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THE SCHOONER-YACHT "CURLEW" ***

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LEFT ON LABRADOR

OR THE

CRUISE OF THE SCHOONER-YACHT "CURLEW"

AS RECORDED BY "WASH"

BY

C. A. STEPHENS

AUTHOR OF "LYNX-HUNTING," "FOX-HUNTING," "CAMPING
OUT," "OFF TO THE GEYSERS," "ON THE AMAZONS," ETC.

Illustrated

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INTRODUCTION.

Those of our readers who may have read "Camping Out," the first volume of the "Camping-Out Series," will probably recall the circumstance of the graphite lode, and the manner in which it was left to Raed to dispose of. As the reason was too far advanced at the time of his negotiations with the unknown gentlemen to permit of a trip to Katahdin that fall, the whole affair was postponed till the following spring.

On the 27th of April, Raed set out for Bangor. At Portland, Me., he was joined by the gentlemen (their names we are not at liberty to give); and at Bangor Kit met the party. Thence they went up to the mountain, where they had no difficulty in rediscovering the lode. That the examination was satisfactory will be seen from the first chapter of young Burleigh's narrative, which we subjoin. It is an account of their first yacht-cruise north. The schooner "Curlew," with the party, sailed from "Squam" (Gloucester, north village) on the 10th of June.

On the 7th of July they made Cape Resolution on the north side of the entrance of Hudson Straits. Thenceforward, till their escape from that icy passage in August, their voyage was one continued series of startling adventures amid some of the grandest and most terrible scenery the earth affords.

Of the plan of self-education adopted and acted upon by these young gentlemen we may remark, that it is singularly bold and original in its conception. If persevered in, we have no doubt that the result will fully justify their expectations. Unless we are much mistaken, it will be, as they modestly hope, a pioneer movement, looking to a much-needed revolution in the present sedentary programme of collegiate study.

LEFT ON LABRADOR.

CHAPTER I.

Sequel to the "Graphite Lode."—The Fifteen Thousand Dollars, and how it was invested.—About the Yacht.—The Schooner "Curlew."—Capt. Mazard.—Guard.—The Gloucester Boys.—"Palmleaf, Sar."—Getting Ready for the Voyage.—Ship-Stores.—The Howitzer.—The Big Rifle.—A Good Round Bill at the Outset.

Raed got home from Katahdin on the night of the 15th of May. Kit came with him; and together they called on Wade and the writer of the following narrative early on the morning of the 16th. Brown enough both boys looked, exposed as they had been to the *tanning* winds for more than a fortnight.

"Jubilate!" shouted Raed, as I opened the door. "Latest news from Mount Katahdin,—graphite stock clean up to the moon!"

Wade came *looking* down stairs, nothing on but his gown and slippers. At sight of his tousled head both our callers gave a whoop of recognition, and set upon him,—shook him out of his slippers, and pulled him down the steps on to the sidewalk barefoot; thereby scandalizing a whole houseful of prim damsels across the street, who indignantly pulled down their curtains. Such a hand-shaking and back-patting as ensued! All the hardships and discouragement we had endured on our last season's expedition seemed to bear an exultant harvest in this our final success.

"But you haven't been to breakfast!" exclaimed Kit.

"So they haven't!" cried Raed. "Well, can't do business till they have their breakfast. We'll leave 'em to guzzle their coffee in peace. But hurry up! We must hold a council this morning,—have a grand pow-wow! Come round at nine sharp."

They were off.

We ate breakfast, and went down to Raed's, where we got into the back parlor, shut the doors, and proceeded to pow-wow. Wade was chosen president of the meeting; Kit, secretary.

"First," said Raed, "allow me to give an account of my stewardship. No need of going into details. We went up to Katahdin; found the lode. Messrs. *Hammer and Tongs* were well satisfied. The fifteen thousand dollars was paid without so much as winking. Might have had twenty thousand dollars just as well; but I didn't know it when I made the offer. Hope you won't be dissatisfied with me. Here's the money; two checks,—one on the First National Bank for nine thousand dollars, the other on the Maverick National Bank for six thousand dollars."

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"I move we accept the gentleman's statement, and tender our sincere thanks for his eminently successful services," said *a voice*.

The motion was seconded by Kit, and carried.

"Question now arises," Raed resumed, "What shall we do with this money? Of course we must plant it somewhere, have it growing, what we don't want to use immediately."

"Might speculate a little with it," suggested Wade, "so as to double it up along."

"And risk losing the whole of it," put in Kit.

"Nothing risked, nothing gained," quoted Wade. "What say, Raed? Why not buy gold?"

"Better put it into bonds," said Kit; "safer, a good deal."

"Don't know about that," remarked Wade. "Your abolition government may turn a somersault some fine morning."

"Well, it won't strike on its head if it does,—like a certain government we've all heard of," retorted Kit.

"Call the president and secretary to order, somebody!" cried Raed.

"Now about buying gold," he continued. "There's nothing to be made in gold just now, especially with fifteen thousand dollars: if we had a million, it might be worth talking of. I really don't just know where to put our little fifteen thousand dollars to make it pull the hardest. Suppose we run down and have a talk with our legal friend, Mr. H——" (the same who had advised us relative to the "lode").

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"All right."

We went down. Our gentleman had just come in. Raed stated our case. H—— heard it.

"So you want to speculate a little," said he pleasantly. "Good boys. That's right. Won't work yourselves; won't even let your money work honestly: want to set it to cheating somebody. Well, you must remember that the biter sometimes gets bitten."

"Oh! we don't want anything hazardous," explained Raed.

"Yes, I see," remarked Mr. H——; "something not too sharp, sort of over and above board, and tolerably safe."

"That's about our style," remarked Wade.

"Well, I'm doing a little something by way of Back-Bay land speculation. That would be near home for you; and you can go in your whole pile, or only a thousand, just as you choose."

"Back-bay land," said Kit. "Where is this Back-bay land?"

"Well, there you've got me," replied Mr. H——, laughing. "It would be rather hard telling where the *land* is. In fact, the *land* is most all *water*. The land part has yet to be made. There's room to make it, however. I mean out in the Back Bay, north-west of the city here, along the Charles River. City is growing rapidly out that way. We have got up a sort of company of share-owners of the space out on the tidal marsh. These shares can be bought and sold. As I said, the city is growing in that direction. There's a steady rise in value per square foot. Value may double in a year. Put in ten thousand now, and it may be worth twenty by next year at this time."

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"But is there really any bottom to it?" asked Wade.

"Oh, yes! geologists think there's bottom out there somewhere. But we shareholders don't trouble ourselves about the bottom."

"I mean bottom to the *company*," interrupted Raed.

"Yes, yes. Well, that's another matter. But then you will be dealt honestly with, if that's what you mean by *bottom*. Of course, you must take the risk with the rest of us. You put in ten thousand: and, if you want me to do so, I will be on the lookout for your interests; tell you when to sell, you know; and, in case there should be like to come a crash, I'll tip you a wink when to stand from under."

"Then you advise us to invest in this?" queried Raed.

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"Well, I should say that it was as well as you can do."

"What say, fellows?" Raed inquired, turning to us.

"Perhaps we could not do better," said Kit. "I suppose this property comes under the head of real estate; and real estate is generally considered safe property. You call it real estate, don't you, Mr. H——?"

"Yes, yes; as near real estate as anything. It's kind of amphibious; half real estate certainly,—

more'n half when the tide is out."

So we purchased that afternoon, through Mr. H—, ten thousand dollars' worth of Back-bay *land*. Of our remaining five thousand dollars, we put three thousand dollars into 5-20 bonds, and deposited the remaining two thousand dollars ready for immediate use. That was about all we did that day.

In the evening we went to hear Parepa, who was then in town; and the next morning met at nine, at Raed's again, to pow-wow further concerning the yacht.

"It is too late," said Kit after we were again snug in the back parlor, "to get a yacht built and launched so as to make a voyage this summer. Such a vessel as we want can't be built and got off the stocks in much, if any, less than a year. What are we to do meanwhile?—wait for it?" [15]

"No," said Wade.

"No," said Raed.

"What then?" asked Kit.

"Hire a vessel," I suggested.

"Can we do that?" asked Wade.

It seemed likely that we could.

"Has it ever occurred to any of you that we none of us know anything about sailing a vessel?—anything to speak of, I mean?" Kit inquired.

We had all been vaguely aware of such a state of things; but not till now had we been brought face to face with it.

"It would be the worst kind of folly for us to go out of port alone," I couldn't help saying.

"Of course it would," replied Kit.

"I'm well aware of that," said Raed. "We shall have to learn seamanship somehow."

"Besides," remarked Wade, "sailing a vessel wouldn't be very light nor very pleasant work for us, I'm thinking. If we could afford to hire a good skipper, it would be better."

"We shall have to hire one till we learn how to manage a vessel ourselves," replied Raed.

"And not only a skipper, but sailors as well," said Kit. "What shall *we* be able to do the first week out, especially if it be rough weather?"

"Do you suppose we shall be much seasick?" Wade asked suddenly. [16]

"Very likely we shall be sick, when it's rough, for a while," said Raed. "We must expect it, and get over it the best way we can."

"Now, suppose we are able to hire a schooner such as we want, with a skipper, and a crew of five or six," he continued: "where shall we make our first cruise?"

"Along the coast of Maine," I suggested. "From Casco Bay to Eastport. Several yachts were down there last summer. Found good fishing. Had a fine time. There are harbors all along, so that they could go in every night."

"Just the place for our first voyage!" exclaimed Wade.

"It seems to me," replied Raed, "that if we hire a good stanch schooner and skipper, with a crew, we might do something more than just cruise along the coast of Maine, fish a little, and then come back."

"So it does to me," said Kit. "We should never get on our polar voyage at that rate. If we are going into all this expense, let's go up as far as the 'Banks' of Newfoundland, anyway."

"And why not a little farther," said Raed, "if the weather was good, and we met with no accident? If everything went well, why not sail on up to the entrance of Hudson Straits, and get a peep at the Esquimaux?" [17]

"Raed never'll be satisfied till he gets into Hudson Bay," laughed Wade. "What is there so attractive about Hudson Bay? I can't imagine."

"Because," said Raed, "it's an almost unknown sea. Ever since it was first discovered by the noble navigator, who perished somewhere along its shores, it has been shut up from the world in the hands of a few selfish individuals, who got the charter of the Hudson-bay Company from the King of England. They own it and all the country about it and run it for their own profit only. About that great bay there is a coast-line of more than two thousand miles, with Indian tribes on its shores as wild and savage as when Columbus first came to America. Just think of the adventure and wild scenery one might witness on a voyage round there! It's a shame we Americans can't go in there if we want to. The idea of letting half a dozen little red-faced men in London rule, hold, and keep everybody else out of that great region! It's a disgrace to us. Their old charter ought to have been taken away from them long ago. I don't know that I shall go there this year, nor next: but I mean to go into that bay sometime, and sail round there, and trade and talk with the savages as much as I choose; and, if the company undertakes to hinder me, I'll fight for it; for they've no moral right nor business to keep us out." [18]

"Good on your head!" cried Kit, patting him encouragingly.

"A war with England seems to be imminent!" exclaimed Wade. "Methinks I hear the boom of

cannon!"

Raed looked dubious a moment, but immediately began to laugh. He is rather apt to fly off on such tangents. We have to sprinkle him with ridicule a little: that always brings him out of it all right again.

"Well," said he, "waiving that subject, what say for going as far north as Hudson Straits, if everything should work favorably?"

We had none of us anything to urge against this.

"But we must not forget that we have not yet hired a vessel," added Kit.

"No," said Raed; "and the sooner we find out what we can do, the better."

That afternoon Wade and I went down to the wharves to make inquiries. Raed and Kit went out to Gloucester, it being quite probable that some sort of a craft might be found out of employ there. Wade and I were unable to see or hear of anything at all to our minds in our harbor, and came up home at about seven, P.M. Kit and Raed had not got back; nor did they come in the morning, nor during the next day. A few minutes before eight in the evening, however, we received a despatch from Portland, Me., saying, "Come down and see it."

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We went down on the morning train. The boys were at the dépôt.

"Couldn't find a thing at Gloucester nor Newburyport nor Portsmouth," said Raed. "But I think we've struck something here, if we can stand the expense."

"Eight out here at the wharf," said Kit.

We walked across.

"There she is!" pointed Raed.

A pretty schooner of a hundred and seventy tons lay alongside.

"One year old," Raed explained. "Clean and sweet as a nut. Here from Bangor with pine-lumber. Captain's a youngish man, but a good sailor. We inquired about him. Appears like a good fellow too. Has been on a cod-fisher up to the Banks; also on a sealer off Labrador. He's our man, I think."

"And the best of it all is," said Kit, "he owns the schooner; can go if he's a mind to. So we sha'n't be bothered with any old musty-fusty owners."

"Well, what does he say?" asked Wade.

"He says he will put us up there this summer if we will give him a hundred dollars per month, pay full insurance fees on the vessel, hire him six good seamen, and give three hundred dollars for the use of schooner; we, of course, to furnish ship-stores and provide a cook."

[20]

"Gracious! that's going to cost us something," said I.

"Yes; but it's about the best and only thing we can do," said Kit.

"Why does he want a new crew?" Wade asked. "Why does he not keep these he has?"

"Says that these are all inexperienced,—green hands," replied Raed. "If we are going up there among the ice on a dangerous coast, he wants Gloucester boys,—Gloucester or Nantucket; prefers Gloucester. Thinks six Gloucester lads will be about the right thing."

"Where is he?" asked Wade.

"Up at the Preble House."

We went up; when Wade and I were formally introduced to Capt. George Mazard of the schooner "Curlew." Had dinner with him. Liked him. He appeared then, as we have since proved him, a thoroughly good-hearted, clear-headed sailor. As Raed had hinted, he was quite a young man,—not more than twenty-seven or eight; middle height, but strong; face brown and frank; features good; manner a little serious; and attentive to business when on duty. On the whole, the man was rather grave for one of his years. Occasionally, however, when anything particularly pleased him, he developed a vein of strong, rich mirth, which would endure for several hours. He impressed us at once as a reliable man,—one to be depended on under any ordinary circumstances. We decided (very wisely as I now think) to accept his offer; and, after dinner, went down to the Marine Insurance Office to take out a policy on the vessel. On learning that we were intending to enter Hudson Straits, the agent refused to underwrite us: it was too ugly a risk. He either couldn't or didn't want to understand the object of our voyage. Here was a *stick*. Capt. Mazard declined to sail uninsured unless we would take the risk. We did not much like to do that. Finally Raed offered on our side to assume one-half the risk. After some hesitation, this was agreed to; and a paper to that effect was drawn up and signed.

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We then went down to the wharf where "The Curlew" lay.

A fine, shaggy Newfoundland dog, black as a crow, came growling up the companion-way as we jumped down on deck, but, perceiving the captain, began to race and tear about with great barks of canine delight.

"That's a jolly big dog!" Kit remarked. "Keeps watch here while you are off?"

"Yes, sir. Don't want a better hand. Never leaves the schooner without I bid him. Wants his dinner too, I guess. I haven't been here since last night."

[22]

"What's his name?" said Wade.

"Guard."

"He's a noble fellow," observed Raed. "Hope you will take him along with you."

"I should be loath to go off without him."

Some changes below deck seemed necessary; and we arranged for having the hold floored over, and a sort of rough saloon made, running nearly the whole length of the vessel. Off the forward end of this saloon was to be parted a cook's galley, with another section for the seamen's berths. Also arranged for a skylight in the deck; in short, for having the schooner made as convenient as possible for our purpose, at our expense.

Leaving Capt. Mazard to superintend these changes, we went back to Gloucester in the morning, and during the day managed to hire six sailors, young fellows of eighteen and twenty, save one, an old sea-dog of fifty or thereabouts, at forty dollars per month. They looked a little rough, but turned out to be very good sailors; which was the most we wanted. Their names, as they gave them to us, were Richard Donovan, Henry Corliss, Jerry Hobbs, Thomas Bonney, and George Weymouth. The elder salt called himself John Somers; though it leaked out shortly after that he had formerly flourished under the less euphonious patronymic of Solomon Trull. [23]

Went home that evening, and the next day advertised for a cook. It was answered by three colored "gemmen," two of whom modestly withdrew their application when they found where we were going, not caring to brave the chill of polar latitudes. The other, who was not a little tattered in his wardrobe, and correspondingly reckless, was quite willing to set his face toward the pole. Although but recently from "Sou' Car'liny, sar," and black as a crow, he assured us he could stand the cold "jes' like a fly, sar."

"What name?" Raed asked.

"Charles Sumner Harris, sar. Been cook on oyster-schooner, sar."

"Charles Sumner Harris!" exclaimed Wade, who was coming in. "You never wore that name in South Carolina."

"No, sar; lately 'dopted it, sar."

"What was your old name?" demanded Wade, looking at him as if he was about to give him five hundred lashes.

The man hesitated.

"When you were a slave, I mean. Yes, you were: don't deny it."

"They called me Palmleaf den, sar."

"Very well: that's what I shall call you. None of your Charles Sumner HARRISES!" [24]

"Oh! don't bully him," Kit said. "Give him a chance for himself."

"We shall see enough of his airs," Wade muttered.

He was a rather hard-looking citizen. We engaged him, however, at thirty dollars a month; and it is but simple justice to him and his race to add, that, like the traditionary singed cat, he did better than his general appearance would have guaranteed at that time.

The next morning we wrote to Capt. Mazard with directions to take "The Curlew" into Gloucester as soon as the carpenter-work was finished. He would need two or three hands temporarily. These were to be hired, and their car-fare back to Portland paid, at our expense.

Another matter now came up. It was quite possible that we might encounter ice at the entrance of Davis Straits, as well as in Hudson Straits, if we should venture in there: indeed, we might be caught in the ice. "The Curlew," though a staunch schooner, was only strengthened in the ordinary way.

"Will it not be best and safest," Raed argued, "to have her strengthened with cross-beams and braces? A few strong beams of this sort might save the vessel from being crushed."

As we were held to pay half the cost of the schooner in case of such an accident, to say nothing of our personal peril, we judged it prudent to neglect no means to render the voyage as safe as possible. Accordingly, we went out to Gloucester, and arranged for having it done; also for getting in water and fuel. In short, there seemed no end to the *items* to be seen to. If ever four fellows were kept busy, we were the four from the 20th of May to the 6th of June. Our ship-stores we bought in Boston, and had them sent to Gloucester by rail. It seemed desirable for us landsmen to have our food as nearly like that we had been in the habit of having as possible. We accordingly purchased five barrels of flour (not a little of it spoiled) at eight dollars per barrel; three of salt pork at sixteen dollars per barrel; two of beef at twelve dollars; six of potatoes at two dollars and fifty cents; two fifty-pound tubs of butter at thirty-five cents per pound; coffee, tea, sugar, and "preserves" to the tune of sixty dollars; and two hundred pounds corn-meal, four dollars.... Then there were a score of other little necessities, amounting to near fifty dollars; in all, a bill of two hundred and seventy-four dollars. These stores were bought at our own suggestion. It would have been better to have taken the advice of some experienced shipmaster: it might have cost us less, and we should afterwards have fared better, to have done so. [25]

I remember that we took along a lot of confectioneries, both for our own delectation and also to "treat" the Esquimaux on! That was a wild shot. As well offer an Esquimau cold boiled parsnip as a stick of candy. We also had two boxes of lemons! Which of us was responsible for the proposition for lemonade in Hudson Straits has never been satisfactorily settled. We none of us [26]

can remember how the lemons came on board. Wade says they were bought as an antidote for sea-sickness. A far more sensible article of traffic was twenty dollars' worth of iron in small bars; four dozen large jack-knives; twenty butcher-knives, and the same number of hatchets. We had also a web of red flannel at twenty dollars; in all, ninety dollars.

For mattresses, blankets, "comforters," and buffalo-skins, there was expended the sum of a hundred and twenty-three dollars. Ten Springfield rifles at ten dollars each (bought at an auction-sale), with a quantity of cartridges, one hundred and twelve dollars. For an old six-pound howitzer, purchased by Capt. Mazard from a schooner supposed to have been engaged in the slave-trade, nineteen dollars; and for ammunition (powder, iron shot, and a lot of small bullets), thirty-seven dollars.

For firing at seals or bears from the deck of the schooner, we had made, at Messrs, R. & Co.'s machine-shop, a large rifle of about an inch bore, and set like a miniature cannon in a wrought-iron frame, arranged with a swivel for turning it, and a screw for elevating or depressing the muzzle. This novel weapon was, as I must needs own, one of my projection, and was always a subject for raillery from my comrades. Its cost, including the mounting, was ninety-seven dollars. In all, three hundred and eighty-eight dollars.

Then there were other bills, including the cost of several nautical telescopes, also ice-anchors, ice-chisels, sounding-line, hawsers, &c., to the sum of a hundred and three dollars.

The lumber and carpenter work on "The Curlew" at Portland made a bill of a hundred and nine dollars; seamen's wages to Gloucester, with car-fare back, nineteen dollars; bracing and strengthening the schooner, sixty-seven dollars; cost of getting in fuel and water, thirty-three dollars; and other bills to the amount of forty-nine dollars: in all, two hundred and seventy-seven dollars. We had thus to pay out at the start over eleven hundred dollars. Capt. Mazard, too, was kept as busy as ourselves superintending the work, putting the vessel in ballast, &c. Indeed, it's no small job to get ready for such a cruise. We had no idea of it when we began.

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CHAPTER II.

ToC

Up Anchor, and away.—What the Old Folks thought of it—The Narrator's Preface.—"Squeamish."—A North-easter.—Foggy.—The Schooner "Catfish."—Catching Cod-Fish on the Grand Bank.—The First Ice.—The Polar Current.—The Lengthening Day.—Cape Farewell.—We bear away for Cape Resolution.—Hudson's Straits.—Its Ice and Tides.

[In Wash's manuscript, the voyage as far as Cape Resolution occupies four chapters. We have been obliged to condense it into one, as indicated by periods.—ED.]

On the afternoon of the 9th of June, Capt. Mazard telegraphed, "Can sail to-morrow morning if the wind serves."

We had been ready several days, waiting for the last job,—strengthening the schooner.

Good-by was said; and, going out to Gloucester, we went on board to pass the night.

As some of our readers may perhaps feel inclined to ask what our "folks" said to this somewhat adventurous departure, it may as well be stated that we were obliged to go considerably in opposition to their wishes, advice, counsel; in short, everything that could be said save a down-right veto. It was unavoidable on our part. They could not be brought to look upon our (or rather Raed's) project of self-education as we did; they saw only the danger of the sea. Had we done as they advised, we should have stayed at home. I shall not take it upon me to say what we *ought* to have done. As a matter of fact, we went, or this narrative would never have been written. Nor can I say conscientiously, by way of moral, that we were ever, for any great length of time, sorry that we went: on the contrary, I now believe it far the best way we could have spent our money; though the experience was a rough one. It may also be added, that we did not publicly state our intention of going so far north as Labrador; one reason for this being, that we were in no wise certain we should go farther than St. John's, Newfoundland.

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Our "saloon" was arranged with a sort of *divan*, or wide seat, along the starboard-side, at about chair-height. On this we laid our mattresses and blankets. Each had his bunk, this *divan* serving in the place of berths. The captain had his toward the forward end of the apartment. Guard bunked directly under him on an old jacket and pants. Along the port-side there was made fast a strong broad shelf, at table-height, running the entire length: this was for our books and instruments. The captain had the forward end of it, the part fronting his bunk, for his charts and papers. Before this table there was a long bench, fixed conveniently for sitting to read or write.

This bench, together with three strong barroom-chairs and four camp-stools, made up our sitting-accommodations. From pegs over the divan and table there hung a miscellaneous collection of powder-horns, rifles, fishing-tackle, tarpauling-hats, rubber coats, and "sou'-westers;" nor had I failed to bring along the old Sharpe's rifle which had done such good service among the moose-stags of Katahdin.

... We had brought "Palmleaf" with us, and now installed him in the galley. As a specimen of his art, we had him make muffins and tea that evening. Very fair they were, with butter and canned peaches.

The men came down during the evening, having been previously notified, and were assigned to their berths. We boys turned in at about eleven, and were only aroused next morning by the rattle of blocks, clank of the windlass, and trampling of feet, on deck.

"We're off!" exclaimed Raed, starting up. "Turn out, and say farewell to 'our native countree.'"

We stumbled up on deck; for it was still quite dark: only a pale-bright belt along the ocean to the eastward showed the far-off coming of the day. The shore and the village looked black as night. We were already several hundred yards from the wharf. A smart, cold breeze gushed out of the north-west. The huge, dim-white sails were filling: "The Curlew" gathered way, and stood out to sea. The chilling breeze, the motion, the ink-black waves, and their sharp cracking on the beach, were altogether a little disheartening at first, coming so suddenly from sleep. We felt not a little inclined to shrink back to our warm blankets; but, mastering this feeling, braced our courage, and drew breath for our long cruise. The captain came aft.

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"Ah! good-morning!" he cried, seeing us huddled about the companion-way. "I meant to get off without waking you. We made too much noise. I suppose. Smart breeze this. Make ten knots on it, easy. Could put you to the *north pole* in fifteen days with such a capful,—if there were no ice in the way," he added.

"We might soon be at Hudson Straits were this to hold," laughed Kit.

"Yes, sir," replied the captain. "Eight days would do it. But of course this is mere fine talk. You are not to look for any thing of the sort."

"We don't," said Raed. "But how long do you suppose it *will* take to work up there with ordinary weather?"

"Oh! well, for a guess, eighteen days,—anywhere from eighteen to twenty-five. Oughtn't to be over twenty-five with this schooner. Will sail thirteen knots on a wind."

... We were now fairly clear of the shore. The wind freshened. "The Curlew" dashed forward, rising and falling with the swells. The whole east was reddening. The dark spar of the bow-sprit rose and fell through it. It seemed a good omen to be going toward the light. Ere the sun met us on the sea, we were twelve miles out of Gloucester....

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Kit had often complained that he had been unable to write up the account of our Katahdin expedition so well as he could have done had he known beforehand that it would have fallen to Jim to do. At his suggestion, Raed, Wade, and myself, this morning, drew lots to sea who would be the historian of the present cruise. The reader, doubtless, has already inferred which of us got the short lot. Well, it was fun for the others, though any thing but fun for me. Nothing but a strong sense of restraining shame, added to the rather inconvenient distance from land, prevented me from deserting. Nature never designed me for a writer. Of that I am convinced; and doubtless my readers will not long differ with me. This is my first literary effort. If I know myself, it will also be my last. Under these circumstances, I beg that such of my young fellow-citizens as may happen to come upon this narrative (and I am not ambitious to have the number large) will kindly forbear to criticise it; for it will not bear criticism. Such of the facts and incidents of our voyage as I have thought would be of interest I have tried to write out. Strictly nautical terms and phrases I have sought to avoid: first, because I believed them of no great interest to the general reader; second, because, with this my first sea-trip, I have not become adept enough in their use to "swing" them with the fluent grace of your true-going, irresistible old salt; and from any other source they are, to my mind, unendurable.

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In the plan of education we have marked out for ourselves, it has not been our intention to become sailors. We would merely use the sea and its ships as a means of conveyance in our scheme of travel.

... Breakfast at six o'clock; two messes,—one of the crew, the other comprising our party and the captain. The men had boiled potatoes, fried pork, corn-bread, and biscuit. At our table we had roast potatoes and butter with corn-bread, then biscuit and butter with canned tomatoes. After breakfast, we went on deck a while; but the motion was far too great for comfort. The breeze held. The coast of Massachusetts was low in the west. To the north, the mountains of Maine showed blue on the horizon. We went below to read. Raed had bought, borrowed, and secured every work he could hear of on northern voyages and exploration, particularly those into Hudson Bay. It was our intention to thoroughly read up the subject during our voyage: in a word, to get as good an idea of the northern coast as possible from books, and confirm this idea from actual observation. This was the substance of Raed's plan of study.

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... By eleven o'clock we had grown a little sea-sick,—just the slightest feeling of nausea. Kit shuts his book, rests his arm on the table, and leans his head on it.

"You sick?" demands Raed.

"Oh, no! not much; just a little squeamish."

Presently Wade lies down on his mattress, and I immediately ask,—

"Much sick, Wade?" To which he promptly replies,—

"Oh, no! squeamish a little; that's all."

By and by the skipper looks down to inquire, "Sick here, anybody?" To which we all answer at once,—

"Oh, no! only a bit squeamish."

Squeamish was the word for it till near night, when we seemed suddenly to rally from it, though the motion continued the same; but the wind had veered to the south, and almost wholly lulled. We slept pretty well that night; but the next forenoon the nausea returned, and stuck by us all day. Every one who has been to sea knows how such a day passes. We had expected it, however, and bore it as lightly as possible.

... On the third morning out we found it raining, with the wind north-east. The schooner was kept as near it as possible, making about three knots an hour. The wind increased during the forenoon. By eleven o'clock there was a smart gale on. The rain drove fiercely. We grew sick enough. [35]

"This is worse than the 'poison spring' at Katahdin!" groaned Kit.

The skipper came down.

"Is it a big gale?" Raed managed to ask.

"Just an ordinary north-easter."

"Well, then, I never wish to meet an extraordinary one!" gasped Wade.

The captain mixed us some brandy and water from his own private supply, which we took (as a medicine). But it wouldn't stay *down*: nothing would stay down. Our stomachs refused to bear the weight of any thing. Night came on: a wretched night it was for us. "The Curlew" floundered on. The view on deck was doubtless grand; but we had neither the legs nor the disposition to get up.... Some time about midnight, a dozen of our six-pound shots, which had been sewed up in a coarse sack and thrown under the table-shelf, by their continued motion worked a gap in the stitches; and three or four of them rolled out, and began a series of races from one end of the cabin to the other, smashing recklessly into the rick of chairs and camp-stools stowed in the forward end. Yet I do not believe one of us would have got up to secure those shot, even if we had known they would go through the side: I am pretty certain I should not. They went back and forth at will, till the captain, hearing the noise, came down, and after a great amount of dodging and grabbing, which might have been amusing at any other time, succeeded in capturing the truants and locking them up. The next day it was no better: wind and rain continued. We were not quite so sick, but even less disposed to get up, talk, or do anything, save to lie flat on our backs. We heard the sailors laughing at and abusing Palmleaf, who was dreadfully sick, and couldn't cook for them. Yet we felt not the least spark of sympathy for him: I do not think we should have interfered had they thrown him overboard. Wade called the poor wretch in, and ordered him, so sick he could scarcely stand, to make a bowl of gruel; and, when he undertook to explain how bad he felt, we all reviled him, and bade him go about his business. [36]

"Nothin' like dis on de oyster schoonah," we heard him muttering as he staggered out.

... The storm had blown us off our course to the south-east considerably; and the next morning we tacked to the northward, and continued due north all that day and the next. It may have been fancy; but we all dated our recovery from this change of course. It had stopped raining, and the wind gradually went down. [37]

Now that the nausea had passed off we were hungry as wolves, and kept Palmleaf, who was now quite recovered, busy cooking all day long.... The weather continued cloudy. The view from the damp deck was dull to the last degree. Capt. Mazard was in considerable doubt as to our latitude. Not a glimpse of the sun had he been able to catch for five days; and during this time we had been sailing sometimes very fast, then scarcely making way in the teeth of the strong north-easter. To the north and north-east the fog banks hung low on the sea. So light was the wind, that the sails scarcely filled. The schooner seemed merely to drift.... Toward night we entered among the fog-banks. The whole face of the sea steamed like a boiling kettle. The mist rose thin and gauze-like. We could scarcely see the length of the deck. It was blind work sailing in such obscurity,—possibly dangerous.

"Have you any idea where we are, captain?" Raed asked. We stood peering ahead from the bow.

"Somewhere off Newfoundland. On the Grand Bank, I think. Fog indicates that. Always foggy here this time o' year."

"It is here that the gulf stream meets the cold currents and ice from Baffin's Bay," said Kit. "The warm current meeting the cold one causes the fog: so they say." [38]

"I have seen the statement," remarked Raed, "that these great banks are all raised from the ocean-bottom by the *débris* brought along by the gulf stream and the current from Davis Straits."

"But I have read that they are raised by the melting of icebergs," said Wade. "The iceberg has lots of sand and stones frozen into it: when it melts, this matter sinks; and, in the course of ages, the 'banks' here have been formed."

"Perhaps both causes have had a hand in it," said Kit.

"That looks most probable," remarked Capt. Mazard. "These scientific men are very apt to differ on such subjects. One will observe phenomena, and ascribe it wholly to one cause, when perhaps a half-dozen causes have been at work. Another man will ascribe it wholly to another of these causes. And thus they seem to contradict each other, when they are both, in part, right. I've noticed that very frequently since I began to read the scientific books on oceanic matters. They draw their conclusions too hastily, and are too positive on doubtful subjects."

I have often thought of this remark of Capt. Mazard since, when reading some of the "strong points" of our worthy scientists. [39]

"How deep is it here, for a guess?" asked Wade.

"Oh! for a guess, a hundred fathoms; about that."

"Too deep for cod-fishing here?" Raed inquired.

"Rather deep. We'll try them, however, in the morning."

Suddenly, as we were talking, a horn—a genuine old-fashioned dinner-horn—pealed out, seemingly not a hundred yards ahead.

"Port your helm there!" shouted the skipper to Bonney, who was at the wheel. The old sea-dog, Trull, caught up a tin bucket setting near, and began drumming furiously; while the skipper, diving down the companion way, brought up a loaded musket, which he hastily discharged over his head.

"Shout, halloo, scream!" he sang out to us. "Make all the noise you can, to let them know where we are!"

The schooner sheered off, minding her helm; and, at the same moment, we saw the dim outline of a small vessel almost under the bows.

"What ship is that?" demanded Capt. Mazard.

"Schooner 'Catfish' of Gloucester," replied a boyish voice.

"Where bound?" [40]

"Home."

"Can you give us the latitude?"

"Can't do it, skippy. Haven't seen the sun for a week. Not far from forty-five degrees, I reckon."

"Are we in any danger of Cape Race?"

"Not a bit. We're more than a hundred miles east of it, I think."

The little schooner, of not more than sixty tons, drifted slowly past. There were seven hands on deck; all boys of sixteen and eighteen, save one. This is the training which makes the Gloucester sailors so prized for our navy.

... During the evening, we heard at a distance the deep, grum whistle of the Inman steamer going down to Halifax,—whistling at intervals to warn the fishermen. It continued foggy all night, but looked *thinner* by nine next morning. The captain brought up an armful of out-riggers (a short spar three or four feet long to set in the side-rail, with a small pulley-block in the upper end to run a line through.)

"Now, boys," said he, setting the out-riggers, "we will try the cod.—Palmleaf! Palmleaf! Here, you sunburnt son! A big chunk of pork!"

"They won't bite it," said old Trull.

"I've sometimes caught 'em with it," replied the captain. "It's pork or nothing. We've no clams nor manhaden (a small fish of the shad family) to lure them." [41]

The stout cod-hooks, with their strong linen lines, were reeved through the blocks, baited, and let down into the green water. For some time we fished in silence. No bites. We kept patiently fishing for fifteen minutes. It began to look as if old Trull was right. Presently Kit jerked hastily.

"Got one?" we all demanded.

"Got something; heavy too."

"Haul him up!" cried the skipper.

Kit hauled. It made the block creak and the out-rigger bend. Yard after yard of the wet line was pulled in; and by and by the head of a tremendous fellow parted the water, and came up, one, two, three feet, writhing and bobbing about.

"Twenty pounds, if an ounce!" shouted young Donovan.

"Heave away!" cried the captain. "Now swing him over the rail!"

They were swinging him in, had almost got their hands on him, when the big fish gave a sudden squirm. The hook, which was but slightly caught in the side of its mouth, tore out. Down he went,—*chud!*

Such a yell of despair as arose! such mutual abuse as broke out all round! till, just at that moment, Wade cried, "I have one!" when all attention was turned to him. Slowly he draws it up. We were all watching. But 'twas a smaller one. [42]

"About a seven-pounder," pronounces the captain, safely landing him on deck, where he was

unhooked, and left to wriggle and jump out his agonies.

A minute later, Raed had out a "ten-pounder;" and, having once begun to bite, they kept at it, until the deck grew lively with their frantic leaping.

"Got all we want!" cried the skipper, after about an hour of this sort of thing. "There's a good two hundred weight of them.—Here, Palmleaf, pick 'em up, dress 'em, and put 'em in pickle: save what we want for dinner.—Now, you Donovan and Hobbs, bear a hand with those buckets. Rinse off the bulwarks, and wash up the deck."

"This is the kind of sport they have on a cod-fisher every day, I suppose," said Raed.

"Yes; but it gets mighty stale when you have to follow it for a month," replied Donovan. "I know what cod-fishing is."

... Toward noon the sun began to show its broad disk, dimly outlined in the white mists. The captain ran for his sextant; and an observation was caught, which, being worked up, gave our latitude at 45° 35'. We had probably made in the neighborhood of thirty miles during the night: so that the *boys* on "The Catfish" had given a very shrewd guess, to say the least. In the afternoon we had a fair breeze from the south-east. All sail was made, and we bowled along at a grand rate. Early the next morning we saw the first ice,—three or four low, irregular masses, showing white on the sea, and bearing down toward us from the north-west with the polar current. This current, coming along the coast of Labrador, is always laden with ice at this season. To avoid it, we now bore away to the north-east, keeping for several days on a direct course for Iceland; then gradually—describing the arc of a circle—came round west into the latitude of Cape Farewell, the southern point of Greenland.

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... Each day, as we got farther north, the sun set later, and rose earlier; till, on the 28th of June, its bright red disk was scarcely twenty minutes below the northern horizon.

... On the 3d of July we discerned Cape Farewell,—a mountainous headland, crowned with snow, at a distance of fifteen or twenty leagues.

From this point, Cape Resolution, on the north side of the entrance into Hudson Straits, bears west ten degrees north, and is distant not far from seven hundred miles. The wind serving, we bore away for it.

... During June and July, Hudson Straits are full of ice driving out into the Atlantic. This ice forms in the winter in vast quantities in the myriads of inlets and bays on both sides of the straits. The spring breaks it up, and the high tides beat it in pieces. It is rare that a vessel can enter the straits during June for the out-coming ice; but by July it has become sufficiently broken up and dispersed to allow of an entrance by keeping close up to the northern side, which has always been found to be freest from ice in July and August; while, on coming out in September, it is best to hug the southern main (land) as closely as possible.

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On our voyage up we had taken great pains to read and compare every account we could find regarding both the ice and the general character of the straits. Our plan was to make Cape Resolution, wait for a fair wind, and slip into the straits early in the day, so as to get as far up as possible ere night came on. A person who has never been there can form no idea of the tremendous force with which the tide sets into the straits, the velocity of the currents, and the amazing smash they made among the ice...

[45]

CHAPTER III.

ToC

Cape Resolution.—The Entrance into Hudson's Straits.—The Sun in the North-east.—The Resolution Cliffs.—Sweating among Icebergs.—A Shower and a Fog.—An Anxious Night.—A Strange Rumbling.—Singular Noises and Explosions.—Running into an Iceberg.—In Tow.—A Big Hailstone drops on Deck.—Boarding an Iceberg.—Solution of the Explosions.—A Lucky Escape.

"Land and ice, land and ice, ho!" sang out our old sea-dog from his lookout in the bow.

'Twas the morning of the 7th of July. We had expected to make Cape Resolution the evening before. Kit and I had been on deck till one o'clock, watching in the gleaming twilight. Never shall I forget those twilights. The sun was not out of sight more than three hours and a half, and the whole northern semicircle glowed continuously. It shone on the sails; it shone on the sea. The great glassy faces of the swells cast it back in phosphorescent flashes. The patches of ice showed white as chalk. The ocean took a pale French gray tint. Overhead the clouds drifted in ghostly troops, and far up in the sky an unnatural sort of glare eclipsed the sparkle of stars. Properly

speaking, there was no night. One could read easily at one o'clock. Twilight and dawn joined hands. The sun rose far up in the north-east. Queer nights these! Until we got used to it, or rather until fatigue conquered us, we had no little difficulty in going to sleep. We were not accustomed to naps in the daytime. As a sort of compromise, I recollect that we used to spread an old sail over the skylight, and hang up blankets over the bull's-eyes in the stern, to keep out this everlasting daylight. We needed night. Born far down toward the equinoxes, we sighed for our intervals of darkness and shadows. But we got used to it after a fortnight of gaping. One gets used to any thing, every thing. "Use is second nature," says an old proverb. It is more than that: it is *Nature* herself.

Land and ice, ho!

"Tumble out!" shouted Raed.

It was half-past three. We went on deck. The sun was shining brightly. Scarcely any wind; sea like glass in the sunlight; ice in small patches all about.

"Where's your land?" asked Wade.

"Off there," replied young Hobbs, pointing to the north-west.

Ah, yes! there it was,—a line of dark gray cliffs, low in the water. Between us and them a dozen white icebergs glittered in the sun.

"Is that the cape, captain?" queried Kit.

"Must be," was the reply. "Same latitude. Can't be any thing else. Answers to the chart exactly."

"Oh! that's Cape Resolution fast enough," said Raed. "Those cliffs correspond with the descriptions, I should say."

"How far off?" asked Wade.

"Well, seven or eight leagues," replied the captain.

"The Button Islands, on the south side of the entrance, ought to be in sight, to the south-west," remarked Raed, looking off in that direction; "but I don't see them," he added.

The captain got his glass, and climbed up to the gaff of the foresail.

"Yes, there 'tis!" he shouted. "Low down; low land. No cliffs."

"Why are they called 'Button Isles' on the chart?" he asked, sliding down the shrouds. "Is it because they resemble buttons?"

"No," said Raed. "They were named for Capt. Button, who sailed through here more than a century ago. He was one of those navigators who tried so hard to find the 'north-west passage' by sailing through Hudson's Straits. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the London merchants sent out expeditions nearly every year in the hope of finding a passage through here to China and India. This Button was one of their captains."

"Then this low land to the south-west of us is Cape Chidleigh, is it not?" said Wade.

"No," said Raed. "Cape Chidleigh is the main land of Labrador down to the south-east of the Button Isles. You couldn't see that, could you, captain?"

"Saw some high peaks to the south, far down on the horizon. Those are on Labrador, I presume. Couldn't say whether they are the cape proper or not. They are in about the direction of the cape as indicated on the chart."

As the sun rose higher a breeze sprang up, and the sails filled. The schooner was headed W.N.W. to run under the cape; Bonney being set to watch sharp for the floating ice.

"Coffee, sar!" cried Palmleaf from the companion-way.

We went down to breakfast and talk over matters with the captain. It was decided to work up under the cape, and so, hugging the land on the north side as closely as possible, get into the strait as far as we could that day. We all felt anxious; for though the sea was now smooth, sky clear, and the wind fair, yet we knew that it was rather the exception than the average. The idea of being caught here among these cliffs and icebergs in a three-days' fog or a north-east gale, with the whole fury of the Atlantic at our backs, was anything but encouraging. The advice of the elder navigators, "to seize a favorable day and get as far up the straits as possible," kept recurring to our minds. The words had an ominous sound. They were the utterances of many a sad experience.

"There never could be a better day nor a fairer wind," remarked the captain.

"Now's our chance; I'm convinced of it," said Kit.

The mainsail, which had been taken in the previous evening, and the topsail, were both set; and, the breeze freshening, "The Curlew" rapidly gathered way. Considerable care had to be used, however, to avoid the broad cakes of ice which were floating out all around us. Small bits, and pieces as large as a hogshead, we paid no attention to; let the cut-water knock them aside. But there were plenty of large, angular, ugly-looking masses, which, if struck would have endangered the schooner's side. These were sheered off from: so that our course was made up of a series of curves and windings in and out. It seemed odd to see so much ice, and feel the deadly chill of the water, with so hot a sun on deck that the pitch started on the deal planks. In our companion-way the thermometer rose to eighty-seven degrees, with icebergs glittering at every point of the compass.

By eight o'clock, A.M., we were abreast the cliffs of Resolution Island, at a distance of a couple of miles. With our glasses we examined them attentively. Hoary, gray, and bare, they were, as when first split out of the earth's flinty crust, and thrust above the waves. The sun poured a flood of warm light over them; but no green thing could be discerned. Either there was no soil, or else the bleak frost-winds effectually checked the outcrop of life. To the south the Button Islands showed like brown patches on the shimmering waves. The width of the straits at this point is given on the chart at twelve leagues,—thirty-six miles. We could see the land on either side.

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By eleven, A.M., we were twenty miles inside the outer cape. The cliffs continued on the north side, and the schooner was headed up within a mile of them. There were no signs of reefs or sunken ledges, however; and, on heaving the lead, a hundred fathoms of line were run out without touching bottom. The cliffs seem thus to form the side of an immense chasm partially filled by the ocean. Raed estimated their height above the sea to be near four hundred feet. At the distance of a mile they appeared to tower and almost impend over us.

Toward noon the wind flawed for half an hour, then dropped altogether. The current, which was setting out to sea, began to drag us back with it slowly. There wasn't a breath of air stirring. Blazes! how the sun poured down! Guard got round in the thin shadow of the mainsail, and actually lolled among icebergs. There we were stuck. That is one of the disadvantages of a sailing-vessel: you have to depend on the wind,—the most capricious thing in the universe. I suppose the air-current had veered about from north-east to north, so that the lofty cliffs intercepted them completely.

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Dinner was eaten. One o'clock,—two o'clock. We were glad to take refuge with Guard in the shade of the sails. All around us was a stillness which passes words, broken loudly by our steps on the hot deck, and the occasional graze of ice-cakes against the sides. We felt uneasy enough. This calm was ominous.

"There's mischief brewing!" muttered Kit; "and here we are in the very jaws of the straits!"

Since the wind dropped, the ice had seemed to thicken ahead. To the southward, farther out from the shore, where the outward current was stronger, we could see it driving along in a glittering procession of white bergs. The wisdom of keeping on the north side of the strait was apparent from this; though it seemed likely to cost us dear in the consequent loss of the wind. On many of the larger cakes we could see dark objects, which the glass disclosed to be seals, sunning.

Presently a dense mass of blue-black clouds loomed suddenly over the brow of the cliffs.

"A shower!" cried Raed.

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"A squall!" exclaimed old Trull.

"All hands take in sail!" shouted the captain.

Our Gloucester lads needed no further awakening. We all bore a hand, and had the mainsail down on the boom, short order; and, while Wade and I tried our hand at lashing it with the gaskets, the rest got down the foresail and the topsail. The jib was not furled, but got ready to "let go" in case of fierce gusts. Low, heavy peals of thunder began to rumble behind the cliffs. The dark cloud-mass heaved up, till a misty line of foamy, driving rain and hail showed over the flinty crags. Bright flashes gleamed out, followed shortly by heavy, hollow peals. The naked ledges added vastly, no doubt, to the tone of the reverberations. The rain-drift broke over the cliffs; but the shower passed mainly to the north-west. Only some scattered drops, with a few big straggling pellets of hail, hit on the deck. An eddy of cool air followed the gust. The jib puffed out on a sudden.

"Up with the foresail!" was the order.

It was at once set; and "The Curlew" started on in the wake of the shower. The cloud passed across the straits diagonally to the south-west. We could see it raining heavily on the ice-flecked water a few miles farther up; and immediately the whole surface began to steam. We watched it with considerable anxiety.

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"It will be a fog, I'm afraid," groaned Raed.

"It's sure to be," said young Hobbs. "I never seed a scud on the 'Banks' but 'ut it was allus follered by a fog."

White-gray, cold-looking clouds began to drift along the sun from the seaward. A sudden change in the air was felt. Cool, damp gusts swept down from the crags. The thermometer was falling rapidly. It had stood at ninety-four degrees just previous to the shower. Kit now reported it at seventy-three degrees; and, in less than an hour, it had fallen twenty degrees more. This sudden change was probably due to the veering of the wind from east round to north. The cold blasts from "Greenland's icy mountains" speedily dissipated our miniature summer. There was a general rush for great-coats and thick jackets. Thin lines of vapor streamed up from the water as the cold gusts swept across it. The hot sunbeams falling on the sea had doubtless raised the temperature considerably, despite the ice; and this sudden change in the air could but raise a great mist. Yet I doubt whether Nature's wonderful and legitimate processes were ever regarded with greater disfavor and apprehension.

"The barometer's falling a good deal too," remarked the captain, coming hastily up the companion-stairs. "Either a rain-storm, or a smart gale from the north'ard: both, perhaps. We're in a tight place."

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"What's to be done?" Raed asked.

"Hadn't we better try to beat out of the straits into the open sea again, clear of the land and ice?" said Kit.

"Can't do it. It would take all night to do that, if there were no ice to hinder. The gale will come before morning, if it comes at all; and the entrance of the straits would be the worst possible place to weather it."

"But, captain, what can we do?" Wade demanded, looking a little pale.

"Well, not much. We must keep on,—get as far up the straits as we can; and then trust to good luck to escape being smashed or jammed. The farther we get up the channel, the less we shall feel the violence of a gale from the seaward."

It was a rather gloomy prospect. The sky was thickening, and darkening rapidly. The mist kept streaming up from the water. What wind there was continued fitfully. We kept the foresail and the jib set, and jogged on, doubling amid the ice. Meanwhile the fog grew so dense, that every thing was very dim at fifty yards. But for the mist, and the danger of striking against large fragments of ice, we should have set the mainsail and the topsail to make the most of our wind ere it blew too hard; for it was plainly rising. Now and then a gust would sigh past the sheets. Supper was eaten in squads of two and three. The thermometer fell constantly. It grew so chilly, that we were glad to slip down into the galley occasionally to warm our fingers at Palmleaf's stove. Guard had already taken up his quarters there.

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"Dis am berry suddin change," the darky would remark gravely to each of us as we successively made our appearance. "Berry suddin. The gerometum fallin' fast. Srink 'im all up, ser cold. Now, dis forenoon it am quite comf'ble; warm 'nuf ter take a nap in the sun: but now—oo-oo-ooo! awful cold!" And Palmleaf would move his sable cheek up close to the hot stove-pipe, Guard all the time regarding him soberly from the other side.

Bidding the negro keep coffee hot and ready for us, we would hurry on deck again, and resume our places in the bow; for it required vigilant eyes to look out for all the ugly ice-cakes among which the schooner was driving. The weather grew thicker, and the sky darker. By half-past ten, P.M., although the sun must have been still high above the horizon, it was dark as one often sees it on a stormy night when there is a moon in the heavens. In fact, it grew too dark to make out the ice-patches; for, despite our watchfulness, at about five minutes to eleven we struck against a large mass with a shock which made things rattle down stairs. Guard barked, and Palmleaf showed a very scared face in the companion-way.

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"Where are your eyes there, forward?" shouted the captain. "Couldn't you see that?"

Just then we grazed pretty heavily against another cake.

"It is really getting too dark for us, captain," said Raed.

"Take in the foresail, then."

The sail was at once furled. The jib was kept on, however, to hold us steady. We were now merely breasting the current, and driving on a little with the gusts. Soon it began to rain,—rain and snow together. The dreariness and uncertainty of our situation can hardly be imagined. We did not even know how near we were to the foot of the cliffs, and could merely keep the schooner headed as she had been during the afternoon.

"The main thing for us now is to keep her as nearly stationary as we can," said the captain. "Between wind and water, I hope not to move half a knot all night."

It was now nearly twelve.

"We may as well go below," said Kit. "No use standing here in the rain when we can do no good."

[57]

We had been up nearly twenty-one hours since our last nap. Sleep will have its tribute, even in the face of danger. Hastily flinging off our wet coats, we lay down. The wind and rain wailed among the rigging above. *Chuck-chock, chock-chuck*, went the waves under the stern; while every few minutes a heavy jarring *bump*, followed by a long raspy *grind* along the side, told of the icy processions floating past. Those were our lullabies that night. Truly it required a sharp summoning of our fortitude not to feel a little home-sick. But we went to sleep; at least I did, and slept a number of hours.

Voices roused me. The captain was standing beside our mattresses.

"Wake up!" he was saying. "Get up, and come on deck!"

At the same moment I heard, indistinctly, a strange, rumbling sound.

"What is it? what's the matter?" cried Kit, starting up.

"Oh! don't be scared; we've been hearing it for some time," replied the captain. "Put on your rubber coats."

We did so, and followed him up the stairway. The rain and snow still came fast and thick. The deck was sappy. Hobbs was at the wheel. Donovan and Weymouth were forward. I could just make them out, standing wrapped up against the bulwarks.

[58]

"Now hark!" said the captain.

We all listened. A heavy noise, like that of some huge flouring-mill in full operation, could be

plainly heard above the swash of the waves and the drive and patter of the storm.

"Thunder?—no, it isn't thunder," muttered Raed.

"Breakers!" exclaimed Kit. "It's the sea on the rocks,—those cliffs,—isn't it?"

"Trull," said the captain to that old worthy, who was just poking his head up out of the forecandle,— "Trull, is that noise the surf?"

The veteran turned an experienced ear apace, listened a moment, and then replied,—

"No, sir," promptly.

"Well, what in the world is it, then?"

The old salt listened again attentively. The steady rumble continued without intermission.

"Don't know, sir," replied Trull, shaking his head. "Never heard any thing like it."

"Are you sure it's not breakers?" demanded Kit. "I'm afraid we're drifting on the rocks. It's dead ahead too!"

But neither the captain nor Trull nor Donovan could believe it was the surf.

"We began to hear it over an hour ago," remarked the captain. "It sounded low then; we could just hear it: but it grows louder. It's either coming towards us, or else we are going towards it. I presume the storm drives us with it considerably." [59]

"I tell you that it is some dangerous reef!" exclaimed Kit; "some hole or cavern which the water is playing through."

"It may be," muttered the captain. "Starboard the helm, Hobbs!"

At this instant a heavy, near explosion boomed out, followed momentarily by another and another.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Raed.

"Cannon!" shouted Wade: "it's a vessel in distress!"

"Impossible!" cried the captain. "No ship would fire cannon here, even if wrecked. There wouldn't be one chance in ten thousand of its being heard by another vessel."

Boom!

"Hark! did you not hear that splashing noise that followed the explosion?" demanded Kit.

We had all heard it; for, by this time, the sailors who were below had come on deck. The heavy rumbling noise began afresh, and sounded louder than before. We were completely mystified, and stood peering off from the bulwarks into the stormy obscurity of the night.

"Are there volcanoes on these straits, suppose?" Wade asked. [60]

No one had ever heard of any.

"There were none in my geography," said Raed. "But there may be one *forming*."

Indeed, we were so much in doubt, that even this improbable suggestion was caught at for the moment.

"But where's the fire and smoke?" replied Kit. "Methinks it ought to be visible."

We could feel, rather than see, that the schooner was veering slowly to the left, in obedience to her helm,—a fact which left no doubt that we were, as the captain had surmised, drifting with the storm against the current; or perhaps, before this, the tide coming in had made a counter-current up the straits. The roaring noise was growing more distinct every minute; till all at once Bonney, who was looking attentively out from the bow, exclaimed,—

"What's that ahead, captain? Isn't there something?"

We all strained our eyes.

Dim amid the fog and rain something which seemed like a great pale shadow loomed before the schooner. For a moment we gazed, uncertain whether it were real, or an illusion of darkness; then Donovan shouted,—

"Ice!—it's an iceberg!"

"Hard a-starboard!" yelled Capt. Mazard. [61]

It was not a hundred feet distant. Old Trull and Bonney caught up the pike-poles to fend off with. "The Curlew" drove on. The vast shadowy shape seemed to approach. A chill came with it. A few seconds more, and the bowsprit punched heavily against the ice-mountain. The shock sent the schooner staggering back like a pugilist with a "blimmer" between the eyes. Had we been sailing at our usual rate, it would have stove in the whole bow. The storm immediately forced us forward again; and the bowsprit, again striking, slid along the ice with a dull, crunching sound as the schooner fell off sidewise.

"Stand by those pike-poles!" shouted the captain; for so near was the iceberg, that we could easily reach it with a ten-foot pole from the bulwarks.

Striking the iron spikes into the ice, the men held the schooner off while she drifted past. The rumbling noise, louder than before, seemed now to come from out the solid berg.

"Let's get away from this before it splits or explodes again!" exclaimed Raed.

"Heavens! it sounds like a big grist-mill in full blast!" said Kit.

"More like a powder-mill, I should judge from the blasts we heard a few minutes ago," remarked Wade.

More poles were brought up, and we all lent a hand to push off from our dangerous neighbor. After fending along its massy side for several hundred yards, we got off clear from an angle. [62]

"Farewell, old thunder-mill!" laughed Kit.

But we had not got clear of it so easily: for the vast lofty mass so broke off the wind and storm, that, immediately on passing it to the leeward, we hadn't a "breath of air;" and, as a consequence, the berg soon drifted down upon us. Again we pushed off from it, and set the fore-sail. The sail merely flapped occasionally, and hung idly; and again the iceberg came grinding against us. There were no means of getting off, save to let down the boat, and tow the schooner out into the wind,—rather a ticklish job among ice, and in so dim a light. "The Curlew" lay broadside against the berg, but did not seem to chafe or batter much: on the contrary, we were borne along by the ice with far less motion than if out in open water.

"Well, why not let her go so?" said Kit after we had lain thus a few minutes. "There doesn't seem to be any great danger in it. This side of the iceberg, so far as I can make it out, doesn't look very dangerous."

"Not a very seamanlike way of doing business," remarked the captain, looking dubiously around.

"Catching a ride on an iceberg," laughed Weymouth. "That sort of thing used to be strictly forbidden at school." [63]

"But only listen to that fearful rumble and roar!" said Raed. "It seems to come from deep down in the berg. What is it?"

"Must be the sea rushing through some crack, or possibly the rain-water and the water from the melted ice on top streaming down through some hole into the sea," said the captain.

"But those explosions!—how would you account for those?" asked Wade.

"Well, I can't pretend to explain that. I have an idea, however, that they resulted from the splitting off of large fragments of ice."

On the whole, it was deemed most prudent to let the schooner lay where she was,—till daylight at least. Planks were got up from below, and thrust down between the side and the ice to keep her from chafing against the sharp angles.

By this time it was near six o'clock, morning, and had begun to grow tolerably light. The rain still continued, however, as did also the bellowings inside the iceberg. Old Trull and Weymouth were set to watch the ice, and the rest of us went down to breakfast. The schooner lay so still, that it seemed like being on shore again. We had got as far as our second cup of coffee, I recollect, when we were startled by another of the same heavy explosions we had heard a few hours previous. It was followed instantly by a second. Then we heard old Trull sing out,— [64]

"Avast from under!"

And, a moment later, there was a tremendous crash on deck, accompanied by a hollow, rattling sound. Dropping our knives and forks, we sprang up the companionway.

"What was that, Trull?" demanded Capt. Mazard.

"A chunk of ice, sir, as big as my old sea-chest!"

"How came that aboard?"

"Rained down, sir. Went up from the top o' the barg, sir, at that thunder-clap, and came plumb down on deck."

The deck-planks were shattered and split where it had struck, and pieces of ice the size of a quart measure lay all about.

"Did you see it fly up from the top of the berg, Weymouth?" Raed asked.

"Yes, sir. It didn't go up till the second pop. I was looking then. It went up like as if it had been shot from a gun; went up thirty or forty feet, then turned in the air, and came down on us. Thought 'twould sink us, sir, sure. There were streams of water in the air at the same time; and water by the hogshead came sloshing over the side of the ice."

"I don't understand that at all," said the captain. [65]

"We must investigate it," said Raed, "if we can. But let's make sure of our breakfast first. I suppose there will be no great danger in letting down the boat as soon as it gets fairly light, will there, captain? This iceberg seems to be a rather mysterious chap. I propose that we circumnavigate it in the boat. Perhaps we may find a chance to climb on to it."

It was already light; and, by the time breakfast was over, the rain had subsided to a drizzly mist: but the fog was still too thick to see far in any direction. The sea continued comparatively calm. A few minutes after seven, the boat was lowered. Raed and the rest of us boys, with the captain and Weymouth, got in, and pulled round to the windward of the berg. It was a vast, majestic mass, rising from forty to fifty feet above the water, and covering three or four acres. On the south, south-east, and east sides it rose almost perpendicularly from the sea. No chance to scale it here; and, even if there had been, the water was much too rough to the windward to

bring the boat up to it. We continued around it, however, and, near the north-west corner, espied a large crevice leading up toward the top, and filled with broken ice.

"Might clamber up there," suggested the captain.

It looked a little pokerish.

"Let's try it," said Kit.

The boat was brought up within a yard or so of the ice. Watching his chance, Capt. Mazard leaped into the crack.

"Jump, and I'll catch you if you miss," said he.

Raed jumped, and got on all right; but Kit slipped. The captain caught him by the arm, and pulled him up, with no greater damage than a couple of wet trousers-legs. Wade and I followed dry-shod.

"Shove off a few yards, Weymouth, and be ready in case we slip down," directed the captain.

But we had no difficulty in climbing up.

The top of the berg was irregular and rough, with pinnacles and "knolls," between which were many deep puddles of water,—fresh water: we drank from one. For some time we saw nothing which tended to explain the explosions; though the dull, roaring noise still continued, seeming directly under our feet: but on crossing over to the south-west side, beneath which the schooner lay, Wade discovered a large, jagged hole something like a well. It was five or six feet across, and situated twenty or twenty-five yards from the side of the berg. Standing around this "well," the rumbling noises were more distinct than we had yet heard them, and were accompanied by a great splashing, and also by a hissing sound, as of escaping air or steam; and, on peering cautiously down into the hole, we could discern the water in motion. The iceberg heaved slightly with the swell: the gurgling and hissing appeared to follow the heaving motion.

"I think there must be great cavities down in the ice, which serve as chambers for compressed air," remarked Raed; "and somehow the heaving of the berg acts as an air-pump,—something like an hydraulic ram, you know."

As none of us could suggest any better explanation, we accepted this theory, though it was not very clear.

We were going back toward the crevice, when a loud gurgling roar, followed by a report like the discharge of a twenty-four-pounder, made the berg tremble; and, turning, we saw the water streaming from the well. Another gurgle and another report succeeded, almost in the same instant. Jets of water, and bits of ice, were spouted high into the air, and came down splashing and glancing about. We made off as expeditiously as we could. Fortunately none of the pieces of ice struck us; though Wade and Raed, who were a little behind, were well bespattered. We hurried down to the boat, greatly to the relief of Weymouth, who expected we had "got blown up."

[Raed begs me to add that he hopes the reader will be able to suggest a better explanation of this singular phenomenon than the one that has occurred to him.]

Jumping to the boat, we pulled round to "The Curlew." The sailors were watching for us, with a touch of anxiety on their rough, honest faces.

"Throw us a line!" shouted Capt. Mazard; "and bear a hand at those pike-poles to shove her off. We'll get clear of this iceberg as quick as we can. Something the matter with its insides: liable to bust, I'm afraid."

Catching the line, we bent to the oars, and, with the help of the men with the poles tugged the schooner off, and gradually towed her to a distance of three or four hundred yards from the berg. The boat was then taken in, sail made, and we were again *bumping* on up the straits.

CHAPTER IV.

The Fog lifts.—A Whale in Sight.—Craggy Black Mountains capped with Snow.—A Novel Carriage for the Big Rifle.—Mounting the Howitzer.—A Doubtful Shot.—The Lower Savage Isles.—A Deep Inlet.—"Mazard's Bay."—A Desolate Island.—An Ice-Jam.—A Strange Blood-red Light.—Solution of the Mystery.—Going Ashore.—Barren Ledges. Beds of Moss.—A Bald Peak.—An Alarm.—The Schooner in Jeopardy.—The Crash and Thunder of the Ice.—Tremendous Tides.

The rain had now pretty much ceased. Some sudden change took place in the air's density; for the fog, which had all along lain flat on the sea, now rapidly rose up like a curtain, twenty, thirty, fifty feet, leaving all clear below. We looked around us. The dark water was besprinkled with white patches, among which the seals were leaping and frisking about. Half a mile to the left we espied a lazy water-jet playing up at intervals.

"There she blows!" laughed Bonney. "Seems like old times, I declare!"

"What's that, sir?" asked Capt. Mazard, who had been below for the last ten minutes.

"A sperm-whale on the port quarter, sir!"

Two or three miles ahead, another large iceberg was driving grandly down. We could also see our late *consort* a mile astern,—see and hear it too. Higher and higher rose the fog. The sky brightened through transient rifts in the clouds. Glad enough were we to see it clearing up. [70]

Either the land had fallen off to the north; or else, in our fear of running on the cliffs, we had declined a good deal from our course. The northern shore was now three or four leagues distant. Fog and darkness hung over it. The bases of the mountains were black; but their tops glistened with snow, the snow-line showing distinct two or three hundred feet above the shore. The sails were trimmed, and the helm put round to bear up nearer.

"What a country!" exclaimed Raed, sweeping it with his glass. "Is it possible that people live there? What can be the inducements?"

"Seals, probably," said Kit,—"seals and whales. That's the Esquimaux bill of fare, I've heard, varied with an occasional white bear or a sea-horse."

"A true 'Husky' (Esquimau) won't eat a mouthful of cooked victuals," said Capt. Mazard; "takes every thing raw."

"Should think so much raw meat would make them fierce and savage," remarked Wade: "makes dogs savage to give them raw meat."

"But the Esquimaux are a rather good-natured set, I've heard," replied Kit.

"Not always," said the captain. "The whalers have trouble with them very often; though these whalers are doubtless anything but angels," he added. "In dealing with them, it is well to have a good show of muskets, or a big gun or two showing its muzzle: makes 'em more civil. Cases have been where they've boarded a scantily-manned vessel; to get the plunder, you see. Hungry for anything of the axe or iron kind." [71]

"It would not be a bad plan to get up our howitzer, and rig a carriage for it," said Wade. "Let's do it."

"And Wash's cannon-rifle," said Kit. "We ought to get that up. I think it's about time to test that rather remarkable *arm*."

"The problem with me is how to mount it," said I.

"I was thinking of that the other day," remarked the captain. "I've got a big chest below,—an old thing I don't use now: we might make the gun fast to the top of it; then put some trucks on the bottom just high enough to point it out over the bulwarks. Here, Hobbs: come below, and help me fetch it on deck."

While they were getting up the chest, Raed and I brought up the cannon-rifle. It was about as much as we could get up the stairs with easily. It was, as the reader will probably remember, set in a light framework of wrought-iron, adjusted to a swivel, and arranged with a screw for raising or lowering the breech at will. The bed-pieces of the framework had been pierced for screws. It was, therefore, but a few minutes' work to bore holes in the top of the chest and drive the screws. Meanwhile the captain, who enjoyed the scheme as well as any of us, split open a couple of old tackle-blocks, and, getting out the trucks, proceeded to set them on the ends of two stout axles cut from an old ice-pole. These axles were then nailed fast to the bottom of the chest. The gun-carriage was then complete, and could be rolled anywhere on deck with ease. [72]

"Decidedly neat!" exclaimed Capt. Mazard, surveying it with a grin of self-approbation.

"What say to that, Trull?" cried Raed.

The old man-of-war's-man had been watching the progress of the invention with an occasional tug at his waistband.

"Yes; how's that in your eye?" exclaimed the captain. "You're a military character. Give us an opinion on that."

"Wal, sur," cocking his eye at it, "I'm free to confass I naver saw anything like it;" and that was all we could get out of him.

"Bring some ammunition, and let's give it a trial," said Kit.

I brought up the powder-flask, caps, and a couple of bullets. The bullets we had run for it were of lead, about an inch in diameter, and weighed not far from six ounces apiece. The breech was depressed. Raed poured in half a gill of the fine powder by measurement; a wad of paper was rammed down; then a bullet was driven home. There only remained to prime and cap it. [73]

"Fire at one of these seals," suggested Wade, pointing to where a group of three or four lay basking on an ice-cake at a distance of eight or ten hundred yards.

"Who'll take the first shot?" said Kit.

Nobody seemed inclined to seize the honor.

"Come, now, that seal's getting impatient!" cried the captain.

Still no one volunteered to shoot off the big rifle.

"I think Wash had better fire the first shot," remarked Raed. "The honor clearly belongs to him."

Seeing they were a little disposed to rally me on it, I stepped up and cocked it. At that everybody hastily stood back. I took as good aim as the motion of the schooner would permit; though I think I should have done better had not Palmleaf just at that moment sang out, "Dinner, sar!" from behind. I pulled the trigger, however. There was a stunning crack; and so smart a recoil, that I was pushed half round sidewise with amazing spitefulness. The old chest rolled back, whirled round, and upset against the bulwarks on the other side. The reader can imagine what a rattle and racket it made.

[74]

"Golly!" exclaimed Palmleaf. "Am crazy!"

"Did it hit the seal?" recovering my equilibrium.

Wade was the only one who had watched the seal.

"I saw him flop off into the water," said he.

"Then of course it hit him," said I.

Nobody disputed it; though I detected an odious wink between the captain and Kit.

The prostrate gun was got up on its legs again; old Trull remarking that we had better trig it behind before we fired, in future: that duty attended to, he thought it might work very well.

We then went to dinner. How to mount the howitzer was the next question.

"We need a regular four-wheeled gun-carriage for that," said Raed.

"I think we can make one out of those planks," remarked Kit.

"The worst trouble will come with the wheels," said Wade.

But Capt. Mazard thought he could saw them out of sections of fifteen-inch plank with the wood-saw.

"I'll undertake that for my part," he added, and, as soon as dinner was over, went about it.

"Now we'll get old man Trull to help us on the *body*," said Kit.

[75]

The planks, with axe, adz, auger, and hammer, were carried on deck. Our old man-of-war's man readily lent a hand; and with his advice, particularly in regard to the cheeks for the trunnions, we succeeded during the afternoon in getting up a rough imitation of the old-fashioned gun-carriage in use on our wooden war-vessels. The captain made the wheels and axles. The body was then spiked to them, and the howitzer lifted up and set on the carriage. By way of testing it, we then charged the piece with half a pint of powder, and fired it. The sharp, brassy report was reverberated from the dark mountains on the starboard side in a wonderfully distinct echo. Hundreds of seals dropped off the ice-cakes into the sea all about,—a fact I observed with some mortification. As the guns would have to remain on deck, exposed to fog and rain, we stopped the muzzles with plugs, and covered them with two of our rubber blankets. They were then lashed fast, and left for time of need.

During the day, we had gradually come up with what we at first had taken for a cape or a promontory from the mainland, but which, by five o'clock, P.M., was discovered to be a group of mountainous islands, the same known on the chart as the "Lower Savage Isles." The course was changed five points, to pass them to the southward. By seven o'clock we were off abreast one of the largest of them. It was our intention to stand on this course during the night. The day had at no time, however, been exactly fair. Foggy clouds had hung about the sun; and now a mist began to rise from the water, much as it had done the previous evening.

[76]

"If I thought there might be any tolerable safe anchorage among those islands," muttered the captain, with his glass to his eye, "I should rather beat in there than take the risk of running on to another iceberg in the fog."

This sentiment was unanimous.

"There seems to be a clear channel between this nearest island and the next," remarked Raed, who had been looking attentively for some moments. "We could but bear up there, and see what it looks like."

The helm was set a-port, and the sails swung round to take the wind, which, for the last hour, had been shifting to the south-east. In half an hour we were up in the mouth of the channel. It was a rather narrow opening, not more than thirty-five or forty rods in width, with considerable ice floating about. We were in some doubt as to its safety. The schooner was hove to, and the lead thrown.

"Forty-seven fathoms!"

"All right! Bring her round!"

[77]

The wind was light, or we should hardly have made into an unknown passage with so much sail on: as it was, we did but drift lazily in. On each side, the islands presented black, bare, flinty crags, distant scarcely a pistol shot from the deck. A quarter of a mile in, we sounded a second

time, and had forty-three fathoms.

"Never saw a deeper gut for its width!" exclaimed Capt. Mazard. "What a chasm there would be here were the sea out of it!"

Half a mile farther up, a third and smaller island lay at the head of the channel, which was thus divided by it into two narrow arms,—one leading out to the north-east, the other to the north-west. This latter arm was clear of ice, showing a dark line of water crooking off among numerous small islets; but the arm opening up to the north-east was jammed with ice. "The Curlew" went in leisurely to three hundred yards of the foot of the island, where we found thirty-three fathoms, and hove to within a hundred yards of the ledges of the island on the east side. The anchor was now let go, and the sails furled.

"We're snug enough here from anything from the north-east or north," remarked Capt. Mazard; "and even a sou'-wester would hardly affect us much a mile up this narrow inlet."

It seemed a tolerably secure berth. The schooner lay as still as if at her wharf at far-distant Portland. There was no perceptible swell in the channel. Despite the vast mass of ice "packed" into the arm above us, it was not disagreeably chilly. The thermometer stood at fifty-nine degrees in our cabin. Indeed, were it not for the great bodies of ice, these extreme northern summers, where the sun hardly sets for months, would get insufferably hot,—too hot to be endured by man.

The mist steamed silently up, up. Gradually the islands, the crags, and even objects at the schooner's length, grew indistinct, and dimmed out entirely by half-past ten. We heard the "*honk, honk,*" of numerous wild-geese from the islands; and, high overhead, the melancholy screams of "boatswains." Otherwise all was quiet. The watch was arranged among the sailors, and we went to bed. For the last sixty hours we had had not over seven hours of sleep. Now was a good time to make up. Profound breathing soon resounded along the whole line of mattresses.

We had been asleep two or three hours, when a shake aroused me. A strange, reddish glare filled the cabin. Donovan was standing at my head.

"What's up?" I asked. "Fire? It isn't fire, is it?" jumping up.

"No, it's not fire," replied Donovan.

"Oh! morning, then," I said, greatly relieved.

"No; can't be. It's only one o'clock."

"Then what is it, for pity sake?" I demanded in fresh wonder.

"Don't know, sir. Thought I'd just speak to you. Perhaps you'll know what it is. Won't you go up. It's a queer sight on deck."

"Of course I will. Go ahead. No matter about waking the others just yet, though."

The cold mist struck in my face on emerging from the companion-way. It was still very foggy and damp. Such a scene! The sky was of a deep rose-color. The thick fog seemed like a sea of magenta. The deck, the bulwarks, the masts, and even Donovan, standing beside me, looked as if baptized in blood. It was as light as, even lighter than, when we had gone below. The cliffs on the island, drear and black by daylight, showed like mountains of red beef through the crimson fog.

"It was my watch," said Donovan. "I was all alone here. Thought I would just speak to you. Come on quite sudden. I didn't know just what to make of it."

"No wonder you didn't."

"I knew it couldn't be morning," he went on. "There must be a great fire somewhere round: don't you think so, sir?"

I was trying to think. Queer sensations came over me. I looked at my watch. It was four minutes past one. Donovan was right: it couldn't be morning. A sudden thought struck me.

"It's the northern lights, Donovan!" I exclaimed.

"So red as this?"

"Yes: it's the fog."

"Do you really think so?" with a relieved breath.

"There's no doubt of it."

"But it makes a funny noise."

"Noise?"

"Yes: I heard it several times before I called you. Hark! There!"

A soft, rushing sound, which was neither the wind (for there was none), nor the waves, nor the touch of ice, could be heard at brief intervals. It seemed far aloft. I am at a loss how to describe it best. It was not unlike the faint rustle of silk, and still more like the flapping of a large flag in a moderate gale of wind. Occasionally there would be a soft snap, which was much like the snapping of a flag. I take the more pains to state this fact explicitly, because I am aware that the statement that the auroral phenomena are accompanied by audible sounds has been disputed by many writers. I have only to add, that, if they could not have heard the "rustlings" from the deck of "The Curlew" that night, they must have been lamentably deaf.

The light wavered visibly, brightening and waning with marvellous swiftness.

"Shall we call the other young gentlemen?" Donovan asked.

"Yes; but don't tell them what it is. See what they will think of it."

In a few moments Kit and Wade and Raed were coming out of the companion-way, rubbing their eyes in great bewilderment. They were followed by the captain.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "Is the ship on fire?"

"Fire!" cried Wade excitedly, catching at the last word: "did you say *fire*?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Kit. "It's *nothing*—nothing—but daybreak!"

"It's only one o'clock," said Donovan, willing to keep them in doubt.

Capt. Mazard was rushing about, looking over the bulwarks.

"There's no fire," said he, "unless it's up in the sky. But, by Jove! if you aren't a red-looking set!—redder than lobsters!"

"Not redder than yerself, cap'n," laughed Donovan, who greatly enjoyed their mystification.

"The sea is like blood!" exclaimed Wade. "You don't suppose the day of judgment has come and caught us away up here in Hudson's Straits, do you?"

"Not quite so bad as that, I guess," said Raed. "I have it: it's the aurora borealis; nothing worse, nor more dangerous."

I had expected Raed would come to it as soon as he had got his eyes open.

"A red aurora!" said the captain. "Is that the way you explain it?"

"Not a red aurora exactly," returned Raed, "but an aurora shining down through the thick fog. The aurora itself is miles above the fog, up in the sky and probably of the same bright yellow as usual; but the dense mist gives it this red hue."

"I've heard that the northern lights were caused by electricity," said Weymouth. "Is that so?"

"It is thought to be electricity passing through the air high up from the earth," replied Raed. "That's what the scientific men tell us."

"They can tell us that, and we shall be just as wise as we were before," said Kit. "They can't tell us what electricity is."

"Why!" exclaimed the captain, "I thought electricity was"—

"Well, what?" said Kit, laughing.

"Why, the—the stuff they telegraph with," finished the captain a little confusedly.

"Well, what's that?" persisted Kit.

"What *is it*?" repeated the captain confidently. "Why, it is—well—Hang it! I don't know!"

We all burst out laughing: the captain himself laughed,—his case was so very nearly like everybody's who undertakes to talk about the wondrous, subtle element. By the by, his definition of it—viz., that it is "the stuff we telegraph with"—strikes me as being about the best one I ever heard. Kit and Raed, however, have got a theory,—which they expound very gravely,—to the effect that electricity and the luminiferous ether—that thin medium through which light is propagated from the sun, and which pervades all matter—are one and the same thing; which, of course, is all very fine as a theory, and will be finer when they can give the proof of it.

After watching the aurora for some minutes longer, during which it kept waxing and waning with alternate pale-crimson and blood-red flushes, we went back to our bunks; whence we were only aroused by Palmleaf calling us to breakfast.

If there was any wind that morning it must have been from the east, when the crags of the island under which we lay would have interrupted it. Not a breath reached the deck of "The Curlew;" and we were thus obliged to remain at our anchorage, which, in compliment to the captain, and after the custom of navigators, we named *Mazard's Bay*. As the inlet bore no name, and was not even indicated on the charts we had with us, we felt at liberty to thus designate it, leaving to future explorers the privilege of rechristening it at their pleasure.

"We shall have a lazy morning of it," Kit remarked, as we stood loitering about the deck.

"I propose that we let down the boat, and go ashore on the island," said Wade. "'Twould seem good to set foot on something firm once more."

"Well, those ledges look firm enough," replied Raed. "See here, captain: here's a chap begging to get ashore. Is it safe to trust him off the ship?"

"Hardly," laughed Capt. Mazard. "He might desert."

"Then I move we all go with him," said Kit. "Let's take some of those muskets along too. May get a shot at those wild-geese we heard last evening."

The boat was lowered. We boys and the captain, with Donovan and Hobbs to row us, got over the rail, and paddled to where a broad jetting ledge formed a natural quay, on which we leaped. The rock was worn smooth by the waves of centuries. To let the sailors go ashore with us, we drew up the boat on the rock several feet, and made it fast with a line knotted into a crevice between two fragments of flinty sienite rock at the foot of the crags. We then, with considerable difficulty and mutual "boosting," clambered up to the top of the cliffs, thirty or forty feet above the boat, and thence made our way up to the summit of a bald peak half a mile from the shore,

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which promised a good prospect of the surrounding islands. It is hardly possible to give an idea of the desolate aspect of these ledgy islets. There was absolutely no soil, no earth, on them. More than half the surface was bare as black sienite could be. Huge leathery lichens hung to the rocks in patches; and so tough were they, that one might pull on them with his whole strength without tearing them. In the crevices and tiny ravines between the ledges, there were vast beds of damp moss. In crossing these we went knee-deep, and once waist-deep, into it. The only plant I saw was a trailing shrublet, sometimes seen on high mountains in New England, and known to botanists as *Andromeda* of the heathworts. It had pretty blue-purple flowers, and was growing quite plentifully in sheltered nooks. Not a bird nor an animal was to be seen. Half an hour's climbing took us to the brown, weather-beaten summit of the peak. From this point eleven small islands were in sight, none of them more than a few miles in extent; and, at a distance of seven or eight leagues, the high mountains of the northern main, their tops white with snow, with glittering glaciers extending down the valleys,—the source of icebergs. There was a strong current of air across the crest of the peak. Sweeping down from the wintry mountains, it made us shiver. The sea was shimmering in the sun, and lay in silvery threads amid the brown isles. Below us, and almost at our feet, was the schooner,—our sole connecting link with the world of men,—her cheery pine-colored deck just visible over the shore cliffs. Suddenly, as we gazed, she swung off, showing her bow; and we saw the sailors jumping about the windlass.

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"What does that mean?" exclaimed Capt. Mazard. "Possible they've got such a breeze as that down there? Why, it doesn't blow enough *here* to swing the vessel round like that!"

"But only look down the inlet!" said Donovan. "How wild it seems! See those lines of foam! Hark!"

A rushing noise as of some great river foaming among bowlders began to be heard.

"It's the tide coming in!" shouted the captain, starting to run down the rocks.

The schooner had swung back and round the other way. What we had read of the high and violent tides in these straits flashed into my mind.

The captain was making a bee-line for the vessel: the rest of us followed as fast as we could run. Just what good we any of us expected to be able to do was not very clear. But "The Curlew" was our all: we couldn't see it endangered without rushing to the rescue. Panting, we arrived on the ledges overlooking the boat and the schooner. The tide had already risen ten or a dozen feet. The boat had floated up from the rock, and broken loose from the line. We could see it tossing and whirling half way out to the schooner. The whole inlet boiled like a pot, and roared like a mill-race. Huge eddies as large as a ten-pail kettle came whirling in under the cliffs. The whole bay was filling up. The waters crept rapidly up the rocks. But our eyes were riveted on the schooner. She rocked; she wriggled like a weather-cock; then swung clean round her anchor.

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"If it will only hold her!" groaned Capt. Mazard. "But, if it drags, she'll strike!"

Old Trull, Weymouth, and Bonney were at the windlass, easing out the cable as the vessel rose on the tide. Corliss was at the wheel, tugging and turning,—to what purpose was not very evident. But they were doing their level best to save the vessel: that was plain. Capt. Mazard stood with clinched hands watching them, every muscle and nerve tense as wire.

I was hoping the most dangerous crisis had passed, when a tremendous noise, like a thunder-peal low down to the earth, burst from the ice-jammed arm of the inlet to the north-east. We turned instantly in that direction. The whole pack of ice, filling the arm for near a half-mile, was in motion, grating and grinding together. From where we stood, the noise more resembled heavy, near thunder than anything else I can compare it with.

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"It's the tide bursting round from the north-east side!" exclaimed Kit.

"Took it a little longer to come in among the islands on the north side," said Raed, gazing intently at the fearful spectacle.

The noise nearly deafened us. The whole vast mass of ice—millions of tons—was heaving and sliding, cake over cake. It had lain piled fifteen or twenty feet above the water; but the tide surging under it and through it caused it to mix and churn together. We could see the water gushing up through crevices, sometimes in fountains of forty or fifty feet, hurling up large fragments of ice. The phenomenon was gigantic in all its aspects. To us, who expected every moment to see it borne forward and crush the schooner, it was appalling. But the sea filling in on the south, added to the narrowness of the arm, prevented the jam from rushing through; though a great deal of ice did float out, and, caught in the swirling currents, bumped pretty hard against the vessel's sides. The schooner swayed about heavily; but the anchor held miraculously, as we thought. Once we fancied it had given way, and held our breath till the cable tightened sharply again. The grating and thundering of the jam gradually dulled, muffled by the water. Our thoughts reverted to our own situation. The sea had risen within five feet of the place where we were standing. To get up here in the morning we had been obliged to scale a precipice.

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"It must have risen fully thirty feet," said Kit. "What a mighty tide!"

"Why should it rush in here with so much greater violence than it does down on the coast of Massachusetts or at Long Branch?" questioned Wade. "How do you explain it, captain?"

"It is because the coasts, both above and below the mouth of the straits, converge after the manner of a tunnel. The tidal wave from the Atlantic is thus accumulated, and pours into the straits with much more than ordinary violence. The same thing occurs in the Bay of Fundy, where they have very high tides. But I had no idea of such violence," he added, "or I shouldn't have

risked the schooner so near the rocks. Why, that inlet ran like Niagara rapids!"

"What an evidence this gives one of the strength of the moon's attraction!" said Raed. "All this great mass of water—thirty feet high—is drawn in here by the moon. What enormous force!"

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"And this vast power is exerted over a distance of two hundred and thirty-eight thousand miles," remarked Kit.

"I can't understand this attraction of gravitation,—how it is exerted," said Wade.

"No more can anyone," replied Raed.

"It is said that this attraction of the moon, or at least the friction of the tides on the ocean-bed which it causes, is exerted in opposition to the revolution of the earth on its axis, and that it will thus at some future time stop that motion altogether," Kit remarked. "That's what Prof. Tyndall thinks."

"Then there would be an end of day and night," said I; "or rather it would be all day on one side of the earth, and all night on the other."

"That would be unpleasant," laughed Wade; "worse than they have it up at the north pole."

"It is some consolation," said Raed, "to know that such a state of things is not likely to come in our time. According to a careful calculation, the length of the day is not thus increased more than a second in a hundred and sixty-eight thousand years."

"But how are we to go aboard, sir?" inquired Hobbs, to whom our present fix was of more interest than the long days of far-distant posterity.

The boat had been tossed about here and there, and was now some twenty or thirty yards astern of the schooner.

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"Have to swim for it," said Donovan.

"Not in this icy water, I hope," said Kit. "Can't we devise a plan to capture it?"

"They might tie a belaying-pin to the end of a line, and throw it into the boat," said the captain.

"Or, better still, one of those long cod-lines with the heavy sinker and hook on it," suggested Hobbs.

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Capt. Mazard. "Sing out to them!"

"Unless I'm mistaken, that is just what old Trull is up to now," said Wade. "He's throwing something! see that!"

As Wade said, old man Trull was throwing a line, with what turned out to be one of our small grapnels attached. The first throw fell short, and the line was drawn in; the second and third went aside; but the fourth landed the grapnel in the boat. It was hauled in. Weymouth and Corliss then got aboard, and came off to us.

"Well, boys, what sort of a dry storm have you been having here?" said the captain as they came up under where we stood.

"Never saw such a hole!" exclaimed Weymouth. "You don't know how we were slat about! We went *right up on it!* Had to pay out six fathoms of extra cable, anyway. D'ye mind what a thundering noise that ice made?"

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We went off to the schooner. Trull stood awaiting us, grinning grimly.

"I don't gen'ly give advice to my betters," he began, with a hitch at his trousers; "but"—

"You'd be getting out of this?" finished Raed.

"I wud, sur."

There was a general laugh all round. But the wind had set dead in the south-east again. There was no room for tacking in the narrow inlet. To get out we should have to tow the schooner a mile against the wind,—among ice too. Clearly we must lay here till the wind favored. We concluded, however, to change our position for one a little lower down, and nearer the middle of the cove. The anchor was heaved up preparatory to towing the vessel along. The men had considerable difficulty in starting it off the bottom; and, on getting it up, one of the flukes was found to be chipped off,—bits as large as one's fist, probably from catching among jagged rocks at the bottom. We thought that this might also account for the tenacity with which the anchor held against the tide. Doubtless there were crevices and cracks, with great boulders, scattered about on the bottom of the cove. Towing "The Curlew" back not far from a hundred yards from our first berth, the anchor was again let go in thirty-seven fathoms; and, for additional security, a second cable was bent to our extra anchor, which we dropped out of the stern. This matter, with arrangements for heaving the anchor up with tackle and fall (for we had no windlass in the stern), took up the time till considerably past noon.

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A Dead Narwhal.—Snowy Owls.—Two Bears in Sight.—Firing on them with the Howitzer.—A Bear-Hunt among the Ice.—An Ice "Jungle."—An Exciting Chase.—The Bear turns.—Palmleaf makes "a Sure Shot."—"Run, you Black Son!"

About two o'clock a dead narwhal came floating out with the ice from the north-east arm, and passed quite near the schooner,—so near, that we could judge pretty accurately as to its length, which we estimated to be twenty or twenty-two feet; and its horn, or tusk, which was partly under water, could not have been less than five feet.

"Killed among the ice there, I reckon," said Capt. Mazard. "Crushed up. I should not wonder if there were a great many large fish killed so."

It seemed not improbable; for we had seen several snowy owls hovering over the ice-packs; and, about an hour afterwards, as we were reading in the cabin, Weymouth came down to say that a couple of bears were in sight up there among the ice. We went up immediately. None of us had ever seen a white bear, save at menageries, where they had to keep the poor brutes dripping with ice-water, they were so near roasting with our climate. To see a white bear prowling in his native ice-fastnesses was, therefore, a novel spectacle for us. [94]

They were distant from the schooner, at a rough guess, five hundred yards, and seemed to have a good deal of business about a hole, or chasm, among the loose ice at some distance up the arm.

"Seal or a dead finner in there, I'll be bound," said the captain. "Now, boys, there's a chance for a bear-hunt!"

"Suppose we give 'em a shot from my cannon-rifle," I suggested.

"Better take the howitzer," said Raed. "Load it with a grist of those bullets."

"That'll be the most likely to fetch 'em," laughed the captain.

Wade ran down after the powder and balls. The rest of us unlashed the gun, got off the rubber-cloth, and trundled it along to point it over the starboard rail. Raed then swabbed it out; Kit poured in the powder; while Wade and I rammed down a wad of old newspaper.

"Now, put in a good dose of these blue-pills," advised the captain, scooping up both hands full from the bag in which we kept them. [95]

"Ef you war ter jest tie 'em up, or wrop 'em in a bit of canvas, they'd go straighter, and wouldn't scatter round so bad," remarked old Trull, who was not an uninterested spectator of the proceedings.

"Make them up sort of grape or canister shot fashion, you mean," said Raed.

"Yes; that's what I mean,—ter keep 'em frum scatterin'."

"Not a bad idea," said Capt. Mazard. "Weymouth, bring a piece of old canvas and a bit of manila-yarn."

About a quart of the ounce balls were hastily wrapped in the canvas, and lashed up with the hempen twine. The bag was then rammed down upon the powder, and the howitzer pointed.

"Let old Trull do the shooting," whispered Kit. "He will be as likely to hit as any of us."

"Mr. Trull," Capt. Mazard began, "we must look to you to shoot those bears for us. Pepper 'em good, now!"

At that we all stood away from the gun. The old fellow grinned, hesitated a moment, then stepped forward, evidently not a little flattered by the confidence reposed in him. First he sighted the piece very methodically. The schooner lay perfectly still. A better chance for a shot could hardly have been asked for. Palmleaf now came up with a bit of tarred rope lighted at the stove, and smoking after the manner of a slow match, with a red coal at the end. Trull took the rope, and, watching his chance till both the bears were in sight and near each other, touched the priming,—*Tizz-z-z-WHANG!* [96]

The carriage recoiled almost as smartly as my big rifle had done. Why is it that a person standing near a gun—especially a heavy gun—can never see what execution is done during the first second or two? He may have his eye on the mark at the discharge, but somehow the report always throws his ocular apparatus out of gear. In a moment I espied one of the bears scrambling over an ice-cake. The other had already disappeared; or else was killed, and had fallen down some fissure.

"Man the boat!" exclaimed Raed. "I'm anxious to see the result of that shot! Bring up those muskets, Wade!"

"Who goes on the bear-hunt, and who stays?" cried the captain.

"I'll stand by the vassel," said old Trull. "Guard and I will look out for things on board."

"Den I'll take his place, sar!" exclaimed Palmleaf, catching the enthusiasm of the thing.

Wade appeared with the muskets. Five of them were already loaded. Cartridges were soon clapped into six more. Wade handed us each one, including Palmleaf. [97]

"See that you don't shoot any of us with it, you lubber!" he said.

"Neber fear, sar," replied the negro with a grin. "I'se called a berry good shot at Petersburg, sar. Fit there, sar,—on the Linkum side."

"You did?"

"Yes, sar. Called a berry sure shot, sar."

Kit and Raed began to laugh.

"Come, tumble in, boys!" shouted the captain, who didn't see the point quite so clearly as we did.

We got into the boat,—eleven of us; about as many as could find room. Hobbs and Bonney lay back at the oars. Kit steered us up to the low ledges of the small island on the west side of the ice-packed arm, where the bears had been seen. We landed, and pulled the boat up after us. No danger from the tide at this time of day. The captain and Raed led off, climbing over the rocks, and following along the jam of ice, which was piled considerably higher than the shore of the arm. Palmleaf, jolly as a darky need be, kept close behind them. The rest followed as best they might, clambering from ledge to ledge. Wade and I brought up the rear.

"Only look at that nigger!" muttered my kinsman of Southern blood. "Impudent dog! I would like to crack his head with the butt of this musket! Hear how he wagged his tongue to me?" [98]

"Well, you called him a lubber."

"What of that?"

"What of that? Why, you must expect him to talk back: that's all. He's a free man, now, you know."

"The more's the pity!"

"I don't see it."

"I'd like to have the handling of that nigger a while!"

"No doubt. But you might just as well get over those longings first as last," I said; for I was beginning to get sick of his foolish spirit. "You had better forget the war, bury your old-time prejudices, and start new in the world, resolved to live and let live; to be a good fellow, and treat everybody alike and well. That's the way we do in the North,—or ought to."

Wade said not a word. I rather pity the fellow. He has got some mighty hard, painful lessons to learn before he will be able to start right in life.

Raed and the captain had stopped.

"They were right opposite here, over among the ice," Raed was saying. "I marked the spot by that high cake sticking up above the rest."

"We need scaling-ladders to get up among it," laughed Kit. "Talk of impenetrable jungles! here is a jungle of ice!" [99]

Imagine, reader, a thousand ice-cakes from six to thirty feet square, and of every grade of thickness, piled sidewise, edgewise, slantwise, cross-wise, and flatwise on top of that, and you may, perhaps, gain some idea of the vast jam which filled the arm and lay heaped up twenty and thirty feet above us. For a moment we were at a loss how to surmount it; then all began looking along for some available cranny or rift which might offer a foothold.

"Here's a breach!" Weymouth shouted.

He had gone along a dozen rods farther. We followed to see him mounting by the jagged edge of a vast cake five or six feet thick which projected out over the ledges. Kit followed; and they stood at the top, stretching down helping hands. In five minutes we were all up, standing, clinging, and balancing on the glassy edges of ice, and hopping and leaping from cake to cake. Cracks, crevices, and jagged holes opened ten, fifteen, and twenty feet sheer down all about us. A single misstep would send us head-foremost into them.

"I say," exclaimed Capt. Mazard, barely saving himself from a tumble, "this is a devil of a funny place for a bear-hunt! No chance for rapid retreats! It will be fight bear, or die!"

The place where the bears had stood when old Trull had fired was back fifteen or twenty rods to the right. We worked off in that direction, getting occasional glimpses of the water down in the deep holes, and stopping once to pull Corliss out of a wedge-shaped crevice into which he had slipped. Arriving on a big broad cake,—which, for a wonder, lay flat side up,—we paused to reconnoitre. [100]

"Don't see any thing of 'em," said the captain.

"Gone, I'll bet my musket!" said Kit disappointedly. "More'n a league away by this time, I'll warrant you."

"Doubt if the old man touched 'em!" said Hobbs.

"Guess he suspected as much!" laughed the captain. "Perhaps that was why he wouldn't come."

"But we haven't half searched yet!" exclaimed Wade, pushing out along the edge of a tilted-up fragment, and jumping across to another.

As he jumped the ticklish cake tipped, slid back, and toppled over into a great chasm to the

right with a tremendous crash and spattering,—for there was water at the bottom,—Wade barely saving himself. Almost at the same instant, I thought I heard a low growl not far off.

"Hark!" exclaimed Kit. "Wasn't that the bear?"

"Sounded like one!" muttered the captain. "Down among the ice!"

"May be wounded down there," said Kit. "Crawled in under the ice."

"Spread out round here, boys," cried the captain, "and peep sharp into the holes!"

I knew we were near where the bullets from the howitzer had hit; for I saw several of them lying down in the cracks, flattened by striking against the ice: and, a few rods farther on, Weymouth and I came to a large irregular hole sixteen or seventeen feet deep, along the bottom of which we saw the bones of some fish.

"This is the very place where they were when we first saw them," said Weymouth. "Ten to one they've crawled into some of those big cracks."

We pitched down a loose junk of ice, and again heard a growl: though just where it issued from was hard telling; for the broad faces of the cakes, set at all angles, echoed the sound in a most bewildering manner. Kit and the captain came along; and we rolled down another fragment. Another growl.

"He's in behind this great cake that sets upright against the side of the hole!" exclaimed Weymouth.

"Think so?" said Kit. "Then let's tip this large piece off on to it. May scare him out."

We managed to turn it over the edge; when it fell down *smash* upon the cake below, splitting it in two. Instantly the bear, a great shaggy, white fellow, sprang out, and ran round at the bottom of the hole, growling, and trying to scratch up the sides. He had several bloody streaks on him. Kit took a rapid aim, and fired a bullet into his fore-shoulder; which only made him growl the louder, however. Then the captain gave him a shot in the head; at which the creature tumbled down, and kicked his last very quietly.

But meanwhile we had heard a great uproar and shouting off to the left.

"They've started the other, I guess!" exclaimed Kit. "Come on!"

Just then a shot was fired, followed by a noise of falling ice-cakes. We could see a head bob up occasionally, and made for the *mêlée* as fast as we could hop. The jam in this direction was not so high. The ice-cakes lay flatter, and were less heaped one above the other. Cries of "There he is! there he goes!" burst out on a sudden; then another musket-shot.

Leaping on, we soon caught sight of the chase. The bear was jumping from cake to cake. Raed, Corliss, and Hobbs were following after him at a reckless pace; Bonney was trying to cut him off on the right; while Wade and Donovan, with Palmleaf a few rods behind them, were heading him on the left. Such a shouting and hallooing! They were all mad with excitement. We, who had killed our bear, kept after them as fast as we could run, but couldn't begin to catch up.

Bang! Somebody tired at him then.

'Twas Hobbs.

"Cut him off!"

"Head him!" was the cry.

"He's hit!"

"Head him off there!"

Wade and Donovan were actually outstripping the bear, and getting ahead; seeing which, the frightened, maddened beast tacked sharp to the left to escape behind them on that side,—going straight for Palmleaf, who was now considerably behind Wade and Don. Instantly a yell arose from all hands.

"Look out, Palmleaf!"

"Shoot him, Palmleaf!"

"Let him have it!"

"Aim low!"

"Now's your time!"

The negro, who had been running hard, stopped short, and, seeing the bear bounding toward him, made a feint to raise his musket, when it went off, either from accident or terror, in the air. We heard the bullet *zip* fifty feet overhead. The bear gave a vicious growl, and made directly at him.

"He'll have the darky!"

"He'll have you, Palmleaf!"

"Run, fool!"

"Run, you black son!"

Palmleaf turned to run; but, seeing a high rand of ice sticking up a few yards to his left, he leaped for it, and, jumping up, caught his hands at the top, and tried to draw himself up on to it.

The bear was within six feet of him, snarling like a fury.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Raed and Corliss and Bonney had fired within twenty yards. But the bear reared, and struck with his forepaws at the darky's legs, stripping his trousers clean off the first pull. Such a howl as came from his terrified throat!

Crack!

That was a better shot. The bear turned, or set out to, but fell down in a heap, then scrambled up, but immediately tumbled over again, and lay kicking.

By this time we had all got near. The negro, scared nearly into fits, still hung on to the edge of the ice, looking as if "spread-eagled" to it.

"Come, sir," said Wade. "Better get down and put on your trousers,—what there is left of them." [105]

The darky turned an agonized, appealing visage over his shoulder, but, seeing only friends instead of bears, let go his hold, and dropped to his feet.

"That's what you call a 'sure shot,' is it," sneered Wade,— "that one you fired at the bear? Guess you didn't hurt *us* much at Petersburg."

"He need to be pretty thankful that somebody fired a *sure shot* about the time the bear was paying his compliments to him," laughed the captain.

"Yes: who fired that last shot?" I asked of Donovan, who stood near.

"Wade did."

We had to send back to the schooner for the butcher-knives, and also for a line to hoist the bear we had first killed out of the hole.

The bears were skinned: we wanted to save their hides for trophies. As nearly as we could make out, they had been both wounded by the bullets from the howitzer, one of them—the one killed first—pretty severely. They did not, however, appear to me, in this our first encounter with them, to be nearly so fierce nor so formidable as I had expected, from accounts I had read. Hobbs cut out a piece of the haunch for steaks. Palmleaf afterwards cooked it: but we didn't much relish it, save Guard; and he ate the most of it.

CHAPTER VI.

The Middle Savage Isles.—Glimpse of an Esquimau Canoe.—
Firing at a Bear with the Cannon-Rifle.—A Strange Sound.
—The Esquimaux.—Their Kayaks.—They come on board.—
An Unintelligible Tongue.—"Chymo."

During the night following our bear-hunt a storm came on,—wind, rain, and snow, as before,—and continued all the next day. The tremendous tides, however, effectually prevented any thing like dullness from "creeping over our spirits;" since we were sure of a sensation at least twice in twenty-four hours. But during the next night it cleared up, with the wind north; and, quite early on the morning of the 11th of July, we dropped out of "Mazard's Bay," and stood away up the straits.

At one o'clock we sighted another group of mountainous isles,—the same figured on the chart as the "Middle Savage Isles;" and by five o'clock we were passing the easternmost a couple of miles to the southward. Between it and the next island, which lay a little back to the north, there was a sort of bay filled with floating ice. Raed was leaning on the bulwarks with his glass, scanning the islands as we bowled along under a full spread of canvas. Suddenly he turned, and called to Kit.

"Get your glass," he said. "Or never mind: take mine. Now look right up there between those islands. What do you see?" [107]

"Seals," replied Kit slowly, with the glass to his eye. "Any quantity of seals on the ice there; and—there's something larger scooting along. That's a narwhal: no, 'tain't, either. By jolly! see the seals flop off into the water as it shoots along! afraid of it. There! something flashed then in the sun! Raed, I believe that's a *kayak*,—an Esquimau canoe! An Esquimau catching seals!"

"That's what I thought."

"Wash!"

"Wade!"

"Get your glasses, and come here quick!"

"What's that about Esquimau?" demanded Capt. Mazard, coming along from the binnacle.

"An Esquimau *kayak*!" said Raed.

"That so?" running after his glass.

In a few moments we were all—all who had glasses—looking off at the wonderful object, to see which had been one of the pleasant hopes of our voyage; and yet I am bound to say, that, in and of itself, it was no great of a sight, especially at a distance of two miles. But, considered as an invention perfected through centuries by one of the most singular peoples of the Man family, it is, in connection with all their implements of use, well worth a study. Indeed, there is, to me at least, something so inexpressibly quaint and *bizarre* about this race, as to render them an object well deserving of a visit. More strikingly even than the Hottentot or the Digger Indian of the Western sage deserts do they exhibit the iron sway of climate and food over habits and character, as well as physical growth and development. [108]

The *kayak* moved about from point to point for some minutes; then shot up into the passage between the islets, and was lost from view.

"Suppose he saw us,—saw the schooner?" said Wade.

"Should have thought he might," replied the captain. "Must be a pretty conspicuous object out here in the sun, with all sail set."

"He may have gone to give news of our arrival," said Raed; "for I presume there are others—whole families—not far away. These people always live in small communities or villages, I understand."

"This may be as good a chance to see them as we shall get," said Kit. "What say for shortening sail, or standing up nearer the islands, and laying to for the night?"

"Just as you say, gentlemen," replied the captain.

It was agreed to stand up within half a mile, and so cruise along leisurely; thus giving them a chance to communicate with us if they desired. The helm was accordingly put round, and "The Curlew" headed for the second island. Half an hour took us up within a thousand yards of the ledges: the schooner was then hove to for an hour. [109]

"A few discharges from the howitzer might stir them up," suggested Wade.

"We *could* do that!" exclaimed Raed.

Powder was brought up, and the gun charged and fired. A thunderous echo came back from the rocky sides of the islands. A second and a third shot were given at intervals of five minutes: but we saw nothing more of the *kayak*; and, after waiting nearly an hour more, the schooner was headed around, and continued on her course at about the same distance from the islands. A gun was fired every hour till midnight. We then turned in for a nap.

From this time till four o'clock the next morning we passed three islands: so the sailors reported. The high mainland was distinctly visible four or five miles to the northward.

At five o'clock we were off a small, low islet,—scarcely more than a broad ledge, rising at no point more than ten feet above the sea. It was several miles from the island next above it, however, and girdled by a glittering ice-field, the remains of last winter's frost, not yet broken up. Altogether the islet and the ice-field about it was perhaps two or two miles and a half in diameter. On the west it was separated from the island below it—a high, black dome of sienite—by a narrow channel of a hundred and fifty yards. Hundreds of seals lay basking in the sun along the edges of the ice-field; and, as we were watching them, we saw a bear swim across the channel and climb on to the ice-field. Landing, he gave his shaggy sides a shake; then, making a short run, seized upon a seal, off which he was soon breakfasting. [110]

"We'll spoil his fun!" exclaimed Kit. "Bring up one of those solid shots, Wade. We've got two bear-skins; but we shall want one apiece. I propose to have an overcoat next winter out of that fellow's hide."

The howitzer was loaded with the six-pound iron ball. Kit undertook to do the shooting this time. The distance was, we judged, somewhere from three-fourths of a mile to a mile. The rest of us got our glasses, and went back toward the stern to watch the effect of the shot. Of course it is hap-hazard work, firing at so small an object at so great a distance, with a cannon, from the deck of a vessel in motion. Nevertheless Kit made quite a show of elevating the gun and getting the range. Presently he touched off. The first we saw of the shot was its striking on the ice-field at a long distance short of the bear. The bits of ice flew up smartly, and the ball must have ricocheted; for we saw the ice fly up again quite near the bear, and then at another point beyond him. It probably went over him at no great height. The creature paused from his bloody feast, looked round, and then ran off a few rods, and stood sniffing for some moments, but soon came back to the seal. Whether it was the report, or the noise of the ball whirring over, which had startled him, was not very evident. [111]

"Not an overcoat!" laughed Raed.

"It's my turn now," said I, uncovering my *smaller* cannon. "I'll make the next bid for that overcoat."

I put in a little less than half a gill of powder this time, and wrapped a thin patch round the ball to make it fit tightly. It was all we could do to drive it down. The gun was then capped and cocked. I moved the screw to elevate it about an inch, and, watching my chance as the schooner heaved, let drive. But the bear kept on eating. There was a general laugh.

"Didn't even notice you!" cried Kit. "I can overbid that!"—taking up the powder to reload the howitzer.

"Not before I bid again," said I.

And at it we went to see who would get loaded first to get the next shot. But, my gun being so much the smaller and more easily handled, I had my ball down before Kit had his powder-wad rammed. The rest stood clapping and cheering us. Hastily priming the tube, I whipped on a cap, then beckoned to old Trull.

"Here," said I, "shoot that bear for me!"

The old salt chuckled, and had his eye to the piece immediately. I snatched up my glass. Kit paused to see the result. The old man pulled the trigger. There was a moment's hush, then a great "Hurrah!" The bear had jumped up, and, whirling partly round, ran off across the ice-field roaring, *we fancied*; for he had his mouth open, and snapping round to his flanks. He had been grazed, if nothing more. With the glass we could detect blood on his white coat.

"He's hit!" said I. "Let's bear up into the channel: that'll stop him from getting back to the high islands. We can then hunt him at leisure on the ice-field. He won't care to swim clean up to the"—

"Hark!" exclaimed Raed suddenly. "What's that noise?"

We all listened.

It was a noise not greatly unlike the faint, distant cawing and hawing of a vast flock of crows as they sometimes congregate in autumn.

"It's some sort of water-fowl *clanging* out there about the high islands," said I.

Again it rose, borne on the wind,—"*Ta-yar-r-r! ta-yar-r-r! ta-yar-r-r!*" Had we been at home, I should have taken it for a distant mass-meeting cheering the result of the presidential election, or perhaps the presidential nomination at the convention. It had a peculiarly barbarous, reckless sound, which was not wholly unfamiliar. But up here in Hudson Straits we were at a loss how to account for it.

"I believe it's the Huskies," said the captain. "Take a good look all around with your glasses."

We ran our eyes over the islands. They looked bare of any thing like an Esquimau convention. Presently Kit uttered an exclamation.

"Why, just turn your glass off to the main, beyond the islands; right over the ice-field; on that lofty brown headland that juts out from the main! There they are!"

There they were, sure enough,—a grimy, bare-headed crowd, swinging their arms, and gesticulating wildly. It could not have been less than five miles; but the faint "*Ta-yar-r-r!*" still came to our ears.

"Suppose they are calling to us?" cried Raed.

"Yes; looks like that," replied the captain.

"Heard the guns, you see," said Kit; "those we fired at the bear."

"Port the helm!" ordered the captain. "We'll beat up through this channel to the north side of the ice-field."

"Perhaps we had best not go up too near them at first," remarked Raed, "till we find out what sort of *folks* they are."

"No: two miles will be near enough. They will come off to us,—as many of them as we shall want on board at one time, I dare say."

The schooner bore up through the channel, and wore along the ice-field on the north side at a distance of a few hundred yards from it. We saw the bear running off round to the south-east side to keep away from us; though, as may readily be supposed, our attention was mainly directed to the strange people on the headland, whose discordant cries and shouts could now be plainly heard. We could see them running down to the shore; and immediately a score of canoes shot out, and came paddling towards us.

"You don't doubt that their coming off is from friendly motives, captain?" Kit asked.

"Oh, no!"

"Still forty or fifty stout fellows might give us our hands full, if they were ill-disposed," remarked Wade.

"That's a fact," admitted the captain; "though I don't believe they would attempt any thing of the sort."

"Well, there is no harm in being well armed," said Raed. "Kit, you and Wash get up half a dozen of the muskets, and load them. Fix the bayonets on them too. Wade and I will load the howitzer and the mighty rifle. And, captain, I don't believe we had better have more than a dozen of them on board at one time till we know them better."

"That may be as well," replied Capt. Mazard. "It will be unpleasant having too many of them

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aboard at once, anyway. And, in order to have the deck under our thumb a little more, I am going to station two of the sailors with muskets, as a guard, near the man at the wheel, another amidships, and two more forward."

Meanwhile the *kayaks* were approaching, a whole school of them, shouting and racing with each other. Such a barbaric din! The crowd on the shore added their distant shouts.

"There's another thing we must look out for," remarked the captain. "These folks are said to be a little thievish. It will be well enough to put loose small articles out of sight."

Hastily perfecting our arrangements, we provided ourselves each with a musket, and were ready for our strange visitors. They came paddling up, one to a canoe. Their paddles had blades at each end, and were used on either side alternately, with a queer windmill sort of movement.

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"Twenty-seven of them," said Kit.

"Bareheaded, every mother's son of them!" exclaimed Weymouth.

"Only look at the long-haired mokes!" laughed Donovan.

"Why, they're black as Palmleaf!" cried Hobbs.

"Oh, no! not nearly so black," said Bonney. "Just a good square dirt-color."

This last comparison was not far from correct. The Esquimaux are, as a matter of fact, considerably darker than the red Indians of the United States. They are not reddish: they are brown, to which grease and dinginess add not a little. On they came till within fifty yards; when all drew up on a sudden, and sat regarding us in something like silence. Perhaps our bayonets, with the sunlight flashing on them, may have filled them with a momentary suspicion of danger. Seeing this, we waved our arms to them, beckoning them to approach. While examining the relics of a past age,—the stone axes, arrow-heads, and maces,—I have often pictured in fancy the barbarous habits, the wild visages, and harsh accents, of prehistoric races,—races living away back at the time when men were just rising above the brute. In the wild semi-brutish shouts and gesticulations which followed our own gesture of friendliness I seemed to hear and see these wild fancies verified,—verified in a manner I had not supposed it possible to be observed in this age. And yet here were primitive savages apparently, not fifteen hundred miles in a direct course from our own enlightened city of Boston, where, as we honestly believe, we have the cream (some of it, at least) of the world's civilization. Reflect on this fact, ye who think the whole earth almost ready for the reign of scientific righteousness!

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Such an unblest discord! such a cry of pristine savagery! They came darting up alongside, their great fat, flat, greasy faces, with their little sharp black eyes, looking up to us full of confidence and twinkling with expectation of good bargains.

During our voyage we had got out of our books quite a number of Esquimaux words with their English meanings; but these fellows gabbled so fast, so shockingly indistinct, and ran every thing together so, that we could not gain the slightest idea of what they were saying, further than by the word "*chymo*," which, as we had previously learned, meant *trade*, or *barter*. But they had nothing with them to trade off to us, save their *kayaks*, paddles, and harpoons.

"But let's get a lot of them up here where we can see them," said Wade.

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We now made signs for them to climb on deck; and immediately half a dozen of them stood up, and, with a spring, caught hold of the rail, and came clambering up, leaving their canoes to float about at random. Five—seven—eleven—thirteen—came scratching over.

"There, that'll do for one dose," said Raed.

Kit and Wade stepped along, and thrust out their muskets to stop the stream. One little fellow, however, had got half up: so they let him nig in, making fourteen in all. Three or four more had tried to get up near the stern; but Weymouth and Don, who were on duty there, rapped their knuckles gently, as a reminder to let go and drop back into their *kayaks*, which they did without grumbling. Indeed, they seemed singularly inoffensive; and, come to get them on deck, they were "little fellows,"—not so tall as we boys even by a whole head. They were pretty thick and stout, however, and had remarkably large heads and faces. I do not think the tallest of them was much, if any, over five feet. Donovan, who was about six feet, looked like a giant beside them. They stood huddled together, looking just a little wistful at being cut off from their fellows, and casting fearful glances at Guard, who stood barking excitedly at them from the companion-way. Though used to dogs, they had very likely never seen a jet-black Newfoundland before. Possibly they mistook him for some different animal.

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"What are we thinking of," exclaimed Raed, "with our guns and bayonets! Why, these little chaps look the very embodiment of good nature! Here they trust themselves among us without so much as a stick in their hands; while we've got out all our deadly weapons! Let's let the rest of them come up if they want to."

Kit and Wade stood back, and beckoned to the others: whereat they all came climbing up, save one, who stayed, apparently, to look out for the empty *kayaks*, which were floating about. They brought rather strong odors of smoke and greasy manginess; but more good-natured faces I never saw.

"My eye! but aren't they flabby fat!" exclaimed Hobbs.

"That comes of drinking seal and whale oil," said Bonney.

"Guess they don't sport combs much," said Donovan. "Look at those tousled heads! Bet you,

they're lousy as hens!"

"Talk to 'em, Raed," said Kit. "Say something. Ask 'em if they want to *chymo*."

At the sound of this last word they turned their little sharp eyes brightly on Kit.

"*Chymo*?" said Raed interrogatively.

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Instantly they began to crowd round him, a dozen jabbering all at once. Faster even than before they ran on, amid which we could now and then distinguish words which sounded like *oomiaksook*, *hennelay*, *cob-loo-nak*, *yemeck*. These words, as we had read, meant *big ship*, *woman*, *Englishman*, *water*, respectively. But it was utterly impossible to make out in what connection they were used. Despite our vocabulary, we were as much at a loss as ever.

"Confound it!" Kit exclaimed. "Let's make signs. No use trying to *talk* with them."

"We shall want one of those *kayaks* to carry home," remarked Raed. "Captain, will you please bring up a couple of those long bars of iron and three or four yards of red flannel? We will see what can be done in the *chymo* line."

Capt. Mazard soon appeared with the iron and the flannel; at sight of which the exclamation of "*Chymo*!" and "*Tyma*!" ("Good!") were redoubled. Raed then took the articles, and, going to the side, pointed down to one of the canoes, then to the iron bars, and said *chymo*. At that some of them said "*Tyma*," and others "*Negga-mai*," with a shake of their heads; but when Raed pointed to both the iron and the flannel, undoubling it as he did so, they all cried "*Tyma*!" and one of them (the owner of the *kayak*, as it proved) came forward to take the things. Raed gave them to him. A line with a slip-noose was then dropped over the nose of the *kayak*, and it was pulled on board.

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In plan it was much like our cedar "shells" used at regattas,—a narrow skiff about twenty-three feet in length by eighteen inches in width. At the centre there was a small round hole just large enough for one to sit with his legs under the seal-skin deck, which was bound tightly to a hoop encircling the hole. Indeed, the whole outside of this singular craft was of seal-skins, sewed together and drawn tight as a drum-head over a frame composed mainly of the rib-bones of the walrus. The double-bladed paddle was tied to the *kayak* with a long thong; as was also a harpoon, made of bones laid together, and wound over with a long thong of green seal-skin. The lance-blade at the point was of very white, fine ivory; probably that of the walrus. Attached to the harpoon was a very long coil of line, made also of braided seal-skin, and wound about a short, upright peg behind the hoop. We supposed that the paddle and the harpoon went with the *kayak*. But the owner did not see it in that light. As soon as it had been hauled on deck, he proceeded to untie the thongs, much to the amusement of the captain. As we wished these articles to go together, nothing remained but to drive a new bargain for them. Raed, therefore, took one of our large jack-knives from his pocket, and, opening it, pointed to the paddle, and again said *chymo*.

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They all *negga-mai-ed*, giving us to understand that it wouldn't be a fair trade; in other words, that they couldn't afford it: and the owner of the paddle kept repeating the work *karrack* deprecatingly.

"What in the world does *karrack* mean?" Raed asked, turning to us.

Nobody knew.

"*Karrack*?" queried he.

"*Karrack, karrack!*" was the reply.

"*Karrack, karrack, karrack!*" they all cried, pointing to the paddle and also to the bulwarks.

"They mean *wood!*" exclaimed the captain. "Corliss, bring up two or three of those four-foot sticks such as we are using for firewood."

It was brought, and thrown down on deck.

"*Karrack, karrack!*" they all exclaimed, and fell to laughing in a most extraordinary way, making a noise which seemed to come from low down in their stomachs, and resembled the syllables *heh-heh*, or *yeh-yeh*, over and over and over. Raed pointed to the three sticks of wood, and then to the paddle, with another "*chymo*." That was *tyma*; for they all nodded and *heh-hehed* again.

"A trade," said the captain. "Now for the harpoon and line."

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These we got for a bar of iron and another stick of wood. It at first seemed rather singular that they should prize a stick of ordinary split wood so highly; but it was easily accounted for when we came to reflect that this vast region is destitute of trees of any size. Wood was almost as eagerly sought for as iron. I have no doubt that a very profitable trade might be made with a cargo of wood along these straits, exchanged for walrus-ivory, bear-skins, and seal-skins.

They wore a sort of jacket, or round frock, of bear-skin, with a cap, or hood, fastened to the collar like the hood of a water-proof. It was tied with thongs in front, and came down to the thigh. Kit bought one of these for a jack-knife,—for a curiosity, of course. Wade also purchased a pair of seal-skin moccasins, with legs to the knee, for a butcher-knife; which gave us a chance to observe that the owner wore socks of dog-skin, with the hair in. A pair of these were *chymoed* from another man for a stick of wood.

Beneath their bear-skin frocks they wore a shirt of some thin skin, which the captain pronounced to be bladder-skin,—of bears, perhaps. I got one of these shirts for a jack-knife. Wishing to have an entire outfit, we bought a pair of breeches of the man of whom we had

already purchased the boots, for a dozen spike-nails. These were of fox-skin, apparently, with the hair worn next the skin. I noticed that one man wore a small white bone or ivory trinket, seemingly carved to represent a child. Pointing to it, I held out a butcher-knife,—a good bargain, I fancied. Somewhat to my surprise, he *negga-mai-ed* with a very grave shake of his head. Two or three others who saw it shook their heads too. Wishing to test him, I brought up a bar of iron, and made another tender of both knife and iron. But he shook his head still more decidedly, and turned away as if to put a stop to further bantering on the subject. We were at a loss to know whether it was a souvenir,—the image of some dead child, or an object of religious reverence. Finally the captain pointed across the ice-field, where the bear was sitting crouched on the margin of it, and said, "*Nen-ook*." At that they all looked, and, espying him, gave vent to a series of cries and shouts. Six of them immediately dropped into their *kayaks* and set off after him. Reaching the ice, they landed, and pulled the canoes on to it. Then, taking their harpoons, they divided into three parties of two each. One of these went straight across toward the bear; the second followed round the edge of the field to the right, the third to the left. The bear must have been pretty severely wounded by our six-ounce bullet, I think; for he paid no attention to their approach till they were within four or five rods, when he made a feeble attempt to get past them. They rushed up to him without the slightest hesitation, and despatched him in a twinkling.

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CHAPTER VII.

ToC

The Husky Belles.—*We-we* and *Caubvick*.—"Abb," she said.—
All Promenade.—Candy at a Discount.—"*Pillitay*,
pillitay!"—Old Trull and the Husky Matron.—Gorgeous
Gifts.—Adieu to the Arctic Beauties.

None of their women had come off with them; and, while the party that had gone after the bear were busy skinning it, Raed brought up a roll of flannel, with half a dozen knives, and, holding them up, pointed off to the mainland and said, "*Henne-lay*." Whereupon they fell to *heh-hehing* afresh with cries of "*Igloo, igloo!*" Kit pointed to our boat, hanging from the davits at the stern, and then off to the shore, to inquire whether we should send it for them; but they shook their heads, and cried, "*Oomiak, oomiak!*"

"Do they mean for us to take the schooner up there?" asked the captain.

Raed pointed to the deck, and then off to the shore, inquiringly. No, that was not it; though they still cried "*Oomiak!*" pointing off to the shore.

"*Oomiak* is a boat of their own, I guess," said Kit; "different from the *kayak*. They called 'The Curlew' *oomiak-sook*, you know."

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"Tell them to bring some of their children along too," said Wade.

"Well, what's the word for child?" Raed inquired.

We none of us knew.

"Try *pappoose*," suggested the captain.

"*Pappoose*," said Raed, pronouncing it distinctly, and pointing off as before. "*Henne-lay*—*pappoose*."

But they only looked blank. *Pappoose* was evidently a new word for them. We then resorted to various expedients, such as holding our hands knee-high and hip-high; but the requisite gleam of intelligence could not be inspired. So, with another repetition of the word *henne-lay*, we started off a delegation of eight or nine after the female portion of the settlement.

While they were gone, the six who had gone to slaughter the bear came back, bringing the hide and a considerable quantity of the meat. Bits were distributed among the crowd, and eaten raw and reeking as if a delicacy. We *chymoed* the bear-skin from them for a bar of iron.

In about an hour a great *ta-yar-r-r-ing* from the shoreward bespoke the embarkation of the *ladies*; and, with our glasses, we could make out a large boat coming off, surrounded by *kayaks*.

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"That's the *oomiak*," said Kit. "Looks like quite a barge."

"Don't lose your hearts now," laughed the captain. "Should hate to have an elopement from my ship here."

"I think Wade is in the most danger," said Raed. "He's very susceptible to Northern beauties. We must have an eye to him."

"Beware, Wade!" cried Kit. "Don't be led astray! Steel your heart against the seductive charms of these Husky belles! Remember how the hopes of your family are centred! What would your mother say? Your father would be sure to disinherit you! How would your sisters bear it?"

"Hold on, fellows!" exclaimed Wade. "This isn't quite fair, nor honorable,—making fun of ladies behind their backs."

"Right, sir!" cried Raed. "Spoken like a true son of the South! Ah! you did always outrank us in gallantry. No discount on it. Had your heads been as true as your hearts, the result might have been different. But here come the ladies. We must do our prettiest to please 'em, or we are no true knights. By the by, we resemble the wandering knight-errants not a little, I fear."

"Only their object was adventure, while ours is science," added Kit. [128]

"Scientific knights!" laughed Wade. "Well, the world moves!"

The *oomiak* was now within fifty yards.

"Let's give 'em a salute!" exclaimed Kit. "Roll the ball out of the howitzer!"

"Oh! I wouldn't; it may scare 'em," said Raed.

"No, it won't. Where's a match?"

Bang went old brassy out of the stern.

It did startle them, I fancy. Something very much like a feminine screech rose in the *oomiak*. It was quickly hushed up, though, with no fainting, but any quantity of *heh-heh-ing* and *yeh-yeh-ing* from the fat beauties.

"Now give 'em two more from the muskets—two at a time—when they come under the side!" shouted Kit. "Hobbs, you and Don first! Ready!—fire!"

Crack, crack!

"Now Weymouth and Corliss!"

Crack, crack!

"There! I now consider their arrival properly celebrated. And here they are under the bows! Pipe the side for the ladies, captain!"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Raed; "how are we to get 'em aboard? Can't climb a line, I don't expect."

"Wouldn't do to give 'em the ratlines!" exclaimed Kit; "might entangle their pretty feet. What's to be done, captain?" [129]

"I—give—it—up!" groaned Capt. Mazard. "Hold! I have it: the old companion-stairs,—the ones we had taken out. They are stowed away down in the hold."

"Just the thing!" cried Raed; "the very essence of gallantry!"

"Corliss, Bonney, and Hobbs," shouted the captain, "bear a hand at those old stairs,—quick! Don't keep ladies waiting!"

The old stairs were hurried up, and let down from the side. The captain stood ready with a stout line, which he whipped around the top rung, and then made fast to the bulwarks. "That'll hold 'em," said he.

The *oomiak* was then brought up close, and the foot of the stairs set inside the gunwale. The *oomiak* was about twenty-seven feet in length by six in width. Like the *kayaks*, it was covered with seal-skin; or perhaps it might have been the hide of the walrus. The framework was composed of both bone and wood tied and lashed together. This was the women's boat, and was rowed by them. The only man in it was a hideous, wrinkled old savage, who sat in the stern to steer.

"Two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve, and an odd one," counted Raed. "Invite 'em up, captain."

Capt. Mazard got up on the bulwarks with a line in his hand, and, holding it down over the stairs, began to bow and make signs to them to come up. Perhaps they had not intended to actually come on board; or perhaps, like their fairer sisters in other lands, they wanted to be coaxed a little. At first they discreetly hesitated, glancing alternately up at us, then round to their swarthy countrymen in the *kayaks*. The most of them were seemingly young. There was but one really ugly face; while four or five were evidently under fifteen. The women were not quite so swarthy and dark as the men, and wore their hair longer. Several of them had it pugged up behind. The captain and Raed now redoubled their gestures of invitation. The Esquimau men on board also began to jabber to them; at which, first two, then another, and another, stood up, and with broad smiles essayed to mount the stairs. Kit was standing close to me. [130]

"Now, which are the prettiest ones?" he whispered. "Which are the belles? Let's you and I secure the *belles* away from Raed and Wade. Those two back in the stern next to old ghoulish—how do those strike you? Aren't those the beauties? They've got on the prettiest fur, anyway. Only look at those white gloves!"

The two Kit had pointed out were, as well as we could judge, the fairest of the bevy.

"I believe Wade's got his eye on one of them!" muttered Kit. "We'll oust him, though. Crowd along sharp when those two come up. Elbow Wade out of the way. I'll push against you, and we'll squeeze him up against the rail." [131]

The others followed the first two, coming up the steps, taking the captain's hand, and jumping off the rail to the deck. Our two came last.

"Now's our time!" exclaimed Kit; and, making a bold push, we got in ahead of the unsuspecting Wade, who immediately saw the sell, and turned away in great disgust.

"I'll pay you for that!" muttered he.

But, having got face to face with the fur-clad damsels, we were not a little perplexed how to make their acquaintance; for they were staring at us with their small black eyes very round and wondering.

"Try a great long smile," said Kit.

We smiled very hard and persistently for some seconds. It seemed to mollify their wonder somewhat.

"Keep it up," Kit advised: "that'll bring 'em."

We kept it up, smiling and bowing and nodding as gayly as we could; and were presently rewarded by seeing faint reflections of our grins on their dusky faces, which rapidly deepened into as broad a smile as I ever beheld. They had very tolerably wide mouths, with large white teeth. Having got up a smile, we next essayed to shake hands with them according to good old New-England custom. Their white gloves were of some sort of bird-skin, I think, and fitted—well, I've seen kid gloves worn that didn't fit a whit better. How to commence a conversation was not so easy; since we knew not more than a dozen words of their language, and could not frame these into sentences. So we began by making them each a present of a jack-knife. These were accepted with a great deal of broad smiling. Kit then showed them how to open the knives. At that one of the girls reached down to her boot; and, thrusting her hand into the leg of it (for their boots had remarkably large legs, coming up to the knee, and even higher), she fished out a little bone implement about four inches long, and resembling a harpoon. Near the centre of it was a tiny hole, in which there was knotted a bit of fine leathern string. It was plain that she meant to give it to one or the other of us. Kit held out his hand for it with a bow.

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"*Kina*?" he asked, taking it. ("What is it?")

"*Tar-suk*," said the girl. "*Tar-suk-apak-pee-o-mee-wanga*;" which was plain, to be sure.

Meanwhile the other was industriously fumbling in her boot, and pretty quick drew out a bone image representing a fox, as I have always supposed. This was for me.

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"*Kina*?" I asked.

"*Bossuit*," was the reply.

This was also pierced with a hole through the neck; and, on my hooking it to my watch-guard, the other girl fell to laughing at her companion, who also laughed a little confusedly, and with a look, which, in a less dusky maiden, might have been a blush. Just what importance they attach to these trinkets and to the wearing of them we could merely guess at.

"I wonder what their names are," said Kit. "How can we find out? Would they understand by our using the word *kina*, do you suppose?"

"Try it."

Kit then pointed to the one who was talking with me, and said "*kina*" to the other. She did not seem to understand at first: but, on a repetition of the question, replied, "*We-we*;" at which her companion looked suddenly around. Then they talked with each other a moment. *We-we*, as I afterwards learned, meant *white goose*. I then put the same question to *We-we*, pointing to the other.

"*Caubvick*," she replied.

Just then Wade passed us; and, lo! he had a white-gloved damsel on his arm, promenading along the deck as big as life.

"What's her name?" cried Kit.

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"*Ikewna*," he replied over his shoulder.

How he had found out he would never tell us; perhaps in the same manner we had done.

"I declare, Wade's outdoing us!" exclaimed Kit. "But we can promenade too."

I then pointed to Wade and *Ikewna*, and then to *We-we* and myself, offering my arm.

"*Abb*," she said; and we started off.

Kit and *Caubvick* followed. After all, walking with an Esquimau belle is not so very different from walking with a Yankee girl: only I fancy it must have looked a little odd; for, as I have already stated, they wore long-legged boots with very broad tops coming above the knee, silver-furred seal-skin breeches, and a jacket of white hare-skin (the polar hare) edged with the down of the eider-duck. These jackets had at least one very peculiar feature: that was nothing less than a tail about four inches broad, and reaching within a foot of the ground. I have no doubt they were in *style*: still they did look a little singular, to say the least.

Meanwhile the others were not idle spectators, judging from the loud talking, *yeh-yeh-ing*, and unintelligible lingo, that resounded all about. We saw Raed paying the most polite attentions to a very chubby, fat girl with a black fur jacket and yellow gloves.

"What name?" demanded Kit as we promenaded past.

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"*Pussay*," replied Raed, trying to look very sober.

The word *pussay* means a seal; and in this case the name was not much misplaced. *We-we* (white goose) was, to my eye, decidedly the prettiest of the lot; *Caubvick* came next; and, as we

promenaded past Wade, we kept boasting of their superior charms as compared with *Ikewna*. Our two both wore white jackets; while Wade's wore a yellow one, of fox-skin.

"How about refreshments!" cried Wade at length. "We ought to treat them, hadn't we?"

"That's so," said Raed. "Captain, have the goodness to call Palmleaf, and bid him bring up a box of that candy."

The captain came along.

"Didn't you see the rumpus?" he asked.

"Rumpus?"

"Yes; when Palmleaf came on deck just after the women came on board. They were afraid of him. He came poking his black head up out of the forecandle, and rolling his eyes about. If he had been the Devil himself, they couldn't have acted more scared. I had to send him below out of sight, or there would have been a general stampede. The men are afraid of him. I don't understand exactly why they should be."

None of us did at the time; but we learned subsequently that the Esquimaux attribute all their ill-luck to a certain fiend, or demon, in the form of a huge black man. We have, therefore, accounted for their strange fear and aversion to the negro on that ground. They thought he was the Devil,—their devil. So Hobbs brought up the candy. Raed passed it round, giving each of our visitors two sticks apiece. This was plainly a new sort of treat. They stood, each holding the candy in their hands, as if uncertain to what use it was to be put. Raed then set them an example by biting off a chunk. At that they each took a bite. We expected they would be delighted. It was therefore with no little chagrin that we beheld our guests making up the worst possible faces, and spitting it out anywhere, everywhere,—on deck, against the bulwarks, overboard, just as it happened. The most of them immediately threw away the candy; though *We-we* and *Caubvick*, out of consideration for our feelings perhaps, quietly tucked theirs into their boot-legs. There was an awkward pause in the hospitalities. Clearly, candy wouldn't pass for a delicacy with them.

"Try 'em with cold boiled beef!" exclaimed the captain.

Luckily, as it occurred, Palmleaf had lately boiled up quite a quantity. It was cut up in small pieces, and distributed among them; and, at the captain's suggestion, raw fat pork was given the men. This latter, however, was much too salt for them: so that, on the whole, our refreshments were a failure. It is doubtful if they liked the cooked meat half so well as they did the raw, reeking flesh of the bear.

By way of making up for the candy failure, we gave them each two common tenpenny nails, and two sticks of hardwood the size we burned in the stove. With these presents they seemed very well pleased, particularly with the wood. But, on finding we were disposed to give, the most of them were not at all modest about asking for more. A general cry of "*Pillitay*" ("Give me something") arose. We gave them another stick of wood all round; at which their cries were redoubled. In short, they treated us very much as some earnest Christians do the Lord,—asked for everything they could think of. Old Trull was especially pestered by one woman, who stuck to him with a continuous whine of "*Pillitay, pillitay!*" He had already given her his jack-knife, and now borrowed it to cut off several of the brass buttons on his jacket. But so far was she from being satisfied with this sacrifice, that she instantly began *pillitaying* for the rest of them. The old man thought that this was carrying the thing a little too far.

"Ye old jade!" he exclaimed, out of all patience. "Ye'd beg me stark naked, I du believe!"

But still the woman with outstretched hand cried "*Pillitay!*" Finally the old chap in pure desperation caught out his tobacco to take a chew. Eying her a moment, he bit it off, and put the rest in her hand with a grim smile. The woman, following his example, forthwith bit off a piece, and chewed at it for a few seconds, swallowing the saliva; then turned away sick and vomiting. She didn't *pillitay* him any more.

To the honor of maidenhood, I may add that *We-we*, *Caubvick*, *Ikewna*, and *Pussay* were exceptions to the general rule of beggary. They asked us for nothing. Something seemed to restrain them: perhaps the attentions we had shown them. Be that as it may, they fared the better for it. Wade led off by giving *Ikewna* a broad, highly-colored worsted scarf, which he wrapped in folds about her fox-jacket, covering it entirely, and giving her a very *distingué* look. Not to be behind, Kit and I gave to *We-we* and *Caubvick* three yards of bright-red flannel apiece; also a red-and-black silk handkerchief each to wear over their shoulders, and two massive (pinchbeck) breast-pins. These latter articles did make their little piercing black eyes sparkle amazingly.

How long they would have stayed on board, Heaven only knows,—all summer, perhaps,—had not the captain given orders to have the schooner brought round. The moment the vessel began to move, they were seized with a panic, lest they should be carried off from home. The men were over into their *kayaks* instantly. Having got rid of them, "The Curlew" was again hove to, while the *oomiak* was brought under the stairs. We bade a hasty farewell to the Husky belles, and handed them into their barge. On the whole, we were not much sorry to be rid of them; for though they were human beings, and some of the young girls not without their attractions, yet it was humanity in a very crude, raw state. In a word, they were savages, destitute to a lamentable extent of all those finer feelings and sentiments which characterize a civilized race. The roughest of our Gloucester lads were immeasurably in advance of them; and Palmleaf, but recently a lash-fearing slave, seemed of a higher order of beings.

They were gone; but they had left an odor behind. We had to keep Palmleaf burning coffee on a shovel all the rest of the evening; and, for more than a month after, we could smell it at times,—a "sweet *souvenir* of our Husky beauties," as Wade used to put it.

There is something at once hopeless and pitiful about this people. There is no possibility of permanently bettering their condition. Born and living under a climate, which, from the gradual shifting of the pole, must every year grow more and more severe, they can but sink lower and lower as the struggle for existence grows sharper. There is no hope for them. Their absurd love of home precludes the possibility of their emigrating to a warmer latitude. Pitiful! because, where-ever the human life-spark is enkindled, his must be a hard heart that can see it suffering, dying, without pity.

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CHAPTER VIII.

ToC

The Husky Chief.—Palmleaf Indignant.—A Gun.—Sudden Apparition of the Company's Ship.—We hold a Hasty Council.—In the Jaws of the British Lion.—An Armed Boat.—Repel Boarders!—Red-Face waxes wrathful.—Fired on, but no Bones Broken.

By the time we had fairly parted from our Esquimau friends it was near eleven o'clock, P.M.,—after sunset. Instead of standing out into the straits, we beat up for about a mile along the ice-field, and anchored in thirteen fathoms, at about a cable's length from the island, to the east of the ice-island. The weather had held fine. The roadstead between the island and the main was not at present much choked with ice. It was safe, to all appearance. We wanted rest. Turning out at three and half-past three in the morning, and not getting to bunk till eleven and twelve, made an unconscionable long day. Once asleep, I don't think one of us boys waked or turned over till the captain stirred us up to breakfast.

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"Six o'clock, boys!" cried he. "Sun's been up these four hours!"

"Don't talk about the sun in this latitude," yawned Raed. "I can sit up with him at Boston; but he's too much for me here."

While we were at breakfast, Weymouth came down to report a *kayak* coming off.

"Shall we let him come aboard, sir?"

"Oh, yes!" said the captain.

"Let's have him down to breakfast with us for the nonce!" cried Kit. "Here, Palmleaf, set an extra plate, and bring another cup of coffee."

"And see that you keep out of sight," laughed the captain: "the Huskies don't much like the looks of you."

"I tink I'se look as well as dey do, sar!" exclaimed the indignant cook.

"So do I, Palmleaf," said Raed; "but then opinions differ, you know. These Esquimaux are nothing but savages."

"Dey're berry ill-mannered fellars, sar, to make de best of dem. I wouldn't hev 'em roun', sar, stinkin' up de ship."

"I don't see that they smell much worse than a pack of niggers," remarked Wade provokingly; at which the darky went back to the galley muttering.

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"Wade, some of these big negroes will pop you over one of these days," said Kit.

"Well, I expect it; and who'll be to blame for that? We had them under good control: you marched your hired Canadians down among us, and set them 'free,' as you say; which means that you've turned loose a class of beings in no way fit to be free. The idea of letting those ignorant niggers vote!—why, they are no more fit to have a voice in the making of the laws than so many hogs! You have done us a great wrong in setting them free: you've turned loose among us a horde of the most indolent, insolent, lustful *beasts* that ever made a hell of earth. You can't look for social harmony at the South! Why, we are obliged to go armed to protect our lives! No lady is safe to walk half a mile unattended. I state a fact when I say that my mother and my sisters do not dare to walk about our plantation even, for fear of those brutish negroes."

"I think you take a rather one-sided view, Wade," said Raed.

"It's the only side I can see."

"Perhaps; but there is another side, nevertheless."

Here a tramping on the stairs was heard, and Weymouth came down, followed by a large Esquimau.

"He's been trying to make out to us that he's the chief, boss, sachem, or whatever they call it, of the crowd that was aboard yesterday," said Weymouth.

"What does he want?" the captain asked.

"Wants to *chymo*."

Raed made signs for him to sit down in the chair at the table and eat with us; which, after some hesitation, he did rather awkwardly, and with a great knocking of his feet against the chairs. He had on a gorgeous bearskin jacket, with the hood drawn over his head. His face was large; his nose small, and nearly lost between the fat billows of his cheeks; his eyes were much drawn up at the corners, and very far apart; and his mouth, a very wide one, was fringed about with stiff, straggling black bristles. The cast of his countenance was decidedly repulsive. Kit made signs for him to drink his coffee; but he merely eyed it suspiciously. I then helped him to a heavy spoonful of mashed potatoes. He looked at it a while; then, seeing us eating of it, plunged in his fingers, and, taking up a wad, thrust it into his mouth, but immediately spat it out, with a broad laugh, all over his plate and over the other dishes, and kept spitting at random.

"De nasty dog!" ejaculated Palmleaf, rushing forward from the galley: "spit all ober de clean plates!"

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The savage turned his eye upon the black, and, with a horrible shout, sprang up from his chair, nearly upsetting the table-shelf, and made a bolt for the stairway. We called to him, and followed as quickly as we could: but, before we were fairly on deck, he was over into his *kayak*, plying his paddle as if for dear life; and the more we called, the faster he *dug to it*.

Suddenly, as we were looking after him and laughing, the heavy report of cannon sounded from the southward. Looking around, we saw a large ship coming to below the islands, at a distance of about three miles. A thrill of apprehension stole over us. Without a word, we went for our glasses. It was a large, staunch-looking ship, well manned, from the appearance of her deck. As we were looking, the English flag went up. We had expected as much.

"It's one of the Hudson-bay Company's ships," remarked Raed.

"Of course," said Kit.

"Not likely to be anything else," said the captain.

"I suppose you're aware that those fellows may take a notion to have us accompany them to London," remarked Raed.

"If they can catch us," Kit added.

"Persons caught trading with the natives within the limits of the Hudson-bay Company's chartered territory are liable to be seized, and carried to London for trial," continued Raed. "It's best to keep that point well in view. Nobody would suppose that, in this age, the old beef-heads would have the cheek to try to enforce such a *right* against Americans, citizens of the United States, who ought to have the inside track of everything on this continent. Still they may."

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"It will depend somewhat on the captain of the vessel—what sort of a man he is," said Kit. "He may be one of the high and mighty sort, full of overgrown notions of the company's authority."

Another jet of white smoke puffed out from the side of the ship, followed in a few seconds by another dull *bang*.

"We'll stand by our colors in any case," remarked Capt. Mazard, attaching our flag to the signal halliards.

Raed and Kit ran to hoist it. Up it went to the peak of the bright-yellow mast,—the bonny bright stars and stripes.

"All hands weigh anchor!" ordered Capt. Mazard.

"Load the howitzer!" cried Kit. "Let's answer their gun in coin!"

While we were loading, the schooner was brought round.

Wade must have got in a pretty heavy charge; for the report was a stunner.

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"Load again," said Kit; "and put in a ball this time. Let's load the rifle too."

The captain turned and regarded us doubtfully, then looked off toward the ship. "The Curlew" was driving lazily forward, and, crossing the channel between the island under which we had been lying and the ice-field, passed slowly along the latter at a distance of a hundred and fifty or two hundred yards. We thus had the ice-island between us and the possibly hostile ship. With our glasses we now watched her movements attentively. A number of officers were on the quarter-deck.

"You don't call that a ship-of-war?" Wade said at length.

"Oh, no!" replied the captain; "though it is probably an armed ship. All the company's ships go armed, I've heard."

"There!" exclaimed Kit. "They're letting down a boat!"

"That's so!" cried Wade. "They're going to pay us a visit sure!"

"They probably don't want to trust their heavy-laden ship up here among the islands," said the

captain.

"It's their long-boat, I think," said Kit. "One, two, three, four, five!—why, there are not less than fifteen or twenty men in it! And *see there!*—weapons!" [147]

As the boat pulled away from the side, the sun flashed brightly from a dozen gleaming blades.

"Cutlasses!" exclaimed Raed, turning a little pale.

I am ready to confess, that, for a moment, I felt as weak as a rag. The vengeful gleam of the light on hostile steel is apt, I think, to give one such a feeling the first time he sees it. The captain stood leaning on the rail, with the glass to his eye, evidently at his wits' end, and in no little trepidation. Very likely at that moment he wished our expedition had gone to Jericho before he had undertaken it. Raed, I think, was the first to rally his courage. I presume he had thought more on the subject previously than the rest of us had done. The sudden appearance of the ship had therefore taken him less by surprise than it did us.

"It looks as if they were going to board us—if we let them," he said quietly. "That's the way it looks; isn't it, captain?"

"I should say that it did, decidedly," Capt. Mazard replied.

"Boys!" exclaimed Raed, looking round to us, and to the sailors, who had gathered about us in some anxiety,—*"boys!* if we let those fellows yonder board us, in an hour we shall all be close prisoners, in irons perhaps, and down in the hold of that ship. We shall be carried out to Fort York, kept there a month in a dungeon likely as any way, then sent to England to be tried—for daring to sail into Hudson Bay and trade with the Esquimaux! What say, boys?—shall we let them come aboard and take us?" [148]

"No, sir!" cried Kit.

"Not much!" exclaimed Donovan. "We'll fight first!"

"Capt. Mazard," continued Raed, "I'm really sorry to have been the means of placing you in such a predicament. 'The Curlew' will undoubtedly be condemned if seized. They would clap a prize-crew into her the first thing, and start her for England. But there's no need of giving her up to them. That's not a ship-of-war. We've got arms, and can fight as well as they. We can beat off that boat, I'll be bound to say: and as for their ship, I don't believe they'll care to take her up here between the islands; and if they do,—why, we can sail away from them. But, for my own part, I had rather fight, and take an even chance of being killed, than be taken prisoner, and spend five months below decks."

"Fight it is, then!" exclaimed the captain doggedly.

By this time the boat was pulling up the channel to the north of the ice-field, within a mile of us. [149]

"We might crowd sail, and stand away to the north of the islands here," I argued.

"Yes; but we don't know how this roadstead ends farther on," replied Raed.

"It may be choked up with ice or small islets," said Kit. "In that case we should run into a trap, where they would only have to follow us to be sure of us. We might abandon the schooner, and get ashore; but that would be nearly as bad as being taken prisoner—on this coast."

"Here's clear sailing round this ice-field," remarked the captain. "My plan is to keep their ship on the opposite of it from us. If they give chase, we'll sail round it."

"But how about their boat?" demanded Wade.

"We must beat it off!" exclaimed the captain determinedly.

"Then we've not a moment to lose!" cried Raed.—"Here, Donovan! help me move the howitzer to the stern.—Kit, you and Wash and Wade get up the muskets and load them. Bring up the cartridges, and get caps and everything ready."

The howitzer went rattling into the stern, and was pointed out over the taffrail. The big rifle followed it. To the approaching boat their muzzles must have looked a trifle grim, I fancy. Matches and splints were got ready, as well as wads and balls. The muskets were charged, and the bayonets fixed. The schooner was kept moving gradually along at about the same distance from the ice. Bonney was stationed at the wheel, and Corliss at the sheets. Old Trull stood by the howitzer. The rest of us took each a musket, and formed in line along the after-bulwarks. Palmleaf, who in the midst of these martial preparations had been enjoying a pleasant after-breakfast snooze, was now called, and bade to stand by Corliss at the sheets. His astonishment at the sight which the deck presented to his lately-awakened optics was very great; the greater, that no one would take the trouble to answer his anxious questions. [150]

The boat had now come up to within a quarter of a mile. With cutlasses flashing, and oars dipping all together, they came closing in with a long, even stroke.

"We don't want them much within a hundred yards of us," said Capt. Mazard in a low tone.

"I'll hail them," replied Raed, taking the speaking-trumpet, which the captain had brought along.

The crisis was close at hand. We clutched the stocks of our rifles, and stood ready. There was, I am sure, no blenching nor flinching from the encounter which seemed imminent. We could see the faces of the men in the boat, the red face of the officer in the stern. The men were armed with carbines and broad sabers. They had come within easy hail. [151]

"Present arms!" commanded Capt. Mazard in clear tones.

Eight of us, with our rifles, stood fast.

"Repel *boarders!*"

Instantly we dropped on one knee, and brought our pieces to bear over the rail, the bayonets flashing as brightly as their own.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Raed through the trumpet.

"Ahoy yourself!" roared the red-faced man in the stern. "What ship is that, anyway?"

This was rather insulting talk: nevertheless, Raed answered civilly and promptly,—

"The schooner-yacht 'Curlew' of Portland."

"Where bound? What are you doing here?"

"Bound on a cruise into Hudson Bay!" responded Raed coolly; "for scientific purposes," he added.

"Scientific devils!" blustered the officer. "You can't fool us so! You're in here on a trading-voyage. We saw a *kayak* go off from you not an hour ago."

Not caring to bandy words, Raed made no reply; and we knelt there, with our muskets covering them, in silence. They had stopped rowing, and were falling behind a little; for "The Curlew" plowed leisurely on.

"Why don't you heave to?" shouted the irate commander of the boat. "I must look at your papers! Heave to while I come alongside!"

"You can't bring that armed boat alongside of this schooner!" replied Raed. "No objections to your examining our papers; but we're not green enough to let you bring an armed crew aboard of us."

"Then we shall come without *letting!* Give way there!"

But his men hesitated. The sight of our muskets, and old Trull holding a blazing splinter over the howitzer, was a little too much even for the sturdy pluck of English sailors.

"Bring that boat another length nearer," shouted Raed, slow and distinctly, "and we shall open fire on you!"

"The devil you will!"

"Yes, we will!"

At that we all cocked our muskets. The sharp clicking was, no doubt, distinctly audible in the boat. The officer thundered out a torrent of oaths and abuse; to all of which Raed made no reply. They did not advance, however. We meant business; and I guess they thought so. Our stubborn silence was not misconstrued.

"How do I know that you're not a set of pirates?" roared the Englishman. "You look like it! But wait till I get back to 'The Rosamond.' and I'll knock some of the impudence out of you, you young filibusters!" And with a parting malediction, which showed wonderful ingenuity in blasphemy, he growled out an order to back water; when the boat was turned, and headed for the ship.

"Give 'em three cheers!" said Kit.

Whereupon we jumped up, gave *three* and a big groan; at which the red face in the stern turned, and stared long and evilly at us.

"No wonder he's mad!" exclaimed Raed. "Had to row clean round this ice-field, and now has got to row back for his pains! Thought he was going to scare us just about into fits. Got rather disagreeably disappointed."

"He was pretty well *set up*, I take it," remarked the captain. "Had probably taken a drop before coming off. His men knew it. When he gave the order to 'give way,' they hung back: didn't care about it."

"They knew better," said Donovan. "We could have knocked every one of them on the head before they could have got up the side. It ain't as if 'The Curlew' was loaded down, and lay low in the water. It's about as much as a man can do to get from a boat up over the bulwarks. They might have hit some of us with their carbines; but they couldn't have boarded us, and they knew it."

"You noticed what he said about knocking the impudence out of us?" said Wade. "That means that we shall hear a noise and have cannon-shot whistling about our ears, I suppose."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Kit.

"Have to work to hurt us much, I reckon," remarked the captain. "The distance across the ice-island here can't be much under two miles and a half."

"Still, if they've got a rifled Whitworth or an Armstrong, they may send some shots pretty near us," said Wade.

"The English used to kindly send you Southern fellows a few Armstrongs occasionally, I have heard," said Raed.

"Yes, they did,—just by way of testing Lincoln's blockade. Very good guns they were too. We ought to have had more of them. I tell you, if they have a good twenty-four-pound Armstrong rifle,

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and a gunner that knows anything, they may give us a job of carpenterwork—to stop the holes."

"We might increase the distance another quarter of a mile," remarked Kit, "by standing off from the ice and making the circle a little larger."

"We'll do so," said the captain. "Port the helm, Bonney!"

During the next half-hour the schooner veered off two or three cables' lengths. We watched the boat pulling back to the ship. It was nearly an hour getting around the ice-island. Finally it ran in alongside, and was taken up. With our glasses we could see that there was a good deal of running and hurrying about the deck. [155]

"Some tall swearing going on there!" laughed Kit.

"Now look out for your heads!" said Raed. "They are pointing a gun! I can see the muzzle of it! It has an ugly look!"

Some five minutes more passed, when *puff* came a little cloud of smoke. We held our breaths. It gives a fellow a queer sensation to know that a deadly projectile is coming for him. It might have been four seconds, though it seemed longer, when we saw the ice fly up rapidly in three or four places half a mile from the schooner as the ball came skipping along, and, bounding off the edge of the ice-field, plunged into the sea with a sullen *sudge*, throwing up a white fountain ten or a dozen feet high, which fell splashing back. We all felt immensely relieved.

"That didn't come within three hundred yards of us," said Kit.

"They'll give her more elevation next time," said Wade. "I don't believe that was an Armstrong slug, though: it acted too sort of lazy."

"Look out, now!" exclaimed Raed. "They are going to give us another!" [156]

Puff—one—two—three—four! The ball struck near the edge of the ice-field, rose with a mighty bound twenty or thirty feet, and, describing a fine curve, struck spat upon the water; and again, rose, to plunge heavily down into the ocean two hundred feet off the port quarter.

"That was better," said Raed. "They are creeping up to us! The next one may come aboard!"

"But that's nothing more than an ordinary old twenty-four-pounder," said Wade. "Bet they haven't got a rifled gun. Lucky for us!"

"I wish we had a good Dahlgren fifty-pound rifle!" exclaimed Kit: "we would just make them get out of that quick! Wouldn't it be fun to chase them off through the straits here, with our big gun barking at their heels!"

"There they go again!" shouted the captain. "Look out!"

We caught a momentary glimpse of the shot high in air, and held our breaths again as it came whirling down with a quick *thud* into the sea a few hundred feet astern, and a little beyond us.

"Gracious!" cried Kit. "If that had struck on the deck, it would have gone down, clean down through, I do believe!"

"Not so bad as that, I guess," said the captain. "That heap of sand-ballast in the hold would stop it, I reckon." [157]

"Think so?"

"Oh, yes!"

There was real comfort in that thought. It was therefore with diminished apprehension that we saw a fourth shot come roaring down a cable's length forward, and beyond the bows, and, a few seconds after, heard the dull boom following the shot. The report was always two or three seconds behind the ball.

They fired three more of the "high ones," as Kit called them. None of these came any nearer than the fourth had done. Then they tried another at a less elevation, which struck on the ice-field, and came skipping along as the first had done; but it fell short.

"Old Red-face will have to give it up, I guess," said Kit. "He wants to hit us awfully, though! If he hadn't a loaded ship, bet you, we should see him coming up the channel between the islands there, swearing like a piper."

"In that case we would just 'bout ship, and lead him on a chase round this ice-island till he got sick of it," remarked the captain. "'The Curlew' can give him points, and outsail that great hulk anywhere."

"He's euchred, and may as well go about his business," laughed Weymouth.

"And that's just what he's concluding to do, I guess," said Donovan, who had borrowed my glass for a moment. "The ship's going round to the wind." [158]

"Yes, there she goes!" exclaimed Wade.

"Possibly they may bear up through the channel to the west of the ice-island," said Raed.

"Hope he will, if he wants to," remarked Capt. Mazard. "Nothing would suit me better than to race with him."

In fifteen or twenty minutes the ship was off the entrance of the channel; but she held on her course, and had soon passed it.

"Now that old fellow feels bad!" laughed Kit. "How savage he will be for the next twenty-four

hours! I pity the sailors! He will have two or three of them 'spread-eagled' by sunset to pay for this, the old wretch! He looked just like that sort of a man."

"I wonder what our Husky friends thought of this little bombardment!" exclaimed Wade, looking off toward the mainland. "Don't see anything of them."

"Presume we sha'n't get that old 'sachem' that saw Palmleaf to visit us again in a hurry," said Kit.

We watched the ship going off to the south-west for several hours, till she gradually sank from view.

"Well, captain," said Raed, "you are not going to let this adventure frighten you, I hope." [159]

"Oh, no! I guess we can take care of ourselves. Only, in future, I think we had better keep a sharper lookout, not to let another ship come up within three miles without our knowing it."

It was now after four o'clock, P.M. Not caring to follow too closely after the company's ship, we beat back to our anchorage of the previous evening, and anchored for the night.

Saw nothing more of the Esquimaux; and, early the next morning, sailed out into the straits, and continued on during the whole day, keeping the mountains of the mainland to the northward well in sight at a distance of eight or ten miles, and occasionally sighting high islands to the south of the straits.

By five o'clock, afternoon, we were off a third group of islands on the north side, known as the "Upper Savage Isles." During the evening and night we passed them a few miles to the south,—a score of black, craggy islets. Even the bright light of the waning sun could not enliven their utter desolation. Dread, oh, how dread! with their thunder-battered peaks rising abruptly from the ocean, casting long black shadows to the eastward. Many of them were mere tide-washed ledges, environed by ice-fields.

About nine o'clock, evening, the ice-patches began to thicken ahead. By ten we were battering heavily among it, with considerable danger of staving in the bows. The foresail was accordingly taken in, and double reefs put in the mainsail. The weather had changed, with heavy lowering clouds and a rapidly-falling thermometer. Nevertheless we boys turned in, and went to sleep. Experience was beginning to teach us to sleep when we could. The heavy rumble of thunder roused us. Bright, sudden flashes gleamed through the bull's-eyes. The motion of the schooner had changed. [160]

"What's up, I wonder?" asked Kit, sitting up on the side of his mattress.

Another heavy thunder-peal burst, rattling overhead. Hastily putting on our coats and caps, we went on deck, where a scene of such wild and terrible grandeur presented itself, that I speak of it, even at this lapse of time, with a shudder; knowing, too, that I can give no adequate idea of it in words. I will not say that I am not glad to have witnessed it; but I should not want to see it again. To the lovers of the awfully sublime, it would have been worth a journey around the earth. It seemed as if all the vast antagonistic forces of Nature had been suddenly confronted with each other. The schooner had been hove to in the lee of an ice-field engirdling one of the smaller islets, with all sail taken in save the jib. Weymouth was at the wheel; the captain stood near him; Hobbs and Donovan were in the bow; Bonney stood by the jib-halliards. On the port side the ice-field showed like a pavement of alabaster on a sea of ink, contrasting wildly with the black, rolling clouds, which, like the folds of a huge shroud, draped the heavens in darkness. On the starboard, the heaving waters, black as night, were covered with pure white ice-cakes, striking and battering together with heavy grindings. The lightnings played against the inky clouds, forked, zigzag, and dazzling to the eye. The thunder-echoes, unmuffled by vegetation, were reverberated from bare granitic mountains and naked ice-fields with a hollow rattle that deafened and appalled us; and, in the intervals of thunder, the hoarse bark of bears, and their affrighted growlings, were borne to our ears with savage distinctness. Mingled with these noises came the screams and cries of scores of sea-birds, wheeling and darting about. [161]

It was half-past two, morning.

"What a fearfully grand scene!" exclaimed Wade.

And I recollect that we all laughed in his face, the words seemed so utterly inadequate to express what, by common consent, was accorded unutterable. An hour later, the blackness of the heavens had rolled away to the westward, a fog began to rise, and morning light effaced the awful panorama of night. [162]

By six o'clock the fog was so dense that nothing could be seen a half cable's length, and continued thus till afternoon, during which time we lay hove to under the lee of the ice. But by two o'clock a smart breeze from the north lifted it. The schooner was put about, and, under close-reefed sails, went bumping through the interminable ice-patches which seem ever to choke these straits. The mountains to the northward showed white after the squalls of last night; and the seals were leaping as briskly amid the ice-cakes as if the terrific scenery of the previous evening had but given zest to their unwieldy antics.

CHAPTER IX.

A Barren Shore, and a Strange Animal, which is captured by blowing up its Den.—Palmleaf falls in with the Esquimaux, and is chased by them.—" *Twau-ve!*"—"A Close Shave."—An Attack threatened.—The Savages dispersed with the Howitzer.

To avoid the thick patches of heavy ice which were this afternoon driving out toward the Atlantic, we bore up quite near the mainland on the north side, and continued beating on, with the wind north all night, at the rate of—at a guess—two knots per hour. It was dull work. We turned in at twelve, and slept soundly till five, when the noisy rattling of the cable through the hawse aroused us. The wind had died out, and they had dropped the anchor in forty-three fathoms. It was a cloudy morning; every thing had a leaden, dead look. We were about half a mile from the shore; and after breakfast, having nothing better to do, fell to examining it with our glasses. Shelving ledges rose up, terrace on terrace, into dark mountains, back two and three miles from the sea. The whole landscape seemed made up of water, granite, and ice. The black, leathern lichens added to the gloomy aspect of the shore-rocks, on which the waves were beating—forever beating—with sullen plashings. Terrible must be the aspect of this coast in winter. Now the hundreds of water-fowl wheeling over it, and enlivening the crags with their cries, softened its grimness. Farther along the shore-ledges Kit presently espied a black animal of some kind, and called our attention to it.

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"He seems to be eating something there," said he.

We looked at it.

"It's not an Esquimau dog, is it?" Wade asked.

"Oh, no! head don't look like a dog's," observed Kit. "Besides, their dogs are not so dark-colored as that."

"This seems from here to be almost or quite black," Raed remarked; "as black as Guard. Not quite so large, though."

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Wade thought it was fully as large.

"If we were in Maine, I should say it was a small black bear," said Kit; "but I have never heard of a black bear being seen north of Hudson Straits."

The head seemed to me to be too small for a bear.

"Captain, what do you think of that animal?" Kit asked, handing him his glass.

Capt. Mazard looked.

"If it hadn't such short legs, I should pronounce it a black wolf," he replied. "It's too large for a *fisher*, isn't it? I don't know that *fishers* are found so far north, either. How is that?"

"Hearne, in his 'Northern Journey,' speaks of the fisher being met with, farther west, in latitude as far north as this," said I.

"But that's too big for a fisher," said Raed; "too thick and heavy. A fisher is slimmer."

"Who knows but it may be a new species!" exclaimed Kit, laughing. "Now's a chance to distinguish ourselves as naturalists. If we can discover a new animal of that size in this age of natural history, and prove that we are the discoverers, it will be monument enough for us: we can then afford to retire on our laurels. Call it a long Latin name, and tack our own names, with the ending *ii* or *us* on them, to that, and you're all right for distant posterity. That's what some of our enterprising young naturalists, who swarm out from Yale and Cambridge, seem to think. Only a few weeks ago, I was reading of a new sort of minute infusorial insect or mollusk, I don't pretend to understand which, bearing the name of '*Mussa Braziliensis Hartii Verrill*.' Now, I like that. There's a noble aspiration for fame as well as euphony. Only it's a little heavy on the poor mollusk to make him draw these aspiring young gentlemen up the steep heights of ambition. But if they can afford to risk two names on a tiny bit of jelly as big as the head of a pin, say, I think we should be justified in putting all four of ours on to this big beast over here. And, since the captain thinks it's like a wolf, suppose we call it '*Lupus rabidus Additonii Burleighii Raedwayvius*'—"

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"There, that'll do!" cried Raed. "You've spelt! Go up head!"

"There's another creature coming along the rocks!" exclaimed Wade. "That's a bear! He's coming out where the black one is!"

"There," said Raed, "you can see now that the bear is much the larger."

"Yes; but a white bear is considerably larger than a black bear," replied Kit.

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"Look quick!" cried Wade. "There's going to be a brush! See the black one bristle up!"

"He's got something there he don't want to give up," said the captain.

"Bear says, 'I'll take your place at that,'" laughed Kit. "He walks up to him. By George! did you see the black one jump at him? Bear sent him spinning with his paw. He won't go off. Stands there *growling*, I'll bet."

"I should really like to know what sort of a beast that is," said Raed. "Captain, have the boat let down, if you please. I would like to go over there."

"Good chance to get another bear-skin," observed Kit. "We need one more."

The boat was lowered; and we four, with Guard, and Weymouth and Don to row, got into it, and paddled across toward where the bear was feeding, and the black creature, sitting up like a dog, watching him. We worked up quietly to within about half a cable's length (three hundred and sixty feet) without disturbing them. It was a pretty large bear: but the black animal did not seem more than two-thirds as large as Guard; and, the nearer we came to it, the more in doubt we were as to its species.

"I never saw any thing at all like it," remarked Raed.

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"Wouldn't it be jolly if it should prove to be a new, undiscovered animal!" exclaimed Wade.

"That's rather too good to be true," replied Kit; "but we'll see."

Just then Guard got his eye on them, and barked gruffly. The bear looked round: so did the black creature.

"Kit, you and Wade take the bear," advised Raed. "Wash and I will fire at the black one. Get good aim, now."

We took as good aim as the rocking of the boat would permit, and fired nearly together. The bear growled out savagely: the black beast snarled.

"There they go!" exclaimed Weymouth.

The bear was running off along the shore, galloping like a hog. The black animal was going straight back over the ledges.

"Pull in quick!" shouted Raed.

The boat was rowed up to the shore. Jumping out, we pulled it up on the rocks.

"Here, Guard!" cried Kit, running forward to where the ledges gave a better view. "There he goes! take him now!" for we had got a momentary glimpse of the black animal crossing the crest of a ledge several hundred yards away.

"Come on, Weymouth!" exclaimed Wade; "and you, Donovan! Let's we three go after the bear. They'll take care of the *new species*: we'll go for the *old*."

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Kit had run on after Guard. Raed and I followed as fast as we could. The Newfoundland, chasing partly by sight and partly by scent, was already a good way ahead; and we soon lost sight of him among the ledgy hillocks and ridges. We could hear him barking; but the rocks echoed the sound so confusedly, that it was hard telling where he was. Hundreds of kittiwakes were starting up all about us too, with such a chorus of cries that it was not very clear which was dog. Presently we lost *sound* of Guard altogether, and wandered on at random for ten or fifteen minutes, but finally met him coming back. As soon as he saw us, he turned and led off again; and, following him for thirty or forty rods, we came to a fissure between two large rocky fragments, partially overlaid by a third. Guard ran up, and by a bark seemed to say, "In here!" Kit thrust in his musket, and we heard a growl.

"Holed him!" cried Raed.

"Pretty strong *posish*, though," said Kit, looking about. "If we only had a big *pry* here, we might heave up this top rock, and so get at him."

"I don't suppose there's a tree big enough to use as a lever within a hundred miles of here," remarked Raed, looking around.

We ran in our muskets, but could not touch the creature. He seemed to have crept round an angle of one of the bottom rocks, so as to be well out of reach and out of range. The hole was scarcely large enough to admit Guard, and the dog did not seem greatly disposed to go in. We fired our muskets, one at a time, holding the muzzles inside the opening, hoping to frighten the animal out; but he didn't see fit to leave his stronghold.

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"If we had only a pound or two of powder here," observed Raed, examining the crevices about the rocks, "I think we might mine this top rock, and blow it up."

"That will be the only way to get at him," said Kit.

"Well, we can go back to the schooner for some," I suggested.

"Yes," said Kit. "Raed, you and Guard stay here and watch him. Wash and I will go for the powder."

We started off, and, on getting back to the beach, found Wade, with Weymouth and Donovan, standing near the boat.

"Where's your bear?" Kit demanded.

"You say," laughed Weymouth, "you were one of the two that shot at him."

"He showed too much speed for us," said Donovan.

"But where's your *new species*?" Wade inquired.

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"Oh! he's all right,—up here in a hole."

"That so? Here's what he was eating when the bear drove him away," pointing down among the

rocks, where a lot of large bones lay partly in the water.

"What kind of an animal was that?" Kit asked.

"A finback, I think," replied Weymouth. "Died or got killed among the ice, and the waves washed the carcass up here. Been dead a good while."

"I should say so, by the smell. Putrid, isn't it? Why, that beast must have had a strong stomach!"

Weymouth and Donovan went off to the schooner after the powder in our places, and came back in about twenty minutes. Palmleaf was with them.

"You haven't come on another bear-hunt, I hope!" cried Wade.

"No, sar. Don't tink much of dem bars, sar. Got a voice jest like ole massa down Souf. 'Spression very much like his when he used ter take at us cullered folks with his bowie-knife."

"Pity he hadn't overtaken you with it!" Wade exclaimed, to hector him. "He would have saved the hangman a job—not far distant."

"Dere's a difference ob 'pinions as to where de noose ought ter come," muttered the affronted darky. "Some tinks it's in one place, some in anoder."

Securing the boat by the painter to a rock, we went up over the ledges to where Raed was doing sentinel duty before the fissure.

"Has he made any demonstrations?" Kit asked.

"Growls a little occasionally," said Raed. "I've been looking at the cracks under this top rock. This on the right is the one to mine, I think. I've cleared it out: it's all ready for the powder. What have you got for a slow match?"

Donovan had brought a bit of rope, which he picked to pieces, while Kit and Raed sifted in the powder. The *tow* was then laid in a long trail, running back some two feet from the crack.

"Now be ready to shoot when the blast goes off," advised Raed. "He may jump out and run. Palmleaf, you keep Guard back."

The rest of us took our stand off thirty or forty yards, and, cocking our guns, stood ready to shoot. Raed then lighted a match, touched the tow, and retired with alacrity. It flamed up, and ran along the train; then suddenly went nearly out, but blazed again, and crept slowly up to the powder; when *whank!* and the rock hopped out from between the others, and rolled spitefully along the ground. We stood with our guns to our shoulders, and our fingers on the triggers. But the beast didn't show himself.

"Possibly it killed him," said Kit.

Raed picked up some rough pebbles, and pitched one over between the rocks. Instantly there was a scramble, and our black-furred friend leaped out and ran.

Crack-k-k-k!—a running fire. Guard rushed after him. The creature fell at the reports, but scrambled up as the dog charged upon him, and tried to defend himself. But the bullets had riddled him. In an instant, Guard had him by the throat: he was dead. There were five shot-holes in the carcass: one of them, at least, must have been received when we fired at him from the boat.

It was a very strong, muscular creature, with short stout legs and broad feet, with claws not so sharp and retractile as a lynx's; seemingly intermediate between a cat's claws and a dog's nails. The tail was quite long and bushy: indeed, the creature was rather shaggy, than otherwise. The head and mouth were not large for the body. The teeth seemed to me much like those of a lynx. I have no doubt that it was a glutton (*Gulo luscus*), or wolverine, as they are indifferently called; though none of us had at that time previously seen one of these creatures. Donovan and Weymouth undertook to skin it; and, while they were thus employed, the rest of us, with Palmleaf and Guard, went off to shoot a dozen kittiwakes. We had gone nearly half a mile, I presume, and secured five birds, when Wade called out to us to see a large eagle, or hawk, which was wheeling slowly about a high crag off to the left.

"It's a white-headed eagle, isn't it?" said he.

Kit thought it might be. But Raed and I both thought not. It seemed scarcely so large; and, so far as we could see, the head was not white. It occurred to me that it might be the famous gerfalcon, or Icelandic eagle; and, on mentioning this supposition, Raed and Kit both agreed with me that it seemed likely. Wishing, if possible, to secure it, I crept along under the crag, and, watching my chance as it came circling over, fired. 'Twas a very long shot. I had little expectation of hitting: yet my bullet must have struck it; for it flapped over, and came toppling down till within a hundred feet of the top of the crag, when it recovered itself, mounted a little, but gradually settled in the air till lost from sight behind the crag. Thinking it barely possible that it might fall to the ground, I sent Palmleaf with Guard round where the acclivity was not so great, to look for it. The negro had seen the bird fall, and started off. I let him take my musket, and, with the rest of the boys, went down to the water, which was distant from where we then were not more than a hundred rods. Donovan and Weymouth had already finished skinning the glutton, and gone down to the boat. Knowing we had followed off to the left, they embarked, and came paddling along to pick us up. They came up; and we got in with our kittiwakes, and then stood off a few yards to wait for the negro. I had not expected he would be gone so long. We were looking for him every moment; when suddenly we heard the report of his musket, apparently a long way

behind the crag.

"Confound the darky!" muttered Raed. "What could possess him to go so far?"

"Perhaps the eagle kept flying on," suggested Kit.

We waited fifteen or twenty minutes. No signs of him.

"You don't suppose the rascal's got lost, do you?" Wade said.

"No need of that, I should imagine," replied Raed.

We waited ten or fifteen minutes longer.

"We might as well go after him," Kit was saying; when, at a distance, a great shouting and uproar arose, accompanied by the barking of dogs and all the other accompaniments of a general row and rumpus.

"What the dickens is up now?" exclaimed Kit. [175]

"It's the Huskies!" cried Weymouth.

"You don't suppose they are after Palmleaf, do you?" Raed demanded.

We listened eagerly. The hubbub was increasing; and, a moment later, we espied the negro bursting over the ledges off to the left at a headlong run, with a whole crowd of Esquimaux only a few rods behind, brandishing their harpoons and darts. There were dogs, too. Guard was running with Palmleaf, facing about every few leaps, and barking savagely. All the dogs were barking; all the Huskies were *ta-yar-r-r-ing* and chasing on.

"They'll have him!" shouted Kit. "To the rescue!"

A smart pull of the oars sent the boat up to the rocks. Raed and Kit and Wade sprang out, cocking their muskets; Donovan followed with one of the oars; and I seized the boat-hook, and started after them. Palmleaf was tearing down toward the water, running for his life. He had lost the musket. Seeing us, he set up a piteous howl of terror. He had distanced his pursuers a little. The savages were now six or eight rods behind; but the dogs were at his heels, and were only kept off him by the sudden facings and savage growls of Guard, who valiantly stemmed the canine avalanche. We met him about fifty yards from the boat, and raised a loud hurrah. [176]

"Into the boat with you!" Raed sang out to him.

The dogs howled and snarled viciously at us. Donovan cut at them with his oar right and left; while Raed, Kit, and Wade levelled their muskets at the horde of rushing, breathless savages, who seemed not to have seen us at all till that moment, so intent had they been after the negro. Discovering us, the front ones tried to pull up; and, those behind running up, they were all crowded together, shouting and screaming, and punching each other with their harpoons.

"Avast there!" shouted Donovan, flourishing his oar.

"Halt!" ordered Wade.

While Kit, remembering a word of Esquimaux, bade them "*Twau-ve*" ("Begone") at the top of his voice.

I must say that they were a wicked-looking lot,—the front ones, at least,—comprising some of the largest Esquimaux we had yet seen. There must have been thirty or forty in the front groups; and others were momentarily rushing in from behind. The dogs, too, fifty or sixty at least calculation,—great, gaunt, wolfish, yellow curs,—looked almost as dangerous as their masters.

"We must get out of this!" exclaimed Raed; for they were beginning to brandish their harpoons menacingly, and shout and howl still louder. [177]

"If we turn, they'll set upon us before we can get into the boat!" muttered Kit.

"Fire over their heads, to gain time!" shouted Wade. "Ready!"

The three muskets cracked. A great *ta-yar-r-r* and screeching followed the reports; under cover of which and the smoke we legged it for the boat, and, tumbling in, were shoved hastily off by Weymouth. Before we had got twenty yards, however, the savages were on the bank, yelling, and throwing stones, several of which fell in among us; but we were soon out of their reach.

"That's what I call a pretty close shave!" exclaimed Donovan, panting.

"We couldn't have stood against them much longer," said Kit. "I didn't suppose they had so much ferocity about them. Those we saw down at the middle islands were kittenish enough."

"These may belong to a different tribe," replied Raed.

Palmleaf, completely exhausted, lay all in a heap in the bow. We pulled off to the schooner. The savages and their dogs kept up a confused medley of howls and shouts: it was hard distinguishing the human cries from the canine. [178]

Capt. Mazard and the men were leaning over the rail, waiting. They had been watching the fracas, and understood it as little as we did.

"What's the row?" demanded the captain as we came under the stern. "What's all that beastly noise about?"

"Ask Palmleaf," said Wade.

"I saw you fire," continued the captain. "You didn't kill any of them, did you?"

"Oh, no!" said Raed. "We fired high to frighten them."

"I'm glad you didn't kill any of the poor wretches."

"Tell us how it happened, Palmleaf," said Kit.

"Did you come upon them? or did they come upon you?" I asked.

"Why, I was gwine arter dat hawk, you know," said the African, still sober from his terror and his race.

"Yes."

"He was fell down ober behind de crag, as you said he'd be; but he flew up 'fore I'd gut near 'im, an' kep' flyin' up."

"And you kept following him," added Raed. "Well, what next? How far did you go?"

"Oh! I went a long ways. I meant ter fotch 'im."

"Half a mile?"

"Yes, sar; should tink so."

"Did you fire at the eagle?" Kit asked.

"Yes, sar: seed him settin' on a ledge, an' fired. He flew, and I chased arter him agin."

"But how did you come to meet the Huskies?" demanded the captain.

"Well, sar, I'se runnin' along, payin' all my 'tention to de hawk, when all ter once I come plump onto two ob dere wimin folks wid a lot ob twine tings in dere han's."

"Snaring birds," said Raed. "Go on!"

"Dey seed me, an' stud lookin', wid dere hair all ober dere faces."

"That stopped you, I suppose?" said Wade.

"I jest halted up a bit, an' cast my eye t'wurds dem."

"You paid the most of your 'tention' to them, then?" continued Wade maliciously.

"Jest stopped a minit."

"To say a word to them on your own account, I'll warrant."

"Thought I'd jest speak an' tell dem dey needn't be ser 'fraid on me."

"Shut up, Wade!" interposed Kit. "Let him tell his story. What did the women do?"

"Dey turned an' haked it, an' hollered as loud as dey cud squawk."

Wade and the captain began to laugh.

"A black man with a black dog was too much for them!" exclaimed Raed. "Well, what next, Palmleaf?"

"Dey run'd; an' twan't a minit 'fore a whole gang ob de men cum runnin' up, wid dere picked bone tings in dere han's."

"That'll do," said Kit. "We know the rest."

"What became of my musket?" I asked.

"I dunno. I tink I mus' ha' dropped it."

"It does look like that," Kit remarked.

"See here, you 'Fifteenth Amendment'!" exclaimed the captain, turning to him: "you had better stay aboard in future."

"I tink so too, sar," said Palmleaf.

The crowd on the shore had grown larger. There could not have been much less than two hundred of them, we thought. The women and children had come. A pack of wolves could hardly have made a greater or more discordant din. We went to dinner, and, after that, lay down to rest a while; but when we went on deck again at three, P.M., the crowd was still there, in greater numbers than before.

"I wonder what they can be waiting for so long," said Wade.

There was little or no wind, or we should have weighed anchor and made off. After watching them a while longer, we went down to read. But, about four, the captain called us. We went up.

"That was what they were waiting for," said he, pointing off the starboard quarter.

About a mile below the place where the Esquimaux were collected, a whole fleet of *kayaks* were coming along the shore.

"Waiting for their boats," remarked the captain.

"They're coming off to us!"

"Do you suppose they really have hostile intentions?" Raed asked.

"From their movements on shore, and their shouts and howls, I should say that it was not impossible. No knowing what notions they've got into their heads about the 'black man.'"

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"Likely as not their priests, if they've got any, have told them they ought to attack us," said Wade.

"There are fifty-seven of those *kayaks* and three *oomiaks* coming along the shore!" said Kit, who had been watching them with a glass.

"Hark! The crowd on shore have caught sight of them! What a yelling!"

"I do really believe they mean to attack us," Raed observed. "This must be some nasty superstition on their part; some of their religious nonsense."

"Well, we shall have to defend ourselves," said Kit.

"Of course, we sha'n't let them board us," replied Wade.

"Poor fools!" continued Raed. "It would be too bad if we have to kill any of them."

"Can't we frighten them out of it in some way?" I inquired.

"Might fire on them with the howitzer," Kit suggested, "with nothing but powder."

"That would only make them bolder, when they saw that nothing came out of it," said Capt. Mazard.

"Put in a ball, then," said Kit.

"That would be as bad as shooting them here alongside."

"It might be fired so as not to be very likely to hit them," said Raed. "Couldn't it, Wade?"

"Yes: might put in a small charge, and skip the ball, ricochet it along the water."

"Let's try it," said Kit.

The howitzer was pushed across to the starboard side.

"Remember that there's a pretty heavy charge in there now," said Wade. "Better send that over their heads!"

The gun was accordingly elevated to near thirty degrees. Raed then touched it off. The Esquimaux, of course, heard the report; but I doubt if they saw or heard any thing of the ball. It doubtless went a thousand feet over their heads; and just then, too, the *kayaks* and *oomiaks* came up where they were standing, and a great hubbub was occasioned by their arrival.

"Try 'em again!" exclaimed Donovan.

"Give them a skipping shot this time," said Wade.

A light charge of powder was then put in, with a ball, as before. The gun was not elevated this time; indeed, I believe Raed depressed it a few degrees. We watched with a great deal of curiosity, if nothing more, while Kit lighted a splint and touched the priming. A sharp, light report; and, a second later, the ball struck on the water off four or five hundred yards, and ricocheted,—skip—skip—skip—skip—*spat* into the loose shingle on the beach, making the small stones and gravel fly in all directions. The Huskies jumped away lively. Very likely the pebbles flew with some considerable violence. But in a moment they were swarming about the *kayaks* again, uttering loud cries. With the reenforcement they had just received, they numbered full a hundred or a hundred and fifty men. Should they make a determined effort to board us, we might have our hands full, or at least have to shoot a score or two of the poor ignorant wretches; which seemed a pitiable alternative.

"Load again!" cried Wade. "Let me try a shot!"

About the same quantity of powder was used as before. Wade did not depress the muzzle, if I recollect aright, at all. Consequently, on firing, the ball did not touch the water till near the shore, when it skipped once, and bounded to the beach, going among a whole pack of the howling dogs. A dreadful "*Ti-yi!*" came wafted to our ears. One, at least, had been hit. With a glass we could see him writhing and jumping about. At this some of the crowd ran off up the ledges for several rods, and stood gazing anxiously off toward the schooner.

"Give 'em another!" exclaimed the captain.

But, while we were loading, twenty or thirty got into their *kayaks*; and, one of the *oomiaks* had eight or ten in it ere Wade was ready to give them a third shot. He depressed it three degrees this time. The ball hit the water about half way to the shore, and, skipping on, struck under the stem of a *kayak*, throwing it into the air, and, glancing against the side of the skin-clad *oomiak*, dashed it over and over. The crew were pitched headlong into the water. Pieces of the bone framework flew up. The skin itself seemed to have been turned wrong side out.

"Knocked it into a cocked hat!" exclaimed Kit.

"I hope none of them were killed," said Raed.

"I can't see that any of them were," remarked the captain. "They've all scrambled out, I believe. But it has scared them properly. Lord! just see them *hake* it, as Palmleaf says, up those rocks! Give 'em another before they get over this scare. Knock their old *kayaks* to pieces: that frightens them worst of any thing. Let me have a shot."

Reloading, the captain fired, smashing one end of another *oomiak*. Men, women, and dogs had taken to their heels, and were scampering off among the hillocks. Kit then fired a ball at an elevation of twenty degrees, which went roaring over their heads: we saw them all looking up, then *haking* it for dear life.

"Routed!" exclaimed Raed. "No blood shed either, except that dog's."

"Poor puppy!" said Wade. "I can see him lying there. Wonder it hadn't hit some of them."

"Well, it's the best thing we could do," said Kit. "Even if some of them had been hit, it would be better than fighting them out here."

"Still, I am very glad not to have slaughtered any of the poor creatures," remarked Raed.

"Don't say too much; they may come back," Capt. Mazard observed.

But, though there was not sufficient wind to enable us to get away till three o'clock the next day, we saw nothing more of them. [186]

CHAPTER X.

ToC

The Dip of the Needle.—The North Magnetic Pole.—A *Kayak* Bottom up, with its Owner Head down.—Ice-Patches.—Anchoring to an Ice-floe.—A Bear-hunt in the Fog.—Bruin charges his Enemies.—Soundings.—The Depth of the Straits.

Before we were up next morning "The Curlew" was on her way.

A great number of small islands, not even indicated on our chart, compelled us to veer to the southward during the forenoon.

For several days the needle of our compass had been giving us some trouble by its strong inclination to *dip*. Three times, since starting, we had been obliged to move the sliding weight out a little on the bar. The farther north we got, the stronger was the tendency of the north pole, or end of the needle, to point downward, and the south pole to rise up correspondingly. By running the sliding weight out a little toward the south pole, its leverage was increased, and the parallel position restored. This was what Capt. Mazard was doing when we went on deck that morning.

"How do you account for this *dipping* of the needle?" he asked Raed. [187]

"By the present theory of magnetism, the earth itself is considered to be a magnet with two poles," replied Raed. "These poles attract and repel the corresponding poles of a magnetic needle, just as another large needle would. The nearer we get up to the north magnetic pole of the earth, the more the pole of our needle is pulled down toward it. We're not such a great distance from it now. What's our latitude this morning?"

"63° 27'."

"Capt. Ross, in the expedition of 1829, made out the earth's north magnetic pole to be in 70° north latitude, farther west, in the upper part of Hudson Bay. At that place he reports that a magnetic needle, suspended so that it turned easily, pointed directly downward."

"We've got a needle hung in a graduated scale downstairs," remarked Kit.

We had nearly forgotten it, however.

"Bring it up," said Raed.

Wade went after it.

It was set on the deck, and, after vibrating a few seconds, came to rest at a *dip* of about 83°.

"If we were up at the point Capt. Ross reached, it would point directly down, or at 90°, I suppose," said Kit.

"That's what he reported," said Raed. "There's no reason to doubt it." [188]

"But where is the south pole?" Wade asked.

"That has never been exactly reached," said Raed. "It is supposed to be in 75°, south latitude, south of New Holland, in the Southern Ocean. A point has been reached where the *dip* is 88-2/3°, however."

"Of course this magnetic pole that Ross found in 70° is not the *bona fide* north pole of the earth," Wade observed.

"Oh, no!" said the captain. "The *genuine* north pole is not so easily reached."

"It's curious what this magnetic attraction is," said Kit reflectively.

"It is now considered to be the same thing as electricity, is it not?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Kit; "but whether they are a *fluid* or a *force* is not so clear. Tyndall and Faraday think they are a sort of *force*."

"It is found that this *dip* of the needle, or, in other words, the position of the magnetic poles, varies with the amount of heat which the earth receives from the sun," remarked Raed. "We know that heat can be changed into electricity, and, consequently, into magnetism. So, at those seasons of the year when the earth receives least sun-heat, there is least electric and magnetic force."

"That only confirms me in my belief that the luminiferous ether through which light and heat come from the sun is really the electric and magnetic element itself," remarked Kit; "that strange fluid which runs through the earth as water does through a sponge, making currents, the direction of which are indicated by these magnetic poles. The same silent fluid which makes this needle point down to the deck makes the telegraphic instrument click, makes the northern lights, and makes the lightning."

"I agree with you exactly," said Raed.

It's no use talking with these two fellows: they've made a regular hobby of this thing, and ride it every chance they get.

Prince Henry's Foreland, on the south side of the straits, was in sight at noon, distant, we presumed,—from our estimate of the width of the passage at this place,—about eleven leagues. It is a high, bold promontory of the south main of Labrador. At this distance it rises prominently from the sea. The glass shows it to be bare, and destitute of vegetation. By two o'clock, P.M., we had passed the scattered islets, and bore up toward the north main again to avoid the floating ice. At five we were running close under a single high island of perhaps an acre in extent, and rising full a hundred feet above the sea, when old Trull, who was in the bows, called sharply to the man at the wheel to put the helm a-starboard.

"What's that for?" shouted the captain, who was standing near the binnacle.

"Come and take a look at this, sur," replied the old man.

Kit and I were just coming up the companion-stairs, and ran forward with the captain. A long, leather-colored *fish*, as we thought at first, was floating just under the starboard bow.

"Thought it was a low ledge," said the old man. "I see 'twan't a moment after. I take that to be a sea-sar-pent, sur."

As the object was certainly twenty feet long, and not more than a foot and a half in diameter, Trull's supposition had the benefit of outside resemblance. The captain seized one of the pike-poles, and made a jab at it; but the schooner, under full headway, had passed it too far.

"Get a musket!" shouted Kit.

We all made a rush down stairs for the gun-rack. Only three were loaded. Catching up one of these, I ran up.

"Off astern there!" cried Weymouth.

We were already fifty yards away; but, getting a glimpse of it, I fired. There was no movement.

"Missed him!" exclaimed Wade. "I'll bore him!"

He fired. Still there was no apparent motion.

"Miss number two," said I.

Kit then took a careful aim, and banged away. The creature didn't stir.

"Number three," laughed Wade.

"That fish must either bear a charmed life, or else it's ball-proof!" Kit exclaimed.

Meanwhile "The Curlew" was being brought round. The captain was getting interested. Raed brought up one of our long cod-lines with the grapnel on it,—the same contrivance with which old Trull had drawn in the boat some days before; and, on getting back within twenty yards, he threw it off. It struck into the water beyond, and, on being drawn in, played over the back of the leathern object till one of the hooks caught fast. Still there was no movement.

"There can't be any life in it," said Wade.

Raed pulled in slowly, the captain assisting him, till they had drawn it up under the bows. It certainly looked as much like a sea-serpent as any thing yet. A strong line, with another grapple, was then let down, and hooked into it with a jerk. Donovan and Hobbs tugged away at it; one foot—two feet—three feet.

"Humph!" exclaimed the captain. "One of those Husky *kayaks*!"

Four feet—five feet—six feet. Something rose with it, dripping underneath.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Raed, turning away.

"There's an Esquimaux in it, hanging head down!" cried Kit.

The sailors crowded round. It was a ghastly sight. The legs of the corpse were still fast inside the little hoop around the hole in the deck in which the man had sat. His arms hung down limp and dripping. His long black hair streamed with water. He might have been floating there head down for a week.

"Wal, I shouldn't s'pose the darn'd fool need to have expected any thing else!" exclaimed Corliss. "To go to sea with his feet fast in such a little skite of a craft as that! Might ha' known the darned thing 'ud 'a' capsized an' drownded him."

"What shall we do with *it*?" I asked. "We might sink it with three or four of those six-pound shot, I suppose."

"No, no!" exclaimed Wade. "We can't afford six-pound shots to bury the heathen: it's as much as we can do to get enough to kill them with."

"Oh, don't, Wade!" said Raed. "It's a sad sight at best."

"Of course it is. But then we've only got seventeen balls left, and no knowing how many battles to fight."

This last argument was a clincher.

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"Let go!" ordered the captain.

Don and Hobbs shook the line violently, but couldn't tear out the grapple from the tough seal-skin.

"Well, let go line and all, then!" cried the captain.

With a dull splash the *kayak* fell back into the sea; and we all turned away.

At midnight the ice-patches were thickening rapidly; and by two o'clock all sail had to be taken in, the bumps had grown so frequent and heavy. On the port side lay a large ice-floe of many acres extent. The schooner gradually drifted up to it. Raed and Kit had gone on deck.

"I think we may as well make fast to it," I heard the captain say; and, a moment later, the order was given to get out the ice-anchors.

Wade and I then went up. "The Curlew" lay broadside against the floe. The wind, with a current caused perhaps by the tide, held us up to it so forcibly, that the vessel careened slightly. Weymouth and Hobbs were getting down on to the ice with the ice-chisels in their hands, and, going off twenty or thirty yards, began to cut holes. The ice-anchors were then thrown over on to the floe. To each of them was bent one of our two-and-a-half-inch hawsers. The anchors themselves were, as will probably be remembered, simply large, strong grapnels. Dragging them along to the holes, they were hooked into the ice, and the hawsers drawn in tight from deck. Planks, secured to the rail by lines, were then run down to bear the chafe. This was our process of anchoring to ice. Sometimes three or four grapnels were used when the tendency to swing off was greater. To-night there was so much floating ice all about, that the swell was almost entirely broken, and the schooner lay as quiet as if in a country lake. A watch was set, and we turned in again.

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Breakfast at six. Fog thick and flat on the ice. The breeze in the night, blowing against the schooner, had turned the ice-field completely round. Occasionally a cake of ice would bump up against us. We could hear them grinding together all about; yet the wind was light, otherwise we might have had heavier thumps. About seven o'clock we heard a splashing out along the floe.

"Seals!" remarked the captain.

"Bet you, I'll have one of those fellows!" exclaimed Donovan, catching up a pike-pole, and dropping over the rail.

"Can he get near enough to kill them with a pole, suppose?" Wade queried.

"That's the way the sealers kill them," replied the captain. "Send the men out on the ice with nothing but clubs and knives. The seals can't move very fast; nothing but their flippers to help themselves with. The men run along the edges of the ice, and get between them and the water. The seals make for the water; and the men knock them on the heads with clubs, and then butcher them."

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"It's a horribly bloody business, I should think," said Raed.

"Well, not so bad as a Brighton slaughter-pen, quite," rejoined the captain. "But I never much admired it, I must confess."

Just then Donovan came racing out of the fog, and, jumping for the rail, drew his legs up as if he believed them in great peril.

"What ails you?" Kit cried out. "What are you running from?"

"Oh! nothing—much," replied Donovan, panting. "Met—a—bear out here: that's all."

"Met a bear!" exclaimed Raed.

"Yes. I was going along, trying to get by some of the seals. All at once I was face to face with a mighty great chap, on the same business with myself, I suppose. Thought I wouldn't wait. He looked pretty big. I'd nothing but the pole, you know."

"We must have him!" exclaimed Wade.

"Best way will be to let down the boat, and work round the floe to prevent his taking to the water," advised the captain. "They will swim like ducks three or four miles at a time."

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While the boat was being let down, Kit and I ran to load the muskets.

"I'm going to put the bayonets on our two," said Kit. "They'll be handy if we should come to close quarters with him."

Raed and Wade, with the captain, were getting ready to go out on the ice. Weymouth and Hobbs were already in the boat. Kit and I followed.

"Now be very careful about firing in this fog," the captain called after us. "We are going off to the right, round the edge of the floe on that side. You keep off on the left to see that he don't escape that way. Head him up toward the schooner if you can; but look out how you shoot."

Old Trull and Corliss, each with a gun, had been stationed at the rail to shoot the bear from the deck if he should come out in sight.

Thus arranged, we pulled away, veering in and out among the ice-patches, and keeping about twenty yards from the floe. We could just see the edge of it rising a few feet from the water.

"Guess the bear run from Don after all his fright," said Weymouth when we had gone a hundred yards or more. [197]

He was not on our side, we felt pretty sure; and, a few minutes later, Guard barked, and we heard the captain shouting from across the field.

"Here he is over here!" And a moment after, "Gone over towards your side! Look out for him!"

We *looked out* as sharply as we could for fog; nevertheless, the first notice we got of his arrival in our vicinity was a splash into the water several rods farther on.

"Give way sharp," shouted Kit, "or we shall lose him!"

The boat leaped under the strong stroke; and, a moment after, we saw the bear climbing out on to a cake, which tipped up as he got on to it.

"Give him your shot, Wash!" Kit exclaimed.

We were not more than fifty feet away. I aimed for his head, and let go. The bullet clipped one of his ears merely, and he turned round with a dreadfully savage growl. Of course it was a bad shot; but some allowance must be made for the rocking of the boat. As he turned to us, the ice-cake tipped and rolled under him, nearly throwing him off; at which he growled and *barked out* all the louder. Kit hesitated to fire.

"He might make a break, and get his paws on to the boat before we could back off, if you shouldn't kill him," said Hobbs. [198]

"Load as quick as you can, Wash," Kit said. "I'll wait till we have a reserve shot."

Meanwhile we heard voices coming out on the floe. Guard began to bark again, and came jumping from cake to cake out within a few rods of the bear, and rather between us and him.

"Be ready, now," said Kit; when some one of the party on the floe fired on a sudden.

Instantly the bear jumped for the dog; and the dog, turning, leaped for a little cake between him and the boat. The bear splashed through, and gained the cake Guard had stood on.

Crack—crack! from the floe.

The bear growled frightfully as he felt the bullets, and plunged after the dog. We both fired as he went down into the water. Guard's paws were already on the gunwale, when the bear rose, head and paws, and swept the dog down with him, *souse!* A howl and a growl mingled. The water was streaked red with the bear's blood. The captain and Wade and Donovan came leaping out from one fragment to another. Up popped the dog's black head. Something bumped the bottom of the boat simultaneously. The bear had come up under us, and floated out on the port side, a great mass of dripping, struggling white hair. Everybody was shouting now. Wade fired. Bits of blazing cartridge-paper flew into our faces. Kit and I thrust wildly with our bayonets; but the poor beast had already ceased all offensive warfare. He was dead enough. But who had killed him it was hard saying. No less than seven bullets had been fired into him from "a standard weapon," as Wade calls our muskets. We towed the carcass up to the edge of the floe, and pulled it up. The captain estimated its gross weight to be from four hundred and fifty to five hundred pounds. This was the largest one we had killed. Donovan and Weymouth and Hobbs were occupied the rest of the forenoon skinning it. [199]

It being a favorable opportunity, we improved it to make soundings. From where we lay moored to the floe, the nearest island was about three leagues to the east, and the northern main from ten to twelve miles. For sounding we had a twenty-four-pound iron weight, with a staple leaded into it for the line. Dropping it out of the stern, we ran out a hundred and seventy-three fathoms before it slacked. The depth of the strait at that place was given at ten hundred and thirty-eight feet. I should add, that this was considerably deeper than we had found it below that point.

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CHAPTER XI.

ToC

"Isle Aktok."—A Sea-Horse and a Sea-Horse Hunt.—In High Spirits.—Sudden Interruption of the Hunt.—A Heavy Gun.—The Race to the Ledge-Tops.—Too Late.—A

Disheartening Spectacle.—Surprised by the Company's Ship.—The Schooner in Peril.—Capt. Hazard bravely waits.—The Flight of "The Curlew" amid a Shower of Balls.—The Chase.—Left on the Islet.—A Gloomy Prospect.—"What shall we have for Grub to *ate*?"—Wild-Geese.—Egging.—"*Boom!*"—A Sea-Horse Fire.

Toward night the wind changed to north, and thinned out the patch-ice, driving it southward, so that by ten o'clock, evening, we were able to get in our ice-anchors and make sail, continuing our voyage, and making about four knots an hour till nine o'clock next morning, when we were off a small island, the first of a straggling group on the south side of the strait. South-east of this islet was another large island, which we at first mistook for the south main, but, after comparing the chart, concluded that it was "Isle Aktok." To the north the mainland, with its fringe of ledgy isles, was in sight, distant not far from thirteen leagues. We had been bearing southward considerably all night, falling off from the wind, which was north-west. We were now, as nearly as we could reckon it up, a hundred and nineteen leagues inside the entrance of the straits at Cape Resolution. Raed and I were below making a sort of map of the straits, looking over the charts, etc., when Kit came running down. [201]

"There's a sea-horse off here on the island!" said he.

"A sea-horse!" exclaimed Raed.

"A walrus!" I cried; for we had not, thus far, got sight of one of these creatures, though we had expected to find them in numbers throughout the straits. But, so far as our observation goes, they are very rare there.

Taking our glasses, we ran hastily up. Wade was looking off.

"Out there where the ice is jammed in against this lower end of the island," directed Kit.

The distance was about a mile.

"Don't you see that great black *bunch* lying among the ice there?" continued he. "See his white tusks!"

Bringing our keen little telescopes to bear, we soon had him *up under our noses*,—a great, dark-hided, clumsy beast, with a hideous countenance and white tusks; not so big as an elephant's, to be sure, but big enough to give their possessor a very formidable appearance.

"Seems to be taking his ease there," said Wade. "Same creature that the old writers call a *morse*, isn't it?"

"I believe so," replied Raed.

"Wonder if our proper name, *Morse*, is from that?" said I. [202]

"Shouldn't wonder," said Kit. "Many of our best family names are from a humbler origin than that. But we must improve this chance to hunt that old chap: may not get another. And it won't do, nohow, to come clean up here to Hudson Bay and not go sea-horse-hunting once."

"Right, my boy!" cried Raed. "Captain, we want to go on a walrus-hunt. Can the schooner be brought round, and the boat manned for that purpose?"

"Certainly, sir. 'The Curlew' is at your service, as also her boat."

"Then let me invite you to participate in the exercise," said Raed, laughing.

"Nothing would suit me better. But as the wind is fresh, and the schooner liable to drift, I doubt if it will be prudent for me to leave her so long. You have my best wishes for your success, however. I shall watch the chase with interest through my glass; and, better still, I will see that Palmleaf has dinner ready at your return.—Here, Weymouth and Donovan, let down the boat, and row these youthful huntsmen to yonder ice-bound shore!"

Ah! if we had foreseen the results of that hunt, we should scarcely have been so jocose, I fancy. Well, coming events are wisely hidden from us, they say; but, by jolly! a fellow could afford to pay well for a glimpse at the future once in a while. [203]

Each of us boys took a musket and eight or ten cartridges. I'm not likely to forget what we took with us, in a hurry.

"We'll put the bayonets on, I guess," Kit remarked. "It's a big lump of a beast. These are just the things for giving long-range stabs with."

"Don't forget the caps!" cried Raed, already half way up the companion-way.

The wind was rather raw that morning: we put on our thick pea-jackets. Weymouth and Don were already down in the boat, which they had brought alongside.

"Here, Don, stick that in your waistband!" exclaimed Kit, who had come up last, tossing him one of our new butcher-knives.

"All right, sir!"

"Wish you would give me a musket," said Weymouth.

"You shall have one!" cried Wade, running back for it.

"Come, Guard!" shouted Kit. "Here, sir!" and the shaggy Newfoundland came bouncing down

into the boat.

We got in and pulled off.

"Make for that little cove up above the ice where the sea-horse lies," directed Raed. "We'll land there, and then creep over the rocks toward him." [204]

Kit caught up the extra paddle, and began to scull. We shot over the waves; we joked and laughed. Somehow, we were all as merry as grigs that morning.

Running into the cove, the boat was pulled up from the water, and securely fastened. Up at this end of the straits the tide did not rise nearly so high,—not more than eight or ten feet during the springs.

"Now whisht!" said Raed, taking up his musket. "Back, Guard! Still, or we shall frighten the old gentleman!"

"He was lying there all sedate when we slid into the cove," said Kit. "Asleep, I guess."

"We'll wake him shortly," said Wade. "But you say they are a large species of seal. Won't he take to the water, and stay under any length of time?"

"That's it, exactly," replied Kit. "We mustn't let him take to the water—before we riddle him."

"But they're said to have a precious tough hide," said I. "Perhaps we can't riddle so easy."

"Should like to see anything in the shape of hide that one of these rifle slugs won't go through," replied Kit.

"Sh-h-h!" from Raed, holding back a warning hand: he was a little ahead of us. "Creep up still! Peep by me! See him! By Jove! he's wiggling off the ice! Jump up and shoot him!" [205]

We sprang up, cocking our muskets, just in time to get a glimpse and hear the great seal splash heavily into the sea. Wade and Kit fired as the waters buried him; Guard rushed past, and Donovan bounded down the rocks, butcher-knife in hand.

"Too late!" exclaimed Raed.

We ran down to the spot. The water went off deep from the ice on which it had lain. It was nowhere in sight. Dirt and gravel had been scattered out on to the ice, and its ordure lay about. Evidently this was one of its permanent sunning-places.

"Get back among the rocks, and watch for him!" exclaimed Kit. "Only thing we can do now."

"I suppose so," said Raed.

We secreted ourselves a little back from the water behind different rocks and in little hollows, and, with guns rested ready to fire, waited for the re-appearance of the big seal. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed; but he didn't re-appear much.

"I say," Wade whispered: "this is getting a little played!"

We were all beginning to think so, when a horrible noise—a sound as much like the sudden bellow of a mad bull as anything I can compare it with—resounded from the other side of the island. [206]

"What, for Heaven's sake, is that?" Kit exclaimed.

"Must be another of these sea-horses calling to the one over here," said Raed, after listening a moment.

"Let's work round there, then," I said.

The noise seemed to have been four or five hundred yards off. Keeping the dog behind us, we hurried round by the east shore to avoid climbing the higher ledges, which rose sixty or seventy feet along the middle of the islet. These bare, flinty ledges, when not encumbered by boulders, are grand things to run on. One can get over them at an astonishing pace. Once, as we ran on, we heard the bellow repeated, and, on coming within twenty or thirty rods of where it had seemed to be, stopped to reconnoitre.

"Bet you, he's right under that high ledge that juts out over the water there," said Kit.

"Wait a moment," whispered Wade: "we may hear him again." And, in fact, before his words were well out, the same deep, harsh sound grumbled up from the shore.

"Under that ledge, as I guessed!" exclaimed Kit.

"Sounds like an enormous bull-frog intensified," Raed muttered. [207]

We crept down toward the brink of the ledge, Kit and Wade a little ahead. Arriving at the crest, they peered over cautiously, and with muskets cocked.

"Here he is!" Kit whispered back of his hand.

We stole up. There, on a little bunch of ice not yet thawed off the shore, lay the unsuspecting monster,—a great brown-black, unwieldy body. There is no living creature to which I can easily compare it. I should judge it would have weighed a ton,—more perhaps; for it was immensely thick and broad: though the head struck me as very small for its bulk otherwise.

"Now, all together!" whispered Raed. "Aim at its body above and back of its forward flippers. Ready! Fire!"

We let drive. The great creature gave a hoarse grunt, and, raising itself on its finlike legs,

floundered over into the sea.

"Round the ledge!" shouted Kit. "He won't get far, I don't believe!"

Guard was tearing down, barking loudly; and we had started to run, when, above the shouting and barking, the sudden boom of a cannon was heard.

"Hark!" cried Weymouth.

"Hold on, hold on, fellows!" Raed exclaimed.

"Wasn't that our howitzer?" Donovan asked. "Sounded like it."

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"It's the cap'n firing, for a joke, to let us know he heard us," Weymouth suggested.

"Oh! he wouldn't do that," replied Raed.

"Of course he wouldn't!" exclaimed Donovan. "He ain't that sort of a man!"

"That's a summons!" said Wade, coming hurriedly back up the rocks; for he and Kit were a little ahead. "Put for the top of the ledges up here! We can see from there!"

We had got twenty yards, perhaps, when a second loud report made the rocks rattle to it.

"There's trouble!" exclaimed Wade at my heels, as we climbed up the steep side.

An undefinable fear had blanched all our faces. Scarcely had the echoes of the gun died out among the crags when another heavier report made the islet jar under our feet.

"Oh, there!" exclaimed Raed despairingly.

Donovan was a step ahead; but Kit and I sprang past him now. Another shelving incline of forty or fifty yards, and the blue sea burst into view over the rocks. My eyes burned in their sockets from the violent exertion. At first I saw only "The Curlew" with her great white sails both broadside to us, and our bright gay flag streaming out. A glance showed that she had been brought round, and that the sails were flapping wildly. A jet of flame streamed out from her side; and, like a warning-call, the sharp report crashed on our ears, infinitely louder now we had gained the top. All this in a second.

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"Why! what is it?" I exclaimed. Turning, I saw them all staring off to the west.

Heavens! there, under full sail, was a large ship not two miles off! How like the shadow of doom she loomed up! and how suddenly white the faces of Kit and Wade just beyond me looked! We had thought we were on the lookout for this very thing; and yet it seemed to us now a complete surprise. We were stunned.

Bang! A heavy cannon; and the water flew up in a long white streak far past "The Curlew" as the big shot went driving by. The ship was within a mile and a half of her, and we here on the islet three-fourths of a mile away! Yet there stood "The Curlew" motionless on the waves; and there stood Capt. Mazard, waving his hat for us, his glass glittering in his other hand.

"To the boat!" yelled Weymouth, leaping down the rocks. "He wouldn't go without us!"

"Stop!" shouted Raed. "It's no use! Don't you see how the ship's closing in?"

Then, catching off his cap, he waved it slowly toward the east. We saw the captain's glass go up to his eye. Again Raed motioned him to go.

Bang! A higher shot. It strikes a quarter of a mile ahead of the schooner, and goes skipping on. But the captain is still looking off to us, as if loath to desert us. A third time Raed waves his cap. He turns. Round go the booms. "The Curlew" starts off with a bound. The flag streams out wildly in the strong north-west wind.

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Bang! That ball hits the sea a long way ahead of its mark. Even in these brief seconds the great shadowy ship has come perceptibly nearer. How she bowls along! We can see the white mass of foam at the bows as she rides up the swells.

A queer, lost feeling had come over me. In an instant it all seemed to have gone on at a far-past date. Looking back to that time now, I see, as in a picture, our forlorn little party standing there on the black, weathered ledges, gazing off,—Weymouth half a dozen rods down the rocks, where he had stopped when Raed called to him; Donovan a few rods to the right, shading his eyes with his hand; Raed with his arms folded tightly; Kit staring hard at the ship; Wade dancing about, swearing a little, with the tears coming into his eyes; myself leaning weakly on a musket, limp as a shoe-string; and poor old Guard whining dismally, with an occasional howl,—all gazing off at the rapidly-moving vessels.

"It was no use," Raed said, his voice seeming to break the spell. "We couldn't have got off to the schooner. See how swiftly the ship comes on! If the captain had waited for us to pull off, or even started up and let us go off diagonally, the ship would have come so near, that there would have been no escaping her guns. I don't know as there is now. If any of those shot should strike the masts, or tear through the sails, there would be no getting away."

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"I want you to look at it just as I do," Raed continued; for we none of us had said a word. "If we had tried to get on board, 'The Curlew' would certainly have been captured, and we with her. Now she stands a chance of getting off."

Bang! What a tremendous gun! The large ship was getting off opposite. The report made the ledge tremble under us.

"Hadn't we better get out of sight?" Donovan said. "They may see us, and send a boat over

here."

"No danger of that, I think," replied Raed. "They want to run the schooner down, and wouldn't care to leave their boat so far behind. This strong north-west wind favors them. Still I don't think they are gaining much. They're not going over ten or eleven knots. 'The Curlew' will beat that, I hope,—if none of those big shots hit her," taking out his glass. "How beautiful she looks!"

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"But, Raed," remarked Kit soberly, "they will chase her clean out the straits into the Atlantic, even if they do not capture her."

"They may."

"And she'll be rather short-handed for men," observed Donovan.

"That's too true."

"Then what are the chances of her getting back here for us?" cried Wade.

Bang! from the great white mass of bulging canvas now fairly opposite us. The smoke drifted out of her bows. We could hear the rattle of her blocks, the swash of the sea, and the roar of sails; and, quite distinct on the fresh breeze, the gruff commands to reload.

"Capt. Mazard won't leave us here if he lives and has his liberty," said Raed.

"Oh, he'll come back if he can!" exclaimed Donovan. "He's true blue!"

"But what if he can't," Kit observed quietly. "What a situation for us! Here we are a thousand miles from a civilized town or a civilized people, and in a worse than trackless wilderness! The season, too, is passing. The straits will soon be closed with ice."

"Only think of it!" Wade cried out,—"here on this frozen coast, with winter coming on! In a month it will be severe weather here. We've nothing but our cloth clothing!"

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Wade turned away; and for many minutes we were all silent.

Bang!

"Come, fellows!" Raed exclaimed at length. "This won't do! Wade has got the gloomiest side out! Come, rally from this! See, they're not gaining on the schooner! Look how she's bowling away! They haven't hit her yet. Kit! Wash! I say, fellows, it looks a little bad, I own. But never say die; or, if you must die,—why, die game. That's the doctrine you are always preaching, Kit. Isn't it, now? Tell me!"

"But to be frozen or starved to death among these desolate ledges!" muttered Kit.

"Is not a cheery prospect, I'll admit," Raed finished for him. "Rather trying to a fellow's philosophy, isn't it?"

Bang!

"She isn't hit yet," remarked Donovan, who had taken Raed's glass. "She slides on gay as a cricket. I can see the cap'n throwing water with the skeet against the sails to make 'em draw better."

"How, for Heaven's sake, did that ship come to get up so near before they saw her?" Kit exclaimed suddenly.

We looked off to the west. The dozen straggling islets beyond us extended off in irregular order toward the north-west.

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"I think," said Raed, "that the ship must have come up a little to the south of those outer islands. Our folks could not have seen her, then, till she came past."

"I don't call that the same ship that fired on us a week ago," Weymouth remarked.

"Oh, no!" said Kit. "That ship, 'The Rosamond,' can't more than have reached the nearest of the Company's trading-posts by this time."

"She probably spoke this ship coming out, and told them to be on the lookout for us," said Raed.

"Old Red-face doubtless charged them to give us particular fits," Kit replied.

"And they've got us in a tight place, no mistake," Wade remarked gloomily. "We're rusticated up here among the icebergs; sequestered in a cool spot."

Bang!

"Gracious! I believe that one hit 'The Curlew!'" Donovan exclaimed. "The captain and old Trull—I believe it's Trull—ran aft, and are looking over the taffrail!"

Kit pulled out his glass and looked. I had not taken mine, nor had Wade. The schooner was now three or four miles down the straits, and the ship was a good way past us.

"No great harm done, I guess," Kit said at length. "The captain ran down into the cabin, but came up a few moments after; and they are standing about the deck as before."

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"As long as they miss the standing rigging, and don't hit the sails, there's no danger," Raed observed.

"That ship is a mighty fast sailer," Weymouth said.

"Ought to be, I should think," Donovan replied. "Look at the sail she's got on! They've been getting out studding-sails too. This strong gale drives her along like thunder!"

"I don't see that she gains," Raed remarked. "We shall see 'The Curlew' back here for us yet."

"Not very soon, I'm afraid," Wade said.

"Well, not to-night, I dare say," replied Raed.

"How long do you set it?" Kit asked, taking down his glass. "Suppose the captain is lucky enough to get away from them: how long do you think it will be before he will get back here for us?"

"That, of course, depends on how far they chase him," said Raed.

"They'll chase him just as far as they can," replied Kit. "Why not? It's right on their way home. They'll chase the schooner clean out the straits."

"The captain may turn down into Ungava Bay, on the south side of the straits," Raed replied. [216]

"No, he won't do that," Kit contended. "That bay is full of islands, and choked with ice; and our charts ar'n't worth the paper they're made out on."

"Well, if he has to run out into the Atlantic, he may not be back for ten days."

"Ten days!" exclaimed Wade. "If we see him in a month, we need to think we're lucky."

Bang!

"That's a pleasant sound for us, isn't it, now?" Kit demanded,—"expecting every shot will lose us the schooner, and leave us two thousand miles from home on a more than barren coast!"

"I shall look for 'The Curlew' in ten days," Raed remarked. "And I don't think we had better leave here, to go off any great distance, till we feel sure she's not coming back for us. If she's not back in two weeks, I shall think we have got to shirk for ourselves."

"But how in the world are we to live two weeks here!" Wade exclaimed.

"Live by our wits," Kit observed.

"Looks as if we should have to give up coffee," Raed said, trying to get a laugh going.

"Why, I'm hungry now!" Wade cried out; "but I don't see anything to eat but ice and rocks!" [217]

"It's half-past eleven," Kit announced, looking at his watch. "Seriously, what do you expect we can get hold of for grub, Raed?"

"Well, seals."

"Seals!" exclaimed Wade; "the oily, nasty trash!"

"Hunger may bring you to sing a different tune," Kit muttered. "I'm not sure that a seal's flipper might not be acceptable by to-morrow morning."

"There are plenty of kittiwakes and lumne and eiderducks about these islets," I suggested. "We can shoot some of them."

"And we can fish!" Weymouth exclaimed.

"Where's your hooks?" said Kit.

That question floored the fishing project.

"Well, we've got our muskets," replied Weymouth.

"How many cartridges in all?" Raed asked.

"Let's take account of them. They are like to be precious property."

"I've got eight," said Kit, counting them.

"I have seven," Wade announced.

"Six," said I.

"I took nine," Raed observed.

"You gave me five," reported Weymouth. "I have used one. Here's the other four."

"Thirty-four in all," said Raed. "Now, boys, these are worth their weight in gold to us. Not one must be wasted." [218]

"My butcher-knife is like to come into good use." Donovan remarked, feeling the edge of it.

"Yes; and we've got our jack-knives too," said Kit.

"How about a fire?" Wade asked.

At that there were blank looks for a moment; till, with a queer grin, Donovan began to fumble in his waistcoat-pocket, and drew out, in close company with a rounded plug of tobacco, seven or eight grimy matches.

"Hurrah!" shouted Kit.

"You've allus been dippin' into me pretty strong about smokin'," said Don, looking around to Raed; "but you can't say that smokin' don't have its advantages sometimes."

"That's an argument for the weed that we can all appreciate at present, no mistake," Raed replied. "Don, keep hold of those matches, and see that they all strike fire, and I'll never preach to you again, so sure as my name is Warren Raedway."

Bang! A distant boom from the hated ship, now low down on the sea.

"The schooner is almost out of sight," said Kit. "She's a long way off. Perhaps it's the last time we shall ever set eyes on her pretty figure!"

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"Oh, not so bad as that, I hope!" cried Raed. "Don't go to getting poetical, Kit. How about dinner? That's of more consequence just now than poetry. Time enough to make verses on this rather awkward episode when we're safe in Boston. Make a proposal for dinner, somebody. Wade's starving."

"What say for the sea-horse!" exclaimed Donovan.

"Yes; how about that walrus?" Kit demanded.

"That sea-horse has got us into a fine scrape," muttered Wade. "It would have been better if we had left him undisturbed on his island."

"That's neither this nor there, now," said Kit. "Question arises, Can we eat him? Is it fit to eat? Did ever anybody hear of their being eaten?"

"The Huskies eat them, I believe," said Raed.

"The Huskies! Well, I mean civilized folks; ship's crews?"

Nobody knew.

"The best way will be to try it for ourselves," remarked Donovan. "But we don't know that we killed him yet. We didn't stop to find out, you know."

"Then that is clearly the next thing to do," said Raed. "Let's go down to the boat, and take that round to the place where we fired at the second one."

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"But how about the birds, the eider-ducks and kittiwakes?" said I. "We should find them more palatable than sea-horse—to begin with."

"Very well: you and Weymouth might go round the island to the left. It can't be more than a mile and a half or two miles. But do be prudent of your cartridges."

Boom!

Raed and Kit, with Wade and Donovan, then got into the boat, and pulled off round the islet to the right; while Weymouth and I, reloading our muskets, set off on our bird-hunt.

The west end of the island was considerably higher than the eastern portion. As we went on, we espied scores of little auks sitting upon the low cliffs.

"No use to waste powder on them," said Weymouth.

"But see there!" suddenly halting. "If those ain't geese, I'm mistaken,—out there on that gravel-flat, waddling along. Ain't those geese?"

Wild-geese they were, or, as some call them, Canada geese; nearly as large as our domestic geese, and of a gray slate-color. They did not seem to fear our approach much. We walked quietly up to fifty yards.

"I'll take that big gander," I said.

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"All right," quoth Weymouth. "I'll take a goose."

We fired at them with a careful aim. Over went the gander and a goose. The rest flew with loud squallings, save one with a broken wing, which Weymouth rushed after, and pelted to death with stones.

"A pretty good haul!" he exclaimed, holding them up. "Weigh eight or ten pounds apiece. But I didn't expect to see wild-geese up here," he added.

We saw several flocks of them after that.

Half a mile farther round, we came upon a flock of razor-bills perched on the cliffs overhanging the water. They rose, and went croaking off toward the next islet, distant about three hundred yards, too quick for us to fire with caution.

"The sealers often get their eggs," Weymouth observed. "They're good fried, they say."

It then occurred to me that these eggs might be a very good and cheaply—as regarded ammunition—obtained article of food for us. Laying down our guns, we climbed up among the rocks, and spent nearly an hour searching for their nests. At length Weymouth found one with three eggs; and, a few moments after, two more. I had some doubt about the eggs being good so late in the season. There were plenty of empty nests about, looking as if there had been a brood raised already. These were doubtless second nests of pairs that had lost their first nests from the depredations of falcons, ravens, or perhaps foxes. To settle the point, we broke an egg: it looked sound. Weymouth then filled his cap with them.

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Boom!

While climbing down to our muskets, I startled a canvas-backed duck sitting on a nest of eleven eggs. These I appropriated; and, before getting round to where we had fired on the sea-horse, Weymouth espied an eider-duck sitting on a shelf of the shore crags. From her we got five eggs of a beautiful pale-green color.

"No need of starving here, I should say," Weymouth remarked as we made our way along the ledges, pretty well laden with muskets, geese, and our caps full of eggs. "There won't be much

bread, to be sure; but then a fellow can live on eggs and birds, can't he?"

"I hope so, Weymouth. Hard case for us if we can't."

"That's so. But don't you be down in the mouth about this scrape. I don't believe they'll catch 'The Curlew,' sir. Capt. Mazard will be back here, I think."

"I hope so."

Truly, I thought to myself, if this young sailor doesn't complain, and even tries to offer consolation to us who have got him in this predicament, it isn't for me to look glum about it; though I am bound to own that some of the most cheerless moments of my life were passed during the twenty-four hours succeeding the ominous appearance of the "*Honorable Company's*" ship. [223]

A great shouting and heave-ho-ing told us of our near approach to where the rest of our party were; and, turning a bend of the crags, we discovered them all four tugging at a line.

"What are they dragging, I wonder?" Weymouth said to me. "Oh! I see. It's the sea-horse."

They were trying to pull the walrus up out of the water, where they had found him floundering about, fatally wounded with the slugs we had fired through his back. The sea about the rocks was discolored with his blood, and turbid with the dirt he had torn up. Donovan had slaughtered him with the butcher-knife; and, with the boat's painter noosed over the head of the carcass, they were now trying to draw it up on the ledge. Weymouth and I at once bore a hand; and it took all six of us, tugging hard, to get it up.

"What a mass of fat and flesh!" Kit exclaimed, puffing.

"I don't believe I could ever stomach it!" Wade groaned. [224]

"We can offer you something better!" exclaimed Weymouth, holding up the geese. "What think of those fellows? Wild-geese! And look at these!" holding up his cap. "Nice fresh eggs!—to be had by the dozen! and nothing to pay, either!"

"Why, fellows, this is a sort of northern paradise!" cried Raed. "But what sticks me is how to cook those eggs and geese. I never could suck eggs."

"Just build a fire, and I'll show you how to cook 'em," Weymouth said.

"But what shall we have for fuel?" Kit demanded.

That was a staggerer.

Boom! It seemed as if those far-borne echoes would never die with the distance. A low, dismal, sullen sound! They gave us queer sensations. As each came rolling on the sea, our hearts would bound. Up to that moment, "The Curlew" had not been taken; but perhaps that shot had struck down her sails.

It was now half-past two. The vessels could hardly be less than twenty or twenty-five miles off. But there is nothing to absorb or deaden sound along those straits.

"Yes; where's your fuel?" demanded Wade. [225]

We looked around: plenty of rocks, ice, and water, with a little coarse dirt, or gravel.

"Might burn the boat," Kit suggested.

"That seems too bad," said Raed. "Besides, how are we to get off the island here, supposing 'The Curlew' should not come back? or even suppose she should? She has no other boat."

"And we may want to go off to the other islands," I said.

"Well, if anybody can suggest anything better, I should like to hear it," replied Kit. "I don't want to burn the boat, I'm sure; but I can't see anything else that looks inflammable."

Neither could any of us, though we looked all around us very earnestly; till Donovan suddenly cried out,—

"Why not burn the old sea-horse?"

"Why, that's our victuals!" laughed Kit.

"I know it; but fire comes before victuals, unless you eat 'em raw like the Huskies."

"Will it burn?" Raed asked.

"Burn? yes. Why, on a sealer, they do all their trying-out the oil with a fire of seal-refuse. Why shouldn't it burn as well as a candle?"

"There's our wood-pile, then!" cried Raed, giving the carcass a kick. "Let's have a fire forthwith. Don, you slash out a hundred-weight or so."

"Don't cut the hide to pieces," Kit interposed: "we may want that to make a tent of." [226]

Donovan whipped out his butcher-knife, and, stripping back the tough skin, cut out a pile of huge slices. Kit, meanwhile, got a piece of old thwart from the boat, and whittled up a heap of pine slivers. Two of the fat slices were then slit up into thin strips, and laid on the slivers. With great caution, Donovan struck a match on his jacket-sleeve. We all hovered around to keep off the wicked puffings of the wind. The slivers were lighted; they kindled: the fat meat began to sizzle; then caught fire from the pine; and soon a ruddy, spluttering flame was blazing with marvellous fierceness.

"Hurrah!" Kit shouted. "The first fire these grim old ledges have seen since they cooled their glowing, molten billows into flinty granite!"

CHAPTER XII.

ToC

The "Spider."—Fried Eggs.—The "Plates."—"Awful Fresh!"—No Salt.—Plans for getting Salt from Sea-Water.—Ice-Water.—Fried Goose.—Plans to escape.—A Gloomy Night.—Fight with a Walrus.—Another "*Wood-Pile*."—Wade Sick.—A Peevish Patient and a Fractious Doctor.—The Manufacture of Salt.

We stood and warmed our hands. It felt comfortable,—decidedly so; for though the sun was high and bright, yet the north-west wind drove smartly across the rocks above us. Currents of air fresh from the lair of icebergs can't be very warm ever. There was plenty of ice all about. [227]

"Ready to cook those eggs, Weymouth?" Raed exclaimed. "You were going to furnish spider, kettle, or something of that sort, you know."

"Yes, sir; and all I'll ask is that some of you will be dressing a couple of those geese while I am gone. I've a mind to dine off goose to-day."

"Well, that's reasonable," said Donovan. "Go ahead, matey! Bring on your spider! We'll have the geese ready for it!"

"If you will go with me," Weymouth said, nodding over to where I was enjoying the fire. "Two may perhaps find what I want sooner than one."

I followed him.

"My idea is," said he, turning when we were off a few rods, "to get a flat, *hollowing* stone,—'bout as big over as a milk-pan, say; kind of hollowed out on the top side, just so grease won't run off it. We can set that up on small rocks, and let the fire run under. It'll soon get hot: then grease it, and break the eggs into it just as they do into a spider. You see?"

I saw it,—a very reasonable project. The only difficulty was to find such a stone. To do that we separated. Weymouth followed out along the shore, while I climbed up among the crags. There were plenty of flat rocks; but to find one sufficiently spider-shaped for our purpose was not so easy. At length I came upon one—a flake of felspar of a dull cream-color—hollowed enough on one side to hold a pint or upwards. But it was heavy: must have weighed fully a hundred pounds. I called to Weymouth: he was out of hearing. Nothing to do but carry it. So, after some mustering of my spare muscle, I picked it up, and, going along to a favorable spot, succeeded in getting down to the beach with it, whence I toiled along to our camp-fire. Weymouth had got there a little ahead of me with a flat stone worn smooth by the waves. It was not so thick as mine, nor so heavy: it was a sort of dark slate-stone. Forthwith a discussion arose as to the merits of the two *spiders*; which was finally decided in favor of the one I had found, from its being the whitest and cleanest-looking. Meanwhile Donovan had been feeding the fire so profusely, that all hands had been obliged to get back from it. Animal fat, like this of the walrus, makes an exceedingly hot flame. Three flat stones were set up edgewise, and the spider set on them. The flaming meat was then thrust under it so as to heat the spider. From its thickness, it took some minutes for it to become heated through; but, in the course of a quarter of an hour, Kit pronounced it ready. Weymouth cut out a chunk of walrus-blubber, with which he basted it, the melted fat collecting in a little puddle at the bottom. [228]

"Now for the eggs!" he exclaimed.

Raed handed them to him, one by one; while he broke them on the edge of the butcher-knife, and dropped a half-dozen into the novel frying-pan.

"Better be getting your plates ready!" he shouted, turning them over with the knife to the tune of a mighty frizzling. [229]

We all took the hint, and scattered to find flat stones for platters. 'Twas a singular assortment of kitchenware that we re-appeared with a few minutes later. Taking up the fried eggs with his knife, Weymouth tossed us each one, which we caught on our *plates*. Another batch was then broke into the spider, fried, and distributed like the first.

"Now then!" cried Kit. "Draw jack-knives, and dine!"

Several mouthfuls were eaten in silence.

"What think of 'em?" Weymouth asked, casting a sly glance around. "How do they go?"

"Rather oily!" grumbled Wade.

"Awful fresh!" Kit complained.

"Not a dust of salt in this camp!" Raed exclaimed.

"We never can live without any salt," said I. "Nothing will relish so fresh as these eggs." [230]

"But where's your salt coming from?" Kit demanded.

"Plenty of it in the sea," said Donovan. "Might boil down some of the salt water."

"If we only had a kettle to boil it in," Raed added.

"Well, there's the old tin dipper in the boat that we used to bail out the rain-water with," replied Don. "We could keep that boiling. Might boil away six or seven quarts by morning. That would give quite a pinch of salt."

"That's the idea!" said Kit. "Let's get it going as soon as we can. Wash it out, and dip it up two-thirds full of water, Don. I'll fix a way to set it over the fire."

Meanwhile Weymouth was frying another dozen of eggs.

"I think I can suggest a better way of evaporating the sea-water," remarked Raed as Donovan came up with the two-quart dipper of water. "You see that little hollow in the ledge just the other side of the fire: that will hold several pailfuls, probably. The fire on the rocks must make that warm: you see if it isn't, Wash."

I was on that side. The ledge for several yards from the blaze was beginning to get warmed up.

"We might brush that out clean," Raed continued, "and fill it with water. It will evaporate fast there, and leave its salt on the bottom of the hollow. We can move the fire along a little nearer to make the rocks hotter. I'm not sure that we could not make the water boil in there." [231]

The place was brushed, and a dozen bumperfuls turned into the hollow, where it soon began to steam.

"That'll do it!" exclaimed Kit. "Never mind: we shall have salt by to-morrow!"

After eating the eggs, one of the geese, which Donovan and Raed had dressed, was cut up raw, and fried on the spider. We had sharpened appetites; and, had the morsels been flavored with salt, it would not have tasted bad. Wade tried dipping his in the bumper of sea-water,—with no great satisfaction to his palate, I inferred; for he did not repeat the experiment.

"How about drink?" Kit observed at length. "I don't suppose there's a spring on the island. I'm getting thirsty. What's to be done for water?"

"Have to melt ice," Raed replied. "There's ice along the shore, among the rocks."

Kit started off, and presently came back with a large lump. Bits of it were broken off and put in the bumper, and held over the fire. The water thus obtained and cooled with ice was not salt exactly. Still it was not, as has sometimes been affirmed, pure fresh water, by any means: it had a brackish taste. [232]

The weather, which had been clear during the day thus far, began to foul toward evening. It was now after six. The wind had veered to the south-west. Wild, straggling fogs, with black clouds higher up, were running into the north-east. Damp, cold gusts blew in from the water.

"We shall have a chilly night," Wade said, shivering a little. "Rain and sleet before morning, likely as not."

We set about preparing for it. A little back from the fire a wall of rough stones was hastily thrown up to the height of three feet or over, and continued for ten or twelve feet, with both ends brought round toward the fire. We then got the boat up out of the water, and, by hard lifting, raised it bottom-up, and laid it on our semicircular wall. It thus formed a kind of shed large enough to creep under. But, not satisfied with this, Donovan fell to work with his butcher-knife, and, in the course of an hour, had cleaved the skin off both sides of the walrus down to where it rested on the rock. Then, using the hafts of the oars as levers, we rolled the carcass on one side. The hide was then skinned off underneath; when, on rolling the carcass clean over, we had the hide off in one broad, immensely-heavy sheet. Raed estimated it to contain twenty square yards, reckoning the average girth of the walrus at twelve feet, and its length at fifteen feet. By means of the oars and thwarts as supports, the skin was then raised with the raw side up in tent form over the wall and boat, making shelter sufficient for us all to get under with comfort. [233]

"Now let it storm, if it wants to!" cried Weymouth: "we've got a water-proof seal-skin at least!"

An arch of stones, with our spider set in the top, was then built over the fire to protect it from the weather.

"How long will this walrus last for firewood, suppose?" I asked.

"Oh! two or three days, for a guess," Donovan thought.

"After that, what?" said Wade.

"It's no use to trouble ourselves about that now," said Kit: "the Bible expressly forbids it. Besides, we've had trouble enough for one day. I'm for turning in and having a nap."

"Not much fun in turning in on a bare ledge, I fancy," Wade replied. "We shall miss our mattresses."

"A bare rock is a rather hard thing to bunk on, I do think," Raed remarked, peeping under the walrus-skin. "If we were in Maine, now, we should qualify that with a 'shake-down' of spruce- [234]

boughs. Didn't see any thing of the evergreen sort among the rocks, did you, Wash?"

We had not. It then occurred to me that we had observed several little shrubs common to the mountains of Labrador, and known to naturalists as the Labrador tea-plant.

"Any thing is better than the bare rock," Raed remarked, when I spoke of this shrub; and we all sallied out to glean an armful.

While thus engaged, Wade and Kit espied a bed of moss in a hollow between the crags, a portion of which was dry enough for our purpose. After bringing an armful of the tea-plant, we made a trip to the moss-patch. What we could all bring at once piled upon the coarse shrubs made a bed by no means to be despised by—cast-aways.

"I presume there's no need of mounting guard or setting a watch here," Donovan said.

"How do we know that some party of Huskies or Indians has not been watching our movements all day?" Weymouth suggested.

"I don't think it likely," said Raed. "We may all venture to go to sleep, I guess, and trust to Guard to keep watch for us."

"I don't know about that," Kit remarked, patting the old fellow's head. "He's eaten so much of our woodpile, that he will be but a drowsy sentinel, I'm afraid."

The fire was replenished with blubber; and we all lay down on our mossy beds inside our fresh-smelling tent. [235]

The sun must have been still high in the north-west; but so wild and dark were the clouds, that it had grown quite dark by nine o'clock. The damp wind-gusts sighed; the surf swashed drearily on the rocks. Despite all our efforts to bear up and seem gay, a weight of doubt and danger rested heavily on our spirits. "Where is 'The Curlew' *now*?" was the question that would keep constantly recurring, followed by a still more ominous query, "What would become of us if she should not return?"

"Isn't there a town out on the Atlantic coast of Labrador, a town or a village, settled by the Moravian missionaries?" Raed asked suddenly, after we had been lying there quietly for some minutes.

"Seems to me there is," Kit replied after a moment of reflection.

"There's one indicated on our geography-maps, I'm pretty sure, called *Nain*, or some such scriptural name. Don't you remember it, Wash?"

I did distinctly; and also another, either above or below it on the coast, called Hopedale, colonized by missionaries from South Greenland.

"Those Moravians are very good folks, I've heard," Wade said. "They're a very pious, Christian people. I have read, too, that they have succeeded in Christianizing many of the coast Esquimaux." [236]

"Those Huskies must make queer Christians!" exclaimed Donovan.

"How far do you suppose it is out to those towns, Nain, say, from here, for a guess?" Raed asked a few minutes after.

"I was just thinking of that," said Kit. "Well, I should say four hundred miles."

"Not less than six hundred," said Wade.

I thought it as likely to be seven or eight hundred.

"That would be a good way to travel on foot," muttered Raed reflectively.

"Yes, it would," said Kit. "Still I shouldn't quite despair of doing it if there was no other way out of this."

"How long would it take us, do you suppose?" Raed asked after another pause. "How many miles a day could we make, besides hunting and getting our food?"

"Not more than twelve on an average," Kit thought.

"Suppose it to be seven hundred miles, that would take us near sixty days," Raed remarked; "seventy, counting out Sundays."

"We never could do that in the world!" Wade exclaimed. "It would take us till midwinter, in this country! We should starve! We should freeze to death!" [237]

"Couldn't very well do both," Kit observed rather dryly.

"The journey would be well-nigh impossible, I expect," Raed remarked. "On getting in from the coast, we should probably meet with no sea-fowl, no seals: in fact, I hardly know what we should be able to get for game. I have heard that caribou-deer are common in Labrador; but they are, as we know from experience in the wilderness about Mount Katahdin, very difficult to kill. And then our cartridges!"

"We might possibly attach ourselves to some party of Esquimaux going southward," Kit suggested.

"And be murdered by them for our guns and knives," exclaimed Wade.

"Oh, no! not so bad as that, I should hope. But let's go to sleep now, and discuss this to-morrow."

There was something horrible to our feelings in this thought of our perfect isolation from the world. I think Wade realized it, or at least felt it, more than either of the other boys. Kit either didn't or wouldn't seem to mind it much after the first hour or two. Raed probably saw the chances of our getting away more clearly than any of us; but I doubt if he felt the wretchedness of our situation so keenly as either Wade or myself. He was always cool and collected in his plans, and not a little inclined to stoicism as regarded personal danger. These philosophical persons are apt to be so. What the most of folks feel badly about they laugh at: it is better so, perhaps. Yet pity and sympathy are good things in their way. They help hold society together; and are, I think it likely, about its strongest bonds of union. As for Weymouth and Donovan, they bore it all very lightly: indeed, they didn't seem to give the subject any great thought, farther than to exclaim occasionally that it was "rough on us," and a "tough one." Sailors always have a vein of recklessness in their mental processes. It comes from their manner of life,—its constant peril. They learn the uselessness of "borrowing trouble."

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Once in the night I woke,—woke from a pleasant dream of home. For several seconds I was utterly bewildered; did not know where I was. Then it burst upon me; and such a wave of desolation and trouble broke with the realization, that the tears would start in spite of all shame. It was raining on the green hide overhead with a peculiarly soft patter. The strong odor of burning fat from the fire filled our rude tent; to which were added the fresh, sick smells from the great newly-butchered carcass of the walrus. The boys were sound asleep, breathing heavily. Guard roused up at our feet to scratch himself, then snuggled down again. The wind howled dismally, throwing down gusts of rain. It dripped and pattered off the skin-covering on to the boat and on to the rocks. Now and then a faint scream from high aloft declared the passage of some lonely seabird; and the ceaseless swash and splash of the sleepless sea filled out in my mind a picture of home-sick misery. It is no time, or at least the worst of all times, to reflect on one's woes in the night when just awakened from dreams: better turn over and go to sleep again. But I had not got that lesson quite so well learned then, and so lay cultivating my wretchedness for nearly an hour, picturing our future wanderings among these northern solitudes, and our final starvation. "Perchance," I groaned to myself, "in after-years, some party of adventurers may come upon our white bones, what the gluttons leave of them." I even went farther; for I was presuming enough to imagine that our melancholy disappearance might become the subject of some future ballad. How would it begin? What would they say of *me*? What had I done in the world to deserve any thing by way of a line of praise or a tear of pity? Nothing that I could think of. At best, the ballad, if written at all (and of that I was beginning to have my doubts the more I thought it over), could but run,—

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"Whilom in Boston town there dwelt a youth
Who ne'er did well except in dying young."

That was as far as I could get with it: in fact, that was about all there was to be said by way of eulogy. The sea seemed to get hold of those two lines somehow, and kept repeating them with its eternal *swish-swash, swash-swish*.

The rain pattered it out in its heroic pentameters,—

Pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat!

Pity-pat, pat-pit, pat-pit, pity-pit, pit-pat!

All at once the regular rhythm of the sea was broken by a slight splash out of time. Instantly my morbid ear detected it, and I listened intently. Something was splashing along in the water.

"Sea-fowl," I hastily assured myself. No, that was not likely, either; for it was quite dark, and the sea rather rough.

"The Huskies trying to surprise us?" It might be. Something was certainly splashing the water very near. Why didn't Guard notice it? Talk about a dog's keen ears!—there lay the Newfoundland snoring loudest of anybody! Just then a scraping sound, accompanied by a dull rattling of the shingle among the rocks, startled me afresh. We were being surprised, stole upon, by something, undoubtedly. Repressing a strong inclination to yell out, I arose softly, and peeped past the drooping, flapping side of the walrus-skin. The splashings were now still more distinct; and I saw, dimly through the rain and darkness, a large, dark object near the water. What could it be? A hundred fearful fancies darted into my mind. Then there came a gruff snort; and the great dusky form heaved up higher on the rocks, upon which lay the carcass of the sea-horse. It seemed to be moving around it, making a dull, scraping noise. Suddenly a deep, horrid groan, ending in a prolonged bellow, burst on the damp air. Guard bounded up with a growl, and rushed out barking. Raed and Kit jumped up. They were all scrambling up. There was a moment of uncertain silence; then Kit cried,—

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"Hollo! What was that?"

"Don't be scared," I said. "It's another walrus, I guess. Keep still; but get your guns ready."

"Another walrus, did you say?" muttered Raed, coming to look out.

"I think it's one come up to smell round the carcass of the one we've killed."

"So it is!" exclaimed Raed. "Like as not, it's this one's mate. What a hideous noise!" for the huge creature was giving vent to the most terrific snortings and snufflings.

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We could hear it butt its head against the carcass.

"It has come round here hunting for its mate," said Kit. "That's its way of showing grief, I

suppose."

Guard was darting up to it, barking furiously: but the great beast did not at first seem to pay much attention to the dog; till on a sudden it turned, with another dreadful bellowing,—we thought the dog had bitten one of its tail flippers,—and came waddling after him, snorting, and gnashing its tusks. Guard fell back toward our shelter.

"Shoot him!" Raed exclaimed.

Kit and Donovan both fired at the monster; but, with ferocious snorts, it kept after the dog.

"Run!" shouted Weymouth. "Out of this!" for the dog was backing right in upon us.

We had to scurry out in a hurry to avoid being penned there. Guard, like a fool, kept backing in that direction. By the time we had got clear of the shelter, he had got himself backed into it; and, the sea-horse essaying to follow him, the oar that held up the skin in front was knocked away, and down it came, burying the dog, and partially covering the walrus. A fearful uproar of barking, howling, and snorting, followed. Presently Guard got out from under, and ran yelping off, leaving his pursuer floundering about under the hide. Kit rushed up, and thrust his bayonet into the creature's exposed side; when with a mighty squirm it turned itself, knocking down the boat, and sending our stone wall flying in all directions. The battle was now fairly begun. We all closed in round the animal, thrusting at it with our bayonets anywhere we could stab. Yet it fought ferociously, with bellowings enough to make one's blood run chill. It seemed marvellous how a creature so unwieldy could turn itself so rapidly. Pain and rage made it no mean antagonist. Once Raed's musket was sent flying out of his hands several rods; and Wade, thrusting at its head, had his bayonet wrenched off at a single twist. We afterwards found it bent up and broken. I think Weymouth gave it a mortal wound by firing a bullet into its head; though Kit and I repeatedly ran our bayonets into its sides clean up to the rings. It succumbed at last, dying hard, with many a finishing thrust.

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The gray morning light was beginning to outline the dreary shore. The chilly rain still poured. The reader can imagine in what a plight we were. The fire had gone out. Our skin-tent lay in a wad; and in the midst of our beds sprawled the dead sea-horse, weltering in its blood; while we ourselves, drenched with rain and bespattered with gore, stood round, steaming from our warlike exertions.

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"This is a pretty how-d'y'-do!" Kit exclaimed. "Look at our 'shake downs!'—all blood and mire!"

"Well, we've got another *wood-pile*," said Donovan.

"I wish it had selected a more fitting time to make its appearance," Raed muttered. "It has demoralized us completely."

"Nothing to do but re-organize," laughed Kit. "Get the painter-line. Let's drag him off."

That was a heavy job, and took us nigh half an hour. Then there were the blood-soaked moss and tea-plant shrubs to get up and throw away, the wall to rebuild, the boat to set up, and the skin to repitch on the oars. All this time it continued to rain hard, with mingled flakes of snow. A tough time, we called it. And, after the tent was pitched again, we had no fire; and could only crouch, wet and shivering, on the bare ledge. I never felt more uncomfortable: my bones all ached; my head ached: I was sick. Wade was worse off than myself even. Throwing himself flat on the rock, he buried his face in his arms, and lay so for more than an hour. Raed and Kit sat blackguarding each other to keep up their spirits. Donovan was trying to dry some pine-splinters to build a fire with by sitting on them. Weymouth was cutting out blubber from the skinned carcass for the fire, so soon as the splinters could be dried. Two matches were burned trying to kindle the pine-shavings. We thought our fire dearly purchased at such a cost.

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"Only four more," remarked Donovan gravely.

"We must not let it go out again," Raed said. "We must sit up, some of us, in future, to tend it."

Any thing like the dreary gloom of that morning I hope never to experience again. Sea, sky, and crags seemed all of one color,—lead. Seven or eight miles to southward, the mountains of the mainland (Labrador) showed their black bases under the fog-clouds. The great island to the south-east seemed to have been dipped in ink, so funereal was its hue.

The rain had frustrated our attempt at salt manufacture. We had to take our breakfast of fried goose in all the *freshness* of nature.

Our clothes gradually dried on us.

During the forenoon Kit sallied out on a hunting excursion, and, about noon, returned with a fine, plump, canvas-backed duck, which we ate for our dinner.

Toward four o'clock it stopped raining. Donovan and Weymouth improved the chance to skin the sea-horse we had killed during the night, it was rather larger than the first one, and had prodigious stiff, wiry whiskers about its upper lip, some of which we kept for a curiosity. They were over a foot in length, and as large as a coarse darning-needle. The tusks, too, were broken out, and laid aside.

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During the night it faired; and the morning was sunny. Wade had become very unwell. He had taken cold from his drenching, and was shivering and feverish by turns. His courage, too, was clean down to zero. He *knew* we should never see home again, and didn't seem to care whether he lived or not. That is about as bad a way as a fellow can get into ever. I was little better than sick myself; and, while the others went off after eggs and game, I stayed to keep the fire going and take care of Wade. No small stint I had of it too; for he was peevish and touchy as a young

badger. I knew he ought to take something hot of the herb-tea sort, and so started off and gathered a dipperful of the tea-plant leaves. Then, getting a lump of ice, I melted it, and made a strong dish of the "tea." Wade was lying under the shelter, face down into his coat-sleeve. Carrying in the steaming dipper, I told him I thought he had better take some of it: it would, I hoped, help his cold, &c.

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No: he wouldn't touch it!

I then reasoned a while. This not having any perceptible effect, I next resorted to coaxing.

No: he wouldn't drink the stinking stuff!

Now, no doctor, I take it, likes to have his potions called "stinking stuff." I began to remonstrate; and from that—not being in a very amiable frame of mind—I ere long got mad, and was on the point of pitching into the sufferer, when it occurred to me that for a doctor to be caught thrashing his patient would be a very unbecoming spectacle! So I contented myself with giving him a "setting-up;" calling him, according to the best of my recollections, supported by the subsequent testimony of the patient, an "ungrateful dog," "peep," "nincompoop," *et als.*: after listening to which for a space, Wade got up and drank the *tea*. Peace was immediately restored with this act of obedience; and I proceeded to get him to bed. Pulling down the boat, I filled it half up with such of the shrubs and moss as had not been besmirched with the blood of the walrus. Wade then got into it. I made him a pillow of the geese-feathers by piling them into the bow under his head, and spreading over them my pocket-handkerchief. I next had him take off his boots, and set a hot rock from the fire at his feet. What to cover him up with was something of a problem. I managed it by putting on a layer of the moss, and laying the thwarts of the boat over this. Then, feeling somewhat fatigued after my labors, I crept in with him; and, ere long, we both went to sleep. The hunting-party coming back, two or three hours after, laden with eggs and brant geese, awoke me. Wade was sweating profusely beneath the boards and moss. We took care not to wake him till near eight o'clock, evening; when he got up, considerably better.

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The next day (July 26) was spent in the manufacture of salt; not the manufacture of it exactly, either, but the extraction of it from sea-water. We were getting perfectly frantic for salt. The fresh food sickened us. I think we should soon have been really ill from the want of it. Filling the hollow in the ledge with the sea-water, we first tried to get fire enough about it to make the water boil. This we found it impossible to do, and so had recourse to a plan suggested by Kit. It was to get eight or ten stones about the size of the tin bumper, and heat them in the fire. When red-hot, these were successively rolled into the water in the hollow, raising great clouds of steam, and soon causing it to boil furiously. Continuing this stone-heating process for three or four hours, we succeeded in boiling away fully half a dozen pailfuls of water. There was then found to be a thin stratum of salt deposited along the bottom of the hollow. How we crowded around it, wetting the ends of our fingers, and licking it up! Eggs were then fried by the dozen, and eaten with a relish that only salt can give. I should add, however, that this appeared to me to be a very poor quality of salt; or else it had other mineral matter mixed with it, giving it a slightly bitter taste.

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The quantity obtained at this our first boiling was so small, that we ate it all that night, and with our breakfast next morning.

The next forenoon was passed boiling down a second vatful. Wade and I attended to the salt-making, while the rest of the party went off to the islet next to the west after eggs and game. In the evening we provided ourselves with fresh "shake-downs" of moss and the tea-plant.

The 28th was devoted by Raed, Kit, and Donovan to a trip down to the mainland on the south. Raed wanted to see what sort of a country it was, with a view to our attempt at going down to Nain in case "The Curlew" should not come back. They did not get back till nine in the evening. They had found the hills and mountains along the coast to be mere barren ridges of lichen-clad rock, with moss-beds in the hollows. But from the summit of the high ridge, about two miles in from the shore, they had seen with the glass, to the southward, what seemed to be low thickets of stunted evergreen,—fir or spruce. From this Raed argued that fuel might be obtained by a party travelling through the country; and, from that, went on to picture these thickets to abound with deer and hares.

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CHAPTER XIII.

ToC

More Salt.—Some Big Hailstones.—A Bright Aurora.—The Lookout.—An *Oomiak* heaves in Sight.—The Huskies land on a Neighboring Island.—Shall we join them?—A Bold, Singular, not to say Infamous, Proposition from Kit.—Some Sharp Talk.—Kit's Project carried by Vote.

During the 29th, 30th, and 31st (Sunday) of the month, we were employed much as upon the 27th; viz., boiling for salt, and egging along the cliffs. We wanted to get as much salt on hand as possible; and, by untiring industry, succeeded in getting about a quart ahead. But to do this we had been obliged to keep up a smart fire, which had consumed nearly all the walrus-blubber from both carcasses. Where to get the next supply of fuel was an open question. No more sea-horses had showed themselves. We concluded that this pair were all that had been in the vicinity.

On the night of the 31st, a terrible storm of wind, thunder, and hail, swept across the straits from the north-west. Raed picked up hailstones in front of our shelter, after the cloud had passed, which were two inches and a half in diameter. They struck down upon the rocks with almost incredible violence. Any ordinary canvas-tent would have been riddled by them: but our tough walrus-skin bore the brunt, and sheltered us completely. The sea, during the hail-fall, seemed to boil with a loud peculiar roar, and was white with bubbles and foam. There was a very bright aurora the following night. The next morning was fair; but a ghastly greenish haze gave the sky an aspect of strange pallor. Somehow we felt uneasy under it. After breakfast, Kit and I went up to the top of the ledges overlooking the straits to the north, east, and west, to see if we could discover any vessels. Some of us used generally to make our way up here every four or five hours to take a long look. For an hour we sat gazing off on the heaving expanse, flecked white with ice-patch, and bounded far to the north by a low line of black mountains. The breadth of the straits here was not far from seventeen leagues.

"Seven days since we were *retired* here," Kit remarked at length.

Seven days! It seemed seven ages.

"Kit, what do you think of the chance of our getting off from here?"

"Wash, I don't know: I don't dare to think."

"Do you really believe Capt. Mazard will come back?"

"Why, if he's not captured, nor wrecked in a gale, nor jammed up in the ice, he will come back."

"You have no doubt he will come back if he can?"

"Why, no: I know he will come if he can. He wouldn't leave us here. Besides, you know, Wash, that we owe him and all the crew for his and their services. I don't say that they would come back any quicker on that account: still they would be likely to want their pay, you know."

"That's true."

"But, Kit, if 'The Curlew' shouldn't make its appearance, do you believe we could get down to Nain, or any of those Esquimau coast-villages?"

"I don't know, Wash: we could try."

"Seven hundred miles through such a country as this! Would it be possible?"

"It would be no use to stay here, you know, if we found the schooner wasn't coming back. We must, of course, make an effort to get away. It would be foolish to stay here till winter came on. I don't suppose it would be possible for us to winter here: we should freeze to death in spite of every thing we could do. The cold is awfully intense through the winter months. Not even the Esquimaux try to winter on the straits here. Besides, it's about time for the sea-fowl to fly southward. We can't live after they're gone."

"But only think of a sixty-days' tramp over these barren mountains! Our boots wouldn't last a hundred miles! Our socks are worn through now!"

"Have to make moccasans."

"We never should get through alive. I don't believe Wade would stand it to go a quarter of the distance. He's sick now, and, worse still, has no courage. He acts strangely."

"Wade will rally when worst comes to worst, and be the head man in extremities."

"Do you think so?"

"I do. Wade is kind of hot-blooded, you know. Being left here so sudden struck him all in a heap. But he will show blood yet, if it comes to a real hand-to-hand struggle to save our lives. A boy that took his musket, and went right into a fair, stand-up battle of his own accord, as they say Wade did, won't give in here without showing us another side to his character. One thing, he feels the cold here worse than we do: it pinches him all up. But he will come out of his dumps yet. Don't badger him: he won't leave his bones here. Seriously, I have more fear for Weymouth and Donovan than for Wade. That is most always the way where there's hardship and suffering. Your great, strong, thoughtless fellow is the first to give out and fail up. You mark my words, now. If we have to undertake this journey, Weymouth and Donovan will be the first to sicken and fall behind. I don't believe they would ever get through it. But, after the first three days, Wade would lead us all. He will sort of rally and rise as the peril and hardship increase. He is kind of discouraged now, because he sees what's before us, and has to muster his energies to meet it; but he is getting a reserve of will-force in store. There's a good deal in that, I tell you! A strong will has carried many a fellow through hardships that would have killed men of twice the muscle without the will; and that's the way it will be with our two sailors, I'm afraid."

"But I am not in favor of making this trip overland," Kit added after we had sat musing a few minutes.

"What do you propose?"

"I think it best to work out of the straits in our boat, if we can."

I had thought of that plan.

"We could make a sail out of this walrus-hide, and watch our chance with a favorable breeze to scud us along from islet to islet on the south side here. We could run down into Ungava Bay, clean to the foot of it; and then, leaving the boat, go across to Nain. It couldn't be more than a hundred and fifty miles from the foot of the bay. We could start off, and, with a strong spurt, do it in a week from that place, I think. We should, at least, be sure of getting seals for food. But Raed don't think it best."

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"Why not?"

"Well, he says, that, by the time we get into Ungava Bay, it will begin to freeze ice nights, enough to stop us. He thinks, too, that we should suffer a good deal more from cold on the water than on the land. Then we should have to wait for favorable winds, and be laid up through storms, besides the danger of getting capsized in gusts, and caught in the ice-patches. But he has agreed to leave it to the party to decide. I know the two sailors will vote to go by boat; but I'm not sure Raed is not right, after all. He's a better judge than any of the rest of us, I do suppose. I have a horror of starting off inland, though."

A very reasonable horror, I considered it. Any thing but toiling over sterile mountains, for me.

We sat there for a long time looking off, pondering the situation. Suddenly my eye caught on a tiny brown speck far to the northward. I watched it a moment, then spoke to Kit. He took out his glass and looked.

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"That's some sort of a boat," he said at length. "Brown sail! That's a Husky boat, I reckon,—an *oomiak*."

I took the glass. The craft was heading southward; coming, it seemed, either for the islet we were on, or else the large island to the south-east. I could see black heads under the large irregular sail.

"Coming down to the Labrador side," Kit remarked. "I've heard that they spend the summer on the north side of the straits; go up in the spring, and come back here to Labrador in the latter part of the season."

"There are *kayaks* with it," he said, with the glass to his eye,— "one on each side; and there are one or two, perhaps more, behind."

In the course of an hour it had come down within three miles, bearing off toward the large island.

"We had best get out of sight, I guess," Kit observed. "Don't care to attract them or frighten them."

We went back a little behind the rocks; and Kit ran down to tell the rest of the party. They came back with them,—all but Weymouth, who was not very well, and had lain down for a nap.

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"That's a big *oomiak*!" exclaimed Raed, taking a long look at it. "One—two—three—five—seven *kayaks*."

"How many do you make out in the big boat?" Kit asked.

"Nineteen—twenty; and I don't know how many behind the sail," Raed replied.

"Those are the women and children, I suppose," Wade said.

"Wade's thinking of the Husky belles," Kit remarked with a wink to me; "of the one he gave the scarf to. Let's see: what was her name?"

"*Ikewna*," I suggested.

"I've noticed Wade has been a little *distract* for some time," Raed observed. "Possibly he sighs for the beauteous *Ikewna*!"

Wade laughed.

"Somebody else was a little sweet on a certain yellow-gloved damsel: rather stout she was, if I recollect aright. Mind who that was, Raed?"

"Ah! you refer to *Pussay*," Raed replied. "Well, she was a trifle adipose. But that's a merit in this country, I should judge. Lean folks never could stand these winters."

"And where now is the beautiful '*White Goose*,' I wonder!" Kit exclaimed.

"And black-eyed *Caubvick*!" said I. "Answer, Echo!"

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"This crew may be a part of the same lot," Donovan suggested.

"It isn't likely," said Raed. "We are now a hundred and fifty miles farther west than the Middle Savage Isles. It is hardly possible. But I dare say they are as much like them as peas in a pod."

The *oomiak* passed us about a mile to the eastward, and, approaching the shore of the large island, was luffed up to the wind handsomely. More than a dozen dogs leaped out, and went splashing to the shore. The men landed from the *kayaks*, and, wading out into the water, laid hold of the *oomiak*, and, guiding it in on the swell, carried it up high and dry. Several of the children had jumped out with the dogs. The women, old folks, and younger children, now followed. The shore fairly swarmed. We could hear them shouting, screaming, and jabbering, and the dogs barking. Guard looked off and growled slightly, turning his great dark eyes inquiringly to our

faces.

"He don't like the looks of them," said Donovan: "remembers the fuss he had with them when they chased Palmleaf and him."

"They seem to be preparing to stop there, I should say," Kit remarked. "They've pulled up the *oomiak* some way from the water, out of reach of the tide, and are unloading it. There are quantities of skins, tents, harpoons, &c. There! they are all starting up from the water, loaded down with trumpery,—going off from the shore toward the middle of the island." [259]

They had not seen us; and, after watching them disappear among the barren hillocks, we went back to our camp for dinner. Unless they came along to the extreme western end of the large island, they would not discover our camp. At first, we decided to have nothing to do with them. We had nothing in the "*chymo*" line except Wade's broken bayonet. They would only be a nuisance with us.

"But, if we could contrive to make them catch seals for us for fuel, it might be worth while to cultivate their acquaintance a little," Kit suggested.

"If we could get a seal a day from them for our fire, it might be a good plan enough," Wade thought.

"But we've nothing to pay them with; unless we paid them in promises of iron and knives when our *ship comes back*," I said. "I don't suppose our greenbacks would be a legal tender with them."

"But, in case 'The Curlew' should *not* come back, we might not be able to redeem our promises," Raed remarked. [260]

"In that case," said Kit, "we might as well marry all their daughters, and take up our abode here. As their sons-in-law, we could perhaps excuse it to them."

"Possibly the daughters might object to this arrangement," said Wade.

"Why, you don't doubt your ability to win the affections of a Husky belle, do you?" demanded Kit, laughing.

"I doubt if our accomplishments would be rated very high among the fair Esquimaux," said Raed. "Not to be able to catch seals is deemed a great disgrace with them. Our going to them to beg seal-blubber would be a very black mark. We should be looked upon much in the light of paupers. No young Husky thinks of proposing to his lady-love till he has become an expert seal-catcher."

"It seems hard not to be thought eligible even by a Husky family," Kit observed. "But let's go over there and see what we can do. If we can't trade with them, we might lay them under contribution by force of arms. What say to beginning our career as conquerors by subjugating that island of Esquimaux, and levying a seal-tax? That's the way our Saxon ancestors first entered England. Has the sanction of history, you see,—as far down even as the ex-emperor Napoleon III." [261]

"You can't be in earnest," said Raed, suddenly looking round to him.

"I am," said Kit. "Decidedly the easiest way (for us) to deal with them. If we were to go over there with a show of authority, they wouldn't make much resistance, I'm very sure. We would take possession of their *oomiak*. That would hold them to the island. They couldn't get off without that,—at least, the women and children couldn't; and the men would not desert their families."

"Now, there's a scheme of rapine worthy of Cæsar!" sneered Raed. "Kit, I am ashamed of you!"

"I don't care. We're in a tight place. I don't mean them any harm. But, if we are going to be dependent on them for our supplies, it will be much better for us to have them under our authority. They're a mere set of ignorant heathens. We know more than they do; and it is but fair that the wisest should govern."

"That's the very argument the old piratical sea-kings of Norway used to use!" Raed exclaimed. "It's about a thousand years behind civilized times!"

"Not so far behind the times as that, I guess," Kit replied. "But I don't care: this is a force-put with us. We don't want to place ourselves in the power of those savages. Yet we need their assistance,—assistance for which we will repay them well when 'The Curlew' comes,—if it comes. Now, I say it is best for us, and will be better for them, to have them do as we want them to while we are on their island." [262]

"In a word, you propose to make slaves of them," remarked Raed. "You mean to deprive them of their liberty."

"Yes, to a certain extent, I do."

"I am sorry to hear you talk in this way. I hoped no citizen of a free State would use language like that."

"Sorry to shock your sincere convictions," replied Kit; "but when it comes to making slaves of others, or being a slave myself, I should choose the former alternative always."

"But there's no such alternative in this case," Raed argued.

"Not exactly. Still I shall hold to my first opinion. If we are going to take supplies from them,—as it seems necessary that we should,—I think it will be better to have them under our control as long as we are here. You mistake me: I don't justify it from principle; but, as a temporary

measure, I think it expedient."

"So was it expedient for the old Romans to attack and capture Corinth and Carthage, and just as fair and right."

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"That merely shows how history repeats itself," laughed Kit.

"Don't laugh, sir!" cried Raed. "The principle is the same, as if, with a hundred thousand men at your back, you should land in England, and undertake to subdue that island instead of this."

"You have a very forcible way of putting things, I'll allow; but there's danger, Raed, of carrying general principles too far."

"For example," interrupted Wade. "Raed, with a number of other abolitionists, believed that all men ought to be free: so they kept to work stirring up bad feeling between the North and South till the war broke out, when they fell upon us with their armies and fleets, and committed the most wholesale piece of robbery that ever disgraced history,—robbed us of several billion dollars' worth of property, all at one swoop."

"To what sort of property do you refer?" Raed asked.

"Slaves."

"I thought so!"

"Then you are not disappointed in my 'principles,' as you choose to term them?"

"Not in the least!"

"I, at least, have never tried to conceal them."

"I should expect you to favor Kit's proposition; but I'm sadly surprised to hear Kit make it."

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"Understand me!" exclaimed Kit. "I advocate it merely as a temporary measure, only justified by our necessity. I mean to pay them for all we have. But we haven't the pay here. They wouldn't trust us for what we want. Under these circumstances, I mean to assume the control of their affairs for a few days or weeks, as the case may be, and get what we must have by force of authority—till we can pay."

"It's nothing more nor less than robbery, Kit!" cried Raed; "a mere subterfuge, in open violation of the free principles of the noble land we hail from!"

"Too bad, I know," said Kit; "but 'needs must where a *certain person* drives.'"

"Kit, you shock me! Do you not believe in an allwise Providence?"

"Generally speaking, yes."

"A Power that takes care of us?"

"Yes, again; but it's after a sort not very flattering to the personal vanity of us poor mortals."

"One would naturally suppose, that, situated as we are at present, where the prospect of our getting through the next six months is so poor, you would hesitate at provoking that Power by such an act as this you propose."

"Raed, that's all bosh! If you mean to ask me if I believe that there is a Power that will interfere miraculously to rescue us from freezing or starving here, I answer promptly, I do not. God doesn't work so. Persons have to take the consequences of their own acts in this world, now-a-days. And as regards tempting Providence by doing any thing of the sort I proposed,—tempting it to some act of vengeance on us,—bosh again! God doesn't work that way at all. Besides, to come back to the subject in hand, I've no conscientious scruples about it; for I believe it to be the best thing we can do."

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"I protest!" Raed exclaimed. "It is neither just nor right!"

"Well, how's this matter to be settled?" Wade demanded. "I suppose so rigid a republican as Raed will be willing to have it decided by vote?"

"Yes," said Raed, "though I lament the issue. Call our names, Kit. Those in favor of Kit's proposition will vote 'Yea;' those who believe it wrong will vote 'Nay.'"

Kit's voice trembled a little as he began.

"Raed?"

"Nay."

"Wash?"

"Nay."

"Wade?"

"Yea."

"Donovan?"

"Yea."

"Weymouth?"

"Yea."

"Not to include my own vote with the affirmative, there is a majority in favor of the measure we

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have just discussed," said Kit gravely.

"Please put it in words," said Raed.

"Why, we all know what I mean," replied Kit.

"But I want to hear it stated," insisted Raed.

"Well, then, there is a majority in favor of the temporary occupation and control of yonder island,—a measure justified by our necessity."

"You have put it very mildly," remarked Raed. "I should give it in very different terms. Kit, I am disgusted with this movement. I can't give it any sympathy whatever."

"You are not going to *secede*, I hope," sneered Wade.

"I am not," said Raed, turning in a passion. "I am, I hope, too good a patriot to be a secessionist, much less a *rebel*."

For a moment they looked straight at each other. Wade's eyes snapped, and his hands clinched.

"Here, here!—come, none of that!" exclaimed Kit, "or I'll thrash both of you. Wade, you are to blame. You said the first unkind thing. You ought to ask his pardon." [267]

"He needn't do that," said Raed. "I was to blame as well as he."

"Well, that's magnanimous!" exclaimed Wade, suddenly relenting. "Beg'e' pardon, old fellow! I was to blame."

And we all laughed, in spite of the qualms sticking in our throats.

CHAPTER XIV.

ToC

We set up a Military Despotism on "Isle Aktok."—"No Better than Filibusters!"—The Seizure of the Oomiak.—The Seal-Tax.—A Case of Discipline.—*Wutchee* and *Wunchee*.—The Inside of a Husky Hut.—"Eigh, Eigh!"—An Esquimau Ball.—A Funeral.—*Wutchee* and *Wunchee's* Cookery.—The Esquimau Whip.

"Raed, will you act as leader, or captain?" Kit asked.

"I decline," was the reply. "It is hardly fair to ask me, I think. That honor—if you look upon it as such—is clearly yours."

"Very well, then. All hands launch the boat!"

It was done.

"Load in the walrus-hides."

They were rolled up and thrown in.

"Ship the *spider* too."

I carried it aboard.

"Now each man spend fifteen minutes attending to his musket! Get off all rust! See that the locks move easily! Load them, and fix the bayonets!" [268]

This done, we called Guard, and embarked; not forgetting to take our dipper of salt, the walrus-tusks, and Wade's broken bayonet.

"Give 'way!" was the order.

Weymouth and Donovan dipped the oars; and we darted out from the little cove beneath the ledges where for seven days we had kept our camp-fire blazing. Kit took up a paddle, and from the stern directed our course toward the larger island.

"I can't see what better we are than any gang of desperadoes or filibusters," Raed remarked.

"Circumstances alter cases, Raed," replied Kit.

"Now, for God's sake, don't shed the blood of any of the poor wretches!" Raed said.

"Never fear: we will manage it without killing any of them, I guess."

On coming up within a quarter of a mile of the shore, we surveyed it carefully. There were none of the Esquimaux in sight, however, to oppose our landing; and the boat was rowed along to within four or five hundred yards of the place where the *oomiak* and *kayaks* had been drawn up on the shore. Landing, we drew up our boat between two large rocks, and went along to where [269]

the *oomiak* lay.

"What a great scow of a craft it is!" exclaimed Weymouth.

"Not less than thirty-five or forty feet long," Raed remarked.

"Seven feet wide, certain," said Wade.

"That's walrus-hide that it is covered with, I think," said Kit; "four or five hides sewed together. We might have our two sewed together for a tent."

"We'll have them do it for us after we've got our *dynasty* established," said Wade.

"Forward, now!" cried Kit.

We followed their trail up from their canoes; and, after crossing several ledgy ridges, at length espied their encampment, distant about half a mile from the water. It was in a hollow, surrounded by crags and rocks. The place had probably been chosen on account of its sheltered situation. It was doubtless an old haunt of theirs.

"Now form in line, boys," Kit requested, "and move on steadily!"

We did so, Guard walking soberly behind us. There were five tents of seal-skin clustered together near what we discovered to be a spring, or run, of water. Half a dozen Huskies were in sight, moving about the camp; and, the moment our approach was discovered, they came pouring out to the number of thirty or forty. As we came up, a few scattered, and ran off among the crags; but the greater part stood huddled together.

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"Now keep cool, boys!" Kit advised. "Don't fire in any case, unless I give the word,—except Wade. He may fire his musket in the air when we come close to them, by way of giving them a foretaste of what we can do."

When we had come up facing them to within three or four yards, Kit gave the order to halt. Wade fired his musket. The swarthy, long-haired crowd stared hard at us in perfect silence. Kit then advanced a little, and pointing to us, and then to himself, exclaimed in a loud voice,—

"*Cob-loo-nak!*" ("Englishmen!")

And, by way of giving emphasis to the announcement, he repeated it several times. Then, pointing off to the east and north, he said,—

"*Oomiak-sook!*" ("Big ship!")

And, when this had been duly repeated, he cried out,—

"*Chymo— aunay!*" ("The trade is far off!")

"Now the next thing is to seize the *oomiak*," said he.

"We will make them help as bring it up here. I'll detail a party for that purpose."

He now pointed off to the shore with the word *oomiak*, and, stepping up to one of the men, laid his hand on his shoulder, and made signs for him to go with us. The man, a stout, short fellow, seemed partly to comprehend his meaning, and rather reluctantly moved out from his fellows.

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"We shall want as many as seven or eight of them," remarked Wade.

"Form a ring around this one, then, while I get out another," said Kit.

But the second one backed off as Kit approached him, gesticulating, and shouting, "*Na-mick, na-mick!*" and, on Kit's laying his hand on his shoulder, he let out a "straight left" with considerable *vim*.

"Donovan," said Kit, "take hold of him!"

Don made a rush, and, clutching one hand into his hair, shook him about, tripped him up, and held the point of the butcher-knife at his throat. The savage howled and begged. With a single effort Donovan set him on his feet, and thrust him into the ring. The third, fourth, and fifth man came out at a mere tap on the shoulder. But the sixth—a little dark fellow—jumped back when Kit stepped up to him, and struck with a rough dagger-shaped weapon made of a walrus-tusk. Indeed, it was a wonder he had not stabbed him; for the movement was remarkably quick and cat-like. Donovan sprang forward; but Kit caught his arm, and dealt him a blow with his fist that sent him reeling to the ground. Don seized him by the collar of his bear-skin smock, and, with a twitch and a kick, sent him spinning into the ring. Several of the remaining men had run to their tents, and now re-appeared with harpoons in their hands. Kit took his musket, and, walking up to one of them, struck the dart out of his hand with a tweak of the bayonet, and then walked him along to the ring.

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"I guess seven will be enough," said Wade.

"Well, keep round them," replied Kit. "Don't let 'em get away from us. Ready! Forward, march!"

We turned to go down to the *oomiak*, and had proceeded a few steps, when some of the savages about the huts suddenly shouted "*Ka-ka, ka-ka!*" In an instant their dogs, which had been growling and prowling about all the time, rushed after us, barking madly. Guard was a little behind us. They set upon him like hungry wolves. Such a barking and snarling! Kit and Wade, who formed the rear-guard, ran to the rescue. Wade laid on them with the butt of his musket; while Kit, with his bayonet, gave several of the gaunt, wolfish curs thrusts which speedily changed their growls to yelps of agony. The savages cried out dismally. Exclamations of "*Mickee!*" "*Arkut mickee!*" "*Parut mickee!*" besought us not to kill them. They had set them on to

us, nevertheless. The dog riot suppressed, we moved on down to the shore. The *oomiak* was then turned bottom up, and the mast which had supported their sails thrust under it transversely about ten feet back of the bows. This mast was a stick of yellow pine, from Labrador probably, about fifteen feet long. It projected four or five feet on each side,—far enough for them to take hold to carry the *oomiak* on it. Wade ran out to our boat and brought one of the oars, which was thrust under, near the stern, in the same way. Kit then stationed six of the Huskies at the mast-pole forward, three on each side: the other he placed at the stern end of the scow. Weymouth took hold of one end of the paddle, and Donovan the other. Kit then made signs to the Huskies to lift at their pole. They raised it; and the sailors lifting the stern at the same time, and walking on, we had it fairly started. It was pretty heavy, however. The Esquimaux soon began to pant; seeing which, we had them set it down and rest every thirty or forty rods.

We were near an hour getting back to their huts. They had worked well. Their part of the load must have been somewhat over a hundred pounds per man, we thought.

"Better than niggers; a great deal better," Wade pronounced them. "I'm not sure that it wouldn't be a good plan to import them into the United States to work on our railroads."

"For slaves, I suppose," said Raed.

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"No; not for slaves. Now that slavery is fairly abolished, I am not much in favor of its re-establishment. Take them down to work for fair wages. Should as lief have them as to have the Chinese, and risk it."

"That makes me think," Kit remarked, "that I have read that some ethnologists think the Esquimaux are a branch of the Chinese nation."

"You would send vessels like the cooly ships up here to kidnap them, I suppose," Raed observed. "You could only carry them away by main force. They are too much attached to their bleak home to leave it voluntarily."

"Well, what of that," said Wade. "Don't be so dreadfully afraid to have a little force used! If it would permanently better their condition, why not bring the whole nation of them farther south by force. A horde of ignorant savages like these don't always know what's best for them, by a long sight. If all these polar tribes could be brought down into a milder climate, it would be vastly better for them. So of the ignorant, brutish negroes of Africa: if they could be got out of their barbarous haunts, and brought up into the latitude of New York and Paris, it would be vastly better for them; and they might be made to do something useful in the world. Millions of hands are lying idle in Africa, which, under proper direction, might be turned to some account, and made to contribute both to the world's progress and their own happiness. But, of course, such savage tribes will never move of their own accord: it remains for more enlightened nations to move them."

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"That's an argument for the re-opening of the slave-trade, I presume," Raed remarked.

"Oh, no! You judge me too severely. I meant just what I said; nothing more."

"If what Wade proposes could be done without violent usage, suffering, and injustice, I think it would be a great and good work," said Kit.

"Well, in that I agree with you fully," replied Raed; "but the trouble would be to find a nation or a company that would deal justly and humanely with such savages."

We let them rest an hour after bringing up the *oomiak*; then started them back to bring up our own boat, with our *spider* and walrus-skins. This took till nearly six o'clock, evening. The walrus-skins were then unrolled, and spread out on the ground.

"Now we want these sewed together," said Kit: "then we can pitch them on their *oomiak*-mast for a tent-pole."

Wade spread out the two skins so that the edges touched each other: then, beckoning to one of the men, he pointed first to the edges, next to the seams where the hide had been sewed on the *oomiak*, then off to the huts, pronouncing the word "*hennelay*" ("woman"). The savage understood him in a moment, and went off into the hut. Presently two chubby faces appeared at the doorway, but shrank back the moment we espied them. We could hear a great talking and urging going on inside. After a while, when we had gone to move the *oomiak* round so as to form one side of a sort of fort, they stole out, and came reluctantly along, the man following them, apparently to keep them from escaping. Seeing them approaching, Kit and Wade went to meet them, smiling and bowing, and pointing to the walrus-skins. They knew what was wanted, and fell to work to sew the two hides together, occasionally casting shy eyes toward us. What amused us was, that each was the exact counterpart of the other. They were just of a size, and of the same height. Face, features, and expression were identical. The man, who might possibly have been their father, but more probably their elder brother, saw our amazed looks, and said "*Bi-coit-suk*:" at least, it sounded like that. The meaning of the word we could only guess at. But, if *bi-coit-suk* does not mean twins, I am greatly mistaken. On questioning the man, using the word *kina*, and pointing to each, we learned, after he understood us, that one was named *Wutchee*, and the other *Wunchee*. The meanings of these words I have no need to translate: they were decidedly significant, and amused us a good deal. For sewing the hides together they used an awl of bone. The thread, which was of the sinew of some animal, was thrust through the awl-holes like a shoemaker's waxed-end, and drawn tight. When they had finished, Kit gave *Wutchee* (or *Wunchee*, for the life of me I couldn't tell which) a half-dozen pins from a round pin-ball he cherished, and three or four bright nickel five-cent bits. Wade then gave *Wunchee* (?) his pen-knife, and an old cuff-button he happened to have in his pocket. They accepted these presents as

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modest as you please; but it did seem a little droll to see them immediately fall to licking them all over with their tongues. They did not seem to act as if they considered the gifts fairly their own till they had *licked* them. We had not observed this practice among those who boarded us at the Middle Savage Isles; but with these the custom seemed a universal one among the women. Even if the gift were a rusty nail, they would lick it all the same. It is said that the mothers lick their young children over like she-bears. Wade also gave the man who had accompanied them the point of his broken bayonet. The fellow looked it over, and then, getting his harpoon, unslashed the bone blade, and substituted the bayonet-point in its place.

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"He seems to understand its use," Kit remarked. "Hope he won't experiment with it on us unawares."

The walrus-skins were then raised on the *oomiak* mast, the edges resting on the bottoms of our boat and the *oomiak*, placed on both sides. Stones laid along the edges held them in place. Not to be too near our *subjects* (for they were rather noisy, and smelled pretty strong of rancid fat), we had placed our tent about two hundred feet away from their huts. While the rest had been pitching the tent, Wade and Weymouth had constructed a rough arch of stones, and set our spider in the top of it as we had previously arranged it.

"Ready for the seal!" said Wade.

"They've got seal-blubber about their huts; I saw some of the young ones eating chunks of it," Donovan remarked.

Several of the men had come round where we were at work, and among them the little dark chap who had tried to stab Kit. Wade went along to him, and pointing to his own mouth, and then toward the mouths of the rest of us, said, "*Pussay*" ("Seal"). But the fellow was still sullen, and stared defiantly.

"Have to discipline him a little, I reckon," Kit muttered.

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Again Wade pronounced the word *pussay*, pointing off toward their huts.

"*Na-mick!*" exclaimed the Esquimau fractiously. "*Na-mick! Ik pee-o nar-kut bok!*" swinging his arms. "*Ik pee-o askut ammee pussay!*"

"Any idea what he said?" Wade asked, turning to Kit.

"No: but it was a refusal; I know by his actions.—Donovan, there's another job for you!"

Don went off a little to one side, and, working up toward him, made a sudden lunge, and had him by the hair in a twinkling. Such a shaking as the poor wretch got! Then, with a quick trip, Donovan laid him flat on his back, and, jerking out his big knife, began strapping it ominously on his boot-leg. Oh, how the terrified savage howled! Raed turned away in disgust. After frightening him nearly into fits with the knife, the stalwart sailor with a twitch threw him across his knee, and applied the flat of the butcher-knife to the seat of his seal-skin trousers with *reports* that must have been distinctly audible for a quarter of a mile. All the Huskies came rushing up, screaming and gesticulating. The dogs barked. There was a general uproar. After three or four dozen of these emphatic reminders of arbitrary power, Donovan set the shrieking wretch on his feet, and, still holding on to his hair, shouted in his face the word *pussay* a dozen times in a tone that might have been heard on the neighboring islands. Kit and Wade and Weymouth all fell to shouting the same word; catching the meaning of which, more than a dozen of the Huskies, men and women, ran to their huts, and brought pieces of seal-blubber to the amount of several hundred-weight. The little dark chap disappeared, and we saw no more of him for two days.

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"Now we want some eggs," said Kit. "What's the word for egg?"

"*Wau-ve*," Raed replied.

Wade then called *wau-ve* several times to the crowd. They ran off again, and in a few minutes returned with fifteen or twenty of the razor-bill's eggs; and a party immediately set off toward the cliffs for more.

"I admire their promptness," Kit observed, laughing.

"They are beginning to respect us," said Wade.

"But would it not have been far better to have come over here and asked them kindly for what we wanted?" Raed demanded.

"No," said Kit; "for we should not have got it."

"I don't know about that," replied Raed.

"I know we shouldn't," said Wade. "We should have got a square *na-mick* to start with; and I am inclined to believe they would have attacked us with their daggers and harpoons. Then we should have been obliged to kill a lot of them in self-defence. As it is, we haven't hurt anybody yet. A dose of spanks won't injure any of them, I'll warrant."

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"But this whole business is revolting,—to me, at least," Raed continued.

"Oh, I guess you will stand it!" laughed Kit. "But, Raed, if I were you, I wouldn't show quite so much of my righteous indignation. You want your supper as well as the rest of us."

"No doubt."

"Well, honestly, old fellow, I could not see any better way to get it for you."

"Well, I hoped never to eat a supper procured by slave-labor."

"You won't notice any great difference in the taste, I dare say," replied Wade.

Donovan was preparing splints from the old thwart, and covering them with the blubber in the arch. Ten or a dozen of the Esquimaux were looking on. When he struck a match on his sleeve, exclamations of wonder broke out. Matches were a novelty with them. From their strange looks, and glances toward each other, we concluded that they took us to be either great saints, or devils; most likely the latter, from the way we had previously deported ourselves. The eggs were fried, and eaten with a sprinkling of salt. A fire of seal-blubber was probably a very extravagant luxury in the eyes of our Husky subjects. They had no fire while we were with them, save their flickering stone lamps. Yet the use of cooked food seemed not to be wholly unknown among them. On several occasions we saw them boiling, or at least parboiling, a duck in a stone kettle over five or six of their lamps set together. They often gave food cooked in this way to their young children, and in cases where any of their number are sick. If wood were plenty, they would doubtless soon come to relish it best; since it is undoubtedly the scarcity of wood which has driven them to raw food.

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Whatever we did,—in our cooking, eating, and in all our movements,—we were sure of a curious and admiring crowd. There were, in all, thirty-seven of the Esquimaux on the island,—nine men and eleven women, adults: the remaining seventeen ranged from one to eighteen years apparently. So far as we could learn, they kept little or no record of their ages. One man, whom they called *Shug-la-wina*, seemed to exercise a sort of authority over the rest; but whether it was from any hereditary claim to power, or simply from the fact that he was rather larger in stature than the others, was not very clear. Another, the little dark chap whom Donovan had punished for his snappishness, was almost continually slapping and cuffing the rest about. His name was *Twee-gock*. Besides *Wutchee* and *Wunchee*, there were, of the girls, one named *Coonee*,—a very laughing little creature,—and another called *Iglooee* ("hut-keeper" or "house-keeper"). Neither of these was so large nor so handsome as *Wutchee* or *Wunchee*. The last two were Kit and Wade's favorites.

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They were quaint little creatures, just about four feet and a half in height; chubby, and rather fleshy; and would have weighed rising a hundred pounds, probably. Their faces were rather larger in proportion than our American girls, rounder and flatter; noses inclined to the pug order; eyes black, and pretty well drawn up at the inner corners; cheek-bones rather high, though their flesh prevented them from appearing disagreeably prominent; mouths large, showing large white teeth; ears big enough to hear well; hair black, straight, and occasionally pugged up behind; complexion swarthy, though, in their case, tolerably clear; feet very small; and hands sizable. Add to this description an ever-genial, pleased expression of countenance, with considerable sprightliness of manner dashed with something like *naïveté*; then picture them in trousers and jackets, with their hoods, and those irresistibly comical "tails,"—and you have *Wutchee* and *Wunchee*, the belles of our island kingdom.

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After our supper of eggs, of which they soon brought as many as seven or eight dozen, Raed proposed that we should take a look at the interior of some of their huts. So, leaving the two sailors with Guard on sentinel duty, we went along to the hut belonging to *Shug-la-wina*, and by signs expressed our desire to go in. He pulled aside the flap in front, and we stepped under. The tent-frame was of small sticks of the yellow pine, with a straight ridge-pole. Over the frame was thrown a covering of cured seal-skin or walrus-skin. A stone lamp, suspended by seal-skin thongs, hung at the farther end. It was burning feebly. The wick seemed to be of long fibers of moss. The lamp itself was simply an open bowl hollowed out of a stone, about the size of a two-quart measure. The oil was the fat of seals or walruses. On one side there was a quantity of fox-skins and bear-skins thrown down promiscuously. Upon these reclined *Shug-la-wina's* wife *Took-la-pok* and his daughter *Iglooee*. Kit made them a present of three pins each. On the other side of the hut there was stowed a sledge, with runners of bone firmly lashed together with thongs. On it was a stone pot, hollowed, like the lamp, out of a large stone. Several harpoons stood in the farther corner. A coil of thong lay on the sledge; also two whips with short handles of bone, but exceedingly long lashes,—not less than fifteen or twenty feet in length. There were lying about half a dozen tusks of the walrus, and, on a low stone shelf, a hundred-weight or more of seal-pork. We were turning to go out, when Wade pointed to the end of a bow and the heads of two arrows protruding from under the furs. Kit took them up; but *Shug-la-wina* very gravely took them from his hands, and returned them to their hiding-place. The bow was of some dark bone, I thought,—possibly whalebone; the bow-string of sinew; and the arrows of wood, but provided with rough iron heads. The sight of these iron heads surprised us a little, as well as the discovery in another hut of an English case-knife. That knife, doubtless, had a history. On going out, Wade took up one of the bear-skins, and pointed off to our tent.

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"*Abb*," replied the Esquimau, nodding.

We took it along with us. The other huts were much the same as *Shug-la-wina's*. We got a bear-skin from each. *Wutchee* and *Wunchee* gave us two. These skins, spread over a "shake-down" of moss, made us a very comfortable bed.

By this time it was past ten o'clock; and, after arranging for regular sentinel duty,—two hours in each watch,—we turned in on our bear-skins, save Weymouth, who had the first watch. But we were horribly disturbed by the incessant barking, growling, and fighting of their dogs. Such a set of vicious, snarling curs do not exist in any other quarter of the world, I hope. They were decidedly the most troublesome of our new subjects. Guard could not stir out away from us without being assaulted tooth and nail. Fights of from two to half a dozen combatants were in progress all night; and not only that night, but each succeeding night. Several times some one or other of the Huskies would rush out from their huts, and lay about them with their long whips,

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shouting "*Eigh, eigh, eigh!*" We could hear the whips snap, followed by piteous yelps and long-drawn howls. Then there would be silence for perhaps ten minutes: by that time another fight would be in full blast.

"What, for thunder sake, do they keep so many dogs for?" growled Donovan.

"To draw their sledges in winter," I heard Raed explaining to him....

[Seventeen pages, containing, as appears from the chapter-head, an account of an Esquimau ball, a funeral, also of *Wutchee's* and *Wunchee's* cookery, are here missing from the manuscript. The young author is now absent with the party in Brazil.—ED.]

Strange how these people can live without salt! They make no use of it with their food; eat fresh seal-blubber, mainly, all their lives. No wonder they look flabby! And yet they are a happy set; always laughing, joking, and badgering each other. Very likely their joys are not of a very high order: but I doubt whether civilization would make them much happier; though, according to the theory of us civilized folks, it ought to. They lead an easy life,—easy, in a savage way; though breaking up dog-fights does keep them pretty tolerably busy. To-day (Aug. 7) we had a perfect dog-war. Three or four of the ravening, howling curs assaulted Guard under the very flap of our tent. Donovan caught up a musket, and, running out, pinned one of them down with the bayonet, and held him for some seconds. On letting him up, the dog ran off howling, with the blood streaming out of him. Instantly all the rest set after him, barking like furies. Round and round the huts they went, all snarling and snapping at the wounded one. Presently out rushed old *Shug-la-wina* and *Twee-gock* with their whips, shouting "*Eigh, eigh!*" and laying about them. The ends of the thongs cracked like pistol-shots. The hair and hide flew up from the dogs' backs. As fast as one got a *crack*, he would leap up and run off, licking at the spot. How the boys laughed!

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"That's a savage weapon!" exclaimed Wade. "I should about as lief take a shot from a revolver as one of those 'cracks' on my bare skin. Moses, how it would sting!"

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"I don't believe it would hurt through anybody's thick coat," Donovan remarked.

"Humph! it would cut right through to a fellow's hide!" exclaimed Kit.

"Nonsense!"

"Bet you don't dare to let one of them crack at you!"

"I wouldn't let one of them snap at my back, for fear he would hit my ears or hands instead; but I had just as lief let him crack at my leg below my knee, under my boot-leg, as not."

"Agreed!"

Kit ran to get old *Shug-la-wina* with his whip.

"Bet my musket against yours that you can't stand three cracks on your boot-leg!" laughed Wade.

"I take it!" cried Donovan.

In a few minutes Kit came back with the old Esquimau and his whip. Signs were made; and Donovan raised his foot on a rock, exposing his boot-leg. The veteran Husky began to *yeh-yeh!* He understood. Standing off about twenty-five feet, he gathered the lash up; then, swinging the handle around his head, let the long thong go circling around him like a black snake. Faster and faster revolved the black gyres,—twenty times, I have no doubt. Presently he fetched a snap. The black thong shot out like lightning. *Thut!* A bit of the leather flew up, spinning in the air. Donovan caught away his leg with a profane exclamation. We crowded round. There was a hole in the boot-leg!

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"Gracious!" exclaimed Weymouth.

Don jerked off his boot. On the calf of his leg there was a mark about half an inch wide, and an inch or more in length, red as blood, and rapidly puffing up.

"Have another?" demanded Wade.

"Not much! One will do for me!"

We naturally picked up a good many words of their language; though of its structure—if it have any—we learned little. Other anxieties occupied our minds so fully, that we were not very attentive scholars. Like the Indians of our Territories, the Esquimaux seemed much addicted to running a whole sentence into a single word, or what sounded like it, of immense length. These sentence-words we could make very little of. But of their detached words, standing for familiar things, I add a vocabulary from such as I can now call to mind:—

Pillitay,

Give. Give me something.

Igloo,

A hut.

Igloo-ee,

A hut-keeper.

Wau-ve,

An egg.

Mickee,

A dog.

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<i>Tuk-tuk,</i>	A reindeer.
<i>Muck-tu,</i>	A caribou.
<i>Tuck-tu,</i>	Seal-blubber.
<i>Nenook,</i>	A bear.
<i>Chymo,</i>	Trade; barter.
<i>Eigh!</i>	Stop! Hold up! Get out!
<i>Karrack,</i>	Wood.
<i>Tyma,</i>	Good.
<i>Mai,</i>	Good.
<i>Negga-mai,</i>	Not good.
<i>Na-mick,</i>	No.
<i>Abb,</i>	Yes.
<i>Singipok,</i>	Sleep.
<i>Kayak,</i>	A canoe.
<i>Coonee,</i>	A kiss.
<i>Cobloo-nak,</i>	An Englishman.
<i>Pee-o mee-wanga,</i>	I want.
<i>Aunay,</i>	Far off.
<i>Ye-meck,</i>	Water.
<i>Hennelay,</i>	A woman.
<i>We-we,</i>	A white goose.
<i>Muck-mhameek,</i>	A knife.
<i>Kolipsut,</i>	A lamp.
<i>Pussay,</i>	A seal.
<i>Awak,</i>	A walrus.
<i>Ka-ka!</i>	Go 'long! St-'boy!
<i>Oomiak,</i>	A large boat.
<i>Oomiak-sook,</i>	A ship.
<i>Kannau-weet-ameg,</i>	A dart.
<i>Kina?</i>	What is it? What's that?
<i>Twau-ve!</i>	Begone! Leave!

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CHAPTER XV.

ToC

Winter at Hand.—We hold a Serious Council.—"Cold! oh, how Cold!"—A Midnight Gun.—The Return of "The Curlew."—"A J'yful 'Casion."—A Grand Distribution of Presents.—Good-by to the Husky Girls.—A Singular Savage Song.—We All get Sentimental.—Adieu to "Isle Aktok."—Homeward Bound.—We engage "The Curlew" and her Captain for Another Year.

Aug. 11.—Water froze last night nearly half an inch of ice. It seemed like December in our home latitude. All day the sky was hazy and cold, with driving mists. The wind blew from the north and north-west almost continually. A fortnight had made a great change in the weather. Summer seemed to be fast merging into winter. During the afternoon and evening we held a serious "council of war;" for all hope of the return of "The Curlew" was now well-nigh abandoned. After some discussion, it was voted to stay here on the island during the winter, rather than attempt either to get out of the straits in our boat, or reach Nain overland. During the morning *Shug-la-wina* had come to our tent, and pointed to the *oomiak* then off to the southward. We knew that it was to urge us to allow them to depart southward into Labrador. The question now arose with us, Should we allow them to go according to their habit? Raed thought we ought to let them go, and not subject them to the peril of a winter passed here on the island; but Kit and Wade opposed this proposition *in toto*.

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"Once on the mainland," said Kit, "and our control over them will cease. They would either desert us, or else be joined by numbers whom we should find it impossible to govern. Not an inch shall they budge from here while I stay."

And in this view he was supported by Wade and the sailors. Indeed, I voted to keep them with us myself. To let them go seemed suicidal.

"But they may all starve here before spring," Raed urged. "That would be terrible!"

"Well, we must take measures to see that they don't starve," replied Kit. "Now's our chance to show them the advantages of our administration. To-morrow we must begin a regular autumnal hunt. Every seal and every bear, and such of the sea-fowl as have not already flown, we must capture for winter-store. We must keep them at it sharp. There's no need of starving, if we manage rightly. To-morrow we will begin a regular hunt,—send out hunting-parties every day. Whatever is brought in we will take charge of, and deal out as they need."

"In case they were like to starve, a lot of these worthless dogs could be killed for them to eat," said Donovan. "It wouldn't hurt my feelings to slaughter the whole pack of them."

"It no need to come to that, if we manage rightly," replied Kit. [293]

Thus it was left. The only cause for immediate alarm was the ghastly fact, that we had only eleven cartridges remaining.

Toward evening it came on to snow. A dreary night settled down upon the island. But we lighted our Husky lamp [it would appear that they had procured a stone lamp from the Esquimaux], and made things as cheery as we could. For the past week we had given up sentinel-duty, save what Guard could do. There seemed no call for it. About ten we all lay down on our bear-skins, and, covering them over us, were soon comfortable. But, somehow, that night my head was full of dreams. I dreamed everything a fellow could well imagine, and a good many things no one ever could imagine awake. I went all over the stern experiences of the past two months. Again we were hunting bears in "Mazard's Bay." Again we were tossing amid the ice. At that stage of my fancies, the dogs probably got to fighting; for suddenly I was back on our desolate isle. It was mid-winter; cold! oh, how cold! The island was a mass of ice. *Wutchee* and *Wunchee* had frozen: we were all freezing. Suddenly one of the Company's ships hove in sight, sailing over the ice-fields, and began a bombardment of our island. They had found us at last, and now were about to shell us out, together with our miserable subjects. How their heavy guns roared! Their shells came dropping down with ruinous explosions. Then one came roaring into our tent. There was a moment of horrible suspense. The fuse tizzed. *Bang!* We were blown to atoms! [294]

I started. It had waked me,—something had. The lamp gave a sickly light. Kit was getting up too; so was Wade. I was already on my feet, near where we had stacked our guns.

"Did you fire a musket?" Kit demanded.

"What did you fire at?" exclaimed Wade.

Raed was rousing up; so were the sailors. I hastily disavowed any shooting on my part.

"Well, what was *that*, then?"

"Certainly heard something," said Wade.

"I thought some of you fired," Raed observed.

They were all a little suspicious of me.

"He fired one of those muskets in his sleep!" I heard Wade whisper to Kit as we pulled aside the flap of the tent to look out.

It was still snowing stormily. A cold, fine gust blew in our faces. A bleak, dim light rested on the whitened earth. It was half-past two, morning. Kit had turned back to the stack of muskets, to see if any of them had been discharged doubtless, when like a thunder-peal came the quick report of a cannon. It made us jump. Then in a moment we saw *it in each other's suddenly-brightening faces*. [295]

"The Curlew!" shouted Donovan.

Catching up our hats, and seizing each a musket, we rushed out into the storm. A dozen of the Esquimaux had come to the doors of their huts, jabbering. Without stopping to enlighten them, however, we pulled up our jacket-collars, and ran off toward the shore, stumbling over stones and blundering into holes in our headlong haste; Guard racing ahead, barking loudly.

In less than five minutes we had passed over the intervening half mile, and were coming out on the shore, where the snowy rocks stood dim-white and ghostly against the wild, black ocean, tumbling in with heavy swash and roar. So thick was the storm, and so dark was the air, that we could scarcely see a hundred yards in any direction. Bringing up among a lot of Husky *kayaks* lying amid the snow, we paused to listen. Momentarily a blaze of fire reddened the sea and the white flakes for a second, and the sharp report of our old howitzer shook the stormy air.

"Hurrah!" yelled Kit.

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

Crack, crack, crack, went the muskets!

"*Hurrah!*" came faintly from out the storm, a quarter of a mile off.

We danced, we capered, at the risk of our necks, among the slippery *kayaks*. We fairly hooted for joy. [296]

"Have you got the boat there?" hailed Capt. Mazard with the trumpet. "Will you come off now?"

"Boat laid up!" shouted Kit. "Wait till light!"

"All right!" was the reply.

Nothing more could be done then. We went back to our tent.

"I suppose we ought to help the Huskies get their *oomiak* back to the water," Kit remarked.

"Yes; it would be a rather hard job for them alone," said Wade.

Shug-la-wina came peeping into the tent with an inquiring look.

"*Oomiak-sook!*" Kit said, pointing off to the sea.

He *yeh-yehed*, and went away.

"We must make it up to these poor people all we can," said Kit.

"We'll make them such a present as they never saw before!" Raed exclaimed.

It was already growing light. We pulled down our tent to get out the *oomiak*-mast; and mustering the men, all of them, got the *oomiak* on the mast-pole and the oars, as before, and carried it back to the shore. There was no resistance now. They were all *yeh-yeh-ing* and *heh-heh-ing*. This took about an hour. We then carried our own boat down in the same way. The whole population followed us. By this time it was broad daylight. The storm had slackened to a few straggling flakes. There lay "The Curlew," stern to the shore, headed to the wind, off five or six hundred yards. We could not resist the temptation of jumping into the boat and pulling out to her instantly. How beautiful she looked to us! Why, I do believe we could have imitated poor little *Wutchee* and *Wunchee*, standing back there on the snowy ledges, and licked the schooner all over! We came up under the side. Such a cheer! Capt. Mazard's honest, brave face glowing with pleasure, and all the rest of the crew hearty with rough affection! 'Twas a sight to do a fellow's eyes good.

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"Boys, this is hunky!"

"Well, ain't it, captain?"

"You're all there, aren't ye? Well, how do you do?" helping us over the rail. "You don't look as if you had starved."

"Starved?—no! Catch us starving! We've got a whole tribe to back us. But Bonney, old boy, what's the matter with your arm?" exclaimed Kit.

"Oh! nothing very bad," replied Bonney, laughing and looking to the captain.

"Splinter hit him," said Capt. Mazard significantly.

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"You don't say!" Kit exclaimed. "Did they come so near you as that?"

"So near's that!" blustered old Trull. "Guess you'd 'a' said so! Why, look at the after-bulwarks! and look at the windlass!"

The taffrail was gone, sure enough, and the stern bulwarks broken and patched up down to the deck. The windlass was torn up too.

"Whew!" from all of us.

"Only one shot hit us," explained the captain. "Glanced up from the water through the stern, knocked up the taffrail, and then went forward: just missed the mast, but hit the windlass. Haven't been able to anchor since."

"Well, I'll be blamed!" exclaimed Wade. "Hurt you much, Bonney?"

"Broke his arm!" said the captain.

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, sir. But we've set it; and it's doing well, I think."

"Well, you must have been short-handed here!" cried Donovan.

"Bet you, we have been! Had to have Palmleaf on deck half the time. We've made quite a sailor of him."

We all praised the darky. Even Wade cried, "Well done, old snowball! How's that under your wool?"

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"I tinks," said the negro, grinning all over, "dat dis am a bery j'yful 'casion!"

"So 'tis!"

"But how far did they chase you?" Raed inquired.

"Clean out into the Atlantic," replied Capt. Mazard. "I should have given them a circular race about that ice-island where we were when 'The Rosamond' fired into us; but the tide has broken up the ice there now. We've come back just as quick as we could. But how have you fared? Why, I've had dismal fears of finding only one or two of you alive, devouring the bodies of the rest."

We thereupon gave the captain a brief account of our sojourn on the island, and how we had managed the Huskies.

"That only demonstrates that you are natural-born sovereign Yankees," remarked the captain, laughing heartily.

"But you must come ashore and see our *subjects!*" exclaimed Kit.

"I'll do it!"

"But not before you've ben ter brackfus', sar?" said Palmleaf. "Coffee all hot, sar."

"Bully for you, Palmleaf!" shouted Weymouth. "Don't care if I do!"

"It seems an age since I last tasted coffee," said Raed.

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That we did justice to Palmleaf's coffee and buttered muffins I have no need to assure the reader.

Breakfast over, we went back to our island, taking the captain along, and Hobbs in the place of Weymouth. The savages were gathered on the shore, watching the *oomiak-sook* rather disconsolately; for, roughly as we had used them, I think they had somehow gotten up a regard for us. Seeing us coming toward the shore again, they began to shout and hop about in a most extravagant manner. Landing, we sent the boat back after the iron, knives, flannel, etc. We then took the captain with us to see their huts and our walrus-skin tent. We had thoughts of taking the hides away with us; but as they were very heavy, and withal emitted a rather disagreeable odor, we finally gave them to *Shug-la-wina*. Our *spider*, off which we had eaten so many fried eggs and broiled ducks, we left set in our arch.

The captain was formally presented to *Wutchee* and *Wunchee*, and bowed very low. Their little black eyes sparkled; but, at a nod from Kit, they bowed in turn,—lower than the captain even: so that, on the whole, the ceremony was a rather grotesque one.

"But, my stars!" exclaimed Capt. Mazard, turning to us. "Which is which? Twins, to a dead certainty!"

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"*Bi-coit-suk*," replied Wade.

Shortly after, we went back to the beach, making signs for them all to follow, which they did; our fair twins smiling on the arms of two of our party, whose names we forbear to give. The boat had come. A general distribution of presents was the next thing in order. To each of the men we gave a long bar of iron. Their exclamations of surprise and delight were only surpassed by those of the women when we gave them each two yards of red flannel. We next gave to each one of them a jack-knife; then to each one of the women a butcher-knife, for cutting up their seals. They were in ecstasies. Kit then gave a hatchet to each man and each boy. Raed gave to *Shug-la-wina* an extra knife for one of his dog-whips, which he wished to keep for a curiosity; and Kit gave to little *Twee-gock* an extra knife and hatchet for the walrus-tusk dagger with which he had tried to stab him. The little dark chap was too much astonished at that to do anything but stare.

The boat was then sent back after a load of four-foot wood, and returned, bringing each one a stick. Nothing else seemed wanting to make the poor creatures regard us as objects worthy of worship. Meanwhile the pretty twins, and also *Igloo-ee* and *Coo-nee*, were not forgotten by any means. Kit and Wade had brought off for each of them a green pea-jacket; which, considering the fact that they wore jackets, were not incongruous gifts. Then there were scarfs, scarf-pins, and big darning-needles; in short, a most munificent variety of presents: for though we must needs pronounce Kit and Wade a trifle unscrupulous in their way of getting possession of the island, yet they were now princely in their generosity.

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The captain now got into the boat: Raed and I followed him. Wade turned to the girls, pointing to himself, then off to the schooner, and, shaking his head, said, "*Annay, annay!*" Kit did the same. They then both shook hands with them, shaking their heads all the time very mournfully, and still repeating the sad "*Annay!*" It is no poetic fiction to add, that the little black eyes of the pretty savages were glistening with tears. Kit and Wade then got into the boat, and we shoved off amid sorrowful cries from the entire group.

"Hold on a bit!" said Raed. "I like to observe them now their feelings are wrought upon."

The sailors stopped rowing, and the boat was allowed to lie at about twenty yards from the beach, while Wade sang "*Dixie*" in his rich, clear voice. We then waved our hands to them slowly and sorrowfully. Immediately little *Coo-nee*, with *Wutchee* and *Wunchee* and *Igloo-ee*, took their white bird-skin gloves from their boots, and drew them on. Then, coming down where the waves touched their feet, they raised their hands slowly, and began a low, clear chant. At the end of what appeared to be a stanza, the group on the shore behind them joined in a sort of chorus resembling the words *Amna-ah-ya, amna-amna-ah-ya*. The girls then began another stanza, extending their hands downward toward the sea, waving them slowly to and fro together. The chorus was then repeated. Their hands and faces were next directed, during a third stanza, to the west; then toward the far east. Finally they raised them to the sky, and, chanting clear and earnestly, seemed to be imploring the blessing of Heaven on us now departing from them over the wild seas. Kit took off his cap; and we all followed his example, as if impelled to it. It was really an affecting incident. Our hardy captain is not a soft-hearted man; but I saw him wipe a tear from his eye as the chant ceased. I have not sought to color the picture. There was a wonderful pathos about it. We had not heard the song before; and I am inclined to believe it *extempore*,—one of those musical efforts which persons in what we term the savage state will sometimes make when their feelings are touched by new and strange influences. Even after the song had ceased, the girls, as if under its spell, stood holding out their white hands to us. I can hardly express how much we were moved by it all. Farewell is, as we all know, a hard word to say. But we were leaving them forever; and the dark storm-clouds, the icy sea, and snowy ledges, seemed a pitiless fate for those whose voices had such power to touch our feelings. What if they were savage Huskies: they had human hearts, with all the beautiful possibilities of souls that might be made undying.

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"Give 'way!" ordered the captain.

We went off with them gazing sadly after us in silence. Kit and Wade were in the bow, talking.

"Why need we leave them here?" I overheard Wade ask.

"Oh, nonsense, Wade!" said Kit.

"But to leave them to the cruel elements!" Wade whispered.

"Yes—I know—but they're happier here than they would be—in—in some great cotton-factory at home."

"Too true," Wade sighed, and fell to softly whistling "Dixie."

"I suppose," said the captain as we got aboard, "that it will be too late to get into Hudson Bay farther this season."

"Yes," replied Raed: "we are all a little home-sick, I expect. Let's go home."

The boat was taken up, and the schooner brought round. The sails swelled out in the stormy wind. "The Curlew" stood away, down the straits.

"Adieu to Isle Aktok!" cried Kit, looking off toward the snowy island. "Our reign ends here; but no one can say that we have not been kings in our day."

We were five days going out to the Atlantic. During most of that time, the wind blew hard and cold. We were glad to keep snug as we could in the cabin. The ice collected along the water-line of the schooner to the depth of several inches.

With the exception of a heavy gale of seventeen hours' duration while off Halifax, our voyage home to Boston was, though tedious, quite uneventful,—the mere monotony of the ocean, which has been so often and so well described.

Arrived in Boston harbor on the forenoon of the 9th of September. Raed went up to the bank where we had deposited our bonds, and, effecting an exchange of \$1,600 worth, came back to pay off our men; viz.:—

Capt. Mazard, three months and a half,	\$350
The six sailors, three months each,	720
Palmleaf, three months,	90
Schooner,	300
Damage done by shot,	100
	<hr/>
In all,	\$1,560
Then the expense of outfit,	1,100
	<hr/>
Giving a total, for the voyage, of	\$2,660

The remaining \$40 from the \$1,600 we gave to Bonney in consideration of the wound received in our service.

"Wish that splinter had hit me!" laughed Donovan.

"Go with us next summer, and we will give you a chance for *one*," replied Kit.

"Do you really think of going up there another season?" said Capt. Mazard.

"Not into Hudson Straits, perhaps," replied Raed. "But we are going north again next spring. And, captain, I wish we might again be able to secure your services as well as those of the crew. 'The Curlew' just suits us. We have got her fitted up for our purpose. We intended to have built a schooner-yacht; but, if you will put a price on 'The Curlew,' we will consider it with a view to buying her."

Capt. Mazard was unwilling, however, to sell his vessel.

"But I will make you this proposition," said he: "I will place 'The Curlew,' with my own services as captain, at your disposal,—you to pay all expenses,—for the sum of fifteen hundred dollars per annum."

We went below to consult.

"I don't believe we could do better," remarked Kit. "It will relieve us of all the cares of building and ownership."

We were unanimous in that opinion, and immediately closed with the captain's offer.

Our big rifle, howitzer, in short, all our property, has been left on board. The services of Palmleaf, as cook, have been retained; and during the fall, thus far (Nov. 16), we have been making the schooner our floating home, off and on. We have got a good anchorage off from the wharves. Occasionally we make a short trip down the bay, and go on board to have dinner, chat, read, and write, at pleasure. Indeed, this humble narrative has been recorded mostly on board, sitting at the table-shelf in our "saloon." We all like the arrangement, and cheerfully recommend it to young gentlemen of similar tastes.

Typographical errors corrected in text:

Page 56: companion-way replaced with companion-way

Page 106: dulness replaced with dullness

The term Esquimau is the singular form of Esquimaux, though the author is sometimes inconsistent with its' usage.

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