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Author: William Henry Giles Kingston

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W.H.G. Kingston

"The Voyages of the Ranger and Crusader"

Chapter One.

The Family Party.

"Harry, my boy; another slice of beef?" said Major Shafto, addressing his fine young sailor-son, a passed midshipman, lately come home from sea.

"No, thank you, since I could not, if I took it, pay due respect to the mince-pies and plum-pudding; but Willy here can manage another slice, I daresay. He has a notion, that he will have to feed for the future on 'salt junk' and 'hard tack.'"

Willy Dicey was going to sea, and had just been appointed to Harry Shafto's ship, the "Ranger."

Among the large party of family friends collected at Major Shafto's house on that Christmas Day not many years ago, was Lieutenant Dicey, a friend and neighbour of the Major's, who had served with him in the same regiment for many years. The Lieutenant had lost a leg, and, unable to purchase his company, had retired from the army. His eldest son, Charles, and two of his daughters, Emily and May, had arranged to go out and settle in New Zealand; and they expected shortly to sail. The Lieutenant would gladly have gone with them, but he had a delicate wife and several other children, and thought it wiser, therefore, to remain at home. The party was a happy and cheerful one. The fire burned brightly, showing that there was a hard frost outside. The lamp shed a brilliant light over the well-covered table, and the Major did his best to entertain his guests. The first course was removed, and then came a wonderful plum-pudding, and such dishes of mince-pies! And then the brandy was brought and poured over them, and set on fire; and Harry Shafto and Willy Dicey tried if they could not eat them while still blazing, and, of course, burned their mouths, eliciting shouts of laughter; and the whole party soon thought no more of the future, and were happy in the present. How Mrs Clagget's tongue did wag! She was a tall, old lady, going out to a nephew in New Zealand; and, as she was to be the companion of the young Diceys on the voyage, she had been asked to join the Christmas party.

Dinner was just over when voices were heard in the hall singing a Christmas carol, and all the guests went out to listen to the words which told of the glorious event which had, upwards of eighteen hundred years before, occurred in the distant East, and yet was of as much importance to all the human race, and will be to the end of time, as then. Ringers came next, and lastly mummers played their parts, according to an ancient custom, which some might consider "more honoured in the breach than in the observance." After this there was blind-man's buff, in which all the maid-servants as well as the children joined, and Mrs Clagget's own maid and the Diceys' Susan, who had come with the children. Well was that Christmas Day remembered by most of the party.

Soon after this the Diceys began to make active preparations for their intended voyage. Charles went up to London and engaged a passage for himself and sisters, and for Mrs Clagget, on board the "Crusader." He came back, describing her as a very fine vessel, and he seemed well pleased with her commander, Captain Westerway.

As the time for parting approached, the young people began to feel that it would prove a greater trial than they had expected. While talking of their future life in the colony, and anticipating the various novel scenes and the new existence they were to enjoy, they had scarcely considered the wrench to their feelings which they would have to endure. Mr and Mrs Dicey had felt this, probably, from the first; and therefore, when the trial came, they were better prepared for it. Willy was the first to be got ready to start with his friend, Harry Shafto. We will, therefore, follow their fortunes before we accompany our other friends on their voyage.

Chapter Two.

The “Ranger” sails.

Harry and Willy leave home—Journey to Portsmouth—The “Blue Posts”—Midshipmen’s tricks—On board the “Ranger”—The soldier-officers—The sergeant’s wife—Mrs Morley and her family—Mrs Rumbelow nurses Willy—Cape of Good Hope—Sent to land troops—The “Ranger” in danger—Driving towards shore—The last anchor holds—Sail made—Mrs Rumbelow’s sermon—Troops carried on.

One bright morning at the end of January, the Portsmouth coach drove up to Major Shafto’s door. The Diceys were breakfasting at the house, for Harry Shafto’s leave was up, and he was to take Willy with him on board the “Ranger,” then lying in Portsmouth harbour. Farewells were said, fond embraces exchanged, for Harry, though a tall young man, was not ashamed to kiss his mother again and again, and his dear young sisters; nor did Willy mind the tears which trickled unbidden from his eyes. His heart was very full; though he had so longed to go to sea, now that he was actually going, he felt that he should be ready, if required, to give up all his bright hopes, and stay at home.

In spite of the cold, the whole family came out and stood at the door while the two young sailors mounted to the top of the coach. “All right,” shouted the guard, as the last article of luggage was handed up. The coachman gave a gentle lash to his horses, and the lads, standing up, turned round to give a last fond look at all those they loved so well.

This, it must be understood, was some time before Charles Dicey and his sisters started on their more important expedition. The young sailors expected to be home again in little more than a year, or perhaps even in less time, for the “Ranger” was a Government troop-ship, with the usual officers and crew, however, of a sloop-of-war. Harry Shafto would have preferred being in a dashing frigate, but, at the same time, he was glad to serve under so worthy a captain as Commander Newcombe.

Harry and his young companion, on their arrival at Portsmouth, went to the “Blue Posts,”—not an aristocratic hotel, certainly, but one resorted to in those days by the junior officers of the service. Willy felt very proud of his new uniform, and could not help handling his dirk as he sat by Harry Shafto’s side in the coffee-room. Several midshipmen and masters’ assistants came in. Two or three who took their seats at the same table asked Willy to what ship he belonged. “To the ‘Ranger’,” he answered proudly; “and a very fine ship she is.”

“Oh, ay, a lobster carrier,” observed a young midshipman, in a squeaky voice. “I have heard of old Newcombe. He is the savage fellow who tars and feathers his midshipmen if they get the ship in irons, or cannot box the compass when he tells them to do it.”

“I have been told, on the contrary, that he is a very kind man,” answered Willy; “and as to getting the ship in irons or boxing the compass, I do not think he would allow either the one thing or the other.”

“What! do you mean to call my word in question, youngster?” exclaimed the midshipman. “Do you know who I am?”

“Tell him you think he has eaten a good deal of the stuff they feed geese on,” whispered Harry.

Willy did as he was advised. The midshipman on this got very angry, especially when all his companions laughed at him, and advised him to let the “young chip” alone, as there was evidently an “old block” at his elbow, who was not likely to stand nonsense. At last the midshipman, who said that his name was Peter Patch, acknowledged that he himself had just been appointed to the “Ranger,” and that he believed old Newcombe to be a very good sort of a fellow, considering what officers generally are.

Next morning, after breakfast, Harry and his young companion went on board their ship, and Harry reported himself and Willy to the first-lieutenant, Mr Tobin. Captain Newcombe was on board; and when Harry, accompanied by Willy, went up and spoke to him on the quarterdeck, he received them very kindly.

Willy, by Harry’s advice, set to work at once to learn his duty. Peter Patch, though fond of practical jokes, was very good-natured, and assisted him as far as he could, telling him the names of the ropes, and showing him how to knot and splice, and the principle of sailing and steering a ship. Willy, who was a sharp little fellow, quickly took in all the instruction given him.

The midshipmen’s berth was somewhat confined, as, indeed, were those of the other officers, as a large portion of the space below was given up for the use of the troops. The poop cabins were devoted to the accommodation of the military officers and their families. There was also a space occupied by the hospital, and another portion by the women who accompanied the regiment, certain non-commissioned officers and privates being allowed to have their wives and children with them.

At length the ship was ready, and the soldiers were seen approaching her from Gosport. As they came up the side, they formed on deck, and each man had his allotted berth shown him; so that, although there were two hundred men, with a proportionate number of non-commissioned officers and their wives and families, there was perfect order and regularity observed. The “Ranger” had the honour of conveying Colonel Morley, who commanded the regiment, and there was a Mrs and two Miss Morleys. Then there was Captain Power, Captain Gosling, and Captain Twopenny; and Lieutenants Dawson, Hickman, and Ward; with Ensigns Holt and Gonne. There was a surgeon, David Davis, who hailed from Wales; and a paymaster, who was the stoutest man on board. There were several sergeants, but only one, Serjeant Rumbelow, whose name it is necessary to record. He was accompanied by his wife, who was a person well capable of keeping order, not only among the soldiers’ wives, but among the soldiers themselves. She was a woman of powerful frame and voice, tall and gaunt, and of a dauntless spirit. The regiment had not been on board many hours before Willy saw her go up to two young soldiers who were quarrelling. Seizing them, she knocked their heads together. “There, lads,” she exclaimed; “make it up this moment, or the next time I catch you at that work I’ll knock them a precious deal harder.”

Willy Dicey looked with a good deal of awe at Mrs Morley and her daughters, who appeared to be very great people. They quickly made themselves at home in their cabins, and had their work-boxes out, and a number of things arranged, as if they had been living there for weeks. Captain Newcombe made some remark on the subject. Mrs Morley replied, laughing, “You need not be surprised, for this will be the tenth voyage I have made, and you may suppose, therefore, that I am pretty well accustomed to roughing it. This ship is like a royal yacht compared to some vessels I have sailed in. My husband was not always a colonel, and subalterns and their wives have to put up with rough quarters sometimes.”

Harry Shafto was glad to find that most of the officers were gentlemanly men, and there appeared every prospect of their having a pleasant voyage.

As soon as the troops were on board, the ship went out to Spithead, and having taken in her powder and a few more stores, with a fair wind she stood down Channel.

The “Ranger” had to undergo not a little tumbling about in the Bay of Biscay, no unusual occurrence in that part of the ocean: it contributed to shake people and things into their places; and by the time she got into the latitude of Madeira, both military and naval officers, and the ladies on board, were pretty well acquainted. Colonel Morley found out that he had served with Major Shafto, and was very happy to make the acquaintance of his son; and Mrs Twopenny, for Captain Twopenny was married, was acquainted with the Diceys, and took Willy Dicey under her especial patronage. Mrs Rumbelow found out, somehow or other, that she had been nurse in his mother’s family, and, of course, Willy became a great pet of hers. Willy fell ill, and Mrs Rumbelow begged that she might nurse him, a favour very readily granted: indeed, had it not been for her watchful care, the doctor declared that little Dicey would have slipped through his fingers.

We need not accompany the “Ranger” in her course. With mostly favourable winds, she had a quick run to the Cape of Good Hope, and, without any accident, came to an anchor off Cape Town. Those who had not been there before looked with interest on the novel scene which presented itself from the anchorage. Willy Dicey, soon after his arrival, wrote a long letter home, from which one extract must be given:—

“Before us rose the perpendicular sides of Table Mountain, while on either hand we saw the crags of the Lion’s Head and Devil’s Peak, the former overhung by a large cloud, known as the Table-cloth. As it reached the edge, it seemed to fall down for a short distance, and then to disperse, melting away in the clear air. The town still preserves the characteristics given to it by its founders, many of the houses retaining a Dutch look, a considerable number of the inhabitants, indeed, having also the appearance of veritable Hollanders. The town is laid out regularly, most of the streets crossing each other at right angles, with rows of oak, poplar, and pine-trees lining the sides of the principal ones. Many of the houses have vine and rose-trees trailed over them; while the shutters and doors, and the woodwork generally, are painted of various colours, which give them a somewhat quaint but neat and picturesque appearance.”

Harry twice got a run on shore, but his duties confined him on board for the rest of the time the ship remained. She was on the point of sailing when news was received of a serious outbreak of the Kaffirs. A small body of troops on the frontier had been almost overwhelmed, and compelled to entrench themselves till relief could be sent to them. The Commander-in-chief accordingly ordered the “Ranger” to proceed immediately to the nearest point where it was supposed troops could be disembarked. It is known as Waterloo Bay. She arrived off the bay in the evening; but Captain Newcombe, not deeming it prudent to run into an unknown place during the night, stood away from the land, intending to return at daylight. In a short time, however, it fell calm. The lead was hove. It was evident that a current and swell combined were drifting the ship fast towards the shore, on which the surf was breaking heavily. On this the captain ordered an anchor to be let go, which happily brought her up. Though there was scarcely a breath of air, every now and then heavy rollers came slowly in, lifting the ship gently, and then, passing on, broke with a terrific roar on the rocky coast. The passengers were on deck. The young military officers chatted and laughed as usual, and endeavoured to make themselves agreeable to the ladies. Colonel Morley, however, looked grave. He clearly understood the dangerous position in which they were placed. Willy Dicey asked Harry what he thought about the matter.

“We must do our duty, and pray that the anchor may hold,” answered Harry.

“But if that gives way?” said Willy.

“We must let go another, and then another.”

“But if they fail us, and no breeze springs up?” said Willy.

“Then you and I must not expect to be admirals,” answered Harry.

“What do you mean?” asked the young midshipman.

“That a short time will show whether any one on board this ship is likely to be alive to-morrow,” said Shafto.

“You don’t mean to say that, Harry?” remarked Willy, feeling that the time had come when he must summon up all the courage he possessed, and of the amount he had as yet no experience. “You don’t seem afraid.”

“There’s a great deal of difference between knowing a danger and fearing to face it,” said Harry. “Not a seaman on board does not know it as well as I do, though they do not show what they think. Look at the captain—he is as cool and collected as if we were at anchor in a snug harbour; yet he is fully aware of the power of these rollers, and the nature of the ground which holds the anchor. There is the order to range another cable.”

Harry and Willy parted to attend to their respective duties. Night came on, but neither Commander Newcombe nor

any of his officers went below. They were anxiously looking out for a breeze which might enable the ship to stand off from the dangerous coast. The night was passing by, and still the anchor held; at length, in the morning watch, some time before daylight, a breeze sprang up from the eastward, and the order was given to get under weigh. As the men went stamping round the capstan, a loud crash was heard.

“The messenger has given way, sir,” cried Mr Tobin, the first-lieutenant. Out ran the cable to the clench, carrying away the stoppers, and passing through both compressors. At length the messenger was again shackled, and the anchor hove up, when it was found that both flukes had been carried away.

Not, however, for some hours did the ship succeed in reaching Waterloo Bay, where she brought up, about a mile and a-half from the landing-place. A signal was made:—“Can troops land?” which was answered from the shore, “Not until the weather moderates,” the wind having by this time increased to a stiff breeze. A spring was now got on the cable, in case of its being necessary to slip; for it was very evident, if so heavy a surf set on shore in comparatively fine weather, that, should it come on to blow from the southward, the position of the ship would be still more critical.

As the day drew on, the breeze freshened, but the rollers at the same time increased, and broke heavily half-a-cable’s length to the westward of the ship, foaming and roaring as they met the resistance of the rockbound shore. The position of the “Ranger” was more dangerous than ever. The crew were at their stations; the soldiers were on deck, divided into parties under their officers, ready to assist in any work they might be directed to perform. Topgallant masts and royal masts were got up, and everything was prepared for making sail. The order was now given for shortening in the cable. As it was got on board, it was found that it had swept over a sharp rock about fifty fathoms from the anchor, and it seemed a miracle that it had not been cut through.

“Avast heaving,” cried the captain. “Loose sails.” In an instant the crew were aloft.

At that moment, as the topsails were filling, the second-lieutenant cried out from forward, “The cable has parted.”

“Let go the second bower,” cried the captain. The ship was drifting towards the rocks. Willy held his breath. What Harry had said might soon be realised. Mrs Morley and her daughters were on deck. They stood together watching the shore. Their cheeks were paler than usual, but they showed no sign of alarm, talking calmly and earnestly together. As Willy Dicey observed them, he wondered whether they could be aware of the danger they were in. To be sure, they might be lowered into the boat before the ship struck, but then the Colonel was not likely to quit his men, and they could not be indifferent to his safety. Still the ship drifted.

“Let go the sheet-anchor,” was the next order. All were looking out anxiously to ascertain whether she was driving nearer the treacherous surf. Many a breast drew a relieved breath. The last anchor had brought her up. Sails were now furled and royal yards sent down.

Near the “Ranger” an English barque was at anchor. Her master came on board, and volunteered to assist in making a hawser fast to his vessel, for the purpose of casting the ship the right way. “You will find, Captain Newcombe, that the rollers will soon be increasing, and, knowing the place as I do, I have great doubts whether the anchors will hold,” he observed; “I wish you were well out of this.” As he spoke, he cast an anxious glance astern, where the surf was breaking with terrific violence. The offer was gladly accepted. The two cutters were accordingly lowered to take hawsers to the barque. On the sheet-anchor being weighed, it came up without resistance. Both flukes had been carried away. The only hope of safety depended on the remaining anchor and cable holding till sail could be made. In vain the boats attempted to carry the hawsers to the barque. A strong current sent them to leeward, and they were accordingly ordered again on board. Happily, at this moment the wind veered a point to the east. There is no necessity to tell the men to be sharp. The order to make sail is given. The crew swarm aloft; the soldiers, under proper guidance, are stationed at the halliards, and the tacks and sheets. The cable is slipped, single-reefed topsails, courses, topgallant sails, jibs, and driver set. Few among even the brave seamen who do not hold their breath and offer up a silent prayer that the ship may cast the right way. Hurra! round she comes. The sails fill. She moves through the water. The boats with the hawser get alongside and are hoisted up, and the old “Ranger” stands out towards the open sea. Is there a soul on board so dull and ungrateful as not to return fervent thanks to a gracious superintending God for deliverance from the imminent danger in which they have been placed?

As the ship drew off the land, the rollers were seen coming in with increased strength and size, and it was very evident that, had she not got under weigh at the time she did, she would have been dashed to pieces in the course, probably, of another short hour, and few of the soldiers and crew would have escaped. (Note 1.)

“I tell you what, boys,” said Mrs Rumbelow, “you will have to go through a good many dangers in the course of your lives may be, but never will you have a narrower escape than this. I was just now thinking where we all should be to-morrow, and wishing I could be certain that we should all meet together in heaven. Not that I think any one of us have a right to go there for any good we have ever done; only I wish you boys to recollect, when you are rapping out oaths and talking as you should not talk, that at any moment you may be called away out of this world; and just let me ask you if you think that you are fit to enter the only place a wise person would wish to live in for ever and ever?”

Mrs Rumbelow was not very lucid, it may be, in her theology, but she was very earnest, and the regiment benefited more than some might be ready to allow by her sayings and doings too. Things might have been much worse had it not been for her.

It being found impossible to land the troops, the “Ranger” returned to Simon’s Bay, where she was detained some time longer in replacing the anchors and cables she had lost. Captain Newcombe was exonerated for not carrying out his directions, seeing it was impossible to do so. A little army of regulars and volunteers was despatched from another station for the relief of the hard-pressed garrison, and arrived just as their last cartridge and last biscuit had been expended. Other troops also coming out from England, the “Ranger” proceeded towards her previous destination.

Note 1. In 1846 H.M.S. “Apollo” was placed under exactly the circumstances described. It was in this locality, also, that the “Birkenhead” troop-ship was lost.

Chapter Three.

The “Crusader” leaves for New Zealand.

The young emigrants—Going on board emigrant ship—The “Crusader” described—Voyage to Plymouth—The cabin passengers—A mysterious passenger—Last sight of England—Mr Paget’s good example—Employment for emigrants—Visit from Neptune—Mawson in the Triton’s hands.

Charles Dicey and his sisters were busily employed from morning till night, after Willy left home, in preparing for their intended voyage, and for their future life in New Zealand. Charles was a very fair carpenter. He had also learned how to shoe a horse and to milk a cow. The latter accomplishment his sisters also possessed. They also knew how to make butter, and to bake bread, and pies, and tarts. They could manufacture all sorts of preserves, and could cook in a variety of ways; while, since they were young girls, they had made all their own dresses; indeed, they possessed numerous valuable qualifications for their intended life in a colony. Charles was a fair judge of horse-flesh, and not a bad one of cattle and sheep. He also possessed steadiness and perseverance, and those who knew him best foretold that he would make a successful settler.

The time fixed for the sailing of the “Crusader” was drawing on. The “Ranger,” it must be remembered, had sailed a short time before. This fact should not be forgotten.

The day before the emigrant ship was to sail, the old Lieutenant accompanied his children up to London, and had the honour of escorting Mrs Clagget at the same time. Though the “Crusader” was to touch at Plymouth, they wisely went on board at the port from which she first sailed, that they might have time to get their cabins in order, and the luggage carefully stowed away.

“Bless you, my children,” said Lieutenant Dicey, as he kissed his young daughters, and held Charles’ hand, gazing earnestly into his countenance. “I entrust these dear girls to you, and I know that you will act a brother’s part, and protect them to the utmost. But there are dangers to be encountered, and we must pray to One in heaven, who has the power, if He sees fit, to guard you from them.”

The “Crusader” was a fine ship, of about a thousand tons, with a poop-deck, beneath which were the cabins for the first-class passengers. Below their cabins were those for the second-class passengers, while the between-decks was devoted to the use of the steerage passengers. Thus there were three ranks of people on board; indeed, including the officers and crow, the good ship presented a little world of itself. Old Captain Westerway was the sovereign—a mild despot, however; but if he was mild, his first mate, Mr William Windy, or Bill Windy, as he was generally called, was very much the contrary, and he took care to bring those who trespassed on the captain’s mildness very quickly under subjection. The “Crusader” was towed down the Thames, and when clear of the river, the Channel pilot, who was to take her to Plymouth, came on board. We shall know more of her passengers as she proceeds on her voyage.

She had a pleasant passage round to Plymouth, with just sufficient sea on for a few hours to shake people into their places, and to make them value the quiet of Plymouth harbour. The wise ones, after the tumbling about they had received, took the opportunity of securing all the loose articles in their cabins, so that they might be prepared for the next gale they were destined to encounter.

At Plymouth a good many steerage and a few more cabin passengers came on board the “Crusader.” Captain Westerway informed those who had come round from London that he expected to remain in that magnificent harbour three days at all events, and perhaps longer, before finally bidding farewell to Old England.

The Misses Dicey had a cabin to themselves, their brother had a small one near theirs, and Mrs Clagget had one on the opposite side of the saloon; but they could hear her tongue going from morning till night; and very often, at the latter period, addressing her next-door neighbour whenever she guessed that she was not asleep. There were two young men, Tom Loftus and Jack Ivyleaf by name, going out as settlers. With the former, who was gentlemanly and pleasing, Charles Dicey soon became intimate. A card, with the name of Mr Henry Paget, had been nailed to the door of one of the cabins hitherto unoccupied. “I wonder what he is like,” said Emily to her sister May. “His name sounds well, but of course that is no guide. Captain Westerway says an agent took his passage, and that he knows nothing about him.” At length a slightly-built gentleman, prepossessing in his appearance, if not handsome, came up the side, and presented a card with Mr Henry Paget on it. The steward immediately showed him into his cabin, where for a short time he was engaged in arranging several cases and other articles. He then going on deck, took a few solitary turns, apparently admiring the scenery. Returning below, he produced a book from his greatcoat pocket and began reading, proceedings duly remarked and commented on by his fellow-passengers. “Who can he be?”

“What is taking him out to New Zealand?” were questions asked over and over again, without eliciting any satisfactory reply.

In the second cabin there was a Mr and Mrs Bolton, very estimable people apparently, from the way they took care of their children. There was an oldish man, James Joel, and a young farmer, Luke Gravel. The last person who came on board told the mate, Bill Windy, as he stepped up the side, that his name was Job Mawson. He had paid his passage-money, and handed his ticket. Windy, who was a pretty good judge of character, eyed him narrowly. The waterman who had put him on board, as soon as the last article of his property was hoisted up, pulled off to the opposite side of the Sound from which the emigrants had come, and thus no information could be obtained from him. There was an unpleasant expression on the man’s countenance. His glance was furtive, and he always seemed to be expecting

some one to touch him on the shoulder, and say, “You are wanted;” so Charles remarked to his sisters.

It would be impossible to describe all the people. There were three other young ladies in the first cabin, and the steerage passengers were generally respectable persons, whose object in emigrating was to find sufficient scope for their industry. Some were farm labourers and farming people, others mechanics, and a few shopkeepers, who had been unsuccessful in England, but who hoped to do better in the colony.

At length the captain with his papers, and the agent, came on board, all visitors took their departure, the anchor was hove up, and the “Crusader” with a fair wind sailed out of the Sound. The next day she took her departure from the Land’s End, the last point of Old England many of those on board were destined to see. Mr Mawson now quickly recovered his spirits, and began to give himself the airs of a fine gentleman. “Circumstances compel me to take a second-class cabin,” he observed to Mr Paget, to whom he at first devoted his especial attention; “but you may suppose that, to a person of my birth and education, such is greatly repugnant to my feelings. However, this is one of the trials of life, sir, we must submit to with a good grace. Circumstances are circumstances, Mr Paget, and I am sure my young friend, Mr Dicey (I think, sir, that is your name?) will agree with me,” he added, turning to Charles.

“We make our own circumstances, sir, however,” answered Mr Paget, “by wise and prudent, or by foolish conduct, or by honest or dishonest dealings with our fellow-men. The upright man is not degraded by loss of fortune, and I have no doubt many persons of education go out in second-class cabins on board emigrant ships.”

“Of course they do, sir, of course,” exclaimed Mr Mawson; but either the tone or the words of Mr Paget did not please him, for he immediately afterwards walked away to another part of the ship.

Mr Paget had not been long on board before he visited the between-decks, and spoke to the fathers and mothers of the families on board. “It would be a pity that your children should be idle during the voyage,” he said; “and as perhaps some of them may be unable to read or write, I shall be happy to give them instruction.” In a short time he had a school established on board, and in a day or two afterwards he collected a Bible-class for the elder people; and then every morning he went below, and read the Bible to them, and offered up a prayer, and explained to them what he read.

“I thought, from his cut, he was one of those missionary fellows,” observed Mr Mawson to Charles Dicey with a sneer.

“I am very glad we have got such a person on board,” answered Charles, firmly. “If he will let me, I shall be very thankful to help him.”

Mr Paget gladly accepted Charles Dicey’s assistance, and the Miss Diceys offered to teach the girls, and they also undertook a sewing-class for the young women, many of whom scarcely knew how to use their needles properly. And then Tom Loftus, who was very ingenious, set to work to give employment to the young men. He got them to cut out models of all sorts, and showed them how to make brushes and other useful articles. Then he induced some of the sailors to teach them to knot and splice, and, indeed, to do all sorts of things.

“I am much obliged to you, gentlemen,” said Captain Westerway. “The last time I took out emigrants, they were almost in a state of mutiny. They had nothing to do on board, and idleness breeds mischief; and idle enough they were. Now, all these people seem as happy and contented as possible, and as far as I can judge, they are much the same class as the others.”

There was a black fiddler on board, who went by the name of Jumbo; and while he played the sailors danced, greatly to the amusement of the passengers. Jack Ivyleaf, who was up to all sorts of fun, used to join them, and soon learned to dance the hornpipe as well as the best dancer on board.

“I wonder, Mr Ivyleaf, you can so demean yourself,” exclaimed Mrs Clagget, when he came on the poop after his performance. “You, a gentleman, going and dancing among the sailors, and exhibiting yourself to the steerage passengers!”

“Why, Mrs Clagget, that is the very thing I did it for,” answered Jack, laughing. “I went on purpose to amuse them. I cannot teach them, like our friends Dicey and Loftus, and so I do what I can. I rather contemplate giving them some recitations, and I am going to sing some songs; and I am not at all certain that I will not act a play for their amusement.”

“Oh, you are incorrigible!” exclaimed Mrs Clagget; not that she really minded what Jack proposed to do, but she must say something.

The fine weather continued. Jack recited and sang songs to the people one evening, and the next he appeared in costume as a conjurer, and performed a number of wonderful tricks; and the third day he got an interesting book, and read out to them a story in a voice that might be heard right across the deck, so that he had a large number of auditors. At length it struck him that he might have a young men’s class; and before the day was over all the young men on board had begged to belong to it, so that he not only had plenty of pupils, but he got them on at a rapid rate. Thus the “Crusader” sailed onwards. The weather was getting hotter and hotter, and Jack Ivyleaf and several of his pupils were found to be especially busily employed in the forepart of the ship, with the assistance of the boatswain and some of the men; but what they were about no one could discover. At length Captain Westerway announced that the “Crusader” had reached the line. The sails were set, but there was so little wind that they hung against the masts, every now and then slowly bulging out, soon again to hang down in a discontented mood. The carpenter’s chips could be seen floating alongside sometimes for half-an-hour together, and the pitch in the seams of the deck bubbled and hissed, and the passengers, as they walked about, found their shoes sticking to it. Suddenly a loud noise was heard ahead. “Ship ahoy! What ship is that?”

“The ‘Crusader,’ Captain Westerway,” answered the master.

“Ay, ay, Captain Westerway, you are an old friend of mine, and I am sure you will welcome me on board,” sang out some one, apparently from beneath the bows.

“Who are you?” asked the captain.

“Daddy Neptune, to be sure,” answered the voice. “Don’t you know that? Your ship is just over my parlour windows, and shutting out the light, so that my wife and children can scarcely see to eat their porridge.”

“I beg your pardon, but that is not my fault, as your Majesty well knows,” answered Captain

Some strange figures were seen coming over the bows, one with a crown on his head and a trident in his hand.—*p.* 39.

Westerway. “However, you are welcome on board.” As he spoke, some strange figures were seen coming over the bows, one with a crown on his head, a trident in his hand, and a huge nose and brownish beard, which flowed over his breast. He was evidently Daddy Neptune himself. His companions were in sea-green dresses, with conch shells in their hands, and among them were half-a-dozen strange-looking fish, who came walloping about the deck as if they supposed themselves still to be swimming in the water.

“Well, Captain Westerway, as you are an old friend, I will grant any favour you like to ask; so just out with it, and don’t stand on ceremony,” said Neptune, in a familiar, easy way.

The captain replied, “As my passengers here are leaving their native shore, and are about to settle in a strange country, I must beg that, after you have mustered all hands, your Majesty will allow them to pass without the ceremonies which those who cross the line for the first time have usually to go through.”

The passengers were accordingly called up on deck, when most of them, in acknowledgment of his courtesy, presented Daddy Neptune with a fee, which he forthwith handed to an odd-looking monster whom he took care to introduce as his treasurer. Mr Job Mawson, however, kept out of the way, evidently determined to pay nothing. Neptune, who had been eyeing him for some time, now turned to his attendants. Four of them immediately sprang forward, when Mr Mawson, suspecting their intentions, took to flight. Round and round the deck he ran, pursued by the tritons, to escape from whom he sprang below; but in his fright he went down forward, so that he could not reach his own cabin, and he was soon hunted up again and chased as before, till at length, exhausted, and nearly frightened out of his wits, he was caught beneath the poop.

“Let him alone,” exclaimed Neptune; “he is beneath our notice, after all.”

Instead of the rough amusements often carried on on board ships crossing the line, a drama was acted by Neptune and his attendants, he being shortly afterwards joined by his wife and children, who had by this time, he observed, finished their breakfasts, and had come to pay their respects to their old friend, Captain Westerway.

Chapter Four.

A Seaman’s Superstition.

“Ranger” takes a southerly course—Albatrosses appear astern—Holt prepares his rifle—Miss Morley pleads for the birds—Holt kills an albatross—A superstition of seamen—The fate of the Ancient Mariner—Mrs Rumbelow’s opinions on the subject—Serjeant Rumbelow—Music heard over the ocean—A ship passed at night—A hail from the “Ranger”—Blowing hard—Mrs Rumbelow comforts the sick—The colonel cautions the commander—Look-out for icebergs—The colonel’s wife and daughters—The colonel’s practical religion—A calm.

The lofty height of Table Mountain sank lower and lower in the blue ocean as the “Ranger” stood towards the south.

“I propose taking the short circle on our voyage eastward,” said Commander Newcombe to Colonel Morley. “We may experience somewhat cold weather; but, at this time of the year we may hope to escape heavy gales, and it is important, with so many men on board, to make a quick passage. If, too, our water should run scarce, we may obtain a supply from the icebergs, with which it is not impossible we may fall in now and then.”

“I hope we may not run foul of one,” observed Colonel Morley.

“No fear of that, colonel, if we have our eyelids open, and our wits about us,” answered the commander of the “Ranger.”

The sea was calm, the wind light, and the “Ranger” glided proudly over the smooth sea. The ladies and most of the other passengers were on deck. Two or three of the lieutenants and ensigns brought up their rifles and proposed shooting at the albatrosses, which, with expanded wings, floated around the ship, now rising high in the air, now darting down on the scrapings of the mess tins which had been thrown overboard. Ensign Holt had just loaded his rifle.

“I think I can hit that fellow,” he exclaimed, pointing at a magnificent bird which, at the instant, came swooping down near the stern.

“Oh! do not be so cruel,” exclaimed Miss Morley, who observed him. “I could not suppose that anybody with right feeling would wish to deprive so beautiful a creature of its joyous existence. How delightful it must be to fly at freedom through the clear blue air, and remain thus, for days and weeks together, away from the heat and dust of the shore.”

The ensign reddened, and lowered his weapon from his shoulder, and the albatross swept off to a distance, far out of range of his rifle.

“I was only thinking of the good practice they would give us,” he observed; “but your interference, Miss Morley, has saved the bird’s life.”

“That is to say, Holt, it prevented you from firing,” observed Lieutenant Dawson; “it does not follow that the bird would have been the sufferer.”

Lieutenant Hickman and Ensign Gonne laughed heartily, for Holt was not celebrated for his shooting. The magnificent birds continued as before, hovering about the ship, not aware of the evil intentions harboured against them by the young officers.

Ensign Holt was nettled, and, notwithstanding Miss Morley’s remark, was longing for an opportunity of exhibiting his skill. She soon afterwards went below, when he again prepared, as he said, to bring down an albatross. He and his brother officers, however, fired several shots without producing any effect. A rifle ball at length striking one of the birds, the white feathers were seen flying from its breast; upwards it soared, making several wide circuits, then once more darted towards the surface of the water, apparently not in any way the sufferer.

While the young officers were thus engaged, Commander Newcombe appeared on the poop. “I do not wish to interfere with the amusements of my passengers,” he observed; “but we sailors are apt to be superstitious, and we hold to the idea, if one of those magnificent birds is wantonly killed by any one on board a ship, she is sure to meet with some misfortune.”

“Why, captain, I do not see that there can be any more harm in killing an albatross than shooting a pheasant,” answered Ensign Holt, who was somewhat vexed at being thus a second time interfered with.

“The pheasant, sir, might serve for dinner,” observed the commander, “but I do not fancy you would wish to eat an albatross, even should you happen to shoot one, and we could lower a boat and pick it up. I confess I do not like to see the creatures wantonly injured. You may break a leg or wing of one of them, and leave it to suffer and die out in the ocean here; but your rifle balls can scarcely penetrate the bird’s thick coat of feathers, unless you get a fair shot at close range, so as to kill it outright.”

The young ensign, who did not at all like to be thus thwarted by the commander, had been watching a bird which, bolder than its companions, had more than once swooped close up to the taffrail. Determined to prove that he was not the bad shot it was supposed, he had kept his rifle capped and ready; he lifted it as the commander spoke, and fired. The albatross rose for an instant, and then, with expanded wings, fell heavily into the water, where it was seen struggling in a vain effort to rise.

“You have done for him, old fellow, at all events,” cried Lieutenant Dawson.

“Well, Holt, you have retrieved your character,” remarked the other ensign.

“I wish that Mr Holt would have listened to my advice,” said the commander, turning away annoyed. The young officers were too much engaged watching the poor bird to observe this. In another instant the struggles of the wounded albatross ceased, and immediately several of its companions pounced down upon it, and, ere the ship had run it out of sight, the body was almost torn in pieces.

“Why, it appears that your pets are somewhat ferocious creatures,” observed Lieutenant Dawson, pointing out what had occurred to Commander Newcombe, who had again returned aft.

“That is their nature, gentlemen,” he replied; “I have an idea, too, that it was implanted in them for a beneficent

purpose. Better that the creature should be put out of its pain at once than linger on in agony. If we come to look into the matter, we shall find that every living creature is imbued with certain habits and propensities for a good purpose. I do not hold that anything happens by chance, or that the albatross is unworthy of being treated with humanity, because it acts in what you call a savage way. You will pardon me for being thus plain-spoken, gentlemen; and now Mr Holt has shown his skill by shooting one of those poor birds, I will ask you to favour me by not attempting to kill any more."

Though not over well pleased at the interference of the commander, the young officers, feeling that his rebuke was just, discharged their rifles in the air, and did not again produce them during the voyage.

Willy Dicey and Peter Patch had been on the poop when these remarks had been made. "I say, Dicey, do you suppose that the commander really believes harm will come to the ship because Ensign Holt killed the albatross?" asked Peter, as they took a turn together on the port side of the quarterdeck.

"I should think not," answered Willy. "I do not see what the one thing has to do with the other."

"The sailors say, however, that it is very unlucky to kill an albatross," observed Peter. "They fancy that the souls of people who die at sea fly about in the bodies of albatrosses, I suppose, or something of that sort—I am not quite certain; and for my part I wish that Ensign Holt had been less free with his rifle. I have always thought him a donkey, and donkeys do a good deal of mischief sometimes."

"I will ask Harry Shafto what he thinks about it," said Willy. "I have read a poem about a man who shot an albatross, and all the people died on board, and the ship went floating about till the masts and sails rotted, and he alone remained alive."

"I suppose he lived on the ship's stores then," observed Peter. "He would have had plenty to eat, as there was no one to share the grub with him; but I should not like to have been in his skin. Did he ever get to shore, or how did people come to know it?"

"I think the old hulk reached the land after a good many years," said Willy; "but I am not quite certain about that."

"He must have had a terrible life of it, all alone by himself," said Peter. "I should like to hear more of the story; but, I say, Dicey, are you certain that it is true?"

"No, I rather think it is a poet's fancy, for the story is written in verse," answered Willy.

"Well! that's some comfort," observed Peter; "because, you see, if the same thing was to happen to us, we should all have to die, and Ensign Holt would be the only person left on board the 'Ranger.'"

Harry Shafto soon afterwards coming on deck, the two midshipmen appealed to him for his opinion. Harry laughed heartily.

"I think, however, that those soldier-officers might as well have let the poor birds alone," he observed. "It is a cruel thing to shoot them, but I do not think any further harm will come of it."

Still, neither Peter nor Willy were quite satisfied. "I'll ask Mrs Rumbelow what she thinks about it," said Willy. "She will soon get the opinion of the seamen, and I should not quite like to ask them myself."

As soon as their watch was over, the two midshipmen went below, where they found Mrs Rumbelow seated on a chest, busily employed in darning her husband's stockings, or in some other feminine occupation, as was her wont: Mrs Rumbelow's fingers were never idle.

"Glad to see you, young gentlemen," she said, looking up from her work. "Well, Mr Dicey, you don't look like the same person you were before we reached the Cape; by the time you get home again they won't know you."

"If all goes well with us, perhaps not," said Willy; "but Ensign Holt has gone and killed an albatross, and perhaps, as you know, that is a very dreadful thing to do. They say that evil is sure, in consequence, to come to the ship."

Mrs Rumbelow looked at the faces of her two young visitors. "Do you think seriously that God rules the world in that fashion?" she asked, in a somewhat scornful tone. "Because a foolish young gentleman happens to kill a bird, will He who counts the hairs of our heads allow a number of His creatures, who have nothing to do with the matter, to suffer in consequence. Do not let such nonsense enter your heads, my dears."

"We wanted you, Mrs Rumbelow, to inquire of the seamen what they think about the matter," said Willy.

"I will do no such thing, and that's my answer," replied the sergeant's wife; "harm may come to the ship, but it won't be because of that, or anything of the sort."

Just then Sergeant Rumbelow himself came up: in appearance he was very unlike his wife. Whereas she was tall and thin, he was comparatively short and broad; indeed, though of the regulation height, his width made him appear shorter than he really was; while his countenance, though burnt and tanned by southern suns and exposure to all sorts of weather, was fat and rubicund. He held his sides and laughed so heartily at the account his wife gave him of the questions which had been put to her, that Willy and Peter wished they had not mentioned the subject.

The wind was light and the ship made but little way for several days. Shafto, though only a mate, did duty as a lieutenant. Willy was in his watch; it was the middle watch. Willy enjoyed such opportunities of talking with his friend. The sea was perfectly smooth, there was only wind sufficient just to fill the sails, and the ship was making scarcely three knots through the water. Every now and then a splash was heard; some monster of the deep rose to the

surface, and leaping forth, plunged back again into its native element. Strange sounds seemed to come from the far distance. A thick fog arose and shrouded the ship, so that nothing could be seen beyond the bowsprit.

“Keep a bright look-out there, forward,” sang out Shafto every now and then, in a clear ringing voice, which kept the watch forward on the alert.

“Hark!” said Willy; “I fancy I heard singing.”

“You heard the creaking yards against the masts, perhaps,” said Shafto.

“No, I am certain it is singing,” exclaimed Willy; “listen!”

Harry and his companion stopped in their walk; even Harry could not help confessing that he heard sweet sounds coming over the water. “Some emigrant ship, perhaps, bound out to Auckland,” he observed; “the passengers are enjoying themselves on deck, unwilling to retire to their close cabins. Sounds travel a long distance over the calm waters. She is on our beam, I suspect; but we must take care not to run into each other, in case she should be more on the bow than I suppose.” He hailed the forecastle to learn if the look-out could see anything. “Nothing in sight,” was the answer. “Keep a bright look-out, then,” he shouted. “Ay, ay, sir,” came from for’ard.

Soon after this the fog lifted. Far away on the starboard hand the dim outline of a tall ship appeared standing across their course. “She will pass under our stern if she keeps as she is now steering,” observed Harry; “the voices we heard must have come from her.”

The stranger approached, appearing like some vast phantom floating over the ocean, with her canvas spread on either hand to catch the light wind. “A sail on the starboard beam,” shouted the look-out, as he discovered her. It appeared as if she would pass within easy hail, when, just as Harry Shafto had told Willy to get a speaking-trumpet, she appeared to melt into a thin mist.

“What has become of her?” exclaimed Willy, feeling somewhat awe-struck.

“She has run into a bank of fog which we had not perceived,” said Shafto; “I will hail her;” and taking the speaking-trumpet, he shouted out, “What ship is that?” No answer came. Again he shouted, “This is Her Majesty’s ship ‘Ranger.’” All was silent. “Surely I cannot have been deceived,” he remarked; “my hail would have been answered if it had been heard.” Willy declared that he heard shouts and laughter, but Harry told him that was nonsense, and that undoubtedly the stranger was much further off than he had supposed her to be.

Before the watch was out, Harry had to turn the hands up to shorten sail; a strong breeze was blowing, increasing every instant in violence. Before morning the “Ranger” was ploughing her way through the ocean under close-reefed topsails, now rising to the summit of a sea, now plunged into the trough below. It was Willy’s first introduction to anything like a gale of wind.

“Well, Mr Dicey, you have at last got a sight of what the sea can be,” said Roger Bolland, the boatswain, with whom Willy was a favourite.

“I have got a feeling, too, of what it can do,” answered Willy, who was far from comfortable.

“Don’t you go and give in, though, like the soldiers below,” said the boatswain; “there are half of them on their backs already, and the gay young ensigns, who were boasting only the other day of what capital sailors they were, are as bad as the men.”

Though the whole battalion had been sick, Mrs Rumbelow was not going to knock under. She was as lively and active as ever, going about to the ladies’ cabins to assist them into their berths, and secure various articles which were left to tumble about at the mercy of the sea. If the truth must be known, she did not confine her attentions to them alone, but looked in as she passed on the young ensigns, offering consolation to one, handing another a little cold brandy and water, and doing her best to take comfort to all.

At length, after the ship had been tumbled about for nearly ten days, the gale began to abate, the soldiers recovered their legs, though looking somewhat pale and woebegone, and the cabin passengers once more appeared on deck. The weather, however, had by this time become very cold; there was no sitting down, as before, with work or book in hand, to while away the time; the ladies took to thick cloaks, and the military officers in their greatcoats walked the deck with rapid steps, as a matter of duty, for the sake of exercise. Gradually, too, the sea went down, and the “Ranger” glided forward on her course under her usual canvas.

Colonel Morley more than once asked the commander whether they had not by this time got into the latitude where icebergs were to be found. “We keep a sharp look-out for them, colonel, as I promised you,” answered the commander. “They are not objects we are likely to run upon while the weather remains clear, and as long as we have a good breeze there is no fear. They are, I confess, awkward customers to fall in with in a thick foe during a calm.”

“You may think I am over-anxious, captain,” observed the colonel, “but we cannot be too cautious with so many lives committed to our charge; and when I tell you that I was sole survivor of the whole wing of a regiment on board a ship lost by the over-confidence of her commander when I was an ensign, you will not be surprised at my mentioning the subject.”

“You are right, colonel, you are right,” said Commander Newcombe. “I pray that no such accident will happen to us; but danger must be run, though we who are knocking about at sea all our lives are apt to forget the fact till it comes upon us somewhat suddenly.”

Willy Dicey did not find keeping watch at night now quite so pleasant as in warmer latitudes; still, with his pea-coat

buttoned well up to his chin, and his cap drawn tightly down over his head, he kept his post bravely on the forecastle, where he now had the honour of being stationed. “He is the most trustworthy midshipman on board,” said Mr Tobin, the first-lieutenant. “I can always depend on him for keeping his eyes open, whereas Peter Patch is apt to shut his, and make-believe he is wide awake all the time.” This praise greatly encouraged Willy. He determined to do his best and deserve it. Blow high or blow low, he was at his station, never minding the salt sprays which dashed into his eyes, and at times nearly froze there, when the wind blew cold and strong.

The “Ranger” continued her course, making good way, the wind being generally favourable.

The only grumblers among the passengers were three or four of the young lieutenants and ensigns, who, having finished all their novels, and not being addicted to reading works of a more useful description, found the time hang heavily on their hands. They ought to have followed the example of the Miss Morleys and their mother, who were never idle. Very little has hitherto been said about them. They were both very nice girls, without a particle of affectation or nonsense, though they had lived in barracks for some portion of their lives. Fanny, the eldest, was fair, with blue eyes, somewhat *retroussé* nose, and good figure, and if not decidedly pretty, the expression of her countenance was so pleasing that no one found fault with any of her features. Emma was dark, not quite so tall as her sister, but decidedly handsomer, with hazel eyes and beautifully formed nose and mouth. As yet, perhaps, they had had no opportunity of giving decided proof of any higher qualities they may have possessed, but they were both right-minded, religious girls. Some of the officers pronounced them far too strict, others considered them haughty, and one or two even ventured to pronounce them prudish, because they showed no taste for the frivolous amusements in which the ordinary run of young ladies indulge; not that they objected to dance, or to join in a pleasant pic-nic; indeed, the few who did find fault with them complained only of the way in which they did those things. Ensign Holt, who was not a favourite, whispered that he thought them very deep, and that time would show whether they were a bit better than other people. Neither Fanny nor Emma would have cared much for the opinion of Ensign Holt, even had they been aware of it. He might possibly have been prejudiced, from the fact that Mrs Morley, though very kind and motherly to all the young officers, had found it necessary to encourage him less than the rest. Ensign Holt, and indeed most of his brother officers, had no conception of the principles which guided the Misses Morley or their parents. They looked upon their colonel as not a bad old fellow, though rather slow; but somehow or other he managed to keep his regiment in very good order, and all the men loved him, and looked up to him as to a father. It was his custom to read the Bible every day in his cabin to his wife and daughters; and as there was no chaplain on board, he acted the part of one for the benefit of his men. His sermons were delivered in a fine clear voice, and were certainly not too long for the patience of his hearers; but Ensign Holt insisted that they were too strict: he did not like that sort of theology. Lieutenants Dawson and Hickman were inclined to echo Holt’s opinion. Whatever the captains thought, they had the good taste to keep it to themselves. Indeed, Power, the senior captain in the regiment, was suspected of having a leaning toward the colonel’s sentiments. No one, however, could say that he was slow or soft: he was known to have done several gallant acts, and was a first-rate officer, a keen sportsman, and proficient in all athletic exercises. It was whispered that Power was the only man likely to succeed with either the Miss Morleys, though, as far as was observed, he paid them no particular attention; indeed, he was not looked upon as a marrying man. He was the only unmarried captain on board. Captain Gosling had left his wife at home; and Mrs Twopenny was in delicate health, and generally kept her cabin. She has not before been mentioned. There were no other ladies on board, but there were several soldiers’ wives, with their children, though, altogether, there were fewer women than are generally found in a troop-ship.

A calm unusual for these latitudes had prevailed for several days. Now and then a light wind would come from the northward, just filling the sails, but again dying away; now the ship glided slowly over the smooth water; now she remained so stationary that the chips of wood swept overboard from the carpenter’s bench floated for hours together alongside.

Peter Patch asked Willy whether he did not think that the fate which befell the ship of the Ancient Mariner was likely to be theirs.

“I hope not,” said Willy; “particularly if the icebergs, which they say are not far off, should get round us, we should find it terribly cold.”

“But we should not die of thirst, as the crew of that unfortunate ship did,” observed Peter; “that’s one comfort.”

“Very cold comfort, though,” said Willy, who now and then ventured on a joke, if only Peter and some other youngster were within hearing.

Chapter Five.

“Iceberg ahead!”

A gale springs up—A dark night—Sound of breakers—Ship running on an iceberg—The “Ranger” scrapes along the berg—Providential escape—Ensign Holt’s alarm—The carpenter reports a leak—The chain-pumps rigged—the “Ranger” on her beam-ends—The masts cut away—Running before the gale—All hands at the pumps—The weather moderates—Prepare to rig jury-masts.

Once more a strong breeze had sprung up from the westward, and the ship was making good way through the water.

Though it was the summer time in the southern hemisphere, the weather was very variable; now, when the wind came from the antarctic pole, bitterly cold; or drawing round and blowing from the north, after it had passed over the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, it was soft and balmy.

It was Harry Shafto’s morning watch; he had just relieved the second-lieutenant. Willy was for’ard. It was blowing

somewhat fresh, and the ship had a reef in her topsails and her courses set. The night was very dark. Willy having just been aroused from a midshipman's sound sleep, was rubbing his eyes to get them clear. Now he peered out ahead into the darkness, now he rubbed them again, and shut and opened them, to satisfy himself that they were in good order. He could not distinguish who was on the forecastle, but he knew by the voice that one of the best men in the ship, Paul Lizard, was by his side.

"I have seen many a dark night, Mr Dicey, but this pretty well beats them all," observed Paul. "It's not one I should like to be caught in on a lee-shore or a strange coast; though out here, in the open sea, there is nothing to fear, as the highway is a pretty wide one, and we are not likely to fall in with any other craft crossing our course."

"Very true," answered Willy; "but there is one thing I have been told to do, and that is to keep a bright look-out, though it may be difficult enough to see an object; even should one be ahead."

"On course, sir," said Paul, "what is our duty must be done, though it would be a hard matter to see the 'David Dunn' of Dover, even if our jibboom were over her taffrail."

"What ship is that?" asked Willy. "I never heard of her."

"The biggest ship that ever was or ever will be, sir," answered Paul, who was fond of a joke. "When she went about going up Channel once, her spanker pretty nigh swept away one of the towers of Calais, while her jibboom run right into Dover Castle."

"She must have been a big ship, then," said Willy.

The voice of the officer of the watch hailing the forecastle put a stop to Paul's wit. "Ay, ay, sir," he answered, in his usual stentorian voice; then he added, "It seems to be growing darker than ever." So Willy thought, but still he tried his best with his sharp young eyes to penetrate the gloom.

"I wish it would clear," observed Willy. "It is dark."

"It couldn't well be darker, sir," said Paul; "to my mind it would be wise to shorten sail, or heave the ship to. The captain knows best, though."

"It is getting very cold, though," said Dicey. "I can feel the difference since the last five minutes."

"I can't say I feel it," said Paul; "but hark, sir; I fancy I heard the sound of breakers."

Willy listened, bending forward in his eagerness. "Yes," he thought he heard a sound, and it seemed to be almost ahead, but yet it seemed to come from a long way off.

"It is only fancy after all," observed Paul. The other men for'ard could hear nothing.

A few minutes passed. "What is that?" exclaimed Willy, with startling energy. "There seems to be a great white wall rising up before us."

"Iceberg ahead!" shouted Paul, and he never hallooed louder in his life, "a little on the starboard bow."

"Starboard the helm," cried Harry from the quarterdeck. "Man the starboard braces. Brace the yards sharp up; call the captain; all hands on deck to save ship." Such were the orders he issued in rapid succession. In an instant the boatswain's whistle and the hoarse bawling of his mates was heard along the lower decks, and the ship, lately so silent and deserted, teemed with life. The crew came tumbling up from below, some with their clothes in their hands; the soldiers quickly followed, hurrying from their berths. Commander Newcombe and the other officers were on deck a few instants after the order to summon them had been given. He now took command, issuing his orders with the calmness of a man well inured to danger. Another voice was heard; it was that of Colonel Morley. "Soldiers, keep to your quarters," he shouted out. The men, who had been rushing on deck, without a murmur obeyed the command.

The danger was indeed imminent. Sheer out of the ocean rose a huge white mountain, directly against which the ship appeared to be running headlong; but, answering her helm, she came up to the wind, though not in sufficient time altogether to avoid the danger. As Willy looked up, he expected to see the yards strike the sides of the iceberg, for such it was. A grating sound was heard: now it seemed as if the ship would be thrown bodily on to the icy mass; still she moved forward; now she heeled over to the wind, the yards again almost touching the frozen cliffs. An active leaper might have sprung on to the berg, could footing have been found. Every moment the crew expected to find their ship held fast by some jutting point, and speedily dashed to pieces; the bravest held their breath, and had there been light, the countenances of those who were wont to laugh at danger might have been seen blanched with terror.

Again and again the ship struck, as she scraped by the berg. It seemed wonderful, indeed, to those ignorant of the cause, that she should continue to move forward, and be driven ever and anon actually away from the ice. This was caused by the undertow, which prevented her from being thrown bodily on to the berg. Not a word was spoken, not an order issued, for all that could be done had been done. All were aware, however, that, even should she scrape clear of the berg, the blows her sides were receiving might at any moment rip them open, and send her helplessly to the bottom of the cold ocean.

The voyager on such an occasion may well exclaim, "Vain is the help of man!"

Harry, with the second-lieutenant, had gone for'ard among the men stationed on the forecastle, all eagerly looking out in the hopes of seeing the extreme end of the berg. Suddenly the white wall seemed to terminate, the ship glided freely forward, rising to the sea, which came rolling in from the north-west.

“Sound the well, Mr Chisel,” said the commander to the carpenter. All on deck stood anxiously waiting his report.

The berg appeared on the quarter, gradually becoming less and less distinct, till what seemed like a thin white mist alone was seen, which soon melted away altogether in the thick darkness. Still all well knew that other bergs might be in the neighbourhood, and a similar danger might have to be encountered.

The officers paced the deck, looking out anxiously, and those who, while the danger lasted, had not felt the cold, hurried below to finish dressing as best they could, or buttoned up their flushing coats, and wrapped comforters round their necks.

Colonel Morley returned to the cabin to tell his wife and daughters that the danger had passed. He found them pale and anxious, but neither trembling nor fainting. The two girls were seated on each side of their mother, holding her hands. They had been fully aware of the danger in which the ship had been placed, and they had together been offering up their prayers for their own safety and for that of all on board.

Peter Patch, finding himself near Willy, whispered that he should like to go and see how Ensign Holt had behaved himself. He would have found the ensign seated on the deck of his cabin with his bed-clothes pulled over his head, much too alarmed to think, or to utter any sounds but “Oh! oh! oh! what is going to happen? Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, I wish I had not come!”

The other officers had collected in the main cabin, where Captain Power had taken his seat at the head of the table, giving encouragement to those around him, while their well-disciplined men, according to orders, kept to their quarters, the sergeants moving among them to see that no one went on deck. Mrs Rumbelow had taken the poor women under her charge, and did her best to comfort them.

“I told you so,” she exclaimed, when the ship was found to be moving easily forward, and those fearful grating sounds had ceased. “Just trust in God, and all will come right. Never cry out that all is lost while there is life, and even at the last moment hope that a way of deliverance may be found.”

The wind had increased, the courses had been taken off the ship, and she stood out under her topsails. It might have been supposed that nothing particular had occurred. All hands were at their stations, however, both watches being kept on deck; indeed, no one, even the most careless, felt inclined to go below.

The commander was walking the poop, awaiting the report of the carpenter; he had taken one or two turns, when a figure approached him.

“I don’t like the state of things,” said a voice which he recognised as that of Mr Chisel. “The ship is making water very rapidly; it’s coming in in several places, though the worst leaks are for’ard.”

“We must do our best to stop them, however,” answered the commander. “And, Mr Chisel, do not let more than necessary know this.” The first-lieutenant and master instantly hurried below to assist the carpenter in discovering the leaks. That they were high up seemed certain, and thus some hope existed that they might be reached. In time the chief injuries were discovered, and every effort was made to stop the leaks, old sails and blankets being used for the purpose. The pumps were immediately manned by the soldiers, who were told off to work them. Their clanking sound echoed along the decks, while, at the same time, the loud gush of the clear water rushing through the scuppers gave fearful proof of the large amount which must be rushing in. How eagerly all on board longed for daylight. The wind, however, was rising, and the ship heeled over on the side which had received the injury; she was accordingly put on the other tack, although it would take her out of her proper course.

All on board felt it to be a solemn time. The only sounds heard were those of the clanking pumps, and the gush of water as it was forced up from below. The wind was every instant increasing. The topsails were closely reefed, and the “Ranger” went plunging on into the fast-rising seas.

At length the cold light of early morn broke on the countenances of the crew; many looked pale and haggard. The past hours had been trying ones, and the soldiers, some in their shirts and trousers only, were labouring away manfully at the pumps; the crew at their stations, ready to obey the commands which any sudden emergency might demand. At length the carpenter reported that he had so far conquered the leaks that the ship might safely be put again on the port tack.

“Helm a-lee!” was heard. “Shift tacks and sheets! Mainsail haul! of all haul!” shouted Commander Newcombe; but at that instant, before the words were well out of his mouth, while the yards were in the act of being swung round, a terrific blast laid the ship over, a heavy sea striking her at the same time. For an instant it seemed as if she would never rise again. Shrieks were heart! rising from the foaming waters under her lee; several poor fellows were seen struggling amid them. No help could be given; no boat would have lived in that sea, had there been time to lower one, before they had sunk for ever. Their fate might soon be that of all on board.

The commander, after a moment’s consultation with the first-lieutenant and master, had summoned the carpenter, who appeared directly afterwards with his crew and several picked men with axes in their hands. They stood round the mizen-mast. “Cut,” he cried. The mizen shrouds were severed, a few splinters were seen to fly from the mast, and over it fell into the seething sea. Still the ship did not rise. They sprang to the mainmast. “That, too, must go,” said the commander, and issued the order to cut. In another instant the tall mast fell into the sea. For a moment it seemed doubtful whether that would have any effect. Suddenly the ship rose with a violent motion to an even keel, carrying away, as she did so, her fore-topmast. The helm was put up. Onwards she flew before the still-increasing gale. The seas rolled savagely up with foaming crests, as if trying to overwhelm her. To attempt to heave her to without any after-sail would now be hopeless.

Willy Dicey, who had gone aft, heard the commander remark to the first-lieutenant, that he hoped the gale would not

last long, as otherwise they might be driven in among the ice, which would be found in heavy packs to the south-east. “With a moderate breeze we might reach New Zealand in ten days or a fortnight,” he observed. “I trust we can keep the old ship afloat till then.”

“Chisel thinks the injuries very severe, though,” said the first-lieutenant; “still, with the aid of the soldiers, we can keep the pumps going without difficulty, and we may be thankful that we have them on board.”

All day long the “Ranger” ran on, the wind and sea rather increasing than in any way lessening. Night once more approached, but no sign appeared of the gale abating. The soldiers relieved each other bravely at the pumps. Had it not been for them, the seamen well knew that the ship must have gone down; for though they might have worked them well, their strength must in time have given in. Mrs Rumbelow continued her kind ministrations to the women and children below; she had a word, too, for the seamen and soldiers, who were allowed half-a-watch at a time to take some rest. “You see, laddies,” she observed, “how you can all help each other. If the ship is to be kept afloat, and our lives saved, it will be by all working together with a will; you soldiers, by labouring at the pumps, and the sailors by taking care of the ship. If all do their duty there’s he fear, boys. I only wish people could learn the same in the everyday concerns of life—the world would get on much more happily than it does.”

While the sea continued rolling and the ship tumbling about, there were no hopes of getting up jury-masts. That night was even more trying than the previous one. It was not quite so dark, for now and then the clouds cleared away, and the bright stars shone forth; but still it was impossible to say whether some big iceberg might not be ahead, or whether the ship might not be driven into the midst of a field of ice, which would be scarcely less dangerous. All night long she ran on before the gale. It would be hopeless to attempt bringing her on a wind while the storm continued, and yet she was running into unknown dangers. Before, when she almost ran into the iceberg, she had had her masts standing, and was under easy steering canvas; now, with her after-masts gone, should an iceberg rise in her course, it would be scarcely possible for her to escape it.

Not a single officer of the ship, and but few of the men, went below that night. The military officers took their turn at the pumps to relieve their men; for, although so many were ready for the duty, so great was the exertion required, that they could continue at it but a few minutes together. As soon as one man was knocked up, another sprang into his place.

Another day dawned. It is easy to imagine how anxiously the night had been spent by all on board, especially by the poor ladies and soldiers’ wives. Happy were those who knew the power and effect of prayer. Wonderfully had they been supported. Those who knew not how to pray had been seated with hands clasped, or lying down with their heads covered up, endeavouring to shut out all thought of the future. Mrs Morley and her daughters had remained in their cabin, calm, though not unmoved, visited every now and then by the colonel; yet he could afford them but little consolation with regard to the safety of the ship. All he could say was that the men were doing their duty, and that they must hope for the best.

Ensign Holt had been missed by his brother officers, and roused up, not very gently, and had been compelled to take his turn at the pumps. He ought to have been very much obliged to them, as those are best off who are actively engaged in times of danger, though he grumbled considerably, declaring that it was not in the articles of war, and that he did not see why he should be made to work at the pumps like the common men.

As the day advanced, though the weather remained thick and lowering, the wind began to abate; yet the sea ran still very high, and the ship laboured greatly. The seamen were making preparations, however, to set up jury-masts, the carpenter and his crew were busy in lashing the spars together for the purpose, and the boatswain and his party in preparing the rigging; but while the ship continued pitching and rolling as she was then doing, it would be impossible to set up the masts. “I often wished to encounter a gale of wind,” observed Peter Patch to Willy; “but, to confess the honest truth, now I know what it is, especially in these cold regions, I would rather have been excused.”

Chapter Six.

More Ice.

Hopes of escape—Harry’s advice to Willy—Among icebergs—wonderful appearance of ice islands—Getting up jury-masts—Drifting towards an iceberg—The icebergs moving—The ship strikes a berg—Consternation of passengers—The soldiers at the pumps—Ship driven stern-on to a berg—Fearful damage received—A slant of wind takes her off—The leaks increasing—Stores hove overboard—Jury-masts carried away—Attempts to stop the leaks—Matters become worse—An anxious night—The water gains on the leaks.

The “Ranger” had been running on for another night. Though the wind had fallen, there was too much sea to attempt rigging jury-masts, or heaving her to. The weather had been tolerably clear, and a bright look-out being kept, it was hoped that, should icebergs appear ahead, they might be seen in sufficient time to steer clear of them. During the whole time the commander had not gone below; indeed none of the officers had turned in, and a few only of the men had taken short snatches of sleep. Not for a moment had the clanging pumps ceased to work. At frequent intervals the carpenter had sounded the well, and reported that they were greatly gaining on the leaks.

“I hope, Willy, you will still be able to write home a long yarn of our adventures,” said Harry Shafto, as they stood together on the deck. “The sea has gone down considerably during the last two hours, and if we can pump the ship clear we may yet stop the leaks, get jury-masts up, and reach New Zealand not long after the time we were due.”

“I hope so,” said Willy, who was feeling somewhat worn-out, and whose spirits for a midshipman were getting unusually low. “I cannot help thinking of the poor fellows who were washed overboard, and thankful I ought to be that I was not among them. I was holding on when one of the men who was making his way for’ard was carried off by the

sea. I know I wish that it was daylight."

"It will soon come," said Harry, "and we shall get the ship to rights; and with regard to those poor fellows, I would not tell you not to think about them, but that their fate should teach us always to be ready. If we are so, we shall never fear to face danger."

"By the by, Willy, I wish to report your conduct to the commander. I find that it was your sharp eyes that first discovered the iceberg from which we so providentially escaped."

"Thank you," said Willy; "but I was only just doing my duty in keeping a bright look-out."

"Exactly," said Harry; "that's the utmost we can do, and all that is expected of any man; just go on, Willy, doing that, and you'll do well. But see, there is a light streak in the horizon; the clouds are clearing away. Though the ocean looks black enough at present, it will soon be sparkling with brightness."

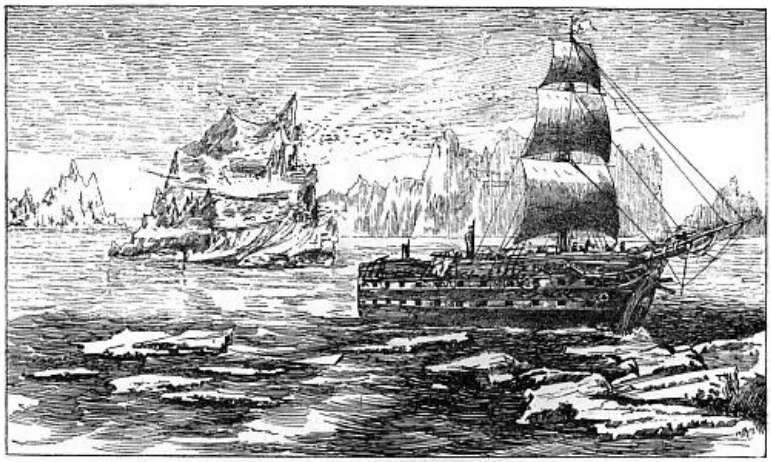
The two friends made their way along the deck to the forecastle, where they found the officers who were stationed there eagerly looking out. One declared that he saw land ahead. "If it is, daylight will soon show it," observed another. While the discussion was going on, the sea seemed on a sudden to go down, and the ship glided on in comparatively smooth water.

"It may or may not be land ahead," exclaimed the master; "but I tell you what—we are under the lee of a large field of ice, and it is a mercy we did not run on it in the dark. See, there! What do you think of that?"

Stretching far round in the eastern horizon, appeared a white line, clearly marked on the dark ocean. All hands were now called and set to work to get up jury-masts. Every one worked with a will, from the smallest boy on board. No time was to be lost. The soldiers were summoned on deck to lend a hand in pulling and hauling. Gradually the light increased, and, as it did so, the work went on more rapidly. Willy had but little time to look about him, but he could not help every now and then glancing towards the east, which was now illuminated by a rich, ruddy glow, extending far and wide, gradually melting into a yellow tint, that again vanished in the dark-blue sky overhead. Presently the sun itself rose out of the ocean, at first like a fiery arch, till, springing rapidly upwards, the whole circle appeared in view. Just then he turned his eyes to the right. He could not refrain from uttering an exclamation of astonishment; for there appeared, not a mile away to the westward, what seemed like a vast island of alabaster, covered with countless edifices—towers and columns, and embattled walls, glowing with numberless brilliant and varied hues. Colonel Morley, who had just then come on deck, observed it also, and pointing it out to the commander, hastened below to summon his wife and daughters to witness the beautiful spectacle. Commander Newcombe's countenance did not show that he was as pleased with the sight as the colonel had apparently been. Casting an anxious glance round, he summoned the first-lieutenant to his side, who seemed to be holding earnest conversation with him. Willy, who had gone aft on some duty, heard the latter remark, "We are embayed, sir, there is no doubt about it. All we can hope for is a breeze from the southward to get out again." Willy heard no more.

"Oh, how beautiful! oh, how magnificent!" exclaimed the Miss Morleys, as they reached the deck; "it is worth making a voyage to witness such a scene as that!"

Willy could now observe what he had only before partially seen. The whole ocean to the west was of



"The whole ocean to the west was of a deep purple hue, from out of which rose several superb icebergs.—*p.* 74.

a deep-purple hue, from out of which rose several superb icebergs; some could not have been less than a third of a mile in length, and from two to three hundred feet in height. The sides of one appeared perfectly smooth, as if carefully chiselled all over. In one of the nearest were seen bold projecting bluffs, with deep caverns beyond, into which the sea forced its way, rushing out again with a loud sound. On the summits of others appeared the towers and pinnacles, the ruined arches and buttressed walls, which had at first caught Willy's sight. It seemed, indeed, as if a large city of alabaster had once stood there, reduced to ruins by a convulsion of nature. Here appeared huge piles of buildings grouped together, with long lanes and streets winding irregularly through them, with what had been the citadel rising in their midst. As the sun rose, the whole mass became bathed in a red light. No words, however, can convey a full idea of the beauty and grandeur of the spectacle.

"I was thinking for a moment that I should like to get out my drawing-book and colour-box," said Emma Morley to her sister; "but I am sure it would be impossible to do anything like justice to such a scene."

"Those who have not witnessed it would believe that you had taken a painter's licence," answered her sister; "and yet I believe that you might produce a very fair idea of the scene. Let me go and get your drawing things."

Mrs Morley was afraid her daughters might suffer from the cold if they remained much longer on deck. Cloaks were, however, brought, and what her parents considered a masterly sketch was quickly produced by their young daughter. Little did they think at the time of the dangerous position in which the ship was still placed.

While the drawing was going on, numerous sea-birds were seen to be passing in and out of the caverns, now plunging down into the ocean to seek their breakfasts, now rising again and pitching upon the icy points and pinnacles as if they were their accustomed home.

“Don’t you think we have drawn nearer to that magnificent iceberg?” said Fanny to her sister.

“Yes, I am almost sure we have,” was the answer. “Papa, what do you think?”

“It is possible, but perhaps the changing light may have deceived us; it is difficult to calculate distances in this atmosphere.”

As may be supposed, they had been several times interrupted by the crew, who now and then came by leading aft the stays of the mast now at length set up. Scarcely any of the men cast more than a momentary glance at the icebergs, but this glance showed that they looked on them with no favourable eyes. All the time, too, it must be remembered, the pumps were kept clanking away as before. No human beings ever worked harder than the crew of the “Ranger;” they well knew, indeed, that they were labouring for their lives. Hour after hour passed by—there was no knocking off even for breakfast; it would be time enough to take their food when the sails were spread, and the ship was standing away from the beautiful but fearfully dangerous icebergs.

By the time the sun had risen high in the sky the water around had become of a dark-green hue, and now not only icebergs and the distant fields of ice were seen, but vast masses of drift ice were observed floating about. Already two or three yards had been got across, and the sails were being bent.

Willy found himself close to his friend Harry. “Shafto, you look unusually grave,” he observed; “you seem pretty well knocked up.”

“We all of us have reason to be grave,” answered Harry; “there is evidently a strong in-draught towards that big berg, and unless we can get the sails bent and a breeze to take us off, no human power can save us from driving against it, and then we shall be worse off than we were when we struck the berg the other night.”

“But don’t you think we shall get the sails bent in time?” asked Willy.

“We may get the sails bent, but the wind to fill them may not come; we must depend on Heaven’s mercy for that.”

Harry Shafto would not generally have spoken so despondingly, but he was well-nigh worn-out; and yet he probably did not see matters in a worse light than most of the other officers.

The passengers had been sometime before summoned below to breakfast, and only the crew and soldiers engaged in active duty remained on deck. They were all working away as hard as ever.

The foremast, which had stood, had been well stayed, and a fresh fore-topmast had also been got up. The captain and officers were watching anxiously for a breeze. It came at length from the southward. Sail was made, the ship was put before the wind, and it seemed that she was now about to move out of her dangerous position. “Let the people go below and get their breakfasts, Mr Tobin,” said the commander to the first-lieutenant; “they are well-nigh knocked up, and may still have heavy work before them.” The boatswain’s whistle was soon heard piping to the welcome meal, and the men gladly hurried below, though with less of the elasticity which they exhibited generally on such occasions.

The lofty icebergs were still dangerously near on the port side. Shafto and Willy, who had snatched a hurried meal in the midshipmen’s berth, were quickly again on deck, as were indeed many of the officers and men, those who had remained on duty going below. The ship made but slow way. In the far distance could still be seen a field of ice, which had hitherto sheltered them from the tumbling sea, which came in from the north-east; several large pieces were also floating about, and it required much watchful care to avoid them. But the chief danger evidently lay from the icebergs to the west; they, too, it appeared, were slowly moving and slightly changing their relative positions. The most northern of a line of bergs was much the largest, its summit towering far above the ship’s masts. The anxious glances which the commander and first-lieutenant occasionally cast towards it showed that they wished they were farther off. Still, as Willy looked over the side, and saw the calm waters and the clear space ahead, he could not fancy but that the ship would soon be out in the open sea. “I shall be quite sorry to lose sight of these beautiful icebergs,” he observed to Shafto; “it may be a long time before we again shall see anything like them.”

“And I shall be very thankful to bid farewell to them for ever,” answered Harry. “Just fancy what it would be to have the ship driven in under one of them. Should there be any sea at the time she would speedily be ground to pieces, or, as sometimes happens, the whole mass might come tumbling over and crush her, without a prospect of a human being on board escaping.”

“Very dreadful!” said Willy; “and I am thankful there is no chance, of that. In another ten minutes we shall be well clear of them.”

“I hope so,” said Harry; but still he looked grave.

They had just then reached the forecastle, where the master was standing.

Though the ship was moving on parallel to the side of the berg, the in-draught was evidently carrying her nearer and nearer it. The master had gone on to the end of the bowsprit, where he stood holding on by the stay, and looking

anxiously ahead; still it seemed as if no danger need be apprehended.

“What can the master be looking out for?” asked Peter Patch, who had just then come up to Willy; “we are all right enough at last.”

The words were scarcely out of the young midshipman’s mouth when a loud crash was heard. The ship trembled from stem to stern, and it appeared as if the masts were going by the board. Orders were instantly given to brace round the yards, so as to box the ship off. In so doing she made a stern-board, and drove rapidly in towards the berg. The sound of the first shock had brought all hands on deck. For a moment discipline was well-nigh lost: the soldiers, women, and children came rushing up from below, the poor women frantically shrieking and clinging to their husbands; even some of the seamen, who understood the danger, evidently thought that all hope was gone. The passengers, too, came hurrying up out of their cabins, with dismay on their countenances. Their alarm was still further increased when, in another instant, the stern of the ship struck with tremendous force against the mass of ice concealed below the surface; it seemed indeed as if the stern was completely stove in. At this juncture the voice of Colonel Morley was heard ordering the soldiers below. “Take your wives with you, and remain till you receive fresh orders; they will be safer there than on deck,” he exclaimed.

“To your stations, men,” shouted Commander Newcombe. “We are not going to lose the ship yet.”

The officers hurrying among the men soon brought them back to a sense of their duty. It was found, however, that the damage the ship had received was very severe. The rudder had been torn from its position; the starboard tiller rope had been carried away, and the neck of the rudder was wrenched off so as to render it unserviceable. Believing tackles were at once applied to the tiller, in hopes that the rudder might be made to work; but after several attempts it was found to be utterly useless. In vain were the yards braced round. Without the use of the rudder the ship could not be got sufficiently off to give her head-way. Slowly she continued to drive towards the monstrous berg, which threatened, should she strike it, to overwhelm her in an instant.

“A slight shift of wind would take her off,” observed the first-lieutenant to the commander.

“I pray that it may come, then,” was the answer.

Again and again the ship struck, evidently on each occasion receiving fearful damage. The soldiers who had been stationed at the pumps had knocked off, forgetting their duty in their alarm, when the ship first struck. The officers now went among them, and urged them to return; Colonel Morley had himself, however, to go before his orders were obeyed. The carpenter, who had been sent to sound the well, reported two feet in the hold. “We may keep that under,” observed the commander, “if the men do their duty.”

Mrs Rumbelow was not idle all this time. She had been from the first tending to the other women; but when she found that the men were inclined not to obey orders, she was in their midst in an instant. “What, my lads!” she exclaimed; “is this like you, to let the ship sink with your wives and children, and the good colonel, and his lady and daughters, and not do your best to keep her afloat? Shame on you! I would not have believed it if it had been told me!” In another moment the pumps were heard clanking away, and sending out the water as rapidly as before.

The ship was moving at a fearfully rapid rate towards the side of the vast iceberg. The crew, after the first alarm had subsided, exerted themselves manfully, and arrangements were being made for the dreaded encounter. Spars were got out and secured to the sides and quarters, but still some hope remained that the wind might catch her headsails, and pay her off in time to avoid it. Every instant, however, that hope lessened, and on she drove, stern foremost, till the summit of the berg appeared almost overhead. Close at hand was seen, between two bluffs, a vast cavern, into which it seemed more than probable that the ship would drive, and if so, her escape would be impossible.

Such moments try the stoutest hearts. Many countenances became pale, and some eyes were turned away from the danger; but the commander and officers faced it boldly, while the crew remained steadily at their stations. Willy Dicey fully understood the terrific danger in which they were placed. He looked at the blue sky, at the sun shining brightly, at the waters dancing gaily, and he thought of the loved ones at home, and of the little prospect which existed of their ever hearing of him again. But, boy though he was, even his young heart did not quail; he was at the post of duty, he knew that; and he knew that there was One all-powerful watching over him, who would carry him safely through the danger, if He thought fit.

Nearer and nearer the “Ranger” drew to the iceberg—the bravest held their breath as they saw that she must inevitably strike. Then came a fearful crash. So perpendicular was the side of the berg that the stern davits drove right against it. The stern boat was crushed in, a portion of the taffrail and the upper part of the spar-deck bulwarks wrenched off. It seemed as if the whole stern of the ship was about to be carried away. Her larboard quarter next came in contact with the ice, but the severity of the shock saved her; for after the damage which has been described was received, she again bounded off with a cant to starboard. The jib was instantly run up, and it and the other headsails catching the wind, away she glided from the berg. Those who had their eyes turned aft, however, could not refrain from uttering a cry of horror, for at that instant the berg, shaken by the concussion, threatened to fall over and crush them. From its summit down came rushing an avalanche of ice and snow, a portion of the mass even striking the poop. Still the ship glided on; the after-sails were trimmed, and again she was clear of another threatened danger. Yet, with the rudder gone, her stern crushed in, with numberless rents in her side, and two of her masts carried away, the “Ranger” was indeed in a perilous condition.

The first thing to be done was to get the rudder repaired. The breeze had increased, and rendered the operation difficult. The weather, too, had far from a satisfactory appearance. Whatever Commander Newcombe thought of the prospect of ultimately saving the ship, he was not the man to relax in his efforts till the last. It was no easy matter to steer the ship while the rudder was being repaired; the only means of doing so was by keeping the yards swinging to and fro, in order to direct the ship’s head towards the opening between the bergs.

Mrs Rumbelow insisted on lending a hand in pulling and hauling. “Why, boys,” she exclaimed, “I can do it as well as any of you, and I don’t see why a woman should be idle because she is a woman.” She well knew that by acting thus she should assist in keeping up the men’s spirits.

At length the rudder was shipped, but even then it could be only worked by relieving tackles, which required a number of hands for the purpose.

The carpenter had been so busy with the rudder that he had not for some time sounded the well. He now did so.

“Are we keeping the leaks under, Mr Chisel?” asked the commander, when he came to make his report.

“No, sir, I am sorry to say we are not,” he answered. “There are three feet of water in the hold, and I fear, from the damages the ship has received, that no power can keep her afloat much longer. If we cannot repair them, you know, sir, that it won’t be for want of our doing our best.”

“I am very sure of that, Mr Chisel, and hope that we may still overcome the leaks, if the sea continues tolerably smooth,” observed the commander. “But we must not let the pumps be idle.” He said this in a cheerful tone, that those who overheard the carpenter’s report might not lose heart.

The ship was now standing out clear of the ice, and being thus more exposed than before to the sea, which rolled in from the northward, began to labour heavily. In a short time the carpenter again reported that the water had gained another foot on the pumps in spite of the incessant way they had been kept going. The commander now summoned the superior officers round him, though what was said was not generally known. The first-lieutenant instantly collecting a party of men, led them between-decks, where, aided by some of the soldiers, they at once set to work to heave overboard such heavy stores and provisions as could be got at. Everything that had been received at the Cape was thrown overboard. The purser was in despair. “Remember, Tobin,” he observed, “we have got all these mouths to feed. We may as well drown at first as starve.”

“You are right, purser,” answered the first-lieutenant. “We will get up what provisions we can, and place them on the upper deck. They will soon be destroyed if they remain where they are.”

At length the ship got clear of the ice, and now the crew were piped below to snatch a hasty meal, those only required to work the rudder and the pump gangs remaining on duty. Matters did not change much till the sun went down in a bank of dark clouds, its rays casting a ruddy glow across the western sky. As darkness came on, the wind increased, the waters becoming covered with crests of foam, which danced and hissed around the ship. No one could be ignorant of their dangerous position; but in spite of it, most of the weary seamen and soldiers not actually on duty turned into their berths to sleep. The officers did so likewise, though they were aware that it might perhaps be the last sleep they should ever enjoy. Two persons, however, did not for a moment retire to their berths, the commander of the ship and the colonel of the regiment. Both felt that the lives of the people under them had been committed to their charge. The commander remained on deck to take advantage of any change for the better which might occur, or to guard against any fresh accident; and the colonel, that he might go among his men labouring at the pumps, and encourage them to persevere in their duty. The hammocks had been piped down as usual, and most of the men turned into them all standing. Willy Dicey had done the same, though, weary as he was, he could not for some time go to sleep—an unusual event in a midshipman’s career. He was thinking of home and the loved ones there, and those voyaging like himself; and when he did sleep, he continued dreaming of, that same home, and of his brother and sisters, now probably far distant from it. He fancied in his troubled dreams that he saw their ship tempest-tossed. Now her masts and yards were shattered. Onward she drove towards a rocky shore. He was there himself; he stretched out his arms, imploring them to keep at a distance. Still on came the ship; her destruction seemed inevitable. Wildly he waved his arms—he shrieked loudly. A dreadful crash was heard—the ship was split into a thousand fragments. He awoke. That loud crash rang in his ears; he sprang from his hammock, and rushed on deck. One of the jury-masts had gone.

Morning was breaking, the faint grey light exhibiting the destruction which had taken place, and the wild leaden-coloured sea, which rose in foaming billows around, now leaping here, now there, threatening destruction to the ship. At the same moment the boatswain’s whistle sounded shrilly, calling all hands on deck. While one party was endeavouring to secure the jury-mast which had been carried away, another was employed in fothering a sail: this, filled with oakum, was lowered over the bows and drawn under the keel, where it was hoped the water rushing in would suck it into the leaks, and thus contribute to stop them. It seemed, however, to have but little effect.

“We must try another sail,” said the commander. The sail was prepared, and, like the first, with great difficulty dragged under the ship’s bottom. The seamen employed in the work were drenched to the skin by the heavy seas which frequently broke over the hapless ship; still they persevered, no one flinching from the work. Harry Shafto attracted the notice of the commander by his activity. Willy Dicey imitated him to the best of his power. Although not so strong as a man, by his intelligence and comprehension of what was to be done he was able to direct others, and thus rendered good service.

“I say, Dicey,” exclaimed Peter Patch, who was standing near him, “do you think really the ship will go down? I feel awfully queer. I wish that I’d followed your advice about some things long ago. I should like to say my prayers, but I don’t know how to begin, and there isn’t time for it now.”

“That’s it,” answered Willy. “Had you said them morning and night, and not have been afraid of our messmates laughing at you, you would have known how to say them even while you are hard at work. I don’t think God would be well pleased if we all were to knock off, and go down on our knees to pray and ask Him for help while we were neglecting to help ourselves.”

“I must work now, at all events,” said Peter.

“Of course you must,” answered Willy, “or praying would be mockery; but you can pray out of your heart while you are pulling and hauling, or while you are running along the deck with a message.”

“I daresay you are right, Dicey,” sighed Peter; “but it’s very terrible. I had no thought, when we left England, that we should get into such a scrape as this. For what I see, we may all be drowned, or be driven on those fearful icebergs, and be frozen to death before many days are over.”

“Very true, Peter. I have been thinking the same; but it is our duty to struggle to the end—first to try and save the ship, and then our own lives.”

Matters did not mend as the day advanced. Again and again the carpenter sounded the well, and reported that the water had rather increased than diminished. The after-part of the deck was now scuttled, so that more provisions and stores could be got up and hove overboard. The pumps continued to be worked as energetically as at first, but still the water gained on them, till it reached the orlop-deck.

The fearful condition of the ship could no longer be concealed from the people. Even the most sanguine began to lose heart. Many cast wistful glances at the boats. Notwithstanding this, the commander kept them labouring at the pumps, still hoping against hope that the wind and sea might go down, and that the ship might be kept afloat. At length, however, some of the crew showed signs of giving in. Willy saw several of them steal off to hide themselves away, but he instantly followed and drove them up again; they grumbled, but obeyed.

“What’s the use of working when we shall have to go to the bottom in a few hours?” exclaimed one.

“I only wish we had a chance of getting to the spirit room,” cried another. “A short life and a merry one for me.”

“You should be ashamed of yourselves,” cried the young midshipman. “Are you men with souls, and do you wish to die like dogs?” The seamen, astonished at a mere boy thus addressing them, felt ashamed, and returned to their duty. Others, however, soon afterwards were seen behaving in the same manner. Willy, falling in with Mr Bolland, reported what he had observed.

“We will soon put a stop to that,” observed the boatswain, seizing a rope’s end. He was not long in hunting out the fellows.

The water continuing to rise, the poor women and children were now collected on the poop cabins.

There they sat, crouching down on the deck, holding their children in their arms, and hiding their pallid faces. Mrs Rumbelow was the only one who remained calm. She might have been a little more excited than usual, as she went among them, trying to cheer them up. “Do not be downhearted, my dear women,” she exclaimed. “There is a God in heaven, remember, who takes care of us. He may make the storm to cease, and keep the old ship afloat notwithstanding all the leaks she has got in her bottom. Do you think the men of our regiment are not going to do their duty, and work away at the pumps as long as the pumps will work? If they do not, we will go and handle them ourselves, and put them to shame. Hurrah, lasses! you think better of your young husbands than to suppose that, and we old ones have tried ours, and know that they will not shirk their duty.” Still, though Mrs Rumbelow spoke thus cheerfully, she had a heavy weight at her heart. She had been too often at sea not to know the danger the ship was in, and she observed no signs of the weather improving.

The night was again drawing on; Commander Newcombe had done his utmost. The ship was kept under easy sail, to relieve her as much as possible. He would get another sail fothered, which might help to keep out the water a few hours longer. “Should that fail,” he observed to Mr Tobin, “we must get the boats ready, and endeavour to save the lives of as many as they can hold.”

“Too true, sir,” was the answer. “I see no other prospect for us.”

“We must trust in God, Mr Tobin; He is our only hope,” observed the commander with a sigh.

Darkness came down once more upon the hapless ship as she lay rolling and pitching heavily in that cold antarctic sea. The pumps kept clanking away the whole night; the gush of water was heard even amid the roar of the waves, as it rushed from her sides. The men crouched down in groups at their stations in different parts of the ship, many a stout heart knowing full well that at any moment the fearful cry might be heard, “She is sinking! she is sinking!”

The colonel was in his cabin with his wife and daughters. Captain Power sat at the table reading, or endeavouring to read, and every now and then addressing a few remarks to the officers around him. They were mostly behaving as English gentlemen generally do behave under such circumstances, with calm courage, ready to perform any duty which might be required of them. The only person who did not show his face was the unhappy Ensign Holt, who kept himself shut up in his cabin for most of the time. Now and then he appeared, with a pale face, to inquire whether the leaks were being got under; and on being told that they were still gaining on the pumps, he rushed back again, with a look of dismay on his countenance.

Chapter Seven.

The “Crusader” in the Tropics.

Fine weather—Lights on the ocean—Flying-fish come on board—Tropic-birds—A shark caught—Southern constellations—A calm—Fever breaks out—Deaths among the emigrants—Mr Paget’s activity—The Diceys assist the sick—Signs of a coming breeze—A gale comes on—Jack-o’-lantern—Job Mawson’s alarm—Reefs shaken out—A man overboard—Charles and Windy go off in boat—Boat lost sight of—Search in vain for the

boat—Emily and May's grief.

Little did Charles Dicey and his sisters think of the fearful dangers to which their brother Willy was exposed. The "Crusader" sailed on over the smooth sea, with her white canvas spread out, towering to the sky, studding-sails on either side reaching to the very surface of the water.

An awning had been spread over the after-part of the ship, and beneath it the cabin passengers assembled, sheltered from the hot rays of the sun. Neither Charles nor Mr Paget were ever idle, and their example generally induced many of their companions to work also. Mrs Clagget, if she did nothing else, always contrived to keep her tongue going. Emily and May were usually well employed. Their attention, however, was frequently called to the various objects which appeared around them. They enjoyed watching the flights of flying-fish which darted with the speed of arrows out of the water, hovered like birds in the air for a few seconds, scarcely touching the foam-crested seas, and then sunk quickly again beneath the surface. "How beautiful and blue are the reflections on their glittering wings, how transparent their tiny bodies, how light their movements!" observed Emily; "they look like ocean elves, as they float through the air. What a happy life they must lead—now in the pure ocean, now getting an uninterrupted sight of the glorious sun and the clear sky above them."

"They would have a very different tale to tell, Miss Dicey, if they could speak to you," observed Mr Paget. "Could your eyes pierce through the surface, you would see some savage bonitos or dolphins pursuing the hapless fish who visit the air, not for amusement, but in the hopes of escaping from their persecutors."

Just then a large covey was seen to rise abeam close to the ship. They flew high into the air, and in an instant the deck was covered with their floundering bodies; their wings, dried by the heat of the sun, no longer spread out, they looked like ordinary fish.

"Catch them, catch them," cried Mrs Clagget; "they will make a delightful dish for dinner."

"Poor creatures—how unromantic you are," said Emily.

"I am practical, my dear. I pride myself on being practical," answered Mrs Clagget. "I prefer eating them myself to allowing the dolphins to have them for their supper." Jumbo, the cook's mate, seemed to be of Mrs Clagget's opinion, for in an instant he was among the poor fish, tumbling them into his bucket as fast as he could pick them up.

"That's a wise lad," observed the loquacious lady. "If any of you happened to be in a boat far away from land without provisions, you would be very glad to have a dish of those fish fly on board."

"But we happen to have plenty of provisions, and are not in want of the poor fish," said Charles. "However, if they were thrown overboard again, I suspect that they would have very little reason to thank us, as the bonitos would speedily swallow them up."

"Get them while you can, Mr Charles," said Mrs Clagget, nodding her head. "Some day, perhaps, you would be very thankful if you could only catch a single one, and be ready to eat it raw." Mrs Clagget's tongue was apt to run on so fast that she now and then said things, among the many she uttered, which came true, in which instances she never failed to boast of her prophetic powers. Shortly afterwards, a number of those beautiful inhabitants of tropical seas, the little Portuguese men-of-war, were seen floating round the ship on the crest of the waves, their out-spread fans sparkling and glistening with the transparent brightness of crystal; as the wind blew them gently through the sea, their wings reflected all the colours of the rainbow. As Emily and May were admiring them, they saw the terrible dismay the ship created among them, as she passed through their midst. As the ship sailed on, the sea-gulls of the northern ocean were succeeded by the high towering tropic-birds, several of which were seen; appearing at first like mere specks in the blue sky, where, with the wonderful balloon apparatus with which they are furnished, they floated calmly at their ease, then suddenly descending like bolts from the skies, they pounced down upon the nether world, to seize some hapless fish swimming unconscious of danger near the surface of the ocean. Beautiful creatures they appeared, with two long streamer-like feathers floating behind their wide-spreading wings. Now and then a sword-fish of a bright hue shot with gold darted by, and huge sharks might be seen turning up their evil eyes with longing glances toward the ship. Bill Windy did not fail to point them out to the boys who were sky-larking in the rigging, and to bid them take care not to fall overboard to become a prey of the monsters. One of the savage creatures continued to follow the ship so pertinaciously that the mate vowed he would punish him for his audacity.

"Either the brute will be catching some of us, or we must catch him," he observed, as he prepared a harpoon and line. Descending by the dolphin-striker, he stood on the bob-stay, watching with keen eye and lifted arm for the shark, which now dropped astern, now swam lazily alongside. Bill ordered one of the men to get out to the jibboom end with a piece of pork, and heave it as far ahead as he could fling. No sooner did the creature see the tempting bait than he darted forward, and turning round to seize it exposed the white under side of his body to a blow from Bill's harpoon, driven home with right good will. The men on deck who held the line hauled away on the slack, while others stood by with bowlines in their hands ready to slip them over the shark's head and tail.

"Haul away," cried the mate, who was on deck in a moment; and the savage creature, in spite of its convulsive struggles, was hoisted up, and lay a helpless captive on the forecastle. Here it continued to plunge and strike out with its tail, keeping the seamen at a respectful distance. Now and then one would rush in with a handspike and endeavour to give it a blow, which might have settled it; but so rapid were its movements that it was necessary to be wary, as one stroke of that tail would have been sufficient to break a man's leg. The shark was at length killed and cut up. In spite of its cannibal propensities, many of the emigrants gladly accepted portions, and even the seamen did not refuse to eat a slice of their hated foe.

While the day presented much to occupy the attention, the night also afforded many objects of interest. The constellations of the northern hemisphere were now sinking one by one in the ocean; the Great Bear disappeared,

followed by the Polar Star, and in their stead, towards the south, rose the Southern Cross, each night appearing higher and higher in the firmament. Charles and his sisters gazed at the beautiful constellation with deep interest. Beneath its glittering light they expected to pass the greatest portion of their future life; and it seemed to welcome them to the new world to which they were bound. Charles confessed that, interesting as it was, it scarcely equalled in beauty several of the northern constellations on which he had been accustomed to gaze. Now, too, the Magellanic clouds appeared in the heavens, composed probably of countless millions of worlds, so far away that the human mind can scarcely calculate their distance from this tiny world of ours. At night, also, Charles, with his sisters at his side, often watched the track of the ship on the ocean, which appeared like a broad road dotted with brilliant and innumerable stars; while on either side the waves were lighted up by thousands of electric sparks, appearing here and there; now lost altogether, now dispersed, as the waves rose and fell. Sometimes, when the wind freshened, and a huge sea broke against the bows with a tremendous crash, the spray appeared all alight, rising in the air to fall on deck like drops of fire.

“Who would not wish to come to sea to witness such a spectacle as this?” exclaimed Emily, with enthusiasm, as the whole ocean appeared glowing with flashes of brilliant light. The remark was made not to Mrs Clagget, but to Mr Paget, who stood by her side.

“You would scarcely suppose that this glorious illumination of the ocean is caused by countless numbers of minute living creatures,” he observed. “As the telescope reveals to us some of the wonders of the heavens, so the microscope enables to inspect many of the smallest of created beings.”

“What, Mr Paget, is every spark of light we see a living creature?” asked May.

“Yes, indeed,” was the answer. “And probably we see at a time not a thousandth part of the number of those which are floating around.”

The ship all this time had been standing over towards the coast of South America, then to steer parallel with it, till, feeling the influence of the trade winds, she was to keep eastward towards her destination. Hitherto good progress had been made, and a rapid passage was expected; but near the Tropic of Capricorn the wind fell, till a dead calm rested on the ocean; gradually every ripple was (as Mrs Clagget expressed it) smoothed out of the water. The sails hung idly down against the masts, chips of wood thrown overboard floated alongside, the sun struck down with terrific force, the whole sea shining like a sheet of burnished gold. The passengers could no longer bear the heat below; and when they came on deck, and sought whatever shade could be found, they gained but little by the change. Though the sky, after a time, became overcast, and a light steamy mist pervaded the atmosphere, the heat, rather than moderating, increased. Few on board could resist complaining. Night brought no relief. People who had appeared active enough before sat listless about the decks. Books, if open, were unread. The seamen even exhibited the same listlessness as the rest of those on board. Emily and May did their best to keep up their spirits, but their efforts were unavailing. Captain Westerway and Bill Windy were among the few who appeared unaffected. Mr Paget, also exerting himself to the utmost, went about his usual occupations, and endeavoured to revive the spirits of his companions. It was evident, however, that unless a breeze should spring up some evil consequences would too probably ensue. Day after day the ship floated on the glassy sea, no sail in sight, the only object ever visible beyond her deck being some wandering tropic bird, which might be seen hovering on high, watching with keen sight for its prey.

The surgeon appeared one morning with a grave face, to make his report to the captain. Several of the steerage passengers were on the sick list. As the day wore on, others were added to them: some, he feared, were cases of malignant fever. They were removed to a part of the ship screened off to serve as an hospital. Nothing else could be done except to fumigate the “between-decks,” that operation rather adding to the heat than otherwise. The cabin passengers at length became alarmed.

“Oh, dear, what shall we do if there is fever?” exclaimed Mrs Clagget to her young companions. “We must take care that no one ever comes near us.”

No one was more alarmed than Mr Job Mawson; for, in spite of the heat, he shut himself up in his cabin, and was afraid of coming in contact even with the steward, lest he should have passed near any of the sick emigrants. Mr Paget, on the contrary, was more active than ever; he, without hesitation, spent many hours of each day visiting those stricken down by disease, and endeavouring to rouse the spirits of those who had hitherto escaped. Charles Dicey, in spite of Mrs Clagget’s warnings, accompanied him, and gave every assistance in his power to the surgeon. Day after day others were added to the numbers already suffering from fever. One poor woman, the mother of a family, sank beneath it, and it was a sad spectacle to all on deck as the body, secured in canvas, and heavily weighted, was committed to the deep. The voice of Captain Westerway, generally so firm, trembled as he read the funeral service. Another and another followed. At last the good captain entreated Mr Paget to perform the painful duty for him. How every one longed for a breeze to carry the fever-stricken ship out of that inhospitable region! It was supposed that the disease must have been brought on board, and had only now developed itself, as the poor woman who had just died had been ill when she left England.

Emily and May had at first listened to Mrs Clagget’s advice, but when so many women and children became ill, they could no longer refrain from assisting in nursing them. Fearlessly they sat by the side of the sick, reading to the elder ones, and trying to soothe and comfort the younger children. Several children of the first poor woman who had died followed their mother to her watery grave.

Charles at first tried to persuade his sisters that they were not called upon to risk their health.

“Then why do you risk yours, brother?” asked Emily. “Your life, surely, is as precious as ours. You would get on very well without us, but we should be forlorn creatures indeed if left alone. I am sure we are but doing our duty, and there is One above who will protect us.”

“But I am more hardy than you are,” argued Charles. “I can go aloft, too, and get any germs of fever which I might have contracted blown away.”

“There is no wind to blow them away,” said Emily, “and we are not more likely to catch the fever than you are. Let us do our duty, and leave the rest to God.”

Still, though Charles was not thoroughly convinced, his sisters gained their object. That very day they visited the hospital, nursed the poor children, gave them their medicine and food, and rendered all the assistance they could to the sick mothers. Charles used to look anxiously at them every morning as they appeared at breakfast, fearful of hearing them complain of illness; but the bloom of health still glowed on their cheeks, and though grave, and sometimes sad when another victim had been added to those already taken off by the disease, they retained their spirits and courage.

“Really, Dicey, you are a brave fellow,” said Jack Ivyleaf one day, while Charles was taking his usual walk on deck for exercise. “I cannot bring myself to go among those sick people as you do. It’s all very well to go forward and amuse them when they are in health, and inclined to be jolly; but to go and sit in the hot, sweltering atmosphere between-decks is quite another thing.”

“Possibly, Mr Ivyleaf, you do not reflect that those poor sick people have immortal souls like ourselves,” observed Mr Paget, who had that instant joined them. “If we profess to be Christians we should look upon them as brothers in distress, and do our utmost for their souls as well as their bodies.”

“Ah, no, to be sure,” said Jack, keeping his mouth agape, and gazing at Mr Paget. “I should have thought that sort of work might be left to the parson and doctor.”

“But as we have no parson on board, and the doctor is overworked, does it not strike you that the poor people have a right to our assistance?” asked Mr Paget.

“Right! I don’t see that they can have any right!” said Jack; “though it’s very kind in you and Dicey to attend to them.” Jack Ivyleaf looked as if he was afraid that his companions wished to enlist him in the service he dreaded, and was evidently trying to make his escape from them.

The captain and first officer were on deck. The latter had been casting an eager look for some time to the north-west.

“We shall have it soon, sir,” he observed, pointing with his hand.

“Turn the hands up, Mr Windy, and trim sails,” said the captain in a cheerful voice. “See there, gentlemen, those clouds yonder are the pleasantest sight I have seen for many days.” A low bank of clouds could be observed resting on the horizon. It grew higher and higher every instant, while a dark line could be seen extending across the ocean in the same direction. The sea, however, continued as calm as before; around the ship not a ripple could be seen on its surface. The crew, hurrying from below, went to their stations, all eyes being turned in the direction of the approaching clouds. Presently cats’-paws began to play over the mirror-like expanse, and then to disappear; the sails slowly bulged out, and speedily again hung down as listlessly as before against the masts. The dark line grew brighter and brighter; presently the loftier sails swelled out, and the ship began to glide smoothly over the ocean. The joyful news was communicated below, and all who were not in their beds came up on deck. The ship, at length feeling the power of the helm, was put before the wind. The dark line now increased gradually in width, and seemed covered with sparkling foam; a rushing noise was heard; in another instant almost the aspect of the whole ocean was changed; the sails bulged out steadily; waves, at first but small, danced up astern, and on either side their crests hissing and foaming, while the spray in broad sheets flew off from their summits. Now the stout ship dashed forward, every instant increasing her speed, as if eager to make up for the time lost. On she went, faster and faster, rising to the seas, and plunging into them as they rolled around her. The lighter sails were taken in. A strong gale was blowing —it was increasing too. The clouds now rapidly gathered in dense masses across the sky; the seamen were busy in all directions securing the boats, the spars, and other articles hitherto left about the deck.

“We shall have a heavy gale, gentlemen, before long,” observed the captain, in answer to Mr Paget’s and Charles’ inquiries respecting the weather. “It’s what I have been wishing for, as nothing else is likely to clear us of this terrible fever.” Before night his predictions were verified, and the ship, under close-reefed topsails, was running on at the rate of twelve knots or more an hour.

Emily and May found it far more difficult to attend to their charges than during the calm; but they still persevered; and though it was very hot between-decks, yet the sick people felt sensibly the change which had occurred in the atmosphere.

For several days the “Crusader” ran on before the gale; sometimes, indeed, the wind blew so hard, and the ship rolled and tossed and tumbled about so much, that many wished the calm back again. One night the thunder roared and rattled overhead with crashing peals; bright lightning darted from the skies. All hands were on deck, for it was impossible to say what might next occur. The masts strained and cracked, and it seemed every instant that the canvas would be blown out of the boltropes. The dark seas came rolling up astern, their crests hissing and foaming, threatening to break over the poop. Several of the gentlemen passengers were collected on deck. Suddenly a voice was heard, exclaiming in a tone of terror, “What is that? Oh mercy, mercy!” They looked aloft; at the end of the yardarm was a mass of bluish light like a small globe. Charles saw Job Mawson standing not far off; his knees were knocking together, his arms outstretched. Presently the light began to move, and suddenly it appeared at the mainmast head; there it remained stationary for some time.

“What is it?” exclaimed Job Mawson. “Oh, captain, do make it go away!”

“It is nothing very terrible,” answered Bill Windy, who overheard him. “We might easily box up that fellow, if it were

worth while to go aloft and catch him."

"Let no one make the attempt," said the captain. "I must not have you, Mr Windy, or the men, risk your lives to catch a jack-o'-lantern. I hope it's a sign that the gale is breaking, and that we shall have moderate weather again before long."

Job Mawson did not appear as satisfied with this explanation of the captain's as the rest of the passengers; he continued watching the light with a terror-stricken glance, as if he expected something dreadful was about to happen. At length, now travelling to one mast-head, now to the other, and back again to the yardarm, it finally disappeared. The wind, however, continued blowing for some time as hard as ever. When morning broke, it had somewhat moderated, and as the day wore on, a strong breeze only was blowing. The sea, notwithstanding this, continued as high as ever, and consequently the ship rolled and tumbled about fully as much as before. The captain, who had been on deck all the night and a great part of the forenoon, at length retired to his berth.

Bill Windy had the watch, Charles was standing near him.

"What do you think of the weather now?" he asked.

"Can't say that I think it settled yet," answered Bill. "There's a stormy look away there to the nor'ard, but the captain ordered me to shake the reefs out of the topsails if it grows no worse; though, to my mind, we shall have to take them in again before nightfall."

Bill took a turn on deck, then ordered the hands aloft to shake out the reefs. The topsails were sheeted home; the ship felt the fresh impulse given to her, and went bounding on over the tossing ocean. The mate walked the deck keeping a watchful eye to windward.

"I don't know what to make of it, Mr Dicey," he observed to Charles. "It is always well to take a reef in in good time, and better seamanship, too, to my mind, than to wait till the squall is down upon one. Still, we have lost so much time in that calm that it won't do to be shortening sail before it is necessary. The surgeon, too, wishes the captain, unless the sickness abates, to put into the Cape, that the people may be landed and the ship fumigated."

"I am thankful to hear that," said Charles; "a few days on shore may, I hope, restore all to health."

Although no deaths had occurred for several days, a considerable number of the people still remained on the sick list, many of the cases being very severe. Even to people in health, the steerage of an emigrant ship is not a desirable place, especially in a hot climate; and now the poor sufferers were not only confined below with closed hatches, but the ship was tumbling and rolling fearfully about, the masts were groaning, the bulk-heads creaking, the stamping of feet was heard overhead, the waves were constantly dashing against the sides, while now and then came the heavy blow of a sea, as it fell on board and deluged the decks.

Bill Windy and Charles had continued their walk for some time, when the mate, looking to windward, exclaimed, "It's high time to shorten sail, or we shall have the masts whipped out of the ship. Boy, call the captain! Hands aloft—two reefs in the topsails." The crew were running up the rigging, when Captain Westerway made his appearance. The men quickly laid out on the yards, and were busily employed in gathering up the sails. An active young topman, whom Charles had seen just before laughing and joking with his shipmates, was on the lee-yardarm; while, with earing in hand, he was passing the point through the cringle, the ship gave a heavy lurch, he lost his hold, and was jerked off the yard. For an instant he was seen hanging on to the earing; but it would have required superhuman strength to maintain his hold with the ship pitching and rolling as she was doing; in another moment he fell headlong into the foaming sea. Scarcely had he touched the water when Bill Windy ran to the falls of the lifeboat on the starboard side, crying out for volunteers. Charles followed him. The most active men were aloft; but several gathered at the falls. The captain took the helm, relieving the man at the wheel, who hurried to assist the mate. Bill, with three hands, was already in the boat. Charles leaped in also.

"You had better not, Mr Dicey," exclaimed Bill. "Get up the side again, and let another hand come. You don't know the danger you are running."

"Not more than you," answered Charles.

"It's my duty, sir," said Bill, "and not yours; do be advised by me."

Charles, however, was eager to go to the assistance of the young seaman. There were in all six stout hands in the boat. The lifebuoy had been let go. Some time passed before the seaman saw it; at last he made towards it, but his strength seemed insufficient to buffet with that rough sea. The attention of most on board was for the moment engaged rather with the boat endeavouring to carry help to the drowning man than to the man himself. The greater number of the crew, too, were occupied in handing the sails. This task had to be accomplished before the ship could be brought to. That was itself a manoeuvre of no small danger, yet the sea was not sufficiently high, nor the wind too strong, to make it altogether impracticable. The boat at length got clear off, and pulled away in the direction the man had last been seen, Mr Paget and other passengers pointing with their hands to guide them. Charles seized an oar—there were only four in the boat; the mate took the helm. They had not pulled far when one of the oars broke. This was seen from the ship. Mr Paget observed that the boat had rapidly dropped a long way to leeward. While he was watching her, a huge wave rose up between her and the ship. He looked anxiously, expecting to see her on the crest of the sea. She was nowhere visible. It was some time before another hand came aft to the helm to relieve the captain. The second and third mates were forward. Not a seaman had been able to keep his eye upon the boat. Mr Paget, however, felt sure he knew where she could be found. The captain was now able to look about for her. Mr Paget told him his fears.

"I am afraid you are right, sir," he said, after he had continued for some time looking out all around.

“The boat has been swamped. I have no doubt about it.” Mr Paget’s heart sank within him at these words; he had formed a sincere regard for Charles Dicey; he felt still more for the poor girls who were thus deprived of their brother.

“I hoped better things of that boat,” observed the captain; “but a very heavy sea is running even for her. Poor fellows, I would to heaven this had not happened. Still she may have escaped.”

He hailed the men aloft, and desired them to look out. No one could see the boat; and neither the lifebuoy nor the young sailor, who, it was supposed, had got hold of it, were anywhere to be seen. The captain continued looking out for some time, ordering those aloft also to keep a bright look-out. At length he gave the order to brace round the yards, and the ship once more gathered way. “We must not give them up yet; so I will wear ship, and run over the ground we have passed.”

While this manoeuvre was being carried out the Miss Diceys and several other ladies, followed by Mrs Clagget, appeared on deck.

“What is the matter, captain?” exclaimed the latter. “They tell me that a man has fallen overboard, and that a boat has gone to look for him. How could you let a boat go away while the sea is tumbling about in this terrible fashion; and, pray, who has gone in her? Ah, Mr Paget, I am glad to see you have not risked your life. But where is Charles Dicey? Just like him, to do such a madcap trick. My dear girls, your brother jumped into the boat to pick up a silly man who tumbled overboard, and they cannot find him or any of those who went with him.”

“Our brother!” exclaimed Emily and May in a tone of alarm. “Where is the boat? Oh! do tell us, Captain Westerway; we do not see her.”

“We are somewhat anxious about the boat, I confess, Miss Dicey,” said Mr Paget, approaching Emily and May; “but still we may hope to find her. In this mountainous sea she might be easily concealed between the waves, though at no great distance.”

In vain, however, every one on board kept looking out for the missing boat. The ship was standing back exactly over the spot where she had been lowered. The only sign of her was a broken oar, which tossed up and down—for a moment was seen, and then disappeared. Mrs Clagget continued to abuse Charles for his foolhardiness, as she called it.

“Poor young man, I wish he had not gone,” said the good captain; “but it was a brave deed. I ought not to have allowed the boat to be lowered; but I could not bear to let one of my fellows perish without an attempt to save him; and I thought that lifeboat could be trusted.”

“Very wrong in all concerned,” exclaimed Mrs Clagget. “But surely, captain, you don’t think poor Charles is really lost, and your worthy mate too. I had a great respect for that honest man.”

“Indeed, madam, I fear such is the case,” said the captain with a sigh; “and I trust you will do your best to console those dear young ladies. It will break their hearts, I am afraid, for it is easy to see what affection they have for their brother.”

Emily and May were, as may be supposed, almost stricken down by grief when they were told, though as cautiously as possible by Mr Paget, of what had occurred. Not till night had arrived, and all hopes had been abandoned, could they be induced to leave the deck. They stood with their hands clasped together, looking out over the tossing sea as though they expected the boat which contained him they loved so much would appear again in sight.

Chapter Eight.

The “Ranger’s” Boats are sent away.

The pumps disabled—The women placed in boats—Younger officers and boys sent away—The Captain and Colonel remain—The Captain’s letter—Child saved by young Broke—Ship driving on launch—Escape of launch—Voyage in boats commenced—Last sight of “Ranger”—Mrs Rumbelow encourages her companions—Boats running before the gale—Mrs Morley’s grief—A cabin formed for the women—A sea breaks on board—Search for provisions—First night in the boat—Harry Shafto at the helm—The weather moderates—Impossibility of returning to the ship—Scarcity of water—The doctor manufactures a still—Various provisions discovered.

Dreary as was the night, it was happily of no long duration. Daylight again appeared; but the scene was as forlorn and threatening as that of the previous morning.

While the first-lieutenant and Harry Shafto, and some of the other officers, were engaged in examining the boats and clearing them of lumber, the purser was busily employed in collecting provisions, and separating those of various description, so that each boat might be supplied with a sufficiency, in due proportion.

“The boats will not carry a quarter of our number,” observed Harry to the first-lieutenant.

“No, Shafto,” was the answer. “We know that. The captain has decided who is to go in each of them. Then we who remain must form rafts, and do the best we can to save our lives.”

“Should the ship sink beneath us!” observed Harry. “I fear, in this cold and stormy sea, that a raft would be of no real service, though it might prolong our existence for a few hours.”

“We, however, must do our best to preserve the lives of the poor people committed to our charge,” said Mr Tobin.

“We certainly must do that, if possible,” said Harry; “and it seems to me that the sea has gone down a little since daybreak; I have been watching it anxiously.”

“I agree with you, Shafto,” replied Mr Tobin. “The wind has lessened considerably within the last half-hour, and though we may not be able to keep the old ship afloat, there is a better prospect of the boats escaping.”

Some time was occupied in getting the boats ready; oars, masts, and sails were put into each; tackles were rove for hoisting them out; but Commander Newcombe was unwilling to give the order to lower them while there seemed a prospect of the ship floating and the sea going down.

The crew were now piped to breakfast, as if nothing particular was occurring. The spirits of all on board were somewhat raised by observing the evident improvement in the weather. The carpenter reported that the water was gaining less rapidly on the pumps, but still it was gaining. Another sail, however, was got up from below, fothered like the last, and passed with ropes under the ship’s bottom. It produced a more satisfactory result than the former ones; still, after another hour had passed, the water continued coming in faster than it could be pumped out. The commander and Colonel Morley were seen earnestly consulting together. They were joined by the first-lieutenant.

“The winch of the starboard pump has broken, and the pump is disabled, sir,” he said, in as calm a tone as he could assume.

“That settles the question,” said the commander. “Colonel, we must do our duty. I see no prospect of keeping the ship afloat much longer. If we delay, she may go down with all on board, and the chance of saving some will be lost.”

“I agree with you, captain,” said the colonel.

“We need not let the people know this, though,” observed Commander Newcombe. “Those who go in the boats may be allowed to suppose that the ship will be kept afloat better without them. Mr Tobin, hoist out the boats at once. The women and children must be divided among them. I have settled who is to go in each. Colonel, you will accompany your wife and daughters.”

“I have a higher duty, sir, though I thank you for the offer. I remain with my men,” answered Colonel Morley in a firm tone.

“And I remain with you and the ship, sir,” said Mr Tobin; “and I believe you will find that most of the other officers desire to do the same.”

“I will direct the junior officers of my regiment to draw lots who is to go,” said Colonel Morley.

Some little time was occupied in making these and similar arrangements. The three officers then separated, to perform the duties they had undertaken. While the naval officers were superintending the lowering of the boats, an undertaking of great difficulty and risk, Colonel Morley entered the cabin, and having summoned the officers around him, he informed them of the determination which had been arrived at. He spoke in a low, calm voice, so that he might not be overheard by his wife and daughters, or the other ladies. The captains at once declined drawing lots.

“Twopenny is the only married man among us,” said Captain Power; “he must accompany his wife.”

The lieutenants, when they heard that the colonel intended to remain, at once decided to stay by him and their men. The ensigns, with the exception of poor Holt, who was still in his cabin, were inclined to decide as their superior officers had already done.

“No, my lads,” said the colonel, “you are young, and may have many years of life before you. I must insist on your obeying my commands.”

The lots were quickly drawn, and Ensign Holt was declared to have the option of going. He had been watching the proceeding with staring eyes and a look of intense anxiety and dread, fully believing, apparently, that he should be among those to remain. The excitement was too much for his nerves. As his name was pronounced, he sank down on the deck without uttering a word. Captain Power kindly raised him up. An almost idiotic expression had come over the young officer’s countenance, and he scarcely seemed aware of what was occurring.

“Come, Holt, bestir yourself,” said the captain. “Pack up anything you may especially wish to take with you. The boats will soon be shoving off.”

The poor young ensign looked wildly about him for a moment, and then hurrying into his cabin, began to pack up a huge portmanteau, tumbling all sorts of articles into it. He was thus engaged when he heard his name called, and, leaving it behind him, rushed on deck. The colonel meantime addressed the officers.

“Gentlemen, we have still our duty to perform,” he said. “Desperate as appears our condition, I do not despair; and, at all events, I am confident that none of you will flinch from what requires to be done. Every one will take his turn at the pumps as long as the ship remains above water; and now I will muster the men. Let the roll be beat.”

The roll of the drum was directly afterwards heard echoing along the decks, and all the men not employed at the pumps fell in. The married men, with the drummers, were ordered to prepare to go in the boats. The crews of each were then mustered aft, and sentries stationed to prevent any others from entering them.

Now came the most trying moment of all. While the commander was standing on the break of the poop, and issuing his final orders, Harry Shafto, followed by Willy Dicey, came up to him.

“I hope, sir, you will allow me to remain on board,” he said; “and though Dicey wishes to prefer the same request, I trust you will refuse it in his case.”

“I certainly shall do so,” answered the commander, “as I also shall refuse yours. I have decided that you are to take command of the launch. I know you to be an excellent boat sailor, and I can confidently entrust her to your care.”

“I thank you heartily, sir,” said Harry. “I would most willingly remain with you; but I know my duty.”

“Then go into the boat, and be ready to receive the ladies and women who will be sent into her, and take young Dicey with you.” He stopped for a moment, then drawing a letter from his breast pocket, he added, “Here, take this despatch also, and preserve it, if possible. It is addressed to the Lords of the Admiralty. I have said what it was my duty to say with regard to the conduct of the officers and ship’s company, and the admirable behaviour of the troops. I have recommended also to the consideration of their Lordships my poor old mother and only surviving sister. I trust my country will look after them, as they depend on me for their support; and if I die, it will be in the performance of my duty. I have no other claim than that. I tell you the contents, that you may be able to repeat them to their Lordships should you reach England and the letter be lost.”

The commander now called over the names of the officers he had selected to take charge of the boats and of the men who were to form their crews, and they were ordered into them; and to each was allotted the supply of provisions and stores which had been prepared. The cooper had been engaged in filling the few casks which could be found with water out of some of the butts on deck. These were divided among the boats. A compass was placed in each, and a chart, as also a quadrant and other nautical instruments for the launch and each of the cutters; lanterns, candles, and several other stores were not forgotten.

“Fowling-pieces will be of use,” observed Captain Power. “Here is mine, Twopenny;” “and mine,” “and mine,” added the other officers, bringing them up from their cabins. “Don’t forget the powder and shot.” A supply in tin cases was soon provided.

While the seamen were performing their various duties, the soldiers stood, drawn up along the deck, with their officers, as if on parade. Not a man moved from his post, but all watched the proceedings going forward as if no unusual occurrence was taking place. The sea had by this time so much gone down that the operation of lowering the women and children into the boats was less hazardous than otherwise would have been the case. Mrs Morley and her two daughters were the first to appear on deck. The colonel led them to the gangway, where the boatswain and several of the most active seamen were standing ready to lower them down, under the direction of the first-lieutenant. Whether or not they expected that Colonel Morley would accompany them, it was difficult to say. The only words heard, as Mrs Morley seemed to hesitate for a moment as she was about to be lowered down, were, “We are all under orders. Duty must be our first consideration.”

Poor Mrs Twopenny shrieked out for her husband. “He will follow you presently,” said the first-lieutenant, hoping to pacify her. “Now, Mrs Rumbelow, you are to go in this boat,” he exclaimed. The sergeant’s wife hesitated, casting a glance towards her husband.

“We want you to go and look after the ladies,” said the colonel. “Come, Mrs Rumbelow, you have never acted contrary to orders, and you will not do so now, I am sure.”

Without a word she stepped to the gangway, and with very little assistance reached the boat. A young drummer, with five or six poor women, some having children, were also lowered down.

“Come, Davis, I promised the colonel that you and your medicine chest should go in the launch,” said the commander. “I hope you will be able to give a good account of your charges. Come! come! I must be obeyed,” he added with a melancholy smile, observing that the surgeon seemed to hesitate. “We can do without your services on board.”

Eight hands had been ordered into the boat to serve as her crew, and Willy was very glad to see Paul Lizard among them. The boatswain had been ordered to take charge of the first cutter. Peter Patch went with him, and poor Ensign Holt was lowered into the same boat, looking more helpless and woebegone than any of the women.

The people, however, had not been placed in the boats without considerable difficulty and danger. As soon as the launch had received her complement, she was dropped astern. Here she hung on while the other boats were being loaded, and as those in her watched this proceeding, they dreaded every instant to see them swamped alongside. Some of the people attempted, in their eagerness, to jump in. Several were seen to fall into the water; others were with difficulty caught, and saved from breaking their limbs. The sea, too, which, while the launch was alongside, was comparatively calm, had since then rapidly become more and more agitated, and heavy rollers were seen coming over the ocean towards the ship. As the people were getting into the second cutter, the sea struck her, violently dashing her against the ship’s side; while some were attempting to fend her off, she was swamped and upset, the unhappy people in her being cast struggling into the foaming waters. Two seamen only managed to regain the ship.

“Out oars,” cried Harry Shafto; and the crew of the launch attempted to pull up, and save some of their drowning shipmates. Before, however, they could get up even to the ship’s quarter, nearly all had disappeared, several poor women and children being speedily overwhelmed.

“See! see!” cried Mrs Rumbelow, “there is a little chap striking out towards us; and I do believe he has a baby in his arms. I know him; he is young Broke, a famous swimmer. Oh, Mr Shafto, do save them if you can.”

Harry required no urging, nor did the crew. In another instant the young drummer boy was alongside; and the doctor, stooping down, lifted up the baby; but it seemed as if life was extinct. Young Broke was speedily hauled on board. All for the moment seemed to forget their own danger in their anxiety for the young infant; watching anxiously for the

report of the doctor, who was seen for a short time gently pressing its stomach and breathing at the time into its mouth. “It lives,” he said, “and will, I trust, recover.” The little creature had no lack of nurses, for even at that moment of trial all were eager to take it. Young Broke, though nearly exhausted when taken on board, soon recovered; he could not tell what had become of the mother, but he had some idea that she was still on board, having entrusted her child to one of the men before she herself was lowered down.

Harry again dropped the launch astern, in obedience to the orders he had received. The sea coming ahead of the ship, she began to pitch violently; the other boats, to avoid the accident which had happened to the second cutter, kept well clear of her. The commander was standing on the poop, and Colonel Morley by his side.

“Is my husband not coming?” asked Mrs Morley, now appearing for the first time aware that she was to be separated from him.

“The colonel will act as duty prompts him,” said Harry.

“Yes, yes; I know he will,” said Mrs Morley, gazing towards the ship. “And he considers it is his duty to remain on board,” she gasped out as she hid her face in her hands, sobs bursting from her bosom.

Harry, still hoping that, as the weather had been moderating, the ship might be kept afloat, determined to hold on to the last. As he looked ahead, however, he saw the heavy rollers continuing to come in from the north-west, while the sky in that direction looked dark and threatening.

Colonel Morley was observed every now and then to cast an anxious gaze at the boat which contained his wife and daughters. How must he have felt at allowing them to go away without him! It must have been a sore trial to his manly heart at all events. The commander was evidently issuing orders to those who remained with him.

“Oh, Mr Shafto, do they not fear that the ship will sink?” exclaimed Miss Morley. “Surely they will not remain on board.”

“They are, I have no doubt, engaged in building rafts,” said Harry. “The people will thus have a chance of saving their lives, for the boats could not take all on board.”

“But my father, my dear father,” exclaimed Miss Morley.

“He will, if possible, remain and try to help those on the rafts,” answered Harry. He could say no more, for he was well aware that till every effort had been made to save his men, Colonel Morley would not desert them.

Harry’s anxiety increased greatly when he saw the threatening aspect of the weather. The ship had been brought as close to the wind as possible, in order to allow the boats with less risk to lie alongside. A heavy sea now struck her bows; driving her astern, and threatening to bring her down upon the launch. Not a moment was to be lost, Harry saw, or the destruction of the boat and all on board would be inevitable. With a heavy heart he gave the order to cut the warp to which she hung. “Out oars, and pull her head round,” he added. The mast had been stepped. “Hoist the fore-staysail,” he exclaimed, and the boat’s head began paying round. Another heavy foam-topped sea came rolling up with a dark black cloud overhead; he held his breath, for he dreaded lest it should break on board. The men tugged at their oars. They, too, saw the danger. The ladies could not refrain from uttering a cry of dismay. Even Mrs Rumbelow kept her lips firmly set as she eyed the foaming mass. Paul Lizard had the fore-halyards in his hand. Up went the foresail, and as it filled with the gale the boat’s head rapidly came round. Away she flew before the wind; the threatening sea roared and hissed under her stern, but failed to overtake her. On she flew, now rising, now falling, amid the tumbling seas. Harry had need to exercise all his seamanship to save her from being overwhelmed; as it was, the seas broke frequently close to her quarters, sending into her heavy masses of foaming water. To attempt to heave to and remain by the ship, as Harry had proposed, would have been madness. Already she had been left far astern. Willy had watched her anxiously. Now she seemed to rise amid the dark waters, now to sink deep down; and more than once Willy thought the “Ranger” had gone for ever. He could scarcely refrain from uttering an expression of horror. There were other eyes besides his in the boat, who were looking towards the ship. Poor Mrs Morley and her two daughters sat with their hands clasped together, not a word escaping their lips; but though they were silent, their hearts were lifted up in prayer, and they seemed to have forgotten the hardships in store for them, and their own danger, while thinking of that to which Colonel Morley was exposed.

Another boat under sail was seen standing in the wake of the launch, supposed to be the first cutter. What had become of the other boats could not be discovered. Very probably, they too had gone down, overwhelmed by the heavy sea from which the larger boats had so narrowly escaped. The dark cloud now burst over the spot where the devoted ship lay, rising and falling amid the dark heaving seas, a dense shower of sleet and rain, like a thick veil, completely shrouding her. Willy strained his sharp eyes, but in vain; the “Ranger” was not to be seen, and he could only just distinguish the white sail of the cutter struggling after them through the tumbling seas.

On, on they flew; a sense of their own danger seemed to have absorbed the thoughts of most on board. Scarcely an observation was made regarding the fate of their companions; even the little baby which had been so wonderfully preserved was for the time neglected, the woman who held it appearing scarcely aware that she had the child in her arms.

“Come, come, Sarah, what are you about?” exclaimed Mrs Rumbelow, “are you going to let that baby drop into the bottom of the boat, and be drowned. You had better give it to me, poor little dear.” Thus aroused, the woman once more bestowed her attention on the little stranger. Mrs Morley, overcome by her feelings, had at length given way, and lay in an almost fainting state in her daughter’s arms. Her condition had not escaped Mrs Rumbelow’s observation. The sergeant’s wife leaned forward towards her. She was sitting at no great distance. “Come, rouse up, Mrs Morley, marm,” she exclaimed, taking the poor lady’s hands, and chafing them with her own somewhat hard palms. “It is God’s will, dear lady, that we are here. He’ll take care of those we left on board. I, too, would lief have

remained with my good-man; but he ordered me to come, and I have always obeyed orders since I entered the army, as I call it, and that's a good score of years ago. When we have done our duty, to my mind, we should be content; and feel sure that all will go right. I don't say what we call right, but what God knows to be right and best; that's it, marm."

Poor Mrs Morley opened her eyes. "Thank you," she faintly said. "You speak kindly. I know all is for the best."

Mrs Twopenny and the other married women in the boat, having their husbands with them, were more inclined to think about themselves than those they had left in the hapless ship. The crew were not idle, for they had plenty to do in bailing the boat and tending the sails. Harry saw the necessity, in order to prevent the boat from being swamped, of carrying as much sail as she could bear; and even then, as he cast his eye astern, he dreaded lest any of the foaming seas which came rolling up might break on board. Could he have kept her head to the seas she might have been safer, but the danger of heaving her to was so great that he dared not attempt it; and, under present circumstances, he judged it more prudent to run before the gale. All he could hope, therefore, was that the wind might moderate again as rapidly as it had risen. His next care was to make some arrangement for the accommodation of the poor women. He called Dr Davis aft, and consulted him about the matter. It was agreed that an awning should be rigged in the centre part of the boat, over an oar a little higher than the gunwale, so as to leave room for the crew to pass on either side; and though this would afford them but a very narrow space, still they would be sheltered from the cold and rain and spray. Fortunately, a spare sail had been thrown into the boat, which would serve for this purpose; there were also several planks and small spars which had not been thrown out of her when she was lowered; and these spread out would serve as a flooring to keep them out of the wet. Among other things was a roll of blankets and several cloaks. These, spread out, would serve for beds. The crew gladly gave up all claim they might have on them for the sake of the poor women.

Several hours passed; and though the wind and sea had slightly gone down, no other change had occurred.

"Now, marm," said Mrs Rumbelow, as soon as the awning was prepared; "we must take possession of our house. It is not a very grand one, but we're thankful to those who built it for us."

"Oh, my husband! my husband!" was the only answer poor Mrs Morley could make.

"I have a husband, too, marm," said Mrs Rumbelow. "The sergeant and I, though old folks, love each other as much as any young folks can do. We have long known that any day, with the chances of war, we might be separated, and by many another chance too, though. I have followed him pretty well round the world, to look after him, and now the time has come which we well knew might come, though I cannot say that I feel it the less on that account. It's hard to bear, Mrs Morley, that it is; but if it's God's will that we are not to see our husbands again, we must submit, marm. Still, you know, marm, it may not be His will to take them from us. He can preserve them if He thinks fit; and if so, we shall meet them again. That's what keeps me up."

"You are right, Mrs Rumbelow," whispered Mrs Morley, as the sergeant's wife knelt by her side within the little tent. "Does any one think that the ship is still afloat?"

"That's more than any one can say, marm. Ships have floated when all on board supposed that they were going down. That must be our hope, marm; and now, Mrs Morley, and you, dear young ladies, take my advice, and try and go to sleep and forget all about it, or you'll wear yourselves out. It's the men's business to look after the boat and us. We must trust to them, and still more to One in heaven, who will take care of us all."

These remarks were made by Mrs Rumbelow as she was endeavouring to place the young ladies and their mother in the most comfortable position she could select in the narrow space allotted to them.

In the meantime, the boat ran on as before amid the raging seas; several had broken partially on board, and four hands were kept continually bailing, to get rid of the water which thus got into her.

"There is another spare sail for'ard," observed Willy Dicey to Harry. "Don't you think we can manage to nail it on round the stern and quarters? I saw some tools put into the boat, and one of the carpenter's mates is with us."

"Your advice is good, and we will follow it," answered Harry: and Willy made his way for'ard to look for the sail. It was soon found; and the carpenter's mate, with the assistance of Paul Lizard and Willy, who prided himself on his skill as a carpenter, quickly sawed out several stanchions. These were at once screwed on so as to raise the gunwale nearly two feet all round the after-part of the boat. Scarcely had the canvas been securely fixed when a heavier sea than ordinary came rolling up, hissing and roaring as if about to overwhelm her. Many gazed at it with dismay. It struck the stern; no small amount of water broke over the counter. The heavier mass, however, was prevented from coming in; and the boat flew on with greater speed, as if to escape from the danger which threatened her.

"Willy, your forethought has saved our lives, I fully believe," observed Harry, as he, with others, began baling away with might and main.

Mrs Rumbelow, who at that instant made her appearance from the cabin, followed their example, having seized a saucepan at her feet. Another and another sea followed.

"Bale away, my lads! bale away!" cried Mrs Rumbelow. "We will try if we cannot send the water out as fast as it comes in."

Her courage inspired the men, who now and then stopped, believing that all their efforts to preserve their lives would prove useless. The boat was quickly again clear of water, and several minutes passed without a sea having struck her. Harry began to hope that once more the gale was abating. He now, remembering that the people might be suffering from want of food, ordered provisions to be served out.

The doctor had spoken but little, except occasionally to offer a word of consolation to some of the poor women. He now, however, undertook to superintend the distribution of the provisions. Some time was occupied in searching for them, as it was necessary to select such as did not require cooking. A keg of butter was first found, with a cask of biscuits, but the latter had suffered already from the salt water. As, however, they could be most easily got at, they were served round, and constituted the chief portion of the first meal taken on board. A few bottles of rum were next routed out from a case amid a number of things hastily thrown in. A small measure full was served out to each person, and injurious as spirits may prove when taken habitually, this small dose served to restore the well-nigh exhausted strength of the men.

Willy was hunting about in hopes of finding something more suitable for poor Mrs Morley and the other ladies. He was delighted to discover some cold fowls, a ham, and a couple of loaves of bread, which the purser had thoughtfully placed in a basket for the very object for which they were now so much-desired.

“Here, Mrs Rumbelow,” he said, handing his prize into the cabin. “You must get your charges to eat some of these things.”

“Bless you! that I will, Mr Dicey,” said the good woman, perfectly ready herself to sup off her biscuit and salt butter. She began at once to persuade the young ladies to eat a portion of the delicacies which she had received. She was at length successful. “And now, marm,” she added, “just a thimbleful of rum; it will do you good, I’m sure. I am not in favour of ladies taking to ardent spirits, but, just now, we may be thankful for some to cheer our hearts and keep out the cold.”

Night was now coming on, and though the weather had slightly improved, Harry could not but feel that the danger of scudding on in the darkness was greater than in the day-time. As yet he had been unable to alter his course, and steer more to the northward. The boat was still in the latitude where icebergs might be encountered, and at night they might not be seen in time to be avoided, “We must commit ourselves to God’s keeping, and do our best,” Harry thought to himself. “Surely I ought to ask those with me to join in a prayer for our protection. My friends,” he said aloud, “we know not what may happen this night; and I trust all will join in asking God to look after us, and in returning thanks to Him in having preserved us thus far.”

“That they will, sir!” exclaimed Mrs Rumbelow; “and I am sure, too, that all will pray heartily that those we left on board the ship may be preserved likewise.”

Harry invited Captain Twopenny to act the part of chaplain; but as both he and Dr Davis declined, he felt that he ought to do so himself. Engaged, however, in the arduous task of steering, he could not sufficiently collect his thoughts for the purpose. While still doubting what to do, Mrs Morley appeared from beneath her tent, and in a firm, clear voice offered up a prayer to Him who rules the stormy ocean for their own safety, as also for that of those in the other boat and on board the ship. All joined heartily; and as the noble lady was seen lifting up her eyes towards heaven, with her hands clasped, no one could doubt that she was indeed speaking to Him who hears and answers prayer.

“Now, friends, I am sure that there are many here who can join in a hymn to our merciful Father and Friend,” exclaimed Mrs Rumbelow. “The young ladies will lead you, for I have often heard them singing on a Sunday evening, and it has done my heart good to listen.”

The Miss Morleys, who had risen with their mother and the other women, without requiring a second invitation gave utterance, with their sweet voices, to that beautiful hymn, which ends—

“O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.”

Amen was echoed by all.

Their hearts were cheered, their fears calmed, as, amid that dark and raging ocean, those sounds of prayer and praise ascended to Heaven.

Mrs Rumbelow now insisted that those whom she considered under her especial charge should return to their cabin, though she had no little difficulty in stowing them away. The baby had, notwithstanding the cold and wetting it had endured, completely recovered, and still received the attention it required from the young woman who had taken it in charge.

During the day, the other boat’s sail had been continually watched with great anxiety. Frequently it could with difficulty be seen amid the foaming seas; now, as the sun went down, though Willy and Paul Lizard strained their eyes to the utmost, they could no longer distinguish it. Still Harry, in the hopes that their small consort was yet afloat, ordered a lantern to be hoisted to their after-mast, that she might be able to follow them during the night. Happily, the night would not last long. A short time after the sun went down the clouds began to clear away. The beautiful Southern Cross shone brilliantly forth; other bright stars appeared, and cheered the voyagers with their calm light. The boat was now kept perfectly free of water, and all, with the exception of the look-out forward, and two or three seamen required to tend the sails, coiled themselves away to sleep. Harry, though growing very weary, would not resign his post at the helm, and Willy Dicey insisted on sitting near him.

“You know, Shafto, I may never have such an opportunity of learning how to steer a boat in such a sea as this,” he observed.

“I hope you never may, Willy,” said Harry; “but we may thank God, more than my skill, for having been preserved

hitherto. We have many a long league to go over before we can reach even the Auckland Islands; and I pray that the weather may continue fine till we get there."

In spite, however, of Willy's resolution he often dropped asleep, though he roused himself up on such occasions, and again spoke to Shafto. Harry himself at times felt that, had he not been standing up, he should have fallen asleep too; and he promised Willy that, should the sea go down, he would in the morning let Paul Lizard relieve him at the helm. How anxiously he longed for daylight, hoping at noon to take an observation and ascertain their exact position. As the sun rose, its bright rays shining on the eyes of several of the sleepers, roused them up. Some at first looked bewildered, as if they had forgotten what had occurred. When they found that the sea had gone down, and the wind decreased to a moderate breeze, a gleam of satisfaction, such as had not before been seen, appeared on their countenances. Harry was at length about to summon Paul Lizard to relieve him at the helm, when Mrs Morley and her daughters came out of their cabin. Their countenances were sad and anxious. The boat was now moving rapidly under all sail over the comparatively smooth ocean. Harry had, as soon as he was able, altered the course to the north-east. Mrs Morley looked around, and then at the compass.

"Oh, Mr Shafto!" she exclaimed, "are you not steering back to the ship? Surely you would not willingly desert those on board!"

It was a trying question to Harry. "I would undoubtedly return, had I the power," he answered; "but my orders were to carry the boat to the nearest land we can make, where food and shelter can be found. Were I to attempt to return, I should disobey those orders. It might take us also three or four days to beat back to the spot where we left the ship, and we might fail to find her after all."

Mrs Morley hid her face in her hands. It seemed as if her last hope had gone.

"Oh, why was I separated from him?" she exclaimed, her feelings overcoming for the moment her better judgment.

"For the sake of your daughters, marm, do cheer up," said Mrs Rumbelow, who at once came to Harry's assistance. "Though you yourself, marm, would go through any fresh dangers to join the colonel, just think how ill able these young ladies are to bear them," she said, in a gentle, soothing tone.

At first Mrs Morley seemed scarcely to understand what was said, but in a short time she recovered herself, her daughters doing their utmost to console her; and Mrs Rumbelow at length persuaded her to return to the shelter of the awning.

Before lying down to take the rest he so much needed, Harry ordered the provisions to be served out. On searching for the water-casks, only three were found. The carpenter's mate giving a knock with his hammer on one of them, it was empty. It had been carelessly put together, and all the contents had leaked out. The other two small casks would last so large a party but for a short time. Many days might pass before they could hope to reach the Auckland Islands, the nearest land Harry expected to make, and even with the smallest possible allowance of water sufficient to sustain life, the supply in the casks would not last half the time. This discovery was indeed a sore trial to the young commander; still he knew too well the importance of keeping up the spirits of the party to express his fears aloud. As the sea had now gone sufficiently down to allow the crew to move about without difficulty, he directed Dr Davis and Willy to overhaul the provisions, and ascertain the quantity they had got; and weary as he was, he would not lie down till this was done. Their report was far less satisfactory than he had hoped for. A good supply of biscuits and flour had been put on board; but, unhappily, both had been so completely wetted by the salt water that the greater part of the flour was a mere mass of dough, and the biscuits, though at present eatable, would evidently not last many days. A small hen-coop full of fowls had been placed in the bows; but, with the exception of two, the poor creatures had been drowned. There were two casks of salt pork; but, as the doctor whispered to Willy, without plenty of water and pease pudding to eat it with, salt pork would prove dangerous food. Four hams were also found, and six Dutch cheeses, with two kegs of butter.

"Here is a case!" exclaimed Willy. "I wonder what it contains."

It was opened, and within were found a dozen pots of jam.

"Ah, this is more to the purpose," cried the doctor.

"We must keep them, though, for the poor women and children," observed Willy.

"You are right, Dicey," was the answer. "But we have not yet finished our search."

There was another case. It only contained pickles. "I am afraid they will help us but little to keep body and soul together," observed Willy.

"We might have found better food, though they have their value," remarked the doctor. "If we can kill some birds, or a seal, or catch a few fish, they will be very useful."

A large black sack was found, it was full of charcoal.

"This is poor food," said Willy with a sigh.

"Yes, but what is that iron thing in the bows there?" asked the doctor. It was hauled out, and found to be a small cooking stove. "Ah, this is indeed a valuable prize," he added. "We may now cook our provisions and boil our kettle."

"The poor women will be better for some tea, at all events," observed Willy. "That is to say, if we have any tea-leaves to make it with, and to be sure we have but a small supply of water for the purpose."

“We must see about that,” said the doctor. “We will try to manufacture a still to turn salt water into fresh.”

“But the charcoal will go but a little way for that purpose,” remarked his young companion.

“Nil desperandum,” answered the doctor. “We will try what can be done.”

“Here’s a case which looks like a tea-chest,” remarked one of the men who was helping them. “It is somewhat wet though.” The case was opened, and found to contain a large supply of tea; and though the outer part was spoilt, the interior was perfectly dry. A tin of coffee berries was discovered.

“We have no mill to grind them in, I fear,” said Willy.

“Ah! but I have my pestle and mortar,” observed the doctor, laughing. “We must make that serve the purpose.”

“Here is a jar of brown sugar, and in this basket what were once two loaves of white sugar,” said Willy; “but, alas, they have sadly diminished in size, and will have a very salt taste.”

“We must not be over-particular,” answered the doctor. “We will try and save what remains.”

It was evident that, notwithstanding the forethought of the purser, many of the articles which he had intended to put into the boat had been left on board the ship.

“Perhaps the cutter, though, has got a part of our share,” observed Willy. “When she comes up with us we shall get what we require.”

“Water is what we most want, Dicey, and from what I know of human beings, I am afraid those on board her will not be willing to share that with us,” observed the doctor gravely. “Thirst is the most trying of all the pains the human frame is compelled to endure; but we must not talk about it—we will do our best to keep these poor women and children from suffering. I have been accustomed to see men go through trials of all sorts, but I cannot stand having the others crying out for help, and not be able to afford it them. When a man has got a bullet in him, or requires his leg off, or anything of that sort, it is what I am used to. I know that I must exert my skill to the best of my power, leaving the rest to God; so I think no more about the matter. However, Dicey, go aft and make your report to Shafto. I, in the meantime, will calculate what quantity of provisions we may venture to serve out each day, so as to make our supply last till we can hope to reach land.”

Willy went aft, and made his report in a low voice. Harry opened his eyes, and tried to listen, but he was already so overcome with fatigue that he could scarcely understand what was said, and directly Willy had ceased speaking, he was fast asleep again.

Chapter Nine.

The Adventure of the “Ranger’s” Boats.

A calm—The cutter seen astern—People cry out for water—Harry takes an observation—The launch put to rights—Squids leap on board—A hail from the cutter—Holt’s sad condition—Peter begs to join Willy—Lizard kills a whale—Blubber used as fuel—Wild-fowl shot—Mrs Rumbelow visits the cutter—Cutter’s crew try to detain Mrs Rumbelow—The crews take to the oars—Mrs Rumbelow assists in rowing.

When the young commander of the “Ranger’s” launch awoke, he found her floating on a glassy sea. Not a breath of wind filled her sails, though every now and then a long, low undulation rose beneath her keel, and went rolling away to the southward. The sun was striking down with undimmed splendour upon the world of waters. Harry’s head had been sheltered from its burning rays by a shawl which Mrs Rumbelow had thoughtfully thrown over him. He felt that heavy weight at his heart which those oppressed with care or sorrow are apt to experience. In a few minutes, however, after uttering a secret prayer to Heaven for strength, he was able to cast it off, and arousing himself, sat up to consider what he had to do. Most of the people, under the superintendence of the doctor, were employed in drying the tea and biscuits, and other articles wetted by the salt water. On lines stretched from the masts were hung up numberless articles of clothing and bedding. The women were seated in the bottom of the boat; one was nursing the baby, who appeared still flourishing. Very few were idle. Mrs Morley and her daughters were setting them a good example, and Mrs Rumbelow was making her way among them, the most active of the party with hand and tongue. The doctor was busy for’ard over the stove, where, with the assistance of the armourer’s and carpenter’s mates, he was engaged on some iron work which absorbed his whole attention. Harry’s first impulse was to look out for the other boat. At first he could not distinguish her, but by the aid of a glass he made out her sail just rising above the horizon to the eastward; yet it was so indistinct that, had not Willy and Paul Lizard declared they could make it out, he might have supposed himself to be mistaken. He did not forget to speak a few words to his female passengers.

“Oh, Mr Shafto, cannot you give us more water?” exclaimed Mrs Twopenny. “We have only had that little tin caseful a-piece the whole of this morning, and the doctor says we must be contented with it.”

“We are under the doctor’s orders on that point,” answered Harry, afraid that others might join in the complaint made by the poor lady. “Captain Twopenny will, I am sure, agree with me in the importance of following his advice.”

The captain, however, had no little difficulty in tranquillising the invalid lady. She had been accustomed all her life to be petted, and to have what she asked for, and was little prepared to endure the trials she would now be called upon to go through.

“It must be near noon,” said Willy, remembering that an observation had to be taken. Harry pulled out his watch—there was but little time to lose. The quadrant was got ready. Harry felt somewhat weak, as he stood up with it at his eye, while Willy, with note-book in hand, marked down the degrees as he read them off. After a satisfactory observation was taken, the result showed that they were somewhat farther to the north than the latitude where they had left the ship, while he calculated that, since then, they had run upwards of a hundred miles. Still their distance to the nearest known land was very considerable. Water, Harry feared, would be their chief want. His mind on that point was, however, somewhat relieved when Willy, coming aft, told him that the doctor hoped to manufacture a still for producing fresh water from that of the sea.

“He forgets the amount of fuel he will require for the purpose,” remarked Harry.

“He told me not to be unhappy about that,” answered Willy. “Perhaps he expects to catch a whale.”

Harry smiled faintly at the notion.

“But we may catch some smaller creatures, though,” exclaimed Willy. “I have just found a harpoon, and Paul Lizard has often told me that he is a first-rate harpooner, and has struck many a porpoise and dolphin in his time.”

“Please, sir, if we can see one of those creatures, I have little fear but what we may manage him,” observed Paul, who was standing steering close to them.

Harry’s hopes revived on hearing this; not that he would have allowed anybody to suppose that he entertained any fears about the ultimate safety of those confided to his charge.

The day was employed in putting the boat to rights, re-stowing carefully everything of value, and heaving overboard several useless and heavy articles. The carpenters’ first care was to tighten the hoops round the water-casks, and it was hoped that, if water could be procured, the leaky cask would now hold it. The empty cases were now broken-up for firewood, to assist the doctor in his operations; and when they heard what he was about, the spirits of most of the party revived. Poor Mrs Morley and her daughters, however, could not forget the brave colonel left to perish with his men; and Mrs Rumbelow, though she did her best to cheer others, every now and then uttered a sigh she could not suppress, as she looked in the direction where the ship had been left. The day was drawing to a close.

“Hurra!” shouted Willy, “the cutter is nearing us. I have been watching her for some time—they have got out their oars—that shows they have some strength left.”

Still the other boat was at a considerable distance when night closed in. There was no change in the weather. The sky was clear and the stars shone out brilliantly; the watch was set, and all hands not on duty lay down to sleep, sheltering themselves as best they could under the thwarts, among the packages, or covering themselves up with cloaks, or pieces of sail-cloth or matting. Willy took the first watch. He felt not a little proud, as he sat in the stern-sheets, at being the only officer on duty. Strange sounds came across the ocean. He was sure that some were made by whales, as they rose to breathe at the surface. Now and then a splash was heard as some huge monster leaped out of the water. Suddenly a large flabby mass was dashed against his face, and at the same time several other dark objects sprang into the boat.

“Hilloa!” cried the doctor, towards whom one of them had directed its course. “Who gave me that slap in the face? Ah, I see,” he added, sitting up and lifting the flabby mass in his hand. “A *cephalopoda-sepia octopus*, commonly called a squid. The fellow nearly poked out my eye with his beak. What, Willy, were you assaulted too?”

Willy, who had been almost knocked over by the blow from the creature, was just recovering himself.

“It nearly drilled a hole in my nose,” said Willy, laughing.

“Well, never mind,” exclaimed the doctor. “I wish only a few more would come on board. They are ugly beasts; but, fried in butter, will serve us for breakfast, and prove a better dish than salt pork. How many are there of them?”

“Five or six, I think,” said Willy.

“Well, hand them to me, and I’ll put a stop to their crawling propensities. They would frighten the ladies if they were to make their way into the cabin.”

The doctor had got out his knife, and was engaged in scientifically depriving the creatures of life. This done, they were stowed away in the stern-sheets.

“A covey of flying-fish would have been more acceptable,” observed the doctor, as he again composed himself to rest; “but they are not to be found in these latitudes.”

Two or three people, awakened by the doctor’s voice, inquired what was the matter.

“Only a few squids come on board to be cooked for breakfast,” answered Willy. Those who had spoken, satisfied with the reply, were quickly again asleep.

Silence once more reigned on board, broken only by the snores of the sleepers, though the blowing of whales or other cetacea could be heard every now and then, now in the distance, now somewhat nearer; and Willy hoped that in the morning they might be successful in catching some of the smaller ones, and obtain a supply of oil. Some time thus passed away; the first watch was nearly over, when he was startled by hearing a loud hail astern. Unwilling to awaken the ladies, he refrained from replying. He could just then distinguish the splash of oars; and straining his eyes through the darkness, he at last made out a boat approaching. He had no doubt she was the cutter, and he hoped to receive good tidings of those on board. As she drew near, he heard every now and then a strange wild shout, and

several persons speaking. At length the boat came close up under the stern of the launch.

“Is that the cutter of His Majesty’s ship ‘Ranger?’” asked Willy.

“Ay, ay,” answered a voice, which he knew to be that of Roger Bollard, the boatswain.

“Why, Mr Bollard, what is the matter?” he inquired.

“One of our people has lost his wits, and if you have the doctor aboard, we wish he could see what he can do for him.”

“Who is he?” asked Willy.

“Mr Holt, sir.”

The doctor had started up on hearing Willy speaking. Roger Bollard repeated what he had before said. “Clap a strait-waistcoat on him, and keep his head cool,” cried the doctor, sitting up. “I’ll see him in the morning; I cannot do him much good now.”

“But he may be overboard before then, sir,” answered Bollard. “It’s a hard job to keep him quiet now, and he is getting worse and worse. He swears that he will swim back to the ship, as he has left all his traps aboard, and abuses us for not going to get them.”

“Lash him to a thwart, then,” said the doctor. “Still, if you will come alongside, I’ll see what I can do for him.”

“Do! What can a wretched saw-bones like you do? I say that I am an officer in His Majesty’s service, and I decline being treated like a common lunatic,” exclaimed the poor young man.

“He has got some sense left, at all events,” observed the doctor. “He never had much in his brains, however.”

The cutter coming alongside, the doctor stepped on board. “Don’t desert us, Dr Davis,” said several of those on board the launch. While Dr Davis was talking to the unfortunate young officer, and trying to calm him, Willy asked the boatswain how those with him had fared.

“It’s a mercy we were not swamped, so we ought not to complain in regard to other matters,” answered Mr Bollard. “We have, however, but a scanty supply of water, and that poor young gentleman and several others have been crying out for more than I could venture to give them. Our provisions, too, are nearly all wet—the flour and biscuit especially.”

“That’s bad news,” remarked Willy. “We must hope soon to get a fresh supply of water, and to do without the biscuits and flour.”

After a time the doctor came back to the launch; he appeared to have quieted the young ensign, though he left directions with his companions to watch him narrowly, observing that he could not answer for his not suddenly taking it into his head to leap overboard.

“Hilloa!” cried a voice, after the doctor had returned. “Is that you, Dicey? I was fast asleep till this moment. I am so glad.”

It was Peter Patch who spoke. “I wish Shafto would let me come into your boat; we should have much better fun together.”

“I should be very glad to have you,” said Willy, “but I am sure Shafto will not allow it. You were ordered into the cutter, and there I would advise you to make up your mind to remain.”

Peter seemed rather annoyed at this rebuff; but still he knew very well that Willy was right. Bollard remarked that he was afraid all the other boats had gone down. He had looked around for them as he was making sail to follow the launch. One, which was at no great distance, was evidently deeply laden, the seas threatening every instant to break over her. Soon afterwards she suddenly disappeared, and he had seen her no more. The people in the cutter seemed to have suffered more than those in the launch, having been completely wetted by the seas which broke on board; only by constantly bailing had she been kept afloat.

In the morning, when Shafto awoke, he was surprised to find the cutter so close at hand. It showed how soundly he had slept that he had not heard a word of the conversation which had gone on forward. The two boats now floated close together, the ocean being as calm as on the previous day. It need not be repeated that every morning and evening prayers were offered up, and two or more chapters read from the Bible.

The doctor did not forget to cook the squids, and produced a dish which was pronounced excellent, with plenty of pepper and salt, by several of the party; though others, not pressed by hunger, declined eating such hideous-looking creatures. They had the satisfaction of supplying their friends in the other boat with a warm meal, no stove having been found in her. There were, however, several iron pots, and out of these the armourer undertook to manufacture a stove, should more fuel be obtained. Several monsters of the deep had been seen rising at no great distance from the boat. Paul Lizard, therefore, as soon as breakfast was over, placed himself in the bows, and stood ready, harpoon in hand, in the hopes of striking one; while the doctor, the tea-kettle being removed from the stove, went on with his still. Numerous birds were also flying about in the distance; the rifles were got ready in the hopes of shooting some of them.

Mrs Morley appeared much concerned on hearing of Ensign Holt’s illness, though he was no favourite of hers or her

daughters'. The day wore on, the doctor working at his still, and the rest of those on board employing themselves in a variety of ways. Paul Lizard had stood for some hours, harpoon in hand, hoping that a porpoise or dolphin might rise near the boat. The creatures were seen in numbers at a distance, but it seemed as though they were aware of the visitors to their realms, and purposely kept away from them. Still Paul persevered, his keen eye looking as if it could pierce down to the bottom of the ocean. Now he let his weapon rest at his feet, now he raised it again, ready to strike. At length it was seen flying from his hand with tremendous force.

"Get a running bowline ready," he shouted out—"one for the head, and another for the tail. Be sharp, lads! We must make the creature fast, or it will get away from us." The line was flying out as he spoke. "It's a big fish, at all events," he exclaimed; "we must take care it doesn't get away." As the rope approached the end, he secured it round the bits, and away went the boat, towed by the monster.

"Hilloa," shouted Bollard, "I wish we had been fast to you, to see the sport. Out oars, lads!"

The crew of the cutter obeyed the order, and pulled away after the launch. Now Paul began to haul in on the line. Suddenly it slackened.

"It will drown itself if it doesn't come up to breathe," he shouted. "We shall soon have it lads!"

Captain Twopenny had got his rifle ready; the line was hauled rapidly in. Presently a huge black mass rose alongside.

"Give it a shot in the head, sir," cried Paul, "and the creature will be ours."

The seamen had got the ropes ready, and now dexterously slipped a running bowline over the head and another over the tail. The creature, which appeared to be a small sort of whale, was evidently much exhausted; a rifle-shot sent through its head contributed yet further to weaken it; but even as it was, its struggles so violently shook the boat that Harry was afraid he should be compelled to order it to be cut loose. After, however, giving two or three violent lashes with its tail, which sent the water flying over the boat, it remained perfectly quiet.

"This is a prize!" cried the doctor exultingly. "If we can secure the blubber we shall be no longer in want of fuel."

Axes and knives were soon out, and the thick mass which surrounded the creature was quickly cut off. A considerable quantity of the flesh was also secured, the fore part of the boat being soon well loaded with it, many of the articles which had before been stowed there having been brought aft to keep her in trim. By the time this operation was finished the other boat came up; and Harry, finding that he could now depend on obtaining enough water for all on board on short allowance, ordered one of his casks to be given to their friends in the cutter. Instead of charcoal, which was kept in store for the future, a fire was now made up of blubber, which burned with a hot flame, and the still was found to work remarkably well, though fresh water could be obtained from it only at a very slow rate. The chief cause of suffering which had been dreaded was, however, removed. Several wild-fowl were shot during the day, giving to each person a small quantity of fresh provisions, which were so much needed. The drowned fowls had also been boiled. Though somewhat tough and flavourless, they were not to be despised; altogether, there seemed but little fear of any suffering from want of food. Harry Shafto, however, knew better than any one on board that their voyage might still be a long one; and he advised the doctor to be very careful in serving out the provisions. He gave the same counsel also to the boatswain, the people in his boat being disposed to eat as much as they fancied, without thought of the future. Mrs Rumbelow, on hearing this, offered to go into the boat, and lecture them on the subject.

"They will listen to me, Mr Shafto," she observed, "more perhaps than to others in authority over them—the soldiers will, at all events. They are accustomed to me, and so are the women. As to the sailors, I'll try to make them ashamed of themselves, if they hold out."

Harry was very glad to obtain the assistance of the brave woman. She soon talked the unruly crew of the cutter into obedience. Even poor Ensign Holt quailed under her eye, when she rated him for his behaviour; she would not leave him until he had promised to behave himself for the future, as she observed. She whispered, however, to the boatswain to keep an eye on him during the day, and at night to have him lashed securely to a thwart.

"You never can tell what these demented people will do," she observed to the boatswain. "I just tell you to do what the doctor advises you, remember; and now I must go back to my party in the launch."

The cutter's people, once having got her, were in no way disposed to let her go, and declared that if she did not stop by fair means, she must by foul. However, she laughed at their threats, and ordering two of the seamen to get out their oars, desired the boatswain to steer alongside. She was obeyed; but as she was stepping from one boat to the other, several of those in the cutter jumped up as if to detain her, while her friends in the launch held out their hands to assist her on board. For a moment it seemed as if there was to be a regular skirmish.

"I shall know how to trust you again," she exclaimed, in her cheery tone, much amused at the incident. "I am grateful to you for the compliment; but a woman likes to have her own way, and I intend to have mine as long as I can get it."

Notwithstanding the wetting and cold to which every one had been exposed, few on board either of the boats complained of illness. The doctor, therefore, had but two or three patients, who did not occupy much of his time, the rest of the day being employed in attending to his still. From its very moderate dimensions, however, notwithstanding the heat created by the burning blubber, it produced but a very small quantity of fresh water; yet that was sufficient to quench the thirst of all in the two boats. His great wish was to produce enough to make tea for the poor women, at all events.

"But you must tell Lizard to look out for another whale or porpoise, or some other cetacea, or we shall run short of fuel, and that is a calamity we must avoid, if possible," he observed to Willy.

Paul, on receiving the message, again took his harpoon in hand to strike any fish which might rise sufficiently near. The calm continuing, and the men being sufficiently refreshed, Shafto, after consulting with Bollard, resolved to row on till nightfall in the direction of the land they hoped to reach. The order was given, “Out oars,” and the boats began to glide smoothly over the calm surface. When the men began to grow tired, Mrs Rumbelow was ever ready to cheer them up. “Pull away, boys! pull away!” she cried out. “We are not badly off as it is, but we shall be better still on dry land. We shall find the breeze, may be, a few miles ahead, and that will spin us along without the necessity of making your arms ache.” Sometimes she would sit down, and grasping an oar, assist one of the younger seamen; she showed, indeed, that she could pull as good an oar as any one on board, and thus no one ventured to exhibit any signs of weariness. Thus the day wore on till supper time arrived, and a substantial meal, cooked under the superintendence of the doctor, was served out to all hands, the cutter coming alongside for her share.

“Little fear of their parting intentionally with us, since we are the dispensers of the good things of life,” observed the doctor. “I am afraid, however, that we shall have to be put on short allowance unless we get along faster than we have lately been doing.” The last remark was made in a whisper to Willy. As most of the soldiers could row, the men on board were divided into watches, so that they might relieve each other at the oars, and thus the two boats continued their course during the night.

Chapter Ten.

Water! Water!

Fearful want of water—Fuel nearly exhausted—Aurora Australis seen—Iceberg in sight—Approach it to obtain water—Seals discovered on iceberg—Seals attacked—Several seals killed—A party get on the iceberg—Fresh water obtained—Iceberg begins to move—Flight for life—Launch nearly overwhelmed—The cutter not to be seen—Launch proceeds on her course—More birds killed—Danger from whales—Provisions becoming scarce—Land seen far off—Sufferings from thirst—A dark night—The launch approaches a rock—Party land on the rock—Bird colony attacked—Seals discovered—The doctor slips down the rock—The seals escape—No water to be found—Fuel obtained from a wreck—Lying in wait for the seals—A sail seen in the distance—The cutter arrives—Starving state of cutter’s crew—How they escaped from the berg—Peter’s generous conduct—The party encamp on the rock—A night scene on rock—Harry’s meditations.

Two days had passed away. Every drop of water, with the exception of a small quantity the doctor could produce from his still, was exhausted; a gill alone could be distributed to each person during the four-and-twenty hours and sometimes even that quantity could but with difficulty be procured. The salt provisions also, on which they had to exist, made every one thirsty, and the bright sun shining down on their heads increased their desire for water. Thirst—thirst—many now for the first time learned the real significance of that word. From both boats voices in plaintive accents were crying out for water. Oh! how many would gladly have given everything they possessed for a draught of the pure liquid; yet, although the still was kept going night and day, no more water beyond the small measure could be produced, and the doctor knew that his fuel was getting to an end. A portion of the charcoal in the bag still remained, but that was kept for cooking purposes. There were, likewise, a few fragments of broken-up cases and other pieces of wood, which might for a short time feed the stove; but they would speedily be exhausted. “What will then become of us all?” thought the doctor. “Heaven in mercy protect us!”

Harry Shafto was at the helm. The two boats were gliding over the mirror-like ocean, which reflected on its surface the bright stars overhead. Willy was by his side, declaring that, though it was his watch below, he could not go to sleep. “What strange light is that?” exclaimed Willy suddenly. From a bank of dark clouds in the northern horizon a bright ray darted upwards towards the zenith, expanding like a fan, and illuminating the whole ocean. Scarcely had he spoken when it died away, and darkness once more reigned over the world of waters. Before a minute, however, had elapsed, a magnificent arch, from which darted forth rays of varied colours, appeared. By degrees the light grew more and more intense, till the whole sky was spread over with a sheet of brightness; but not for a moment did it remain at rest—the most brilliant red, purple, orange, and yellow tints streamed upwards in innumerable radiations, with every possible variety of hues which a combination of these colours could produce. Now the rays seemed to close, now they opened again, like a vast variously-tinted umbrella, till the bright dome of heaven was all a-blaze. Now and then the stars could be seen beyond the mass of light; now they altogether paled, and were concealed by the marvellous glare.

“This is indeed beautiful,” exclaimed Willy. “I should so like to call the Miss Morleys; they would be sorry to miss it.”

“Thank you,” said Harry, “I wish you would, and do so softly, so as not to alarm them.”

“Miss Morley,” said Willy, going to the side of their cabin, “there is a splendid display of the Aurora Australis, and Shafto thinks you would like to see it.”

One of the young ladies was apparently awake; she called her sister, and, wrapped in their cloaks, they stood for some time gazing at the wonderful spectacle. Mere words indeed cannot describe it, nor can the painter’s pencil. It continued for nearly half-an-hour, varying during the time in its form. Now the arch grew still more brilliant, then it suddenly melted away, dropping downwards in a sheet of flame; now it arose once more, and the same brilliant and varied hues again appeared. As Willy was looking out eastward, his eye was attracted by a vast mass of brilliant light, now assuming one colour, now another, yet the form remained the same. He called Harry’s attention to it.

“It is an iceberg,” exclaimed Harry, “and directly in our course. Had it not been lighted up by the Aurora, we might have been close upon it without its being observed.” He carefully took its bearings by the compass, while the Aurora continued. Even the men at the oars could not help uttering exclamations of astonishment while the glorious spectacle was exhibited before them. At length it died away; but the Miss Morleys continued to watch for some time

longer, expecting it to reappear; they were at last persuaded to return to their cabin, for though the atmosphere was warm enough when the sun was shining, it was very cold at night.

Harry altered his course so as to pass to the northward of the iceberg, hailing the boatswain to follow him. The boats made but slight progress; and when daylight broke, they were close abreast of the huge berg. The doctor was on his feet in a moment, with unusual animation on his countenance. “We must get some of that berg,” he said. “Heaven has sent it to our aid. Hurra, boys! We shall now have as much water as we can pour down our throats.”

How welcome were those words to the seamen, as they awoke from their sleep with parched mouths and cracked lips; for notwithstanding the exertion they had gone through, they had taken even less water than the women and children. Those who had been tugging at the oars during the last hours of the night had been relieved, and the boats were eagerly pulled towards the berg. As they approached, several dark objects were seen on a low ledge projecting from one side of it. “They are seals,” cried the doctor. “We must have them! They will serve us for food and fuel to melt the ice. Our casks must be filled with water, and we must take on board as many lumps of ice as the boats can carry. But steady, boys! If we make the slightest noise, we shall frighten the seals and lose them.”

“I think I could shoot one of the fellows,” observed Captain Twopenny.

“And I another,” said Harry. “I suppose Bollard sees the seals.” He hailed the boatswain, and together the two boats eagerly approached the ice. Just then some more seals were seen at a little distance, and in order to double the chance of killing some, Harry directed the cutter to steer for the last which had appeared. Paul Lizard got his harpoon ready, in the hope of striking one should they take to the water. Those in the boats almost held their breath as they glided onwards, for fear of frightening the wary creatures. They appeared, however, never to have been alarmed by man, for every now and then one lifted up its head, and gazed at the advancing boats, as if they were some huge sea animals, without showing any signs of alarm.

“You take the big fellow on the right hand,” whispered Captain Twopenny to Harry. “I’ll take another I have marked farther to the left. Doctor, you pick out one in the centre.”

The boats drew nearer and nearer; the seals began to show that they suspected their visitors. No one moved in the boat, for fear of frightening the creatures. Again the animals began to move.

“They will be into the water if we don’t take care,” whispered the doctor. A few more strokes of the oars were given, and the seals nearest the edge began to move towards it. Captain Twopenny fired; the doctor followed his example, aiming at an animal some way from the edge; Harry, less accustomed than his companions to the use of a rifle, was afraid that he had missed his game. The boat now darted on, Paul Lizard standing with harpoon poised ready to strike. The seals, frightened at the noise, came rushing over the ice, and splashing into the water; fierce-looking fellows they were, too, with their huge tusks, long manes, and big beards. Instead of taking to flight, they came roaring angrily round the boat, apparently with the intention of attacking her. The women screamed as they saw the savage-looking animals surrounding them. “Load again quickly,” cried Harry, “and drive these creatures off.” One big fellow, the leader of the herd probably, came swimming up with grinning teeth, as if intent on mischief. He looked fully capable of ripping a plank out of the boat; and such seemed his purpose. Paul’s harpoon flew from his hand, burying itself in the monster’s head. The seal swam off, dragging out the line. Paul called two of the men to his assistance, and while they were hauling away at the animal, who was fast, the other men were engaged with their oars in keeping the rest of the infuriated herd at bay. Two seals lay on the ice dead, brought down by the captain and doctor. Three more were shot, but scarcely had the bullets entered their brains than down they sank, and were lost to sight. The remainder of the herd, having sufficient sagacity to know that the fate of their companions might be theirs, suddenly diving, with loud splashes disappeared. They rose again at some distance, blowing loudly, and looking as if they were about to make a fresh attack on the boat. After, however, they had continued for some time swimming rapidly to and fro, uttering their fierce cries, they seemed to have arrived at the conclusion that “discretion is the better part of valour,” and away they went till they were lost to sight in the distance. In the meantime, Paul Lizard had succeeded in hauling the seal he had struck up to the boat, when a few blows killed it. As rapidly as possible it was cut up, the best part of the blubber being taken on board, and stowed away in the bows. The doctor was eager to secure the other two seals which had been killed, and by pulling a little way round, a smooth landing-place was found. The boat rowed cautiously in, when the doctor, with Willy Dicey, Lizard, and two other men, leaped on to the berg. The two seals which lay there were soon cut up, under the doctor’s directions. “And now, Willy,” he said, “as we have an abundance of fuel, we must get as much ice on board as the boats can carry. See!” he added, chopping off a lump with his hatchet; “it is perfectly sweet and free from salt. Just tell Shafto to send two more hands here; we shall soon have enough to quench the thirst of all the party.” Willy ran to the boat, and quickly returned with two men, bringing axes and a large basket to transport the ice. They were working away on the side of the berg, and had already sent a good supply on board, when they felt it move in a strange manner.

“Why, it seems as if an earthquake were taking place,” said Willy.

At that moment they heard Shafto shouting loudly to them.

“Not a moment to be lost,” cried the doctor. “On, boys, for your lives! Here, take my hand, Dicey, I’ll not leave you behind.”

The huge ice-mountain became more and more agitated as they moved on. They reached the bows of the boat, and tumbled headlong in; and, at the same moment Paul Lizard, who had seized a boathook, shoved her off; the men got out their oars, and pulled her head round.

“Now give way, lads, for your lives,” cried Shafto.

The water around them became violently agitated, and the huge ice-rock swayed to and fro. Shafto cast an anxious look behind him. Its tall summit seemed to be bending over. Where was the other boat? No one could tell. There was

little time for thinking of their friends; their own probable fate absorbed all their attention. The men bent to their oars, looking up with horror in their eyes towards the mass which seemed about to come down and crush them. The ice on which they had lately stood disappeared. Large masses of frozen snow came hurtling down, falling with loud splashes into the water on either side of them. One such mass would have been sufficient to send their boat to the bottom; but only a few small fragments fell on board, and no one was hurt. Then came a cry of terror from many a usually stout heart. The summit of the ice-mountain bent over more and more. What chance had they of escaping from beneath it? Down, down it came with a terrific splash into the hitherto calm sea, throwing up the foaming waters, which dashed over them in dense showers, while the wave raised by the fall of the berg, as it rolled after the boat, seemed as if it were about to break on board and swamp her. The crew needed no urging to put forth all their strength. The boat's stern rose high as it passed under her, and then on she glided, away from the danger. They were saved! Narrow, indeed, was their escape.

"But where is the cutter?" exclaimed Willy, looking around. She was not to be seen.

The weather, which had hitherto been so calm, had been changing rapidly while they were engaged in killing the seals. A thick mist had rapidly swept over the ocean, and shut out even the huge mass of the overturned iceberg, which still floated upon the water. They shouted loudly, hoping that those in the cutter, if she was still above water, might hear them; but no answer came.

"God's ways are mysterious," observed Mr Morley. "He has thought fit to preserve us while our poor companions have perhaps been allowed to perish. To Him our thanks are due."

The doctor and Captain Twopenny fired their rifles several times, but still there was no reply, and Harry reluctantly continued his course. A light breeze had sprung up, the sails filled, and the "Ranger's" launch glided rapidly over the water. The doctor at once lighted the stove, and having melted the ice, filled all the water-casks. How eagerly did those who had for so many days tasted barely sufficient water to moisten their throats drink down large draughts of the pure liquid. A plentiful repast of seal cutlets and steaks was served out, and a small quantity of spirits to those who wished for them. All, however, felt very sad at the loss of their companions. "Poor Peter Patch!" sighed Willy; "I little thought, when he was joking with me this morning, that I should never see him again."

For several days the boat ran on, the breeze having freshened considerably. The charts showed some rocks in their course. Harry kept a bright look-out for them. He was anxious to make them, if possible, at the same time that he dreaded running on them during the dark hours of night. Once more the wind fell, and by this time their water was again getting low. All the ice had been melted, and a good deal of the seal blubber burnt up. What remained was becoming far from pleasant, but the doctor insisted that it was too valuable to throw overboard. Numerous birds were seen at different times, and several came near enough for the captain and doctor to get a shot at them. Several petrels and Cape pigeons were killed; but it was necessary to haul down the sails in order to pick them up. Though Harry did not like the delay, they were too valuable an addition to their larder to be lost. It was wonderful all this time how Mrs Morley and her daughters bore up under the trials to which they were exposed. Poor Mrs Twopenny was the only invalid, she constantly requiring the doctor's attention. Thus day after day passed away, Paul Lizard in vain trying to catch a porpoise or dolphin, or some other fish. Their dark backs were frequently seen as they swam by at a tantalising distance, and sometimes a whole shoal would appear, by the curious way in which they rose and sank as they darted forward near the surface, making it seem as if they were performing somersaults in the water. Willy could scarcely believe that they only rose to breathe, and that their backs but slightly moved out of the horizontal position, their peculiar shape giving them the appearance of diving. Whales, too, frequently appeared close at hand, sending forth from their blow-holes a column of foam-like breath—the spray which they forced up falling round in graceful jets. The doctor explained that the white spout which appeared was the warm breath of the animal, and not, as the sailors often suppose, a mass of foam forced from its nostrils. The whales were, however, too formidable antagonists to attack, even had one come near enough to allow Paul Lizard to send his harpoon into its back.

"No, no," he observed; "I know what I am about. We should get but little change out of one of those creatures if we interfered with it. Much more likely to have the boat capsized or sent by its flukes to the bottom."

The doctor had now again recourse to his still to obtain a supply of water. One of the casks was always left full, in case of emergency, should bad weather come on, and it be impossible to keep the stove alight. Again they were on a short allowance of food; the wet flour had become perfectly mouldy, and the biscuits were in very little better condition. Starving people only could have eaten them.

One evening, as the sun was setting, a blue hillock appeared rising out of the eastern horizon. At first it was so faint that few on board believed it to be land. Harry hoped that it might prove one of the rocky islets of which he was in search. All he could tell from the chart was its existence. Nothing was said about its size or height. He stood towards it, but the wind was light, and little progress was made. The last pieces of seal blubber had been expended, and but one small cask of water remained. There was charcoal only sufficient to cook breakfast for the next day. Every one was suffering more or less from thirst.

"Cheer up, friends," cried Mrs Rumbelow, whose throat, though she did not say so, was as if a hot iron had been thrust down it. "Yonder is the land, and we there may hope to find water and provisions of some sort."

The night was very dark, and anxious as Harry was to get on shore, he was afraid of running on some unknown reef, or passing the rock, should he continue his course. He therefore hove the boat to, and, as many sailors have had to do, longed for daylight. Willy, that night dreamed of home more than he had done before, and of the loved ones there. Sometimes, too, thoughts of his late shipmates came into his head, and they appeared to perform a fantastic drama before him. "Harry," he exclaimed, starting up, "what has happened? You don't know what dreadful things I have been thinking about."

Harry tried to calm his agitation, but it was no easy matter to do so. The hardships and anxiety he was going through

told on the young boy's nerves, well-strung as they were; as also on those of many others aboard. Poor Mrs Morley struggled bravely; her daughters, feeling their situation not the less keenly, exerted themselves to the utmost to console her. The launch was still a considerable distance from the rocky island when daylight appeared. Harry, now once more easing off the sheets, stood towards it, proposing to go round, and stand in on the other side, knowing that on the weather side landing would be difficult. As they approached, several parts of the rock were seen covered with white patches, and on drawing nearer, these patches appeared to be moving.

"Why, I believe, those are birds!" exclaimed Willy. "See, there are hundreds of them. They appear to me to be arranged in rows one above another on the higher ledges of the rock."

"They are penguins, I have no doubt," exclaimed the doctor. "Though they themselves are not very palatable food, their eggs, if any remain unhatched, will afford us some substantial meals. We shall not starve if we can get at them."

The sun was very hot, and there was a great demand for water; but the doctor would only serve out half-a-gill to each person. He knew full well that in a short time the last drops would be reached, and that then their suffering, hitherto but moderate, would be greatly increased. The wind fell, and once more the oars were got out. As the rock was approached, it was evident that too much surf was breaking on it to allow of landing on that side. The boat was therefore rowed round it; and after coasting along the shore for a short distance, a small sheltered cove was found, into which they gladly ran. For the first time for many a day the wanderers at length stepped on firm ground. The ladies were first assisted to land, but they could with difficulty walk, after being cramped up for so long a time.

"I am afraid the island will afford but short rambles," observed Harry; "but we need fear no savages or wild animals."

"The first thing to look out for, boys, is water," exclaimed the doctor; "though, by the appearance of these rocks, it may be a hard matter to find."

While the females of the party preferred remaining near the little cove, the rest rambled away in search of the much-desired fluid. The doctor had taken his rifle, and Willy, by his direction, carried an axe in his belt, and a spar sharpened at the end.

"You observe, Dicey," said the doctor, "if we come upon any soft place, we shall, by driving this spar into it, more readily ascertain whether water is below."

They had not gone far, however, before they saw how slight was the probability of discovering water. There might be some trifling rivulet formed by the melting snow, but hitherto not a trace of moisture had been seen on the hard dry rock. They were climbing the rocks when, having passed a deep fissure, they saw before them a vast array of strange-looking birds perched on the crags above their heads.

"Come, Willy," cried the doctor, "we must have some of these fellows at once."

Directly they were seen, the birds set up a loud concert of squeaking, squalling, and gabbling. The doctor shouted to Willy to come on, but so overpowering were the cries that he could not hear what was said. Each bird appeared to be endeavouring to out-squall and out-gabble its neighbour. Undaunted by the noise, the doctor climbed on, and was soon in the midst of the feathered colony. Willy followed close at his heels, when the birds fearlessly commenced attacking them, snapping at their legs, seizing hold of their trousers, and showing their anger in every possible way.

"I say, Dicey, we must put a stop to this," cried the doctor, beginning to jump about as the birds dug their beaks into his calves. Willy, for the same reason, was skipping here and there, in a vain endeavour to avoid them. "Give me your axe, and defend yourself as you best can with your stick," cried the doctor; and saying this, he laid about him with the weapon, and a number of hapless penguins were soon brought to the ground. In a short time, upwards of a hundred were killed; the remainder still continuing gabbling and squalling as loud as ever. In some places there were old birds with their young, in others nests on which the hens were still sitting. In some of the nests, which were formed of dry seaweed, or frequently only placed without a lining in the hollow of a rock, was one egg, in others two. The eggs varied in size, some being as large as those of a goose, others not larger than a hen's egg, with a slight tinge of green. The nests were about two feet apart, and generally one old bird was found sitting on the nest, the young ones endeavouring in vain to nestle themselves under her wings. They were very like goslings, covered with a dark thick down. The parent birds were about twenty inches in height, with a white breast, and nearly black back; the rest of the body being of a dark, dun colour, with the exception of the head, which was adorned on each side with four or five yellow feathers, three or four inches long, forming graceful plumes. Thus the birds, when seen standing erect in rows, had very much the appearance of a company of soldiers.

"These will be a welcome prize to our poor friends," exclaimed the doctor; "so load yourself, Dicey, with as many eggs and birds as you can carry, and we will send the men up for the remainder." Saying this, the doctor, tying the legs of a number of birds together with his handkerchief, fastened them round his neck, and then filled his hat full of eggs. Willy did the same.

"They will take us for a couple of feathered bipeds of some new species," said the doctor, laughing. In truth, except their heads, nothing was to be seen of the doctor and Willy but masses of feathers. Now and then some of the birds, who had only been stunned, began fluttering about, and sticking their beaks into the bodies of their captors, who, climbing down the steep rocks, were but ill able to defend themselves. In spite of this, they succeeded in reaching the cove in safety, where their appearance, as they expected, created no little astonishment. Mrs Rumbelow, with some of her companions, quickly relieved them of their burdens, and instantly began plucking out the feathers of the birds, while the doctor and Willy again hastened off to continue their rambles. After making their way over the hill, they came, as they neared the beach, upon a large family of seals basking on a small strip of sand in a little cove below them. The doctor was delighted at the sight. "Now, Willy," he exclaimed, "we must have some more of these phocae." The doctor in his eagerness was hurrying on, rifle in hand, when his foot slipped, and he went sliding down

a steep rock. The rifle exploded, the bullet passing very near Willy's head. Willy cried out, dreading that the doctor would be killed. Still he continued his downward course, Willy making his way by a more circuitous path as rapidly as he could towards him. At length the doctor reached the bottom of the cliff, where he lay without moving. Willy hurried towards him, expecting to find every bone in his body broken. Happily, the sand was soft where he had fallen.

"Help me up, Dicey," he said, in a faint voice. "Where is my rifle; we must do battle with the seals notwithstanding."

Willy soon assisted his friend to get on his feet; but when they looked round for the seals, not one was to be seen; the sound of the rifle and the doctor's and Willy's voices had put the whole family to flight. The worthy doctor, after shaking himself, discovered, to his infinite satisfaction, that no bones were broken, and in a short time was able to scramble up the rocks again, to continue his search for water. Their worst anticipations were realised; not a spot was found which gave the slightest indication of there being water below it. The rock had been searched throughout, and all hands returned to the cove with the same report. They came, however, laden with as many penguins as they could carry, and all the eggs that could be collected. There was now no fear of suffering from starvation. The great difficulty was how to cook their abundant supply of provisions. No other seals had been seen; and it was feared that those on the little beach, frightened away by the doctor, would not return.

"If so, the sooner we get away from this barren spot the better," observed Harry. "If the fine weather continues, as I hope it may, we can expect to reach the Auckland Islands in three or four days."

"I think we should not give up all hopes of catching a seal or two," observed the doctor. "As they have been only once disturbed, the herd we saw are pretty certain to come back before long; and if we can conceal ourselves and watch for them, we may shoot or knock some on the head before they can again escape."

This proposal was agreed to, and Harry resolved to wait a few hours longer, in the hopes of success. One of the men also stated that he had seen some pieces of timber apparently, thrown up into a shallow cavern at the north end of the rock, and a man with him had in vain tried to get down to them; but he thought, with the aid of ropes, they might be reached.

"Then let us get hold of them at once," said the doctor; "they will serve as fuel, and fuel can procure us water—no time to be lost."

Two lengths of rope, and three blocks to form a tackle, were therefore procured from the boat; and Harry, taking a party of men with him, under the guidance of the seaman proceeded to the spot. From a projecting point they could look into the cavern, where was seen a considerable amount of broken planking and timbers, the remains, apparently, of a large boat or small vessel One of the seamen volunteered to be lowered down to the spot. The tackle was secured to the rock overhead, and in a short time, to the doctor's great satisfaction, a considerable amount of planking was hoisted up. He at once eagerly shouldered as much as he could carry, and two of the men who could be spared followed him to the cove. His still was landed, and a blazing fire being raised beneath it, he was soon able to offer a small quantity of the precious fluid to his thirsty companions. All had had enough to moisten their parched throats, when the remainder of the party arrived with a fresh supply of fuel.

"Poor fellows, little did they think, when their vessel was cast away, what a blessing her ribs and skin would prove to us," soliloquised the doctor, as he added fresh fuel to his fire. A shot was just then heard. It was fired by Willy Dicey, who had remained on the summit of the rock; he was pointing westward, and waving his cap.

"The boat! the boat!" he cried out; and the top of the rock was soon crowded with most of the seamen, eagerly looking out in the direction towards which he pointed. There, just rising above the blue water, was seen a tiny white spot, some declaring that it was only the wing of a sea-bird; but when Harry arrived with his spy-glass, he at once pronounced it to be the sail of the cutter. So anxious were they all in watching it that most of them forgot the seals. Captain Twopenny, however, reminded by the doctor, had made his way, accompanied by Paul Lizard and one of the soldiers, towards the sandy beach. Here they concealed themselves among the rocks on either side of it, while Harry and Willy, with the rest of the party, were watching the approach of the boat on the top of the rock. First one dark head, and then another, was seen rising above the surface of the water, and presently the herd of seals made their way towards the beach. The creatures, after cautiously looking about them, began crawling up. The first which arrived lay down at no great distance from the edge; but soon others climbing up, giving them no very gentle shoves, they crawled on still further, and then again lay down, the next treating the last comers in the same way; till at length a herd of full fifty seals had landed, the inner ones being at a considerable distance from the water. The seamen on the top of the rock were eager to rush down and attack them.

"They will be off as before, and we shall lose them," said Willy, in a low voice. Just then a shot was heard, then another and another, and presently Paul Lizard was seen scrambling along the beach, and followed by the captain and a soldier, and a regular onslaught on the seals was commenced. The seamen could restrain themselves no longer, and down they rushed pell-mell to assist their friends; the only weapons, however, which they possessed were some pieces of the wreck. The seals were rushing towards the water, tumbling over each other in their hurry to escape; a few old bulls, however, the patriarchs of the herd, were ferociously attacking their assailants. The captain was tumbled over, the soldier had nearly broken his rifle in defending himself against the assaults of a fierce bull, while Paul was laying about him right and left with his club, when the rest of the party arrived to their rescue. Two seals had been shot, and Paul's club had brought down four more; the rest, charging all who opposed them, made their way to the water. The captain, though somewhat bruised, and having his clothes torn by the teeth of the seal which had attacked him, was not otherwise the worse for the encounter. The six seals which remained as trophies of the battle were well worth all the injuries which had been received. The seamen's knives were quickly at work, and the flesh and blubber were cut off and carried away in triumph to be laid at the doctor's feet. He was delighted when he saw the spoils brought to him.

"No fear now, my friends, of dying of thirst or hunger," he exclaimed. "If we can keep our pot boiling, we shall do

well."

By this time the cutter had drawn near the rock, and Harry and Willy once more mounted its summit to watch her. They could see with the telescope the faces of those in her looking up with astonishment at them. Harry waved to them to go round to the other side of the rock; and as soon as they understood his signals, the boat was hauled on a wind, so as to weather the north point. They all seemed very pale and miserable.

"There are some people lying at the bottom of the boat," observed Willy. "I fear they have been suffering greatly."

The two friends hurried down to the cove, and in a short time the cutter was seen coming round and standing in for it. The sail was lowered, and the oars got out; but from the languid way in which they moved, it was evident that those who were rowing had but little strength. As she approached several people were seen pointing to their mouths.

"I thought so," observed the doctor. "We have fortunately saved some water, though there is scarcely more than sufficient to wet their lips."

"Oh, give them all we have," exclaimed Mrs Morley, who overheard the remark.

"Oh yes, do! do!" exclaimed several of her female companions.

The doctor, who had been perseveringly attending to his still, hurried to the cove as the boat came in with a jug and a little tin canister, which served as a measure. The pale cheeks and cracked lips of those on board the cutter showed how much they had suffered.

"The women first, if you please, sir," said Mr Bollard, as the doctor stepped on board. How thankfully they and the poor children received the few drops of water offered to each of them. One person only looked at him with an angry glance. "Why don't you bring me champagne?" exclaimed poor Ensign Holt. "That's fit tipple for a gentleman." It was evident, poor fellow, that he was as mad as ever. He did not, however, refuse the water poured into his mouth, declaring as he drank it that it was hock of the first quality. Not till all the others had been served would the brave boatswain accept the water for himself. The doctor then hurried back to get a fresh supply.

"We are truly glad to see you, Bollard," said Harry, "for we believed that you had been overwhelmed by the iceberg."

"So we should have been, sir," was the answer, "but the moment we saw the top of the berg beginning to move we shoved off, and pulled away to the westward. We were not a moment too soon, however; for a mass of ice rose right up out of the water, directly astern of us. Had we been a moment later, it would have lifted the boat fifty feet in the air, and, for what I know, sent us all flying over the top to the other side of it."

Willy, who had hurried down to the cutter, looked anxiously for Peter Patch. He was in the stern-sheets, his cheeks as pale as death, and his eyes closed. A few drops of water poured down his throat revived him. "Thank you, Dicey," he whispered, opening his eyes. "I thought it was all up with me."

"You will be soon to rights, Mr Patch," said Bollard, looking kindly at him. "He would not touch a drop of water himself," he added, turning to the doctor, "but gave his share to those two little children crying out for it."

"And you gave yours to their mothers," said Peter, "so you need not talk of what I did."

"The youngster has got a heart after all, in spite of his nonsense," muttered the doctor; and Peter was a favourite of his ever afterwards.

It was indeed providential that the launch had arrived at the rock some time before the other boat, and that the firewood and seals had been procured, or probably many of the poor women and children on board her would have perished, however the stronger men might have endured their sufferings.

The doctor hurried back to his still, which he believed no one could superintend so well as himself. It required, indeed, the greatest attention, and three hands were constantly employed in filling up the boiler and supplying the condenser with cold water. Though Harry was anxious to continue the voyage, the doctor begged that they might remain on the rock during the night, that he might the better keep his still at work, and, at the same time, as there was fuel sufficient for their fires, that a good supply of seal-flesh might be cooked. The tent was accordingly carried on shore and considerably enlarged, to afford accommodation for the ladies and other women, while some of the men slept on shore, thus giving ample space for the remainder to stretch their legs on board the boats. The scene looked wild and strange in the extreme to Harry, as he retired a short distance from the camp to enjoy a few moments of solitude, and seek for that strength he so much needed, with the heavy responsibility thrown upon his young shoulders.

By the side of the small cove on which floated the two boats was the white tent, and at a little distance their camp-fires blazed up brightly; while high above rose the dark, rugged peaks of the weather-worn rock on which, ever and anon, a ruddy glare was cast by the flames at their base, while beyond stretched out into interminable space the dark, heaving ocean. Across that ocean he was now to go, and guide the course of the two boats towards an inhospitable land, yet the nearest where water and fuel could be found. It could not, however, prove a permanent resting-place, as the winter, he had heard, was severe in the extreme, and provisions for so many mouths it might be impossible to find. Yet could he venture farther on in these open boats? New Zealand lay beyond; but a large portion of that country was but little known; they might reach a part inhabited by savages, who might treat them as foes instead of rendering them assistance. If so, might it not be safer to stand across from the Aucklands to the distant shores of Australia? Even should the weather favour them, could they carry water and provisions sufficient for so large a party? Could any of their number be left behind? Who, indeed, would consent to stay?

These questions, and many more, crowded on the young officer's mind as he thus sat beneath the rugged cliffs of that wild sea-worn rock. He resolved, at all events, to steer for the Auckland Islands, which had been discovered in 1806 by Captain Bristow, commander of the "Ocean," South Sea whaler, and called after Lord Auckland; but with the exception that they contained some good harbours, Harry knew very little more than that fact about them.

Chapter Eleven.

The Auckland Islands.

The boats leave the rock—Steer for the Auckland Islands—Scarcity of fresh water—Mrs Rumbelow puts the men to shame—Clouds gather in the sky—Preparations for catching rain-water—Rain comes at last—Land in sight—Threatenings of a storm—The Aucklands approached—Off a harbour—Risk of running in—The storm bursts—The boats stand towards the harbour—Dangerous passage—Anxiety for the cutter—Boats run up the harbour—A landing-place found—Safe on shore.

The whole of the next day was passed on the island. Among its various productions, scanty though they seemed at first, was a supply of salt, found in the hollows of the rocks. This, in addition to the salt produced by the still, gave the party enough to preserve a considerable number of the birds they had killed, as well as some seals' flesh. Under Mrs Rumbelow's direction, the former were plucked and split open; and while some were salted, others were hung up in the smoke of the fires to dry. Every one during the day was so busily employed that it seemed to pass rapidly away. Though Harry, afraid of a change of weather, had intended putting to sea in the evening, he consented, at the entreaties of most of the party, to remain till the following morning. Being the first on foot, at early dawn the following morning he called up Willy, and the little camp was soon astir. While Mrs Rumbelow and her willing assistants were busily cooking the last meal they could hope to enjoy on shore for many days, the men were engaged in stowing the boats with their fresh provisions, and as large a supply of fuel as they could carry. Prayer was offered up, Mrs Morley reading a chapter in the Bible, and then the whole party embarked. The short stay on the rock had greatly revived them, and even poor Ensign Holt seemed much more tranquil and contented.

"It won't do to trust him, though," said Peter Patch to Willy, as they were embarking. "I have to keep my eye on him, and I am afraid, even now, he will play some trick."

The little baby, in spite of the cold to which it had been exposed, seemed to flourish, still affording a great amount of interest to its nurses as at first, young Broke occasionally begging that he might have it in his arms; and it was pleasant to see the tender care he took of the little girl. She was called Bessy, and was supposed to be the child of a Sergeant Leslie, whose wife had accompanied him; but as there were two or three babies of the same age on board, there appeared to be some doubt about the matter. Young Broke evidently considered himself the rightful guardian of little Bessy, and would have again risked his young life, if necessary, for the sake of preserving hers.

The sea continued smooth and the wind fair, and the boats ran swiftly across the ocean. Twice a-day the cutter came up alongside for her supply of water. It was a small quantity, little more than sufficient to moisten the throats of the voyagers after each meal; still they were thankful to obtain even that. Frequently, as they saw the clouds gathering in the sky, they longed for rain, that they might obtain a larger amount of the necessary fluid. Though the rain might wet them to the skin, and chill their bodies, they could endure anything, they thought, for the sake of more water.

Willy often dreamed he was on shore, wandering near sparkling cascades and clear running streams, but that somehow or other he could never reach the water to obtain a draught. Probably the dreams of others of the parties were of a similar character.

Day after day passed by; the wind was very light, and the voyage promised to be longer than Harry had anticipated. The doctor looked anxiously at his stock of fuel. "I am afraid our boiler won't hold out much longer," he observed to Willy. "Ask Shafto when he hopes to sight these Auckland Islands he talks of. We have not passed them, I hope."

"No fear of that," answered Willy. "Shafto says that we are still nearly two hundred miles from them."

"Two hundred miles!" murmured the doctor. "That is a long distance, should the wind come foul; but we must keep the pot boiling,—there's no doubt about that." The following day, the doctor told Shafto that he thought it would be prudent to reduce the allowance of water. "We can exist with very little, and though that may be painful, it is far better than going without it altogether," he remarked.

Several of the people murmured when they received their reduced allowance; even some of the women declared they must have as much as they had been accustomed to; and two or three of the seamen and soldiers, who had hitherto behaved well, exclaimed that they would not be deprived of their rights. Harry's anxieties were greatly increased. Mrs Rumbelow, however, came to the rescue.

"What is that you say, men?" she exclaimed. "Are you not able to go through what these poor ladies—who have been accustomed to gentle nurture all their lives—endure without complaining? You should be ashamed of yourselves. I'll soon show the next man I hear talking in that way that I have not been in the regiment for thirty years without learning my duty; so look out. But I think better of you, boys. If I was to ask you now, you would, I am sure, be ready to give up half your allowance to any of the poor women who might require it more than you do!"

Not another word was said. Little Broke, it was observed, as soon as he got his allowance of water, always crept near little Bessy, and poured a few drops down her throat before he would take any to quench his own burning thirst. The seal blubber was at length expended, and but a small quantity of wood remained to keep the stove alive. The anxiety of all naturally increased as the prospect of obtaining more lessened. Some, indeed, were beginning to despair.

Before long, however, dark clouds were seen gathering in the sky, hanging low down above their heads, the breeze freshened, the air felt heavy and damp.

“What do you think of the weather?” asked Harry of the boatswain, the cutter being within hailing distance.

“We shall have the rain, sir, and I am getting a sail ready to catch it. I’d advise you to do the same,” was the answer.

The canvas which formed the ladies’ cabin was immediately stretched out between the masts, and triced up at the corners; the women held out their shawls, and every arrangement was made to catch the hoped-for shower; while the casks and cans, and all the articles capable of holding water, were got ready.

“There it is! there it is!” cried several voices, as the rain was seen descending some hundred fathoms from the boat in a thick shower; but it was to leeward of them. Then it suddenly stopped. Soon another heavy fall of rain came down at a considerable distance astern. How tantalising it was to the thirsty throats of those who watched it! Now another shower appeared ahead, but not a drop descended where the boats lay.

“Oh, Mr Shafto, is the rain not coming near us?” inquired several of the poor women, as they turned their flushed faces towards him, and hugged their children closer to their bosoms. He could not bring himself to say that he thought so, as he observed their cracked lips, their lustreless eyes, and anxious looks.

“We must hope for the best,” he replied. “See the showers are falling all around us, and we may hope that one will visit us ere long.”

The men proposed getting out their oars, and pulling in the direction the next shower might appear.

“We might be too late to reach it, and miss another by so doing,” he answered. “Ten minutes of one of those showers will be sufficient to supply all our wants.”

Still the rain continued falling, and the thirsty voyagers fancied they could hear the splash in the water, so near did one or two showers come to them. Now the heavy clouds seemed to be rolling away, but others came up in their stead.

“There’s a drop! I felt it on my face,” cried Willy. “Another, and another. It rains! it rains!” In an instant all in the boats were lifting up their faces to the sky, the poor little children opening wide their mouths to catch a few drops of the refreshing liquid. There was no mistake about it now. Down came the welcome rain in thick heavy drops. The sails were hauled down, for fear of passing through the shower. Not a drop, if they could help it, would have been lost. As the water fell it was drained off into the casks and buckets; the women rung out their shawls; every bit of rag that could be wetted was eagerly sucked. Still the rain continuing to fall, every can, and even the smallest cup that could be found, was filled. They had learned the true value of water. Scarcely had all their measures been filled when the rain ceased, the clouds rolled away. The sun shining forth assisted to dry their saturated garments. A brisk breeze soon after sprang up, and the boats danced gaily over the now laughing water. The hearts of the voyagers were inclined to laugh too, many lifting them up to heaven to express their gratitude for the relief afforded them. There was now water enough, they hoped, to last them till they could reach the wished-for land. Notwithstanding this, the doctor kept his precious still going, when the stove was not required for cooking, carefully husbanding the small remains of fuel.

A strong northerly breeze was blowing, the boats continuing their course to the eastward, the launch leading. All night long they had stood on, the dark foam-topped seas rising up around them. Harry feared that he should be compelled to heave to should the wind increase. He had been at the helm during the middle and morning watch. Willy was on the look-out forward.

“Land! land!” he shouted. Daylight had just broke. “There are cliffs ahead, with high lands rising beyond them,” he added. Paul Lizard was awake in a moment, looking out with him.

“You are right, Mr Dicey.”

“Do you see a high point to the south’ard?” asked Harry.

“Yes, sir,” answered Paul. “And it seems to me that there’s an opening in the cliffs.”

“That must be the west entrance to the southern harbour of the Auckland Islands,” said Harry. “I little expected to make such a run. Providence has guided us, not my navigation.”

Every one in the launch was soon eagerly looking out towards the land. The cheering intelligence was announced to those in the cutter. They, however, had also seen the land, but were not so well informed about it as was Shafto. The boats now stood on, steering for the narrow passage between the cliffs. Harry looked anxiously ahead. It seemed to him that the line of breakers ran directly across the passage. If so, to attempt to enter would be hazardous in the extreme, although, in consequence of the wind leading directly in, the risk might be lessened; yet every instant the gale was increasing, and it was important to get without delay under shelter. He knew that there was a wide western entrance; but the wind might be blowing out of it, and a long time must pass before it could be reached. He hove to, therefore, till the cutter could come up, that he might consult with the boatswain.

“It’s six of one and half-a-dozen of the other,” answered Bollard; “the boats have shown what they can do, and I am ready to chance running in.”

Harry could not conceal from himself the risk he was about to run; yet it might be greater should he continue at sea during the gale which was brewing. Giving, therefore, the helm to Lizard, he swarmed up the foremast, that he might the better examine the appearance of the entrance. It was sufficiently threatening to have deterred him under other

circumstances from making the attempt to enter; yet as there appeared a narrow space of dark water, a break in the line of foam, he resolved to stand on. On either side rose perpendicular cliffs; that on the north four or five hundred feet high, but that on the south considerably lower. The two boats stood on, the cutter keeping about a hundred fathoms astern of the launch. Harry placed Paul Lizard at the helm, he himself going forward, holding on by the foremast. The oars were got out, to be in readiness should any flaw come off the shore, and all hands not required to pull them, or tend the sheets, were ready with buckets to bail out the water should a sea come on board. Mrs Rumbelow had taken possession of the largest she could find, ever ready to set her companions a good example. She perhaps, as well as any one, knew the risk that must be run.

“Now, my dear ladies, and you soldiers’ wives, don’t be screaming out if a little drop of water cornea aboard; we’ll soon send it back again; and in ten minutes or so we shall be safe at anchor. Just think how God has taken care of us heretofore, and He is not going to desert us now,” she exclaimed, looking round on those to whom she spoke.

The gale was rapidly increasing; dark clouds were gathering overhead, from which ever and anon flashes of bright lightning darted forth, with crashing peals of thunder. The leaden-coloured waves danced up wildly on either side. The boats dashed on. The roaring of the breakers could be heard, as they leaped up madly against the frowning rocks. Harry kept his eye fixed on the spot of clear water ahead. On either hand of it rose up the white foaming wall of hissing waters, amid which the stoutest boats would have been in an instant overwhelmed. There was no possibility of turning back now; they must stand on, or their destruction would be inevitable. Harry, holding on to the mast with one hand, kept the other pointed in the direction Lizard was to steer. Many of those on board shut their eyes as they drew near the roaring breakers. The tide was running out strong. Such a wind as was then blowing would alone have enabled the boats to stem it. Tall basaltic cliffs rose up on either hand, while the foaming rollers, as they came in, appeared ready to engulf the two boats. Now the launch rose to the summit of a high sea, now downward she glided, the breakers hissing and foaming so close to her that it seemed impossible she could pass through the narrow opening between them in safety. Now a heavy mass of water came tumbling on board on the starboard side; now another fell over her on the other hand.

“Bail away, boys, bail away,” cried Mr Rumbelow; and all who had buckets or cans exerted themselves to the utmost, down to young Broke, the water being hove out again as fast almost as it had come on board. The launch flew on. Harry breathed more freely. She was already within the breakers; but the waters still kept leaping and tumbling about in a way which showed the rapid current running against them. Should they be becalmed under the cliffs, they might find it impossible to stem it. Willy had been standing near Lizard; he now looked back anxiously for the cutter. Where was she? His heart sank. Had she been engulfed? A huge roller came roaring up astern. Presently she appeared on its summit, darting forward with the speed of an arrow; now she descended, gliding on towards the passage the launch had just passed through. Willy could not help feeling intense anxiety about her. It seemed impossible that so small a boat could pass through so fierce a tumult of water in safety; yet in another instant she was gliding on through the passage, and, shooting forward, was almost up to the launch.

The crews of the two boats cheered each other as they thus found themselves in comparative safety, the sound of their voices echoing from cliff to cliff.

“Let us, my friends, return thanks to Heaven, which has so mercifully preserved us,” said Mrs Morley, who had during the time sat with her two daughters gazing at the scene, apparently fearless and calm. They had been so living that they were prepared without flinching to encounter any danger which might meet them.

The wind blowing directly up the harbour, they ran on, no place appearing on either side where they could land. A small island was passed a mile from the entrance, but its shores were rugged, and afforded no resting-place. On they advanced; point after point was passed, still no sheltering bay had been seen where they could securely anchor. At length Harry perceived on the port bow a wide opening. It was the entrance, he hoped, to an inner harbour, where shelter might be found. He shouted to the boatswain that he would stand in.

“Cheer up! There’s a harbour at last,” cried Mrs Rumbelow, as she surveyed the entrance. The men kept the halyards in their hands, ready to lower the sails at a moment’s notice; the oars were got out, prepared for any emergency. The boats glided on. Instead of the tumbling, hissing waters through which they had lately passed, all was calm and smooth. On the right was a high bluff, with a reef running out from it. On the left the land was more level, but everywhere covered with low, stunted trees; while the shores on either hand were fringed with black, rugged rocks, and ahead rose ranges of hills, some bare and bleak, towering to the sky, the nearest clothed thickly with brushwood. The harbour they had entered proved to be of considerable size, extending far up into the interior of the island. As they sailed on, numbers of seals appeared—some swimming round them, others resting on the rocks and gazing at the intruders to their domains with wondering eyes, evidently unaccustomed to the sight of human beings.

At length, after proceeding several miles up the harbour, which branched off in several directions, Harry observed a small bay on the right which promised to afford shelter to the boats. The sails were lowered, and he steered for it. A ledge running out on one side formed a natural landing-place. The launch pulled in, and the men jumped on shore. The cutter came close up astern, and the crews, rejoicing in having reached a harbour in safety, gave vent to their satisfaction in hearty cheers. The whole party were soon on shore. Beyond the rocks on which they landed was a broad plot of grass land, sloping gradually upwards, bordered by a mass of underwood and stunted trees. In the distance rose several hills, some of considerable height; while opposite the bay the harbour had the appearance of a large lake, dotted here and there with wooded islands, and encircled by a belt of hilly country, covered with trees. On the opposite side of the outer harbour which they first entered Harry told them was Adams’ or South Island; while, eastward, a broad estuary stretched away towards the ocean, forming the entrance to Carnley Harbour. Close to where they landed a beautiful stream of clear water came rushing down from the heights, making its way into the bay. The moment it was seen most of the party rushed towards it, and in an instant were kneeling down by its side, taking it up with cups and cans, which the more provident had brought with them. Willy immediately ran back to the boat to secure a can and a small cup, with which, having filled, he hastened back to where Mrs Morley and her daughters, with poor Mrs Twopenny, were seated on the rocks. He saw that they, at all events, were not unmindful of

God’s protecting care, which had carried them through so many dangers, and that they were, with grateful hearts, offering their thanks to Him to whom their preservation was due. As they ceased, Willy approached them. The two young ladies were certainly not suffering less than others; but they would not touch the water till their mother and their invalid companion had quenched their thirst. When they had done so, Willy could no longer resist placing the jug to his own lips.

“What, my boy,” said Mrs Morley, “had you not first drunk of the water yourself?”

“No, how could I,” said Willy, “when I knew how much you wanted it?”

Willy was amply rewarded with the smile the young ladies bestowed on him.

“That is indeed true chivalry,” observed Emma Morley to her sister.

Chapter Twelve.

The “Crusader” is disabled.

Fever still on board—Plans for the future—Emily and May attend the sick—Mrs Clagget’s suspicions—Scene on deck of emigrant ship—Land in sight—Arrival at Cape Town—“Crusader” again ready for sea—“Crusader” meets another ship—Charles and Bill Windy on board—The lost one recovered—Charles narrates his adventures—Seaman overboard recovered—Attempts to follow the ship—Ship lost sight of—Without food or water in boat—Windy keeps up the men’s spirits—They steer for Trinidada—Long voyage in prospect—Sufferings from hunger and thirst—Picked up by homeward bound ship—Get on board ship bound for the Cape—End of Charlie’s narrative—“Crusader” stands to the south—A gale comes on—Tremendous seas—Sail blown from boltropes—Mrs Clagget’s tongue in the storm—Mrs Clagget begs the captain to change his course—Ship thrown on her beam-ends—The masts cut away—The “Crusader” springs a leak.

The “Crusader” having sailed sufficiently far south to obtain the assistance of the prevailing westerly winds, once more, with studding-sails on either side, glided rapidly over the ocean towards the southern end of Africa.

Besides the sickness which still prevailed, she had run short of water, in consequence of her long detention in the calms of the Tropics; and this made it doubly necessary for her to touch at the Cape, in order to obtain a fresh supply before she continued her course across the Southern Ocean.

Proudly as she sailed on, how different were the spirits of those on board to what they had been at the commencement of the voyage. Jack Ivyleaf no longer spouted or sang his comic songs. The poor steerage passengers mourned for their lost friends. The seamen talked over the good qualities of Bill Windy, the late mate, who was a general favourite with them. The captain sincerely grieved for him, and felt his loss acutely. But Emma and May Dicey, perhaps more than any one else, had cause to mourn for their brother. Mr Paget endeavoured, with the most delicate attention, to comfort them; and even Mrs Clagget’s manner softened when she attempted to soothe the grief of the poor girls. Still her tongue would keep wagging, and they would frequently have been glad had she kept silence.

“You see, my dear Emily, you and May have been deprived of your brother, and I know what it is to lose a person one loves. When poor dear Mr Clagget was taken from me, I thought my heart would break; but it didn’t, you see, and I got over my grief in time. Now, according to my idea, it is wise to make the best of everything; and what I propose is, when we reach New Zealand, that we should set up house together. You cannot live alone, that’s very certain, and I have no wish to reside by myself. It is but natural, and right and proper, that an old friend of your family, as I am, should remain with you, and afford you that protection which you so much require.”

Notwithstanding Mrs Clagget’s kind intentions, neither Emily nor May had any wish to have the sound of her tongue always in their ears. They talked over her proposal, but agreed that they would rather do anything than be compelled to accept it. Mr Paget did not offer any advice on the subject, considering that there would be time enough to discuss the matter when they were nearer New Zealand. He probably thought that they would, when there, find some more desirable friend than the talkative lady appeared to be. What was passing in his own mind, indeed, he did not reveal. There were still so many sick on board that the young ladies’ services were almost as much required in attending to them as at first. In this occupation they found their best solace. After two or three days, they had aroused themselves to attend to their self-imposed duties. They were now never idle, although tears unbidden often came into their eyes when they thought of their young brother, cut off so suddenly in his youth and strength. They endeavoured, on such occasions, to turn their minds to the duties they had in hand, and, to the casual observer, they appeared very soon to have recovered from their loss.

“I have an idea,” said Mrs Clagget to the lady who occupied the next cabin to hers, “that it won’t be long after we arrive in New Zealand before my friend Emily replaces poor dear Charles. I should have given those two girls credit for having more feeling; but ah, my dear Mrs Jones, there’s wonderful elasticity in the spirits of youth. I am sure such was my case, when I was a girl—down one moment, up the next; weeping and sighing, laughing and dancing, within a few minutes. I was still in my youth when I was deprived of my dear Mr Clagget, and, as I was telling them the other day, I thought my heart would break; but I bore my loss with wonderful equanimity.”

“Yes; but then you are a wonderful woman,” observed Mrs Jones, who had long since become weary of her neighbour’s loquacity, and did not observe that the Miss Diceys showed any want of feeling at the loss they had suffered.

Although at first unwilling to encounter their fellow-passengers, the two poor girls, feeling the importance of taking

the fresh air, used to come on deck at night, where they would stand, their hands clasped together, watching the beautiful constellations, and gazing over the dark ocean which they believed to be their beloved brother's grave. The other passengers, respecting their grief, kept aloof from them, and allowed them the part of the deck they chose to themselves. The old captain and Mr Paget were the only people who spoke to them on such occasions, and then only to advise them to retire to their cabins, when the late hour made it desirable. Sometimes, notwithstanding this, Emily lingered, and Mr Paget, finding that he was not intruding on her sorrows, stood by her side, offering such subjects of consolation as he thought likely to produce a good impression upon her mind. Emily felt very grateful to him, and was thankful that she and her sister had a friend on whose calm judgment and sympathy they could so thoroughly rely.

The "Crusader" sailed on towards the east before a steady breeze. Often for days together not a sheet nor tack was started; the crew had seldom to go aloft, except to serve some of the rigging, or to keep the usual lookout.

Although the sickness on board did not increase, the captain still considered it necessary to put into Simon's Bay for water. One fine calm morning, the passengers were scattered about in groups on deck, the women belonging to the steerage attending to various domestic concerns, the mothers dressing and nursing their children, the girls working or pretending to work with their needles. Three or four of the men were helping the cooks, some were mending their shoes, others were tailoring, a few of both sexes were reading, a greater number arguing some knotty point, or smoking their pipes, and several were sitting listlessly with their hands between their knees, already wishing that the voyage was over, and that they were once more engaged in the occupations to which they had been accustomed. The crew were all busy in their various duties about the ship. The captain was not a person to allow his men to be idle. The carpenter was at his bench, scattering white shavings around him; several were at work with heaps of oakum, spinning yarns. The sailmakers, with canvas spread before them, were plying their needles; others were making mats, or splicing or knotting ropes. The painters, with their pots and brushes, were giving touches to the bulwarks and other parts where the paint had been rubbed off; and every particle of brass was getting a fresh polish from the ship's boys, who whistled as they worked. The cabin passengers were collected under the awning on the poop. In one part, Mr and Mrs Bolton, with their children around them, were holding school; the younger ladies were reading or working. Mr James Joel was laying down the law on some agricultural subject to the young farmer, Luke Gravel. Tom Loftus and Jack Ivyleaf were smoking their cigars, and arranging some plan of proceeding which Jack had proposed as certain of success. Mrs Clagget, though with work in her hands, had forgot all about it in her eagerness to employ her tongue on her reluctant hearer, poor Mrs Jones. Emily and May were reading together a book which Mr Paget had lent them. He had wisely judged that the best way to restore their spirits was to draw them off from themselves. He was standing near them, doing nothing, an unusual occurrence for him. Now and then he glanced over the page, and made some remark, and though perhaps he was not aware of it, he continued watching Emily's countenance as she read.

"I thought so before, and now I am sure," whispered Mrs Clagget to her companion. "Well, it's the best thing that could happen."

"But is he going to settle in New Zealand?" asked Mrs Jones. "He is a mere traveller I fancy, or perhaps he has a wife already."

"I think too highly of him to suppose that," said Mrs Clagget; "though, to be sure, I do wish he would talk more about himself. I like a person to be communicative; those reticent people always puzzle me."

Such was the state of affairs on board the "Crusader" when a voice was heard from aloft shouting the welcome cry of "Land ho! Land on the port bow!" In an instant every one was on the alert, looking out in the direction indicated; but though it could be seen from the mast-head, a considerable time passed before it was visible from the deck.

The captain ordered the seamen to the starboard braces, and in an instant, the deck, before so quiet, was full of bustle and life. The ship was hauled up to the north, and at length the bold outline of the Cape of Good Hope came into view. Before evening the "Crusader" anchored in Simon's Bay.

The captain at once went on shore, and returned with the satisfactory intelligence that the passengers would be allowed to land on the following morning, though they would be kept in quarantine till all fear of infection had passed away. This would detain the ship for some time; but it was hoped that the residence on shore, with the advantages of an abundant supply of fresh vegetables, would restore the sick to health. Mrs Clagget was very indignant on finding that she would not be allowed to visit the town, nor to travel into the country. She had, however, to submit to regulations which were for the good of all. All the passengers were indeed compelled to land, as it was considered necessary thoroughly to fumigate every part of the "Crusader," an operation which could not be carried on while they remained on board. When released from quarantine, the Miss Diceys met with much sympathy from the inhabitants of Cape Town, who had heard of the loss of the boat. Mr Paget was received with great attention by the principal people in the place.

"I am sure he must be somebody," observed Mrs Clagget, when she heard of it. "I have always remarked a peculiarly aristocratic air about him." However, as Mr Paget himself did not speak of any of his acquaintances, the good lady began to doubt whether the report was true.

At length the "Crusader" was declared to be again ready for sea, the steerage passengers were removed on board, and the following day the rest again occupied their cabins. Captain Westerway had wished to obtain another first mate in the place of Bill Windy, but he had been unsuccessful. The second mate was a young man, and though a fair sailor, was not as trustworthy a navigator as the captain desired; thus, consequently, throwing more labour and responsibility on him. Once more the sails were loosed, the anchor hove up, and the "Crusader" stood out of Simon's Bay, the captain hoping to get a good offing before nightfall. Sail after sail was loosed; and close-hauled, with the wind to the westward, she glided swiftly over the blue sea. While the passengers were on deck watching the receding shores, a shout was heard that another ship was approaching under all sail, right ahead. Their attention was turned towards the stranger. She was an object to be admired, as, the sun glancing on her wide spread of canvas, she

heeled gracefully over to the breeze. The two ships rapidly neared each other, the “Crusader” keeping to windward. Closer and closer they drew; it seemed, indeed, as if they were about to run into each other. The stranger, however, slightly deviated from the course on which she had been steering, and then keeping as before, showed that she intended to pass as near as possible to leeward of the “Crusader.” The passengers of the latter ship hurried to the side nearest her, and a number of people were seen on board, some holding on to the shrouds, others leaning over the bulwarks.

“Why, as I’m a live man, there’s our mate, Bill Windy,” exclaimed one of the “Crusader’s” seamen, “and there’s Dick Hansom, and Tom Bowline, I do believe! Yes, it’s Tom himself!”

Emily and May heard these exclamations, and, eagerly gazing with beating hearts, they saw their brother Charles in the main rigging. They looked and looked again, scarcely trusting their eyes; but there could be no mistake. He waved his hand; he had seen them, and Bill Windy discovered them also.

“Heave to,” cried the mate, “and we will come aboard you.”

The two ships glided by each other. The helm of the stranger was put down, and with her headsails backed against the masts, she lay, hove to. Captain Westerway imitated the manoeuvre, and the “Crusader” likewise became almost stationary. Scarcely even now crediting what they had seen, and feeling as if they were in a dream, the two sisters watched the stranger. A boat was lowered. Several people jumped into her, and she rapidly approached. In a few minutes their dear brother Charles, for whom they had so long grieved as lost, was in their arms. May hung about his neck, and kissed him again and again. Bill Windy and the rest of the boat’s crew received the hearty greetings of their shipmates. The good captain, with a tear in his eye, warmly shook his mate by the hand. “I would rather see you here alive and well, my dear fellow, than be told I had a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds left me, and need no longer knock about the salt ocean. I had given you up as gone for ever, Bill.”

“I knew that you would do your best to look for us, captain,” answered the mate, “and that it was no fault of yours that you didn’t pick us up. We had a narrow squeak for it; but we had saved poor Tom, and that cheered us during the dangerous time we had to go through.”

“And how did it all happen, how did it all happen, Mr Charles?” exclaimed Mrs Clagget, as soon as she thought he and his sisters had kissed and welcomed him sufficiently, as she called it. “We’re dying to know how it happened, for we never expected to see you again.”

“I hope soon to tell you my story,” answered Charles, “but I must shake hands first with the friends who are wishing to speak to me.”

Mr Paget was among the foremost to welcome Charles, the rest of the passengers following, and expressing their pleasure at seeing him again.

“Now, Charles, you must know that I am very angry with you for jumping into that boat,” exclaimed Mrs Clagget. “The only way you can make your peace with me is to tell me your story at once. I can’t let you go and describe all to your sisters and other people, and allow me to have it second-hand.”

Charles laughed. “I must not disappoint you, then, Mrs Clagget,” he said. “But were I to give you more than the outline of my adventures, I should have to spin you too long a yarn; so you must excuse me if I somewhat curtail my story. Soon after we shoved off from the ship, we saw the lifebuoy, and Tom Bowline, the man who had fallen overboard, clinging to it, and driving away to leeward. We followed, and not without difficulty got him at last on board. We then attempted to secure the buoy, and while so doing, a heavy sea broke over us, and nearly swamped the boat. She had, we found, so slight a hold of the water that she drifted away even faster than the lifebuoy. One of the oars had been broken, and another was carried away while we were trying to haul in the lifebuoy. We thus in vain attempted to pull back to the ship, and found ourselves every instant increasing our distance from her. Sometimes, as we sank into the trough of the sea, she was hidden from our sight, and we knew, consequently, that we could not be seen from her deck; besides this, from the colour of the boat, when we were on the crest of the sea, we were well aware that she could scarcely be distinguished from the foaming water around. At length we saw the yards swung round, and then we knew that we must have been given up for lost. To reach her was impossible. You may fancy, my dear sisters, how acutely I felt for you, knowing the grief my supposed loss must cause you. That, indeed, was the hardest thing to bear. Our hopes revived when we saw the ship wear round, and stand back again nearly across the spot where Tom had fallen overboard; but she kept too far to windward. Though we could not row with any effect, we determined to try and sail. Happily, Jack Ivyleaf and Tom Loftus had in the morning been reclining at their ease in the boat to smoke their cigars, and, to make themselves comfortable, had thrown in some rugs and blankets. With these we devised some sails, the broken oar was fitted as a bowsprit, and two other oars were stepped as masts. Some of the emigrants had, fortunately for us, also left a child’s mattress in the boat. This, split open, formed a jib and fore-staysail We had a coil of rope, with which we fitted the stays and sheets. Our sails answered better than we expected; but we found that we could not lie sufficiently close to the wind to get up to the ship. Our disappointment was great when we saw her again standing on her course. Night was approaching, and we were by this time some five miles away; still, while the light lasted, we could clearly trace the rise and fall of her bowsprit with the swell of the sea. Bill Windy, however, did his best to keep up our spirits. ‘Never fear, lads,’ he exclaimed, ‘we are slipping along at a good rate through the water, and we shall not be so very far astern of the old ship after all; perhaps at daylight, when the sea goes down, as it is doing fast, she will catch sight of us, and we shall be aboard again for breakfast.’ The word ‘breakfast’ made us think of food, for we were feeling somewhat hungry; but not a particle could be found in the boat. The mate now divided us into two watches; he was in the one, I in the other. While one of us steered, another kept a look-out, and the rest slept. I confess that I felt from the first that the chance of catching the ship was but small; still I hoped that we might do so, and hope kept up my spirits during that long night. Sleep I could not for thinking of you both, and what would become of you should I be lost. I knew we were a long, long way from any land, without a drop of water or a particle of food. We could scarcely, therefore, expect to survive till we should

reach even the nearest point. While I sat alongside the mate, talking of the possibility of overtaking the ship, I asked him whether he really thought we could do so.

"'That depends whether during the night she carries much sail or not. The captain believes that the boat was swamped. To tell you the truth, Mr Dicey, I don't think we shall overhaul her, however, we must not give way to despair. If the worst comes to the worst, we must try and make a little island which lies midway between the coast of South America and Africa, called Trinidada. It is a barren spot, but I have heard that water is to be procured there, and it is said that a few runaway seamen, with negro wives, manage to pick up a livelihood on it. If so, we shall not want for food, as where they exist we can manage to support ourselves till a ship passes within hail.' By the mate's calculation, the island he spoke of was about a hundred and twenty miles away to leeward. It was, however, but a small dot in the ocean to hit to a certainty; still he thought we should not fail to pass within sight of it. 'However,' he concluded, 'mind, I don't think that it is impossible we may, after all, be in sight of the ship at daylight.' The boat was making fine weather of it, and slipping at the rate of five or six knots an hour through the water, so that, had we possessed something to eat and drink, we should have had less cause for anxiety. Notwithstanding this, the men kept up their spirits wonderfully, and as they were roused up one after the other to take their watch, each man had a joke on his lips. The thing they chiefly seemed to sigh for was a pipe of tobacco. Tom had had some in his pocket, he declared, when he went overboard, but it must have slipped out, and he mourned its loss more than that of his hat.

"When morning broke, you may be sure we eagerly looked out for the ship, but she was nowhere to be seen. 'Then, lads,' exclaimed the mate, in a cheerful voice, 'what we have now to do is to steer for the island I have been telling Mr Dicey about. No fear as to getting there, and we may live like Robinson Crusoe, the lords of all we survey, till some craft comes by to take us off, and then we can go or not as we have a mind to do.' 'Hurra for Trinidada,' shouted the men, inquiring of the mate what sort of a place it was. As the wind was right aft, we rigged the square-sail with the boathook as a yard, and though the sea was still running pretty heavily, we calculated that we were making a good six knots an hour. The mate advised the men to take a reef in their belts when they felt hungry. 'Ay, ay, sir,' answered Tom, laughing, 'it's the best way to keep hunger out, when there happens to be no plum-dough to stow aboard.' 'I wonder who will have ours,' exclaimed another of the men. 'I'll lay anything Dick Handspike does his best to get my share.' Thus the men joked and laughed as if we were not in the middle of the Atlantic, with a fearful probability of being starved to death. Bill Windy assured us that we should make the island by noon the following day, whispering to me, however, that he had hopes of reaching it by dawn, and we all made up our minds for another supperless night at sea. I had little notion before what were the actual sensations of thirst and hunger. I could not help thinking of your remark, Mrs Clagget, to me a short time ago, and wished that a covey of flying-fish would come on board. Some of the men had begun to scrape the broken pieces of the oar, and chew the wood to stop the gnawing of hunger. Another night, we all felt, would be very trying. The day wore on, and though we had kept a bright look-out on either side, no sail had been sighted. Believing that if I could get to sleep, I might better endure the pangs of hunger, I at length threw myself down in the bottom of the boat, and had been dozing away, though still conscious of where I was, when I heard a shout of 'Sail, ahoy!' We were all sitting up in a moment, and saw, on the port bow, the topgallant sails of a ship rising above the horizon. She was standing to the northward. We bore away and rapidly neared her. As we approached, she altered her course still more for us. We were seen, and had now every hopes of getting on board. At length she hove to, and we were quickly alongside. She was an American whaler, homeward bound. The captain received us with the greatest kindness; our boat was hoisted up; and while Windy and I were entertained in the cabin, the men were hospitably treated by the crew forward. Although we were no longer in danger of starving, I could not help still thinking of the grief you, my sisters, were suffering on my account, and wishing that some aerial telegraph existed among the wonders of nature by which I could send you a message to assure you of my safety. Months might pass before I could find a ship to rejoin you in New Zealand. When the captain heard of my anxiety, he promised to keep a bright look-out for any ship bound for the Cape or the Australian colonies, on board which he might put us. The mate and I spent most of each day relieving each other at the mast-head, not willing to trust to the eyes of others.

"Near a week had passed away, when Bill Windy, who was aloft, hailed the deck. A ship was in sight, steering southward. We stood for her, with a signal flying. She hove to. We did the same. She was bound out for the Cape. Wishing good-bye to the kind master, who would not receive even the boat which we offered him as payment for his hospitality, we went on board the other ship. We were as kindly received as before. We met with no accident, though we had a somewhat slow passage, till, to our joy, we recognised the 'Crusader' coming out of Simon's Bay. Thus, Mrs Clagget, ends our adventures. I only wish you had heard them from my friend Windy, as he would have given them in a more graphic manner."

"Oh, I intend to get them out of him before long," said Mrs Clagget. "There are a number of things I want to ask him about, and remember, Mr Charles, that you never go and do so foolish a thing again. You don't know how angry I have been with you."

"I am much obliged to you, Mrs Clagget, and promise to remember your advice," said Charles, laughing, as he descended with his sisters to their cabin, where they might talk of their dear home and the loved ones there. Charles greatly relieved their minds when he told them that he had written home, and that he hoped his letter would reach England as soon as that which conveyed the intelligence of his supposed loss. They had thought of remaining at the Cape, but Mrs Clagget and Captain Westerway had urged them to continue their voyage in the "Crusader." Perhaps Mr Paget might have said something about the matter. At all events, they had determined to go on to New Zealand, thence to return home, should they find it desirable. Having recovered their brother, they had now no longer any doubts about the future, but believed—and surely that was but natural—that all would go smoothly and happily.

The ship stood to the south, till she again met with the steady westerly wind, which had already carried her so many hundred miles on her voyage. A change, however, again came over the ocean. Dark clouds were seen hurrying across the sky; the sea, hitherto rolling in regular billows, now began to foam, and hiss, and dance wildly about, the wind carrying the spray in thick sheets from their curling summits over the deck. Sail after sail was taken off the ship, till the topsails, closely reefed, alone remained set, the gale howling and whistling in the rigging. The waves continued to increase in height, and huge mountains of water rose up on either side, whilst others came rolling

astern, as if about to break over the poop and sweep the decks of the stout ship. The emigrants were desired to keep below, the hatches were battened down, everything that could be washed away was secured. Lines were also stretched along the deck, by the aid of which the seamen could make their way from one end to the other. Four of the best hands, secured by ropes, were at the helm, where they stood struggling and clinging to it every now and then, in spite of all their efforts one or other being thrown on either side from the violent jerks it made. The wind increased every instant, low heavily laden clouds bounded the horizon, circumscribed to a couple of miles. Sometimes the ship sank so low in the trough of the sea that the curling summits of the waves appeared to reach above her mast-heads; now she climbed a watery height, to remain but for a moment, before she rushed down again on her impetuous course. In vain the captain and his mates shouted to the men, their voices were drowned by the loud uproar of the waves, the howling and whistling of the wind in the rigging, the creaking of the bulk-heads, the flapping of the canvas, the complaining of the masts and spars. A fierce hurricane was blowing, such as Captain Westerway said he had never before encountered in those seas. Charles and Mr Paget frequently made their way on deck to witness the grand spectacle which the ocean presented. A close-reefed fore-topsail, and a storm-staysail were the only sails set; but even with these the masts bent as if they would go by the board, and every moment it seemed likely that the canvas would be carried out of the boltropes. Looking astern, they saw the huge waves following them, now one came rolling up, its foaming crest towering over the taffrail, while ahead appeared another, the summit of which could just be seen above the fore-topmast-crosstrees. In an instant, the ship, escaping from the watery mountain astern, rose to the crest of that before her, and thus she careered onwards, again sinking so low down, that, sheltered by the surrounding seas, the wind could not be felt on deck, though still heard whistling aloft. Directly afterwards it came with a force against which it seemed scarcely possible to withstand. Frequently as the ship rolled, the ends of her yards flicked off the crest of the waves which rose up on either side. For several days the ship ran on, the gale in no way moderating. Emily and May longed to go on deck, to witness, with their brother and Mr Paget, the wild tumult of waters. They wisely entreated them not to make the attempt.

“No, no, young ladies,” said Captain Westerway, “you had better stay where you are. We are doing our best as seamen, but we cannot tell from one moment to another what may happen. A mast may go, and one of those waves following astern might break on board, and sweep the decks, and you will be carried away like feathers without the possibility of saving you.”

This reply made them very anxious whenever Charles and Mr Paget went on deck. One day they both had gone up as usual, promising to hold fast and not run any risk of the danger the Captain had pictured. Just as the ship had reached the crest of a sea a clap was heard like the sound of thunder. The fore-topsail had split. In an instant the larger portion was blown into ribbons, which, streaming out, flapped and twisted and curled themselves round the yard.

“Fore-topmen, aloft!” cried the captain, and, led by Bill Windy, several men mounted the rigging with axes in their belts. As the fragments of the sail beat wildly about, the men ran a fearful risk of being caught by them and hurled into the foaming sea. Bravely they faced the danger, and, cutting away the remainder of the sail, off it flew like a gigantic kite ahead of the ship. Now came the task of bending another sail. Notwithstanding the difficulty, this was accomplished, the ship happily escaping being pooped during the interval.

Several more days passed by and still the gale gave no sign of abating. How different was the aspect of the cabin now to what it had been during fine weather. The stern lights were closely shut in, the sky-light battened down and covered over, to prevent any sea which might come on board breaking through. A solitary lamp swung, both night and day, to and fro, casting a pale, flickering light around. Most of the passengers kept in their cabins, seldom venturing out, even at the breakfast and dinner hour, at which time the table was partially covered with dishes, firmly secured by puddings and fiddles, as the captain told them the lines and sandbags fastened to it are called. Even Mrs Clagget’s tongue was more silent than usual; sometimes, however, it could be heard amid the creaking of the bulk-heads, as she endeavoured to make Mr Jones listen to her complaints; but, though the notes of her voice were distinguishable, that much-enduring lady could but seldom catch the meaning of her words. “Terrible!” then the ship rolled and the bulk-heads creaked. “Deceitful!” and a blow on the quarter from the sea prevented the remainder of the sentence being heard. “Ought to have come another way,”—the increasing uproar drowned even her voice. “Complain to authorities,” showed that Mrs Clagget entertained strong doubts of the captain’s seamanship. Now and then, when he made his appearance in the cabin, though he was but seldom off the deck, she attacked him vigorously. He, however, only smiled at her complaints, and assured her that, had he the management of the weather, he would have arranged smooth seas and steady breezes for her sake, and for that of the other fair ladies on board. “But you see, madam,” he observed, “though the wind blows pretty strong, it is carrying us at a good rate on our course. In a few days we shall be at no great distance from the southern end of New Zealand; and, once under the lee of the land, we shall have, I hope, smooth water and a fair breeze to carry us into port.”

The gale, however, continued longer than the captain expected; but he hoped soon to make the land which he had spoken of. This news raised the spirits of all, and many who, during the continuance of the hurricane, had shut themselves up in their cabins, now once more appeared on deck.

“Do you really tell me that the sea has greatly gone down?” said Emily, as she watched the still mountainous billows amid which the ship laboured.

“Oh, they are mere mole-hills to what they have been,” answered Bill Windy, who was standing by. “The stout ship makes nothing of them. See, we have our three topsails set again, and shall soon be shaking out the topgallant sails and letting fall the courses.” The mate, however, was wrong in his prognostications. During the middle watch, while the second mate had charge of the deck, the wind suddenly chopped round. The ship heeled to the fearful blast. In an instant her lee-yardarms were dipping in the foaming seas. Before he had time to issue any orders the main topgallant mast was carried away, dragging the fore-topmast, and with it the jibboom. Still the ship did not rise—she was on her beam-ends. Captain Westerway and Bill Windy were on deck in an instant. The watch below came hurrying up without being summoned. Every one knew what had occurred.

“Cut away the mizen-mast, Windy,” cried the captain.

The mate, with a gleaming axe in his hand, stood ready to obey the order. The shrouds were cut.

“Cut,” cried the captain, and a few strokes sent the tall mast into the sea. The desired effect was not produced. The helm was put up, but the ship refused to obey it. The mate sprang to the mainmast. That, too, must go, or the ship might never rise from her dangerous position; but it was a fearful alternative; for, deprived of her masts, she might be driven at the mercy of the wind and waves, and cast helpless on some rocky shore of that bleak region, towards which, should the gale continue, she might be driven.

“Cut,” again cried the captain. The mainmast fell into the seething water, the seamen hurrying with axes to sever the ropes which kept it still attached to the ship. With a sudden jerk the ship in another instant rose to an even keel; but so violent was the motion that the foremast, deprived of its accustomed support, went by the board, and the “Crusader” lay a helpless wreck on the wild waste of waters.

It is needless to describe the dismay and anxiety of those below, though only partly aware of the dangerous position to which the ship was reduced. Now, answering her helm, she flew before the gale. While the captain was issuing orders to clear the wreck, the carpenter appeared with a face of dismay. He had been sounding the well.

“Three feet of water in the hold, sir,” he said. “It will be a hard job, with all the pumps going, to keep the leaks under.”

Mr Paget heard the announcement. “I will get the emigrants to work them,” he said, “and the cabin passengers will, I feel confident, set the example.”

“Rig the pumps at once, then, Mr Gimlett,” said the captain. “When the gale moderates we will get up jury-masts, and do our best to save the ship. Tell the poor people not to be downhearted, Mr Paget, but to put their trust in Him who has carried us thus far on our voyage in safety.”

Chapter Thirteen.

An Invasion of Seals.

Stores landed—Party sent to kill seals—A tent rigged—Woodcutters set to work—Tiger-seals—A mob of seals attacked—Peter chased by tiger-seal—Willy rescues Peter from the seal—Harry meditates on his responsibilities—The encampment at night—A storm threatens—Rain comes through the huts—Invaded by seals—Seals driven off—A hurricane—Boats in danger—The cutter hauled up—The launch wrecked—The huts blown down.

As soon as the thirst of the long sea-tossed party was assuaged, Harry called the officers and men round him.

“We have an abundance of work before us,” he said. “We have but a scanty stock of provisions remaining, and must obtain more without delay. We have wood to cut for fuel, and we must get up the best shelter we can manage for the women and children before nightfall. First, however, we must land our remaining stores, and secure them under cover. For these purposes we will form three parties.”

Dr Davis volunteered at once to go in search of seals; several, it will be remembered, having been observed poking their snouts out of the water as they came up the harbour. He had hopes also of finding more on the islands or rocks within its circuit. Captain Twopenny offered to accompany him, and Willy and Peter Patch begged that they might go also. Harry told them that they might take the cutter as soon as she was unloaded, with four of the men to pull. The boatswain and a large party took charge of the unloading of the boats and putting up the huts, while the remainder, armed with all the axes which could be mustered, were directed to cut down wood for fuel.

“And, please sir, what are we to do?” asked Mrs Rumbelow; “there are other hands here willing to work.”

“I think the best thing you can do is to look after the children,” answered Harry.

“Oh, sir, the ladies can do that; and they will pardon me for saying so. I and several other women can manage to bring in the wood as the men cut it, or to carry up the stores from the water. No one among us wishes to be idle.”

“I am not going to work,” said poor Mr Holt, who was seated by himself on a rock. “I was brought here against my will, and do not intend to be made a slave of.”

“Poor fellow,” observed Harry, “he is not yet recovered from his attack, Well, Mrs Rumbelow, I will accept your services; but what we have to do must be done quickly, as night will shortly be upon us.”

The wooding party under Paul Lizard, as soon as they had collected all the axes and large knives to be found, went off to the wood at a short distance from the landing-place. The cutter was quickly unloaded. The doctor, in the meantime, had been surveying the island across the harbour with a spy-glass. “I see several dark objects moving up the bank,” he observed. “I have no doubt they are seals; and, if so, we may hope to obtain an ample supply of fresh meat. We shall find clubs of more use than our guns,” he added; “make haste, and get some ready.” As soon as the clubs were cut from some small trees growing near the beach, the doctor, fearing that the seals might return to the water before they could get up to them, hurried his companions into the boat, which pulled away across the harbour. The launch had been hauled alongside the rocks, and as soon as she was unloaded, Harry and the boatswain set to work to erect a tent. The mast served as the ridge pole, and the spars and oars formed supports over these, while the

sails of the two boats were spread and secured to the ground by stones placed along the lower edges. Besides this, the canvas was made fast with lashings and ropes to the poles. A tent of tolerable dimensions was thus formed, sufficiently large to protect all the women and children.

“Should rain come on, there is something it wants,” observed Mrs Rumbelow, who had been very active in bringing up the things from the boats. “We must spread a flooring of some sort. It will not do for Mrs Morley and the young ladies to lie on the bare ground.” Saying this, and summoning the other women, she hurried off to the wood. In a short time she and her attendants returned with loads of spruce fir-tops. These were spread over the ground at one end of the tent. The cutter’s foresail had been triced up, and served as a partition. “There, marm,” she said, addressing Mrs Morley; “we have fitted up a room for you, and the two young ladies, and Mrs Twopenny, where you may be tolerably private; I wish it were a better one. You have not been accustomed to this sort of rough life; but I and most of the other women have seen something of it before, and can manage very well in the rest of the tent. I only hope the children won’t disturb you at night.”

Mrs Morley warmly thanked her.

“Bless you, marm,” answered Mrs Rumbelow, “we have only done our duty. We could never do too much for our poor colonel’s lady; so pray, marm, don’t talk of thanks.”

Mrs Morley and the other ladies gladly took possession of that portion of the tent prepared for them, feeling truly thankful that they could rest without the dread of awaking and finding the dark seas tossing and foaming around them. As soon as the tent was set up, the boatswain and most of the other men joined the party in the wood, to collect the boughs and the thickest bushes they could find. With these they erected a number of wigwams, within which all the men might lie down and find shelter. Mrs Rumbelow would not yet let her attendants rest, but back again they went to the wood, and returned laden with as much fuel as they could carry. A large fire soon blazed up.

“I wish we had some seal-flesh ready for cooking,” observed the boatswain to her as she began busily to employ herself in roasting the last of the penguins, and the few remaining eggs which had been brought from the rock. “This sort of work makes one hungry.”

“If the doctor and the rest have any luck, we shall soon have as much as you and all hands can stow away,” she answered. “We’ll keep the fire blazing for them.”

The cutter had meantime made her way across the harbour towards the island. As she drew near it, the doctor and his party distinguished several large animals, apparently asleep, high on the beach.

“Why, I do believe they are lions!” exclaimed Peter Patch, as a huge monster, one of the nearest, lifted up its head and stared at the intruders with its large eyes. The creature’s mouth was of a prodigious size, furnished with teeth, four of which were of great length. It had long bristles on its lips, and from the neck and shoulders stood up a thick mane of coarse hair. As they continued to advance, it lifted up its head just as a dog would do, opening wide its mouth as if ready to attack them with its enormous teeth.

“I say, Dicey, surely the doctor is not going in to fight these savage creatures,” whispered Peter. “Why they will tear us to pieces and gobble us up in five minutes.”

“They look fierce enough,” said Willy. “But they are only seals, and as they have not got legs, I suppose we can easily manage to keep out of their way.” Captain Twopenny proposed shooting the sea-lion; but the doctor warned him not to fire, lest he might alarm the remainder, who might take to the water before they could land. He directed Willy, therefore, to steer the boat further round, so that they might get on shore at a little distance from the seals, and then, by creeping on them unawares, kill as many as they might require.

They soon landed, and the captain and doctor led the way, club in hand, followed by Willy, Peter, and three of the men, one having been left in charge of the boat. Willy shortly afterwards missed Peter, who had evidently no fancy for attacking the lions, as he still believed them to be. After making their way through the bush for a short distance, the rest of the party came upon an open space in which were at least a hundred seals, apparently fast asleep, divided into three bands, which the sailors called mobs, quite separate from each other. They were of all sizes; some were huge bulls, others cows; and among them were a number of young calves. The doctor told off two men to attack each mob. Willy thought that it must be dangerous work to fight such formidable creatures; still he was not inclined to flinch from it. The doctor directed them to knock over the young ones, and not to mind the others, unless the creatures should stand at bay, or attack them. “If they do, we must give them a hard rap on the nose, which, depend upon it, will settle them at once,” he observed.

Having placed their guns against a tree, they grasped their clubs at a sign from the doctor, who set them the example, and rushed in among the seals. The animals waking up, stared at the intruders with astonishment, while the doctor and his companions, wielding their clubs, struck right and left at their heads. A single blow was sufficient to kill the young ones, and in a few seconds more than a dozen were knocked over. The larger animals, seized with alarm, instead of turning to attack their assailants, scuttled off, moving themselves with their fins at a rapid rate towards the water. Three, however, of the large seals were killed, besides the smaller ones.

“Well done, my lads,” cried the doctor, delighted. “We shall have provisions enough to last all hands for several days. No fear of starvation now, I hope. Dicey, do you and two of the men bring the boat round to take the seals on board. Dick Sharp and Tom Wall, go with Mr Dicey.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” said the men named.

Willy hastened off to obey the order, carrying his gun with him. He had not gone far when a cry

Peter Patch was seen scrambling up a tree, while a huge tiger-seal was charging at him with open mouth.—*p.* 220.

was heard. “Help! help! help! a savage brute is at me.” It was Peter Patch who was crying out. Willy and his companions hurried on, and in another instant they caught sight of Peter Patch scrambling up a tree, while a huge tiger-seal, as the sailors called the creature, on account of the colour of its fur, was charging at him with open mouth. Peter had barely time to draw himself up out of the monster’s way. The seal, seeing Willy and the other men approaching, now came dashing on towards them, and they had to leap actively out of its way to avoid its sharp tusks. So savage did it look that they had no wish to approach its open jaws; indeed, with such rapidity did it run and twist about in the thick bush, that they had considerable difficulty in escaping from it.

“Take care,” cried Peter; “he nearly killed me just now. If he catches you, you’ll repent it.”

At that moment the seal either heard Peter’s voice or caught sight of him, and again dashed up towards the tree. This enabled Willy and his companions to get into a more open part of the bush. Peter shrieked out, “Oh! oh! shoot him, shoot him, or he will be clambering up after me.”

Willy could not help laughing at his messmate’s fright, not believing that the creature could possibly climb the tree. He was now able to stop and take aim. He fired, and though the bullet went through the seal’s head, it seemed in no way incommoded, but, finding that it could not reach Peter, turned round and made again towards its other foes. Willy, who had begun to load, had to scramble as best he could through the scrub, to escape the charge of the enraged creature. The seamen, observing the dangerous position in which he was placed, hurried forward with their clubs uplifted. The animal turned towards Tom Wall, and seizing his club, wrenched it out of his hand, biting it almost through. Dick Sharp, however, at the same moment let fall his weapon on its nose with such force that the creature staggered and sank to the ground, thus allowing Tom to get back his club. Before, however, either of them could repeat the blow, the seal, recovering, again dashed at Tom, who had to leap out of its way, narrowly escaping an ugly gripe on the leg. Willy had again loaded, but was afraid to fire lest he might hit either of the seamen. The seal now stopped, seeming doubtful at which of his assailants he should next rush. When they stopped the creature stopped also; and directly they moved, either to one side or the other, it charged as fearlessly as at first. At length Willy got another shot. Again the ball entered the creature’s head, but without producing any apparent effect. Several times the brave old sea-lion charged, now on one side, now on the other, till it again got into the open space. It was now apparently beginning to feel the effects of the bullets, for, raising itself up on its fore-flippers, it remained several seconds glaring at its foes.

“Come on, Tom,” cried Dick Sharp. “We are not going to be beaten by a seal, I hope, though he does look more like an African lion than any creature I have ever before set eyes on.”

Peter, ashamed of his fright, now came down from the tree, and picking up his club, which he had dropped, he with the rest advanced towards the doomed seal. A well-aimed blow by Dick brought it again to the ground, and in another instant it was deprived of life. As it was too far from the boat to attempt to get it on board, they left it, and quickly pulled round to the spot where the other slaughtered animals lay. In a short time the boat was fully loaded. Just as they were shoving off, several wild-fowl were seen.

“We ought to try and get some,” said Willy, “for though this seal’s flesh will do for us and the men, the poor ladies require more delicate food.”

Captain Twopenny and the doctor at once crept up towards the birds, and soon killed a dozen; for they, being evidently in happy ignorance of the effect of fire-arms, were not frightened at the report of the guns. Willy also succeeded in bringing down three with his gun. It was quite dark, as the boat, with her welcome supply of provisions, crossed the harbour, the light from the camp-fire serving as a beacon by which Willy could steer his course.

The weather had been somewhat threatening, the wind freshened up, and deeply laden as was the boat, they were afraid that she might be swamped before they could reach the shore. At length, however, they got safely to land, and

found the party still busy in putting up huts. Mrs Rumbelow was was among the first to welcome them. As soon as she saw the wild-fowl, she begged for a couple, and began picking them on her way back to the fire. The seals and the remainder of the birds were quickly landed, and an ample supply of their flesh was soon either boiling over the fire or roasting before it. Mrs Rumbelow prepared with the birds a more delicate meal for the ladies than the seal-flesh could afford. Willy had the satisfaction of taking it to them, with the last plateful of biscuit crumbs which remained. One of the compass lamps had been hung up to give light to the tent within which the four ladies were seated.

“The doctor says that he hopes to-morrow to find some roots which may serve instead of bread,” observed Willy; “and he begs, Mrs Morley, that you will accept the last apology for wheaten bread we are likely to have for some time.”

“Pray, thank the doctor, and we hope that you will share it with us, Mr Dicey,” said Mrs Morley.

“No, no, marm!” answered Willy, laughing at the bare thought of such a thing. “Mr Shafto has determined that the officers and men shall share alike, and we have all agreed to abide by his wishes.”

The arrangement for the night had scarcely yet been completed, but the people were so hungry that Harry Shafto allowed them to knock off work, that they might cook the seal-flesh which had just arrived. Three fires had been lit, round which eager faces were collected, some toasting pieces of seal-flesh on the ends of sticks, others more scientifically roasting them on spits, while Mrs Rumbelow was cooking more of the wild-fowl reserved for the women. Close to these fires were the huts just erected, of various shapes, some like Indian wigwams, others with circular roofs, others of a more square form, as the fancy of the architects had dictated; while beyond them was the more pretentious tent composed of the boats’ sails.

In front, the two boats floated in the bay, with a dark outline of the shore and hills of the other side of the harbour, while behind the camp rose tree-covered heights, some towering up towards the sky, out of which numberless stars were now shining forth. Harry had walked a little way from the camp, where he stood, considering what was next to be done. He felt the full responsibility of the position in which he was placed.

“We may still,” he thought, “reach New Zealand in the boats; but the risk of the passage across the stormy sea which intervenes is very great. We may be unable to make the English settlements in the northern island, and it is uncertain what reception we may meet with from the natives on any other part of the coast. It may be wiser to remain where we are; but, then, with regard to the matter of provisions? Do the seals frequent the harbour at all times of the year? If not, we shall have only the birds, and any wild animals which may exist, to live on. Perhaps even wild-fowl may not be found at all seasons, and then are there any other animals besides seals? I think I have heard that hogs and goats have been landed; but they may have been destroyed by the severity of the climate, or the want of proper food.”

Such and many more thoughts passed through the young officer’s mind. His meditations were interrupted by the shrill whistling of the wind in the trees. Dark clouds gathering to the northward had begun to course rapidly across the sky, soon obscuring the stars overhead, warning him that he must hasten back to the camp, and urge the men to hurry on with the huts, which might afford them some shelter from the coming storm. He found them seated round the fires, discussing the seals’ flesh. Most of them had been too hungry to wait till it was thoroughly cooked, and even the officers had been unable to refrain from beginning supper till he joined them. He, however, took but a hurried meal, and then went in search of the boatswain, who was seated at one of the fires.

“We have put up some huts for you and the other gentlemen, just in front of the ladies’ tent,” said Mr Bollard. “The men refused to build their own till they had made them pretty comfortable as things go. They will soon, however, have theirs ready, as we have plenty of boughs cut down for the purpose.”

Harry thanked the boatswain, and told him to hurry the men on with the work.

All hands were soon again busy, and in a short time the huts were finished, those of the men extending on either side of the little group intended for the officers. The three fires, with fresh fuel added to them, burned up brightly in a row between them and the beach.

Scarcely were the arrangements for the night completed, when the rain began to fall in torrents. The women hastened to their tent, which kept it out pretty well, but the leafy bowers, it was soon found, formed but a very imperfect protection. The men, however, wearied with their day’s exertion, were glad to get within, and coiling themselves up on the rough boughs which served as couches, most of them were soon fast asleep. Harry had Willy and Peter Patch as his companions; Captain Twopenny and the Doctor took charge of poor Holt. Willy could not help telling Harry of Peter’s adventure with the seal, and they had a hearty laugh at the fright he had been in.

“And so would you,” exclaimed Peter. “How could I tell that the beast was not going to swallow me up; he had a mouth big enough, at all events.”

It was some time before the inmates of the midshipmen’s berth (as they called their hut) could get to sleep. Though the leafy wall around them sheltered them from the wind, yet the rain penetrated in all directions; and they had to turn their collars up, and sit as close together as possible in the centre of the hut to avoid being wetted through. For some time they had sufficient light from the blazing fires to see, and were able to stop up some of the gaps in the roof; but by degrees the torrents of water which came down from the higher ground put them out, and they were left in almost total darkness. It was hopeless, while the rain continued, to relight them. Overcome by fatigue, Willy and Peter dropped off asleep, while Harry, though kept awake some time longer by the thoughts which occupied his mind, at length followed their example. As no human beings nor wild beasts inhabited the island, Harry had not thought it necessary to place a watch. He had been asleep for some time, when he heard Peter, who was nearest the opening of the hut, shrieking out loudly, “A lion! a lion! Oh! oh! the brute, he will eat me up!”

Harry naturally thought that his messmate was dreaming. “What is the matter, Peter?” he cried out. “Wake up. There is nothing to hurt you.”

“I am awake, and there is a huge beast shoving his snout right against me.”

Harry now sat up, and there, sure enough, he saw by the dim light the large head of an animal at the entrance of the hut. At the same instant cries and shouts burst forth from the inmates of the other huts, and the camp, till then so quiet, was in a complete uproar. Willy, awoke by the noise, jumped up. “Why, it is a huge seal,” he exclaimed. Fortunately he had brought his club into the hut, and telling Peter to stand aside, he dealt the animal a heavy blow on the nose. The poor seal, not expecting such a reception, began to back out, when another blow laid it lifeless. The midshipmen, on going outside their hut, saw the whole ground covered by huge black forms moving in all directions, while the seamen, armed with clubs or whatever they could pick up, were running about, striking right and left at the astonished creatures. The seals apparently had landed at one of their usual places of resort, not at all expecting to find it occupied by human beings. In their fright several charged right into the middle of the camp, and two of the huts were in a moment levelled to the ground. They paid dearly for their mistake, for the seamen, some frightened and others angry at being roused from their slumbers, killed ten or twelve of them before they made their escape. Some were seen moving at a rapid rate inland, bellowing loudly, while others crawled quickly down into the water. Harry, fearing that the ladies would be alarmed, hastened to their tent to assure them that there was no danger.

Once more, the seals having taken their departure, order and quiet was restored to the camp. In case they might return, a watch, however, was placed, that due notice might be given of the approach of the intruders. Sailors have happily a knack of going to sleep at times when other men would be kept awake, and in a few minutes all hands, with the exception of the watch, were again wrapped in slumber. Harry had hoped to get a good night’s rest, to be enabled the better to go through the duties of the next day. He had been asleep some time, when he was once more aroused by hearing Paul Lizard’s voice.

“It’s coming on to blow very hard, sir; and from the way the sea is breaking into the bay, I am afraid the boats, if we don’t look after them, will be knocked to pieces.”

“Call Mr Bollard, and we will see about it,” said Harry, springing to his feet.

It was indeed blowing a regular hurricane, and it did credit to the builders of the huts that they should have withstood its force. The waves, crested with foam, came rolling in from across the harbour, breaking with great violence against the rocks. The seamen, aroused from their sleep, hurried out of their huts, encountering as they did so thick showers of spray, which, driven by the wind, broke over them. The first thing to be done was to haul up the cutter, which, dashed about by the foaming seas, ran the risk at any moment of being knocked to pieces on the rocks. So violently, however, did the waves break on the shore, that the seamen could not without much difficulty get hold of her.

“Now, my lads,” cried Bollard, “we will make a dash at the boat. A strong pull, and a pull altogether, and we will have her in safety.”

Inspired by his and Harry’s example, the men succeeded in getting hold of the boat, and as the next sea lifted her, they hauled her up on a level part of the rock. The launch meantime was tossing about at her anchor; the foam-topped seas now breaking on board her, now lifting her up as if they would send her bodily on shore. The sailors watched her anxiously; for should no vessel appear to take them off the island, she would afford them the only means of escaping. The hurricane was apparently not yet at its height. The wind howled and whistled louder and louder through the woods, the sea, breaking in white masses along the shore, every instant roared more fiercely; first one hut, and then another was overthrown, and their materials scattered over the ground; but the men were too anxious watching the boat to care about the matter. Another and another foaming sea came rolling onwards. It was evident that they would either swamp the boat or drive her from her anchor.

“The cable has parted,” cried several voices. The boat rose to the top of a sea, and then came hurrying on towards the shore. All felt that there was but little hope of saving her. Notwithstanding this, they ran to the point towards which she was driving. Before they could reach it, she was thrown with tremendous violence against the rocks, rebounding a short distance, to be driven back again with greater force than before. The crashing of her planks and timbers could be heard as she was driven again and again against the pointed rocks. Those who endeavoured to reach her ran a great risk of being crushed or swept off by the receding sea. Harry, fearing for their lives, ordered them to desist, having a faint hope that she might be thrown high up on the rocks before her total destruction had been accomplished. He hoped in vain, for she continued beating with increasing violence against the rocks, till every timber and plank on one side were stove in, and in a few minutes, being driven again and again on the rocks, scarcely two of her planks remained hanging together, the fragments strewing the beach in all directions. With a heavy heart at the serious accident that had occurred, Harry returned to his hut, which, having been built more strongly than the rest, had hitherto escaped destruction. The ladies’ tent had also withstood the gale; but how long it would continue to do so it was difficult to say. The seamen, in no way disconcerted by the disaster, were laughing and cutting jokes with each other as they endeavoured to rebuild their huts in the dark; but scarcely had they tried to fix the boughs in a proper position than another gust would again scatter the whole structure far and wide. The sea, too, was making its way higher and higher up the beach, sending deluges of spray over the spot where the huts had stood, and reaching occasionally up to the tent. As may be supposed, no one in the camp got more sleep that night.

Chapter Fourteen.

Foraging.

Consequence of loss of launch—Mrs Morley’s resignation—Prepare to winter on the island—House-building commenced—The ladies’ cottage completed—More huts erected—Birds seek shelter in the cottage—The

young ladies' aviary—Industry of the settlers—Anxiety about provisions—Fish caught—Fish-hooks manufactured—Sea-lions attacked—Lizard charged by sea-lion—Escape of Tippo Sahib—Cow-seals' milk—Young Broke takes milk to ladies—The doctor's expedition inland—Seal-tracks up mountain—Ripe fruit found—Willy and Peter chased by a seal—A cavern discovered—Fight with the seal—Breakfast on the mountain—Difficult travelling—Enveloped in a thick mist—Encamp for the night—Willy sees a dog—Proceed on journey—Traces of hogs discovered—A ship close in-shore—The party hurry forward—The ship has gone—Their signal not noticed—Return along the beach—A hut in the distance—A dead sailor discovered—Proceed over the hills—Willy finds nest of parrots—Return to village—Digging for roots—Willy's gallantry.

When daylight broke, the whole harbour appeared covered with white-crested waves, dancing and leaping wildly, while the beach was covered with the fragments of the launch.

Harry felt very unwilling to communicate the disaster to Mrs Morley. It must be done, however. As soon as she appeared, he told her of what had occurred.

"God's will be done," she answered. "Any suffering we may be called on to go through seems light compared with that others have had to endure. I have sought for strength from on high, and it will not be denied me."

The rain had now ceased. In spite of the gale, fires were lighted; and Mrs Rumbelow, with the aid of several of the men, set to work to get breakfast ready. They had still some tea and coffee remaining, as they had been enabled to use but little of it during the voyage; their only other food, however, was the wild-fowl and seals' flesh. Of the latter they had certainly an abundant supply, but would willingly have exchanged some of it for the coarsest sea biscuit.

As soon as breakfast was over, Harry held a council of war with the doctor, Captain Twopenny, and Mr Bollard. All hope of getting away, if no vessel appeared, was now cut off. They might have to remain many months—it was impossible to say how long. Winter would soon be upon them; and as shelter from the cold and wet was indispensable, the first thing was to build warm substantial huts, the next was to provide food. The doctor was of opinion that they could not depend on the seals remaining in the harbour, while he feared that the health of all would suffer unless some variety of food could be obtained. He advised, in the first place, that the seals' flesh should be salted and dried, so as to have a store in reserve should the animals disappear. He volunteered also to set off, when the weather moderated, on an exploring expedition, to ascertain the natural productions of the country.

"We may find roots and fruits of some sort which may answer the purpose of bread and vegetables, and we may discover the hogs and goats you speak of, Dicey; and perhaps some other creatures," he observed. "In my opinion, when people use their intellects, and exert themselves, there are few parts of the world so utterly unproductive that they must of necessity starve,—as we should certainly if we were to sit down in this little nook with our hands before us."

"Very right, sir," observed the boatswain. "I have a notion that we should also keep a look-out along the coast for any vessel which may be passing. If we remain up here, any number might go by and not discover us. As soon as the weather moderates, I'll therefore, with Mr Shafto's leave, take the boat down the harbour, and search for some point where we may establish a look-out place, and set up a flagstaff with which we can signalise any ship coming in sight."

Harry at once agreed to Bollard's proposal, and Captain Twopenny volunteered to accompany the doctor on his proposed exploring expedition.

In the meantime, as the weather continued too bad to move to any distance, it was arranged that all hands should turn to at house-building. The spot selected for the little village was on the driest piece of ground to be found at the foot of the hill; and it was agreed that the first house put up should be for Mrs Morley and her daughters, with another for Captain and Mrs Twopenny close to it. The best axe-men at once commenced felling trees. They were not long or thick enough, however, to form log-huts after the American fashion. It was settled, therefore, that they should be put in upright, close together, and the interstices filled with clay, while the outside walls, as well as the roofs, were to be thatched with the long grass which grew in abundance at the foot of the hills.

While the men were hewing down the trees, Mrs Rumbelow, with four of the most active women, set to work to cut the grass for thatching. It was no slight task, as it was evident that a large quantity would be required. By the end of the first day, they had, however, formed a stack of considerable size. In the meantime, Willy and Peter, with young Broke and the other boys, collected all the fragments of the boat which had been washed on shore. With some of the planks they proposed forming a floor for Mrs Morley's cottage. The most perfect were kept for repairing the cutter, and Willy suggested that others might serve for manufacturing casks in which the seals' flesh could be pickled.

"But where are we to get the salt from, now that the doctor's still is not at work?" asked Peter.

"We shall find plenty of it among the rocks if we get some sunshine," said Willy; "and if not, we must dig some salt pans. I heard him say that if we could obtain plenty of salt, there would be no fear of our starving."

Where people labour with a will, under good management, work proceeds rapidly. Before the evening the timber for the first two cottages was shaped, and trees for several others were cut down; while grass enough had been stacked for thatching them.

The ladies were not idle. Fanny and Emma Morley insisted on carrying the bundles of grass, and even poor Mrs Twopenny tried to exert herself, but certainly did very little real work. When Mrs Morley was seen accompanying her daughters, Mrs Rumbelow came up to her. "Please, marm, I beg your pardon, but that must not be. What is play to us is killing work for you. Let an old woman advise you, and don't go and knock yourself up. Mr Shafto commands here, and I am sure he will say I am right." It was not, however, without difficulty that the poor lady could be induced to

return to the tent.

The first two cottages were completed. They had fire-places composed of stone and clay at the further ends, the wall being of sufficient thickness to prevent the woodwork outside from burning; while the chimneys were formed of wood coated inside with clay. The roofs were made double; the lowest set of rafters were first covered with grass, and a layer of clay placed over them: above this was a thickly-thatched pointed roof, so that the snow and wet could not rest on it. Harry and Willy, with the assistance of the doctor, put up a porch in the front of Mrs Morley's house, which gave it a picturesque look. As there was no planking to spare, the doors and window-shutters were formed of rough frames and bars across, with grass thickly interwoven between them. These served to keep out the wind and cold, and, as Willy said, looked excessively rural. The bedplaces, fixed against the walls, were raised some feet from the floor, and formed much after the fashion of the doors. In the centre was a table constructed out of the planking of the launch, with seats on either side. Bound the beds, with a sailor's forethought, Harry had stretched some broad pieces of canvas, assisting to keep off any draughts which might make their way in blowing weather into the cottage. Captain Twopenny's abode, though smaller than Mrs Morley's, was constructed in the same manner. He and Harry, with all the men of the party, had been up by daybreak to complete them. As soon as breakfast was over, they invited the ladies to take possession of their new cottages. Mrs Morley and her daughters expressed themselves delighted with theirs.

"You have indeed, Mr Shafto, laboured hard to secure our comfort," she said, "and we feel most grateful. I little expected so soon to have such excellent shelter."

"What a fearful place to have to live in during the winter," said Mrs Twopenny, as she surveyed the abode to which her husband introduced her. "Why didn't you build it of brick."

"Simply, my dear, because no bricks can be had," answered the captain, not looking very well pleased; "and this you will, I hope, find warm and comfortable. We might have been very much worse off, believe me."

Mrs Morley and her daughters at once set to work to arrange, with the scanty means at their disposal, the interior of their cottage, assisted by Mrs Rumbelow. Meantime, all hands were engaged in putting up the other huts. One of larger dimensions was in a short time finished for the women, into which they at once moved; Harry and the officers taking possession of the tent; while two other huts, one for the men, and another for themselves, were being erected.

The sun at length shone forth brightly on the little settlement: the woods were alive with song-birds, numbers of which came fearlessly flying up as if to ascertain what the strangers had been about. Their notes were very sweet, though their plumage was somewhat sombre. They seemed especially anxious to make the acquaintance of Fanny and Emma Morley, who were standing at the porch of their cottage watching them, and surprised at the bold way in which they approached. First one came hopping up, and then another, and when the young ladies stooped down and offered them some small bits of meat, the birds without hesitation took the food out of their hands.

"How cruel it would be to kill any of our little confident visitors!" said Emma. "We must beg Mr Shafto to allow no gun to be fired near our village, lest it should frighten them away."

"I am afraid that if there is a scarcity of food it will be very difficult to persuade the people not to do so," observed Fanny.

"But with so many seals and other large birds in the neighbourhood, I trust we may never be reduced to such an extremity," answered her sister.

While they were speaking, a large flock of birds came flying rapidly towards them. Some darted through the open window, others made their way over their heads through the door into the cottage, and others flew round them, evidently in great terror. On looking out, they observed the cause of the birds' alarm. Hovering in the air was a large hawk, about to pounce down upon the little songsters. They called to Captain Twopenny, who was approaching his cottage. He ran in for his gun, and in another instant the savage pirate fell to the ground. Instead of flying away at the report, the little birds seemed to comprehend the service which had been rendered them, and kept flying round and round the cottages, or settling on the roofs, as if perfectly satisfied that no harm was intended them. Harry, who soon afterwards appeared, promised to warn the people against injuring the little birds; and after this they made themselves perfectly at home among their visitors, flying fearlessly in and out of the cottages, no one attempting to interfere with them. They were, indeed, frequently seen settling on the hands of the children, who soon learned to make pets of the confiding little creatures. On several occasions after this large flocks pursued by hawks came for shelter among their friends, when the birds of prey seldom escaped the captain's gun. Among their feathered friends was a pretty little green bird, which sung very sweetly; another was exactly like the English blackbird; and a third, with a red breast, came hopping up with the familiarity of the winter visitor of old England, the dear little Robin. One of the latter perched with perfect confidence on Emma's hand, and seemed in no way disposed to fly away. After looking up pertly in her face, it hopped off to the trellis work of the porch, where it perched, apparently determined to take up its abode beneath their sheltering roof. In a short time several others followed its example; indeed, the porch looked like an aviary, except that the birds, instead of being confined within wire bars, could fly in and out as they pleased, and go off to the woods in search of the food they found most suitable to their tastes.

The young ladies, however, did not give all their time to their pets, for they were anxious to set an example of industry to the rest of the women. They had found some long grass, which they set to work to plait. They began by making some hats for the children; and these succeeding well, they manufactured others for the women as well as for themselves. Even Mrs Twopenny, seeing them employed, tried to make herself useful, and succeeded beyond the expectations of her companions. As soon as the huts were supplied with bedplaces, and tables, and seats, two or three of the men employed themselves in making wooden bowls and cups and plates, though, as they had no turning-lathe, the articles were somewhat rough in appearance. However, as the supply of crockery which had been brought in the boats was but small, they were very acceptable. Others were engaged in making casks for preserving

the seals' flesh. Mrs Rumbelow had also carefully collected all the feathers from the wild-fowls which had been killed. With these she made several warm quilts, the first of which she presented to the ladies, telling them that she hoped still to have enough feathers to supply all the women and children.

Another important object, which Harry especially desired to succeed in, was the manufacture of the seal-skins into leather. He was anxious to have these to serve as bed-coverings for the men as soon as possible; he foresaw, too, that their shoes and clothing would soon wear out, and that the seal-leather would be the only material with which to supply their places. On making inquiries among the men whether any of them knew how to dress the skins, Dick Sharp said that he had been apprenticed to a currier, and thought, if he could obtain some suitable bark, he should be able to dress the skins, and make them fit for any purpose which might be required.

"Very well," said Harry; "we must appoint you to that duty; and, doctor, it must be your charge to look out for bark with tanning properties."

His chief anxiety, however, was to provide food for the party. The boat had been sent over every day for seals, but they were already becoming wary, and fewer were killed than at first. Some mussels had been found on the rocks, but they were only to be obtained at low water, and in no large quantities. The doctor and Captain Twopenny had also gone out every day with their guns in search of wild-fowl; but they were compelled to be very economical of their powder, of which they had only a limited supply. Before long that must come to an end. What then was to be done? Should the seals go away altogether, unless they could entrap the birds by some means or other, they would run a fearful risk of starvation.

While Harry was considering this important matter, Paul Lizard appeared with a good-sized cod which he held up triumphantly as he came towards the village. "I have brought this for Mrs Morley and the other ladies, sir," he said; "and if I had some proper hooks I could get as many as would serve all hands. I often used to catch fish when I was a boy; and so I thought I would just knock out a couple of hooks from crooked nails, and see, what could be done. I took young Broke down with me; and before long we got plenty of bites, but not one could we hook, till at last I caught this fellow."

"There will be no difficulty in getting the hooks," said Harry. "We will set the armourer's mate to work to try what he can do for you." The bellows had fortunately been kept in good order, the stove serving as a forge, and a block of stone as an anvil. In the course of an hour, under Paul's superintendence, a hook was produced which satisfied him thoroughly. This served as a model for others. Some long sticks were cut for rods, while the mussels made excellent bait. Taking two other men with him, Paul hastened back to the part of the shore where he had caught the cod. In the course of a couple of hours the party returned, laden with as many fish as they could carry. The supply was indeed most welcome, and they were received with warm congratulations from Mrs Rumbelow, who forthwith set the women to work to clean and cook as many as were required. The poor children especially were in want of a change of food. Though they had apparently suffered but little from exposure in the boat, several were now ill, and demanded the doctor's constant attention. Little Bessy was among the invalids; and hoping that she might benefit by being removed from the other children, the Miss Morleys offered to take charge of her. From that day she became the inmate of their cottage, and was a constant source of interest.

Paul and young Broke, with Tom Wall and another man, were now regularly constituted the fishermen of the settlement. Next morning, at daylight, they set out, hoping to get some fresh fish for breakfast. They made their way further down the harbour than they had before gone, intending to go out to the end of some rocks which formed one side of a small bay. Peter and Tom Wall had carried clubs with them, on the chance of falling in with seals. On climbing over the rocks above the bay, they caught sight of a mob of sea-lions, apparently fast asleep. Approaching, they were quickly in the midst of the animals, and had killed three cows and their calves before the rest discovered them. Most of the animals, on awaking and seeing their foes, scuttled off in their usual fashion into the water. One old bull, however, a large and savage-looking creature, indignant at having his family thus destroyed, charged at Paul, who was unable to turn and defend himself. Supposing that he could run faster than the sea-lion, he scampered off inland, not a bit alarmed, but shouting and laughing at the idea of having to run away from a seal. The other men followed, trying to attract the attention of the savage beast, who appeared to have singled out Paul as the object of its vengeance. Paul ran on as fast as his legs could move; but the old seal kept way with him as long as he remained on the level ground. Matters were becoming serious, and he saw that, should the creature catch him, he might suffer severely. Fortunately, a high and rugged rock appeared before him; he made towards it, and succeeded in scrambling up its side just as the seal reached his heels. The animal was not to be stopped, and made a great effort to follow, but a sailor in climbing was not to be overtaken by a seal; and just as Paul reached the top, the disappointed brute tumbled over on its back. Tom Wall, with his companion, who had just come up, was on the point of striking the seal when Paul cried out, "Let the old fellow alone; he deserves to live for the pluck he has shown, and we have more meat already than we want." The bull, on recovering himself, instead of attacking his other foes, made off round the rock, and took refuge in a wood a little beyond it, where they could hear him bellowing loudly in his rage and disappointment.

"I have heard tell of an old fellow in India, one Tippo Sahib, and to my mind that's a good name for that old chap," said Paul. "If we ever come across him again I shall know him by his ugly phiz."

While they remained in the neighbourhood Paul, however, could not help looking round every now and then, expecting to see Tippo Sahib charging out of the wood towards him.

On returning to the shore, they found young Broke by the side of the cows. "Look here," he exclaimed, "the creatures have got first-rate milk. If I had a bowl now, I might carry some for little Bessy. I should not be surprised but what it would set her all to rights."

"Well, then, boy, you run back and get the women to give you a couple of cans, and tell four or five of the men to come along and take the seals' flesh to the village, while we three remain here fishing."

Young Broke ran off in high glee; and as the Miss Morleys came out of their cottage in the morning, he appeared with a bowl of fresh milk in his hands.

“Where have you got that, my boy?” asked Fanny.

“Please, miss, we killed some cows this morning, and I have brought it for little Bessy,” answered the boy.

“Some cows!” exclaimed Mrs Twopenny, who had just joined her friends. “I had no idea there were any on the island. And could the men have been so foolish as to kill them?”

“They are not real cows, please, marm,” answered young Broke, “but those fish sort of creatures. The doctor has tasted the milk, and he says it is much better than goats’ milk, and will do the little girl a great deal of good. There’s more than she can want, and I hope that you ladies will take the rest. I must be off again, because I have to bring some fish for Mrs Rumbelow to cook for your breakfast.”

Without waiting to receive the thanks of the ladies, the lad hurried away.

Mrs Rumbelow boiled some of the seals’ milk, of which there was a good supply, with sugar, in order to preserve it. So beneficial was its effect on the children, with the assistance of the fish, that the doctor was now able to commence his proposed exploring expedition. He and Captain Twopenny, carrying their guns, set out at daybreak the next morning, accompanied by Willy and Peter, with axes in their belts, and Tom Wall and Dick Sharp, the two latter taking their clubs to do battle with any seals they might encounter. The doctor had also a wooden spade with a sharp point which he had manufactured, and carried like a sword by a belt round his waist. Willy had a similar implement, which he had made after the doctor’s model.

“If I mistake not, Dicey, we shall find our tools of as much value as our guns,” observed the doctor. “By their means we may discover the treasures hidden beneath the soil, and which we can at all times obtain; whereas the birds may fly away, and the beasts, if any exist besides seals, may not always be found.”

The explorers soon began to climb the steep sides of a mountain which rose beyond the harbour. “Why, surely this country must be inhabited,” exclaimed Willy, as they got into a pathway which led up the mountain.

“It is very evident that such is the case, but we have already made acquaintance with the inhabitants,” said the doctor. “This is a seals’-track; and, see, there are others leading up from the water. The creatures are fond of travelling inland, though I should not have supposed they would have made their way up the mountains.”

They followed the track for a considerable distance, and still it continued, till they calculated that they were at least four miles from the shore. They were struck by the evergreen appearance of the trees and the herbage generally. Some of the trees were in blossom.

“Here, here,” cried Willy. “Look at these red berries. They seem quite ripe, and I saw several birds perched on the tree eating them.”

The doctor hastened up, and nibbled one of the berries in a cautious manner, to ascertain its nature.

“Ah, yes, a subacid flavour; they are wholesome, I should think. Peter, just eat a handful, and we will judge whether or not they are poisonous.”

“But suppose they prove the latter?” asked Peter.

“Why, then you will have the honour of suffering for the benefit of science,” answered the doctor, laughing. “But you need not be alarmed; I will set you an example.”

The doctor tasted another berry. Peter then ate nearly a handful, acknowledging that, though the flavour was pleasant, they were very acid.

“We will mark the spot,” said the doctor, “and on our way back carry a load down to Mrs Rumbelow to preserve.”

“But where is the sugar to come from, doctor?” asked Willy; “we have but a small stock remaining.”

“Perhaps we may find some on our journey,” said the doctor. “Numerous roots possess saccharine qualities, and from the flavour of one I dug up just now I have hopes that we may manufacture sugar from it. At all events, it will form a valuable addition to our daily fare. What do you think of this?” The doctor produced a good-sized root, which resembled, on being cut open, something between a potato and a turnip, but of rather a drier character than either. “This will serve us for bread, if we cannot find anything better;” and the doctor tasted it two or three times.

“Yes, there is an abundance of saccharine in it,” he observed, “and I have little doubt also that we can manufacture beer from it, which will suit the tastes of the men better than cold water, and serve instead of tea for all of us when our store runs short. If we find nothing else during our expedition, we should be well satisfied. But remember that, however insignificant a plant may look, we should examine it thoroughly to ascertain its character.”

“I have seen plenty of those leaves at no great distance from the village,” said Peter Patch; “but I had no idea that there were roots under them.”

“Ah! so much the better; we shall have a supply of food at our doors, and when we return you shall go out and dig them up, Peter,” said the doctor, who perhaps, rather doubted the correctness of the midshipman’s assertion.

Willy and Peter in their eagerness frequently went ahead of the rest of the party. The latter was a little in advance of

his companion, when he uttered a loud cry. “Oh! there is another of those horrid brutes.” At that instant a fierce bellow was heard, and a huge tiger bull-seal started up and gazed fiercely at the midshipmen. They grasped their axes to attack the seal; but the animal, rushing forward, warned them that “discretion was the best part of valour.” With such short weapons they could not hope to strike it without the risk of being seized by its formidable tusks.

“Run, Dicey, run,” cried Peter; and Willy, brave as he was, felt that it was prudent to follow Peter’s example. The seal came after them at full speed, bellowing loudly. His voice and their shouts brought the seamen to their assistance; but the animal, seeing fresh foes in front, turned aside, and before the men could reach it, dashed at a rapid rate through the bush.

The doctor and captain now joined the chase, and away they all went, the seal bellowing and the men shouting and laughing. The doctor, who was not so active as the rest of the party, was soon distanced. The captain in vain attempted to get a shot at the animal’s head; he knew that a wound in any other part of the body would produce no effect. On went the seal, down the side of the mountain, following a well-marked track. “Where he goes we can follow,” cried Willy; “come on, come on.” The seal soon showed that he could not only run for a short distance faster than they could, but that he could keep at the same speed for a longer time.

“This beats coursing,” cried Peter Patch. “The creature will give us as good a chase as a hare. If we had but some dogs it would be fine fun. We must have run a couple of miles already.”

“We may have to run a couple more before we catch him,” said Willy, “and it won’t do to give it up.”

They were approaching the shore, or, rather, the head of a gulf which ran up from it. Should the seal reach the water he would be lost. The party doubled their speed, when the animal, then about fifty yards ahead, suddenly disappeared. Willy and Peter could with difficulty stop, and save themselves from falling into a deep narrow gully with perpendicular sides which appeared before them. They leaned over the edge. It was thirty or forty feet deep, a stream of water running at the bottom. Had they gone over, they would probably have broken their necks.

“He will escape by the end of the gully,” cried Willy. “Sharp and Wall, run round to the beach and try and stop him.”

The men did as they were directed; while Willy and Peter scrambled down with the assistance of some bushes which grew in the sides to the bottom of the gully. On making their way towards the sea, they found that the gully was arched over, and they now entered a spacious cavern, down the centre of which the stream made its way. It was separated into two parts by the stream; each part was about fifty feet long and fully twenty wide, while the roof appeared to be nearly thirty feet above their heads. A flood of light came through a round hole in the centre of the roof, and enabled them to survey the cavern. The walls and ground were perfectly dry, and they agreed that it would not be a bad place to live in, provided the wind did not set through it. As they were proceeding on, they heard the captain’s voice shouting to them, he wondering where they had got to. Looking up, they caught sight of his head appearing through the hole.

“Here we are, all right,” said Willy.

“Why, boys, how could you get down there?”

Willy told him.

“What has become of the seal?” asked the captain.

“I suppose he is somewhere not far off, if he hasn’t reached the sea,” answered Peter. “Yes, sure enough, and there he comes.”

The seal at that moment appeared, rushing back, having encountered the men at the outlet.

“Run, Dicey, run,” cried Peter, “or he’ll be upon us.”

The midshipmen were caught in a trap. It was more easy to climb down the side of the gully than to get up again. The monster came rushing towards them with open mouth. Willy this time determined not to fly, but, flourishing his axe, stood on the defensive. The consequences might have been serious had not the captain, getting sight of the animal at that moment, fired. The bullet struck it on the head, and though it did not stop its course altogether, Willy was enabled to spring out of its way, and Tom and Dick, coming up, despatched it with their clubs. As no seals had been killed for several days, the meat was very acceptable.

“We may have some seal-steaks for dinner, at all events,” said Peter, as the men prepared to cut up the animal.

Having performed their task, they were directed to carry the remainder of the seal’s flesh to the village, while the captain and midshipmen, with a good supply of steaks, made their way up the side of the mountain. Following the seal-track, they at length found the doctor, who was sitting down, waiting their return.

“See, our island produces one species of ferae which I did not expect to find,” he exclaimed, holding up an animal by the legs.

“Why, it’s a cat,” cried Willy.

“Exactly so,” said the doctor. “Our feathered friends will be much obliged to me for killing it. Should these creatures increase and multiply, they will in time nearly depopulate the island of its most attractive inhabitants.”

The explorers now proceeded onwards for some way over very rough and uneven ground. As they were anxious to obtain a view of the whole island, they climbed to the highest point in sight, which the doctor calculated was about a

thousand feet above the sea. Hence they could look around in all directions. On every side appeared rocky and barren heights, thrown up into all possible variety of shapes, while beyond was the ocean, now blue and calm, and shining in the rays of the bright sun. The cold, however, was considerable, and all the places usually rendered soft by springs were frozen hard. This enabled them to proceed over spots they could not otherwise have crossed.

The scene was full of wild and rugged grandeur. Here and there perpendicular precipices and chasms, several hundred feet in depth, were visible, while the summit of the central mountain was crowned by a ridge of rock, which, from its appearance at a distance, they called the Giant's Coffin.

As the atmosphere was remarkably clear, the whole group could be seen, extending for about thirty-five miles in length from north to south, and fifteen miles at the broadest part from east to west. Several deep indentations forming harbours were observed, while a number of reefs, over which, even on that calm day, the surf broke violently, extended from the shore to a distance of ten miles. In the far north an island of some size could be seen, while several smaller islands appeared close to the rocky coast. The shores everywhere appeared clothed with scrub and stunted timber, but on some of the hills the trees were of respectable height and size.

"See," cried Willy, pointing to the north-east. "Is that smoke? Can it be a burning mountain?"

All the party looked, and though their eyes were not so keen as Willy's, they also distinguished a thick wreath of smoke ascending in the clear air. Though it was at a considerable distance off, yet, eager to ascertain its cause, they determined to make their way towards it. After descending the mountain for some time, hunger compelled them to stop, as they had eaten nothing since daybreak. A fire was soon lighted, and their seal-steaks were soon spitted on sticks before it; while the doctor, after scraping several of the roots which he had just discovered, put them into the hot ashes. On being raked out, they were found to be tolerably well done, though somewhat hard and dry; but to people who had eaten neither bread nor vegetables for many weeks they were very welcome.

"We shall find a better way of cooking them by-and-by," observed the doctor. "We will try how they answer scraped or pounded; and though they may not be very palatable, they will assist materially in keeping us in health. Well, Peter, do you feel any uncomfortable sensations."

"I hope not," answered the midshipman, surprised at the question.

"We may then venture to make our desert on the berries," said the doctor, laughing. "We are much obliged to you for having proved them not to be poisonous, but I had my doubts, I confess."

"What a shame!" cried Peter. "Suppose I had died, what would you have said?"

"Oh, there was no fear of that," answered the doctor. "In case of accidents I brought some antidotes in my pocket, and should soon have got you round again."

"The next time, please make your experiments on Dicey," cried Peter. "It is not fair that I should be the only one to run the risk of being poisoned. Suppose your antidotes had failed?"

"The doctor fixed on you, Peter, as the least likely to be missed of the party," said Willy. "You know you have never done anything for the common good." Peter had, in truth, generally preferred wandering about the harbour, and scrambling over the rocks, to working.

"But I found the roots, and could have got any quantity," he exclaimed.

"Yes, but you dug none up, and told no one of them," rejoined Willy.

"Well, you shall see that I can be of as much use as you are, Master Dicey," exclaimed Peter, bristling up.

"Come, boys, no quarrelling," cried the doctor. "It's time we were moving."

Refreshed by their frugal repast, the explorers proceeded on their way. They found the road far more difficult than they had expected, and soon came to the edge of a steep precipice, down which it was impossible to get; and they had, therefore, to scramble a mile or more before they found a practicable path into the valley. They went along it for a considerable distance, hoping to be able to climb up the cliff; but the sides were perfectly perpendicular, and at last they determined to turn back and make their way by the shore. Just then Willy, who had run on ahead, shouted out, "I see a break in the cliff, and very possibly we may get up by it." His advice was followed, and assisting each other, they succeeded at length in reaching the higher ground. Another high and steep hill appeared before them; but they, hoping to find the ground beyond more easy for travelling over, commenced the ascent. It was, however, steep and difficult, and in some places they came to perpendicular precipices, down which a fall would have proved fatal to any one who had happened to slip.

They had got about halfway down the mountain when a thick mist was seen sweeping over the sea from the southward. It came on so rapidly that before they could decide what path to follow they were entirely enveloped in it. They could now only venture to move with the greatest caution; any moment they might arrive at the edge of some frightful precipice similar to those they had before passed. Anxious, however, to escape the cold and damp to which they were exposed on the mountain side, they descended by the only practicable route they could find. The mist every instant grew thicker, and the short day was drawing to a close. In what direction they were going they could not with any certainty tell. At last the captain declared that he would proceed no further. The doctor agreed with him. Just then they saw before them the edge of the forest, which reached up the mountain side to a considerable distance from the shore. They agreed that it would be wise to camp here for the night; and while Willy and Peter cut down some boughs to form a hut, and wood for fuel, the doctor and the captain endeavoured to shoot a few birds for supper. They could hear them singing in the woods in great numbers, but the mist shrouded them from their view till

they were close upon them. The birds were, however, so tame that they succeeded in killing a few; and these, with some of the roots which the doctor dug up close at hand, gave them a sufficient meal.

As night came on, they made up their fire and crept into their leafy bower for shelter.

“I suppose, doctor, we ought, to keep watch,” said Willy. “We may have a big tiger-seal poking his nose in among us, or there may be other wild beasts, though we have not seen them.”

The doctor agreed to the wisdom of this, and when supper was over they drew lots as to who should keep the first watch. It fell upon Willy. After they had sat up some time, the rest of the party went to sleep. Willy had some difficulty in performing his duty, but by running out every now and then to throw a log on the fire he managed to keep his eyes open. As he did so on one occasion, he saw an animal scamper by him. “It looked very like a wolf,” he said to himself. He got the doctor’s gun to have a shot at it, should it again appear. There was no use, he thought, in waking up his companions. In a short time afterwards he heard a loud bark. He listened. The bark was repeated. “Why, it’s a dog. I wonder if there are people in the neighbourhood,” he said to himself. “If there are, they will find us out; but they are not likely to be otherwise than friendly. However, when I call the captain I’ll tell him to keep a sharp lookout.” When at length his watch was over, he roused up Captain Twopenny and told him what had occurred.

“Perhaps there may be natives on the island, after all,” observed the captain. “Depend upon it, I will not be taken by surprise.”

Willy, who was longing to go to sleep, lay down, and before another minute had passed was far away in the land of dreams. He was awoke by Peter Patch, who had had the last watch. Daylight was already breaking; the dogs had been heard barking during the night, and Peter said he had seen two or three creatures, which seemed from their movements to be like cats, stealing by; but each time, before he could get a shot, they had disappeared. Nothing else had occurred.

As the sun rose the mist cleared off; and as soon as they had breakfasted the doctor proposed that they should once more climb the mountain, in order to ascertain what direction to take. They had not gone far when some footmarks were observed on the soft ground over which they were crossing. The doctor examined them. “Hogs,” he exclaimed. “We shall have pork for dinner soon, I hope. They, at all events, are always in season, and will not take their departure like the seals and wild-fowl. We shall not starve here if like wise men we exert our wits. Cats and dogs may serve us at a pinch; I prefer bacon. Captain, I daresay you will manage to shoot a porker before long.”

This discovery put the whole party in spirits, the doctor was so positive about the matter. Willy had gone on as usual some way ahead, when, looking out in the direction the smoke had been seen, he caught sight of a large vessel hove to close to the shore. He could scarcely believe his eyes. He rubbed them again and again. There was no doubt about it. He waved to his companions, who made their way up to the rock on which he was standing. He pointed in the direction of the vessel.

“She is a long way off from this,” observed the doctor, after looking at her for some moments. “We must get down to the beach as fast as we can.”

“What has brought her in here, I wonder?” said Captain Twopenny.

“Probably the smoke we saw yesterday may have something to do with the matter,” observed the doctor. “At all events, there is no time to be lost.”

He gazed as he spoke over the intervening country. There were deep valleys to be passed, and steep hills, with rugged rocks and precipices, to be scaled. Having taken the bearings of the vessel, they set out. They first had to descend the mountain side. They soon came to a soft boggy ground, and were obliged to make a wide circuit to avoid it. Not without considerable difficulty did they at length reach the bottom of the valley. A stream was to be crossed; they waded through it, regardless of the cold. Now they came to a precipice. Considerable time was spent before they could find a way to the top. Then they were involved in a labyrinth of huge rugged rocks. The sun shining brightly enabled them to keep a tolerably correct course, otherwise it would have been difficult to determine in what direction they were going. On and on they went. The hope of obtaining relief for themselves and their friends kept up their spirits; but Peter Patch at length cried out that he could go no further. They had brought some baked roots and cooked wild-fowl with them. A stream which came trickling down the side of the hill afforded a refreshing draught of water. They would not stop to light a fire, but, taking a hurried meal, again pushed on. The doctor himself confessed that he was beginning to get knocked up; still they thought that they must soon reach a height from which they could make a signal to the ship. For the last hour or more, however, they had been unable to get sight of her.

“Had she been at anchor, I should have had more hopes of doing so,” said the doctor; “but still we must not despair.”

“That’s the hill,” cried Willy; “I know it by its shape. If we can get to the top of it we shall reach the shore in a short time.”

The rest of the party thought Willy was right, and thus encouraged, made their way with renewed ardour. The summit of the hill was free of trees. They gained it at length. Willy was the first to reach the top. A cry escaped him. “She is gone! she is gone!” he exclaimed. He waved his cap frantically; he shouted as if his voice could reach across the intervening ocean. The rest soon joined him. A ship under all sail was standing away with a fresh breeze from the land, from which she was already some three miles distant.

“The smoke of a fire might still attract the attention of those on board,” said the doctor. Willy and Peter ran down the hill, and began hewing away at the driest bushes they could find. A fire was soon lighted. More bushes were brought; a thick column of smoke ascended in the air. How eagerly they gazed at the receding ship. Still she stood on. No attention was paid to their signal.

“They either do not see it, or think that it is the result of accident,” observed the doctor.

More bushes were thrown on the fire, and then they hurried down the hill.

“Perhaps she may be a sealer, and landed some of the crew to catch seals from the shore. If so, she may return,” remarked the captain.

“She does not look like one,” said Willy.

The bottom of the hill was reached. They made their way along the beach. In a sheltered spot a hut was seen. It was rudely constructed from the wreck of a vessel. Outside there were the ashes of a fire still smouldering; within were several bedplaces covered with leaves. Other signs showed that it had been lately occupied. Whoever the people were, they had just been taken off by the ship,—probably part of the crew of some vessel wrecked on the shore. They looked about in the neighbourhood, and discovered six or seven mounds which had the appearance of graves.

“Well, my friends, I am very glad that the poor fellows, whoever they were, got away; and for ourselves, we are not worse off than we should have been had we not discovered them,” observed the philosophical doctor. “Don’t let us be cast down. If one vessel comes, so may another; and next time we may be more fortunate. And now I advise that without loss of time we make the best of our way back to the settlement.”

As the shore appeared for some distance tolerably free of rocks, they agreed to keep along it till compelled by the rising tide to take their way over higher ground. Still, as they walked along they could not help every now and then turning round to watch the receding ship. Gradually her hull disappeared, her courses sank beneath the horizon, the topsails followed, and then Willy alone could discern a small dark speck, which soon faded from view. He heaved a sigh. “I should like to have sent home news, at all events, that I was safe, and perhaps Charles and the girls may by this time have reached New Zealand. They will be very sorry when they hear that the ship has been lost, and of course they will think that I was lost in her.” Willy seldom allowed himself to give way to thoughts like these.

The doctor was very anxious to get back that night; so, although pretty well knocked up himself, he urged his companions to proceed as fast as they were able. For several miles they continued along the beach, occasionally having to climb over high ledges of rocks which jutted out into the water, or to go round bays or small inlets. Still, after the experience they had had of the interior of the island, they considered that this road was less fatiguing than the way they had come. Seeing a succession of rocks running out into the ocean, they were at length about to strike across the country, when a small hut was discovered at the head of a little bay just below them.

“Why, perhaps, after all, there are human beings besides ourselves on the island,” exclaimed Willy.

“If such is the case, we will make their acquaintance,” observed the doctor, and they descended into the bay. They hurried towards the hut. On reaching the entrance, even the doctor started back. Part of the roof had been blown off, allowing the light to strike down into the interior. On a rude bed, raised a couple of feet from the ground, lay the body of a man. He was fully clothed, but the eyeless skull and parchment-like cheeks showed that he had been long dead. He was dressed as a seaman. A sou’-wester was on his head, and a woollen muffler round his neck, while a blue serge vest and a dark jacket and trousers clothed his body. Several pairs of woollen socks and stockings were on his feet, one of which was tied up with rags, as if it had received some injury. His legs were crossed, and the arms and fingers stretched out straight on either side. Had it not been for the light which struck down on the head, the body lay in so natural a position that the man might have been supposed to be asleep. Close by was a small heap of limpet and mussel shells, and within his reach were two bottles—one was empty, but the other was full of water. Another object attracted their attention. It was a piece of slate, on which were scratched several zigzag marks, which had apparently been formed by the hand of the dying man, who had probably in his last moments attempted to write his name and give some account of his sad history.

The doctor, after examining the body for some minutes, observed, “He has died of hunger, poor fellow. Probably he belonged to the crew of some hapless vessel wrecked near this, the survivors of whom were taken off by the ship we saw this morning. Poor fellow, we must come back and bury him another day, but we must delay no longer.”

The sad spectacle they had just witnessed made the explorers turn their thoughts from themselves.

They pushed on as fast as they could go, but were often nearly dropping with fatigue. Marshes had to be passed, and frequently they were plunging across boggy ground, running the risk every instant of sticking or sinking beneath it; several streams were forded, and rugged heights climbed similar to those they had traversed on the previous day.

Just before sunset they stopped to dig a quantity of roots, which the doctor was anxious to carry with him, while Captain Twopenny shot several birds. While Willy was hunting about, he heard a low clattering sound. Searching more narrowly, he found in a small bush a large nest with five young birds. “Here, here,” he cried to Peter, who ran up. “Why, I do believe they are parrots. They are nearly fledged. How delighted the Miss Morleys will be to have them.”

“But how can we carry them?” said Peter.

“See, I will tie them up in my handkerchief, and sling them round my neck,” said Willy, securing the nest as he proposed. The young parrots were, as may be supposed, a constant care to him for the rest of the journey. Peter every now and then looked into the handkerchief as it hung at his back, declaring that the birds were getting on very well, only opening their mouths as if they wanted to be fed. They seemed to like the berries which had been found, and meeting with another bush, Peter collected a supply to feed them with.

At length it grew so dark that they could with difficulty see their way. They were about to encamp, when Willy caught sight of the lights in the village, far below them. Just then they got into a seal-track, along which they proceeded.

“Look out, Peter, lest we should find a lion in the path,” said Willy. He had scarcely spoken when a bellow was heard close to them. It was repeated in all directions.

“I don’t quite like it,” exclaimed Peter. “Can those horrible noises really be made only by seals?”

“No doubt about that,” said the doctor. “They are not likely to attack us, and the best thing we can do is to push on.”

To those not aware of the cause, the loud bellows which resounded through the woods would have indeed seemed terrific. Once or twice one of the monsters was seen scrambling among the bushes, but was soon out of sight, and none appeared to be combatively disposed.

At length the lower ground was reached, and in a short time they were welcomed by their friends at the village.

Harry Shafto was especially thankful when he received the report of the doctor; and it was arranged that the next morning, as soon as some more spades could be manufactured, a party should set out to dig roots, while Captain Twopenny volunteered to lead another in search of hogs.

“At all events, I trust we need have no fear of dying of starvation,” Harry remarked in a tone which showed the relief he felt. “Had it not been for you, doctor, however, I confess we should have been badly off.”

Willy awoke at early dawn to feed his parrots, which were chattering away at his ear. As soon as breakfast was over, he took them up to the Miss Morleys. “I have brought an addition to your menagerie,” he said, exhibiting his prizes; “but as they are nearly fledged, you must find some means of preventing them from flying away.”

“Oh, I hope we may tame them sufficiently to make them wish to stay with us,” said Emma. “What pretty little lively creatures. We are so much obliged to you, Mr Dicey.”

“Perhaps Mrs Twopenny would like to have one,” said Fanny. “And do you not wish to retain one yourself?”

“I am afraid that I should not have time to attend to it,” said Willy. “But I will take one to Mrs Twopenny; and if you will bring up one for me, I should like to carry it home with me for my sisters.” Mrs Morley, who heard the remark, smiled faintly. She was thinking, perhaps, of the little probability there was of their ever returning to the shores of England.

Chapter Fifteen.

A Ship!

The island flag—Expedition to establish a look-out place—Cutter proceeds down the harbour—Pierce attack of seals—Tippo Sahib put to flight—Flagstaff set up—Lookout hut erected—Night in the hut—The boatswain’s yarns—Harry puts off to return—Blowing hard—Boat in danger—Return to lookout point—The storm rages—Peter wraps himself in the flag—Anxiety about the boat—Hut on fire—Attempts to save hut—Pass night by the fire—A ship seen.

The cutter had been thoroughly repaired, and Harry resolved at once to go down the harbour and fix on a look-out place whence a signal could be made to any ship approaching the southern end of the island. A flagstaff had been constructed out of the spars of the launch, and some of the straightest trees which could be found. The boatswain had rigged it completely, so that it was ready at once to set up. Willy and Peter laughed heartily when they saw the flag which had been formed. It consisted of two boats’ ensigns, increased in size by a petticoat and part of a seaman’s shirt.

“If its materials can be distinguished, it will tell pretty plainly the character of our party,” remarked Harry.

Harry took the boatswain, with Peter and Willy and four other seamen, one of whom was Paul Lizard, and another Tom Wall. As the excursion might prove a long one, and as in that uncertain climate they might be detained by bad weather, they carried provisions for a couple of days, hoping, should they be kept out longer, to be able to kill some seals or wild-fowl for their support. The rest of the party were to search for roots and berries, from the latter of which Mrs Rumbelow announced that she could make an excellent preserve, could sugar be manufactured. The doctor promised to exert his scientific knowledge to the best of his power for the public good.

The wind being light, Harry and his party had to keep close in-shore, to avoid the tide which was still running up the harbour. Just as they got off the bay, where Paul and Tom had the adventure with the old sea-lion, several seals were seen swimming about, apparently fishing, darting rapidly to and fro in various directions in chase of their prey. Presently there was a great commotion in the water ahead, and two huge animals appeared struggling together. “Why, they are fighting,” cried Willy. “What tremendous digs they give into each other’s necks with their sharp tusks.”

One was a tiger and the other a black seal. Now they separated, now they dashed at each other, just like savage dogs, not uttering the slightest sound all the time. Now they sank below the surface, now rose again, tearing away at each other as before.

“I shouldn’t be surprised that one of them was the big fellow you called Tippo Sahib, who attacked you the other day, Paul,” said Willy.

“May be, sir,” answered Lizard. “But see, there’s another on the rocks. That’s master Tippo, I suspect. He looks as if he was watching for us, and I shouldn’t be surprised if he was to give chase.”

Willy laughed at the notion; but directly afterwards the old lion plunged into the water, and his snout was seen within a few seconds rising close to the oars. Harry ordered the men to pull on, as he did not wish to expend any shot on the animal. Tippo, however, seizing the blade of Paul's oar, held it so tightly that he nearly hauled it out of his hands. Not till he had received several blows on the nose from the other oars would he let go.

"Why, he has nearly bitten my oar in two," cried Paul.

"Better that than your leg," observed Willy.

"That's Tippo; I have no doubt about him," cried Paul. "He means mischief."

The sea-lion, however, was kept at bay by the oars, while the boatswain stood up in the stern with a club, ready to give him a blow should he come nearer. After swimming round the boat for some time, he seemed to consider that he could gain nothing by a battle with the four-legged strange creature, as he doubtless considered the boat, and so leisurely swam back to the rocks he had left, up which he scrambled, and sat watching the cutter as she continued her course along the shore.

A breeze at last sprang up, and sail being set she ran down to the mouth of the harbour. On the northern shore, near the eastern entrance, was a point rising for a hundred feet or more above the water. Here the party landed, and Harry and the boatswain agreed that it was the best station on which their flagstaff could be planted. From its summit they could look over the whole of the southern island; while the flag would be visible far out at sea, beyond the western entrance of the harbour. The flagstaff was accordingly landed, and as all hands were required to set it up, and the boat could not be left alone, she was hauled up on the beach. But as they had only wooden spades to work with, some time was occupied in digging the hole in which to plant the flagstaff. It was at length got up, and stayed by four shrouds. The flag was hoisted and flew out to the breeze.

"That will show that some one is not far off," observed Mr Bollard. "But should a vessel send her boat on shore, the people may not know where to find us."

"I have been thinking of that," said Harry, "and will leave a bottle with a paper in it directing them to the settlement."

"But if another gale was to spring up, and there is every chance of that, the flag might be blown to pieces, or the flagstaff itself carried away," observed the boatswain. "If you think fit, therefore, Mr Shafto, I'll remain here with one or two of the men; and, depend on it, we will keep a bright look-out for passing vessels, so that we need only hoist our flag should one come near enough to see it."

"We can ill spare you at the camp, Bollard," said Harry; "and if you remain here you will require shelter and food. This hill is a bleak place, and if we could not get to you with a supply of provisions, you would run the risk of starving."

"As to shelter, we have our axes, and we might easily put up a hut; and for the matter of food, if we are hard-pressed, we can make our way overland to the settlement; it cannot be much more than five or six miles."

As the boatswain was so anxious to remain, Harry at last consented to his proposal.

"We must put you up a hut, however, before we return to the settlement," he observed; "and after we have had dinner we will set to work about it."

There was a wood at some little distance; and, as soon as the meal was over, all hands repaired there to cut timber for the proposed hut. They worked away very hard, Harry and the midshipmen labouring as well as the rest. As soon as several trees were felled, Harry, leaving Bollard and two of the men to cut more, with the rest of the party carried them up the hill. They had then to dig the foundation of the hut. While this was doing, Willy and Peter collected a supply of grass from the hillside.

So busily were they all employed that evening arrived before they thought the day was half spent. Dark clouds had been gathering, and the wind increasing, and they had the prospect of a stormy night. The hut, however, was roofed in, and they were able to take shelter from the torrents of rain which now came down. Fuel having been collected, they lighted a fire in the front of the hut, but the wind blew the flames about so furiously that there was a risk of the walls, and a still greater one of the roof, catching fire. No one, therefore, ventured to go to sleep; indeed, there was not room for all the party to stretch their legs.

The first hours of the night were passed, as they sat close together to keep themselves warm, watching the bending flagstaff, and listening to the howling of the wind and the roar of the surf as it broke on the rocky shore. Harry did his best to keep the party amused, and got Paul Lizard, who could sing a good song, to strike up a merry stave; and Paul, once set going, was generally loath to stop. His full manly voice trolled forth many a ditty, sounding above the whistling of the storm and the roar of the waves. Then adventures and stories were told, and yarn after yarn was spun, most of which were no novelties to the hearers. The boatswain, who seldom condescended to tell his adventures except to the other warrant officers, narrated several wonderful ones he had gone through; and Willy and Peter could not help being surprised, after encountering so many dangers and hardships, he should be still living to narrate them. He had been left alone on an iceberg in the Polar seas, when the boat in which he was chasing a whale and all the other hands had been lost. He had been stranded on the coast of Africa, and made captive by the natives; when escaping, he had been nearly torn to pieces by a lion, only managing to scramble up a tree just as the monster's claws were within a few inches of his heels. He had got on board a slaver, which had gone down while being chased by a man-of-war, and had been picked up again just as a shark was about to seize his legs. A ship he had been on board had blown up, when only he and a dozen more had escaped. On another occasion his ship had caught fire, and the crew had to take to their boats. Three times besides he had been wrecked. "And yet, you see, mates," he wound up by saying, "here I am, alive and well, and fit for duty; and if you ask me if I think we are to get out of this place, I tell you. To be sure I do. We are not half as badly off as I have been a score of times." Encouraged

by their officer, the men kept up a brisk conversation till daylight dawned.

The weather appeared to have somewhat moderated, and Harry hoped, as soon as breakfast was over, to be able to launch the boat and return to the settlement. As the party were descending the hill, however, a seal was heard bellowing in the wood. As it was important to secure the supply of meat the animal might afford, they set out in chase. The cry of the creature guided them towards her; but as they advanced, it became evident that she was going away from them. They therefore increased their speed, hoping before long to come up with her.

“May be she has lost her calf; and if so, we must keep a look-out,” observed Paul Lizard. “She will prove mighty savage.”

“She is not likely to show fight against half-a-dozen men,” said the boatswain. “Come along, lads, we have lost a great deal of time already.” At last the bellowing grew louder, and the seal was seen looking about her, wondering perhaps at the unusual sounds which struck her ear.

The boatswain was the first to emerge from the cover of the wood. The creature lifted up its monstrous head, and opening wide its jaws, made a dash at the intruder. So formidable did she appear that the sturdy boatswain, though he would have faced a human foe without trembling, turned tail and ran for his life. The seal followed, but just then, Paul Lizard coming in sight, she bolted at him, moving over the ground with her flipper-like feet at a rapid rate. Paul, having learned a lesson from experience, dodged behind a tree, and when the seal nearly reached him, sprang on one side, giving her a blow with his club on the nose. It was not sufficiently well dealt, however, to bring her to the ground; and, again catching sight of the boatswain, she once more rushed at him. Imitating Paul’s manoeuvre, he managed to escape her charge. She, however, had fixed her eyes on him, and continued the pursuit, the rest of the party following. Before they could get up with the animal, the boatswain had run a considerable distance in an opposite direction from the flagstaff. Matters were growing serious; for he had well-nigh lost his breath, and the seal was so close to him that he could not venture to turn round and strike at her. Willy and Peter could not help laughing, thinking the matter very good fun, a notion the boatswain in no way shared with them. At last Paul and Tom Wall so distracted her attention that she stopped short, allowing the boatswain to bring up and face about. The three then dashed at her with their clubs, and quickly ended her life.

“Well, mates, we have deserved our dinners, at all events,” exclaimed Paul, as he commenced cutting up the seal. “Mr Bollard will have gained an appetite for his.”

“I had rather have gained it in a more dignified way,” observed the boatswain, wiping the perspiration from his brow. “I had no notion one of these brutes would show so much fight.”

“You should have had Tippo Sahib at your heels, sir,” said Paul. “He showed us yesterday that he was ready enough to fight, and he is twice as savage on shore.”

Some time was occupied in cutting up and packing the seal’s flesh, and then, each man carrying a load, they turned their steps towards the Flagstaff-hill. It was past noon before they got back, but Harry still hoped to be able to reach the settlement at nightfall. The fire had to be relighted, and as soon as some of the seal had been cooked and eaten, they hastened down to launch the boat. It took some time to do so; but at length she was got afloat; and, leaving the boatswain and two of the men at the look-out station, Harry and the rest made sail. Though the weather appeared threatening, he was unwilling to abandon his intention. The wind was contrary, and he had to stand out some way from land to fetch the mouth of the inner harbour. He had just gone about when the wind shifted, and a furious blast from the north-west blew directly in his teeth, making the boat heel over, and nearly capsizing her. The sails were lowered just in time to prevent such a catastrophe, but it soon became evident that it would be a difficult matter to reach the harbour’s mouth. The sails, however, being closely reefed, Harry determined to try what could be done. The boat looked up bravely for some time to the gale, but the wind increasing still more, he saw that the attempt was hopeless. The open ocean lay broad on his beam, foaming and raging, and there was now the danger of his being blown out to sea. The only spot where he could hope to land without losing the boat was the little bay he had just before left. Keeping as close to the wind as he could, he therefore stood towards the shore. Even with the reduced canvas she carried, and all hands sitting up to windward, the boat heeled over fearfully. Harry was at the helm, looking out anxiously through the spray, which beat up in showers over the bows, for the point which formed the northern side of the little bay into which he wished to run. Sometimes the boat’s head fell off, and he was afraid that he should be unable to reach it.

“I don’t like the look of things,” whispered Peter to Willy; “what if we don’t reach the bay?”

“We may perhaps lose the boat,” answered Willy, “but I trust that we may be able to scramble on shore somewhere or other.”

At length they got near enough to distinguish Bollard and his companions, who had come down to the beach to assist them. A fiercer blast than before struck the boat’s sail; down she heeled, till the hissing water ran over her gunwale. For a moment Harry feared she would not recover herself. As he put down the helm she once more rose, and in another minute was under the lee of the point; and he steered in towards the only spot of sandy beach which the bay afforded. The sails were hauled down, and all hands stood ready to leap out as she touched the shore. Aided by the next sea which came rolling in, she was run high upon the beach.

“This is indeed unfortunate,” said Harry to the boatswain. “It is too late to get back to-night, and I am afraid our friends at the settlement will become anxious about us.”

“But they will see it is blowing hard, sir, and that will fully account for the boat not being able to get up the harbour,” answered the boatswain.

Perhaps Harry was thinking that the fierce gale then blowing would only increase the anxiety which some, at all

events, of the inhabitants of the settlement would feel on his account.

By the time they reached the hut the day was well advanced. There was still a short time of daylight, however, and the men employed it in cutting a further supply of fuel, that they might keep up a good fire during the night. A stream had been found at the bottom of the hill, from which they replenished their water-casks. Their supper, as on the previous evening, consisted of roast seal and a few roots cooked in the ashes, washed down with tea boiled in an iron bowl which had served as a baler for the boat. The night as it advanced became even more tempestuous than the preceding one. A few bough-tops served to keep them off the damp ground, and on these as many as could find room lay down to sleep, while the rest sat up keeping watch over the fire. Peter Patch finding the flag, which had been hauled down at sunset, wrapped himself up in it—a fortunate circumstance, as it afterwards proved, although the midshipman's object was of a purely self-interested nature. No songs were sung that evening, and though a few yarns were spun, they were often wonderfully long-drawn, the drowsy listeners scarcely comprehending the drawling words which struck on their ears. The night passed slowly by. They were thankful that the boat had been drawn up on the beach, and placed, as they hoped, in safety, out of the reach of the sea.

The gale increased, thunder roared, and lightning flashed, and the whole harbour, as far as the eye could reach, was lashed into fury.

"I don't like the look of things, Mr Shafto," observed the boatswain to Harry, who had just sat up to make room for others. "If the sea was to reach the boat it would soon knock her into splinters. I cannot stand it any longer. With your leave, sir, I'll go and see if she is all safe."

Saying this, Bollard started up, Paul Lizard following him. In a short time they were heard shouting, and all the party hurried down to join them, Peter Patch, very unwilling to be roused, bringing up the rear, wrapped, to keep himself warm, in the flag which he had appropriated. They were not a moment too soon. The foaming water had already reached the stern of the boat, and was every now and then lifting her up and letting her fall again on the sandy beach. In a few minutes more she would have been carried away or knocked to pieces. By great exertion they managed to haul her up out of the reach of the surf, though every now and then the water washed up almost round her in a sheet of foam. As it was high tide, they had hopes she would remain safe during the night. Still, although drenched to the skin, they were unwilling to leave her when so much depended on her preservation. Again and again they tried to drag her further up. They were still standing round her, when Willy, looking towards the hill, exclaimed, "Why, surely our fire is blazing up brighter than before."

"Our fire!" cried Harry. "I am afraid that the hut is in flames! On, lads, we can do no more for the boat, and we may still manage to save the hut."

The whole party rushed up the hill; but already, as they drew near the top, they saw, to their dismay, that not only the walls, but the roof itself had caught fire. Fanned by the wind, the flames rapidly spread round the building which had cost them so much labour to erect; and so fiercely did the dry grass with which it was covered burn that they could not approach it. Not without difficulty, indeed, did they save the shrouds of the flagstaff, towards which the wind drove the flames.

"And all our grub is inside," cried Paul Lizard. "I'll try and save that, even though I get scorched a bit."

Paul was rushing forward. "Avast," cried Harry, seizing him by the arm. "My gun and powder flask is within, and any moment the powder may explode."

Scarcely had he spoken when a loud report was heard, and the shattered flask flew out, just passing between them, and in all probability would have struck Paul on his legs had he gone a few paces further. In a few moments the gun itself went off, but fortunately being in an upright position the shot with which it was loaded flew over their heads.

"The danger is over now, at all events," said Paul. "And though our breakfast must be pretty well cooked, we must save some of that." Saying this, he rushed up to the hut with a long stick which he had picked up, and began raking away at the ashes. Tom and another man joined him, and succeeded in scraping out a portion of the seal-flesh and some roots, though, as he observed, holding them up, "somewhat over-roasted."

"You have forgotten the axes, lads," cried the boatswain. "Try and get them out, or we shall have a hard matter to put up another hut." After making several efforts, the heads of the axes were raked out, though the handles had been so burnt and charred as to be useless.

"Never mind that," observed the boatswain. "We may manage to replace them."

The walls of the hut, from being of some thickness, continued to burn for a long time.

"Well, lads," said Harry, "as we cannot save the huts, we must now make up a rousing fire with the remains of the wood, and try and warm ourselves. The rain has fortunately ceased, and we shall get dry in time, I hope."

The seamen, caring apparently little for the accident, began to pile up the wood they had cut on the remains of their fire, which they scraped to a sufficient distance from the burning hut to enable them to sit round it, laughing and joking as they did so.

"Shouldn't be surprised but what our bonfire had been seen from the village," said Paul Lizard. "They will be thinking that a burning mountain has burst forth. Come, lads, pile on more logs. It's precious cold still, in spite of the fire."

Fortunately, more wood had been cut for the hut than was required, and this, in addition to the fuel they had collected, enabled them to keep a fire burning till daylight. As may be supposed, no one ventured to go to sleep; indeed, all hands underwent a regular roasting process, sitting now with their backs to the fire, now with one side,

now with another, and then facing it, till their wet clothes were tolerably well dried. By the boatswain's advice they then stripped off their inner garments, which they dried and then put them on again, thoroughly warmed. The latter part of the night was employed in fashioning some fresh handles for the axes out of the toughest pieces of wood they could find, so that they might be ready by daylight to go to work.

"There, my axe is as good as ever," cried Paul Lizard, as he secured the handle he had just finished.

"And so is mine," said Tom Wall. "We will soon have the hut up again, and make it a little bigger the next time."

"That's the spirit I like, lads," observed the boatswain. "Never strike your flag while the ship swims. That's the motto for English seamen; and I hope, lads, you will always stick to it. Now, Paul, just; give us a stave; we have not heard your sweet voice all the night. Just see if you cannot shout as loud as the gale." Paul thereon, nothing loath, struck up, "Cease, rude Boreas, blustering railer." Paul's example was followed by others, and daylight broke on them even before they expected its appearance.

Willy was the first to spring to his feet, saying that he would take a run down the hill and up again to warm himself. Peter Patch followed him. They had got a little distance from the bright glare of the fire, when Willy turned his eyes seaward.

"Why, Peter," he exclaimed, after gazing earnestly for a few seconds, "there is a sail, and not far off the mouth of the harbour."

"A sail! a sail!" shouted the midshipmen together. All the party sprang to their feet, and every eye was turned in the direction Willy pointed to.

"She is trying to beat in; no doubt about it," exclaimed the boatswain. "She is a large ship, under jury-masts, but will find it a hard job, though."

Chapter Sixteen.

Ensign Holt makes himself useful.

Proceedings at the village—Various employments—School established—Ensign Holt recovers his senses—Mrs Morley reads the Bible—The doctor's excursion inland—The dead seaman buried—Ensign Holt makes himself useful—Anxiety about Harry and his party—Fanny's meditations—Holt leads expedition to look for Harry.

The party at the village were busily employed. The doctor had set the armourer and cooper to work, to make, under his superintendence, an apparatus for manufacturing sugar and beer. The women, directed by the ever-active Mrs Rumbelow, were scraping the roots which had been collected for that purpose, while the tanner was trying various ways of preparing the seals'-skins. Two or three of the men were endeavouring, with fair success, to make shoes from some they had roughly cured, to replace those of several of the party which were nearly worn-out.

Captain Twopenny and his party returned from his hunting expedition with three hogs. Though they had seen traces of many more, the animals were so active and the country so difficult that they had been unable to kill them. Still it was satisfactory to know that the island possessed means of giving them support besides that which the waters afforded. He had also shot as many birds as the men could carry.

The doctor, ever fertile in resources, had had a stone hut constructed in which both birds and fish could be smoke-dried after the fashion practised in England and elsewhere.

The children had now plenty of work in plucking the birds ready for curing, and afterwards in sorting the feathers for beds and coverlids.

From the first Mrs Morley and her daughters had visited the women's hut every evening to read the Scriptures and to comfort them in their sorrow. The poor women, most of whom had left their husbands on board the "Ranger," well knew how truly Mrs Morley could sympathise with them, and listened to her exhortations and advice. Some who had before been very indifferent to matters of religion now looked forward with satisfaction each day to the time when they were to receive a visit from her and the young ladies. She and her daughters held school with all the children at their cottage. It was carried on under difficulties, for they had only one book, but that was the Bible. The young ladies devised, however, various means for teaching the little ones. Some thin flat stones served as slates, and young Broke cut out several sets of letters from wood, which were greatly valued. On Sunday the whole party assembled in the men's hut, where Harry had conducted a service, and every evening also he had borrowed Mrs Morley's Bible, and read a chapter to the men. During his absence she now did the same. This system tended greatly to keep the people contented and orderly. They saw that those of superior education among them were resigned to the trials they were called on to endure, and were trusting to the support and protection of that great and merciful God whose message of love to man they every day heard read, and who would send them relief in His good time.

Young as Harry Shafto was, by his firmness and decision he had maintained a strict discipline among the little band, and even the few who might have been disposed to be mutinous never ventured to dispute his authority. Even now that he was absent, they implicitly obeyed the doctor, whom he had left in command.

Poor Ensign Holt has not been mentioned for some time. He had gradually been improving in health and spirits.

"Come, Holt," said Dr Davis to him one morning. "It is time that you should rouse yourself. We are all exerting

ourselves to the utmost for the common good, and I wonder you are not ashamed to sit in the hut doing nothing. Surely it is more degrading to eat the bread of idleness than to labour like the rest of us. Take a spade in hand, and come and dig for roots; or, if you like it better, try to catch, some fish. At least endeavour to gain your daily bread."

"If I do anything, I'll work as hard as the rest of you," said the ensign, with more intelligence in his countenance than had long been there. "What are you going to be about, doctor?"

"To dig for roots. That I suspect was among the first occupations of primeval man, and requires no great exertion of the mind," answered the doctor. "Here is a spade. Come along."

Without another word the young officer followed his kind friend, and having been shown the leaf beneath which the root was to be found, set to work and dug away diligently till he had collected as many as he could carry. The doctor sent him back to the village with them, and told him to return without delay. All day long he worked away, and seemed very proud of the pile of roots he had dug up. That evening, by the doctor's invitation, he attended the meeting in the men's hut, and listened with great attention while Mrs Morley read the Bible. She afterwards spoke a few kind words to him, expressing her pleasure at seeing him so much improved in health. He burst into tears.

"I have been a good-for-nothing foolish fellow," he said at length. "But oh, Mrs Morley, if you would but take me in hand, I think there might be a chance of my improvement."

"If you seek for strength and guidance whence alone it can come, you may be very certain there will be an improvement, dear Mr Holt," said Mrs Morley, kindly. "The trials you have gone through, and may yet have to endure, will then prove a blessing to you. I will gladly give you counsel and advice, but more I cannot do. Let me remind you only of God's promise, 'that if you seek you will find; if you knock, it shall be opened unto you.'"

From that day forward a great change was perceptible in the young ensign. He laboured as hard as any one; and whenever he could borrow Mrs Morley's Bible, he would sit up for hours together at night reading it diligently.

This had occurred some days before Harry went on his expedition to the harbour. The doctor reminded Captain Twopenny of their intention of burying the body of the unfortunate seaman they had found on the beach. He invited Ensign Holt to accompany him, taking also two men, with spades, who also carried their clubs in case they should fall in with seals. He had his gun, and proposed that Holt should take one also. "No," answered the ensign. "I am but a poor shot, and should only throw away powder. I will carry your game. I am not of use for much else." Formerly, how indignant he would have been had such an idea been suggested to him.

They started at daybreak, hoping to get back at night, and to find Shafto and his companions had returned.

The journey was a very fatiguing one. Though the captain knew the way tolerably well, it was noon before they reached the little bay where the dead seaman lay. The ensign seemed greatly struck when he saw it. "Poor fellow," he said, contemplating the body. "I thought my fate a very hard one, and yet how infinitely worse was that poor fellow's, cast on this inhospitable shore, perhaps deserted by his companions, and left to die in all the agonies of starvation, without a human voice to soothe his last hours."

"It won't do to give way to such thoughts as those, Holt," observed the captain, who had no sympathy with the ensign's present state. "Come, lads, we will bury the poor fellow, as we promised, and when we get back, I daresay Mrs Morley will speak about the subject. We have no time to lose, or we shall run the risk of being benighted on the mountain side."

A shallow grave was dug in the soft earth at the foot of the cliff, and the melancholy remnant of humanity was lifted into it.

"Poor fellow," said one of the seamen. "You or I, Bill, may come to this one of these days, though, as Mrs Morley says, it matters little if we are prepared."

"Come, lads," cried the captain from the top of the cliff, "be quick now. We must make the best of our way homewards."

The party were tolerably successful in obtaining provisions during the excursion. The captain killed a hog and a number of birds, and the men, after a short combat, knocked a seal on the head whom they found wandering in the woods. The ensign shouldered the hog—fortunately for him, not a very heavy one—the men having cut up the seal, divided the pieces between them, and the captain carried the birds; and thus heavily laden they reached the village soon after nightfall. Before this the rain had begun to fall in dense showers, and a strong gale was blowing.

They found their friends in considerable anxiety about Harry Shafto and his party, who had not returned. The next day was Sunday, and he had promised to be back without fail. A fire was kept burning on the beach, by the doctor's directions, during the night, to guide his boat into the bay. Emma and Fanny, who had persuaded their mother to go to bed, sat up watching anxiously for his return. Frequently they went to the door, hoping to hear the voices of him and his companions; but the only sound which reached their ears was the howling of the wind through the neighbouring trees, and the roar of the surf upon the rocky shore. They had a good excuse for sitting up, little Bessy being somewhat ill and restless.

"I trust no accident has happened to Mr Shafto," said Emma, when, after waiting several hours, Harry did not appear. "His life is of great consequence to us all."

"It is indeed," sighed Fanny. "Oh, no, no, it would be too dreadful to think of. But what can have delayed him?"

"The boat may have struck on the rocks, and have been injured," observed Emma; "or, as the wind blows down the

harbour, that may have delayed him."

"But the wind was blowing up the harbour all day," said Fanny. "I hope Dr Davis will send an expedition along the shore to search for them. They took, I am afraid, but a small amount of provisions, and may be suffering from hunger."

"I daresay they will, after all, appear early to-morrow," observed Emma. "They can row up, if they are unable to sail."

Fanny was less hopeful than her sister. She could not help acknowledging to herself that she felt a deep interest in the brave young officer, under whose guidance, and in consequence of whose judgment and courage, the lives of the whole party had—humanly speaking—been preserved. Though Harry had treated her, and her mother and sister, with the most gentle and thoughtful attention, he had not by word or look showed that he felt especial regard for her. But this, she was sure that, under the circumstances in which they were placed, he would be very careful to avoid doing, "Yet why should I allow such thoughts to enter my mind," she said to herself. "Perhaps it may be our lot never to leave this place, and how selfish in me to think thus when my poor mother is weighed down with such a burden of grief, which it should be my sole thought how best to alleviate!"

The morning came. The gale was blowing with even greater violence than during the night. Still there were no signs of the boat. The seamen told the doctor that this was no wonder, as she would be unable to get up while the wind held in its present quarter. Still, several of them went down along the shore to a considerable distance, but came back without having seen any signs of the missing party, two of them who went beyond the rest declaring that they could not get any further, as Tippo Sahib had chased them, and that they had had to run for their lives.

The usual Sunday service was conducted in the men's hut, and all seemed especially serious and attentive. As soon as it was over, Ensign Holt, as he accompanied the doctor to their hut, said, "I hope all is well with Shafto; but still the ladies seem very anxious about him; and if you will let me, doctor, I will start off, and try to find our friends. I daresay, one or two of the men will be ready to accompany me, and we will take as large a supply of provisions as we can carry. They may, at all events, be hard up for food, wherever they are."

"A good idea of yours, Holt," answered the doctor, "though, as probably they would have been able to kill a seal or two, I have no apprehension on that score. My idea is that the boat has met in with an accident somewhere round the coast. The danger is that you may miss them, as they will probably take the shortest route across the country. We will talk the matter over. It is late for starting to-day; but if they do not appear to-night, or early to-morrow morning, I should say that you ought to set off."

Had Fanny Morley been consulted she might possibly have advised the ensign to set off immediately. She was very grateful to him when she heard of his proposal; and she and Emma assisted Mrs Rumbelow in arranging some knapsacks and baskets, in which he and his companions might carry provisions for the party.

The day passed by—the morning came—the boat did not appear—and the ensign, with two men and young Broke, who begged to accompany them, prepared to set out on their expedition.

Few would have recognised the helpless creature who landed on the island a short time before in the active young man, with a bright and intelligent eye, who was to lead the party. He felt that he had work before him, and that he could be of use to his fellow-creatures.

Chapter Seventeen.

The Wreck of the Crusader.

Watching ship from Flagstaff-hill—Ship approaches harbour—Pronounced to be an emigrant ship—Launching boat to assist ship—Ship enters the sound—The emigrant ship in danger—Cutter puts off—The ship anchors near reef—Boat gets alongside—Mrs Clagget's tongue heard—Passengers lowered into boat—Dangerous passage to the shore—The "Crusader" driven on the reef—Watching wreck from the beach—Harry returns to the wreck—Bill Windy's brave exploit—Communication established with shore—Sea breaking over ship—Captain Westerway the last to leave—Encampment on the shore—Good hope for the future—Arrival of Ensign Holt—Mutiny among the crew—Mawson ringleader of mutineers—Resolve to build a vessel.

We left Harry Shafto and his companions on the brow of the hill, watching with intense eagerness the ship they had just discovered as she endeavoured to beat up towards the mouth of the harbour.

"They must have seen our hut blazing during the night, and it probably served them as a beacon," remarked Harry. "What we considered our misfortune was to their advantage."

"Ay, ay, Mr Shafto, it's an ill wind that blows no one good," observed the boatswain. "I only wish she had the wind freer. It will be no easy matter for that big ship, rigged as she is, to beat up this harbour, and when she is inside it is hard to say where she can bring up; for, with the wind shifting and veering about, there is no safe anchorage that I could find for her."

"She would not attempt to come in here unless she was in distress," remarked Harry. "And if, as is probable, there are passengers on board, they may be landed here with less danger than on the open coast, even should she get on shore."

"I should not like to insure her against doing that," said the boatswain. "Heaven help her and the poor people on

board. If the captain knows the place, he would rather have kept out at sea than tried to come in here. See, she is about again, and is standing to the south'ard. Perhaps, after all, he thinks he had better not make the attempt."

"We must run up the flag. It will help them to find the mouth of the inner harbour, at all events," said Harry. "Come, Patch, you must give up your cloak; you can do without it now."

The curiously-contrived flag was quickly hoisted and flew out to the breeze.

The party stood in silence watching the ship for some time. They were too anxious about her to make many remarks. The gale continued blowing as hard as ever. Suddenly it shifted to the southwest, the ship fell off a few points, and then she was seen slowly to come about, and once more she headed up towards the harbour.

"He has made up his mind to come in. No doubt about that," observed the boatswain.

"It is time, Mr Shafto, for us to launch the boat, to go off to her, and we may then be ready. The captain thinks if he is once inside he will be all safe, but to my mind he will be greatly mistaken."

"I'll follow your advice, Mr Bollard," said Harry. "We will do our best, lads, to help the people if the ship gets on shore. I know that I can depend on you."

"Ay, ay, sir, and never fear," answered the men, as they followed the young officer down the the hill. They kept the ship in sight all the way, and could still see her clearly from the beach.

On she stood, and the wind holding, she was able to steer directly for the harbour. Under ordinary circumstances she would have appeared secure of entering a haven of safety; but with the wind constantly shifting, the rocky shore on either side, and deep water close up to it, there would still be great danger, even should she succeed in making the entrance.

The boat was reached, but now came the difficulty of launching her; for the wind having shifted to the south, the sea raised across the broad estuary drove directly into the bay. Could they once get her safely through the surf, however, they might obtain shelter under the western point, where a reef running out formed a natural breakwater. They ran her down the beach, but when near the water both Harry and the boatswain hesitated about attempting to launch her. Should they not succeed in getting her quickly through the surf, one of the heavy seas which were breaking on the shore might roll her over and knock her to pieces, as well as endanger all their lives. Still, if they waited till any accident happened to the ship, they might be too late to render assistance to those on board.

As the stranger stood in, the English flag was seen flying at her peak, and from her appearance the boatswain pronounced her to be a merchantman, probably an Australian emigrant ship, and that if so she would probably have numerous passengers on board.

"She has evidently been fearfully knocked about," said Harry, who was looking at her through his spy-glass. "And I can only see one quarter-boat. Come, lads, we must try to launch the cutter. Dicey and Patch, do you jump in and stand by with the oars. When I give the word, we will run her down without stopping, and back out as the sea falls off."

Harry waited till a heavy sea broke on the shore, then all hands uniting their strength, in another instant the boat was afloat. They leaped in, the oars were out in a moment, and before the next sea broke, the boat had been urged fifty fathoms from the beach. Only one small patch of water was visible where she could remain in safety, close inside the reef. They pulled towards it, the seas, as they rolled in, threatening to capsize her. It was reached, and by keeping the boat's head towards the outer rocks they were able to lie in comparative safety, and watch the progress of the ship.

"If the wind holds she will get in, and may be come to anchor under the south island," observed Bollard.

"It would be safer for her, then, to run up the inner harbour; for should the wind afterwards shift, she would be placed in a dangerous position," said Harry.

"No doubt about that, sir," observed Bollard. "The chances are that she will leave her ribs on the rocks."

"If so, we must do our best to save the people," said Harry. "The sea breaks heavily along the shore, and they will be placed in great danger."

The ship meantime was standing boldly on, keeping close to the southern shore, for the purpose evidently of being well to windward. She had already reached the entrance of the sound, and now she was in comparatively smooth water, though the fierce gale made her heel over, threatening every instant to carry away her masts. It must have been an anxious time to those on board. Away to leeward the waves were dashing fiercely on the rockbound coast, and well they must have known, should any accident happen, that no power could save them from driving against it, when few could have hoped to escape with life.

The party in the boat continued anxiously to watch the ship. Harry was considering how he could best render her assistance. It was a long way by land to the mouth of the sound, and should she drive on shore in that direction, all on board might be lost before he and his party could reach the spot. Still the masts held, and the captain evidently dared not shorten sail, as only by carrying on could he hope to keep to windward.

"He is a brave seaman, whoever he may be," observed Bollard. "Hold on, good sticks, hold on, and you may still bring the stout ship into port!" he added, apostrophising the masts.

"They see our flagstaff, and will probably steer for it," said Harry. "Or perhaps they are aware of the existence of the

inner harbour, and purpose running up to an anchorage."

The ship had now got within two miles of where the boat lay; and, sheltered somewhat by the land, she stood up more bravely than before to her canvas. The captain evidently did not like the look of the shore on his port side, as no preparations were made for coming to an anchor.

"She will do it now," cried Bollard, "if the wind holds for another quarter of an hour. See, she is keeping away. They have made out the entrance of the inner harbour. We might pull outside the reef, Mr Shafto, and get on board, to pilot her in. If they see us coming, they will have ropes ready for us."

"It would be no easy matter to reach her, and we shall risk our lives and the loss of the boat, if we make the attempt till she is in smoother water," said Harry. "However, we may pull round to the harbour, and lead her in; they will be looking out for a boat, and will be sure to see us. Now, lads, give way. Dicey and Patch, you must keep the bailers going, for we shall ship some seas, and must be prepared. We will first get to windward, and step the mast, and then run merrily up."

The ship was now standing almost across the sound, making directly for the mouth of the inner harbour. As she drew nearer, the gush of water from her sides, evidently forced out by pumps at work, showed her distressed condition, and the reason which had induced her commander to seek a haven instead of keeping the open sea. The boat had just got from under the shelter of the reef, when the wind again shifted several points to the westward, and blew with greater violence than before. The crew tugged bravely at their oars; but all their efforts could scarcely send the boat ahead in the teeth of the gale. The ship, heeling over, made her way across the sound. The mouth of the harbour was almost reached, when with redoubled violence the wind struck her. Down she heeled, and all her masts in one instant falling over her side, she lay a helpless wreck upon the water, driving rapidly towards the reef. So close was she already that Harry could see the people running along her decks. An anchor was let go, but even when the whole cable had run out, so great was the depth of water that it did not hold. Another anchor followed. Still the ship drove onwards.

Harry, forgetting his previous caution, urged his men to pull out, in the hopes of getting alongside before she struck, and saving, if possible, some of the females who might be on board. There was but little time to do so, however, for she was already within three cables' lengths of the rocks.

"She holds! she holds!" cried Willy. The last anchor had brought her up. "Whatever becomes of the ship, lads, the people may be saved."

It was now seen that the only boat had been stove in when the masts were carried away.

"The lives of those on board may depend on our exertions, lads," cried Harry, when he discovered this. The crew thus encouraged and incited, used every effort to reach the sorely battered vessel. Several persons were seen collected on the poop, eagerly watching their approach. It was too probable that the anchor would not long hold, and when, driven on the reef, her destruction would be inevitable.

At length the boat succeeded in getting under the ship's quarter. "Let no one attempt to get into the boat till the women are cared for," cried some one from the poop in a stern voice, as the boat lay tossing up and down.

A chair slung by ropes was lowered with a female in it, who shrieked out as she descended, "Hold on tight, hold on tight, good sailors! hold on, I pray you, hold on tight! Don't let me drop into the water. I was ready to sacrifice myself for the good of the rest by coming first; hold on, hold on!"

Her tongue had been heard even before the chair was over the side, and continuing till she was unlashed and handed over to the boatswain into the stern of the boat, where she continued uttering exclamations without intermission. "Oh, do take care of the girls, they are under my charge. Let them come next; I must not be separated from them."

"Why," exclaimed Willy, as he caught sight of the lady's features, "are you not Mrs Clagget, and are my sisters and Charles with you?"

"Yes, to be sure they are, and there comes Emily. And is it possible that you are Willy Dicey, and can I believe my senses?" was the answer.

Willy did not stop to reply, but sprang to the bow of the boat to assist his sister, who was just then being lowered down. May followed her. Harry recognised them. "Is Charles with you?" he asked, as he carried May aft.

"Oh, yes. Can he come with us?"

"Not till the other women are safe," he answered. "I am sure he would not."

There was no time to exchange further words, for more women and children were being lowered down. Poor Mrs Bolton, when she had got all her children with her, cried out for her husband, but the necessary rule was adhered to.

"He will come next trip, when you are all landed," said Harry.

Though anxious to take off as many as the boat could carry, Harry, afraid of overloading her, at length resolved to take no more.

The passage to the shore, though short, was full of danger. The oars were got out, the rope which held her to the ship cast off, and now came the fierce struggle with the seas. The crew had to exert their utmost strength to clear the end of the reef. Those who watched her from the deck must have trembled for their safety. Often it seemed as if she must be driven into the surf, which broke in sheets of foam over the rocks; but the strong arms of the crew and their

tough oars did not fail them. The point of the reef was doubled, and the boat now glided into comparatively smooth water within it. Instead of attempting to run on the beach, Harry steered her towards some rocks which formed the inner part of the reef. Even here the landing was far from easy. While some of the men kept the boat from being dashed against the rocks, Harry, with the boatswain and the rest, leaped into the water.

“Come, marm,” said Mr Bollard to Mrs Clagget. “You were the first in the boat, and you should be the first out, and do just cling on to my back, and I will soon place you on dry ground.”

“Oh, you will let me into the water, I know you will,” answered Mrs Clagget.

“No, no, marm, don’t be afraid,” said Bollard, seizing her hands, and lifting her up on his shoulders as he would have carried his hammock. “You must set the rest of the ladies an example.”

Mrs Clagget’s tongue did not cease; but the boatswain, regardless of what she said, ran with her over the rocks, and putting her down, quickly returned to the boat. Harry in the meantime having landed May, the boatswain next took up Emily, and bore her to the shore, while Willy and Peter scrambled over the rocks, each with a child on his shoulders. One after the other, the whole of the passengers were thus landed.

The midshipmen were then about to jump into the boat. “No, Dicey, do you and Patch remain on shore, and take care of the women,” said Harry. “If we are lost, there will be no one to send for help to the settlement. You understand me? I can trust to your judgment. Good-bye.” Saying this, Harry ordered the crew to shove off, and once more pulled away to the ship.

Harry had frequently cast an anxious glance towards her. She appeared already to have got nearer the reef; and his fear was, knowing the depth of the water on the outside and her already leaky condition, that, should she strike, she might go down before the rest of the people could be landed.

The boat had got to the outer end of the reef, when so heavy a squall met her that the crew, though exerting all their strength, in vain attempted to pull against it. The ship felt its force; nearer and nearer she drew to the reef, pitching her bows into the seas as they rolled along nearly the whole length of the broad estuary. At last she rose to a heavier sea than ordinary. The cable parted, and the hapless “Crusader” drove stern-on to the rocks. She struck heavily, the falling sea driving her broadside on to them. To rescue any of those on board from the outside of the reef was now an operation of too much danger to be attempted, and Harry, by the boatswain’s advice, steered back, hoping to establish a communication with the ship across the reef.

Emily and May Dicey stood on the beach, watching with fearful apprehension the ship as she lay with her broadside against the reef, the sea wildly breaking over her. “Oh! they will be lost, they will be lost,” cried May.

Emily clasped her hands. “Willy, can nothing be done for them?” she exclaimed.

“I hope so,” said Willy. “If man can help them, Harry Shafto and Bollard will do it.”

Most of the poor women were uttering cries and lamentations in their terror for the safety of their husbands left on board. There were still also a number of poor women and children. Willy felt more anxious for them even than for the men.

The boat was seen coming back. “Oh, they have given it up. There is no hope for them! Dear, dear Charles! he will be lost. I wish we had stayed with him,” cried May.

“I am very sure Harry Shafto has not given it up,” said Willy. “He knows that the only way to get the people out of the ship is on this side. We shall soon see what he is about to do.”

The part of the reef where the ship had struck was under water, and some distance from the point of rocks which ran out from the shore. Had she gone to pieces and no boat been at hand, although so close to the land, the greater number, if not all, might have perished, for the surf as it receded would have carried them off, and even the strongest swimmer would have found it difficult to make way against it.

Harry and his brave crew were now seen to approach as near the ship as they could venture without the risk of being carried on the rocks. Several persons were standing on the ship’s starboard bow, which was now nearest the shore. One of them held a coil of light rope in his hands; he hove it, but it fell short. Again and again he made the attempt. At length a person standing near was observed to fasten it round his waist, when, holding on by another rope, he lowered himself down. He waited till the receding sea had gone past him, and then, as another rolled up, he leaped on its crest, and was borne onwards, striking out boldly towards the beach. On he struggled. Again the receding sea bore him backwards towards the reef. He redoubled his exertions. Harry ordered the cutter to “back in,” anxious to assist the brave fellow. The rocks appeared fearfully close. He stretched out his hand to grasp the swimmer’s arm. “Give way, lads, give way,” he shouted; and the boatswain coming to his assistance, they hauled the man in, and secured the rope which was fastened to his waist. They now pulled away across the little bay formed by the reef and the shore, towards a high rock which jutted out from the beach.

“I thought Bill Windy would do it,” exclaimed the man who had been rescued; and without shaking the water from his clothes, he began hauling in on the line which he had brought with him. At the other end was a hawser which the boat now towed towards the rock. Leaping on to it, the boatswain and Lizard made fast the hawser. A communication was thus established between the vessel and the shore.

Emily and May, with the rest of the party on the beach, had been watching these proceedings with intense eagerness. The boat again pulled back towards the wreck. The brave mate was seen to cling to the hawser, and work his way back. Several times the surf covered him, but he held on tight, and, emerging from the water, clambered up

the bows of the ship. The hawser was tautened up, while the boat hung on to it, ready to receive the next comers. The mate was soon again seen making his way along the hawser, carrying another line and a block. He reached the boat in safety, when the block was secured, just above the boat. A cradle, which had meantime been prepared, was slung on the hawser; but eager as those on board were to reach a place of safety, they appeared to hesitate about trusting themselves to it.

“Why are they losing so much precious time?” cried Emily. “How fearfully the sea is breaking over the ship; any moment she may be dashed to pieces, or fall off the rocks into the deep water. Oh, see! see! there is a man making the attempt with two children. It is Mr Paget.” That gentleman, finding others hesitated, had taken two infants from their mothers’ arms, and had seated himself in the cradle, to set an example to the rest of the people on board. Holding on with one hand, and steadying the cradle with the other, though the surf as it rose washed over him more than once, he reached the boat with his charges.

“Thank Heaven!” exclaimed Emily. “He is safe! he is safe! And there is Charles; he is following the brave example.”

Several other persons succeeded in gaining the boat. Tom Loftus, Jack Ivyleaf, and Mr Bolton, the father of the large family already on shore, were among them. Each brought either a couple of children or one of the women with him—the latter being afraid of trusting themselves alone. The boat was already full, and as yet no casualty had occurred; but the danger was every instant increasing. The tide was rising, the sea striking with fearful violence against the side of the ship, making every timber in her quiver. It need not be told how heartily those who now reached the shore were welcomed by the party already on the beach—how his wife and children clung round Mr Bolton; how Emily and May pressed Charles’ hand; and how, in voluble language, Mrs Clagget expressed her satisfaction at seeing her fellow-passengers out of the terrible wreck.

Harry, without stopping a moment after the last person had landed, again pulled across the bay. Already several of the sailors were seen making their way along the hawser independent of the cradle. As the boat approached, they then dropped one by one into her. Bill Windy rated them for not remaining on board.

“You should have stopped to get up provisions, you rascals,” he exclaimed. “How are all these people to be fed?”

“Little hope of getting provisions or anything else,” answered one of the men, “when the chances are that the ship will be knocked to pieces, or go down before the day is many minutes older.”

“Greater need for you to have stopped and helped to get them into the boat,” said Windy. “But, bear a hand, and assist these people off the cradle.”

The same operation as before was repeated, till the boat was once more full, all the remaining women and children being got into her.

A rush was now seen to take place towards the forecastle, and a heavy sea struck the after-part of the ship, carrying away a large portion of the stern upper works. What would next happen it was not difficult to foretell. Several unfortunate people who had remained there were hurled into the surf. In vain they struggled—no assistance could be given them—and, one by one, they were carried away. Had anything been necessary to make the nigh worn-out crew of the boat increase their exertions, this would have done so. Happily, the hawser still remained secure. Harry shouted to the master, who unflinchingly was standing on the forecastle directing the landing of the people, to put himself into the cradle. “No, no,” he answered. “Not while a man remains on board will I quit the ship.” At length, contrary to the expectations of many, nearly all the surviving passengers and crew were got safely into the boat. Besides the captain, only one trembling wretch remained. He clung frantically to the bulwarks, afraid of quitting his hold, and trusting himself to the cradle.

“Come, Mr Mawson,” exclaimed Captain Westerway, “I am hauling the cradle back for the last time, and if you do not go, before many minutes you will be carried off by the sea, and no power on earth can help you.”

The wretched man looked up with pale cheeks and staring eyes. “I dare not, I dare not,” he answered. “But will you not save me, Captain Westerway?”

“Save you! I want you to save yourself!” said the captain, taking him by the shoulder. “Come, get in there, and hold tight;” and the captain lifted the trembling wretch, and forced him into the cradle. He shrieked out with alarm as he felt himself moving, clinging convulsively to the hawser; but the men in the boat, more for the captain’s sake than his, hauled away, and quickly had him out; and the cradle was travelling back for their brave commander. As he was placing himself in it he felt the ship tremble violently. The sea which struck her washed over him. Those in the boat thought he was gone, but to their joy they saw him still holding on to the hawser. They hauled away with all their strength, for a few seconds’ delay might have caused his destruction. A loud cheer burst from their throats as he reached the boat, and at that moment the upper part of the ship, to which the hawser was made fast, parted, and was speedily washed away.

The old captain sighed as he watched the ship breaking up. “I would gladly have been among the poor fellows lost; and yet, no. I am wrong to say that. It is my duty to look after those who are saved.”

The survivors of the passengers and crew of the ill-fated “Crusader” were now collected on the beach. Though saved from a watery grave, how fearful would have been their condition had Harry and his companions not been there to assist them! As it was, starvation stared them in the face. How could all be fed with the scanty supply of provisions which he possessed. Bill Windy proposed going back to the wreck; but now that the communication with her had been cut off, it was impossible to get on board without the greatest danger. Evening, too, was approaching, and shelter must be found for the women and children. Harry despatched some of his men for the axes to cut wood for fuel and building huts, while he and others hauled up the boat, and by turning her partly over under the cliff, provided shelter for the whole of the women and children; while a large fire made in front enabled the shipwrecked

party to dry their drenched garments. Willy and Peter hastened off to the spring to obtain water. The poor children were crying out for food. Such as Harry had he divided among them and their mothers, but nearly the whole party were already suffering from hunger.

At the settlement all might be fed and sheltered, but many hours must elapse before they could reach it. He knew, too, that in the dark it would be almost hopeless to make the attempt. He resolved, however, to start the next morning with a party of the men, who might return with provisions; but in the meantime he feared that many would suffer greatly. He held a consultation with Captain Westerway, Mr Paget, and Charles as to what was best to be done.

“Should the weather moderate in the morning, or the wind shift, I still have hopes that we may get some provisions from the ship,” answered the captain. “If not, the men, at all events, can hold out a few hours; and as there seems to be an abundance of wood in the island, we may form litters, and carry the women and children who are unable to walk. We have hitherto been so mercifully preserved that I do not fear for the future. Had it not been for the light you showed on shore, Mr Shafto, we should none of us at this time have been alive. The men were nearly worn-out at the pumps, and I had no hopes of keeping the ship afloat many hours longer, when, as we were standing to the eastward, we caught sight of the light on shore, and I at once knew that it must be on a part of the Auckland Islands.”

“Our hut did not catch fire by chance, then,” said Harry. “We were mourning its loss, little thinking of the advantage it would be to others. You would probably not have seen the ordinary fire we had kept burning.”

While they were talking a shout was heard, and Willy and Peter Patch were seen hurrying up, followed by Ensign Holt with a couple of men and young Broke, each carrying a heavy load of seals’ flesh on his shoulders.

“Here is food for you all, good people,” shouted the midshipmen. “No fear of starving now, for Holt says they left a couple more big fellows which they knocked on the head not a mile away.”

Harry warmly welcomed him. The ensign’s astonishment was, as may be supposed, very great at seeing so large a party. He at once volunteered to go back to the spot where he and his companions had killed the seals, with any of the people who would accompany him, to obtain a further supply of their flesh.

Meantime, Harry and Captain Westerway set all hands to work. While some were cooking the seals’ flesh, others brought in fuel, and poles, and boughs to build huts. A tent was formed of the boats’ sails which Harry begged the Miss Diceys, Mrs Clagget, and the other ladies to occupy. Some, however, of the merchant seamen grumbled on being ordered to work by the young naval officer, asserting that as they were now on shore, and their ship stranded, they were free men, and would do what they liked.

“As you please,” said Harry. “But no work, no pay. You will have, at all events, to forage for yourself.”

The mutineers, who had sat down at some distance from the rest of the party, at length appeared to repent of their resolution, and one of them came up, humbly begging for some meat, and fuel to keep up a fire. Harry, not sorry to be relieved of their society, granted them their request. They were joined by some of the younger emigrants, and Charles observed that Job Mawson stole off and sat himself down among them.

Ensign Holt and his party returned at dark with an ample supply of food, and by this time all the huts for which they had materials were erected, and the shipwrecked people, thankful that their lives had been spared, prepared to pass their first night on shore, no one knowing how many more they might have to spend on the island before they could make their escape.

The storm continued blowing, but the rain held off. Harry and his men went about renewing the fires, so as to keep the poor women and children as warm as possible. The chief annoyance arose from the noise made by the mutineers. They had been seen wandering about, and appeared to have hauled something on shore. Not long afterwards they began to sing, and shout, and shriek out in the wildest fashion. At last the sounds died away, and their fire alone, smouldering in the distance, showed where they were.

Captain Westerway took but little rest; he seemed dreadfully cast down at the loss of his ship, in spite of the consolation which Charles, Mr Paget, and Harry tried to give him.

“I had thought, when I came in here, to get the leaks stopped, and continue the voyage to New Zealand,” he said, sighing deeply.

“We do not know what can be done yet,” said Harry. “At all events, we may build a new vessel out of the old one; and though she cannot carry all the people, she may give notice of our condition, and a larger one may be sent from New Zealand to our relief. So you see, Captain Westerway, your loss is our gain; for had you not come in, months or years might have passed before we could have made our escape, and the anxiety of our friends have been relieved.”

Chapter Eighteen.

Shipbuilding.

Preparations for moving to village—Litters formed for ladies—Holt leads the party—Willy and Peter carry May—The journey commenced—Stores and boat recovered from wreck—Mutineers disappear—Keel of “Young Crusader” laid.

The morning was too tempestuous to allow the boat to make the passage to the settlement. Harry, therefore, set all the men to work to construct litters on which the ladies and the weaker women and children might be carried, Ensign

Holt having undertaken to show the way, which he declared practicable, though in places somewhat rough and marshy.

The women meantime were busily employed in preparing breakfast. Paul Lizard had, fortunately, some hooks and lines in his pocket, and he set the boys to work to catch fish.

The mutineers did not appear; but Willy and Peter were sent to see what had become of them, and they reported that they were lying asleep round the ashes of their fire, with a spirit cask near them, a small portion of the liquor only remaining in it. Harry felt that it was important for him to return to the settlement, in order to make preparations for the support of so many people, or he would gladly have remained with Captain Westerway, to assist him in getting stores from the wreck, and seeing what could be done to build another vessel, as had been proposed. He left, however, Bollard and Lizard with him; while he, taking young Broke as his guide, and four of the emigrants, set off towards the settlement, it being arranged that Ensign Holt, aided by Mr Paget, Charles, and the other gentlemen, should conduct the main body.

Captain Westerway undertook, should he be able to obtain the provisions, to send them up in the cutter, under charge of Mr Bollard, One of the ship's boats, though stove in so as then to be useless, remained on deck; and the captain hoped, should she not be washed away, to repair her sufficiently to be of use in visiting the wreck.

Some time passed before the young ensign's party were ready to start, and had been supplied with food. Several of the women had found biscuits in their pockets, which afforded support to the younger children. The young ladies had begged to be allowed to walk, but were assured that their shoes were unfit for the rough ground which they would have to traverse. Willy and Peter, with two other boys, insisted on carrying May, while Emily's litter was borne by her elder brother, Mr Paget, Tom Loftus, and Jack Ivyleaf. Mrs Clagget declined taking her seat on the litter prepared for her. "No, no; you men will be letting me down in the middle of a bog," she exclaimed. "If some one would lend me a pair of boots, I would show you that I could trudge as well as any body." As may be supposed, no boots were to be procured; but Jack Ivyleaf, ever fertile in resources, undertook to fit the old lady with a pair of seal-skin moccasins, which would protect her feet from the rocks.

The party formed a long line, not unlike a caravan prepared to cross the desert. They were in tolerable spirits, but the more thoughtful ones could not help feeling anxious about the means of supplying so many mouths with food.

As soon as they had started, Captain Westerway launched the boat, to be ready to visit the wreck directly the weather moderated sufficiently. Meantime, while some of the people were collecting the pieces of timber and planking which were washed on shore, others were engaged in cutting wood for building the huts they required to shelter them from the cold and rain at night.

Towards evening the sea had gone down sufficiently to enable the captain and his first mate, with Mr Bollard, to get alongside the ship. A short inspection soon convinced them that she was a hopeless wreck.

"It cannot be helped, Windy," said Captain Westerway, with a sigh. "We must now try to make the best of what remains of her."

"Cheer up, captain," answered the mate; "though the old 'Crusader' will carry us no longer over the ocean, we will have a 'Young Crusader' built before long, and she will do good service if, by her means, we can get away to some Christian land. We might have been much worse off than we are, and, to my mind, we have no cause to grumble. Here's our boat still safe, and, with some tinkering, she may be made to swim and serve us well. We will tow her on shore; but first we will see what provisions we can come at to carry with us."

Bill and his companions at once set to work. A cask of beef, another of pork, and three of flour were found, besides several articles—among the most valuable was the carpenter's tool chest, and a quantity of iron. These were at once lowered into the boat. A number of sails were also got up, and thus laden they returned in her to the shore.

Another trip only could be made that night, when more hands were taken off to assist in the work.

The various articles brought from the wreck greatly raised the spirits of the party. The sails, stretched on poles they had cut, made comfortable tents, and they had now food in abundance.

"I wish those mutinous chaps had not been such fools," observed Windy. "I wonder what has become of them."

On inquiries being made, it was found that the mutineers, headed by Job Mawson, had been seen making their way across the country in the direction of the settlement.

"I hope they will not have gone to annoy the people there," observed the boatswain. "The men are often away hunting or fishing, and only the ladies and a few other women and children are left at the huts."

"They are not likely to get there before Mr Shafto, at all events," said the captain. "We need not trouble ourselves about them."

Still Bill Windy was not quite comfortable in his mind. Three or four of the crew were great scoundrels, and several of the emigrants were ruffianly fellows, ready to engage in any sort of mischief.

The captain and his mates, with Mr Bollard, sat up for several hours arranging the plan of the vessel, which they proposed commencing as soon as the timber could be got from the wreck. By daybreak they commenced repairing the boat, and she being put to rights, they were able to proceed more rapidly in getting the stores and provisions on shore. A raft was also formed to facilitate the operation.

So hard did they work—the weather still continuing favourable—that before many days had passed the keel of the

“Young Crusader” was laid, the old ship disappearing by the efforts of those who a short time before were so anxious for her preservation.

Nothing had been seen of the mutineers. “They must take the consequences of their foolishness,” observed Bill Windy, “and, the chances are, will have to spend the best part of their days on this island.”

Meantime, Captain Westerway had not forgotten the party at the settlement, and sent up Mr Bollard in the cutter, laden with some of the provisions which had been saved.

Chapter Nineteen.

The Cutter is carried off.

Journey of emigrants to village—Rough travelling—Pursued by mutineers—Tippo comes to the rescue—Welcome at the village—Arrival of provisions—Arrangements for victualling the settlement—Mutineers seen watching village—The cutter carried off—The “Young Crusader” completed—Mrs Morley resolves to remain—Mrs Rumbelow stays with her charges—Preparations for embarking—The “Young Crusader” at the settlement.

Ensign Holt and the party of emigrants he was leading made very good progress on their journey towards the settlement. The only grumbler was Mrs Clagget, as she trudged on with a long stick in her hand, sometimes by the side of the Diceys, and at others addressing her remarks to Mrs Jones. However, as it was so evident that she talked for the sake of keeping her tongue in motion, no one minded her. She regained her good humour when, soon after mid-day, the party halting for dinner, fires were lighted, and steaks frizzling before them. They had had woods to cut through, boggy ground to cross, and rugged stony hills to climb. She, however, got along as well as any one, and her example encouraged the other women who had to travel on foot. Their spirits were revived when their young leader told them that they were within a mile of the settlement.

The last of the party were climbing the ledge of rocks which formed one side of the sandy bay when, on looking back, they saw several men following.

“Why, I do believe they are those fellows who would not work yesterday,” observed one of the emigrants. “And there is that ill-conditioned chap, Job Mawson, among them. I cannot help thinking they mean mischief.”

The mutineers, for such they evidently were, on seeing the party, hurried on; but as they got halfway across the sandy shore of the bay, a huge seal suddenly darted out of the wood, and seeing the men running, made chase. He soon overtook the nearest, whom he knocked over, giving him a fierce bite, and then rushed at the next, whom he treated in the same way. Willy and Peter, who had stopped on the top of the ridge to rest, hearing the cries, looked round.

“Why,” exclaimed Willy, “that is our old friend Tippo Sahib, and he is giving those fellows their deserts.”

Tippo Sahib sure enough it was. The mutineers, who had never seen such a creature before, seized with a panic, ran off in all directions, two or three overtaking the party of emigrants.

“No, no, we don’t want you fellows,” cried the men. “You be off now, or you will be sorry for it.”

Two of the mutineers humbly petitioned to be allowed to keep with the party, when Willy at length told them that they might do so if they would behave better in future. The rest by this time were nowhere to be seen, having run into the wood to escape, as they hoped, from the strange beast which had attacked them.

As the travellers neared the settlement, Mrs Morley, with her daughters and Mrs Twopenny, came out to welcome them. The former invited Emily and May to their cottage, while Mrs Clagget, introducing herself to Mrs Twopenny, told her she should be happy to take up her abode with her.

Harry having reached the settlement some time before, preparations were already being made for the reception of the party. The men willingly turned out to give up their huts to the women and children. Fires were lighted, and several of the people were busy, under the direction of Mrs Rumbelow, cooking food, while the men were employed in bringing in wood for forming fresh huts. Harry started off a fresh party to assist those already engaged in the work. The gentlemen laboured as hard as any of the men, and in a short time a row of huts, constructed after the fashion of those already built, rose near them.

Harry’s chief anxiety was, however, to provide food for so many mouths, as he saw the store which had been made for the former party rapidly diminishing. Some of the emigrants grumbled, too, at not having a greater variety. Seal-soup and fried roots served for breakfast, and boiled or roasted seal, with baked roots and water, for dinner, while the same fare was served at supper. Sometimes fish varied the material for their meals; but neither they nor mussels were to be obtained when the weather was stormy, and the sea broke with violence on the rocks.

Several days passed away, when a sail was seen coming up the harbour. She was recognised as the cutter. Nearly all the inhabitants of the little settlement ran down to welcome her. She had on board several casks and kegs brought by the boatswain from the wreck. They were eagerly rolled up to the huts, when they were found to contain flour and beef, raisins and suet. “Hurrah! we shall have English beef and plum-pudding now,” exclaimed numerous voices. The doctor, however, who acted as store-keeper, ordered them at once to be placed in safe keeping, to be served out as required. He soon afterwards held a consultation with Mrs Rumbelow. Under his directions, an oven was constructed, while he set to work in his laboratory to manufacture some yeast, or risings, as Mrs Rumbelow called the

composition; and the next morning a supply of hot rolls was distributed among the women and children. How delicious they appeared to those who had for many a long day not tasted a morsel of bread!

Bollard brought word that considerable progress had already been made in building the “Young Crusader,” and Captain Westerway requested that he might be supplied with such provisions as the island afforded, in order to husband those which had been saved from the wreck, as they would be required as stores for the vessel. Among other things, he brought several cases of gunpowder, and the sportsmen were therefore able to range the island with their guns in search of game.

Parties went out daily to dig for roots. Traps were constructed for catching birds; at low water, mussels were sought for on the rocks; and more hooks being made, the number of fishermen was greatly increased. The days, however, were short, and the weather frequently so very bad that they had literally to make hay while the sun shone. As provisions could be obtained they were sent by sea to the shipbuilders, and when the wind blew too strong to allow the boat to make the passage, they were sent overland.

Harry’s cares, in providing food and maintaining order among so mixed an assemblage, were greatly lightened by the assistance offered him by Mrs Morley and Mr Paget, as well as by Charles, Tom Loftus, and Jack Ivyleaf, who also did their best to instruct and amuse the people, old and young, when their hours of labour were over. The school was kept with less difficulty than before, as several books had been saved from the “Crusader.” Harry’s great care was to keep all employed; indeed, he foresaw that it would be necessary for every one to exert himself to the utmost to obtain a sufficient supply of food for the support of their lives during the winter. Happily, the weather was not nearly so cold or stormy as he had expected to find it; and though occasionally it froze hard, the frost seldom lasted long, while the snow which fell quickly disappeared again from the lower ground.

Nothing was seen for some time of the mutineers. It was supposed that they were living a savage life by themselves in the woods, unwilling to submit to the discipline to which they would have been subjected in the settlement. One day, however, when Captain Twopenny and several of the other gentlemen were starting on a shooting expedition, they caught sight of a man in the neighbouring wood, whence he had apparently been watching the settlement. As soon as he found that he was discovered he ran off, and disappeared before they were able to overtake him. This circumstance gave Harry some little anxiety, though, as it was known that the only arms the men possessed were their knives and an axe or two, they were not likely to prove formidable enemies. The probabilities were that the man only intended to steal into the village, and carry off any provisions on which he could lay his hands.

Two or three days passed away; the cutter had just returned, after taking supplies to the shipbuilders, and had been hauled up for safety on the beach. Early in the morning the boatswain and several men went down, intending to go off in her in search of seals. She was not to be seen. They went up and down the shore, but not a trace of her could they discover. It was too evident that she had been carried away by the mutineers. This was confirmed on the following day, when the “Crusader’s” boat, which had been repaired, arrived with the information that she had been seen passing down the sound early in the morning; but whether those in her intended to attempt a passage to New Zealand, or only to land on another part of the Aucklands, it was difficult to say. As, however, they could have had but a scanty supply of provisions, and little means of carrying water, it was most likely that they intended to land on the northern part of the island.

Although the loss of the cutter was a very serious matter, still Harry felt that it was satisfactory to be relieved of the presence of such lawless characters. Captain Westerway sent word that he would either leave his own boat or build another of sufficient size to go in search of seals, the chief purpose for which she was required.

At length the satisfactory intelligence arrived that the “Young Crusader” was ready for sea. It was now necessary to determine who should go in her, as she was unable to carry more than a sixth of the number. When Harry asked Mrs Morley what she wished to do, she replied, “My daughters and I are determined to remain, and watch over those who are entrusted to our care. When the schooner reaches New Zealand, a vessel will probably be sent to our assistance; until then we feel confident that He who has hitherto preserved us will keep us in safety. And what do you intend doing, Mr Shafto?”

“My duty is clear. I will remain, for the same reason, Mrs Morley,” he answered. “And Dr Davis desires also to stay with us; indeed, few, I believe, of the ‘Ranger’s’ people wish to quit the island. I will, however, send young Dicey, with his brother and sisters, and he will apply to the senior officer on the station, who will probably send a man-of-war, or some other vessel, as soon as one can be despatched.” The question was put to the various members of the community, “Whether or not they would desire to remain.”

“Remain! to be sure I will,” exclaimed Mrs Rumbelow, when she was asked. “While the wife or child of one of the men of our regiment stops here, it’s my duty to stay and look after them. And especially if the colonel’s lady stays, do you think I would desert her, Mr Shafto? Her husband was like a father to the regiment, and I would as soon desert my own mother as her.”

The Diceys, however, and Mr Paget, as well as Tom Loftus and Jack Ivyleaf, resolved to sail in the “Young Crusader.” Though Captain Westerway warned them that the voyage might prove boisterous, and not without danger, still Charles was anxious to reach the colony, that he might begin the life of a settler, and write home to relieve the anxiety of his family. The greater number of the emigrants, however, begged to remain, unwilling again to encounter the dangers of the sea, especially when they compared the size of the “Young Crusader” with that of the large ship which had brought them to the island. She had come up to the settlement in order to land such stores as could be spared, and to take others, as well as her intended passengers, on board. As Harry surveyed her, he was well pleased with her appearance. She was a stout little schooner of about 30 tons, and he felt satisfied to entrust his friends on board her, especially under the guidance of such experienced seamen as Captain Westerway and Bill Windy.

Chapter Twenty.

Conclusion.

The “Young Crusader” sails—Voyage along the coast—A storm—Schooner puts into harbour—Fate of the mutineers—The “Young Crusader” proceeds on her voyage—Stormy passage—New Zealand sighted—Enters a beautiful harbour—Hostile appearance of natives—Mr Paget advises flight—The schooner makes sail—Escaping from the harbour—Pursued by canoes—Man-of-war appears—The canoes give up chase—On board the “Ranger”—Good news for the settlement—How the “Ranger” was saved—Return to the Aucklands—All safe on board “Ranger”—Harry obtains his reward—Our friends settle in New Zealand—Conclusion.

The whole of the little community, men, women, and children, collected on the shore of the bay to witness the “Young Crusader” take her departure. Loud cheers burst from their throats as the anchor was tripped, the sails set, and with a fine westerly breeze she glided down the harbour.

Emily and May, with Mrs Clagget, stood at the stern, waving their handkerchiefs, the Miss Morleys returning the salute with tears in their eyes, for they could not help thinking of the dangers to which their friends would be exposed on board the little vessel.

“Good-bye, kind friends, good-bye,” cried Mrs Clagget. “We will send you relief; don’t be afraid. It won’t be our fault if your condition is not made known.” She continued, at the top of her voice, uttering these and similar expressions long after it could possibly have been heard by those on shore.

Flagstaff-hill was rounded, and they could look into the small harbour where the schooner had been built. On its shores stood the huts they had occupied, with the reef before them, on which a small remnant of the wreck was still visible. They soon reached the mouth of the sound, the wind enabling them to haul up and stand to the northward, parallel with the coast. They had, however, to keep some distance from it, to avoid the reef which ran out from the shore.

The little schooner had nearly reached the north end of the island when the fickle wind changed, and a heavy gale right ahead sprang up. Though the “Young Crusader” behaved well, the captain was unwilling to expose her, with so many people on board, to its fury; and the mouth of a harbour being clearly made out, he determined to run in and take shelter till the wind had abated. After running up some way, the schooner came to an anchor in a small cove, where the captain hoped she might lie in perfect security. Darkness came on soon afterwards, the sails were furled, and all was made snug.

Though disappointed at being delayed on their passage, those on board, as they heard the wind howling above their heads, and the sea roaring in the distance, were thankful that they were safe from the fury of the tempest.

The usual watch was set, and most of the passengers retired to their narrow berths. The ladies had a small cabin aft, in which Mrs Clagget declared that there was scarcely room to allow her to move her tongue, an observation which brought a smile on the countenances of her companions.

Willy was walking the deck with Bill Windy, with whom he had become very friendly, when he caught sight of a dark object moving towards the vessel. “There is a boat,” he exclaimed; “where can she come from?”

“She is the cutter, depend on it, which those scoundrels ran away with,” answered Windy. “They may mean mischief. Call the captain and the watch below; it’s as well to be prepared for them.”

Captain Westerway and all hands were quickly on deck. The boat approached cautiously, as if those in her were doubtful whether or not they were perceived. At length she came alongside. The schooner’s crew stood ready for an attack, and it was then seen that she contained but three people.

“Who are you, and what do you want?” asked Bill Windy.

“Oh, take us on board and give us some food,” answered a voice. “We are dying of hunger.”

“Make fast the boat and lend them a hand,” said Captain Westerway, and the three men were helped up the schooner’s side.

They were found to be two of the emigrants and one of the seamen who had mutinied. They appeared thoroughly humbled and wretched. As soon as they had taken a little food, they gave an account of their sufferings.

They stated that they were themselves the only survivors of the party—two having fallen down precipices, one having been killed by a seal which he incautiously approached, another having been drowned when scrambling out on the rocks in search of mussels, and the rest having died of starvation. Job Mawson, they declared, had been their ringleader. They had last seen him lying in a sinking state in the woods.

Although the vessel had already as many on board as could be accommodated, the captain humanely received them, and the next morning the cutter was sent on shore to be hauled up on the beach, as she was too large either to tow or to be taken on board.

The patience of the passengers was greatly tried; but at length, after a detention of three days, the weather moderating, the “Young Crusader” again put to sea. Still she was doomed to experience contrary winds.

Provisions were running short, and all hands, with the exception of the ladies, were put on short allowance. Day after day they beat backwards and forwards, the captain being anxious, if possible, to make the entrance of Cook’s Straits,

should he be unable to reach the more northern settlement of Auckland. At that time the natives of many parts of New Zealand were in open hostility with the settlers, and he was therefore unwilling to run the risk of landing on any other part of the coast.

The stormy weather still continued, but at length a slant of wind from the westward enabled the schooner to lay her course. Water and provisions were running fearfully short, and her passengers and crew were already beginning to feel the effects of their scanty fare. Many anxious eyes kept a lookout for land. The thick weather had prevented an observation from being taken for three days. Willy had the morning watch with Bill Windy. As the day broke, and the sun, rapidly rising above the horizon, shed its beams across the foaming sea, they lighted up the snowy summits of a range of mountains. “Land! land!” he shouted.

“You are right, Mr Dicey; but I am afraid it’s a long way from Auckland,” observed Bill Windy.

The deck was soon crowded with eager spectators. As the sun rose higher, and the little vessel sailed onwards, the intermediate lower shore could clearly be perceived. The vessel stood on till the mouth of a harbour of sufficient size to admit the schooner appeared ahead. Sail was shortened, that she might approach it cautiously, and a bright look-out kept ahead for sunken reefs. Captain Westerway was in hopes that, by going in, even though no settlers might be there, he would be enabled to obtain a supply of water, as well as wild-fowl or other birds, to support the people till some more hospitable place could be reached. The schooner, under easy sail, sounding as she went, entered the little harbour, and after making several tacks, brought up at no great distance from the shore. It was a lovely spot, and the eyes of all were gladdened by a sparkling stream which ran down the hillside. The boat was lowered, the empty casks were put into her, and Charles Dicey, with two other gentlemen, carrying their fowling-pieces, went on shore.

How delicious was their first ample draught of water! A cask being filled, they sent back the boat with it to the ship while they filled the others. This done, they proceeded over the hills in search of game. They had not gone far before they perceived, in a little cove that was not seen from the deck of the vessel, several large canoes drawn up on the beach.

“There must be natives in the neighbourhood, and we may probably obtain provisions from them,” observed Charles. “Their village cannot be far off.”

“What is that curious-looking stockade on the top of the hill?” asked Jack Ivyleaf.

“A native pah or fort,” said Mr Paget. “We must approach it cautiously, for we cannot depend on the friendliness of the inhabitants. See, there are several men gathering close outside. They have arms in their hands. Their numbers are increasing. Take my advice, and let us make the best of our way to the boat. They may attack us before we can explain that we have no hostile intentions.”

As he spoke, the natives were seen running down the hill towards the canoes. Charles urging the party to follow Mr Paget’s advice, they hastened to the place where they had landed. The boat had returned and taken on board several of the water-casks.

“Never mind the remainder,” cried Mr Paget. “The water will be dearly purchased if we wait to allow these savages to overtake us. Shove off, shove off!”

Captain Westerway was on deck, surprised to see the boat coming back. Willy was standing near him. They observed Mr Paget making signs to them. “He is telling us to get under way, sir,” he observed.

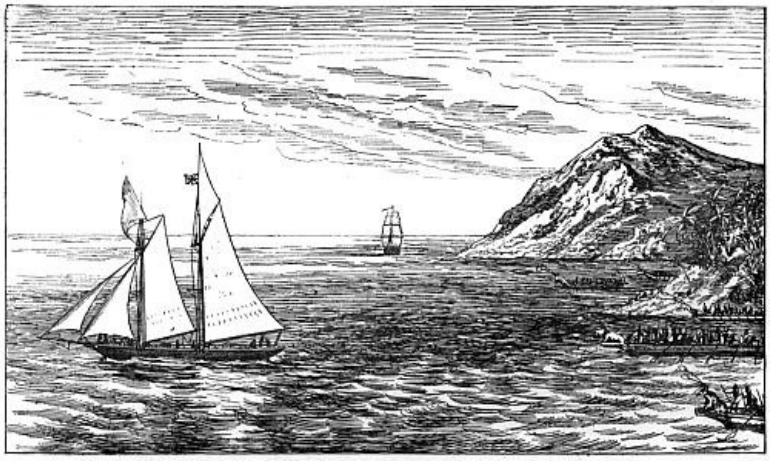
“So I believe he is,” exclaimed the captain. “Mr Windy, turn the hands up and make sail.”

The people, who were below, jumped on deck, wondering what was the matter. The boat was quickly alongside; those in her leaped on board, and she was hoisted in.

“Shall we weigh the anchor?” asked Windy.

“Not if we wish to escape from the savages’ canoes,” said Mr Paget. “Captain Westerway, these people are not to be trifled with.”

“We will slip the cable, then,” said the captain. “It is better to lose that than be cut off, as several vessels have been, by these people.”



"All the sail the schooner could carry was set; but still it was too evident that the canoes, unless the wind freshened, would overtake her.—*p.* 346.

The headsails quickly filled, the wind blew out of the harbour; the after-sails were set, and the "Young Crusader" glided rapidly towards the ocean. As she got into the middle of the harbour, the cove in which the canoes lay opened out, and a large number of savages were seen in the act of launching them. They were soon afloat, and, filled with men, made chase after the schooner. Of their hostile intentions there could now be no longer any doubt. On they came, paddling at a rapid rate over the smooth surface of the water. All the sail the schooner could carry was set; but still it was too evident that the canoes, unless the wind freshened greatly, would overtake her. The few fire-arms on board the schooner would avail but little against the vastly superior numbers of the savages. The wind increased; still the canoes were gaining ground. Had the captain waited to weigh the anchor, the "Young Crusader" would to a certainty have been captured; even now there appeared little probability of her escaping.

"The savages are gaining on us fearfully," observed Willy to his brother. "We shall have to fight for it; at all events, we may kill a few of the savages before we are taken."

"That would be but a small satisfaction," observed Charles. "I little expected such a termination to our adventures."

The breeze continued to freshen. Notwithstanding this, the schooner did not gain on the canoes.

"Captain Westerway," cried Willy, suddenly, "there is a sail to the northward."

"Yes, and she is standing this way," said the captain. "We will haul up for her. Starboard the helm, Windy. Get a pull at the fore and mainsheets."

The savages had probably not seen the stranger, or perhaps they wanted to overtake the schooner, before she could get within signalling distance. The ship was a large one, and under all sail. With the freshening breeze she came on rapidly. A shot was now fired from the leading canoe, another and another followed. The ladies who were on deck were hurried below. Loftus and Ivyleaf were about to discharge their fowling-pieces in return. "Don't fire, my friends," said Mr Paget. "It will be useless. Let us rather trust to the protection of Heaven. When the savages discover that yonder ship is a man-of-war, as I have no doubt they soon will, they will give up the pursuit."

In another minute his words proved true. The canoes were seen to stop, then to sweep round, and to paddle back again at full speed towards the land.

Willy intently watched the ship as she approached. He rubbed his eyes again and again. "What is the matter?" asked Charles, seeing him almost gasping for breath.

"Why, Charles," he exclaimed, "she is the 'Ranger.' Yes, I am as sure of it almost as I am of my own existence."

In a short time the "Young Crusader" was hove to, and the boat, with Willy and Peter Patch in her, was pulling towards the ship, which, it being seen that the schooner wished to speak her, was also brought to the wind. The two midshipmen quickly scrambled up the side. On the quarterdeck stood Commander Newcombe, with Mr Tobin, the first-lieutenant, and several of the other officers.

"Come on board," said Willy and Peter, going aft, and touching their hats.

"What! are you the midshipmen I thought lost, with so many other poor people?" exclaimed the captain, starting back with astonishment, and then holding out his hands towards them. "Yes, I am surely not mistaken; and have the rest, too, escaped?"

"Yes, sir; Mrs and the Miss Morleys, Harry Shafto, Mrs Rumbelow, and the boatswain are all safe, though they would be very glad if you would run down to the Auckland Islands, where we left them a fortnight ago, and take them away. They are very hard up for food, I am afraid, and it is not the pleasantest of countries to live in."

Willy and his companions received the warmest congratulations from all the officers; and the news soon ran round the ship that those whom they supposed had long been numbered with the dead were still alive and well.

"It will do the sergeant's heart good when he hears that that first-rate wife of his is all right and well," observed the quarter-master, who was one of the first to catch the news.

Willy and Peter felt great satisfaction on hearing that Colonel Morley, with his regiment, was at New Zealand, and

though grieving at the supposed loss of his wife and daughters, had been greatly supported in his affliction, and enabled to perform his duty like a true soldier.

“But how, sir, did the ‘Ranger’ escape?” asked Willy. “We thought we saw her go down.”

“She was well-nigh doing so, my lad,” answered Commander Newcombe; “but by the courage and perseverance of the men, through God’s mercy, she was kept afloat till we could get an additional sail under her bottom, when, as we steered to the northward, we fell in with a ship which towed us to the Mauritius. There the ship being repaired, we were sent on to New Zealand to land the troops. So confident were all on board that the boats had gone down, it was at first deemed hopeless to look for you. At length, however, from the representations of Colonel Morley, I was despatched to visit the islands at which you might possibly have touched, on the merest chance of gaining some tidings of your fate.”

As soon as the commander heard of the requirements of the schooner, he sent a supply of provisions and water on board. The “Young Crusader” then steered for Auckland, near which Colonel Morley was stationed, to convey to him the glad tidings of the safety of his wife and daughters, while the “Ranger” proceeded to the Auckland Islands. She quickly arrived at Charnley Sound, and brought up in the deep bay near its entrance, on the north side. Hence, with Willy Dicey as pilot, her boats were sent up to the inner harbour. As they approached, Willy’s heart beat high at the thought of the joyful intelligence he was bringing. The first person he met was Harry Shafto who, on seeing the boats approach, had hurried down to the bay. Harry recognised several well-known faces of his old shipmates. A few words served to tell how the “Ranger” had escaped. The two friends hurried to communicate the intelligence to Mrs Morley and her daughters. On their way they met Mrs Rumbelow, who had seen the arrival of the boats. She, too, had recognised the faces of their crews. Willy took her hand, and shook it warmly.

“Happy news, Mrs Rumbelow,” he exclaimed; “the sergeant is alive and well. I heard of him on board; and I hope in a few days you will see him in New Zealand.”

“You are a good angel, Mr Dicey, to bring me such tidings,” she exclaimed, putting her arms round his neck, and bursting into tears. “My good brave husband! I’ll never forget who it was that told me I should meet him again down here on earth, for I felt sure we should be joined up aloft there.” And the strong-minded energetic woman, who had held out so bravely, never allowing a tear or complaint to escape, sobbed for very joy.

They found Mrs Morley, with Fanny and Emma, just leaving their cottage. “God has indeed been merciful to me,” were the only words Mrs Morley could utter. Fanny unconsciously gave Harry Shafto her hand. “How my dear father will thank you for all the care you have taken of us,” she said. “We can never sufficiently show our gratitude.” Harry kept the hand thus offered him. What Harry said in return it is not necessary to repeat.

As there was but little property to carry away, in a few minutes every individual was ready to embark. Harry Shafto was the last person to leave the shore. The boats, laden with passengers, pulled down the harbour. The sea was smooth, and without accident they, before nightfall, got alongside the “Ranger.”

A bright moon enabled them to put to sea that night, and, the weather continuing unusually fine, within a week they landed in New Zealand.

Harry Shafto gained his well-earned promotion, and in two years became a commander and the husband of Fanny Morley.

A remittance sent out by Mr Nicholas Steady, when he heard of the loss which the Diceys had suffered from the wreck of the “Crusader,” enabled Charles to commence his career as an emigrant. His nearest neighbour was Mr Paget, who, it surprised few to hear, became the husband of his sister Emily. Sergeant Rumbelow got his discharge, and he and his wife settled near them; while Mrs Clagget, who took up her abode with her relatives in the town, paid them frequent visits, and never failed to tell all the news of the place, which she detailed with her accustomed volubility. Charles won the heart of Emma Morley, and, when his sister May married Tom Loftus, she became the mistress of his house. Dr Davis settled in their neighbourhood, and was a very constant visitor at the houses of his old friends, not only in cases of sickness, which were rare, but on all festive and other interesting occasions.

Little Bessy, left an orphan, was adopted by Sergeant and Mrs Rumbelow, and, growing up a good, steady girl, married young Broke, who, become a warrant officer, found his way at length to New Zealand, where he ultimately settled.

Willy Dicey is now a post-captain, and Harry Shafto, though still young, an admiral. Ensign Holt sold out of the army, and forming a partnership with Peter Patch, who had got tired of a seafaring life, they became successful settlers at no great distance from their former friends.

The old “Ranger” has long since been laid up in ordinary, and the “Young Crusader,” under the command of Bill Windy, to whom Captain Westerway presented her, traded for many years between the settlements and Australia, till she had gained a comfortable fortune for her owner, who at length settled on shore near the friends his courage and kind heart had gained for him.

The former passengers of the two ships often met at the gatherings of the settlements; and a new generation, which sprang up in their midst, delighted to hear them recount the adventures they met with during their voyages in the “Ranger” and “Crusader.”

The End.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE VOYAGES OF THE "RANGER" AND "CRUSADER" ***

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