

Picked up Adrift

James De Mille

The lower half of the cover features a vibrant blue background with a complex, abstract pattern of thick, bright green lines. These lines form various geometric shapes, including rectangles, triangles, and curved segments, creating a sense of movement and depth. The pattern is reminiscent of a stylized architectural or mechanical design.

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James De Mille



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ADRIFT ***

PICKED UP ADRIFT

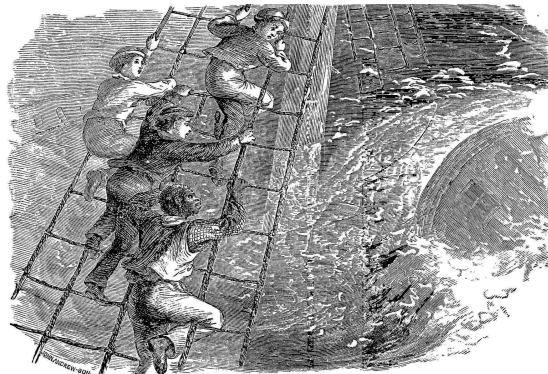
BY Prof. James De Mille,

**Author Of "The B. O. W. C.," "The Boys Of Grand Pré School," "Lost
In The Fog," "Fire In The Woods," "The Treasure Of The Seas,"
"Among The Brigands," "The Seven Hills," Etc.**

Illustrated

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1872



HIGHER UP THE MIZZEN SHROUDS. — Page 207.



PICKED UP ADRIFT.

BY

PROF. JAMES DE MILLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE B. O. W. C.," "THE BOYS OF GRAND PRÉ SCHOOL,"
"LOST IN THE FOG," "FIRE IN THE WOODS," "THE TREASURE
OF THE SEAS," "AMONG THE BRIGANDS,"
"THE SEVEN HILLS," ETC.

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THE SIX VOLUMES OF THE "B. O. W. C" SERIES.

1. THE "B. O. W. C."
2. THE BOYS OF GRAND PRÉ SCHOOL.
3. LOST IN THE FOG.
4. FIRE IN THE WOODS.
5. PICKED UP ADRIFT.
6. THE TREASURE OF THE SEAS.

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PICKED UP ADRIFT.

I.

The enterprising Voyageurs.—A Parliament—Where shall we go next?—The Islands of the Sea.—Captain Corbet’s Confession.—Once more, upon the Waters.—The lonely Isle.—The strange Schooner.—Ashore.—A new Acquaintance.—A Disciple of Progress.—Railroads and Telegraphs for the Magdalen Islands.

THE Antelope had traversed all the waters of the Baie de Chaleur, and the enterprising voyageurs on board had met with many adventures by sea and land; and at length all these were exhausted, and, as the time drew near for their departure, the question arose where next to go, which question was discussed in full council assembled upon the deck; present Bruce, Arthur, Bart, Tom, Phil, Pat, Captain Corbet, Wade, and Solomon, Bruce being in the chair—that is to say, on the taffrail. “All you that are in favor of going home, say ‘Ay’,” said Bruce.

There was a dead silence. Not one spoke.

“That’s not the way to go about it,” said Bart. “It isn’t parliamentary. Let’s do business regularly. Come. I rise, Mr. President, to make a motion. I move that the B. O. W. C. continue their wanderings as long as the holidays last.”

“I second that motion,” cried Phil.

“Gentlemen,” said Bruce, “it has been moved and seconded that the B. O. W. C. continue their wanderings as long as the holidays last. All that are in favor of this motion will please manifest it by saying, ‘Ay.’”

At this there was a universal chorus of “Ay.”

“Contrary minds, ‘No.’”

Silence followed.

“It’s a vote,” said Bruce; “and now all that remains to do is to decide upon the direction to be taken.”

Upon this Captain Corbet smiled benignly, and a glance of approval beamed from his venerable eye. Old Solomon grinned violently, but checked himself in a moment; his grin was drowned in a low chuckle, and he exclaimed, “De sakes now, chil’en alive, how you do go on! Mos’ make dis ole nigga bust hisself to see dese yer mynouvrins.”

“Look here, boys,” cried Bart, suddenly dropping altogether the “parliamentary” style in which he had last spoken; “what do you say to a cruise around the gulf? Let’s visit the islands; there are ever so many; some of them are uninhabited, too. It’ll be glorious!”

“Glorious—will it?” cried Tom. “Wait, my boy, till you know as much about uninhabited islands as I do. You don’t catch me putting my foot ashore on anything of that sort.”

“O, well, we needn’t be particular about the inhabitants,” said Arthur. “I go in for islands, head over heels.”

“So do I,” said Phil.

“Be the powers,” said Pat, “but it’s meself that howlds up both hands to that same.”

“Suppose we go to the Magdalen Islands,” said Bruce. “They’re right in the middle of the gulf, and it’s a very queer place, they say.”

“No, no,” said Bart; “if we go anywhere, let’s go to Anticosti. For my part, I’ve always been wild to go to Anticosti. I don’t believe there’s another island in all the world that’s equal to it. It’s cold, bleak, gloomy, uninhabited, and full of ghosts.”

“Full of fiddlesticks!” exclaimed Arthur. “What do you want of ghosts?”

“Well,” said Bart, placidly, “for my part, I think there is something uncommonly interesting in a haunted island.”

“A haunted island!” repeated Arthur. “Well, my boy, all I’ve got to say is, that if you want anything of that sort, you’ll find the best specimen on Sable Island; so I propose that we go there at once.”

“Sable Island? Why, man alive, that’s ever so far away!” said Tom. “We’d better wait till we’re on our way home, and leave that for the last; though, for my part, I think we’d better give it a wide berth. I go in for some of the gulf islands—St. Paul, for instance, or St. Peter.”

“Well, boys,” said Phil, “since you’re all so crazy about islands, why can’t we go to the Bay of Islands at once? We can have our fill of them there, I should think. For my part I’m indifferent. I’m like Tom; I’ve had my turn at a desert island, and have found out the vanity of Robinson Crusoe.”

“Sure, thin,” said Pat, “and whin we’re about it, we’d better take the biggest island we can find about here, and that same is Newfoundland. Wouldn’t it be better to begin with that, thin?”

“The fact is, boys,” said Bruce, with the air of a judge or an umpire, “we’ll have to make up our minds to visit all these islands. Each one has his preference, and each one shall be gratified. You, Bart, may see Anticosti; you, Arthur, may see Sable Island; you, Tom, may visit St. Paul and St. Peter; you, Phil, may visit the Bay of Islands; and at the same time you, Pat, may see Newfoundland. Of course, then, I hope to go to the Magdalen Islands. Now, as we are going to visit all these places, and the Magdalen Islands happen to be nearest, we will take them first, while we may visit in turn Anticosti and the others, winding up with Sable Island, which may be postponed to the last, since it is the farthest off. We may make up our minds, boys, to no end of adventures. We’re all in first-rate training; we are hardened by adventures on sea and on shore; we can live on next to nothing; and I’m only sorry that we’re not a little nearer to the North Pole,

so that we might set out now as we are to settle the question forever about the open Polar Sea.”

The extravagant notion with which Bruce closed his address was received with shouts of laughter and applause. Then followed a confused conversation. At length they all gathered around Captain Corbet, who had thus far been a listener, and began to question him about the various places which they proposed to visit. The answer of the venerable navigator was not very satisfactory.

“Wal, boys,” said he, “you put me down in any part of old Fundy, an I’m to hum; anywhar’s between the head of old Fundy an Bosting, I know it all be heart; an I engage to feel my way in fog or in darkness, or in snow-storms, backard an forard, year on an year on; but jest about here I’m all agog. In these here parts I’m a pilgerrim an a stranger, an ain’t particularly to be trusted. But I can navigate the Antelope all the same, an fool round in these waters as long as you like. I ain’t got any chart, terrew; but I’ve got an old map of Canady, an kin scrape along with that, especially this season of the year. I kin git a ginral leadin idee of the position of places, an work along the old Antelope wharever you want to go. I’m an old man myself, an don’t mind this kerrewsing a bit; in fact, it’s rayther agree’ble. The best of it is, we’re allus sure to fetch up some-whar.”

This frank announcement of Captain Corbet’s ignorance of these seas might have excited disquietude in the bosoms of less enterprising lads; but the cruisers of the Antelope had seen and known, and felt and suffered, too much to be easily disturbed. Of Captain Corbet’s confession they thought nothing whatever, nor indeed did it really matter very much to them whether he was acquainted with these waters or not. After all, they were not particular about any destination; any mistakes which he might make would not create any inconvenience to them; and even if, in seeking to reach Newfoundland, he should land them at Cape Cod, they would not much care. Under these circumstances they listened to his words with

indifference, and if they felt any disappointment, it was because they were unable to gain from him any information whatever about the places which they proposed to visit.

Since they could gain no information, they did not waste much more time in conversation, but concluded to set out without delay. And so in a little while the Antelope spread her white wings, and began to walk the waters in her usual style, like a thing of life, and all that. In process of time she reached the entrance of the bay, and then passed out into the gulf.

It was a glorious day. The wind was fair. The Antelope did her best. The sun went down that evening behind the high hills, and before them lay a wide expanse of water. On the following morning they saw land ahead. The land was an island, or a cluster of islands, and all the boys felt certain that it was the Magdalen Islands.

In spite of Captain Corbet's ignorance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, he had chosen his course very accurately, for this was indeed their destination. As the schooner drew nearer and nearer, the boys looked with curious eyes upon this remote and isolated spot, situated in the midst of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and shut out during all the winter months from the rest of the world of man by ice, and storms, and solitude.

The wind died away after sunrise, and hours passed before they came near enough to think of landing. At length the anchor was dropped, and the boat was made ready to go ashore. From this point they could see this new land to the best advantage. They saw before them an island rising high out of the water, with its green slopes covered with grass, and crowned with trees, and dotted with white houses. Before them there were a cove and a sandy beach, upon which boats were drawn up. The other islands of the group were shut out from view by this one. Not far away—in fact, not farther than a stone's throw—there lay another schooner at anchor. Very different was this other schooner from the Antelope. The Antelope, in spite of its many admirable and amiable qualities, was not particularly

distinguished either for size, or strength, or speed, or beauty. In every one of these particulars the other schooner was the exact opposite. It was large; it was evidently new; its lines were sharp and delicate, indicating great speed; its spread of canvas was immense; it was a model of naval architecture; while the freshness of its paint, and the extreme neatness which appeared in every part, indicated a far greater care on the part of its master than any which the good and gracious Corbet was ever disposed to exhibit towards his beloved Antelope. On high floated the Stars and Stripes, exhibiting the nationality of the stranger. On her stern the boys could read her name and nation. They saw there, in white letters underneath a gold eagle, the words,

FAWN-GLOUCESTER.

“On land,” said Bruce, gravely, as he looked at the strange craft, “the Antelope and the Fawn are somewhat alike; but on the sea it strikes me that there is a slight difference.”

The other boys said nothing, but there arose involuntarily in the mind of each a feeling not exactly of envy, but at least a fervent wish that the resemblance which Bruce spoke of should exist on the water as well as on the land.

“I suppose it’s a yacht,” said Bart.

“Or a cruiser,” said Arthur.

“Nothin of the kind,” said Captain Corbet. “That thar craft ain’t anythin more than a Gloucester fishing schewner.”

“A fishing schooner?”

“Course; an why not? Why, them Gloucester skippers make themselves comfortable; they know how to do it, tew, an this chap is jest like the rest. He makes himself comfortable, keeps his schewner like a palace or a parlor, an don’t let even so much as the scale of a red herrin be seen about.”

The boys went ashore in the boat. Bruce then returned for Captain Corbet, who was touched by this small attention. As Bart and the rest waited on the beach, they noticed a small, neat, freshly-painted boat drawn up not far away, which needed not the name of Fawn on the stern to assure them that it could belong to nothing else than the smart schooner. While they were looking at it and admiring it, a man advanced towards them, who regarded them with a puzzled and curious expression.

He was a man of middle age and medium stature, with clean-shaven face, close-cut hair, and keen gray eye. He wore a dark-blue frock coat and wide-awake hat, and did not seem at all like a seaman; yet somehow the boys could not help feeling that this very neatly-dressed man must have something to do with the Fawn. He came up to them, and looked at them with a smile.

“Who in thunder are you, anyhow?” he exclaimed, at length. “I can’t make you out at all. You belong to that queer-looking tub out there, I see; but who you are and what you are after is beyond me.”

This style of address struck the boys as being rather uncivil; but the good-natured expression of the stranger’s face showed that no incivility was meant, and won their hearts at once.

“O, well,” said Bart, with a laugh, “you must never judge by appearances, you know. We’re not a fishing vessel. In fact, we’re a sort of chartered yacht, though we’re a very unpretending sort of yacht, and we don’t go in for show. We’re a schooner, cruising about in a plain, off-hand, homely manner for pleasure, and all that sort of thing.”

At this the stranger burst into a shout of laughter, which was so cheery, and so hearty, and so good-natured, that the boys found it impossible to resist its contagion, and at length they all joined in also, though why they were laughing, or what they were laughing at, they had not the smallest idea in the world.

“Look here, boys,” exclaimed the stranger, at length, as soon as he had recovered from his laughter; “excuse me, but I can’t help it. I’ll knock under. I cave in. I don’t understand it at all. Have you a looking-glass aboard your tub out there? Has any one of you any idea what he looks like? Or have you ever examined one another?”

At this the boys could not help looking at one another, and at themselves, and at this survey they began to perceive what they had not at all suspected—that they were one and all a most disreputable-looking crowd. Their clothes were torn and stained with mud, and gave signs in every seam and fibre of long scrambles through wood and water, and long struggles with the elements. But, in fact, no one of them had thought of this until this moment, when they found themselves confronted and laughed at by this well-dressed stranger.

“It ain’t the shabbiness,” cried the stranger, “that upsets me, but it’s the contrast—such faces looking at me out of such clothes! Do your mothers know you are out? or, in other words, boys, do your parents know the particular way in which you are moving about the world?”

“O, well,” said Bart, “we’re not a vain vessel, you know. We’re only a plain, simple, matter-of-fact potato schooner, out for a holiday, and on the lookout for a little fun. We’re not proud, and so, perhaps, being a potato schooner, it’s just as well not to be too particular about clothes. We’ve always been told not to think too much about dress; and besides, this sort of thing is ever so much more convenient for roughing it, you know.”

“Well, boys,” said the stranger, “I dare say you looked very well when you started; and after all, clothes are not the most important thing. At any rate, I’m glad to meet you! How d’ye do, all? I’m glad to see you! How d’ye do? I’d like to know you. My name’s Ferguson, Tobias Ferguson, and I’m skipper of that there craft, the Fawn.”

Saying this, he shook hands with every one of the boys in succession, asked their names, their ages, their place of abode, the names, occupations, and ages of their parents, and then proceeded to inquire about their adventures thus far, and their intentions in the future. By this time Bruce had returned from the vessel with Captain Corbet, to whom Ferguson at once made himself known; and thus in a short time he had come to be on intimate terms with all the party.

“I just dropped in here to Magdalen,” said he, frankly, “to fix up the Fawn a bit. ’Tain’t much of a place, any ways. The people air a lot of beggarly, frog-eating Frenchmen, that follow fashions as old as Adam. When Adam delved and Eve span, as the old verse says, they had a plough and a spindle, and that thar identical plough and spindle air still in use here among these here French. You can’t make em use anythin else. Why, I’ve been here dozens of times, and I’ve tried, to get em to give up their old-fashioned ways, and be up to the age. I’ve showed em our way of doin things. No go. Not a mite of use. Might as well talk to a stone wall. They’ll never get out of the old rut. And see what they’re doin here! Why, only look around you! Magdalen Islands! Why, this locality is one of the most favored on this green earth. In the middle of this gulf, right in the track of ships, it is in a position to enter upon a career of progress that might make this place one of the most flourishing in the world. They might control the whole fish trade; they might originate new modes of fishing. Why, look at me! I’ve tried to get em to start factories, build railroads, steamboats, common schools, hotels, newspapers, electric telegraphs, and other concomitants of our nineteenth century civilization. And what’s the result? Why, nothing. I might as well talk to the wind. Railroads! electric telegraphs! Why, you might as well ask them to build a bridge to the moon! Well, all I can say is, that these here Magdalen Islands won’t ever be anythin till they fall in with the sperrit of the age. Them’s my sentiments.”

“Railroads!” cried Bart. “Why, what could they do with a railroad?”

“Do?” exclaimed Ferguson. “Why, develop their resources, promote trade, facilitate intercourse, and keep themselves abreast with the age.”

“But there are not more than a couple of thousand people on the islands,” said Bart.

“Well, what’s the odds? So much the more reason for them to be up and doin’,” retorted Ferguson, with some warmth. “They’re all as poor as rats; and a railroad is the only thing that can save them from eventooly dyin out.”

The boys looked at the stranger in some perplexity, for they did not know whether he’ could really be in earnest or not. But from Ferguson’s face and manner they could gather nothing whatever. He seemed perfectly serious, and altogether in earnest.

“Yes, sir,” he repeated, emphatically, “these here Magdalen Islands’ll never be wuth anythin till they get a railroad. Them’s my sentiments.”

II.

A new Acquaintance,—The Islands of the Sea,—Making Friends,—The Natives,—A Festival,—Efforts at Conversation in an unknown Tongue, — Corbet's Baby Talk,—Experiments of Bart and Tim,—Pat comes to Grief.—Overthrow of the French,—Arrival of the Skipper on the Scene, —He means Business.

FINDING that their new acquaintance was so very friendly, and communicative, and all that, the boys thought that it would be a good thing to find out from him something about the various islands which they proposed visiting. Ferguson declared that he knew as much about the Gulf of St. Lawrence as any man living, and could tell them all they wanted to know.

“What sort of a place is St. Paul's Island,” asked Arthur.

The skipper shook his head in silence. “Is St. Pierre worth visiting?”

“Well—scarcely,” said the other.

“What sort of a place is Anticosti?” asked Bruce.

“Well, you'd best not go within fifty miles of that thar island.”

“What sort of a place is Sable Island?” asked Bart.

“Sable Island!” exclaimed the skipper, staring at them in astonishment.

“Yes, Sable Island.”

“You mean Cape Sable Island.”

“No; we mean Sable Island.”

The skipper looked at them all with a solemn face.

“Well, boys,” said he, “as to visiting Sable Island, all I’ve got to say is, I hope you’ll never begin to try it on Sable Island. Why, Sable Island’s one of the places that seafarin’ men try never to visit, and pray never to get nearer than a hundred miles to. Sable Island! Boys,” he continued, after a pause, “don’t ever speak of that again; don’t even think of it. Give it up at once and forever. I only hope that you won’t be brought to pay a visit there in spite of yourselves, a thing which I’m afraid you’re very likely to do if you go cruisin’ about in an old tub like that much longer. Not but what Sable Island mightn’t be improved—that is, if the inhabitants only had any enterprise, and the government that owns it was alive to the wants of the age.”

“Inhabitants!” said Bart; “why, there’s only the keeper and his family.”

The skipper waved his hand.

“Grant all that,” said he. “Very well. They’re a nucleus, at any rate, and can give tone and character to the future Sable Islanders. Now, what your government ought to do with Sable Island is this. They’d ought to make a good breakwater, first and foremost, so as to have decent harbor accommodation for passing vessels. Then they’d ought to connect it with the main land with a submarine cable, so that the place needn’t be quite so isolated, and have regular lines of steamers runnin’ backard and forard. Well, then they ought to get up a judicious emigration scheme, and that thar island would begin to go ahead in a style that would make you fairly open your eyes. Why, in ten years, if this plan was carried out, they’d be building a railroad,—a thing that is needed there more than most anywheres, the island bein so uncommon long and narrow,—and that bein done, why, Sable Island would begin to come abreast of the nineteenth century, instead of hanging back in the middle ages.”

After some further conversation of a similar character, the skipper proposed to show the boys about the country, and introduce them to some of the “aristocracy.”

“And there,” said he, “is one of them, now. It’s the priest—and a precious fine fellow he is, any how, and no mistake. He is priest, governor general, magistrate, constable, policeman, Sunday school teacher, town clerk, schoolmaster, newspaper, lawyer, doctor, notary public, census taker, and fifty other things all rolled into one. He is the factotum of the Magdalen Islands. They come to him for everything: to baptize their infants, to marry their young couples, and to bury their dead. They go to mass on Sundays, and on week days they go to him for advice and assistance in everything. He visits the sick, and administers medicine as doctor, or extreme unction as priest. He settles all their quarrels better than any judge or jury, and there never ain’t any appeal thought of from his decision. Now, all this is what I call a species of despotism,—it’s one man power, but it suits these poor benighted frog-eatin heathen,—and, besides, it’s no more a despotism than the father of a family exercises. It’s patriarchal—that’s what it is. It’s wonderful, too, how much honor the young people hereabouts pay to their fathers, and grandfathers, and elders genrally. I never knowed anythin like it in all my born days. Well, now, boys, mind you, all this is goin to be upset. Some day they’ll be appointin magistrates here, and doctors will come, and lawyers; then this little community will all be sot by the ears, and—and they’ll enter upon a career of boundless progress. They’ll get the ballot-box, and the newspaper, and all the concomitants of modern civilization; the present patriarchal system’ll be played out, and the spirit of the age will reign and rule over them.”

By the time the skipper had given utterance to this, they had approached the priest. He was a mild, venerable man, with a meek face and a genial smile. He spoke English very well, shook hands with all, and listened to the skipper’s explanations about their present visit.

“And now, boys, I’ll leave you for the present,” said the skipper, “to the care of Father Leblanc, who will do the honors of the island. I’ve got to go

aboard the Fawn to fix up a few things. We'll meet again in the course of the day."

With these words he went down to the beach. The shabbiness of the costume of the boys had already excited the remarks of the skipper, but the good Father Leblanc soon saw that in spite of this they were clever and intelligent.

"We do not often have," said he, "at this place visitors above the rank of fishermen, and we have never before had any visitors like you. I can assure you a welcome, dear boys, from all the good people here. There is to be a fête to-day in honor of the marriage of two of my flock. Would you like to go? If so, I invite you most cordially, and assure you of a welcome."

This unexpected invitation, thus kindly given, was accepted with undisguised eagerness; and thereupon the boys accompanied the priest, who first of all went to his own home, where he offered them some simple refreshments. The priest's home was a small cottage of very unpretending exterior, and very similar to all the other cottages; but inside there were marks of refined taste and scholarly pursuits. A few Latin and Greek classics were on a small book-shelf. There was an harmonium, with some volumes of sacred music, and here and there were some volumes which were of a theological character. The entertainment of the priest consisted of some coffee, which the boys were surprised to find, and which they afterwards unanimously pronounced to be "perfectly delicious," and some fresh eggs, with immaculate bread and butter.

After chatting with the boys for about an hour, the priest announced that it was time to start, as their destination was on the opposite side of the island. They accordingly set out at once, and walked along the slope of a hill. There was no road, but only a footpath, which served all the purposes of the Magdalen Islanders, in spite of the skipper's theories about a railway. On the way the priest entertained them with stories of his life on these secluded islands, of the storms of winter, of the ice blockade, of the perils of

the sea, of the vast solitude of the surrounding gulf, where in winter no ship ever ventures. Yet in spite of the loneliness, he affirmed that no one here had any sense of desolation, for it seemed to all of the inhabitants, just as it seems to the inhabitants of other countries, that this home of theirs was the centre of the universe, and all other lands strange, and drear, and unattractive.

At length they reached their destination. It was a cottage of rather larger size than usual, and it seemed as if the whole population of the island had gathered here. Tables were spread in the open air, and a barrel of cider was on tap. As they drew near they heard the sound of a fiddle, and saw figures moving about in a lively dance. Old men, young men, women, girls, and children were all laughing, talking, dancing, or playing. It was a scene full of a curious attractiveness, and exhibited in a striking way the irrepressible gayety that characterizes the French wherever they go.

At their approach the laughter and the dance ceased for a time, and the company welcomed the good priest with smiles and kindly words. The boys also came in for a share of the hospitable welcome, and as soon as the priest had explained who they were, they were at once received as most welcome and honored guests. Unfortunately the boys could not speak a word of French, and the people could not speak a word of English, so that there was not that freedom of intercourse between the two parties which might have been desirable; but the priest did much to bring about this interchange of feelings by acting as interpreter, and the boys also by gestures or by smiles endeavored, not without some success, to make known their feelings for themselves.

The boys soon distributed themselves about at random, and the good people never ceased to pay delicate little attentions to them by offering them coffee or cakes, by uttering a few words in the hope that they might be understood, or, if words were wanting, they took refuge in smiles. But words were not wanting, and different members of the party made violent

efforts to break through the restraints which a foreign language imposed, and express their feelings more directly.

Thus Captain Corbet, who had accompanied the party, finding himself hospitably entertained by a smiling old Frenchman, endeavored to make known the joy of his heart.

“Coffee,” said he, tapping his cup and grinning.

“Oui, oui,” said the Frenchman.

“Coffee dood—pooty—nicey—O, velly nicey picey.”

Captain Corbet evidently was falling back upon his “baby talk,” under the impression that it would be more intelligible to a foreigner. But this foreigner did not quite understand him. He only shrugged his shoulders.

“Cooky—cakey—nicey,” continued Captain Corbet, in, an amiable tone. “All dood—all nicey—velly.”

And he again paused and smiled.

“Plait-il?” said the Frenchman, politely.

“Plate? O, no, no plate for me, an thank you kindly all the same.”

The Frenchman looked at him in a bewildered way, but still smiled.

“Vouley vous du pain?” he asked, at length.

“Pan?” said Captain Corbet; “pan? Course not. What’d I do with a pan?—but thankin you all the same, course.”

The Frenchman relapsed into silence.

“It was a pooty ’itile tottage,” said Captain Corbet, resuming his baby talk, “an a pooty tompany, an it was all dood—pooty—nicey.”

But the Frenchman didn’t understand a word, and so at length Captain Corbet, with a sigh, gave up the attempt.

Meanwhile the others were making similar endeavors. Tom had got hold of a French boy about his own age.

“Parley vous Français,” said Tom, solemnly.

“Oui,” said the French boy.

“Oui, moosoo,” said Tom.

The French boy smiled.

“Merci, madame,” continued Tom, boldly.

The boy stared.

“Nong—tong—paw,” proceeded Tom, in a business-like manner.

Of this the boy could evidently make nothing.

But here Tom seemed to have reached the limit of his knowledge of French, and the conversation came to a sudden and lamentable end.

Bart had carried on for some time an interesting conversation with smiles and gestures, when he too ventured into audible words.

“Bon!” said he, in an impressive manner; and then touching the breast of the boy to whom he was speaking, he continued, “You—tu—you know—you’re bon;” then, laying his hand on his heart, he said, “me bon;” then, pointing to the cup, “coffee bon;” then sweeping his hand around, he added, “and all bon—house bon, company bon, people bon.”

“Ah, oui,” cried the boy. “Oui, je vous comprends. Aha, oui, la bonne compagnie, le bon peuple—”

“Bon company, bon people, bon company, bon people,” cried Bart, delighted at his success in getting up a conversation; “bon coffee, too; I tell you what, it’s the bonnest coffee that I’ve tasted for many a long day.”

At this the boy looked blank.

“Parley vous Français?” asked Bart, in an anxious tone.

“Oui,” said the boy.

“Well, then, I don’t,” said Bart; “but the moment I get home I intend to study it.”

And at this stage Bart's conversation broke down.

Pat chose another mode of accomplishing the same end. Captain Corbet had been acting on the theory that foreigners were like babies, and could understand baby talk. Pat, in addition to this, acted on the theory that they were deaf, and had to be addressed accordingly. So, as he was refreshing himself with coffee and cakes, he drew a little nearer to the old woman who had poured it out for him, and bent down his head. The old woman was at that moment intent upon her coffeepot, and did not notice Pat. Suddenly Pat, with his mouth close to her ear, shouted out with a perfect yell,—

“Bully for you! and thank you kindly, marm!”

With a shriek of terror the startled old woman sprang up and fell backward. The chair on which she had been sitting, a rather rickety affair, gave way and went down. The old lady fell with the chair upon the ground, and lay for a moment motionless. Pat, horror-struck, stood confounded, and stared in silence at the ruin he had wrought. The bystanders, alarmed at the shout and shriek, crowded around, and for a moment there was universal confusion. Among the bystanders was the priest. To him Pat turned in his despair, and tried to explain. The priest listened, and then went to see about the old woman. Fortunately she had fallen on the soft turf, and was not at all hurt. She was soon on her feet, and another chair was procured, in which she seated herself. The priest then explained the whole affair. Pat was fully forgiven, and the harmony of the festival was perfectly restored. But Pat's laudable efforts at maintaining a conversation had received so severe a check that he did not open his mouth for the rest of the day.

The festival went on. Fun and hilarity prevailed all around. The dancing grew more and more vigorous. At length the contagion spread to the elder ones of the party, and the boys were astonished to see old men stepping forth to skip and dance about the green; then old women came forward to take a part, until, at length, all were dancing. The boys stood as spectators, until at length Bart determined to throw himself into the spirit of the scene.

He therefore found a partner, and plunged into the dance. The others followed. Captain Corbet alone remained, seated near a table, viewing the scene with his usual benevolent glance.

In the midst of this festive scene the skipper approached. He walked with rapid steps, and, without hesitating an instant, seized a partner and flung himself, with all the energy of his race, into the mazy dance.

“I don’t often dance, boys,” he remarked, afterwards, “but when I do, I mean business.”

It was evident that on this occasion the skipper did mean business. He danced more vigorously than any. He jumped higher; he whirled his partner round faster; he danced with more partners than any other, for he went through the whole assemblage, and led out every female there, from the oldest woman down to the smallest girl.

Most of the time he chatted volubly, and flung out remarks which excited roars of laughter. He won all hearts. He was, in fact, an immense success. The boys wondered, for they had not imagined that he could speak French.

He alluded to this afterwards.

“We have a natral affinity with the French down in New England,” said he. “When America was first colonized, our forefathers had to fight the French all the time. The two races were thus brought into connection. Our forefathers thus caught from the French that nasal twang with which the uneducated still speak English. You find that twang among the uneducated classes all over the British provinces and New England. It’s French—that’s what it is. Corbet and I are both uneducated men, and we both speak English with the French twang. I speak French first rate; and Corbet there could speak it first rate also, if he only knew the language perfectly.”

These remarks the boys did not quite know how to take. The skipper seemed to have a bantering way with him, and spoke so oddly that it was

impossible for them to make out half of the time whether he was in earnest or only in jest.



III.

Friendly Advice and dismal Forebodings.—Once more upon the Waters, yet once more.—Due North.—A Calm.—The Calm continues.—A terrible Disclosure.—Despair of Corbet.—Solomon finds his Occupation gone.—Taking Stock.—Short Allowance.

ANOTHER day was passed very pleasantly at the Magdalen Islands, and then the boys concluded that they had seen about all that there was to be seen in this place. As the question where next to go arose, they concluded to ask the skipper.

“Well, boys,” said he, “in the first place, let me ask you if you’ve ever heard of Anticosti?”

“Of course we have,” said Bart.

“Well, don’t go there; don’t go near it; don’t go within fifty mile of it; don’t speak of it; don’t think of it; and don’t dream of it. It’s a place of horror, a howling wilderness, the abomination of desolation, a haunted island, a graveyard of unfortunate sailors. Its shores are lined with their bones. Don’t you go and add your young bones to the lot. You can do far better with them.”

“Well, where do you advise us to go?” asked Arthur.

The skipper thought for a few moments without answering.

“Well,” said he, “you know Sable Island.”

“Yes,” said Bart, in some surprise.

“Well,” said the skipper, impressively, “don’t go there; don’t go within a hundred miles of it; don’t speak of it; don’t think of it; don’t dream of it.”

“But you’ve said all that to us before,” said Bruce. “We want to know where we *are* to go, not where we are *not* to go.”

“Well,” said the skipper, “I am aware that I’ve said all this before, and I say it a second time, deliberately, for the simple purpose of impressing it upon your minds. There’s nothin like repetition to impress a thing on the memory; and so, if you ever come to grief on Anticosti, or on Sable Island, you’ll remember my warnin, and you’ll never feel like blamin me.”

“But where ought we to go?” asked Bruce.

“Well, that’s the next point. Now, I’ve been thinkin’ all about it, and to my mind there ain’t any place in all this here region that comes up to the Bay of Islands, Newfoundland.”

“The Bay of Islands?”

“Yes, the Bay of Islands, on the west coast of Newfoundland. It’s a great place. I’ve been there over and over, and I know it like a book. Thousands of vessels go there every season. It’s one of the best harbors in the gulf. It’s one of the most beautiful places in the world. The air is bracing, the climate salubrious, the scenery inviting; and it only needs a first-class hotel with all the modern improvements in order to become a number one waterin-place. Yes, by ginger!” he continued, “you plant a first-class hotel there, and let that there place become known, and there’s nothin to prevent it from goin ahead of Long Branch or Newport, or any other place you can mention.

“Then,” continued the skipper, “if you wanted to go any further, you might go up the Straits of Belle Isle, and round Newfoundland. If you had time, you might take a run over to Greenland; it’s gettin to be quite a place, a fashionable resort in the hot summer; but perhaps you won’t have time, and won’t care about doin more than cruisin round Newfoundland, and then home.”

Once more the skipper’s tone seemed somewhat extravagant to the boys, and they did not know how to take it.

“O, well,” said Bart, “we don’t want to go to Greenland this season. When we do go there, we shall probably go for good; but just now, we want to confine ourselves to the gulf. If you can really recommend the Bay of Islands, perhaps we had better go there; that is,” added Bart, “unless you think we had better go to Iceland.”

The skipper looked at Bart for a few moments in silence, and a smile gradually passed over his face.

“Well,” said he, after a pause, “that’s the identical place that I was just going to recommend, when you took the words out of my mouth. The fact is, boys, with that old tub of yours you might as well go to Iceland as anywhere else. Every time I look at it I am thunderstruck. What were your fathers and mothers thinkin of when they let you come away up here in such an old rattle-trap?—an old tub that isn’t worth being condemned! Do you think you’ll ever get home again in her? Not you. Do you know where that old tub’s bound to go before the end of this season? Down to the bottom of the sea; and if you don’t go in her, you may bless your lucky stars. I only wish I wasn’t otherwise engaged. I’d make you all clear out at once, and come aboard the Fawn.”

Captain Corbet was not present, and did not hear these insulting reflections upon his beloved Antelope, and therefore was spared the pain which they would have caused to his aged bosom; but the boys were not the ones to listen to such insinuations in silence. The Antelope was dear to them from past associations, and they all began at once to vindicate her character. They talked long and eloquently about her. They spoke of her speed, soundness, and beauty. They told of her performances thus far.

At all of which the skipper only grinned.

“Mark my words, boys,” said he; “that there tub is goin to the bottom.”

“Well, if she does, she’ll get up again,” said Bart.

The opinions of the two parties were so different that any further debate was useless. The skipper believed that they were bound for the bottom of the sea; the boys on the contrary had faith in the Antelope. The end of it all was, that they concluded to take the skipper's advice in part, and sail for the Bay of Islands. This place was one which they all were desirous of visiting, and they thought that when they had gone that far, they could then decide best where next to go.

They were to leave the next morning. That evening they took leave of the friendly skipper.

"Boys," said he, "I'm afraid we'll never meet again; but if you do get back safe from this perilous adventure of yours, and if any of you ever happen to be at Gloucester, Massachusetts, I do wish you'd look me up, and let me know. I'd give anything to see any one of you again."

With these words the skipper shook hands with each one of them heartily, and so took his leave.

Early on the following morning the Antelope spread her sails and began once more to traverse the seas, heading towards the north. The wind was fair, and all that day they moved farther and farther away from the Magdalen Islands, until at length towards evening they were lost to view in distance and darkness.

On the next day they were all up early. They saw all around a boundless expanse of water. No land was anywhere visible, and not a sail was in sight. This was a novelty to the boys, for never yet had any of them had this experience in the Antelope. Some of them had been out of sight of land, it is true; but then they were in large ships, or ocean steamers. Being in such a situation in a craft like the Antelope, was a far different thing. Yet none of them felt anything like anxiety, nor had the slurs of the skipper produced any effect upon their affectionate trust in their gallant bark, and in their beloved Captain Corbet.

Certainly on the present occasion there was little enough cause for anxiety about the sea-worthiness of the Antelope. The sea was as smooth as a mirror, and its glassy surface extended far and wide around them. There was not a breath of air stirring. They learned from Wade that the wind had gradually died away between sundown and midnight, until it had ceased altogether. They were now in a dead calm.

None of the party was very well pleased at this. They all wished to be moving. They disliked calms, and would have much preferred a moderate gale of wind. The Antelope, however, was here, and there was no help for it. She was far away from land. She lay gently rising and falling, as the long ocean rollers raised her up and let her down; and her sails flapped idly in the still air, at the motion of the vessel. The boys did the best they could under the circumstances, and tried to pass away the time in various ways. Some of them tried to sleep; others extemporized a checker-board, and played till they were tired; others walked up and down, or lounged about. All of them, however, found their chief employment in one occupation, and that was eating. Ever since they had been on the water their appetites had been sharpened; and now that they had nothing else to do, the occupation of eating became more important and engrossing. To prolong the repast while it was before them as far as possible, and then to anticipate the next, were important aids towards killing the time.

All that day the calm continued: on going to bed that night, the boys confidently looked forward to a change of weather on the following day. The night was calm. The following day came. They were all up betimes. To their deep disappointment they found no change whatever. There was the same calm, the same unruffled sea, the same cloudless sky. Not a sail was visible anywhere, and of course there was no sign of land on any quarter.

The second day the time hung more heavily on their hands. Some of them proposed fishing; but they had no hooks, and moreover no bait. Pat proposed fashioning a spike into a hook; fastening it on a line, and fishing

for sharks, and worked all day at a rusty spike for this purpose. Unfortunately, he could not get it sharp enough, and so he had at length to give it up.

Captain Corbet was perhaps the most impatient of all; and this seemed singular to the boys, who thus far had known him only as the most patient and the most enduring of men.

On this occasion, however, his patience seemed to have departed. He fidgeted about incessantly. He kept watching the sea, the sky, and the horizon, and occupied himself for hours in all the various ways common among seamen, who indulge in the superstitious practice of trying to “raise the wind.” One mode consisted in standing in one position motionless for half an hour or more, watching the horizon, and whistling; another was a peculiar snapping of the fingers; another was the burning of some hairs pulled from his own venerable head. These and other similar acts excited intense interest among the boys, and helped to make the time pass less slowly. Unfortunately, not one of these laudable efforts was successful, and the obstinate wind refused to be “raised.”

That day the boys detected something in their meals which seemed like a decline of skill on the part of Solomon. There was a falling off both in the quantity and in the quality of the eatables. Only four potatoes graced the festive board, and a piece of corned beef that was quite inadequate to their wants. The tea was weak, and there was very little sugar. There was only a small supply of butter, and this butter seemed rather unpleasantly dirty.

On the following day all this was explained. Hurrying up on deck at early dawn, they saw the scene unchanged. Above was the cloudless sky, all around the glassy sea, and before them stood Captain Corbet, the picture of despair. By his side stood Solomon, with his hands clasped together, and his head hanging down.

“It’s all my fault, boys,” said Captain Corbet, with something like a groan. “I was to blame: But I declare, I clean forgot. And yet what business had I to forget? my fustest and highest duty bein to remember. And here we air!”

“Why, what’s the matter?” asked Tom, who, like all the rest was struck by Captain Corbet’s despairing attitude and words.

“I won’t hide it any longer, boys,” said he; “it’s this calm. I didn’t calculate on bein becalmed. I thought only of head winds, and then we could hev put back easy; but a calm! Why, what can you do?”

“Hide it?” Cried Bruce. “Hide what? What do you mean by this? What would you want to put back for?”

Captain Corbet groaned.

“For—for pro—provisions, dear boys,” he said mournfully, and with an effort.

“Provisions!” repeated Bruce, and looked very blank indeed. All the boys exchanged glanced, which were full of unutterable things. There was silence for some time.

Tom was the first to break it.

“Well, what have we?” he, asked, in his usual cheery voice. “Come captain, tell us what there is in the larder.”

“Ask Solomon,” said Captain Corbet, mournfully.

“Well, Solomon, tell us the worst,” said Tom.

But Solomon would not or could not speak. He raised his head, looked wildly around, and then hurried away.

Captain Corbet looked after him, and heaved a heavy sigh.

“Wal, boys,” said he, “the fact is, Solomon and me, we’ve been talkin it all over. You see, he considers himself cook, and cook only, and looks to me for the material. It’s all my fault. I forgot. I thought there was lots till

yesterday mornin. Then Solomon told me how it was. I'd ort to have laid in a supply before leavin Bay de Chaleur; but as I said, I forgot. And as for Solomon, why, he's been calmly a continuoin of his cookery, same as if he was chief cook of a fust-class hotel, and all the time he was in a becalmed schewner. He told me all about it yesterday mornin; but I says, 'Don't tell the boys; mebbe the wind'll change, and I'll sail for the nighest port.' So he didn't, except so far as you might have guessed, from the meals which he served up; pooty slim they were too; but he did his best."

"Well," said Tom, with unaltered self-possession, "it would have been better for us to have known this yesterday morning; but that can't be helped. So we have no more provisions?"

"Precious little," said Captain Corbet, mournfully.

"Have we any?" asked Tom.

"Wal," said Captain Corbet, "the tea's all gone; and the coffee, and all the potted meats, and the apples, and the taters, and the turnips and carrots, and all the vegetables, and the smoked provisions, and you had the last mite of corned beef yesterday."

"But what is there left?" asked Tom.

"Only two or three papers of corn starch," said Captain Corbet, with an effort, "and, I believe, a half box of raisins, and a little rice."

"And nothing else?"

"Not a hooter," said Captain Corbet, despairingly.

Tom was silent. The boys all looked at one another with anxious faces, and then began to talk over the situation.

The result was, that first of all they made Solomon produce everything in the shape of eatables that remained on board. Solomon ransacked the vessel, and laid everything out on the cabin table.

It was not a very large supply, and the display created additional uneasiness in the minds of the boys.

There were,—

3 papers of corn starch, 1 lb. each.

1 ham bone.

1 box raisins.

1 lb. rice.

6 biscuits.

1 bowl soup.

4 carrots.

1 potato, turnip.

2 apples.

1 oz. tea.

This was all—absolutely all on board the *Antelope* for the sustenance of no less than nine human beings, all of whom were blessed with excellent appetites. Fortunately, there was a sufficient supply of fresh water, so that there was no trouble on that score.

But this supply of food, even when husbanded with the greatest care, could scarcely last more than one day,—and here they were in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and becalmed!

The circumstances in which they were, excited the deepest anxiety in the minds of all. A grave and earnest discussion followed as to the best course to be pursued. First of all, they all resolved to deny themselves as far as possible, and make their supply of provisions last three days. This could be done by making a very thin soup out of the ham bone with the potato and turnip. The raisins were to be cooked with the corn starch and rice, in one general mess, which was to be carefully divided day by day. The biscuits, carrots, and apples were to be reserved.

After this they decided to try and construct something like oars, and propel the Antelope in that manner.

The provisions were divided and cooked in accordance with this decision. They all went without breakfast, for they had decided to eat but one meal per day. At midday they partook of this important meal, which consumed one third of their whole stock. But little was afforded out of that one meal for each individual, and each one felt able to consume the whole repast, instead of the beggarly ninth part which fell to him. Poor Captain Corbet refused at first to eat, and so did Solomon, for each reproached himself as the cause of the present famine; but the boys put a stop to this by refusing also to eat, and thus compelled Solomon and the captain to take the allotted nourishment.

As to the oars or sweeps, the plan proved a total failure. There was nothing on board which could be used for that purpose. There was but one small oar for the boat, and they could find nothing else that could serve for an oar except the spars of the schooner, and they were not quite prepared to resort to these. Even if they had done so, there was not an axe or a hatchet on board with which to fashion them into the requisite shape. There was, in fact, no tool larger than a pocket knife, except perhaps the table knives, and they were too dull.

The calm continued.

Thus the first day of their famine passed.

They went to bed hungry.

They awaked famished, and found the calm still continuing. There was no breakfast for them. The long hours passed slowly. In vain Captain Corbet whistled for a wind. The wind came not.

Dinner was served at midday. Each one ate his meagre share. Each one felt that this repast only tantalized his appetite, rather than satisfied it. Solomon was in despair. Captain Corbet heaped upon himself never-ending

reproaches. Wade sat stolid and starving on the deck. The boys stared, with hungry eyes, around the horizon.

There was not a sign of land; there was not a sail to be seen.

So the second day passed away.

IV.

The third Day.—A strange Sail.—Below the Horizon.—Making Signals.—No Answer.—Weary Waiting.—Starvation stares them in the Face.—A long Day.—Hope dying out.—A long Discussion upon the Situation.—The last Meal.—Bruce and Bart come to a desperate Determination.—The secret Resolve.

THE third day came.

The boys slept soundly during the night, and were up early. As they took their first look all around, their feelings were those of deep despondency; for far and wide, as before, there was nothing visible but the smooth sea and the cloudless sky. The calm continued, and all the east was glowing with the fiery rays of the rising sun.

Suddenly there was a cry from Phil.

“A ship! A ship!”

“Where? Where?” asked all the others.

“There! There!” cried Phil, in intense excitement, pointing towards the east, where the fiery sky rose over the glowing water. Looking in the direction where he pointed, they all saw it plainly. It was indeed as he said. It was a ship, and it was now plainly visible, though at first, on account of the glare, none of them had noticed it but Phil. As they stood and looked at it, every one of them was filled with such deep emotions of joy and gratitude that not a word was said. Captain Corbet was the first to break the solemn silence.

“Wal, I declar,” said he, “it’s ben so dim all along that I didn’t notice her; and then it kine o’ got so bright that the glare dazzled my eyes; but there she

is, sure enough; and now all we've got to do is to manage to get into communication with her."

The boys made no answer, but stood looking in silence. Every minute the glare lessened; then the sun rose, and as it ascended above the horizon, the form of the strange ship became fully revealed.

It was a ship apparently of considerable size; but her hull was low down in the water, and only her masts were visible. She seemed to lie below the horizon, yet was as plain to the eye as though she had been only five miles away.

"Well, boys," said Bruce, at length, "I don't know how you feel, but for my part I feel like taking the boat and going off to her at once. I'm sick of this fare, and should like to get a good breakfast. What do you think, captain?"

Captain Corbet shook his head.

"Wal," said he, "I don't exactly seem to see my way clear to approv'in of you takin a row for such a matter as twenty mile or so. We'd never see you again."

"Twenty miles!" exclaimed Bruce. "Why, it doesn't look like more than two."

The captain smiled.

"Why, you can't see more of her than her masts," replied Captain Corbet; "and a ship that's down below the horizon far enough to hide her hull is a pooty good distance off—twenty mile, at least."

At this Bruce was silent. Captain Corbet's remarks were unanswerable, and he did not yet feel prepared to row so great a distance as twenty miles.

At length Bart went to the cabin, and returned with a spy-glass. This instrument did not belong to Captain Corbet, for the venerable navigator was strongly prejudiced against any such instruments, and the dimmer his eyes grew, the stronger grew those prejudices. It belonged, in fact, to Bruce,

who had provided himself with it before leaving home. Armed with this, Bart took a long look at the stranger. Then he passed the glass to Bruce, and then all the boys, in turn, took a look.

The strange ship already appeared surprisingly distinct for a vessel that lay below the horizon; and on looking at her through the glass, this distinctness became more startling. Most of her sails were furled, or rather, there appeared to be no sails at all, except the jib. The fore and main-top gallant masts were gone. She appeared, indeed, to have encountered a storm, in which she had lost her spars, and the present calm seemed very little in accordance with her appearance.

The comments which the boys made upon the appearance of the stranger excited Captain Corbet's curiosity to such a degree that he surmounted his prejudices, and condescended to look through the glass. His astonishment at the result was due rather to his own ignorance of glasses than to anything in the strange ship; but after he had become somewhat more familiar with the instrument, he began to pay attention to the object of his scrutiny.

"The fact is," said he, after a long and careful search, "it doos raily look jest for all the world as if that thar craft has been in a storm, and lost her spars and sails. Perhaps he's in distress. Perhaps they're watching us more anxiously than we're watching them."

"I wonder if they can see us?" said Bruce.

"I'm afraid not," said Bart, "we're so small."

"But they've got a glass."

"Yes, and they'd be sweeping the horizon for help."

"I wish we could get nearer."

"If they're hard up, they might row to us."

"Is it any use to signalize, captain?" asked Tom.

“Not a mite,” said Captain Corbet. “You can’t signalize to a vessel so far away; at least I never heard of such a thing.”

“O, well, captain,” objected Bruce, “you see they have glasses. We could see any signals if they were to hoist them, and they can see us as well as we can see them, of course.”

“Wal,” said Captain Corbet, thoughtfully, “perhaps they can; and if so, I’m sure I don’t see why we mayn’t try. So you may as well hist that thar flag o’ yourn, boys. It can’t do any harm, at any rate.”

This proposal was at once acted upon. Several of the boys sprang aft, and seizing the lines, began to lower and elevate, incessantly, the proud, yet somewhat battered banner of the B. O. W. C.—the banner whose pictured face had so often grinned at them through many an adventure, in storm and in calm. It gave them an occupation; it also served to excite hope; and so, for several hours, the flag never ceased to rise and fall,—the boys taking turns at it, and one relieving the other, so as to keep a fresh hand always at the work. This continued till midday; but at length they gave it up in disgust.

They gave it up because it had not produced the slightest result, nor excited the smallest attention; nor had the circumstances of their situation changed in any respect whatever. Far away lay the ship, and no more of her was visible. Nothing but her masts appeared to their eyes; not a particle of her hull could be seen. She seemed somewhat longer now, and some of them accounted for this on the ground that she had changed her position somewhat, and presented her broadside more than she had done in the morning.

The weather had not changed, nor were there any signs whatever of a change. The sky was still as cloudless as ever, and not the faintest fleck disturbed the expanse of blue that hung above them. The sea was unruffled, nor was there any puff of wind to agitate its surface.

Early in the morning, when that strange ship first appeared, they had hoped that a wind might arise before long to bring them together; or, if a wind did not come, that at least the currents of the sea might drift them into closer proximity; but now there began to arise a dark fear that, instead of drifting nearer together, they might be carried farther asunder, and that this strange ship, which had thus been borne so mysteriously to their sight during the darkness, might, on the advent of another day, be borne as mysteriously out of their sight. With anxious eyes they watched her form, testing it in every possible way, to discover whether the intervening space had increased or lessened. Some of the more desponding ones were convinced that they were drifting asunder; others, more hopeful, maintained that they were nearer; while others, again, asserted that their respective positions had not changed. And, in fact, it was evident from the very dispute itself, that the position of the two vessels had not very greatly altered.

Half of the day had passed. Another half remained; and after that, what? Night and darkness, and then how easily could they drift away from this stranger, on which they had been placing such hopes! How could they expect that the rest of the day would be any different from the beginning?

Midday had come, and this was the time for their single daily meal. Moreover, this meal was the last,—the last of the three portions which they had set aside for the consumption of three days.

Here arose a solemn question.

Should they eat up all of this last portion? or should they divide it into two parts, reserving something for the possible emergency of the next day? The moment that this was proposed, they all decided at once to reserve something, and not to devour at once all that was left. They determined to deny themselves for this day for the security of the morrow; and, hungry though they were, they preferred to have a meagre repast with hope, rather than a fuller repast with despair. And so their dinner was divided, and one portion set aside for the next day. Meagre indeed and inadequate was this

repast for these long-fasting and ravenous boys; but there was no help for it; and as yet they had not quite reached the worst. They, therefore, all tried most strenuously to look on the bright side, make the best of their situation, and cheer one another with remarks of a hopeful and encouraging character.

Dinner was prolonged as far as possible. Then came the long hours of the afternoon. Gradually the efforts of the boys to keep up their own spirits and encourage one another grew feebler and feebler. From time to time they made faint efforts to find occupation for themselves, by resorting to the flag, and actively lowering and hoisting it. But the greater part of the time was spent in silently and sadly staring at the strange ship, sometimes through the glass, whenever they could get the chance, but generally without it. The remarks grew more and more infrequent. The hoplessness of their situation began to weigh down more and more the spirits of each, and at length they, one and all, relapsed into silence. Solomon kept out of sight. Wade sat, as usual, stolid and passive. Captain Corbet stood at the helm, looking in all directions, at sea and sky, with an unchanged expression of heart-broken melancholy. So the time passed.

The afternoon was far worse than the morning: in every respect. The moral tone of the whole party had declined, and the whole scene around presented no encouraging feature. In the morning they had been inspired by the hope of making communications with the ship, but now this hope died out more and more with every passing moment.

At length the sun went down, and then the shadows of the gloomy night followed slowly and steadily. One by one the shades passed over the distant ship, until at last they stood staring at the place where they had seen her, but where now they could see nothing but darkness. This completed their despondency, and the gloom around was commensurate with that which now fell darkly and desparingly over the soul of each.

For a long time they wandered up and down the deck. No one spoke. Each one was involved in his own gloomy thoughts. At length, one by one,

they retired to their beds, with the hope of forgetting their cares in sleep.

Bruce and Bart were left on the deck alone. All the rest had gone below. Around all was dark. Both the boys were pacing up and down restlessly on opposite sides of the deck.

At length Bruce stopped. "Bart," said he, in a low voice, "is that you?"

"Yes," said Bart. "Look here. I've got something I want to tell you."

At this Bart came up to him in silence.

"I don't like this style of thing," said Bruce.

"Why, what can we do?"

"O, never mind. I've got a plan. Do you think we couldn't have been doing better all this day than staying here, moping our lives out?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean the very thing that I proposed this morning."

"What, to row to the ship?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"How can you row twenty miles?"

"Stuff and nonsense. She can't be so far. Captain Corbet's utterly mistaken."

"Why, she's below the horizon."

"I don't care. I judge from the looks of her. Do you believe you can see so plainly a ship that's twenty miles away? Why, man alive, if she had a flag up you could almost make it out. For my part, I feel sure that she isn't over five miles away at the very farthest. I haven't the slightest doubt about it. Why, Bart, you and I are both accustomed enough to look at ships out on the water, and you can see for yourself that it's simply impossible that this one can be so far away as twenty miles, or farther away than I say. All the morning I couldn't help feeling puzzled, and concluded that it might be

something in the atmosphere that magnified the ship, and made her seem so near,—like the mirage, you know; but, afterwards, I gave that up.”

“Well,” said Bart, after some thought, “I don’t know but what you’re about right, Bruce; but what are you going to do?”

“Well, we’ve got this night before us, and if the wind comes, why, of course we are all right. But suppose that the wind doesn’t come, and we find ourselves to-morrow morning as we did this morning, with that ship so near. Do you feel able to stand here all day, and watch, and wait, and then sit down to our last dinner? I don’t. Or suppose that we find ourselves gradually drifting away from her. No—I can’t stand it. I’ve made up my mind to row out to her. What do you say? Will you come with me?”

“I will,” said Bart, firmly. “I’ll go, even if it is twenty miles. I’d go forty, rather than live this day over again. But when do you propose to start?”

“I’ve been thinking it all over,” said Bruce. “My plan is this: We’ll get all ready to-night; that is, have the oars in the boat, and put in a couple of bottles of fresh water; besides, we can take with us about our share of the food that remains. Well, to-morrow morning, if the calm continues, the moment that we see the ship, we’ll start, and row for her. Why, if we had only done that this morning, by this time we’d have been on board of her, with a boat from the ship back here with provisions. Mind you, don’t think of twenty miles; it isn’t more than five at the very furthest—perhaps not over three or four.”

“All right. I’ll go. Do you intend to tell anybody?”

“No; not a soul. The rest of the fellows would insist on going; and it will be better for us two only to go; it will prevent confusion, and be the best for all concerned.”

“But how can we get away without their knowing it?”

“O, my idea is to push off from the schooner before any one is up, and then watch for the appearance of the ship by daylight. The moment we see

her we can pull for her.”

“That seems pretty good,” said Bart, thoughtfully; “but it is a puzzle to me how that ship can be below the horizon, and yet not be farther off than five miles. She certainly did not look farther away than that. For my part, I don’t see how she could be less than ten miles at the least, so as to be so completely hidden. I forget the rule for the disappearance of a ship below the horizon; but there is something in this one that I can’t understand. Yet, as you say, judging by the appearance of her masts, one might imagine her to be not more than three or four miles off. After all, it must be mirage.”

“O, no; mirage doesn’t last all day long, without the slightest change.”

“You don’t know. It may in this case.”

“Well, of course I don’t pretend to understand all the freaks of the atmosphere; but all that I’ve ever read about the mirage shows that it is incessantly shifting and changing, and never lasts over an hour or so, at the furthest. Besides, in our latitudes, these peculiar appearances only take place in the morning.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Bart. “At any rate, I shall be prepared for a row of at least ten miles.”

“All right. Make up your mind to that, and then you won’t be disappointed.”

“Shall you go to bed to-night, Bruce?”

“Of course.”

“But how can you wake?”

“O, I can wake whenever I like. I’ll wake you.”

“All right. About what time?”

“O, about an hour before daybreak; but come, let’s get things ready now.”

The boys then went about completing their preparations for their adventurous journey. These were but slight. They consisted in simply

putting on board the boat, which was floating astern, two bottles of fresh water and a little of the provision which had been put aside for the next day.

After this they both retired.

On the following morning, at about three o'clock? Bruce laid his hand on Bart's forehead. Bart awoke instantly. The two then went as softly as possible on deck. No one was there. All were below, sound asleep.

Silently, yet quickly, the two boys got into the boat, and then pushed off. There were two oars in the boat. Each took one, and then began to row. But, after a few strokes, Bruce took the oar from Bart, for the boat was too small for two oarsmen. So Bruce pulled very silently out into the darkness over the water, in the direction which they supposed would lead towards the strange ship. After rowing about a hundred yards Bruce stopped. Both boys now waited patiently till it should become light enough for them to see the ship.

V.

Daybreak.—Startling Discovery.—The Boat gone.—Where are Bruce and Bart?—Dismay.—The long Row.—The distant Ship.—Below the Horizon.—Deep in the Water.—The shattered Sails.—Waterlogged!—Boarding the Stranger.—Discoveries of a Kind which are at once exciting and pleasing.

WITH the break of day the boys were all on deck. Their first impulse was to take a look around. They saw the reddening eastern sky and the smooth water all around them, and their hearts sank within them as they perceived that the wearisome calm still continued. They noticed, however, that the ship was still visible, and this was some consolation. It seemed now a little nearer than the day before.

“Captain,” said Tom, “we’ve got nearer to her: don’t you think so?”

The captain made no reply. Tom looked up, and repeated his remark. As he looked up, he saw Captain Corbet standing astern with a puzzled expression, and looking down into the water and all around.

“What’s the matter?” asked Tom.

“The boat,” said Captain Corbet.

“What of her?”

“Some one’s been and stole her, or else she’s gone to the bottom, only the rope’s gone, too.”

“What! the boat!” cried Tom. “You don’t mean to say the boat’s gone!”

The other boys were startled at this, and hurried aft to look for themselves.

“I’m glad I wasn’t in her this time, at any rate,” said Tom, and then added in a melancholy voice, “but I suppose it wouldn’t make much difference

now.”

The boys stood in silence for some time, not quite knowing how to take this new incident. At length Phil looked all around.

“Where’s Bart?” he asked, “and Bruce?”

“They’re not up,” said Tom. “Don’t wake them. Let them sleep as long as they can.”

“Up? They’re not down, either,” said Phil. “Their berths are empty.”

The boys all stared at each other. A suspicion flashed across their minds.

“Sure and if they’re not up nor down, they must be in the boat, and there you have it,” said Pat, dryly. “And it’s meself,” he added, “that ’ud be proud to be with thim this day.”

“The boat? But what for?” asked Phil.

“They must have started off for the ship,” said Tom, who-now understood all.

At this they all looked with eager eyes over the water in the direction of the ship. All thought that they could see a shadowy spot, but it was too indistinct as yet to be resolved into anything. After a few minutes Phil went below, and returned with the glass, through which he looked long and attentively.

“It’s them,” said he at last, passing the glass to Arthur.

Arthur looked, and then Tom, and then Pat, and then Captain Corbet. It grew brighter and brighter every moment, and at length, as Corbet looked, he saw the boat plainly for an instant; but the next moment the glare of the rising sun drove his eyes away. The sun rose and ascended higher, and still they could see the boys rowing with quick strokes very far away, while beyond lay the strange ship.

It was still as low down as ever, “below the horizon,” as Captain Corbet said, but was very much larger and plainer. Every one of them wondered

how she could be in reality so far away as twenty miles. None of them spoke, however, but stood with varying feelings, staring in silence after their companions.

Of them all the most affected was Captain Corbet. At the first mention of the fact he had started, and after having assured himself of its truth with his own eyes, he exhibited every mark of the deepest agitation.

“Wal,” said he, as he stood with his head bowed upon his breast. “I never! Who’d a thought it! Why, its ravin madness. And them, too, thinkin of rowin to a ship that’s below the horizon. Twenty mile in that thar boat, if it’s an inch, and two mile an hour’s the most they can do. Why, it’s temptin fate. It’s flyin in the face of Providence. That’s what it is. That thar ship’s twenty mile away. The wind’ll come up before they get half way. They’ll never get there—never. And stealin off in this way, too! Why didn’t they get me to go with them? Why didn’t they ask my advice? And them, too, a trustin of their two perecious lives in that thar ferrail bark, that hadn’t ought ever to go more’n a mile at the furthest. And here am I, chained to this post, and can’t move, and them a rushin on to utter ruination. O, boys, dear boys,” he concluded, in a kind of wail, “for your sakes I want the wind to rise, but for their sakes I want it to contennew a calm.”

“O, captain, never fear,” said Arthur, cheerfully. “They’ll take care of themselves easy enough; and, in fact, the more I think of it, the better it seems.”

“I only wish I was in the boat,” said Tom, heartily.

“So do I,” said Phil.

“Sure and that same I said meself at the first,” said Pat.

Meanwhile Solomon had stood a little apart from the rest, looking after the boat, but manifesting very different emotions. His occupation being gone, he had come upon deck to see what the prospects might be, and had heard everything. Taking advantage of a moment when the glass was not in

requisition, he had given a look towards the receding boat, and had assured himself by actual inspection of the facts of the case. The moment that he had done this he drew a long breath, laid down the glass, and then stood looking after the boys with a gentle smile irradiating his ebony face. From time to time he would close his eyes, sigh gently, and his lips would move as though whispering to himself, while once or twice a half audible chuckle escaped him.

“Tell you what it is,” said he at length; “don’t you go on. Dem yer boys is goin to save der blessed selves and us too. It’s my pinion dey’ll bring us luck, fust rate, too, fust chop, tip-top, prime. Hooray! Dey’ll quaint dem yar seamen ob our difficulties, an dey’ll come back a flyin wid a big boat-load of pro-visium. O, you can’t drown dem blessed chilen. Dey’re boun to tak car ob demselves, and dey’ll work dar way ober de oceum foam, to sabe de libes ob all aboard, and’ll be back to-night to tea. Hooray! Mind, I tell you!”

The gayety and hopefulness of Solomon did not fail to be communicated to all the rest, until at length even Captain Corbet was willing to admit that it was just as well, after all, that they had gone, though he still professed to feel hurt that his advice had not been asked.

To the boys their situation seemed now in every way more endurable. They had at least something to hope for, and the adventure of their companions formed a perpetual subject for thought or conversation. Even the calm was now welcome, for as long as this continued it would be favorable to the boat. On the other hand, should the ‘wind arise, they could up sail and after them. They all thought that Captain Corbet’s estimate of a distance of twenty miles was extravagant; and even if the ship was “below the horizon,” they concluded that at the farthest it could not be more than eight or ten miles away. Allowing two miles an hour for the boat, they thought that Bruce and Bart might reach their destination by nine or ten o’clock in the morning, and thus have the greater part of the day still before them.

As the hours passed away, the boys thus beguiled the time by various speculations about the progress of their companions. The calm continued; and they were not sorry, for they saw in this the best chance for a successful issue to the enterprise. Phil made a sort of chart, with the schooner and the ship in proper position, and marked off ten intervals which he estimated at a mile each. For hour after hour they watched this, and amused themselves by indicating on it the progress of their friends. At length it was ten o'clock, and all the boys felt quite sure that the boat had reached the ship.

Meanwhile the two adventurous boys had been going on their expedition. At a hundred yards from the schooner they had stopped, as we have seen, and looked anxiously around in the direction where they supposed the stranger to lie. For some time they could see nothing; but at length, as it grew lighter, they detected her masts through the gloom, and were overjoyed at finding that she was nearer than on the previous day. They had made a mistake, however, as to the right direction, for the ship lay very much more to one side.

“We’ve drifted nearer together during the night,” said Bruce, “and I don’t believe she’s over three miles away.”

Saying this, he changed the boat’s course, and heading for the ship, pulled with all his might.

“I say, Bruce,” said Bart, “you’d better not pull so hard at first; you’ll tire yourself.”

“O, it’s only till we get further from the schooner. I want to get well out of the reach of hearing before the fellows see us. I’ll take it easy after a time.”

Saying this, he pulled on, watching the schooner, and succeeded in getting so far away, that by the time they came on deck he could only distinguish the moving figures. Then he slackened his efforts somewhat.

“There isn’t a bit of prospect of any wind,” said he. “I tell you what it is, my boy: I’d far rather be here this minute than aboard the Antelope.”

“So would I,” said Bart; “but can you imagine the state of mind that the fellows must be in?”

“O, they’ll be glad after the first excitement’s over.”

“I wonder if they saw us.”

“Of course.”

“They didn’t shout, or anything.”

“We were too far off to hear them.”

“No, we weren’t; but I suppose we were so far off that they thought it would do no good.”

For about half an hour Bruce pulled quite leisurely, for he wished to husband his strength as much as possible, and then Bart took his turn at the oars. Not much was said, partly because the exertion of rowing did not allow of any prolonged conversation, and partly because they were too much filled with their own thoughts, arising out of the suspense of the occasion.

At length, after rowing for another half hour, Bart handed the oars to Bruce, and took his seat in the stern.

The moment he did so he uttered a cry of surprise.

“What’s the matter?” asked Bruce.

“Why, how near we’re getting!” said Bart.

“Of course we are.”

“I haven’t looked since I took the oars, on purpose to see what our progress is. And now—why, really, Bruce, it seems as if we must be half way already.”

“Of course we are,” said Bruce, “and more too.”

“Why, she’s as low in the water as ever.”

“I know; there’s something queer about her.”

“She looks as though she’d been in a heavy gale.”

“She must have been.”

“I don’t see a soul on board.”

“I haven’t seen any one, either.”

“Perhaps no one is up yet. It’s early, you know.”

“I hope it’s that,” said Bruce.

Bart was silent for a few moments. At length he said,—

“I should like to see some signs of life there, I must say.”

“Well, we’ll know all about her by the time you’re through your next pull.”

Bruce now rowed, and Bart sat with his eyes fixed on the ship. She still lay as low in the water as ever, but they could see her bulwarks plainly, and her cabins. Her rigging seemed as disordered as ever, and it was a puzzle to Bart, why, in this calm weather, she should be so neglected. Various unpleasant thoughts arose in his mind, but he kept-them to himself. Thus the time passed, and Bruce rowed, and the boat drew steadily nearer. At length he gave the oars over to Bart, and took his seat in the stern.

By this time they were not more than a mile from the ship. She was certainly very low in the water. At a distance they had supposed that her sails were furled. They could now see that she had no sails at all. There was her jib, and that was all. There was no sign of life aboard, and the disorder in her rigging was more perceptible than ever.

“Bart,” said Bruce in a solemn tone, after he had gazed silently at the ship for full ten minutes.

“Well?”

“Do you know what I think about her?”

“What?”

“It’s my opinion that there’s not a soul on board of her.”

Bart was silent.

“She’s evidently been in a storm; her sails are gone; her rigging is every way. The crew have probably deserted her; and, yes, she is—there’s no doubt about it. I suspected it—I knew it.”

“She’s what?” asked Bart.

“Waterlogged!” said Bruce.

Bart turned his head and looked at her for a long time. He said not a word. At last he turned to Bruce.

“Well,” said he, “at any rate, we must board her. After coming so far, we can’t go back. Besides, we may find something.”

“Find something? Of course we shall,” said Bruce, confidently. “We’ll find lots of things. We’ll find barrels of pork, and beef, and bread, and other things besides, no doubt. When they left her, they would only take enough to last them till they got ashore. They must have left the greater part of their supplies and sea stores behind.”

“Of course,” said Bart; “so here goes.”

And with these words he pulled as vigorously as though he had not yet rowed a stroke.

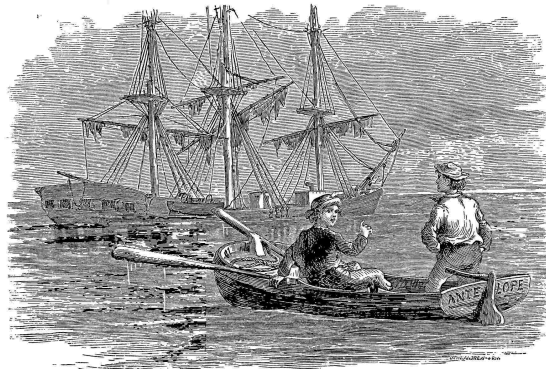
And now every minute they drew nearer and nearer. Bart rowed without turning his head, but Bruce sat with his eyes fixed upon her, occasionally telling Bart when he got out of his course.

As they drew nearer in this way, every doubt was removed, if there had been any doubts in the mind of either. The ship was evidently deserted. She was also as evidently waterlogged. Now they were able to account for what had puzzled them before; her lying so low in the water, and yet at the same time seeming so near. Her nearness was not apparent, but real; her lowness in the water actual, and not seeming. That she had been deserted by her

crew was more and more evident every moment, for as they drew nearer, they could see not a sign of life. Had there been any one on board, he would certainly have made himself visible.

At length Bruce bawled out, "Ship, ahoy!"

Bart stopped rowing and looked around. Both boys listened. They did not expect any answer, nor did any answer come. They waited for about a minute, and then Bart rowed on. In about two minutes they were alongside. The oars were thrown in, the boat secured, and the two boys stepped aboard.



THE WATERLOGGED SHIP. — Page 76.



There was a mixture of attraction and repulsion in the first sight of the ship, which affected the boys very peculiarly. She lay waterlogged. Her decks were on a level with the sea. But her bulwarks rose six feet high above the water, and the deck itself afforded a spacious area on which to walk. The deck was white with the washing of many waters, and dry in the warm sun, which had shone upon it for some days past. All the boats were gone except one, which hung at the starboard davits, and looked like the captain's gig. The cook's galley stood amidships, and astern there was a quarter-deck. The cabin doors were open wide. The fore-castle was also

open. The main hatchway was open, and the boys, looking in, could see the cargo. It consisted of enormous pine logs.

The sight of this cargo explained all. This was a timber ship, no doubt, from Quebec, which had encountered a storm in the gulf, and sprung aleak. On becoming waterlogged, she had been deserted and left to her fate; yet her cargo, which was of wood, prevented her from sinking, and the huge sticks of timber served to give her stiffness as well as buoyancy, and preserve her from breaking up. To Bart a timber ship was the most familiar thing in the world, for he had been brought up in a timber port; his father sailed timber ships, and the whole situation was one which he perfectly understood at the very first glance.

The boys walked about the decks. To their delight, they saw several water casks lashed behind the mainmast, and a row of barrels that looked as if they contained provisions, for they all bore the eloquent inscription:—

MESS PORK.

Going into the cook's galley, they saw the cooking-stove in good working order, and the inmost thought and spontaneous expression of each was,—“Won't Solomon rejoice when he sees this!” They then went aft.

They entered the cabin.

There was a passage-way about three feet wide. On each side there was a door which was open. Looking in, they saw on one side a room full of ropes, and sails, and oakum, while on the other was another room full of ship's stores.

Passing on, they reached the cabin itself. It was a room about twelve feet wide and sixteen feet long. A door at one end opened into another cabin aft. On the sides of both cabins were doors opening into state-rooms. Two of these were very well furnished, and in the after cabin there was a large and comfortable state-room, which both the boys decided to have been the

captain's. The furniture was all confused. The carpet was damp. It seemed as though the sea had been careering through these cabins and state-rooms. But the upper parts had been spared; and in the pantry where the boys at length found themselves, they saw, with a pleasure that cannot be described, the contents of the upper shelves as dry as when they were first put there.

At this they rejoiced more than at anything else.

VI.

Bruce and Bart on board the deserted Ship.—New Discoveries.—The Cook's Galley.—A sumptuous Repast.—Observations.—A Return baffled.—Back again.—The Antelope.—The Ripple in the Water.—Speculations.—The Sail to the Ship.—Puzzle about the lost Ones.—Nearer and nearer.—Unexpected and astounding Welcome!

THE state of mind and body in which Bruce and Bart found themselves was of such a kind that the discovery of a well-stocked pantry and store-room gave them more delight than they had known for a very long time. They themselves were ravenously hungry; for the appetite which had been quickened by their long fast had been sharpened by exercise, and they also could not forget that their friends on board the Antelope were depending upon this expedition as much as themselves. Under such circumstances they looked around upon the well stocked shelves, and as, one after another, they recognized well-known and favorite articles of food, tears of joy started to their eyes.

Tea, and coffee, and sugar, and butter, and potted meats, and hams, and pickles, and many other delicacies of a similar kind, showed that their predecessors had not been indifferent to the pleasures of the table. In taking leave they seemed to have been very modest in their requirements, since they had taken away but little. As they continued their researches, they found other articles which increased their delight. There were a barrel of apples, boxes of raisins, drums of figs, bags of nuts, bottles of raspberry vinegar and of lemon sirup, a demijohn full of lime juice, and a delicious Cheshire cheese. Leaving the pantry and going into another store-room, they saw numerous barrels, some of which contained beef, and others pork.

Opening another door, they looked in, and saw a chamber lined with tin and filled with pilot bread.

“I say, Bruce,” said Bart, “let’s postpone any further searches now, and get breakfast.”

“All right. What shall we have?”

“Well, I feel strongly inclined for some tea, broiled bacon, toasted biscuit, and Welsh rarebit.”

“Why don’t you add a few other things?” said Bruce, with a laugh. “How can we cook anything?”

“Why, in the cook’s galley.”

“But there isn’t any fuel.”

“Why, there’s a lot of coal in that front storeroom, and fagots of wood. Didn’t you see them?”

“I didn’t notice.”

“Well, I did, and I’m going to make a fire.”

“Have you any matches?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you make the fire, and I’ll set the table.”

“O, no; don’t set the table here. Let’s eat on the quarter-deck. It’s rather close in here.”

“Very well; I’ll gather the dishes and eatables.” Bart now went about his task. Going into the store-room, he found the fuel, and carrying a supply to the cook’s galley, he succeeded in a few minutes in producing a roaring fire. Then he filled the kettle, and before long the water began to boil.

By that time Bruce was ready with his part of the business. The teapot was brought forward, and the tea set to draw. Then a few slices of very superior ham were placed over the coals and broiled. While Bruce attended to this, Bart soaked some pilot biscuit in water till they were quite soft, after

which he fried them in butter on the stove. He then proceeded to try his hand at a Welsh rarebit. He cut up some thin slices of cheese, added butter, and then allowed it all to liquefy over the fire. Having accomplished this, the two adventurers conveyed their things to the quarter-deck, and sat down to breakfast.

Even had they been less hungry they would have enjoyed that breakfast. True, they had no milk in their tea, but they had long since grown accustomed, on board the Antelope, to dispense with that. The tea was of a very superior quality, the fried biscuit was most savory, the broiled ham was a great success, and the Welsh rarebit was pronounced delicious.

Already they had turned occasional glances over the water, and had seen the Antelope, lying apparently three or four miles away, in the same place where they had left her. Now, after they had satisfied their appetites, they began to look at her more closely, and to discuss the time of their return. They felt anxious to go back as soon as possible, but decided that they might as well postpone it until they were thoroughly rested.

It was evident to the boys that the ship which they had boarded had been deserted very hastily, and they thought that her company must have boarded some other ship. In this way only could they account for the numerous things which had been left behind. Among these was a very good spy-glass. Bruce had seen this while preparing breakfast, and had brought it on deck with the other things. As they now sat on the deck after breakfast, they amused themselves for some time with looking at the Antelope. They could see several figures on the deck, but could not distinguish one from another. They tried to tell by watching their movements who each one might be. A solitary figure, that stood motionless at the stern, they were certain was Captain Corbet, while another figure, which indulged in rather eccentric movements, seemed to be Solomon. The rest could not be guessed at.

They had already found out the name of the ship. They saw it in many places, on a row of buckets that hung in front of the cabin, on the captain's

gig, on the cook's galley; they saw it engraved on a brass plate on the cabin door, on the capstan, and on the spy-glass; and this name, which they thus saw in so many places, was,—

PETREL, LIVERPOOL.

In discussing her fate, they concluded that she had loaded with timber at Quebec, had encountered a severe gale in the gulf and sprung a leak, and that another ship had hove in sight, to which the captain and crew of the Petrel had fled in their boats, without taking anything off their ship. They must have deserted her under the impression that she was going down.

Thus they accounted for the present situation.

They decided to leave at eleven o'clock for the Antelope, and return with the schooner as soon as possible. Nearly an hour still remained, and they thought it would be a good idea to prepare the Petrel for the reception of visitors, so as to afford as cheerful an impression as possible. This could be effected by making the cabin more "shipshape." It seemed to have been entered by rolling seas, for the furniture was lying confusedly about, and there was some dampness in the air. The bedding also was all wet. They devoted themselves now to this. They opened the skylight, so as to secure ventilation, and the stern-ports. Then they brought all the bedding out, and spread it over the quarter-deck, where the hot sun and dry wind might do their work. Then they swept out the cabin, and arranged the furniture as neatly as possible. At the end of this a great change was produced, and the cabin of the Petrel assumed an appearance not only of comfort, but almost of comparative luxury.

At length eleven o'clock came, and they began to prepare for their return to the Antelope. These preparations consisted simply in filling a bag with pilot bread, and putting this on board the boat; to which they added a ham,

with some tea, sugar, and butter. They then embarked, and, pushing off, began to row.

But scarcely had they rowed a dozen strokes when they became sensible of a breeze. It was a gentle breeze, and it was blowing against them. Bart, who was rowing, at once stopped, and Bruce at the same moment uttered a cry which made him look round. It was a joyous sight that they saw—a sight which assured them that they would be spared the long effort of pulling back again, for there, away over the water, they saw the Antelope spreading her white wings to catch the gentle breeze. If that breeze continued, it would bring her up to them in an hour, and though light, it promised to be steady enough.

“I wonder if it’s going to last,” asked Bart thoughtfully.

“O, I think so.”

“Perhaps it may be as well not to pull any farther just yet.”

“Certainly not. This breeze’ll bring the Antelope here faster than we can row towards her, and we will not be gaining enough time to pay for our trouble.”

“But the wind might stop, and in that case it would be a pity to lose the time.”

“O, it can’t be of much consequence. If the wind does die away, we can start off. We can watch the Antelope all the time.”

“Well,” said Bart, “if you’re agreed, I am, I’m sure; and besides,” he added, “I should like to do a little more to make the Petrel more presentable, and in better order for receiving our visitors.”

“Capital,” said Bruce. “I didn’t think of that. Yes, that will be far better than wasting time in unnecessary rowing.”

“My idea,” said Bart, “is to set the table in the cabin, and cook a sumptuous breakfast to receive the starving Antelopers.”

“Hurrah!” cried Bruce, with enthusiasm; “that’s just the thing.”

“The cabin’s a little damp, but not so bad as it was, and by the time they get here, it’ll be dry enough. They won’t be particular. We’ll set the table regularly, bring out the best china, and cook some ham, trot out some of those potted meats, and have both tea and coffee.”

“And Welsh rarebit.”

“Well, yes, if we have time; but the fact is, I wasn’t altogether satisfied with my last effort, and we can try it again some other time.”

This new project was a most fascinating one to both the boys, who returned to the Petrel, and hauled up their boat on the other side, so that it could not be seen from the Antelope. This was merely to heighten the surprise which they intended to give. They then went to work to prepare the repast with which they wished to welcome their friends; and their only fear now was that the Antelope would reach them before they were ready. Fortunately, this was not the case. The breeze lasted, but it was light, and the progress of the Antelope, though steady, was slow, so that the two boys were able to complete their preparations.

Meanwhile, the time on board the Antelope had passed very slowly. The boys had felt full of hope about the result of the expedition of Bart and Bruce, but they were all ravenously hungry, and hope could not take the place of bread and butter. As the time passed they all felt more and more impatient, and after they had settled for themselves that the boat had reached the ship, they began to look for its return.

But from these thoughts they were all roused by a sudden cry of joy. It burst forth from Captain Corbet. Every one started and turned to see what had happened. They saw an exhilarating sight, which at once roused them from their gloom. There at the stern stood their venerable friend, a smile of exultation on his aged face, tears of joy in his mild eyes, one hand waving his hat in the air, and the other pointing over the water.

“It’s come! It’s come! Hooray!”

This was what he said, and as he said it the boys looked, and saw all over the water a gentle ripple. Then they knew it all. The long-wished-for wind had at last come, and they were freed from their long and irksome imprisonment. In an instant they all rushed to hoist the sails. As they hoisted them they felt the gentle air on their faces, and they saw the sails swelling at its touch. Soon all sail was hoisted, and Captain Corbet, with an exultant smile, stood once more at the helm, and the Antelope began to move through the waters.

“I knowed it,” said he, “I knowed it all along, and I said it, I did. That thar wind was bound to come. I felt it in my bones; yea, down to my butes. I saw how down in the mouth you all felt, and didn’t like to make you too san-goo-wine, but I knowed it, I did, I knowed it, all the same; and here, it has come at last, sure enough.”

The progress of the Antelope was slow, but it was progress, and that was enough. All the boys stood watching the ship, which they were gradually approaching. Solomon stood watching with the rest. Once he suggested the subject of dinner; but though before the wind came they had all been so hungry, they seemed now to have lost their appetites. The excitement of suspense was too strong, and none of them felt able to eat until they had reached the ship, and joined their friends again. And so they moved slowly over the water.

They soon perceived that the ship was not half so far away as they had supposed, and then they discovered, not long after, the truth of her situation. They could see this better than Bart and Bruce had been able to do, for they had been sitting low down in a boat, while these were standing on the deck, or the taffrail of the schooner, and thus could make out the true character of the stranger more easily.

As they came within sight, and learned this, they began to look eagerly about for signs of life. That the ship was waterlogged they could see, but whether there was any one aboard or not they could not see. What had become of the boat? Where were Bruce and Bart? They could see no signs of any boat whatever. But signs of life at length did appear in the shape of smoke from the cook's galley. Arthur, who was examining the ship through the glass, was the first to detect this, and it was not long before all the boys could see it with the naked eye. Smoke of itself would have indicated human life; but smoke from the cook's galley indicated something more, and was eloquently suggestive of those joys of the table to which they had too long been strangers. It served to assure them that their difficulties were approaching an end, and that smoke from the cook's galley was of itself enough to drive away the last vestige of despondency.

But, in the mean while, what had become of Bruce and Bart? That was the question which every one asked himself, without being able to answer. Where was the boat? They could not see it anywhere. Could the boys have gone on board the ship? They must have done so. The water had been too calm to admit of the probability of any evil happening to them. They must have boarded the ship.

But where were Bruce and Bart now?

No one could tell.

The Antelope drew steadily nearer, and all on board watched with indescribable eagerness the strange ship. Now they could see her disordered rigging, her yards bare of sails, her open hatchway. They could see bedding lying on the quarter-deck, and the open skylight. All these things indicated life on board; yet of that life there was no other sign. Where was the captain? Where were the crew? Where was the cook, who kept up such a roaring fire? It was all a puzzle. Above all, where were Bruce and Bart? Who could tell?

Nearer and nearer.

Every moment brought them closer, but disclosed no living being.

Solomon crept up slowly to Arthur, and gently touched his arm.

Arthur started, and turned.

“Hallo, Solomon! what’s the matter with you?”

“Mas’r Atta, I donno bout dis yer craft,” said Solomon, in a tremulous voice, with his eyes rolling wildly.

“Why, what’s the matter?” asked Arthur, in surprise.

“Donno; dar’s somethin drefful curous bout dis yer craft,—beats all eber I see,—floatin under water; full ub water, an not sinkin; fire a burnin like de old boy in de cook’s galley, an not a livin man aboard. I don’t like it. Tell you what, now, I don’t like it.”

“Pooh! nonsense,” said Arthur. “Don’t be absurd, Solomon. You’ll take your turn in that cook’s galley, perhaps, before sundown, and make acquaintance with the cook of the ship.”

Solomon shuddered and shook his head.

They were now within a stone’s throw of the ship.

Suddenly Captain Corbet, put both hands to his mouth, holding the tiller between his legs, and shouted, in a loud voice,—

“Ship, ahoy!”

Then came an answer.

At last!

And what an answer!

Out of the cabin bounded two well-known forms. They rushed out dancing, and capering, and flinging their hats in the air. They shouted, and yelled, and hurrahed. They ran up to the quarter-deck, and repeated these actions there. Those on board the Antelope were so astounded that they looked on in dumb bewilderment.

“Haul up alongside!” cried Bruce. “Fetch her round! I’m captain of this craft, and Bart is mate; I’m steward, and he’s cook; I’m boatswain, and he’s the crew. Hurrah! Haul up alongside, and heave us a line, my hearties.”

It was some time before Captain Corbet could recover sufficiently from his bewilderment to be capable of doing anything. Half mechanically he managed to bring the Antelope around, and managed it just in time to cause her to move gently up alongside. Wade, who had all along been perfectly stolid, then proceeded to secure the schooner to the ship in the most matter-of-fact way in the world, just as if he had been securing her to the wharf in Grand Pré. But long before he had taken the first turn in the rope, the boys had bounded on board the Petrel, and proceeded to overwhelm Bruce and Bart with countless questions.

VII.

All aboard.—A Welcome of the best Kind.—The Invitation.—The Banquet.—Amazement of the Visitors.—The Repast.—Solomon in his Glory.—The Manuscript found in a Bottle.—The Fate of the Petrel.—Captain Corbet has an Idea.—He begins to brood over it.—A Question of Salvage.—How to make one's Fortune.

GRADUALLY they became acquainted with the whole truth of the situation. They had thought thus far that the ship, though waterlogged, was still in the possession of her captain and crew. Boundless was their astonishment at learning that it was in the possession of Bruce and Bart alone, and the astonishment which they experienced at this amazing discovery for a time drove away all other thoughts. But Nature at length asserted her supremacy, and the pangs of hunger, for some time past kept in abeyance, now awaked in full force.

“Haven't you found anything to eat?” asked Arthur, in a low voice, tremulous with emotion.

Bruce did not reply, but looked at Bart. The other boys turned pale. For a moment the awful thought occurred that there was nothing; but the next instant there was wafted to their nostrils the savory odor of broiled ham, which overpowered that mournful thought, and drove it away effectually.

“Well, I don't know,” said Bart, “but that we may manage to scare up something. I suppose you're not very particular. Come in here, and I'll see what I can do for you.”

With these words he entered the cabin, and all the others followed.

One by one they entered the cabin, and one by one each, as he entered, stood rooted to the spot, and stared around in dumb amazement. Captain Corbet came last. He took one look, and then exclaimed, in a low, prolonged, and tremulous voice,—

“Good gerracious!”

And indeed there was every reason for surprise. They had come in expecting to enter the ruinous cabin of a half-wrecked ship, with perhaps a few mouldy ship’s biscuit to be divided among the hungry company. Instead of this they saw a table set out to its fullest extent, with a white cloth spread, and on that table a repast which was nothing less than sumptuous. Tea, coffee, biscuit hard and toasted, Welsh rarebit, broiled ham, potted shrimps, game pie, pickled oysters, lobster, potted salmon, tomatoes, potatoes hot, steaming, and mealy, apples, raisins, nuts, figs, raspberry vinegar, lemon sirup, and numerous other dainties which Bart and Bruce had discovered and drawn forth from the rich store that lay accumulated in the pantry of the Petrel. The lavish abundance of everything, as well as the astonishing variety, overwhelmed the hungry newcomers, and, except the exclamation of Captain Corbet, not one word was spoken. It was a moment when words were useless.

For an instant or so Bruce and Bart enjoyed the astonishment of their friends, and watched the effect with a triumphant smile. They had been purposely lavish in this first entertainment of theirs, and had succeeded in placing upon the table a specimen of every individual article for food or drink which the ship contained. They had worked hard in anticipation of this moment, and now that it had come, they found it a complete success.

“Come,” said Bruce, at last, “you can’t eat with your eyes, you know. Come, noble captain, do you preside at this festive board. Tom, sit on the captain’s right, Bart on his left. I’ll take the foot of the table, with Phil on my right. Ward, my bold mate, sit next to Bart; Pat and Phil, fall in.

Solomon, you go and install yourself in the cook's galley, where you'll find as much as you can eat for the rest of the day."

Upon this they all took their places, and began to eat with appetites such as those only can possess who have fasted for twenty-four hours on the sea. Bart and Bruce had already satisfied their own wants; so while their friends were eating they gave a full, complete, and exhaustive account of their own adventures, and their doings aboard of the Petrel.

The dinner passed off most delightfully, and a far longer time was spent at the table than the boys generally gave to their repast. Ample justice was done to the bountiful and varied supply that graced the board. After the first pangs of hunger were appeased, there were a thousand new questions to be asked and answered, in addition to those which they had already made. Captain Corbet alone said nothing. He sat and ate, and listened, and from time to time leaned back in his chair with a sigh of happiness, and surveyed the company with a smile that spoke of inward peace.

"My dear young ferriends," said the venerable captain, at length, taking advantage of an opening in the conversation to express his feelings, "it is with feelings of no ordinary deskription that I now address you. We have sailed over the briny and billowy main far and wide, and have encountered parls and dangers more'n any ordinary people, but never have we been in such a position, or reduced to such extremities, as in these last few days. And now look at us. Here we air. What kind of an abode is this? Is it a ship? Scacely. Is it a island? Not quite. It's enchanted gerround! Here we air, an we've been led by the kind hand of Providence to this secluded spot in the midst of the wide waste of waters. We come here in a state of starvation, with our minds in a kine of despair; we come here, and we found, as it were, a table spread for us in the wilderness. So far, so good; and I know, my dear young Christian ferriends, you all rejice with me, and feel as I do, full of gladness and gerratitood. But secondly, my dear ferriends," continued the captain, insensibly increasing his tone and manner to a

sermonizing intensity, “there air things about this here craft, that begin to occur to my mind, that go beyond the present fleetin moment, and interweave themselves with our footoor destiny. I ain’t a goin to say jest now what these things air, but I want, fust and foremost, to browse round, and inspect, and cogitate, and meditate, till I kin hit on some kind of a plan for workin out what I want. I’ll tell you when I get it all thought out, but for the present I am dumb.”

After this very mysterious conclusion, Captain Corbet rose and left the cabin. For the remainder of the day he kept by himself. He wandered all over the ship, and inspected every part most carefully. Then he retreated to the quarter-deck, and, seating himself there, lost himself in his own absorbing thoughts. What he was thinking about the boys did not know, nor did any of them inquire; for they were all far too much taken up with the novelty of the situation to pay any attention to him.

Meanwhile Solomon had followed the commands of Bruce, and had taken himself off to the cook’s galley. There, two hours afterwards, on leaving the cabin, the boys found him. He had that expression on his face, and had installed himself in that particular attitude, which might have belonged to one who had lived and labored here for years. He had eaten a huge repast, and was meditating over a roaring fire.

“Hurrah, Solomon,” said Bart, who was the first to visit him. “How goes it, my prince of darkies? This is a little ahead of the Antelope—isn’t it? Now you can begin to live again; and I tell you what, you’ll find enough stuff aft there to give us a first-rate bill of fare every day, and different every time.”

Solomon jumped up with a grin..

“Is de dinna oba, Mas’r Bart?” he asked.

“O, yes.”

“Well, den, I mus go aft an clar away de tings, and spect for myself, to see what we got roun us in dis yer craft. I been a tryin to cogitate an contrive for suppa, but I can’t manage it nohow till I know zacly what I got to put my ole hands un. I s’pose you’ll take all de tings aboard de Antelope right away?”

“Aboard the Antelope? Indeed, we don’t intend to do anything of the kind.”

“Why, what are you a goin to do?”

“Do? Why, we’ll stay here for ever so long. It’s a kind of desert island, you know—only it’s ten times better.”

The rest of the boys now came streaming forward, wandering all over the ship. Solomon went to the cabin, while Bart and Bruce proceeded to examine the mattresses. These were very much dryer than they had been, but still were so damp that several of them would require two or three days to become fit to sleep on. Others, however, were already nearly fit for use. Bart noticed that the wet ones came from the port side of the ship, and he remembered that the state-rooms on that side were much damper than those on the other. Water seemed to have penetrated there. He accounted for this on the supposition that this had been the leeward side in a gale, and, when the ship was filling, it had lain low down, and had received the washings of the waves. Fortunately, the storeroom and the pantry were on the other side, and thus their contents had escaped without injury. But the wet mattresses themselves were afterwards taken in hand by Solomon, who opened them, and dried their contents partly in front of the galley stove and partly in the open air. To assist in this process he kindled a roaring fire in the cabin, which served a double purpose, for it not only dried the mattresses but it also dried the cabin itself, and drove away the last vestige of dampness from the state-rooms on the port side.

While busy in one of these, Bart saw a bottle lying on the floor. It was corked. On taking it up, he held it to the light to see what liquid might be inside. To his surprise he saw no liquid, but some folded paper. With a loud cry he rushed forth upon deck, displaying his bottle, and calling upon all the boys to come.

In a few moments the eager boys had all collected around Bart, and even Captain Corbet was roused from his abstraction, and came to the centre of interest.

“Has any one a corkscrew?” asked Bart.

“There’s one in the pantry,” said Bruce.

“I’ll go and get it,” said Phil.

“Pooh!” said Tom; “break the bottle. You’ll never get at the paper if you don’t.”

“Sure enough,” said Bart; and the next instant he struck the bottle against an iron belaying-pin, and shivered it to atoms. The paper fell on the deck.

Bart snatched it up, and opened it. It was a piece of coarse paper, that looked as though it had been hastily torn from some book. On it some writing was hurriedly scrawled with a pencil. It was as follows:—

Ship Petrel, of Liverpool, from Quebec, with timeber. Fog for two weeks, and violent gales. Lost reckoning. Took an observation last in lat. 46° 5’ 22”, long. 59° 8’ 2”. Ship waterlogged, on beam-ends, and going to pieces. Taking to boats.

Henry Hall, Master.

There was another scrawl that seemed intended for a date, but the boys could not make it out. It looked like “Tuesday, March,” but it might have been anything else.

Such, then, was the writing. The captain had believed that the ship was actually going to pieces, and had hurried off evidently in the greatest

possible haste, and had probably thrown into the boats a few of the barest necessities of life.

But Bart suggested another theory. It was that the captain had put this writing in the bottle, and had got it all ready to throw over, when perhaps a sail had hove in sight, and thus the bottle had been left in the cabin.

Another theory was, that, in his hurry or panic, he had forgotten all about the bottle, which had floated about in the cabin, and been left in one of the state-rooms by the retreating waves.

It was evident to all that the captain, "Henry Hall," had lost his head. In his terror he had believed that the ship was "going to pieces;" whereas nothing of the sort was going on. She might possibly have been on her beam-ends, since he said so, but even here his fears might have exaggerated the danger. Captain Corbet thought that she had been struck over on her beam-ends, and held down by her sails, and, when these were torn away, she had eventually righted herself.

"That thar skipper," said he, sententiously, "was frikened out of his seven senses, and fancied the craft was brakin up. So he rushed to the boats, chucked in a bag of biscuit and a few bottles of water, and rowed away for his life."

Captain Corbet paused for a moment, and looked at the boys with a very singular expression on his face.

"And now," said he, "my dear young friends, do you know what you air and what you've ben an gone an done?"

"What?" asked Bruce, in some surprise at the captain's tone and manner.

"Wal, only this—you're salvors."

"Salvors!" repeated Bruce, to whom this word conveyed no meaning in particular.

"Salvors!" repeated Captain Corbet, impressively. "Yes, you've found this here ship on the broad bosom of the deep, deserted; you've took

possession—she’s yours.”

“Well, what of that?” said Bruce. “For that matter, she belongs to all of us.”

“She belongs to all them that bear a hand to bring her into port.”

“Into port!” cried Bart, in great surprise.

“Yes, into port,” said Captain Corbet. “That thar was the very fust idee that entered into my head as I sot foot on this here deck. This noble ship, this valable cargo,—is this to be given up, or surrendered to the tender mussies of the pitiless and ragin ocean? Not if I knows it. If we can manage to navigate this here craft into port, she’s ours! We can sell her. We can sell her cargo. It’s a val’able cargo. It’ll give each of us enough, if the proceeds air divided, to set us up for life. For my part, I’m an old man, with one foot in the grave; but I never forget that I am a feyther, and never did the parental heart beat more wildly than it did at the identical moment when this thought came like fire into my brain. That’s so.”

“But how in the world can we get her into port?” cried Bart, in astonishment and excitement.

“Wal,” said Captain Corbet, “that thar’s the very identical pint that I’ve been a cogitatin over the hull arternoon. I’ve gone about this here craft on all sides, an I’ve sot an surveyed her from a distance. I’ve shot my eyes an meditated her all over. But thar’s one grand and overpowerin obstacle in the way to a fair navigation, and that is, she hasn’t got a rag of a sail except that jib.”

“So what can we do?” said Bruce. “We can’t get her to move an inch without sails.”

“Couldn’t we rig up the sails of the Antelope?” asked Tom.

Captain Corbet shook his head mildly.

“Tain’t possible,” said he, “no how. Fust an foremost, the spread of canvas on the schewner ain’t over an above sufficient to fetch her along,

and on this here ship it wouldn't be a succumstance. Why, this here ship is a thousand tonner, an more too. Besides," added the venerable captain, with mild suggestiveness, "the canvas of the *Antelope* *might* be stronger."

This was a statement the truth of which was at once felt and acknowledged by all the boys.

"Wal," said Captain Corbet, "there ain't no use doin things up in a hurry—not a mite. We've got to deliberate, cogitate, turn it all over in our minds, and be precious keerful how we decide. There's a good deal at stake, and this here hour may be a goin to make or mar our fortins. I intend to brood over it this night, an p'aps by mornin I'll see my way. The only trouble is," he added, in a pensive tone, "that I don't quite know how I can ever see my way to navigatin this here vessel without sails."

"Perhaps we can drift to some place," suggested Phil.

Captain Corbet looked at Phil for a few moments with mild astonishment.

"Have you ever tried driftin, young sir?" he asked, at length.

"No," said Phil, "except with you, in the *Antelope*."

"Yea, and in the Bay of Fundy. Now, if this was only the Bay of Fundy, I'd feel at home. In that thar bay I'd ventoor to cal'late the exact point to which this here ship would drift. But this ain't the Bay of Fundy, and, what's more, I don't understand the currents of these here waters,—more's the pity, bein as I'm a pilgerrim an a stranger. As to driftin, why, we'll drift, course, as long as we're aboard; but where we may drift to it would take a man with a head as long as a horse to tell. Why, we might drift to Portygal, and that, I think, wouldn't quite meet the voos of any of us. I've knowed, or leastways I've heerd tell of ships that's gone all the way over to Portygal, partly driftin, partly by the wind a blowin of 'em. But this here ship I want to indooce to go to some home port,—and how to do that is the puzzle that now occoopies this bewildered brain."

With these words the captain gently passed away from the group of boys, leaving them to think over and to talk over this new and exciting project. It was in conversation about this and about the message in the bottle, that they occupied themselves till bedtime.

That night they concluded to sleep in their old quarters on board the Antelope, as the beds and bedding in the cabin of the Petrel were not dry enough to satisfy the mind of Captain Corbet.

VIII.

Solomon in his Glory.—The Breakfast a splendid Success.—Out of Starvation and into the Land of Plenty.—Removal of Lodgings.—The Question of Salvage.—An important Debate.—To go or not to go.—Dropping Anchor.—The final Departure.—Corbet bids a fond Farewell.—Alone in the Water-logged Ship.

IT was late on the following morning when they awoke. The effect of fatigue and excitement, together with perfect peace of mind, all conspired to make their sleep sound and refreshing. Solomon alone was up early; but it was nine o'clock before they sat down to the sumptuous breakfast which he had prepared in the cabin of the Petrel.

Solomon had found himself in command of a very well appointed larder, and he showed no inclination to spare it. He seemed to be endeavoring to make amends for his enforced idleness of the past few days by extraordinary activity and fruitfulness of invention in the culinary department. There was no lack of anything which the ship could supply; nay? there was even more than any of the boys had expected, for, to the amazement of all, they saw on the table before them several dishes of hot rolls; for Solomon had discovered among the ship's stores some barrels of flour, and had at once made a raid upon these. He laid before them coffee, tea, hot rolls, delicious fish-balls, broiled ham, stewed tomatoes, baked potatoes, with a variety of potted meats, prepared in manifold ways by his skilful hand.

The breakfast was a splendid success. It made all of them more delighted than ever with their situation. In fact, about that situation there was now an air of luxury; and the first determination of all of them was to move, bag

and baggage, on board the Petrel, and live there. Solomon assured them that before the next evening all the bedding would be so dry that the most delicate invalid might sleep upon any one of the mattresses without fear. The boys, therefore, made their decision at once. They determined to take up their lodgings on board the Petrel, and proceeded to select state-rooms. As there was some difference in these apartments, they decided that the fairest way would be to draw lots. Captain Corbet positively refused to leave the Antelope, and so did Wade; so the boys had it all to themselves. Pat and Phil drew the best room (the captain's); Bart and Tom drew the next best, which was apparently the mate's; while Bruce and Arthur had the choice of any one out of the four remaining ones. All, however, were sufficiently comfortable to satisfy the most exacting, and none of the party had any cause to find fault with the result. Then followed the removal of their simple baggage, after which the boys began to "fix up" their respective state-rooms with as much care and labor as though they proposed spending the rest of the summer on board.

These preparations did not take up much time; and before long they were all out on deck inspecting the bedding, and examining how far the various mattresses were prepared for being restored to their places. But it was decided to leave all these for the day, until Solomon should be ready to make the beds.

It was a beautiful day. The sky was without a cloud, blue and glorious. The sun shone down warmly and brilliantly. There was a gentle breeze, which tossed up the water into wavelets without making much motion, a breeze which was sufficient for the tranquil movement of some pleasure yacht, and not strong enough to excite any fear. There was a freshness in the atmosphere which was most exhilarating. The air was clear and transparent. Wide around lay the waste of waters, upon which not a single sail was visible.

Solomon cleared away the table, and then relapsed into the galley. The boys gathered into a little group upon the quarter-deck. To them thus assembled appeared the form of the venerable Corbet, a smile on his lips, a glance of benignity in his eyes.

“It’s all about this here salvage,” he began, somewhat abruptly. “You see, boys, I’ve ben a thinkin an a dreamin, asleep an awake, all night long, an my pinion is more an more that we hadn’t ort, none of us, to lose this present blessed chance, if we can possibly make anythin out of it. I’ve ben a cal’latin the valoo of this here ship an cargo. Now, this here ship must have cost at least fifteen thousand pounds. Of course she ain’t wuth that much now, an I can’t tell what she is wuth till I know what damage she’s received. At any rate, she’s wuth a good deal. As for her cargo, why, that’s jest as good as the day it was put inside of her. Timber ain’t like grain or cotton; it don’t spile. Here, then, we have a couple of thousand tons or so of fust-rate white pine timber, wuth lots of money, and we have this ship, wuth thousands of pounds. Why, boys, at the smallest cal’lation, the proceeds of the sale of this here ship and cargo would amount to over a thousand pounds apiece for every one of us, includin Solomon.

“’Tain’t myself I’m a thinkin on,” resumed the captain, after a pause, in a tone of mild melancholy, and with a pensive sigh; “’tain’t myself at all. I’m old, sere, an yaller. I don’t want money; I got enough for all my needs and pupposes. But it’s the babby, dear boys, the babby. That thar infant is the true cause of my present wanderin life. He drives me to the ocean wave when I might be toastin my shins in front of my own stove. I want to airn somethin to leave to him when I’m dead an gone. I got the house an the farm; but I want somethin more for the infant. All my cares are for him. I don’t want to leave him to the cold world, to sturruggle an to sturrive. I want to give him a eddication, to make a man of him an a scholyer, a joy to his parient, and an honor to his country.

“Wal, now’s the chance. Here we have it thrown into our very hands. We’ve got it, an all we’ve got to do is to make use of it. Here’s this here ship an cargo. If we can only get her into some port, it’ll be wuth over a thousand pounds apiece to every one of us, Solomon included. Each one of you boys’ll have enough, dear knows, to keep you in pocket-money all your born days, or to buy you a fine schewner all to yourself. Solomon’ll have enough to raise him far above the humble attitood of a ship’s cook; an I will have enough to raise the babby above want, an rair him to be a gentleman an a scholyer.”

Partly from the idea of getting plenty of pocket-money, partly to help old Solomon, partly to assist the respected Corbet in acquiring the means of giving an “eddication” to the “babby,” but more than all because they were moved by his earnestness, the boys universally chimed in with his wishes, and urged him most enthusiastically to do all that he could to save the ship. Captain Corbet listened with his usual mildness, and then suggested that perhaps there might be some sails stowed away on board; upon which he at once went off to search for himself.

His search, however, was not successful. One sail was found, but it was quite inadequate to the needs of the ship. It really seemed to be, as the captain asserted, that the Petrel had encountered violent gales, in which her sails had been lost, and all her spare ones made use of only to be lost in turn. Certain it was that, though of other things there was no lack, of sails there was a total want; and the discovery of this reduced Captain Corbet once more to his former meditative mood.

While Captain Corbet thus meditated, the boys talked over the situation. If sails were wanted, it seemed to them that the best thing that could be done would be for some one to go and get them. There was wind enough. The Magdalen Islands were not far away, and no doubt a sufficient supply could be obtained there. Some one might remain on board the Petrel. The question then arose, Who should go and who should stay? As to that there

was no doubt. Every one of the boys determined to stick to the Petrel at all hazards, and thus Captain Corbet himself could go in the Antelope.

It was with words to this effect that Bart broke in upon the musings of Captain Corbet.

The captain listened to his remarks, and, though he was evidently struck by them, still there arose in his mind certain scruples, which under the circumstances were very natural.

“O, no! no, no!” said he; “raily, now, you mustn’t try to persuade me.”

“Why not?”

“O, it would never do!”

“Do? Yes, it would.”

“O, I couldn’t bring myself to leave youns! Who could tell what might happen!”

“Nonsense! Are we babies? Can’t we take care of ourselves? Of course we can! We’ve been in far worse situations than this. Think of what we’ve all gone through at different times! Think in particular of Tom and Phil, what they’ve gone through! Are we the fellows that could meet with any harm if you were to leave us?”

“Yes, you air; it’s jest that,” said Captain Corbet. “You’ve all got a natral-born, innate talent for gettin into difficulties. You don’t caitch me lettin you go out of my sight.”

“Nonsense!” said Bart. “See here, now, captain. There isn’t and there can’t be the slightest danger. It’s all safe. We’ll be as safe here as if we were on an island. This ship? can never sink. Why, I know all about these timber ships. My father owned one that got waterlogged just like this, in the middle of winter, in the Atlantic, and in the course of several tremendous gales she was blown over, to Europe. Mind you, she couldn’t sink. She got into Liverpool, and was broken up there, and her cargo was sold for the benefit of the underwriters. Captain Beyea, who commanded her, told me all about

it. Of course at this season of the year we're all right, for there's no likelihood of any storms; and besides, you'll only be gone a few days."

Captain Corbet did not answer for some time.

"O, boys," he said, at length, in a hesitating way, "if you only could! If I only dar'd!"

"If we only could?" said Bruce. "Why, captain, you don't seem to know us! You think that we're a parcel of helpless children."

"I only wish," said Tom, "that I may never have anything worse to do than to stay in a place like this—a floating palace, where we feed on the fat of the land. When I think of Ilee Haute, I consider this a sort of Paradise."

"I think I have known worse places," said Phil. "I could tell you of a burning forest, in comparison with which every other situation isn't worth being mentioned. Why, boys, this is going to be a sort of picnic—a pleasure party."

"Captain," said Arthur, "we are all settled here now. Each of us has his state-room. We've got plenty of provisions. We've made up our minds to spend a couple of weeks here at least. So you may as well knock under. While we're aboard, it will be much better for you to go off, and try to get some sails, than to wander up and down, moping, day after day, with the Antelope alongside doing nothing."

"Sure, an it's meself," said Pat, "that would be willing to sail off in the Antelope single-handed, if Captain Corbet is afraid, only I'll want one man to give a hand in navigatin, so I will."

"O, two could easily sail the Antelope," said Bruce.

"And what shall Solomon do?" asked Arthur.

"Do?" said Bart. "Why, he'll stay with us. What could we do without Solomon? We need him here more than anywhere else. Without him our life here would become flat and insipid. I could do the cooking once; but as a

general thing, I should beg to be excused. Without Solomon we should not be able to eat.”

“Yes, yes,” said Captain Corbet, meditatively. “Thar’s no trouble about me an Wade navigatin the Antelope. We don’t want Solomon. He’ll be best here with youns. If I could only leave you—”

“But that’s already settled,” said Bart, decisively. “You are going to leave us.”

“Wal,” said Captain Corbet, “here we air, some-whar nigh onto fifty mile north of the Magdalen Islands. I steered doo north; an I don’t think we’ve made much of a muve since the calm began. Now, my idee is, that if we were to drop anchor here, this here craft would stay till I come back, an I know I could find her easy.”

“Drop anchor? Of course,” said Bart. “I didn’t think of that. In fact, this was my only trouble—the possibility of drifting from this place. But if we were to drop anchor, why, of course it stands to reason that we shouldn’t move from this place; and so, of course, you could find us again, as you say, without any difficulty.”

“Her anchors air all right,” said Captain Corbet. “I’ve seen em. There’s sixty fathom of chain if there’s an inch.”

“Well, come now. We’d better drop anchor at once,” said Bart.

“You tempt me, boys,” said Captain Corbet, with evident emotion. “You tempt me awful. I feel as though I hadn’t ought to go; but you’ve got a kind of a sort of a way of puttin things that makes it seem all so safe, an pleasant, an easy like that I’ve half a mind to resk it, an go off at all hazards. For there’s so much at stake! My babby! He pulls even now at my paternal heart-strings! His voice, even now, is a soundin in my aged ear! ‘Father,’ he seems to say, ‘go off, an hurry up with them thar sails.’ An then,” continued the captain, after a pause, everything seems favorable. The breeze is fair; the sea is calm; the sky is blue; an I’ll only be gone a couple of days at the

farthest. 'Tain't likely there'll be another calm. The wind is fair for the Magdalen Islands. There's provisions enough aboard here for months: An, as you say, there raily ain't any danger.

“You're quite right, Bart. This here ship can never sink. Her timber cargo'll keep her afloat till dumesday, an, what's more, it'll hold her together. An I've so much at stake! The babby! His fortune may now be made. It needs only one bold stroke, an all is done. Then we have the ship for our own, an the cargo, an we'll sell em both, an divide the proceeds. It'll be more'n a thousand pounds apiece, an the babby'll be independent. He can receive a college eddication; he can grow up to be a gentleman an a scholyer; an he'll live to bless the memory of the aged parient who now doos violence to his own conscience for the sake of the footor interests of his offspring. Yes, yes, it must be done. An, boys, I rayther guess, on the whole, that p'aps I'd best go, as you say.”

The decision of the captain thus announced was received with acclamation by the boys, and these marks of approval served to drive away the last vestige of hesitation from Captain Corbet's mind.

“Wal,” said he, “if we're goin to do it, we'd best do it as soon as possible. So, fust an foremost, we'd best let go the anchor.”

Calling Wade, the captain then went forward, followed by all the boys.

The anchor was let go.

Rattle, rattle, rattle went chain and windlass, and at length the anchor stopped.

“That'll hold, I guess,” said the captain, “Now you're hard an fast. Now I'll know where to find you. You're no longer aboard a ship. You're on a fixed and immovable spot,—an island of the sea,—an here you'll stay patient and quiet till I come back.”

These remarks the boys heard with the utmost placidity, and accepted them as absolute fact.. They had flung themselves headlong into this

somewhat dangerous project, and were now more eager than ever for its successful completion.

After letting go the anchor, the next thing was to prepare the Antelope for her trip.

“We’re out of provisions, boys, over there,” said the captain, “as you may, perhaps, be aware, an we’ll have to make a re-qui-sition on you. We don’t want much; none o’ yer potted meats an chicken-fixins; none o’ yer luxoories an sweetmeats. All we want is a modest supply of good honest biscuit, with a little pork, a ham or two, an a pinch of sugar, an a drawin o’ tea. Wade an me, we don’t go in for scientific cookery; we only want somethin to chaw at odd times.”

They now proceeded to transfer to the Antelope a sufficient supply of food. All the boys lent a hand. A dozen hams, a barrel of pork, a barrel of beef, and six barrels of ship bread were put on board the schooner, in spite of the remonstrances of the captain, who assured them that they only wanted a tenth part of all these stores. But the boys would not be balked in their hospitable intentions.

At length the stores were all on board the Antelope, and nothing more remained to be done. The last moment had come. Captain Corbet was deeply affected, and seemed inclined to change his mind, after all, and stay. But the boys were eager in urging him off. So the good captain allowed himself to be persuaded against his better reason, and he and Wade got on board the Antelope, and the lines were cast off.

The sails of the schooner were hoisted, and the breeze filled them, moving the schooner slowly away.

Captain Corbet stood at the stern of the Antelope, holding the tiller. His face was turned towards the boys, who stood in a group on the quarter-deck of the Petrel. He seemed melancholy and miserable.

“Boys,” said he, in a tremulous voice, “dear boys, take care of yourselves.”

“All right,” cried Bart, cheerily.

The Antelope moved farther off.

Captain Corbet stood looking at the ship, and his face had an expression of despair. At times he called out to them; but the Antelope moved farther and farther off every minute, and at length his voice could no longer be heard.

It was evening when the Antelope left. In about an hour she was lost to view.

The boys were alone on the ship.

IX.

Corbet at the Helm.—Visions by Night.—The Vis-ion of sudden Wealth.—Over the Waters.—The Ocean Isles.—A startling and unwelcome Sight.—Landing of Corbet.—Corbet among the Moun-seers.—Unpleasant Intelligence.—An unwelcome Visitor.—A sharp Inquisition.—Corbet in a Corner.—Answers of Guile and Simplicity.—Perplexity of Cross examiner.

THUS the Antelope passed away from the eyes of the boys, and vanished into the shades of night. The breeze was light, and Corbet stood at the helm, shaping his course for the Magdalen Islands. The first feeling of uneasiness which he had experienced on leaving ‘the boys in so very peculiar, perhaps dangerous, a situation, had passed away with the boys themselves, and his thoughts now turned on other things. He was virtually alone. Wade indeed, was on board, but the captain had sent him below to sleep, so that he might be able to relieve him and take his turn at midnight.

Thus alone at the helm, Captain Corbet looked out over the silent sea, and up into the starry sky, and lost himself in peaceful meditations. But his thoughts were not concerned with sea or sky. Other and dearer subjects gave them occupation. It was his “babby” that occupied his mind; that babby for whose sake he had deserted the boys, and left them alone in mid ocean. He was going to make a fortune for his son. He was going to take measures for securing the wrecked ship, so as to bring her into some port, sell her, and divide the proceeds.

Night, and solitude, and silence are ever the best promoters of meditation, and Captain Corbet’s fancy was stimulated and quickened by his present surroundings. In thought he went all over the Petrel. He

examined her hull; he considered her cargo; he made light of her injuries— He concluded that a very small sum might make her once more seaworthy, and he thought that fifteen thousand pounds might be easily obtained for her. Then as to her cargo; that he knew must be perfectly free from injury. He tried to estimate the number of tons; then he multiplied these by the price per ton, so as to get at the value of the entire cargo. Then he added this to the value of the ship, and allowed his mind to play freely around the aggregate. It was a sum of dazzling proportions—a sum far greater than he had been able to make after the hard toil and persevering efforts of many laborious years! And all this he was now about to achieve by one stroke. It was to be the work of a few days. It was to be for the good of the “babby.”

Here another theme attracted the thoughts of the good captain,—the fondest of all themes,—his infant son. That son would now have something that would approximate to wealth. All his future would take tone and flavor from this adventure. The father’s best feelings were roused, and in fancy he traced the future of his beloved infant. He saw him pass from long clothes into short clothes, from frocks into jackets, and from jackets into coats. He followed him in thought from his mother’s arms to his own legs; from his home to the school; from the school to the college. He watched him consume the midnight oil for years, until he at length reached the brilliant end of his educational goal. Then he portrayed before his mind the form of his son in the future,—now at the bar pleading, or on the bench judging; now at the bedside of the sick; now in the pulpit preaching. He listened to the sermon of the imaginary preacher, and found himself moved to tears.

“Dear, dear!” he murmured to himself; “I’d no idee the little feller’d be so eliquint. It doos beat all, raily.”

Captain Corbet was really like one who had taken intoxicating liquor, or opium; and, in fact, he was intoxicated, but the stimulus was no drink or drug; it was merely his fancy, which had become heated by the extravagant dream of sudden wealth. Gold produces its own fevers and deliriums; and

the good captain had been seized by one of these. Yet, after all, let it be remembered that his avarice was not for himself, but for his child. And as the lone navigator stood at his post under the midnight sky, in solitude and darkness, heaping up those bright fancies, out of which he was rearing so stupendous a castle in the air, he was building, all the while, not for himself, but for another.

Had he left the boys under any other circumstances,—that is, supposing that he had been capable of so leaving them,—there is no doubt that he would have been a prey to the most harassing anxiety on their account, and would have passed a wakeful night, full of mental distress. But now these new thoughts so occupied him that there was no place for anxiety, and he went on towards the accomplishment of his purpose as resolutely as though he had left them all in the safest and pleasantest place in the world.

Yet the situation in which they were left was one which might have created anxiety in the breast of even a more unfeeling man than Captain Corbet—on board a wrecked ship, that lay there in mid sea, with no means of saving themselves in the event of disaster. It was calm now, but how long would the calm continue? This breeze, that was wafting him along so gently and pleasantly, might stiffen, and strengthen, and intensify itself into a gale; and how would the gale act upon a ship that was virtually under water? Where could the boys betake themselves for refuge? How could they avoid the sweep of the surges that a rising storm would pour over her decks? Where could they find security from the downfall of the masts, which, in the writhing and twisting ship, must inevitably fall. A storm might change their foothold into a waste of boiling foam, and make the masts above as dangerous as the sea below. Even a moderate wind and a very ordinary rising of the sea might make their situation one of peril. Of this the boys, in their inexperience, had taken no thought; but this was the very thing that Captain Corbet ought to have thought of, and this was the thing that he was destined to think of afterwards with anguish of soul. But, for the present,

not a thought of this sort came to him. His mind was altogether given up to the sway of those exciting and alluring fancies which beckoned him away to imaginary wealth.

Captain Corbet had arranged to call Wade at midnight; but so excited was he by his dreams and speculations that he took no note of time, and was at length startled by the coming of the dawn. Then he hurried away, sent Wade to the helm, and flung himself into his berth.

After a long and profound sleep, which was the natural consequence of the excitement of the previous night, he awaked. To his surprise he found that it was about eleven o'clock.

He cast a hasty look around.

His first feeling was one of satisfaction. There, immediately in front of him, were the Magdalen Islands. His course had been sufficiently accurate to bring him to his destination. He was near enough now to cast anchor, and Wade was already moving forward with that intent.

But in that first look that he had given he noticed another thing, for which he was not prepared, and which detracted somewhat from the satisfaction that had been caused by the sight of the islands.

He saw a schooner at anchor.

The beautiful outline, the slender, tapering masts, the white spars, and the immaculate neatness that characterized this schooner, all told him plainly what she was, and he needed no closer inspection to feel sure that it was the Fawn.

Now, the sight of the Fawn disturbed the mind of the venerable captain.

He dreaded a meeting with her skipper, Captain Tobias Ferguson.

The Petrel was a prize for those who might be her salvors. To that fortunate situation he did not wish to admit any others. He wished merely to procure sails, and then navigate her somehow with the help that he already

had. He knew well, and he dreaded, the keen inquisitiveness and the active, restless energy of Captain Tobias Ferguson.

He did not want to meet with him at all. In fact, the very last person in all the world that he would have chosen to meet with at this particular time was this very man.

So great was his dread of a meeting, which might ruin all his plans, that his first impulse was to fly. He cast a hasty look all around. Upon the beach he saw the boat of the Fawn. Evidently the skipper was ashore. Upon this discovery he at once acted, and determined to move farther away. Hastily checking Wade, who was in the act of dropping the anchor, Captain Corbet wore round, and continued on his former course for a mile or so. Then, rounding the extremity of the island, he kept on his way along the shore, anxiously considering what was best to be done.

There were other islands in the group, but this was the one which he wished to visit, for here only could he hope to find anything like sails. He had come here for this purpose, and to go away without accomplishing it was not to be thought of. It now seemed to him that the best thing for him to do, under the circumstances, would be to land here, and pursue his investigations in a quiet way about the island, managing so as to avoid all contact with Captain Ferguson. He therefore dropped anchor here, and, taking Wade with him, he went ashore.

Once on shore, he went about his search with the utmost diligence, going from house to house, and making inquiries about sails. But from the first his task was a roost discouraging one. Every one assured him that there were no spare sails on the island; all the schooners were away, and whatever stock any one had he generally kept in his schooner, and took it with him. This was the information that he got from every one to whom he applied.

For hour after hour Captain Corbet kept up his fruitless search, dodging about cautiously, so as to avoid being seen by Captain Ferguson, in case he

might be ashore, and keeping a wary lookout. At length he had visited every house on the island of any consequence. The only thing that they could suggest was for him to go to Miramichi, where he would be likely to obtain what he wanted.

Captain Corbet, in deep dejection, now retraced his steps to the boat. He thought for a time of applying to Ferguson. But a moment's reflection made him give up that idea. He knew that Ferguson would be full of curiosity; that he would ask him all about the boys; and he feared that if he got the slightest hint of the facts of the case, he might start off instantly for the wreck, and thereby forestall him. It does not follow that Ferguson would really have done this; but this was Captain Corbet's belief, and it influenced him, of course, precisely as if the belief had been well founded.

Having thus dismissed the idea of appealing to Ferguson, it remained for him to decide what next to do. He did not think of going back. Better to take Ferguson into his confidence at once. He still clung to his first hope and his first plan, and, since Miramichi was the nearest place where he could rely upon finding sails, he began to think about going there. True, this would take up two or three days more, and the boys would be left to themselves all that time; but, as he had already accustomed himself to think of them in their present position as quite safe, he was able to entertain the thought of leaving them this way still, longer. He had committed himself too deeply to his plan, he had gone too far towards its execution, and he had built too largely upon its successful accomplishment, to be willing to give it up just yet.

And so by the time he reached the boat he had about made up his mind to start off for Miramichi at once. With this resolve he went back to the schooner.

The moment that he stepped on deck he was astonished at detecting in the atmosphere the smell of cigar smoke; and while he was yet standing, with open mouth and expanded nostrils, inhaling the unwelcome odor, he

was still more unpleasantly surprised at seeing a figure emerge from the cabin, in whom at one glance he recognized the well-known and particularly dreaded lineaments of Captain Tobias Ferguson.

His unwelcome visitor held out his hand, and wrung that of Captain Corbet with affectionate cordiality.

“Didn’t expect to see you back again in these parts so soon. You must have made a fine run of it, too. How far did you go? Not to the Bay of Islands—hey? Why, there’s been a reg’lar old-fashioned calm about here, and this here wind ain’t much to speak of. And how are my young friends, the ragamuffins?”

“Wal—pooty tol’able,” said Captain Corbet, in a faint voice.

“Hm—glad to hear it. And where was it, did you say, that you went to?”

“O—a—kine o’—genral sort o’ kerrews, like.”

“Hm—and so you left them in the Bay of Islands?”

“Wal—n—n—no—, ’twan’t exactly thereabouts.”

“O—not Anticosti?”

“Wal—n—no,” said Captain Corbet, with an increasing sense of discomfort.

“Ah, St. Pierre?”

“N—n—n—not exactly.”

“St. Paul’s, then?”

“Wal—’twan’t St. Paul’s, nuther.”

“O, a kind o’ general cruise, I see; young adventurers, and all that. But I’m glad you took my advice, and didn’t go to Anticosti. A bad place. And how do they like Newfoundland?”

“Wal—they—didn’t—quite git to Newfoundland, nuther,” said Captain Corbet, in a low, faint, hesitating, confused way.

“No, of course not,” said Ferguson, briskly. “Too far away; I said so. You concluded to go to Gaspé, of course.”

“Wal—n—n—n—no, we didn’t quite get—off—in that thar—de—rection,” replied Captain Corbet, who was utterly at a loss how to fight off this eager and inquisitive questioner. Had the good captain been capable of telling a lie, his task would have been easier; but he was a truthful man, and in this case he hardly knew what to do.

“Well, come now,” said Ferguson, “where did you go?”

Captain Corbet started at this point blank question, and was perfectly dumb.

Ferguson looked at him with keen scrutiny, and then said,—

“You don’t answer. What’s the matter? Has anything happened? Where are the boys?”

Again the unfortunate Corbet was unable to answer.

“It’s a plain question enough,” said Ferguson, “and you’ve *got* to answer it somehow—for I’m going down Nova Scotia way, and may see some of their parents. So, own up, old man. What have you done with the boys?”

At this moment a happy thought occurred to the bewildered Corbet. It came like a ray of light in deep darkness.

“Wal,” said he, “you see, captin’—you know—them thar youngsters, you know—they—they’ve—got up a kine o’ secret society—you know—they told you—themselves—you know—and they’re all together—you know—and it’s a matter—of importance—to them—and to me—to—to—to—to keep the secret, you know. O, I do assure you it’s all right—they’re all safe an sound—an enjoyin life; good quarters, plenty to eat an drink, an ole Solomon a doin of the cookin—but it’s a great secret, you know—and so—you see—captin’—the fact is—I’d a *leetle* rayther not let on where they air jest now.”

Captain Corbet spoke this in a confused way, and in a mild, deprecatory manner. Ferguson listened attentively to his words, and then stood looking at him for some time with an air of dissatisfaction.

“Well—old man,” said he, “I do remember some nonsense of theirs about a secret society; but you haven’t answered my question; you evade it; and what their secret society has to do with their present situation I don’t quite begin to make out. The fact is, I don’t consider you a fit guardian for such boys as they are, and my opinion all along has been that they’ll all get into mischief. I’m afraid that they’re in some fix at this particular moment, and that you have left them at the very time that you ought to be standin by them. If you don’t choose to tell me, I can’t make you—only I warn you, if the boys air in a fix it’s best to let me know, for I can go and help them sooner and better than you can.”

“O, but raily, now—now—raily, captin,” said Corbet, with great earnestness, “I do assure you, honest and honor bright, there ain’t no difficulty about the boys. They’re all rail happy—tip-top, an no mistake; as lively as crickets; lots to eat an drink, comfortable beds, good cookery—all in good spirits and a enjyin of themselves in a way that would do your heart good to see.”

“Well—but where are they?” persisted Ferguson.

“Wal—now—raily—you know,” said Captain Corbet, “it’s a kine o’ secret—an I’d very much rather not tell—that is—not *jest* now; now raily—don’t ask me.”

Ferguson looked at him for a few moments with the same scrutinizing look that he had already turned upon him.

“Where are you going now?” he asked at length; “back to the boys?”

“Wal—not *jest* yet,” answered Corbet, after a pause. “The fact is, I was thinkin a little of takin a turn over Miramichi way—on business. I won’t belong, and they’ll be all right till I get back from Miramichi.”

“O, the boys’ll have to wait for you, in the place where they now are, till you get back from Miramichi—so that’s it.”

Ferguson spoke these words slowly and deliberately, with his eyes fixed on Captain Corbet. The latter looked somewhat uncomfortable, and for a while said nothing; but at length he murmured,—

“Wal—I s’pose—that’s—about—it.”

X.

The Baffled Inquisitor.—Corbet's Flight by Night.—Dead Beckoning.—His Purpose accomplished.—Once more an unwelcome Visitor.—The warning Words.—Corbet confident.—“Right straight back”—The stormy Water.—The gloomy Night and the gloomier Day.—Where is the Petrel?—Despair of Corbet.

FINDING that Captain Corbet was obstinate in his refusal to tell him about the boys, Ferguson at length desisted from his inquiries, and departed from the Antelope, much to the relief of the commander of that vessel. But, though he had left the Antelope, he had by no means given up his investigations into the cause of her present voyage. He at once rowed to the shore, with the intention of finding out from the people there what had been Corbet's business among them.

This he had no difficulty whatever in finding out. Corbet had come there with only one purpose, and this he had made known to every one with whom he came in contact, as best he could.

He had picked up a man who spoke English, and this man had accompanied him in his rounds as interpreter. This very man fell into Ferguson's way, and from him Ferguson was able to learn that Captain Corbet's sole aim in visiting the Magdalen Islands was to obtain some sails. He learned that the sails, could not be obtained, and also that they had recommended him to go to Miramichi for them. By this he understood the reason why Captain Corbet was going to that place.

Now, Ferguson had taken a great fancy to the boys; but the opinion which he had formed of Captain Corbet and the Antelope was of a very different kind. That opinion he had been at no pains to conceal. He had, in fact,

expressed it freely and frequently. He had called Captain Corbet an “old woman,” and the Antelope “a tub.” This opinion he still cherished. Moreover, he had prophesied solemnly that the boys were more likely than not to land at the bottom of the sea before their voyage was over, and this prophecy he still believed in. In fact, the strong regard that he had conceived for these boys made him feel uneasy about them, and he did not like to think of them sailing about these seas with such a vessel and such a commander. The sudden appearance of the Antelope had excited his apprehensions. He had seen her come in while he was ashore. He had noticed her manoeuvres. He had watched her as she rounded to and then stood off again. He had then gone in his boat to watch her, and had seen her anchor. He had seen Captain Corbet go ashore with Wade. He had then rowed to her, boarded her, and examined her. The result of this examination was anything but satisfactory. He could not see any signs of the boys. All their luggage was gone. What had become of them was his first thought, and he had waited for the return of Captain Corbet in deep uneasiness.’ That uneasiness had only been increased when the captain returned and answered his questions in so evasive a manner.

He had not been prepared for this; the evasive answers of Captain Corbet irritated him, and awakened his suspicions. The secrecy which he threw around the movements of the boys was in the highest degree annoying. He had come hoping to find them on board. Their absence had filled him with uneasiness. In this state of uneasiness he had waited on board for hours, fidgeting and fuming; and the end of it all was, that when Captain Corbet did appear, he refused to answer the simplest questions.

There were several things that troubled and perplexed him to an unusual and a most unpleasant degree.

First. What had become of the boys? Captain Corbet would not say. He had asked about every place in which it was possible that they could be, and had been told, most positively, that they were not there. Anticosti, Bay of

Islands, Newfoundland, St. Pierre, St. Paul's, Gaspé, all the coasts surrounding the gulf he had asked after, and he had been told that they were in none of them. Where, then, could they be? Such secrecy puzzled and irritated him. Captain Corbet's story about the secret society did not deceive him for one instant. He saw through it all. He saw that Captain Corbet, though incapable of telling a falsehood, was yet willing to mislead, or to put him on a false track; but, for his part, he was not the man who could be easily misled or baffled.

Then came the discovery which he had made of the purpose which Captain Corbet had in visiting the Magdalen Islands. He had come for sails. Sails! What did he want of sails? What absurd project had he formed? And what had his search for sails to do with the absence of the boys? Yet, so great was Captain Corbet's desire to obtain sails, that he was going to Miramichi for that very purpose.

Then, again, Ferguson could not forget the way in which Captain Corbet had come to the Magdalen Islands. He had come—he had appeared for a moment, as if about to anchor, but then had turned away, and sailed elsewhere. The whole manoeuvre had looked exactly like a wish to avoid the Fawn, and it might have been successful, had he not pursued so closely. Captain Corbet's appearance also, when he first came on the deck of the Antelope, and found himself confronted by his visitor, his start, his look of surprise, his confusion, his hesitation,—all these things made him seem the more open to suspicion.

Suspicion!

And of what?

Now, Ferguson did not for a moment believe Captain Corbet capable of wrong. In fact, he looked upon him as an imbecile. Yet, even from that point of view, his uneasiness about the boys was none the less. These boys, under the care of an imbecile, seemed to him to be in as great peril as though their

guardian had been a criminal. Where were they now? Had the folly or the imbecility of their captain drawn them into some position of danger? They were innocent and inexperienced; he was an imbecile; all were alike unprepared to encounter the dangers that might befall them; and from all these causes combined, the boys might now be in a position of very serious danger, while this incapable guardian was idly roaming the seas.

The more he thought of all these things, the more uneasy he felt; until, at length, his fears about the safety of the boys, who had so suddenly awakened his interest, grew so strong, that he determined to keep Captain Corbet in sight. Believing that they were in some situation of possible danger, into which they had been drawn by their own ignorance and Captain Corbet's imbecility, and in which they were now left, Ferguson felt an intolerable anxiety, and so at length came to the conclusion to follow the Antelope, until some light should be thrown upon this mystery.

Meanwhile, Captain Corbet, having got rid of his troublesome visitor, waited patiently until the boat had rounded the projecting promontory of the island, and then proceeded to continue his voyage. He had already made up his mind to go to Mirami-chi, and this visit of Ferguson, together with his sharp inquiries, far from changing his purpose, had only served to intensify it. He only waited until the boat which contained his dreaded visitor was out of sight, in order to hurry his departure. Accordingly the anchor was weighed in the utmost haste, the sails hoisted, and soon the Antelope set forth on a fresh cruise. The wind was still light, yet sufficient for his purpose; and he directed his course around the island, so as to avoid, as far as possible, being seen by Ferguson. His knowledge of these waters was not very minute, yet it was sufficient to give him a general idea of his destination, and he steered the Antelope accordingly.

Evening came, and the Antelope continued on her course. All night long she traversed the waters, and on the following day approached the New Brunswick coast. Here Captain Corbet recognized the entrance to the Bay

de Chaleur, and, turning southward, he sailed along the coast towards the Miramichi River. As he went on, he noticed a sail some miles away; but to this he paid no attention. It was a common enough thing in these waters, and there was no reason why he should notice it particularly. The sail remained in sight all that day; and at length, as he entered the Miramichi River and sailed up it, the fact that this stranger was following did not excite any attention on his part.

Three large towns lie on the Miramichi River,—Chatham, Douglastown, and Newcastle. Of these, two are a few miles from the mouth, on opposite sides of the stream—Chatham and Douglastown; and the three towns form together the centre of a great trade in ship-building, and in the exportation of deals and timber. Here may be found all that appertains to the outfit of a ship, and here Captain Corbet expected to procure what he wanted.

It was evening when the Antelope dropped anchor in the river opposite Chatham. It was then too late to do anything; so Captain Corbet had to postpone his business until the following day. Pleased with his prosperous voyage, and pleased still more with the easy way in which he had got rid of Ferguson, full of hope also in the successful completion of his business, he retired to bed that night, and slept placidly and profoundly. The wind that night arose, and blew hard; but the venerable captain, sunk in slumber, and surrounded by the river shores, heard nothing of the noise of the storm. Had he been out at sea, he would doubtless have thought of the boys in the distant ship; but here in the placid river there was nothing to mar his repose.

On the following morning Captain Corbet went ashore at Chatham, and began a search after the sails. The search took up some time, but at length he succeeded in finding what he wanted. He found some sails and rigging that had been taken from a condemned ship, and were held for sale. They had not been considered good enough for a ship's outfit, and had not only been torn and rent by storms, but also, from having been kept in a damp warehouse, they were somewhat mildewed. Still they served Captain

Corbet's purpose as well as brand new ones could have done, and, in fact, even better, for their damaged condition enabled him to obtain them at a price which was commensurate with his means. It took some time to get these all stowed away properly in the Antelope; but at length the work was satisfactorily accomplished, and Captain Corbet emerged from the hold, and ascended upon deck, with a smile of serene satisfaction, and the peaceful consciousness that this had been a well-spent, day.

Thus, with this smile of serenity and this tranquil breast did our good Captain Corbet emerge from the hold and ascend to the deck of the Antelope. Scarcely, however, had he set foot thereon, scarcely had he taken one look around, than the smile on his face faded away utterly, and the tranquillity of his soul was abruptly ended.

For there, full before him, seated calmly on the rail, with a piece of soft pine stick in one hand, and a keen jackknife in the other, with a cigar in his mouth, and a pleasant glance in his eye,—there sat the dreaded Ferguson, the very man whom Captain Corbet most feared to see, and whom he believed to be far away at the Magdalen Islands.

Captain Corbet stood rooted to the spot. His jaw dropped. He was paralyzed.



AN UNEXPECTED MEETING. — Page 140.



“You made a nice run,” said Ferguson. “A snug place this.”

Captain Corbet did not answer. He was too confused.

“I see you got your sails. I s’pose you didn’t have any trouble.”

These words increased the dismay of Captain Corbet. He thought that this would be a profound secret. Ferguson now showed that he knew it. He must have found out about this at the Magdalen Islands. Whether he knew any more or not, was a troublesome problem. Captain Corbet did not see how he could possibly know any more, and yet Ferguson had such a knowing look, that he would not have been surprised at learning that he knew all.

“I see you’ve got your sails,” said Ferguson, as Captain Corbet did not answer.

“Yes,” said the other, in a melancholy tone, and with a resigned look.

“It’s pretty difficult to get hold of things of that sort in these parts, and you were lucky enough to get them so easy. They’ll do for your purpose, I s’pose.”

“O, yes,” said Captain Corbet, “they’ll do—well enough—considerin; just as well as if they was new.”

“I s’pose you’re going right back from this?”

“Right back?” repeated Captain Corbet.

“Yes; you don’t intend to go dawdling about any longer—do you?”

“O, no.”

“And you’re going right straight back?”

“O, yes.”

“And when I say right straight back,” continued Ferguson, “I mean, of course, right straight back to the boys. It’s only the boys I consider. I feel anxious about them. I consider myself in some sort, just now, as responsible for their rescue, or, at any rate, for their safety; and, old man, let me warn

you solemnly to be careful what you're about. Don't you go flitting about any longer in this style. Go you right straight back to where those boys are; if you don't, there'll be trouble."

The tone of Ferguson was earnest and anxious. Captain Corbet looked distressed.

"O, raily, now," he said: "see here now; raily I do assure you, sir, the boys are all right, and all happy—plenty to eat, good quarters, and old Solomon to cook for them and make their beds. Why, you don't suppose I'm made of iron, or that I'd have the heart to leave them in any place except where they would be safe?"

"I don't believe you'd leave them in any place that you might think dangerous, of course; but the trouble is you might leave them somewhere, not knowing it to be dangerous, while all the time it would be very dangerous indeed. Have you sailed much about these waters?"

"Wal—n—no, not to say much."

"Well, I have; and let me tell you, it won't do to trust to your judgment where such precious things are concerned as the lives of those boys. I felt afraid, when I first saw the Antelope without the boys, that they had fallen into some difficulty through your ignorance or carelessness, and the moment I spoke to you about it, I felt convinced of it. It has worried me ever since. I took for granted that you were going back from the Magdalen Islands, and had no idea that you would venture so far away from them as this. When I learned your object, and saw where you were heading, I followed you on purpose to say what I now say; and that is, Go back, go back, old man, go back to the boys. I feel sure that they are in danger."

"But ain't I going to go back?" cried Captain Corbet, with as much vexation in his tone as could be showed by one of so amiable a nature.

"I don't know."

"Wal, I am, then,—thar."

“Now?”

“Yes; right away.”

“That’s right,” said Ferguson, standing up and getting over the side of the Antelope into his own boat; “and one word more: don’t you delay. Pile on all the sail this old tub’ll carry, and get back to those boys as soon as you can.”

“O, you needn’t be a mite afeard,” said Captain Corbet, in a confident tone. “Them thar boys are jest as safe as you and me. They’re not only safe, but comfortable; yes, comfortable, and jolly, and lively, and happy, and safe, and sound. All right.”

“Well, well; I only hope it may turn out so,” said Ferguson; and with these words he rowed away.

Captain Corbet had spoken these last words in a very confident tone; but, in spite of this, he was by no means so confident as he seemed. In spite of himself, the warning words of Ferguson had sunk deep into his soul, and roused very deep anxiety. Now, too, that the great purpose of his voyage had been achieved, and the sails were actually lying stowed away in the hold, he had leisure to think of those boys, and of the situation in which he had left them. He had left them far longer than he had intended. He had been gone now three days. It might take two days to get back, and in case of a calm, it might take far longer. The thought of this filled him with uneasiness.

Ferguson himself, had he been on board, would have commended the activity with which captain and mate now proceeded to hoist anchor and sail. In a very short time the Antelope was under way.

Captain Corbet’s uneasiness grew greater. The warnings of Ferguson started up in his mind, and joined themselves to his recollections of the ship. He remembered how unwilling he had been to leave them, and how they had overpersuaded him. He began to lament that he had ever gone

away. The vision of sudden wealth had lost all its charm, and no longer dazzled his mind.

At length he passed out of the river into the gulf. Ever since he had started, the wind had been blowing more and more, and at length, on reaching the open sea, it was quite a gale. All around the waves tossed up their white caps, and the clouds scudded across the sky. This only increased the anxiety of the captain, and as he looked out upon the waste of waters, he trembled for the safety of those who were so helpless in that half-sunken ship. How would they endure this? For this he had not been prepared. He could not forgive himself.

All that night he sailed on, full of grief and terror. The wind increased; the sea rose higher.

The next day came, and wind and sea were yet high. The progress of the Antelope was very good, and towards evening Captain Corbet reckoned that he must be approaching the place where the Petrel lay.

But the shades of night came down, and nothing was visible. For a few hours Captain Corbet sailed on, and at length lay to. This must be the place, according to his calculations; and on the following morning he hoped to see the tall masts of the wrecked ship.

The next morning came.

All that night Captain Corbet had paced the deck in sleepless misery. With the first beam of dawn his eyes sought the horizon, and as the day grew brighter, he still sought eagerly in all directions.

In vain.

The sun rose. It was broad day.

But upon the face of the waters there was not a sign of the Petrel.

Only one sail was visible, and that was a schooner far away to the west.

Captain Corbet stood terror-struck, and looked all around with a face of despair.



XI.

The water-logged Ship.—Alone upon the Waters.—Jolly under creditable Circumstances.—Old Solomon's queer Fancies.—He dreads his Persecutor.—He prefers the Life of Crusoe.—Follow my Leader.—Swimming in deep Waters.—An important Meeting.—Debates.—Parties formed.—Molassesites and Sugarites.—Desperate Struggle of Phil, and melancholy Result.

THE night after Captain Corbet left was spent by the boys without any incident of an unusual character. At first when they felt themselves thus cut off from all chance of leaving the vessel, there came over every one a singular sense of loneliness, together with an exhilarating feeling of independence. Their situation seemed to them like that of shipwrecked mariners on a desert island, and they all found the part of Robinson Crusoe a very pleasant one, under the circumstances. Their lodgings were excellent, their provisions varied and abundant; they had a cook who was master of his art; and they looked for the return of the Antelope within twenty-four hours.

Captain Corbet had laid stress upon this; and the only conditions upon which he consented to tear himself away from them had been, that he would not go farther than the Magdalen Islands. For he had fully counted on obtaining there what he needed, and had not made any calculations with reference to a failure.

That first evening, then, the boys were in high spirits, and interchanged many jocular remarks about their situation. Solomon expressed more than usual gratification, and seemed to have a serene self-satisfaction, which was extraordinary in him. As the shades of night descended he began to illuminate the cabin. He had found some oil, and had filled the lamp which

hung immediately under the skylight. It was a large one, with four argand burners, and threw a brilliant lustre over the scene. Beneath this bright glow the boys sat at the evening repast, spread by the hands of Solomon, where they found the usual variety of dishes, and also not a few of quite a novel and original character. To play the part of Robinson Crusoe under such circumstances as these was not at all unpleasant.

Among all the boys, then, there prevailed a spirit of joyousness, and old Solomon's mood was certainly not out of accord with that of his young companions. For Bart found him alone in his solitary galley, rubbing his thighs in front of a roasting fire, and chuckling audibly to himself.

"Tell ye what, Massa Bart," was his exclamation as he looked up at his smiling visitor, "dis yer am high ole times, an no mistake; dis yer ole nigger habn't felt so happy an habn't had sich a stornary feelin of skewrity, ebber since he was your age. Let dat dar Ant'lope keep way's long ebber she kin. I don want to see her again. I want to take up my bode in dis yer galley, and bid farewell to ebery feah, an wipe my weepin eyes."

"Well, that's a curious fancy too," said Bart, in some surprise. "You don't mean to say that you'd like to live here."

"Would so; dat dar's *jest* wat I mean, an it's wat'd zactly suit dis yer ole man, an no mistake now—would so."

"Well," said Bart, sympathetically, "it's not a bad place just now, as long as the weather's fine, though how it might be in case of a blow, I confess I have my suspicions."

"O, you nebber mind de blow. Dar's blows dat are a heap wuss dan de wind. How would you like blows on yer head, an backbone, an ribs, from a broomstick, or a shobbel, or a stick ob cord-wood, or a red-hot iron poker? Dem's blows as is blows, mind I tell you! Tell you what, when you come to git blows, like dat ar, you'll begin to hab a realizin sense ob what blows is possible for to be."

“Why, Solomon, how very feelingly you speak!”

“Feelinly! Ony wait till you’ve felt ober your head an shoulders what she’s giben me.”

“She? Who?”

Solomon gave a groan.

“You know her. You—saw her at Loch—Lomond.”

“What, your wife! O, I understand;” and a light began to dawn upon Bart. Solomon shuddered. The remembrance was too much for him.

“Dis yer’s de fust time I’ve felt real safe for ebber so long; and here I am real safe. She can’t git at me here no how. She can’t imagine where I am no how.”

“Pooh! nonsense, Solomon! Haven’t you been safe enough ever since you left St. John?”

“No, sah! Safe! Why, dar’s not a moment ob de day dat I don’t fancy dat ar woman’s arter me—on my back. I knows it. Tell you what, she’s a comin to fetch me. I knows it. I feel it in my bones, and dat ar’s a feelin dat’s wuss dan de rheumatics. ’Tis so!”

“But what a rdiculous fancy!” said Bart. “Do you really mean to say that you believe she will come after you?”

“Do so. No doubt bout dat ar, Mas’r Bart. She’s a comin jest as shuah’s you’re born. An I habn’t felt real safe’ till now. Here I’m all right.”

“But suppose she does come?”

“Wal, s’pposin.”

“What can she do to you?”

“Do! Lots ob tings. She can come and lib whar I lib, an hamma away all day an all night on my ole head wid broomsticks an pokers.”

“But what makes you let her?”

“Let her? Wat can I do bout it?”

“Why, the law’ll protect you.”

“Be law sakes, chile! Don’t you know de law can’t ’tect husbands agin wives? It’ll only ’tect wives agin husbands. My pinion is, dat de law’s clean in fabor ob de women, an de men hain’t got no chance—not a mite.”

At this new view of the law Bart was somewhat nonplussed.

“O, well,” said he, “I don’t believe she’ll ever trouble you again. You’ll go back to the academy, and Dr. Porter’ll take care of you.”

Solomon shook his head.

“Tell you what,” said he; “fifty millium Docta Porta’s couldn’t do anythin agin dat ar woman if she come to fetch me. De ’cadmy ain’t no place for me. Don’t think you’ll eber catch me back dar. Ise boun to be a rober; an I’ll sail de sea, so as to prebent her from eber a gittin on my track.”

“O, nonsense!” said Bart. “You’ll come with us, and it’ll be all right.”

Solomon shook his head, and relapsed into silence.

And now it became time to prepare for bed. Solomon had already arranged the state-rooms and made the beds. Thanks to their assiduous care, the rooms and the bedding were all quite dry and very inviting.

It was a beautiful night. There was a gentle breeze, which made a slight ripple on the water, but there was not enough to raise a sea. There was a slight motion on the ship, as she slowly rose and fell to the long and gentle undulations; but the motion was scarcely perceptible, and certainly did not interfere in the slightest degree with the comfort of those on board. It was about ten o’clock when they retired for the night. They went to the different rooms which had fallen to their lot. The excitement of the day and of the evening, the long fatigues, together with the exhaustion arising from former privations, all conspired to make their sleep this night very profound as well as very refreshing. Solomon sat till midnight toasting his shins in front of the galley fire, and meditating about the strange vicissitudes of life which

had brought across his path that being whom he so justly feared. But Solomon's thoughts gradually became intermingled with the confused fancies of the land of Nod; and at length awaking with a start, he rubbed his sleepy eyes, and carried his aged frame somewhere "for'ard." None of the party awoke until late on the following day. Then, on opening their eyes, their nostrils were greeted with savory odors that were wafted from the cabin, which served to show them that Solomon, at least, had not overslept himself, but that he was up and doing, and that he had prepared everything that might be needed to fortify them for the cares and trials of a new day. For the savory odors that were wafted to their nostrils were multifarious, and among them each boy, before he had made up his mind to rise, and while he was still enjoying that luxurious doze that follows the awakening from sleep, could have enumerated, had he felt inclined, the strong, rich aroma of coffee, the pungent odor of broiled ham, the gentler steam of distilling tea, the appetizing atmosphere shed forth from hot rolls, together with a confused medley of others equally attractive, though less definable. .

A rush upon deck to breathe the glorious air, and to look upon the scene around, followed. The view was most enlivening. Far and wide around them extended the deep blue water, whereon not a sail was visible. Overhead hung the azure vault of heaven, with not a cloud in all its wide expanse. The wind was light, and blew at intervals, nor had it increased since the night before. They took their morning bath on deck in the cool, refreshing salt water, dipped out fresh from the sea. Pat improved on this, for he undressed himself again, and plunged into the sea, where he swam about, and called on the others to follow. His example was infectious, and soon the whole party were floundering and gamboling in the water, like a shoal of porpoises, beside the ship.

The bath was a most refreshing one, and added to the zest with which they attacked their breakfast. When, at length, this repast was finished, they once more came forth to the deck like giants refreshed, and began to make

plans for passing the time. For their active young natures, filled to overflowing with animal spirits, some lively exercise was needed. This they found in an exploring tour among the rigging. Bart went first, and then the others. Each one tried to venture farther than the others. Thus it soon became a game—the well-known one often played at sea in fine weather called “follow my leader.”

Bart’s training in a seaport town gave him an advantage over the others, even though some of them were stronger, and others more active than he. But he had all through his boyhood been familiar with ships, and had ventured time and again to every part. There was no height so dizzy but that he had sought it out and familiarized himself with it. Bart, therefore, on the present occasion easily surpassed the others in feats of daring, and ventured where none of the others could follow. Singularly enough, it was Phil who came nearest to him. His light, lithe, slender, yet sinewy frame made him as nimble as a kitten in the rigging, and if he had only had Bart’s practice and familiarity, he would have decidedly surpassed him. Phil came near enough to Bart to elicit the admiration and the applause of all. Next to Phil came Pat, who was very sinewy and active. Bruce and Arthur were about equal, while Tom, who, though very strong, was somewhat slow and a little awkward, lingered in the rear. This exciting sport served to occupy several of the hours of that summer morning.

But at length they had exhausted the utmost resources of even so fascinating a game as “follow my leader,” and they once more came down to the common level of every-day life, when they proceeded to debate the great question what next to do. A swim about the ship served to settle this question until dinner time, after which the important subject of dinner remained under discussion long enough to consume a few more hours.

After dinner none of them felt very much inclined to take any active exertion, and they distributed themselves about in various ways. At length Bart suggested a regatta, which was at once adopted. Not having books to

read, or anything else in particular to attend to, it was not surprising that they should take with much excitement to a sport which, though perhaps decidedly childish, is yet not without its attractions to the unoccupied mind. The plan was for each boy to make a boat, put it over the side, and see which one of the little fleet would beat. These boats were at first made of paper. But paper was soon found inadequate, and wood was resorted to. These wooden boats were long and sharp, and sailed with a speed which excited the warmest interest. At length Bart proposed a new kind.

Finding a piece of iron hoop, he broke it into short fragments, and sticking this underneath a wooden boat, so that it might act as ballast, keel, and rudder all in one, he produced a little vessel that would sail with the wind abeam, and carry an astonishing amount of canvas. Soon a fleet of these little vessels was formed, and the regatta went on with fresh excitement.

At length a bright thought struck Phil, which, on being suggested to the other boys, at once caused all interest in the regatta to be eclipsed by the stronger attraction of this new idea.

It was nothing less than to make candy.

About this there was a double attraction, for, first, the candy was of value in itself, and secondly, the process of cooking it would, afford an occupation at once charming and exciting.

There was sugar on board, both brown and white, and also molasses. The choice among these was the subject of a prolonged debate; but at length, on being put to the vote, it was found that the Molassesites were, in a triumphant majority. Upon this the White Sugarites and the Brown Sugarites waved their objections, and the vote became a unanimous one.

Another debate took place upon the appointment of a cook, which was terminated by a resolve to ballot for one. The result of the balloting was the unanimous election of Phil to that important and responsible post. This was

nothing more than was right, and it was a handsome tribute to Phil for being the originator of the whole scheme. Phil, on being informed of his election, responded in a neat speech, which was greeted with loud applause.

A motion was then made that a deputation be sent to Solomon, requesting him to vacate the cook's galley for a few hours, so that the new purpose of the assembly might be carried into successful accomplishment. This motion was carried, and the deputation was chosen by ballot. The deputies were Bart, chairman, Bruce, Arthur, Tom, and Pat.

Upon the departure of these on their mission, the whole assemblage consisted of Phil. Though alone, he contrived to represent the assemblage with as much dignity as possible, for he laid himself down flat on the deck, and distributed his arms and legs in all directions, so that he might occupy as much space as possible.

The deputation at length returned, and announced to the assembly that their mission had been successful, and that Solomon had kindly consented to give up to them the cook's galley for the required time and purpose.

Upon this the assembly moved, seconded, and carried unanimously a resolution that the report of the deputation be adopted.

Upon this an adjournment took place *sine die*, and the meeting retired to the scene of labor.

About a gallon of molasses was procured. This was poured into an iron pot, and Phil stationed himself at his post in the galley. The fire was supplied with fresh fuel, and soon the liquid began to boil. Phil stirred away like a good fellow, and the liquid began to froth up. Phil tried to keep it down, so that it might not boil over. For some time there was a desperate struggle between Phil and the molasses. The boys stood crowding around, watching that struggle with intense interest and keen excitement. None of them offered to make a suggestion, for it was felt that any offer of advice would be derogatory to the dignity of Phil's office.

So the struggle went on.

It grew fiercer and fiercer every moment.

Now the molasses rose up in wrath and fury, and seemed about to rush forth from its iron prison.

Now Phil, summoning all his energy, dealt a series of destructive blows at his furious enemy, and laid him low for a time.

So went the struggle. Now the molasses gained, now Phil.

But all the time the molasses was increasing in fury.

The boys stood about. They formed themselves into two parties, one embracing the cause of the molasses, the other that of Phil. Cheer after cheer arose as one or the other saw its cause in the ascendant.

Phil grew weaker and fainter.

At length he tried to make a flank attack, and tore open the stove doors so as to lessen the draught.

The movement failed.

Scarce had he torn open the doors than the molasses, rising in its wrath, rushed forth, streamed over, and poured out in resistless strength, driving Phil himself back from the clouds of hot steam that arose.

Phil fled vanquished from the galley.

The molasses had conquered!

Wild cheers arose from the Molassesites.

At length, when the smoke and steam had subsided, Phil ventured back. There was a boiling, foaming mass still in the pot; but on lifting it off the stove, and allowing it to subside for a moment, it was found that not more than a quart was left.

“Sure, an here’s some lovely flavorin I found,” said Pat, “in the pantry. It’ll make a good flavorin to the candy, so it will.”

He held forth a small vial to Phil, which was labelled,—

Extract of Lemon.

Phil thought it would be an improvement, and so poured the whole contents of the vial into the boiling molasses.

His task was soon over, and the candy was taken off, and poured into dishes to cool. There was only a little, but it was hoped that this might suffice for the present.

At length they ventured to taste it. But the first taste excited one universal cry of execration. The taste was of rancid oil, and not by any means the smooth, sweet, delicious lemon-flavored molasses candy for which they had waited so long. In bitter disappointment and vexation, Phil seized the vial which Pat had handed him. He smelt it; he poured some of the last drops out on his hand, and touched it.

“Boys,” said he, with a rueful look, “the steward of the Petrel must have taken a lemon bottle to keep his hair-oil in.”

And all the boys retired from the cook’s galley with a mournful smile.

XII.

Ingenuity of Tom and Phil.—Checkers and Chess.—Speculations as to the Future.—Melancholy Forebodings.—Where is the Antelope?—A Change of Weather.—Solemn Preparations by Solomon.—Making ready for the Worst.—The Place of Retreat.—Laying in a Stock of Provisions.—Pitching a Tent.—Reconnaissance in Force.—A midnight Alarm.—Horror of Solomon.—A haunted Ship.—Sleepers awakened.—They go to lay the Ghost.—Forth into the Night.

THE boys thus succeeded in filling the day with sufficient incidents to occupy their thoughts. It was not an unpleasant day; indeed, it was afterwards looked back upon by all of them as one of the marked days in their lives. True, most of the molasses had been lost, and the remainder, which had been turned into candy, had not been recommended to their palates by the addition of the hair-oil of the steward of the Petrel; but to active-minded boys these little disappointments caused no trouble whatever; on the contrary, they only furnished material for endless jests and laughter. The conclusion of the whole affair was reached when the party once more formed themselves into a meeting, at which it was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted, “that the thanks of this meeting be conveyed to Solomon for his generous loan of the cook’s galley.”

After this, Tom, who always was remarkably fruitful in devices, conceived the idea of making a checker-board. He was able to do this without any very great difficulty. He obtained the head of a flour barrel, and with some soot and water he was able to mark out the squares very well indeed. He then obtained the covers of some red herring boxes, which he cut up into the checker pieces, blackening them with soot. He then

challenged Bruce to a game. Bruce played, and won; but, as at the end of that time Bruce, who had chosen the black men, found his fingers and face all covered with soot, and his fingers, moreover, smelling most abominably of stale red herring, his victory did not seem to give him that satisfaction which it might be supposed to have caused.

Fired by Tom's example, Phil undertook a more ambitious task, which was nothing less than to make a set of chess-men. He went about the pantry, and succeeded in finding a number of corks, which he attempted to cut into the required shapes. His knife, however, was rather dull, and he himself was not particularly skilful at carving; so that when the pieces were completed, it required a great effort of the imagination to see the connection between the corks and the pieces which they were supposed to represent, and a still greater effort of memory to retain the recollection of such resemblance. He challenged Bart to a game, and the two attempted to play; but, after a dozen moves, attended by a dozen disputes, the game resolved itself into an insoluble problem as to whether a certain piece, belonging to Phil, was a pawn or a queen. All present took part in the discussion, but, after a long debate, it was left undecided; and so the game broke down.

After tea they adjourned to the quarter-deck. Here all was pleasant, and soothing, and agreeable. A gentle breeze still blew as before, and the prospect of this tranquil weather continued. The boys sang, and told stories, and chatted for hours. They speculated much as to the time when the Antelope might be expected back again. Some thought that she might be back by the evening of the next day, but others were inclined to allow her a longer time.

“For my part,” said Bart, “I think well have to allow about three days—one day to go to the Magdalen Islands, one day to hunt up the sails, and one day to come back.”

“O, he needn't be so long as that,” said Phil. “I should think he could get to the Magdalen Islands in far less time. They can't be over fifty miles

away, and this breeze would take him there in fifteen hours or so. He left here at about six yesterday; he probably got there at about twelve to-day. He could hunt all over the islands before dark at farthest; and, of course, he'll come straight back after he gets the sails. He probably left there this evening at sundown, and he may be here to-morrow."

"O, I don't know," said Bruce. "I dare say he did leave this evening to come back; but, mind you, my boy, this wind's against him. He'll have to tack coming back, and the Antelope isn't much at that. I don't believe he'll do it by to-morrow."

"Three days, I think, will have to be allowed," said Arthur.

"Well, three days ought to do it at the farthest," said Tom. "He certainly won't wait at the Magdalen Islands. The only thing that'll keep him'll be the head winds."

"Sure, an' for my part," said Pat, "he may stay three weeks, if he likes. This place is over an over again bettther than the Antelope."

"O, I don't know," said Bart. "It's all very well while the wind is this way, but if an easterly or southerly wind should come up, it wouldn't be so comfortable. A heavy sea would roll through and through the cabin, and we'd have to live, and eat, and sleep up here."

"Sure, an ayvin that wouldn't be so bad."

"Well, if it were to rain at the same time," said Bruce, "it might be a little damp up here; and I'm afraid we wouldn't have quite so good a table."

"I only hope that the Antelope'll get back before it begins to blow," said Tom.

"Yes," said Bart, "it's all very well in fine weather; for I'd rather be on board here than in the Antelope; but if the weather is going to change, I'd a precious sight rather have the Antelope within hail."

"O, well," said Phil, cheerily, "there's no sign of a blow just yet, at any rate; so I suppose we needn't talk about that. I've no doubt this weather'll

hold on for a day or so longer, and by that time, at the farthest, the Antelope will be here.”

“If the Antelope were really in sight,” said Bart, “I don’t believe I should give one thought to the weather; but the fact that she is away makes the subject a very important one. This head wind may detain her, and if it were to blow hard, it would be bad for us.”

“Well,” said Bruce, “I believe that if it did blow hard, the wind would change; and in that case, it would be all the more favorable for the Antelope, and, of course, bring her here all the faster. So, at the worst, our hardships couldn’t last more than a few hours.”

“There’s a good deal in that,” said Bart; “I didn’t think of it before.”

Such were their speculations as to the Antelope; but all these, together with all apprehensions of danger, and all fears about the change of weather, were soon forgotten in a sound and refreshing sleep.

The next morning came, and their conversation of the previous night made every one think of the Antelope. On going upon deck, their first thought was of her. But of the Antelope there was not a sign, nor was any sail visible whatever. Little did they imagine that at that moment, instead of steering his bark back to them, Captain Corbet was sailing away from them, and directing his course to Miramichi. But the weather was fine, and the breeze was still mild; and so, after one glance around, they all dismissed the subject.

Breakfast, and morning occupations, and games, and swimming, and various other pastimes, took up the interval until midday, when dinner came to engage their attention.

On going upon deck after dinner, they noticed a change in the appearance of sea and sky. Clouds were visible on the horizon, and the wind had shifted. It was blowing from another quarter. It had been north-east. It was now south-east. It was also a little stronger than it had been, and created

more than a ripple on the water. The surface of the sea was now agitated, and the halcyon times of calm had passed. The boys noted all these things at one glance.

“It’s going to be rough,” said Bart. “The wind has changed, and it’s going to blow.”

“Well,” said Bruce, “let it blow. It’ll be fair for the Antelope, and fetch her up all the faster.”

“It’s an ill wind that blows no good,” said Tom, quietly.

“Let her rip,” said Phil.

The boys were not by any means inclined to borrow trouble, and so they soon drove away these thoughts, and began to get up amusements of the old sort. They ransacked the cabin, they peered into places heretofore neglected. Nothing, however, of any particular interest rewarded their searches. So the afternoon passed away.

The tea table was set. Solomon did his best. All praised the repast, as something of a superior order. This time Solomon did not kindle, and glow, and chuckle at the praises of his young friends, but preserved a demeanor of unchangeable gravity.

As they sat at table, they all noticed a slight motion in the vessel, which would not have been regarded under ordinary circumstances, but which now, in their very peculiar situation, excited comment.

“The wind is increasing,” said Arthur.

“I dare say we’ll have a blow to-night,” said Bart.

“If there’s much more motion, we must expect to get a ducking,” said Tom.

“Any way,” said Phil, “my berth’s out of the reach of the water; it’s the upper one.”

“Sure, thin, an I’ll have to change my berth to an upper one,” said Pat, “if that’s what ye’re thinkin of.”

“Well,” said Bruce, “it’ll be all the better for the Antelope. The wind won’t be much, after all. We’ll only feel it because we’re so low in the water.”

“O, of course,” said Bart; “and if the worst comes to the worst, we can go to the quarterdeck.”

The change in their prospects, however, did not in the slightest degree affect the appetite of the boys; but, on the contrary, they exhibited a greater devotion than ordinary to this repast, as though they were all under the impression that this might be the last one which they were to eat under such luxurious circumstances.

This impression, if it did exist, was confirmed after tea, when they went out upon deck. Solomon was there, grave and preoccupied.

“Chilen,” said he, in a mild voice, “we mus get some ’visium up dis yar ebenin on to dat ar quarter-deck. I ben a riggin some tackle to hist up some barls ob biscuit. Dar’s water up dar already, two barls, an dat’ll be nuff for de present. You’ll all hab to len a han, an hist up biscuit barls; an you can fotch up as many oder tings as you can lay yer hans on.”

“O, let’s wait till to-morrow,” said Tom.

“No, no; bes be in time,” said Solomon. “It’s a gwine to blow dis yer night, an we’ve got to work so as to hab all tings ready.”

None of the boys were surprised at this; so they all prepared to lend a hand at the work. This was, as Solomon said, to hoist up some barrels of biscuit. These they rolled out from the store-room, and hoisted up to the quarter-deck. They then lashed them round the mizzenmast securely. Two stout seamen’s chests were then brought up, being first emptied of their contents, and into these the boys packed an assortment of such articles of food as might be desirable in the event of a prolonged stay on the quarter-

deck, such as two hams, which Solomon, with wise forethought, had boiled, cheese, potted meats, knives, forks, mustard, butter, salt, &c.

They now felt prepared to some extent for the worst; but the question still remained, how they were to procure shelter in the event of rain. A diligent search resulted in the discovery of several tarpaulins. These they hung over the boom, securing the ends on each side to the deck in such a way that a tent was formed, which was spacious enough to shelter them all in case of need, and quite impervious to water. In the middle of this tent rose the skylight, which might serve for a table, or even a sleeping-place, in case of need. Upon the top of this they spread some mattresses and blankets.

“Dar,” said Solomon, “dat ar’s de best dat we can do; an if dis yer wind’s boun to rise, an dis yer vessel’s decks get a swimmin wid water, we’ll be able to hab a dry place to lib in.”

“Well, I don’t believe we’ll have to use it,” said Tom; “but there’s nothing like having things ready.”

“O, we’ll sleep all the sounder for this,” said Bart.

“There’s nothing like knowing that we’ve got a place to run to, if the worst comes to the worst.”

“And then, even if the sea does wash over the decks,” said Phil, “all we’ve got to do is, to take off our shoes and stockings, roll up our trousers, and meander about barefoot.”

“Sure, an there’s a good deal to be said in favor of goin barefoot,” remarked Pat.

“O, well,” said Bruce, “it’ll only be for a little while; for I’ve no doubt that the Antelope’ll be along some time to-morrow.”

“At any rate, we can get our sleep this night in our beds,” said Arthur. “I’m going to my old crib, and I mean to sleep there, too, till I’m washed out of it.”

“And so will I,” said Bart.

“And I,” said Tom.

“And I,” said Phil.

“And sure an meself will do that same too,” said Pat.

“Of course,” said Bruce; “we’d be great fools not to sleep there as long as we can.”

The wind had increased a little, but not much, and the motion of the ship was, after all, but slight.

It was rather the prospect before them than the present reality that had led to these preparations.

Two or three hours passed, and ten o’clock came. By that time the wind had increased to a fresh, strong breeze, and the sea had risen into moderate waves. The motion of the ship had grown to be a slow, regular rise and fall of about two feet. On walking to the bows, they saw that at every rise and fall the water came in through the scupper-holes and flowed over the deck.

“Well, there it comes,” said Tom; “but for my part, I persist in refusing to believe that it’ll be anything of consequence. I don’t believe it’ll get into the cabin. As to the deck here, a thorough washing’ll do it good. I was thinking to-day that it needed one.”

“O, it’ll not be much,” said Phil.

“Sure an where’s the harrum,” said Pat, “if it does come into the cabin, so long as we’re high up in our berths, out of reach?”

“Solomon’ll have trouble in cooking to-morrow,” said Bart.

“Then we’ll feed on biscuit,” said Arthur. “A few days ago we’d have been glad enough to be where we are now.”

“That’s true,” said Bruce; “and, besides, tomorrow the Antelope’ll be almost sure to be here. This wind’s fair, and as I’ve always said, what’s bad for us in one way is best for us in another, for-it’ll bring the Antelope along all the faster.”

In this way they all made light of the change that had taken place; and, turning away, they all went to the cabin and retired to their respective berths. The lamp under the skylight was burning brightly, the cabin had its usual cheerful appearance, and the comforts here served still more to make them overlook the troubles outside.

So they all went to bed.

For a few hours they slept.

Then they were awakened by a cry—a wild, wailing cry, a cry of terror and of despair. Every one started up at once. The cry came again from the cabin.

“O, chilén, we’re lost! we’re done for! we’re ru-i-na-ted for ebbemo!”

“Hallo, Solomon!” cried Bart. “What are you making all that row about?”

And as he said this he jumped out of his berth. As he entered the cabin one glance reassured him partially. The lamps were burning; they had allowed them to burn for this night; the floor was dry. Everything had the same air of comfort which had prevailed when they retired. The motion of the ship was certainly greater, perhaps even much greater; but under any other circumstances it would not have been noticed. This much Bart saw first; and then he noticed a figure bowed over the table, sighing and groaning. It was Solomon. His head was buried in his hands.

“Come,” said Bart, laying his hand on Solomon’s shoulder. “What’s the matter? What’s upset you so?”

Solomon raised his head and grasped Bart’s arm convulsively in both of his hands.

“Dar’s ghosts about!”

“Ghosts?”

“Yes, Mas’r Bart; d-d-d-dars g-g-ghosts a-b-b-b-bout,” said Solomon, with a shudder and with chattering teeth.

“Pooh! nonsense! What do you mean?” asked Bart.

By this time all the other boys were out in the cabin. They had all gone to bed with their clothes on, and stood now wide awake and prepared for any emergency. They all stared fixedly at Solomon, expecting to hear some dreadful disclosure. They had never before seen him so completely upset.

“Dar’s g-g-ghosts a-b-b-b-b-b-oard,” said Solomon. “I went to bed. I waked at de row dey made down below, in de hole.”

“What, in the hold?”

“Y-y-yes, Mas’r Bart, in d-d-d-d-e hole ob de ship. It’s a haunted ship—an—full ob hobgoblums.”

“Pooh!” said Bart, with a sigh of relief; “is that all? Some nightmare or other. Never mind, old Solomon; it’s all right; we’ll go and lay the ghosts. You come and show me the place.”

“Darsn’t,” gasped Solomon.

“If you’ll come with us, you know; we’ll all go.”

“D-d-d-arsn’t,” said Solomon again.

“Well, we’ll go, and T think it’ll be better for you to come with us than to stay here alone,” said Bart. “Come along, boys; let’s find out what it is. Perhaps something’s the matter.”

With these words he went out.

The other boys followed.

Solomon gave one wild glance around, and then, finding himself forsaken, and dreading the loneliness, he hurried after the others.

XIII.

Rushing forth at the Alarm of Solomon.—The rolling Waters.—The flooded Decks.—Strange, unearthly Noises.—Dread Fears.—is the Ship breaking up?—Consolations.—Refuge in the Cabin.—A Barricade against the Waters.—A damp Abode.—A Debate.—Where shall we pass the Night?—Solomon on Guards—The fourth Day.—No Antelope.—A long Watch.—The Cabin deserted.—Sleeping on Deck.

AT the alarm of Solomon, the boys thus all hurried out upon deck. The night was dark. The sky was overcast. The motion of the ship was greater than it had been. As they stepped out, they felt their feet plash in a stream of water that rolled towards them, and perceived by this that the waves had risen high enough to break over the low-lying deck. But it was only enough to wet the deck, and not enough to cause either alarm or even discomfort, since it had not penetrated to the cabin. As they advanced forward, however, they encountered deeper streams of water, which swept down from the bows towards them, rising as high as their ankles. Yet even this excited but little attention. Solomon's alarm had prepared them all for something serious, and so slight a thing as this was not deemed worthy of notice. They hurried on, therefore, and at length having reached the fore-castle, they stood and looked all around.

The motion of the vessel would have been considered very ordinary in any one differently situated. The waves had risen somewhat, and at their motion the ship rose and fell about four feet. This was sufficient to bring her deck under the surface of the sea, and at each fall the water streamed in and rolled about. The wind was rather fresh, but not by any means violent, and it sighed through the rigging overhead.

“Why, Solomon,” said Bart, at length, “what do you mean? I don’t see that anything’s happened.”

Solomon had been clinging to the outskirts of the party, and at this he cried out,—

“Dey ain’t out dar! Dey’s inside.”

“Inside? Where?”

“In dar!” said Solomon, pointing to the door of the forecastle.

At this Bart went in, followed by all the boys. A dim lamp was burning, suspended from a beam. The boys looked around, and saw the seamen’s berths, but nothing more.

“There isn’t anything here,” said Bruce.

At that moment Solomon grasped Bart’s arm, and said, with a gasp,—

“Jes’ you listen to ‘em!”

The boys all listened.

As they listened, there arose a confused medley of sounds, which seemed to come from the hold of the ship—sounds of pounding, thumping, and grinding, mingled with groanings, gurglings, sobs, choking sighs, squeals, scrapings, rumblings, tumblings, shiverings, and many others of an indefinable character. To these the boys all listened in silence, and for a time there came a solemn feeling of awe over every one of that little band of listeners.

“D-d-d-dem’s um!” said Solomon, with a shudder. “D-d-d-dem’s d-d-de g-g-g-ghosts, d-d-d-dem’s d-d-de hobble-bobble-gobblums!”

“Nonsense!” said Bart. “Don’t talk that trash just now. This may be something serious.”

“The cargo seems moving,” said Bruce. “The leak may be a large one.”

“I dare say she’s got a bad strain,” said Phil.

“It’s very likely,” said Arthur, solemnly, “that she won’t last very long.”

“That’s my own idea,” said Tom. “Come, boys, we may as well look the worst in the face. It’s my opinion that she’s breaking up.”

“Well, we’ve got the captain’s gig,” said Pat, “an can take to that, so we can. We’ve got lots of provisions.”

“But we’ve no oars,” said Bart.

“Well, we can rig up a bit of a sail, so we can, out of thim ould tarpowlines.”

“After all, though,” said Bruce, “she may not be breaking up. I’ve heard somewhere that in a water-logged ship the water makes the most extraordinary noises ever heard whenever there is the slightest motion; so these may, after all, be nothing more than the usual noises.”

“And besides, what is this sea!” said Bart; “it can’t do anything; it’s nothing. In fact, the more I think of it, the more sure I feel that this ship can’t break up, unless she strikes a rock. I remember what sea captains have told me—that a timber ship may float and drift about for fifty years, and hold together without any trouble, unless it should strike a rock or be driven ashore. So now that I think of it, I don’t believe there’s the slightest danger.”

“But, if that is so, why did the captain of the Petrel desert her? He must have known this, if it is so.”

This was Tom’s objection, who was not quite inclined to receive Bart’s assertion.

“Well, I dare say he hadn’t been in the timber trade,” said Bart. “This was something new for him, and he thought she would go to pieces. That’s what he wrote in the message that he put in the bottle.”

This conversation had not been lost on Solomon, whose fears, prompted by superstition, gradually faded away, and finally died out. The true cause of the terrific noises being thus asserted and accepted by the boys, there was no difficulty on Solomon’s part about adopting it. Accordingly he soon

regained his ordinary equanimity, and began to potter about the forecastle, arranging some dishes and pans.

The descent of Solomon from the supernatural to the commonplace had a good effect upon the boys, who, seeing that he had suddenly lost all his fears, thought it time to throw aside their own anxieties.

“Well,” said Phil, “I don’t see the use of staying in this dismal forecastle any longer, when there is a comfortable cabin aft; so I’m going back to my berth.”

“Sure an it’s meself,” cried Pat, “that was jist goin to say that same.”

“I think it’s about the best thing we can do, boys,” said Bruce. “There’s no danger just yet, evidently, and so there’s no reason why we should lose our night’s rest. Let’s sleep while we can, say I, and I dare say the Antelope’ll be along some time to-morrow.”

Upon this proposal the boys acted forthwith, and soon they were all not only back again in their berths, but slumbering profoundly. Solomon also turned in “forard,” and finished his night’s sleep, which, however, was frequently interrupted by excursions and reconnoitings which he made for the purpose of seeing how the weather was.

On the following morning they all awaked early, and hurried upon deck. This was the third day since the Antelope had left, and by evening the three days would be completed which they allowed for her probable absence. There was not one of them who did not go up on deck that morning with the expectation of seeing her somewhere in the distance. But on looking around, they saw no sail of any kind. It was with a feeling of disappointment that they recognized this fact, for, though thus far they had not encountered any danger, they had, at least, become aware of the fact that an increase of wind might make their situation very dangerous indeed.

The wind also had grown stronger, and sang through the rigging in a way that was anything but music to their ears. The sky was overcast with rolling

clouds. In another vessel they would have called it a fine day, and a fresh breeze, but to them it became equivalent to a storm. The waves had risen to a height commensurate with the increase of the wind. The rise and fall of the ship amounted to about six feet, and at every other plunge her bows went entirely under water. The deck was now completely flooded, and Solomon in traversing it was sometimes up to his knees in the rushing torrent. The fire in the cook's galley had been put out, and he had been compelled to transfer his apparatus to the stove in the cabin.

The quarter-deck astern prevented the sea from coming aboard in that direction; and by the time the water that rolled over the bows had reached the cabin doors, it had greatly subsided; yet still enough had poured into the cabin to saturate it in every nook and corner. A pool of water filled all the cabin and all the state-rooms to a depth of six inches, and rolled about with the motion of the ship.

“Well, this isn't certainly quite as comfortable as it might be,” said Phil, with a blank look.

“At this rate,” said Tom, “if this, sort of thing keeps on, we'll have to launch the boat, and row to the cook's galley.”

“It's strange that the Antelope isn't in sight!” said Arthur, shading his eyes, and trying to force them to see.

“No use,” said Bart, who had been peering through the glass, and now handed it to Arthur. “No use. There's not only no Antelope, but no other vessel; in fact, there's not a sign of any sail of any kind whatever.”

At this Arthur, who had already exhausted all the capabilities of the spy-glass, took it, and began sweeping the entire circuit of the horizon.

“O, don't trouble yourselves, boys,” said Bruce. “It isn't quite time yet for the Antelope to get here. We allowed her three days. They won't be up till evening. Besides, she's just as likely to be four days; she's not over fast. For my part, I don't intend to look for her to-day at all. It's quite possible

that a vessel may heave in sight; but I don't believe it'll be the Antelope. And if any vessel does turn up, we can easily signalize, for I found all the signal-flags of the Petrel in the closet next my state-room."

That morning Solomon had to cook the breakfast in the cabin. The boys all concluded to go about barefoot. The breakfast was cooked, and, considering all the circumstances, was a great success; but the glory of the cabin had departed, and it was hardly to be expected that a breakfast could be thoroughly enjoyable at which one had to sit with the water playing all about his feet and ankles. Still the boys made the best of it, and did ample justice to the fare. Solomon still struggled manfully against the difficulties of his position, and on this occasion actually furnished them with hot rolls. These, with broiled ham, coffee, tea, and other things, made a breakfast that was not to be despised.

After breakfast the boys were glad to leave the cabin, and seek the quarter-deck, which arose like an island out of the water. They began to look upon this quarter-deck as a place that was likely to become their home. The sashes of the skylight were kept open and made use of, as affording a readier means of passing in and out of the cabin. They began to feel very seriously the restriction of space which had been caused by the flowing waters, and the charms of the comfortable cabin had never seemed so great as when they were deprived of them. Formerly they had been able to lounge in and out, and, above all, to prolong the various repasts, and thus pass away the time; but now breakfast, dinner, and tea had to be hurried over as rapidly as possible, and there came the prospect of final banishment from the cabin altogether.

The sea at midday was somewhat rougher; but Solomon heroically cooked the dinner in the cabin, although the water was sometimes half way up to his knees. Measures were now taken to keep the water out. The door was shut and locked, and in the interstices they fastened oakum. Had this been done at the first, the cabin might have been saved; but unfortunately it

had been neglected, and now that the water was in, there was no way of getting it out. Still this was a decided improvement, and there was comfort in the thought that it could not grow any worse now, unless it became very bad indeed.

Dinner was served in the cabin, and the boys did justice to it, though they showed no inclination to linger at the table any longer than was absolutely necessary.

After dinner they sought the quarter-deck, where they spent the afternoon. They had now begun to look for the coming of the Antelope with great impatience, and their anxiety in this respect kept them in a state of suspense which did not allow them to feel interest in any other thing. To all of them the time seemed interminable. The spyglass was passed around a hundred times, and each one on using it seemed reluctant to give it up. But at every fresh survey of the horizon there was the same result; and as hour after hour passed, they began to fear that something might have happened to Captain Corbet.

So the time passed. All the afternoon the wind grew higher, and the rolling of the vessel increased; still they took tea in the cabin; and there arose the important question as to where they should sleep.

The opinions varied. Some of them, in view of the fact that the wind was rather increasing than diminishing, were inclined to desert their staterooms, and sleep on the quarter-deck, upon the skylight, under the friendly shelter of the tarpaulin.

Tom advocated this most strongly.

“It’ll be just as comfortable,” said he, “and much less liable to interruption. Here are our mattresses, all spread out, and roomy enough for all of us. Here is the tarpaulin hanging over the boom, and making a first-rate tent. Down in the cabin the water seems to be slowly increasing, and we’ll be liable to be washed out of our berths before morning.”

“Yes,” said Phil, who chimed in with Tom, “and what’s worse, if the sea gets rougher, we’ll be certain to ship some seas astern before morning, and in that case it’ll come pouring into the cabin through the skylight.”

“Well, if it does,” said Bruce, “we should get as wet on the skylight as in the cabin.”

“Yes,” said Arthur, “and we might be washed off into the sea.”

“Sure an we can lash ourselves to the mast, an sleep there,” said Pat. “That’s what shipwrecked sailors always do.”

“O, there’s all the difference in the world,” said Tom. “If we are above, we’ll be able to avoid any danger, but down below there we’ll only be drowned like rats in a hole. For my part, if the sea is coming in, I should like to be where I can have a chance to swim, at least.”

“O, come now, Tom,” said Bart, “you are putting it too strong altogether. The wind hasn’t increased very much, and the change has been very gradual. There’s no likelihood of any sudden change, you know. If it gets much rougher, we’ll find it out soon enough, and we’ll be able to get out of the cabin, I should think, before it gets filled with water. If the ship begins to pitch like that, so as to ship heavy seas astern, the first one that comes aboard will be enough to wake every mother’s son of us. I believe in sticking to the cabin as long as we can. Our berths are as comfortable as ever. The puddle of water about the floor don’t really amount to much, after all. The door is so tight now that very little more water can get in; and as to shipping seas over the stern, I, for my part, don’t believe that there is any danger of that just yet; not to-night, at any rate.”

“No,” said Bruce. “Just see. After all, there’s been no very great change since morning. If we were aboard the Antelope, we’d think nothing of this.”

“But unfortunately,” said Tom, “we’re not aboard the Antelope.”

“O, well,” said Bruce, cheerfully, “we needn’t bother ourselves. We’re pretty certain to be aboard of her to-morrow, if we choose to go, for by that

time she's sure to show herself. We allowed her three days, and the time is up; but we ought to allow one day more in case of unlooked-for delays. Perhaps Captain Corbet had to wait for the sails, getting them mended, and all that sort of thing. I don't think he'd wait more than one day, at the farthest; so we may look for him tomorrow pretty confidently. And in the mean time, I'm of Bart's opinion, and think that we'd better make ourselves comfortable as long as we can, and sleep below until we are driven out. I don't believe we'll be driven out to-night, at any rate; and if we are, we'll have plenty of warning."

The end of it was, that they all decided to sleep below. Solomon, however, who had been present at the discussion, informed them that he would sleep on deck, and keep one eye open. Some remonstrance was offered, but in vain, and at length this arrangement was entered into.

Fortunately the night passed without any accident. Their sleep was undisturbed. On waking in the morning, they found not much increase in the water inside the cabin, but felt that the vessel was pitching about more than ever, and creaking and groaning in every timber.

Hurrying out on deck, they looked eagerly around. Bruce was up first, and seizing the spyglass, scanned the whole horizon in the most searching manner. But not to the eyes of any one, nor to the searching gaze of Bruce, appeared any sail whatever. Not one word was said. The disappointment of all amounted almost to dismay for a moment, and their feelings were too strong for utterance.

All around them the sea arose in foaming billows. Overhead the sky was covered with clouds that drove onward impetuously. The wind howled through the rigging; the 'ship labored and plunged, shipping heavy seas, and thrusting her bows far under the rolling waves. But the quarter-deck, as yet, was spared, and rose above the seas like an island, whereon they could rest.

This day passed like the previous one. They spent the whole time looking for the Antelope. It was now the fourth day since her departure, and her delay made all feel uneasy. The cabin was now too uncomfortable for them, so that they decided to eat their meals on the quarter-deck; but Solomon cooked their meals in the cabin stove, and struggled heroically against fate in the effort to afford his young friends the best fare that could be furnished.

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The day passed slowly.

No Antelope!

Night came.

This time there was no debate about a sleeping-place. No one thought of going below, and they all stretched their weary frames on the mattresses, which were laid on the skylight.



XIV.

A strange Sleeping-place.—The Tent.—The View astern.—Rolling Waters in Pursuit.—Morning.—Astonishing Discovery.—The solid Land moving towards the anchored Ship.—How to account for it.—What Land is this?—Various Theories.—Every one has a different Opinion.—Solomon driven from the Cabin.—Drawing nearer.—An iron-bound Coast.

THEIR sleep that night was somewhat disturbed, for the novelty of their position prevented them from having that placidity of mind which is the best promoter of slumber. At times through the night they awaked, and were sensible of the rush of waters about the ship's quarter, and also of a greater motion of the vessel, accompanied by all manner of creakings and groan-ings. The tarpaulins hung over them, having been secured in such a fashion as to form an excellent tent, opening towards the stern, and closed at the other end by the mizzen-mast and the barrels of biscuit and other things around it. Through the opening astern they could see at times, as the ship sunk, the phosphorescent gleam of foaming billows rolling around them as if about to break over them. Most of these did dash themselves against the ship, but none fell upon the quarterdeck; all that the boys felt was the fine spray which floated under their resting-place, and saturated everything.

None of them, however, attempted to rise and go forth until daybreak. There was no cause for doing so; their sleeping-place was the most comfortable now left in the ship, and the scene without had no attraction strong enough to draw them away. Day dawned, and still there was some hesitation about getting up.

This day was the fifth since the departure of the Antelope. Their situation was now quite serious; but they had not yet seen any signs of Captain Corbet. They looked forward towards seeing him on this day, but the disappointment of the two previous days made them despondent, and each one dreaded to look out, for fear that his forebodings might be confirmed. This was the waking thought of each, and each one also perceived that this day was worse than any they had known yet. If the Antelope still kept away, they scarcely knew what to hope for.

At length they went forth, and looked around. All over the sea the waves were larger, and rougher, and fiercer. The motion of the ship was greater than ever. It seemed as though the billows, that raced and chased about in all directions, were hurrying to overwhelm her. The deck below was all covered with white foam, and at times the bows plunged so far under water, and remained there so long, and were overwhelmed by such floods of rolling billows, that it seemed as though the ship would never again emerge. The quarterdeck was now more than ever like an island; but every moment lessened its security, and brought it more and more within reach of the ravenous waves that surged around on all sides. Such was the sight that met their view, as they took their first look around.

But for all this they had been prepared during the long night, by all that they had felt, and heard, and seen; and therefore this did not affect them so much. It was the long, eager look which they turned towards the distant sea, the sharp, scrutinizing gaze with which they swept the horizon, that brought the deepest trouble; for there, over the wide surface of the waters, not a single sail was visible; and the fifth day, while it brought fresh calamities, brought no Antelope, and no hope of relief.

Suddenly Pat gave a loud shout.

“What’s that?” he cried; “what in the wide wurruld is it that I see over there? Sure it’s draimin I must be.”

All the boys looked in the direction where Pat was pointing.

“It’s land!” cried Bruce, in tones of amazement. .

“Land!”

“Land!”

“Land!” burst from the other boys, who, with inexpressible wonder, looked at the unaccountable sight, and scarcely were able to believe what they saw.

Yet it was land—most unmistakably. There it rose, a long, blue line, apparently about fifteen miles away. It was a rugged shore, and extended along the horizon for some distance. For such a sight as this they had not been in the slightest degree prepared; in fact, they would have expected anything sooner; for how could the land move itself up to their fast-anchored ship? Yet there was the fact, and before that fact they were simply confounded.

“I don’t understand it at all,” said Bruce. “If it had been foggy during the last few days, or even hazy, I could then understand it; but it’s been particularly bright and clear all the time.”

“I wonder if it can be something like mirage,” said Arthur.

“No,” said Bart. “The mirage never appears, except when the sea is perfectly still.”

“My opinion is,” said Arthur, “that the ship’s been dragging her anchor, and has been drifting all these five days; or, at any rate, ever since the wind rose.”

“Perhaps she has broken loose,” said Tom. “The chain may have had a weak link. I remember the anchor went down with a tremendous jerk.”

“For my part,” said Phil, “I’m half inclined to believe that the anchor never got to the bottom. I don’t know how deep the water is in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but I remember thinking at the time that it was

a very short chain to reach to the bottom of the sea. I remember wondering that the gulf was so shallow, but I thought that Captain Corbet knew what he was about; but now, the more I think of it, the more sure I feel that Captain Corbet did *not* know what he was about, but dropped anchor, and let things slide, after his usual careless fashion. He confessed, over and over, that he knew nothing at all about these waters; and he never once took the trouble to sound, or to try and hunt up a chart. No; he has dropped anchor, and the anchor has never begun to get near the bottom. The consequence is, we've been drifting along ever since he left us, and are now ever so many miles away from the place where the anchor was dropped. And, what's worse, I dare say the Antelope was back there two days ago; but we were gone, and so, of course, Captain Corbet's lost us, and has no more idea where to look for us than a child."

Phil's theory was so plausible, that it was at once accepted by all the boys. It seemed the most natural way of accounting for everything,—for the absence of the Antelope, and the appearance of this strange shore. For a time a deep gloom fell over all, and they stood in silence, staring at the land.

Out of this gloom Tom was the first to rouse himself.

"I tell you what it is, boys," said he, at length, "I don't know that it's so bad a thing after all. The more I think of it, the better it seems. I'd ten times sooner be near some land, as we are now, than be far away out in the midst of the sea, with nothing to be seen, day after day, but sky and water. It seems to me that we must be drawing nearer to the land, and before evening we may be close enough to see what sort of a country it is. If the worst comes to the worst, we can launch the boat, and go ashore. It's a little rough, but, after all, not too rough for the boat. I've been out in an open boat when the water was quite as rough as this. It seems rough to us, because the ship is water-logged, and is drifting every way—end on, side on, and so forth."

“I wonder what land it is,” said Phil.

“If we only knew how the wind has been, we might guess how we have been drifting,” said Bruce; “but the wind has changed once or twice, and I’ve never kept any account of it.”

“Sometimes,” said Bart, “it has been blowing from the bows, and sometimes from the quarter.”

“O, of course, and every other way,” said Arthur; “for the simple reason that the ship must have been turning about, first one way and then the other, as she drifted.”

“I’ve got a strong idea,” said Phil, “that this land is Newfoundland.”

“O, no,” said Tom; “my impression is, that it’s Prince Edward’s Island. For this to be Newfoundland, the wind should have been from the south or the south-west; but it seems to me that it has been generally from a northerly direction.”

“I don’t think anything of the kind,” said Bart; “I think it’s been from a westerly direction, and that this is some part of Nova Scotia or Cape Breton.”

“Sure, an I agree with Tom,” said Pat, “about the wind, only I don’t think that this is Prince Edward’s Island; it’s too high—so it is—and it’s meself that wouldn’t be a bit surprised if it should turrun out to be the Magdalen Islands after all.”

“O, no,” said Bruce, “it’s too long in extent for the Magdalen Islands. I think it may be some part of the New Brunswick coast, perhaps Miramichi, —for it seems to me that the wind has generally come from the east.”

“So it seems to me,” said Arthur; “but, Bruce, an east wind couldn’t take us to Miramichi; it would bring us a good distance to the north of that, from the place where we were. It seems to me that this must be Gaspé,—and if so, we won’t be very far away from the Bay de Chaleur.”

“Well, well,” cried Pat, with a laugh, “sure it’s the whole surroundin coasts that we’ve gone over, so it is, an every one of us has put her in a different place from every one else. One comfort is, that some of us’ll have to be right, an so I’ll stick, so I will, to the Magdalen Islands, an if it is, why sure we’re certain of good intertainment, so we are, ivery one of us.”

“Well, boys,” said Bruce, cheerily, “perhaps, after all, this is about the best thing that could have happened to us.”

“I don’t see why,” said Tom.

“Why, you know the very reason that Captain Corbet went away was to get sails to bring this ship to some land. The very thing we all wanted was to get her to some land. Well, here we’ve been drifting along, and now, lo and behold! here is the land that we wanted to reach.”

“Yes; but how can we get her to any port? We’ve got no sails, and we can’t steer her.”

“O, when we get nearer, some pilots or fishermen will come off.”

“Yes; but will they be salvors too?” asked Phil, anxiously.

“Certainly not,” said Bruce, in a lofty tone; “they shall be nothing of the kind. We’ll hire them to help us bring her into port. We’ll pay them liberally, of course.”

“Yes,” said Bart, “and we won’t let Captain Corbet’s absence make any difference. He shall have his share all the same—for his not being here isn’t his fault.”

“My idea is,” said Arthur, “that we’d better make a contribution, call it the Corbet Baby Fund, and add it to his share for the sake of old times, and all that sort of thing.”

“Our profits,” Bruce went on to say, in the same lofty tone, “will depend very largely upon the sort of place we can bring the ship to. If this is Miramichi, they ought to be very large,—in fact, the ship’ll bring as large a price there as anywhere; but if it’s the Magdalen Islands, why, of course we

can't expect to do quite so well. Still we ought to do well in almost any case."

"I should like to know how we can get word to Captain Corbet again," said Arthur. "I'm afraid he'll feel anxious about us."

"O, that's easy enough," said Bruce. "On landing, we can telegraph to the Magdalen Islands, and they'll get word to him somehow."

"But there isn't any cable to the Magdalen Islands."

"Doesn't the Newfoundland cable pass by there?"

"O, no."

"O, well, we'll telegraph to various places, and he'll be sure to hear sooner or later."

"I wonder what's become of him?" said Phil.

"I dare say he's cruising about the gulf everywhere, asking every vessel he meets about us."

"I only hope, then, he'll meet with more vessels than we have."

"It's a very curious thing that we haven't seen any vessels."

"O, I suppose we've drifted out of the way of the fishing vessels and the timber ships. I dare say the fishing vessels keep generally to the same places, for fishes must be more abundant in some spots than in others, and, as to the timber ships, they try to keep as much as possible in one given course."

"I wonder whether we're drifting towards that land, or past it."

"O, well, we didn't see it yesterday, and we do see it to-day, which proves that we have drifted towards it during the night; and from this it follows that we will be likely to continue drifting towards it. When we get pretty close we must contrive to get some of the fishermen on the coast to help us; but I don't suppose there'll be any trouble about that. They'll all

come piling on board as soon as they catch sight of us, and see our situation.”

“I wonder what sort of people they are,” said Phil. “Along some of these shores they don’t bear the best of characters. Some of the fishing population are given to wrecking.”

“I don’t believe a word of that,” said Bruce, “and I never did. I dare say if a ship breaks up they appropriate what they can in a quiet way, and when the owners appear, they may be rather loath to surrender their spoil; but wrecking, in its bad sense, is not known here on these shores. Wrecking, as I understand it, means decoying vessels ashore, and sometimes murdering the shipwrecked crews. And I never heard of a case of that kind about these waters.”

“Perhaps,” suggested Bart, “they won’t feel inclined to recognize our ownership. I confess I don’t feel myself a very strong confidence in our claim.”

“Why not?” said Bruce.

“O, I don’t know. The claim don’t seem to be a just one; for instance, now, if the owners were to appear in a steam-tug and hitch on, would you order them off?”

“Yes, I would,” said Bruce, firmly; “of course I would. I would hire them to tow our ship and cargo into port, and pay them liberally, of course; but as to recognizing them as being owners, so long as we, the salvors, were on board, I would do nothing of the kind. The moment the captain and crew deserted the Petrel, that moment they lost all claims to her, on their own account and on account of their employers. The owners after that must look to the insurance companies, while we gain the benefits of good fortune and our own boldness.”

Bruce spoke all this in the most cool and confident manner in the world, and in the same tone as though the Petrel was lying in some safe harbor, and

he and the boys were contemplating her, and considering her from a cosy nook on the wharf. Yet all the time the ship was pitching, and tossing, and straining, and the waves boiled around, and the seas rolled in foam over her deck.

The conversation was at length interrupted by Solomon.

His head and shoulders were projecting from the skylight. He was standing on the cabin table.

“Ise ben a tryin, chilen,” said he, “an a deav-orin to git up some kine ob a fire down heah, but I ben an made it six or seben times, an ebery time de water hab stinguished it. Don know dat dar’s any sort o’ use in tryin to kin’l it agin, specially as all de kinlin wood’s used up, an de res ob it is soaked through an through. Pears to me we’ll hab to do widout de tea an coffee, an drink cole water dis time, unless we can manage to hist dis yer stove on deck. Only, if we do, it might turn out to be a leetle mite tottlish.”

“Well, boys,” said Bart, “what do you say? Shall we try and get the stove on deck, or drink cold water?”

“The stove on deck? O, nonsense!” said Arthur. “What’s the odds if we don’t have tea and coffee? We’ve got enough to eat; we’ve got a precious sight better supply than we ever had on board the Antelope—cold boiled ham, mustard, biscuit, butter, cheese, potted meats, and no end of things. Bother the stove, I say. Let it slide. What do we want with it up here? We never could fix it in a tight place.”

This was the decision of all. In fact all saw that any attempt to hoist up the stove would have been absurd. The ship was pitching and tossing too much to make such a task practicable.

So Solomon came forth, having been driven from the cabin, as he had formerly been driven from the cook’s galley; but not for this did he lose any of his equanimity. He proceeded to lay out the breakfast as well as he could upon the skylight, piling up the mattresses in a dry place, and laying the

table with a regard rather to use than to show. He tacitly assumed that under the circumstances the breakfast would be somewhat informal, and did not think it necessary to risk plates and cups by putting them where they would be certain to be flung off by the motion of the ship. The table was therefore rudely spread, but the eatables were all that could be desired.

After breakfast the day went on, and the boys watched hour after hour the distant shore. By midday it had grown much more distinct, and they knew that they were drawing nearer. A few hours after they had drawn still nearer.

But the nearer they came the less satisfaction did they feel in the aspect of the land. The most careful examination through the glass failed to show the slightest sign of life. No houses appeared, no tilled fields, no pastures even, no clearings of any kind; but a rocky shore, with a wooded country behind, was all that they could see.

“O, well, boys,” said Bruce, “this is the way it is almost everywhere around these coasts; but I dare say Miramichi settlement is only a few miles away, and we may find a fisherman’s hut in some cove close by.”

XV.

A miserable Day.—Keeping their Courage up.—Solomon unmoved.—The Cook triumphs over the Man.—A big Wave.—A Shower-bath.—Helter-skelter.—All in a Heap.—Flight.—The Rigging.—Solomon ventures his Life for a Ham Bone.—Remarks.—Flight farther up.—The Mizzen-top.—The Fugitives.—Pat ties himself to the Mast.—Remonstrances.—Pat is obdurate.—Night, and Storm, and Darkness.

ALL through that day the sea continued as rough as at first, and the wind blew as strongly. In the afternoon the wind came up more fiercely, and far surpassed anything they had experienced since they had boarded the Petrel. It sang and roared through the rigging, and so great was its power, that there was a perceptible list in the ship in spite of the tremendous weight of her cargo and water-logged hull. Soon the increasing wind stirred up the sea to greater fury, and the ship began to labor most fearfully. Every hour made it worse; and at length the whole ship forward seemed to be perpetually submerged, for nothing could be seen of its deck, and the foaming waves rolled backward and forward, and boiled, and seethed, and swept resistlessly to and fro. Sometimes a dozen huge waves in succession broke in thunder on the helpless ship which lay beneath them, and received these mountain torrents, quivering and groaning in every plank and beam.

By this time the boys had certainly become accustomed to the creaking and groaning of the straining ship, but this surpassed all that they had yet seen, and filled them with awe. They stood there looking at the scene; the land was now forgotten. It had lost its interest. The feeling began to arise that perhaps they might never reach those shores, and if they did turn a

glance any longer in that direction, it was solely in order to measure the intervening distance, and try whether it might be possible for the ship to reach the shore before going to pieces.

Solomon alone stood unmoved. Faithful to the last, with his one idea, the performance of his duty, Solomon prepared the evening meal. The cook triumphed over the man, and professional feeling rose superior to the frailties of humanity. It was ham that they would have, and biscuit, and butter. They should have cheese, too, and sardines. Pickles and mustard should not be wanting. And Solomon laid these on the skylight, one by one, solemnly and in silence, as though the consciousness was present in his breast that this meal might be the last on board. Never before had he arranged a repast more deliberately and more thoughtfully. The table was set under circumstances which, indeed, required deliberation and thought. The pitching of the ship was so violent, that it required the most careful management to induce the things to lie in their places; and it was only by covering the biscuit with bits of board, that he succeeded in keeping them to their places. With the ham he had a long struggle, but finally tied it with rope-yarn to the skylight. As to the smaller articles, he had to leave them in the chest.

Solomon was just returning for the last time, carrying a piece of cheese and a box of sardines; the boys were seated on the edge of the skylight, waiting for the preparations to be completed, when suddenly the stern of the ship went down, down, down, very much farther than they had ever known it to descend before. An awful thought seized upon all: the ship was sinking! Every one started wildly up, clutching at anything that happened to be nearest, without knowing what they were doing, and looking fearfully through the opening at the end of their shelter.

It was a terrific sight that appeared in that direction.

There rose a wall of water, black, towering high in wrathful menace, with its crest boiling in white foam. For a few moments that great mass hung

poised above them; and then, with terrific fury, and with resistless might, it descended in thunder upon them. For a few moments all was the blackness of darkness, and the boys struggled despairingly with the rolling, overwhelming, foaming waters, which swept them helplessly about. The thought, and the only thought in every mind, was, that the ship was going down, and with this conviction that the last hour of life had come, there rose from each a short prayer, gasped out in that moment of agony.

It seemed ages; but at length the ship slowly struggled up, and the waters rolled away. For a few moments they all lay where they had been thrown, heaped up together; and then they struggled to their feet, and each began to call after the others. To their great joy they found that they all were there, and that, except a few bruises more or less severe, no evil had been incurred. But the tarpaulins had been torn from the fastenings, and blown away by the fury of the wind, and the boys had been saved from a similar fate only by the quarter-deck rail, against which they had been flung. To this rail they clung as they rose to their feet, and for a short time stood clinging there, not knowing what to do.

But from this stupor they were roused by the voice of Solomon.

“Chilen,” said he, “de suppa am ’sposed of, an you got to go widout it dis bressed night. No use settin de table agin. Don’t pay in dis yer weather. Anybody dat wants anytin to eat, had bes go to de barl or de trunk an fish for hissself. Dere all full ob salt water, and dem dat’s fond ob salt junk can get deir fill.”

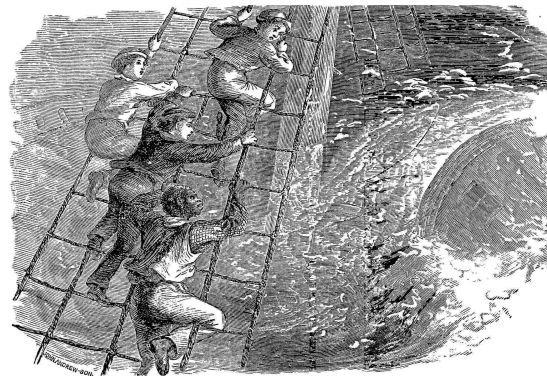
None of the boys, however, showed any disposition to eat. This last wave had destroyed all appetite. It had showed them how the wind had increased. They had hoped all along that the quarter-deck would be spared, and that they would be safe there; but now this hope was lost: where one wave had come, others were sure to follow, and the prospects for the night were dark and dismal indeed. For the night was before them. The sun was already going down; the sky looked lowering, and dark, and menacing; the wind

had grown to a gale, and all around the waters seemed waiting to engulf them. Once they had wondered why the captain and crew had fled from the ship; now they understood but too well the reason of that flight. The idea of salvage seemed now to all of them a miserable mockery. What would they not have given to have escaped from this ship to any place of safety? Even the days of famine on board the Antelope seemed less terrible than the fate that now frowned wrathfully upon them out of the lowering night.

“It won’t do to stay here,” said Bruce. “Another wave’ll follow. Let’s get higher up, out of the way.”

“Where can we go?” asked Tom.

“Up in the rigging,” said Bruce. “Come.” Saying this, he climbed up the mizzen shrouds for a little distance on the windward side. The others followed. Last of all came Solomon, who took up his station below them all as though to guard them.



HIGHER UP THE MIZZEN SHROUDS. — Page 207.



There they all clung, and watched with awful eyes the scene below. It seemed for some time as though they had been premature in deserting the quarter-deck, for no wave followed that mountain billow which had precipitated itself upon them. But the recollection of that one wave was enough; and though its successor came not for some time, still they all

confidently expected it. They knew that it would come before long, followed by many others, for the sea grew higher every minute, and the wrath of its waters grew more wild. Forward all was a sea of foam, and the quarter-deck appeared beneath them like a raft over which they hung as they clung to the shrouds.

They did not climb far up. They were not more than ten feet above the deck, having rested at this point, so that they might be out of the reach of the waves and no more. About their lost repast they did not think for one moment. That wave which had swept away their supper, had carried with it all thoughts and all desires concerning it. The only one who gave it a thought was Solomon, who, even now, was still true to his professional duties; and seeing the boiled ham lying against the quarter-deck railing, in the very place where it had been flung, he leaped down, at the peril of his life, hastily seized it, pitched it into the trunk, and then clambered back again.

“Boun to skewer dat ar ham dis yer time,” said he, in a soliloquizing tone. “No use lettin de win an de sea hab it all deir own way, nohow. Dat ar ham’s too precious to be lost, an I’se boun to’ serve it up yet for breakfus tomorrow, when de storm goes down. Lucky we didn’t try to hist up dat ar cabin stove. Jerusalem! wouldn’t it hab spun overboard? Would so. But it’s down deep ’nough now in de water, for de cabin’s chock full. Don’t ebber ’member bein so ’sturbed before in all my cookin ’sperience; an watebbers goin to be de suit ob it all’s more’n I can tell. Beats all; an dese yer chilen’s all boun to catch deir deff ob cold.”

At this Solomon raised his head, and looked at each one of the boys in succession. He saw them all wet to the skin, with the water dripping from their clothes, and their hands clutching fast the rigging. It was a painful sight, too painful: he turned away his face, and drops of brine ran down his face which did not come from the sea.

Suddenly a thunderous sound arose, which made every one look in terror towards the place from which it came. It was forward. In an instant they saw it all. Several great waves had fallen there in swift succession, striking amidships full upon a round-house which stood there, and was used for the reception of deck cargoes. The force of these blows was resistless; the structure yielded with a crash, and gave way utterly. For a moment it was brought up against the ship's bulwarks, but the waters poured in underneath, floated it far upward, and tumbled it over into the sea. There it floated at the mercy of the waves, farther and farther away, while the raging billows, like hungry wolves, encompassed it on every side.

The boys had already felt sufficiently awed by the scene around to be hushed into silence, but about this last event there was something so appalling that they all uttered an involuntary cry, and clung more closely to the rigging, each one looking at his neighbor with a face of despair. For the only thought now present to each one was, that the ship was breaking up, and that utter ruin and destruction was imminent. The crash of the wave, as it struck the massive structure and tore it away, was so tremendous that the boys might well have dreaded the worst; and the sight of it now, as it tossed and tumbled in the boiling floods, had in it something so terribly suggestive of their own fate, that they shuddered and turned their eyes away.

But suddenly Solomon's voice broke the silence.

"Dar," said he; "dar's how I knowed it was goin for to be. I bet high on de cook's galley. Dem dar round-houses only built for show; dey got no rail strenf. Now de cook's galley down dar ain't goin to gib way dat fashium; she's boun to stan, jes like de rock ob Gibberalter, an de stove too,—dat's so."

There was something in Solomon's tone which was so cool and matter-of-fact that the others felt a little reassured, and recovered a little of their former coolness. They saw that the ship was still holding together, and as the waves rolled back, they saw the smooth firm deck where the

roundhouse had stood, and learned from this that the round-house did not constitute a portion of the ship, but was merely an erection on that deck, and therefore to some extent a movable.

But Solomon's confidence in the cook's galley was by no means warranted by facts. Thus far it had been protected to some extent from the sweep of the waves by the round-house, and the loss of this barrier left it all exposed to the full fury of the waters. For some time it bore up gallantly, and as each wave rolled over it, Solomon cheered exultantly, to see it come forth erect from the rolling torrents. At length, however, Solomon's exultant cries grew fainter, and finally ceased altogether. For the galley was shaking, and quivering, and yielding. At length one side started, and was beaten out; the rest soon followed, until all was crushed to fragments, and its separate portion hurled out upon the angry sea.

"Anyhow," said Solomon, "dat ar galley held out pooty tough, mind I tell you; an dar's de stove yet, as large as life, an it's goin to take a good many waves afore they'll be able to start her. Yes, dat ar stove's goin to hold on, mind I tell you; an I'se a goin to bile a kittle ob water on her yet, you see. Will so."

Whether Solomon really meant what he said, is an open question. He may have really believed it all, or, as is most probable, he may have expressed himself in this way merely for the purpose of giving courage and confidence to the boys, and preventing them from sinking into despair. Certain it is that his words had this effect; and seeing that the loss of the round-house and galley had made no material difference in the ship herself, they clung to hope, and tried to believe that the stout hull, with its firm cargo, would ride out the storm.

But by this time the sun had set; and now, in addition to their other troubles, there was added the dismal prospect of the coming night. Dark, indeed, would that night be to all of them. Fearful enough was their position already; but when, in addition to this, they would find the light of day cut

off, and the horror of great darkness all around, what support could they find for their sinking souls, or what hope of escape? Already the land was fading out of sight, lost in the gathering shadows of evening. By the dim twilight they could see that they had drawn much nearer, and their distance seemed now but a few miles. Thus far they had regarded the land only with pleasure; now, however, as the night came down, and the darkness deepened, and the storm increased, they began to experience other feelings with regard to this dreary shore. That it was rocky and forbidding they had already seen, nor had they hitherto been able to detect any part of the coast here which was at all inviting or favorable to a landing. If in such a storm the ship should be driven upon such a shore, what could save her from being shattered to pieces? If in such a darkness they were driven upon those rocks, what could save them from destruction? Yet towards that unknown shore they were every moment drawing nearer, and wind and tide seemed alike to urge them onward towards it.

It was not yet dark, when suddenly a giant wave rose high from underneath the stern, and hung suspended over the quarter-deck. It was the counterpart of that wave which had struck them an hour before. For a few moments it hung, poised and quivering, and then it fell, in thunder, down. It poured all over the barrels of biscuit that were lashed to the mizzen-mast, it swept down through the skylight into the cabin, it rolled in a flood over the deck, and rushed forward, pouring down, and blending its waters with those that boiled and foamed amidships.

The ship now seemed unable to rise. She seemed to have sunk into some vortex, and being without anything like buoyancy, the waters held her fast. Wave after wave rolled in, and poured over the quarter-deck. The whole ship, from stem to stern, seemed to be one mass of foam. The hull was lost to sight. They seemed supported by masts that rose out of the sea. Destruction appeared close at hand. Clinging to the rigging with death-like

tenacity, they could only murmur their prayers of despair to that mighty unseen Being who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand.

At length, shuddering, and groaning, and trembling in every fibre, like some living thing, the ship struggled up out of the mass of waters, and freed herself for a time. The boys could see the quarter-deck. They could see the barrels lashed to the mizzen-mast still secure. They breathed more freely. It seemed as though they had received a reprieve,—as though their despairing cries had been heard and answered.

“Boys,” said Bruce, “we can’t hang here all night. We’ll fall off. Lets go up higher. There’s room for all of us, I think, in the mizzen-top. Come.”

With these words he started upward. The rest followed. Solomon went up last. They all reached the mizzen-top in safety, and, on reaching it, found that it was spacious enough to afford room for them all.

Here Pat proceeded to possess himself of a line which ran through a block close by, after which he began to tie himself to the mast.

“What are you up to, Pat?” asked Bart, in some wonder.

“Sure it’s tying meself to the mast, I am, so it is.”

“Tying yourself to the mast?” repeated Bart, in amazement. “What in the world is that for?”

“What is it for?” said Pat. “Sure and what else is it that people always do in shipwrecks? It’s the reg’lar thing, so it is.”

“Well, for my part,” said Bart, “I’d rather have my hands free. If this mast should go over, I’d rather not be fastened to it as tight as that. You’d better not.”

“Sure an won’t I float ashore on it without any trouble?”

“Yes; only the trouble may be to keep your head above water. Don’t do it, Pat.”

But Pat was deaf to argument. Slowly, but pertinaciously and securely, he wound the rope round and round the mast, binding himself to it tighter at every turn.

“Ye’d best follow my lade,” said Pat. “There’s enough left in this bit of a line to tie ye’s all fast and firrum, so there is.”

But the others refused. They preferred liberty of action, and did not like the idea of swathing themselves up like mummies. They wished to be able occasionally, if possible, to lie down, or sit down, and not remain all night on their feet.

Thus there they stood in the mizzen-top. And the night came down, and the darkness gathered deeper and deeper around them. And the storm rose to its height, and night, and storm, and darkness, in all their terrific power, environed them as they stood in their giddy perch.

XVI.

Night, and Storm, and Darkness.—The giddy Perch.—The trembling Ship.—The quivering Masts.—A Time of Terror.—Silence and Despair.—A Ray of Hope.—Subsidence of Wind ami Wave.—Descent of the Boys.—Sufferings of Pat.—In the Mizzen-top.—Vigil of Bart.—The Sound of the Surf.—The Rift in the Cloud.—Land near.—The white Line of Breakers.—The black Face of Solomon.—All explained.—The Boat and the Oars.—The friendly Cove.—Land at last.

NIGHT, and storm, and darkness! There, in their giddy perch in the mizzen-top, stood that despairing little band. Gradually all the scene was lost to view in thick darkness. But beneath, the ship tossed and pitched wildly, groaning and creaking as before, and the big waves beat in fury on her bows, or fell in thunder on her quarter-deck. Looking down, they saw the phosphorescent gleam of the boiling waters, which made all the extent of the ship luminous with a baleful lustre, and wide over the seas extended the same glow. Well it was for them that they had sought this place of retreat, or rather that this place of retreat had been left open to them, for clinging to the rigging would have exhausted their strength, and through those long hours more than one might have fallen into the sea. But as it was they could have something like rest, and, by changing their positions, find relief for their wearied frames.

Yet this place had its own terrors, which were fully equal to any others. The wind howled fearfully through the rigging, and as the ship pitched and tossed, the mast strained and quivered in unison. Often and often it seemed to them that the strained mast would suddenly snap and go over the side, or, if not, that in its violent jerks it might hurl them all over to destruction.

More than once they thought of guarding against this last danger by following Pat's example, and binding themselves to the rigging; but they were deterred from this by the fear of the mast falling, in which case they, too, would be helpless. Fortunate it was for them that there were no sails. These had long since been rent away; but had they been here now, or had the wind taken any stronger hold of the masts, they must have gone by the board.

Often and often, as some larger wave than usual struck the ship, the feeling came that all was over, and that now, at last, her break-up was beginning; often and often, as she sank far down, and the waters rolled over her quarter, and held her there, the fear came to them that at last her hour had come—that she was sinking; and with this fear they looked down, expecting to see the waters rise to where they were standing. And then, in every one of these moments of deadly fear, they raised, as before, their cries to Him who is able to save.

So passed away hour after hour, until the duration of time seemed endless, and it was to all of them as though they had spent days in their place of peril, instead of hours only.

At length they became sensible of a diminution in the power of the wind. At first they hardly dared to believe it, but after a time it became fully evident that such was the case. The cessation of the wind at once relieved the ship very materially, though the sea was still high, and the waters below relaxed but little from their rage. But the cessation of the wind filled them all with hope, and they now awaited, with something like firmness, the subsidence of the waves.

That subsidence did come, and was gradually evident. It was slow, yet it was perceptible. They first became aware that those giant waves no longer fell in thunder upon the quarter-deck, and that the ship no longer seemed to be dragged down into those deep, watery abysses into which they had formerly seemed to be descending.

“There’s no mistake about it, boys,” said Bruce at length, in tones that were tremulous with fervent joy; “the storm is going down.”

This was the first word that had been spoken for hours, and the sound of these spoken words itself brought joy to all hearts. The spell was broken. The horror vanished utterly from their souls.

“Yes,” cried Bart, in tones as tremulous as those of Bruce, and from the same cause,—“yes, the worst is over!”

“I don’t mind this pitching,” said Tom; “it seems familiar. I think to-night has been equal to my night in the Bay of Fundy—only it hasn’t been so long, and it’s seemed better to have you fellows with me than being alone.”

“I had a hard time in the woods,” said Phil, “but this has been quite equal to it.”

“Pat,” said Arthur, “you’ve been doing the mummy long enough. You’d better untie now, and lie down.”

“Sure an it’s meself that’ll be the proud lad to do that same,” said Pat, “for it’s fairly achin I am all over, so it is.”

With these words Pat tried to unbind himself. But this was not so easy. He had been leaning his whole weight against the ropes, and his hands were quite numb. The other boys had to help him. This was a work of some difficulty, but it was accomplished at last, and poor Pat sank down groaning, and he never ceased to sigh and groan till morning.

Several hours now passed. The sea subsided steadily, until at length its motion was comparatively trifling, not more than enough to cause a perpendicular pitch to the ship of a few feet, and to send a few waves occasionally over the deck. Wearied and worn out, the boys determined to descend to the quarter-deck, so as to lie down. Pat was unable to make the descent; so Bart remained with him, and curled himself up alongside of him on the mizzen-top. The other boys went down, and Solomon also.

Everything there was wet, but as the boys also were saturated, it made but little difference. They flung themselves down anywhere, and soon were fast asleep.

But in the main-top Pat was groaning in his pain. The blood was rushing back into his benumbed limbs, and causing exquisite suffering. Bart tried to soothe him, and rubbed and chafed his arms and hands and feet and legs for hours.

At last Pat grew easier, though still suffering somewhat from pricking sensations in his arms and legs, and Bart was allowed to rest from his labors.

And now, as Bart leaned back, he became aware of a very peculiar sound, which excited all his attention.

It was a droning sound, with a deep, swelling cadence, and not long in duration; but it rose, and pealed forth, and died away, to be followed by other sounds precisely similar—regular, recurrent, and sounding all abroad. It was nothing like the roar of the waves, nor the singing of the wind through the rigging; it was something different from these, yet in this darkness, and to this listener, not less terrible.

Bart knew it. The sound was familiar to his ears. There was only one sound in Nature of that character, nor could it be imitated by any other. It was the long sound of the surf falling upon the shore.

The surf!

What did that mean?

It meant that land was near. And what land?

There was only one land that this could tell of—it was that land which they had been approaching for days; the land which they had watched so closely all the previous day, and to which at evening they had been drawn so near. The name of the land he could not know, but he had seen it, and he remembered its drear and desolate aspect, its iron-bound shores, its desert

forests. It was upon this shore that the surf was beating which now he heard, and the loudness of that sound told him how near it must be.

It seemed to him that it could not be more than half a mile away at the farthest.

And the ship was drifting on!

This first discovery was a renewal of his despair. He could only find comfort in the thought that the sea had subsided so greatly. What ought he now to do?

Ought he to awake the boys and tell them? He hesitated.

Pat had by this time fallen asleep, worn out with weariness and pain. Bart had not the heart to wake him just yet.

Suddenly there was an opening in the sky overhead, and through a rift in the clouds the moon beamed forth. Bart started up and looked all around. The morn disclosed the scene.

The sea had grown much calmer, and the waves that now tossed about their spray over its surface were as nothing compared to those which had beat upon the ship during the night. This was probably due, as Bart thought, to the shelter of some headland which acted as a breakwater. For as he looked he saw the land now full before him. He had conjectured rightly from the sound of the surf, and he now saw that this land could not be much more than a half mile away.

This confirmation of his worst fears overcame him. He started to his feet, and stood clinging to the rigging, and looking at the land.

How near! how fearfully near! And every moment was drawing the ship nearer. And what sort of a shore was that? Was it all rocky, or was it smooth sand? The waves were high enough there to create a tremendous surf. Did that surf fall on breakers, or did it fall on some gentle beach? This he could not tell. In vain he strained his eyes. He could see the white line of foaming surf, and beyond this the dark hills, or cliffs, but more than this he could

make out nothing definite. But the shore was so near that their fate could not be very long delayed, and he determined to wake the boys at once, leaving Pat to sleep a little longer.

With this intention he prepared to descend. But scarce had he put one foot over, when he saw a shadowy figure close by.

“Mas’r Bart,” said a voice.

It was Solomon.

“I see you a movin about, an I jes thought I’d come up to see how you was a gittin along,” said Solomon.

“Did you see the land?” asked Bart, in agitated tones.

“De lan! Sartin sure—seen it dese four hours. Ben a watchin it ebber so long.”

“What! Why didn’t you wake us before?”

“Wake you? Not me. What de use ob dat ar? I ben kine o’ watchin, an kine o’ canterin round all de time, seein dat de tings are all straight; an I got de galley stove in prime order, an if youns don’t get de bes breakfas you ebber eat, den I’m a useless ole nigga. Sho, now; go away. Leab tings to me, I tell you.”

“Breakfast!” cried Bart, in amazement. “Why, we’ll drift ashore in a few minutes. Don’t you see how near we are? What shall we do? Is the boat gone?”

Solomon put his head back for a few minutes, and chuckled to himself in a kind of ecstasy.

“De boat? O, yes, de boat’s all right. Held on tight as a drum—de boat an de galley stove.”

“O, then,” said Bart, “come, let’s wake the boys, and get her out at once. It isn’t too rough for her here. We must get some pieces of wood for paddles.”

“O, dere’s lashins ob time; neber you mind,” said Solomon. “You jes lie down an finish your nap, an leab de res to me.”

“But we’re drifting ashore. In a quarter of an hour we’ll be among the breakers.”

“O, no, Mas’r Bart; not in a good many quarter ob an hours.”

“But the shore’s only half a mile away.”

“I know it,” said Solomon; “an it’s ben jes dat, ar distums off for de las four hour an more.”

“What!”

“Dat’s so. I ben a watchin. Hadn’t I tole you dat ar?”

“But the ship’s afloat. She isn’t aground. She must be drifting in.”

“Dat ar conclusium don’t foller as a nessary suc-cumstance,” said Solomon, with dignity.

“Why, what prevents her from drifting?” asked Bart, in a puzzle..

“De simplest ting in de world,” said Solomon—“her anchor.”

“Her anchor! O,” cried Bart, as a flood of light burst in upon his mind, and dispelled all the darkness of his despair; “her anchor! O, I begin to understand.”

“Tell you what,” said Solomon; “when I fust heard dat ar surf I was in a quandary, mind I tell you. Gib all up. Was jes about to rouse youns. But fust an foremost I went to see about de boat. Found dat all right an tight. Den I got a belayum pin an tored off some strips ob wood for paddles. Den I waited to see how we was a goin. Well, arter waitin for ebber so long, de surf didn’t get any nearer. Tell you what; dat ar succumstance puzzled dis old nigga’s head considable. Sudden a idee popped into me. I ran forad, an sure enough I found de ship’s head off from de sho, an felt de anchor chain standin out stiff. Den I knew de anchor had caught, and had fetched her up all right in dis yer identicull place an po—sitium; an so, Mas’r Bart, here

we air, anchored hard an fast, de boat all right an tight, de paddles ready, de galley stove ready too, an de prospek afore all ob us ob a fus'-rate breakfas to ward us for all de per'ls an clamties ob de night."

Some further inquiries followed from Bart, which served to assure him still more of Solomon's vigilance; and the result was, that after a time he resumed his place beside Pat in the mizzen-top, and, curling himself up, was soon sound asleep. It was not a very luxurious sleeping-place, but it was at least as soft as the deck below, where the boys had flung themselves, and it was also a trifle dryer.

When Bart awoke it was broad day. Pat was gone. He had awaked, and, finding himself all right again, and seeing the land close by, he had descended to the deck to talk to Solomon. For his first thought had been a very natural one, namely, that the ship was going ashore; and seeing Solomon placidly moving about below, he had gone down to find out what it all meant. Of course his fears were soon dispelled.

The rest of the boys waked at about the same time that Bart did, and he soon rejoined them below. The smell of broiled ham was wafted over the ship. Great was the wonder of Bruce, Arthur, Tom, and Phil at their present situation, and even greater was their wonder at seeing the repast which Solomon had already spread out upon the quarter-deck.

For Solomon had been working like a beaver.

He had forced open the cabin door, and let out all the water. He had then obtained some coal, which, though wet, burned merrily in the galley stove, and had found the cooking utensils, which he had fortunately conveyed to the cabin when he had first been driven from the galley.

The biscuit were, of course, soaked and saturated with salt water; but Solomon declared that they were made to be soaked before cooking, and that the salt water was "jes as good as fresh—ebry mite." So he fried these in butter, and sprinkled over them some pepper, which was in the sea-chest,

and which, with all the other contents of the chest, had not been injured. Ham, and toasted cheese, and potted meats, and tea and coffee, together with other articles too numerous to mention, formed the breakfast; and it is scarce necessary to say that the boys did full justice to it.

After breakfast they began to consider what next they should do. The land was close by, about half a mile away. The line of coast extended far away towards the left, but on the right it ended in a headland. The sea was very quiet, but on the shore before them there was a heavy surf, the result of the past storm. They saw farther away to the left a smooth beach, where a landing might be easily effected, and another place towards the right where there was very little surf. This last seemed the best place for attempting a landing.

The shore was not very attractive. In some places rocky cliffs arose, crowned at the summit with spruce and birch; in other places there were slopes covered with the same sort of trees. There was no sign whatever of any house, or of any cultivation, or of any pasture land, or of any clearing. The forest seemed unbroken.

The boys were now as ignorant of the country as they had been when they first saw it. Each still held the same opinion which he had announced before.

Phil thought that it was Newfoundland.

Tom, that it was Prince Edward's Island.

Bart, that it was some part of Nova Scotia, or Cape Breton.

Pat, that it was the Magdalen Islands.

Bruce, that it was the coast of New Brunswick, somewhere near the Miramichi.

And Arthur, that it was Gaspé, not far from the Bay de Chaleur.

Thus, although this particular spot seemed desolate enough, no one gave any thought to that, for they all supposed that inhabitants could be found

within no very great distance. .

After some deliberation, it was at length concluded to go ashore. The strips of wood which Solomon had already, with wise forethought, procured, were easily shaped into very respectable paddles by means of a hatchet and a knife.

They then determined to secure themselves from want while ashore, and this they did by putting into the boat one of the barrels of biscuit and the chest of provisions.

Then they all embarked and pulled away. They paddled along without difficulty towards the beach on the right, where the surf seemed less. On approaching this, they found a cove formed by a gully among the hills, and at one end there were grassy banks, near which a stream of fresh water flowed into the sea.

Here they landed.

XVII.

The Lookout over the Sea.—The missing Ship.—Where are the Boys?—Where are the Boys?—Where are the Boys?—Where are the Boys?—Where are the Boys?—An elaborate Calculation.—Dragging the Anchor.—A Chart on the Cabin Table.—Writ in Water.—Hope.—The Antelope sails 'North by East.—Corbet watches the Horizon.—Midday.—Despair.—Corbet crushed!

Captain Corbet had arrived at the place where he supposed he had left the Petrel, and on looking about saw no signs of her, he was filled with despair. The wind had been blowing all night long, and the sea had been rising to an extent that might have justified the deepest anxiety; he had been upheld only by the thought that he was bringing relief to the boys; and this solitary consolation was taken from him by the first glance that he cast around.

This was the fifth day since he had left them. He had gone, proposing and expecting to be back in two days, or in three at farthest. But he had gone much farther than he had at first intended, and hence had left them longer than he had said.

And where were they now?

In vain he strained his eyes. The only sail on the water was that schooner: possibly some fisherman cruising about in this direction.

Where were the boys?

Where were the boys that had been committed to his care,—the boys who had been intrusted to him,—the boys who had confided in him,—the boys who had placed their young lives in his keeping?

Where were the boys?

Where were the boys whom he had left; whom he had promised to return for so promptly?

He had led them into difficulty, and left them there!

He had led them into starvation—that was his first fault. How they had suffered during those days of calm! He had led them to that waterlogged vessel! He had gone on board with them; he had caused them to put a confidence in that wrecked ship which was not justifiable.

Worst of all, he had left them!

And now that he thought of it, what was that ship? She might have been not water-logged—but sinking! The thought filled him with horror. A sinking ship! and he had left them there!

No; she was not a sinking ship—he knew that.

He remembered the length of time that he had seen her from a distance. He recalled the time he had been on board, and all the observations which he had made. Water-logged she certainly was, but not sinking—no, not sinking. Timber ships never sink. They cannot sink. A timber ship is like a solid wooden ship low down in the water, but absolutely unsinkable.

This thought brought some consolation to him in his despair.

But as he looked out over the sea, as he saw the swelling waves, as he felt the Antelope toss, and leap, and plunge about, and as he recalled the long night that had passed, with its storms and billows, he trembled for the boys in the water-logged ship.

And again the old question came back,—

Where were the boys?

Where were the boys whom he had left in the water-logged ship? He himself had anchored that ship in these waters, hard and fast; but now, as he

looked about far over the seas, he saw no sign of any ship, or of any floating thing save that distant fishing schooner. What did this mean?

Again and again he asked this question, and again and again he shrank back from the answer that suggested itself.

He tried to console himself by thinking of the buoyancy of wood in general, and of timber ships in particular. Alas! these efforts were all in vain. For he remembered how rough the sea had been; and he saw all around him even now the swelling waves. That ship had already been torn and shattered by storms. That ship had been forsaken by captain and crew. They had believed that she was about to founder. Was this belief, then, so far wrong as he had supposed? She was like a raft, torn and dislocated, which any fresh movement of the water might shatter to pieces. Perhaps in the storm that had fallen upon her in his absence the waves had wrought their will upon her. Perhaps they had torn her to pieces in their wrath, and scattered all her timbers afar over the surface of the deep. Perhaps the only vestige of the Petrel which his eyes might ever see, might be some floating timbers drifting past, and bearing to him the only message which could ever come to the land of the living from the lost boys.

Where were the boys?

Where, O, where were the boys whom he had led into danger, and then madly deserted?—doubly deserted, in fact; first, when he sailed away, leaving them on board the wrecked ship, and secondly, in that worse desertion, when he had gone away so thoughtlessly, so wickedly, and so madly, from the Magdalen Islands to the Miramichi River? How could he have ever thought of it? What could have so infatuated him as to lead him so far away from those helpless boys in their desperate position?

Where were the boys?

O, where were the boys? And what had they thought of him? What misery had they not suffered! What despair! How often must they have

watched for his return! And day had succeeded to day, and night to night, but he had never come! While they were watching for his appearance, he was calmly sailing away, or was loitering in distant ports, leaving them to their terrific fate!

Where were the boys?

What was their fate?

What had become of that ship?

She had been anchored fast. She was gone now. Gone! Gone were those boys, for whom he would have laid down his life; but whom, nevertheless, he had deserted and betrayed. And he—what could he do? Where could he go? Where could he search for them? Over what seas could he sail? With what hope? Was there any hope? Hope! Alas! what hope could he form when he looked out over these foaming waves, and felt the Antelope quiver beneath the force of their assault?

These, or something very much like these, were the thoughts that filled the soul of the unhappy, the despairing Corbet, as he rolled his venerable eyes over the wide waste of waters, and saw that the Petrel was gone. It was a moment full of deeper misery and keener anguish than any which the good captain had ever known in the whole course of his life, though that life had by no means been without its sufferings. Yet among all the sufferings and sorrows of a life full of vicissitudes, it had never fallen to his lot to experience such a misfortune as this,—to reproach himself so keenly, so severely, and yet so justly. Whatever the fate of the boys might have been, he knew perfectly well that he, and he alone, was the cause; nor could he plead, even to his own conscience, the excuse that his motives were right. For his motives were not right, and he knew it. His motives had been nothing better than wild desires for sudden wealth. True, he had only wished that wealth for his “babby;” but that did not in the least mitigate his

offence. At the very least, he had been guilty of carelessness so gross that it was hardly inferior to downright, deliberate crime.

So the poor captain's anguish of soul was extreme, and utter, as well it might be. So keen, indeed, was his suffering, that his hair might have turned white from its severity,—a circumstance not unusual,—but in the captain's case it was not possible, since, as is well known, his hair was already as gray as it well could be, and therefore the good Captain Corbet could only suffer in secret, and occasionally wipe away the tears that dropped from his eyes with the sleeve of his venerable coat.

At length the thought occurred to him that perhaps he had not come to the right place.

To his mind, the thought was well nigh inconceivable; yet, after all, it was barely possible, and in his despair he caught at this straw. After all, navigation by dead reckoning is not the most accurate way in the world of working one's way along; and Captain Corbet felt this in an obscure and shadowy sort of way; so it need not be wondered at if he sought relief in the thought that he had possibly gone astray.

So he called upon Wade to take the helm, while he went below to make some elaborate calculations.

He did it in this way.

He first got a mug of water.

Then he seated himself by the cabin table.

Then he dipped the fore finger of his right hand in the water.

Then, with this finger, he traced certain mysterious marks upon the table.

Now, these mysterious marks were designed by this ancient mariner to represent nothing less than the coasts surrounding the Gulf of St. Lawrence. To an unprejudiced observer, this idea would never have suggested itself; but to the mind of the venerable Corbet, these marks were as plain and as intelligible as the finest outlines of the Admiralty charts engraved in steel,

and bristling with names of places. In his mind's eye he could see everything. He could see Prince Edward's Island, Cape Breton, Newfoundland, Gaspé, the Bay de Chaleur, Miramichi, and the Magdalen Islands. There, too, full and fair, in the centre of the scene, a big wet spot, made most emphatically with his thumb, showed him the spot where he had left the Petrel.

And this was Captain Corbet's chart, and this was his mode of navigating, and this was the scientific method which he adopted in order to work his way out of a difficulty. Quadrant, sextant, and other instruments of that character he did not need; he trusted to his own head, and to his finger.

It must be confessed that, on this occasion, these resources rather failed him. The puzzle seemed insoluble. In vain he obliterated the wet spot where he first stationed the Petrel. In vain he made another dab with his thumb in a second place. He could not arrive at any conclusion which was entirely satisfactory. He placed the mug of water on the table, leaned his aged head in both hands, and sat watching his chart in profound thought. A sudden sea struck the Antelope. The good vessel leaped, as was natural, at such rough treatment. As was natural, also, the mug of water leaped. Moreover, it upset. The contents poured forth, and inundated the fable. The chart was all obliterated.

At this casualty Captain Corbet rose. He betrayed no excitement, no passion. He did not swear, as some wrecked sea captains have done. He did not even utter an exclamation. He simply took his aged coat tail and wiped the water off the table very carefully, and then with his other aged coat tail he dried it, and even polished it most elaborately. The table had not been so clean for ever so long. It seemed to be astonished at itself. Captain Corbet, meanwhile, remained mild and patient. Sir Isaac Newton himself, after the burning of his Principia by his immortal little dog Diamond, was not more placid. Without a word, our captain went to the bucket, replenished the mug, returned to the table, resumed his seat, and, holding the mug in his left

hand, under the table, to prevent a recurrence of this mishap, he dipped the fore finger of his right hand into the water, and proceeded to retrace upon the table the outline of his chart. In a little while there appeared before his eyes, as plain as before, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with all the surrounding coasts—Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Gaspé, Newfoundland, the Magdalen Islands, and plain in the middle the dab of his venerable thumb representing the spot where he had left the Petrel.

But the problem remained insoluble. He was certain that he had come back to the right spot. Again and again he traced, in a thin line, made by his wet finger-nail, the course which he had taken; first, from the Petrel to the Magdalen Islands, and, secondly, from the Magdalen Islands to Miramichi, and, thirdly, from Miramichi to the place where he now was. In each case his course had, fortunately, been quite straight. Had there been head winds, it might have been different; but, as it was, the straight course which he had kept made the outlines on the table all the more simple, but at the same time they made the problem all the more complex. The ship was missing. He had left her at anchor. She could not sink. What, then, had become of her?

The first answer was the terrible one that she had gone to pieces in the storm. But this was the very one from which he was seeking to escape, and against which he sought refuge in such facts as her strength and the stiffness of a timber cargo.

But what other conclusion was there?

That he had mistaken his way?

Impossible!

On the table before him the marks that he had made confirmed him in the opinion that he was, if not on the identical spot where he had left the Petrel, at least sufficiently near to be able to see her if she still was here.

Yet here she evidently was not.

What, then, had become of her?

To this only one answer remained, and in this he sought to find comfort.

She might have dragged her anchor, and might have thereby drifted, under the pressure of the storm, far enough away to be out of sight.

But in what direction had she drifted?

The wind had been south by east. He knew that well enough. This one fact, then, showed him what course she would have taken when adrift. .

He wet his finger now for the last time. He planted it down upon the place which he had marked as the position of the Petrel, and then drew a line in the direction which he supposed might indicate the course of her drift. Then he stopped to calculate the possible distance which she might have traversed while dragging her anchor, and made a mark to represent what, under this theory, might be her present position.

Then he drew a long breath.

He then rose to his feet, and surveyed his chart for a few moments with a thoughtful face.

And now the time had come for action. He had at last a theory. His mind was made up. He hurried upon deck, and, seizing the tiller, headed the Antelope north by west, in the direction which he conjectured the drifting ship to have taken.

He had allowed between twenty and thirty miles for her drift. He had calculated that a mile an hour would be a fair allowance for a vessel that was dragging her anchor, and he did not think that the wind had been strong enough to make her drag her anchor for more than twenty hours, and certainly, as he thought, not more than thirty, at the farthest. Upon this principle he acted, and when he headed the Antelope north by west, he hoped to catch sight of the lost ship before noon.

For the Antelope, with a fair wind, could make as much as four or five miles an hour; and, after making every allowance for currents, or for leeway, she ought to do twenty miles between six o'clock in the morning

and midday. And so, full of confidence in the ability of the Antelope to do her duty, Captain Corbet took his station at the helm.

Now that a gleam of hope had appeared, he was a different man. The gleam became brighter and brighter, until at last it grew to be positive sunshine. He forgot his recent despair. The more he thought of his theory of the Petrel dragging her anchor, the more convinced he was that it was correct, and the more certain he was that he would ultimately catch sight of her.

And so he kept on his course, with his eyes fixed on the horizon before him, anxiously awaiting the time when he would descry the masts of the lost vessel becoming gradually defined against the sky.

Hour after hour passed.

The Antelope sailed on.

Midday came.

The Antelope had traversed the distance which her commander had allotted for the utmost possible drift of the Petrel.

Yet not the slightest sign of the Petrel had appeared.

The hopes upon which Captain Corbet had been relying gradually sank under him. When midday came, and the masts of the Petrel did not appear, hope sank away, and despondency came, and despondency deepened into despair.

All that he had felt at early dawn, when he first looked abroad upon the seas and found her not, now came back to him,—all the self-reproach, all the remorse, all the anguish of soul.

He stood at the helm, and let the Antelope pass onward, but there was no longer any hope in his mind. He was overwhelmed, and now even the possibility of finding her seemed to be taken away.

All this time the wind had gone on increasing in violence, and the sea had risen more and more. For himself and for the Antelope Captain Corbet did not care; but the lowery sky and the stormy sea seemed terrible to him, for they spoke to him of the lost boys, and told a tale of horror.

XVIII.

The venerable but very unfortunate, Corbet—The Antelope lies to.—Emotions of her despairing Commander.—Night and Morning.—The Fishing Schooner,—An old Acquaintance appears, and puts the old, old Question.—Corbet overwhelmed.—He confesses all.—Tremendous Effect on Captain Tobias Ferguson.—His Selfcommand.—Considering the Situation.—Wind and Tide.—Theories as to the Position of the lost Ones.—Up Sail and after.—The last Charge to Captain Corbet.

THE unfortunate Corbet thus found himself in a state of despair. The situation, indeed; could not possibly be worse. The ship was gone; and where? Who could tell? Certainly not he. He had exhausted all his resources. From the cabin table he was unable to elicit any further information, nor could his aged brain furnish forth intellectual power which was at all adequate to the problem before it. He was alone. He had none to help him. With Wade he did not offer to take counsel, feeling, perhaps, that Wade would be about as useful in this emergency as the Antelope's pump.

Meanwhile the storm increased, and Captain Corbet felt himself unable to contend with it. The tattered old sails of the Antelope were double-reefed, but seemed every moment about to fly into ribbons. There was no object in keeping his present course any longer; and so he decided, in view of the storm and his own indecision, to lie to. And now the Antelope tossed, and pitched, and kicked, and bounded beneath Captain Corbet,

"like a steed
That knows its rider,"

and Wade went below, and took refuge in sleep; and the good, the brave, yet the unhappy Corbet took up his position upon the windlass, and bestriding it, he sat for hours peering into space. There were no thoughts whatever in his mind. He tried not to speculate, he attempted not to solve the problem; but there was, deep down in his soul, a dark, drear sense of desolation, a woful feeling of remorse and of despair. Nothing attracted his attention on that wide sea or troubled sky; not the waste of foaming waters, not the giant masses of storm clouds, nor yet that fishing schooner, which, only a few miles off was also, like the Antelope, lying to. Captain Corbet did not notice this stranger; he did not speculate upon the cause of her presence; he did not see that she was the identical vessel that he had noticed before, and therefore did not wonder why it was that he had been followed so long and so persistently.

So he sat on the windlass, and gazed forth into illimitable space.

And the long, long hours passed away.

Evening came.

Deepening into night.

Night, and storm, and darkness came down, and the Antelope tossed, and plunged, and kicked, and jumped; yet the sleepless Corbet remained on deck, occasionally shifting his position, but still overwhelmed by his misery.

Towards midnight the storm abated. Corbet waited a few hours longer, and then stole below, hoping to forget his misery and relieve his fatigues by a little sleep.

In vain.

The air of the cabin seemed to suffocate him. Sleep was impossible. His distressing thoughts seemed to drive him into a fever; he tried hard and for a long time to overcome them, and finally succeeded in getting a short nap.

By this time it was dawn, and the good captain rose, and went upon deck, feeling dejected and miserable.

He looked out over the waters, and noticed that the strange schooner was bearing down straight towards him. She was coming bows on, so that at first he did not know her from any other vessel; but at length she came up, and hove to close by, disclosing the symmetrical hull, the beautiful lines, the slender, tapering masts, and the swelling, snow-white canvas of the Fawn. At the same moment he saw a boat drop alongside, and into this leaped Captain Tobias Ferguson, who at once pulled to the Antelope, and in a few minutes stood on board.

The last time that he had seen Captain Ferguson he had looked upon him in the light of a busybody, a vexatious and too inquisitive spy, a persecutor and a tormentor. But now circumstances had changed so utterly, and Captain Corbet's sufferings both of mind and body had been so acute, that the once dreaded Ferguson appeared to him almost equal to some Heaven-sent deliverer. His wan face flushed with joy; he could not speak; tears burst from his eyes; and seizing Ferguson's hand in both of his, he clasped it tight.

Ferguson darted over him one swift, keen glance that took in everything, but made no comment upon the emotion that was so visible.

"Well," said he, "we're bound to meet again. The fact is, I was bound not to lose sight of you. I tell you I got those boys on my brain, and couldn't get them out no how. I knew you were going to find them, or to try to find them. I believed they were all in danger, and so I up sail and followed. And a precious hard job that following was. Why, it was like making a race-horse follow a snail. I had to turn back every other mile or so, and go away. I saw you lie to yesterday, so I lay to; and here I am this morning, right side up, and ready to repeat my question, Where are the boys? So come, now, old man; no humbug, no shuffling. You're in a fix. I know it well enough.

You've lost the boys. Very well. I'll help you find 'em. So, now, make a clean breast of it, and tell me all about it from the very beginning."

Saying this, Ferguson seated himself on the taffrail, and drawing forth a cigar, lighted it, and waited for Captain Corbet to begin.

But for Captain Corbet there was the difficulty. How could he begin? How could he tell the miserable story of his madness and his folly? of the ignorant confidence of the poor boys? of his culpable and guilty negligence, doubly guilty, since he had deserted them not only once in leaving the ship, but a second time in sailing away from the Magdalen Islands? And for what purpose? Even had he reached the ship with the sails, could he really have saved her? Yet here stood his inquisitor, and this time his questions must be answered.

"Wal," began Captain Corbet, in a tremulous voice, "I left em—"

"Yes."

"I—I—left—left—em—"

"Well?"

"I '—I—left em, you know."

"So you said three times; but I knew that before. The question is, Where?"

"Aboard a ship."

"Aboard a ship?"

"Yes."

"What ship? Where?"

"Somewhar's about here."

"About here? But what ship?"

"She—she—she—was—she—she was—wa-wa-water-logged."

At this Ferguson started to his feet, almost leaping in the air as he did so. For a moment he regarded the unhappy Corbet with an expression of

mingled horror and incredulity.

“You don’t mean it!” he said, at length.

Captain Corbet sighed.

“What?” cried Ferguson. “Were you mad? Were they mad? Were you all raving, stark, staring distracted? What were you all thinking of? A water-logged ship! Why, do you mean to stand there in your boots, look me in the face, and tell me that about the boys?”

Captain Corbet trembled from head to foot.

“A water-logged ship! Why, you might as well tell me you pitched them all overboard and drowned them.”

Captain Corbet shuddered, and turned away.

Ferguson laid his hand upon his shoulder.

“Come,” said he, more quietly, “you couldn’t have been such a fool! You must have considered that the boys had some chance. What sort of a ship was she? What was her cargo?”

“Timber,” said the mournful Corbet in a melancholy wail.

Ferguson’s face brightened.

“You’re sure of that?”

“Gospel sure.”

“Not deals, now, or laths, or palings, or pickets, or battens, or anything of that sort?”

“I saw the timber—white pine.”

“Well, that’s better; that gives them a chance. I’ve heard say that a timber ship’ll float for years, if she’s any kind of a ship at all; and so, perhaps, this one is drifting.”

Captain Corbet shook his head.

“Why not?” asked Ferguson, noticing the movement.

“I anchored her.”

“Anchored her?”

“Yes.”

“Anchored what? The timber ship?”

“Yes.”

“Anchored her? That’s queer! And where?”

“Why, somewhars about twenty mile or so back.”

“Somewhere about twenty mile or so back!” repeated Ferguson. “Why, the man’s mad! See here, old man; what do you mean by anchoring hereabouts? Did you try soundings?”

“Wal, n-n-no.”

“Are you aware that the bottom is several miles down below, and that all the chains and ropes of that ship, if they were all tied together in one line, wouldn’t begin to reach half way?”

“Wal, now, raily, I hadn’t any idee. I jest kine o’ dropped anchor to hold the ship till I got back.”

“Well, old man,” said Ferguson, “I’ve got a very good general idea of your proceedings; but I want a few more particulars, so that I can judge for myself about the poor lads. So I’ll trouble you to make a clean breast of it, and in particular to let me know why you kept so close when I asked you about it before. Close? Why, if you’d been decoying those boys out there on purpose to get rid of them, you couldn’t have fought shy of my questions than you did.”

Upon this Captain Corbet proceeded, as Ferguson called it, to “make a clean breast of it.” He began at the first, told about their failure in provisions, their discovery of the ship, and his project of saving her. He explained all about his reticence on the subject at the Magdalen Islands, and the cause of his voyage to Miramichi. All this was accompanied with

frequent interruptions, expressive of self-reproach, exculpation, remorse, misery, and pitiable attempts at excusing his conduct.

Ferguson listened to all without expressing any opinion, merely asking a question for information here and there; and at the close of Captain Corbet's confession, he remained forborne a considerable time buried in profound reflection.

"Well," said he, "the whole story is one that won't bear criticism. I won't begin. If I did, you'd hear a little of the tallest swearing that ever came to your ears. No, old man; I've got a wicked temper, and I won't get on that subject. The thing that you and me have got to do is, to see what can be done about those boys, and then to do it right straight off. That's what we've got to do; and when I say *we*, I mean *myself*, for you appear to have done about as much mischief as is needful for one lifetime."

Ferguson now began to pace the deck, and kept this up for about half an hour, at the end of which time he resumed his seat on the taffrail. Captain Corbet watched him with wistful eyes, and in deep suspense; yet there was already upon his venerable face somewhat less of grief, for he felt a strange confidence in this eager, energetic, active, strong man, whose pertinacity had been so extraordinary, and whose singular affection for the boys had been so true and so tender.

"I'm beginning," said Ferguson, at length, "I'm beginning to see my way towards action, and that's something; though whether it'll result in anything is more than I can begin to say.

"In the first place, I go on the theory that this timber ship didn't sink; that she stood this blow as solid as though she was carved out of a single stick.

"In the second place, I scout your idea of anchoring her. That is rank, raving insanity. To anchor a ship in three miles of water! Old man, go home; you have no business on the sea.

“So she’s been drifting; yes, drifting. She was drifting when you found her, and drifting when you left her. Where she was you can’t tell, seeing that you can’t take an observation, and didn’t take one. So we’re all astray there, and I can only calculate her probable position from the course you took to the Magdalen Islands, and the time occupied in making the trip by that astonishing old tub of yours, that disgraces and ridicules the respectable name of Antelope.

“Very well. Now say she’s afloat, and has been drifting. The question is, Where has she drifted to? She probably was found by you somewhere about here. That was about a week ago. Well, after the calm was over, then came a wind. That wind was a south-easter. It got up at last into a storm, like the blow last night.

“Now, there are two things to be considered.

“First, the wind.

“Second, the current.

“First, as to the wind. It was a steady southeaster for nearly a week, ending in a hard blow. That wind has had a tendency to blow her over in that direction—over there, nor’-west. In that direction she must have been steadily pushed, unless there was something to prevent, some ocean currents or other.

“And this brings us to the next point—the currents.

“Now, over there, about thirty miles south of this, there is a current setting out into the Atlantic from the River St. Lawrence; and up there, thirty miles to the north, there is considerable of a current, that runs up into the Straits of Belle Isle. Just round about here there is a sort of eddy, or a back current, that flows towards the Island of Anticosti. Now, that happens to be the identical place towards which the wind would carry her. So, you see, granting that the Petrel has remained afloat, the wind and the currents must both have acted on her in such a way as to carry her to that desert

island, that horrible, howling wilderness, that abomination of desolation, that graveyard of ships and seamen—Anticosti.”

At this intelligence, Captain Corbet’s heart once more sank within him.

“Anti—Anticosti!” he murmured, in a trembling voice.

“Yes, Anticosti. And I ain’t surprised, not a bit surprised,” said Ferguson. “I said so. I prophesied it. I was sure of it. I read it in their faces at Magdalen. When I saw that rotten old tub, and those youngsters, something told me they were going to wind up by getting on Anticosti. When I saw you come back to Magdalen, I was sure of it. I followed you to Miramichi to find out; and ever since I’ve been following you, I’ve had Anticosti in my mind, as the only place I was bound to.”

Captain Corbet drew a long breath.

“Wal,” said he, “at any rate, it’s better for them than bein—bein—at—at the bottom of the sea.”

“Tain’t any better, if they’ve been smashed against the rocks of Anticosti in last night’s gale,” retorted Ferguson, who was not willing that Captain Corbet should recover from his anxiety too soon.

“But mayn’t she—mayn’t she—catch?”

“Catch?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Why—her—her anchor. It’s been down all the time. That thar anchor had ought to catch hold of somethin.”

Ferguson slapped his thighs with both hands with tremendous force.

“You’re right! right are you, old man, for once! For the moment, I had forgotten about the anchor. That saves them. That anchor’s bound to catch; for, after all, I don’t think last night’s storm was bad enough to make her

drag. At any rate, it gives them a chance, And now—off we go.” With these words, Ferguson jumped into his boat.

He turned his head once more. “Old man, mark me—? all you’ve got to do is to follow straight after me.”

“But you’ll get away in the night.”

“So I will. Well, then, you head straight nothe-west and by nothe. I’ll pick you up some time tomorrow. We’ll cruise along the shore of Anticosti till we find the ship.”

With these words, Ferguson seized the oars. A dozen strokes brought him alongside of his own schooner. He leaped on board, and the boat was hauled up astern.

In a few moments the Fawn spread her snow-white wings, and headed away “nothe-west and by nothe.”

The Antelope followed.

Before evening the Fawn was out of sight.

But Captain Corbet stood calmly and confidently at the helm, and steered “nothe-west and by nothe.” His despair had subsided, leaving only a mild melancholy that was not unbecoming; but his soul was full of hope, for he had confidence in Ferguson.

XIX.

The Cove.—The grassy Knoll.—The Brook.—A Reconnoitre.—The Bed of the Brook.—Far up into the Country.—A rough Road.—Return.—The Aroma of the strange Dinner.—Solomon again in his Glory.—A great Surprise.—A Resolution.—Drawing of Lots.—The fated Two.—Last Visit to the Petrel.—Final Preparations.—A sound Sleep.—The Embarkation. —The white Sail lost to View..

THE cove into which they pulled seemed to the boys to be the most beautiful place that they had ever seen. Such a thought was natural, after such a passage from the wrecked ship, and from the terrors of the sea to this peaceful and sheltered nook; and, indeed, more unprejudiced observers might have been charmed with such a place. The hills encircled it, covered with trees; the brook babbled over pebbles into the sea; the grassy knoll rose invitingly in front of them; while behind them was the sea, upon which the ship floated low in the water. The boys looked upon this with enthusiastic delight; but Solomon's face was turned away; he was bowed down low, and staring intently into the water. That water was astonishingly clear and transparent; and Solomon found an attractiveness in the sea bottom which made all other things seem dull and commonplace. He said nothing, however, and the boys were too much taken up with the beauties of the place to notice his attitude.

In a few minutes the biscuit and the chest of provisions were put ashore; and Solomon's first act was to take the former out of the barrel and spread them out over the grass, so that they might dry in the sun. But the boys had other aims. Their first desire was to explore the country; and as they knew well from past experience how easy it was to get lost in the woods, they

sought about, first of all, for some sort of a path or trail. Nothing of the kind could be seen. Phil then suggested going up the bed of the brook. His forest experiences had made him far more fruitful in resources than any of them; and the stream occurred to him at once as the readiest way of passing through the impenetrable forest.

Accordingly they all set forth by this path. The brook was not very wide, and the trees almost met overhead; the water was only a few inches in depth, chiefly composed of gravel, and occasionally interspersed with larger masses, which offered a succession of stepping-stones. As they went along, they never ceased to look most carefully in all directions for any traces of a path, however faint. The utter absence of anything of the sort excited their surprise, but only led them to continue their journey still farther. The way at length grew more difficult. They came to a rising ground, where the brook had worn a bed for itself. Here the path became rough, and full of mud and clay. Every few steps they came to trees which had fallen across. But they worked their way along bravely, and at length reached the top of the rising ground. Here they found themselves in the forest, with nothing visible on every side but spruce trees of moderate size. They walked on for two or three hours, traversing fallen trees, and rocks, and mud; but at length they came to a place where the brook lost itself in a swampy soil. Here there was a dense and impenetrable underbrush, and no longer even such a pathway as the bed of the brook had afforded. They all saw that it was impossible to proceed any farther, and therefore they concluded to return.

Their calculations led them to suppose that they had gone many miles; yet in all that distance they had found no trace whatever of any human beings. They had not come upon even the rudest trail. This fact impressed them all very forcibly. Hitherto, each one had had a different theory as to the country; and no less than five provinces were claimed, in order to support the theory of each. But they all knew that it would be difficult indeed to find a place in any one of those five provinces, where a march

could be made for so great a distance, without encountering some signs of humanity, past, if not present. In all of them the woods had been scoured by lumbering parties, or, at least, by hunting parties; and if there were no paths made by lumbermen, there might be found, at least, some trail. Pat, of course, gave up the Magdalen Islands; Bruce gave up Miramichi; Tom, Prince Edward's Island; and Bart, Cape Breton. There remained, then, the belief of Phil in Newfoundland, and that of Arthur in Gaspé. Upon these two localities the party divided; and though in the laborious journey back they were too much fatigued to expend their breath in argument, yet, when they did reach their journey's end, they were all prepared for it.

But all argument was postponed for the present by the advent of dinner.

It was late when they got back. They had eaten nothing since breakfast. They found Solomon waiting for them most impatiently. He had kindled a fire under a rock, and had taken the trouble to go back to the ship for some pots, kettles, and pans. A pot was even now hanging over the fire, and when they reached the place, there issued from this pot a stream so savory, so aromatic, so odoriferous, and so enticing, that in an instant every other thought vanished from their minds.

"O, Solomon," was the cry, "what is it that you've got there?"

And they rushed up to the place.

But Solomon, brandishing a huge ladle, waved them back with solemn dignity.

"You look heah, chilen; don't you go bodder yer heads bout dis yer; it's a kine o' soup dat I ben a concoctin'; an you'll know when de time comes. Jes now, you'd all bes lie down ober dar, an res yourselves. I ben worritin' bout you for ten hour an more. You didn't ought to go for to 'crease de 'ziety ob dis ole man; cos he ain't able to hole up. But nebber mind; you're all safe an soun; so now you all jes lay by a few minutes, an I'll walk dis yer dish off de hook in no time."

The boys respected Solomon's whim, and fell back. A few dishes, with spoons, were lying on the grass, and towards these they allowed themselves to drift, and then flung their weary frames upon the ground near by.

Solomon was true to his word. He did not keep them long waiting. In a short time he took the pot off the fire, and brought it towards them. He then filled each of the dishes in silence.

The savory steam rose up; its odor was now unmistakable. Scarce able to believe the evidence of the sense of smell, they hurried to appeal to that of taste. One mouthful was enough. A cry of joy burst from them all, followed by,—

“Oysters! Oyster stew! O, glorious! Solomon, where in the world did you find these?”

Solomon's eyes beamed with quiet exultation; he drew a long breath of silent rapture, and gently rubbed his-old hands together. For a few moments his emotions deprived him of the power of utterance; but at length he found voice.

“Well, chilen, to tell de troof, I intended it as a great 'prise, for you. I saw dem dis yer mornin when we landed, and didn't say nuffin. But dar dey is—dem's um. De cove is full; nuff heah to feed a ship's company ten years; an we's boun to feed on de fat ob de lan so long as we stick to dis yer place. Dat's so; mind I tell you. Yes, sir.” After such a repast as this, they all felt much more able to grapple with the difficulties of their situation. And now once more arose the question, what land this was upon which they had been thrown.

“Of course,” said Arthur, “there's no use now to talk about the Magdalen Islands, or Prince Edward's Island, or Cape Breton, or even Miramichi. This coast lies east and west, as we saw while we were drifting towards it. We came from a southeast direction towards it; we can tell now. There's the west, where the sun is soon going to set, and there's the south. Now, my

idea is, that this must be Gaspé. Besides, the desolation of the country shows that it must be Gaspé.”

Phil shook his head.

“Gaspé doesn’t lie east and west,” said he; “and it may just as well be Miramichi as Gaspé. The fact is, it can’t be either of them. It must be Newfoundland. We’ve drifted up from the south, and have been driven upon these shores. I can’t imagine where it is, but I rather think it may be the south-west corner of the island. If that is right, then settlements ought to be not very far away; only we can’t get to them by land. There’s St. Pierre’s Island east, and there’s the Bay of Islands.”

“It’s rather a bad lookout’ for us,” said Tom, “if there isn’t any settlement nearer than St. Pierre or the Bay of Islands. Why, there are hundreds of miles of the roughest coast in the world lying between. We may be on the coast, as you say; somewhere between Cape Ray and Fortune’s Bay; but how we are ever to get to any settlement is a little beyond me.”

“There’s the boat,” said Bart.

“What can we do with the boat?” said Tom. “We have no oars. I don’t feel inclined to set out on a long journey with paddles like those. They do very well to land a shipwrecked party, but are hardly the things to start off with on a sea voyage. I tried going about with a bit of board once, and didn’t find, that it worked very well.”

“O, we can rig up a sail. We can get something on board the Petrel that’ll do—some quilts, or, better yet, some sheets.”

“Sheets aren’t big enough,” said Arthur.

“Well, we can sew two or three of them together. They’re good, strong sheets, and they’ll do very well for the boat. As for a mast, why, we can find a very good one here in the woods in five minutes.”

“But what direction should we take?”

“Well, that’s a question that requires a good deal of careful consideration.”

“My opinion is,” said Tom, “that it is by far the best to sail east. If we sail west, we could scarce hope to meet with any one till we got to the Bay of Islands; and we’d have to double Cape Bay,—which is altogether too dangerous a thing for a little boat like this. But if we go east, we’ll have more chances of shelter in case of storms, and we’ll be sure to reach some sort of settlement, either St. Pierre or some fishing stations on the main land, or in Fortune’s Bay.”

“East, then, is the course,” said Bart. “And now, who of us shall go? We’d better not all go.”

“Well, no; I suppose not.”

“Of course not,” said Bruce. “The boat isn’t large enough. Two will be plenty. The rest of us can stay here.”

“If the boat goes,” said Arthur, “those of us who stay behind won’t be able to go on board the ship.’ Shall we stay aboard or ashore?”

“For my part,” said Pat, “I won’t put a fut aboard that ship again as long as I live.”

“I’ll stay here, or else go in the boat,” said Phil. “I’m ready to do either.”

“I’m quite of Pat’s opinion,” said Arthur.

“Well, I’m not anxious to visit the ship again,” said Bart, “not even as a salvor, and I certainly would not stay aboard of her.”

“It’s too comfortable here altogether,” said Tom.

“And so say I,” said Bruce. “The fact is, boys, we’re all of one mind about the Petrel. Her glory is departed; and after that night in the mizzen-top, we don’t fancy trying any other nights.”

“Fortunately,” said Tom, “the wind has changed. It’ll be fair for the boat if she goes east.”

“But who are to go?” said Phil.

“I think,” said Bruce, “that the best way will be to draw lots. What do you say, boys?”

To this proposal they all assented. Bruce thereupon took some bits of grass, and broke them up into different lengths.

“Two of these,” said he, “are short; the rest are long. Those who draw the short ones are to go in the boat. Will that do?”

“All right.”

Upon this Bruce put the pieces of grass in his hat, stirred them about; and then laid the hat in the midst. Each one then shut his eyes and took a piece of grass from the hat. Then they all held them forth.

And it was seen that the two shortest pieces had been drawn by Arthur and Tom.

Upon this every one of the other boys offered to exchange places with either one of these, and go in his stead. But Arthur and Tom were both firm in their refusal.

“What are you going to take with you?” asked Bart.

“Well,” said Arthur, “first of all, we’ll need to have a sail. I think we’d better make a raid on the Petrel at once, and hunt up some sheets. Tom and I will go, and you fellows might find a couple of sticks that’ll do for the mast and pole.”

“O, by the way,” said Bart, “if you’re going aboard, you’d better bring back some more biscuit. We won’t have enough.”

“I’ll go and help you,” said Bruce.

“And I too,” said Phil.

The boys now pushed off,—Arthur, and Tom, and Bruce, and Phil. In about a quarter of an hour they reached the ship, and boarded her. They noticed now that the change of the wind had caused a corresponding change

of position. She had swung round at her anchor, and was very much nearer the headland before spoken of.

“It’s my opinion,” said Tom, “that she’s been dragging her anchor a little.”

“She’s certainly a good deal nearer the shore,” said Arthur.

“She’s so deep down,” said Bruce, “that she’ll touch bottom if she drags much longer,—and a strong breeze might do it too.”

“If it does,” said Phil, “then good by forever to her. A timber ship may hold together as long as she keeps in deep water; but these rocks would soon grind her to powder, if she touched them.”

“Let her grind,” say I.

“Yes. I give up my share of the salvage.”

“The best place for her will be the bottom of the sea.”

“At any rate, we’ll make one final haul, boys, and take ashore everything that may be needed at all.”

The boys now hurried to complete their preparations, for the sun was not more than one half hour above the horizon, and there was no time to spare. Arthur went to secure the sails. He selected a half dozen of the largest sheets, and flung them into the boat. They were the coarsest and strongest which he could find. Tom found some sail needles and sail twine in a drawer in the pantry, where he remembered having seen them before.

They then rolled out four barrels of biscuit, and put them on board the boat. After this they put six hams in her, and all the rest of the potted meat, and canned vegetables, and other dainties. Phil looked with longing eyes at the galley stove, but concluded that it was best not to try to convey that ashore. Finally, they took all the blankets, for they were articles that promised to be always useful.

With this cargo they returned to the shore.

Arthur then went to work at his sail, while Tom went to see about the mast. He found that Bart had already nearly finished one that was very suitable. In smoothing this, in fitting it into the boat, and in shaping a pole, another hour or so was taken up. Meanwhile Arthur had found that three of the sheets were large enough. These he stitched together, and afterwards cut it the right shape.

It was then secured to the mast, and the little boat was all ready for her voyage.

But they had still more preparations to make. First of all, the spy-glass, which had been brought ashore in the chest, was deposited in the boat. Then, a barrel of the biscuit that Solomon had dried in the sun was put on board, together with a sufficient supply of potted meats. A jug of water was considered sufficient, as they expected to land from time to time, and would be able to replenish it, if it should be necessary. For warmth or shelter, three or four blankets, which the careful forethought of Solomon had dried in front of the blazing fire, were deemed amply sufficient.

Before these were completed it was dark. Of course they had no intention of setting off that evening, though Tom was at first of the opinion that they had better start, and take advantage of so fine a night. But the others overruled him, and expressed the opinion that they had better sail by night as little as possible.

Solomon kept the fire heaped high with fuel, not for the purposes of warmth, for the air was balmy and pleasant, but more for the sake of cheerfulness. He had found no difficulty in procuring dry wood from the fallen trees in the forest. Brightly the flames leaped up, throwing a pleasant glow over the surrounding scene. The contrast between this evening and the evening of the previous day was thought of and felt by all; and more than once there arose from the warm, grateful hearts of these honest lads a prayer of thankfulness to that Being who had heard their cry in the stormy sea, and had saved them from destruction.

Early the next morning they were all awake. Solomon already had breakfast prepared. It was a bright and beautiful morning. The little cove looked charming. But on the sea the Petrel still floated; but they were all sure that she was nearer than ever to the headland.

A pleasant breeze was blowing, and all things promised well. Arthur and Tom finished their breakfast, and then, bidding all the rest good by, they embarked, and pushed off.

The wind filled the sail, and the little boat moved out of the cove, and away to sea. The boys watched their departing friends in solemn silence, until the white sail disappeared around the headland.

XX.

Trouble and Consolation.—A fresh Proposal.—The Building of the Camp.—Hard Work.—The triumphant Result.—Blisters and Balsam.—A new Surprise by Solomon.—Illumination.—The rising Wind.—They go forth to explore.—The impending Fate of the Petrel.—Wind and Wave.—A rough Resting-place.—What will be the Fate of the Ship?—The Headland.—The View.—Where are our departed Friends?

AFTER the little white sail had disappeared around the headland, the boys stood in silence for some time. The departure of Arthur and Tom had made a perceptible breach in their numbers, and the thought that they had gone on a long, an uncertain, and a perilous expedition seemed to throw an air of gloom over those who remained behind.

Bart was the first to rouse himself.

“Seventy-four hours, with this wind; ought to do it,” said he.

“Do what?” asked Bruce.

“Well,” said Bart, “I’ve been making a calculation. I don’t see how St. Pierre can be more than a hundred miles from here at the very farthest. Now, this breeze ought to take them four or five miles an hour, and if they went on without stopping, they certainly ought to reach St. Pierre by this time to-morrow, even if they don’t find any settlements or any fishing vessels on the way.”

“Yes; but they won’t find it so easy to get back,” said Bruce.

“O, yes, they will,” said Bart. “They won’t have to work their own way back. They’ll get a schooner, and have no trouble.”

“Well,” said Bruce, “we’ll have to allow a week, at least.”

“Certainly,” said Phil. “It won’t do for us to tie them down to two days. If we do, we’ll be all the time in a fever, and watch for them day and night. I’m determined not to expect them at all this time.”

“Sure an that’s the wisest resolution we can make, so it is,” said Pat, sedately; “and, be the same token, it’s a month I’m goin to allow, so it is; an, what’s more, I’m thinkin we’ll betther be afther buildin a bit of a house, or tint, or camp.”

“A camp!” cried Bart. “Hurrah! that’s the very thing.”

“Yes,” cried Phil; “just like the camp in the woods behind the hill at Grand Pré.”

“The very best thing we could think of,” said Bruce. “It’ll give us all something to do, and at the same time it’s a positive necessity.”

“It’s a pity we hadn’t some of that spare lumber on board the Petrel,” said Bart.

“Well,” said Phil, “I think we’ll have it all before another day; for, from present appearances, she’ll be on the rocks soon; and if so, there’ll be a general free delivery of her cargo all along the beach. But we needn’t wait for that.”

“Sure an there’s nothin betther,” said Pat, “thin good honist spruce. We can get sticks enough all around us, an have a camp that’ll be as warrum, and as dhry, and as whowlsome as iver was, so we will.”

There was a hatchet which had been brought ashore in the chest, and had already done good service in making the masts for the boat. This was now made use of for the purpose of getting the necessary supply of poles and brush for the camp. As there was only one hatchet, they could not of course cut the brush quite so fast as was desirable; but Bruce cut pretty quickly, and kept two of them well employed in carrying the poles and brush to the grassy knoll. Phil and Pat did this work while Bart occupied himself with

the preparation of the ground for the erection of the camp. He first selected a place that seemed suitable, where there was a level space, about twelve feet square. Then he sharpened one of the stakes, and cutting off a portion of it, about three feet long, he hardened the point by burning it in the fire. He then marked out the line of foundation, and made holes in the ground all around the marked space, so that the stakes might be inserted without any delay. Fortunately there were no stones to interfere with his work. The ground was sandy, and he drove his stake in without any difficulty.

In this way they worked until noon, when Solomon called them to dinner. All the boys were amazed at finding that the time had passed so rapidly; and they saw by this a fresh and striking example of the importance of having some pleasant occupation in life. It had been for want of this, to a great extent, that their time had dragged along so slowly, first during the famine on board the Antelope, and afterwards on board the Petrel.

After dinner they examined their work, and concluded that the immense heap of stakes and brushwood ought to suffice for the needs of any ordinary camp; so now they proceeded to the important task of its erection.

Bart had made a double row of holes around four sides, which were intended to enclose the camp. These holes were about a foot apart, and the rows were separated by a space of about three inches.

The next task was to prepare the stakes. These were sharpened, and cut about seven feet long; and as fast as each one was prepared, it was inserted as tightly as possible in one of the holes. Before long all the stakes were set up, and the outline of the camp became dimly visible. Bart and Phil now went off in search of roots, which might serve the purpose of cords, to bind together those portions of the frame which needed securing, leaving Bruce and Pat at work preparing other stakes, the one with his hatchet, and the other with a knife. The roots were found without any difficulty, most of them belonging to a species of dwarf willow, or osier, and they were as flexible and as strong as the stoutest cord.

The next thing was to take four long poles, and bind these along the top of each row of stakes, so as to form the eaves of the camp. When all these were secured, the framework was quite as strong as was necessary.

It now remained to form the roof. This was a matter of some difficulty, but was at length successfully achieved. They had all had so much practice in camp-building, that there was but little hesitation at any stage of the proceedings. The way in which the roof was erected was so ingenious that it deserves to be explained. They procured two stout poles, about fifteen feet long, which they put at each end of the structure, binding each firmly in its place, and leaving at the top a fork, formed from the projecting stump of one of the severed branches. Across these, and resting on these forks, they laid their ridge-pole, and bound this firmly in its place. To make it still stronger, they set up a third support in the middle of the camp, and thus made the ridge-pole firm enough to bear the weight of any of them.

After this they proceeded to lay a row of poles along from the eaves to the ridge-pole, and others again intersecting these. Thus they formed a framework close enough and strong enough to admit of brush being placed upon it, and this they proceeded to lay there after the manner of thatch. The roof was pretty steep, and the spruce brush was so smooth, and was laid on so compactly, that it could have resisted any ordinary rain storm.

The remainder of their task was easy enough, the roof and frame having been by far the most troublesome. One side was allotted to each, and the work was interweaving spruce brush along the stakes. The space was twelve feet long by six high. They began from the ground, and went upward; and at length this was finished.

There was still an open space at each gable end, but it was their intention to leave windows here. Poles were fastened in such a way that a square space was left in each gable, which admitted an ample amount of light, and the remainder was filled in with brush, like the sides. The door, of course, had been attended to in the construction of the frame.

It had been hard work, but they were all adepts at the business, and knew exactly how to do each thing. The consequence was, that by sundown their camp was all completed, and only needed a few finishing touches, which could very well be postponed till the following day.

They all sat down to their evening repast with the consciousness that they had passed a well-spent day. Solomon had done his duty, as usual, with a minute conscientiousness, and a painful care of the smallest details, which was evinced by the exquisite flavor of the oyster stew. The chief regret that they had was, that Arthur and Tom were not there to share it.

After tea none of them ventured to move. They were more utterly fagged out than they ever remembered to have been in the whole course of their lives. There had, of course, been times when they had been more exhausted, and Phil could tell a tale of weariness which might have shamed his present feelings; but for the fatigue resulting from sheer hard work, they never knew anything that had equalled this. Their hands were all covered with blisters and balsam, while an additional air of shabbiness had been given to them by new rents and tatters in their clothes.

After sunset they noticed that the wind was stronger and the sea rougher. The Petrel had moved also still farther in to the shore.

“Another night’ll finish her,” said Bruce, “if this wind continues.”

“I hope they’ll land,” said Bart, thinking of Arthur and Tom.

“Well, as to that,” said Bruce, “it seems to me that they won’t feel inclined to sail all night; and they’ll land, if they only can; but the trouble is, they may find themselves off some coast where no landing can be made.”

“I dare say,” said Bart, thoughtfully, “that the coast is rough enough all along, for most of the way; but then, fortunately, this wind is off the land; so they’ll be all right. The danger would be if it was in any other direction. As it is, the closer they keep in to the shore, the safer they’ll be; and, in fact, the safest place for them would be close in under the highest cliffs.”

“Well, that certainly is a consolation,” said Bruce, with a sigh of relief. “I’ve been a good deal bothered all the afternoon, for I noticed that the wind was rising. I rather think you’re in the right of it, Bart, and I’m glad enough that you thought of that.”

“O, they’re all right,” said Phil, “as long as the wind is this way.”

“The throuble is,” said Pat, “they might have to go round some headland, and thin they’d catch it, hot and heavy.”

“O, they wouldn’t try it if it was too rough,” said Bart. “They’d haul up ashore, and wait till the wind went down. The fact is, they’ll do just as any of us would do in the same circumstances. Neither Arthur nor Tom is inclined to run any risks. They know that there’s no hurry, that we’ve got lots of provisions. They’ve got a good supply, too, and so they’ll take it easy. My opinion is, they both landed two or three hours ago, hauled up their boat high and dry, picked up some drift wood, and are at this moment sitting in front of a roaring fire, calmly discussing what had best be done tomorrow.”

This discussion about the fate of their two absent friends made them all feel quite at their ease once more, and soon after they went to bed inside of the camp.

Here they found a pleasant surprise awaiting them, which had been devised by Solomon. He had taken the fat out of some of the jars of potted meat, and put it in two cups. In these he had ingeniously arranged floating wicks, and lighted them. So now, as the boys entered, they were surprised at a cheerful glow inside. At first they were alarmed, and thought the camp was on fire; but a second look showed them the truth.

Their camp now seemed very cheerful indeed. The ground was quite dry, and each one rolled himself up in his blanket, which formed their only preparation for bed. Here, reclining on the soft grass, with the green walls

of their camp encircling them, they chatted pleasantly for a short time, and at length, one by one, dropped off into sound and refreshing slumbers.

On awaking they all hurried forth. They found that the wind had increased, and must have been increasing all night. Close in under the shore the water was smooth enough, but a mile outside it began to roughen, and a white line of breakers shone along the base of the headland.

But it was the Petrel that now engaged all their attention. She had been forced in to within a stone's throw of the shore, and had evidently touched bottom, for she lay a little over on one side. She had reached a place where the sea felt the effect of the wind, and the waves broke over her decks. She rose and fell occasionally, with a slow, heavy movement, at the force of the waves that beat upon her. The shore immediately opposite the place where she had grounded was all white with foam, and it seemed as if the bottom where she touched might be strewn with rough, jagged rocks.

Hard indeed was the resting-place to which the Petrel had come after so long a wandering!

The boys looked on in silence. They did not exactly lament the fate which seemed to impend over her, but, at the same time, they felt as though, in some way, it might be a disaster to themselves. For the Petrel, as long as she had floated, had served, at least, as a sort of signal by which any passing vessel might be attracted; whereas, if she were destroyed, their chance of rescue in that way grew less. They also felt that the large store of provisions and supplies on board might yet be needed; and in case of the unsuccessful return of Arthur and Tom, they might need to visit her once more. But now all hope of this seemed at an end. In this half-developed regret at her fate, there was, however, no thought of salvage; that subject was forgotten.

After breakfast their attention was once more directed to the Petrel. Any further operations in the camp had now to be postponed, for the attractions

of the imperilled ship were too engrossing to admit of lesser thoughts.

“I say, boys,” said Bruce, “why can’t we try to get nearer? We can work our way along at the top of the bank, I should think.”

“Of course we can,” said Bart. “At any rate, it’s not very far.”

“It won’t be worse than the upper part of that miserable brook,” said Phil.

“Sure an I’d go on me hands and knees all the way, so I would, to git nearer to her,” said Pat.

The coast that ran along terminated in the headland, between which and the cove it consisted of steep banks, at first wooded, and rough cliffs. The top of the bank all along was covered with trees, and seemed to offer no greater difficulties than any other part of the woods. The headland itself seemed over a mile away, and the Petrel was some distance inside of this.

They thus resolved to go, and set forth at once.

“Be back in time for dinna,” said Solomon, as they climbed up the steep bank to get to the top..

“O, yes,” was the reply, as they vanished into the woods.

It was decidedly rough walking. The ground was uneven, rising into mounds and depressed into hollows. Sometimes fallen trees lay before them; at other times underbrush so dense and so stubborn that a way could only be forced through with the most persevering effort. Besides, it was absolutely necessary to keep as near as possible to the edge of the cliff, for they all knew how easily they might be lost, if they once ventured out of sight of it. So they kept on, close by the brink, even though places occasionally appeared which seemed much easier to traverse.

At length they reached the place immediately opposite the Petrel. She lay within easy stone’s throw. Before them the cliff went down with rough, jagged sides, and the shore at its foot was covered with masses of rock that had fallen there from the precipice. It was not more than sixty or seventy

feet down. On this elevation, and at this distance out, they felt the full force of the blast.

The Petrel had certainly grounded, and it was evident to them that the bottom was rough and irregular. She lay over on her side, her stern nearest to the shore. The bows were sunk under to the depth of about a foot, while the stern rose a little. She swayed backward and forward with a regular motion, and there was a dull, gringing, creaking noise, that came from her to their ears, and was plainly discernible through the noise of the surf on the rocks below. The sea at this point was quite heavy, and rolled over and over the doomed ship. The long waves came sweeping up at successive intervals, and at every stroke the Petrel would yield, and then slowly struggle back.

“I wonder how long she can stand this sort of thing,” said Phil.

“Not long, I should think,” said Bart; “but after all, the wind isn’t very strong just yet, and if there are no rocks under her, she may hold out some time.”

“If this wind grows to a gale, she’s done for.”

“But then it may not get any worse, and if it goes down, I’d undertake to swim on board.”

“O, of course, if it gets smooth.”

“What do you say to going out to the point?” said Bruce.

“O, yes, let’s go.”

The point was not far away, and the woods were thinner. They reached it without much difficulty. Standing here an extensive scene came upon their view.

On the left, the coast line ran on for a few miles, rough and rugged cliffs, with a crest of stunted trees. On the right, the coast line was what they had already seen. In front was the boundless sea, covered with foaming waves. At their feet the surf thundered in a line of foam, and tossed its spray high on the air.

“I don’t altogether like the look of things,” said Bruce, after a long and silent gaze upon the sea and the rough coast in the west.

“O, don’t fret,” said Bart. “Look, Bruce, close in to the shore under the cliffs: why, it’s smooth enough there to paddle a raft in. They’ll keep close in to the shore, and land whenever they want to.”

“Only they might try to round a headland like that,” said Bruce, pointing to a cliff which terminated the view towards the left, at the base of which there was a line of white foam; “and if they did,” he added, “I’m afraid neither Arthur nor Tom—”

He stopped abruptly, leaving the sentence unfinished.

XXI.

The Expedition and the Voyagers.—Speculations.—Dinner followed by a Change of Wind.—A Squall.—Shipping a Sea.—Nearer the Shore.—An iron-bound Coast.—Rounding the Headland.—Startling Sight.—The Column of Smoke.—A Man on the Beach.—The shipwrecked Stranger.—Astonishing Disclosures.—Where are we?—The mournful Truth.—Anticosti!—Arthur contains his Soul.—The Boys and the Boat both hauled up.—The Expedition ends.

ARTHUR and Tom, on rounding the headland, kept on their course, following the line of the shore. The water was smooth, and the breeze continued moderate, yet fair. The sail worked well, the boat glided smoothly through the water, and they slipped on past the shore at a rate which was most gratifying to both of them. They kept away about a mile from the land, a distance which seemed to them to allow of a ready resort there in case of need, while at the same time it was far enough out to get the full benefit of the breeze, and maintain a sufficiently straight course.

The coast was most forbidding. Rugged cliffs arose, or rocky, sterile banks, crested with stunted spruce. Hour after hour passed by, and mile after mile of the coast slipped away behind them, but not the slightest sign appeared of human habitation or of human life; nothing but the same iron-bound shore, and the same unbroken solitude.

From time to time they came in sight of places which were more inviting. Sometimes there were shelving beaches, which appeared to be covered with sand or pebbles; at other times they saw coves, whose aspect was less forbidding than that of the bolder coast line; and on one occasion there was

a small harbor, which, in comparison with the rest of the country, was decidedly inviting, and, if their errand had been less pressing, they would certainly have entered it, and explored the surrounding region. But, as it was, they passed on, noticing as they passed that here, as everywhere else, there was not a field, not a pasture, not a clearing; that there were no signs of cattle or of man.

So passed the hours of the morning.

The sun attained its meridian, and the two voyagers thought of dinner. The provident care of Solomon had furnished them with everything that could be desired on such a trip as this, and the repast was not only abundant, but attractive.

“I wonder what speed we have been making,” said Arthur.

“Five miles, I should think,” said Tom, “at least.”

“So should I; but, then, we can’t be certain. There may be currents, or we may be deceived in our estimate. Let’s say four, and then we’ll feel certain. It’s after twelve now; we left at six; that’s six hours.”

“Four miles an hour—little enough,” said Tom. “Well, that’s twenty-four miles. If this sort of thing can only be kept up, we’ll get to St. Pierre in no time.”

“That’s the very thing,” said Arthur,—“if it can only be kept up. But I’m afraid it’s a little too good to last.”

“At any rate,” said Tom, cheerily, “we’ll make the best of it while we can.”

Arthur’s forebodings, though not based upon any ground of alarm, were, however, actually justified by the event, and not very long after. For scarcely had they finished their repast, when they became aware of a very serious increase in the wind. A series of puffs, which almost amounted to squalls, came down, and in a very short time the sea began to rise to a very unpleasant extent.

“We’ll have to keep in closer,” said Arthur.

“Yes,” said Tom, “fortunately the wind’s off the land, and, if we can get in nearer, we’ll be all right.”

But it was not so easy to get in nearer. Tom, however, took a paddle, while Arthur held the boat as close to the wind as possible, and thus, in process of time, they drew her in far enough to get into smoother water. This was not accomplished without some trifling casualties: several waves dashed their spray into the boat, and they shipped one sea which was heavy enough to drench them both, and leave as much as a barrel full of salt water behind. This showed them what they might expect if they dared to keep too far away from the land.

They were now close in to the shore, and they proceeded onward slowly, but securely. It was not quite equal to their previous progress, but it was free from danger and inconvenience.

“I’m afraid,” said Tom, “that we’re going to have a turn of luck.”

“O, we’re doing well enough,” said Arthur.

“Yes, but we’ll be sure to come to some headland, and there we’ll stick, for we shan’t be able to round it. This boat can’t stand any sea.”

“Well, we’ll wait till the time comes,” said Arthur, “and not fret till then.”

“It’s lucky for us,” said Tom, “that the wind’s the way it is. If that was a lee shore, we’d be done for.”

“Well, if the wind had been any other way we shouldn’t have started, you know,” said Arthur, “and if it changes we’ll go ashore and haul up—that’s all.”

“We couldn’t find a landing-place just here very easily. I don’t think I ever saw a more rascally place in my life.”

“It’s rather rough, I must confess,” said Arthur, “but we’ll find a better place before long.”

They were within an eighth of a mile from the land. It rose there in high, rocky cliffs, crested, as usual, with stunted trees, and fragments of rock at its base.

“This seems to run on for a long way ahead,” said Tom.

“Yes,” said Arthur, “but I shouldn’t wonder if behind that point ahead the land got better. It stands to reason that these cliffs can’t extend forever. There must be places here and there where gullies occur—places where brooks run down, you know.”

“O, I dare say; but I only hope we may get to some such a place before the wind changes.”

“Why, is the wind going to change?”

“I don’t know. I merely supposed a case.”

“O, I dare say the wind’ll keep in this direction for ever so long yet.”

They sailed along slowly under these cliffs for about a couple of miles, and at length reached the point of which Arthur had spoken. They passed this, full of curiosity as to what lay beyond. They saw that the land here receded for a mile or two,—very gradually, however,—while several miles ahead it projected itself once more into the sea, and was terminated by a precipitous headland. These receding shores showed a different appearance from that of the cliffs which they had just been passing. They were wooded down to the water’s edge, which they approached by a gentle declivity, while about two miles ahead they disclosed a wide area where there were no trees at all.

Whether this was cultivated ground, cleared ground, or pasture, they could not very well make out; but they had not caught sight of it before they saw something which at once riveted their attention.

It was a column of smoke!

“Hurrah!” cried Tom. “We’ve come to a settlement at last. Well, it’s about time. Hurrah! We’re all right now.”

“Yes,” said Arthur, “there must be some life about—though I can’t see any sign of any settlement.”

“O, there must be a settlement somewhere about. We can’t see it yet.”

“There certainly must be people, for there is the smoke.”

“The settlement is farther back; away from the shore.”

“Yes, or perhaps behind that headland. I dare say there’s a harbor there, and a fishing settlement. This may be some solitary house.”

“Solitary or not, it’s all the same to us. It shows us that we have come near to human beings again.”

A straight course towards the place where the smoke arose would have drawn them into rough water; so they hugged the shore, and followed its curve, in order to avoid the danger. For a time the smoke was concealed from view; but at length, as they went on, it came into sight again, and appeared twice as near as when they had first seen it. Here they saw a beach, which ran away for a long distance; and they noticed now that the smoke itself seemed to rise from a point on the beach about a mile away.

“That’s queer,” said Tom. “The smoke can’t be from a house at all.”

“No, some one has been making a fire on the beach. But it’s all the same. It shows that people are living hereabouts, and that’s all we want.”

“Well, we’ll soon know.”

“Tom!”

“What?”

“I should laugh if this place were to turn out to be Gaspé, after all.”

“O, there’s no doubt about the place. It must be Newfoundland.”

“Hallo!”

This exclamation came from Arthur. He said no more, but pointed in silence, while Tom looked eagerly in that direction.

On the beach, about a quarter of a mile away, they saw a moving figure. It was a man. He was running along with irregular steps, waving his arms in the air in a wild way, and evidently trying to attract their attention.

They at once headed the boat in nearer to the shore, so as to meet him as soon as possible. As they neared the shore the man neared them. The beach was smooth, and his staggering, irregular steps could not have been caused by the rough ground, while his wild gesticulations seemed unaccountable.

“He must be drunk,” said Tom.

Arthur said nothing.

The boat grounded, and the next moment the man reached the spot. No sooner had he come up to them than he fell on his knees, and, grasping the bows of the boat, bowed his head, and sobbed convulsively.

They saw, as he came up, that he was pale and emaciated. He was panting heavily from his exertions. He wore a flannel shirt and canvas trousers. He looked like a common sailor from some ship, and not at all like a fisherman or farmer. The boys stared at him without saying one single word.

At length the man rose and looked at them with a searching and curious gaze.

“A couple o? youngsters,” said he at last, as though speaking to himself. “Queer, too—youngsters! Say, boys, is your ship near by?”

“Not very.”

“Where do you come from?”

“O, from over there,” said Arthur. “The fact is, we got ashore.”

“Got ashore!”

“Yes; and we’ve come here to look up some settlement.”

“Got ashore! settlement!” said the man.

“Yes,” said Arthur. “And we’d like to go, as soon as possible, to the nearest settlement. We want to engage a schooner to go back with us and get our friends.”

At this the man stared at them for a few moments in a wild way, and then burst forth into laughter so strange and so wild that both the boys felt uncomfortable. Tom began to think that he was not drunk, but insane, and felt sorry that they had allowed the boat to touch the shore.

Suddenly the man stopped, and looked at them with a totally different expression. He looked at them fixedly, and there was on his face a certain pity and commiseration which struck them forcibly.

“Boys,” said he at length, in a gentle voice, “you’re on the lookout for a settlement, are you?”

“Yes.”

“Well, look at me. Now look at all this country. Well, I’m the only settler here. I’m the only settler you’ll ever find here, if you sail a hundred years. Do you know where you’ve got to?”

“Why, we thought it was Newfoundland,” said Tom.

“Or Gaspé,” said Arthur.

The man looked at them with a solemn face for some time, and said not a word.

“Poor boys! poor boys!” he murmured at last; “p’raps they was worse off’n I was. An air you all alone, boys?”

“No; we’ve left our friends some, miles back.”

“O, an you thought you was on Newfoundland coast, or Gaspé, an you goes off to hunt for help, an you leaves your friends. Well, now, have they got lots to eat?”

“O, yes.”

“Lots?” repeated the man, with some energy. “Lots, now, raily?”

“Plenty—enough to last them for a year.”

The man sighed.

“An so you comes off for help. Why did they let you youngsters go? Why didn’t the men go?”

“O, we’re all boys,” said Tom.

“Well, that’s queer, too.”

“A kind of pleasure party,” said Arthur.

The man shook his head mournfully.

“An so you thinks you’ve got onto Newfoundland or Gaspé,” he said.

“Yes. Why? Where are we? Can you tell us? And who are you? and what are you doing here?”

Tom said this.

“Me?” said the man. “Look at me. Can’t you see what I be? Do I look like a gentleman farmer? Is this the country for a emigrant? Me!” he repeated, with a bitter laugh. “Poor boys! poor boys! Why, I’m jest like you. I’m ship-wracked—on’y I knows where I be, an that’s more’n you do, it seems.”

“Shipwrecked!” exclaimed Tom.

“Yes, wracked—the worst sort; an this here country—so you think it’s Newfoundland or Gaspé? Well—it ain’t either.”

“What is it?”

“The worst place in the world—that’s what it is; a place where there ain’t no hope, and there ain’t no life. It’s only death that a man can find here.”

“What do you mean?” asked Tom. “Tell us what place it is.”

The man looked at them both, one after the other, with a solemn face.

“I been ship wracked,” said he, “an I been here more’n a fortnight; an this here place is—Anticosti!”

“Anticosti!” exclaimed both the boys, exchanging glances of horror, while a feeling of despair came over them.

“Yes,” said the man, “this here country’s Anticosti—un woe to the poor wretch that’s cast ashore here. For there ain’t no life here, an there ain’t no hope, an there ain’t no food; an the only thing a man can do is to lie down an die as fast as he can.”

A long silence followed. The boys felt utterly overwhelmed. They had all heard enough about Anticosti to make the name one of dread, and to surround it with the darkest gloom and the most formidable terrors.

“We thought,” said Arthur, at length, to the man, who seemed to be lost in his own thoughts, “we supposed that we were on the coast of Newfoundland, somewhere between Cape Ray and Fortune’s Bay; so we started off to sail along the coast in search of a settlement, and if we couldn’t find any we intended to go to St. Pierre.”

“This is Anticosti,” said the man.

“Very well,” said Arthur, gravely, “we’ll suppose it is. So much the more need for us to help our friends. You appear to have had a hard time of it; but you’re a sailor, and we are not. You can help us. It seems to me that you can do a great deal for us. I think we had better keep to our plan, and try to reach the nearest settlement. If it is St. Pierre, or the Bay of Islands, or any other place, perhaps you can tell us. At any rate, you can sail the boat, and we can’t. We’ve got lots of provisions here; so you’d better come with us, and help us to reach some place where we can get assistance for our friends.”

While Arthur was saying this, the man stared at him most intently.

“Well,” said he at last, as Arthur ceased, “you’re about the pluckiest lot in the way of boys that I’ve come across for some time. All I can say is, you needn’t beat round the bush with me. You’ve saved my life, and so you’ll find that Dick Bailey is yours till death. All you’ve got to do, boys, is to tell

what you want done, and I'll do it—if it can be done. But fust and foremost, let me tell you 'tain't no use tryin to get any further in that there boat this day, for the wind's risin, and you'd best come ashore till it blows over. We'll take the boat up high and dry out of harm's way, and then we can talk over what we'd best do."

"Can't we go any farther to-day?" asked Arthur, in a disappointed tone.

"No," said Bailey,—“no, you can't go either for'ard or back'ard, for it's a head wind one way, and the other way is barred by that there pint. So, as I said afore, you'd better land. We'll draw the boat up high an dry out of harm's way, and we'll wait till to-morrer. By that time there'll be a change for the better.”

Upon this Arthur and Tom got out, and the three drew the boat up as far as they could upon the beach.

"There," said Bailey, “she's out of harm's way, unless a sou'-wester comes; an if it does, we can move her up further. But there ain't no chance of that. And now, boys, hain't you got something to give a poor feller to eat that's been starvin for a fortnight?”

Upon this appeal Arthur and Tom at once laid open all their stores, producing biscuit, ham, potted meats, and all the other articles of food which comprised their sea stores.

And the shipwrecked Bailey ate ravenously; ate, in fact, as though he would never be satisfied.

"I ain't had," said he, as soon as he found time to speak in the intervals of eating,—“I ain't had not to say a reg'lar meal for three weeks, which accounts for my present ravenosity, an hopin you'll excuse it, young gents.”

XXII.

Bailey's Den.—The Fire.—The blazing Beacon.—Shell Fish.—Bailey begins his Narrative.—Astonishing Disclosure.—Mutual Explanations. — The Story of Bailey.—The Crank Ship.—Springing aleak.—The mutinous Crew.—A Storm.—Taking to the Boats.—The Captain sticks to his Ship.—Driving before the Wind.—Cast ashore.—How to kindle a Fire.—Plans for the Future.—The Evening Repast.—The insatiable Appetite of a half starved Man.—Asleep in Bailey's Den.

AT length Bailey's hunger seemed somewhat appeased. "I'm a thinkin," said he, "as how we'd better take these here victuals to some place where it'll be more under cover, and handy for us about tea time. If you like, I'll take them to my den."

"But can't we roll it farther up? This barrel's too heavy to take any distance."

"Well, I don' know but what you're more'n half right. I didn't think of the bar'l. Leastways, we can put it further up, out of the reach of any surf, and cover it with the sail."

"We can take with us as much as we may be likely to want," said Arthur.

"Wal," said the man, "there ain't no fear of anybody stealin the things here; and as the wind ain't likely to turn yet a while, I don't s'pose there'll be any danger of surf."

After a few further precautions, so as to secure the boat and the contents from any possible harm, Bailey set off to show the boys his "den." They walked along the beach for about half a mile, and then stopped at a place where a high rock jutted out. Behind this there was a recess about twenty

feet above the beach, formed by a fissure in the rock. A huge mass overhead shut it in, and formed a sort of roof; while the lower portion had been filled up by crumbled fragments. Over this rough floor Bailey had spread spruce brush, ferns, and mosses, so that it was soft enough to lie down on. The whole recess was about eight feet deep, six feet wide, and six feet high. Immediately outside a fire was burning, and from this came the smoke which had first attracted their attention.

“I keep that there burnin,” said Bailey, “night and day, an I’ve kept it a burnin for the last fortnight. There’s drift-wood enough along the beach here, though every day I have to go further away to get it. Wal, there’s wood enough on the island, if it comes to that, only ‘tain’t easy gittin it up in the woods.”

The boys looked around with deep interest, and with varied feelings. They saw outside, by the fire, heaps of shells, which seemed to have been burned.

“Thar,” said Bailey, “them’s all I’ve had to eat, every bite, since I landed here. They do to keep body and soul together, but they ain’t much account. I’d give a bushel any day for one good biscuit. What I’ve jest eat seems to have made a man of me.”

The boys were silent for some time, and at length Arthur asked,—

“How did you happen to get here?”

“Wal, I’ll tell you all about it,” said Bailey.

“I’ll begin at the beginnin. Wal, you see, about five weeks ago I shipped aboard the Petrel, at Quebec—”

“The what?” cried Arthur and Tom, in the greatest wonder and excitement.

“The ship Petrel,” said Bailey. “Why, what of her?”

“The Petrel!” cried Arthur. “What, the ship Petrel, of Liverpool-?”

“That there’s the identical craft.”

“And—and—and,” stammered Tom, in his excitement, “was—was her captain’s name Henry Hall? and—and was she loaded with timber?”

“And didn’t she get water-logged?” said Arthur.

“Yes, and didn’t the captain and crew all leave her?”

Bailey stared at the boys with astonishment fully equal to their own.

“You seem to know all about her,” said he, slowly; “and how you larned all that beats me.”

“Why, that’s the very ship that we got wrecked on, too,” said Arthur.

“Yes,” said Tom; “we were sailing about, and found her adrift, and all as comfortable as possible.”

“We tried to be salvors,” said Arthur; “and we were left on board to take care of her while our captain went off in the schooner for help.”

“And he anchored her, and the anchor didn’t hold,” said Tom.

“And we drifted all about the gulf,” continued Arthur, “and were out in the most horrible gales that ever were, till finally we got ashore here.” The boys poured out this information in the most rapid manner possible upon the astounded Bailey, who now seemed fairly struck dumb.

“You—in the Petrel!” he exclaimed, at length, in slow and perplexed tones. “You—you adrift in that water-logged craft! and thrown by that there ship here on Anticosti!”

“Yes,” said Arthur, briskly, “that’s just it.” Bailey raised his hand slowly to his head, and scratched it solemnly, raising his eyes at the same time, and fixing them upon empty space.

“These here two young coves in the Petrel! and hev ashore on Anticosti!” he murmured.

“Yes, yes,” said Arthur; “and now tell us all about how you got here.”

Bailey started, and looked at each of them silently and solemnly; then he looked away, as before.

“Wal,” said he, at last, “this here—doos—beat—my—grandmother! Wal, I’ll tell my story, an then I’ll listen to youn, an we’ll compare notes, an in that way we’ll grad’ly get the hang of it; for jest now, as things is, I’m dumfounded.

“Wal,” continued Bailey, after a pause, “I’ll start afresh. I shipped then, as I was a sayin, as able seaman, aboard the Petrel. She was loaded down deep with timber, an badly loaded, too, for as she lay in the stream at Quebec, she had a list ever so far over.

“I don’t think I was overly sober when I was took on board, an I don’t think any of the other men was overly sober, neither; at any rate, the first thing I knows, I finds myself thirty mile below Quebec, aboard the Petrel, that had a list to one side that would almost let a man foot it up her masts.

“The first thing we all does, we all begins to kick up a dust. The mate he swears we ain’t goin to sail the ship. Crank? Why, crank ain’t the word! Wal, the captain he tells us we’re gettin up mutiny, and warns us. And we tells him to look at the ship.

“Wal, things goes on somehow, and we gets down the river further, we grumblin all the way and the mate a swearin. One night she drifts nigh to the shore and touches. We gets her off somehow; but she got a bad sprain, and begins to leak.

“Wal, we all growls and grumbles, and won’t touch the pumps; and the captain he threatens, and the mate he rows and swears, and the captain he vows, leak or no leak, he’ll put that there ship across the Atlantic. At last things grows worse, and the mate one day puts a couple of us in the bilboes.

“Wal, that only makes things worse; and by that time we was in the gulf, and rough weather comes on, and none of us would touch a line. So the captain he knocks under, and lets the men go, and promises us a glass of

grog all round if we'll bear a hand at the pumps. But we insists on putting the deck-load overboard first. The captain wouldn't do it, though, for ever so long; till at last the wind blew a gale, and the cranky vessel plunged under so, and strained and twisted so, that at last he was glad enough to do it of his own accord. So we all goes to work in the midst of that there gale, and puts every stick over. They wasn't much—only deals, and easy handled. It was timber below, and if it had been timber on deck, we couldn't have done it nohow.

“Wal, that gale went on, and another followed, and we all pumped away for dear life, but didn't do much. It had got to be a little too late; and what with the first touch on the rocks, and the straining and twisting afterwards, the leak got to be a little the biggest I ever did see.

“So it went from bad to worse. We all worked at last like the old boy. No need then for the captain to encourage us. We worked for dear life without bein told. But the leak gained steadily, and the storm increased. At last every rag of sail was blown off, and the ship was water-logged, and we all had to take refuge in the riggin. We saw what was comin in time to get the boats up out of harm's way, for the water was rollin over the deck so that you couldn't tell which was the ship and which was the sea. We were for puttin off and abandonin of her; but the captain he swore she never could sink, bein timber-laden, and said the storm would soon blow over, and we'd put into Miramichi. So we hung on as long as we could.

“At last the vessel strained so that we all was sure and certain that she was goin to pieces; so we determined to save ourselves; so we got down the long-boat, and managed, one by one, to get into her as she floated to leeward, and then begged the captain and mate to follow. The mate seemed half inclined, but the captain was obstinate. He swore he would stick to the ship, and save her yet. He begged us to come back, and told us she would float till doomsday. But we swore she was break-in up, and told him she couldn't hang together one day more.

“The worst of it was, all this time we didn’t know where we was. There was fog and heavy-gales, and the captain hadn’t taken no reckonin for weeks. We wanted to git off the wreck before she got onto the rocks. As for the captain and mate, they had the cutter, and a couple of the men staid behind to take off the cutter, and the captain and mate, too, if they should come to their senses, leastways the mate. And what became of them four I hain’t no idee.

“Wal, then we dropped off, and went away in the long-boat. We hadn’t no idee where we was, and couldn’t tell the pints of the compass. We thought the best thing would be to run before the wind, since we didn’t know any better way, and we knew we was somewhere in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and would fetch up at last somewheres. So we let her run, and kept a sharp lookout, or tried to, though ’twan’t no use at night, for what with the darkness and the fog, the nights was that dark you couldn’t see the nose before your face. Well, that’s all. The only thing more that I know is this—that one night I was sound asleep, and was waked up by a tremenjous yell, and found myself in the water. The boat had been thrown on rocks or surf, and had capsized. I struggled, and at last found bottom, and rushed blindly along, I couldn’t see where, till I got to dry ground. And it was this here beach; and afterwards, as I found out how the wind was blowin, and put this an that together, I concluded that this was Anticosti, and now I know it.”

So ended Bailey’s narrative. A long conversation followed. The boys were anxious to know why he felt so sure that it was Anticosti, and Bailey described his theory of the position of the Petrel at the time he left her, and the course which the boat must have taken in such a wind. He also felt sure, from the character of the coast and the country, that it was this place, and no other. Then the boys gave a minute account of their own adventures. Bailey was most struck by the captain’s paper found in the bottle.

“Wal,” said he, “he stood it as long as he could; but I dar say, arter we cleared out, he begun to feel a little shaky. And that thar ship did shake

herself up in a way that beat everythin I ever see in all my born days. I was as sure that she was breakin up as I was of my own name. So the captain he thought, no doubt, that it wan't wuth while to die for the sake of an old timber ship, or p'raps the mate and the sailors pressed him, and so off he goes; or p'raps some passing vessel hove in sight, and took him off. But only think of you youngsters happenin on board, and goin through the same identical fortin that I went through, and then us meetin this way in Anticosti! It doos—beat—my—grandmother! It—doos—railyly.”

The question now arose what was best to be done. Of course the fact that this was Anticosti changed the whole state of things.

“You see if this was railyly Newfoundland,” said Bailey, “we might sail east, and event’ly git to some settlement; but if we try that now, we’ll have to go all along past the worst coast in the world, and then we’d get to East Pint; and what then? Why, the gulf. So we’ve got to turn about, and go back in the other direction.”

“What? West?”...

“Yes, away west, or sou’-west. I’ve heard tell of some settlement at West Pint, the other end of the island; but I hain’t no idee whether it’s kep up yet or not. At any rate, there’s Gaspé. ‘Tain’t far off. We can crawl along the shore, and then cut across to Gaspé, and get help.”

“But we’ll go back first to where we left the boys.”

“Course, that’s the first thing; and then your vyge ends, and we’ve got to arrange a fresh one.”

“Well, can we start to-day?” asked Tom.

“To-day? No, sir! Look at me! Why, I’d give anythin to git away from this here place! Think of me here for two long weeks, livin on shell fish, pacin up and down the beach, and keepin my signal-fire a burnin all the time, and feelin myself every day gradooly growin ravin mad! Think what

I've ben an suffered here! Yet I wouldn't leave to-day, 'cos it's goin to blow harder, and that there cockle-shell don't do to beat against a wind like this."

"But can't we row?"

"You hain't got no oars."

"There are those in the boat."

"Them things! Them's poles, or paddles; do to push the boat a little way through smooth water, but not with the wind this way. No; we've got to wait."

Arthur and Tom both felt the force of this, and urged the point no longer.

"I don't see," said Arthur, "how you managed to light a fire."

"O, with my jackknife and a bit of flint," said Bailey. "No trouble to get flint hereabouts. I got some cotton wool out of the paddin of my collar, and some dry moss, and coaxed some sparks into a blaze. O, you give me a knife, and I'll draw fire out of any stone anywhars. The night I was drove ashore, I crept somewhar under the cliff, and staid there till mornin, and in the mornin the first thing I doos is to kindle a fire. I found the drift-wood, and this seemed to be the best place. Sea shells isn't the best fare in the world, and sick am I of all sorts and kinds of shell fish; but glad was I when I lit on them that first day, when I walked about nearly starved. If it hadn't ben for them thar shells it would ha' ben all over with me. That's so. And this here den wasn't a bad place, considerin. In fact, I ben a lucky man in some things, seein that this is Anticosti, and fust and foremost, that I got off with my life; for every one of the rest was drownded, and I've never seen even a splinter of the boat since."

The recollection of this gloomy event reduced Bailey for a time to silence.

The afternoon passed away. The wind increased. The sea grew rougher, and every hour served to increase the impossibility of a return that day. But

the boys had already resigned themselves to this, and therefore awaited the evening, and looked forward to the night with calmness and in patience.

At sunset the evening repast was spread out, and Bailey showed his usual ravenous appetite.

“‘Pears to me, boys,” said he, apologetically, “jest as if I couldn’t ever git enough to eat again. You’ll have to make allowances for a man as has been starvin for three weeks.”

After tea they made their preparations for the night. First they went to see that the boat was safe, and to make doubly sure, they hauled her farther up the beach. Then they collected a quantity of drift-wood, with which they replenished their fire.

“‘Thar,” said Bailey, “if so be as any vessel does pass by, they’ll be sure to see this here light, and they’ll know precious well as how some unfortunate coves is shipwrecked here, and is a signalin for help. But, misfortunately, I ben a lookin for-ard every night for help, and it never would come.”

“It was your signal that drew us in,” said Arthur. “It was a success by day, at any rate.”

They talked and meditated for another hour or so, and watched the blazing flames till they were tired.

Then they all spread themselves out in Bailey’s “den,” and fell asleep.

XXIII.

The Denizens of Bailey's Den—Morning.—A Sail upon the Surface of the Sea.—The Spyglass.—Exciting Discovery to the lost Ones.—The strange Schooner.—Exchange of Signals.—The Excitement increases.—The Schooner draws nearer.—New Signals.—They take to the Boat.—Out to Sea.—Rough Water.—Another Sail.—A strange Suspicion.—Old Friends.—Pleasant Greetings.—Mrs. Corbet.—Obloquy heaped upon the Antelope and its venerable Commander.—Away to the Rescue.

BAILEY'S den was a particularly well sheltered recess in the rock, open to no wind, except a sou'-wester. The wind that blew while Bailey and his guests slumbered inside, came from the north-west, and therefore the sleepers knew nothing of it. Out in the sea, indeed, the waters felt its power, and the foaming waves on the following morning told them the story of the night; but during that night they knew nothing at all about it. Far down the side of the cliff, under the rocky precipice, out of the way of the wind, the occupants of Bailey's den slumbered on the soft spruce brush and softer moss. All night long the fire burned outside, for Bailey had piled up the fuel generously, yet carefully, and had so arranged it, by making alternate layers of green wood and dry, that it would burn all night long, and yet send forth sufficient flame to be visible at sea.

Morning came, and the wind and sea had gone down. Upon rising, the denizens of Bailey's den looked forth upon the water, and saw that it was very much the same as it had been on the preceding day. At this Arthur and Tom shook their heads, but Bailey was sanguine, and spoke encouragingly.

"The wind has hauled round a pint or two," said he, "and I shouldn't wonder if it was to come round a little more; and if so, it'll be all right for

us. A moderate north or north-east wind'll be jest the cheese."

They now replenished the fire, after which they sat down to their breakfast.

"So you got all this out of the Petrel," said Bailey. "Well, only think! Why, what gormandizers them captains an mates in the cabin must be—feedin on potted meats! an only think what we eats before the mast! Hard tack, salt junk, an dish-water, that's what we eats before the mast; but aft, my gentlemen won't be satisfied with nothin less than Yorkshire game pie, and Oxford sassage—and, what's this?—Bolony sassage, an all them other condyments what you've got done up in them there tin pots. Wall, they're precious good eatin on a desert island, whatever they be in a ship's cabin, only they seem most too good for the likes of me."

"You?" said Arthur. "Why, you have a better right to them than we have; for we haven't any right at all. And, as to the Petrel, if you can manage to save her, I hereby agree to deliver up and surrender to you. all my right, title, and interest in and to any part or portion of the so-called salvage."

"And I too," said Tom, chiming in with the utmost gravity; "and hereby make known by these presents, to all whom it may concern, and anything to the contrary hereof in any wise notwithstanding."

Bailey was evidently much impressed by these legal formulas. He bowed very gravely.

"Your servant, young gents, and my 'umble dooty to both of you; but, at the same time, I don't want any more'n fair an honest wages, and, if so be as you ain't in the position to give it, why, well and good, says I; but, if so be as you can, why, I'll take what's fair, and right, and lawful, and no more —"

But at this point this interesting conversation was abruptly terminated by a loud cry from Tom. His eyes were fixed upon the sea, and were fascinated by something there.

“A sail! a sail!” he cried. “A sail! O, a sail! Look, look, look!”

Arthur and Bailey sprang to their feet, and looked in the direction where Tom was pointing. Tom seized the spy-glass, which they had brought into the den, and examined more closely, while Arthur and Bailey watched the distant sea.

And there, on the distant sea, several miles away, a sail appeared, unmistakably. It was a schooner, and she was not more than five miles away.

“She’s heading away from us,” said Tom; “she’s going away, out to sea.”

“Don’t be too hasty,” said Bailey; “she may p’raps be only beatin up agin this here wrind. It’s a head wind for her.”

“I wish it may turn out so,” said Tom.

They now watched in silence for some time longer. The schooner held on her way steadily. At length she tacked, and, wearing round, headed towards the shore.

“I knowed it!” said Bailey, triumphantly. “She’s a coastin along, and is beatin up agin the wind. Just hand us that there glass for a minute, if you please, and let us git a squint at her.”

Tom handed the glass to Bailey, who took it, and looked at the schooner long and carefully.

At length he returned it to Tom. “It’s a fisher,” said he; “a Yankee fisher. I knows the cut of her jib; there’s no mistakin her. You don’t find any of yer Province fishermen git up such a turnout as that there. Why, she’s a cross between the best class of Liverpool pilot-boat and a nobleman’s yacht; and I don’t believe there’s a pilot-boat or a yacht afloat that can lick that there fisherman in a fair race.”

Arthur now took the glass, and looked at her long and earnestly.

“I say, Tom,” said he.

“What?”

“Do you know what I’m thinking?”

“I dare say it’s the very thought that I had.”

“What? The Fawn?”

“The very thing.”

“Of course it’s all nonsense. I suppose all the Yankee fishermen, or, at any rate, a great many, are just like the Fawn; but, at any rate, wouldn’t it be fun if it should turn out to be her?”

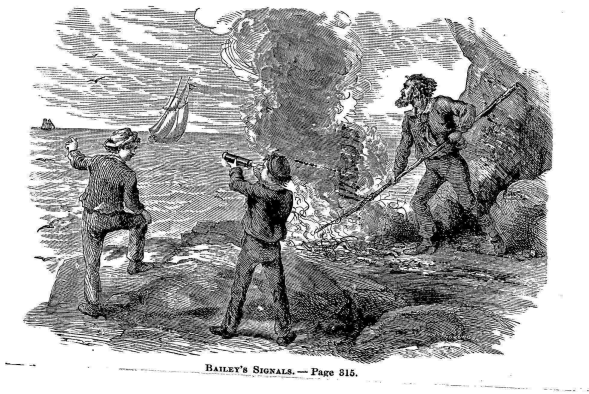
“Well, it’s too much to hope for,” said Tom; “it’ll be fun enough for me if she only takes us off—if she only sees us. Hadn’t we better pile on more fuel, Bailey?”

“No; ’tain’t no use. The fire’s makin as much smoke as it can, an that’s the best thing by daytime. If that there vessel’s beatin up the coast, she’s bound to see us on the next tack, if she don’t see us now; and it’ll only take three more tacks to bring her right opposite—Hallo!”

An abrupt exclamation terminated Bailey’s remarks. He seized the glass without a word of apology, and took a hasty glance.

“They’re a histin an a lowerin of the flag! They’re a signalizing, as sure as I’m a born sinner! and to us! Hooray!”

This Bailey shouted, quite beside himself, and then dropping the spy-glass, at the imminent risk of its destruction, he seized a pole that lay near, and scattered the fire about in all directions.



“I’m a tryin to answer their signals,” said he. “They see us! They know that were a signalizin to them, and they’re a tellin us that they’ll be along! Hooray!”

The schooner now tacked, and stood out to sea.

“All right,” said Bailey; “the next tack’ll bring her nearer.”

This reassured the boys, who did not like even the appearance of desertion. They watched her now in silence, and at length had the gratification of seeing her taking her next tack, and standing in towards the shore. This time she was very much nearer. Bailey rushed off, and gathered a quantity of dry spruce twigs and moss. As the schooner neared the shore, her flag rose and fell rapidly, and the report of a rifle sounded over the waters. At this Bailey flung his moss and spruce twigs upon the fire, and a vast cloud of smoke shot up, intermingled with sparks and flame.

“We’re gradooly a comin to a understandin,” said Bailey, as he rubbed his hands in immense glee, and watched the schooner. “And I do believe that the next tack’ll bring her here. Boys, let’s get ready with the boat.”

Saying this, Bailey hurried down, followed by the boys. They hurried as fast as possible to the boat, and began to launch her. As she was

uncommonly high and dry, this was a work of time; but it was at length accomplished, and the boat was afloat.

The wind was still off the land, to a certain extent, and the water had become far smoother. Besides, for a quarter of a mile or so from the land, it had never been much affected by the wind. They were too eager to wait, and so in a short time the sail was up, and Bailey, at the stern, headed the boat so as to meet the schooner on her return tack. As the wind caught the sail, the boat moved through the water, at first slowly, but gradually more swiftly. While the boat moved out, the schooner seemed to be sailing away, and leaving them behind; but this gave them no trouble, for they knew that before long she would wear round, and come to meet them. And so, with eager eyes, they watched her, and waited impatiently for the moment when she would turn.

Suddenly Arthur gave a cry, and pointed down the coast. There, as they looked, to their great amazement, they saw another sail, far away, emerging from the land, and standing out to sea.

“Wall—this—doos—beat—my—grandmother!” cried Bailey. “Or, in other words, boys, it never rains but it pours. We’ll have the whole fishing fleet yet.”

Arthur and Tom said nothing. Tom seized the glass, and looked for a few minutes. Then he handed it to Arthur in silence.

Arthur looked for some time most earnestly and most curiously.

“It’s queer!” said he.

“What?” said Tom.

“I don’t believe there’s another vessel in the world like that.”

“Do you think that?” said Tom. “It’s the very idea that I had.”

“What! Not the Antelope?”

“Yes; the Antelope—her own very old self.”

“The Antelope!” cried Bailey. “You don’t mean it. If it is her, then it’s all explained. So he’s come arter you—has he? So that’s it. Wal, it’s the least he could do, arter gittin you into such a precious scrape.”

“O, it’s only a fancy. It mayn’t be her, after all.”

“O, but to my mind, it’s more likely to be her than any one else. No one but a friend, in search of a friend, would ever think of beatin up this here way along the coast of Anticosti. That’s my idee.” This assurance of Bailey’s tended to strengthen the idea which the boys had formed. After all, it was not impossible; nay, they thought it was not even improbable; for had they not been on the lookout for this very Antelope? and what vessel was more likely to come after them than this one? and why should she not come even to Anticosti?

“There she comes!” cried Bailey.

It was the fishing schooner. She was tacking. She wore round easily and gracefully, and headed straight towards them. They saw her draw nearer and nearer every moment, her bows rising, and tossing the water aside in showers of spray. They also stood boldly out now, for Bailey was at the helm, and was a far different sailor from Arthur or Tom. The little boat plunged soon into the rough water, and occasionally a torrent of foam dashed on board; but this was nothing, for all their eyes and all their thoughts were centred upon the approaching schooner.

At length they met—the schooner driving through the sea under a cloud of canvas. There was a man at the bow—a well-known form—the form of Captain Tobias Ferguson. The graceful Fawn wore round; the boat came up; a line was thrown, and Bailey seized it. The boys clambered up her sides, and the instant they reached her deck, they found themselves seized by Ferguson, who said, in a voice broken by agitation,—“Hooray! We’ve got—we’ve got you—at—at last! Where are the others? Why didn’t they come off too?”

“All right,” said Arthur. “They are all safe in a cove about twenty miles west of this.”

Then followed a torrent of questions from Ferguson, which the boys answered. Their answers brought peace to his soul, for it appeared that he had been full of terror at the coming of these two, and two only, and had feared that they were bringing some disastrous tidings about the others.

The boat was towed astern. Bailey was welcomed right royally, as was befitting one whom the boys introduced as their friend. At length the mind of Captain Tobias Ferguson was at rest; and the Fawn, rounding on another tack, stood out to sea, on her way towards the cove, where the rest of the party were encamped.

“But you haven’t told us how you heard about us,” said Arthur, as soon as he had a chance to ask a question.

Ferguson seized his arm, and pointed over the water to the sail that Arthur and Tom had already noticed.

“Do you see that?”

“Yes; that schooner?”

“No; that tub, that wash-basin, that horse-trough, anything but a schooner. Well, do you know what that is?”

“The Antelope?” suggested Tom.

“Yes; that’s what she is called by her commander—that old woman, Mrs. Corbet, Mrs. Captain Corbet—old woman! Why, I can find fifty old women down our way that would take better care of a vessel than him—*her*, I mean. Well, boys, I was at Magdalen Islands when Mrs. Corbet came there in her wash-tub. I felt uneasy about you; knew something had happened; asked him—*her*, I mean—all about it; but Mrs. Corbet wouldn’t answer. Well, I followed her. I was bound to see what had become of you. And where do you think that old woman went? Where? Why, to Miramichi! Well, I followed her there and back, and come up to her, to find her in the

middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, at her wit's end; for she had come there thinking that you would be anchored there, and waiting for her. Now, what do you think of that for an Old Woman?"

The boys were very much surprised at this, and questioned him more closely. At first they thought that he was too hard on the venerable captain; but when they learned how the venerable captain had actually gone all the way to Miramichi, leaving them in their perilous position, they thought that the V. C., aforesaid, had gone too far, and that he merited all the contumely which Ferguson heaped so lavishly upon him.

"Anybody else," he continued,—“anybody else but me, Tobias Ferguson, would simply have gone mad at trying to keep that old woman and her tub in sight. It's taken two days to do what might have been done in one. I've sailed back a dozen times to keep her in sight; and look at her now! There she is, losing as much as she gains at every tack; standing still, as I'm a living sinner. I sailed off, that very day I was telling you about, for Anticosti, and got to East Point. There I waited for Mrs. Corbet, inspecting the coast at odd times, and it was nearly the end of the next day before she came up; and even then I had to sail back ever so far to find her. Then we began to beat up along the coast, against the wind, watching all the time, not only the shore, but Mrs. Corbet. And there she is! At any rate, I won't bother about her any longer. I'll hurry up to the cove to get the rest of the boys, and let Mrs. Corbet come along as well as her venerable limbs'll carry her.”

“But how did you know so well that we had drifted to Anticosti?”

“Well, for various reasons. Partly because I found out from Mrs. Corbet all about her crazy experiment at anchoring the ship; partly because I understood the general set of the tide; partly because I knew how the wind had been; but chiefly, I may say, because I had a presentiment all along that you were bound to get ashore on the worst place in all the gulf; which was Anticosti, and no other place. I knowed it. I was sure of it.”

Meanwhile the Fawn was careering through the waters. The boys had no regret at leaving Bailey's den, even though a number of cans of meat had been left behind. Bailey was on the broad grin, and felt no homesickness whatever. Arthur and Tom could not help contrasting the Fawn with the Antelope, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter, and began to think that in choosing Captain Corbet for their guide, they had made a mistake. But all these thoughts were swallowed up in the one great thought of the deliverance which they were bringing to their friends in the cove—a deliverance so much better than anything which they had hoped for, since it was in the form of old familiar friends, and not through the medium of strangers. Even the Antelope, and the much-maligned Corbet, as they followed far behind, seemed like additional elements in their joy.

XXIV.

Out on the Headland.—The doomed Ship.—The Struggle with the Waters.—The ravening Waves.—All over.—The last of the Petrel.—An Interruption at Dinner.—Startling Sight.—The strange, yet familiar Sail.—A grand and joyous Reunion.—Away from the Isle of Desolation.—The Antelope once more.—Over the Sea to Miramichi.—Farewell.—Captain Corbet moralizes, and Sermonizes.

BUT on the headland the boys stood watching. Bruce was sad and preoccupied. The others gazed uneasily upon the rough water. Could Arthur and Tom ever sail the boat through such a sea? That was the question which occurred to every one, and every one felt in his own heart that it was impossible. The prospect was not pleasant. They could only hope that the boys had gained the shore, and were waiting there till the wind might blow over. With this hope they tried to encourage Bruce, who showed more depression than the rest, and blamed himself several times for not insisting on going in Arthur's place.

At length they went back to the place where the Petrel lay. On reaching it they found that a marked change had taken place. Thus far, though low in the water, she had always preserved a certain symmetry of outline; and to those who might stand on her deck in fine weather and smooth water she seemed quite uninjured. But now her decks appeared to be burst open; she seemed broken in two. Bow and stern were low under water, while amidships she was above it. The mainmast inclined forward, and the foremast sloped back so far that they almost touched. Where she had parted asunder the planks of the decks had also started, and as the waves rolled over her, every new assault increased the ruin.

“She’s hogged,” said Bart.

“She’s worse than hogged,” said Bruce; “she’s completely broken in two.”

“She’s fallen upon some ridge of rock,” said Phil, “and the weight of her cargo has done it.”

“Deed thin, an the waves have had somethin to do with that same,” said Pat; “and glad am I that we’re all out of her, so I am; and lucky it was for us that she didn’t go ashore on that same reef, the night of the starrum.”

The boys looked on in silence. The work of destruction went on slowly, but surely, before their very eyes. Each wave did something towards hastening the catastrophe. That the Petrel was doomed was now beyond the possibility of doubt.

Rocks were beneath her, and never-ending billows rolled over her, making her their prey.

At length the fore part of the ship rolled over, with the deck towards them, severing itself completely from the other half. The decks gaped wide, and opened; the sides started: the foremast came down with a crash, and the pitiless waves, rolling on incessantly, flung themselves one after the other upon the wreck. The two parts were soon completely severed, the fore part breaking up first, the other half resisting more obstinately; while the sea was covered with sticks of timber that were torn out from her and flung away upon the face of the waters.

At length the ruin of the fore part was completed, and that part of the ship, all torn asunder, with all that part of the cargo, was dissipated and scattered over the water and along the beach. The other half still clung together, and though sorely bruised and shaken, seemed to put forth an obstinate resistance. At every touch of the waves it rolled over only to struggle back; it rose up, but was flung down again upon the rocks; it seemed to be writhing in agony. At length the mainmast went down with a

crash, followed not long after by the mizzenmast. Then the fragment of the ship suddenly split, and the entire quarterdeck was raised up. Here the waves flung themselves, tearing it away from the hull. But before the quarter-deck was altogether severed, the rest of the ship gave way, and parted in all directions. One by one the huge timber logs were detached from her cargo; the separation of the parts of the ship, and the dissolution of her compact cargo, gave a greater surface to the action of the waves, which now roared, and foamed, and boiled, and seethed, and flung themselves in fury over every portion of the disordered, swaying, yielding mass. Fragment after fragment was wrenched away; bit by bit the strong hull crumbled at the stroke of the mighty billows. The fragments were strewn afar over the sea, and along the beach; and the boys saw the mizzen-top, where they had found refuge on that eventful night, drifting away towards the headland. At length all was over; and in place of the Petrel there remained nothing but a vast mass of fragments, strewing the rocky shore, and floating over the sea for many a mile.

All this, however, was the work of hours. The boys watched it all as though they were held to the spot by a species of fascination. There seemed to be a spell upon them. They could not tear themselves away. But at last there was nothing left; nothing but floating fragments; or timbers flung by the waves on the shore, with which the waves seemed to play, as they hurled them forward and drew them back; while of the Petrel herself there was no sign—no coherent mass, however battered and beaten, which might serve to be pointed out as the representative of the ship that once bore them all. Of that ship there was nothing left; she was dissolved; she was scattered afar; she was no more. Such was the end of the Petrel.

Hours had passed while the boys were watching there. At length they started back to their camp. They walked on in silence. There was a certain sadness over all. This sadness arose in part from the scene which they had just witnessed, and in part out of their anxiety about Arthur and Tom, which

now had grown to be serious, since they had seen with their own eyes the power of the waves. When the strong ship had yielded, what chance had that frail boat? And Arthur and Tom knew very little about navigation. Where were they now?

With these sad and anxious thoughts, they made their way back, and found Solomon in a state of great excitement because they had kept dinner waiting. They found that it was past three o'clock, and were amazed that it was so late.

Dinner was now served, accompanied by lamentations long and loud from Solomon, who protested against such neglect and indifference as they had shown, whereby everything had become spoiled from waiting.

“Now dis yer dinna, chilen, am no common dinna,” said he. “I ben makin rangements to hab a rail fust-chop, stylish dinna, and hab cocted a new dish ob succotash. I took some potted corn an biled it wid the beans, an if dat don't make succotash, I don' know what do—dat's all; an dat ar succotash, wid de ham, and oysta chowda, an coffee, an game pie, an tomato, had ought to make a men-jous good dinna; ought so.”

The boys said nothing. They were hungry, and they were also sad. For both reasons they felt disinclined to speak. They were anxious about Arthur and Tom; they also felt mournful about the sad fate of the Petrel; they also had dismal forebodings about their own future; but at the same time they were most undeniably hungry, ravenously hungry, in fact; and Bruce, who was most sad and most anxious, was the hungriest of the crowd.

So they all sat down to dinner, and, first of all, they devoted themselves to Solomon's succotash. This was a compound of potted corn and dried beans; and though the real original succotash is a dish compounded from green corn and green beans, yet this was no bad substitute; and they all felt, in spite of their sadness, that it was an idea whose originality did infinite credit to the culinary genius of Solomon.

Now they had about come to the end of the succotash, and were looking about, like Alexander, for more worlds to conquer, or, in other words, for more dishes to devour, and were languidly awaiting the next course which Solomon might bring, when suddenly a wild cry from Pat roused them all from languor to the greatest excitement.

“Whoroo! Thunder and turf!” cried Pat; and he sprang to his feet as he spoke. “Be the powers! but it’s fairly dead I am with joy this day. O, look! O, look! look, boys! jools! see’ out there! They’re a comin for us’ so they are! We’re saved! We’re saved! Hooray! Hooray! O, look! It’s a schooner; she’s comin for us; she’s goin to take us out o’ this; and O! but it’s the bright clever boys that Arthur and Tom are to come back so soon, and with a schooner like that same.”

Long before Pat had finished his Irish howl, and while he was yet howling, the others had sprung to their feet, and were looking out to sea.

And there, rounding the headland, and bearing down towards them, they saw a beautiful schooner, graceful as a pleasure yacht, with all her snow-white sails spread wide in spite of the fresh breeze that was blowing, as though hurrying towards them to seek and to save. Never had they seen a more beautiful craft; but its own proper beauty was now increased a hundred fold by the thought that their safety, their rescue, their deliverance, was the purpose that guided her here, and that she was coming to restore them to home, to friends, and to all the joys of life.

Three cheers!

Yes, and three more!

Yes, and three times three, and nine times nine, and cheers without end! They cheered. They shouted. They danced. They hugged one another for very joy.

Solomon joined in the general jubilation. He did this by standing apart and bursting into tears.

“Don’t mind me,” he muttered. “Clar, I can’t help it, nohow. De tears will come, but dey’s all tears ob j’y. It’s ben a drefful tryin time to me all along, chilen, dis yer time, for I allus ben a feelin an a thinkin as how dat I had some han in a bringin ob you to dese yer stremities; but I held out, I bore up, all for your sakes; but now all am ober; an O, de precious sakes! dar’s a ole man hereabouts, chil’en, dat’s like to bust wid j’y! Don’t mind me. All right! Hooray! All safe at last!—an de chilen snatched from the jaws ob roonatum! O, do go way now, or else dis yer nigga’ll bust!”

And at this Solomon really did burst—into tears.

The glorious schooner! the beautiful schooner! the schooner with the swan-like form and the snow-white sails! She plunged through the waters, the waves foamed about her bows, as she hurried on towards them. Arthur and Tom were there; they knew it, or else how should that schooner come so straight towards them? No more fears now, no more anxieties. Arthur and Tom were both safe, and the deep joy of that little company arose more from the assurance of this than even from the prospect of their own rescue.

The schooner came near. She rounded to; she dropped her anchor. A boat was lowered. Three figures appeared in the boat—one rowing with vigorous strokes, two smaller ones in the stern. The boat came nearer. In the stern they saw the two, and recognized them as they came nearer. They had felt sure at the first, but now they saw with their own eyes Arthur and Tom; and O, with what joy, with what jubilation, with what shouts, what cries, what leaps of joy! Arthur and Tom waved their hands, they stretched out their arms, they called out incoherent words, and it was with incoherent words that those on the shore responded.

The boat grounded. The boys ashore rushed into the water to seize Arthur and Tom in their arms. Then the man who had rowed the boat stood up and looked at them. They saw him. They knew him. Captain Ferguson! Tears were in his eyes, and he tried to hide them, but couldn’t. Captain Tobias

Ferguson, bold sailor, strong, brave man, broke down on this occasion, and cried like a child.

Then he went about shaking hands and talking wildly. He grabbed old Solomon's hand, and shook it most warmly. He asked anxiously about his health. Solomon was still sobbing and crying with utter joy. Neither of them knew what he was doing. Both felt the same emotions, yet the emotions of each arose from the same cause, and that was, anxiety about these boys, whom they loved, for whom they had feared so much, and suffered so much, and over whose safety they now rejoiced with such deep joy.

Captain Ferguson did not say much, but made them all get into the boat and go aboard the Fawn. He did not look at their camp, nor did they feel any regret at leaving the work which had caused them so much toil. Solomon only stipulated that he should take away the provisions—the barrels of biscuit, the potted meats, the hams, and whatever else had been accumulated there on that desolate shore. Nor was there any reason for longer delay, for the associations of the place were by no means of a kind which they chose to dwell upon; so the Fawn turned her back upon Anticosti, and stood out to sea.

As they passed the headland Bruce pointed out to Arthur and Tom the broken fragments of the Petrel, which still lined the rocky shore. But the eye of Captain Ferguson was turned elsewhere. He was on the lookout for the Antelope.

“We've got to go back after her,” said he. “If we wait for her, she won't be here till to-morrow morning, and we can run down to where she is in less than an hour.”

As he said these words the Fawn passed outside the headland, and there, far away to the east, heading out to sea in one of her tacks, was the Antelope. There she was, her very venerable self at last, the schooner for which they had so often searched the water, for whose appearance they had

so longed and hoped, and which never came through all those weary and despairing days. Now, when she was not needed, and, in fact, was not particularly wanted, she made herself visible.

The wind, which was against the Antelope, was fair for the Fawn, and in a short time the two schooners were within hail. Captain Corbet then made the best of his way on board the Fawn.

He had already seen the boys, and guessed all. When he stood before them the boys were all shocked at his appearance. Venerable he had always been, but now he looked ten years older than when they last had seen him. He was also very much agitated, trembled violently, and, going around, he shook hands with every one in silence. Then he turned away his head and wept. The boys all felt deeply touched at seeing this exhibition of feeling on his part, and even Captain Ferguson looked at him with less severity.

“Well,” said he, “I do believe he’s shed a good many tears about you, and if he did bring you into a scrape, he’s suffered enough for it, I say.”

After this his treatment of the venerable navigator was far more generous than it had hitherto been.

“I ain’t got much time to spare,” said he, “captain, but I’m bound to see these boys in a place of safety. So I propose to sail to Miramichi, and you hurry along as fast as your old tub can get through the water. I understand you’re all going straight back to the Bay of Fundy, and I don’t see why you shouldn’t be able to do that much safe enough; so I’ll deliver up the boys to your care in Mirami-chi. I think I can make them comfortable enough till then aboard the Fawn.”

Captain Corbet had nothing to say against this decision, but meekly returned to the Antelope, and prepared to follow the Fawn to the destination mentioned. As for the boys, they were delighted, and felt only too glad at being able to have a short cruise on board such a vessel as the Fawn.

On the following day the Fawn reached her destination, but the Antelope did not turn up until a day later. The boys now went back to their old quarters, and Captain Ferguson bade them all good by. Bailey accompanied him, having been engaged by him as one of his crew.

“Wal, boys,” said Captain Corbet, after Ferguson had taken his departure, “we’ve lived, an we hev suffered, an hev mootooly ben called on to undergo triboolations that ain’t often met with in this mortal spere. This uthly life is one of strange vycissitoods, an the seafarin life has fre-kent ups an downs. I don’t think I ever, in all my born days, was called upon to endoor more pewer mental tortoor than in this week that’s past an gone. The wust of it all was the thought that it was my fault, and mine only. So now, boys, look at me, and take a warnin. Bewar, above all, of avarice. Think of me, with my plans for sudden wealth. Terrew, I might say that it was keer for the babby that animated this excited boosom; I might plead the affection of a absint feyther a yearnin over his offsprin; but I forbar. I pint to my unworthy self, and say, Bewar! Don’t ever allow yer young minds to grow delooded about the vain and glitterin toys of wealth and fortin! See what it’s cost us. We derreamed of a great ship, and cargo, and thousands upon thousands of pounds to divide among us; and what did we raily git? Salvage! farewell, good by to you forever. Out of all our derreams we hev gained nothin but the Petrel’s boat, which ain’t so dreadful bad a boat nuther, but contrariwise, and’ll be useful enough yet, maybe; an if we’d quietly taken that thar boat, and ben content, we’d a ben spard all this trouble, which shows that a small possibility’s bet-ter’n a big impossibility. Them’s my sentiments; and among the lessons which I hope to live to inculcate in the mind of my babby, the most important shall be the story of the ship that we PICKED UP ADRIFT.”

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PICKED UP
ADRIFT ***

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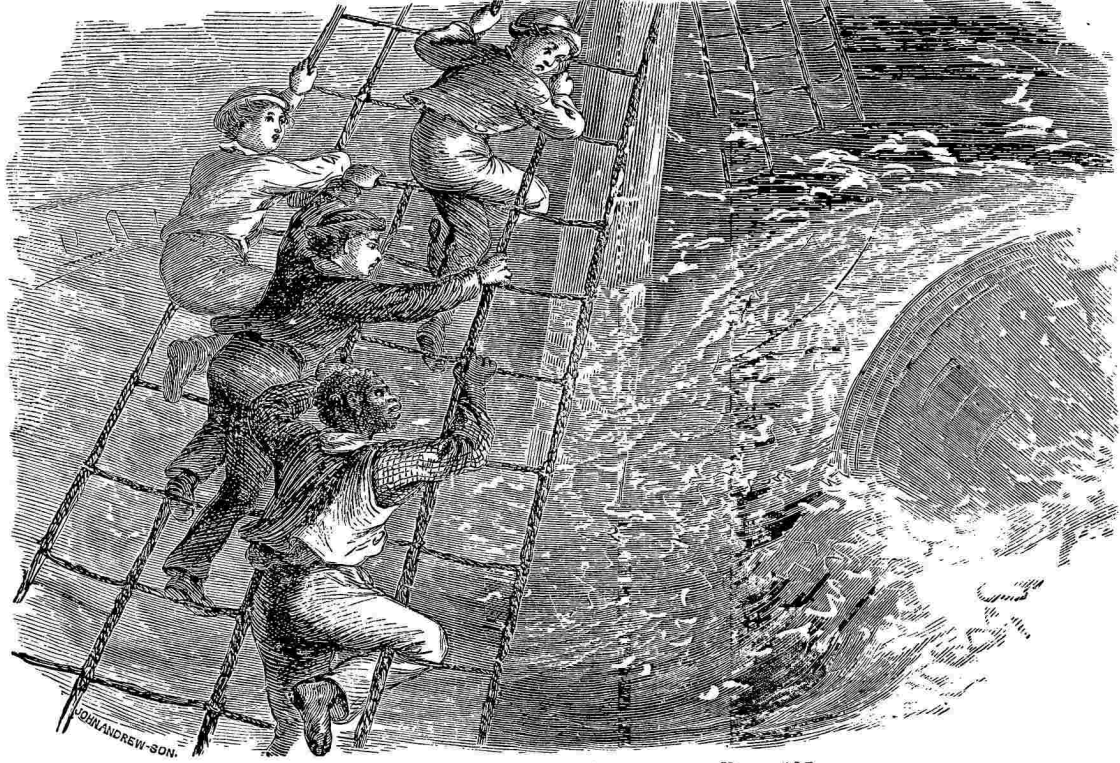
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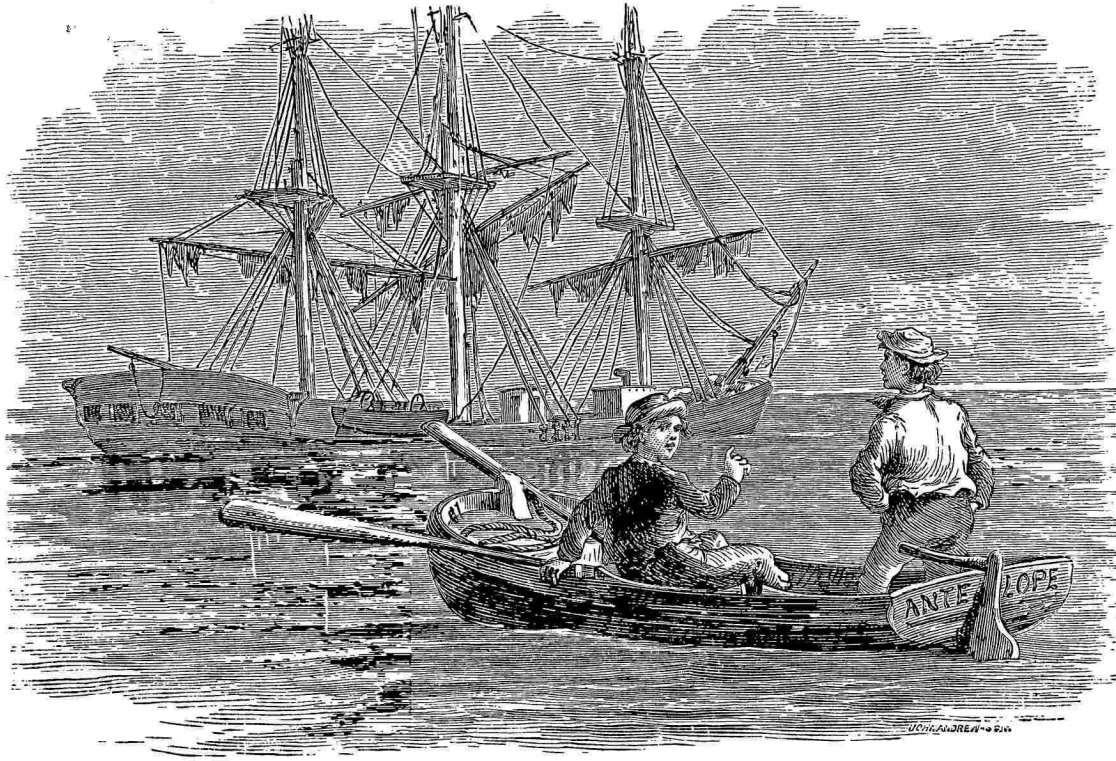
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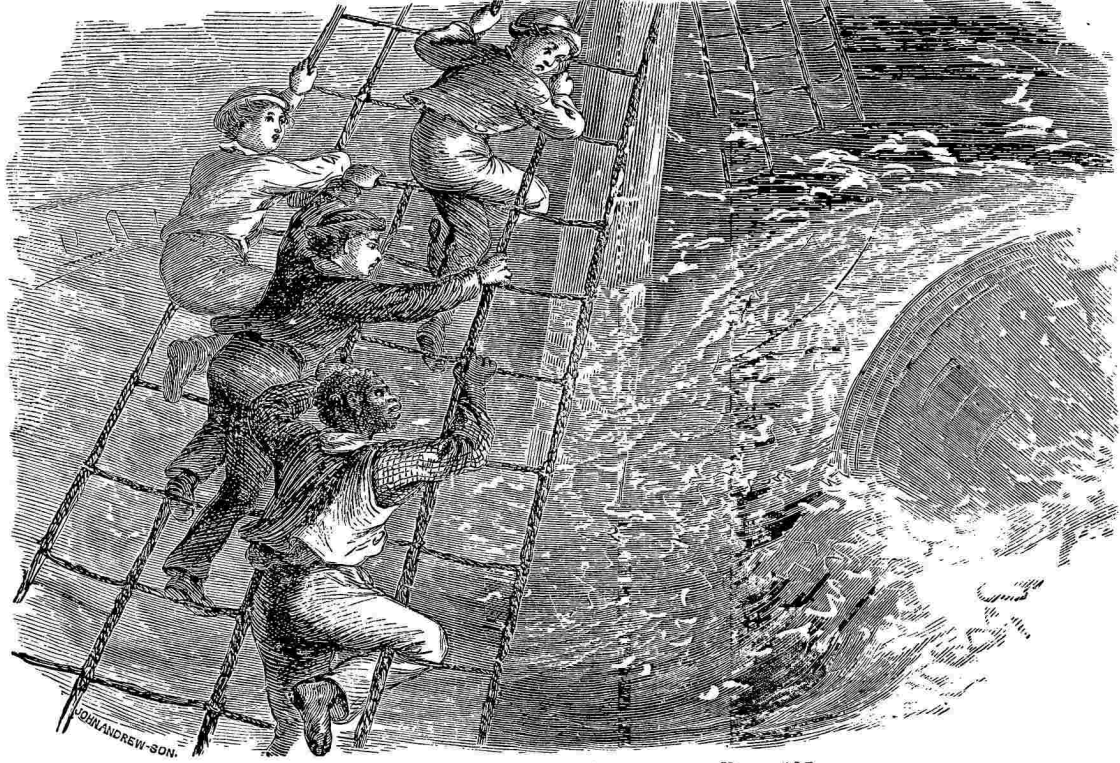
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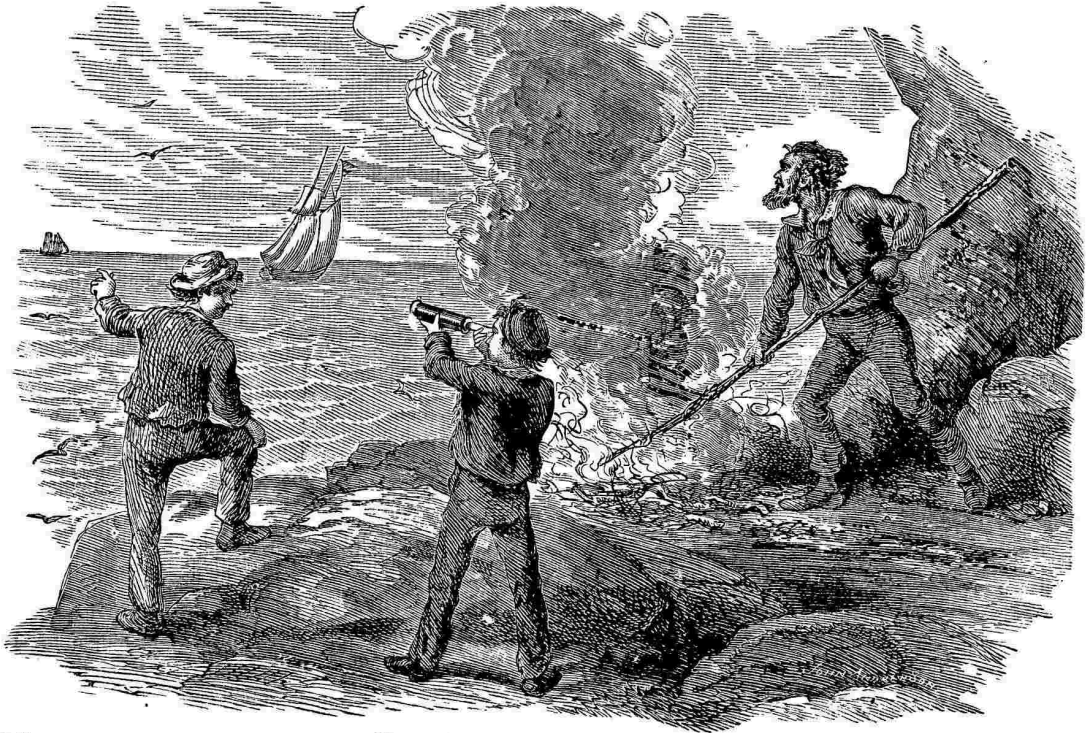
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