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Author: R. M. Ballantyne

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE COXSWAIN'S BRIDE; ALSO, JACK FROST AND SONS; AND, A DOUBLE RESCUE ***

R.M. Ballantyne

"The Coxswain's Bride"

Story 1 -- Chapter 1.

The Rising Tide—A Tale of the Sea.

The coxswain went by the name of Sturdy Bob among his mates. Among the women of the village he was better known as handsome Bob, and, looking at him, you could not help seeing that both titles were appropriate, for our coxswain was broad and strong as well as good-looking, with that peculiar cast of features and calm decided manner which frequently distinguish the men who are born to lead their fellows.

Robert Massey, though quite young, was already a leader of men—not only by nature but by profession—being coxswain of the Greyton lifeboat, and, truly, the men who followed his lead had need to be made of good stuff, with bold, enthusiastic, self-sacrificing spirits, for he often led them into scenes of wild—but, hold! We must not forecast.

Well, we introduce our hero to the reader on a calm September evening, which blazed with sunshine. The sun need not have been mentioned, however, but for the fact that it converted the head of a fair-haired fisher-girl, seated beside Bob, into a ball of rippling gold, and suffused her young cheeks with a glow that rudely intensified her natural colour.

She was the coxswain's bride-elect, and up to that date the course of their true love had run quite smoothly in spite of adverse proverbs.

"I can't believe my luck," said Bob, gravely.

He said most things gravely, though there was not a man in Greyton who could laugh more heartily than he at a good joke.

"What luck do you mean, Bob?" asked Nellie Carr, lifting her eyes from the net she was mending, and fixing them on the coxswain's bronzed face with an air of charming innocence. Then, becoming suddenly aware of what he meant without being told, she gave vent to a quick little laugh, dropped her eyes on the net, and again became intent on repairs.

"To think," continued Bob, taking two or three draws at his short pipe—for our hero was not perfect, being, like so many of his class, afflicted with the delusion of tobacco!—"to think that there'll be no Nellie Carr to-morrow afternoon, only a Mrs Massey! The tide o' my life is risin' fast, Nellie—almost at flood now. It seems too good to be true—"

"Right you are, boy," interrupted a gruff but hearty voice, as a burly fisherman "rolled" round the stern of the boat in front of which the lovers were seated on the sand. "W'en my Moggie an' me was a-coortin' we thought, an' said, it was too good to be true, an' so it was; leastwise it was too true to be good, for Moggie took me for better an' wuss, though it stood to reason I couldn't be both, d'ee see? an' I soon found her wuss than better, which—"

"Come, come, Joe Slag," cried Bob, "let's have none o' your ill-omened growls to-night. What brings you here?"

"I've comed for the key o' the lifeboat," returned Slag, with a knowing glance at Nellie. "If the glass ain't tellin' lies we may have use for her before long."

Massey pulled the key from his pocket, and gave it to Slag, who was his bowman, and who, with the exception of himself, was the best man of the lifeboat crew.

"I'll have to follow him," said Bob, rising soon after his mate had left, "so good-bye, Nellie, till to-morrow."

He did not stoop to kiss her, for the wide sands lay before them with fisher-boys playing thereon—apparently in their fathers' boots and sou'-westers—and knots of observant comrades scattered about.

"See that you're not late at church to-morrow, Bob," said the girl, with a smile and a warning look.

"Trust me," returned Bob.

As he walked towards the lifeboat-house—a conspicuous little building near the pier—he tried to blow off some of the joy in his capacious breast by whistling.

"Why, Slag," he exclaimed on entering the shed, "I do believe you've been an' put on the blue ribbon!"

"That's just what I've done, Bob," returned the other. "I thought you'd 'ave noticed it at the boat; but I forgot you could see nothin' but the blue of Nellie's eyes."

"Of course not. Who'd expect me to see anything else when I'm beside *her*?" retorted Bob. "But what has made you change your mind? I'm sure the last time I tried to get you to hoist the blue-peter ye were obstinate enough—dead against it."

"True, Bob; but since that time I've seed a dear woman that I was fond of *die* from drink, an' I've seed Tom Riley, one of our best men, get on the road to ruin through the same; so I've hoisted the blue flag, as ye see."

"That's a good job, Slag, but don't you forget, my lad, that the blue ribbon won't save you. There's but *one* Saviour of men. Nevertheless, it's well to fight our battles under a flag, an' the blue is a good one—as things go. Show your colours and never say die; that's my motto. As you said, Slag, the glass *is* uncommon low to-day. I shouldn't wonder if there was dirty weather brewin' up somewhere."

The coxswain was right, and the barometer on that occasion was a true prophet. The weather which "brewed up" that evening was more than "dirty," it was tempestuous; and before midnight a tremendous hurricane was devastating the western shores of the kingdom. Many a good ship fought a hard battle that night with tide and tempest, and many a bad one went down. The gale was short-lived but fierce, and it strewed our western shores with wreckage and corpses, while it called forth the energies and heroism of our lifeboat and coastguard men from north to south.

Driving before the gale that night under close-reefed topsails, a small but well-found schooner came careering over the foaming billows from the regions of the far south, freighted with merchandise and gold and happy human beings. Happy! Ay, they were happy, both passengers and crew, for they were used by that time to facing and out-riding gales; and was not the desired haven almost in sight—home close at hand?

The captain, however, did not share in the general satisfaction. Out in "blue water" he feared no gale, but no one knew better than himself that the enemy was about to assail him at his weakest moment—when close to land. No one, however, could guess his thoughts as he stood there upon the quarter-deck, clad in oil-skins, drenched with spray, glancing now at the compass, now at the sails, or at the scarce visible horizon.

As darkness deepened and tempest increased, the passengers below became less cheerful, with the exception of one curly-haired little girl, whose exuberant spirit nothing could quell. Her young widowed mother had given in to the little one's importunities, and allowed her to sit up late on this the last night at sea, to lend a helping hand while she packed up so as to be ready for landing next day. Consent had been the more readily given that the white-haired grandfather of little Lizzie volunteered to take care of her and keep her out of mischief.

The other passengers were as yet only subdued, not alarmed. There were men and women and little ones from the Australian cities, rough men from the sheep farms, and bronzed men from the gold mines. All were busy making preparations to land on the morrow. With the exception of those preparations things on board went on much as they had been going on in "dirty weather" all the voyage through.

Suddenly there was a crash! Most of the male passengers, knowing well what it meant, sprang to the companion-ladder—those of them at least who had not been thrown down or paralysed—and rushed on deck. Shrieks and yells burst forth as if in emulation of the howling winds. Crash followed crash, as each billow lifted the doomed vessel and let her fall on the sands with a shock that no structure made by man could long withstand. Next moment a terrific rending overhead told that one, or both, of the masts had gone by the board. At the same time the sea found entrance and poured down hatchways and through opening seams in cataracts. The inclined position of the deck showed that she was aground.

The very thought of being *aground* comforted some, for, to their minds, it implied nearness to land, and *land* was, in their idea, safety. These simple ones were doomed to terrible enlightenment. Little Lizzie, pale and silent from terror, clung to her grandfather's neck; the young widow to his disengaged arm. With the other arm the old man held on to a brass rod, and prevented all three from being swept to leeward, where several of the women and children were already struggling to escape from a mass of water and wrecked furniture.

"Come on deck—all hands!" shouted a hoarse voice, as one of the officers leaped into the cabin, followed by several men, who assisted the people to rise.

It is usual to keep passengers below as much as possible in such circumstances, but the position of the schooner, with her bow high on a bank, and her stern deep in the water, rendered a different course needful on this occasion.

With difficulty the passengers were got up to the bow, where they clustered and clung about the windlass and other

points of vantage. Then it was that the true nature of their calamity was revealed, for no land was visible, nothing was to be seen around them but a hell of raging foam, which, in the almost total darkness of the night, leaped and glimmered as if with phosphoric light. Beyond this circle of, as it were, wild lambent flame, all was black, like a wall of ebony, from out of which continually there rushed into view coiling, curling, hoary-headed monsters, in the shape of roaring billows, which burst upon and over them, deluging the decks, and causing the timbers of the ship to writhe as if in pain.

"We've got on the tail o' the sands," muttered a sailor to some one as he passed, axe in hand, to cut away the wreckage of the masts, which were pounding and tugging alongside.

On the sands! Yes, but no sands were visible, for they had struck on an outlying bank, far from shore, over which the ocean swept like the besom of destruction.

It was nearly low water at the time of the disaster. As the tide fell the wreck ceased to heave. Then it became possible for the seamen to move about without clinging to shrouds and stanchions for very life.

"Fetch a rocket, Jim," said the captain to one of the men.

Jim obeyed, and soon a whizzing line of light was seen athwart the black sky.

"They'll never see it," muttered the first mate, as he got ready another rocket. "Weather's too thick."

Several rockets were fired, and then, to make more sure of attracting the lifeboat men, a tar-barrel, fastened to the end of a spar, was thrust out ahead and set on fire. By the grand lurid flare of this giant torch the surrounding desolation was made more apparent, and at the fearful sight hearts which had hitherto held up began to sink in despair.

The mate's fears seemed to be well grounded, for no answering signal was seen to rise from the land, towards which every eye was anxiously strained. One hour passed, then another, and another, but still no help came. Then the tide began to rise, and with it, of course, the danger to increase. All this time rockets had been sent up at intervals, and tar-barrels had been kept burning.

"We had better make the women and children fast, sir," suggested the mate, as a heavy mass of spray burst over the bulwarks and drenched them.

"Do so," replied the captain, gathering up a coil of rope to assist in the work.

"Is this necessary?" asked the widow, as the captain approached her.

"I fear it is," he replied. "The tide is rising fast. In a short time the waves will be breaking over us again, and you will run a chance of bein' swept away if we don't make you fast. But don't despair, they must have seen our signals by this time, an' we shall soon have the lifeboat out."

"God grant it," murmured the widow, fervently, as she strained poor little trembling Lizzie to her breast.

But as the moments flew by and no succour came, some gave way altogether and moaned piteously, while others appeared to be bereft of all capacity of thought or action. Many began to pray in frantic incoherence, and several gave vent to their feelings in curses. Only a few maintained absolute self-possession and silence. Among these were the widow and one or two of the other women.

They were in this condition when one of the crew who had been noted as a first-rate singer of sea songs, and the "life of the fo'c's'l," had occasion to pass the spot where the passengers were huddled under the lee of the starboard bulwarks.

"Is there never a one of ye," he asked, almost sternly, "who can pray like a Christian without screechin'? You don't suppose the Almighty's deaf, do you?"

This unexpected speech quieted the noisy ones, and one of the women, turning to a man beside her, said, "You pray for us, Joe."

Joe was one of those who had remained, from the first, perfectly still, except when required to move, or when those near him needed assistance. He was a grave elderly man, whose quiet demeanour, dress, and general appearance, suggested the idea of a city missionary—an idea which was strengthened when, in obedience to the woman's request, he promptly prayed, in measured sentences, yet with intense earnestness, for deliverance—first from sin and then from impending death—in the name of Jesus. His petition was very short, and it was barely finished when a wave of unusual size struck the vessel with tremendous violence, burst over the side and almost swept every one into the sea. Indeed, it was evident that some of the weaker of the party would have perished then if they had not been secured to the vessel with ropes.

It seemed like a stern refusal of the prayer, and was regarded as such by some of the despairing ones, when a sudden cheer was heard and a light resembling a great star was seen to burst from the darkness to windward.

"The lifeboat!" shouted the captain, and they cheered with as much hearty joy as if they were already safe.

A few minutes more and the familiar blue and white boat of mercy leaped out of darkness into the midst of the foaming waters like a living creature.

It was the boat from the neighbouring port of Brentley. Either the storm-drift had not been so thick in that direction

as in the neighbourhood of Greyton, or the Brentley men had kept a better look-out. She had run down to the wreck under sail. On reaching it—a short distant to windward—the sail was lowered, the anchor dropped, the cable payed out, and the boat eased down until it was under the lee of the wreck. But the first joy at her appearance quickly died out of the hearts of some, who were ignorant of the powers of lifeboats and lifeboat men, when the little craft was seen at one moment tossed on the leaping foam till on a level with the ship's bulwarks, at the next moment far down in the swirling waters under the mizzen chains; now sheering off as if about to forsake them altogether; anon rushing at their sides with a violence that threatened swift destruction to the boat; never for one instant still; always tugging and plunging like a mad thing. "How can we ever get into that?" was the thought that naturally sprang into the minds of some with chilling power.

Those, however, who understood the situation better, had more legitimate ground for anxiety, for they knew that the lifeboat, if loaded to its utmost capacity, could not carry more than half the souls that had to be saved. On becoming aware of this the men soon began to reveal their true characters. The unselfish and gentle made way for the women and children. The coarse and brutal, casting shame and every manly feeling aside, struggled to the front with oaths and curses, some of them even using that false familiar motto, "Every man for himself, and God for us all!"

But these received a check at the gangway, for there stood the captain, revolver in hand. He spoke but one word—"back," and the cravens slunk away. The mild man who had offered prayer sat on the ship's bulwarks calmly looking on. He understood the limited capacity of the boat, and had made up his mind to die.

"Now, madam, make haste," cried the mate, pushing his way towards the widow.

"Come, father," she said, holding out her hand; but the old man did not move.

"There are more women and little ones," he said, "than the boat can hold. Good-bye, darling. We shall meet again—up yonder. Go."

"Never!" exclaimed the widow, springing to his side. "I will die with you, father! But here, boatman, save, oh, save my child!"

No one attended to her. At such terrible moments men cannot afford to wait on indecision. Other women were ready and only too glad to go. With a sense almost of relief at the thought that separation was now impossible, the widow strained the child to her bosom and clung to her old father.

At that moment the report of a pistol was heard, and a man fell dead upon the deck. At the last moment he had resolved to risk all and rushed to the side, intending to jump into the boat.

"Shove off," was shouted. The boat shot from the vessel's side. The bowman hauled on the cable. In a few seconds the oars were shipped, the anchor was got in, and the overloaded but insubmersible craft disappeared into the darkness out of which it had come.

The wretched people thus left on the wreck knew well that the boat could not make her port, land the rescued party, and return for them under some hours. They also knew that the waves were increasing in power and volume with the rising water, and that their vessel could not survive another tide. Can we wonder that most of them again gave way to despair—forgetting that with God "all things are possible?"

They were not yet forsaken, however. On the pier-head at Greyton their signals had indeed been observed, but while the Brentley boat, owing to its position, could run down to the wreck with all sail set, it was impossible for that of Greyton to reach it, except by pulling slowly against wind and tide.

The instant that Bob Massey saw the flare of the first tar-barrel he had called out his men. One after another they came leaping over the rocks—eager for the God-like work of saving life.

It is one of the grand characteristics of our lifeboatmen that on being summoned to the fight there are often far more volunteers than are required. Joe Slag, as in duty bound, was first to answer the call. Then several of the younger men came running down. Last of all—almost too late—Tom Riley appeared, buckling on his lifebelt as he ran. His gait was not quite steady, and his face was flushed. The coxswain was quick to note these facts.

"Take that lifebelt off!" he said, sternly, when Riley came up.

No need to ask why. The tippler knew the reason why only too well, and he also knew that it was useless as well as dangerous to disobey the coxswain. He took off the belt at once, flung it down, and staggered away back to his grog-shop.

A powerful young fisherman—who had felt almost heart-broken by being refused permission to go for want of room—gladly put on the belt and took Riley's place. Another minute and they were out of the harbour, battling with the billows and fighting their way inch by inch against the howling blast. At last they got out so far that they could hoist sail and run with a slant for the wreck.

Story 1 -- Chapter 2.

It was daylight by the time the Greyton lifeboat arrived at the scene of action, but the thick, spray-charged atmosphere was almost as bad to see through as the blackness of night.

"I'm afeared she's gone," shouted Slag to the coxswain, putting his hand to his mouth to prevent the words being blown bodily away.

"No—I see her bearing sou'-west," was the brief reply, as Bob Massey plied his steering oar.

A few minutes later, and the despairing people on the wreck, catching sight of the boat, greeted her with a long, wild cheer of reviving hope.

"What is it?" asked the widow, faintly, for she had been growing gradually weaker from prolonged exposure.

"The lifeboat, darling," said her father. "Did I not say that He would not forsake us?"

"Thank God!" murmured the poor woman, fervently. "Look up, Lizzie; the lifeboat is coming to save us!"

The child, who had been comparatively warm and sheltered, at the expense of her mother, looked up and smiled.

Soon the boat was alongside, and much the same scene that we have already described was re-enacted; but there were no rebels this time. By the captain's resolute bearing at first many lives had probably been saved.

When most of the people had been lowered into the boat—not without great risk and many bruises—the widow, who, cowering with her father and child under the fore-castle, had been overlooked, was led to the side with her child.

"Not together, ma'am," said the captain. "You'd likely drop her. Let me lower the child down first; or come first yourself—that will be better."

"Give Lizzie to me," said the grandfather. "I'll hold her till you are safe, and ready to receive her."

"Look alive, ma'am," urged one of the lifeboat men, who had scrambled on deck to render assistance.

The widow was soon in the boat, and held out her arms for little Lizzie. Somehow—no one could tell how—the men made a bungle of it. Perhaps the very fear of doing so was the cause. Instead of being caught by the boatmen, Lizzie slipped between the boat and the vessel into the boiling sea. Giving one agonised cry, the grandfather leaped after her, but the surging boat swept in at the moment, and the old man fortunately fell into that instead of the sea. He was not hurt, for strong arms had been upraised to receive him. The little child rose above the foam as she was whirled past the stern of the boat by a swift current. Bob Massey saw her little out-stretched arms. There was no time for thought or consideration. With one bound the coxswain was overboard. Next moment the crew saw him far astern with the child in his arms.

"Get 'em all aboard *first!*" came back, even against the wind, in Bob's powerful, deep-toned voice.

Another moment, and he was lost to sight in the boiling waste of waters. Slag knew well what he meant. If they should cast off the rope before rescuing all, for the purpose of picking up the coxswain, there would be no possibility of getting back again to the schooner, for she was fast breaking up. Every current and eddy about these sands was well known to Joe Slag, also the set of the tides—besides, had not Bob got on his lifebelt? He felt, nevertheless, that it was a tremendous risk to let him go. But what could poor Slag do? To cast off at once would have been to sacrifice about a dozen lives for the sake of saving two. It was a fearful trial. Joe loved Bob as a brother. His heart well nigh burst, but it stood the trial. He did his duty, and held on to the wreck!

Duty, on that occasion, however, was done with a promptitude, and in a fashion, that was not usual in one of his sedate nature. Fortunately, none but men remained on the wreck by that time.

"Tumble 'em in—sharp!" cried Slag.

The lifeboat men obeyed literally, and tumbled them in with a celerity that might almost have awakened surprise in a sack of potatoes!

To haul up the anchor would have been slow work. Slag—economical by nature—became extravagant for once. An axe made short work of cable and anchor.

"Let 'em go!" he growled, as the boat drifted away.

The sail was set with miraculous speed, for now the wind was in their favour, and the gay lifeboat bounded off in the direction where Bob had disappeared, as though it felt a lively interest in the recovery of its coxswain. It seemed as if the very elements sympathised with their anxiety, for just then the gale sensibly abated, and the rising sun broke through a rift in the grey clouds.

"There he is—I see him!" shouted the man in the bow—pointing eagerly ahead.

"It's on'y a bit o' wreck, boy," cried a comrade.

"Right you are," returned the bowman.

"There he is, though, an' no mistake, this time. Port!—port! hard-a-port!"

As he spoke, the boat swept round into a sort of cross-current among the waves, where an object resembling a man was observed spinning slowly round like a lazy teetotum. They were soon alongside. A dozen claw-like hands made a simultaneous grasp, and hauled the object on board with a mighty cheer, for it was, indeed, the coxswain—alive, though much exhausted—with his precious little curly-haired burden in his arms.

The burden was also alive, and not much exhausted, for the weather was comparatively warm at the time, and Bob had thrust her little head into the luxuriant thicket of his beard and whiskers; and, spreading his great hands and arms all over her little body, had also kept her well out of the water—all which the great buoyancy of his lifebelt

enabled him easily to do.

Shall we describe the joy of the widow and the grandfather? No; there are some sacred matters in life which are best left to the imagination. The sunshine which had begun to scatter the clouds, and flood both land and sea, was typical of the joy which could find no better means than sobs wherewith to express gratitude to the God of mercy.

We have said that the gale had begun to abate. When the lifeboat escaped from the turmoil of cross-seas that raged over the sands and got into deep water, all difficulties and dangers were past, and she was able to lay her course for Greyton harbour.

“Let’s have another swig o’ that cold tea,” said Bob Massey, resuming his rightful post at the helm. “It has done me a power o’ good. I had no notion that cold tea was so good for warmin’ the cockles o’ one’s heart.”

Ah! Bob Massey, it was not the cold tea, but the saving of that little girl that sent the life’s blood careering so warmly through your veins! However, there’s no harm done in putting it down to the credit of the cold tea. Had the tea been hot, there might have been some truth in your fancy.

“What’s the time?” asked Bob, with a sudden look of anxiety.

“Just gone ten,” said Slag, consulting a chronometer that bore some resemblance to an antique warming-pan.

The look of anxiety on the coxswain’s countenance deepened.

“Ease off the sheet a bit,” he said, looking sternly over the weather quarter, and whistling for a fresher breeze, though most men would have thought the breeze fresh enough already.

As if to accommodate him, and confirm the crew in the whistling superstition, the breeze did increase at the moment, and sent the lifeboat, as one of the men said, “snorin’” over the wild sea towards the harbour of Greyton.

It was a grand sight to behold the pier of the little port on that stormy morning. Of course, it had soon become known that the lifeboat was out. Although at starting it had been seen by only a few of the old salts—whose delight it was to recall the memory of grand stormy times long past, by facing the gales at all hours in oiled coats and sou’-westers—the greater part of the fishing village only became aware of the fact on turning out to work in the morning. We have said that the gale had moderated, and the sun had come out, so that the pier was crowded, not only with fisher-folk, but with visitors to the port, and other landsmen.

Great was the hope, and sanguine the expectation of the crowd, when, after long and anxious waiting, the lifeboat was at last descried far out at sea, making straight for the harbour.

“All right, Bill,” exclaimed an old fisherman, who had been for some time past sweeping the horizon with his glass, “the flag’s a-flyin’.”

“What does that mean?” asked a smart young lady, who had braved the blast and run the risk of a salt-wash from the sprays at the pier-end in her eager desire to see the boat arrive.

“It means, Miss, that they’ve managed to save somebody—how many, in course, we can’t tell till they come.”

There was a strong disposition on the part of the crowd to cheer when this was said.

After a few minutes’ further observation, the old man with the glass murmured, as if speaking to himself, “I do believe she’s chock-full o’ people.”

When this was repeated, the suppressed cheer broke forth, and the excitement increased. Soon the people with good eyes could see for themselves that the swiftly approaching boat was as full as she could hold of human beings. At the same time, those who were in the boat could see the swarms of sympathisers on the pier who awaited their arrival.

But there was one man who took no note of these things, and seemed indifferent to everything around him. The coxswain of the lifeboat was spiritually absent from the scene.

“You seem to’ve got the fidgets, Bob,” remarked Joe Slag, looking earnestly at his friend. “That swim has been too much for ’ee.”

“‘Taint that, Joe,” replied Bob, quickly. “What’s the time now, lad?”

Pulling out the antique warming-pan again, Slag said it was nigh a quarter past ten, and added that he, (Bob), seemed to be “uncommon consarned about the time o’ day that mornin’.”

“And so would you be, lad,” returned the coxswain, in a low voice, as he advanced his mouth to his comrade’s ear, “if you was in my fix. I’ve got to be spliced this day before twelve, an’ the church is more’n two miles inland!”

“That’s awk’ard,” returned Slag, with a troubled look. “But, I say, Bob, you’ve kep’ this uncommon close from us all—eh? I never heerd ye was to be spliced so soon.”

“Of course I kep’ it close, ’cos I wanted to give you an’ my mates a surprise, but it strikes me I’ll give some other people a surprise to-day, for there’s no time to put on clean toggery.”

“You’ll never manage it,” said Slag, in a sympathetic tone, as he once more consulted the warming-pan. “It’s gettin’ on for half arter ten now, an’ it takes a mortal time to rig out in them go-to-meetin’ slops.”

"Do I look anything like a bridegroom as I am?" asked the coxswain with a curious glance.

"Sca'cely," replied Slag, surveying his friend with a grim smile—"(mind your helm, Bob, there's a awk'ard run on the tide round the pier-head, you know.) No; you're not wery much like one. Even if your toggery was all ship-shape—which it ain't—it would stand dryin', and your hair would be the better o' brushin'—to say nothin' o' your beard—an' it do seem, too, as if a bit o' soap might improve your hands an' face arter last night's work. No, Bob, I couldn't honestly say as you're exactly ship-shape as you stand."

"Listen, Joe Slag," said Bob Massey, with sudden earnestness. "I've never yet come in after a rescue without seein' the boat hauled up an' made snug. 'Dooty first, an' pleasure arter,' that's bin my motto, as *you* know. But dooty lies in another direction *this* day, so you promise to see her hauled up, an' cleaned, an' properly housed, won't you?"

"In coorse I does."

"Well, then," continued Bob, in the same low, earnest tone, "arter that's done, you'll go an' invite all our mates an' friends to a jolly blow-out in the big shed alongside o' my old mother's house. Don't tell who invites 'em, or anything about it, an' ask as many as like to come—the shed's big enough to hold 'em all. Only be sure to make 'em understand that they'll get no drink stronger than coffee an' tea. If they can't enjoy themselves on that, they may go to the grog-shop, but they needn't come to *me*. My mother will be there, and she'll keep 'em in order!"

"What!" exclaimed Slag, with a look of slight surprise. "Your mother! Her what's bin bed-ridden for years, an' hasn't got no legs at all—leastwise not to speak of?"

"Just so, lad. We'll lift her in, bed an' all. Now you be off to the bow. Oars out, lads; stand by the halyards!"

They were by that time close to the pier-head, where the people were shouting and cheering, some of them even weeping, and waving hats, 'kerchiefs, sticks, and umbrellas, almost wild with joy at seeing so many fellow-creatures rescued from the maw of the hungry sea.

The first man who leaped out when the lifeboat touched the pier was the coxswain, dripping, dirty, and dishevelled.

"Bless you, my gallant fellow!" exclaimed an irrepressible old enthusiast, stepping forward and attempting to grasp the coxswain's hand.

But Bob Massey, brushing past him, ran along the pier, leaped a fence, and sprang up the steep path that led to the cliffs, over the top of which he was finally seen to bound and disappear.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed the irrepressible enthusiast, looking aghast at Slag, "exposure and excitement have driven him mad!"

"Looks like it!" replied Slag, with a quiet grin, as he stooped to assist the widow and little Lizzie to land, while ready hands were out-stretched to aid and congratulate the old grandfather, and the rest of the rescued people.

The coxswain ran—ay, he ran as he had been wont to run when he was a wild little fisher-boy—regardless alike of appearances and consequences. The clock of the village steeple told him that the appointed hour had almost arrived. Two miles was a long way to run in heavy woollen garments and sea-boots, all soaked in sea-water. But Bob was young, and strong, and active, and—you understand the rest, good reader!

The church had purposely been selected at that distance from the village to prevent Bob's comrades from knowing anything about the wedding until it should be over. It was a somewhat strange fancy, but the coxswain was a man who, having taken a fancy, was not easily turned from it.

In order to her being got comfortably ready in good time, Nellie Carr had slept the night before at the house of an uncle, who was a farmer, and lived near the church. The house was in a sheltered hollow, so that the bride was scarcely aware of the gale that had been blowing so fiercely out at sea. Besides, being much taken up with cousin-bridesmaids and other matters, the thought of the lifeboat never once entered her pretty head.

At the appointed hour, arrayed in all the splendour of a fisherman's bride, she was led to the church, but no bridegroom was there!

"He won't be long. He's *never* late," whispered a bridesmaid to anxious Nellie.

Minutes flew by, and Nellie became alarmed. The clergyman also looked perplexed.

"Something must have happened," said the farmer-uncle, apologetically.

Watches were consulted and compared.

At that moment a heavy rapid tread was heard outside. Another moment, and Bob Massey sprang into the church, panting, flushed, dirty, wet, wild, and, withal, grandly savage.

"Nellie!" he exclaimed, stopping short, with a joyful gaze of admiration, for he had never seen her so like an angel before.

"Bob!" she cried in alarm, for she had never before seen him so like a reprobate.

"Young man," began the clergyman, sternly, but he got no further; for, without paying any attention to him whatever, Bob strode forward and seized Nellie's hands.

"I dursen't kiss ye, Nell, for I'm all wet; but I hadn't one moment to change. Bin out all night i' the lifeboat an' saved over thirty souls. The Brentley boat's done as much. I'm ashamed, sir," he added, turning to the clergyman, "for comin' here like this; but I couldn't help it. I hope there's nothin' in Scriptur' agin' a man bein' spliced in wet toggery?"

Whether the clergyman consulted his Cruden's Concordance with a view to clear up that theological question, we have never been able to ascertain; but it is abundantly clear that he did not allow the coxswain's condition to interfere with the ceremony, for in the *Greyton Journal*, of next day, there appeared a paragraph to the following effect:

"The marriage of Robert Massey, the heroic coxswain of our lifeboat, (which, with all its peculiar attendant circumstances, and the gallant rescue that preceded it, will be found in another part of this day's issue), was followed up in the afternoon by a feast, and what we may style a jollification, which will live long in the memory of our fisher-folk.

"Several circumstances combined to render this wedding-feast unique. To say nothing of the singular beauty of the bride, who is well known as one of the most thrifty and modest girls in the town, and the stalwart appearance of our coxswain, who, although so young, has already helped to save hundreds of human lives from the raging sea, the gathering was graced by the presence of the bridegroom's bed-ridden mother. Old Mrs Massey had been carried in, bed and all, to the scene of festivity; and it is due to the invalid to state that, despite rheumatics and the singularity of her position, she seemed to enjoy herself exceedingly. Besides this, the friends and comrades of the coxswain—backed by the enthusiastic groomsmen, Joe Slag—would not permit Massey to don wedding garments, but insisted on his dancing himself dry in the rough garb in which he had effected the rescue. This he had no difficulty in doing, having already run himself more than half dry in hastening from the lifeboat to the church, which latter he reached only just in time.

"The little girl whom Massey personally saved was also present, with her mother and grandfather; and one interesting episode of the evening was the presentation to our coxswain of a gold watch and a purse of fifty sovereigns by the grateful old grandfather. Another peculiarity of the proceedings was that Massey insisted—although the clergyman was present—on his old mother asking God's blessing on the feast before it began. All who are acquainted with our liberal-minded vicar will easily understand that he highly approved of the arrangement.

"To crown all, the feast was conducted on strictly teetotal principles. We have frequently advocated the principles of total abstinence in these columns—at least for the young, the healthy, and the strong—and we are glad to acknowledge that this wedding has greatly helped our cause; for the fun and hilarity in all, the vigour of limb in dancing, and of lung in singing—in short, the general jollity—could not have been surpassed if the guests had been swilling rivers of beer and brandy, instead of oceans of tea. Yes, as one of the Irish guests remarked, 'It was a great occasion intoirely,' and it will be long before the event is forgotten, for the noble deeds of our Greyton lifeboat are, from this day forward, intimately and inseparably connected with her coxswain's wedding!"

Thus spake the Greyton oracle; but, prophet though that journal professed to be, the oracle failed to discern that from that time forward the names of Robert Massey and Joe Slag would very soon cease to be connected with the Greyton lifeboat.

Story 1 -- Chapter 3.

Soon after the wedding recorded in the last chapter an event occurred which entirely altered the character and current of our coxswain's career, at least for a time. This was the sudden death of the bed-ridden old mother, who had played such an interesting part at the wedding-feast.

To our hero, who was a tender-hearted man, and a most affectionate son, the blow was almost overwhelming, although long expected.

"I don't think I can stay here much longer," he said one evening to his pretty wife, as they sat together outside their door and watched the village children romping on the sands; "everything minds me o' the dear old woman, an' takes the heart out me. If it wasn't for you, Nell, I'd have been off to the other side o' the world long before now, but I find it hard to think o' takin' you away from all your old friends and playmates—and your Aunt Betty."

A peculiar smile lit up Nellie's face as her husband concluded.

"I should be sorry to leave the old friends here," she replied, "but don't let that hinder you if ye want to go away. I'd leave everything to please you, Bob. And as to Aunt Betty—well, I'm not ungrateful, I hope, but—*she* wouldn't break her heart at partin' wi' *me*."

"Right you are, Nell, as you always was, and always will be," said Massey. He laughed a short, dry laugh, and was grave again.

It was quite evident that Aunt Betty would not be a hindrance to the departure of either of them and no wonder, for Betty had received Nellie Carr into her family with a bad grace when her widowed brother, "old Carr," died, leaving his only child without a home. From that day Betty had brought the poor little orphan up—or, rather, had scolded and banged her up—until Bob Massey relieved her of the charge. To do Aunt Betty justice, she scolded and banged up her own children in the same way; but for these—her own young ones—she entertained and expressed a species of

affection which mankind shares in common with cats, while for Nellie Carr she had no such affection, and contrived to make the fact abundantly plain. As we not infrequently find in such circumstances, the favoured children—which numbered seven—became heart-breakers, while the snubbed one turned out the flower of the flock.

“Then you’re sure you won’t think it hard, Nell, if I ask you to leave home and friends and go wi’ me over the sea?”

“Yes, Bob, I’m quite sure. I’m willin’ to follow you to the end o’ the world, or further if that’s possible!”

“Then the thing’s settled,” said Massey, with decision, rising and thrusting his short pipe into his vest pocket, the lining of which had already been twice renewed in consequence of the inroads of that half-extinguished implement.

In pursuance of his “settled” purpose, our coxswain proceeded to the lifeboat-shed in search of his bowman, Joe Slag, and found him there.

“Joe,” said he, in the quiet tone that was habitual to him, “Nell and I have made up our minds to go to Australia.”

“To Austrailly!” exclaimed Slag, leaning his arms on the mop with which he had been washing down the lifeboat.

“Ay; I can’t settle to work nohow since the dear old woman went away; so, as Nell is agreeable, and there’s nothin’ to keep me here, I’ve decided to up anchor and bear away for the southern seas.”

The bowman had seated himself on a cask while his friend was speaking, and gazed at him with a bewildered air.

“Are ’ee in arnest, Bob?”

“Ay, Joe, in dead earnest.”

“An’ you say that you’ve nothin’ to keep you here! What’s this?” said Slag, laying his strong hand tenderly on the blue side of the boat.

“Well, I’ll be sorry to leave *her*, of course, an all my friends in Greyton, but friends will get along well enough without me, an’ as for the boat, she’ll never want a good coxswain while Joe Slag’s alive an’ well.”

“You’re wrong there, mate,” returned the bowman, quickly, while a look of decision overspread his bluff countenance, “there’ll be both a noo cox’n and a noo bowman wanted for her before long, for as sure as the first goes away the tother follers.”

“Nonsense, Joe; you’re jokin’ now.”

“Yes, I’m jokin’ if *you’re* jokin’; otherwise, I’m in dead earnest too—in as dead earnest as yourself, if not deader. Wasn’t you an’ me born on the same day, Bob? Didn’t our mothers crow over us cheek by jowl when we was babbies? Haven’t we rollicked together on the shore ever since we was the height of our daddies’ boots, an’ gone fishin’ in company, fair weather an’ foul, to the present hour, to say nothin’ o’ the times we’ve lent a hand to rescue men an’ women an’ child’n i’ the lifeboat? No, no, Bob Massey! if you lay yer course for Austrailly, Joseph Slag follers, as sure as a gun.”

Finding that his comrade was in downright earnest, and possessed of a will as inflexible as his own, Bob made no effort to dissuade him from his purpose. On the contrary, he approved of the determination, for he was pleased at the unexpected demonstration of affection which his announcement had called forth in one who was by nature undemonstrative, and who, having thus given vent to his aroused feelings, quickly resumed the reserve from which he had been so suddenly drawn out. Massey, therefore, shook hands with him, by way of sealing an unspoken compact of eternal friendship, and suggested that they should proceed together to the office of an emigration agent, who had recently made his appearance in the village.

In the office they found a very small boy, with an air of self-possession that would have been suitable in his grandfather.

“Is the agent in?” asked the coxswain.

“Yes, but engaged. Sit down; he’ll attend to you directly.”

The lifeboat men obeyed, almost sheepishly, the one speculating as to whether highly developed precocity was not almost criminal, the other wondering how such a boy would look and act if obliged to undergo the process of being rescued—say by the hair of his head—from a wreck.

Their minds were diverted from this subject of contemplation by the entrance of a man and woman. These, like themselves, were told to sit down and wait. The man was long, thin, and lugubrious. The woman short, slight, and lackadaisical, though rather pretty.

Evidently the agent was a busy man, for he kept them waiting some time. When he at length appeared he almost took the breath away from his visitors by the rapid and enthusiastic way in which he described the advantages of the great island on the other side of the globe. There was gold—yes, *enormous* quantities of gold in all directions. There was land of the finest quality to be had for next to nothing; work for all who were blessed with good bone and muscle; a constant demand for labour—skilled or unskilled—at high wages; a climate such as the Olympian gods might revel in, and—in short, if all England had heard the oration delivered by that man, and had believed it, the country would, in less than a month, have been depopulated of its younger men and women, and left to the tender mercies of the old and middle-aged.

Our two fishermen were captivated. So were the lugubrious man and his mild little wife. The end of it was that, three weeks later, these four, with many other men and women of all ranks and conditions, found themselves on board the good ship *Lapwing*, ploughing their way through the billows of the broad Atlantic Ocean bound for the sunny isles of the Antipodes.

Wheels within wheels—worlds within worlds—seems to be the order of nature everywhere. Someone has written, with more of truth than elegance—

“Big fleas have little fleas upon their legs to bite ‘em,
And little fleas have lesser fleas—and so *ad infinitum*.”

One’s native land is to millions of people the world in which their thoughts centre, and by which they are circumscribed. A farmer’s homestead is the world to him, and one of the farmer’s cheeses contains a mighty world in itself. But the most complete, compact, and exclusive world in existence, perhaps, is a ship at sea—especially an emigrant ship—for here we find an epitome of the great world itself. Here may be seen, in small compass, the operations of love and hate, of wisdom and stupidity, of selfishness and self-sacrifice, of pride, passion, coarseness, urbanity, and all the other virtues and vices which tend to make the world at large—a mysterious compound of heaven and hell.

Wherever men and women—not to mention children—are crowded into small space, friction ensues, and the inevitable result is moral electricity, positive and negative—chiefly positive! Influences naturally follow, pleasant and unpleasant—sometimes explosions, which call for the interference of the captain or officer in charge of the deck at the time being.

For instance, Tomlin is a fiery but provident man, and has provided himself with a deck-chair—a most important element of comfort on a long voyage. Sopkin is a big sulky and heedless man, and has provided himself with no such luxury. A few days after leaving port Sopkin finds Tomlin’s chair on deck, empty, and, being ignorant of social customs at sea, seats himself thereon. Tomlin, coming on deck, observes the fact, and experiences sudden impulses in his fiery spirit. The electricity is at work. If it were allowable to venture on mental analysis, we might say that Tomlin’s sense of justice is violated. It is not fair that he should be expected to spend money in providing comforts for any man, much less for a man who carelessly neglects to provide them for himself. His sense of propriety is shocked, for Sopkin has taken possession without asking leave. His self-esteem is hurt, for, although Sopkin knows it is his chair, he sits there doggedly, “like a big brute as he is,” and does not seem to care what Tomlin thinks or how he looks. Besides, there is thrust upon Tomlin the disagreeable necessity of claiming his own, and that, too, in a gentlemanly tone and manner—for it will not do to assume beforehand that Sopkin is going to refuse restitution. Tomlin is not aware that he thinks all this, but he knows that he feels it, and, in spite of himself, demands his property in a tone and with a look that sets agoing the electrical current in Sopkin, who replies, in a growling tone, “it is *my* chair just now.”

Ordinary men would remonstrate in a case of this kind, or explain, but Tomlin is not ordinary. He is fiery. Seizing the back of his property, he hitches it up, and, with a deft movement worthy of a juggler, deposits the unreasonable Sopkin abruptly on the deck! Sopkin leaps up with doubled fists. Tomlin stands on guard. Rumkin, a presumptuous man, who thinks it his special mission in life to set everything wrong right, rushes between them, and is told by both to “mind his own business.” The interruption, however, gives time to the captain to interfere; he remarks in a mild tone, not unmixed with sarcasm, that rough skylarking is not appropriate in the presence of ladies, and that there is a convenient fo’c’s’l to which the gentlemen may retire when inclined for such amusement.

There is a something in the captain’s look and manner which puts out the fire of Tomlin’s spirit, and reduces the sulky Sopkin to obedience, besides overawing the presumptuous Rumkin, and from that day forth there is among the passengers a better understanding of the authority of a sea captain, and the nature of the unwritten laws that exist, more or less, on ship-board.

We have referred to an incident of the quarter-deck, but the same laws and influences prevailed in the forepart of the vessel in which our coxswain and his friend had embarked.

It was the evening of the fifth day out, and Massey, Joe Slag, the long lugubrious man, whose name was Mitford, and his pretty little lackadaisical wife, whose name was Peggy, were seated at one end of a long mess-table having supper—a meal which included tea and bread and butter, as well as salt junk, etcetera.

“You don’t seem quite to have recovered your spirits yet, Mitford,” said Massey to the long comrade. “Have a bit o’ pork? There’s nothin’ like that for givin’ heart to a man.”

“Ay, ‘specially arter a bout o’ sea-sickness,” put in Slag, who was himself busily engaged with a mass of the proposed remedy. “It ‘ud do yer wife good too. Try it, ma’am. You’re not half yerself yit. There’s too much green round your eyes an’ yaller about yer cheeks for a healthy young ooman.”

“Thank you, I—I’d rather not,” said poor Mrs Mitford, with a faint smile—and, really, though faint, and called forth in adverse circumstances, it was a very sweet little smile, despite the objectionable colours above referred to. “I was never a great ‘and with victuals, an’ I find that the sea don’t improve appetite—though, after all, I can’t see why it should, and—”

Poor Mrs Mitford stopped abruptly, for reasons best known to herself. She was by nature rather a loquacious and, so to speak, irrelevant talker. She delivered herself in a soft, unmeaning monotone, which, like “the brook,” flowed “on for ever”—at least until some desperate listener interrupted her discourteously. In the present instance it was her own indescribable feelings which interrupted her.

“Try a bit o’ plum-duff, Mrs Mitford,” suggested Massey, with well-intentioned sincerity, holding up a lump of the

vian on his fork.

"Oh! please—don't! Some tea! Quick! I'll go—"

And she went.

"Poor Peggy, she never *could* stand much rough an' tumble," said her husband, returning from the berth to which he had escorted his wife, and seating himself again at the table. "She's been very bad since we left, an' don't seem to be much on the mend."

He spoke as one who not only felt but required sympathy—and he got it.

"Och! niver give in," said the assistant cook, who had overheard the remark in passing. "The ould girl'll be all right before the end o' this wake. It niver lasts more nor tin days at the outside. An' the waker the patients is, the sooner they comes round; so don't let yer sperrits down, Mr Mitford."

"Thank 'ee, kindly, Terrence, for your encouragin' words; but I'm doubtful. My poor Peggy is so weak and helpless!"

He sighed, shook his head as he concluded, and applied himself with such energy to the plum-duff that it was evident he expected to find refuge from his woes in solid food.

"You don't seem to be much troubled wi' sickness yourself," remarked Massey, after eyeing the lugubrious man for some time in silence.

"No, I am not, which is a blessin'. I hope that Mrs Massey ain't ill?"

"No; my Nell is never ill," returned the coxswain, in a hearty tone. "She'd have been suppin' along with us to-night, but she's nursin' that poor sick lad, Ian Stuart, that's dyin'."

"Is the lad really dyin'?" asked Mitford, laying down his knife and fork, and looking earnestly into his companion's face.

"Well, it looks like it. The poor little fellow seemed to me past recoverin' the day he came on board, and the stuffy cabin, wi' the heavin' o' the ship, has bin over much for him."

While he was speaking Nellie herself came softly to her husband's side and sat down. Her face was very grave.

"The doctor says there's no hope," she said. "The poor boy may last a few days, so he tells us, but he may be taken away at any moment. Pour me out a cup o' tea, Bob. I must go back to him immediately. His poor mother is so broken down that she's not fit to attend to him, and the father's o' no use at all. He can only go about groanin'. No wonder; Ian is their only child, Bob—their first-born. I can't bear to think of it."

"But you'll break down yourself, Nell, if you go nursin' him every night, an' all night, like this. Surely there's some o' the women on board that'll be glad to lend a helpin' hand."

"I know *one* who'll be only too happy to do that, whether she's well or ill," said Mitford, rising with unwonted alacrity, and hastening to his wife's berth.

Just then the bo's'n's stentorian voice was heard giving the order to close reef tops'ls, and the hurried tramping of many feet on the deck overhead, coupled with one or two heavy lurches of the ship, seemed to justify the assistant cook's remark—"Sure it's durty weather we're goin' to have, anyhow."

Story 1 -- Chapter 4.

The indications of bad weather which had been observed were not misleading, for it not only became what Terrence O'Connor had termed "durty," but it went on next day to develop a regular gale, insomuch that every rag of canvas, except storm-sails, had to be taken in and the hatches battened down, thus confining the passengers to the cabins.

These passengers looked at matters from wonderfully different points of view, and felt accordingly. Surroundings had undoubtedly far greater influence on some of them than was reasonable. Of course we refer to the landsmen only. In the after-cabin, where all was light, cosy, and comfortable, and well fastened, and where a considerable degree of propriety existed, feelings were comparatively serene. Most of the ladies sought the retirement of berths, and became invisible, though not necessarily inaudible; a few, who were happily weather-proof, jammed themselves into velvety corners, held on to something fixed, and lost themselves in books. The gentlemen, linking themselves to articles of stability, did the same, or, retiring to an appropriate room, played cards and draughts and enveloped themselves in smoke. Few, if any of them, bestowed much thought on the weather. Beyond giving them, occasionally, a little involuntary exercise, it did not seriously affect them.

Very different was the state of matters in the steerage. There the difference in comfort was not proportioned to the difference in passage-money. There was no velvet, not much light, little space to move about, and nothing soft. In short, discomfort reigned, so that the unfortunate passengers could not easily read, and the falling of tin panikins and plates, the crashing of things that had broken loose, the rough exclamations of men, and the squalling of miserable children, affected the nerves of the timid to such an extent that they naturally took the most gloomy view of the situation.

Of course the mere surroundings had no influence whatever on the views held by Bob Massey and Joe Slag.

"My dear," said the latter, in a kindly but vain endeavour to comfort Mrs Mitford, "rumpusses below ain't got nothin' to do wi' rows overhead—leastways they're only an effect, not a cause."

"There! there's another," interrupted Mrs Mitford, with a little scream, as a tremendous crash of crockery burst upon her ear.

"Well, my dear," said Slag, in a soothing, fatherly tone, "if all the crockery in the ship was to go in universal smash into the lee scuppers, it couldn't make the wind blow harder."

Poor Mrs Mitford failed to derive consolation from this remark. She was still sick enough to be totally and hopelessly wretched, but not sufficiently so to be indifferent to life or death. Every superlative howl of the blast she echoed with a sigh, and each excessive plunge of the ship she emphasised with a weak scream.

"I don't know what *you* think," she said, faintly, when two little boys rolled out of their berths and went yelling to leeward with a mass of miscellaneous rubbish, "but it do seem to be as if the end of the world 'ad come. Not that the sea *could* be the end of the world, for if it was, of course it would spill over and then we would be left dry on the bottom—or moist, if not dry. I don't mean that, you know, but these crashes are so dreadful, an' my poor 'ead is like to split—which the planks of this ship will do if they go on creakin' so. I *know* they will, for 'uman-made things can't —"

"You make your mind easy, my woman," said her husband, coming forward at the moment and sitting down to comfort her. "Things are lookin' a little better overhead, so one o' the men told me, an' I heard Terrence say that we're goin' to have lobscouse for dinner to-day, though what that may be I can't tell—somethin' good, I suppose."

"Something thick, an' luke-warm, an' greasy, / know," groaned Peggy, with a shudder.

There was a bad man on board the ship. There usually is a bad man on board of most ships; sometimes more than one. But this one was unusually bad, and was, unfortunately, an old acquaintance of the Mitfords. Indeed, he had been a lover of Mrs Mitford, when she was Peggy Owen, though her husband knew nothing of that. If Peggy had known that this man—Ned Jarring by name—was to be a passenger, she would have prevailed on her husband to go by another vessel; but she was not aware of it until they met in the fore-cabin the day after leaving port.

Being a dark-haired, sallow-complexioned man, he soon became known on board by the name of Black Ned. Like many bad men, Jarring was a drunkard, and, when under the influence of liquor, was apt to act incautiously as well as wickedly. On the second day of the gale he entered the fore-cabin with unsteady steps, and looked round with an air of solemn stupidity. Besides being dark and swarthy, he was big and strong, and had a good deal of the bully in his nature. Observing that Mrs Mitford was seated alone in a dark corner of the cabin with a still greenish face and an aspect of woe, he staggered towards her, and, sitting down, took her hand affectionately.

"Dear Peggy," he began, but he got no further, for the little woman snatched her hand away, sprang up and confronted him with a look of blazing indignation. Every trace of her sickness vanished as if by magic. The greenish complexion changed to crimson, and the woebegone tones to those of firm resolution, as she exclaimed—

"Ned Jarring, if you ever again dare to take liberties with *me*, I'll tell my 'usband, I will; an' as sure as you're a-sittin' on that seat 'e'll twist you up, turn you outside in, an' fling you overboard!"

Little Mrs Mitford did not wait for a response, but, turning sharply round, left the cabin with a stride which, for a woman of her size and character, was most impressive.

Jarring gazed after her with an expression of owlish and unutterable surprise on his swarthy countenance. Then he smiled faintly at the unexpected and appalling—not to say curious—fate that awaited him; but reflecting that, although lugubrious and long, Mitford was deep-chested, broad-shouldered, and wiry, he became grave again, shook his head, and had the sense to make up his mind never again to arouse the slumbering spirit of Peggy Mitford.

It was a wild scene that presented itself to the eyes of the passengers in the *Lapwing* when the hatches were at last taken off, and they were permitted once more to go on deck. Grey was the prevailing colour. The great seas, which seemed unable to recover from the wild turmoil into which they had been lashed, were of a cold greenish grey, flecked and tipped with white. The sky was steely grey with clouds that verged on black; and both were so mingled together that it seemed as if the little vessel were imbedded in the very heart of a drizzling, heaving, hissing ocean.

The coxswain's wife stood leaning on her stalwart husband's arm, by the foremast, gazing over the side.

"It do seem more dreary than I expected," she said. "I wouldn't be a sailor, Bob, much as I've bin used to the sea, an' like it."

"Ah, Nell, that's 'cause you've only bin used to the *sea-shore*. You haven't bin long enough on blue water, lass, to know that folks' opinions change a good deal wi' their feelin's. Wait till we git to the neighbour'ood o' the line, wi' smooth water an' blue skies an' sunshine, sharks, and flyin' fish. You'll have a different opinion then about the sea."

"Right you are, Bob," said Joe Slagg, coming up at that moment. "Most people change their opinions arter gittin' to the line, specially when it comes blazin' hot, fit to bile the sea an' stew the ship, an' a dead calm gits a hold of 'e an' keeps ye swelterin' in the doldrums for a week or two."

"But it wasn't that way we was lookin' at it, Joe," returned Nellie, with a laugh. "Bob was explainin' to me how pleasant a change it would be after the cold grey sea an' sky we're havin' just now."

"Well, it may be so; but whatever way ye may look at it, you'll change yer mind, more or less, when you cross the line. By the way, that minds me that some of us in the steerage are invited to cross the line to-night—the line that

separates us from the cabin—to attend a lectur' there—an' you'll niver guess the subjec', Bob."

"I know that, Joe. I never made a right guess in my life, that I knows on. Heave ahead, what is it?"

"A lectur' on the 'Lifeboat,' no less! But it aint our lifeboat sarvice: it's the American one, cause it's to be given by that fine young fellow, Dr Hayward, who looks as if suthin' had damaged his constitootion somehow. I'm told he's a Yankee, though he looks uncommon like an Englishman."

"He's tall an' 'andsome enough, anyhow," remarked Massey.

"Ay, an' he's good enough for anything," said Nellie, with enthusiasm. "You should see the kind way he speaks to poor Ian when he comes to see him—which is pretty much every day. He handles him, too, so tenderly—just like his mother; but he won't give him medicine or advice, for it seems that wouldn't be thought fair by the ship's doctor. No more it would, I suppose."

"D'ee know what's the matter wi' him?" asked Mitford, who had joined the group.

"Not I," returned Massey. "It seems more like ginerall weakness than anything else."

"I can tell you," said a voice close to them. The voice was that of Tomlin, who, although a first-class passenger, was fond of visiting and fraternising with the people of the fore-cabin. "He got himself severely wounded some time ago when protecting a poor slave-girl from her owner, and he's now slowly recovering. He is taking a long voyage for his health. The girl, it seems, had run away from her owner, and had nearly escaped into Canada, where of course, being on British soil, she would be free—"

"God bless the British soil!" interrupted little Mrs Mitford, in a tone of enthusiasm which caused a laugh all round; but that did not prevent some of the bystanders from responding with a hearty "Amen!"

"I agree with you, Mrs Mitford," said Tomlin; "but the owner of the poor slave did not think as you and I do. The girl was a quadroon—that is, nearly, if not altogether, white. She was also very beautiful. Well, the owner—a coarse brute—with two followers, overtook the runaway slave near a lonely roadside tavern—I forget the name of the place—but Dr Hayward happened to have arrived there just a few minutes before them. His horse was standing at the door, and he was inside, talking with the landlord, when he heard a loud shriek outside. Running out, he found the girl struggling wildly in the hands of her captors. Of course, he demanded an explanation, though he saw clearly enough how matters stood.

"'She's my slave,' said the owner, haughtily. He would not, perhaps, have condescended even with that much explanation if he had not seen that the landlord sympathised with the doctor.

"This was enough, however, for Hayward, who is a man of few words and swift action. He was unarmed, but carried a heavy-handed whip, with this he instantly felled the slave-owner and one of his men to the ground before they had time to wink, but the third man drew a pistol, and, pointing it straight at the doctor's head, would have blown out his brains if the landlord had not turned the weapon aside and tripped the man up. Before he could recover Hayward had swung the girl on his horse, leaped into the saddle, and dashed off at full speed. He did not draw rein till he carried her over the frontier into Canada, and had placed her beyond the reach of her enemies."

"Brayvo! the doctor," exclaimed Slag, heartily.

"Then he found," continued Tomlin, "that he had been wounded in the chest by the ball that was meant for his head, but made light of the wound until it was found to be serious. The ball was still in him, and had to be extracted, after which he recovered slowly. The romantic part of it is, however, that he fell in love with Eva—that was the girl's name—and she with him, and they were married—"

"Ah, poor thing," said Mitford; "then she died and he married again?"

"Not at all," returned Tomlin, "she did not die, and he did not marry again."

"How—what then about that splendid wife that he's got in the after-cabin *now*?" asked Mitford.

"That's her. That's Eva, the quadroon. She's not only as white as Mrs Massey or Mrs Mitford there, but she's been educated and brought up as a lady and among ladies, besides having the spirit of a *rea*/lady, which many a born one hasn't got at all."

There were many fore-cabin passengers who "crossed the line" that night in order to hear the gallant American lecture, but chiefly to see the beautiful lady who had been so romantically rescued from slavery.

"Not a drop of black blood in her body!" was Mrs Mitford's verdict after the lecture was over.

"An' what if there was?" demanded Slag, in a tone of indignation. "D'ee think that white blood is worth more than black blood in the eyes o' the Almighty as made 'em both?"

The lecture itself was highly appreciated, being on a subject which Bob and Joe had already made interesting to the steerage passengers. And the lecturer not only treated it well, but was himself such a fine, lion-like, yet soft-voiced fellow that his audience were quite charmed.

Soon the *Lapwing* was gliding through the warm waters of the equatorial seas, and those of the passengers who had never visited such regions before were immensely interested by the sight of dolphins, sharks, and especially flying-fish.

"I *don't* believe in 'em," said Mrs Mitford to Mrs Massey one day as they stood looking over the side of the ship.

"I do believe in 'em," said Mrs Massey, "because my Bob says he has seen 'em."

Not long after this double assertion of opinion there was a sudden cry that flying-fish were to be seen alongside, and Mrs Mitford actually beheld them with her own eyes leap out of the sea, skim over the waves a short distance, and then drop into the water again; still she was incredulous! "Flyin'" she exclaimed, "nothin' of the sort; they only made a long jump out o' the water, an' wriggled their tails as they went; at least they wriggled something, for I couldn't be rightly sure they 'ad tails to wriggle, any more than wings—never 'avin' seen 'em except in pictures, which is mostly lies. Indeed!"

"Look-out!" exclaimed Slag at the moment, for a couple of fish flew over the bulwarks just then, and fell on deck almost at Mrs Mitford's feet. When she saw them there floundering about, wings and all, she felt constrained to give in.

"Well, well," she said, raising her hands and eyes to heaven, as though she addressed her remarks chiefly to celestial ears, "did ever mortal see the likes? Fish wi' wings an' no feathers! I'll believe *anything* after that!"

Peggy Mitford is not the first, and won't be the last woman—to say nothing of man—who has thus bounded from the depths of scepticism to the heights of credulity.

Story 1 -- Chapter 5.

Dr Hayward, who had given great satisfaction with his lecture, possessed so much urbanity and power of anecdote and song, that he soon became a general favourite alike with steerage and cabin passengers.

One sultry forenoon Terrence O'Connor, the assistant steward, went aft and whispered to him that Ian Stuart, the sick boy, wanted very much to see him.

"I think he's dying, sor," said Terrence, in a low tone.

"Has the doctor seen him this morning?" asked Hayward, as he rose quickly and hurried forward.

"He's seed him twice, sor," said Terrence, "an' both times he shook his head as he left him."

It was evident that the steerage passengers felt death to be hovering over them, for they were unusually silent, and those who were in the fore-cabin at the time Hayward passed cast solemn glances at him as he descended and went to the berth of the poor boy. It was a comparatively large berth, and, being at the time on the weather side of the ship, had the port open to admit fresh air.

"My poor boy, do you suffer much?" said the doctor, in soothing tones, as he sat down beside Ian, and took his hand.

It was obvious that Ian suffered, for an expression of weariness and pain sat on his emaciated countenance, but on the appearance of Hayward the expression gave place to a glad smile on a face which was naturally refined and intellectual.

"Oh, thank you—thanks—" said Ian, in a low hesitating voice, for he was almost too far gone to speak.

"There, don't speak, dear boy," said the doctor, gently. "I see you have been thinking about our last conversation. Shall I read to you?"

"No—no. Jesus is speaking—to me. His words are crowding on me. No need for—reading when He speaks; 'Come—unto Me—I will *never*—leave—'"

His breath suddenly failed him, and he ceased to speak, but the glad look in his large eyes showed that the flow of Divine words, though inaudible, had not ceased.

"Mother—father," he said, after a short pause, "don't cry. You'll soon join me. Don't let them cry, Dr Hayward. The parting won't be for long."

The Doctor made no reply, for at that moment the unmistakable signs of dissolution began to overspread the pinched features, and in a few minutes it became known throughout the ship that the "King of Terrors" had been there in the guise of an Angel of Light to pluck a little flower and transplant it into the garden of God.

Hayward tried to impress this fact on the bereaved parents, but they would not be comforted.

They were a lowly couple, who could not see far in advance of them, even in regard to things terrestrial. The last words of their child seemed to have more weight than the comfort offered by the doctor.

"Cheer up, David," said the poor wife, grasping her husband's hand, and striving to check her sobs, "Ian said truth, it won't be long afore we jine him, the dear, dear boy."

But even as she uttered the words of cheer her own heart failed her, and she again gave way to uncontrollable grief, while her husband, dazed and motionless, sat gazing at the face of the dead.

The funeral and its surroundings was as sad as the death. Everything was done to shroud the terrible reality. The poor remains were tenderly laid in a black deal coffin and carried to the port side of the ship by kind and loving

hands. A young Wesleyan minister, who had been an unfailing comforter and help to the family all through the boy's illness, gave a brief but very impressive address to those who stood around, and offered up an earnest prayer; but nothing could blind the mourners, especially the parents, to the harsh fact that the remains were about to be consigned to a never resting grave, and that they were going through the form rather than the reality of burial, while, as if to emphasise this fact, the back fin of a great shark was seen to cut the calm water not far astern. It followed the ship until the hollow plunge was heard, and the weighted coffin sank into the unknown depths of the sea.

An impression that never faded quite away was made that day on some of the more thoughtful and sensitive natures in the ship. And who can say that even amongst the thoughtless and the depraved no effect was produced! God's power is not usually exerted in visibly effective processes. Seeds of life may have been sown by that death which shall grow and flourish in eternity. Certain it is that some of the reckless were solemnised for a time, and that the young Wesleyan was held in higher esteem throughout the ship from that day forward.

Some of the passengers, however, seemed very soon to forget all about the death, and relapsed into their usual frames of mind. Among these was Ned Jarring. For several days after the funeral he kept sober, and it was observed that the Wesleyan minister tried to get into conversation with him several times, but he resisted the good man's efforts, and, when one of his chums laughingly remarked that he, "seemed to be hand and glove wi' the parson now," Black Ned swung angrily round, took to drinking again, and, as is usually the case in such circumstances, became worse than before.

Thus the little world of ship-board went on from day to day, gradually settling down into little coteries as like-minded men and women began to find each other out. Gradually, also, the various qualities of the people began to be recognised, and in a few weeks—as in the greater world—each man and woman was more or less correctly gauged according to worth. The courageous and the timid, the sensible and the vain, the weak and the strong, the self-sacrificing and the selfish, all fell naturally into their appropriate positions, subject to the moderate confusion resulting from favouritism, abused power, and other forms of sin. It was observable also that here, as elsewhere, all the coteries commented with considerable freedom on each other, and that each coterie esteemed itself unquestionably the best of the lot, although it might not absolutely say so in words. There was one exception, namely in the case of the worst or lowest coterie, which, so far from claiming to be the best, openly proclaimed itself the worst, gloried in its shame, and said that, "it didn't care a button," or words, even more expressive, to the same effect.

Ned Jarring belonged to this last class. He was probably the worst member of it.

One night an incident occurred which tested severely some of the qualities of every one on board. It was sometime after midnight when the dead silence of the slumbering ship was broken by perhaps the most appalling of all sounds at sea—the cry of "Fire!"

Smoke had been discovered somewhere near the fore-cabin. Fortunately the captain had just come up at the time to speak with the officer of the watch on deck. At the first cry he ran to the spot pointed out, telling the officer to call all hands and rig the pumps, and especially to keep order among the passengers.

The first man who leaped from profound slumber into wide-awake activity was Dr Hayward. Having just lain down to sleep on a locker, as he expected to be called in the night to watch beside a friend who was ill, he was already dressed, and would have been among the first at the scene of the fire, but for an interruption. At the moment he was bounding up the companion-ladder, a young man of feeble character—who would have been repudiated by the sex, had he been born a woman—sprang down the same ladder in abject terror. He went straight into the bosom of the ascending doctor, and they both went with a crash to the bottom.

Although somewhat stunned, Hayward was able to jump up and again make for the region of the fire, where he found most of the men and male passengers working with hose and buckets in the midst of dire confusion. Fortunately the seat of the conflagration was soon discovered; and, owing much to the cool energy of the captain and officers, the fire was put out.

It was about a week after this thrilling event that Mrs Massey was on the fore-castle talking with Peggy Mitford. A smart breeze was blowing—just enough to fill all the sails and carry the ship swiftly on her course without causing much of a sea. The moon shone fitfully through a mass of drifting clouds, mingling its pallid light with the wondrous phosphoric sheen of the tropical seas.

Mrs Mitford had been regaling her companion with a long-winded and irrelevant, though well-meant, yarn about things in general and nothing in particular; and Nellie, who was the personification of considerate patience, had seated herself on the starboard rail to listen to and comment on her lucubrations.

"Yes, as I was sayin', Nellie," remarked Peggy, in her soft voice, after a brief pause, during which a variety of weak little expressions crossed her pretty face, "I never could abide the sea. It always makes me sick, an' when it doesn't make me sick, it makes me nervish. Not that I'm given to bein' nervish; an', if I was, it wouldn't matter much, for the sea would take it out o' me, whether or not. That's always the way—if it's not one thing, it's sure to be another. Don't you think so, Nellie? My John says 'e thinks so—though it isn't to be thought much of what 'e says, dear man, for 'e's got a way of sayin' things when 'e don't mean 'em—you understand?"

"Well, I don't quite understand," answered Mrs Massey, cutting in at this point with a laugh, "but I'm quite sure it's better to say things when you don't mean them, than to mean things when you don't say them!"

"Perhaps you're right, Nellie," rejoined Mrs Mitford, with a mild nod of assent; "I've sometimes thought on these things when I've 'ad one o' my sick 'eadaches, which prevents me from thinkin' altogether, almost; an', bless you, you'd wonder what strange idears comes over me at such times. Did you ever try to think things with a sick 'eadache, Nellie?"

With a laugh, and a bright look, Mrs Massey replied that she had never been in a position to try that curious experiment, never having had a headache of any kind in her life.

While she was speaking, a broad-backed wave caused the ship to roll rather heavily to starboard, and Mrs Massey, losing her balance, fell into the sea.

Sedate and strong-minded though she was, Nellie could not help shrieking as she went over; but the shriek given by Mrs Mitford was tenfold more piercing. It was of a nature that defies description. Its effect was to thrill the heart of every one who heard it. But Peggy did more than shriek. Springing on the rail like an antelope, she would have plunged overboard to the rescue of her friend, regardless of her own inability to swim, and of everything else, had not a seaman, who chanced to be listening to the conversation—caught her with a vice-like grip.

“Hold on, Peggy!” he cried.

But Peggy shrieked and struggled, thus preventing the poor fellow from attempting a rescue, while shouts and cries of “man overboard” rang through the ship from stem to stern, until it became known that it was a woman. Then the cries redoubled. In the midst of the hubbub the strong but calm voice of the captain was heard to give orders to lower a boat and port the helm—“hard a-port.”

But, alas! for poor Nellie that night if her life had depended on shouters, strugglers, shriekers, or boatmen.

At the moment the accident happened two men chanced to be standing on the starboard side of the ship—one on the quarter-deck, the other on the fore-castle. Both men were ready of resource and prompt in action, invaluable qualities anywhere, but especially at sea! The instant the cry arose each sprang to and cut adrift a life-buoy. Each knew that the person overboard might fail to see or catch a buoy in the comparative darkness. He on the fore-castle, who chanced to see Nellie fall over, at once followed her with the life-buoy in his arms. Ignorant of this act the man near the stern saw something struggling in the water as the ship flew past. Without an instant’s hesitation he also plunged into the sea with a life-buoy in his grasp.

The faint light failed to reveal who had thus boldly plunged to the rescue, but the act had been observed both at bow and stern, and a cheer of hope went up as the ship came up to the wind, topsails were backed, and the boat was dropped into the water.

Twenty minutes elapsed before there was any sign of the boat returning, during which time the ship’s bell was rung continually. It may be better imagined than described the state of poor Bob Massey, who had been asleep on a locker in the fore-cabin when the accident occurred, and who had to be forcibly prevented, at first, from jumping into the sea when he heard that it was Nellie who was overboard.

At last oars were heard in the distance.

“Stop that bell! boat ahoy!” shouted the captain.

“Ship aho-o-oy!” came faintly back on the breeze, while every voice was hushed and ear strained to listen, “All right! all saved!”

A loud “Thank the Lord!” burst from our coxswain’s heaving chest, and a wild ringing cheer leaped upwards alike from passengers and crew, while warm tears overflowed from many an eye that was more intimate with cold spray, for a noble deed and a life saved have always the effect of stirring the deepest enthusiasm of mankind.

A few minutes more and three dripping figures came up the gangway. First came Nellie herself; dishevelled and pale, but strong and hearty nevertheless, as might be expected of a fisher-girl and a lifeboat coxswain’s wife! She naturally fell into, or was caught up by, her husband’s arms, and was carried off to the cabin.

Following her came two somewhat exhausted men.

The cheer that greeted them was not unmingled with surprise.

“The best an’ the worst men i’ the ship!” gasped Joe Slag, amid laughter and hearty congratulations.

He was probably right, for it was the young Wesleyan minister and Ned Jarring who had effected this gallant rescue.

The performance of a good action has undoubtedly a tendency to elevate, as the perpetration of a bad one has to demoralise.

From that day forward Black Ned felt that he had acquired a certain character which might be retained or lost. Without absolutely saying that he became a better man in consequence, we do assert that he became more respectable to look at, and drank less!

Thus the voyage progressed until the good ship *Lapwing* sailed in among some of the innumerable islands of the Southern seas.

Story 1 -- Chapter 6.

Darkness, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, is probably the greatest evil that man has had to contend with since the fall. At all events, the physical and mental forms of it were the cause of the good ship *Lapwing* sailing one night straight to destruction.

It happened thus. A pretty stiff breeze, amounting almost to half a gale, was blowing on the night in question, and the emigrant ship was running before it under close-reefed topsails. For some days previously the weather had been "dirty," and the captain had found it impossible to obtain an observation, so that he was in the dark as to the exact part of the ocean in which he was sailing.

In an open sea this is not of serious moment, but when one is nearing land, or in the neighbourhood of islands, it becomes cause for much anxiety. To make matters worse, the ship had been blown considerably out of her course, and worst of all the night was so intensely dark that it was not possible to see more than a few yards beyond the flying jibboom.

The captain and mate, with several of the men, stood on the forecastle peering anxiously out into the darkness.

"I don't like the look o' things at all," muttered the captain to the chief mate.

"Perhaps it would be well, sir, to lay-to till daylight," suggested the mate.

Whether the captain agreed with his chief officer or not was never known, for just then a dull sound was heard which sent a thrill to the bravest heart on board.

"Breakers ahead!" cried the look-out, as in duty bound, but he was instantly contradicted by the mate, who shouted that they were on the starboard beam, while another voice roared that they were on the port-bow.

The helm was instantly put hard a-port, and immediately after the order was given "hard a-starboard," for it was discovered that the sound of breakers came from both sides of the vessel. They were, obviously, either running in a narrow strait between two islands, or into a bay. In the first case the danger was imminent, in the second case, destruction was almost inevitable.

"Clear the anchor, and stand by to let go!" cried the captain, in loud sharp tones, for he felt that there was no room to turn and retreat. The order was also given to take in all sail.

But before either order could be obeyed, a cry of terror burst from many throats, for right in front of them there suddenly loomed out of the darkness an object like a great black cloud, which rose high above and seemed about to fall upon them. There was no mistaking its nature, however, for by that time the roar of the breakers right ahead told but too plainly that they were rushing straight upon a high perpendicular cliff. At this moment the vessel struck a rock. It was only a slight touch at the stern, nevertheless it tore the rudder away, so that the intention of the captain to put about and take his chance of striking on the rocks to starboard was frustrated.

"Let go," he shouted, in this extremity.

Quick as lightning the anchor went to the bottom but with such way on the ship, the sudden strain snapped the chain, and the *Lapwing* rushed upon her doom, while cries of terror and despair arose from the passengers, who had by that time crowded on deck.

To the surprise of the captain, and those who were capable of intelligent observation, the ship did not immediately strike again, but sailed straight on as if right against the towering cliffs. Still onward it went, and as it did so there settled around them a darkness so profound that no one could see even an inch before his eyes. Then at last the ill-fated vessel struck, but not with her hull, as might have been expected. High up above them a terrific crash was heard.

"God help us," exclaimed the captain, "we've sailed straight into a cave!"

That he was right soon became evident, for immediately after the crashing of the topmasts against the roof of the cave, a shower of small stones and several large fragments fell on the deck with a rattle like that of musketry. Some of the people were struck and injured, though not seriously so, by the shower.

"Get down below, all of you!" cried the captain, himself taking shelter under the companion hatchway. But the order was needless, for the danger was so obvious that every one sought the shelter of the cabins without delay.

The situation was not only terrible but exceedingly singular, as well as trying, for as long as stones came thundering down on the deck it would have been sheer madness to have attempted to do anything aboveboard, and to sit idle in the cabins with almost certain death staring them in the face was a severe test of endurance.

From the motion of the vessel several facts could be deduced. Although the scraping and crashing of the masts overhead told eloquently of destruction going on in that direction, the heaving of the ship, and her striking occasionally on either side, proved that there was deep water below her. That they were not progressing into an interminable cavern was made evident by the frequent plunging of the shattered bowsprit against the inner end of the cave. This action sent the vessel reeling backwards, as it were, every time she struck, besides shattering the bowsprit. That the cave, also, was open to the full force of the sea was only too severely proved by the rush of the billows into it, and the frequent and severe shocks to which they were in consequence subjected. These shocks had extinguished the lamps, and it was only by the aid of a few candles that they were delivered from sitting in absolute darkness.

In these awful circumstances the young Wesleyan proved that, besides the courage that he had already shown in facing danger on a sudden emergency, he also possessed that far higher courage which can face the slow and apparently sure approach of death with equanimity and self-possession. Moreover, he proved that the Word of God and prayer are the true resources of man in such extremities.

Calling those who were willing around him, he led them in prayer, and then quieted the timid among them, as well as

comforted all, not by reading, but by quoting appropriate passages from Scripture, in which he was profoundly versed.

"D'ee know when it'll be low water, sir?" asked Joe Slag of the captain, when the ship gave one of her upward heaves and rasped her timbers again on the sides of the cave.

"Not for three hours yet, but it's falling. I expect there will be less sea on in a short time. If the ship holds together we may yet be saved."

There was a murmured "thank God" at these words. Then Bob Massey expressed some fear that there might be a danger of striking the rocks underneath before low water.

"I wish it was the risin' tide," he said, and the words took his mind back, like a flash of lightning, to the time when he used them in a very different sense. Then all was peace, hope, sunshine, and his bride was sitting like a good angel beside him, with a sweet smile on her fair face. Now, something like darkness visible, showed him his poor wife—still beside him, thank God—but clinging to his arm with looks of terror amounting almost to despair. "What a contrast!" he thought, and for the first time a feeling of rebellion arose in his mind.

"There's no use o' sittin' here to be drowned like rats," he cried, starting up. "I'll go on deck an' take a cast o' the lead, an' see what chances we have."

"No, you won't, Bob," cried Nellie, throwing her arms firmly round him. "There's big stones falling all about the deck yet. Don't you hear them?"

As if to corroborate her words, a piece of rock nearly half a ton in weight fell on the sky-light at that moment, crashed completely through it, through the table below, and even sank into the cabin floor. Fortunately, no one was hurt, though Slag had a narrow escape, but that worthy was not easily intimidated. He rose up, and, saying that, "it was as well to be killed on deck doin' somethin' as in the cabin doin' nothin'," was about to ascend the ladder when Dr Hayward suddenly entered, all wet and dishevelled, and with blood trickling down his face.

"No use going up just now, Joe," he said, as he sat down beside his wife, and permitted her to tie a kerchief round his head. "Only a slight wound, Eva, got while taking soundings. I find that there are sixteen fathoms of water under us, and, although I couldn't see my hand held up before my face, I managed to make out by the flash of a match, which burned for a moment before being blown out, that the sides of the cave are quite perpendicular, not the smallest ledge to stand on. The tide, however, is ebbing fast, and the water in the cave calming, so that if no bad leak has been made by all this thumping we may yet be saved. Our only chance is to stick to the ship."

While he was speaking the vessel again surged violently against one side of the cave, and another of the huge masses of rock that were brought down by the swaying masts came crashing on the deck.

"There is no bad leak as yet," said the captain, re-entering the cabin, which he had quitted for the purpose of sounding the well. "If we can keep afloat for an hour or two we may be able to use the boats. Just now it would be useless to attempt launching them."

Although the captain's words were not particularly reassuring, his confident tone and manner infused hope, and comforted the people greatly. Some of the male passengers even volunteered to face the shower of stones, if need be, and lend a hand in launching the boats, when the time for doing so arrived.

These boats, three in number, were lying bottom up on deck, and to reach them involved the risk of death to whoever should attempt it. They were therefore compelled to wait.

It is difficult to form even a slight conception of the horrors of that night. For several hours they sat in the after-cabin, and the ship surged and plunged in the wildly-heaving water, striking the sides continually, while rocks fell at intervals on the deck, thus adding to the noise of wind and waves as they raged with echoing, deafening noise in the black cavern. Each moment it seemed as if the ship must have her planks stove in and be sunk, but she was a new vessel and strong. Of course she leaked considerably, but when the tide went down the sea calmed a little, the rocks ceased falling from the roof, and they were enabled to rig the pumps and work them vigorously. The boats, meanwhile, were cast loose and got ready to launch at the first glimmer of daylight! Fortunately, they had received no serious injury from the falling rocks.

Oh, how they longed and prayed for the day! It came at last, a gleam so faint that it showed nothing of their surroundings save the outline of the cavern's great mouth.

"Shall we launch the boats now, sir?" asked the first mate, who was becoming anxious, because the carpenter had just reported that the water in the hold was increasing dangerously in spite of the pumps.

"Not yet—not yet," returned the captain, hurriedly. "We must have more light first. The loss of a boat would be fatal. I'm afraid of the rising tide."

"Afraid of the rising tide!" Again the words struck strangely on Bob Massey's ears as he stood wiping the perspiration from his brow after a long spell at the pumps—and once more carried him back to the sunlit sands of Old England.

Soon the increase of water in the hold was so great that the getting out of the boats could no longer be delayed. The first launched was a small one. It was lowered over the stern by means of the studding-sail boom, with a block and whip, which kept it from dropping too quickly into the water. Massey and his friend Slag, being recognised as expert boatmen in trying circumstances, were sent in it, with two of the crew, to run out a line and drop an anchor in the sea outside, so that the heavier boats might be hauled out thereby. Two hundred and fifty fathoms of rope were given

them—more than sufficient for the purpose. On getting outside, Bob and his friend, according to custom as lifeboat men, kept a sharp look-out on everything around them, and the feeble daylight enabled them to see that the black cliff which had, as it were, swallowed up the *Lapwing*, was full six hundred feet high and a sheer precipice, in some places overhanging at the top, and without the symptom of a break as far as the eye could reach in either direction.

“A black look-out, Joe,” muttered Massey, as he assisted his comrade to heave the anchor over the side.

“Ay, Bob, an’ the worst of it is that the tide’s risin’. A boat can live here as long as that ridge o’ rocks keeps off the seas, but in an hour or so it’ll be rollin’ in as bad as ever.”

“I knows it, Joe, an’ the more need to look sharp.”

Returning to the ship, our coxswain made his report, and recommended urgent haste. But the captain required no urging, for by that time the ship’s main deck was level with the water, and the seas were making a clean breach over the stern. The passengers and crew crowded towards the port gangway where the large boat was being brought round to receive the women and children first. This was such a familiar scene to the two lifeboat men that they kept cool and self-possessed from the mere force of habit. Seeing this, the captain ordered Mitford to get into the boat first, and help to stow the others, for it would be a tight pack, he said, to stow them all. Dr Hayward was ordered to assist. Ned Jarring volunteered to help to fend the boat off during the operation, and, without waiting for permission, jumped into her.

Mitford had consigned his wife to the care of his friend Massey, who at once undertook the duty by tying a kerchief round Peggy’s head to keep her hair out of her eyes, after which he did the same for Nellie. Both women were perfectly quiet and submissive—the first owing to fear and exhaustion, the last from native courage, which enabled her to rise to the occasion. Massey then stripped off all his own clothes, except shirt and trousers, so as to be ready for swimming, and, catching up a rope, advanced towards his wife, intending to fasten it round her waist.

“Peggy first, Bob; I’ll wait for *you*,” said his wife.

“Look sharp!” cried the captain.

Bob turned at once to Peggy, and in a few seconds she was lowered into the boat. Mrs Hayward followed. Then Massey insisted on his wife going, and the obedient Nellie submitted, but, owing to a lurch of the ship at the moment, she missed the boat, and dropped into the water. One of the men attempted to pull her in, but could not, and, as all the others were engaged at the moment in trying to fend off the rocks, Massey at once jumped into the sea, and helped to get his wife into the boat.

At that moment there arose a cry that the ship was sinking, and a wild rush was made for the long-boat, which had also been successfully launched. Of course it was instantly overcrowded, for all discipline was now at an end. Before anything else could be done the *Lapwing* sank in sixteen fathoms of water, carrying the long-boat and all the people in her along with it, but those in the other boat had shoved off at the first wild cry, and hauling on the anchored cable, just escaped being sucked down by the sinking ship.

Bob Massey clung to the boat’s gunwale, and thus escaped. Rowing back instantly, however, to the spot where the ship had gone down, they sought eagerly for swimmers. Only three were discovered and rescued, but the others—seventy souls in all—found a watery grave in the dark cavern of that unknown land.

Story 1 -- Chapter 7.

So rapidly did the final catastrophe take place that it was difficult for the rescued party at first to credit the evidence of their senses. On the spot where the *Lapwing* had been beating her sides against the cruel walls of the cavern, and where so many hearts had been throbbing wildly between hope and fear, no living creature remained; nothing but a few feet of the shattered masts appearing now and then above the surging waves was left to tell of the terrible tragedy that had been enacted there.

For upwards of an hour the party in the boat hovered about the place, not so much with the hope of rescuing any of their shipmates as on account of the difficulty of tearing themselves away from the fatal spot. Perhaps the natural tendency of man to hope against hope had something to do with it. Then they passed silently out of the cavern and rowed slowly along the base of the tremendous cliffs.

At length the feeling of self-preservation began to assert itself, and Bob Massey was the first to break silence with the question—

“Does any one know if there’s anything to eat aboard?”

“We’d better see to that,” observed Dr Hayward, who was steering.

Bob Massey pulled in his oar, and, without remark, began to search the boat. It was found that all the food they had brought away consisted of nine tins of preserved meat and three pieces of pork, a supply which would not go far among ten persons.

The ten survivors were Dr Hayward and his wife; Massey and Nellie; Joe Slag; John Mitford and his wife Peggy; Terrence O’Connor, the assistant cook; Tomlin, one of the cabin passengers; and Ned Jarring. All the rest, as we have said, had perished with the ill-fated *Lapwing*.

Little was said at first, for the hopelessness of their condition seemed so obvious that the men shrank from

expressing their gloomy fears to the women who sat huddled together, wet and cold, in the bottom of the boat.

As we have said, as far as the eye could see in any direction, the frowning cliffs rose perpendicularly out of deep water. There was not even a strip of sand or a bay into which they could run in case of the wind increasing.

"There is nothing for it but to push on till we come to an inlet or break of some sort in the cliffs by which we may land," said Hayward, speaking encouragingly to the women. "God helping us, we are sure to find some such place ere long."

"Don't look very like it," muttered Black Ned, gloomily.

"We can see how it looks about as well as you can," retorted John Mitford, indignantly. "If ye can't say somethin' to cheer the women, there's no need for to look blue an' tell us what a mere babby could see for itself."

This remark, coming as it did from lugubrious Mitford, caused Terrence O'Connor to smile.

"True for ye," he said, "we can see what's fornint us, but even Black Ned can't see round the corner."

"Besides, there may be a flat shore on the other side o' the island," added Bob Massey in a cheerful tone; "I've often noticed islands o' this build, and when they're so high on one side they usually are low on the opposite side; so we'll only have to pull round—an' mayhap there are people on it—who knows?"

"Ay, natives pr'aps," growled Jarring, "an' cannibals who are fond of eatin' white folk—specially women!"

"Shut up your black muzzle, or I'll heave ye overboard!" said Mitford, fiercely, for like many easy-going, quiet men, he was unusually savage when fairly roused.

Whatever Black Ned may have felt, he gave no expression to his thoughts or feelings by word or look, but continued calmly to pull his oar.

All that day, and all that night, however, the party pulled steadily along the shore without finding an opening in the cliffs or any part which could be scaled by man. During this period their plight was miserable in the extreme, for the weather at the time was bitterly cold; they were drenched through and through with spray, which broke so frequently over the side as to necessitate constant baling, and, to make matters worse, towards evening of the second day snow began to fall and continued to do so the greater part of the night. Fortunately, before dark they came to some small rocky islets, on which they could not land as the waves washed over them, but in the lee of which they cast anchor, and thus were enabled to ride out a furious gale, which sprang up at sunset and did not subside till morning.

It need scarcely be said that the men did all that lay in their power to shelter the poor women, who had exhibited great fortitude and uncomplaining endurance all that weary time; but little could be done for them, for there was not even a bit of sail to put over them as a protection.

"Nellie, dear," said Massey, when the boat was brought up under the lee of the rocks, "d'ee feel *very* cold?"

"Not very," replied his wife, raising her head. "I'm strong, thank God, and can stand it; but Peggy here is shudderin' awful bad. I believe she'll die if somethin' isn't done for her."

"I think if she could only ring the water out of her clothes," whispered Mrs Hayward to her husband, "it might do her some good, but—"

"I know that, Eva: it would do you all good, and we must have it done somehow—"

An exclamation in the bow of the boat at that moment attracted attention. It was John Mitford, who, having taken off his own coat, and wrapped it round his shivering wife, had gone to the bow to rummage in a locker there, and had found a tarpaulin. Massey had overhauled the locker for food before him, but the tarpaulin had been so well folded, and laid so flat in the bottom, that it had escaped his notice.

Retiring aft with this god-send, the lugubrious man speedily, with the assistance of his comrades, covered over the centre of the boat so completely that a small chamber was formed, into which the women could retire. It was not high enough, indeed, to stand in, but it formed a sufficient shelter from wind and spray.

"Now, Peggy, my dear," said her husband when it was finished, "get in there—off wi' your things an' wring 'em out."

"Th—thank you, J—John," replied Peggy, whose teeth chattered like castanets, "but 'ow am I t—to d—dry 'em? For wet c—clo'es won't dry wi—without a fire. At least I n—never 'eard of—"

The remainder of her remarks were lost to male ears as the tarpaulin dropped around her after Eva Hayward and Nellie had led, or half-lifted, her under its sheltering folds. How they managed to manipulate the shivering Peggy it is not our province to tell, but there can be no doubt that the treatment of her two friends in misfortune was the cause of her emerging from under the tarpaulin the following morning alive and comparatively well, though still far from dry.

The aspect of things had changed greatly for the better when the unfortunates resumed their voyage. The wind had abated, the sea, although still heaving, was smooth. The snow had ceased, and the sun arose in a cloudless sky, so that when poor Mrs Mitford raised her dishevelled head and felt the sun's cheering rays she exclaimed, with a sigh of relief: "La! if the sun ain't blazin' 'ot! An' I'm so 'ungry. Dear, dear, 'ave you bin rowin' all night, John? 'Ow tired you must be; an' your 'ands blistered, though you are pretty tough in the 'ands, but you couldn't 'old a candle to Bob Massey at that— Yes, yes, Nellie, I 'ear you, but la! what does it matter 'ow your 'air an' things is deranged w'en

you're wrecked at sea and—"

The abrupt disappearance of the dishevelled head at that moment suggested the idea that Mrs Mitford had either fallen backward suddenly or been pulled under cover by her companions.

"She's all right, anyhow," said O'Connor, adjusting his oar.

"She's always all right," remarked Mitford in a funereal tone, which, however, was meant to be confidential. "Bless your heart, I've seen that woman under all circumstances, but although she's timid by nature, an' not over strong in body, I've never seen her give in or fairly cast down. No doubt she was pretty low last night, poor thing, but that was 'cause she was nigh dead wi' cold—yet her spirit wasn't crushed. It's my solemn conviction that if my Peggy ever dies at all she'll die game."

With a profound sigh of satisfaction at having thus borne testimony to the rare and admirable qualities of his wife, the worthy man applied himself to his oar with redoubled vigour.

It is quite a pleasure in this censorious world to see any man absolutely blind to his wife's faults, and thoroughly awake to her good qualities. The opinion formed of Peggy—by Mrs Massey and Mrs Hayward respectively, did not quite coincide with that of John Mitford.

"How did you get on with poor Peggy last night, Eva?" asked Dr Hayward of his wife, in an undertone, as they breakfasted that forenoon beside the tiller, while the rest of their companions were similarly engaged in the middle of the boat, and at the bow.

"Pretty well, Tom, but she's troublesome to manage. She is so unusually timid, poor creature, so prone to give way to despair when things look bad, yet so sweetly apt to bound into high spirits when things are looking hopeful,—and withal, so amusingly garrulous!"

Strange to say, at the very moment that this was uttered, Nellie was remarking to her husband in a low tone that, "poor Peggy was quite a puzzle, that she was all but dead at one moment, and quite lively at another, that she professed to be all submission, but was as obstinate as a pig, and that her tongue—soft though it was—went like the clapper of a mill!"

We have referred to breakfast, but the meal spread before the castaways hardly merits that name, for it consisted of only a small slice of pork to each; a few pieces of ship's biscuit that Slag had discovered in his pockets; and a cup of water drawn from the pond which had accumulated in a hollow of the tarpaulin during the night.

"It is lucky that one of the pieces of pork happened to be cooked," observed Dr Hayward, as he served out the allowance, "for I would have been sorry to break into the preserved meat tins till forced to do so. We must keep these as a reserve as long as possible."

"Right you are, sir!" said Slag, with his mouth full, while with a clasp-knife he carefully cut off another morsel to be ready, "right you are! That 'minds me when we was starvin', me and my shipmates in the Arctic regions, so as our ribs was all but comin' through our skins, an' we was beginnin' to cast an evil eye on the stooard who'd kep' fatter than the rest of us somehow, an' was therefore likely to prove a more satisfyin' kind o' grub, d'ee see—"

"I say, Joe," said Hayward, interrupting, for he feared that Slag's anecdote might not tend to render the pork breakfast more palatable.

"Sir?" said Slag.

"Will you just go to the bow and take a squint ahead? I think there seems to be something like an end o' the cliffs in view—your eyes are better than mine."

Slag swallowed the mouthful on which he was engaged, thrust after it the morsel that was ready to follow, wiped the clasp-knife on his thigh, and went forward to "take a squint."

It turned out that the "end" of the cliffs which the doctor had only supposed possible, was a reality, for, after a long gaze, Slag turned and said—

"Your eyes are better than you think, sir, for the end o' the cliff is visible, an' a spit o' sand beyond is quite plain."

As this report was corroborated by Bob Massey, and then by all the other men, it sent a thrill of gratitude into the hearts of most of the party—especially the women, who, having lain so long wet and almost motionless, were nearly benumbed in spite of the sunshine. Longer exposure, indeed, would probably have proved fatal to poor Mrs Mitford, possibly also to Mrs Hayward, who was by no means robust. As for our coxswain's wife, having been reared among the health-giving breezes of the sea-shore, and inured from infancy to exposure and hard work, she suffered much less than her female companions, and busied herself a great part of the time in chafing their cold limbs. In doing this she reaped the natural advantage of being herself both warmed and invigorated. Thus virtue not only "is," but inevitably brings, its own reward! Similarly, vice produced its natural consequences in the case of Black Ned, for that selfish man, being lazy, shirked work a good deal. It is possible to pull an oar in such a way that, though the rower may be apparently doing his best, he is, in reality, taking the work very lightly and doing next to nothing. Acting in this way, Ned Jarring became cold when the sleet and spray were driving in his face, his blood flowed sluggishly in his veins, and his sufferings were, consequently, much more severe than those of his comrades. Towards the afternoon of that day, they rounded the spit of sand mentioned by Joe Slag, and came upon a low-lying coast. After proceeding a considerable distance along which, they discovered a good harbour. This was fortunate, for grey clouds had again covered the sun and a bitter east wind began to blow.

"Thank God, Eva," said Hayward, as he steered into the bay, "for if we had not come upon this harbour, your strength and that of poor Peggy, I fear, would have failed, but now you'll be all right in a short time."

"Oh, no, sir, I don't think as *my* strength would fail," said Peggy, in a feeble voice, for she had overheard the remark. "Not that I shouldn't be thankful all the same, I allow—for thankfulness for mercies received is a dooty, an' most on us do fail in that, though I say it that shouldn't, but my strength ain't quite gone yet—"

"Stand by, Slag, to fend off with your oar when we get close in," said the doctor, interrupting Peggy's discourse.

"Have any of you got matches in your pockets?" asked Massey, clapping his hands suddenly to the various receptacles about his person, with a look of unwonted anxiety.

"Ye may well ax that, Bob," said O'Connor, using his own hands in the same way. "Cold, wet weather, and no house! It 'ud be death to the women, sure, av—"

"Here you are!" shouted Tomlin in a burst of triumph, in spite of his naturally reserved disposition.

He held up a box of vestas which, being a smoker, he fortunately had in his pocket.

"I hope they ain't wet," remarked Black Ned, suggestively.

"Wrap 'em well up," said Slag.

Tomlin drew out his handkerchief and proceeded to do so. At the same moment the boat's keel grated softly on the shingly shore.

Story 1 -- Chapter 8.

Seldom have the mysterious sparks of life been sought for more anxiously, or tended and nursed with greater care, than were the little sparks of fire which were evoked with difficulty from Tomlin's match-box.

Drizzling rain had commenced just as the wrecked party landed. The tarpaulin had been set up as a slight though very imperfect shelter; the ground underneath had been strewn with twigs and grass, and a large pile of dead branches had been arranged to receive the vital spark before any attempt was made to create it.

"Everything must be quite ready, first," said Hayward to Tomlin, "for our very lives depend, under God, on our securing fire; so keep the matches snug in your pocket till I ask for them."

"I will," replied Tomlin, "D'you know it never occurred to me before how tremendously important the element of fire is? But how will you ever manage to make the branches catch, everything being so thoroughly soaked?"

"You shall see. I have had to make a fire in worse circumstances than the present," returned Hayward, "though I admit they are bad enough. Have you got the small twigs broken and ready, Slag?"

"All ready, sir."

"Now look here, Tomlin."

As he spoke, the doctor picked up a dead but wet branch, and, sheltering himself under the tarpaulin, began to whittle it with his penknife. He found, of course, that the interior of the branch was dry. The thin morsels which he sliced off were handed to Slag, who placed them with great care in the heart of a bundle of very small twigs resembling a crow's nest. A place had been reserved for this bundle or nest, in the heart of the large pile of branches lying on the ground. Meanwhile, Slag held the nest ready in his hands.

"Now, Tomlin, get out your matches," said the doctor.

With the utmost care the anxious man unfolded the kerchief, and, opening the box, looked into it earnestly.

"Wet?" asked Hayward.

Tomlin shook his head. "I fear they are." He took one out, while the whole party assembled round him to note the result.

The first match dropped its head like a piece of soft putty when scraped on the lid. The second did the same, and a suppressed groan escaped from the little group, for it could be seen that there were not more than ten or twelve matches in the box altogether. Again and again a match was struck with similar result. The fifth, however, crackled a little, and rekindled, sinking hope in the observers, though it failed to kindle itself. The seventh burst at once into a bright blaze and almost drew forth a cheer, which, however, was checked when a puff of wind blew out the new-born flame.

"Och! let Bob Massey try it!" cried O'Connor. "Sure he's used to workin' in troublesome weather."

"Right, boy," said Slag, "hand it to the cox's'n."

Tomlin readily obeyed, only too glad to get some of the failure shifted to other shoulders.

Massey readily undertook the task, and success attended his first effort.

"I knowed it!" said Nellie, in a quiet tone, as she saw the bright flame leap up and almost set her husband's beard on fire. "Bob never fails!"

The burning match was quickly plunged into Hayward's handful of shavings, which blazed up as he thrust it into Slag's nest; and Slag, holding the nest with the tender care of a loving sick-nurse and the cool indifference of a salamander till it was a flaming ball, crammed it into the heart of the pile of sticks. Tremendous was the volume of smoke that arose from the pile, and anxious were the looks riveted on it.

"Sure ye've smothered it intirely," gasped O'Connor.

"Oh, me!" sighed Peggy in a voice of mild despair.

"No fear, it's all right," said Massey, in a confident tone, while Joe Slag, on his knees, with cheeks inflated and nose all but kindling, blew at the glowing heart with unwearied determination, regardless alike of friend and foe.

"It's going to do," remarked John Mitford in his most dismal tone.

"Any child might tell that," said Nellie, with a light laugh.

The laugh seemed infectious, for the whole party joined in as a glorious gush of flame rushed among the sticks, dried up the dampness, and effectually changed the pillar of smoke into a pillar of fire.

The fire thus kindled was rightly deemed of such vital importance that it was not permitted to go out thereafter for many months, being watched night and day by members of the party appointed to the duty by turns. It had, indeed, not a few narrow escapes, and more than once succeeded in reaching what appeared to be its last spark, but was always caught in time and recovered, and thus was kept burning until a discovery was made which rendered such constant attendance and care unnecessary.

"Now," said Dr Hayward, when the fire was safely established, "we have not much daylight left, so it behoves us to make the most of it. You are a man of action and experience, Robert Massey, what would you advise us to do first?"

"Well, doctor, since you're good enough to ask me, I would advise that we should appoint a leader. You see, mates," he continued, addressing himself to the company in general, "there's no possibility of a ship gettin' along without a captain, or an army without a general. If we was going off to a wreck now, with or without a lifeboat, I would claim a sort o' right to be coxswain in virtue o' past experience; but, as we've now begun a sort o' shore-goin' business, which requires a deal o' general knowledge, besides seamanship, an' as Dr Hayward has got that by edication, I move that we make him our leader."

"Right you are, Bob," said Joe Slag. ("As he always is," said Nellie, *sotto voce*.) "So I second the move—if that's the reg'lar way to do it."

"Hear, hear!" said every one with right good will, and a gleam of pride flashed from Eva's pretty brown eyes as her husband was thus unanimously appointed leader of the shipwrecked band.

Like a sensible man, knowing his capacity, he at once accepted the command without any display of undue modesty, and proved his fitness by at once going to work.

"The first thing, then, is to thank God for our deliverance, which we all do, I am sure, most heartily."

This was received with a responsive "Amen" from every one—not even excepting Black Ned.

"Next, we must find fresh water and boil a bit of pork—"

"Ah, then, we haven't a kittle!" exclaimed O'Connor.

"Haven't we a big baling-dish, Terrence?" said Hayward.

"Sure we have, sor, an' it's a tin wan as'll stand fire," returned Terrence with a reproved look.

"Well, then, you go fetch it; wash it well out and get the pork ready. Jarring and Tomlin will gather as much dead wood as they can find and pile it beside the fire. Mitford will search for fresh water—there must be a spring or brook not far off—and Massey and I will rig up some sort of shelter for the night."

"Please, sir, may I go with Mitford to seek for water?" asked Nellie.

"By all means, if you wish to."

"And I will keep you company, Nell," said Mrs Hayward energetically.

"So will I," chimed in little Mrs Mitford, feebly. "I was always fond of water. As a child I used to paddle about in it continually, an' sometimes tumbled into it, for of course young people will—"

"No, Peggy, you must sit by the fire with my wife," said the doctor. "Neither of you is fit for work of any kind yet, so sit down and warm yourselves."

Eva was too wise and Peggy too weak to offer objection, so these two sat by the fire while the others went to work.

Energy of action tends to lighten the burdens that may be laid on human spirits, and to induce the most favourable view of the worst circumstances. The toil which the party now undertook was such a blessed relief to them after the

prolonged exposure to cold and comparative inaction in the boat, that all returned to the camp-fire in a much more cheerful state of mind than they left it. The searchers for water came back first, having found what they sought close at hand; and Terrence, filling his baling-dish, soon had the pork boiling, along with some mysterious herbs gathered by the doctor to convert the liquid into soup. Tomlin and Black Ned returned heavily laden with firewood, and Bob Massey discovered a tree with branches sufficiently spreading and leafy to protect them to some extent from rain.

“’Tis as well we have found overhead protection, Massey,” said the doctor, when our coxswain led him to the spot, “for I have been thinking that as we have no blankets, we shall be obliged to use our tarpaulin as a quilt rather than an umbrella.”

“That’s true, sir,” returned Massey, “but how about the women?”

“Well, I’ve been thinking about that,” said Hayward, “and I’ve devised a plan for to-night at least; to-morrow I hope to hit on a better arrangement. First of all, we’ll spread in front of a fire, which we will kindle beneath this tree, a layer of branches and grass. In the middle of this the women will lie down side by side, after having dried and warmed themselves thoroughly at the fire. Then we’ll take two of the floor planks from the boat, and put one on each side of them—partially frame them, as it were. Then one half of us men will lie down on one side of the frame, the other half on the other side, and we’ll draw the tarpaulin over us all.”

“Hm! not very comfortable,” said Massey, “for the poor women to be framed like that.”

“Admitted; but what else can we do?” said Hayward. “It would risk our lives to sleep without covering of any kind in such cold weather, and with sleet falling as it does now. Better have the sheet spread upon us than merely over our heads. So now let’s kindle another fire, and do you arrange our couch, Bob.”

In spite of the cold and the sleet, things looked much more cosy than persons unacquainted with “roughing it” could believe possible, and they became comparatively happy when the couch was spread, and they were seated under the sheltering tree, with the fire blazing and crackling in front of them, suffusing their faces and persons and the leaf-canopy overhead with a deep red glare, that contrasted well with the ebony-black surroundings, while a rich odour of pork soup exhaled from the baling-dish.

“Ah! now there’s nothin’ wantin’ to produce parfit felicity but a pipe,” said O’Connor with a sigh.

“That’s so, lad,” assented Tomlin, echoing the sigh, and feeling in his pocket from force of habit, though he knew too well that nothing was to be found there.

“Here, Terrence,” said Massey, handing him an empty pipe, at the same time asking him to shut his eyes and draw, and try to imagine himself smoking, but Terrence shook his head.

“I couldn’t do that, Bob,” he said, “but I’ll sing ye a stave in praise o’ the weed.”

Without waiting for permission, the jovial Irishman at once began:

“Oh! it’s ‘baccy as is my chief joy,
At mornin’, noon and night;
An’ it’s verily my belief, boy,
That I love it with all my might.
If your liver an’ lungs are squeakin’,
An’ your head is growin’ cracky,
There’s nothin’ so sure to kill or cure,
As fumes o’ the strongest ‘baccy.”

“If it would improve your voice, Terrence,” observed Mr Mitford, meekly, “I’m sure I wish ye had pounds of it, for it’s that harsh—though, of course, I make no pretence to music myself, but—”

“Just listen to that now, ‘Harsh!’ an’ that to a man whose own mother, by the father’s side, towld him he shud make music his purfession! Arrah, howld on, Black Ned, ye spalpeen; ye’ve had two helpin’s already!”

This latter remark had reference to the baling-dish of soup which was being passed round the party, so that each might help himself to two mouthfuls of soup before passing it on. As they had no spoons, the doctor had extemporised ladles of folded bark which served the purpose pretty well.

“Haven’t ye a small bit o’ ‘baccy in the corner o’ wan o’ yer pockets, doctor, dear?” asked Terrence, insinuatingly. “May be ye’d find a morsel if ye’d try.”

“Quite useless to try, my poor fellow,” returned the doctor, with a look of affected pity, “for I’m a non-smoker. I never indulge in such an absurdity.”

“Sure, it’s a true proverb that says ‘doctor’s differ,’” retorted O’Connor, “for most o’ the saw-bones of my acquaintance have smoked like lime kilns.”

“More’s the pity, Terrence, but if you’ll heave on some more firewood you’ll have a smoke that may do as a substitute at present.”

By heaping quantities of fresh branches on the fire till it was large enough to roast an ox, the party managed to pass the night in comparative comfort, in spite of cold and sleet. Hayward watched the fire during the first part of the night. Then he was relieved by our coxswain, who was succeeded by Joe Slag, and no Vestal virgins ever tended their fire with more anxious solicitude than those three men guarded theirs during that first night on the island.

As if to make up for the sufferings of the past few days, the morning that followed broke with unclouded splendour, and the rising sun shone upon as beautiful a scene as could well be imagined, for it revealed an island richly clothed with verdure, which, rising out of a calm blue sea, sloped gradually upwards, until its western ridge met the bright sky. Evidently that terminating ridge was the place whence descended the precipitous cliffs, along which they had sailed immediately after leaving the cave of the wreck.

There is no accounting for the eccentricities of weak-minded females, whether pretty or plain. The first thing that pretty little Mrs Mitford exclaimed on opening her eyes and beholding the glorious view was—

“Oh! I *do* so wish that we had oysters for breakfast!”

If she had expressed a desire for elephant chops, she could not have taken Eva Hayward more by surprise. As for Nell Massey, she went off into a hilarious giggle.

“I fear there are no oysters hereabouts,” said Hayward, “but I shouldn’t wonder if we were to find mussels and things of that sort. Come, lads, we’ll go and have a search for them, while the ladies fill and boil our kettle.”

Limpets, mussels, and other shell-fish were found in great abundance. With these warm soup was soon made, and after a hearty breakfast, Hayward organised the party in two bands which were sent off in different directions to explore the island, Peggy and her husband being left behind to cook the dinner and keep up the fire.

Story 1 -- Chapter 9.

For several days the shipwrecked party continued to live chiefly on limpets and mussels gathered on the sea-shore. Only a very little of the pork was used, for the purpose of converting the food into soup. As they could not tell, of course, how long they might be compelled to live there, it behoved them to be very careful of the food-supply already in possession. Fortunately, the weather continued fine, though cold, so that it was not necessary at first to make any alteration in their camp arrangements.

During this period much of their time was necessarily spent in laying in a stock of shell-fish, and in attempting to bring down with stones some of the gulls which flew inquisitively about and very temptingly near to the camp, but none of the party was a good marksman with stone ammunition, and it soon became evident that unless some other means of obtaining food were discovered there was every prospect of starvation ending their career.

In this emergency Dr Hayward organised an exploring expedition on a more extended scale. He divided the party into three bands—one consisting of Ned Jarring, Tomlin, and himself, to examine the shores; another comprising Joe Slag, John Mitford, and O’Connor, to penetrate the interior and higher lands; while it was appointed to Bob Massey, who had by that time come to be more frequently addressed by his old title of “coxswain,” to stay at the camp, keep the all-important fire going, and guard the women.

“You see, we must go about this business thoroughly,” said the doctor, when they were all assembled in the camp one day after their frugal meal, excepting O’Connor, who was a short distance off, trying, with unwearied perseverance and unvaried failure, to kill gulls with stones. “And for this purpose, we must hold a council of war. Where’s Terrence?”

“He’s pelting the gulls as usual,” said Black Ned.

“A-missin’ of ‘em, you mean,” suggested Mitford.

“Hallo, Terrence!” shouted Hayward, catching sight of the Irishman at that moment. “Here! we want you.”

“Comin’, sor, jist wan more shot at this baste. He’s bin flyin’ round me hid for half-an-hour at laste, winkin’ at the stones as they go by him. Och! missed again—bad luck to ye!”

As he uttered the malediction the disappointed man heaved a last stone, angrily and without an attempt at an aim. He did not even look up to observe the result, but turned sharply round towards the camp.

That stone, however, was like the arrow shot at a venture. It hit the bird full on the breast and brought it down, which fact was made known to the sportsman by a cheer from the camp and a heavy thud behind him.

“Well done, Terrence!” cried Hayward as he came up with his prize. “I regard it as a good omen—a sort of turn in the tide which will encourage us on our contemplated expedition.”

The leader then gave minute instructions as to how long they were to be away; how much food they were to take; the direction to be followed, and the work to be done.

“In short,” said the doctor in conclusion, “we must use our eyes, ears, and limbs to the best advantage; but bear in mind that the grand object of the expedition is—”

“Grub,” suggested O’Connor.

“Just so. Grub is our first and greatest necessity. Meanwhile, Peggy, Nell, and Eva will do what they can to make our camp comfortable: gather mussels and other shell-fish and see that the coxswain does not eat more than a fair share of victuals, and conducts himself in all respects like an obedient and trusted servant.”

With such and similar touches of pleasantry Hayward sought to cheer the spirits of the party and divert their minds from dwelling too much on the fact that their case was a very serious one—almost desperate, for they were on a

comparatively small island, far to the southward of the usual track of ships, without food or shelter, and without any of the ordinary means of procuring either.

The remainder of that day was spent in making preparation for the projected expedition. As they had no offensive or defensive arms, except two gully knives, their first business was to provide each man with a spear. Fortunately, some of the surrounding trees had very straight branches of various sizes, so they had only to cut down such as were suitable, and peel the bark off. But the formation of hard points gave them some anxiety, until Tomlin hit upon the idea of utilising the bones of their pork.

"The very thing!" said Mitford, with a look of melancholy satisfaction.

Having no turn whatever for mechanics, he never saw difficulties till they met and overcame him, and was always ready to rush in where mechanical angels—if we may say so—feared to tread.

"And how would you propose to cut the bones, John?" asked Slag, with an air of modest simplicity.

"Cut 'em? eh! well—wi' the knife, of course."

It was found, however, that the knife made but slight impression on the bones, and after one or two vain attempts, they turned to a more effective method. Finding a huge boulder of some kind of sandstone they broke it up, and on the rough surface thus produced, ground the bones into sharp points, and by an ingenious method known to Slag, who learned it from the Eskimos, they fixed these firmly on the ends of their spears.

Thus armed, and with a small quantity of cold pork, and a large allowance of cold boiled limpets and mussels in their wallets, they set out on their explorations.

It is impossible to accompany two parties at once. Let us follow just now the one composed of Joe Slag, Terrence O'Connor, and John Mitford. These, with Joe as their leader, proceeded along the shore some miles in a northerly direction; and then, turning into the bush, which was nowhere thick, they pushed into the interior of the island. After advancing about ten miles they came on a wide stretch of sandhills or downs, and found that, having crossed a sort of isthmus, they had come out again on the sea-shore.

"This won't do," said Slag, on making the discovery. "We'll have to steer d'rect for the highest land."

"That's so, Joe," said Mitford, "and yonder's a height away there, right in the wind's eye, that will act as a beacon to us."

"I sees it, John—but, I say, what's the matter wi' Terrence?"

This question was drawn forth by the action of the Irishman, who had walked on about fifty yards in advance of his comrades. He was standing in the attitude of an ancient Roman about to discharge a javelin. Stooping low as if to render themselves less conspicuous, Mitford muttered, "hallo!" and his comrade whispered, "Sh! he sees suthin'!"

Whatever it was he saw, O'Connor evidently felt too far off to act effectively, for, after standing a moment in the classic position just referred to, he suddenly lowered his spear, dropped on hands and knees, and made a slow, undignified advance of a few yards. Then he rose again, became classic once more and discharged his spear, in a manner that would have done credit to Achilles himself.

The growl that followed, and the "bad luck to ye," that came faintly back on the breeze, told too plainly that the result was a miss.

"Sure it's a rabbit I saw," he said, returning to his companions, "an' if I'd only sent it two yards more to the left, I'd have hit the baste!"

To the satisfaction of the explorers, it was found that the sandhills were burrowed all over by rabbits, and that there existed there a large colony of them. Cheered by this—in spite of their bad javelin play—they made for the high ground, and soon found themselves threading a belt of wood, after crossing which they reached the foot of the range of hills that bounded the island to the westward.

It was a weird, rugged spot, covered with great boulders that had rolled down the hill-sides, and with gaps and chasms here and there of considerable depth, that suggested the idea of volcanic action having visited the place at some remote period. These chasms or rents in the earth were overgrown with trees or bushes in many places, and obliged the travellers to make wide detours in some places to avoid them.

Thus they were so much delayed that night was upon them before they had reached the higher parts of the hill-range where they had intended to encamp.

The difference between blanketing and gossamer is great, yet it is inconceivably slight compared with the difference between gossamer and nothing! In the pride of their strength the members of the exploring party lay down to sleep without covering of any kind, for the good reason that they possessed none, and before morning they would gladly have given a fabulous price for even a gossamer coverlet.

"It's freezin' I am, if not froze," said Terrence O'Connor at the end of the second sleepless hour. "If we could have only brought away some o' the fire in our pockets, what a comfort it would have bin!"

He got up, shook himself, and slapped his arms across his breast vigorously.

Slag and Mitford followed his example.

"I'm beginnin' to feel better on the outside," continued O'Connor, pausing, "but my spinal marrow isn't properly warm yet."

"Minds me o' Baffin's Bay," growled Slag, with a mighty slap of the arms between each word.

Mitford seemed to think any remark superfluous, for he only groaned.

"Pity it's too dark to see yer face, John," said Terrence. "It must be a sight worth seein'. Och, av I only had a good-sized pocket-han'kicher I'd wrap me feet in it, anyhow."

"Suppose we cut some grass and try that?" suggested Mitford.

The suggestion was acted on.

It was slow work cutting grass with a clasp-knife; tearing it up in handfuls was still slower, but the labour warmed the tired explorers, and when they lay down again under this Adam-an'-Eveic bedding, they fell asleep almost immediately, and did not waken till the sun was pretty well up in the eastern sky.

"Breakfast fust," said Slag, on completing a tremendous stretch and yawn. "It's always bin my way since I was a babby—business first; pleasure to foller. Grub is business, an' work is pleasure—leastwise, it ought to be to any man who's rated 'A. One' on the ship's books. Hallo! sorrowful-monkey-face, clap a stopper on yer nose an' tumble up,—d'ye hear?"

Mitford did not hear, but a touch of Slag's toe caused him to feel and to rise.

O'Connor was already astir, preparing breakfast. Cold boiled mussels and a bit of pork may be good food, but it is not appetising. Consequently they did not linger long over the meal, but were soon striding up the mountain-side rejoicing in the fresh air and sunshine.

There was a certain phase in John Mitford's character which had not yet been discovered by his friends, and was known only to his wife. He was romantic—powerfully so. To wander through unknown lands and be a discoverer had been the dream of his youth. He was naturally reticent, and had never said so to any one but Peggy, who, being the reverse of romantic, was somewhat awe-stricken by the discovery, and, in an imbecile way, encouraged him to hope that, "one of these days he'd 'ave 'is desires gratified, as there was nothink to prevent 'im from goin' to Novazealand—if that was the right way to pronounce it—or to Van Demons land—not in a sinful way of course, for they had given up transportin' people there now—though wherever they transported 'em to she couldn't imagine—anyhow, there was nothink to prevent his tryin'." And John did try, which was the primary cause of his being a member of the exploring party now under consideration.

Influenced by his romantic spirit, Mitford betrayed a troublesome tendency to wander from his comrades in pursuit of the Unknown. O'Connor, with the straightforward simplicity of his nation, set it down to pig-headedness. Slag, being a man of feeling, opined that it was absence of mind.

"The spalpeen! he's off again," said O'Connor, turning round as they halted to rest a minute, after breasting the hill for half-an-hour. "Hallo, John! Where are ye, boy?"

"Here—all right," shouted a voice in the distance, "I'm exploring behind the knoll here. Go ahead; I'll meet ye at the top o' the hill."

By that time they were within about an hour's walk of the highest ridge of the island, so they pushed on without delay, expecting to find their lugubrious friend there before them, or not far behind them. It turned out as had been supposed. The mountain ridge formed the summit of the great precipice along the foot of which they had sailed after quitting the cavern, or, as they had come to call it, the wreck-cave. For some time the two stood on the giddy edge, looking in silence on the tremendous depths below, and the sublime spectacle of illimitable sea beyond, with its myriad facets gleaming in the sunshine.

Then they bethought them of their comrade, and turned back to look for him; hallooing now and then as they went, and expecting every moment to see him emerge from one of the gorges that led to the ridge. But there was no answering shout or any sign of his having been there. Soon, becoming anxious and then alarmed, the two men set to work in earnest to search for their lost comrade, but they sought in vain. Returning to the spot where they had last heard his voice, they continued the search in that direction, and made the rocks echo with their shouting. Still no John Mitford was to be found, and the curious thing was that there seemed to be no very rugged or precipitous formation of land where he could easily have met with an accident. At last, evening approached.

"We must go back at wance," said O'Connor, with anxious looks, "an' rouse all the men out to seek for him wi' torches."

Without another word they turned and made for the camp as fast as they could go.

Meanwhile, Dr Hayward and his party had been successful in their exploration, for they not only discovered a rabbit-warren, but had observed seals basking on the rocks, and found the tracks of goats, or some animal of that kind with divided hoofs. They had even succeeded in getting between a young seal and the water and speared it, so that there was something like jubilation in the camp on their return at the prospect of a fresh meal and better fare in future.

But this was abruptly put an end to by the arrival of Slag and his comrade with the news of Mitford's disappearance. Poor Mrs Mitford was thrown into a state of terrible alarm, and at first insisted on accompanying the search party, but under the united entreaties of Eva and Nelly she was prevailed on to remain behind.

With torches made of resinous wood which burnt admirably they searched all that night, and, taking only a few hours' rest, continued the search all the following day, but without success. Day after day the search was continued, even after all hope of ever again seeing their comrade alive had died out, but at last they were compelled to give it up and devote themselves to the urgent duty of procuring better shelter and food.

As for poor Mrs Mitford, she sank into a state of helpless and hopeless despair.

Story 1 -- Chapter 10.

Men in straits cannot afford to sit down to grieve and mope over their sorrows. Although a deep gloom had been cast over the shipwrecked party by the loss of one whom they had learned to respect, the urgent need of obtaining better food and shelter compelled them, as we have said, to give their whole mind and attention to this work.

They pitied poor Peggy sincerely, however, and endeavoured to comfort her a little by raising the hope that her husband might have merely lost himself in the woods of the island, and would yet, perhaps, be found alive and well. But, although their intentions were kindly, they could comfort neither Peggy nor themselves with such a hope; for their experience convinced them that the woods, although thick and tangled, were not extensive enough for any one to be permanently lost in them, and it seemed quite certain that if the lost man had not met with some fatal accident, he would certainly have made his way to the coast, by following which he could have easily found the camp.

"It is very sad to give over our search for poor Mitford," said Dr Hayward one morning, while seated on a ledge of rock near the beach, taking counsel with his male companions as to the order of procedure for the day, "but we cannot afford to delay our operations longer. This poor fare of mussel soup, with such a small allowance of pork, is beginning to injure the health of our women, not to mention ourselves; besides, the pork won't last long, even though we put ourselves on the shortest possible allowance; so I think that to-day we must go on an expedition after the seals we saw the last time we went to the southern end of the island. What say you, comrades?"

"All right, cap'n," answered Massey. "You've only got to say the word. But who's to stop at home to mind the camp-fire and the women?"

"I'm afraid," returned Hayward, with a deprecatory smile, "that it's your own turn, Bob. I would say that I'm sorry for you, were it not ungallant to pity a man for being condemned for a day to female society."

The way in which the coxswain received this showed that he did not repine at his fate. He did not even object to O'Connor's remark that, "Faix, he might consider himself the luckiest man o' the lot!"

Accordingly, Massey remained at the camp while the doctor, Slag, O'Connor, Tomlin, and Jarring set out on a hunting expedition with two days' cooked provisions in their wallets. The doctor and Tomlin armed themselves with spears, but Jarring and Slag preferred clubs.

"You see," said the latter, "I've heard—though I can't rightly say I've seed it done myself—that the seal-hunters o' the north do their work wi' clubs; so, if one man can kill a seal wi' such a thing, I don't see why another shouldn't."

And, truly, there was some reason for this covert boast; for Joe, besides possessing arms of prodigious power, had cut and shaped for himself a knotted club which might have suited the hand of Hercules himself.

It turned out that Bob Massey's satisfaction at being left behind that day was not altogether the result of regard for female society. While he was sauntering back to the camp, after his comrades had left, he congratulated himself aloud on having at last a chance of making his experiment without being laughed at during the trial. "That is—if Nellie has got enough of line made."

At that moment Nell was busy with the line in question, and at the same time doing her best to comfort Mrs Mitford—Mrs Hayward being engaged in preparing dinner; by no means a difficult duty, which the women undertook day about.

"Keep up your spirits, dear Peggy," said Nell, in that sweet, cosy tone—if we may say so—which played such havoc in Bob's bosom at the time when she was known as the coxswain's bride. "I feel *sure* that your dear husband will return to us. No doubt, some sort o' misfortune has come to him; but he's such a sensible, handy man, is John, that I can't help feelin' he'll come back to us; an' when I *feel* anything very strongly, d'ee know, I've almost always found it come true. Do you believe in strong feelin', Peggy?"

Poor Mrs Mitford, who had been sitting with her hands clasped in her lap, and an utterly woebegone expression on her pale face, raised her head with a troubled look on being thus directly appealed to.

"Believe in strong feelin's, Nellie? I should just think I do. Not to mention my own feelin's—which are so strong that I never felt nothink like 'em before—any one who has been married to my John must know well what st-strong—oh! no, I shall never see 'im again; dear Nellie, don't tell me," she said, beginning to cry. "I know—I know—"

"There, now—there's a good soul. Don't go off again. Look! D'ee know what this is for?"

As she spoke, Nellie held up a ball of what appeared to be twine, and her companion—whose mind resembled that of a child, in that it could be easily diverted—said no, she didn't know what it was for, and that she, (Peggy), had seen her making it when the men were off excursioning, and had asked about it; and why didn't she, (Nellie), relieve her curiosity before, upon the point, instead of waitin' till now?

"Well, you see, Peggy," replied her friend, with the confidential air of one who has a secret to tell, "my Bob has took it into his head to give his mates a surprise by fishin' for albatrosses."

"Lawks! Nellie, an' that *will* give 'em a surprise!" interrupted Mrs Mitford, drying her eyes. "How ever can any man *fish* for a bird—unless, indeed, it goes under water an' changes its nature, which no creetur can do; though, now I come to think of it, I have seen flyin' fish, an' so, perhaps, there may be albytresses, or other birds, that—"

"Hallo! Nellie, hard at the twine, lass? You've made about enough of it now," cried our coxswain, entering the camp at that moment, sitting down beside his wife, and examining the ball of cord which she had been so busily spinning.

"I'm glad you think there's enough, Bob, for I've come to the end o' the stuff you gathered for me."

"Plenty more where that came from, Nell; but there's no need to gather more than enough; for enough, you know, is as good as a feast. Well, Peggy," he added, turning to the poor woman, and patting her gently on the shoulder, "has Nell been tellin' you what I'm goin' to try?"

"She was beginnin' to tell me, Mr Massey, when you came in, something about fishin' for albytresses, an' I always thought albytresses was birds, and—"

"Quite right, Peggy. See, this is how it is: you bait a hook—but come," said the coxswain, rising suddenly, and taking up the ball of twine, "they do say example's better than precept. Come along wi' me an' Nell, an' we'll show you how to do it."

So saying, Massey led the two women down to the boat, telling Mrs Hayward, whom they passed on the way, to heave some more sticks on the fire, as it was getting low.

"Never fear," said Eva, who carried the baling-dish full of shell-fish in her hands. "I shall never forget the fright we got that time Joe let it get so low that it was almost at the last spark. You won't be long away, will you?"

"Not long. Anyhow, we'll be sure to turn up for dinner."

During their short residence on the island, the coxswain had observed that albatrosses paid them frequent visits. The giant birds had exhibited some signs of curiosity as to the doings of the new arrivals on the island; so he resolved to capture one of them, with a view to soup!

Embarking in the boat, he rowed towards a point of rocks jutting out into the sea, over which albatrosses had been seen hovering many times. On the way, Nellie, who had previously been taught what to do, fastened a small bit of wood to the end of the line she had spun. Hanging from this was a hook that the coxswain had made from a gull's breast-bone. It was baited with a piece of pork. Before arriving at the point of rocks, they saw that an albatross was soaring over it on its mighty outspread wings. On observing the boat, it flew away and disappeared in the distance; but Bob was not much concerned about that.

"Now, Nell," he said, on landing, "carry this bait out to sea as far as the line will let you, lay it on the water, an' then pull back into yon cove, and see that you hide the boat an' yourselves well, and keep quiet. You mustn't even talk, Peggy! Yon fellow will soon be back."

Nellie did exactly as she was directed; and then her husband, holding the shore-end of the line, concealed himself among the rocks.

He was right about the bird. Ere long, it was seen returning, and soon, on motionless, expanded wings, it hovered over the rocky point. Then it caught sight of the floating bait. With a majestic swoop, it dived, caught it up, and next moment was flouncing wildly about, hooked by the tongue, while Bob Massey hauled in the line. He had provided himself with a stick, and when the huge bird came within reach he felled it, to the immense delight of the watchers in the cove, who had already begun to smell savoury soup by anticipation!

While these were thus engaged, the sealing party was even more successful in the opposite direction. They had not gone half-a-dozen miles when they sighted a group of seals, sleeping—or sunning themselves—on a flat rock, near high-water mark.

"Now, then, Hercules, lead the way with your club," said the doctor to Joe Slag, in a whisper. Joe at once shouldered his weapon and led the party round by some sheltering rocks, so as to get between the seals and the sea; then, rushing forward in a body, they took the creatures by surprise, and intercepted two of them. On coming to close quarters, however, they found that the seals were much more formidable to look at than anything that any of them had ever seen in the Arctic Seas; and when Joe brought his club down on the skull of the foremost with a terrible thwack, it refused to tumble over, but continued to splutter and flounder towards the sea. Dr Hayward, however, used his spear at this moment with such effect that the seal fell, and another blow from the Herculean club finished its career.

As this animal was about half-a-ton in weight, they left it on the beach with the intention of cutting off some steaks on their return, and sending the boat round afterwards to fetch the remainder of the carcass.

Considerably elated by their success, they pushed on. In a valley which led towards the interior hills they found fresh tracks of goats, and saw one of those animals in the distance. Rabbits were also seen, but none killed at that time. They had not gone far into this valley, when a most interesting discovery was made. On opening up a new turn in the valley they came on the ruins of a hut.

With feelings of profound interest, they entered—for there was no door to bar their progress—and gazed around on the silent, mouldering walls.

“Good luck!” exclaimed O’Connor, springing forward, and grasping an object which lay on the ground. It was a hatchet, covered with red rust. “Here is something else that will be useful,” said Tomlin, picking up a file, which was also covered with rust.

The party at once began an eager search in the hope of finding other things that might be of use to them, and they were not altogether disappointed; for Jarring found a clasp-knife—much rust-eaten, of course, but still fit for use. Slag found a much-battered frying-pan, and Tomlin discovered a large cast-iron pot behind the hut, with a chip out of its rim. A bottle was also found, and the party crowded round to watch while the doctor examined it.

“Gin, I hope,” said Jarring, in a low tone.

“Physic, I think,” murmured Slag.

“A paper!” exclaimed the doctor, holding it up to the light; then, breaking the bottle, he unfolded the paper, but much of the writing on it had been obliterated by water which had leaked in. The few sentences, however, that were more or less legible, conveyed the fact that a vessel had been wrecked on the island in 1848; that the crew had lived there eighteen months when a ship, chancing to pass that way, rescued them; that they had no provisions to leave for the use of unfortunates who might chance to be cast away there in future; and that there was a garden, with some vegetables in it, about—

Here the writing became quite illegible.

“Now, we must find that garden,” said the doctor, “and as we’ve not much daylight left, we must begin at once. Come along, lads.”

In half an hour they found the garden, with potatoes growing in it, and a few other roots that were new to them.

Rejoicing over their discoveries the party started back without delay for the camp, carrying the pot, the frying-pan, etcetera, along with them, and not forgetting a good slice of the seal in passing. Arriving late that night, they found Bob Massey and the women already enjoying a supper of albatross soup.

“Hooroo, Bob!” exclaimed O’Connor, flourishing the frying-pan in his excitement, “we’ve found some praties, boy! Shovel out some o’ that into this, honey, an’ I’ll soon let ye smell the smell of an Irish stew!”

Next day the party removed from the camp and took up their abode in the old hut, which was soon repaired sufficiently to keep out wind and rain, and the skin of the seal—with that of another killed next day—was large enough to screen off part of the hut as a separate chamber for the women.

From that time forward they had no lack of food, for they succeeded in killing plenty of seals, and in snaring a great many rabbits, though they failed entirely to kill any of the goats. And thus they lived for several months in comparative comfort, though suffering considerably from cold and bad weather.

During all that time the poor women were kept pretty busy cooking, looking after domestic matters, and mending the garments of the men. This last they accomplished by means of needles made from albatross bones and the finely divided sinews of various animals instead of thread. When the European garments were worn out—which they were, long before deliverance was sent to them—Nell Massey proved her fitness for a Robinson Crusoe life, by actually splitting the sealskins—which were as thick as sole leather—so as to obtain material thin enough for clothing.

Of course, a flagstaff had been among the first things erected. It stood on a prominent hill, and a seal-skin flag was hoisted thereon, to attract any vessel that might chance to pass that way, but the flag fluttered in vain, for, as we have said, the island lay far out of the usual track of commerce.

Although poor Mrs Mitford appeared to become resigned to her great loss as time passed by, it was evident to her kind-hearted female companions that she was not recovering from the shock she had received. In spite of their care of her she grew thinner and older-looking every day, and although she quietly took her share of the work, she had become sad and silent—caring little apparently for what was going on around her, and never indulging in those prolonged observations of an irrelevant nature to which she had been addicted before her husband’s disappearance.

Things were in this state when, about two months after their landing, a boat-voyage to the western cliffs of the island was arranged for purposes of further exploration.

Story 1 -- Chapter 11.

Within the dark recesses of a great cavern in the western cliffs, in the midst of a mass of wreckage, there sat one morning a man whose general appearance might have suggested to a beholder “the wild man of the cave”—or, at the least, an unhappy maniac—for his grey locks were long and unkempt, his eyes bloodshot and wild, his garments torn, so that his wasted limbs were exposed in numerous places, and his beard and moustache dishevelled and bristling.

No one looking at that gaunt creature—not even the mother who bore him—would have easily recognised John Mitford; yet it was he.

On the day when he mysteriously disappeared he had come upon a great hollow, or hole, of about sixty yards in diameter, which appeared to descend into the very depths of the earth. The sides of the hollow sloped towards the centre, and were covered with bushes. Noting this, our romantic friend resolved to explore the spot. He descended cautiously till he came to a place where the hole had narrowed to about twenty feet in diameter, and the herbage

ceased because of the absence of the earth to sustain it. Filled with eager curiosity, the reckless man held on to a branch and stretched his head over the edge of the hole. He saw nothing but blackness. He soon felt something, however, for the branch suddenly broke off, and John went headlong down into that hole!

Then and there he would certainly have paid for his curiosity with his life, had not a mass of earth, a few feet further down, and against which he struck, broken his fall in some measure, and shunted him off to the opposite wall of the rock. This latter proved to be a slope so steep that it let him slide, like lightning, to the bottom, a depth of about thirty feet or more, where he was stopped with such violence that he lay stunned for a considerable time.

Recovering, he found that no bones were broken, and that, indeed, he was not much damaged considering the violence of the fall; but the satisfaction and thankfulness that this undoubtedly caused him were diminished by the fact that he was in total darkness, and at the bottom of a hole of unknown depth. A feeling of horror rushed over him at the thought of being thus, as it were, buried alive. Springing up, he felt all round the walls of his prison for some inequalities or projections by which he might climb out, but none such could he find. The place was like a well of not more than about ten feet wide, with smooth rocky sides, which were almost perpendicular as far up as he could reach. On looking upward, he could see the mouth of the hole, through which he had fallen, glimmering like a little star above him.

After a fruitless search of nearly half-an-hour the poor man sat down on a piece of fallen rock, over which he had stumbled several times in his search, and a deep groan burst from him as he began to realise the fact that escape from the place was impossible, and that a lingering death awaited him—for he could scarcely hope that his companions would find him in such a place. Hope, however, is hard to kill in the human breast. Perhaps they might hear him if he shouted. Immediately he began to shout for help with all the strength of his lungs. Then, as no answering shout came down from the little star above—at which he continuously gazed—a feeling of wild despair took possession of him, and he yelled and shrieked in mortal agony until his vocal chords refused to act, and nothing but a hoarse whisper passed his parched lips. Overcome at last, alike with horror and exhaustion, he fell to the ground and became partially unconscious.

How long he lay thus he could not tell; but, on recovering and looking up, he found that the star was gone—telling plainly that night had set in.

Then it was, when all hope of delivering himself, or of being delivered by others, had fled, that a word which had been uttered by Dr Hayward to a dying man on board the ship, leaped into John Mitford's mind like a gleam of light. "Call upon Me in the time of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." He had seen this invitation accepted by the dying man and deliverance obtained—if a happy smile and a triumphant gaze across the river of death were to be regarded as testimony. "But, then," thought John Mitford, "that was spiritual deliverance. Here it is a hard physical fact, from which nothing short of a miracle can deliver me. No—it is impossible!"

Was it a voice within him, or an old memory, that immediately whispered the words, "With God all things are possible?" At all events, the poor man rose up slowly in a somewhat calmer frame of mind, and began once more to feel round the walls of his narrow prison. He found nothing new, save that once he narrowly escaped falling down what seemed to be a still deeper hole among the fallen rocks already referred to. Then he lay down—or rather fell on the floor exhausted—and slept till morning. The fact that another day had begun was only ascertainable by the shining of the star-like mouth of the hole. He attempted again to shout, but found that his voice had left him, and that even if his comrades should return to the place he could not make them hear! In the fit of despair which followed he went round and round his living tomb like some wild beast in a cage. During one of these perambulations, he stumbled again over the fallen rocks, dropped into the hole behind them, and slid a few feet downwards, but not rapidly, for the slope was gradual, and it terminated on a flat floor. Looking cautiously round, on reaching this lower depth, he saw what appeared to be a faint light far beneath him, and considerably in advance of the spot where he stood, or rather to which he clung.

Gradually his mind calmed, and, resolving to make for this light, he groped his way downward. It was a long and wearisome scramble, involving many a slip and slide, and not a few falls, (for it was made, of course, in total darkness), and the distant light did not appear to become stronger or nearer. At last it seemed as though it were growing. Then John found himself on ground over which he could walk, guiding himself by touching perpendicular walls of rock on either side with his hands. It was a great split in the mountain, caused perhaps by those mighty subterranean forces, which some men recognise as volcanic action, whilst others, admitting—but passing beyond—second causes, recognise them as tools with which God is moulding this world according to His will.

"Strange!" thought the man, as he moved slowly forward. "Was this split made hundreds—perhaps thousands—of years ago, for the purpose of enabling me to escape?"

"Certainly not—absurd, presumptuous idea," answered Unbelief, smartly.

"It was," remarked Faith, slowly, "made, no doubt, for hundreds—it may be millions—of other purposes, but among these purposes the saving of your life was certainly in the mind of Him who 'knows all things from the beginning,' and with whom even the falling of a sparrow is a matter for consideration."

We do not assert that John Mitford's reasoning took the precise form of these words, for many minds can think somewhat profoundly without being able to express themselves clearly; but some such thoughts undoubtedly coursed through John's mind, as he moved through that subterranean labyrinth, and finally emerged—through a narrow crack, not so large as an ordinary door—upon the inner margin of a stupendous cavern.

With a fervent "Thank God!" and a hopeful leap of the heart, the poor man beheld the waters of the sea rushing up to his very feet; and beyond the cave's mouth lay the grand ocean itself, like a bright picture in a black frame. But what was that projecting from the water, not twenty yards from where he stood? The broken mast of a sunken wreck!

Mitford's heart almost stood still, for he became aware that he had made his way to the very cavern in which the ill-fated *Lapwing* had met her doom, and around him were masses of wreckage that had been washed up and thrown on the rocks at the inner end of the cave where he stood.

An involuntary shudder passed through the man's frame as he glanced round expecting to see the dead bodies of his late shipmates. But nothing of the kind was visible, and the spars, masts, and other wreckage which had reached the rocks had been shattered into "matchwood" by frequent gales.

John Mitford now hastened in eager hope along the sides of the cave towards its mouth, intending to go out to the base of the cliffs, forgetting, in his eagerness, that the mouth could not be reached without a boat. He soon discovered this, and was then thrown into another fit of despair by remembering that he could not swim.

Oh! how bitterly he blamed himself for having neglected to acquire such a simple accomplishment. He might have learnt it when young, had he not been indifferent, or lazy about it. Often had he been advised to learn it by companions, but had treated the matter lightly and let the chance go by—and now, only fifty yards or so of deep water intervened between the end of the ledges of rock and the outside of the cavern, where he might perhaps find foothold enough to scramble along the base of the cliffs—but those fifty yards were equal to the Atlantic to him, he could not swim that distance to save his life. Once or twice, in a fit of desperation, he had almost plunged in to attempt it, and take his chance. Fortunately his courage failed. Had he taken the plunge his fate would no doubt have been sealed.

Returning to the inner end of the cave he searched among the wreckage for wood with which to make a raft, but it was so shattered that he found no pieces large enough to be thus used. He found, however, a barrel of pork and another of pease jammed into a crevice. These proved an immense relief to his feelings, for they secured him against absolute starvation, which he had begun to think stared him in the face.

From that time forward the unfortunate man made incessant and wild efforts to get out of the cave. He climbed and scrambled about until his clothes were almost torn off his back. He gathered the largest masses of wood he could find and tied them together in bundles until he had made something like a raft; but John was not a handy workman; his raft overturned the first time he tried it, and went to pieces, and he would have been drowned at that time if he had not been within grasping distance of the rocks. As it was, he got a fright which made him finally turn from that method of escape in despair.

Then the raw pork and hard pease tried him severely, and brought on a complaint which lasted a considerable time and greatly reduced his strength, but John was tough, and recovered—though not much more than the skeleton of his former self remained.

Thus he continued to exist in that cavern, during all the time that his wife and friends were mourning him as dead; and in this condition was he there seated on the morning in which this chapter opens.

"Weary, weary—desolation!" moaned the unfortunate man, lifting his head and gazing round with the air of one from whom all hope has long since departed.

It is said, or supposed, that when a spoke in Fortune's wheel is at the lowest there must needs be a rise. Mitford's experience at this time would seem to give ground for belief in the saying; for the word "desolation" had scarcely passed his lips, when distant voices of men were heard, causing his heart to bound violently. Next moment a boat glided in front of the cave's mouth.

John Mitford sprang up and gave vent to a yell!

Hope raised to strong life after being long deferred; despair suddenly trampled in the dust; joy bounding as from the tomb into rampant being—and a host of indescribable sentiments and passions found vent in that tremendous, that inconceivable howl!

And its effect on those in the boat?—Well—

That morning our exploring party had resumed their voyage with somewhat saddened hearts, for they remembered the look of the coast well, and knew that an hour or so would bring them to the cave where the *Lapwing* had gone down. Even Black Ned had become sentimental, and given vent to a few expressions of a semi-religious nature!

"We can't be far from it now," said Dr Hayward, as the men ceased rowing, and the boat glided slowly, silently along.

"It's a gruesome place," remarked Black Ned, in a low voice.

"To think that so many lives were lost here—or hereabouts," murmured Tomlin.

"An' their ghost, maybe, hangin' about!" suggested Slag, with a superstitious glance over his shoulder.

Just then Hayward bade O'Connor get up and stand in the bow with the boat-hook, ready to fend off,—an order which the Irishman, having been somewhat awed by the tone of the conversation, obeyed in silence.

It was at this point that they glided in front of the cave, and drew forth the yell which burst upon them like a clap of thunder. The shock to the nervous system of each was terrific. In the case of O'Connor it was visible, for he fell flat back into the bottom of the boat and fetched Jarring a tremendous whack on the head with the boat-hook in falling. Afterwards, Terrence asserted stoutly that a slip of the foot as he stood on the th'ort was the cause, but those who knew him best held that it was "a case of nerves."

Need it be said that, on recovering nervous equilibrium, the joy of rescuers and rescued was intense?

"Come along, let's take 'im home at wanst," cried the Irishman, when they had got the poor dazed man into the boat. "Isn't it Peggy that'll open her eyes an' screech for joy when she sots her eyes on ye!"

"We'll have to wash and comb an' clothe him first," said Tomlin.

He did not say "shave," for they had no razors,—and by that time the beards of most of the party were as long as Mitford's; but their locks had been trimmed by means of a clasp-knife super-sharpened, whereas Mitford's were in wildest disorder.

That night they encamped in the wreck-cave, made a fire, and prepared a splendid supper of pork and pea-soup for John and themselves, after which they subjected their recovered comrade to a scrubbing and cropping and repairing of habiliments that almost proved fatal to his constitution. Next day they loaded the boat with all the pork and pease they could find, as well as portions of cordage that might be useful. Then they started off on the return journey.

It was a fine day when they reached the encampment, where the coxswain and the women were on the look-out. Massey, of course, was the first to observe, as the boat approached, that an extra hand was in it; but he wisely said nothing at first. Then his heart began to beat as it used to do when he brought in rescued men and women from wrecks, for the truth suddenly flashed upon him. He glanced at Peggy. Poor thing, her sad eyes had wandered from the approaching boat and were resting wistfully on the horizon beyond.

"Nell," murmured the coxswain in a deep, earnest whisper to his wife, who stood at his elbow, "the tide's a-goin' to rise again wi' poor Peggy, if my eyes are tellin' truth."

"What d'ee mean, Bob?" asked Nellie, with a quick, anxious look.

"Five men went away, Nell; *six* are comin' back!"

As he spoke, a tall figure rose up in the stern of the boat and waved a hand.

Nellie glanced quickly at her friend. She was standing with glaring eyes, parted lips, and a deathly pallor on her worn face.

"Peggy!"

The familiar word came rolling to the shore, and a piercing shriek replied to it as the poor woman threw up both hands and fell backward into the ready arms of the coxswain's wife, who had sprung to her side in anticipation of some such catastrophe.

There was the voice of prayer and thanksgiving that night in the hut on the lonely shore—such thanksgiving as we might conceive filled the hearts of Jairus and of the widow of Nain in the days of old.

Story 1 -- Chapter 12.

The state of things on the island was now considerably improved. Peggy, under the influence of gratitude for restored felicity, became more helpful than she had formerly been, and more loquacious than ever. Her female companions, being amiable and easily pleased, were rather amused than otherwise at the continuous flow of discursive, sometimes incomprehensible, and always good-natured small talk—particularly small talk—with which she beguiled the hours that might have otherwise hung heavily on their minds while their hands were busily engaged with the bone-needles and sinew threads which the coxswain had manufactured for them. For the clothes with which they had landed on the island—especially those of the men—had begun to wear out after eight or ten months, and new garments had to be made, while repairs never ceased.

Meanwhile, the men were fully occupied each day in hunting seals or fishing, cutting firewood with the axe they had found in the hut, and in making their home more comfortable. A door was fitted to the hut; a wooden partition was put up to cut off more effectually the women's apartment from that of the men; the open crevices in the walls were stopped up with moss, and many other improvements were made. A few nails extracted from the walls of the hut were converted into fish-hooks, by means of the file which had been found, and Nellie spun some excellent fishing-lines from flax found growing wild in abundance. The file also enabled them to strike fire with broken flints picked up on the shore. The ash of burnt cotton, as the doctor knew, makes good tinder; so in the public interest, John Mitford agreed to part with the ragged remains of the cotton shirt he had long worn—quite unnecessarily—over his woollen jersey. Thus they could afford to let the fire go out, and were relieved from constant watching, as well as anxiety in regard to it.

They did not, however, cease their nocturnal vigils, for the hope of deliverance never died out, though it at last sank very low. Besides keeping their seal-skin flag flying, they kindled a beacon-fire every night, to guard and replenish which became the nightly duty of one or other of the men—watch and watch about—all the time they stayed on the island.

During the earlier part of each night, however, the beacon-fire was not watched. It was merely lighted and left for some hours to look after itself. During this period, after supper, the whole party were wont to draw round the blazing fire in the hut, and each contributed his or her share to the entertainment of the social circle. Then it was that lugubrious John Mitford developed amazing powers of inventive story-telling, and Joe Slag came out strong with thrilling lifeboat tales, every word of which Bob Massey corroborated, while Terrence O'Connor displayed powers of sarcastic criticism of the highest order, and Tomlin, Black Ned, and the women proved an intensely appreciative audience. But the latter were not merely listeners. True, Peggy did nothing for the general good. Having quite exhausted her lungs with incessant talk during each day, she was fortunately almost incapable of speech in the

evening, but Nellie, who possessed a voice as sweet as herself, and clear and true as that of a nightingale, was induced to "favour the company"—chiefly with pathetic or patriotic ditties and hymns—while Eva thrilled her audience with terrible tales of slavery, in many of which she had acted a part. Of course Dr Hayward lent his aid, both with song and story; but, like a true leader, he devoted himself chiefly to drawing out the powers of his companions, directing or diverting the flow of conversation, and keeping order. He also instituted what may be truly styled family worship at night, by repeating from memory portions of the word of God and engaging in prayer just before retiring to rest. Bob Massey and Tomlin were induced to help him in this, and never was a prayer put up from that hut in which there was not an earnest petition that a ship might be sent for their deliverance.

"But a ship is long, long o' comin'," said Slag to Jarring as he accompanied the latter part of the way to the beacon-fire one night when it was Black Ned's turn to watch.

"A ship'll come, Joe, when God sees fit to send it," said Ned.

Slag glanced at his comrade in surprise, the reply was so very unlike Ned's usual style of speech that he felt uncertain whether it was uttered in earnest.

"The only thing I feel an awful longin' for now, at times, is a bit o' 'baccy," continued Ned.

"So does I, Ned, an' I sometimes think Dr Hayward has got the advantage of us there, for he never smoked, so he says, an' in coorse it stands to reason that he can't have no longin' for a thing he don't want—an' he seems as jolly an' happy as the best of us without it!"

"Ay, jollier and happier!" replied Ned, shortly.

"But, I say, Ned, don't ye ever feel a longin' for grog? Ye used to be raither fond of it."

"No—not now, Joe. It's the best thing as ever happened to me, bein' cast on this here island—wi' Dr Hayward to give a feller a word of advice."

Slag, who felt a sort of self-righteous superiority over his comrade, inasmuch as *he* had never given way to drink, said, "You should be thankful for that, Ned."

"I *am* thankful," returned the other in a tone that induced Slag to say no more.

It was a very dark night, and cold, so that Black Ned involuntarily shuddered as he approached the beacon-fire alone—Joe having left him—and commenced to heap on fuel. Then rain began to fall heavily. There was no shelter, and the watchman was soon drenched to the skin. Heaping on more logs till the fire roared again, he tried to warm himself, and stood so close to the blaze that his garments smoked—they would have burnt had they not been wet—but no heat seemed to penetrate the shivering frame of Black Ned.

Next morning the poor man was smitten with a raging fever. From the first the doctor had little hope of his recovery. With a constitution fatally injured by dissipation and drink, his chance was very small; but of course every effort was made to save him. He was laid on a soft bed of moss in the warmest corner of the hut, and the women took their turn in nursing him, night and day—the coxswain's wife, however, being the chief nurse; for, besides being sympathetic and tender by nature, she had been trained in a rough school where self-reliance and capacity were constantly called into action in circumstances of difficulty, so that she was better fitted for the post than either of her companions. But their efforts were of no avail. After a week, Black Ned died, with a smile of gratitude on his dark face as he gazed in Hayward's eyes, and held his hand until the spirit returned to God who gave it.

The gloom cast over the little community by this sudden appearance of the King of Terrors lasted for many days, and had the good effect of turning the thoughts of all of them to those subjects which are obviously and naturally distasteful to fallen man—the soul and the world to come. But gradually the gloom passed away, though it left in the party a greater longing than ever to escape from their island prison.

One day, while some of them were at breakfast, Terrence O'Connor rushed into the hut with the news that a ship was in sight! Instantly the boat was manned, and they rowed with all their might towards the vessel, which was seen like a white speck on the horizon. They rowed to within four miles of her, with an oar set up as a mast, and a jacket attached thereto as a flag, but a breeze sprang up, and the strange sail actually passed on without taking the slightest notice of them—though the people on board could not have failed to see the boat!

Profound was the disappointment, and violent the indignation, that filled the thoughts of the castaways as they rowed slowly back to land.

"Sure it's devils that must live in the bodies o' some men," growled O'Connor, in the bitterness of his soul.

"You're too hard on the devils, Terrence," said Bob Massey. "Some men in this world do the worst *that they can*, an' surely devils can do no more than that."

This incident, however, aroused the hopes and expectations of the party to a high pitch, so that the beacon-fire was kept burning more steadily and brightly than before, and the look-out hill was more frequently visited; still, weeks and months passed by, and no deliverance came to them.

During this period, the seal-hunting, fishing, clothes-mending, etcetera, were carried on with unflagging energy, and the nightly entertainments became more and more entertaining, by reason of use and effort developing new capacities and talents that might in less favourable circumstances have lain altogether dormant. All this was due very much to their leader; for, besides being a God-fearing man, Hayward was pre-eminently cheery, and full of fun as well as vigour. The coxswain, too, was like-minded, and of great capacity in every way; while his wife's voice was so

charming that the party became almost dependent on it. They could scarcely have gone to rest at last without Nellie's hymn or song as a lullaby! We must state, however, that Tomlin did not share in this pleasure. That poor man had been born musically deaf, as some people are born physically blind. There was no musical inlet to his soul! There was, indeed, a door for sound to enter, and music, of course, sought an entrance by that door; but it was effectually destroyed, somehow, in passing through the doorway, so that poor Tomlin showed no symptom of pleasure. What he heard, and how he heard it, is known only to himself!

Once or twice during this time they visited the cavern of the wreck, with the view, if possible, of recovering something from the sunk vessel, but though most of the men could swim, none of them could dive, therefore the result was failure.

They succeeded, however, in making soap by boiling wood-ash and seal's fat in their cast-iron pot. Those who are accustomed to the celebrated "Pears" can scarcely understand what an addition to cleanliness and comfort resulted from this coarsely manufactured article.

Gulls' eggs were found in great quantity on the cliffs, and the discovery and capture of wild pigs added to the luxury of their table—which latter, by the way, was an ingenious contrivance of Joe Slag. Binding four sticks together in the form of a stout oblong frame, Joe had covered this—filled it in as it were—with straight branches about a finger thick, laid side by side and tied to the frame. This he fixed on four posts driven into the ground, and thus formed an excellent, if not an elegant, table.

One morning at breakfast, Terrence O'Connor was observed to be unusually busy with a large hook.

"Are you goin' to fish for sharks to-day?" asked Slag.

"Faix, no; it's to the woods I'll go fishin' to-day, Joe. Now, Nell, gi' me the stoutest line ye've got on hand, mavourneen."

"Will that do? I made it the other day specially for sharks—or whales!" said Nellie, with a light laugh, for she expected him to reject the line she held up.

"The very thing, Nell. Hand it over. Now, boys, I'm off to try my luck i' the woods, for I'm gittin' tired o' the say."

O'Connor went off alone, bestowing a mysterious wink on Peggy Mitford as he left.

The Irishman had observed that the wild pigs were particularly fond of a certain root which was plentiful in a valley about three miles distant from the hut. Repairing to that valley, he dug up one of the roots, baited his hook with it, hung it from a low branch to attract attention, fastened the other end of the line to a tree, and went off to hide and bide his time. Before half-an-hour had elapsed, a gay young pig visited the scene of its former festivities, saw the pendent bait, smelt it, took it in its mouth, and straightway filled the woods with frantic lamentations. The struggle between the Irishman and that pig was worthy of record, but we prefer leaving it to the reader's imagination. The upshot was, that the pig was overcome, carried—bound, and shrieking—to the hut, and tamed by Peggy. In a short time, other pigs were caught and tamed. So, also, were rabbits. These bred and multiplied. The original pig became the mother of a large family, and in a short time something like the sounds and aspects of a farm began to surround the old hut. Still further—by means of the cast-iron pot, which already boiled their soup and their soap—they managed to boil sea-water down into salt, and with this some of the pigs were converted into salt pork—in short, the place began to assume the appearance of a busy and thriving backwoods settlement.

"It's risin' tide with us again, after a fashion, Nell," said the coxswain to his wife, as they stood one evening on the sea-shore watching the sunset.

Nellie sighed. "It is, Bob," she said, "and I'm very thankful; but—but I'd rather be at home in Old England among kith and kin, even though the tide was low!"

"What! alongside o' Aunt Betty?"

"Yes, even alongside o' Aunt Betty; for if this voyage has taught me anything at all, it has taught me that, after all, 'there's no place like home!'"

"Right you are, Nell," said Joe Slag, who came up at that moment, "there's no place like home—when it's a happy one; but if it ain't a happy one, there may be difference of opinion even on that pint, d'ee see?"

That very night, a great ocean steamer, bound from the Antipodes to Old England, chanced to diverge from her true course, and sighted the beacon-fire which Tomlin—on duty at the time—was stirring up to fervent heat. The Captain was not one of those whom Terrence O'Connor credited with diabolic possession. He was a good man; and, knowing that men did not light beacon-fires on lonely islands merely for amusement, he resolved to lay-to till daylight, which was due in about an hour from the time the island was sighted. Meanwhile, he sounded his steam whistle.

At the sound, the hut instantly disgorged its male inmates, who, recognising the familiar noise and the steamer's lights, sent up a shout of mingled joy and thanksgiving.

"Get out the boat, boys!" cried Hayward, as he ran back to the hut to rouse the women.

"Get ready, quick! Eva; a steamer at last, thank God, in the offing! Don't lose a moment. They may have little time to wait. Boat will be ready in a few minutes."

"Ay, an' pack up all you want to carry away," cried the coxswain, crossing the threshold at that moment.

"So it is all going to end suddenly like a dream!" said Eva, as she hastened to obey orders.

"Home, sweet home!" murmured Nellie, trembling with joy at the prospect.

"Wherever you are, my dear, the home will be sweet," said Peggy. "Though of course it wouldn't be that without your 'usband, for it takes two to make a fight, you know, an' it takes two no less, I think, to make things pleasant, but—dear, dear, what a disagreeable thing it is to 'ave to dress in a 'urry, though one shouldn't—"

"Look alive, there! look al-i-ve!" roared O'Connor, putting his head in at the door. "Daylight's a-breakin', an' they won't—"

"Oh! Terrence, that reminds me—don't forget our pets," cried Nellie, who had steadily declined to speak of them as "live stock."

"All right, missis. It's lookin' after them I am this minnit."

The Irishman ran, as he spoke, to the styes and hutches where the pigs and rabbits were kept and opened the doors.

"Out wid ye!" he cried, "the Act of Emancipation's passed, and ye're all free—ivery mother's son of ye."

Accustomed to his voice and his caressing hand, the astonished creatures seemed to look up at him in surprise.

"Be aff, at wance, hooroo!" cried the excited man, with a clap of his hands and a Donnybrook yell that sent all the "pets" leaping and squealing into their native jungle.

Soon after that the boat was bounding out to sea under the impulse of strong arms and willing hearts. A few minutes more, and they were receiving the warm congratulations of the passengers and crew of the steamer. Then the order was given to go ahead full speed, and the engine's great heart seemed to throb sympathetically within the hearts of the rescued ones as the vessel cut her way swiftly through the Southern Ocean—homeward bound for Old England! Nevertheless, there was a touch of sadness in the breasts of all as they turned their farewell gaze on the receding island and thought of the pets, the old hut, the long period of mingled pleasure and suffering, and the lonely grave.

We cannot part from the friends whose footsteps we have followed so long and so far without a parting word or two.

On returning to his native village, Bob Massey found that his successor as coxswain had died, and that another man had not yet been appointed to the lifeboat—he was therefore installed, with much rejoicing, in his old position as a rescuer of human lives. Joe Slag, naturally and pleasantly, also fell into his old post at the bow. Nellie found that Aunt Betty had had what the villagers called "a stroke" during her absence; which crushing blow had the effect of opening her eyes to many things regarding herself and others, to which she had been particularly blind before. It also had the effect—indirectly—of subduing much of the evil in her character and bringing out much of the good. As evil begets evil, so good begets good; and one result of this law was, that the seven children, whom she had brought—or banged—up, became seven repentant and sympathetic and reasonably good creatures when they saw the old mother, whom they used to think so harsh and so physically strong, reduced to amiable helplessness. Thus it came to pass that there was not in all the village an old woman who was so well looked after by her progeny as Aunt Betty.

Terrence O'Connor continued to rove about the world in the capacity of a ship's cook till near the end of his days. John Mitford and Peggy unexpectedly came into a small inheritance soon after returning home, and settled down for life close to the coxswain's cottage. Tomlin went to New Zealand to seek his fortune. Whether he found it or not, we cannot tell! Last, but not least, Dr Hayward and his wife returned to their native land, and for many years afterwards kept up a steady correspondence with Nell Massey, in which, you may be sure, there were frequent and pleasant allusions to the time which they had spent together on the lonely isle in the southern seas.

One morning, Nellie presented her husband with a baby boy. Bob was out with the lifeboat rescuing a shipwrecked crew at the time the presentation was made. On his return, he opened the door and stood before his wife dripping wet.

"Fifteen saved this time, Nell," he began, but the nurse stopped him by exhibiting the baby boy.

"Thank the Lord!" he said, with a glad look in his wet eyes.

"You mustn't come near us," said the nurse, with a look of warning. "Only a look just now."

"The tide has risen to the flood now, Bob," murmured the young mother, softly.

"Ay," said the coxswain in a deep voice, "an' it's a high spring tide too. God bless you, Nell!"

The End.

Story 2 -- Chapter 1.

Jack Frost and Sons—A Short Story.

One year in the last quarter of the present century John Frost, Esquire, of Arctic Hall, paid an unusually long visit to the British Islands.

John, or Jack, Frost, as he was familiarly called by those who did not fear him, was a powerful fellow; an amazingly active, vigorous, self-willed fellow, whom it was difficult to resist, and, in some circumstances, quite impossible to overcome.

Jack was a giant. Indeed, it is not improbable that he was also a “giant-killer,”—an insolent, self-assertive, cold-hearted giant, who swaggered with equal freedom into the palaces of the rich and the cottages of the poor; but he did not by any means meet with the same reception everywhere.

In palaces and mansions he was usually met in the entrance hall by a sturdy footman who kicked him out and slammed the door in his face, while in cottages and lowly dwellings he was so feebly opposed that he gained entrance easily—for he was a bullying shameless fellow, who forced his way wherever he could—and was induced to quit only after much remonstrance and persuasion, and even then, he usually left an unpleasant flavour of his visit behind him.

But there were some abodes in which our hero met with no opposition at all, where the inmates scarcely made any attempt to keep him out, but remained still and trembled, or moaned feebly, while he walked in and sat down beside them.

Jack was somewhat of a deceiver too. He had, for the most part, a bright, beaming, jovial outward aspect, which made the bitter coldness of his heart all the more terrible by contrast. He was most deadly in his feelings in calm weather, but there were occasions when he took pleasure in sallying forth accompanied by his like-minded sons, Colonel Wind and Major Snow. And it was a tremendous sight, that few people cared to see except through windows, when those three, arm-in-arm, went swaggering through the land together.

One Christmas morning, at the time we write of, Jack and his two sons went careering, in a happy-go-lucky sort of way, along the London streets towards the “west end,” blinding people’s eyes as they went, reversing umbrellas, overturning old women, causing young men to stagger, and treating hats in general as if they had been black footballs. Turning into Saint James’s Park they rushed at the royal palace, but, finding that edifice securely guarded from basement to roof-tree, they turned round, and, with fearless audacity, assaulted the Admiralty and the Horse-Guards—taking a shot at the clubs in passing. It need scarcely be recorded that they made no impression whatever on those centres of wealth and power.

Undismayed—for Jack and his sons knew nothing either of fear or favour—they went careering westward until they came to a palatial mansion, at the half-open front door of which a pretty servant girl stood peeping out. It was early. Perhaps she was looking for the milkman—possibly for the policeman. With that quick perception which characterises men of war, Major Snow saw and seized his opportunity. Dashing forward he sprang into the hall. Colonel Wind, not a whit less prompt, burst the door wide open, and the three assailants tumbled over each other as they took possession of the outworks of the mansion.

But “Jeames” was not far distant. The screams of Mary drew him forth, he leaped into the hall, drove out the intruders, and shut the door with a crash, but with no further damage to the foe than the snipping off part of Major Snow’s tails, which Mary swept up into a dust shovel and deposited in the coal-hole, or some such dark region below.

Our trio possessed neither fear nor pride. They were also destitute of taste, and had no respect for persons. Treating their repulse as a good joke, they turned round and went hilariously along the Strand, embracing every one they met, young and old, rich and poor, pretty and plain, with pointed impartiality, until they reached the City. There we will leave them to revel amongst the poor, while we return to the mansion at the west end.

In two snug bedrooms thereof two young men lay in their comfortable beds, partially awake and yawning—the one flat on his back as if laid out for his last sleep; the other coiled into a bundle with the bedclothes, as if ready to be carried off to the laundry with the next washing. The rooms were connected by a door which stood open, for the occupants were twin brothers; their united ages amounting to forty years.

“Ned,” said the straight one to the bundle.

“Well, Tom,” (sleepily).

“Did you hear that noise—like a cannon-shot?”

“Ya-i-o-u yes—som’ing tumbled—door bang’d,” (snore).

“Hallo, Ned!” cried Tom, suddenly leaping out of bed and beginning to dress in haste; “why, it’s Christmas morning! I had almost forgot. A Merry Christmas to you, my boy!”

“M’rry Kism’s, ol’ man, but don’ waken me. What’s use o’ gettin’ up?”

“The use?” echoed Tom, proceeding rapidly with his toilet; “why, Ned, the use of rising early is that it enables a man to get through with his work in good time, and I’ve a deal of work to do to-day at the east-end.”

“So ‘v’ I,” murmured Ned, “at th’ wes’ end.”

“Indeed. What are you going to do?”

“Sk-t.”

“Sk-t? What’s that?”

“Skate—ol’ man, let m’ ‘lone,” growled Ned, as he uncoiled himself to some extent and re-arranged the bundle for

another snooze.

With a light laugh Tom Westlake left his brother to enjoy his repose, and descended to the breakfast-room, where his sister Matilda, better known as Matty, met him with a warm reception.

Everything that met him in that breakfast-parlour was warm. The fire, of course, was warm, and it seemed to leap and splutter with a distinctly Christmas morning air; the curtains and carpets and arm-chairs were warm and cosy in aspect; the tea-urn was warm, indeed it was hot, and so were the muffins, while the atmosphere itself was unusually warm. The tiny thermometer on the chimney-piece told that it was 65 degrees of Fahrenheit. Outside, the self-registering thermometer indicated 5 degrees below zero!

"Why, Matty," exclaimed Tom, as he looked frowningly at the instrument, "I have not seen it so low as that for years. It will freeze the Thames if it lasts long enough."

Matty made no reply, but stood with her hands clasped on her brother's arm gazing contemplatively at the driving snow.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Tom.

"About the poor," answered Matty, as she went and seated herself at the breakfast-table. "On such a terrible morning as this I feel so inexpressibly selfish in sitting down to an overflowing meal in the midst of such warmth and comfort, when I know that there are hundreds and thousands of men and women and children all round us who have neither fire nor food sufficient—little clothing, and no comfort. It is dreadful," added Matty, as an unusually fierce gust dashed the snow against the windows.

Tom was like-minded with his sister, but he could not suppress a smile as he looked into her pretty little anxious face.

"Yes, Matty, it *is* dreadful," he replied, "and the worst of it is that we can do so little, so very little, to mend matters. Yet I don't feel as you do about the selfishness of enjoying a good breakfast in comfortable circumstances, for it is God who has given us all that we have, as well as the power to enjoy it. I grant, that if we simply enjoyed our good things, and neither thought of nor cared for the poor, we should indeed be most abominably selfish, but happily that is not our case this morning. Have we not risen an hour earlier than usual to go out and do what we can to mitigate the sorrows of the poor? Are we not about to face the bitter blast and the driving snow on this Christmas morning for that very purpose? and should we not be rendered much less capable of doing so, if we were to start off on our mission with cold bodies and half-filled—I beg pardon, pass the muffins, dear. Besides, sister mine, if you were to go out on such a morning cold and underfed, would it not be probable that I should have to go and fetch a doctor for you instead of taking you out to help me in aiding and comforting poor people?"

"That may be all very true, Tom," returned Matty, with a dissatisfied and puzzled look, "but I cannot help feeling that I have so much, so *very* much, more than I need of everything, while the thousands I speak of have so little—so very little. Why could not rich people like us be content with plainer things, and use fewer things, and so have more to give to the poor?"

"You have broached a very wide and profound subject, Matty, and it would probably take us a week to go into it exhaustively, but a few words may suffice to show you that your remedy would not meet the case. Suppose that all the people in England were all at once smitten with your desire to retrench in order to have more to spare to the poor—and were to act upon their convictions; to determine that henceforth they would live on the plainest food, such as potatoes, mutton, and bread; what, I ask you, would become of the great army of confectioners? Would they not be thrown out of employment, and help, perhaps, to swell the ranks of the poor? If the rich ceased to buy pictures, what would become of painters? If they gave up books, (horrible to think of!) what would be the consequences to authors, and what the result to themselves? If carriages and horses were not kept, what would become of coachmen and grooms and ostlers—to say nothing of coach-makers, saddlers, harness-makers, and their innumerable dependants? No—living plainly or simply is not what is wanted, but living reasonably—according to one's means. Then, as to your having, as you say, much more than you need—that does not injure the poor, for nothing of it is wasted. Does not part of the surplus go to Mary and James and the other servants, and much of what they do not consume goes in charity, directly, to the poor themselves?"

"Well, but," returned Matty, with the distressed and puzzled look still unabated, "though all you tell me may be quite true, it does not in the least degree alter the fact that there *is* something quite wrong in the condition of the poor of our great cities, which *ought* to be remedied."

"Of course it does not, little woman, but it relieves my mind, and it ought to relieve yours, as to the selfishness of enjoying a good breakfast."

"But, surely," resumed Matty, with a slightly indignant look and tone, "surely you don't mean to tell me that there is no remedy for the miserable condition of the poor, and that the rich must just sigh over it, or shut their eyes to it, while they continue to revel in luxury?"

"How you fly to extremes, sister!" said Tom, with a laugh, as he neatly cut the top off a fourth egg. "I combat your erroneous views, and straightway you charge me, by implication, with having no views at all! A remedy there surely is, but the wisest among us are not agreed as to *what* it is—chiefly, I think, because the remedy is not simple but extremely complex. It cannot be stated in a few words. It consists in the wise and prompt application of multiform means—"

"Brother," interrupted Matty with a smile, "do you think I am to be turned from my quest after this great truth by the stringing together of words without meaning—at least words vague and incomprehensible?"

"By no means, Matty. I hope that nothing will ever turn you from your quest after the best method of helping the poor. But my words are not meant to be vague. By multiform means I would indicate legislation in numerous channels, and social effort in all its ramifications, besides the correction of many erroneous modes of thought—such, for instance, as the putting of the less before the greater—"

"Tom," again interrupted Matty, "I think it is about time to go and put on my things."

"Not so, sister dear," said Tom impressively; "I intend that you shall hear me out. I think that you put the less before the greater when you talk of 'giving' to the poor instead of 'considering' the poor. The greater, you know, includes the less. Consideration includes judicious giving, and the teaching of Scripture is, not to give to, but to *consider*, the poor. Now you may be off and get ready—as quickly as you can, too, for it would never do to keep the poor waiting breakfast!"

With a light laugh and a vigorous step—the result of goodwill to mankind, good intentions, good feeding, and, generally, good circumstances—Matilda Westlake ran upstairs to her room at the top of the house to put on a charming little winter bonnet, a dear little cloak lined with thick fur, and everything else to match, while Tom busied himself in meditating on the particular passage of God's Word which he hoped, by the Spirit's influence, to bring home to the hearts of some of the poor that Christmas morning.

Half an hour after these two had gone forth to do battle with John Frost and Sons, Edward Westlake sauntered into the breakfast-room, his right hand in his pocket and his left twirling the end of an exceedingly juvenile moustache.

Turning his back to the fire he perused the morning paper and enjoyed himself thoroughly, while James re-arranged the table for another sumptuous meal.

Ned was by no means a bad fellow. On the contrary, his companions thought and called him a "jolly good fellow." His father was a jolly, though a gouty old widower. Perhaps it was owing to the fact that there was no mother in the household that Ned smoked a meerschaum in the breakfast-room while he read the paper.

"Have my skates been sharpened?" he asked, looking over the top of the paper.

James said that they had been sharpened, and were then lying ready on the hall table.

Sauntering to the window Ned looked out, and, James having retired, he made a few remarks himself, which showed the direction of his thoughts.

"Capital! Ice will be splendid. Snow won't matter. Lots of men to sweep it. Looks as if the wind would fall, and there's a little bit of blue sky. Even if it doesn't clear, the pond is well sheltered. I do like a sharp, stinging, frosty day. Makes one's blood career so pleasantly!"

With such agreeable thoughts and a splendid appetite Ned Westlake sat down to breakfast. Thereafter he put on a thick overcoat, edged with sable, a thick pair of boots and softly lined gloves, and went out with the skates swinging on his arm.

Jack Frost and his two sons were still holding high revelry outside. They met him with impartial violence, but Ned bent forward with a smile of good-humoured defiance, and went on his way unchecked.

Not so a stout and short old female of the coster-monger class, who, after a series of wild gyrations that might have put a dancing dervish to shame, bore down on Ned after the manner of a fat teetotum, and finally launched herself into his arms.

"Hallo old girl—steady," exclaimed Ned, holding her up with an effort. "You carry too much sail to venture abroad in such weather."

"Which it were my only one!" gasped the old woman, holding out her umbrella that had been reversed and obviously shattered beyond repair. Then, looking up at Ned, "You'd better leave a-go of me, young man. What will the neighbours think of us?"

Which remark she uttered sternly—all the more that she had securely hooked herself to the railings and could afford to cast off her friend.

With a solemn assurance that he esteemed her, "the sweetest of the fair," Ned went smilingly on his way, receiving in reply, "La, now, who'd 'a' thought it!"

Having twisted this lady's bonnet off, blown her unkempt hair straight out, and otherwise maltreated her, Colonel Wind, with his father and brother, went raging along the streets until he came to the neighbourhood of Whitechapel. The three seemed rather fond of this region, and no wonder; for, although never welcomed, they found themselves strong enough to force an entrance into many a poor home, and to remain in possession.

Swaggering, in their own noisy and violent manner, into several courts and blind alleys, they caught up all the lighter articles of rubbish that lay about, hurled them against the frail and cracked windows—some of which they broke, and others of which they could not break by reason of their having been broken already. They did what was next best, however,—drove in the old hats and coats and other garments with which the square holes had been inefficiently stopped.

"Jolly! ain't it?" remarked a street boy, with a ruddy face and hair blown straight on end all round, to another street boy with a cast-iron look and a red nose—both being powerfully robust.

"Prime!" asserted the knight of the red nose.

And then both went eagerly to take liberties with a neighbouring pump, from the spout of which hung an icicle like a stalactite, the droppings from which, at an earlier period, had formed a considerable stalagmite on the stones below.

It is probable that the sick old man on the poor bed in the small room close to the pump did not think the state of matters either "jolly" or "prime," for, besides being very old, he was very weak and thin and cold and hungry; in addition to which Jack Frost had seated himself on the rickety chair beside the empty grate, and seemed bent on remaining—the colonel having previously blown open the door and removed a garment which had sheltered the old man's head, thus permitting the major to sprinkle a miniature drift on his pillow.

"I hardly like to leave you, gran'father, in such blustery weather," said a little maiden of about ten years of age, with filthy garments and a dirty face, who, if she had been washed and dressed, would have been distinctly pretty, but who, in the circumstances, was rather plain. As she spoke she re-adjusted the garment-screen and removed the snowdrift.

"Don't say that, Martha," replied the old man in a thin weak voice—it had been strong and deep and resonant once, but Time and Want and Disease play sad havoc with strong men.

"You *must* go, darling," resumed the old man after a few seconds' pause to recover breath. "You've no chance of a breakfast otherwise. And—perhaps—they may give you a bit to bring home for—"

Martha eagerly interrupted the hesitating voice,—and it was easily interrupted! "Yes, yes, gran'father. They'll be sure to let me bring home some for you. I'll be quite, *quite* sure to do it."

She made the promise with great decision, as well she might, for she had made up her mind to pocket all the food that was given to her except just a small morsel, which she would nibble in order to make believe that she was feeding!

"Lock the door and put the key in your pocket," said the old man, while the child tucked in about him the thin torn counterpane which formed the only covering to his straw bed. "An' don't fear for me, darling. The Lord is with me. Be sure to eat as much as you can."

Having regard to her secret intentions, Martha refrained from pledging herself, but she laughed and nodded significantly as she quitted the cold, dismal, and shabby room.

It was little Martha's first experience of a "free breakfast." She had, indeed, heard of such a thing before, but had not up to that time met with anything of the kind, so she advanced to "the hall" with some timidity and much expectation.

The hall was very full, and, as poor little Martha was rather late, she could not manage to crush in much beyond the door. Besides, being small, she could see nothing. In these depressing circumstances her heart began to sink, when her attention was attracted by a slight stir outside the door. A lady and gentleman were coming in. It so happened that the lady in passing trod upon one of Martha's cold little toes, and drew from the child a sharp cry.

"Oh, my dear, *dear* little girl!" cried the shocked lady, with a gush of self-reproach and sympathy, "I'm *so* sorry—so *very, very* sorry. It was so stupid of me! Have I hurt you much, *dear* little girl? Come—come with me."

"Bring her to the stove, Matty, there's more room there to have it looked to," said the gentleman, in a kind voice.

Much consoled by all this, though still whimpering, little Martha suffered herself to be led to the front seats, and set on a bench just below the platform, where she began to bloom under the genial influence of the stove, and to wonder, with inexpressible surprise, at the mighty sea of upturned faces in front of her. As for the toe, it was utterly forgotten. The lady's foot, you see, being almost as light as her heart, had done it no serious injury. Nevertheless, she continued for a few minutes to inspect it earnestly and inquire for it tenderly, regardless of dirt!

"You're *sure* it is better, dear little child?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, thank you. I don't feel it at all now. An' it's *so* nice to feel warm again!"

What a depth of meaning was unwittingly given to the last two words by the emphasis of the child-voice.—"Warm"—"Again!" The lady almost burst into tears as she thought of all that they implied. But her services were required at the harmonium. With a parting pat on Martha's curly head, and a bright smile, she hurried away to ascend the platform.

The preliminaries of a feast at which most of the feasters are cold and hungry—some of them starving—should not be long. Full well did Tom Westlake know and appreciate this truth, and, being the donor, originator, and prime mover in the matter, he happily had it all his own way.

In the fewest possible words, and in a good loud voice which produced sudden silence, he asked God to give His blessing with the food provided, and to send His Holy Spirit into the hearts of all present, so that they might be made to hunger and thirst for Jesus, the Bread and Water of Life. Then the poor people had scarcely recovered from their surprise at the brevity of the prayer, when they were again charmed to silence by the sweet strains of the harmonium. You see, they had not yet become *blasé* and incapable of enjoying anything short of an organ. Indeed, there were some among them who deliberately said they preferred a harmonium to an organ!

But no instrument either of ancient or modern invention could drown the clatter that ensued when enormous mugs of earthenware were distributed to the company, by more or less rich and well-off "workers"; so the clatter and the

hymns went on together until each lung was filled with some delectable fluid, smoking hot, and each mouth crammed with excellent bread and meat. Then comparative quiet ensued, during which temporary calm Tom read a few verses of the Word of God, commenting on them briefly in language so forcible that it went right home to many hearts, yet so simple that even little Martha understood it.

True to her intention, little Martha, although much surprised and charmed and perplexed by all that was going on around her, did not forget to pocket something for gran'father. She was met, however, by an exasperating difficulty at the very outset. Her pocket was not large enough to contain the huge roll which, with some meat, had been put hastily into her small hand by a lady with a red rose in her bonnet. To achieve her object with the roll and meat in one hand and the mug in the other was, she found, impossible, so she set the mug on the floor between her feet and proceeded to wrestle with the loaf and pocket, having previously torn off a very small portion of the bread for her own use. Still the loaf was too large; so she tore off another morsel, and finally, after a severe struggle, succeeded in getting it and the bit of meat in.

"You'll go for to kick it over, if you don't mind," said a small boy near her, referring to the mug.

"You mind your own business—Imperence!" replied Martha, sharply. It must be remembered that she was a child of the "slums."

"Wot a cheeky little shrimp it is," retorted the boy, with as much of a grin as a stuffed mouth would admit of.

Just then Matilda Westlake, having finished a hymn, and being mindful of the little toe, came quietly down to where Martha was sitting.

"Why, dear child," she said, in surprise, "have they not given you something to eat?"

"Oh yes, ma'am. But I've—"

She was going to say, "I've eaten it," but gran'father had so earnestly impressed on her mind the sinfulness of telling lies, that she felt constrained to hesitate, and, with a trembling lip, finished by saying she had eaten *some* of it.

"And what has become of the rest, dear?"

"Please, miss, she've putt it in 'er pocket," said "Imperence" promptly.

Without noticing the remark, Matty moved so as to make herself an effectual screen between Imperence and Martha.

"Tell me, dear child," she said, stooping low and putting a gentle hand on Martha's shoulder, "are you not hungry?"

"Oh yes," answered the little one quickly; "I'm so 'ungry. You can't think 'ow 'ungry; but I promised to—to—"

At this point her lip quivered, and she began to cry quietly.

"Stay, don't tell me anything more about it, dear, till you have breakfasted. Here, eat *this* before you say another word."

She took a roll from the basket of a passing "worker" and put it in the child's hand. Nothing loth, Martha began to eat and drink, mingling a warm tear or two with the hot soup, and venting a sob now and then as she proceeded.

Watching her for a few moments, Matty left her.

In passing she stopped and said to Imperence, in a whisper of terrible intensity, "If you speak to that girl again you shall have—*no more*."

No more! To be "hanged by the neck till you are dead" would not have sounded so appalling just at that time. So Imperence collapsed.

It is not our purpose to go much further into the details of the feast. Suffice it to say that the poorest of the poor were there; that they were encouraged to eat as much as possible, and allowed to carry away what they could not eat, and there is reason to believe that, judging from the prominence of pockets, a considerable quantity found its way to hungry mouths which had been found incapable of attending the feast.

Among those who did great execution in the pocketing line was, as you may well believe, little Martha. Finding, to her ineffable joy, that there was no limit assigned to consumption, and that pocketing was not esteemed a sin, she proceeded, after stuffing herself, to stuff to overflowing the pocket with which she had previously wrestled, as already described, and then attempted to fill the pocket on the other side. She did so in utter and child-like forgetfulness of the fact that she had recently lost several small articles in consequence of the condition of that pocket, and her memory was not awakened until, having just completed the satisfactory filling of it, she beheld, or rather felt, the entire mass of edibles descending to the floor, proving that the pocket was indeed a very bottomless pit.

"Never mind, little one," said Tom Westlake, coming forward at the moment, for he had just closed the meeting; "I'll find a bag for you to put it in. I hope the toe is all right."

"Oh yes, sir, thank you, it's quite well," answered Martha, blushing through the dirt on her face, as she eyed the fallen food anxiously.

"Tell me now, little one," continued Tom, sitting down on the bench and drawing the child gently towards him, "whom

are you pocketing all these good things for?—not for yourself, I'm quite sure of that."

"Oh dear, no, sir; it's for gran'father."

"Indeed. Is grandfather very poor?"

"Oh yes, sir, very, *very* poor; an' he's got nobody but me to take care of him."

"If that be so, who is taking care of him just now?" asked Matty, who had joined her brother, leaving another "worker" at the harmonium to play the people out,—a difficult thing to do, by the way, for the people seemed very unwilling to go.

You see, among other things, Jack Frost and Sons could gain no footing in that hall, and the people knew only too well that the firm was in great force awaiting them outside.

"Nobody's takin' care on 'im, ma'am," replied Martha, somewhat shyly. "I locked 'im in, an' he's takin' care of hisself."

"Would you like to give grandfather anything in particular, little woman, if a fairy were to offer to give it you?"

"Oh, wouldn't I just?"

"Yes? What would you ask for?"

Martha pursed her little mouth and knitted her brows in thought for a minute. Then she said slowly, "I'd ask for a mug of hot soup, an' a blanket, an' some coals, and—oh! I forgot, a teapot, for ours is cracked an' won't 'old in now."

"Do you live far from this hall?" asked Tom.

"No, sir, quite close."

"Come, Matty, you and I will go with this little one and see grandfather. What is your name, child?"

"Martha Burns, sir."

"Well, Martha, give me your hand, and come along."

They were soon in the shabby little room,—for Martha was eager to give the food to the old man. Of course Jack Frost and Sons were still in possession, but there had come another visitor during the child's absence, whom they were scarce prepared to meet.

Death sat beside the lowly bed. He had not yet laid his hand on his victim, but his chill presence was evidently felt.

"Darling, I'm glad you've come," said the old man, faintly. "I've been longing so for you. Give me your hand, dear. I'm so cold—so cold."

He shivered as he spoke until the miserable bed shook. Poor Martha forgot the food in her anxiety, for a striking change had come over gran'father—such as she had never seen before. She took his thin hand in hers, and began to weep softly.

But Matilda Westlake did not forget the food. She took up the tin can in which it had been brought there, and poured some of the still warm contents into a cracked soup plate that stood on the table. Finding a pewter spoon, she at once put her hand under the pillow, and raising the old man's head gently, began to feed him like a child. Meanwhile Tom Westlake took off his thick overcoat and spread it over the bed. Then he went out, bought some sticks and coal from a neighbour, and, returning, soon kindled a fire in the rusty grate.

The old man did not seem surprised. His face wore a dazed, yet thoroughly pleased, look as he quietly accepted these attentions. All the time he kept fast hold of Martha's hand, and smiled to her once or twice. It was evident that he relished the soup. Only once he broke silence to thank them and say, "Jesus sent you, I suppose?"

"Yes, Jesus sent us," replied Matty, thoroughly meaning what she said.

At that moment Death raised his hand and laid it gently on the old man's brow. The hoary head bowed to the summons, and, with a soft sigh, the glad spirit fled to that region where suffering cannot enter.

Oh, it was sad to witness the child-grief when Martha at last came to understand that gran'father was really gone. And it required no little persuasion to induce her to leave the lowly sordid room that she had known as "home."

While his sister comforted the child, Tom went to the "authorities" to inform them that an old pauper had gone the way of all flesh.

When at last Martha permitted her new friends to remove her, she was led by Miss Westlake to the not far distant house of a lady friend, whose sympathies with the suffering, the sorrowful, and the fallen were so keen that she had given up all and gone to dwell in the midst of them, in the sanguine hope of rescuing some. To this lady's care Martha was in the meantime committed, and then Tom and his sister went their way.

Their way led them to a very different scene not far from the same region.

"We're rather late," remarked Tom, consulting his watch as they turned into a narrow street.

"Not too late, I think," said his sister.

"I hope not, for I should be sorry to go in upon them at dinner-time."

They were not too late. David Butts, whom they were about to visit, was a dock-labourer. In early youth he had been a footman, in which capacity he had made the acquaintance of the Westlakes' nursery-maid, and, having captivated her heart, had carried her off in triumph and married her.

David had not been quite as steady as might have been desired. He had acquired, while in service, a liking for beer, which had degenerated into a decided craving for brandy, so that he naturally came down in the world, until, having lost one situation after another, he finally, with his poor wife and numerous children, was reduced to a state bordering on beggary. But God, who never forgets His fallen creatures, came to this man's help when the tide with him was at its lowest ebb. A humble-minded city missionary was sent to him. He was the means of bringing him to Jesus. The Saviour, using one of the man's companions as an instrument, brought him to a temperance meeting, and there an eloquent, though uneducated, speaker flung out a rope to the struggling man in the shape of a blue ribbon. David Butts seized it, and held on for life. His wife gladly sewed a bit of it on every garment he possessed—including his night-shirt—and the result was that he got to be known at the docks as a steady, dependable man, and found pretty constant employment.

How far Matilda Westlake was instrumental in this work of rescue we need not stop to tell. It is enough to say that she had a hand in it—for her heart yearned towards the nurse, who had been very kind to her when she was a little child.

Jack Frost and his sons, with their usual presumption, were in close attendance on the Westlakes when they knocked at David's door, and when it was opened they rudely brushed past the visitors and sought to enter, but a gush of genial heat from a roaring fire effectually stopped Jack and the major on the threshold, and almost killed them. Colonel Wind, however, succeeded in bursting in, overturning a few light articles, causing the flames to sway, leap, and roar wildly, and scattering ashes all over the room, but his triumph was short-lived. The instant the visitors entered he was locked out, and the door shut against him with a bang.

"It do come rather awkward, sir, 'avin' no entrance 'all," said David, as he made the door fast. "If we even 'ad a porch it would 'elp to keep the wind and snow hout, but I ain't complainin', sir. I've on'y too good reason to be thankful."

"Dear Miss Matilda," said the old nurse, dusting a wooden chair with her apron, and beaming all over with joy, "it's good for sore eyes to see you. Don't mind the child'n, miss, an' do sit down near the fire. I'm sure your feet must be wet—such dreadful weather."

"No, indeed, nurse,—thank you," said Miss Westlake, laughing as she sat down, "my feet are not a bit wet. The frost is so hard that everything is quite dry."

"Now it's no use to tell me that, Miss Matty," said Mrs Butts, with the memory of nursing days strong upon her. "You was always such a dear, thoughtless child! Don't you remember that day when you waded in baby's bath, an' then said you wasn't wet a bit, only a *very* little, an' you rather liked it? Indeed she did: you needn't laugh, Master Tom, I remember it as well as if it happened yesterday."

"I don't in the least doubt you, Mrs Butts," said Tom, "I was only laughing at my sister's idea of dryness. But you must not let us interrupt you in your cooking operations, else we will go away directly. Just go about it as if we were not here, for I have some business matters to talk over with your husband."

"Go away?" echoed Mrs Butts; "you must not talk of going away till you've had a bite of lunch with us. It's our dinner, you know, but lawks! what do it matter what you calls it so long as you've got it to eat? An' there's such a splendid apple dumplin' in the pot, miss; you see, it's Tommy's birthday, for he was born on a Christmas Day, an' he's very fond of apple dumplin', is Tommy."

The six children, of various ages and sizes scattered about the small room, betrayed lively interest in this invitation—some hoping that it would be accepted; others as evidently hoping that it would be declined. As for Tommy, his fear that the dumpling would be too small for the occasion filled his heart with anxiety that showed itself strongly in his face, but he was promptly relieved by Miss Matty assuring his mother that to stay was impossible, as they had other visits to pay that day.

Thus the lady and nurse chatted of past and present days, while Tom Westlake talked "business" with the dock-labourer.

"You seem to be getting on pretty comfortably now," remarked Tom.

"Yes, sir, thank God I am. Ever since I was enabled to cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' things 'as gone well with me. An' the puttin' on o' the blue ribbon, sir, 'as done me a power o' good. You see, before that I was sorely tempted by comrades offerin' me a glass, and by my own wish to 'ave a glass, but when I mounted the blue I was let alone, though they chaffed me now an' then, an' I felt it was no use thinkin' about it, 'owever much I might wish for it. The missus, bless 'er 'art, sewed a bit o' blue on my night-shirt in fun, but d'ee know, sir, I do believe it's that 'as cured me o' dreamin' about it, as I used to do."

"I'm glad to hear that, Butts," said Tom, with a laugh. "Now, tell me; how long is it since you tasted strong drink?"

"Six months this very day, sir."

"And are you satisfied that you are better without it?"

"Better without it, sir," repeated Butts, with energy, "in course I am—better in body and better in soul, also in pocket. Of course you know, sir, we don't carry on every day with such fires an' dinners as we're a-goin' in for to-day—for Christmas on'y comes once a year, and sometimes we've been slack at the docks, an' once or twice I've bin laid up, so that we've bin pinched a bit now an' then, but we've bin able to make the two ends meet, and the older child'n is beginnin' to turn in a penny now an' again, so, you see, sir, though the fires ain't always bright, an Jack Frost do manage to git in through the key 'ole rather often just now, on the whole we're pretty comfortable."

"I'm glad to hear it, Butts; very glad to hear it indeed," said Tom, "because I'm anxious to help you, and I make it a point only to help those who help themselves. Six months of steadiness goes a long way to prove that your craving for drink has been cured, and that your reformation is genuine; therefore, I am able now to offer you a situation as porter in a bank, which for some time I have kept open on purpose to be ready for you. How will that suit you—eh?"

Whatever David Butts replied, or meant to reply, could only be gathered from his gratified expression, for at that moment his voice was drowned by a shriek of delight from the youngest children in consequence of Mrs Butts, at Matilda's request, having removed the lid of the pot which held the dumpling, and let out a deliciously-scented cloud of steam. It was almost too much for the little ones, whose mouths watered with anticipation, and who felt half inclined to lay violent hands on the pot and begin dinner without delay.

"Now, I know by the smell that it is quite ready, so we will say good-bye at once," said Matilda, getting up with a smile, and drawing her warm cloak round her. "Be sure to send your eldest girl to me to-morrow along with your husband."

"And come early, Butts," said Tom Westlake, buttoning up his coat.

"You may depend on me, sir."

"Stand by to shut the door quickly after us," added Tom as he grasped the handle, "else the wind will get in and blow the fire about."

The brother and sister, being young and active, were pretty smart in making their exit, and David Butts, being used to doors, was not slow to shut his own, but they could not altogether baffle the colonel, for he was waiting outside. Indeed, he had been whistling with furious insolence through the keyhole all the time of the visit. Sliding in edgewise, at the moment of opening, he managed to scatter the ashes again, and whirl about some of the light articles before he was fairly expelled.

Thereafter, along with his father and brother, he went riotously after Tom and Matilda Westlake, sometimes shrieking over their heads; now and then dashing on in front, and, whirling round in an eddy, plunging straight back into their faces, but they could make nothing of it. The brother and sister merely laughed at them, and defied them to do their worst, even, in the joy of their hearts, going the length of saying to several utter but beaming strangers, that it was "splendid Christmas weather." And so it was,—to the young and strong. Not so, alas! to the old and feeble.

It almost seemed as if Colonel Wind and Major Snow had taken offence at this last sally, for about that time of the day they forsook their father and left London—probably to visit the country. At all events, the clouds cleared away, the sky became blue, and the sun shone out gloriously—though without perceptibly diminishing the frost.

After spending another hour or two in paying visits, during which they passed abruptly, more than once from poverty-stricken scenes of moderate mirth to abodes of sickness and desolation, Tom and Matilda, by means of 'bus and cab, at last found themselves in the neighbourhood of the Serpentine.

"What say you to a turn on the ice, Matty?"

"Charming," cried Matty.

Society on the Serpentine, when frozen over, is not very select, but the brother and sister were not particular on that point just then. They hired skates; they skimmed about over the well-swept surface; they tripped over innumerable bits of stick or stone or orange-peel; they ran into, or were run into by, various beings whose wrong-headedness induced a preference for skating backwards. In short, they conducted themselves as people usually do on skates, and returned home pretty well exhausted and blooming.

That evening, after a family dinner, at which a number of young cousins and other relatives were present, Tom and his sister left the festive circle round the fire, and retired to a glass conservatory opening out of the drawing-room. There was a sofa in it and there they found Ned Westlake extended at full length. He rose at once and made room for them.

"Well, Ned, how have you enjoyed yourself to-day?" asked Tom.

"Oh, splendidly! There was such a jolly party in Wharton's grounds—most of them able to skate splendidly. The pond is so sheltered that the wind scarcely affected us, and a staff of sweepers cleared away the snow as fast as it fell. Afterwards, when it cleared up and the sun shone through the trees, it was absolutely magnificent. It's the jolliest day I've had on the ice for years, though I'm almost knocked up by it. Jovially fatigued, in fact. But where have you been?"

"We also have been skating," said Matilda.

"Indeed! I thought you had intended to spend the day somewhere in the east-end attending some of those free breakfasts, and visiting the poor, or something of that sort—as if there were not enough of city missionaries, and sisters of mercy, or charity, or whatever you call them, to look after such things."

"You are right, Ned," said Tom, "such was our intention, and we carried it out too. It was only at the end of the day that we took to skating on the Serpentine, and, considering the number of people we have run into, or overturned, or tumbled over, we found a couple of hours of it quite sufficient."

From this point Tom Westlake "harked back" and related his experiences of the day. He possessed considerable power of graphic delineation, and gradually aroused the interest of his gay and volatile but kindly-disposed brother.

"Ned," said he, at last, "do you really believe in the truth of these words, 'Blessed are they that consider the poor?'"

"Yes, Tom, I do," replied Ned, becoming suddenly serious.

What Tom said to his brother after that we will not relate, but the result was that, before that Christmas evening closed, he succeeded in convincing Ned that a day of "jolly good fun" may be rendered inexpressibly more "jolly," by being commenced with an effort to cheer and lighten the lot of those into whose sad lives there enter but a small amount of jollity and far too little fun.

Story 3 -- Chapter 1.

A Double Rescue—Introduction.

It is a curious and interesting fact that Christmas-tide seemed to have a peculiar influence on the prospects of our hero Jack Matterby all through his life. All the chief events of his career, somehow, happened on or about Christmas Day.

Jack was born, to begin with, on a Christmas morning. His father, who was a farmer in the middle ranks of life, rejoiced in the fact, esteeming it full of promise for the future. So did his mother. Jack himself did not at first seem to have any particular feeling on the subject. If one might judge his opinions by his conduct, it seemed that he was rather displeased than otherwise at having been born; for he spent all the first part of his natal day in squalling and making faces, as though he did not like the world at all, and would rather not have come into it.

"John, dear," said his mother to his father, one day not long after his birth, "I'm so glad he is a boy. He might have been a girl, you know."

"No, Molly; *he* could never have been a girl!" replied the husband, as he gently patted his wife's shoulder.

"Now, don't laugh at me, John, dear. You know what I mean. But what shall we call him?"

"John, of course," replied the farmer, with decision. "My father was called John, and *his* father was called John, and also his grandfather, and so on back, I have no doubt, to the very beginning of time."

"Nay, John," returned his wife, simply, "that could hardly be; for however many of your ancestors may have been Johns, the first, you know, was Adam."

"Why, Molly, you're getting to be quite sharp," returned the farmer. "Nevertheless this little man is to be John, like the rest of us."

Mrs Matterby, being meek, gave in; but she did so with a sigh, for she wished the little one to be named Joseph, after her own deceased father.

Thus it came to pass that the child was named John. The name was expanded to Johnny during the first period of childhood. Afterwards it was contracted to Jack, and did not attain to the simple grandeur of John till the owner of it became a man.

In the Johnny period of life our hero confined his attention almost exclusively to smashing and overturning. To overturn and to destroy were his chief amusements. He made war on crockery to such an extent that tea-cups and saucers were usually scarce in the family. He assaulted looking-glasses so constantly, that there was, ere long, barely enough of mirror left for his father to shave in. As to which fact the farmer used to say, "Never mind, Molly. Don't look so down-hearted, lass. If he only leaves a bit enough to see a corner of my chin and the half of my razor, that will do well enough." No window in the family mansion was thoroughly whole, and the appearance of a fat little fist on the wrong side of a pane of glass was quite a familiar object in the nursery.

As for toys—Johnny had none, so to speak. He had only a large basket full of bits, the misapplication of which to each other gave him many hours of profound recreation. Everything that would turn inside out was so turned. Whatever was by nature straight he bent, whatever bent he straightened. Round things he made square when possible, and square things round; soft things hard, and hard things soft. In short, nothing was too hard for Johnny. Everything that came into his clutches was subjected to what we may style the influence of experimental philosophy; and if Farmer Matterby had been a poor man he must soon have been ruined, but, being what is styled "well-to-do," he only said, in reference to these things—

"Go ahead, my boy. Make hay while the sun shines. If you carry on as you've begun, you'll make your mark *somewhere* in this world."

"Alas!" remarked poor Mrs Matterby, "he has made his mark already *everywhere*, and that a little too freely!"

Nevertheless she was proud of her boy, and sought to subdue his spirit by teaching him lessons of self-denial and love out of the Word of God. Johnny listened intently to these lessons, gazing with large wondering eyes, though he

understood little of the teaching at first. It was not all lost on him, however; and he thoroughly understood and reciprocated the deep love that beamed in his mother's eyes.

Soon after Johnny had slid into the Jack period of life he became acquainted with a fisher-boy of his own age, whose parents dwelt in a cottage on the sea-shore, not a quarter of a mile from his own home, and close to the village of Blackby.

Natty Grove was as fine a little fellow as one could wish to see: fair, curly-headed, blue-eyed, rough-jacketed, and almost swallowed up in a pair of his father's sea-boots which had been cut down in the legs to fit him. As to the feet!—well, as his father Ned Grove remarked, there was plenty of room for growth. Natty had no mother, but he had a little sister about three years of age, and a grandmother, who might have been about thirty times three. No one could tell her age for certain; but she was so old and wrinkled and dried up and withered and small, that she might certainly have claimed to be "the oldest inhabitant." She had been bed-ridden for many years because of what her son called rum-matticks and her grandson styled rum-ticks.

The name of Natty's little sister was Nellie; that of his grandmother, Nell—old Nell, as people affectionately called her.

Now it may perhaps surprise the reader to be told that Jack Matterby, at the age of nine years, was deeply in love. He had, indeed, been in that condition, more or less from the age of three, but the passion became more decided at nine. He was in love with Nell—not blue-eyed little Nellie, but with wrinkled old Nell; for that antiquated creature was brimming over with love to mankind, specially to children. On our hero she poured out such wealth of affection that he was powerfully attracted to her even in the period of Johnny-hood, and, as we have said, she captured him entirely when he reached Jack-hood.

Old Nell was a splendid story-teller. That was one of the baits with which she was fond of hooking young people. It was interesting to sit in the fisherman's poor cottage and watch the little ones sitting open-mouthed and eyed gazing at the withered little face, in which loving-kindness, mingling with fun, beamed from the old eyes, played among the wrinkles, smiled on the lips, and asserted itself in the gentle tones.

"Jack," said Mrs Matterby, on the Christmas morning which ushered in her boy's ninth birthday, "come, I'm going to give you a treat to-day."

"You always do, mammy, on my birthdays," said Jack.

"I want you to go with a message to a poor woman," continued the mother.

"Is that all?" exclaimed Jack, with a disappointed look.

"Yes, that's all—or nearly all," replied his mother, with a twinkle in her eye, however, which kept her son from open rebellion. "I want you to carry this basket of good things, with my best love and Christmas good-wishes, to old Nell Grove."

"Oho!" exclaimed Jack, brightening up at once, "I'm your man; here, give me the basket. But, mother," he added with a sudden look of perplexity, "you called old Nell a *poor* woman, and I've heard her sometimes say that she has *everything* that she needs and *more* than she deserves! She can't be poor if that's true, and it *must* be true; for you know that old Nell never, *never* tells lies."

"True, Jack; old Nell is not poor in one sense: she is rich in faith. She has got 'contentment with godliness,' and many rich people have not got that. Nevertheless she has none too much of the necessaries of this life, and none at all of the luxuries, so that she is what people usually call poor."

"That's a puzzler, mammy—poor and rich both!"

"I daresay it is a puzzler," replied Mrs Matterby, with a laugh, "but be off with your basket and message, my son; some day you shall understand it better."

Pondering deeply on this "puzzler," the boy went off on his mission, trudging through the deep snow which whitened the earth and brightened that Christmas morning.

"She's as merry as a cricket to-day," said Natty Grove, who opened the cottage door when his friend knocked.

"Yes, as 'erry as a kiket," echoed flaxen-haired Nellie, who stood beside him.

"She's always 'erry," said Jack, giving the little girl a gentle pull of the nose by way of expressing good will. "A merry Christmas both! How are you? See here, what mother has sent to old Nell."

He opened the lid of the basket. Nattie and Nellie peeped in and snuffed.

"Oh! I *say!*" said the fisher-boy. He could say no more, for the sight and scent of apples, jelly, roast fowl, home-made pastry, and other things was almost too much for him.

"I expected it, dearie," said old Nell, extending her withered hand to the boy as he set the basket on the table. "Every Christmas morning, for years gone by, she has sent me the same, though I don't deserve it, and I've no claim on her but helplessness. But it's the first time she has sent it by you, Jack. Come, I'll tell ye a story."

Jack was already open-eyed with expectancy and he was soon open-mouthed, forgetful of past and future, absorbed entirely in the present. Natty and Nelly were similarly affected and like-minded, while the little old woman swept

them away to the wilds of Siberia and told them of an escape from unjust banishment, of wanderings in the icy wilderness, and of starvation so dire that the fugitives were reduced to gnawing and sucking the leathern covers of their wallets for dear life. Then she told of food sent at the last moment, almost by miracle, and of hair-breadth escapes, and final deliverance. Somehow—the listeners could not have told how—old Nell inserted a reference to the real miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand, and she worked round to it so deftly, that it seemed an essential part of the story; and so indeed it was, for Nell intended the key-stone of the arch of her story to be the fact that when man is reduced to the last extremity God steps in to save.

It is certain that little Nellie did not understand the moral of the story, and it is uncertain how far the boys appreciated it; but it was old Nell's business to sow the seed beside all waters, and leave the rest to Him who gave the command.

"Yes, dearies," she said in conclusion, laying her hand on the basket, "I expected this gift this morning; but many a time does our Father in heaven send a blessin' when an' where we *don't* expect it. Mind that—*mind ye that.*"

Jack had more than enough of mental food to digest that morning as he retraced his steps homeward through the deep snow; for he found that old Nell, not less than his mother, had treated him to a few puzzlers. Poor boy, he little knew as he plodded on that he was that day about to enter into one of the darkest clouds of his young life.

During his absence a letter had been received by his father, intimating that through the failure of a bank he was a ruined man. The shock had paralysed the farmer, and when Jack entered his home he found him lying on his bed in a state of insensibility from which he could not be rallied. A few days later the old man died.

Farmer Matterby's widow had few relatives, and none of these were in circumstances to help her in the day of trial. They and her numerous friends did indeed what they could. Besides offering sincere sympathy, they subscribed and raised a small sum to enable the bereaved woman and her only child to tide over present difficulties, but they could not enable her to continue to work the farm, and as most of her late husband's kindred had migrated to Canada, she had no one from whom she could naturally claim counsel or aid. She was therefore thrown entirely on God; and it was with strange and solemn feelings that Jack kneeled by her side, and heard her pray in tones of anguish for help, light, and guidance, and especially that, whatever might become of herself, her dear boy might be preserved from evil and guided in ways of righteousness.

A few months later, and the widow, gathering the small remnant of her possessions together, set off with her little boy to seek employment in London. How many poor souls, in various ranks of life, must have turned their steps, in days gone by, towards that giant city in the sanguine hope of bettering their condition! Mrs Matterby had no friends to whom she could go in London; but she could paint and draw and sing, and was fairly educated. She would teach. In the meantime she had a little money to start with. Entertaining a suspicion that it might be considered a wildish scheme by her friends and neighbours, she resolved to say nothing about her plans to any one, save that she was going to London for a time.

It was a touching scene, the parting of Jack and the Grove family. The sturdy fisherman was at sea at the time, but old Nell was in her accustomed corner in the lowly bed with the ragged counterpane, where her uneventful yet happy life was spent; and little curly-headed Nellie was there, playing with the cat; and Natty was there, cutting out a first-rate man of war with a huge knife.

"Granny," (Jack always called her "granny" like the rest), "granny, I've come to say good-bye. I am going away f-f-for ever an' ever!"

"Amen!" responded Natty, from the mere force of habit, for he was a constant responder at granny's family worship.

"Ye don't know that, darlin'," replied old Nell. "The Lord leads us in ways that we know not, an' it may be His good pleasure to bring you here again."

"N-no; I'm quite *sure* I'll never see you again," returned the boy, giving way to the sobs which he could not restrain. "M-mother says we will never come back again,—n-never, *never* more—"

He broke down entirely at this point, and a few silent tears trickled over the kind old face of Nell. Natty was too much of a man to give way out and out, but he snivelled a little in spite of himself. As for Nellie, she stood there in open-eyed wonder, for she failed to quite understand the situation. We will not prolong the painful scene. When at length Jack had taken leave of them all—had kissed the two Nells and shaken hands with Natty—the younger Nell seemed to realise the facts of the case; for Jack saw her, as he glanced back for the last time, suddenly shut her large blue eyes, throw back her curly little head, open wide her pretty little mouth, and howl miserably.

Story 3 -- Chapter 2.

Lost in London.

London in a fog is too well known to require description. In an uncommonly thick fog, on a day in December of the following year, Mrs Matterby hurried along Fleet Street in the direction of the city, leading Jack by the hand. Both were very wet, very cold, ravenously hungry, and rather poorly clad. It was evident that things had not prospered with the widow.

"Dear Jack," she said in a choking voice, as they hurried along the streets towards the wretched abode in the Tower Hamlets to which they had been at length reduced, "dear Jack, my last human hope has failed. Mr Block has told me that I need not go there again; he has no more work for me."

Jack's experience of life was too limited to enable him to understand fully the depth of distress to which his mother had fallen—with health broken, money expended, and work not to be had except on terms which rendered life a misery, and prolonged existence almost an impossibility. But Jack's power of sympathy was strong and his passions were vehement.

"Mother," he said, with tearful eyes, as he clung closer to her side, "I would *kill* Mr Block if I could!"

"Hush, dear boy! You know that would be wrong and could do no good. It is sinful even to feel such a desire."

"How can I help it, mother!" returned Jack indignantly. Then he asked, "What are we going to do now, mother?"

For some time the poor widow did not reply; then she spoke in a low tone, as if murmuring to herself, "The last sixpence gone; the cupboard empty; nothing—nothing left to pawn—"

She stopped short, and glanced hastily at her marriage ring.

"Mother," said Jack, "have you not often told me that God will not forsake us? Does it not seem as if He *had* forsaken us now?"

"It only seems like it, darling," returned the widow hurriedly. "We don't understand His ways. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!'"

It seemed as if God were about to test the faith of His servant, for at that moment a cab drove furiously round the corner of a street and knocked her down. Jack was overturned at the same time. Recovering himself, instantly, he found his mother in a state of unconsciousness, with blood flowing from a deep cut in her forehead. In a state of semi-bewilderment the poor boy followed the stretcher on which Mrs Matterby was carried to the nearest hospital, where he waited while his mother's injuries were examined.

"My boy," said a young surgeon, returning to the waiting room, and patting Jack's head, "your mother has been rather badly hurt. We must keep her here to look after her. I daresay we shall soon make her well. Meanwhile you had better run home, and tell your father—if, that is—your father is at home, I suppose?"

"No, sir; father's dead."

"Well then your sister or aunt—I suppose there's some relative at home older than yourself?"

"No, sir; none but mother an' me," whispered Jack.

"No relations of any kind at all in London?"

"None, sir. We know nobody—at least not many, and they're all strangers."

"A sad case," murmured the surgeon. "Your mother is poor, I suppose?"

"*Very* poor, sir."

"But of course you have a home of some sort, somewhere?"

"Yes, it's not far from here."

"Well, then, you'd better go home just now, for you can't see your mother to-night. We dare not let her speak, but come back early to-morrow, and you shall hear about her—perhaps see her. Here, put that in your pocket."

Poor Jack took the shilling which the sympathetic surgeon thrust into his hand, and ran home in a state bordering on distraction; but it was not till he entered the shabby little room which he had begun to consider "home" that he realised the full weight of the calamity that had befallen him. No mother's voice to welcome him; no bit of fire in the grate to warm; no singing kettle to cheer, or light of candle to dispel the gloom of rapidly approaching night.

It was Christmas Day too. In the morning he had gone forth with his mother—she in the sanguine hope of renewing an engagement in a clothier's shop, which terminated that day; he in the expectation of getting a few jobs of some sort—messages to run or horses to hold. Such were the circumstances to which they had been reduced in twelve months, Jack had arranged to call for his mother and walk home with her. On the way they were to invest a *very* small part of the widow's earnings in "something nice" for their Christmas supper, and spend the evening together, chatting about the old home in Blackby, and father, and Natty Grove, and Nellie, and old Nell, in the happy days gone by.

"And now!" thought Jack, seating himself on his little bed and glancing at that of his mother, which stood empty in the opposite corner—"now!—"

But Jack could think no more. A tremendous agony rent his breast, and a sharp cry escaped from him as he flung himself on his bed and burst into a passion of tears.

Child-like, he sobbed himself to sleep, and did not awake till the sun was high next morning. It was some time before he could recall what had occurred. When he did so he began to weep afresh. Leaping up, he was about to rush out of the house and make for the hospital, when he was checked at the door by the landlord—a hard, grinding, heartless man, who grew rich in oppressing the poor.

"You seem to be in a hurry, youngster," he said, dragging the boy back by the collar, and looking hurriedly round the room. "I've come for the rent. Where's your mother?"

In a sobbing voice Jack told him about the accident.

"Well, I don't really believe you," said the man, with an angry frown; "but I'll soon find out if you're telling lies. I'll go to the hospital and inquire for myself. D'ee know anything about your mother's affairs?"

"No, sir," said Jack, meekly, for he began to entertain a vague terror of the man.

"No; I thought not. Well, I'll enlighten you. Your mother owes me three weeks' rent of this here room, and has got nothing to pay it with, as far as I knows, except these sticks o' furniture. Now, if your mother is really in hospital, I'll come back here and bundle you out, an' sell the furniture to pay my rent. I ain't a-goin' to be done out o' my money because your mother chooses to git run'd over."

The landlord did not wait for a reply, but went out and slammed the door.

Jack followed him in silent horror. He watched him while he inquired at the gate of the hospital, and, after he had gone, went up timidly, rang the bell, and asked for his mother.

"Mrs Matterby?" repeated the porter. "Come in; I'll make inquiry."

The report which he brought back fell like the blow of a sledge-hammer on the poor boy's heart. His mother, they told him, was dead. She had died suddenly in the night.

There are times of affliction, when the human soul fails to find relief in tears or cries. Poor Jack Matterby stood for some time motionless, as if paralysed, with glaring eyes and a face not unlike to that of death. They sought to rouse him, but he could not speak. Suddenly, observing the front door open, he darted out into the street and ran straight home, where he flung himself on his mother's bed, and burst into an uncontrollable flood of tears. By degrees the passion subsided, leaving only a stunned feeling behind, under the influence of which he lay perfectly still.

The first thing that roused him was the sound of a heavy foot on the stair. The memory of the landlord flashed into his mind and filled him with indescribable dread—dread caused partly by the man's savage aspect and nature, but much more by the brutal way in which he had spoken about his mother. The only way in which to avoid a meeting was to rush past the man on the stair. Fear and loathing made the poor boy forget, for the moment, his crushing sorrow. He leaped up, opened the door, and, dashing downstairs, almost overturned the man who was coming up. Once in the street, he ran straight on without thought, until he felt that he was safe from pursuit. Then he stopped, and sat down on a door-step—to think what he should do; for, having been told that the furniture of his old home was to be sold, and himself turned out, he felt that returning there would be useless, and would only expose him to the risk of meeting the awful landlord. While he was yet buried in thought, one of those sprightly creatures of the great city known as street arabs accosted him in a grave and friendly tone.

"My sweet little toolip," he said, "can I do anythink for you?"

Despite his grief Jack could scarcely forbear smiling at the absurdity of the question.

"No, thank you," he replied.

"Well now, look 'ere, my toolip," returned the arab in a confidential tone, "I've took quite a fancy to you; you've got such a look, some'ow, of my poor old grandmother. Now, if you've no objection, I'd like to give you your breakfast. You're 'ungry, I suppose?"

Jack admitted that he was, and, after a moment's hesitation, accepted this surprisingly kind and liberal offer. Taking him promptly by the arm his new friend hurried him to a pastry-cook's shop, and bade him "smell that," referring to the odours that ascended through a grating.

"Ain't it 'eavenly?" he asked, with sparkling eyes.

Jack admitted that it was very nice.

"So green, an' yet so fair!" murmured the arab, casting a look of admiration on his companion. "Now I means to go into that there shop," he added, returning to the confidential tone, "an' buy breakfast for you—for both on us. But I couldn't go in, you know, with this 'ere shabby coat on, 'cause they wouldn't give me such good wittles if I did. Just change coats with me for a few minutes. What! You doubt me? No one ever doubted Bob Snobbins without—without a-'urtin' of his feelin's."

Whatever might have caused Jack to hesitate, the injured look on young Snobbins' countenance and the hurt tone were too much for him. He exchanged coats with the young rascal, who, suddenly directing Jack's attention to some imaginary object of interest at one end of the street, made off at full speed towards the other end. Our hero was, however, a famous runner. He gave chase, caught the arab in a retired alley, and gave him an indignant punch in the head.

But although Jack had plenty of courage and a good deal of strength, he was no match for a street warrior like Bob Snobbins, who turned about promptly, blackened both his opponent's eyes, bled his nose, swelled his lips, and finally knocked him into a pool of dirty water, after which he fled, just as a policeman came on the scene.

The constable was a kindly man. He asked Jack a few questions, which, however, the latter was too miserable to answer.

"Well, well, my boy," said the constable gently, "you'd as well give up fightin'. It don't pay, you see, in the long run.

Besides, you don't seem fit for it. Cut away home now, and get your mother to clean you."

This last remark caused Jack to run away fast enough with a bursting heart. All day he wandered about the crowded streets, and no one took any notice of him, save a very few among the thousands, who cast on him a passing glance of pity. But what could these do to help him? Were not the streets swarming with such boys?

And in truth Jack Matterby was a very pitiable object, at least according to the report of shop-mirrors, which told him that his face was discoloured and bloody, his coat indescribably dirty and ragged, besides being out of harmony with his trousers, and that his person generally was bedaubed with mud. Hunger at last induced him to overcome his feelings of shame so far that he entered a baker's shop, but he was promptly ordered to be off. Later in the day he entered another shop, the owner of which seemed to be of a better disposition. Changing his shilling, he purchased a penny roll, with which he retired to a dark passage and dined.

When night came on he expended another penny and supped, after which he sought for some place of shelter in which to sleep. But wherever he went he found the guardians of the public requiring him to "move on." Several street arabs sought to make his acquaintance, but, with the memory of Bob Snobbins strong upon him, he declined their friendship. At last, wearied out and broken-hearted, he found a quiet corner under an archway, where he sat down and leaned his head against the wall, exclaiming, "I'm lost—lost!" Then he wept quietly, and sought to find temporary relief in slumber.

He was indeed lost, and more completely so, in the feeling of lonely isolation, perhaps, than he would have been if lost in the backwoods of America. Yet he was not utterly lost, for the tender Shepherd was on his track. Some such thought seemed to cross his mind; for he suddenly began to pray, and thoughts about the old home in Blackby and of the Grove family comforted him a little until he fell asleep on his hard bed.

But, for the time being, the poor boy *was* lost—lost in London! His disreputable face and discreditable coat argued a dissipated character—hence no one would employ him. Ere long necessity compelled him to accept the society of street arabs, and soon he became quite as sharp, though not quite as wicked, as they. But day by day he sank lower and lower, and evil at which he would have shuddered at first became at last familiar.

He did not sink without a struggle, however, and he would have returned to the place where his mother had died, to ask help of the young surgeon who had expressed sympathy with him, but, with the carelessness of boyhood, he had forgotten the name of the hospital, and did not know where, in the great wilderness of bricks and mortar, to search for it. As for the home from which he had fled, the memory of the landlord still kept him carefully clear of that.

But Jack's mother was *not* dead! In hospitals—as in the best of well-regulated families—mistakes will sometimes happen. The report which had proved so disastrous to our poor hero referred to another woman who had died. A messenger had been at once sent, by the young surgeon before mentioned, to tell Jack of the error; but when the messenger arrived the boy had flown—as already described. Indeed, it was he whom Jack had passed on the stair.

It was long before Mrs Matterby recovered, for the disappearance of her boy caused a relapse; and when at last she left the hospital, feeble and homeless, she went about for many months, searching at once for work and for her lost treasure.

Christmas came again, and found Jack Matterby at nearly the lowest point in his downward career. It is due to him to say, however, that he had not up to that time, been guilty of any criminal act that could bring him with the grasp of human law; but in word and deed he had begun, more and more, to break the law of God: so that if poor Mrs Matterby had at that time succeeded in finding her son, it is probable that her joy would have been overwhelmed with terrible grief.

It was not exactly Christmas morning, but it was the Christmas season of the year, when our little hero, wearied in spirit and body with the hard struggle for life, sauntered down the now familiar Strand in the hope of finding some odd job to do. He paused before a confectioner's shop, and, being very hungry, was debating with himself the propriety of giving up the struggle and coolly helping himself to a pie! You may be sure that bad invisible spirits were at his elbow just then to encourage him. But God sent a good angel also, and she was visible—being in the form of a thin little old lady.

"You'd like a bun, I know," she said, putting a penny into Jack's hand.

"God bless you, ma'am—yes," burst from the astonished boy.

"Go in and buy one. Then, come and tell me all about you."

The thin little old lady was one of those followers of the Lamb who do not wait for Christmas to unlock their sympathies. The river of her love and pity was *always* overflowing, so that there was no room for increase to a deluge at Christmas time—though she rejoiced to note the increase in the case of others, and wished that the flood might become perennial. To this lady Jack laid bare his inmost heart, and she led him back to the Saviour.

"Now, Jack, let me ask you one question," she said; "would you like to go to Canada?"

With tremendous energy Jack answered, "*Wouldn't*!"

"Then," said the old lady, "to Canada you shall go."

The Double Rescue.

And Jack Matterby went! But before he went he had to go through a preliminary training, for his regular schooling had ceased when his father died, and he had learned no trade.

In those days there were no splendid institutions for waifs and strays such as now exist, but it must not be supposed that there was no such thing as "hasting to the rescue." Thin little old Mrs Seaford had struck out the idea for herself, and had acted on it for some years in her own vigorous way. She took Jack home, and lodged him in her own house with two or three other boys of the same stamp—waifs. Jack elected to learn the trade of a carpenter, and Mrs Seaford, finding that he had been pretty well grounded in English, taught him French, as that language, she told him, was much spoken in Canada. Above all, she taught him those principles of God's law without which a human being is but poorly furnished even for the life that now is, to say nothing of that which is to come.

In a few months Jack was ready for exportation! A few months more, and he found himself apprenticed to a farmer, not far from the shores of that mighty fresh-water sea, Ontario. Time passed, and Jack Matterby became a trusted servant and a thorough farmer. He also became a big, dashing, and earnest boy. More time passed, and Jack became a handsome young man, the bosom friend of his employer. Yet a little more time winged its silent way, and Jack became John Matterby, Esquire, of Fair Creek Farm, heir to his former master's property, and one of the wealthiest men of the province—not a common experience of poor emigrant waifs, doubtless, but, on the other hand, by no means unprecedented.

It must not be supposed that during all those years Jack forgot the scenes and people of the old land. On the contrary, the longer he absented himself from the old home the more firmly and tenderly did the old memories cling and cluster round his heart; and many a story and anecdote did he relate about these, especially during the Christmas season of each year, to his old master and to Nancy Briggs, in the log homestead of Ontario.

Nancy was a waif, who had been sent out by the same thin little old lady who had sent Jack out. She was very pretty, and possessed of delightfully amiable domestic qualities. She grew up to be a very handsome girl, and was a very bright sunbeam in the homestead. But Jack did not fall in love with her. All unknown to himself his heart was pre-occupied. Neither did Nancy fall in love with Jack. All unwittingly she was reserving herself for another lot. Of course our hero corresponded diligently with the thin little old lady, and gladdened her heart by showing and expressing strong sympathy with the waifs of the great city; more than once, in his earlier letters, mentioning one named Bob Snobbins, about whose fate he felt some curiosity, but in regard to whose home, if such existed, he could give no information.

Twice during those years Jack also wrote to the Grove family; but as he received no answer on either occasion, he concluded that the father must have been drowned, that old Nell was dead, and the family broken up. Need we add that the memory of his dear mother never faded or grew dim? But this was a sacred memory, in regard to which he opened his lips to no one.

At last there came a day when John Matterby, being in the prime of life, with ample means and time to spare, set his heart on a holiday and a visit to the old country—the thin little old lady being yet alive. It was not so easy, however, for our hero to get away from home as one might imagine; for, besides being a farmer, he was manager of a branch bank, secretary to several philanthropic societies, superintendent of a Sunday-school, and, generally, a helper of, and sympathiser with, all who loved the Lord and sought to benefit their fellow-men. But, being a man of resolution, he cut the cords that attached him to these things, appointed Miss Briggs to superintend the Sunday-school in his absence, and set sail for England—not in a steamer, as most rich men would have done, but in a sailing ship, because the vessel happened to be bound for the port of Blackby, the home of his childhood.

It was winter when he set sail, and the storms of winter were having high jinks and revels on the deep in the usual way at that season of the year. Jack's vessel weathered them all till it reached the shores of old England. Then the storm-fiend broke loose with unwonted fury, and, as if out of spite, cast the good ship on the rocks lying a little to the eastward of the port of Blackby.

It was a tremendous storm! The oldest inhabitant of Blackby said, as well as his toothless gums would let him, that, "it wos the wust gale as had blow'd since he wos a leetle booy—an' that warn't yesterday—no, nor yet the day before!"

The gale was at its height, in the grey of early morning, when the ship struck, and all the manhood of the port and neighbouring village were out to render aid, if possible, and to gaze and sympathise. But who could render aid to a vessel which was rolling on those black rocks in a caldron of white foam, with a hundred yards of swirling breakers that raged and roared like a thousand lions between it and the base of the cliffs? Even the noble lifeboat would have been useless in such a place. But hark! a cry is raised—the coastguardmen and the rocket! Yes, there is one hope for them yet—under God. Far below the men are seen staggering along over the shingle, with their life-saving apparatus in a hand-cart.

Soon the tripod is set up, and the rocket is fired, but the line falls to leeward. Another is tried; it falls short. Still another—it goes far to windward. Again and again they try, but without success, until all their rockets are expended. But these bold men of the coastguard are not often or easily foiled. They send for more rockets to the next station. Meanwhile the terrible waves are doing their awful work, dashing the ship on the rocks as if she were a mere toy—*as indeed she is*, in their grasp. Can nothing be done?

"She'll never hold together till the rockets come," said a young seaman stepping out from the crowd. "Here, let me have the line, and stand by to pay out."

"Don't try it, lad, it'll be your death."

The youth paid no regard to this advice. "A man can only die once," he remarked in a low voice, more as if speaking to himself than replying to the caution, while he quickly tied the end of the light rope round his waist and dashed into the sea.

Oh! it is grand and heart-stirring to see a stalwart youth imperilling life and limb for the sake of others; to see a powerful swimmer breasting the billows with a fixed purpose to do or die. But it is terrible and spirit-crushing to see such a one tossed by the breakers as if he were a mere baby, and hurled back helpless on the sand. Twice did the young sailor dash in, and twice was he caught up like a cork and hurled back, while the people on shore, finding their remonstrances useless, began to talk of using force.

The man's object was to dive *through* the first wave. If he could manage this—and the second—the rest would not be beyond the power of a strong man. A third time he leaped into the rushing flood, and this time was successful. Soon he stood panting on the deck of the stranded vessel, almost unable to stand, and well he knew that there was not a moment to lose, for the ship was going to pieces! Jack Matterby, however, knew well what to do. He drew out the hawser of the rocket apparatus, fixed the various ropes, and signalled to those on shore to send out the sling life-buoy, and then the men of the coastguard began to haul the passengers and crew ashore, one at a time.

The young sailor, recovering in a few minutes, lent a hand. Jack knew him the instant he heard his voice, but took no notice of him, for it was a stern matter of life or death with them all just then.

When Jack and the captain stood at last awaiting their turn, and watching the last of the crew being dragged over the boiling surf, our hero turned suddenly, and, grasping the young sailor's hand with the grip of a vice, said, "God bless you, Natty Grove!"

Nat gazed as if he had been stunned. "*Can* it be?" he exclaimed. "We had thought you dead years ago!"

"Thank God, I'm not only alive but hearty. Here comes the life-buoy. Your turn next. But one word before—old Nell; and—Nellie?"

"Both well, and living with your mother—"

"My—" Jack could not speak, a tremendous shock seemed to rend his heart. Young Grove felt that he had been too precipitate.

"Your mother is alive, Jack, and—"

He stopped, for the captain said quickly, "Now, then, get in. No time to lose."

But Jack could not get in. If he had not been a strong man he must have fallen on the deck. As it was, he felt stunned and helpless.

"Here, captain," cried Nat Grove, leaping into the life-buoy, "lift him into my arms. The ropes are strong enough for both."

Scarce knowing what he did, Jack allowed himself to be half-lifted into the buoy in which his old friend held him fast. A few minutes more, and they were dragged safely to land and the ringing cheers and congratulations of the assembled multitude. The captain came last, so that, when the ship finally went to pieces, not a human life was lost—even the ship's cat was among the number of the saved, the captain having carried it ashore in his arms.

Now, there are some scenes in this life which will not bear description in detail. Such was the meeting of our hero with his long-lost mother. We refrain from lifting the curtain here. But there is no reason why we should not re-introduce the joyful and grateful pair at a later period of that same eventful day, when, seated together by the bedside of old Nell, they recounted their experiences—yes, the same old woman, but thinner and wrinkleder, and smaller in every way; and the same bed, as far as appearance went, though softer and cosier, and bigger in all ways. On the other side of the bed sat the manly form of Natty Grove. But who is that fair girl with the curling golden hair, whose face exhibits one continuous blush, and whose entire body, soul and spirit is apparently enchained by an insignificant piece of needlework? Can that be Nellie Grove, whom we last saw with her eyes shut and her mouth open—howling? Yes, it is she, and—but let Mrs Matterby explain.

"Now, Jack," said that lady in a firm tone, "it's of no use your asking question after question of every one in this way, and not even waiting for answers, and everybody speaking at once—"

"Excuse me, dearest mother, Miss Nellie Grove has not yet spoken at all."

"*Miss* Nellie, indeed! Times are changed,"—murmured Natty, with a look of surprise.

"Her not speaking proves her the wisest of us all," resumed the widow, looking at Old Nell, who with tremulous head nodded violent approval. You must know, old Nell had become as deaf as a post, and, being incapable of understanding anything, she gratified her natural amiability by approving of everything—at least everything that was uttered by speakers with a visible smile. When they spoke with gravity, old Nell shook her tremulous head, and put on a look of alarmingly solemn sympathy. On the present occasion, however, the antique old thing seemed to have been affected with some absolutely new, and evidently quaint, ideas, for she laughed frequently and immoderately, especially when she gazed hard at Jack Matterby after having looked long at Nellie Grove!

"Now, Jack," resumed the widow for the fiftieth time, "you must know that after I lost you, and had given you up for dead, I came back here, feeling an intense longing to see once more the old home, and I began a school. In course of years God sent me prosperity, notwithstanding the murmurings of rebellion which rose in my heart when I thought of *you*. The school became so big that I had to take a new house—that in which you now sit—and sought about for a

teacher to help me. Long before that time poor Ned Grove had been drowned at sea. Your old friend Natty there had become the first mate to a merchantman, and helped to support his grandmother. Nellie, whose education I had begun, as you know, when you were a boy, had grown into a remarkably clever and pretty girl, as, no doubt, you will admit. She had become a daily governess in the family of a gentleman who had come to live in the neighbourhood. Thus she was enabled to assist her brother in keeping up the old home, and took care of granny."

At this point our hero, as he looked at the fair face and modest carriage of his old playmate heartily admitted, (to himself), that she was much more than "pretty," and felt that he now understood how a fisherman's daughter had, to his intense surprise, grown up with so much of gentle manners, and such soft lady-like hands. But he said never a word!

"Most happily for me," continued Mrs Matterby, "Nellie lost her situation at the time I speak of, owing to the death of her employer. Thus I had the chance of securing her at once. And now, here we have been together for some years, and I hope we may never part as long as we live. We had considerable difficulty in getting old Nell to quit the cottage and come here. Indeed, we should never have succeeded, I think, had it not been for Natty—"

"That's true," interrupted Nat, with a laugh.

"The dear old woman was too deaf to understand, and too obstinate to move: so one day I put the bed clothes over her head, gathered her and them up in my arms, and brought her up here bodily, very much as I carried *you* ashore, Jack, in the life-buoy, without asking leave. And she has been content and happy ever since."

What more of this tale there is to tell shall be told, reader, by excerpts from our hero's Christmas letter to thin little Mrs Seaford, as follows:—

"Pardon my seeming neglect, dear old friend. I meant to have run up to town to see you the instant I set foot in England, but you must admit that my dear, long-lost mother had prior claims. Pardon, also, my impudence in now asking you to come and see *me*. You *must* come. I will take no denial, for I want you to rejoice at my wedding! Yes, as old Nell once said to me, 'God sends us a blessing sometimes when we least expect it.' He has not only restored to me my mother, but has raised me from the lowest rung in the ladder to the very highest, and given me the sweetest, and most—. But enough. Come and see for yourself. Her name is Nellie. But I have more to astonish you with. Not only do I take Nellie back with me to my home in the new world, but I take my mother also, and Natty Grove, and *old Nell herself!* How we got her to understand what we want her to do, could not be told in less than four hundred pages of small type. Nat did it, by means of signs, symbols, and what *he* styles facial-logarithms. At all events she has agreed to go, and we hope to set sail next June. Moreover, I expect to get *you* to join us. Don't laugh. I mean it. There is good work to be done. Canada needs philanthropic Christians as well as England.

"You will scarcely credit me when I say that I have become a match-maker—not one of those 'little' ones, in whose welfare you are so much interested, but a real one. My deep design is upon your partner, Natty Grove. Yes, your *partner*—for were not *you* the instrument used in rescuing my soul, and *he* my body? so that you have been partners in this double rescue. Well, it is my intention to introduce Natty Grove to Nancy Briggs, and abide the result! Once on a time I had meant her for Bob Snobbins, but as you have failed to hunt him up, he must be left to suffer the consequences. D'you know I have quite a pathetic feeling of tenderness for the memory of that too sharp little boy. Little does he know how gladly I would give him the best coat in my possession—if I could only find him!

"Now, dearest of old friends, I must stop. Nellie is sitting on one side of me, mother on the other, and old Nell in front—which will account to you, in some degree, for the madness of my condition.

"Once more, in the hope of a joyful meeting, I wish you 'a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.'"

The End.

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE COXSWAIN'S BRIDE; ALSO, JACK FROST AND SONS; AND, A DOUBLE RESCUE ***

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