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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PERSONAL REMINISCENCES IN BOOK MAKING, AND SOME SHORT STORIES ***

R.M. Ballantyne

"Personal Reminiscences in Book Making"

Chapter One.

Incidents in Book Making—Introductory.

Book making is mixed up, more or less, with difficulties. It is sometimes disappointing; often amusing; occasionally lucrative; frequently expensive, and always interesting—at least to the maker.

Of course I do not refer to that sort of book making which is connected with the too prevalent and disgraceful practice of gambling, but to the making of literary books—especially story-books for the young.

For over eight-and-thirty years I have had the pleasure of making such books and of gathering the material for them in many and distant lands.

During that period a considerable number of the juvenile public have accepted me as one of their guides in the world of Fiction, and through many scenes in the wildest and most out-of-the-way regions of our wonderful world.

Surely, then, it is not presumptuous in me to suppose—at least to hope—that a rambling account of some of the curious incidents which have occurred, now and then, in connection with my book making, will interest the young people of the present day. Indeed I entertain a hope that some even of the old boys and girls who condescended to follow me in the days gone by may perchance derive some amusement, if not profit, from a perusal of these reminiscences.

The shadows of life are lengthening, and, for me, that night, "in which no man can work," may not be far off. Before it is too late, and while yet the flame of the lamp burns with sufficient clearness, I would fain have a personal chat with those for whom, by God's blessing, I have been permitted to cater so long.

But fear not, dear reader, that I shall inflict on you a complete autobiography. It is only the great ones of the earth who are entitled to claim attention to the record of birth and parentage and school-days, etcetera. To trace my ancestry back through "the Conquerors" to Adam, would be presumptuous as well as impossible. Nevertheless, for the sake of aspirants to literary fame, it may be worth while to tell here how one of the rank and file of the moderately successful Brotherhood was led to Authorship as a profession and how he followed it out.

I say "led" advisedly, because I made no effort whatever to adopt this line of life, and never even dreamed of it as a possibility until I was over twenty-eight years of age.

Let me commence, then, by at once taking a header into the middle of that period when God—all unknown to, and unrecognised by, myself—was furnishing me with some of the material and weapons for the future battle of life.

One day my dear father was reading in the newspapers some account of the discoveries of Dease and Simpson in the neighbourhood of the famous North-west Passage. Looking at me over his spectacles with the perplexed air of a man who has an idle son of sixteen to start in the race of life, he said—

"How would you like to go into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company and discover the North-west Passage?"—or words to that effect.

"All right, father," said I—or something of that sort.

I was at that age, and in that frame of mind, which regards difficulties with consummate presumption and profound inexperience. If the discovery of the North-pole had been suggested, or the South-pole, or any other terrestrial pole

that happened to exist at the time, I was quite ready to “rush in” where even a Franklin might “fear to tread!”

This incident was but a slight one, yet it was the little hinge on which turned my future career.

We had a relation—I won't say what, because distant relationships, especially if complicated, are utterly beyond my mental grasp—who was high up in the service of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company. Through him I became a clerk in the service with a salary of 20 pounds for the first year. Having been born without a silver spoon in my mouth, I regarded this as an adequate, though not a princely, provision.

In due time I found myself in the heart of that vast North American wilderness which is variously known as Rupert's Land, the Territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Great Nor'west, many hundreds of miles north of the outmost verge of Canadian civilisation.

I am not learned in the matter of statistics, but if a rough guess may be allowed, I should say that the population of some of the regions in which I and my few fellow-clerks vegetated might have been about fifty to the hundred square miles—with uninhabited regions around. Of course we had no libraries, magazines, or newspapers out there. Indeed we had almost no books at all, only a stray file or two of American newspapers, one of which made me acquainted with some of the works of Dickens and of Lever. While in those northern wilds I also met—as with dear old friends—some stray copies of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, and the *Penny Magazine*.

We had a mail twice in the year—once by the Hudson's Bay ship in summer, and once through the trackless wilderness by sledge and snow-shoe in winter. It will easily be understood that surroundings of such a nature did not suggest or encourage a literary career. My comrades and I spent the greater part of our time in fur-trading with the Red Indians; doing a little office-work, and in much canoeing, boating, fishing, shooting, wishing, and skylarking. It was a “jolly” life, no doubt, while it lasted, but not elevating!

We did not drink. Happily there was nothing alcoholic to be had out there for love or money. But we smoked, more or less consumedly, morning, noon, and night. Before breakfast the smoking began; after supper it went on; far into the night it continued. Some of us even went to sleep with the pipes in our mouths and dropped them on our pillows. Being of such an immature age, I laboured under the not uncommon delusion that to smoke looked manly, and therefore did my best to accommodate myself to my surroundings, but I failed signally, having been gifted with a blessed incapacity for tobacco-smoking. This afflicted me somewhat at the time, but ever since I have been unmistakably thankful.

But this is wandering. To return.

With a winter of eight months' duration and temperature sometimes at 50 below zero of Fahrenheit, little to do and nothing particular to think of, time occasionally hung heavy on our hands. With a view to lighten it a little, I began to write long and elaborate letters to a loving mother whom I had left behind me in Scotland. The fact that these letters could be despatched only twice in the year was immaterial. Whenever I felt a touch of home-sickness, and at frequent intervals, I got out my sheet of the largest-sized narrow-ruled imperial paper—I think it was called “imperial”—and entered into spiritual intercourse with “Home.” To this long-letter writing I attribute whatever small amount of facility in composition I may have acquired. Yet not the faintest idea of story-writing crossed the clear sky of my unliterary imagination. I am not conscious of having had, at that time, a love for writing in any form—very much the reverse!

Of course I passed through a highly romantic period of life—most youths do so—and while in that condition I made a desperate attempt to tackle a poem. Most youths do that also! The first two lines ran thus:—

“Close by the shores of Hudson's Bay,
Where Arctic winters—stern and grey—”

I must have gloated long over this couplet, for it was indelibly stamped upon my memory, and is as fresh to-day as when the lines were penned. This my first literary effort was carried to somewhere about the middle of the first canto. It stuck there—I am thankful to say—and, like the smoking, never went further.

Rupert's Land, at that time, was little known and very seldom visited by outsiders. During several years I wandered to and fro in it, meeting with a few savages, fewer white men—servants of the Company—and becoming acquainted with modes of life and thought in what has been aptly styled “The Great Lone Land.” Hearing so seldom from or of the outside world, things pertaining to it grew dim and shadowy, and began to lose interest. In these circumstances, if it had not been that I knew full well my mother's soul was ready to receive any amount of out-pourings of which I was capable, I should have almost forgotten how to use the pen.

It was in circumstances such as I have described that I began my first book, but it was not a story-book, and I had no idea that it would ever become a printed book at all. It was merely a free-and-easy record of personal adventure and every-day life, written, like all else that I penned, solely for the uncritical eye of that long-suffering and too indulgent mother!

I had reached the advanced age of twenty-two at the time, and had been sent to take charge of an outpost, on the uninhabited northern shores of the gulf of Saint Lawrence, named Seven Islands. It was a dreary, desolate, little-known spot, at that time. The gulf, just opposite the establishment, was about fifty miles broad. The ships which passed up and down it were invisible, not only on account of distance, but because of seven islands at the mouth of the bay coming between them and the outpost. My next neighbour, in command of a similar post up the gulf, was, if I remember rightly, about seventy miles distant. The nearest house down the gulf was about eighty miles off, and behind us lay the virgin forests, with swamps, lakes, prairies, and mountains, stretching away without break right across the continent to the Pacific Ocean.

The outpost—which, in virtue of a ship's carronade and a flagstaff, was occasionally styled a "fort"—consisted of four wooden buildings. One of these—the largest, with a verandah—was the Residency. There was an offshoot in rear which served as a kitchen. The other houses were a store for goods wherewith to carry on trade with the Indians, a stable, and a workshop. The whole population of the establishment—indeed of the surrounding district—consisted of myself and one man—also a horse! The horse occupied the stable, I dwelt in the Residency, the rest of the population lived in the kitchen.

There were, indeed, other five men belonging to the establishment, but these did not affect its desolation, for they were away netting salmon at a river about twenty miles distant at the time I write of.

My "Friday"—who was a French-Canadian—being cook, as well as man-of-all-work, found a little occupation in attending to the duties of his office, but the unfortunate Governor had nothing whatever to do except await the arrival of Indians, who were not due at that time. The horse was a bad one, without a saddle, and in possession of a pronounced backbone. My "Friday" was not sociable. I had no books, no newspapers, no magazines or literature of any kind, no game to shoot, no boat wherewith to prosecute fishing in the bay, and no prospect of seeing any one to speak to for weeks, if not months, to come. But I had pen and ink, and, by great good fortune, was in possession of a blank paper book fully an inch thick.

When, two or three years after, a printer-cousin, seeing the manuscript, offered to print it, and the well-known Blackwood, of Edinburgh, seeing the book, offered to publish it—and did publish it—my ambition was still so absolutely asleep that I did not again put pen to paper in *that* way for eight years thereafter, although I might have been encouraged thereto by the fact that this first book—named *Hudson's Bay*—besides being a commercial success, received favourable notice from the press.

It was not until the year 1854 that my literary path was opened up. At that time I was a partner in the late publishing firm of Thomas Constable and Company of Edinburgh. Happening one day to meet with the late William Nelson, publisher, I was asked by him how I should like the idea of taking to literature as a profession. My answer I forget. It must have been vague, for I had never thought of the subject at all.

"Well," said he, "what would you think of trying to write a story?"

Somewhat amused, I replied that I did not know what to think, but I would try if he wished me to do so.

"Do so," said he, "and go to work at once,"—or words to that effect.

I went to work at once, and wrote my first story, or work of fiction. It was published in 1855 under the name of *Snowflakes and Sunbeams; or, The Young Fur-traders*. Afterwards the first part of the title was dropped, and the book is now known as *The Young Fur-traders*. From that day to this I have lived by making story-books for young folk.

From what I have said it will be seen that I have never aimed at the achieving of this position, and I hope that it is not presumptuous in me to think—and to derive much comfort from the thought—that God led me into the particular path along which I have walked for so many years.

The scene of my first story was naturally laid in those backwoods with which I was familiar, and the story itself was founded on the adventures and experiences of my companions and myself. When a second book was required of me, I stuck to the same regions, but changed the locality. While casting about in my mind for a suitable subject, I happened to meet with an old, retired "Nor'wester" who had spent an adventurous life in Rupert's Land. Among other duties he had been sent to establish an outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company at Ungava Bay, one of the most dreary parts of a desolate region. On hearing what I wanted, he sat down and wrote a long narrative of his proceedings there, which he placed at my disposal, and thus furnished me with the foundation of *Ungava, a tale of Eskimo-Land*.

But now I had reached the end of my tether, and when a third story was wanted I was compelled to seek new fields of adventure in the books of travellers. Regarding the Southern seas as the most romantic part of the world—after the backwoods!—I mentally and spiritually plunged into those warm waters, and the dive resulted in *The Coral Island*.

It now began to be borne in upon me that there was something not quite satisfactory in describing, expatiating on, and energising in, regions which one has never seen. For one thing, it was needful to be always carefully on the watch to avoid falling into mistakes geographical, topographical, natural-historical, and otherwise.

For instance, despite the utmost care of which I was capable, while studying up for *The Coral Island*, I fell into a blunder through ignorance in regard to a familiar fruit. I was under the impression that cocoa-nuts grew on their trees in the same form as that in which they are usually presented to us in grocers' windows—namely, about the size of a large fist with three spots, suggestive of a monkey's face, at one end. Learning from trustworthy books that at a certain stage of development the nut contains a delicious beverage like lemonade, I sent one of my heroes up a tree for a nut, through the shell of which he bored a hole with a penknife and drank the "lemonade"! It was not till long after the story was published that my own brother—who had voyaged in Southern seas—wrote to draw my attention to the fact that the cocoa-nut is nearly as large as a man's head, and its outer husk over an inch thick, so that no ordinary penknife could bore to its interior! Of course I should have known this, and, perhaps, should be ashamed of my ignorance—but, somehow, I'm not!

I admit that this was a slip, but such, and other slips, hardly justify the remark that some people have not hesitated to make, namely, that I have a tendency to draw the long bow. I feel almost sensitive on this point, for I have always laboured to be true to fact, and to nature, even in my wildest flights of fancy.

This reminds me of the remark made to myself once by a lady in reference to this same *Coral Island*. "There is one thing, Mr Ballantyne," she said, "which I really find it hard to believe. You make one of your three boys dive into a clear pool, go to the bottom, and then, turning on his back, look up and wink and laugh at the other two."

"No, no, Peterkin did not 'laugh,'" said I remonstratively.

"Well, then, you make him smile."

"Ah, that is true, but there is a vast difference between laughing and smiling under water. But is it not singular that you should doubt the only incident in the story which I personally verified? I happened to be in lodgings at the seaside while writing that story, and, after penning the passage you refer to, I went down to the shore, pulled off my clothes, dived to the bottom, turned on my back, and, looking up, I smiled and winked."

The lady laughed, but I have never been quite sure, from the tone of that laugh, whether it was a laugh of conviction or of unbelief. It is not improbable that my fair friend's mental constitution may have been somewhat similar to that of the old woman who declined to believe her sailor-grandson when he told her he had seen flying-fish, but at once recognised his veracity when he said he had seen the remains of Pharaoh's chariot-wheels on the shores of the Red Sea.

Recognising, then, the difficulties of my position, I formed the resolution always to visit—when possible—the scenes in which my stories were laid, converse with the people who, under modification, were to form the *dramatis personae* of the tales, and, generally, to obtain information in each case, as far as lay in my power, from the fountain-head.

Thus, when about to begin *The Lifeboat*, I went to Ramsgate, and, for some time, was hand and glove with Jarman, the heroic coxswain of the Ramsgate boat, a lion-like as well as lion-hearted man, who rescued hundreds of lives from the fatal Goodwin Sands during his career. In like manner, when getting up information for *The Lighthouse*, I obtained permission from the Commissioners of Northern Lights to visit the Bell Rock Lighthouse, where I hobnobbed with the three keepers of that celebrated pillar-in-the-sea for three weeks, and read Stevenson's graphic account of the building of the structure in the library, or visitor's room, just under the lantern. I was absolutely a prisoner there during those three weeks, for boats seldom visited the rock, and it need scarcely be said that ships kept well out of our way. By good fortune there came on a pretty stiff gale at the time, and Stevenson's thrilling narrative was read to the tune of whistling winds and roaring seas, many of which sent the spray right up to the lantern and caused the building, more than once, to quiver to its foundation.

In order to do justice to *Fighting the Flames* I careered through the streets of London on fire-engines, clad in a pea-jacket and a black leather helmet of the Salvage Corps;—this, to enable me to pass the cordon of police without question—though not without recognition, as was made apparent to me on one occasion at a fire by a fireman whispering confidentially, "I know what *you* are, sir, you're a hamitoor!"

"Right you are," said I, and moved away in order to change the subject.

It was a glorious experience, by the way, this galloping on fire-engines through the crowded streets. It had in it much of the excitement of the chase—possibly that of war—with the noble end in view of saving, instead of destroying, life! Such tearing along at headlong speed; such wild roaring of the firemen to clear the way; such frantic dashing aside of cabs, carts, 'buses, and pedestrians; such reckless courage on the part of the men, and volcanic spoutings on the part of the fires! But I must not linger. The memory of it is too enticing. *Deep Down* took me to Cornwall, where, over two hundred fathoms beneath the green turf, and more than half-a-mile out under the bed of the sea, I saw the sturdy miners at work winning copper and tin from the solid rock, and acquired some knowledge of their life, sufferings, and toils.

In the land of the Vikings I shot ptarmigan, caught salmon, and gathered material for *Erling the Bold*. A winter in Algiers made me familiar with the *Pirate City*. I enjoyed a fortnight with the hearty inhabitants of the Gull Lightship off the Goodwin Sands, from which resulted *The Floating Light*; and went to the Cape of Good Hope, and up into the interior of the Colony, to spy out the land and hold intercourse with *The Settler and the Savage*—although I am bound to confess that, with regard to the latter, I talked to him only with mine eyes. I also went afloat for a short time with the fishermen of the North Sea, in order to be able to do justice to *The Young Trawler*.

To arrive still closer at the truth, and to avoid errors, I have always endeavoured to submit my proof-sheets, when possible, to experts and men who knew the subject well. Thus, Captain Shaw, late Chief of the London Fire Brigade, kindly read the proofs of *Fighting the Flames*, and prevented my getting off the rails in matters of detail, and Sir Arthur Blackwood, financial secretary to the General Post Office, obligingly did me the same favour in regard to *Post Haste*.

In conclusion, there are some things that I shrink from flaunting in the eyes of the public. Personal religion is one of these. Nevertheless, there are a few words which I feel constrained to write before closing this chapter.

During all the six years that I spent in Rupert's Land I was "without God." He was around me and within me, guarding me, bestowing upon me the physical and mental health by which alone I could fully enjoy a life in the wilderness, and furnishing me with much of the material that was to serve as my stock-in-trade during my subsequent career; yet—I confess it with shame—I did not recognise or think of, or care for, Him. It was not until after I had returned home that He opened my eyes to see myself a lost soul, and Jesus Christ—"God with us"—an all-sufficient Redeemer, able and willing to save me from sin, as He is to save all sinners—even the chief.

More than this I will not say. Less I could not say, without being unfaithful to my Creator.

Chapter Two.

Life in the Bell Rock Lighthouse.

One of my most interesting experiences in hunting up materials for books was at the Bell Rock Lighthouse; interesting because of the novelty of the situation, the pleasant intercourse with the keepers, and the grandeur of the subjects brought under my observation.

The lighthouses of this kingdom present, in their construction, a remarkable evidence of the capacity of man to overcome almost insurmountable difficulties, and his marvellous power of adapting means to ends. They also stand forth as a grand army of sentinels, who, with unobtrusive regularity, open their brilliant eyes on the great deep, night after night—from year to year—from age to age, and gaze—Argus-like—all around our shores, to guard our shipping from the dangers of the sea, perhaps I should rather say from the dangers of the coast, for it must be well-known to most people that the sailor regards “blue water” as his safe and native home, and that it is only when he enters the green and shallow waters of the coast that a measure of anxiety overclouds his free-and-easy spirit.

It is when he draws near to port that the chief dangers of his career surround him, and it is then that the lighthouse is watched for anxiously, and hailed with satisfaction.

These observations scarce need confirmatory proof. Of all the vessels, great and small, that annually seek and leave our ports, a large proportion meet their doom, and, despite all our lighthouses, beacons, and buoys, lay their timbers and cargoes in fragments, on our shores. This is a significant fact, for if those lost ships be—as they are—a mere fraction of our commerce, how great must be the fleet, how vast the wealth, that our lighthouses guide safely into port every year? If all our coast-lights were to be extinguished for only a single night, the loss of property and life would be terrible beyond conception. But such an event can never happen, for our coast-lights arise each evening at sunset with the regularity of the sun himself. Like the stars, they burst out when darkness begins to brood upon land and sea like them, too, their action and aspect are varied. Some, at great heights, in exposed places, blaze bright and steady like stars of the first magnitude. Others, in the form of revolving lights, twinkle like the lesser stars—now veiling, now flashing forth their beams.

One set of lights shine ruby-red like Mars; another set are white, like Venus; while those on our pier-heads and at our harbour mouths are green; and, in one or two instances, if not more, they shine, (by means of reflecting prisms), with borrowed light like the moon; but all—whether revolving or fixed, large or small, red or white or green—beam forth, like good angels, offering welcome and guidance to the mariner approaching from beyond seas; with God-like impartiality shedding their radiance on friend and foe, and encircling—as with a chaplet of living diamonds, rubies, and emeralds—our highly favoured little islands of the sea.

Lighthouses may be divided into *two* classes, namely, those which stand on cliffs, and elsewhere, somewhat above the influence of the waves, and those built on outlying rocks which are barely visible at high tide, or invisible altogether except at low-water. The North and South Foreland lights in Kent, the Girdleness in Aberdeenshire, and Inchkeith in the Forth, are examples of the former. The Eddystone, Bell Rock, and Skerryvore, are well-known examples of the latter, also the Wolf Rock off the Land’s End.

In one of the latter—namely the Bell Rock—I obtained permission, a good many years ago, from the Commissioners of Northern Lights, to spend a fortnight for literary purposes—to be imprisoned, in fact, for that period.

This lighthouse combines within itself more or less of the elements of all lighthouses. The principles on which it was built are much the same with those of Skerryvore. It is founded on a tidal rock, is exposed to the full “fetch” and fury of an open sea, and it has stood for the greater part of a century exposed to inconceivable and constantly recurring violence of wind and wave—not, indeed, unshaken, but altogether undamaged.

The Bell Rock lies on the east of Scotland, off the mouths of the Forth and Tay, 12 miles from the Forfarshire coast, which is the nearest land. Its foundation is always under water except for an hour or two at low-tide. At high tides there are about 12 or 16 feet of water above the highest ledge of the Bell Rock, which consists of a series of sandstone ridges. These, at ordinary low-tides, are uncovered to the extent of between 100 and 200 yards. At neap tides the rock shows only a few black teeth with sea-weed gums above the surface.

There is a boat which attends upon this lighthouse. On the occasion of my visit I left Arbroath in it one morning before daybreak and reached the Rock about dawn. We cast anchor on arriving—not being able to land, for as yet there *was* no land! The lighthouse rose out of the sea like a bulrush out of a pond! No foundation rock was visible, and the water played about the tower in a fashion that would have knocked our boat to pieces had we ventured to approach the entrance-door.

In a short time the crest of the rock began to show above the foam. There was little or no wind, but the ordinary swell of the calm ocean rolled in upon these rocks, and burst upon them in such a way that the tower seemed to rise out of a caldron of boiling milk. At last we saw the three keepers moving amid the surges. They walked on an iron platform, which, being light and open, and only a few feet above the waves, was nearly invisible.

When the tide was near its lowest ebb, so that there was a piece of smooth water under the lee of the rock, we hoisted out our little “twin” boat. This was a curious contrivance, being simply a small boat cut across amidships, so as to form two parts which fitted into each other like saucers, and were thus rendered small enough to be easily carried in the larger boat. When about to be used, the twins are put into the water and their sterns brought together and screwed tight. Thus one little boat, sharp at each end, is formed.

Embarking in this we rowed between tangle-covered ridges up to the wrought-iron landing-place. The keepers looked surprised as we drew near. It was evident that visitors were not “common objects of the shore” out there!

There were three keepers. One, the chief, was very tall, dark, and thin; of grave temperament and sedate mien. Another was a florid, hearty young fellow, full of fire and energy. The third was a stout, short, thick-set man, with placidity and good-humour enthroned on his fat countenance. He was a first-rate man. I shall call him Stout; his comrade, Young. The chief may appropriately be named Long.

There was no time for more than a hurried introduction at first, for the fresh water-casks and fortnightly allowance of fresh provisions had to be hoisted into the tower, the empty casks got out, and the boat reloaded and despatched, before the tide—already rising—should transform the little harbour into a wild whirlpool. In little more than an hour the boat was gone, and I proceeded to make myself at home with my new friends.

Probably every one knows that the Bell Rock is the Inch Cape Rock, immortalised by Southey in his poem of “Sir Ralph the Rover,” in which he tells how that, in the olden time—

“The Abbot of Aberbrothock
Had placed a bell on the Inch Cape Rock.
On a buoy in the storm it floated and swung
And over the waves its warning rung.”

A pirate named “Sir Ralph the Rover” came there one day and cut away the bell in a wicked frolic. Long years after, returning with a rich cargo of ill-gotten wealth, retributive justice overtook Sir Ralph, caused his vessel to strike on the Inch Cape Rock—for want of the warning bell which he had cut away—and sent him and his belongings to the bottom.

Whether this legend be true or not, there is no doubt that the Rock had been so dangerous to shipping, that seamen often avoided the firths of Forth and Tay in bad weather for fear of it, and many captains, in their anxiety to keep clear of it, ran their vessels in the neighbouring coasts and perished.

Another proof that numerous wrecks took place there lay in the fact that the fishermen were wont to visit the rock after every gale, for the purpose of gathering wreckage. It was resolved, therefore, about the beginning of this century, to erect a lighthouse on the Inchcape Rock, and to Mr Robert Stevenson, Engineer at that time to the Board of Northern Lights, was assigned the task of building it. He began the work in August 1807, and finished it in February 1811.

I began my sojourn in the Bell Rock Lighthouse with breakfast. On ascending to the kitchen I found Stout preparing it. Mr Long, the chief, offered, with delicate hospitality, to carry my meals up to the library, so that I might feast in dignified solitude, but I declined the honour, preferring to fraternise with the men in the kitchen. Breakfast over, they showed me through the tower—pointed out and explained everything—especially the lantern and the library—in which last I afterwards read Mr Stevenson’s interesting volume on the building of the Bell Rock; a book which has been most appropriately styled the *Robinson Crusoe* of Engineering literature.

On returning to the entrance-door, I found that there was now *no land!* The tide had risen. The lighthouse was a mere pillar in the sea. “Water, water everywhere”—nothing else visible save the distant coast of Forfarshire like a faint blue line on the horizon. But in the evening the tide again fell, and, the moment the rock was uncovered, we descended. Then Mr Long showed me the various points of interest about the rock, and Stout volunteered anecdotes connected with these, and Young corroborated and expounded everything with intense enthusiasm. Evidently Young rejoiced in the rare opportunity my visit afforded him of breaking the monotony of life on the Bell Rock. He was like a caged bird, and on one occasion expressed his sentiments very forcibly by saying to me, “Oh, sir, I sometimes wish I could jump up and never come down!” As for Long and Stout, they had got used to lighthouses and monotony. The placid countenance of each was a sure index of the profound tranquillity within!

Small though it was, the rock was a very world in itself to the residents—crowded with “ports,” and “wharves” and “ledges,” which had reference to the building-time. There were “Sir Ralph the Rover’s ledge,” and “the Abbot’s ledge,” and “the Engineer’s ledge,” and “Cunningham’s ledge,” and “the Smith’s ledge,” etcetera. Then there were “Port Stevenson,” and “Port Boyle,” and “Port Hamilton,” and many others—each port being a mere hole capable of holding a boat or two. Besides which there were “tracks,” leading to these ports—such as “Wilson’s track,” and “Macurich’s track,” and “Gloag’s track.” And then there were “Hope’s Wharf,” and “Rae’s Wharf,” and “Watt’s Reach,” and “Scoresby Point,” while, among numerous outlying groups of rocklets, there were the “Royal Burghs,” the “Crown Lawyers,” and the “Maritime Sheriffs”—each and all teeming with interesting associations to those who know the Story of the Rock,—*all* comprehended within an area of a few hundred yards—the whole affair being wiped entirely and regularly off the face of nature by every rising tide.

Close beside Rae’s Wharf, on which we stood, Mr Long showed me the holes in which had been fixed the ends of the great beams of the beacon. The beacon was a point of considerable interest to me. If you had seen the rock as I saw it, reader, in a storm, with the water boiling all over and round it for more than a mile, like seething milk—and if you had reflected that the *first* beacon built there was carried away in a gale, you would have entertained very exalted ideas of the courage of the men who built the Bell Rock lighthouse.

While the tower was building, Mr Stevenson and his men were exposed for many days and nights in this beacon—this erection of timber-beams, with a mere pigeon-house on the top of it for a dwelling. Before the beacon was built, the men lived in the *Pharos* floating light; a vessel which was moored not far from the Rock. Every day—weather permitting—they rowed to the rock, landed, and worked for *one, two, or three* hours, when they were drowned out, so to speak, and obliged to return to their floating home. Sometimes the landing was easy. More frequently it was difficult. Occasionally it was impossible. When a landing was accomplished, they used to set to work without delay. There was no time to lose. Some bored holes in the rock for hold-fasts; others, with pick and chisel, cut out the foundation-pit. Then the courses began to be laid. On each occasion of landing the smith had to set up his bellows, light his fire, and work in hot haste; because his whole shop, except the anvil, had to be taken down, and carried away every tide! Frequently, in fine weather, this enterprising son of Vulcan might have been seen toiling with his head enveloped in volumes of smoke and sparks, and his feet in the water, which gradually rose to his ankles and knees until, with a sudden “hiss,” it extinguished his fire and ended his labours for the day. Then he was forced to pack up his bellows and tools, and decamp with the rest of the men.

Sometimes they wrought in calm, sometimes in storm; always, more or less, in water. Three hours was considered a fair day's work. When they had the good fortune to work "double tides" in a day, they made five, or five-and-a-half, hours; but this was of rare occurrence.

"You see that mark there, sir, on Smith's Ledge?" said Mr Long to me one day, "that was the place where the forge stood; and the ledge beyond, with the old bit of iron on it, is the '*Last Hope*,' where Mr Stevenson and his men were so nearly lost." Then he went on to tell me the following incident, as illustrating one of the many narrow escapes made by the builders.

One day, soon after the men had commenced work, it began to blow hard, and the crew of the boat belonging to the attending vessel, named the "Smeaton," fearing that her moorings might be insufficient, went off to examine them. This was wrong. The workmen on the rock were sufficiently numerous to completely fill three boats. For one of these to leave the rock was to run a great risk, as the event proved. Almost as soon as they reached the "Smeaton," her cables parted and she went adrift, carrying the boat with her away to leeward, and although sail was instantly made, they found it impossible to regain the rock against wind and tide. Mr Stevenson observed this with the deepest anxiety, but the men, (busy as bees about the rock), were not aware of it at first.

The situation was terrible. There were thirty-two men left on a rock which would in a short time be overflowed to a depth of twelve or fifteen feet by a stormy sea, and only two boats in which to remove them. These two boats, if loaded to the gunwales, could have held only a few more than the half of them.

While the sound of the numerous hammers and the ring of the anvil were heard, the situation did not appear so hopeless; but soon the men at the lowest part of the foundation were driven from work by the rising tide; then the forge-fire was extinguished, and the men generally began to make towards their respective boats for their jackets and dry socks. When it was discovered that one of the three boats was gone not a word was uttered, but the men looked at each other in evident perplexity. They seemed to realise their position at once.

In a few minutes some of that band must inevitably be left to perish, for the absent boat and vessel were seen drifting farther and farther away to leeward. Mr Stevenson knew that in such a case, where life and death were in the balance, a desperate struggle among the men for precedence would be certain. Indeed he afterwards learned that the pickmen had resolved to stick by their boat against all hazards. While they were thus gazing in silence at each other and at the distant vessel, their enterprising leader had been casting about in his mind as to the best method of at least attempting the deliverance of his men, and he finally turned round to propose, as a forlorn hope, that all hands should strip off their upper clothing, that every unnecessary article should be removed from the boats, that a specified number should get into each, and that the remainder should hang on by the gunwales, and thus be dragged through the water while they were rowed cautiously towards the "Smeaton"! But when he tried to speak his mouth was so parched that his tongue refused utterance! and then he discovered, (as he says himself), "that saliva is as necessary to speech as the tongue itself!" Turning to a pool, he moistened his lips with sea-water, and found immediate relief. He was again about to speak when some one shouted "a boat! a boat!" and, sure enough, a large boat was seen through the haze making towards the rock. This timely visitor was James Spink, the Bell Rock pilot, who had come off express from Arbroath with letters. His visit was altogether an unusual one, and his truly providential appearance unquestionably prevented loss of life on that critical occasion. This is one specimen—selected from innumerable instances of danger and risk—which may give one some idea of what is encountered by those who build such lighthouses as the Bell Rock.

Our rambles on the rock were necessarily of short duration. We used to stand in the doorway watching the retreating waves, and, the moment the rails were uncovered, we hurried down the ladder—all of us bent on getting as much exercise as possible on land! We marched in single file, up and down the narrow rails, until the rock was uncovered—then we rambled over the slippery ledges.

Sometimes we had one hour—sometimes two, or even three hours, according to the state of the tides. Then the returning waves drove us gradually from the rocks to the rails, from the rails to the ladder—and so back into the lighthouse.

Among other things that impressed me deeply was the grandeur of the waves at the Bell Rock.

One enjoys an opportunity there of studying the form and colour of ocean billows which cannot be obtained on any ordinary shore, because, the water being deep alongside the Rock, these waves come up to it in all their unbroken magnificence. I tried to paint them, but found it difficult, owing to the fact that, like refractory children, they would not stand still to be painted! It was not only in stormy weather that these waves arose. I have seen them during a dead calm, when the sea was like undulating glass. No doubt the cause of them was a gale in some distant part of the sea—inducing a heavy ground-swell; but, be the cause what it might, these majestic rollers often came in without a breath of air to help them, and with the sun glittering on their light-green crystal sides. Their advance seemed slow and solemn amid the deep silence, which made them all the more impressive. The rise of each wave was so gradual that you could not tell where it began in the distant sea. As it drew near, it took definite form and swelled upwards, and at last came on like a wall of glass—probably ten or twelve feet high—so high, at all events, that I felt as if looking up at it from my position on the low rock. When close at hand its green edge lipped over and became fringed with white—then it bent forward with a profound obeisance to the Bell Rock and broke the silence with a grand reverberating roar, as it fell in a ruin of foam and rushed up to my very feet!

When those waves began to paint the canvas with their own spray and change the oil into a water-colour, I was constrained to retire to the lighthouse, where Mr Long, (a deeply interested student), watched me as I continued my studies from the doorway.

Mr Long had an inquiring mind and closely observed all that went on around him. Among other things, he introduced me to a friend of his, a species of fish which he called a "*Paddle*."

Stout called it a sucker, in virtue of an arrangement on its breast whereby it could fasten itself to a rock and hold on. This fish dwelt in Port Hamilton, near Sir Ralph the Rover's ledge, and could be visited at low-tide. He happened to be engaged at that time in watching his wife's spawn, and could not be induced to let go his hold of the rock on any account! Mr Long pulled at him pretty forcibly once or twice, but with no effect, and the fish did not seem in the least alarmed! While Mr Paddle did duty in the nursery, Mrs Paddle roamed the sea at large. Apparently women's rights have made some progress in that quarter! It was supposed by Stout that she took the night-watches. Mr Young inclined to the opinion that she attended to the commissariat—was out marketing in fact, and brought food to her husband. All that I can say on the matter is, that I visited the family frequently, and always saw the father "on duty," but only once found Mrs Paddle at home! The tameness of this kind of fish is very remarkable. One day I saw a large one in a pool which actually allowed me to put my hand under him and lift him gently out! Suddenly it occurred to me that I might paint him! The palette chanced to be at hand, so I began at once. In about two minutes the paddle gave a flop of discomfort as he lay on the rock; I therefore put him into a small pool for a minute or so to let him, breathe, then took him out and had a second sitting, after which he had another rest and a little refreshment in the pool. Thus in about ten minutes, I had his portrait, and put him back into his native element.

I am inclined to think that this is the only fish in the sea that has had his portrait taken and returned to tell the tale to his admiring, perhaps unbelieving, friends!

Of course one of the most interesting points in the lighthouse was the lantern. I frequently sat in it at night with the man on duty, who expounded the lighting apparatus to me, or "spun yarns."

The fifth day of my sojourn on the Bell Rock was marked by an event of great interest,—the arrival of a fishing-boat with letters and newspapers. I had begun by that time to feel some degree of longing to hear something about the outer world, though I had not felt lonely by any means—my companions were too pleasant to admit of that. Our little world contained a large amount of talent! Mr Long had a magnificent bass voice and made good use of it. Then, Young played the violin, (not so badly), and sang tenor—not quite so well; besides which he played the accordion. His instrument, however, was not perfect. One of the bass notes would not sound, and one of the treble notes could not by any means be silenced! Between the two, some damage was done to the harmony; but we were not particular. As to Stout—he could neither sing nor play, but he was a *splendid* listener! and the sight of his good-humoured face, smiling through clouds of tobacco smoke as he sat by the kitchen fire, was of itself sufficient to encourage us.

But Stout could do more than listen and admire. He was cook to the establishment during my visit. The men took this duty by turns—each for a fortnight—and Stout excelled the others. It was he who knew how to extract sweet music from the tea-kettle and the frying-pan! But Stout's forte was buttered toast! He was quite an adept at the formation of this luxury. If I remember rightly, it was an entire loaf that Stout cut up and toasted each morning for breakfast. He knew nothing of delicate treatment. Every slice was an inch thick at the least! It was quite a study to see him go to work. He never sawed with the knife. Having a powerful hand and arm, one sweep of the blade sufficed for one slice, and he cut up the whole loaf before beginning to toast. Then, he always had the fire well prepared. You never saw alternate stripes of black and white on Stout's toast; and he laid on the butter as he might have laid tar on the side of a ship, thick and heavy. He never scraped it off one part to put it on another—and he never picked the lumps out of the holes. Truly, Stout was quite a genius in this matter.

The fisherman who brought off our letters could not have landed if the weather had not been fine. Poor fellow! after I left, he lost his boat in consequence of being on too familiar terms with the Bell Rock. He was in the habit of fishing near the rock, and occasionally ran in at low-water to smoke a pipe with the keepers. One morning he stayed too long. The large green billows which had been falling with solemn boom on the outlying rocks began to lip over into the pool where his boat lay—Port Stevenson. Embarking in haste with his comrade he pushed off. Just then there came a tremendous wave, the crest of which toppled over Smith's Ledge, fell into the boat, and sank it like a stone. The men were saved by the keepers, but their boat was totally destroyed. They never saw a fragment of it again. What a commentary this was on the innumerable wrecks that have taken place on the Inch Cape Rock in days gone by!

Sometimes, on a dark stormy night, I used to try to realise something of this. Turning my back on the lighthouse I tried to forget it, and imagine what must have been the feelings of those who had actually stood there and been driven inch by inch to the higher ledges, with the certain knowledge that their doom was fixed, and without the comfort and assurance that, behind them, stood a strong tower of refuge from the storm!

I was fortunate, during my stay, in having experience of every variety of weather—from a dead calm to a regular gale. It was towards the end of my visit that the gale came on, and it lasted two days. No language can convey an adequate idea of the sublimity of the scene and the sense of power in the seething waves that waged furious war over the Rock during the height of that gale. The spray rose above the kitchen windows, (70 feet on the tower), in such solid masses as to darken the room in passing, and twice during the storm we were struck by waves with such force as to shake the tower to its foundation.

This storm delayed the "Relief boat" a day. Next day, however, it succeeded in getting alongside—and at length, after a most agreeable and interesting sojourn of two weeks, I parted from the hospitable keepers with sincere regret and bade adieu to a lighthouse which is not only a monument of engineering skill, but a source of safety to the shipping, and of confidence to the mariners frequenting these waters.

In former days men shunned the dreaded neighbourhood of the Inch Cape Rock with anxious care. Now, they look out for that:—

"Ruddy gem of changeful light
Bound on the dusky brow of night,—"

And *make for it* with perfect safety. In time past human lives, and noble ships, and costly merchandise were lost on

the Bell Rock every year. Now, disaster to shipping there is not even dreamed of; and one of the most notable proofs of the value of the lighthouse, (and, indirectly, of all other lighthouses), lies in the fact, that not a single wreck has occurred on the Bell Rock since that auspicious evening in 1811 when the sturdy pillar opened its eyes for the first time, and threw its bright beams far and wide over the North Sea.

Chapter Three.

Nights with the Fire Brigade.

There are few lives, we should think, more trying or more full of curious adventure and thrilling incident than that of a London fireman.

He must always be on the alert. No hour of the day or night can he ever count on as being his own, unless on those occasions when he obtains leave of absence, which I suppose are not frequent. If he does not absolutely sleep in his clothes, he sleeps beside them—arranged in such a way that he can jump into them at a moment's notice.

When the summons comes there must be no preliminary yawning; no soft transition from the land of dreams to the world of reality. He jumps into his boots which stand invitingly ready, pulls on his trousers, buttons his braces while descending to the street, and must be brass-helmeted on the engine and away like a fiery dragon-gone-mad within three minutes of "the call," or thereabouts, if he is to escape a fine.

Moreover, the London fireman must be prepared to face death at any moment. When the call comes he never knows whether he is turning out to something not much more serious than "a chimney," or to one of those devastating conflagrations on the river-side in which many thousand pounds worth of property are swept away, and his life may go along with them. Far more frequently than the soldier or sailor is he liable to be ordered on a duty which shall turn out to be a forlorn hope, and not less pluckily does he obey.

There is no respite for him. The field which the London Brigade covers is so vast that the liability to be sent into action is continuous—chiefly, of course, at night. At one moment he may be calmly polishing up the "brasses" of his engine, or skylarking with his comrades, or sedately reading a book, or snoozing in bed, and the next he may be battling fiercely with the flames. Unlike the lifeboat heroes, who may sleep when the world of waters is calm, he must be ever on the watch; for his enemy is a lurking foe—like the Red Indian who pounces on you when you least expect him, and does not utter his warwhoop until he deems his victory secure. The little spark smoulders while the fireman on guard, booted and belted, keeps watch at his station. It creeps while he waits, and not until its energies have gained considerable force does it burst forth with a grand roar and bid him fierce defiance.

Even when conquered in one quarter it often leaps up in another, so that the fireman sometimes returns from the field twice or thrice in the same night to find that the enemy is in force elsewhere and that the fight must be resumed.

In the spring of 1867 I went to London to gather material for my book *Fighting the Flames*, and was kindly permitted by Captain Shaw—then Chief of the Fire Brigade—to spend a couple of weeks at one of the principal west-end stations, and accompany the men to fires.

My first experience was somewhat stirring.

My plan was to go to the station late in the evening and remain up all night with the men on guard waiting for fires.

One day, in the afternoon, when it was growing dusk, and before I had made my first visit to the station, a broad-shouldered jovial-looking fellow in blue coat, belted, and with a sailor's cap, called on me and asked if I should like to "see a 'ouse as 'ad bin blowed up with gas."

Of course I was only too glad to follow him. He conducted me to an elegant mansion in Bayswater, and chatted pleasantly as we went along in somewhat nautical tones, for he had been a man-of-war's man. His name was Flaxmore.

I may remark here that the men of the London brigade were, and still are, I believe, chosen from among seamen.

"You see, sir," said Flaxmore, in explanation of this fact, "sailors are found to be most suitable for the brigade because they're accustomed to strict discipline,—to turn out suddenly at all hours, in all weathers, and to climbing in dangerous circumstances."

Arrived at the mansion, we found that the outside looked all right except that most of the windows were broken. The interior, however, presented a sad and curious appearance. The house had been recently done up in the most expensive style, and its gilded cornices, painted pilasters and other ornaments, with the lath and plaster of walls and ceilings had been blown into the rooms in dire confusion.

"Bin a pretty considerable smash here, sir," said Flaxmore, with a genial smile on his broad countenance. I admitted the fact, and asked how it happened.

"Well, sir, you see," said he, "there was an 'orrid smell of gas in the 'ouse, an' the missus she sent for a gas man to find out where it was, and, *would you believe it*, sir, they went to look for it *with a candle!* Sure enough they found it too, in a small cupboard. The gas had been escapin', it had, but couldn't git out o' that there cupboard, 'cause the door was a tight fit, so it had made its way all over the 'ouse between the lath and plaster and the walls. As soon as ever it caught light, sir, it blowed the whole place into smash—as you see. It blowed the gas man flat on his back; (an' sarved him right!) it blowed the missus through the doorway, an' it blowed the cook—(as was on the landin'

outside)—right down the kitchen stairs, it did;—but there was none of 'em much hurt, sir, they wasn't, beyond a bruise or two!"

After examining this house, Flaxmore proposed that I should go and see his engine. He was proud of his engine, evidently, and spoke of it as a man might speak of his wife!

On our way to the station the driver of a passing 'bus called out—

"Fireman, there's a fire in New Bond Street."

One word Flaxmore exchanged with the driver, and then, turning to me, said, "Come on, sir, I'll give you a ride!"

Off we went at a run, and burst into the station. "Get her out, Jim," cried Flaxmore, (*her* being the engine). Jim, the man on duty, put on his helmet without saying a word, and hauled out the fire-engine, while a comrade ran for the horses, and another called up the men. In five minutes more I was seated beside seven men in blue uniforms and brass helmets, dashing through the streets of London at full gallop!

Now, those who have never seen a London fire-engine go to a fire have no conception of what it is—much less have they any conception of what it is to ride on the engine! To those accustomed to it, no doubt, it may be tame enough—I cannot tell; but to those who mount an engine for the first time and dash through the crowded thoroughfares at a wild tearing gallop; it is probably the most exciting drive conceivable. It beats steeplechasing! It feels like driving to destruction—so desperate and reckless is it. And yet, it is not reckless in the strict sense of that word; for there is a stern need-be in the case. Every moment, (not to mention minutes or hours), is of the utmost importance in the progress of a fire, for when it gets the mastery and bursts into flames it flashes to its work, and completes it quickly. At such times one moment wasted may involve the loss of thousands of pounds, ay, and of human lives also. This is well-known to those whose profession it is to fight the flames. Hence the union of apparent mad desperation, with cool, quiet self-possession in their proceedings. When firemen can work in silence they do so. No unnecessary word is uttered, no voice is needlessly raised; but, when occasion requires it, their course is a tumultuous rush, amid a storm of shouting and gesticulation!

So was it on the present occasion. Had the fire been distant, they would have had to commence their gallop somewhat leisurely, for fear of breaking down the horses; but it was not far off—not much more than a couple of miles—so they dashed round the corner of their own street and swept into the Edgeware Road at full speed.

Here the noise of our progress began, for the great thoroughfare was crowded with vehicles and pedestrians.

To pass through such a crowd without coming into collision with anything required not only dexterous driving, but rendered it necessary that two of the men on the engine should stand up and shout incessantly as we whirled along, clearing everything out of our way.

The men seemed to shout with the memory of the boatswain strong upon them, for their tones were pitched in the deepest and gruffest bass-key. Sometimes there was a lull for a moment, as a comparatively clear space of 100 yards or so lay before us; then their voices rose like the roaring of the gale as a stupid or deaf cabman got in our way, or a plethoric 'bus threatened to interrupt our furious career. The cross streets were the points where the chief difficulties met us. There cab- and van-drivers turned into or crossed the great thoroughfare, all ignorant of the thunderbolt that was rushing on like a fiery meteor, with its lanterns casting a glare of light before, and the helmets of the stern charioteers flashing back the rays from street-lamps and windows. At the corner of one of the streets the crowd of vehicles was so great that the driver of the engine began to tighten his reins, while Flaxmore and his comrades raised a furious roar. Cabs, 'buses, and pedestrians scattered right and left in a marvellous manner; the driver slackened his reins, cracked his whip, and the horses stretched out again.

"There, it shows a light," observed Flaxmore, as we tore along Oxford Street. At that moment a stupid cabman blocked up the way. There was a terrific shout from all the firemen, at once! but the man did not hear. Our driver attempted both to pull up and to turn aside; the first was impossible, the latter he did so effectively that he not only cleared the cab but made straight at a lamp-post on the other side! A crash seemed inevitable, but Flaxmore, observing the danger, seized the rein next to him and swung the horses round. We flew past, just shaving the lamp-post, and in three minutes more pulled up at a house which was blazing in the upper floors. Three engines were already at work on it. Flaxmore and his men at once entered the burning house, which by that time was nearly gutted. I stood outside looking on, but soon became anxious to know what was doing inside, and attempted to enter. A policeman stopped me, but at that moment Flaxmore came out like a half-drowned rat, his face streaked with brick-dust and charcoal. Seeing what I wanted he led me into the house, and immediately I found myself in a hot shower-bath which did not improve my coat or hat! At the same time I stepped up to the ankles in hot water! Tons of water were being poured on the house by three powerful engines, and this, in passing through so much heated material had become comfortably warm. The first thing I saw on entering was a foaming cataract! This was the staircase, down which the water rushed, breaking over masses of fallen brickwork and debris, with a noise like a goodly Highland burn! Up this we waded, but could get no further than the room above, as the upper stair had fallen in. I was about to descend in order to try to reach the roof by some other way, when a fireman caught me by the collar, exclaiming— "Hold on, sir!" He thought the staircase was about to fall. "Bolt now, sir," he added, releasing me. I bolted, and was out in the street in a moment, where I found that some of the firemen who had first arrived, and were much exhausted, were being served with a glass of brandy. If there were any case in which a teetotaller might be justified in taking spirits, it would be, I think, when exhausted by toiling for hours amid the heat and smoke and danger of a fire—nevertheless I found that several of the firemen there were teetotallers.

There was a shout of laughter at this moment, occasioned by one of the firemen having accidentally turned the *branch* or delivery pipe full on the faces of the crowd and drenched some of them. This was followed by a loud cheer when another fireman was seen to have clambered to the roof whence he could apply the water with better effect. At

last their efforts were crowned with success. Before midnight the fire was extinguished, and we drove back to the Paddington Station at a more leisurely pace. Thus ended my first experience of a London fire.

Accidents, as may be easily believed, are of frequent occurrence.

Accidents.

There were between forty to fifty a year. In 1865 they were as follows:—

Cuts and Lacerated Wounds	12
Contusions	15
Fractures	2
Sprains	9
Burns and Scalds	3
Injury to Eyes	5
	46

My friend Flaxmore himself met with an accident not long afterwards. He slipped off the roof of a house and fell on his back from a height of about fifteen feet. Being a heavy man, the fall told severely on him.

For about two weeks I went almost every evening to the Regent Street Station and spent the night with the men, in the hope of accompanying them to fires. The "lobby"—as the watch room of the station was named—was a small one, round the walls of which the brass helmets and hatchets of the men were hung. Here, each night, two men slept on two trestle-beds. They were fully equipped, with the exception of their helmets. Their comrades slept at their own homes, which were within a few yards of the station. The furniture of the "lobby" was scanty—a desk, a bookcase, two chairs, a clock, an alarm-bell, and four telegraphic instruments comprised it all. These last formed part of a network of telegraphs which extended from the central station to nearly all the other stations in London. By means of the telegraph a "call" is given—i.e. a fire is announced to the firemen all over London, if need be, in a very few minutes. Those who are nearest to the scene of conflagration hasten to it at once with their engines, while each outlying or distant station sends forward a man on foot. These men, coming up one by one, relieve those who have first hastened to the fire.

"Calls," however, are not always sent by telegraph. Sometimes a furious ring comes to the alarm-bell, and a man or a boy rushes in shouting "*fire!*" with all his might. People are generally much excited in such circumstances,—sometimes half mad. In one case a man came with a "call" in such perturbation of mind that he could not tell where the fire was at all for nearly five minutes! On another occasion two men rushed in with a call at the same moment, and both were stutterers. My own opinion is that one stuttered by nature and the other from agitation. Be that as it may, they were both half mad with excitement.

"F-f-f-fire!" roared one.

"F-f-f-fire!" yelled the other.

"Where away?" asked a fireman as he quietly buckled his belt and put on his helmet.

"B-B-Brompton!"—"B-B-Bayswater!" burst from them both at the same moment. Then one cried, "I—I s-s-say Brompton," and the other shouted, "I—I s-say Bayswater."

"What street?" asked the fireman.

"W-W-Walton Street," cried one.

"N-No—P-P-orchester Terrace," roared the other, and at the word the Walton Street man hit the Porchester Terrace man between the eyes and knocked him down. A regular scuffle ensued, in the midst of which the firemen got out two engines—and, before the stutterers were separated, went off full swing, one to Brompton, the other to Bayswater, and found that, as they had guessed, there were in reality two fires!

One night's experience in the "lobby" will give a specimen of the fireman's work. I had spent the greater part of the night there without anything turning up. About three in the morning the two men on duty lay down on their trestle-beds to sleep, and I sat at the desk reading the reports of recent fires. The place was very quiet—the sounds of the great city were hushed—the night was calm, and nothing was heard but the soft breathing of the sleepers and the ticking of the clock as I sat there waiting for a fire. I often looked at the telegraph needles and, (I am half ashamed to say it), longed for them to move and give us "a call." At last, when I had begun to despair, the sharp little telegraph bell rang. Up I started in some excitement—up started one of the sleepers too, quite as quickly as I did, but without any excitement whatever—he was accustomed to alarms! Reading the telegraph with sleepy eyes he said, with a yawn, "it's only a stop for a chimbley." He lay down again to sleep, and I sat down again to read and wait. Soon after the foreman came down-stairs to have a smoke and a chat. Among the many anecdotes which he told me was one which had a little of the horrible in it. He said he was once called to a fire in a cemetery, where workmen had been employed in filling some of the vaults with sawdust and closing them up. They had been smoking down there and had set fire to the sawdust, which set light to the coffins, and when the firemen arrived these were burning fiercely, and the stench and smoke were almost overpowering—nevertheless one of the men ran down the stair of the vaults, but slipped his foot and fell. Next moment he rushed up with a face like a ghost, having fallen, he said, between two coffins! Quickly recovering from his fright he again descended with his comrades, and they soon managed to extinguish the fire.

The foreman went off to bed after relating this pleasant little incident and left me to meditate on it. Presently a sound of distant wheels struck my ear. On they came at a rattling pace. In a few minutes a cab dashed round the corner and drew up sharply at the door, which was severely kicked, while the bell was rung furiously. Up jumped the sleepers again and in rushed a cabman, backed by a policeman, with the usual shout of "fire." Then followed "question brief and quick reply"—"a fire in Great Portland Street close at hand."

"Get her out, Bill," was the order. Bill darted to the engine-shed and knocked up the driver in passing. He got out the horses while the other man ran from house to house of the neighbouring firemen giving a *double* ring to their bells. Before the engine was horsed one and another and another of the men darted into the station, donned his helmet, and buckled on his axe; then they all sprang to their places, the whip cracked, and off we went at full gallop only eight minutes after the alarm-bell rang. We spun through the streets like a rocket with a tail of sparks behind us, for the fire of the engine had been lighted before starting.

On reaching the fire it was found to be only smouldering in the basement of the house, and the men of another engine were swarming through the place searching for the seat of it. I went in with our men, and the first thing I saw was a coffin lying ready for use! The foreman led me down into a vaulted cellar, and here, strange to say, I found myself in the midst of coffins! It seemed like the realisation of the story I had just heard. There were not fewer than thirty of them on the floor and ranged round the walls. Happily, however, they were not tenanted. In fact the fire had occurred in an undertaker's workshop, and, in looking through the premises, I came upon several coffins laid out ready for immediate use. Two of these impressed me much. They lay side by side. One was of plain black wood—a pauper's coffin evidently. The other was covered with fine cloth and gilt ornaments, and lined with padded white satin! I was making some moral reflections on the curious difference between the last resting-place of the rich man and the poor, when I was interrupted by the firemen who had discovered the fire and put it out, so we jumped on the engine once more, and galloped back to the station. Most of the men went off immediately to bed; the engine was housed; the horses were stabled; the men on guard hung up their helmets and lay down again on their trestle-beds; the foreman bade me "good-night," and I was left once more in a silence that was broken only by the deep breathing of the sleepers and the ticking of the clock—scarcely able to believe that the stirring events of the previous hour were other than a vivid dream.

All over London, at short distances apart, fire-escapes may be seen rearing their tall heads in recesses and corners formed by the angles in churches or other public buildings. Each night these are brought out to the streets, where they stand in readiness for instant use.

At the present time the escapes are in charge of the Fire Brigade. When I visited the firemen they were under direction of the Royal Society for the Protection of Life from Fire, and in charge of Conductors, who sat in sentry-boxes beside the escapes every night, summer and winter, ready for action.

These conductors were clad like the firemen—except that their helmets were made of black leather instead of brass. They were not very different from other mortals to look at, but they were picked men—every one—bold as lions; true as steel; ready each night, at a moment's notice, to place their lives in jeopardy in order to rescue their fellow-creatures from the flames. Of course they were paid for the work, but the pay was small when we consider that it was the price of indomitable courage, tremendous energy, great strength of limb, and untiring perseverance in the face of appalling danger.

Here is a specimen of the way in which the escapes were worked.

On the night of the 2nd March 1866, the premises of a blockmaker named George Milne caught fire. The flames spread with great rapidity, arousing Milne and his family, which consisted of his wife and seven children. All these sought refuge in the attics. At first Milne thought he could have saved himself, but with so many little children round him he found himself utterly helpless. Not far from the spot, Henry Douglas, a fire-escape conductor, sat in his sentry-box, reading a book, perchance, or meditating, mayhap, on the wife and little ones slumbering snugly at home, while he kept watch over the sleeping city. Soon the shout of fire reached his ears. At once his cloth-cap was exchanged for the black helmet, and, in a few seconds, the escape was flying along the streets, pushed by the willing hands of policemen and passers-by. The answer to the summons was very prompt on this occasion, but the fire was burning fiercely when Conductor Douglas arrived, and the whole of the lower part of the house was so enveloped in flames and smoke that the windows could not be seen at all. Douglas therefore pitched his escape, at a venture, on what he *thought* would bring him to the second-floor windows, and up he went amid the cheers of the on-lookers. Entering a window, he tried to search the room, (and the cheers were hushed while the excited multitude gazed and listened with breathless anxiety—for they knew that the man was in a position of imminent danger). In a few moments he re-appeared on the escape, half suffocated. He had heard screams in the room above, and at once threw up the fly-ladder, by which he ascended to the parapet below the attic rooms. Here he discovered Milne and his family grouped together in helpless despair. We may conceive the gush of hope that must have thrilled their breasts when Conductor Douglas leaped through the smoke into the midst of them; but we can neither describe nor conceive, (unless we have heard it in similar circumstances), the *tone* of the deafening cheers that greeted the brave man when he re-appeared on the ladders, and, (with the aid of a policeman named John Pead), bore the whole family, one by one, in safety to the ground! For this deed Conductor Douglas received the silver medal of the Society, and Pead, the policeman, received a written testimonial and a sovereign. Subsequently, in consequence of Conductor Douglas's serious illness,—resulting from his efforts on this occasion—the Society voted him a gratuity of 5 pounds beyond his sick allowance to mark their strong approbation of his conduct. Now in this case it is obvious that but for the fire-escape, the blockmaker and his family must have perished.

Here is another case. I quote the conductor's own account of it, as given in the Fire Escape Society's annual report. The conductor's name was Shaw. He writes:—

"Upon my arrival from Aldersgate Street Station, the fire had gained strong hold upon the lower portion of the building, and the smoke issuing therefrom was so dense and suffocating as to render all escape by the

staircase quite impossible. Hearing cries for help from the upper part of the house, I placed my Fire Escape, ascended to the third floor, whence I rescued four persons—viz. Mrs Ferguson, her two children, and a lodger named Gibson. They were all leaning against the window-sill, almost overcome. I carried each down the Escape, (a height of nearly fifty feet), in perfect safety; and afterwards entered the back part of the premises, and took five young children from a yard where they were exposed to great danger from the fire.”

There was a man in the London Brigade who deserves special notice—viz. Conductor Samuel Wood. Wood had been many years in the service, and had, in the course of his career, saved no fewer than 168 lives.

On one occasion he was called to a fire in Church Lane. He found a Mr Nathan in the first-floor unable to descend the staircase, as the ground floor was in flames. He unshipped his first-floor ladder, and, with the assistance of a policeman, brought Mr Nathan down. Being informed that there was a servant girl in the kitchen, Wood took his crowbar, wrenched up the grating, and brought the young woman out in safety. Now this I give as a somewhat ordinary case. It involved danger; but not so much as to warrant the bestowal of the silver medal. Nevertheless, Wood and the policeman were awarded a written testimonial and a sum of money.

I have had some correspondence with Conductor Wood, whose broad breast was covered with medals and clasps won in the service of the F.E. Society. At one fire he rushed up the escape before it was properly pitched, and caught in his arms a man named Middleton as he was in the act of jumping from a window.

At another time, on arriving at a fire, he found that the family thought all had escaped, “but,” wrote the conductor to me, “they soon missed the old grandmother.—I immediately broke the shop door open and passed through to the first-floor landing, where I discovered the old lady lying insensible. I placed her on my back, and crawled back to the door, and I am happy to say she is alive now and doing well!”

So risky was a conductor’s work that sometimes he had to be rescued by others—as the following extract will illustrate. It is from one of the Society’s reports:—

“Case 10,620.

“Awarded to James Griffin, Inspector of the K Division of Police, the Society’s Silver Medal, for the intrepid and valuable assistance rendered to Fire Escape Conductor Rickell at a Fire at the ‘Rose and Crown’ public-house, Bridge Street, at one o’clock on the morning of February 1st, when, but for his assistance there is little doubt that the Conductor would have perished. On the arrival of Conductor Rickell with the Mile End Fire Escape, not being satisfied that all the inmates had escaped, the Conductor entered the house, the upper part of which was burning fiercely; the Conductor not being seen for some time, the Inspector called to him, and, not receiving an answer, entered the house and ascended the stairs, and saw the Conductor lying on the floor quite insensible. With some difficulty the Inspector reached him, and, dragging him down the staircase, carried him into the air, where he gradually recovered.”

While attending fires in London, I wore one of the black leather helmets of the Salvage Corps. This had the double effect of protecting my head from falling bricks, and enabling me to pass the cordon of police unquestioned.

After a night of it I was wont to return home about dawn, as few fires occur after that. On these occasions I felt deeply grateful to the keepers of small coffee-stalls, who, wheeling their entire shop and stock-in-trade in a barrow, supplied early workmen with cups of hot coffee at a halfpenny a piece, and slices of bread and butter for the same modest sum. At such times I came to know that “man wants but little here below,” if he only gets it hot and substantial.

Fire is such an important subject, and an element that any one may be called on so suddenly and unexpectedly to face, that, at the risk of being deemed presumptuous, I will, for a few minutes, turn aside from these reminiscences to put a few plain questions to my reader.

Has it ever occurred to you to think what you would do if your house took fire at night? Do you know of any other mode of exit from your house than by the front or back doors and the staircase? Have you a rope at home which would support a man’s weight, and extend from an upper window to the ground? Nothing easier than to get and keep such a rope. A few shillings would purchase it. Do you know how you would attempt to throw water on the walls of one of your rooms, if it were on fire near the ceiling? A tea-cup would be of no use! A sauce-pan would not be much better. As for buckets or basins, the strongest man could not heave such weights of water to the ceiling with any precision or effect. But there are garden hand-pumps in every seedsman’s shop with which a man could deluge his property with the greatest ease.

Do you know how to tie two blankets or sheets together, so that the knot shall not slip? Your life may one day depend on such a simple piece of knowledge.

Still further, do you know that in retreating from room to room before a fire you should shut doors and windows behind you to prevent the supply of air which feeds the flames? Are you aware that by creeping on your hands and knees, and keeping your head close to the ground, you can manage to breathe in a room where the smoke would suffocate you if you stood up?—also, that a wet sponge or handkerchief held over the mouth and nose will enable you to breathe with less difficulty in the midst of smoke?—Do you know that many persons, especially children, lose their lives by being forgotten by the inmates of a house in cases of fire, and that, if a fire came to you, you ought to see to it that every member of your household is present to take advantage of any means of escape that may be sent to you?

These subjects deserve to be considered thoughtfully by every one, especially by heads of families—not only for their

own sakes, but for the sake of those whom God has committed to their care. For suppose that, (despite the improbability of such an event), your dwelling really *did* catch fire, how inconceivable would be the bitterness added to your despair, if, in the midst of gathering smoke and flames—with death staring you in the face, and rescue all but hopeless—you were compelled to feel that you and yours might have escaped the impending danger if you had only bestowed on fire-prevention, fire-extinction, and fire-escape a very little forethought and consideration.

Chapter Four.

A War of Mercy.

There is a great war in which the British Nation is at all times engaged.

No bright seasons of peace mark the course of this war. Year by year it is waged unceasingly, though not at all times with the same fury, nor always with the same results.

Sometimes, as in ordinary warfare, there are minor skirmishes in which many a deed of heroism is done, though not recorded, and there are pitched battles in which all our resources are called into action, and the papers teem with the news of the defeats, disasters, and victories of the great fight.

This war costs us hundreds of lives, thousands of ships, and millions of money every year. Our undying and unconquerable enemy is the storm, and our great engines of war with which, through the blessing of God, we are enabled to fight more or less successfully against the foe, are the Lifeboat and the Rocket.

These engines, and the brave men who work them, are our sentinels of the coast. When the storm is brewing; when grey clouds lower, and muttering thunder comes rolling over the sea, men with hard hands and bronzed faces, clad in oilskin coats and sou'westers, saunter down to our quays and headlands, all round the kingdom. These are the Lifeboat crews on the look-out. The enemy is moving, and the sentinels are being posted—or, rather, they are posting themselves—for the night, for all the fighting men in this great war are volunteers. They need no drilling to prepare them for the field; no bugle or drum to sound the charge. Their drum is the rattling thunder, their trumpet the roaring storm. They began to train for this warfare when they were not so tall as their fathers' boots, and there are no awkward squads among them now. Their organisation is rough and ready, like themselves, and simple too. The heavens call them to action; the coxswain grasps the helm; the men seize the oars; the word is given, and the rest is straightforward fighting—over everything, through everything, in the teeth of everything, until the victory is gained, and rescued men and women and children are landed in safety on our shores.

In the winter of 1863 my enthusiasm in the Lifeboat cause was aroused by the reading in the papers of that wonderful achievement of the famous Ramsgate Lifeboat, which, on a terrible night in that year, fought against the storm for sixteen hours, and rescued a hundred and twenty souls from death.

A strange fatality attaches to me somehow—namely, that whenever I have an attack of enthusiasm, a book is the result!

Immediately after reading this episode in the great war, I called on the Secretary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, who kindly gave me minute information as to the working of his Society, and lent me its journals.

Then I took train to the coast of Deal, and spent a considerable part of the succeeding weeks in the company of Isaac Jarman—at that time the coxswain of the Ramsgate Lifeboat, and the chief hero in many a gallant fight with the sea.

The splendid craft which he commanded was one of the self-righting, insubmersible boats of the Institution. Jarman's opinion of her was expressed in the words "she's perfect, sir, and if you tried to improve her you'd only spile her." From him I obtained much information, and many a yarn about his experiences on the famous and fatal Goodwin Sands, which, if recorded, would fill a volume. Indeed a volume has already been written about them, and other deeds of daring on those Sands, by one of the clergymen of Ramsgate.

I also saw the captain of the steam-tug that attends upon that boat. He took me on board his vessel and showed me the gold and silver medals he had received from his own nation, and from the monarchs of foreign lands, for rescuing human lives. I chatted with the men of Deal whose profession it is to work in the storm, and succour ships in distress, and who have little to do but lounge on the beach and spin yarns when the weather is fine. I also listened to the thrilling yarns of Jarman until I felt a strong desire to go off with him to a wreck. This, however, was not possible. No amateur is allowed to go off in the Ramsgate boat on any pretext whatever, but the restriction is not so absolute in regard to the steamer which attends on her. I obtained leave to go out in this tug, which always lies with her fires banked up ready to take the Lifeboat off to the sands, if her services should be required. Jarman promised to rouse me if a summons should come. As in cases of rescue from fire, speed is all-important. I slept for several nights with my clothes on—boots and all—at the hotel nearest to the harbour. But it was not to be. Night after night continued exasperatingly calm.

No gale would arise or wreck occur. This was trying, as I lay there, wakeful and hopeful, with plenty of time to study the perplexing question whether it is legitimate, under any circumstance, to wish for a wreck or a fire!

When patience was worn out I gave it up in despair.

At another time, however, I had an opportunity of seeing the Lifeboat in action. It was when I was spending a couple of weeks on board of the "Gull" Lightship, which lies between Ramsgate and the Goodwins.

A "dirty" day had culminated in a tempestuous night. The watch on deck, clad in drenched oil-skins, was tramping

overhead, rendering my repose fitful. Suddenly he opened the skylight, and shouted that the Southsand Head Lightship was firing, and sending up rockets. As this meant a wreck on the sands we all rushed on deck, and saw the flare of a tar-barrel in the far distance. Already our watch was loading, and firing our signal-gun, and sending up rockets for the purpose of calling off the Ramsgate Lifeboat. It chanced that the Broadstairs boat observed the signals first, and, not long after, she flew past us under sail, making for the wreck.

A little later we saw the signal-light of the Ramsgate tug, looming through the mist like the great eye of the storm-fiend. She ranged close up, in order to ask whereaway the wreck was. Being answered, she sheared off, and as she did so, the Lifeboat, towing astern, came full into view. It seemed as if she had no crew, save only one man—doubtless my friend Jarman—holding the steering lines; but, on closer inspection, we could see the men crouching down, like a mass of oilskin coats and sou'westers. In a few minutes they were out of sight, and we saw them no more, but afterwards heard that the wrecked crew had been rescued and landed at Deal.

In this manner I obtained information sufficient to enable me to write *The Lifeboat: a Tale of our Coast Heroes*, and *The Floating Light of the Goodwin Sands*.

A curious coincidence occurred when I was engaged with the Lifeboat story, which merits notice.

Being much impressed with the value of the Lifeboat service to the nation, I took to lecturing as well as writing on this subject. One night, while in Edinburgh in the spring of 1866, a deputation of working men, some of whom had become deeply interested in Lifeboat work, asked me to re-deliver my lecture. I willingly agreed to do so, and the result was that the working men of Edinburgh resolved to raise 400 pounds among themselves, and present a boat to the Institution. They set to work energetically; appointed a Committee, which met once a week; divided the city into districts; canvassed all the principal trades and workshops, and, before the year was out, had almost raised the necessary funds.

In the end, the boat was ordered and paid for, and sent to Edinburgh to be exhibited. It was drawn by six magnificent horses through the principal streets of the city, with a real lifeboat crew on board, in their sou'westers and cork life-belts. Then it was launched in Saint Margaret's Loch, at the foot of Arthur's Seat, where it was upset—with great difficulty, by means of a large erection with blocks and ropes—in order to show its self-righting and self-emptying qualities to the thousands of spectators who crowded the hill-sides.

At this time the good people of Glasgow had been smitten with a desire to present a lifeboat to the Institution, and, in order to create an interest in the movement, asked the loan of the Edinburgh boat for exhibition. The boat was sent, and placed on view in a conspicuous part of the city.

Among the thousands who paid it a visit was a lady who took her little boy to see it, and who dropped a contribution into the box, which stood invitingly alongside. That lady was the wife of a sea-captain, who lost his ship on the coast of Wigton, where the Edinburgh boat was stationed, and whose life was saved by that identical boat. And not only so, but the rescue was accomplished on the anniversary of the very day on which his wife had put her contribution into the collecting-box!

Sixteen lives were saved by it at that time, and, not long afterwards, fourteen more people were rescued by it from the insatiable sea; so that the working men of Edinburgh have reason to be thankful for the success which has attended them in their effort to "rescue the perishing."

Moreover, some time afterwards, the ladies of Edinburgh—smitten with zeal for the cause of suffering humanity, and for the honour of their "own romantic town"—put their pretty, if not lusty, shoulders to the wheel, raised a thousand pounds, and endowed the boat, so that, with God's blessing, it will remain in all time coming on that exposed coast, ready for action in the good cause.

Chapter Five.

Descent into the Cornish Mines.

From Lighthouses, Lifeboats, and Fire-brigades into the tin and copper mines of Cornwall is a rather violent leap, but by no means an unpleasant one.

In the year 1868 I took this leap when desirous of obtaining material for *Deep Down: a Tale of the Cornish Mines*.

For three months my wife and I stayed in the town of Saint Just, close to the Land's End, during which time I visited some of the principal mines in Cornwall; associated with the managers, "captains," and miners, and tried my best to become acquainted with the circumstances of the people.

The Cornish tin trade is very old. In times so remote that historical light is dim, the Phoenicians came in their galleys to trade with the men of Cornwall for tin.

Herodotus, (writing 450 years B.C.) mentions the tin islands of Britain under the name of the *Cassiterides* and Diodorus Siculus, (writing about half a century B.C.), says:

"The inhabitants of that extremity of Britain which is called Bolerion, excel in hospitality, and also, by their intercourse with foreign merchants, they are civilised in their mode of life. These prepare the tin, working very skilfully the earth which produces it."

There is said to be ground for believing that Cornish tin was used in the construction of the temple of Jerusalem. At the present time the men of Cornwall are to be found toiling, as did their forefathers in the days of old, deep down in

the bowels of the earth—and even out under the bed of the sea—in quest of tin.

“Tin, Copper, and Fish” is one of the standing toasts in Cornwall, and in these three words lie the head, backbone, and tail of the county, the sources of its wealth, and the objects of its energies.

As my visit, however, was paid chiefly for the purpose of investigating the mines, I will not touch on fish here. Having obtained introduction to the managers of Botallack—the most famous of the Cornish Mines—I was led through miles of subterranean tunnels and to depths profound, by the obliging, amiable, and anecdotal Captain Jan—one of the “Captains” or overseers of the mine.

He was quite an original, this Captain Jan; a man who knew the forty miles of underground workings in Botallack as well, I suppose, as a postman knows his beat; a man who dived into the bowels of the earth with the vigour and confidence of a mole and the simple-minded serenity of a seraph.

The land at this part of Cornwall is not picturesque, except at the sea-cliffs, which rise somewhere about three hundred feet sheer out of deep water, where there is usually no strip of beach to break the rush of the great Atlantic billows that grind the rocks incessantly.

The most prominent objects elsewhere are masses of débris; huge pieces of worn-out machinery; tall chimneys and old engine-houses, with big ungainly beams, or “bobs,” projecting from them. These “bobs” are attached to pumps which work continually to keep the mines dry. They move up and down very slowly, with a pause between each stroke, as if they were seriously considering whether it was worth while continuing the dreary work any longer, and could not make up their minds on the point. Their slow motions, however, give evidence of life and toil below the surface. Other “bobs” standing idle tell of disappointed hopes and broken fortunes. There are not a few such landmarks at the Land’s End—stern monitors, warning wild and wicked speculators to beware.

One day—it might have been night as far as our gloomy surroundings indicated—Captain Jan and I were stumbling along one of the levels of Botallack, I know not how many fathoms down. We wore miners’ hats with a candle stuck in front of each by means of a piece of clay. The hats were thicker than a fireman’s helmet, though by no means as elegant. You might have plunged upon them head first without causing a dint.

Captain Jan stopped beside some fallen rocks. We had been walking for more than an hour in these subterranean labyrinths and felt inclined to rest.

“You were asking about the word *wheal*,” said the captain, sticking his candle against the wall of the level and sitting down on a ledge, “it do signify a mine, as Wheal Frances, Wheal Owles, Wheal Edwards, and the like. When Cornishmen do see a London Company start a mine on a grand scale, with a deal of fuss and superficial show, and an imposing staff of directors, etcetera, while, down in the mine itself, where the real work ought to be done, perhaps only two men and a boy are known to be at work, they shake their heads and button up their pockets; perhaps they call the affair wheal *Do-em*, and when that mine stops, (becomes what we call a ‘knacked bal’) it may be styled wheal *Donem*!”

A traveller chanced to pass a water-wheel not long ago, near Saint Just.

“What’s that?” he said to a miner who sat smoking his pipe beside it.

“That, sur? why, that’s a pump, that is.”

“What does it pump?” asked the traveller.

“Pump, sur?” replied the man with a grim smile, “why, et do pump gold out o’ the Londoners!”

There have been too many wheal *Do-ems* in Cornwall.

Botallack mine is not, I need scarcely say, a wheal *Do-em*. It is a grand old mine—grand because its beginning is enveloped in the mists of antiquity; because it affords now, and has afforded for ages back, sustenance to hundreds of miners and their families, besides enriching the country; because its situation on the wild cliffs is unusually picturesque, and because its dark shafts and levels not only descend to an immense depth below the surface, but extend far out under the bottom of the sea. Its engine-houses and machinery are perched upon the edge of a steep cliff, and scattered over its face and down among its dark chasms in places where one would imagine that only a sea-gull would dare to venture.

Underground there exists a vast region of shafts and levels, or tunnels—mostly low, narrow, and crooked places—in which men have to stoop and walk with caution, and where they work by candlelight—a region which is measured to the inch, and has all its parts mapped out and named as carefully as are the fields above. Some idea of the extent of this mine may be gathered from the fact that it is 245 fathoms, (1470 feet), deep, and that all the levels put together form an amount of cutting through almost solid granite equal to nearly 40 miles in extent. The deepest part of the mine is that which lies under the bottom of the sea, three-quarters of a mile from the shore; and, strange to say, that is also the *driest* part of the mine. The Great Eastern would find depth of water sufficient to permit of her anchoring and floating securely in places where miners are at work, blowing up the solid rock, 1470 feet below her keel—a depth so profound that the wildest waves that ever burst upon the shore, or the loudest thunder that ever reverberated among the cliffs, could not send down the faintest echo of a sound.

The ladder-way by which the men descend to their work is 1230 feet deep. It takes half an hour to descend and an hour to climb to the surface.

It was a bright morning in May when I walked over from Saint Just with Captain Jan to pay my first underground visit

to Botallack.

Arrayed in the red-stained canvas coat and trousers of the mine, with a candle stuck in the front of our very strong hats and three spare ones each hung at our breasts, we proceeded to the ladder-way. This was a small platform with a hole in it just big enough to admit a man, out of which projected the head of a strong ladder. Before descending Captain Jan glanced down the hole and listened to a distant, regular, clicking sound—like the ticking of a clock. “A man coming up,” said he, “we’ll wait a minute.”

I looked down, and, in the profound abyss, saw the twinkling of, apparently, a little star. The steady click of the miner’s nailed shoes on the iron rounds of the ladder continued, and the star advanced, until, by its feeble light I saw the hat to which it was attached. Presently a man emerged from the hole, and raising himself erect, gave vent to a long, deep-drawn sigh. It was, I may say, a suggestive sigh, for there was a sense of intense relief conveyed by it. The man had just completed an hour of steady, continuous climbing up the ladders, after eight hours of night-work in impure atmosphere, and the first great draught of the fresh air of heaven must have seemed like nectar to his soul! His red garments were soaking, perspiration streamed from every pore in his body, and washed the red earth in streaks down his pale countenance. Although pale, however, the miner was strong and in the prime of life. Chills and bad air, (the two great demons of the mines), had not yet smitten his sturdy frame with “miner’s complaint.” He looked tired, but not exhausted, and bestowed a grave glance on me and a quiet nod on Captain Jan as he walked away to change his dress in the drying-house. My contemplation of the retiring miner was interrupted by Captain Jan saying—“I’ll go first, sir, to catch you if you should fall.” This remark reminded me of many stories I had heard of men “falling away from the ladders;” of beams breaking and letting them tumble into awful gulfs; of stones giving way and coming down the shafts like grape or cannon-shot, and the like. However, I stepped on the ladder and prepared to follow my guide into the regions of unchanging night! A few fathoms’ descent brought us into twilight and to a small platform on which the foot of the first ladder rested. Through a hole in this the head of the second ladder appeared.

Here we lighted the candles, for the next ladder—a longer one, 50 feet or so—would have landed us in midnight darkness. Half way down it, I looked up and saw the hole at the top like a large white star. At the foot I looked up again, the star was gone, and I felt that we were at last in a region where, (from the time of creation), sunlight had never shone. Down, down, ever *downwards*, was the uppermost idea in my mind for some time after that. Other thoughts there were, of course, but that one of never-ending descent outweighed them all for a time. As we got lower the temperature increased; then perspiration broke out. Never having practised on the treadmill, my muscles ere long began to feel the unwonted exercise, and I thought to myself, “If you are in this state so soon, what will you be when you get to the bottom, and how will you get up again?”

At this point we reached the foot of another ladder, and Captain Jan said, “We’ll walk a bit in the level here and then go down the pump-shaft.” The change of posture and action in the level we had now entered was agreeable, but the path was not a good one. It was an old, low, and irregular level, with a rugged floor full of holes with water in them, and with projections in the roof that rendered frequent stooping necessary. The difficulty of one’s progress in such places is that, while you are looking out for your head, you stumble into the holes, and when the holes claim attention you run your head against the roof; but, thanks to the miner’s hat, no evil follows.

We were now in a region of profound *silence*! When we paused for a minute to rest, it felt as if the silence of the tomb itself had surrounded us—for not the faintest echo reached us from the world above, and the miners at work below us were still far down out of ear-shot. In a few seconds we came to a yawning hole in the path, bridged by a single plank. Captain Jan crossed. “How deep is it?” I asked, preparing to follow. “About 60 feet,” said he, “it’s a winze, and goes down to the next level!”

I held my breath and crossed with caution.

“Are there many winzes, Captain Jan?”

“Yes, dozens of ’em. There are nigh 40 miles of levels and lots of winzes everywhere!”

The possibility of anything happening to Captain Jan, and my light getting blown out occurred to me, but I said nothing. When we had walked a quarter of a mile in this level, we came to the point where it entered the pump-shaft. The shaft itself was narrow—about 8 or 10 feet in diameter—but everything in it was ponderous and gigantic. The engine that drove the pump was 70 horse power; the pump-rod was a succession of wooden beams, each like the ridge-pole of a house, jointed together—a rugged affair, with iron bolts, and nuts, and projections at the joints. In this shaft the kibbles were worked. These kibbles are iron buckets by which ore is conveyed to the surface. Two are worked together by a chain—one going up full while the other comes down empty. Both are free to clatter about the shaft and bang against each other in passing, but they are prevented from damaging the pump-rod by a wooden partition. Between this partition and the pump was the ladder we had now to descend, with just space for a man to pass.

Captain Jan got upon it, and as he did so the pump went up, (a sweep of 10 or 12 feet), with a deep watery gurgle, as if a giant were being throttled. As I got upon the ladder the pump came down with another gurgle, close to my shoulder in passing. To avoid this I kept close to the planks on the other side, but at that moment I heard a noise as if of distant thunder. “It’s only the kibbles,” said Captain Jan.

Up came one and down went the other, passing each other with a dire crash, not far from where we stood, and causing me to shrink into the smallest possible space. “There’s no danger,” said the Captain encouragingly, “if you only keep cool and hold on.” Water was coursing freely down the shaft and spiriting over us in fine spray, so that, ere long, we were as wet and dirty as any miner in Botallack. At last we reached the 120 fathom level, 720 feet from “grass.”

Here the Captain told me men were at work not far off and he wished to visit them. "Would I wait where I was until he returned?"

"What!" said I, "wait in a draughty level with an extinguishable candle close to the main shaft, with 30 or 40 miles of levels around, and no end of winzes? No, no, Captain Jan, go on; I'll stick to you *now* through thick and thin like your own shadow!"

With one of his benignant smiles the captain resumed his progress. In a few minutes I heard the clink of hammers, and, soon after, came to a singular cavern. It was a place where the lode had been very wide and rich. Years before it had been all cut away from level to level, leaving a void space so high and deep that the rays of our candles were lost in obscurity. We walked through it in mid-air, as it were, supported on cross beams with planks laid thereon. Beyond this we came to a spot where a number of miners were at work in various places and positions.

One, a big, broad-shouldered man named Dan, was seated on a wooden box hammering at the rock with tremendous energy. With him Captain Jan conversed a few minutes on the appearance of the lode, and then whispered to me, "A good specimen of a man that, sir, and he's got an uncommon large family,"—then, turning to the man—"I say, Dan, you've got a biggish family, haven't you?"

"Iss, a'w iss, Cap'n Jan, I've a braave lot o' child'n."

"How many have you had altogether, Dan?"

"I've had seventeen, sur, but ten of 'em's gone dead—only seven left. My brother Jim, though, he's had more than me."

After a few more words we left this man, and, in another place, found this brother Jim, working in the roof of the level with several others. They had cut so high up in a slanting direction that they appeared to be in another chamber, which was brilliantly lighted with their candles. Jim, stripped naked to the waist, stood on the end of a plank, hammering violently. Looking up into his curious burrow, Captain Jan shouted—"Hallo! Jim!"

"Hallo, Captain Jan."

"Here's a gentleman wants to know how many children you've had."

"How many child'n, say 'ee? Why, I've had nineteen, sur, but there's eleven of 'em gone dead. Seven of 'em did come in three years and a half—*three doubles and a single*—but there's only eight of 'em alive now!"

I afterwards found that, although this man and his brother were exceptions, the miners generally had very large families.

While we were talking, a number of shots were heard going off in various directions. This was explained by Captain Jan. All the forenoon the miners employ their time in boring and charging the blast-holes. About mid-day they fire them and then hasten to a clear part of the mine to eat luncheon and smoke their pipes while the gunpowder smoke clears away. This it does very slowly, taking sometimes more than an hour to clear sufficiently so as to let the men resume work.

Immediately after the shots were heard, the men began to assemble. They emerged from the gloom on all sides like red hobgoblins—wet and perspiring. Some walked out of darkness from either end of the level; some stalked out from diverging levels; others slid, feet first, from holes in the roof and sides, and some rose, head-foremost, from yawning gulfs in the floor. They all saluted Captain Jan as they came up, and each stuck his candle against the wall and sat down on a heap of wet rubbish, to lunch. Some had Cornish pasty, and others a species of heavy cake—so heavy that the fact of their being able to carry it at all said much for their digestive organs—but most of them ate plain bread, and all of them drank water which had been carried down from the realms of light in little canteens. Frugal though the fare was, it sufficed to brace them for the rest of the day's work.

After a short talk with these men Captain Jan and I continued our descent of the ladders—down we went, ever downwards, until at last we reached the very bottom of that part of the mine—1230 feet below the surface.

Here we found only two men at work, with whom Captain Jan conversed for a time while we rested, and then proceeded to ascend "to grass" by the same ladder-ways. If I felt that the descent was like never getting to the bottom, much more did the ascent seem like never getting to the top!

I may remark here that the bottom which we had reached was not the bottom under the sea. At another time Captain Jan took me to that submarine cavern where, as I have said, no sound ever reaches the ear from the world above. There is, however, a level close under the sea where the roar of Ocean is distinctly heard. It is in a part of Botallack Mine named Wheal Cock. It was very rich in copper ore, and the miners worked at the roof of it so vigorously, that they began to fear it would give way. One of them, therefore, in order to ascertain what thickness of solid rock still lay between them and the sea, bored a small hole upwards, and advanced about three feet or so before the water rushed in. Of course they had a wooden plug ready and stopped up the hole. But, as it was dangerous to cut away any more of the roof, they were finally obliged unwillingly to forsake that part of the mine.

This occurred some thirty years before my visit, yet when I went to see the place, I found the wooden plug still hard and fast in the hole and quite immovable. As I stood and listened I could well understand the anxiety of the miners, for at the upward rush of each wave, I could hear the rattle of the boulders overhead, like monster cannon balls, and a repetition of the thunder when the waves retreated.

On our way up the ladders we stopped several times to rest. At such times Captain Jan related various anecdotes

illustrative of mining life.

"This is a place," said he, on one occasion, "which reminds me of a man who was always ready to go in for dangerous work. His name was Old Maggot. He was not really old, but he had a son named after himself, and his friends had to distinguish him from the young Maggot."

So saying, Captain Jan trimmed his candle with nature's own pair of snuffers—the finger and thumb—and proceeded as follows:

"Some time ago the miners in Botallack came to an old deserted mine that was full of water—this is what miners call a '*house of water*.' The ore there was rich, but the men were afraid to work it lest they should come suddenly on the old mine and break a hole through to it—in other words '*hole to that house of water*.' They stopped working at last, and no one seemed willing to run the risk of driving the hole and letting out the water. In this difficulty they appealed to Old Maggot, who at once agreed to do it. The old mine was about three-quarters of a mile back from the sea-shore, but at that time it could only be got at by entering the *adit* level from the shore. It was through this level that the water would have to escape. At the mouth of it a number of men assembled to see Old Maggot go in. In he went, alone, with a bunch of candles, and, as he walked along, he stuck a lighted candle every here and there against the wall to light him out,—for he expected to have to run for it.

"When he came to the place, the water was spirting out everywhere. But Old Maggot didn't mind. He grasped his hammer and borer and began. The work was done sooner than he had expected! Suddenly the rock gave way and the water burst upon him, putting out his candle and turning him heels over head. He jumped up and tried to run, but the flood rose on him, carried him off his legs, swept him right through the level, and hurled him through the adit-mouth at last, upon the sea-shore! He was stunned a little, but soon recovered, and, beyond a few bruises and a wetting, was nothing the worse of his adventure.

"*That*," said Captain Jan, pointing to the rock beside us, "was the place where Old Maggot holed to the house of water, and *this* was the level through which he was washed and through part of which I will now conduct you."

Accordingly, we traversed the level, and, coming to another shaft, continued our upward progress.

While we were slowly toiling up, step by step, we were suddenly arrested by the sound of voices singing in the far distance above us. The music was slow and solemn. Coming as it did so unexpectedly in such a strange place, it sounded quite magical and inexpressibly sweet.

"Miners descending to work," said my guide, as we listened. The air was familiar to me, and, as it grew louder and louder, I recognised that beautiful tune called "French," to which we are accustomed to sing the 121st Psalm, "I to the hills will lift mine eyes." Gradually the men came down to us. We stood on one side. As they passed they ceased singing and nodded to Captain Jan. There were five or six stout fellows and a boy. The latter was as active as his companions, and his treble voice mingled tunefully with theirs as they continued the descent, and resumed the psalm, keeping time to the slow measured tread of their steps. We watched until their lights disappeared, and then resumed our upward way, while the sweet strains grew fainter and fainter, until they were gradually lost in the depths below. The pleasant memory of that psalm still remained with me, when I emerged from the ladder-shaft of Botallack mine, and—after having been five hours underground—once more drank in, (with a new and intensified power of appreciation), the fresh air of heaven and the blessed influences of green fields and sunshine.

To many a weird and curious part of the great mine did the obliging Captain Jan lead me, but perhaps the most interesting part was the lowest depth under the sea, to which my wife accompanied us. This part is reached by the Boscawen shaft, a sloping one which the men descend in an iron car or gig. The car is let down and hauled up by an iron rope. Once this rope broke, the car flew to the bottom, was dashed against the rock, and all the men—eight in number—were killed.

In 1865 the Prince and Princess of Wales descended this shaft, and Captain Jan was their amiable, not to say eccentric, guide. The Captain was particularly enthusiastic in praise of the Princess. He said that she was a "fine intelligent young lady; that she asked no end of questions, would not rest until she understood everything, and afterwards undertook to explain it all to her less-informed companions." A somewhat amusing incident occurred while they were underground.

When about to begin his duty as guide it suddenly flashed across the mind of poor Captain Jan that, in the excitement of the occasion, he had forgotten to take gloves with him. He was about to lead the Princess by the hand over the rugged floors of the levels. To offer to do so without gloves was not to be thought of. To procure gloves 200 fathoms below the sea was impossible. To borrow from the Prince or the Duke of Sutherland, who were of the party, was out of the question. What was he to do? Suddenly he remembered that he had a newspaper in his pocket. In desperation he wrapped his right hand in a piece of this, and, thus covered, held it out to the Princess. She, innocently supposing that the paper was held up to be looked at, attempted to read. This compelled Captain Jan to explain himself, whereupon she burst into a hearty fit of laughter, and, flinging away the paper, took the ungloved hand of the loyal but bashful miner.

Chapter Six.

The Land of the Vikings.

To this romantic land of mountain and flood I paid four visits at various times. These were meant as holiday and fishing rambles, but were also utilised to gather material for future books.

Norway, as every one knows, was the land of the ancient Vikings—those grand old rascally freebooters—whose indomitable pluck carried them in their open galleys, (little better than big boats), all round the coasts of Europe, across the unknown sea to Iceland, and even to the shores of America itself, before the other nations dreamed of such a continent, and long before Columbus was born; who possessed a literature long before we did; whose blood we Britons carry in our veins; and from whom we have inherited many of our best laws, much of our nautical enterprise, and not a little of our mischief and pugnacity.

Norway, too, is the land where Liberty once found refuge in distress,—that much abused goddess, whom, since the fall of Adam and Eve, License has been endeavouring to defame, and Tyranny to murder, but who is still alive and kicking—ay, and will continue to kick and flourish in spite of all her enemies! Liberty found a home, and a rough welcome, strange to say, among those pagans of the North, at a time when she was banished from every other spot, even from the so-called Christian states in Europe.

No wonder that that grand old country with its towering snow-clad mountains, its mighty fords, its lonesome glens and its historical memories should be styled "*gamle Norge*" (old Norway—as we speak of old England), with feelings of affection by its energetic and now peaceful inhabitants.

I was privileged to go to Norway as one of a yachting party. There were twelve of us altogether, three ladies, three gentlemen, and a crew of six sailors. Our object was to see the land and take what of amusement, discomfort, or otherwise might chance to come in our way. We had a rough passage over, and were very sick, sailors included! except the captain, an old Scotch highlander who may be described as a compound of obstinacy and gutta-percha. It took us four days to cross. We studied the Norse language till we became sea-sick, wished for land till we got well, then resumed the study of Norse until we sighted the outlying islands and finally cast anchor in the quaint old city and port of Bergen.

Now, it is well to admit at once that some of us were poor linguists; but it is only just to add that we could not be expected to learn much of any language in four days during intervals of internal derangement! However, it is curious to observe how very small an amount of Norse will suffice for ordinary travellers—especially for Scotchmen. The Danish language is the vernacular tongue of Norway and there is a strong affinity between Danish, (or Norse), and broad Scotch. Roughly speaking, I should say that a mixture of three words of Norse to two of broad Scotch, with a powerful emphasis and a strong infusion of impudence, will carry you from the Naze to the North Cape in perfect comfort.

Bergen is a most interesting city, and our party had many small adventures in it, which, however, I will not touch on here. But one scene—the fish-market—must not be passed over.

There must certainly be something in the atmosphere of a fish-market which tends to call forth the mental and physical energies of mankind, (perhaps I should rather say of *womankind*), and which calls forth a tremendous flow of abusive language. Billingsgate is notorious, but I think that the Bergen fish-market beats it hollow. One or two phases of the national character are there displayed in perfection. It is the Billingsgate of Norway—the spot where Norse females are roused to a pitch of frenzy that is not equalled, I believe, in any other country.

There are one or two peculiarities about the Bergen market, too, which are noteworthy, and which account in some degree for the frantic excitement that reigns there. The sellers of the fish, in the first place, are not women but men. The pier and fleet of boats beside it constitute the market-place. The fishermen row their cargoes of fish direct from the sea to the pier, and there transact sales. There is a stout iron railing along the edge of that pier—a most needful safeguard—over which the servant girls of the town lean and look down at the fishermen, who look up at them with a calm serio-comic "don't-you-wish-you-may-get-it" expression that is deeply impressive. Bargains, of course, are not easily made, and it is in attempting to make these that all the hubbub occurs. The noise is all on the women's side. The men, secure in their floating position, and certain of ultimate success, pay very little attention to the flax-haired, blue-eyed damsels who shout at them like maniacs, waving their arms, shaking their fists, snapping their fingers, and flourishing their umbrellas! They all carry umbrellas—cotton ones—of every colour in the rainbow, chiefly pink and sky-blue, for Bergen is celebrated as being the most rainy city in Europe.

The shouting of the girls is not only a safety-valve to their feelings, but is absolutely necessary in order to attract the attention of the men. As 15 or 20 of them usually scream at once, it is only she who screams loudest and flourishes her umbrella most vigorously that can obtain a hearing. The calm unruffled demeanour of the men is as much a feature in the scene as is the frenzy of the women.

During one of my visits I saw a fisherman there who was the most interesting specimen of cool impudence I ever encountered. He wore a blue coat, knee-breeches, white worsted stockings, and on his head of long yellow hair a red night-cap with a tall hat on top of all. When I discovered him he was looking up with a grave sarcastic expression into the flushed countenance of a stout, blue-eyed lass who had just eagerly offered him *syv skillings* (seven skillings), for a lot of fish. That was about 3 and a half pence, the skillings being half a penny. The man had declined by look, not by tongue, and the girl began to grow angry.

"Haere du, fiskman," (hear you, fisherman), she cried, "vil du har otté skillings?" (will you have eight skillings?)

The fisherman turned away and gazed out to sea. The girl grew crimson in the face at this.

"Fiskman, fiskman!" she cried, "vil du har *ni* (nine) skillings?"

The fisherman kicked out of the way a lobster that was crawling too near his naked toes, and began to bale out the boat. The girl now seemed to become furious. Her blue eyes flashed like those of a tiger. She gasped for breath, while her cotton umbrella flashed over the fisherman's head like a pink meteor. Had that umbrella been only a foot longer the tall black hat would have come to grief undoubtedly. Suddenly she paused, and in a tone of the deepest solemnity, said—

“Haere du, fiskman, vil du har ti (ten) shillings?”

The rock of Gibraltar is not more unyielding than was that “fiskman.” He took off his hat, removed his night-cap, smoothed his yellow hair, and wiped his forehead; then, replacing the cap and hat, he thrust both hands into his coat pockets, turned his back on the entire market, and began to whistle.

This was too much! It was past female endurance! The girl turned round, scattered the bystanders right and left, and fled as if she had resolved then and there to dash out her brains on the first post she met, and so have done with men and fish for ever. But she was not done with them yet! The spell was still upon her. Ere she had got a dozen yards away she paused, stood one moment in uncertainty, and then rushing back forced her way to the old position, and shouted in a tone that might have moved the hearts even of the dead fish—

“Fiskman, heré du, vil du hav tolv?”

“Tolve” (or twelve) skillings was apparently not quite the sum he meant to take; but he could hold out no longer—he wavered—and the instant man wavers, woman’s victory is gained! Smiling benignly he handed up the fish to the girl, and held out his baling dish for the money.

The storm was over! The girl walked off in triumph with her fish, not a trace of her late excitement visible, the pink cotton umbrella tucked under her arm, and her face beaming with the consciousness of having conquered a “*fiskman*” in fair and open fight!

Steamers ply regularly between the north and south of Norway in summer, and an excursion in one of these is very enjoyable, not only on account of the scenery, but because of the opportunity afforded of making the acquaintance of the people. I once made a voyage in one of those steamers from the Nordfjord to Bergen, and one thing struck me very particularly on that occasion, namely, the *quietness* that seemed to be cultivated by the people as if it were a virtue. I do not mean to say that the passengers and crew were taciturn—far from it. They bustled about actively; they were quite sociable and talkative, but no voice was ever raised to a loud pitch. Even the captain gave his orders in a quiet tone. Whether this quietness of demeanour is peculiar to Norwegian steamers in general, or was a feature of this steamer in particular, I am not prepared to say. I can only state the fact of the prevailing quietude on that particular occasion without pretending to explain it.

The state of quiescence culminated at the dinner-table, for there the silence was total! I never saw anything like it! When we had all assembled in the cabin, at the almost whispered invitation of the steward, and had stood for a few minutes looking benign and expectant, but not talking, the captain entered, bowed to the company, was bowed to by the company, motioned us to our seats, whispered “*ver so goot*,” and sat down.

Now this phrase “*ver so goot*” merits particular notice. It is an expression that seems to me capable of extension and distension. It is a flexible, comfortable, jovial, rollicking expression. To give a perfect translation of it is not easy; but I cannot think of a better way of conveying its meaning, than by saying that it is a compound of the phrases—“be so good,” “by your leave,” “what’s your will,” “bless your heart,” “all serene,” and “that’s your sort!”

The first of these, “be so good,” is the literal translation—the others are the super-induced sentiments, resulting from the tone and manner in which it is said. You may rely on it, that, when a Norwegian offers you anything and says *ver so goot*, he means you well and hopes you will make yourself comfortable.

Well, there was no carving at that dinner. The dishes were handed round by waiters. First we had very thin rice soup with wine and raisins in it—the eating of which seemed to me like spoiling one’s dinner with a bad pudding. This finished, the plates were removed. “*Now*,” thought I, “surely some one will converse with his neighbour during this interval.” No! not a lip moved! I looked at my right and left-hand men; I thought, for a moment, of venturing out upon the unknown deep of a foreign tongue, and cleared my throat for that purpose, but every eye was on me in an instant; and the sound of my own voice, even in that familiar process, was so appalling that I said nothing! I looked at a pretty girl opposite me. I felt certain that the youth beside her was about to speak—he looked as if he meant to, but he didn’t. In a few minutes the next course came on. This was a dish like bread-pudding, minus currants and raisins; it looked like a sweet dish, but it turned out to be salt,—and pure melted butter, without any admixture of flour or water, was handed round as sauce. After this came veal and beef cutlets, which were eaten with cranberry jam, pickles, and potatoes. Fourth and last came a course of cold sponge-cake, with almonds and raisins stewed over it, so that, when we had eaten the cake as a sort of cold pudding, we slid, naturally and pleasantly, into dessert, without the delay of a change of plates.

There was no remaining to drink at that dinner. When the last knife and fork were laid down, we all rose simultaneously, and then a general process of bowing ensued.

In regard to this proceeding I have never been able to arrive at a clear understanding, as to what was actually done or intended to be done, but my impression is, that each bowed to the other, and all bowed to the captain; then the captain bowed to each individually and to all collectively, after which a comprehensive bow was made by everybody to all the rest all round—and then we went on deck to smoke. As each guest passed out, he or she said to the captain, “*tak for mad*,” which is a manner and custom, and means “*thanks for meat*.” With the exception of these three words, not a single syllable, to the best of my belief, was uttered by any one during the whole course of that meal!

Of course the gentlemen of our party performed many wonderful exploits in fishing, for sea-trout and salmon abound in Norway, and the river beds are very rugged.

In that land fishing cannot be styled the “gentle art.” It is a tearing, wearing, rasping style of work. An account of the catching of one fish will prove this.

One morning I had gone off to fish by myself, with a Norwegian youth to gaff and carry the fish. Coming to a sort of weir, with a deep pool above and a riotous rapid below, I put on a salmon fly and cast into the pool. At once a fish rose and was hooked. It was not a big one—only 12 pounds or thereabouts—but quite big enough to break rod and line if not played respectfully.

For some time, as is usual with salmon, he rushed about the pool, leaped out of the water, and bored up stream. Then he took to going down stream steadily. Now this was awkward, for when a fish of even that size resolves to go down stream, nothing can stop him. My efforts were directed to turning him before he reached the rapid, for, once into that, I should be compelled to follow him or break the line—perhaps the rod also.

At last he reached the head of the rapid. I put on a heavy strain. The rod bent like a hoop and finally began to crack, so I was compelled to let him go.

At the lower end of the pool there was a sort of dam, along which I ran, but soon came to the end of it, where it was impossible to reach the shore owing to the dense bushes which overhung the stream. But the fish was now in the rapid and was forced down by the foaming water. Being very unwilling to break the line or lose the fish, I went slowly into the rapid until the water reached the top of my long wading boots—another step and it was over them, but that salmon would not—indeed could not—stop. The water filled my boots at once, and felt very cold at first, but soon became warm, and each boot was converted into a warmish bath, in which the legs felt reasonably comfortable.

I was reckless now, and went on, step by step, until I was up to the waist, then to the arm-pits, and then I spread out one arm and swam off while with the other I held up the rod.

The rapid was strong but deep, so that nothing obstructed me till I reached the lower end, when a rock caught my legs and threw me into a horizontal position, with the rod flat on the water. I was thrown against the bank, where my Norwegian boy was standing mouth open, eyes blazing, and hand extended to help me out.

When I stood panting on the bank, I found that the fish was still on and still inclined to descend, but I found that I could not follow, for my legs were heavy as lead—the boots being full of water. To take the latter off in a hurry and empty them was impossible. To think of losing the fish after all was maddening. Suddenly a happy thought struck me. Handing the rod to the boy I lay down on my back, cocked my legs in the air, and the water ran like a deluge out at the back of my neck! Much relieved, I resumed the rod, but now I found that the fish had taken to sulking.

This sulking is very perplexing, for the fish bores its nose into some deep spot below a stone, and refuses to budge. Pulling him this way and that way had no effect. Jerking him was useless. Even throwing stones at him was of no avail. I know not how long he kept me there, but at last I lost patience, and resolved to force him out, or break the line. But the line was so good and strong that it caused the rod to show symptoms of giving way.

Just then it struck me that as there were several posts of an old weir in the middle of the stream, he must have twisted the line round one of these, broken himself off and left me attached to it! I made up my mind therefore to wade out to the old weir, and unwind the line, and gave the rod to the boy to hold while I did so.

The water was deep. It took me nearly up to the neck before I reached the shallow just above the posts, but, being thoroughly wet, that did not matter.

On reaching the post, and unwinding the line, I found to my surprise that the fish was still there. At first I thought of letting go the line, and leaving the boy to play him; “but,” thought I, “the boy will be sure to lose him,” so I held on to the line, and played it with my hands. Gradually the fish was tired out. I drew him slowly to my side, and gaffed him in four feet of water.

Even then I was not sure of him, for when I got him under one arm he wriggled violently, so that it was difficult to wade ashore with him. In this difficulty I took him to a place where the shoal in the middle of the stream was about three inches deep. There I lay down on him, picked up a stone and hammered his head with it, while the purling water rippled pleasantly over my face.

The whole of this operation took me upwards of two hours. It will be seen, therefore, that fishing in Norway, as I have said, cannot be called “the gentle art.”

One extremely interesting excursion that we made was to a place named the Essé Fjord. The natives here were very hospitable and kind. Besides that, they were fat! It would almost seem as if fat and good-humour were invariably united; for nearly all the natives of the Essé Fjord were good-humoured and stout!

The language at this place perplexed me not a little. Nevertheless the old proverb, “where there’s a will there’s a way,” held good, for the way in which I conversed with the natives of that region was astounding even to myself.

One bluff, good-humoured fellow took me off to see his house and family. I may as well admit, here, that I am not a good linguist, and usually left our ladies to do the talking! But on this occasion I found myself, for the first time, alone with a Norwegian! fairly left to my own resources.

Well, I began by stringing together all the Norse I knew, (which wasn’t much), and endeavoured to look as if I knew a great deal more. But I soon found that the list of sentences, which I had learned from Murray’s *Handbook*, did not avail much in a lengthened conversation. My speech quickly degenerated into sounds that were almost unintelligible to either my new friend or myself! and I terminated at last in a mixture of bad Norse and broad Scotch. I have already remarked on the strong family-likeness between Norse and broad Scotch. Here are a few specimens.

They call a cow a *coo!* A house is a *hoose*, and a mouse is a *moose!* *Gaae til land*, is go to land, or go ashore. *Tak ain stole* is take a stool, or sit down. *Vil du tak am dram?* scarcely needs translation—will you take a dram! and the usual

answer to that question is equally clear and emphatic—"Ya, jeg vil tak am dram!" One day our pilot saw the boat of a fisherman, (or fiskman), not far off. He knew we wanted fish, so, putting his hands to his mouth, he shouted "Fiskman! har du fisk to sell?" If you talk of bathing, they will advise you to "dook oonder;" and should a mother present her baby to you, she will call it her "smook barn"—her pretty bairn—smook being the Norse word for "pretty," and *barn* for child; and it is a curious fact, worthy of particular note, that all the mothers in Norway think their bairns smook—very smook! and they never hesitate to tell you so—why, I cannot imagine, unless it be that if you were not told you would not be likely to find it out for yourself.

Despite our difficulty of communication, my fat friend and I soon became very amicable and talkative. He told me no end of stories, of which I did not comprehend a sentence, but looked as if I did—smiled, nodded my head, and said "ya, ya,"—to which he always replied "ya, ya,"—waving his arms, and slapping his breast, and rolling his eyes, as he bustled along beside me towards his dwelling. The house was perched on a rock close to the water's edge. Here my host found another subject to expatiate upon and dance round, in the shape of his own baby, a soft, smooth, little imitation of himself, which lay sleeping in its crib, like a small cupid. The man was evidently extremely fond of this infant. He went quite into ecstasies about it; now gazing at it with looks of pensive admiration; anon, starting and looking at me as if to say, "*Did you ever, in all your life, see such a beautiful cherub?*" The man's enthusiasm was really catching—I began to feel quite a fatherly interest in the cherub myself.

"Oh!" he cried, in rapture, "det er smook barn!"

"Ya, ya," said I, "megit smook," (very pretty)—although I must confess that *smoked* bairn would have been nearer the mark, for it was as brown as a red-herring.

I spent an agreeable, though I must confess mentally confused, afternoon with this gentleman, who, (when he succeeded in tearing himself away from that much-loved and megit smook barn), introduced me to his two sisters, who were stout and good-humoured like himself. They treated me to a cup of excellent coffee, and to a good deal more of incomprehensible conversation. Altogether, the natives of the Essé Fjord made a deep impression on us, and we parted from their grand and gloomy but hospitable shores with much regret.

I had hoped, good reader, to have jotted down some more of my personal reminiscences of travel—in Algiers, the "Pirate City," at the Cape of Good Hope, and elsewhere—but bad health is not to be denied, and I find that I must hold my hand.

Perchance this may be no misfortune, for possibly the "garrulity of age" is descending on me!

Before closing this sketch, however, I would say briefly, that in all my writings I have always tried—how far successfully I know not—to advance the cause of Truth and Light, and to induce my readers to put their trust in the love of God our Saviour, for this life as well as the life to come.

Chapter Seven.

The Burglars and the Parson.

A Country mansion in the south of England. The sun rising over a laurel-hedge, flooding the ivy-covered walls with light, and blazing in at the large bay-window of the dining-room.

"Take my word for it, Robin, if ever this 'ouse is broke into, it will be by the dinin'-room winder."

So spake the gardener of the mansion—which was also the parsonage—to his young assistant as they passed one morning in front of the window in question. "For why?" he continued; "the winder is low, an' the catches ain't overstrong, an there's no bells on the shutters, an' it lies handy to the wall o' the back lane."

To this Robin made no response, for Robin was young and phlegmatic. He was also strong.

The gardener, Simon by name, was not one of the prophets—though in regard to the weather and morals he considered himself one—but if any person had chanced to overhear the conversation of two men seated in a neighbouring public-house that morning, that person would have inclined to give the gardener credit for some sort of second sight.

"Bill," growled one of the said men, over his beer, in a low, almost inaudible tone, "I've bin up to look at the 'ouse, an' the dinin'-room winder'll be as easy to open as a door on the latch. I had a good look at it."

"You are the man for cheek an' pluck," growled the other man, over his beer, with a glance of admiration at his comrade. "How ever did you manage it, Dick?"

"The usual way, in course. Comed it soft over the 'ousemaid; said I was a gardener in search of a job, an' would she mind tellin' me where the head-gardener was? You see, Bill, I had twigged him in front o' the 'ouse five minutes before. 'I don't know as he's got any odd jobs to give 'ee,' says she; 'but he's in the front garden at this minute. If you goes round, you'll find him.' 'Hall right, my dear,' says I; an' away I goes right round past the dinin'-room winder, where I stops an' looks about, like as if I was awful anxious to find somebody. In course I glanced in, an' saw the fastenin's.

"They couldn't keep out a babby! Sideboard all right at the t'other end, with a lookin'-glass over it—to help folk, I fancy, to see what they look like w'en they're a-eatin' their wittles. Anyhow, it helped me to see the gardener comin' up one o' the side walks; so I wheels about double quick, an' looked pleased to see him.

“‘Hallo!’ cries he.

“‘I was lookin’ for you,’ says I, quite easy like.

“‘Did you expect to find me in the dinin’-room?’ says he.

“‘Not just that,’ says I, ‘but it’s nat’ral for a feller to look at a ‘andsome room w’en he chances to pass it.’

“‘Ah,’ says he, in a sort o’ way as I didn’t quite like. ‘What d’ee want wi’ me?’

“‘I wants a job,’ says I.

“‘Are you a gardener?’ he axed.

“‘Yes—leastwise,’ says I, ‘I’ve worked a goodish bit in gardings in my time, an’ can turn my ‘and to a’most anythink.’

“‘Oh,’ says he. ‘Look ‘ere, my man, what d’ee call that there tree?’ He p’inted to one close alongside.

“‘That?’ says I. ‘Well, it—it looks uncommon like a happle.’

“‘Do it?’ says he. ‘Now look ‘ere, you be off as fast as your legs can take you, or I’ll set the ‘ousedog at ‘ee.’

“W’en he said that, Bill, I do assure you, lad, that my experience in the ring seemed to fly into my knuckles, an’ it was as much as ever I could do to keep my left off his nob and my right out of his breadbasket. But I restrained myself. If there’s one thing I’m proud of, Bill, it’s the wirtue o’ self-restraint in the way o’ business. I wheeled about, held up my nose, an’ walked off wi’ the air of a dook. You see, I didn’t want for to have no more words wi’ the gardener,—for why? because I’d seen all I wanted to see—d’ee see? But there was one—no, two—things I saw which it was as well I did see.”

“An’ what was they?” asked Bill.

“Two statters.”

“An’ what are statters?”

“Man alive I don’t ye know? It’s them things that they make out o’ stone, an’ marable, an’ chalk—sometimes men, sometimes women, sometimes babbies, an’ mostly with no clo’es on to speak of—”

“Oh! I know; but / call ‘em statoos. Fire away, Dick; what see’d you about the statoos?”

“Why, I see’d that they wasn’t made in the usual way of stone or chalk, but of iron. I have heerd say that sodgers long ago used to fight in them sort o’ dresses, though I don’t believe it myself. Anyhow, there they was, the two of ‘em, one on each side of the winder, that stiff that they could stand without nobody inside of ‘em, an’ one of ‘em with a big thing on his shoulder, as if he wor ready to smash somebody over the head. I thought to myself if you an’ me, Bill, had come on ‘em unbeknown like, we’d ha’ got such a start as might have caused us to make a noise. But I hadn’t time to think much, for it was just then I got sight o’ the gardener.”

“Now my plan is,” continued Dick, swigging off his beer, and lowering his voice to a still more confidential tone, as he looked cautiously round, “my plan is to hang about here till dark, then take to the nearest plantation, an’ wait till the moon goes down, which will be about two o’clock i’ the mornin’—when it will be about time for us to go in and win.”

“All right,” said Bill, who was not loquacious.

But Bill was mistaken, for it was all wrong.

There was indeed no one in the public at that early hour of the day to overhear the muttered conversation of the plotters, and the box in which they sat was too remote from the bar to permit of their words being overheard, but there was a broken pane of glass in a window at their elbow, with a seat outside immediately below it. Just before the burglars entered the house they had observed this seat, and noticed that no one was on it; but they failed to note that a small, sleepy-headed pot-boy lay at full length underneath it, basking in the sunshine and meditating on nothing—that is, nothing in particular.

At first little Pat paid no attention to the monotonous voices that growled softly over his head, but one or two words that he caught induced him to open his eyes very wide, rise softly from his lair and sit down on the seat, cock one ear intelligently upward, and remain so absolutely motionless that Dick, had he seen him, might have mistaken him for a very perfect human “statter.”

When little Pat thought that he had heard enough, he slid off the seat, crawled close along the side of the house, doubled round the corner, rose up, and ran off towards the parsonage as fast as his little legs could go.

The Reverend Theophilus Stronghand was a younger son of a family so old that those families which “came over with the Conqueror” were mere moderns in comparison. Its origin, indeed, is lost in those mists of antiquity which have already swallowed up so many millions of the human race, and seem destined to go on swallowing, with ever-increasing appetite, to the end of time. The Stronghands were great warriors—of course. They could hardly have developed into a family otherwise. The Reverend Theophilus, however, was a man of peace. We do not say this to his disparagement. He was by no means a degenerate son of the family. Physically he was powerful, broad and tall, and his courage was high; but spiritually he was gentle, and in manner urbane. He drew to the church as naturally as a duck draws to the water, and did not by any means grudge to his elder brothers the army, the navy, and the Bar.

One of his pet theories was, to overcome by love, and he carried this theory into practice with considerable success.

Perhaps no one put this theory to the test more severely or frequently than his only son Harry. War had been that young gentleman's chief joy in life from the cradle. He began by shaking his fat fists at the Universe in general. War-to-the-knife with nurse was the chronic condition of a stormy childhood. Intermittent warfare with his only sister Emmie chequered the sky of his early boyhood, and a decided tendency to disobey wrung the soul of his poor mother, and was the cause of no little anxiety to his father; while mischief, pure and simple for its own sake, was the cherished object of his life. Nevertheless, Harry Stronghand was a lovable boy, and love was the only power that could sway him.

The lad grew better as he grew older. Love began to gain the day, and peace began—slowly at first—to descend on the parsonage; but the desire for mischief—which the boy named “fun”—had not been quite dislodged at the time we write of. As Harry had reached the age of fifteen, feared nothing, and was quick-witted and ingenious, his occasional devices not only got him into frequent hot water, but were the source of some amusement to his people—and he still pretty well ruled his easy-going father and the house generally with a rod of iron.

It was to Harry Stronghand that little Pat directed his steps, after overhearing the conversation which we have related. Pat knew that the son of the parsonage was a hero, and, in his opinion, the most intelligent member of the family, and the best fitted to cope with the facts which he had to reveal. He met the object of his search on the road.

“Plaze yer honour,” said Pat—who was an Irishman, and therefore “honoured” everybody—“there’s two tramps at the public as is plottin’ to break into your house i’ the mornin’.”

“You don’t mean it, do you?” returned Harry, with a smile and raised eyebrows.

“That’s just what I do, yer honour. I heard ’em reel off the whole plan.”

Hereupon the boy related all that he knew to the youth, who leaned against a gate and nodded his curly head approvingly until the story was finished.

“You’ve not mentioned this to any one, have you, Pat?”

“Niver a sowl but yersilf, sir.”

“You’re a sensible boy, Pat. Here’s a shilling for you—and, look here, Pat, if you keep dark upon the matter till after breakfast to-morrow and don’t open your lips to a living soul about it, I’ll give you half a crown.”

“Thank yer honour.”

“Now mind—no hints to the police; no remarks to your master. Be dumb, in fact, from this moment, else I won’t give you a penny.”

“Sure I’ve forgot all about it already, sir,” said the boy, with a wink so expressive that Harry felt his word to be as good as his bond, and went back to the parsonage laughing.

Arrived there, he went in search of his sister, but found that she was out.

“Just as well,” he muttered, descending to the dining-room with his hands deep in his pockets, a pleased expression on his handsome mouth, and a stern frown on his brows. “It would not be safe to make a confidant of her in so delicate a matter. No, I’ll do it all alone. But how to do it? That is the question. Shall I invite the aid of the police? Perish the thought! Shall I consult the Pater? Better not. The dear, self-devoted man might take it out of my hands altogether.”

Harry paused in profound meditation. He was standing near the window at the time, with the “statters” on either hand of him.

They were complete suits of armour—one representing a knight in plate armour, the other a Crusader in chain-mail. Both had been in the family since two of the Stronghand warriors had followed Richard of the Lion Heart to the East. As the eldest brother of the Reverend Theophilus was in India, the second was on the deep, and the lawyer was dead, the iron shells of the ancient warriors had naturally found a resting-place in the parsonage, along with several family portraits, which seemed to show that the males of the race were prone to look very stern, and to stand in the neighbourhood of pillars and red curtains in very dark weather, while the females were addicted to old lace, scant clothing, and benign smiles. One of the warriors stood contemplatively leaning on his sword. The other rested a heavy mace on his shoulder, as if he still retained a faint hope that something might turn up to justify his striking yet one more blow.

“What would you advise, old man?” said Harry, glancing up at the Crusader with the mace.

The question was put gravely, for, ever since he could walk or do anything, the boy had amused himself by putting free-and-easy questions to the suits of armour, or defying them to mortal combat. As he was true to ancient friendships, he had acquired the habit of giving the warriors an occasional nod or word of recognition long after he had ceased to play with them.

“Shades of my ancestors!” exclaimed Harry with sudden animation, gazing earnestly at the Crusader on his right, “the very thing! I’ll do it.”

That evening, after tea, he went to his father’s study.

"May I sit up in the dining-room to-night, father, till two in the morning?"

"Well, it will puzzle you to do that to-night, my son; but you may if you have a good reason."

"My reason is that I have a problem—a very curious problem—to work out, and as I positively shan't be able to sleep until I've done it, I may just as well sit up as not."

"Do as you please, Harry; I shall probably be up till that hour myself—if not later—for unexpected calls on my time have prevented the preparation of a sermon about which I have had much anxious thought of late."

"Indeed, father!" remarked the son, in a sympathetic tone, on observing that the Reverend Theophilus passed his hand somewhat wearily over his brow. "What may be your text?"

"Be gentle, showing meekness to all men," answered the worthy man, with an abstracted faraway look, as if he were wrestling in anticipation with the seventh head.

"Well, good-night, father, and please don't think it necessary to come in upon me to see how I am getting on. I never can work out a difficult problem if there is a chance of interruption."

"All right, my son—good-night."

"H'm," thought Harry, as he returned to the dining-room in a meditative mood; "I am afraid, daddy, that you'll find it hard to be gentle to *some* men to-night! However, we shall see."

Ringling the bell, he stood with his back to the fire, gazing at the ceiling. The summons was answered by the gardener, who also performed the functions of footman and man-of-all-work at the parsonage.

"Simon, I am going out, and may not be home till late. I want either you or Robin to sit up for me."

"Very well, sir."

"And," continued the youth, with an air of offhand gravity, "I shall be obliged to sit up working well into the morning, so you may have a cup of strong coffee ready for me. Wait until I ring for it—perhaps about two in the morning. I shall sit in the dining-room, but don't bring it until I ring. Mind that, for I can't stand interruption—as you know."

"Yes, sir."

Simon knew his imperious young master too well to make any comment on his commands. He returned, therefore, to the kitchen, told the cook of the order he had received to sit up and take Master Harry's coffee to him when he should ring, and made arrangements with Robin to sit up and help him to enliven his vigil with a game of draughts.

Having thus made his arrangements, Harry Stronghand went out to enjoy a walk. He was a tremendous walker—thought nothing of twenty or thirty miles, and rather preferred to walk at night than during the day, especially when moon and stars were shining. Perhaps it was a dash of poetry in his nature that induced this preference.

About midnight he returned, went straight to the dining-room, and, entering, shut the door, while Simon retired to his own regions and resumed his game with Robin.

A small fire was burning in the dining-room grate, the flickering flames of which leaped up occasionally, illuminated the frowning ancestors on the walls, and gleamed on the armour of the ancient knight and the Crusader.

Walking up to the latter, Harry looked at him sternly; but as he looked, his mouth relaxed into a peculiar smile, and displayed his magnificent teeth as far back as the molars. Then he went to the window, saw that the fastenings were right, and drew down the blinds. He did not think it needful to close the shutters, but he drew a thick heavy curtain across the opening of the bay-window, so as to shut it off effectually from the rest of the room. This curtain was so arranged that the iron sentinels were not covered by it, but were left in the room, as it were, to mount guard over the curtain.

This done, the youth turned again to the Crusader and mounted behind him on the low pedestal on which he stood. Unfastening his chain-mail armour at the back, he opened him up, so to speak, and went in. The suit fitted him fairly well, for Harry was a tall, strapping youth for his years, and when he looked out at the aperture of the headpiece and smiled grimly, he seemed by no means a degenerate warrior.

Returning to the fireplace, he sat down in an easy chair and buried himself in a favourite author.

One o'clock struck. Harry glanced up, nodded pleasantly, as if on familiar terms with Time, and resumed his author. The timepiece chimed the quarters. This was convenient. It prevented anxious watchfulness. The half-hour chimed. Harry did not move. Then the three-quarters rang out in silvery tones. Thereupon Harry arose, shut up his author, blew out his light, drew back the heavy curtains, and, returning to the arm-chair sat down to listen in comparative darkness.

The moon by that time had set and darkness profound had settled down upon that part of the universe. The embers in the grate were just sufficient to render objects in the room barely visible and ghost-like.

Presently there was the slightest imaginable sound near the bay-window. It might have been the Crusader's ghost, but that was not likely, for at the moment something very like Harry's ghost flitted across the room and entered into the warrior.

Again the sound was heard, more decidedly than before. It was followed by a sharp click as the inefficient catch was forced back. Then the sash began to rise, softly, slowly—an eighth of an inch at a time. During this process Harry remained invisible and inactive; Paterfamilias in the study addressed himself to the sixth head of his discourse, and the gardener with his satellite hung in silent meditation over the draught-board in the kitchen.

After the sash stopped rising, the centre blind was moved gently to one side, and the head of Dick appeared with a furtive expression on the countenance. For a few seconds his eyes roved around without much apparent purpose; then, as they became accustomed to the dim light, a gleam of intelligence shot from them; the rugged head turned to one side; the coarse mouth turned still more to one side in its effort to address some one behind, and, in a whisper that would have been hoarse had it been loud enough, Dick said—

“Hall right, Bill. We won’t need matches. Keep clear o’ the statters in passin’.”

As he spoke, Dick’s hobnailed boot appeared, his corduroy leg followed, and next moment he stood in the room with a menacing look and attitude and a short thick bludgeon in his knuckly hand. Bill quickly stood beside him. After another cautious look round, the two advanced with extreme care—each step so carefully taken that the hobnails fell like rose-leaves on the carpet. Feeling that the “coast was clear,” Dick advanced with more confidence, until he stood between the ancient warriors, whose pedestals raised them considerably above his head.

At that moment there was a sharp click, as of an iron hinge. Dick’s heart seemed to leap into his throat. Before he could swallow it, the iron mace of the Crusader descended with stunning violence on his crown.

Well was it for the misguided man that morning that he happened to have purchased a new and strong billycock the day before, else would that mace have sent him—as it had sent many a Saracen of old—to his long home. The blow effectually spoilt the billycock, however, and stretched its owner insensible on the floor.

The other burglar was too close behind his comrade to permit of a second blow being struck. The lively Crusader, however, sprang upon him, threw his mailed arms round his neck, and held him fast.

And now began a combat of wondrous ferocity and rare conditions. The combatants were unequally matched, for the man was huge and muscular, while the youth was undeveloped and slender, but what the latter lacked in brute force was counterbalanced by the weight of his armour, his youthful agility, and his indomitable pluck. By a deft movement of his legs he caused Bill to come down on his back, and fell upon him with all his weight plus that of the Crusader. Annoyed at this, and desperately anxious to escape before the house should be alarmed, Bill delivered a roundabout blow with his practised fist that ought to have driven in the skull of his opponent, but it only scarified the man’s knuckles on the Crusader’s helmet. He tried another on the ribs, but the folds of chain-mail rendered that abortive. Then the burglar essayed strangulation, but there again the folds of mail foiled him. During these unavailing efforts the unconscious Dick came in for a few accidental raps and squeezes as he lay prone beside them.

Meanwhile, the Crusader adopted the plan of masterly inactivity, by simply holding on tight and doing nothing. He did not shout for help, because, being bull-doggish in his nature, he preferred to fight in silent ferocity. Exasperated as well as worn by this method, Bill became reckless, and made several wild plunges to regain his feet. He did not succeed, but he managed to come against the pedestal of the knight in mail with great violence. The iron warrior lost his balance, toppled over, and came down on the combatants with a hideous crash, suggestive of coal-scuttles and fire-irons.

Sleep, sermons, and draughts could no longer enchain! Mrs Stronghand awoke, buried her startled head in the bed-clothes, and quaked. Emmie sprang out of bed and huddled on her clothes, under the impression that fire-engines were at work. The Reverend Theophilus leaped up, seized the study poker and a lamp, and rushed towards the dining-room. Overturning the draught-board, Simon grasped a rolling-pin, Robin the tongs, and both made for the same place. They all collided at the door, burst it open, and advanced to the scene of war.

It was a strange scene! Bill and the Crusader, still struggling, were giving the remains of the other knight a lively time of it, and Dick, just beginning to recover, was sitting with a dazed look in a sea of iron débris.

“That’s right; hit him hard, father!” cried Harry, trying to look round.

“No, don’t, sir,” cried the burglar; “I gives in.”

“Let my son—let the Crusa— let *him* go, then,” said the Reverend gentleman, raising his poker.

“I can’t, sir, ’cause he won’t let *me* go.”

“All right, I’ll let you go now,” said Harry, unclasping his arms and rising with a long-drawn sigh. “Now you. Come to the light and let’s have a look at you.”

So saying, the lad thrust his mailed hand into the burglar’s neckerchief, and assisted by the Reverend Theophilus, led his captive to the light which had been put on the table. The gardener and Robin did the same with Dick. For one moment it seemed as if the two men meditated a rush for freedom, for they both glanced at the still open window, but the stalwart Simon with the rolling-pin and the sturdy Robin with the tongs stood between them and that mode of exit, while the Crusader with his mace and huge Mr Stronghand with the study poker stood on either side of them. They thought better of it. “Bring two chairs here,” said the clergyman, in a gentle yet decided tone.

Robin and Harry obeyed—the latter wondering what “the governor was going to be up to.”

“Sit down,” said the clergyman, quietly and with much solemnity.

The burglars humbly obeyed.

"Now, my men, I am going to preach you a sermon."

"That's right, father," interrupted Harry, in gleeful surprise. "Give it 'em hot. Don't spare them. Put plenty of brimstone into it."

But, to Harry's intense disgust, his father put no brimstone into it at all. On the contrary, without availing himself of heads or subdivisions, he pointed out in a few plain words the evil of their course, and the only method of escaping from that evil. Then he told them that penal servitude for many years was their due according to the law of the land.

"Now," said he, in conclusion, "you are both of you young and strong men who may yet do good service and honest work in the land. I have no desire to ruin your lives. Penal servitude might do so. Forgiveness may save you—therefore I forgive you! There is the open window. You are at liberty to go."

The burglars had been gazing at their reprover with wide-open eyes. They now turned and gazed at each other with half-open mouths; then they again turned to the clergyman as if in doubt, but with a benignant smile he again pointed to the open window.

They rose like men in a dream, went softly across the room, stepped humbly out, and melted into darkness.

The parson's conduct may not have been in accordance with law, but it was eminently successful, for it is recorded that those burglars laid that sermon seriously to heart—at all events, they never again broke into that parsonage, and never again was there occasion for Harry to call in the services of the ancient knight or the Crusader.

Chapter Eight.

Jim Greely, the North Sea Skipper.

When Nellie Sumner married James Greely—the strapping skipper of a Yarmouth fishing-smack—there was not a prettier girl in all the town, at least so said, or thought, most of the men and many of the women who dwelt near her. Of course there were differences of opinion on the point, but there was no doubt whatever about it in the mind of James Greely, who was overwhelmed with astonishment, as well as joy, at what he styled his "luck in catching such a splendid wife."

And there was good ground for his strong feeling, for Nellie was neat, tidy, and good-humoured, as well as good-looking, and she made Jim's home as neat and tidy as herself.

"There's always sunshine inside o' my house," said Greely to his mates once, "no matter what sort o' weather there may be outside."

Ere long a squall struck that house—a squall that moved the feelings of our fisherman more deeply than the fiercest gale he had ever faced on the wild North Sea, for it was the squall of a juvenile Jim! From that date the fisherman was wont to remark, with a quiet smile of satisfaction, that he had got moonlight now, as well as sunshine, in the Yarmouth home.

The only matter that distressed the family at first was that the father saw so little of his lightsome home; for, his calling being that of a deep-sea smacksman, or trawler, by far the greater part of our fisherman's rugged life was spent on the restless ocean. Two months at sea and eight days ashore was the unvarying routine of Jim's life, summer and winter, all the year round. That is to say, about fifty days on shore out of the year, and three hundred and fifteen days on what the cockney greengrocer living next door to Jim styled the "'owlin' deep."

And, truly, the greengrocer was not far wrong, for the wild North Sea does a good deal of howling, off and on, during the year, to say nothing of whistling and shrieking and other boisterous practices when the winter gales are high.

But a cloud began to descend, very gradually at first, on James Greely's dwelling, for a demon—a very familiar one on the North Sea—had been twining his arms for a considerable time round the stalwart fisherman.

At the time of Jim's marriage those mission-ships of the Dutch—and, we may add, of the devil—named *copers*, or floating grog-shops, were plying their deadly traffic in strong drink full swing among the trawlers of the North Sea. Through God's blessing the mission-ships of the Cross have now nearly driven the *copers* off the sea, but at the time we write of the Dutchmen had it all their own way, and many a splendid man, whom toil, cold, hardship, and fierce conflict with the elements could not subdue, was laid low by the poisonous spirits of the *coper*. Greely went to the *copers* at first to buy tobacco, but, being a hearty, sociable fellow, he had no objection to take an occasional friendly dram. Gradually, imperceptibly, he became enslaved. He did not give way at once. He was too much of a man for that. Many a deadly battle had he with the demon—known only to himself and God—but as he fought in his own strength, of course he failed; failed again and again, until he finally gave way to despair.

Poor Nellie was quick to note the change, and tried, with a brave heart at first but a sinking heart at last, to save him, but without success. The eight days which used to be spent in the sunny home came at last to be spent in the Green Dragon public-house; and in course of time Nellie was taught by bitter experience that if her husband, on his periodical return from the sea, went straight from the smack to the public-house, it was little that she would see of him during his spell on shore. Even curly-headed juvenile Jimmie—his father's pride—ceased to overcome the counter-attraction of strong drink.

Is it to be wondered at that Nellie lost some of her old characteristics—that, the wages being spent on drink, she found it hard to provide the mere necessaries of life for herself and her boy, and that she finally gave up the struggle to keep either person or house as neat and orderly as of yore, while a haggard look and lines of care began to spoil

the beauty of her countenance? Or is it a matter for surprise that her temper began to give way under the strain?

"You are ruining yourself and killing me," said the sorely-tried wife one evening—the last evening of a spell on shore—as Jim staggered into the once sunny home to bid his wife good-bye.

It was the first time that Nellie had spoken roughly to him. He made no answer at first. He was angry. The Green Dragon had begun to demoralise him, and the reproof which ought to have melted only hardened him.

"The last of the coals are gone," continued the wife with bitterness in her tone, "and there's scarcely enough of bread in the house for a good supper to Jimmie. You should be ashamed of yourself, Jim."

A glare of drunken anger shot fiercely from the fisherman's eyes. No word did he utter. Turning on his heel, he strode out of the house and shut the door after him with cannon-shot violence.

"O Jim—stop Jim!" burst from timid Nellie. "I'll never—"

She ceased abruptly, for the terrified Jimmie was clinging to her skirts, and her husband was beyond the reach of her voice. Falling on her knees, she prayed to God passionately for pardon. It was their first quarrel. She ended by throwing herself on her bed and bursting into a fit of sobbing that not only horrified but astounded little Jim. To see his mother sobbing wildly while he was quiet and grave was a complete inversion of all his former experiences. As if to carry out the spirit of the situation, he proceeded to act the part of comforter by stroking his mother's brown hair with his fat little hand until the burst of grief subsided.

"Dare, you's dood now, muzzer. Tiss me!" he said.

Nellie flung her arms round the child and kissed him fervently.

Meanwhile James Greely's smack, the *Dolphin*, was running down the Yare before a stiff breeze, and Jim himself had commenced the most momentous, and, in one sense, disastrous voyage of his life. As he stood at the tiller, guiding his vessel with consummate skill out into the darkening waters, his heart felt like lead. He would have given all he possessed to recall the past hour, to have once again the opportunity of bidding Nellie good-bye as he had been wont to do in the days that were gone. But it was too late. Wishes and repentance, he knew, avail nothing to undo a deed that is done.

Jim toiled with that branch of the North Sea fleets which is named the "Short Blue." It was trawling at a part of the North Sea called "Botney Gut" at that time, but our fisherman had been told that it was fishing at another part named the "Silverpits." It blew hard from the nor'west, with much snow, so that Jim took a long time to reach his destination. But no "Short Blue" fleet was to be seen at the Silverpits.

To the eyes of ordinary men the North Sea is a uniform expanse of water, calm or raging as the case may be. Not so to the deep-sea trawler. Jim's intimate knowledge of localities, his sounding-lead and the nature of the bottom, etcetera, enabled him at any time to make for, and surely find, any of the submarine banks. But fleets, though distinguished by a name, have no "local habitation." They may be on the "Dogger Bank" to-day, on the "Swarte Bank" or the "Great Silverpits" to-morrow. With hundreds of miles of open sea around, and neither milestone nor finger-post to direct, a lost fleet is not unlike a lost needle in a haystack. Fortunately Jim discovered a brother smacksman looking, like himself, for his own fleet. Being to windward the brother ran down to him.

"What cheer O! Have 'ee seen anything o' the Red Cross Fleet?" roared the skipper, with the power of a brazen trumpet.

"No," shouted Jim, in similar tones. "I'm lookin' for the Short Blue."

"I passed it yesterday, bearin' away for Botney Gut."

"'Bout ship" went Jim, and away with a stiff breeze on his quarter. He soon found the fleet—a crowd of smacks, all heading in the same direction, with their huge trawling nets down and bending over before what was styled a good "fishing-breeze." It requires a stiff breeze to haul a heavy net, with its forty or fifty feet beam and other gear, over the rough bottom of the North Sea. With a slight breeze and the net down a smack would be simply anchored by the stern to her own gear.

Down went Jim's net, and, like a well-drilled fisherman, he fell into line. It was a rough grey day with a little snow falling, which whitened all the ropes and covered the decks with slush.

Greely's crew had become demoralised, like their skipper. There were five men and a fair-haired boy. All could drink and swear except the boy. Charlie was the only son of his mother, and she was a good woman, besides being a widow. Charlie was the smack's cook.

"Grub's ready," cried the boy, putting his head up the hatchway after the gear was down.

He did not name the meal. Smacksmen have a way of taking food irregularly at all or any hours, when circumstances permit, and are easy about the name so long as they get it, and plenty of it. A breakfast at mid-day after a night of hardest toil might be regarded indifferently as a luncheon or an early dinner.

Black Whistler, the mate, who stood at the helm, pronounced a curse upon the weather by way of reply to Charlie's summons.

"You should rather bless the ladies on shore that sent you them wursted mittens an' 'elmet, you ungrateful dog," returned the boy with a broad grin, for he and Whistler were on familiar terms.

The man growled something inaudible, while his mates went below to feed.

Each North Sea trawling fleet acts unitedly under an "admiral." It was early morning when the signal was given by rocket to haul up the nets. Between two and three hours at the capstan—slow, heavy toil, with every muscle strained to the utmost—was the result of the admiral's order. Bitter cold; driving snow; cutting flashes of salt spray, and dark as Erebus save for the light of a lantern lashed to the mast. Tramp, tramp, tramp, the seemingly everlasting round went on, with the clank of heavy sea-boots and the rustle of hard oil-skins, and the sound of labouring breath as accompaniment; while the endless cable came slowly up from the "vasty deep."

But everything comes to an end, even on the North Sea! At last the great beam appears and is secured. With a sigh of relief the capstan bars are thrown down, and the men vary their toil by clawing up the net with scarred and benumbed fingers. It is heavy work, causes much heaving and gasping, and at times seems almost too much for all hands to manage.

Again Black Whistler pronounces a malediction on things in general, and is mockingly reminded by the boy-cook that he ought to bless the people as sends him wursted cuffs to save his wrists from sea-blisters.

"Seems to me we've got a hold of a bit o' Noah's ark," growled one of the hands, as something black and big begins to appear.

He is partially right, for a bit of an old wreck is found to have been captured with a ton or so of fish. When this is disengaged the net comes in more easily, and the fish are dropped like a silver cataract on the wet deck.

One might imagine that there was rest for the fishermen now. Far from it. The fish had to be "cleaned"—i.e. gutted and the superfluous portions cut off and packed in boxes for the London market. The grey light of a bleak winter morning dawned before the work was finished. During the operation the third hand, Lively Dick, ran a fish-bone deeply into his hand, and laid a foundation for future trouble.

It was noon before the trunks, or fish-boxes, were packed. Then the little boat had to be launched over the side, loaded with fish, and ferried to one of the steamers which ply daily and regularly between Billingsgate and the fleets. Three men jumped into it and pushed off—a mere cockle-shell on a heaving flood, now dancing on a wave-crest, now lost to view in a water-valley.

"What's that?" said Whistler, as they pulled towards the steamer. "Looks bigger than the or'nary mission-ships."

"Why, that must be the noo hospital-ship, the *Queen Victoria*," answered Lively Dick, glancing over his shoulder at a large vessel, smack-rigged, which loomed up through the haze to leeward.

They had no time for further remark, for the great side of the steamer was by that time frowning over them. It was dangerous work they had to do. The steamer rolled heavily in the rough sea. The boat, among a dozen other boats, was soon attached to her by a strong rope. Men had to be athletes and acrobats in order to pass their fish-boxes from the leaping and plunging boats to the deck of the rolling steamer. The shouting and noise and bumping were tremendous. An awkward heave occasionally sent a box into the sea amid oaths and laughter. Jim's cargo was put safely on board, and the boat was about to cast off when a heavier lurch than usual caused Black Whistler to stagger. To save himself from plunging overboard he laid both hands on the gunwale of the boat—a dangerous thing to do at any time when alongside of a vessel. Before he could recover himself the boat went crashing against the steamer's iron side and the fisherman's hands were crushed. He fell back into the boat almost fainting with agony. No cry escaped him, however. Lively Dick saw the blood streaming, and while his mate shoved off the boat he wrapped a piece of canvas in a rough-and-ready fashion round the quivering hands.

"I'm done for this trip," groaned Whistler, "for this means go ashore—weeks in hospital—wages stopped, and wife and chicks starving."

"Never a bit, mate," said Dick; "didn't you know that the noo mission-ship does hospital work afloat and that they'll keep you aboard of her, and lend us one o' their hands till you're fit for work again?"

Whether poor Whistler believed, or understood, or was comforted by this we cannot say, for he made no reply and appeared to be almost overcome with pain. On reaching the *Dolphin* a signal of distress was made to the floating hospital, which at once bore down to them. The injured man was transferred to it, and there, in the pleasant airy cabin, Black Whistler made acquaintance with men who were anxious to cure his soul as well as his body. Up to this time he had resolutely declined to visit the mission-ships, but now, when a skilled medical man tenderly dressed his terrible wounds and a sympathetic skipper led him to a berth and supplied him with some warm coffee, telling him that he would be free to remain there without charge as long as was needed, and that meanwhile one of the mission hands would take his place in the *Dolphin* till he was able to resume work, his opinion of mission-ships and work underwent modification, and he began to think that mission crews were not such a bad lot after all.

Meanwhile Skipper Greely, leaving his man in the *Queen Victoria*, returned to his smack accompanied by George King, the new hand.

King's position was by no means an enviable one, for he found himself thus suddenly in the midst of a set of men who had no sympathy with him in religious matters, and whose ordinary habits and conversation rendered remonstrance almost unavoidable. Unwilling to render himself obnoxious at first, the man resolved to try the effect of music on his new shipmates. He happened to possess a beautiful tenor voice, and the first night—a calm bright one—while taking his turn at the helm, he sang in a soft sweet voice one after another of those hymns which Mr Sankey has rendered so popular. He began with "Come to the Saviour, make no delay," and the first effect on his mates, most of whom were below, was to arouse a feeling of contempt. But they could not resist the sweetness of the voice. In a few minutes they were perfectly silent, and listening with a species of fascination—each being wafted, both by

words and music, to scenes on shore and to times when his spirit had not been so demoralised by sin.

Greely, in particular, was transported back to the sunny home in Yarmouth, and to the days of first-love, before the *demon* had gained the mastery and clouded the sunshine.

As the night wore on, a fog settled down over the North Sea, and the smacks of the Short Blue fleet began to blow their fog-horns, while the crews became more on the alert and kept a bright look-out.

Suddenly, and without warning, a dull beating sound was heard by the look-out on the *Dolphin*. Next moment a dark object like a phantom ship loomed out of the fog, and a wild cry arose as the men saw the bows of a huge ocean steamer coming apparently straight at them. The smack was absolutely helpless, without steering way. For an instant there was shouting on board the steamer, and she fell off slightly as she rushed into the small circle of the *Dolphin's* light. A tremendous crash followed, but the change of direction had been sufficient to prevent a fatal collision. Another moment and the great steamer was gone, while the little smack rocked violently from the blow as well as from the swell left in the steamer's wake.

This was but the beginning of a night of disaster. Skipper Greely and his men had scarcely recovered from the surprise of this incident when the fog lifted and quickly cleared away, revealing the Short Blue fleet floating all round with flapping sails, but it was observed also that a very dark cloud rested on the north-western horizon. Soon a stiffish breeze sprang up, and the scattered fleet drew together, lay on the same tack, and followed the lead of their admiral, to whom they looked for the signal to shoot the trawls. But instead of giving this order the admiral signalled to "lay-to."

Being disgusted as well as surprised that their leader was not going to fish, Jim Greely, being also exhausted by long watching, went below and turned in to have a sleep. He had not been long asleep when fair-haired Charlie came to tell him that Lively Dick, who acted as mate in Whistler's absence, wanted him on deck. He ran up at once.

"Looks like dirty weather, skipper," said Dick, pointing to windward.

"Right you are, lad," said Jim, and called all hands to close-reef.

This being done and everything made snug, the skipper again turned in, with orders to call him if things should get worse.

Soon after, Dick, who was at the helm, saw a squall bearing down on them, but did not think it worth while to call the skipper. It broke on them with a clap like thunder, but the good *Dolphin* stood the shock well, and Dick was congratulating himself when he saw a sea coming towards them, but sufficiently astern, he thought, to clear them. He was wrong. It broke aboard, right into the mainsail, cleared the deck, and hove the smack on her beam-ends.

This effectually aroused the skipper, who made desperate but at first ineffectual efforts to get out of his berth, for the water, which poured down the hatchway, washed gear, tackles, turpentine-tins, paint-pots, and nearly everything moveable from the iron locker on the weather-side down to leeward, and blocked up the openings. Making another effort he cleared all this away, and sprang out of the berth, which was half full of water. Pitchy darkness enshrouded him, for the water had put out the lights as well as the fire. Just then the vessel righted a little.

"Are you all right on deck?" shouted Jim, as he scrambled up the hatchway.

"All right, as far as I can see," answered Dick.

"Hold on, I've a bottle o' matches in my bunk," cried the skipper, returning to the flooded cabin. Fortunately the matches were dry; a light was struck, and a candle and lamp lighted. The scene revealed was not re-assuring. The water in the cabin was knee-deep. A flare, made of a woollen scarf soaked in paraffin, was lighted on deck, and showed that the mainsail had been split, the boat hopelessly damaged, and part of the lee bulwarks broken. The mast also was leaning aft, the forestay having been carried away. A few minutes later Lively Dick went tumbling down into the cabin all of a heap, to avoid the mast as it went crashing over the side in such a way as to prevent the use of the pumps, and carrying the mizzenmast along with it.

"Go to work with buckets, boys, or she'll sink," shouted the skipper, himself setting the example, for the ballast had shifted and the danger was great. Meanwhile George King seized an axe and cut away the rigging that held on to the wrecked masts, and fair-haired Charlie laboured like a hero to clear the pumps. The rays of the cabin lights did not reach the deck, so that much of the work had to be done in what may be styled darkness visible, while the little vessel kicked about like a wild thing in the raging sea, and the torn canvas flapped with a horrible noise. Pitiless wind, laden with sleet, howled over them as if thirsting impatiently for the fishermen's lives. At last they succeeded in clearing the pumps, and worked them with untiring energy for hours, but could not tell how many, for the thick end of a marline-spike had been driven through the clock-face and stopped it.

It was still dark when they managed to rig up a jury-mast on the stump of the old one and hoist a shred of sail. George King was ordered to the tiller. As he passed Greely he said in a cheerful voice, "Trust in the Lord, skipper, He can bring us out o' worse than this."

It might have been half an hour later when another sea swept the deck. Jim took shelter under the stump of the mast and held on for dear life. Charlie got inside the coil of the derrick-fall and so was saved, while the others dived into the cabin. When that sea had passed they found no one at the tiller. Poor King had been washed overboard. Nothing whatever could be done for him, even if he had been seen, but the greedy sea had swallowed him, and he was taken to swell with his tuneful voice the company of those who sing on high the praises of redeeming love.

The sea which swept him into eternity also carried away the jury-mast, and as the smack was now a mere wreck,

liable to drift on shore if the gale should continue long, Jim let down an anchor, after removing its stock so that it might drag on the bottom and retard the drifting while it kept the vessel's head to the sea.

A watch was then set, and the rest of the crew went below to wait and wish for daybreak! It was a dreary vigil under appalling circumstances, for although the smack had not actually sprung a leak there was always the danger of another sea overwhelming and altogether sinking her. Her crew sat there for hours utterly helpless and literally facing death. Fortunately their matches had escaped the water, so that they were able to kindle a fire in the stove and obtain a little warmth as well as make a pot of tea and eat some of their sea-soaked biscuit.

It is wonderful how man can accommodate himself to circumstances. No sooner had the crew in this wreck felt the stimulating warmth of the hot tea than they began to spin yarns! not indeed of a fanciful kind—they were too much solemnised for that—but yarns of their experience of gales in former times.

"It minds me o' this wery night last year," said Lively Dick, endeavouring to light his damp pipe. "I was mate o' the *Beauty* at the time. We was workin' wi' the Short Blues on the Dogger, when a tremendous squall struck us, an' it began to snow that thick we could scarce see the end o' the jib-boom. Well, the gale came on in real arnest before long, so we had to lay-to all that night. When it came day we got some sail set and I went below to have a hot pot o' tea when the skipper suddenly sang out 'Jump up here, Dick!' an' I did jump up, double quick, to find that we was a'most runnin' slap into a dismayed craft. We shoved the tiller hard a-starboard and swung round as if we was on a swivel, goin' crash through the rackage alongside an' shavin' her by a hair. We could just see through the snow one of her hands choppin' away at the riggin', and made out that her name was the *Henry and Thomas*."

"An' did ye see nothin' more of 'er arter that?" asked the boy Charlie with an eager look.

"Nothin' more. She was never heard of arter that mornin'."

While the men were thus talking, the watch on deck shouted that one of the mission-ships was close alongside. Every one ran on deck to hail her, for they stood much in need of assistance, two of their water-casks having been stove in and everything in the hold turned topsy-turvy—beef, potatoes, flour, all mixed up in horrible confusion. Just then another sea came on board, and the crew had to dive again to the cabin for safety. That sea carried away the boat and the rest of the starboard bulwarks, besides starting a plank, and letting the water in at a rate which the pumps could not keep down.

Quickly the mission-ship loomed up out of the grey snow-cloud and ran past.

"You'll want help!" shouted the mission skipper.

"Ay, we do," shouted Jim Greely in reply. "We're sinkin', and our boat's gone."

An arm thrown up indicated that the words were understood. A few minutes later and the crew of the *Dolphin* saw the mission crew launching their little boat. With, such a sea running the venture was perilous in the extreme, but when the mission skipper said "Who'll go?" he had no lack of volunteers. The boat was manned at once, and the crew of the *Dolphin* were rescued a few minutes before the *Dolphin* herself went head-foremost to the bottom. Just as they got safely on deck the mission-ship herself shipped a heavy sea, which washed several of the men into the lee scuppers. They jumped up immediately—some with "Thank God" on their lips, others with a laugh—but James Greely did not rise. He lay stunned and rolling about in the water. It was found on raising him that his right leg was broken at the thigh.

When Jim recovered consciousness he did not complain. He was a man of stern mould, and neither groaned nor spoke; but he was not the less impressed with the kindness and apparent skill with which the mission skipper treated him.

Having received a certain amount of surgical training, the skipper—although unlearned and a fisherman—knew well how to put the leg in splints and otherwise to treat the patient.

"It's pretty bad, I fear," he said soothingly, observing that Jim's lips were compressed, and that beads of perspiration were standing on his brow.

Jim did not reply, but smiled grimly and nodded, for the rolling of the ship caused him increasing agony as the injured parts began to inflame.

"I'm not very good at this sort o' work," said the mission skipper modestly, "but thank God the new hospital-ship is cruisin' wi' the Short Blue just now. I saw her only yesterday, so we'll put you aboard of her and there you'll find a reg'lar shore-goin' surgeon, up to everything, and with all the gimcracks and arrangements of a reg'lar shore-goin' hospital. They've got a new contrivance too—a sort o' patent stretcher, invented by a Mr Dark o' the head office in London—which'll take you out o' the boat into the ship without movin' a bone or muscle, so keep your mind easy, skipper, for you'll be aboard the *Queen Victoria* before many hours go by."

Poor Greely appreciated the statement about the stretcher more than all the rest that was said, for he was keenly alive to the difficulty of passing a broken-boned man out of a little boat into a smack or steamer in a heavy sea, having often had to do it.

The mission skipper was right, for early the next day Jim was strapped to a wonderful frame and passed into the hospital-ship without shake or shock, and his comrades were retained in the mission smack until they could be sent on shore. Greely and his men learned many lessons which they never afterwards forgot on board of the *Queen Victoria*—the foundation lesson being that they were lost sinners and that Jesus Christ came "to seek and to save the lost."

Slowly, and at first unwillingly, Skipper Greely took the great truths in. Several weeks passed, and he began to move about with some of his wonted energy. Much to his surprise he found himself one morning signing the temperance pledge-books, persuaded thereto by the skipper of the *Queen Victoria*. Still more to his surprise he found himself one Sunday afternoon listening, with unwonted tears in his eyes, to some of his mates as they told their spiritual experiences to an assembly of some hundred or so of weather-beaten fishermen. Before quitting that vessel he discovered that he possessed a powerful and tuneful voice, admirably adapted for singing hymns, and that he was capable of publicly stating the fact that he was an unworthy sinner saved by grace.

When at last he returned ashore and unexpectedly entered the Yarmouth home, Nellie could scarcely believe her senses, so great was the change.

"Jim!" she cried, with opening eyes and beating heart, "you're like your old self again."

"Thank God," said Jim, clasping her in his strong arms. But he could say no more for some time. Then he turned suddenly on curly-headed Jimmie, who had been fiercely embracing one of his enormous sea-boots, and began an incoherent conversation and a riotous romp with that juvenile fisherman.

A brighter sunshine than had ever been there before enlightened that Yarmouth home, for God had entered it and the hearts of its occupants.

Example is well-known to be infectious. In course of time a number of brother fishermen began to think as Jim Greely thought and feel as he felt. His house also became the centre, or headquarters, of an informal association got up for the purpose of introducing warmth and sunshine into poor homes in all weathers, and there were frequently such large meetings of the members of that association that it taxed Nellie's ingenuity to supply seats and stow them all away. She managed it, however; for, as Jim was wont to remark, "Nellie had a powerful intellec' for her size."

Among the frequenters of this Yarmouth home were several of the men who had once been staunch supporters of the Green Dragon, and of these the most enthusiastic, perhaps, if not the most noisy, were Black Whistler, Lively Dick, and fair-haired Charlie.

Chapter Nine.

A Northern Waif.

If a waif is a lost wanderer, then little Poosk was a decided waif for he had gone very much astray indeed in the North American backwoods. It was a serious matter for an Indian child of six years of age to become a waif in the dead of winter, with four feet of snow covering the entire wilderness, and the thermometer far below zero.

Yes, little Poosk was lost. His Indian mother, when she tied up his little head in a fur cap with ear-pieces, had said to him that morning—and it was a New Year's Day morning—"Poosk, you go straight to the mission-house. The feast will be a very grand one—oh! *such* a good one! Better than the feast we have when the geese and ducks come back in spring. Go straight; don't wander; follow in your father's tracks, and you can't go wrong."

Ah! what a compliment to father would have been implied in these words had the mother meant his moral tracks. But she did not: she referred to his snow-shoe tracks, which would serve as a sure guide to the mission-house, if closely followed. Poosk had promised to obey orders, of course, as readily as if he had been a civilised white boy, and with equal readiness had forgotten his promise when the first temptation came. That temptation had come in the form of a wood-partridge, in chase of which, with the spirit of a true son of the forest, Poosk had bolted, and soon left his father's tracks far behind him. Thus it came to pass that in the pursuit of game, our little savage became a "waif and stray." Had he been older, he would doubtless have returned on his own little track to the spot where he had left that of his father; but, being so young, he fancied that he could reach it by bending round towards it as he advanced.

Poosk was uncommonly small for his age—hence his name, which, in the Cree language, means *half*. He came at the tail-end of a very large family. Being remarkably small from the first, he was regarded as the extreme tip of that tail. His father styled him *half* a child—Poosk. But his lack of size was counterbalanced by great physical activity and sharp intelligence. Wrapped in his warm deerskin coat, which was lined with flannel, and edged with fur, and secured with a scarlet belt, with his little legs in ornamented leggings, his little feet in new moccasins, and shod with little snowshoes not more than twenty-four inches long by eight broad—his father's being five-feet by fifteen inches,—and his little hands in leather mittens of the bag-and-thumb order, Poosk went over the snow at an amazing rate for his size, but failed to rejoin his father's track. Suddenly he stopped, and a pucker on his brow betrayed anxiety. Compressing his little lips, he looked round him with an expression of serious determination in his large brown eyes. Was he not in his native wilds? Was he not the son of a noted brave? Was *he* going to submit to the disgrace of losing his way; and, what was much worse, losing his feast? Certainly not! With stern resolve on every lineament of his infantile visage he changed his direction, and pushed on. We need scarcely add that he soon stopped again; resolved and re-resolved to succeed, and changed his direction again and again till he became utterly bewildered, and, finally, sitting down on the trunk of a fallen tree, shut his eyes, opened his little mouth, and howled. It was sad, but it was natural that at so early a period of life the stoicism of the savage should be overcome by the weakness of the child. Finding after a while that howling resulted in nothing but noise, Poosk suddenly shut his mouth, and opened his eyes. There seemed to be some intimate connection between the two operations. Perhaps there was. The opening of the eyes went on to the uttermost, and then became a fixed glare, for, right in front of him sat a white rabbit on its hind legs, and, from its expression, evidently filled with astonishment equal to his own.

The spirit of the hunter arose, and that of the child vanished, as little Poosk sprang up and gave chase. Of course the rabbit "sloped," and in a few minutes both pursued and pursuer were lost in the depths of the snow-encumbered forest.

On a point of rocks which jutted out into a frozen lake, stood a small church with a small spire, small porch, and diminutive windows. The pastor of that church dwelt close to it in a wooden house or log cabin, which possessed only one window and a door. A much larger hut alongside of it served as a school-house and meeting-hall. In this little building the man of God, assisted by a Red Indian convert, taught the Red Men of the wilderness the way of life through Jesus Christ, besides giving them a little elementary and industrial education suited to their peculiar circumstances; and here, on the day of which we write, he had prepared the sumptuous feast to which reference has just been made. The pastor's wife and daughter had prepared it. There were venison pies and ptarmigan pasties; there were roasts of fowls, and roasts of rabbits, and stews of many things which we will not venture to describe, besides puddings of meat, and puddings of rice, and puddings of plums; also tea and coffee to wash it all down. There was no strong drink. Strong health and appetite were deemed sufficient to give zest to the proceedings. The company was remarkably savage to look at, but wonderfully civilised in conduct, for the influence of Christian love was there, and that influence is the same everywhere. Leathern garments clothed the men; curtailed petticoats adorned the women; both wore leggings and moccasins. The boys and girls were similarly costumed, and all had brilliant teeth, brown faces, glittering eyes, lank black hair, and a look of eager expectancy.

The pastor went to the head of the table, and silence ensued while he briefly asked God's blessing on the feast. Then, when expectation had reached its utmost point, there was a murmur. Where was the smallest mite of all the guests? Nobody knew. Poosk's mother said she had sent him off hours ago, and had thought that he must be there. Poosk's father—a very tall man, with remarkably long legs,—hearing this, crossed the room in three strides, put on his five-foot by fifteen-inch snow-shoes and went off into the forest at express speed.

Anxiety is not an easily-roused condition in the North American Indian. The feast began, despite the absence of our waif; and the waif's mother set to work with undiminished appetite. Meanwhile the waif himself went farther and farther astray—swayed alternately by the spirit of the stoic and the spirit of the little child. But little Poosk was made of sterling stuff, and the two spirits had a hard battle in him for the mastery that wintry afternoon. His chase of the rabbit was brought to an abrupt conclusion by a twig which caught one of his snow-shoes, tripped him up, and sent him headlong into the snow. When snow averages four feet in depth it affords great scope for ineffectual floundering. The snow-shoes kept his feet near the surface, and the depth prevented his little arms from reaching solid ground. When at last he recovered his perpendicular, his hair, eyes, nose, ears, sleeves, and mittens were stuffed with snow; and the child-spirit began to whimper, but the stoic sprang on him and quickly crushed him down.

Drawing his little body up with a look of determination, and wiping away the tears which had already begun to freeze on his eyelashes, our little hero stepped out more vigorously than ever, in the full belief that every yard carried him nearer home, though in reality he was straying farther and farther from his father's track. Well was it for little Poosk that day that his hope of reaching home did not depend on his own feeble efforts. Already the father was traversing the wilderness in search of his lost lamb, though the lamb knew it not.

But Poosk's disasters were not yet over. Although brave at heart and, for his years, sturdy of frame, he could not withstand the tremendous cold peculiar to those regions of ice and snow; and ere long the fatal lethargy that is often induced by extreme frost began to tell. The first symptom was that Poosk ceased to feel the cold as much as he had felt it some time before. Then a drowsy sensation crept over him, and he looked about for a convenient spot on which to sit down and rest. Alas for the little savage if he had given way at that time! Fortunately a small precipice was close in front of him, its upper edge concealed by wreaths of snow. He fell over it, turning a somersault as he went down, and alighted safely in a snow-bed at the bottom. The shock revived him, but it also quelled the stoic in his breast. Rising with difficulty, he wrinkled up his brown visage, and once again took to howling. Half an hour later his father, steadily following up the little track in the snow, reached the spot and heard the howls. A smile lit up his swarthy features, and there was a gleam of satisfaction in his black eyes as he descended to the spot where the child stood.

Sudden calm after a storm followed the shutting of Poosk's mouth and the opening of his eyes. Another moment, and his father had him in his strong arms, turned him upside down, felt him over quietly, shook him a little, ascertained that no bones were broken, put him on his broad shoulders, and carried him straight back to the Mission Hall, where the feasters were in full swing—having apparently quite forgotten the little "waif and stray."

North American Indians, as is well-known, are not demonstrative. There was no shout of joy when the lost one appeared. Even his mother took no further notice of him than to make room for him on the form beside her. She was a practical mother. Instead of fondling him she proceeded to stuff him, which she was by that time at leisure to do, having just finished stuffing herself. The father, stalking sedately to a seat at another table, proceeded to make up for lost time. He was marvellously successful in his efforts. He was one of those Indian braves who are equal to any emergency.

Although near the end of the feast and with only *débris* left to manipulate, he managed to refresh himself to his entire satisfaction before the tables were cleared.

The feast of reason which followed was marked by one outstanding and important failure. The pastor had trained the Indian boys and girls of his school to sing several hymns, and repeat several pieces in prose and verse. Our waif, besides being the smallest boy, possessed the sweetest voice in the school. He was down on the programme for a hymn—a solo. Having fallen sound asleep after being stuffed, it was found difficult to awake him when his turn came. By dint of shaking, however, his mother roused him up and set him on his legs on a table, where he was steadied a little by the pastor's wife, and gently bid to begin, by the pastor's daughter.

Poosk was very fond of the pastor's daughter. He would have done anything for her. He opened his large eyes, from which a sleepy gleam of intelligence flashed. He opened his little mouth, from which rolled the sweetest of little voices. The Indians, who had been purposely kept in ignorance of this musical treat, were ablaze with surprise and expectation; but the sound died away, the mouth remained open, and the eyes shut suddenly as Poosk fell over like a ninepin, sound asleep, into the arms of the pastor's daughter.

Nothing more was to be got out of him that day. Even the boisterous laugh which greeted his breakdown failed to rouse him; and finally our Northern Waif was carried home, and put to bed beside a splendid fire in a warm robe of rabbit skins.

Chapter Ten.

How to make the Best of Life: from a Young Man's Standpoint.

This world is full of niches that have to be filled, of paths that have to be trod, of work that has to be done.

Pouring continually into it there are millions of human beings who are capable of being fitted to fill those niches, to traverse those paths, and to do that work. I venture a step further and assert that every human being, without exception, who arrives at the years of maturity must, in the nature of things, have a particular niche and path and work appointed for him; and just in proportion as a man finds out his exact work, and walks in or strays from his peculiar path, will be the success of his life. He may miss his aim altogether, and his life turn out a failure, because of his self-will, or, perhaps, his mistaken notions; and there are few sights more depressing than that of a round young man rushing into a square hole, except that of a square young man trying to wriggle himself into a round hole. What the world wants is "the right man in the right place." What each man wants is to find his right place.

But the fact that man may, and often does, make a wrong choice, that he may try to traverse the wrong path, to accomplish the wrong work, and do many things in the wrong way, is a clear proof that his course in life is not arbitrarily fixed, that he has been left to the freedom of his own will, and may therefore fall short of the *best*, though he may be fortunate enough to attain the good or the better. Hence devolves upon every one the responsibility of putting and finding an answer to the question—How shall I make the best of life?

And let me say here in passing that I venture to address young men on this subject, not because I conceive myself to be gifted with superior wisdom, but because, being an old man, I stand on the heights and vantage ground of Experience, and looking back, can see the rocks and shoals and quicksands in life's ocean, which have damaged and well-nigh wrecked myself. I would not only try my hand as a pilot to guide, but as, in some sense, a buoy or beacon to warn from dangers that are not only unseen but unsuspected.

Every young man of ordinary common sense will at least aim at what he believes to be best in life, and the question will naturally arise—What *is* best?

If a youth's chief idea of felicity is to "have a good time;" to enjoy himself to the utmost; to cram as much of sport, fun, and adventure into his early manhood as possible, with a happy-go-lucky indifference as to the future, he is not yet in a frame of mind to consider our question at all. I feel disposed to say to him—in paraphrase—"be serious, man, or, if ye can't be serious, be as serious as ye can," while we consider a subject that is no trifling matter.

What, then, *is* best? I reply—So to live and work that we shall do the highest good of which we are capable to the world, and, in the doing thereof, achieve the highest possible happiness to ourselves, and to those with whom we are connected. In the end, to leave the world better than we found it.

Now, there is only one foundation on which such a life can be reared, and that foundation is God.

To attempt the building on any other, or to neglect a foundation altogether, is to solicit and ensure disaster.

But supposing, young man, that you agree with me in this; are fully alive to the importance of the question, and are desirous of obtaining all the light you can on it, then I would, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, urge you to begin on this sure foundation by asking God to guide you and open up your way. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He will bring it to pass." Without this beginning there is, there can be, no possibility of real success, no hope of reaching the best. With it there may still be partial mistake—owing to sin and liability to err—but there can be no such thing as absolute failure. Man's first prayer in all his plans of life should be—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Many people think that they have put up that petition and got no answer, when the answer is obviously before their eyes. It seems to me that God's answers are always indicative, and not very difficult to understand.

An anxious father says—if he does not also pray—"What shall I train my boy to be?" God, through the medium of common sense, replies, Watch your son, observe his tastes, and especially his powers, and train him accordingly. His capacities, whatever they are, were given to him by his Maker for the express purpose of being developed. If you don't develop them, you neglect a clear indication, unless, indeed, it be held that men were made in some haphazard way for no definite purpose at all; but this would be equivalent to making out the Creator to be less reasonable than most of His own creatures!

If a lad has a strong liking for some particular sort of work or pursuit, and displays great aptitude for it, there is no need of an audible voice to tell what should be his path in life. Contrariwise, strong dislike, coupled with incapacity, indicates the path to be avoided with equal precision.

Of course, liking and disliking are not a sufficient indication, for both may be based upon partial ignorance. The sea, as a profession, is a case in point. How many thousands of lads have an intense liking for the idea of a sailor's life! But the liking is not for the sea; it is for some romantic notion of the sea; and the romancer's aptitude for a sea life must at first be taken for granted while his experience is *nil*. He dreams, probably, of majestic storms, or heavenly calms, of coral islands, and palm groves, and foreign lands and peoples. If very imaginative, he will indulge in Malay pirates and wrecks, and lifeboats, and desert islands, on which he will always land safely, and commence a second

edition of Robinson Crusoe. But he will scarcely think, till bitter experience compels him, of very long watches in dirty unromantic weather, of holy-stoning the decks, scraping down the masts, and clearing out the coal-hole. Happily for our navy and the merchant service there are plenty of lads who go through all this and stick to it, their love of the ocean is triumphant—but there are a few exceptions!

On the other hand, liking and fitness may be discovered by experience. I know a man who, from childhood, took pleasure in construction and invention. At the age of nine he made a real steam engine which “could go” with steam, and which was small enough to be carried in his pocket. He was encouraged to follow the providential indication, went through all the drudgery of workshops, and is now a successful engineer.

Of course, there are thousands of lads whose paths are not so clearly marked out; but does it not seem reasonable to expect that, with prayer for guidance, and thoughtful consideration on the part of the boy’s parents, as well as of the boy himself, the best path in life may be discovered for each?

No doubt there are many difficulties in the way; as when parents are too ambitious, or when sons are obstinate and self-willed, or when both are antagonistic to each other. If, as is not infrequently the case, a youth has no particular taste for any profession, and shows no very obvious capacity for anything, is it not a pretty strong indication that he was meant to tread one of the many subordinate paths of life and be happy therein? All men cannot be generals. Some must be content to rub shoulders with the rank and file. If a lad is fit only to dig in a coal pit or sweep the streets, he is as surely intended to follow these honourable callings as is the captain who has charge of an ocean steamer to follow the *sea*. And even in the selection of these lowly occupations the path is divinely indicated, while the free-will is left to the influence of common sense, so that the robust youth with powerful frame and sinews will probably select the pit, and the comparatively delicate man will prefer the crossing.

I repeat, to say that any creature was called into being for no purpose at all, is to question the wisdom of the Almighty. Even if a babe makes its appearance on this terrestrial scene, and wails out its brief career in a single day, it was sent here for a special purpose, else it would not have been sent, and that purpose must have been fully accomplished, else it would not have died.

To my mind this is an exceedingly cheering view of things, for it encourages the belief that however poor or feeble may have been our efforts to live a good life, these efforts cannot have been made in vain, even although they may fall very far short of the “best.” And there is also this very hopeful consideration to comfort us, that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, that wisdom sometimes proceeds out of the mouths of babes, and that “we little know what great things from little things may rise.”

To be sure, that cuts both ways, for, what sometimes are called “little sins” may result in tremendous evil, but, equally, efforts that seem insignificant may be the cause of great and unexpected blessing.

If, then, as I sincerely believe, every living being has a special work to do—or, rather, has a variety of appropriate paths in any one of which he may walk with more or less advantage to himself and his fellow-men—it behoves every young man to find out what path is the best one for him, and to walk in it vigorously. Fatalism is folly. No one believes in it. At least no one in this country acts upon it. When I say that every being has a special work to do, I don’t mean that it has been decreed *exactly* what each man has to do. Were this so, he would have to do it, *nolens volens*, and there would be no such thing as responsibility—for it would be gross injustice to hold a man responsible for that which he could by no means prevent or accomplish. That which has really been decreed is that man shall have free-will and be allowed to exercise that free-will in the conduct of his affairs. It is a most mysterious gift, but there it is—an unquestionable fact—and it must be taken into account in all our reasoning. There is a confusion here into which men are sometimes liable to fall. Man’s will is absolutely free, but his action is not so. He may will just as he pleases, but all experience tells us that he may not do just as he pleases. Whether his intentions be good or bad, they are frequently and effectively interfered with, but his will—never.

Seeing, then, that there is a best way for every one, and that there are sundry common sense methods by which the path may be discovered, it may be well to consider for a moment whether there are not some obstacles which stand in the way of a young man’s success in life, not only because they are providentially allowed to lie there, but because the young man himself either carelessly or unwittingly has planted them in his own path.

Selfishness is one of those obstacles. And by selfishness I do not mean that gross form of it which secures for the man who gives way to it a bad name, but those subtle phases of it which may possibly be allied with much that is good, amiable, and attractive. It is not unfrequently the consequence of that thoughtlessness which results in evil not less than does want of heart.

Talking too much about oneself and one’s own affairs, and being too little interested in the affairs of others, is one aspect of the selfishness to which I refer. Some men, the moment they meet you, begin to talk energetically about what they have been doing, or thinking, or about what they are going to do, and if you encourage them they will go on talking in the same strain, totally forgetting that *you* may chance to be interested in other things. Such men, if they begin young, and are not checked, soon degenerate into “bores,” and no bore, however well-meaning or even religious, ever succeeded in making the best of life. The cure for this is to be found—as usual—in the Scripture: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” And what says the word? “Look not (only) on your own things, but upon the things of others.”

I have a friend who was the confidant of a large number of his kindred and of many other people besides. It was said of him that everybody went to him for sympathy and advice. I can well believe it, for he never spoke about himself at all that I can remember. He was not unusually wise or superlatively clever, but he had “a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathise.” The consequence was that, in spite of a good many faults, he was greatly beloved. And it is certain, reader, that to gain the affection of your fellow-men is one of the surest steps in the direction of success in life. To be too much concerned in conversation about yourself, your affairs and your opinions will prove to be a

mighty obstruction in your way. Perhaps one of the best methods of fighting against this tendency is to resolve, when meeting with friends, *never* to begin with self, but *always* with them. But it is hard to crucify self! This mode of procedure, be it observed, would not be a hypocritical exhibition of interest where none was felt, but an honest attempt to snub self by deliberately putting your friends' interests before your own.

It is probable that we are not sufficiently alive to the influence of comparatively insignificant matters on success in life. Illegible handwriting, for instance, may go far to retard or arrest a youth's success. It sometimes interferes with friendly intercourse. I once had a friend whose writing was so illegible, and the cause of so much worry in mere decipherment, that I was constrained to give up epistolary correspondence with him altogether. There can be little doubt that many a would-be author fails of success because of the illegibility of his penmanship, for it is impossible that an editor or publisher can form a fair estimate of the character or value of a manuscript which he has much difficulty in reading.

There is one thing which men are prone to do, and which it would be well that they should not do, and that is, "nail their colours to the mast" in early youth. The world is a school. We are ever learning—or ought to be—and, in some cases, "never coming to a knowledge of the truth!" Is not this partly owing to that fatal habit of nailing the colours? I do not for a moment advocate the holding of opinions loosely. On the contrary, whether a man be young or old, whenever he gets hold of what he believes to be true, he ought to grasp it tenaciously and with a firm grip, but he should never "nail" it. Being fallible, man is liable to more or less of error; and, therefore, ought to hold himself open to correction—ay, even to conversion. New or stronger light may convince him that he has been wrong—and if a man will not change when he is convinced, or "fully persuaded in his own mind," he has no chance of finding out how to make the best of life, either from a young, or middle-aged, or old man's standpoint. Why, new or stronger light—if he would let it illumine him—might even convince him that his opinion was not only true, but involved much greater and grander truths than he supposed. It is difficult to go more minutely into details, even if it were advisable to do so. I may fittingly conclude by saying that the sum of all that might be written is comprehended in the statement that obedience to God in all things is the sure and only road to success.

Of all the bright and glorious truths with which our fallen world is enlightened, there is one—a duplex truth—which lies at the foundation of everything. It is unchangeable. Without it all other facts would be valueless, and I would recommend every man, woman, and child to nail it to the mast without hesitation, namely—"God is love," and "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

Chapter Eleven.

Forgive and Forget: A Lifeboat Story.

Old Captain Bolter said he would never forgive Jo Grain—never. And what Captain Bolter said he meant: for he was a strong and self-willed man.

There can be no doubt that the Captain had some ground of complaint against Grain: for he had been insulted by him grossly—at least so he thought. It happened thus:—

Joseph Grain was a young fisherman, and the handsomest, tallest, strongest, and most active among the youths of the little seaport town in which he dwelt. He was also one of the lifeboat's crew, and many a time had his strong hand been extended in the midst of surging sea and shrieking tempest to save the perishing. Moreover, he was of a frank, generous disposition; was loved by most of his comrades; envied by a few; hated by none.

But with all his fine qualities young Grain had a great and serious fault—he was rather fond of strong drink. It must not, however, be supposed that he was a drunkard, in the ordinary sense at least of that term. No, he was never seen to stagger homeward, or to look idiotic: but, being gifted with a robust frame and finely-strung nerves, a very small quantity of alcohol sufficed to rouse within him the spirit of combativeness, inducing him sometimes to say and do things which afterwards could not be easily unsaid or undone, however much he might repent.

One afternoon Grain and some of his mates were sauntering towards the little lighthouse that stood at the end of their pier. It was an old-fashioned stone pier, with a dividing wall or parapet down the middle of it. As they walked along, some of the younger men began to question Jo about a rumour that had recently been spread abroad.

"Come, now, Jo," said one, named Blunt, "don't try to deceive us; you can't deny that you're after Cappen Bolter's little gal."

"Well, I *won't* deny it," replied Jo, with sudden energy and somewhat forced gaiety, while the blood mounted to his bronzed cheeks: "moreover, I don't care who knows it, for there's not a sweeter lass in all the town than Mary Bolter, an' the man that would be ashamed to own his fondness for her don't deserve to have her."

"That's true," said a young fisherman, named Guy, with a nod of approval—"though there may be two opinions as to which is the sweetest lass in all the town!"

"I tell 'ee what, Jo," remarked a stern and rather cross-grained bachelor, named Grime, "you may save yourself the trouble of givin' chase to that little craft, for although old Bolter ain't much to boast of—bein' nothin' more than the skipper of a small coastin' craft—he thinks hisself far too big a man to give his darter to a fisherman."

"Does he?" exclaimed Grain, with vehemence, and then suddenly checked himself.

"Ay, that does he," returned Grime, with something of a sneer in his tone.

It chanced that Jo Grain had been to the public-house that day, and the sneer, which at other times would have been passed over with indifference, stung him—coupled as it was with a slur on his lowly position. He looked fiercely at Grime, and said, in a loud, angry tone: "It's a matter of moonshine to me what Bolter thinks of himself. If the girl's willin' to have me I'll wed her in spite o' the old grampus."

Now, unhappily for Jo Grain, the "old grampus" chanced at that very time to be sunning himself, and enjoying his pipe on the other side of the pier-wall, and heard distinctly what Jo said. Moreover, there was some truth in what Grime had said about the old skipper looking down on the young fisherman's position: so that, although he could not deny that Jo was a first-rate man, and knew that Mary was fond of him, he had hitherto felt a strong disinclination to allow his darling and only child to wed, as he considered it beneath her. When, therefore, the speech above quoted broke harshly on his ears, the matter became finally settled in his mind. He dropped his pipe, set his heel on it, and ground it to powder. He also ground his teeth, and, turning round with a snort, worthy of the creature to which he had been compared, sailed wildly homewards.

Next day Jo Grain chanced to meet him in the street, and held out his hand as usual; but the captain, thrusting both hands deep into his trousers pockets, looked the young man firmly in the face—

"No, Grain," he said sternly. "I've done with *you!*"

"Why so, Captain Bolter?" asked Jo, in great surprise.

"Because," hissed the Captain, as his wrath rose, "an *old grampus* don't choose to have anything more to do with a *young puppy!*"

Instantly his reckless speech of the day before flashed into Jo's mind.

"Forgive me, Captain Bolter," he said respectfully: "forgive me, and try to forget it—I didn't mean it, believe me—I—I wasn't quite myself, sir, when—"

"No!" interrupted the Captain fiercely; "I'll never forgive you, nor forget it."

With that he turned away and left Jo Grain to meditate on the folly of indulging in a stimulant which robbed him of his self-control. But youth is very hopeful. Jo did not quite believe in the Captain's sincerity. He comforted himself with the thought that time would soften the old man's feelings, and meanwhile he would continue to court Mary when opportunity offered.

The Captain, however, soon proved that he was thoroughly in earnest: for, instead of leaving his daughter under the care of a maiden aunt, as had been his custom previously, during his frequent absences from home, he took her to sea with him, and left Jo with an extra supply of food for meditation.

Poor Jo struggled hard under this his first severe trial, but struggled in his own strength and failed. Instead of casting away the glass which had already done him so much damage, he madly took to it as a solace to his secret grief. Yet Jo took good care that his comrades should see no outward trace of that grief.

He was not, however, suffered to remain long under the baleful influence of drink. Soon after the departure of Captain Bolter, a missionary visited the little seaport to preach salvation from sin through Jesus Christ, and, being a man of prayer and faith, his mission was very successful. Among the many sins against which he warned the people, he laid particular stress on that of drunkenness.

This was long before the days of the Blue Ribbon movement: but the spirit of that movement was there, though the particular title had not yet arisen. The missionary preached Christ the Saviour of sinners, and Temperance as one of the fruits of salvation. Many of the rough fishermen were converted—bowed their heads and wills, and ceased to resist God. Among them was Joseph Grain.

There was not, indeed, a remarkably great outward change in Jo after this: for he had always been an amiable, hearty, sweet-tempered fellow: but there was, nevertheless, a radical change; for whereas in time past he had acted to please himself, he now acted to please his Lord. To natural enthusiasm, which had previously made him the hero of the town, was now superadded the enthusiasm of a soldier of the Cross: and when lifeboat duty called him, as in days gone by, to hold out his hand to the perishing, even while in the act of saving their bodies he prayed that the result might be salvation to their souls.

You may be sure that Jo did not forget Mary: but his thoughts about her were wonderfully changed: for in this affair of the heart despair had given place to trust and submission.

Time passed by, and one night in the dreary month of November the storm-fiend was let loose on the shores of England. All round the coast the crews of our lifeboats assembled at pier-heads and other points of vantage to watch the enemy and prepare for action. Among others Jo Grain and his comrades assembled at their post of duty.

It was an awful night—such as, happily, does not often visit our shores. Thick darkness seemed to brood over land and sea. Only the robust and hardy dared to show face to the keen, withering blast, which was laden with sleet. Sometimes a gleam of lightning would dart through the raging elements; occasionally the murky clouds rolled off the sky for a short time, allowing the moon to render darkness hideously visible. Tormented foam came in from the sea in riven masses, and the hoarse roaring of the breakers played a bass accompaniment to the yelling blast, which dashed gravel and sand, as well as sleet, in the faces of those who had courage enough to brave it.

"There—wasn't that a light?" cried the coxswain of the lifeboat, as he covered under the shelter of the pier-wall and gazed seaward with difficulty.

"Ay," responded Blunt, who was bowman of the boat; "there it goes again."

"And a rocket!" shouted Jo Grain, starting up.

"No mistake now," cried the coxswain. "Look alive, lads!"

He ran as he spoke to the spot where the lifeboat lay ready under the shelter of the pier, but Jo was on board before him. Almost simultaneously did a dozen strong and fearless men leap into the noble craft and don their cork lifebelts. A few seconds sufficed. Every man knew well his place and his duty. The short, powerful oars were shipped.

"Give way!" cried the coxswain.

There was no cheer—no onlooker to encourage. Silently the strong backs were bent, and the lively boat shot away towards the entrance of the harbour like a "thing of life."

No description can adequately convey to landsmen the work to be done and the conditions under which it was performed. On passing the shelter of the pier-head the boat and her crew were met not only by the tumultuous surging of cross seas, but by a blast which caught the somewhat high bow and almost whirled them into the air; while in its now unbroken force the cold blast seemed to wither up the powers of the men. Then, in the dark distance, an unusually huge billow was seen rushing down on them. To meet it straight as an arrow and with all possible speed was essential. Failure here—and the boat, turning side on, would have been rolled over and swept back into the harbour, if not wrecked against the breakwater.

The coxswain strained at the steering oar as a man strains for life. The billow was fairly met. The men also strained till the stout oars were ready to snap; for they knew that the billow must be cut through if they were to reach the open sea; but it was so high that the bow of the boat was lifted up, and for one instant it seemed as if she were to be hurled backward right over the stern. The impulse given, however, was sufficient. The crest of the wave was cut, and next moment the bow fell forward, plunging deep into the trough of the sea. At the same time a cross-wave leaped right over the boat and filled it to the gunwales.

This initial danger past, it was little the men cared for their drenching. As little did the boat mind the water, which she instantly expelled through the discharging tubes in her floor. But the toil now began. In the teeth of tide and tempest they had to pull with might and main; advancing foot by foot, sometimes only inch by inch. No rest; no breathing time; nothing but continuous tearing at the oars, if progress was to be made, while the spray enveloped them perpetually, and at frequent intervals the "solid" water, plunging inboard, almost swept the heroes from their seats.

But if the raging sea through which the lifeboat struggled was dreadful, much more terrible was the turmoil on the outlying sands where the wreck was being gradually dashed to pieces. There the mad billows held high revelry. Rushing in from all sides, twisted and turned in their courses by the battered shoals, they met not far from, the wreck with the shock of opposing armies, and clouds of foam sprang upward in dire, indescribable confusion.

The vessel in distress was a small brig. She had been lifted like a plaything by the waves, and hurled high on the sand, where, although now unable to lift her up, they rolled her to and fro with extreme violence. Rocket after rocket had been sent up, until the drenching seas had rendered the firing of them impossible. The foremast had already gone by the board, carrying most of the crew with it. On the cross-trees of the mainmast only two remained—a man and a woman, who could barely maintain their hold as the battered craft swayed from side to side.

"The end comes at last, darling Mary," said the man, as he grasped the woman tightly with one arm and the mast with the other.

"No, father—not yet," gasped the woman; "see—the lifeboat! I felt sure that God would send it."

On came the gallant little craft. There was just light enough to enable those on the wreck to see dimly her white and blue sides as she laboured through the foam towards them.

"They have missed us, father; they don't see us!" cried the girl.

The blast blew her long hair about, adding wildness to the look of alarm which she cast on the man while speaking.

"Nay, darling, it's all right. They've only pulled a bit to wind'ard. Keep on praying, Mary."

When well to windward of the wreck the anchor of the lifeboat was let go, and they began to drop down towards the vessel by the cable. Then, for the first time, the men could draw a long breath and relax their efforts at the oars, for wind and waves were now in their favour, though they still dashed and tossed and buffeted them.

Soon they were nearly alongside, and the man on the cross-trees was heard to shout, but his words could not be made out.

What could it be that caused Jo Grain's heart to beat against his strong ribs with the force of a sledge-hammer and his eyes to blaze with excitement, as he turned on his thwart and crouched like a tiger ready to spring?

There was tremendous danger in drawing near: for, at one moment, the boat rushed up on a sea as if about to plunge through the rigging of the vessel, and the next she was down in a seething caldron, with the black hull looming over her. It was observed that the two figures aloft, which could barely be seen against the dark sky, were struggling with some difficulty. They had lashed themselves to the mast, and their benumbed fingers could not undo the fastenings.

"Haul off!" shouted the coxswain, as the boat was hurled with such force towards the vessel's hull that destruction seemed imminent.

“No, hold on!” roared Jo Grain.

The men obeyed their coxswain, but as the boat heaved upwards Jo sprang with all his might, and fell into the rigging of the wreck. A few seconds later and he was on the cross-trees, knife in hand, and the lashings were cut.

At the same moment a rending crash was heard, and again the stentorian voice of the coxswain was heard shouting to the men. The lifeboat was pulled off just in time to escape from the mainmast as it fell, burying its cross-trees and all its tangled gearing in the sea.

The bowman and young Guy leaned over the side, and at the risk of their lives grasped at a drowning man. They caught him, and Captain Bolter was dragged into the boat insensible. A moment later and a hand was seen to rise in the midst of the wreckage. Guy knew it well. He grasped it and held on. A few seconds more and Jo Grain, with blood pouring down his face, from a deep cut in his head, was raised to the gunwale.

“Have a care,” he gasped faintly.

His right arm encircled an inanimate form. Both were dragged on board, and then it was seen that the form was that of Mary Bolter, uninjured though insensible.

To haul up to the anchor was a slow process and laborious, but it was done cheerily, for the hearts of the men were aglow with satisfaction. Three lives saved! It was what Blunt styled a grand haul. Not many, indeed: but was not one that of a loved comrade, and was not another that of “the sweetest lass in all the town,” in spite of young Guy’s difference of opinion?

It was grey dawn when the lifeboat returned to port under sail, with a small flag flying in token of success, and it would have done your heart good, reader, to have seen the faces of the crowds that lined the pier, and heard the ringing cheers that greeted the gallant rescuers as they brought the rescued safe to land.

Six hours after that Captain Bolter sat at the bedside of Jo Grain.

“You’ve been hard hit, Jo, I fear,” he said kindly.

“Yes, rather hard, but the doctor says I’ll be all right in a week or two; and it’s little I’ll care about it, Captain, if you’ll only agree to forgive and forget.”

The Captain seized Jo’s hand and tried to speak, but could not. After an abortive effort he turned away with a grunt and left the room.

Six months after that, Joseph Grain, transformed into a coast-guardsman, led “the sweetest lass in all the town” to the village church, and young Guy, still objecting to the title, was groom’s-man.

“Jo,” said Captain Bolter that day, at parting, “I’ve forgiven you long ago, but I *can’t* forget; for you said the truth that time. I *was* an old grampus, or a fool, if you like, and I’m not much better now. However, good-bye, dear boy, and take care of her, for there’s not another like her in all England.”

“Except one,” murmured young Guy, as he squeezed his friend’s hand and quietly attached an old slipper to their cab as they drove away. Thereafter he swaggered off to a certain familiar cottage to talk over the wedding with one whom *he* considered the sweetest lass in all the town.

Chapter Twelve.

“Rescue the Perishing.”

Proverbial philosophy asserts that the iron should be struck when it is hot. I sympathise with proverbial philosophy in this case, but that teacher says nothing whatever about striking the iron when it is cold; and experience—at least that of blacksmiths—goes to prove that cold iron may be struck till heat is evolved, and, once heated, who knows what intensity of incandescence may be attained?

I will try it. My hammer may not be a large one. A sledge-hammer it certainly is not. Such as it is I wield it under the impulse of great heat within me, and will direct my blows at the presumably cold iron around. I say presumably,—because if you, good reader, have not been subjected to the same influences with myself you cannot reasonably be expected to be even warm—much less white-hot.

The cause of all this heat was Dr Barnardo’s splendid meeting held recently in the Royal Albert Hall. I came home from that meeting incandescent—throwing off sparks of enthusiasm, and eagerly clutching at every cold or lukewarm creature that came in my way with a view to expend on it some of my surplus heat!

The great Albert Hall filled is enough of itself to arouse enthusiasm, whatever the object of the gathering may be. Ten thousand human beings, more or less, swarming on the floor, clustering on the walls, rising tier above tier, until in dim distance the pigmy throng seems soaring up into the very heavens, is a tremendous, a solemn, a heart-stirring sight, suggestive—I write with reverence—of the Judgment Day. And when such an assembly is convened for the purpose of considering matters of urgent importance, matters affecting the well-being of multitudes, matters of life and death which call for instant and vigorous action, then the enthusiasm is naturally intensified and needs but little hammering to rouse it to the fiercest glow.

It was no ordinary gathering this—no mere “annual meeting” of a grand society. It was indeed that, but a great deal

more. There was a "noble chairman," of course, and an address, and several speeches by eminent men; but I should suppose that one-half of the audience could not well see the features of the speakers or hear their words. These were relatively insignificant matters.

The business of the evening was to present to the people a great Object Lesson, and the only figure on the platform that bulked large—at least in my esteem—was that of Dr Barnardo himself, and a magical master of the ceremonies did the doctor prove himself to be.

Being unable to induce the "West End" to visit the "East End," he had simply cut several enormous slices out of the slums and set them down in the Royal Albert Hall for inspection.

The display was set forth interestingly and with emphasis, insomuch that things almost spoke for themselves, and wherein they failed to do so the Doctor supplemented in a satisfactorily sonorous voice.

One of the slum-slices was a large one. It consisted of thirteen hundred children—boys and girls—in bright, light, smart dresses, who clustered on the orchestra and around the great organ, like flowers in June. Looking at their clean, wholesome faces, neat attire, and orderly demeanour, I thought, "Is it possible that these are the sweepings of the streets?" The question was tellingly answered later on; but here it may be stated that this beautiful band of 1300 was only a slice—a sample—of the Doctor's large family, which at present numbers nearly 3500. (It now, in 1893, numbers nearly 5000.)

It was grand to hear them sing! The great organ itself had to sing small beside them, for wood and metal can never hope to equal the living human voice, even though it be but a voice from the slums. Not only hymns but humorous songs they sang, and heroic. A telling effect was produced while singing one of the latter by the sudden display of 1300 Union Jacks, each the size of a 'kerchief, which the singers waved in time to the chorus. It seemed as though a stiff breeze had swept over the flower-bed and kissed the national flag in passing.

Another surprise of this kind was given during the stirring song of *The Fire Brigade*, when 1300 bits of gold and silver paper, waved to and fro, seemed to fill the orchestra with flashing fire.

But much of this was for show, to tickle our eyes and ears and prepare the way, as it were, for the grave and stern realities yet to come.

There was a mighty platform covered with crimson cloth in the centre of the hall in front of the orchestra. On it were several mysterious objects covered with sheets. At a signal—a whistle—given by the Doctor, a band of sturdy boys, clad in their work-a-day uniform, scampered down the central passage of the hall, jumped on the platform, flung off the sheets, and discovered carpenters' benches, saws, hammers, wood—in short, all the appliances with which they carry on the various trades at their "Home" in the East End. In a few seconds, as if by magic, the platform was a workshop in full swing—hammering, sawing, chiselling, wood-chopping, clattering, and indescribable din, which was enhanced, but not drowned, by the applause of the astonished audience. The little fellows worked as though life depended on their activity, for the space, it seemed to me, of half a minute. Then the shrill whistle sounded again, and the work ceased, as if the springs of life had been suddenly cut off. Dead silence ensued; each worker remaining in the attitude in which he had been petrified—a group of artisan statuary in colour!

The Doctor was thus enabled quietly to explain that the display represented only a very few of the trades taught and carried on by his rescued boys at Stepney Causeway.

At another signal the splendidly drilled young fellows scampered off, carrying not only their tools, but their benches, tables, stools, and even débris along with them, and, disappearing in less than a couple of minutes, left not a chip or shaving behind.

It would take a good many pages of close writing to give anything like a detailed account of all that I saw. I must pass over much in order to emphasise one or two very telling incidents. The Doctor presented a sample of all his wares. One of these was a very touching sample—namely, a band of cripples, who made their way slowly on crutches down the passage to the platform—for it is one of the noteworthy points in this Mission that no destitute boy is turned away, whether he be well or ill, crippled or sound. So, also, there was a small procession of neat, pleasant-looking nurses, each leading one or more mites of forsaken humanity from "Babies' Castle."

But it seemed to me that the kernel of the nut had been reached, and the foundation of the God-like Mission laid bare for our inspection, when the raw material was led forth. We had got accustomed by that time to turn an expectant gaze at a far distant door when the Doctor's voice ceased or his whistle sounded. Presently a solitary nurse with the neat familiar white cap and apron appeared at the door leading two little creatures by the hand. A hush—a distinct though indescribable sensation—as of profound pity and pathos,—passed over the vast assembly as a little boy and girl direct from the slums were led forward. The nurse had to walk slowly to accommodate her pace to theirs. Half naked, ragged, dirty, unkempt, bereft of their natural guardians, or forsaken by them—helpless, yet left to help themselves almost before they could walk! Forward they came to the central platform, casting timid, wondering glances around at the mighty host of well-to-do beings, not one of whom, perhaps, ever knew what it is to hunger for a whole day and lie down at night with a door-step for a pillow. Oh, it was pitiful! the Doctor advanced to these forlorn ones and took them by the hands with inexpressible tenderness, and then, facing the assembly, broke the silence and presented the human material which it was, under God, his mission in life to rescue.

Then turning abruptly to the flower-bed in the orchestra, he signalled with his finger. A flower that might well have been styled a rosebud—a neat little girl in pink with a natty straw hat—tripped lightly down and stood on the platform beside the poor waifs. Looking up once more to the entranced audience and pointing to the children, the Doctor said

—
"Such as these are, she was but a few months ago, and such as she is now they will soon become, with God's

blessing.”

I may not quote the words correctly, but that is my recollection of the substance.

The Doctor was not content, however, to show us the foundation and progress of his work. He showed us the work, as it were, completed, in the form of a band of sturdy young men in their working costume, ready to start as rescued, trained, useful, earnest labourers for the fields of Manitoba—young men who all had once been lost waifs and strays.

Still further, he, as it were, put the capstone on his glorious work by presenting a band of men and women—“old boys and girls”—who had been tested by rough contact with the world and its temptations, and had come off victorious “by keeping their situations with credit” for periods varying from one to nine years—kept by the power of Christ!

When I saw the little waifs and looked up at the bands of happy children before me, and thought of the thousands more in the “Homes,” and of the multitudes which have passed through these Homes in years gone by; the gladness and the great boon to humanity which must have resulted, and of the terrible crime and degradation that might have been—my heart offered the prayer, which at that moment my voice could not have uttered—“God bless and prosper Dr Barnardo and his work!”

I hear a voice from the “Back of Beyond,” or some such far off locality—a timid voice, perhaps that of a juvenile who knows little, and can scarce be expected to care much, about London—asking “Who is Dr Barnardo?”

For the sake of that innocent one I reply that he is a Scavenger—the chief of London Scavengers! He and his subordinates sweep up the human rubbish of the slums and shoot it into a receptacle at 18 Stepney Causeway, where they manipulate and wash it, and subject it to a variety of processes which result, with God’s blessing, in the recovery of innumerable jewels of inestimable value. I say inestimable, because men have not yet found a method of fixing the exact value of human souls and rescued lives. The “rubbish” which is gathered consists of destitute children. The Assistant Scavengers are men and women who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter Thirteen.

A Knotty Question.

“Tom Blunt,” said Richard Sharp, “I deny your premises, condemn your reasoning as illogical, and reject your conclusions with scorn!”

The youth who made this remark with very considerable assurance and emphasis was a student. His fellow-student received it with an air of bland good-nature.

“Dick,” said he, “your oratory is rotund, and if it were convincing might be impressive; but it fails to some extent in consequence of a certain smack of self-assertion which is unphilosophical. Suppose, now, that we have this matter out in a calm, dispassionate manner, without ‘tooth,’ or egotism, or prejudice, which tend so powerfully to mar human disputation and render it abortive.”

“With all my heart, Tom,” said the other, drawing close to the fire, placing one foot against the mantelpiece, as being a comfortable, though not elegant posture, resting his elbows on the arms of his chair, and placing his hands in that position—with all the finger tips touching each other—which seems, from the universal practice of civilised society, to assist mental elucidation. “I am quite prepared. Come on!”

“Stay; while my mind is working I like to have my hands employed. I will proceed with my monkey while we talk,” said Blunt, taking up a walking-stick, the head of which he had carved into the semblance of a monkey. “Sweet creature!” he added, kissing the object of his affection, and holding it out at arm’s-length. “Silent companion of my solitary rambles, and patient auditor of my most secret aspirations, you are becoming quite a work of art. A few more touches of the knife, and something like perfection shall have been attained! Look here, Dick, when I turn it towards the light—so—isn’t there a beauty about the contour of that upper lip and nose which—”

“Don’t be a fool, Tom,” interrupted his friend, somewhat impatiently; “you seem to me to be growing more and more imbecile every day. We did not sit down to discuss fine art—”

“True, Richard, true; but there is a power in the consideration of fine art, which, when judiciously interpolated in the affairs of life, tends to soften the asperities, to round away, as it were, the ruggedness of human intercourse, and produce a tranquillity of mind which is eminently conducive to—to—don’t you see?”

“No, I don’t see!”

“Then,” continued Blunt, applying his knife to one of the monkey’s eyes, “there arises the question—how far is this intellectual blindness the result of incapacity of intellectual vision, or of averted gaze, or of the wilful shutting of the intellectual eyelids?”

“Well, well, Tom, let that question alone for the present. Let us come to the point, for I wish to have my mind cleared up on the subject. You hold that gambling is wrong—essentially wrong.”

“I do; but let us not have a misunderstanding at the very beginning,” said Blunt. “By gambling I do not mean the playing of games. That is not gambling. What I understand by gambling is betting on games—or on anything—and the playing of games for the purpose of winning money, or anything that possesses value, great or small. Such gambling I hold to be wrong—essentially, morally, absolutely wrong, without one particle of right or good in it

whatever.”

As he spoke Blunt became slightly more earnest in tone, and less devoted to the monkey.

“Well, now, Tom, do you know I don’t see that.”

“If you did see it, my dear fellow,” returned Blunt, resuming his airy tone, “our discussion of the subject would be useless.”

“Well, then, I *can’t* see it to be wrong. Here are you and I. We want to have a game of billiards. It is uninteresting to play even billiards for nothing; but we each have a little money, and choose to risk a small sum. Our object is not gain, therefore we play for merely sixpenny points. We both agree to risk that sum. If I lose, all right. If you lose, all right. That’s fair, isn’t it?”

“No; it is undoubtedly equal, but not necessarily fair. Fair means ‘free from blemish,’ ‘pure,’ in other words, right. Two thieves may make a perfectly fair division of spoil; but the fairness of the division does not make their conduct fair or right. Neither of them is entitled to divide their gains at all. Their agreeing to do so does not make it fair.”

“Agreed, Tom, as regards thieves; but you and I are not thieves. We propose to act with that which is our own. We mutually agree to run the risk of loss, and to take our chance of gain. We have a right to do as we choose with our own. Is not that fair?”

“You pour out so many fallacies and half truths, Dick, that it is not easy to answer you right off.”

“Morally and politically you are wrong. Politically a man is not entitled to do what he chooses with his own. There are limitations. For instance, a man owns a house. Abstractly, he is entitled to burn it down if he chooses. But if his house abuts upon mine, he may not set it on fire if he chooses, because in so doing he would set fire to my house also, which is very much beyond his right. Then—”

“Oh, man, I understand all that,” said Sharp quickly. “Of course a man may put what he likes in his garden, but with such-like limitations as that he shall not set up a limekiln to choke his neighbours, or a piggery to breed disease; but gambling does nothing like that.”

“Does it not?” exclaimed Blunt. “Does it not ruin hundreds of men, turning them into sots and paupers, whereby the ruined gamblers become unable to pay their fair share of taxation; and, in addition, lay on the shoulders of respectable people the unfair burden of supporting them, and perhaps their families?”

“But what if the gambler has no family?”

“There still remains his ruined self to be maintained.”

“But suppose he is not ruined—that he manages, by gambling, to support himself?”

“In that case he still remains guilty of two mean and contemptible acts. On the one hand he produces nothing whatever to increase the wealth or happiness of the world, and, on the other hand, whatever he gains is a matter of direct loss and sorrow to others without any tangible equivalent. It is not so with the orator or the musician. Though their products are not indeed tangible they are distinctly real and valuable. During the hour of action the orator charms the ear, eye, and intellect. So does the musician. When the hour is past the heart is gladdened by the memory of what has been, and the hopes are aroused in anticipation of what may yet be in the future. As regards the orator, the lessons inculcated may be a lasting gain and pleasure, and source of widespread benefit through life. To a great extent this may also be said of the musician when words are wedded to music. Who has not heard of souls being delivered from spiritual darkness and brought into spiritual light by means of song?—a benefit which will last through eternity as well as time. Even the man of wealth who lives on the interest of his possessions is not necessarily a drone in the human hive. He may, by wise and careful use of his wealth, greatly increase the world’s riches. By the mere management of it he may fill up his days with useful and happy employment, and by devoting it and himself to God he may so influence the world for good that men shall bless him while he lives and mourn him profoundly when he dies. But what fraction of good is done by the gambler in all the wide world?”

“Much the same that is accomplished by the others,” put in Sharp at this point. “The orator gives pleasure to those who are fond of recitation or declamation; the musician pleases those who are fond of sweet sounds, and the gambler gives pleasure to men who are fond of the excitement of play. Besides, by paying his way he gives benefit to all whom he employs. He rents a house, he buys furniture, he eats food, all of which brings profit to house-owners, cabinet-makers, butchers, bakers, etcetera, and is good done to the world by the gambler.”

“Nay, friend Richard, not by the gambler, but by the money which the gambler spends.”

“Isn’t that much the same thing?”

“By no means. The money—or its equivalent—is created by some one else. The gambler merely passes it on. If he had never been born the same money would have been there for some one else to spend. The labour of the gambler has not added one penny to it. He brought nothing into the world, and has added nothing to the world’s pile, though he has managed to consume a good deal of its produce. Is there not something very mean and contemptible in this state of being? On the other hand the orator has spent laborious days and exerted much brain-power before he made himself capable of pleasing and benefiting his fellows. The musician has gone through exhausting drudgery and practice before being fit to thrill or instruct by means of his sweet sounds, and the man of wealth has had to be educated up to the point of using his possessions to profitable account—so that his fields shall grow heavier crops than they did when he began his work; his tenants shall be better housed than they were at first, and shall lead

healthier and happier lives to the great moral and material advantage of the community. Nearly all the other members of the hive produce, or help to produce, some sort of equivalent for the money they obtain. Even those who produce what is bad have still *something* to show for their money, and that something, bad though it be in one form, may be decidedly good in another form, or if put to another use. The gambler alone—except, perhaps, the absolute idler—enjoys the unenviable position of a thorough, out-and-out, unmitigated drone. He does absolutely *nothing*, except produce unhealthy excitement in himself and his fellows! He has nothing whatever to show for the money he has obtained except ‘risk,’ and that can hardly be styled a commodity.”

“I beg pardon,” interrupted Sharp, “the gambler produces skill; and there can be no doubt that hundreds of men derive as much pleasure from an exhibition of skill with the billiard-cue as others derive from an exhibition of skill with the flute or violin.”

“You forget, Dick, my boy, that skill with the billiard-cue is not gambling. What I condemn as being morally and politically wrong is betting on games and staking anything upon the issue of them. Gamblers are, if I may say so, a set of living pockets which circulate money about amongst themselves, one pocket gaining neither more nor less than what another pocket loses.”

“But you are now talking of professional gamblers, Tom. Of course I don’t defend these. What I do defend is my right to play, now and then, for sixpenny, or say shilling, or even half-crown points, without laying myself open to the charge of having been guilty of what you term a mean, dishonourable, unjust, contemptible act.”

“In other words, you wish to steal now and then without being called a thief! But come, old man, I won’t call you bad names. I know you don’t look at this matter as I do, and therefore I don’t think that you are either mean or contemptible. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that honourable, upright men may sometimes be reasoned into false beliefs, so that for a time they may fail to see the evil of that which they uphold. I am not infallible. If my reasoning is false, I stand open to correction.”

Laying the monkey down on the table at this point and looking earnestly at his friend, Tom Blunt continued—

“Let me ask a question, Dick. Is it for the sake of getting money that you gamble?”

“Certainly not,” returned his friend, with a slight touch of indignation. “You know that I *never* play for high stakes, and with penny or sixpenny points you know it is impossible for me either to win or lose any sum that would be worth a moment’s consideration. The game is all that I care for.”

“If so, why do you lose interest in the game when there are no stakes?”

“Oh—well, it’s hard to say; but the value of the stake cannot be that which adds interest, for it is so trifling.”

“I’m not so sure of that, Dick. You have heard gambling talked of as a disease.”

“Yes, but I don’t believe it is.”

“Do you believe that a miser is a morally diseased man?”

“Well, perhaps he is,” returned Sharp; “but a gambler is not necessarily a miser.”

“Yet the two have some symptoms of this moral disease in common. The miser is sometimes rich, nevertheless the covetous spirit is so strong in him that he gloats over a sixpence, has profound interest in gaining it, and mourns over it if lost. You, being well off with a rich and liberal father, yet declare that the interest of a game is much decreased if there are no stakes on it.”

“The cases are not parallel.”

“I did not say they were, but you must admit—indeed you have admitted—that you have one symptom of this disease in common with the miser.”

“What disease?”

“The love of money.”

Richard Sharp burst into a laugh at this, a good-humoured laugh in which there was more of amusement than annoyance.

“Tom, Tom,” he said, “how your notions about gambling seem to blind you to the true character of your friends! Did you ever see me gloating over gold, or hoarding sixpences, or going stealthily in the dead of night to secret places for the purpose of counting over my wealth? Have I not rather, on the contrary, got credit among my friends for being somewhat of a spendthrift? But go on, old fellow, what more have you to say against gambling—for you have not yet convinced me?”

“Hold on a bit. Let me pare off just a morsel of my monkey’s nose—there, that’s about as near perfection as is possible in a monkey. What a pity that he has not life enough to see his beautiful face in a glass! But perhaps it’s as well, for he would never see himself as others see him. Men never do. No doubt monkeys are the same. Well now,” continued Blunt, again laying down the stick, and becoming serious, “try if you can see the matter in this light. Two gamblers meet. Not blacklegs, observe, but respectable men, who nevertheless bet much, and play high, and keep ‘books,’ etcetera. One is rich, the other poor. Each wishes ardently to gain money from his friend. This is a somewhat low, unmanly wish, to begin with; but let it pass. The poor one has a wife and family to keep, and debts to pay. Many thousands of men, ay, and women, are in the same condition, and work hard to pay their debts. Our poor gambler,

however, does not like work. He prefers to take his chance at gambling; it is easier, he thinks, and it is certainly, in a way, more exciting than work. Our rich gambler has no need to work, but he also likes excitement, and he loves money. Neither of these men would condescend for one moment to ask a gift of money from the other, yet each is so keen to obtain his friend's money that they agree to stake it on a chance, or on the issue of a contest. For one to *take* the money from the other, who does not wish to part with it, would be unfair and wrong, of course; but their agreement gets rid of the difficulty. It has not altered the *conditions*, observe. Neither of them wishes to give up his money, but an arrangement has been come to, in virtue of which one consents to be a defrauder, and the other to be defrauded. Does the agreement make wrong right?"

"I think it does, because the gamblers have a right to make what agreement they please, as it is between themselves."

"Hold there, Dick. Suppose that the poor man loses. Is it then between themselves? Does not the rich gambler walk away with the money that was due to the poor one's butcher, baker, brewer, etcetera?"

"But the rich one did not know that. It is not his fault."

"That does not free the poor gambler from the dishonourable act of risking money which was not his own; and do you really think that if the rich one did know it he would return the money? I think not. The history of gambling does not point to many, if any, such cases of self-sacrifice. The truth is that selfishness in its meanest form is at the bottom of all gambling, though many gamblers may not quite see the fact. I want your money. I am too proud to ask it. I dare not demand it. I cannot cajole you out of it. I will not rob you. You are precisely in the same mind that I am. Come, let us resort to a trick, let us make an arrangement whereby one of us at least shall gain his sneaking, nefarious, unjust end, and we will, anyhow, have the excitement of leaving to chance which of us is to be the lucky man. Chance and luck! Dick Sharp, there is no such condition as chance or luck. It is as surely fixed in the mind of God which gambler is to gain and which to lose as it is that the morrow shall follow to-day."

"My dear Blunt, I had no idea you were such a fatalist," said Sharp in surprise.

"I am not a fatalist in the sense you mean," returned his friend. "Everything has been fixed from the beginning."

"Is not that fatalism of the most pronounced nature, Tom?"

"You don't seem to see that, among other fixtures, it was fixed that free-will should be given to man, and with it the right as well as the power to fix many things for himself, also the responsibility. Without free-will we could have had no responsibility. The mere fact that God of course *knew* what each man would will, did not alter the fixed arrangement that man has been left perfectly free to will as he pleases. I do not say that man is free to *do* as he pleases. Sometimes the doing is permitted; sometimes it is interfered with—never the willing. That is always and for ever free. Gamblers use their free-wills, often to their own great damage and ruin; just as good men use their free-wills to their great advantage and happiness. In both cases they make free use of the free-wills that have been bestowed on them."

"Then I suppose that you consider gambling, even to the smallest extent, to be sin?"

"I do."

"Under which of the ten commandments does it fall?"

"Thou shalt not covet."

Chapter Fourteen.

Two Remarkable Dreams.

Some natures are better than others. There can be no question about that. Some dispositions are born moderately sweet, others are born slightly sour. If you doubt the fact, reader, go study Nature, or get you to an argumentative friend and dispute the point. We refuse flatly to enter into a discussion of the subject.

Look at that little boy sleeping there under the railway arch in the East End of London—not the boy with the black hair and the hook nose and the square under-jaw, but the one with the curly head, the extremely dirty face, and the dimpled chin, on the tip of whose snub nose the rising sun shines with a power that causes it to resemble a glowing carbuncle on a visage still lying in shadow.

That little boy's disposition is sweet. You can see it in every line, in every curve, in every dimple of his dirty little face. He has not been sweetened by training, he has had no training—at least none from man or woman with a view to his good. He has no settled principles of any kind, good or bad. All his actions are the result of impulse based on mere animal propensity, but, like every other human being, he has a conscience. At the time of his introduction to the reader his conscience is, like himself, asleep, and it has not as yet been much enlightened. His name is Stumpy, but he was never christened.

Critical minds will object here that a boy would not be permitted to sleep under a railway arch, and that London houses would effectually prevent the rising sun from entering such a place. To which we reply that the arch in question was a semi-suburban arch; that it was the last, (or the first), of a series of arches, an insignificant arch under which nothing ever ran except stray cats and rats, and that it spanned a morsel of waste ground which gave upon a shabby street running due east, up which, every fine morning, the rising sun gushed in a flood of glory.

Each fleeting moment increased the light on Stumpy's upturned nose, until it tipped the dimpled chin and cheeks and at last kissed his eyelids. This appeared to suggest pleasant dreams, for the boy smiled like a dirty-faced angel. He even gave vent to an imbecile laugh, and then awoke.

Stumpy's eyes were huge and blue. The opening of them was like the revealing of unfathomable sky through clouds of roseate hue! They sparkled with a light all their own in addition to that of the sun, for there was in them a gleam of mischief as their owner poked his companion in the ribs and then tugged his hair.

"I say, you let me alone!" growled the companion, turning uneasily on his hard couch.

"I say, you get up," answered Stumpy, giving the companion a pinch on the tender part of his arm. "Come, look alive, Howlet. I sees a railway porter and a bobby."

Owlet, whose nose had suggested his name, had been regardless of the poke, the tug, and the pinch, but was alive to the hint. He at once came to the sitting posture on hearing the dreaded name of "bobby," and rubbed his eyes. On seeing that there was neither policeman nor guard near, he uttered an uncomplimentary remark and was about to lie down again, but was arrested by the animated expression of his comrade's face and the heaving of his shoulders.

"Why, what ever is the matter with you?" he demanded. "Are you goin' to bust yourself wi' larfin', by way of gettin' a appetite for the breakfast that you hain't no prospect of?"

To this Stumpy replied by pulling from his trousers pocket four shining pennies, which he held out with an air of triumph.

"Oh!" exclaimed Owlet; and then being unable to find words sufficiently expressive, he rubbed the place where the front of his waistcoat would have been if he had possessed one.

"Yes," said Stumpy, regarding the coppers with a pensive air, "I've slep' with you all night in my 'and, an' my 'and in my pocket, an' my knees doubled up to my chin to make all snug, an' now I'm going to have a tuck in—a blow out—a buster—a—"

He paused abruptly, and looking with a gleeful air at his companion, said—

"But that wasn't what I was laughin' at."

"Well, I suppose it warn't. What was it, then?"

The boy's eyes sparkled again, and for some moments a half-suppressed chuckling prevented speech.

"It was a dream," he said at last.

"A dream!" exclaimed Owlet contemptuously.

"I hate dreams. When I dreams 'em they're always about bobbies and magistrates, an' wittles, an' when other fellows tells about 'em they're so long-winded an' prosy. But I had a dream too. What was yours?"

"My dream was about a bobby," returned his friend. "See, here it is, an' I won't be long-winded or prosy, Howlet, so don't growl and spoil your appetite for that 'ere breakfast that's a-comin'. I dreamed—let me see, was it in Piccadilly—no, it was Oxford Street, close by Regent Street, where all the swells go to promenade, you know. Well, I sees a bobby—of course I never can go the length my little toe without seein' a bobby! but this bobby was a stunner. You never see'd sitch a feller. Not that he was big, or fierce, but he had a nose just two-foot-six long. I know for certain, for I'm a good judge o' size, besides, I went straight up to him, as bold as brass, and axed him how long it was, an' he told me without winkin'. The strange thing about it is that I wasn't a bit surprised at his nose. Wery odd, ain't it, eh, Howlet, that people never is surprised at anything they sees in dreams? I do b'lieve, now, if I was to see a man takin' a walk of a' arternoon with his head in his coat-tail pocket I'd take it quite as a matter of course.

"Well, w'en that bobby had told me his nose was two-foot-six inches long I feels a most unaccountable and astonishin' gush of indignation come over me. What it was at I don't know no more nor the man in the moon. P'raps it was the sudden thought of all the troubles that bobbies has brought on me from the day I was born till now. Anyhow, I was took awful bad. My buzzum felt fit to bust. I knowed that I must do somethin' to him or die; so I seized that bobby by the nose, and hauled him flat down on his breast. He was so took with surprise that he never made any struggle, but gived vent to a most awful howl. My joy at havin' so easily floored my natural enemy was such that I replied with a Cherokee yell. Then I gave his nose a pull up so strong that it well-nigh broke his neck an' set him straight on his pins again! Oh! Howlet, you can't think what a jolly dream it was. To do it all so easy, too!"

"Well, what happened arter that?" asked Owlet.

"Nothin' happened after that," returned Stumpy, with a somewhat sad expression on his usually gleeful visage. "It's a wery strange thing, Howlet, that dreams invariably wanishes away just at the most interestin' p'int. Did you ever notice that?"

"Notice it! I should think I did. Why the dream that I had w'en I was layin' alongside o' you was o' that sort exactly. It was all about wittles, too, an' it's made me that 'ungry I feels like a ravagin' wolf."

"Come along, then, Howlet, an' you an' me will ravage somethin' wi' them browns o' mine. We'll 'ave a good breakfast, though it should be our last, an' I'll stand treat."

"You're a trump, Stumpy; an' I'll tell you *my* dream as we goes along."

"Hall right—but mind you don't come prosy over me. I can't stand it no more nor yourself."

"You mind Dick Wilkin, don't you?"

"What—the young man from the country as I've see'd standin' at the dock gates day after day for weeks without getting took on?"

"That's him," continued Owlet, with a nod, as he shoved his hand into his trousers pockets. "He brought a wife and five kids from the country with him—thinkin' to better hisself in London. Ha! a sweet little town for a cove as is 'ard up to better hisself in—ho yes, certingly!" remarked the precocious boy in a tone of profound sarcasm.

"Well," he continued, "Dick Wilkin came to better hisself an' he set about it by rentin' a single room in Cherubs Court—a fine saloobrious spot, as you know, not far from the Tower. He 'ad a few bobs when he came, and bought a few sticks o' furniture, but I don't need for to tell *you*, Stumpy, that the most o' that soon went up the spout, and the Wilkins was retooed to beggary—waried off an' on with an odd job at the docks. It was when they first comed to town that I was down wi' that fever, or 'flenzy, or somethink o' that sort. The streets bein' my usual 'abitation, I 'ad no place in partikler to go to, an' by good luck, when I gave in, I lay down at the Wilkins' door. O! but I *was* bad—that bad that it seemed as if I should be cleared out o' my mortal carcass entirely—"

"Mulligrumps?" inquired his sympathetic friend.

"No, no. Nothin' o' that sort, but a kind of hot all-overishness, wi' pains that—but you can't understand it, Stumpy, if you've never 'ad it."

"Then I don't want to understand it. But what has all this to do wi' your dream?"

"Everythink to do with it, 'cause it was about them I was dreamin'. As I was sayin', I fell down at their door, an' they took me in, and Mrs Wilkin nussed me for weeks till I got better. Oh, she's a rare nuss is Mrs Wilkin. An' when I began to get better the kids all took to me. I don't know when I would have left them, but when times became bad, an' Dick couldn't git work, and Mrs Wilkin and the kids began to grow thin, I thought it was time for me to look out for myself, an' not remain a burden on 'em no longer. I know'd they wouldn't let me away without a rumpus, so I just gave 'em the slip, and that's 'ow I came to be on the streets again, an' fell in wi' you, Stumpy."

"'Ave you never seen 'em since?"

"Never."

"You ungrateful wagibone!"

"What was the use o' my goin' to see 'em w'en I 'ad nothin' to give 'em?" returned Owlet in an apologetic tone.

"You might 'ave given 'em the benefit of your advice if you 'ad nothin' else. But what did you dream about 'em?"

"I dreamt that they was all starvin'—which ain't unlikely to be true—an' I was so cut up about it, that I went straight off to a butcher's shop and stole a lot o' sasengers; then to a baker's and stole a loaf the size of a wheel-barrer; then to a grocer's and stole tea an' sugar; an' the strange thing was that neither the people o' the shops nor the bobbies seemed to think I was stealin'! Another coorious thing was that I carried all the things in my pockets—stuffed 'em in quite easy, though there was 'arf a sack o' coals among 'em!"

"Always the way in dreams," remarked his friend philosophically.

"Yes—ain't it jolly convenient?" continued the other. "Well, w'en I got to the 'ouse I set to work, made a rousin' fire, put on the kettle, cooked the wittles as if I'd bin born and bred in a 'otel, and in less than five minutes 'ad a smokin' dinner on the table, that would 'ave busted an alderman. In course the Wilkins axed no questions. Father, mother, five kids, and self all drew in our chairs, and sot down—"

"What fun!" exclaimed Stumpy.

"Ay, but you spoilt the fun, for it was just at that time you shoved your fist into my ribs, and woke me before one of us could get a bite o' that grub into our mouths. If we'd even 'ad time to smell it, that would 'ave bin somethink to remember."

"Howlet," said the other impressively, "d'ye think the Wilkins is livin' in the same place still?"

"As like as not."

"Could you find it again?"

"Could I find Saint Paul's, or the Moniment? I should think so!"

"Come along, then, and let's pay 'em a visit."

They were not long in finding the place—a dirty court at the farther end of a dark passage.

Owlet led the way to the top of a rickety stair, and knocked at one of the doors which opened on the landing. No answer was returned, but after a second application of the knuckles, accompanied by a touch of the toe, a growling voice was heard, then a sound of some one getting violently out of bed, a heavy tread on the floor, and the door was flung open.

"What d'ee want?" demanded a fierce, half-drunken man.

"Please, sir, does the Wilkins stop here?"

"No, they don't," and the door was shut with a bang.

"Sweet creature!" observed Stumpy as they turned disappointed away.

"Wonder if his mother 'as any more like 'im?" said Owlet.

"They've 'ad to change to the cellar," said a famished-looking woman, putting her head out of a door on the same landing. "D'ye want 'em?"

"In course we does, mother, else we wouldn't ax for 'em. W'ereabouts is the cellar?"

"Foot o' this stair."

Descending to the regions below, the two boys groped their way along an underground passage till they came to a door. It was opened by a woman, who timidly demanded what they wanted.

"It's me, Missis Wilkin. 'Ave you forgotten Howlet?"

With an exclamation of surprise and joy the woman flung the door wide, seized Owlet, dragged him into the room, and embraced him with as much affection as if he had been her own child. Instantly there arose a shout of juvenile joy, and Stumpy could see, in the semi-darkness, that four little creatures were helping their mother to overwhelm his friend, while a fifth—a biggish girl—was prevented from joining them by the necessity that lay on her to take care of the baby.

When the greetings were over, the sad condition of the family was soon explained, and a single glance round sufficed to show that they had reached the lowest state of destitution. It was a back room rather than a cellar, but the dirty pane of thick glass near the roof admitted only enough of light to make its wretchedness visible. A rickety table, two broken chairs, and a bedstead without a bottom was all the furniture left, and the grate was empty.

"We've been obleeged to pawn everything," said Mrs Wilkin, with difficulty suppressing a sob, "and I need hardly tell you why," she added, with a glance at the children, who were living skeletons.

The baby was perhaps the saddest object there, for it was so thin and weak that it had not strength to cry—though the faces which it frequently made were obviously the result of an effort to do so.

Much interested in the scene, young Stumpy stood admiring it patronisingly for a little, but when he heard the poor woman tell of their desperate struggle to merely keep themselves alive, his feelings were touched, and when he learned that not a bite of food had passed their lips since the previous morning, a sudden impulse swelled his little breast. He clutched his four pennies tightly; glanced quickly round; observed an empty basket in a corner; caught it up, and left the place hurriedly.

He had scarcely gone when the father of the family entered. The expression of his face and his whole bearing and aspect told eloquently of disappointment as he sat down with a heavy sigh.

"Stumped again," he said; "only a few hands took on."

The words sounded as a death-knell to the famishing family, and the man himself was too much cut up to take notice of the return of his friend Owlet, except by a slight nod of recognition.

Meanwhile Stumpy ran along several streets in quest of food. He had not far to run in such a locality. At a very small grocer's shop he purchased one halfpenny worth of tea and put it in his basket. To this he added one farthing's worth of milk, which the amiable milkman let him have in a small phial, on promise of its being returned. Two farthings more procured a small supply of coal, which he wrapped in two cabbage leaves. Then he looked about for a baker. One penny farthing of his fund having been spent, it behoved him to consider that the staff of life must be secured in preference to luxuries.

At this point the boy's nose told him of a most delicious smell which pervaded the air. He stood still for a moment and sniffed eagerly.

"Ah, ain't it prime? I've jist 'ad some," said another much smaller and very ragged street-boy who had noticed the sniff.

"What ever is it?" demanded Stumpy.

"Pea-soup," answered the other.

"Where?"

"Right round the corner. Look alive, they're shovellin' it out like one o'clock for *far'd'ns!*"

Our hero waited for no more. He dashed round the corner, and found a place where the Salvation Army was dispensing farthing and halfpenny breakfasts to a crowd of the hungriest and raggedest creatures he had ever seen, though his personal experience of London destitution was extensive.

"Here you are," said a smiling damsel in a poke bonnet. "I see you're in a hurry; how much do you want?"

“Ow much for a fard’n?” asked Stumpy, with the caution natural to a man of limited means.

A small bowl full of steaming soup was placed before him and a hunk of bread.

“For *one* fard’n?” inquired the boy in surprise.

“For one farthing,” replied the presiding angel in the poke bonnet.

“Here, young ‘ooman,” said Stumpy, setting down his basket, “let me ‘ave eleven fard’n’s worth right away. There’s a big family awaitin’ for it an’ they’re all starvin’, so do make haste.”

“But, dear boy, you’ve brought nothing to carry the soup in.”

Stumpy’s visage fell. The basket could not serve him here, and the rate at which the soup was being ladled out convinced him that if he were to return for a jug there would not be much left for him.

Observing his difficulty, the attendant said that she would lend him a jug if he would promise to bring it back. “Are you an honest boy?” she asked, with an amused look.

“About as honest as most kids o’ the same sort.”

“Well, I’ll trust you—and, mind, God sees you. There, now, don’t you fall and break it.”

Our hero was not long in returning to the dreary cellar, with the eleven basins of soup and eleven hunks of bread—all of which, with the previously purchased luxuries, he spread out on the rickety table, to the unutterable amazement and joy of the Wilkin family.

Need we say that it was a glorious feast? As there were only two chairs, the table was lifted inside of the bottomless bed, and some of the young people sat down on the frame thereof on one side, and some on the other side, while Mrs Wilkin and her husband occupied the places of honour at the head and foot. There was not much conversation at first. Hunger was too exacting, but in a short time tongues began to wag. Then the fire was lighted, and the kettle boiled, and the half-pennyworth of tea infused, and thus the sumptuous meal was agreeably washed down. Even the baby began—to recover under the genial influence of warm food, and made faces indicative of a wish to crow—but it failed, and went to sleep on sister’s shoulder instead. When it was all over poor Mrs Wilkin made an attempt to “return thanks” for the meal, but broke down and sobbed her gratitude.

Reader, this is no fancy sketch. It is founded on terrible fact, and gives but a faint idea of the wretchedness and poverty that prevail in London—even the London of *to-day*!

The End.

[Chapter 1](#) | [Chapter 2](#) | [Chapter 3](#) | [Chapter 4](#) | [Chapter 5](#) | [Chapter 6](#) | [Chapter 7](#) | [Chapter 8](#) | [Chapter 9](#) | [Chapter 10](#) | [Chapter 11](#) | [Chapter 12](#) | [Chapter 13](#) | [Chapter 14](#)

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