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Captain Mayne Reid

"The Land of Fire"

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## Preface.

This tale is the last from the pen of Captain Mayne Reid, whose stories have so long been the delight of English boys. Our readers may, perhaps, like to know something of the writer who has given them so much pleasure; especially as his own life was full of adventure and of brave deeds.

Mayne Reid was born in the north of Ireland in 1819; his father was a Presbyterian minister, and wished that his son should also be a clergyman; but the boy longed for adventure, and to see the world in its wildest places, and could not bring himself to settle down to a quiet life at home.

When he was twenty years old he set out on his travels, and, landing at New Orleans, began a life of adventure in the prairies and forests of America—good descriptions of which were given by him in his books.

In 1845 a war broke out between the United States and Mexico, and young Reid instantly volunteered his services to fight on the United States' side.

He received the commission of lieutenant in a New York regiment, and fought all through the campaign with the most dauntless courage. He received several wounds, and gained a high reputation for generous good feeling.

The castle of Chapultepec commanded the high road to the city of Mexico, and as it was *very* strongly defended, and the Mexicans had thirty thousand soldiers to the American six thousand, to take it was a work requiring great courage.

Reid was guarding a battery which the Americans had thrown up on the south-east side of the castle, with a grenadier company of New York volunteers and a detachment of United States' marines under his command. From thence he cannonaded the main gate for a whole day. The following morning a storming party was formed of five hundred volunteers, and at eleven o'clock the batteries ceased firing, and the attack began.

Reid and the artillery officers, standing by their guns, watched with great anxiety the advance of the line, and were alarmed when they saw that half-way up the hill there was a halt.

"I knew," he said in his account, "that if Chapultepec was not taken, neither would the city be; and, failing that, not a man of us might ever leave the Valley of Mexico alive." He instantly asked leave of the senior engineering officer to join the storming-party with his grenadiers and marines. The officer gave it, and Reid and his men at once started at a swift run, and came up with the storming-party under the brow of the hill, where it had halted to wait for scaling ladders.

The fire from the castle was constant, and very fatal. The men faltered, and several officers were wounded while urging them on. Suddenly Reid, conspicuous by his brilliant uniform, sprang to his feet, and shouted, "Men, if we don't take Chapultepec, the American army is lost. Let us charge up the walls!"

The soldiers answered, "We are ready."

At that moment the three guns on the parapet fired simultaneously. There would be a moment's interval while they reloaded. Reid seized that interval, and crying "Come on," leaped over the scarp, and rushed up to the very walls. Half-way up he saw that the parapet was crowded with Mexican gunners, just about to discharge their guns. He threw himself on his face, and thus received only a slight wound on his sword hand, while another shot cut his clothes.

Instantly on his feet again, he made for the wall, but in front of it he was struck down by a Mexican bullet tearing through his thigh.

There Lieutenant Cochrane, of the Voltigeurs, saw him as he advanced to the walls. Reid raised himself, and sang out, entreating the men to stand firm.

“Don’t leave the wall,” he cried, “or we shall be cut to pieces. Hold on, and the castle is ours.”

“There is no danger of our leaving it, captain,” said Cochrane; “never fear!”

Then the scaling ladders were brought, the rush was made, and the castle taken. But Reid had been *the very first man under its walls*.

When the war was over, Captain Reid resigned his commission in the American army, and organised a body of men in New York to go and fight for the Hungarians, but news reached him in Paris that the Hungarian insurrection was ended, so he returned to England.

Here he settled down to literary work, publishing “The Scalp Hunters,” and many wonderful stories of adventure and peril.

The great African explorer, the good Dr Livingstone, said in the last letter he ever wrote, “Captain Mayne Reid’s boys’ books are the stuff to make travellers.”

Captain Mayne Reid died on the twenty-first of October, 1883, and the “Land of Fire” is his unconscious last legacy to the boys of Great Britain, and to all others who speak the English language.

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## Chapter One.

### “The Sea! The Sea! The Open Sea!”

One of the most interesting of English highways is the old coach road from London to Portsmouth. Its interest is in part due to the charming scenery through which it runs, but as much to memories of a bygone time. One travelling this road at the present day might well deem it lonely, as there will be met on it only the liveried equipage of some local magnate, the more unpretentious turn-out of country doctor or parson, with here and there a lumbering farm waggon, or the farmer himself in his smart two-wheeled “trap,” on the way to a neighbouring market.

How different it was half a century ago, when along this same highway fifty four-horse stages were “tooled” to and fro from England’s metropolis to her chief seaport town, top-heavy with fares—often a noisy crowd of jovial Jack tars, just off a cruise and making Londonward, or with faces set for Portsmouth, once more to breast the billows and brave the dangers of the deep! Many a naval officer of name and fame historic, such as the Rodneys, Cochranes, Collingwoods, and Codringtons,—even Nile’s hero himself,—has been whirled along this old highway.

All that is over now, and long has been. To-day the iron horse, with its rattling train, carries such travellers by a different route—the screech of its whistle being just audible to wayfarers on the old road, as in mockery of their crawling pace. Of its ancient glories there remain only the splendid causeway, still kept in repair, and the inns encountered at short distances apart, many of them once grand hostelries. They, however, are not in repair; instead, altogether out of it. Their walls are cracked and crumbling to ruins, the ample courtyards are grass-grown and the stables empty, or occupied only by half a dozen clumsy cart-horses; while of human kind moving around will be a lout or two in smock-frocks, where gaudily-dressed postillions, booted and spurred, with natty ostlers in sleeve-waistcoats, tight-fitting breeches, and gaiters, once ruled the roast.

Among other ancient landmarks on this now little-used highway is one of dark and tragic import. Beyond the town of Petersfield, going southward, the road winds up a long steep ridge of chalk formation—the “South Downs,” which have given their name to the celebrated breed of sheep. Near the summit is a crater-like depression, several hundred feet in depth, around whose rim the causeway is carried—a dark and dismal hole, so weird of aspect as to have earned for it the appellation of the “Devil’s Punch Bowl.” Human agency has further contributed to the appropriateness of the title. By the side of the road, just where it turns around the upper edge of the hollow, is a monolithic monument, recording the tragic fate of a sailor who was there murdered and his dead body flung into the “Bowl.” The inscription further states that justice overtook his murderers, who were hanged on the selfsame spot, the scene of their crime. The obelisk of stone, with its long record, occupying the place where stood the gallows-tree.

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It is a morning in the month of June; the hour a little after daybreak. A white fog is over the land of South Hampshire—so white that it might be taken for snow. The resemblance is increased by the fact of its being but a layer, so low that the crests of the hills and tree-tops of copses appear as islets in the ocean, with shores well defined, though constantly shifting. For, in truth, it is the effect of a mirage, a phenomenon aught but rare in the region of the South Downs.

The youth who is wending his way up the slope leading to the Devil’s Punch Bowl takes no note of this illusion of nature. But he is not unobservant of the fog itself; indeed, he seems pleased at having it around him, as though it afforded concealment from pursuers. Some evidence of this might be gathered from his now and then casting suspicious glances rearward, and at intervals stopping to listen. Neither seeing nor hearing anything, however, he continues up the hill in a brisk walk, though apparently weary. That he is tired can be told by his sitting down on a bank by the roadside as soon as he reaches the summit, evidently to rest himself. What he carries could not be the cause of his fatigue—only a small bundle done up in a silk handkerchief. More likely it comes from his tramp along the hard road, the thick dust over his clothes showing that it had been a long one.

Now, high up the ridge, where the fog is but a thin film, the solitary wayfarer can be better observed, and a glance at

his face forbids all thought of his being a runaway from justice. Its expression is open, frank, and manly; whatever of fear there is in it certainly cannot be due to any consciousness of crime. It is a handsome face, moreover, framed in a profusion of blonde hair, which falls curling down cheeks of ruddy hue. An air of rusticity in the cut of his clothes would bespeak him country bred, probably the son of a farmer. And just that he is, his father being a yeoman-farmer near Godalming, some thirty miles back along the road. Why the youth is so far from home at this early hour, and afoot—why those uneasy glances over the shoulder, as if he were an escaping convict—may be gathered from some words of soliloquy half-spoken aloud by him, while resting on the bank:

“I hope they won’t miss me before breakfast-time. By then I ought to be in Portsmouth, and if I’ve the luck to get apprenticed on board a ship, I’ll take precious good care not to show myself on shore till she’s off. But surely father won’t think of following this way—not a bit of it. The old bailiff will tell him what I said about going to London, and that’ll throw him off the scent completely.”

The smile that accompanied the last words is replaced by a graver look, with a touch of sadness in the tone of his voice as he continues:

“Poor dear mother, and sis Em’ly! It’ll go hard with them for a bit, grieving. But they’ll soon get over it. ‘Tisn’t like I was leaving them never to come back. Besides, won’t I write mother a letter soon as I’m sure of getting safe off?”

A short interval of silent reflection, and then follow words of a self-justifying nature:

“How could I help it? Father would insist on my being a farmer, though he knows how I hate it. One clodhopper in the family’s quite enough; and brother Dick’s the man for that. As the song says, ‘Let me go a-ploughing the sea.’ Yes, though I should never rise above being a common sailor. Who’s happier than the jolly Jack tar? He sees the world, any way, which is better than to live all one’s life, with head down, delving ditches. But a common sailor—no! Maybe I’ll come home in three or four years with gold buttons on my jacket and a glittering band around the rim of my cap. Ay, and with pockets full of gold coin! Who knows? Then won’t mother be proud of me, and little Em too?”

By this time the uprisen sun has dispelled the last lingering threads of mist, and Henry Chester (such is the youth’s name) perceives, for the first time, that he has been sitting beside a tall column of stone. As the memorial tablet is right before his eyes, and he reads the inscription on it, again comes a shadow over his countenance. May not the fate of that unfortunate sailor be a forecast of his own? Why should it be revealed to him just then? Is it a warning of what is before him, with reproach for his treachery to those left behind? Probably, at that very moment, an angry father, a mother and sister in tears, all on his account!

For a time he stands hesitating; in his mind a conflict of emotions—a struggle between filial affection and selfish desire. Thus wavering, a word would decide him to turn back for Godalming and home. But there is no one to speak that word, while the next wave of thought surging upward brings vividly before him the sea with all its wonders—a vision too bright, too fascinating, to be resisted by a boy, especially one brought up on a farm. So he no longer hesitates, but, picking up his bundle, strides on toward Portsmouth.

A few hundred paces farther up, and he is on the summit of the ridge, there to behold the belt of low-lying Hampshire coastland, and beyond it the sea itself, like a sheet of blue glass, spreading out till met by the lighter blue of the sky. It is his first look upon the ocean, but not the last; it can surely now claim him for its own.

Soon after an incident occurs to strengthen him in the resolve he has taken. At the southern base of the “Downs,” lying alongside the road, is the park and mansion of Horndean. Passing its lodge-gate, he has the curiosity to ask who is the owner of such a grand place, and gets for answer, “Admiral Sir Charles Napier.” (See Note 1.)

“Might not / some day be an admiral?” self-interrogates Henry Chester, the thought sending lightness to his heart and quickening his steps in the direction of Portsmouth.

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Note 1. The Sir Charles Napier known to history as the “hero of Saint Jean d’Acre,” but better known to sailors in the British navy as “Old Sharpen Your Cutlasses!” This quaint soubriquet he obtained from an order issued by him when he commanded a fleet in the Baltic, anticipating an engagement with the Russians.

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## **Chapter Two.**

### **The Star-Spangled Banner.**

The clocks of Portsmouth are striking nine as the yeoman-farmer’s son enters the suburbs of the famous seaport. He lingers not there, but presses on to where he may find the ships—“by the Hard, Portsea,” as he learns on inquiry. Presently a long street opens before him, at whose farther end he descries a forest of masts, with their network of spars and rigging, like the web of a gigantic spider. Ship he has never seen before, save in pictures or miniature models; but either were enough for their identification, and the youth knows he is now looking with waking eyes at what has so often appeared to him in dreams.

Hastening on, he sees scores of vessels lying at anchor off the Hard, their boats coming and going. But they are men-of-war, he is told, and not the sort for him. Notwithstanding his ambitious hope of one day becoming a naval hero, he does not quite relish the idea of being a common sailor—at least on a man-of-war. It were too like enlisting in the army to serve as a private soldier—a thing not to be thought of by the son of a yeoman-farmer. Besides, he has heard of harsh discipline on war-vessels, and that the navy tar, when in a foreign port, is permitted to see little more of the country than may be viewed over the rail or from the rigging of his ship. A merchantman is the craft he inclines to—at least, to make a beginning with—especially one that trades from port to port, visiting many lands; for, in truth,

his leaning toward a sea life has much to do with a desire to see the world and its wonders. Above all, would a whaler be to his fancy, as among the most interesting books of his reading have been some that described the "Chase of Leviathan," and he longs to take a part in it.

But Portsmouth is not the place for whaling vessels, not one such being there.

For the merchantmen he is directed to their special harbour, and proceeding thither he finds several lying alongside the wharves, some taking in cargo, some discharging it, with two or three fully freighted and ready to set sail. These last claim his attention first, and, screwing up courage, he boards one, and asks if he may speak with her captain.

The captain being pointed out to him, he modestly and somewhat timidly makes known his wishes. But he meets only with an offhand denial, couched in words of scant courtesy.

Disconcerted, though not at all discouraged, he tries another ship; but with *no* better success. Then another, and another with like result, until he has boarded nearly every vessel in the harbour having a gangway-plank out. Some of the skippers receive him even rudely, and one almost brutally, saying, "We don't want landlubbers on this craft. So cut ashore—quick!"

Henry Chester's hopes, high-tide at noon, ere night are down to lowest ebb, and, greatly humiliated, he almost wishes himself back on the old farmstead by Godalming. He is even again considering whether it would not be better to give it up and go back, when his eyes chance to stray to a flag on whose corner is a cluster of stars on a blue ground, with a field of red and white bands alternating. It droops over the taffrail of a barque of some six hundred tons burden, and below it, on her stern, is lettered the *Calypso*. During his perambulations to and fro he has more than once passed this vessel, but the ensign not being English, he did not think of boarding her. Refused by so many skippers of his own country, what chance would there be for him with one of a foreign vessel? None whatever, reasoned he. But now, more intelligently reflecting, he bethinks him that the barque, after all, is not so much a foreigner, a passer-by having told him she is American—or "Yankee," as it was put—and the flag she displays is the famed "Star-spangled Banner."

"Well," mutters the runaway to himself, "I'll make one more try. If this one, too, refuses me, things will be no worse, and then—then—home, I suppose."

Saying which, he walks resolutely up the sloping plank and steps on board the barque, to repeat there the question he has already asked that day for the twentieth time—"Can I speak with the captain?"

"I guess not," answers he to whom it is addressed, a slim youth who stands leaning against the companion. "Leastways, not now, 'cause he's not on board. What might you be wantin', mister? Maybe I can fix it for you."

Though the words are encouraging and the tone kindly, Henry Chester has little hopes that he can, the speaker being but a boy himself. Still, he speaks in a tone of authority, and though in sailor garb, it is not that of a common deck hand.

He is in his shirt-sleeves, the day being warm; but the shirt is of fine linen, ruffled at the breast, and gold-studded, while a costly Panama hat shades his somewhat sallow face from the sun. Besides, he is on the quarter-deck, seeming at home there.

Noting these details, the applicant takes heart to tell again his oft-told tale, and await the rejoinder.

"Well," responds the young American, "I'm sorry I can't give you an answer about that, the cap'n, as I told you, not being aboard. He's gone ashore on some Custom House business. But, if you like, you can come again and see him."

"I would like it much; when might I come?"

"Well, he might be back any minute. Still, it's uncertain, and you'd better make it to-morrow morning; you'll be sure to find him on board up till noon, anyhow."

Though country born and bred, Henry Chester was too well-mannered to prolong the interview, especially after receiving such courteous treatment, the first shown him that day. So, bowing thanks as well as speaking them, he returns to the wharf. But, still under the influence of gratitude, he glances back over the barque's counter, to see on her quarter-deck what intensifies his desire to become one of her crew. A fair vision it is—a slip of a girl, sweet-faced and of graceful form, who has just come out of the cabin and joined the youth, to all appearance asking some question about Chester himself, as her eyes are turned shoreward after him. At the same time a middle-aged ladylike woman shows herself at the head of the companion-ladder, and seems interested in him also.

"The woman must be the captain's wife and the girl his daughter," surmises the English youth, and correctly. "But I never knew that ladies lived on board ships, as they seem to be doing. An American fashion, I suppose. How different from all the other vessels I've visited! Come back to-morrow morning? No, not a bit of it. I'll hang about here, and wait the captain's return. That will I, if it be till midnight."

So resolving, he looks around for a place where he may rest himself. After his thirty miles' trudge along the king's highway, with quite ten more back and forth on the wharves, to say nought of the many ships boarded, he needs rest badly. A pile of timber here, with some loose planks alongside it, offers the thing he is in search of; and on the latter he seats himself, leaning his back against the boards in such a position as to be screened from the sight of those on the barque, while he himself commands a view of the approaches to her gangway-plank.

For a time he keeps intently on the watch, wondering what sort of man the *Calypso's* captain may be, and whether he will recognise him amidst the moving throng. Not likely, since most of those passing by are men of the sea, as

their garb betokens. There are sailors in blue jackets and trousers that are tight at the hip and loose around the ankles, with straw-plaited or glazed hats, bright-ribboned, and set far back on the head; other seamen in heavy pilot-cloth coats and sou'-westers; still others wearing Guernsey frocks and worsted caps, with long points drooping down over their ears. Now, a staid naval officer passes along in gold-laced uniform, and sword slung in black leathern belt; now, a party of rollicking midshipmen, full of romp and mischief.

Not all who pass him are English: there are men loosely robed and wearing turbans, whom he takes to be Turks or Egyptians, which they are; others, also of Oriental aspect, in red caps with blue silk tassels—the fez. In short, he sees sailors of all nations and colours, from the blonde-complexioned Swede and Norwegian to the almost jet-black negro from Africa.

But while endeavouring to guess the different nationalities, a group at length presents itself which puzzles him. It is composed of three individuals—a man, boy, and girl, their respective ages being about twenty-five, fifteen, and ten. The oldest—the man—is not much above five feet in height, the other two short in proportion. All three, however, are stout-bodied, broad-shouldered, and with heads of goodly size, the short slender legs alone giving them a squat diminutive look. Their complexion is that of old mahogany; hair straight as needles, coarse as bristles, and crow-black; eyes of jet, obliqued to the line of the nose, thin at the bridge, and depressed, while widely dilated at the nostrils; low foreheads and retreating chins—such are the features of this singular trio. The man's face is somewhat forbidding, the boy's less so, while the countenance of the girl has a pleasing expression—or, at least, a picturesqueness such as is commonly associated with gipsies. What chiefly attracts Henry Chester to them, however, while still further perplexing him as to their nationality, is that all three are attired in the ordinary way as other well-dressed people in the streets of Portsmouth. The man and boy wear broadcloth coats, tall "chimney-pot" hats, and polished boots; white linen shirts, too, with standing collars and silk neckties, the boy somewhat foppishly twirling a light cane he carries in his kid-gloved hand. The girl is dressed neatly and becomingly in a gown of cotton print, with a bright coloured scarf over her shoulders and a bonnet on her head, her only adornment being a necklace of imitation pearls and a ring or two on her fingers.

Henry Chester might not have taken such particular notice of them, but that, when opposite him, they came to a stand, though not on his account. What halts them is the sight of the starred and striped flag on the *Calypso*, which is evidently nothing new to them, however rare a visitor in the harbour of Portsmouth. A circumstance that further surprises Henry is to hear them converse about it in his own tongue.

"Look, Ocushlu!" exclaims the man, addressing the girl, "that the same flag we often see in our own country on sealing ships."

"Indeed so—just same. You see, Orundelico?"

"Oh, yes!" responds the boy, with a careless toss of head and wave of the cane, as much as to say, "What matters it?"

"'Merican ship," further observes the man. "They speak Inglis, same as people here."

"Yes, Eleparu," rejoins the boy, "that true; but they different from Inglismen—not always friends; sometimes they enemies and fight. Sailors tell me that when we were in the big war-ship."

"Well, it no business of ours," returns Eleparu. "Come 'long." Saying which he leads off, the others following, all three at intervals uttering ejaculations of delighted wonder as objects novel and unknown come before their eyes.

Equally wonders the English youth as to who and what they may be. Such queer specimens of humanity! But not long does he ponder upon it. Up all the night preceding and through all that day, with his mind constantly on the rack, his tired frame at length succumbs, and he falls asleep.

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## Chapter Three.

### Portsmouth Mud-Larks.

The Hampshire youth sleeps soundly, dreaming of a ship manned by women, with a pretty childlike girl among the crew. But he seems scarcely to have closed his eyes before he is awakened by a clamour of voices, scolding and laughing in jarring contrast. Rubbing his eyes and looking about him, he sees the cause of the strange disturbance, which proceeds from some ragged boys, of the class commonly termed "wharf-rats" or "mud-larks." Nearly a dozen are gathered together, and it is they who laugh; the angry voices come from others, around whom they have formed a ring and whom they are "badgering."

Springing upon his feet, he hurries toward the scene of contention, or whatever it may be, not from curiosity, but impelled by a more generous motive—a suspicion that there is foul play going on. For among the mud-larks he recognises one who, early in the day, offered insult to himself, calling him a "country yokel." Having other fish to fry, he did not at the time resent it; but now he will see.

Arriving at the spot, he sees, what he has already dimly suspected, that the mud-larks' victims are the three odd individuals who lately stopped in front of him. But it is not they who are most angry; instead, they are giving the "rats" change in kind, returning their "chaff," and even getting the better of them, so much so that some of their would-be tormentors have quite lost their tempers. One is already furious—a big hulking fellow, their leader and instigator, and the same who had cried, "country yokel." As it chanced, he is afflicted with an impediment of speech, in fact, stutters badly, making all sorts of twitching grimaces in the endeavour to speak correctly. Taking advantage of this, the boy Orundelico—"blackamoor," as he is being called—has so turned the tables on him by successful

mimicry of his speech as to elicit loud laughter from a party of sailors loitering near. This brings on a climax, the incensed bully, finally losing all restraint of himself, making a dash at his diminutive mocker, and felling him to the pavement with a vindictive blow.

"Tit-it-it-take that, ye ugly mim-m-monkey!" is its accompaniment in speech as spiteful as defective.

The girl sends up a shriek, crying out:

"Oh, Eleparu! Orundelico killed! He dead!"

"No, not dead," answers the boy, instantly on his feet again like a rebounding ball, and apparently but little injured. "He take me foul. Let him try once more. Come on, big brute!"

And the pigmy places himself in a defiant attitude, fronting an adversary nearly twice his own size.

"Stan' side!" shouts Eleparu, interposing. "Let me go at him!"

"Neither of you!" puts in a new and resolute voice, that of Henry Chester, who, pushing both aside, stands face to face with the aggressor, fists hard shut, and eyes flashing anger. "Now, you ruffian," he adds, "I'm your man."

"Wh-wh-who are yi-yi-you? an' wh-wh-what's it your bi-bib-business?"

"No matter who I am; but it's my business to make you repent that cowardly blow. Come on and get your punishment!"

And he advances towards the stammerer, who has shrunk back.

This unlooked-for interference puts an end to the fun-making of the mud-larks, all of whom are now highly incensed, for in their new adversary they recognise a lad of country raising—not a town boy—which of itself challenges their antagonistic instincts.

On these they are about to act, one crying out, "Let's pitch into the yokel and gie him a good trouncin'!" a second adding, "Hang his imperence!" while a third counsels teaching him "Portsmouth manners."

Such a lesson he seems likely to receive, and it would probably have fared hardly with our young hero but for the sudden appearance on the scene of another figure—a young fellow in shirt-sleeves and wearing a Panama hat—he of the *Calypso*.

"Thunder and lightning!" he exclaimed, coming on with a rush. "What's the rumpus about? Ha! a fisticuff fight, with odds—five to one! Well, Ned Gancy ain't going to stand by an' look on at that; he pitches in with the minority."

And so saying, the young American placed himself in a pugilistic attitude by the side of Henry Chester.

This accession of strength to the assailed party put a different face on the matter, the assailants evidently being cowed, despite their superiority of numbers. They know their newest adversary to be an American, and at sight of the two intrepid-looking youths standing side by side, with the angry faces of Eleparu and Orundelico in the background, they become sullenly silent, most of them evidently inclined to steal away from the ground.

The affair seemed likely thus to end, when, to the surprise of all, Eleparu, hitherto held back by the girl, suddenly released himself and bounded forward, with hands and arms wide open. In another instant he had grasped the big bully in a tiger-like embrace, lifted him off his feet, and dashed him down upon the flags with a violence that threatened the breaking of every bone in his body.

Nor did his implacable little adversary, who seemed possessed of a giant's strength, appear satisfied with this, for he afterwards sprang on top of him, with a paving-stone in his uplifted hands.

The affair might have terminated tragically had not the uplifted hand been caught by Henry Chester. While he was still holding it, a man came up, who brought the conflict to an abrupt close by seizing Eleparu's collar, and dragging him off his prostrate foe.

"Ho! what's this?" demands the newcomer, in a loud authoritative voice. "Why, York! Jemmy! Fuegia! what are you all doing here? You should have stayed on board the steamship, as I told you to do. Go back to her at once."

By this time the mud-larks have scuttled off, the big one, who had recovered his feet, making after them, and all speedily disappearing. The three gipsy-looking creatures go too, leaving their protectors, Henry Chester and Ned Gancy, to explain things to him who has caused the stampede. He is an officer in uniform, wearing insignia which proclaim him a captain in the Royal Navy; and as he already more than half comprehends the situation, a few words suffice to make it all clear to him, when, thanking the two youths for their generous and courageous interference in behalf of his *protégés*, as he styles the odd trio whose part they had taken, he bows a courteous farewell, and continues his interrupted walk along the Hard.

"Guess you didn't get much sleep," observes the young American, with a knowing smile, to Henry Chester.

"Who told you I was asleep?" replies the latter in some surprise.

"Who? Nobody."

"How came you to know it, then?"

"How? Wasn't I up in the maintop, and didn't I see everything you did? And you behaved particularly well, I must say. But come! Let's aboard. The captain has come back. He's my father, and maybe we can find a berth for you on the *Calypso*. Come along!"

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That night Henry Chester eats supper at the *Calypso's* cabin table, by invitation of the captain's son, sleeps on board, and, better still, has his name entered on her books as an apprentice.

And he finds her just the sort of craft he was desirous to go to sea in—a general trader, bound for the Oriental Archipelago and the isles of the Pacific Ocean. To crown all, she has completed her cargo and is ready to put to sea.

Sail she does, early the next day, barely leaving him time to keep that promise, made by the Devil's Punch Bowl, of writing to his mother.

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## Chapter Four.

### Off the "Furies."

A ship tempest-tossed, labouring amid the surges of an angry sea; her crew on the alert, doing their utmost to keep her off a lee-shore. And such a shore! None more dangerous on all ocean's edge; for it is the west coast of Tierra del Fuego, abreast the Fury Isles and that long belt of seething breakers known to mariners as the "Milky Way," the same of which the great naturalist, Darwin, has said: "One sight of such a coast is enough to make a landsman dream for a week about shipwreck, peril, and death."

There is no landsman in the ship now exposed to its dangers. All on board are familiar with the sea—have spent years upon it. Yet is there fear in their hearts and pallor on their cheeks, as their eyes turn to that belt of white frothy water between them and the land, trending north and south beyond the range of vision.

Technically speaking, the endangered vessel is not a ship, but a barque, as betokened by the fore-and-aft rig of her mizenmast. Nor is she of large dimensions; only some six or seven hundred tons. But the reader knows this already, or will, after learning her name. As her stern swings up on the billow, there can be read upon it the *Calypso*; and she is that *Calypso* in which Henry Chester sailed out of Portsmouth Harbour to make his first acquaintance with a sea life.

Though nearly four years have elapsed since then, he is still on board of her. There stands he by the binnacle. No more a boy, but a young man, and in a garb that bespeaks him of the quarter-deck—not before the mast, for he is now the *Calypso's* third officer. And her second is not far-off; he is the generous youth who was the means of getting him the berth. Also grown to manhood, he, too, is aft, lending a hand at the helm, the strength of one man being insufficient to keep it steady in that heavily rolling sea. On the poop-deck is Captain Gancy himself, consulting a small chart, and filled with anxiety as at intervals looking towards the companion-ladder he there sees his wife and daughter, for he knows his vessel to be in danger and his dear ones as well.

A glance at the barque reveals that she has been on a long voyage. Her paint is faded, her sails patched, and there is rust along the chains and around the hawse-holes. She might be mistaken for a whaler coming off a four years' cruise. And nearly that length of time has she been cruising, but not after whales. Her cargo, a full one, consists of sandal-wood, spices, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, and real pearls also—in short, a miscellaneous assortment of the commodities obtained by traffic in the islands and around the coasts of the great South Sea.

Her last call has been at Honolulu Harbour in the Sandwich Isles, and she is now homeward-bound for New York around the Horn. A succession of westerly winds, or rather continuation of them, has forced her too far on to the Fuegian coast, too near the Furies; and now tossed about on a billowy sea, with the breakers of the Milky Way in sight to leeward, no wonder that her crew are apprehensive for their safety.

Still, perilous as their situation, they might not so much regard it were the *Calypso* sound and in sailing trim. Unfortunately she is far from this, having a damaged rudder, and with both courses torn to shreds. She is lying-to under storm fore-staysail and close-reefed try-sails, wearing at intervals, whenever it can be done with advantage, to keep her away from those "white horses" a-lee. But even under the diminished spread of canvas the barque is distressed beyond what she can bear, and Captain Gancy is about to order a further reduction of canvas, when, looking westward—in which direction he has been all along anxiously on the watch—he sees what sends a shiver through his frame: three huge rollers, whose height and steepness tell him the *Calypso* is about to be tried to the very utmost of her strength. Good sea-boat though he knows her to be, he knows also that a crisis is near. There is but time for him to utter a warning shout ere the first roller comes surging upon them. By a lucky chance the barque, having good steerage-way, meets and rises over it unharmed. But her way being now checked, the second roller deadens it completely, and she is thrown off the wind. The third then taking her right abeam, she careens over so far that the whole of her lee-bulwark, from cat-head to stern-davit, is ducked under water.

It is a moment of doubt, with fear appalling—almost despair. Struck by another sea, she would surely go under; but, luckily, the third is the last of the series, and she rights herself, rolling back again like an empty cask. Then, as a steed shaking his mane after a shower, she throws the briny water off, through hawse-holes and scuppers, till her decks are clear again.

A cry of relief ascends from the crew, instinctive and simultaneous. Nor does the loss of her lee-quarter boat, dipped under and torn from the davits, hinder them from adding a triumphant hurrah, the skipper himself waving his wet tarpaulin and crying aloud:

"Well done, old *Calypso*! Boys, we may thank our stars for being on board such a seaworthy craft!"

Alas! both the feeling of triumph and security are short-lived, ending almost on the instant. Scarce has the joyous hurrah ceased reverberating along her decks, when a voice is heard calling out, in a tone very different:

"The ship's sprung a leak!—and a big one too! The water's coming into her like a sluice!"

There is a rush for the fore hatchway, whence the words of alarm proceed, the main one being battened down and covered with tarpaulin. Then a hurried descent to the "tween-decks" and an anxious peering into the hold below. True—too true! It is already half full of water, which seems mounting higher and by inches to the minute! So fancy the more frightened ones!

"Though bad enuf, 'tain't altogether so bad's that," pronounced Seagriff the carpenter, after a brief inspection. "There's a hole in the bottom for sartin'; but mebbe we kin beat it by pumpin'."

Thus encouraged, the captain bounds back on deck, calling out, "All hands to the pumps!"

There is no need to say that. All take hold and work them with a will: it is as if every one were working for his own life.

A struggle succeeds, triangular and unequal, being as two to one. For the storm still rages, needing helm and sails to be looked after, while the inflow must be kept under in the hold. A terrible conflict it is, between man's strength and the elements, but short, and alas! to end in the defeat of the former.

The *Calypso* is water-logged, will no longer obey her helm, and must surely sink.

At length, convinced of this, Captain Gancy calls out, "Boys, it's no use trying to keep her afloat. Drop the pumps, and let us take to the boats."

But taking to the boats is neither an easy nor hopeful alternative, seeming little better than that of a drowning man catching at straws. Still, though desperate, it is their only chance, and with not a moment to be wasted in irresolution. Luckily the *Calypso's* crew is a well-disciplined one, every hand on board having served in her for years. The only two boats left them—the gig and pinnace—are therefore let down to the water, without damage to either, and, by like dexterous management, everybody got safely into them. It is a quick embarkation, however—so hurried, indeed, that few effects can be taken along, only those that chance to be readiest to hand. Another moment's delay might have cost them their lives, for scarce have they taken their seats and pushed the boats clear of the ship's side, when, another sea striking her, she goes down head foremost like a lump of lead, carrying masts, spars, torn sails, and rigging—everything—along with her.

Captain Gancy groans at the sight. "My fine barque gone to the bottom of the sea, cargo and all—the gatherings of years. Hard, cruel luck!"

Mingling with his words of sorrow are cries that seem cruel too: the screams of seabirds, gannets, gulls, and the wide-winged albatross, that have been long hovering above the *Calypso*, as if knowing her to be doomed, and hoping to find a feast among the floating remnants of the wreck.

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## Chapter Five.

### The Castaways.

Not long does Captain Gancy lament the loss of his fine vessel and valuable cargo. In the face and fear of a far greater loss—his own life and the lives of his companions there is no time for vain regrets. The storm is still in full fury; the winds and the waves are as high as ever, and their boat is threatened with the fate of the barque.

The bulk of the *Calypso's* crew, with Lyons, the chief mate, have taken to the pinnace; and the skipper is in his own gig, with his wife, daughter, son, young Chester, and two others—Seagriff, the carpenter, and the cook, a negro. In all only seven persons, but enough to bring the gunwale of the little craft dangerously near the water's edge. The captain himself is in the stern-sheets, tiller-lines in hand. Mrs Gancy and her daughter crouch beside him, while the others are at the oars, in which occupation Ned and Chester occasionally pause to bale out, as showers of spray keep breaking over the boat, threatening to swamp it.

What point shall they steer for? This is a question that no one asks, nor thinks of asking as yet. Course and direction are as nothing now; all their energies are bent on keeping the boat above water. However, they naturally endeavour to remain in the company of the pinnace. But those in the larger craft, like themselves, are engaged in a life-and-death conflict with the sea, and both must fight it out in their own way, neither being able to give aid to the other. So, despite their efforts to keep near each other, the winds and waves soon separate them, and they only can catch glimpses of each other when buoyed up on the crest of a billow. When the night comes on—a night of dungeon darkness—they see each other no more.

But, dark as it is, there is still visible that which they have been long regarding with dread—the breakers known as the "Milky Way." Snow-white during the day, these terrible rock-tortured billows now gleam like a belt of liquid fire, the breakers at every crest seeming to break into veritable flames. Well for the castaways that this is the case; else how, in such obscurity, could the dangerous lee-shore be shunned? To keep off that is, for the time, the chief care of those in the gig; and all their energies are exerted in holding their craft well to windward.

By good fortune the approach of night has brought about a shifting of the wind, which has veered around to the west-



north-west, making it possible for them to “scud,” without nearer approach to the dreaded fire-like line. In their cockleshell of a boat, they know that to run before the wind is their safest plan, and so they speed on south-eastward. An ocean current setting from the north-west also helps them in this course.

Thus doubly driven, they make rapid progress, and before midnight the Milky Way is behind them and out of sight. But, though they breathe more freely, they are by no means out of danger—alone in a frail skiff on the still turbulent ocean, and groping in thick darkness, with neither moon nor star to guide them. They have no compass, that having been forgotten in their scramble out of the sinking ship. But even if they had one it would be of little assistance to them at present, as, for the time being, they have enough to do in keeping the boat baled out and above water.

At break of day matters look a little better. The storm has somewhat abated, and there is land in sight to leeward, with no visible breakers between. Still, they have a heavy swell to contend with, and an ugly cross sea.

But land to a castaway! His first thought and most anxious desire is to set foot on it. So in the case of our shipwrecked party: risking all reefs and surfs, they at once set the gig’s head shoreward.

Closing in upon the land, they perceive a high promontory on the port bow, and another on the starboard, separated by a wide reach of open water; and about half-way between these promontories and somewhat farther out lies what appears to be an island. Taking it for one, Seagriff counsels putting in there instead of running on for the more distant mainland, though that is not his real reason.

“But why should we put in upon the island?” asks the skipper. “Wouldn’t it be much better to keep on to the main?”

“No, Captain; there’s a reason agin it, the which I’ll make known to you as soon as we get safe ashore.”

Captain Gancy is aware that the late *Calypso’s* carpenter was for a long time a sealer, and in this capacity had spent more than one season in the sounds and channels of Tierra del Fuego. He knows also that the old sailor can be trusted, and so, without pressing for further explanation, he steers straight for the island.

When about half a mile from its shore, they come upon a bed of kelp (Note 1), growing so close and thick as to bar their farther advance. Were they still on board the barque, the weed would be given a wide berth, as giving warning of rocks underneath; but in the light-draught gig they have no fear of these, and with the swell still tossing them about, they might be even glad to get in among the kelp—certainly there would be but that between it and the shore. They can descry waveless water, seemingly as tranquil as a pond.

Luckily the weed-bed is not continuous, but traversed by an irregular sort of break, through which it seems practicable to make way. Into this the gig is directed, and pulled through with vigorous strokes. Five minutes afterward her keel grates upon a beach, against which, despite the tumbling swell outside, there is scarce so much as a ripple. There is no better breakwater than a bed of kelp.

The island proves to be a small one—less than a mile in diameter—rising in the centre to a rounded summit, three hundred feet above sea-level.

It is treeless, though in part overgrown with a rank vegetation, chiefly tussac-grass (Note 2), with its grand bunches of leaves, six feet in height, surrounded by plume-like flower-spikes, almost as much higher.

Little regard, however, do the castaways pay to the isle or its productions. After being so long tossed about on rough seas, in momentary peril of their lives, and eating scarcely a mouthful of food the while, they are now suffering from the pangs of hunger. On the water this was the last thing to be thought of; on land it is the first; so as soon as the boat is brought to her moorings, and they have set foot on shore, the services of Caesar the cook are called into requisition.

As yet they scarcely know what provisions they have with them, so confusedly were things flung into the gig. An examination of their stock proves that it is scant indeed: a barrel of biscuits, a ham, some corned beef, a small bag of coffee in the berry, a canister of tea, and a loaf of lump sugar, were all they had brought with them. The condition of these articles, too, is most disheartening. Much of the biscuit seems a mass of briny pulp; the beef is pickled for the second time (on this occasion with sea-water); the sugar is more than half melted; and the tea spoiled outright, from the canister not having been water-tight. The ham and coffee have received least damage; yet both will require a cleansing operation to make them fit for food.

Fortunately, some culinary utensils are found in the boat the most useful of them being a frying-pan, kettle, and coffeepot. And now for a fire!—ah, the fire!

Up to this moment no one has thought of a fire; but now needing it, they are met with the difficulty, if not impossibility, of making one. The *mere* work of kindling it were an easy enough task, the late occupant of the *Calypso’s* caboose being provided with flint, steel, and tinder. So, too, is Seagriff, who, an inveterate smoker, is never without igniting apparatus, carried in a pocket of his pilot-coat. But where are they to find firewood? There is none on the islet—not a stick, as no trees grow there; while the tussac and other plants are soaking wet, the very ground being a sodden spongy peat.

A damper as well as a disappointment this, and Captain Gancy turns to Seagriff and remarks, with some vexation, “Chips, (All ship-carpenters are called ‘Chips.’) I think ’t would have been better if we’d kept on to the main. There’s timber enough there, on either side,” he adds, after a look through his binocular. “The hills appear to be thickly wooded half-way up on the land both north and south of us.”

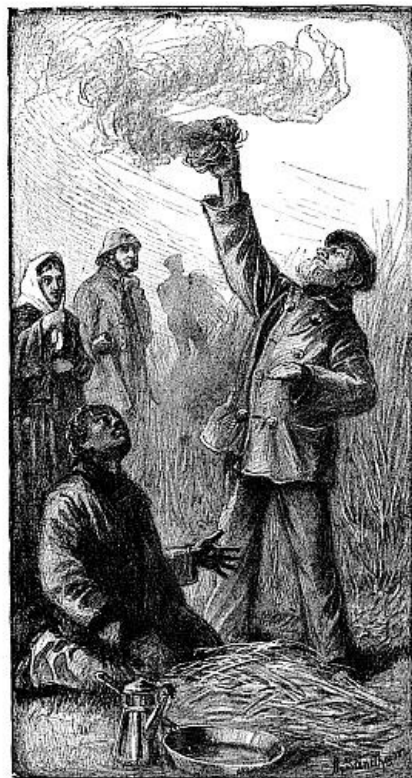
His words are manifestly intended as a reflection upon the judgment of the quondam seal-hunter, who rejoins shortly, “It would have been a deal worse, sir. Ay, worse nor if we should have to eat our vittels raw.”

"I don't comprehend you," said the skipper: "you spoke of a reason for our not making the mainland. What is it?"

"Wal, Captain, there is a reason, as I said, an' a good one. I didn't like to tell you, wi' the others listenin'." He nods toward the rest of the party, who are out of earshot, and then continues, "'Specially the women folks, as 'tain't a thing they ought to be told about."

"Do you fear some danger?" queries the skipper, in a tone of apprehension.

"Jest that; an' bad kind o' danger. As fur's I kin see, we've drifted onto a part of the Feweeegin coast where the Ailikoleeps live; the which air the worst and cruellest o' savages—some of 'em rank cannyballs! It isn't but five or six



MAKING A FIRE IN THE LAND OF FIRE.

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years since they murdered, and what's more, eat sev'ral men of a vessel that was wrecked somewhere about here. For killin' 'em, mebbe they might have had reason, seein' as there had been blame on both sides, an' some whites have behaved no better than the savages. But jest fur that, we, as are innocent, may hev to pay fur the misdeeds o' the guilty! Now, Captain, you perceive the wharfor o' my not wantin' you to land over yonder. Ef we went now, like as not we'd have a crowd o' the ugly critters yellin' around us, hungering for our flesh."

"But, if that's so," queried the captain, "shall we be any safer here?"

"Yes, we're safe enough here—'s long as the wind's blowin' as 'tis now, an' I guess it allers does blow that way, round this speck of an island. It must be all o' five mile to that land either side, an' in their rickety canoes the Feweeegins never venture fur out in anythin' o' a rough sea. I calculate, Captain, we needn't trouble ourselves much about 'em—leastways, not jest yet."

"Ay—but afterward?" murmurs Captain Gancy, in a desponding tone, as his eyes turn upon those by the boat.

"Wal, sir," says the old sealer, encouragingly, "the arterwards 'll have to take care o' itself. An' now I guess I'd better determine ef thar ain't some way o' helpin' Caesar to a spark o' fire. Don't look like it, but looks are sometimes deceivin'."

And, so saying, he strolls off among the bunches of tussac-grass, and is soon out of sight.

But it is not long before he is again making himself heard, by an exclamation, telling of some discovery—a joyful one, as evinced by the tone of his voice. The two youths hasten to his side, and find him bending over a small heath-like bush, from which he has torn a handful of branches.

"What is it, Chips?" ask both in a breath.

"The gum plant, sure," he replies.

"Well, what then? What's the good of it?" they further interrogate. "You don't suppose that green thing will burn—wet as a fish, too?"

"That's jest what I do suppose," replied the old sailor, deliberately. "You young ones wait, an' you'll see. Mebbe you'll lend a hand, an' help me to gather some of it. We want armfuls; an' there's plenty o' the plants growin' all about, you see."

They do see, and at once begin tearing at them, breaking off the branches of some, and plucking up others by the roots, till Seagriff cries, "Enough!" Then, with arms full, they return to the beach in high spirits and with joyful faces.

Arrived there, Seagriff selects some of the finest twigs, which he rubs between his hands till they are reduced to a fine fibre and nearly dry. Rolling these into a rounded shape, resembling a bird's nest, click! goes his flint and steel—a piece of "punk" is ignited and slipped into the heart of the ball. This, held on high, and kept whirling around his head, is soon ablaze, when it is thrust in among the gathered heap of green plants. Green and wet as these are, they at once catch fire and flame up like kindling-wood.

All are astonished and pleased, and not the least delighted is Caesar, who dances over the ground in high glee as he prepares to resume his vocation.

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Note 1. The *Fucus giganteus* of Solander. The stem of this remarkable seaweed, though but the thickness of a man's thumb, is often over one hundred and thirty yards in length, perhaps the longest of any known plant. It grows on every rock in Fuegian waters, from low-water mark to a depth of fifty or sixty fathoms, and among the most violent breakers. Often loose stones are raised up by it, and carried about, when the weed gets adrift. Some of these are so large and heavy that they can with difficulty be lifted into a boat. The reader will learn more of it further on.

Note 2. *Dactylis caespitosa*. The leaves of this singular grass are often eight feet in length, and an inch broad at the base, the flower-stalks being as long as the leaves. It bears much resemblance to the "pampas grass," now well known as an ornamental shrub.

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## Chapter Six.

### A Battle with Birds.

Through Caesar's skilful manipulations the sea-water is extracted from the ham, and the coffee, which is in the berry and unroasted, after a course of judicious washing and scorching, is also rendered fit for use. The biscuits also turn out better than was anticipated. So their breakfast is not so bad, after all—indeed, to appetites keen as theirs, it seems a veritable feast.

While they are enjoying it, Seagriff tells them something more about the plant which has proved of such opportune service. They learn from him that it grows in the Falkland Islands, as well as in Tierra del Fuego, and is known as the "gum plant," (*Hydrocelice gummifera*), because of a viscous substance it exudes in large quantities; this sap is called "balsam," and is used by the natives of the countries where it is found as a cure for wounds. But its most important property, in their eyes, is the ease with which it can be set on fire, even when green and growing, as above described—a matter of no slight consequence in regions that are deluged with rain five days out of every six. In the Falkland Islands, where there are no trees, the natives often roast their beef over a fire of bones, the very bones of the animal from which, but the moment before, the meat itself was stripped, and they avail themselves of the gum plant to kindle this fire.

Just as Seagriff finishes his interesting dissertation, his listeners have their attention called to a spectacle quite new to them, and somewhat comical. Near the spot where they have landed, a naked sand-bar projects into the water, and along this a number of odd-looking creatures are seen standing side by side. There are quite two hundred of them, all facing the same way, mute images of propriety and good deportment, reminding one of a row of little charity children, all in white bibs and tuckers, ranged in a row for inspection.

But very different is the behaviour of the birds—for birds they are. One or another, every now and then, raises its head aloft, and so holds it, while giving utterance to a series of cries as hoarse and long-drawn as the braying of an ass, to which sound it bears a ludicrous resemblance.

"Jackass penguins," (Note 1) Seagriff pronounces them, without waiting to be questioned; "yonder 're more of 'em," he explains, "out among the kelp, divin' after shell-fish, the which are their proper food."

The others, looking off toward the kelp, then see more of the birds. They had noticed them before, but supposed them to be fish leaping out of the water, for the penguin, on coming up after a dive, goes down again with so quick a plunge that an observer, even at short distance, may easily mistake it for a fish. Turning to those on the shore, it is now seen that numbers of them are constantly passing in among the tussac-grass and out again, their mode of progression being also very odd. Instead of a walk, hop, or run, as with other birds, it is a sort of rapid rush, in which the rudimentary wings of the birds are used as fore legs, so that, from even a slight distance, they might easily be mistaken for quadrupeds.

"It is likely they have their nests yonder," observed Mrs Gancy, pointing to where the penguins kept going in and out of the tussac.

The remark makes a vivid impression on her son and the young Englishman, neither of whom is so old as to have quite outgrown a boyish propensity for nest-robbing.

"Sure to have, ma'am," affirms Seagriff, respectfully raising his hand to his forelock; "an' a pity we didn't think of it sooner. We might 'a' hed fresh eggs for breakfast."

"Why can't we have them for dinner, then?" demands the second mate; the third adding, "Yes; why not?"

"Sartin we kin, young masters. I knows of no reason agin it," answers the old sealer.

"Then let's go egg-gathering," exclaimed Ned, eagerly.

The proposal is accepted by Seagriff, who is about to set out with the two youths, when, looking inquiringly round, he

says, "As thar ain't anything in the shape of a stick about, we had best take the boat-hook an' a couple of oars."

"What for?" ask the others, in some surprise.

"You'll larn, by-an'-bye," answers the old salt, who, like most of his kind, is somewhat given to mystification.

In accordance with this suggestion, each of the boys arms himself with an oar, leaving Seagriff the boat-hook.

They enter among the tussac, and after tramping through it a hundred yards or so, they come upon a "penguinery," sure enough. It is a grand one, extending over acres, with hundreds of nests—if a slight depression in the naked surface of the ground deserves to be so called. But no eggs are in any of them, fresh or otherwise; instead, in each sits a young, half-fledged bird, and one only, as this kind of penguin lays and hatches but a single egg. Many of the nests have old birds standing beside them, each occupied in feeding its solitary chick, duckling, gosling, or whatever the penguin offspring may be properly called. This being of itself a curious spectacle, the disappointed egg-hunters stop awhile to witness it, for they are still outside the bounds of the "penguinery," and the birds have as yet taken no notice of them. By each nest is a little mound, on which the mother stands perched, from time to time projecting her head outward and upward, at the same time giving forth a queer chattering noise, half quack, half bray, with the air of a stump orator haranguing an open-air audience. Meanwhile, the youngster stands patiently waiting below, evidently with a fore-knowledge of what is to come. Then, after a few seconds of the quacking and braying, the mother bird suddenly ducks her head, with the mandibles of her beak wide agape, between which the fledgling thrusts its head, almost out of sight, and so keeps it for more than a minute. Finally, withdrawing it, up again goes the head of the mother, with neck craned out, and oscillating from side to side in a second spell of speech-making. These curious actions are repeated several times, the entire performance lasting for a period of nearly a quarter of an hour. When it ends, possibly from the food supply having become exhausted, the mother bird leaves the little glutton to itself and scuttles off seaward to replenish her throat larder with a fresh stock of molluscs.

Although during their long four years' cruise Edward Gancy and Henry Chester have seen many a strange sight, they think the one now before their eyes as strange as any, and unique in its quaint comicality. They would have continued their observations much longer but for Seagriff, to whom the sight is neither strange nor new. It has no interest for him, save economically, and in this sense he proceeds to utilise it, saying, after an interrogative glance sent all over the breeding-ground, "Sartin, there ain't a single egg in any o' the nests. It's too late in the season for them now, an' I might 'a' known it. Wal, we won't go back empty-handed, anyhow. The young penguins ain't sech bad eatin', though the old 'uns taste some'at fishy, b'sides bein' tough as tan leather. So let's heave ahead, an' grab a few of the goslin's. But look out, or you'll get your legs nipped!"

At which all three advance upon the "penguinery," the two youths still incredulous as to there being any danger—in fact, rather under the belief that the old salt is endeavouring to impose on their credulity. But they are soon undeceived. Scarcely have they set foot within the breeding precinct, when fully half a score of old penguins rush fiercely at each of the intruders, with necks outstretched, mouths open, and mandibles snapping together with a clatter like that of castanets.

Then follows a laying about with oars and boat-hook, accompanied by shouts on the side of the attacking party, and hoarse, guttural screams on that of the attacked. The racket is kept up till the latter are at length beaten off, though but few of them are slain outright; for the jackass penguin, with its thick skull and dense coat of feathers, takes as much killing as a cat.

The young birds, too, make resistance against being captured, croaking and hissing like so many little ganders, and biting sharply. But all this does not prevent our determined party from finally securing some ten or twelve of the featherless creatures, and subsequently carrying them to the friends at the shore, where they are delivered into the eager hands of Caesar.

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Note 1. *Aptenodytes Patagonica*. This singular bird has been christened "Jackass penguin" by sailors, on account of its curious note, which bears an odd resemblance to the bray of an ass. "King penguin" is another of its names, from its superior size, as it is the largest of the auk or penguin family.

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## Chapter Seven.

### A World on a Weed.

A pair of penguin "squabs" makes an ample dinner for the entire party, nor is it without the accompaniment of vegetables; these being supplied by the tussac-grass, the stalks of which contain a white edible substance, in taste somewhat resembling a hazel-nut, while the young shoots boiled are almost equal to asparagus. (Note 1.)

While seated at their midday meal, they have before their eyes a moving world of nature, such as may be found only in her wildest solitudes. All around the kelp-bed, porpoises are ploughing the water, now and then bounding up out of it; while seals and sea-otters show their human-like heads, swimming among the weeds. Birds hover above in such numbers as to darken the air, some at intervals darting down and going under with a plunge that sends the spray aloft in showers white as a snow-drift. Others do their fishing seated on the water; for there are many different kinds of water-fowl here represented—gulls, shags, cormorants, gannets, noddies, and petrels, with several species of *Anatidae*, among them the beautiful black-necked swan. Nor are they all seabirds, or exclusively inhabitants of the water. Among those wheeling in the air above is an eagle and a small black vulture, with several sorts of hawks—the last, the Chilian *jota* (Note 2). Even the gigantic condor often extends its flight to the Land of Fire, whose mountains are but a continuation of the great Andean chain.

The ways and movements of this teeming ornithological world are so strange and varied that our castaways, despite all anxiety about their own future, cannot help being interested in observing them. They see a bird of one kind diving and bringing to the surface a fish, which another, of a different species, snatches from it and bears aloft, in its turn to be attacked by a third equally rapacious winged hunter, that, swooping at the robber, makes him forsake his ill-gotten prey, while the prey itself, reluctantly dropped, is dexterously re-caught in its whirling descent long ere it reaches its own element—the whole incident forming a very chain of tyranny and destruction! And yet a chain of but few links compared with that to be found in and under the water, among the leaves and stalks of the kelp itself. There the destroyers and the destroyed are legion, not only in numbers, but in kind. A vast world in itself, so densely populated and of so many varied organisms that, for a due delineation of it, I must again borrow from the inimitable pen of Darwin. Thus he describes it:—

“The number of living creatures of all orders, whose existence entirely depends on the kelp, is wonderful. A great volume might be written describing the inhabitants of one of these beds of seaweed. Almost all the leaves, excepting those that float on the surface, are so thickly encrusted with corallines as to be of a white colour. We find exquisitely delicate structures, some inhabited by simple hydra-like polyps, others by more organised kinds. On the leaves, also, various shells, uncovered molluscs, and bivalves are attached. Innumerable Crustacea frequent every part of the plant. On shaking the great entangled roots, a pile of small fish-shells, cuttle-fish, crabs of all orders, sea-eggs, star-fish, sea-cucumbers, and crawling sea-centipedes of a multitude of forms, all fall out together. Often as I recurred to the kelp, I never failed to discover animals of new and curious structures... I can only compare these great aquatic forests of the Southern Hemisphere with the terrestrial ones of the inter-tropical regions. Yet, if in any country a forest were destroyed, I do not believe so many species of animals would perish as would here from the destruction of the kelp. Amidst the leaves of this plant numerous species of fish live, which nowhere else could find food or shelter; with their destruction, the many cormorants and other fishing-birds, the otters, seals, and porpoises, would perish also; and lastly, the Fuegian savage, the miserable lord of this miserable land, would redouble his cannibal feats, decrease in numbers, and perhaps cease to exist.”

While still watching the birds at their game of grab, the spectators observe that the kelp-bed has become darker in certain places, as though from the weeds being piled up in swathes.

“It’s lowering to ebb-tide,” remarks Captain Gancy, in reply to an interrogation from his wife, “and the rocks are awash. They’ll soon be above water, I take it.”

“Jest so, Captain,” assents Seagriff; “but tain’t the weeds that’s makin’ those black spots. They’re movin’ about—don’t you see?”

The skipper now observes, as do all the others, a number of odd-looking animals, large-headed, and with long slender bodies, to all appearance covered with a coat of dark brown wool, crawling and floundering about among the kelp, in constantly increasing numbers. Each new ledge of reef, as it rises to the surface, becomes crowded with them, while hundreds of others disport themselves in the pools between.

“Fur-seals they are,” (Note 3) pronounces Seagriff, his eyes fixed upon them as eagerly as were those of Tantalus on the forbidden water, “an’ every skin of ’em worth a mint o’ money. Bad luck!” he continues, in a tone of spiteful vexation. “A mine o’ wealth, an’ no chance to work it! Ef we only had the ship by us now, we could put a good thousan’ dollars’ worth o’ thar pelts into it. Jest see how they swarm out yonder! An’ tame as pet tabby cats! There’s enough of ’em to supply seal-skin jackets fur nigh all the women o’ New York!”

No one makes rejoinder to the old sealer’s regretful rhapsody. The situation is too grave for them to be thinking of gain by the capture of fur-seals, even though it should prove “a mine of wealth,” as Seagriff called it. Of what value is wealth to them while their very lives are in jeopardy? They were rejoiced when they first set foot on land; but time is passing; they have in part recovered from their fatigue, and the dark, doubtful future is once more uppermost in their minds. They cannot stay for ever on the isle—indeed, they may not be able to remain many days on it, owing to the exhaustion of their limited stock of provisions, if for no other reason. Even could they subsist on penguins’ flesh and tussac-stalks, the young birds, already well feathered, will ere long disappear, while the tender shoots of the grass, growing tougher as it ripens, will in time become altogether uneatable.

No; they cannot abide there, and must go elsewhere. But whither? That is the all-absorbing question. Ever since they landed the sky has been overcast, and the distant mainland is barely visible through a misty vapour spread over the sea between. All the better for that, Seagriff has been thinking hitherto, with the Fuegians in his mind.

“It’ll hinder ’em seein’ the smoke of our fire,” he said; “the which mout draw ’em on us.”

But he has now less fear of this, seeing that which tells him that the isle is never visited by the savages.

“They hain’t been on it fur years, anyhow,” he says, reassuring the Captain, who has again taken him aside to talk over the ticklish matter. “I’m sartin they hain’t.”

“What makes you certain?” questions the other.

“Them ’ere—both of ’em,” nodding first toward the fur-seals and then toward the penguins. “If the Feweegins dar’ fetch thar craft so fur out seaward, neither o’ them ud be so plentiful nor yit so tame. Both sort o’ critters air jest what they sets most store by—yieldin’ ’em not only thar vittels, but sech scant kiver as they’re ’customed to w’ar. No, Captin, the savagers hain’t been out hyar, an’ ain’t a-goin’ to be. An’ I weesh, now,” he continues, glancing up to the sky, “I weesh ’t wud brighten a bit. Wi’ thet fog hidin’ the hills over yonder, ’tain’t possybul to gie a guess az to whar we air. Ef it ud lift, I mout be able to make out some o’ the landmarks. Let’s hope we may hev a cl’ar sky the morrer, an’ a glimp’ o’ the sun to boot.”

“Ay, let us hope that,” rejoins the skipper, “and pray for it, as we shall.”

The promise is made in all seriousness, Captain Gancy being a religious man. So, on retiring to rest on their shake-down couches of tussac-grass, he summons the little party around him and offers up a prayer for their deliverance from their present danger, not forgetting those in the pinnace; no doubt the first Christian devotion ever heard ascending over that lone desert isle.

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Note 1. It is the soft, crisp, inner part of the stem, just above the root, that is chiefly eaten. Horses and cattle are very fond of the tussac-grass, and in the Falkland Islands feed upon it. It is said, however, that there it is threatened with extirpation, on account of these animals browsing it too closely. It has been introduced with success into the Hebrides and Orkney Islands, where the conditions of its existence are favourable—a peaty soil, exposed to winds loaded with sea spray.

Note 2. *Cathartes jota*. Closely allied to the “turkey-buzzard” of the United States.

Note 3. *Otaria Falklandica*. There are several distinct species of “otary,” or “fur-seal”; those of the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego being different from the fur-seals of northern latitudes.

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## Chapter Eight.

### A Flurry with Fur-Seals.

As if Captain Gancy’s petition had been heard by the All-Merciful, and is about to have favourable response, the next morning breaks clear and calm; the fog all gone, and the sky blue, with a bright sun shining in it—rarest of sights in the cloudlands of Tierra del Fuego. All are cheered by it, and, with reviving hope, eat breakfast in better spirits, a fervent grace preceding.

They do not linger over the repast, as the skipper and Seagriff are impatient to ascend to the summit of the isle, the latter in hopes of making out some remembered landmark. The place where they have put in is on its west side, and the high ground interposed hinders their view to the eastward, while all seen north and south is unknown to the old carpenter.

They are about starting off, when Mrs Gancy says interrogatively, “Why shouldn’t we go too?”—meaning herself and Leoline, as the daughter is prettily named.

“Yes, papa,” urges the young girl; “you’ll take us with you, won’t you?”

With a glance up the hill, to see whether the climb be not too difficult, he answers, “Certainly, dear; I’ve no objection. Indeed, the exercise may do you both good, after being so long shut up on board ship.”

“It would do us all good,” thinks Henry Chester, for a certain reason wishing to be of the party, that reason, as a child might see, being Leoline. He does not speak his wish, however, backwardness forbidding, but is well pleased at hearing her brother, who is without bar of this kind, cry out, “Yes, father. And the other pair of us, Harry and myself, would like to go too. Neither of us have got our land legs yet, as we found yesterday while fighting the penguins. A little mountaineering will help to put the steady into them.”

“Oh, very well,” assents the good-natured skipper. “You may all come—except Caesar. He had better stay by the boat, and keep the fire burning.”

“Jess so, Massa Cap’n, an’ much obleeged to ye. Dis chile perfur stayin’. Golly! I doan’ want to tire myse’f to deff a-draggin’ up dat ar pressypus. ‘Sides, I hab got ter look out for de dinner, ‘gainst yer gettin’ back.”

“The doctor” (The popular sea-name for a ship’s cook) speaks the truth in saying he does not wish to accompany them, being one of the laziest mortals that ever sat roasting himself beside a galley fire. So, without further parley, they set forth, leaving him by the boat.

At first they find the uphill slope gentle and easy, their path leading through hummocks of tall tussac, whose tops rise above their heads, and the flower-scapes many feet higher. Their chief difficulty is the spongy nature of the soil, in which they sink at times ankle-deep. But farther up it is drier and firmer, the lofty tussac giving place to grass of humbler stature; in fact, a sward so short, that the ground appears as though freshly mown. Here the climbers catch sight of a number of moving creatures, which they might easily mistake for quadrupeds. Hundreds of them are running to and fro like rabbits in a warren, and quite as fast. Yet they are really birds, penguins of the same species which supplied so considerable a part of their yesterday’s dinner and to-day’s breakfast. The strangest thing of all is that these Protean creatures, which seem fitted only for an aquatic existence, should be so much at home on land, so ably using their queer wings as substitutes for legs that they can run up or down high and precipitous slopes with the swiftness of a hare.

From the experience of yesterday, Ned and Harry might anticipate attack by the penguins. But that experience has taught the birds a lesson, which they now profit by, scuttling off, frightened at the sight of the murderous invaders, who have made such havoc among them and their nestlings.

On the drier upland still another curious bird is encountered, singular in its mode of breeding and other habits. A petrel it is, about the size of a house pigeon, and of a slate-blue colour. This bird, instead of laying its eggs, like the penguin, on the surface of the ground, deposits them, like the sand-martin and burrowing owl, at the bottom of a burrow. Part of the ground over which the climbers have to pass is honeycombed with these holes, and they see the petrels passing in and out; Seagriff, meanwhile, imparting a curious item of information about them. It is that the

Fuegians capture these birds by tying a string to the legs of certain small birds, and force them into the petrels' nests, whereupon the rightful owners, attacking and following the intruders as they are jerked out by the cunning decoyers, are themselves captured.

Continuing upward, the slope is found to be steeper, and more difficult than was expected. What from below seemed a gentle acclivity turns out to be almost a precipice—a very common illusion with those unaccustomed to mountain climbing. But they are not daunted—every one of the men has stood on the main truck of a tempest-tossed ship. What to this were even the scaling of a cliff? The ladies, too, have little fear, and will not consent to stay below, but insist on being taken to the very summit.

The last stage proves the most difficult. The only practicable path is up a sort of gorge, rough-sided, but with the bottom smooth and slippery as ice. It is grass-grown all over, but the grass is beaten close to the surface, as if schoolboys had been "coasting" down it. All except Seagriff suppose it to be the work of the penguins—he knows better what has done it. Not birds, but beasts, or "fish," as he would call them—the *amphibia* in the chasing, killing, and skinning of which he has spent many years of his life. Even with his eyes shut he could have told it was they, by a peculiar odour unpleasant to others, though not to him. To his olfactories it is the perfume of Araby.

"Them fur-seals hev been up hyar," he says, glancing up the gorge. "They kin climb like cats, spite o' thar lubberly look, and they delight in baskin' on high ground. I've know'd 'em to go up a hill steeper an' higher 'n this. They've made it as smooth as ice, and we'll hev to hold on keerfully. I guess ye'd better all stay hyar till I give it a trial."

"Oh, it's nothing, Chips," says young Gancy, "we can easily swarm up."

He would willingly take the lead himself, but is lending a hand to his mother; while, in like manner, Henry Chester is entrusted with the care of Leoline—a duty he would be loth to transfer to another.

The older sealer makes no more delay, but, leaning forward and clutching the grass, draws himself up the steep slope. In the same way the Captain follows; then Ned, carefully assisting his mother; and lastly, but with no less alacrity, the young Englishman helping Leoline.

Seagriff, still vigorous—for he has not much passed manhood's prime—and unhampered, reaches the head of the gorge long before the others.

But as soon as his eyes are above it, and he has a view of the summit level, he sees there something to astonish him: the whole surface, nearly an acre in extent, is covered with fur-seals, lying close together like pigs in a sty.

This sight, under other circumstances, he would have hailed with a shout of joy; but now it elicits from him a cry of apprehension, for the seals have taken the alarm, too, and are coming on in a rush toward the ravine, knowing that it is their only way to the water.

"Thunder an' airthquakes!" he exclaims, in highest pitch of voice. "Look out thar, below!"

They do look out, or rather up, and with no little alarm. But the cause of it none can as yet tell. But they see Seagriff spring to one side of the gorge and catch hold of a rock to steady himself, while he shouts to them to do the same. Of



AN ARMY OF SEALS.

course, they obey; but they barely have time to get out of the ravine's bed before a stream, a torrent, a very cataract of living forms comes pouring down it—very monsters in appearance, all open-mouthed, and each mouth showing a double row of glittering teeth.

A weird, fear-inspiring procession it is, as they go floundering past, crowding one another, snapping, snorting, and barking, like so many mastiffs!

Fortunately for the spectators, the creatures are fur-seals, and not the fierce sea-lions; for the fur-seal is inoffensive, and shows fight only when forced to it. These are but acting in obedience to the most ordinary instinct, as they are seeking self-preservation by retreat to the sea—their true home and haven of safety.

The flurry lasts for but a brief while, ending as abruptly as it began. When all the seals have passed, our party resume the ascent and continue it till all stand upon the summit. But not *all* in silence; for turning his eyes north-eastward, and seeing there a snow-covered mountain—a grand cone, towering thousands of feet above all the others—Seagriff plucks off his hat, and, waving it around his head, sends up a joyous huzza, cries out, “Now I know whar we are better ’n a hul ship full o’ kompa an’ kernometers kud tell us. *Yon’s Sarmiento!*”

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## Chapter Nine.

### An Unnatural Mother.

“Yis, Captin, thet’s Sarmiento, an’ nary doubt of it,” pursues the old sealer. “I’d reck’noise thet mountin ’mong a millyun. ’Tair the highest in all Feweego. (Note 1.) An’ we must be at the mouth o’ Des’late Bay, jest as I wor suspectin’. Wal, ’ceptin’ them ugly things I told ye ’bout, we kudn’t be in a better place.”

“Why?” inquires the Captain, dubiously.

“’Kase it ain’t a bay at all; but the entrance to a soun’ bearin’ the name o’ ‘Whale-Boat Soun’.’ An’ thet’s open water too, communicatin’ wi’ another known ez ‘Darwin Soun’—the which larst leads right inter the Beagle Channel.”

“But what of all that, Chips? How can it help us?”

“Help us! Why, ’tair the very i-dentical thing ez ’ll help us; our coorse is laid out to a p’int o’ the kompass! All we’ll hev to do is to run east’ard through the Beagle Channel, an’ then ’long the open coast to good Success Bay, in the Straits o’ Le Maire. Thar we’ll be a’most sure o’ findin’ some o’ the sealin’ vessels, thet bein’ one o’ thar rendeyvoos when they’re fishin’ roun’ Staten Land.”

“You think that better, then, than trying to the northward for the Straits of Magellan?” inquires Captain Gancy.

“Oceans o’ odds better. To reach Magellan we’d hev to work out seaward ag’in, an’ back past the ‘Furies,’ whar thar’s all sorts o’ cross-currents to contend wi’. Whereas goin’ east’ard through the Beagle, we’ll hev both wind and tide a’most allers in our favour. ’Sides, there’d be no bother ’bout the coorse. ’Tair jest like steerin’ in a river, an’ along the coast ag’in. I’m wall acquaint’ wi’ every inch o’ ’t.”

That Captain Gancy, an experienced navigator, should be unacquainted with the Beagle Channel may seem strange. But at the time of which we write, this remarkable passage was of recent discovery, and not yet laid down on the charts.

“How about the other matter?” he asks, in half whisper, glancing significantly toward his wife and daughter, who are but a few paces off. “Will the Beagle course be any the safer for that?”

“I can’t say ’twill, sir,” is the answer, in like undertone. “Tho’ it won’t be any worse. Guess the danger’s ’bout equil eytherways.”

“What danger?” questions young Gancy, who has overheard the ugly word.

“O’ the gig gettin’ bilged, Mister Ed’ard,” is the ready, but not truthful, rejoinder. “In coorse thar’s rough seas everywhar through Fireland, an’ wi’ such a mite o’ a boat, we’ll hev to be on the keerful.”

“Then,” says the Captain, his mind made up, after long and minutely examining sea and coast all around through his glass, “then by the Beagle Channel be it. And we may as well set out at once. I can see nothing of the pinnacle. If she’d weathered the gale and put in this way, they’d be sure to sail on for the mainland. In that case, they may sight us when we get well out on the open water.”

“Jest so, Captin,” says Seagriff, “an’ as ye perpose, we mout as well make the start now. We kin gain nothin’ by stayin’ hyar.”

“All right, then. Let us be off.”

So saying, the skipper takes a last look through the binocular, with a lingering hope that something may still be seen of the consort boat; then, disappointed, he leads the way down to the landing-place.

Their further stay on the island is for but a few minutes,—while the two youths make a fresh raid on the penguinnery, and rob it of another dozen of the young birds, as boat stores. Some tussac-asparagus is also added, and then all resume their places on the thwarts, this time with everything properly stowed and shipshape. The painter is drawn in and the gig shoved off.

Once more under way, they encounter a heavy ground swell; but the breeze is in their favour, and, with the sail set, they are able to keep steadily before it. They have no trouble in making their course, as the sky is clear, and Sarmiento—an all-sufficient guide-post—always visible. But although neither Captain Gancy nor Seagriff has any



anxiety as to the course, both seem anxious about something, all the while scanning the water ahead—the skipper through his glass, the old sealer with hand shading his eyes.

This attracting the attention of young Gancy, sharp at reading facial expression, as are most men who follow the sea, he asks, after a time, “What is it, father? You and Chips appear to be troubled about something.”

“Wal, Mister Ed’ard, thar ain’t ennythin’ rumarkabul in thet, sitiwated ez we air; it’s only nateral to be allers expectin’ trouble o’ some sort. You youngsters don’t think o’ thet, ez we old ’uns do.”

The old sealer has made haste to answer a question not put to him. He fears that the skipper, in his solicitude as husband and father, may break down, and betray the secret that oppresses them.

Vain the attempt at concealing it longer; for the very next instant the Captain himself exclaims,—

“Ha! yonder! A boat full of people putting off from the shore!”

“Mout it be the pinnace, Captin?”

“No, Chips; it’s some sort of native craft. Look for yourself.” And he hands him the binocular.

“Yer right, sir,” says Seagriff, after a look through the glass. “A Feweeegin canoe it air, an’ I do believe they’re *Ailikoleeps*. Ef so, we may look out for squalls.”

Both his words and tone tell of fear,—confessed at last, since he knows it can no longer be concealed. But the others are only surprised, for as yet they are ignorant of any danger which may arise from an interview with the natives, of whom they know nothing.

Meanwhile, the canoe has pulled well out from the shore—the northern one—and is evidently making to meet the gig in mid-water, an encounter which cannot be avoided, the breeze being now light, and the boat having little way, nothing like enough to shun the encounter. Seeing it to be inevitable, the Captain says, “We may as well show a bold front, and speak them, I suppose?”

“Yes,” assents Seagriff, “thet air the best way. ‘Sides, thar’s no chance o’ our gettin’ past ‘em out o’ reach o’ thar sling-stones. But I guess we hev’n’t much to fear from thet lot, ef thar aren’t others to jine ‘em; an’ I don’t see any others.”

“Nor do I,” indorses the Captain, sweeping the shore-line with his glass. “It’s the only craft I can see anywhere.”

“Wal, *it* ain’t on a warlike bender, whether Ailikoleep or no, seein’ as thar’s weemen an’ childer in ‘t. So I reck’n thar’s nothin’ to be skeart about jest yet, though you niver kin tell for sartin what the critters air up to till they show it themselves.”

By this, the Fuegians have approached near enough for hailing, which, however, they have been doing all along, shouting in high-pitched voices, and frantically gesticulating.

They cry, “Ho-say! ho-say!” in quick repetition, two of them standing up and waving skins of some sort above their heads.

“Thet means to hold palaver, an’ hev a dicker wi’ ‘em,” says Seagriff. “They want to trade off thar pelts an’ sech-like for what we can give them in exchange.”

“All right,” assents the Captain. “Be it so; and we may as well douse the sail and heave to—we’re making no way, any how.” At this the sail is lowered, and the boat lies motionless on the water, awaiting the approach of the canoe.

In a few seconds the native craft comes paddling up, but for a time keeps beyond grappling distance—a superfluous precaution on the part of the Fuegians, but very agreeable to those in the gig. Especially so now that they have a nearer view of the occupants of the native craft. There are, in all, thirteen of them; three men, four women, and the rest girls and boys of different ages, one of the women having an infant tied to her by a scarf fastened over one of her shoulders. Nearly a dozen dogs are in the canoe also—diminutive, fox-like animals with short ears, resembling the Esquimaux breed, but smaller. Of the human element—if human it can be called—all are savages of the lowest type and wildest aspect, their coarse shaggy hair hanging like loose thatch over low foreheads, and partially shading their little, bleary red eyes. Hideous are they to very deformity. Nor is their ugliness diminished, but rather heightened, by a variety of pigments—ochre, charcoal, and chalk—laid thick upon their faces and bodies with an admixture of seal-oil or blubber. The men are scantily clothed, with only one kind of garment, a piece of skin hung over their shoulders and lashed across the chest, and all the women wearing a sort of apron skirt of penguin-skins.

The canoe is a rough, primitive structure: several breadths of bark stitched together with sinews of the seal, and gathered up at the ends. Along each side a pole is lashed joining the gunwale-rail, while several stout pieces laid crosswise serve as beam timbers. In the bottom, amidships, is a mud hearth on which burns a fire, with sticks set up around it to dry. There are three compartments in the craft, separated from one another by the cross-pieces: in the forward one are various weapons—spears, clubs, and sling-stones—and fishing implements. The amidships section holds the fire-hearth, the men having place on the forward side of it; the women, who do the paddling, are seated farther aft; while in the stern division are stowed the boys, girls, and dogs.

Such is the picture taken in by the gig’s people at a glance, for they have neither time nor opportunity to examine it minutely, as the Fuegians keep up a continual shouting and gesticulating, their hoarse guttural voices mingled with the barking of the dogs making a very pandemonium of noise.

A sign from Seagriff, however, and a word or two spoken in their own tongue, brings about a lull and an understanding, and the traffic commences. Sea-otter and fox-skins are exchanged for such useless trifles as chance to be in the gig's lockers, the savage hucksters not proving exorbitant in their demands. Two or three broken bottles, a couple of empty sardine-boxes, with some buttons and scraps of coloured cloth, buy up almost all their stock-in-trade, leaving them not only satisfied, but under the belief that they have outwitted the *akifka-akinish* (white men).

Still, they continue to solicit further traffic, offering not only their implements of the chase and fishing, but their weapons of war! The spears and slings Seagriff eagerly purchases, giving in exchange several effects of more value than any yet parted with, somewhat to the surprise of Captain Gancy. But, confident that the old sealer has a good and sufficient reason, the Captain says nothing, and lets him have his way.

The Fuegian women are no less solicitous than the men about the barter, and eagerly take a hand in it. Unlike their sisters of civilisation, they are willing to part with articles of personal adornment, even that most prized by them, the



THE FUEGIAN WOMAN CLUTCHES AT LEOLINE'S SCARF. 89

shell necklace. (Note 2.) Ay, more, what may seem incredible, she with the child—her own baby—has taken a fancy to a red scarf of China crape worn by Leoline, and pointing first to it and then to the babe on her shoulder, she plucks the little one from its lashings and holds it up with a coaxing expression on her countenance, like a cheap-jack tempting a simpleton at a fair to purchase a pinchbeck watch.

“What does the woman want?” asks Mrs Gancy, greatly puzzled; all the rest sharing her wonder, save Seagriff, who answers, with a touch of anxiety in his voice, “She wants to barter off her babby, ma’am, for that ‘ere scarf.”

“Oh!” exclaims Leoline, shocked, “surely you don’t mean that, Mr Chips.”

“Sure I do, Miss; neyther more nor less. Thet’s jest what the unnateral woman air up to. An’ she wouldn’t be the first as hez done the same. I’ve heerd afore uv a Feweegin woman bein’ willin’ to sell her chile for a purty piece o’ cloth.”

The shocking incident brings the bargaining to an end. Situated as they are, the gig’s people have no desire to burden themselves with Fuegian *bric-à-brac*, and have consented to the traffic only for the sake of keeping on good terms with the traffickers. But it has become tiresome, and Captain Gancy, eager to be off, orders oars out, the wind having quite died away.

Out go the oars, and the boat is about moving off, when the inhuman mother tosses her pickaninny into the bottom of the canoe, and, reaching her long skinny arm over the gig’s stern-sheets, makes a snatch at the coveted scarf! She would have clutched it, had not her hand been struck down on the instant by the blade of an oar wielded by Henry Chester.

The hag, foiled in her attempt, sets up a howl of angry disappointment, her companions joining in the chorus and sawing the air with threatening arms. Impotent is their rage, however, for the crafty Seagriff has secured all their missile weapons, and under the impulse of four strong rowers, the gig goes dancing on, soon leaving the clumsy Fuegian craft far in its wake, with the savages shouting and threatening vengeance.

Note 1. The height of Sarmiento, according to Captain King, is 6,800 feet, though others make it out higher, one estimate giving it 6,967. It is the most conspicuous as well as the highest of Fuegian mountains,—a grand cone, always snow-covered for thousands of feet below the summit, and sometimes to its base.

Note 2. The shell most in vogue among Fuegian belles for neck adornment is a pearl oyster (*Margarita violacea*) of an iridescent purplish colour, and about half an inch in diameter. It is found adhering to the kelp, and forms the chief

food of several kinds of seabirds, among others the "steamer-duck." Shells and shell-fish play a large part in Fuegian domestic (!) economy. A large kind of barnacle (*Concholepas Peruviana*) furnishes their drinking-cups, while an edible mollusc (*Macra edulis*) and several species of limpet (*Patellae*) help out their often scanty larder.

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## Chapter Ten.

### Saved by a Williwaw.

"Wal!" says the old sealer, with an air of relief, when he sees that danger past, "I guess we've gi'n 'em the slip. But what a close shave! Ef I hedn't contrived to dicker 'em out o' the sling fixin's, they mout 'a' broke some o' our skulls."

"Ah! that's why you bought them," rejoins the skipper; he, as all the others, had hitherto been wondering at the acquisition of such worthless things, with more than their value given for them; for the spears were but tough poles pointed with flint or bone, and the slings a bit of seal-skin. "I perceive now what you were up to," he adds, "and a good bargain you made of it, Chips."

"But why should we have cared?" asked Henry Chester, his English blood roused, and his temper ruffled by the fright given Leoline. "What had we to fear from such miserable wretches? Only three men of them, and five of us!"

"Ay, Mister Henry, that's all true as to the numbers. But ef they war only *one* to our five, he wouldn't regard the odds a bit. They're like wild animals, an' fight jest the same. I've seed a Feweegin, only a little mite uv a critter, make attack on a whale-boat's crew o' sealers, an' gi'e sev'ral uv 'em ugly wounds. They don't know sech a thing as fear, no more'n a trapped badger. Neyther do thar weemen, who fight jest the same's the men. Thar ain't a squaw in that canoe as cudn't stan' a tussle wi' the best o' us. 'Sides, ye forgit that we haven't any weepens to fight 'em with 'ceptin' our knives." This was true; neither gun, pistol, nor other offensive arm having been saved from the sinking *Calypso*. "An' our knives," he continues, "they'd 'a' been o' but little use against their slings, wi' the which they kin send a stone a good hundred yards. (Note 1.) Ay, Mister Henry, an' the spears too. Ef we hedn't got holt o' them, some uv 'em mout be stickin' in us now. Ez ye may see, they're the sort for dartin'."

The English youth, exulting in the strength and vigour of growing manhood, is loth to believe all this. He makes no response, however, having eased his feelings, and being satisfied with the display he has made of his gallantry by that well-timed blow with the oar.

"In any case," calmly interposes the skipper, "we may be thankful for getting away from them."

"Yis, Captin'," says Seagriff, his face still wearing an anxious expression, "ef we hev got away from 'em, the which ain't sartin yit. I've my fears we haven't seen the last o' that ugly lot."

While speaking, his eyes are fixed on the canoe in an earnest, interrogating gaze, as though he sees something to make him uneasy. Such a thing he does see, and the next instant he declares, in excited tones, "No! Look at what they're doin'!"

"What?" asks the Captain.

"Sendin' up a signal smoke. That's thar trick, an' ne'er another."

Sure enough, a smoke is seen rising over the canoe, quite different from that previously observed—a white, curling cloud more like steam or what might proceed from straw set on fire. But they are not left long conjecturing about it, ere their attention is called to another and similar smoke on the land.

"Yonder!" exclaims Seagriff. "Thar's the answer. An' yonder an' yonder!" he adds, pointing to other white puffs that shoot up along the shore like the telegraphy of a chain of semaphores. (Note 2.)

"'Tair lookin' bad for us now," he says in undertone to the Captain, and still gazing anxiously toward the shores. "Thar's Feweegins ahead on both sides, and they're sure to put out fur us. That's Burnt Island on the port bow, and Cath'rine to starboard, both 'habited by Ailikoleeps. The open water beyant is Whale-boat Soun'; an' ef we kin git through the narrer atween, we may still hev a chance to show 'em our starn. Thar's a sough in the soun', that tells o' wind thar, an' oncet in it we'll get the help o' the sail."

"They're putting out now," is the Captain's rejoinder, as through his glass he sees canoe after canoe part from the shore, one shooting out at every point where there is a smoke.

When clear of the fringe of overhanging trees, the canoes are visible to the others; fifteen or twenty of them leaving the land on both sides, and all making toward the middle of the strait, where it is narrowest, evidently with the design of heading off the boat.

"Keep her well to starboard, Captin'!" sings out the old sealer, "near as may be to the p'int o' Cath'rine Island. Ef we kin git past that 'fore they close on us, we'll be safe."

"But hadn't we better put about and put back? We can run clear of them that way."

"Cl'ar o' the canoes ahead, yis! But not o' the others astarn. Look yonder! Thar's more o' 'em puttin' out ahint—the things air everywhar!"

"'Twill be safer to run on, then, you think?"

"I do, sir. B'sides, thar's no help for 't now. It's our only chance, an' it ain't sech a bad un, eyther. I guess we kin do it yit."

"Lay out to your oars, then, my lads," cries the skipper, steering as he has been advised. "Pull your best, all!"

A superfluous command that, for already they are straining every nerve, all awake to the danger drawing nigh. Never in their lives were they in greater peril, never threatened by a fate more fearful than that impending now. For, as the canoes come nearer, it can be seen that there are only men in them; men of fierce aspect, every one of them armed.

"Nary woman nor chile!" mutters Seagriff, as though talking to himself. "Thet means war, an' the white feathers stickin' up out o' thar skulls, wi' thar faces chalked like circus clowns! War to the knife, for sartin!"

Still other, if not surer, evidences of hostility are the spears bristling above their heads, and the slings in their hands, into which they are seen slipping stones to be ready for casting. Their cries, too, shrilling over the water, are like the screams of rapacious birds about to pounce on prey which they know cannot escape them.

And now the canoes are approaching mid-channel, closing in from either side *en échelon*, and the boat must pass between them. Soon she has some of them abeam, with others on the bows. It is running the gauntlet, with apparently a very poor chance of running it safely. The failure of an oar-stroke, a retarding whiff of wind, may bring death to those in the gig, or capture, which is the same. Yet they see life beyond, if they can but reach it,—life in a breeze, the "sough" on the water, of which Seagriff spoke. It is scarcely two cables' length ahead. Oh, that it were but one! Still they have hope, as the old sealer shouts encouragingly, "We may git into it yet. Pull, boys; pull wi' might an' main!"

His words spur them to a fresh effort, and the boat bounds on, the oars almost lifting her out of the water. The canoes abeam begin to fall astern, but those on the bows are forging dangerously near, while the savages in them, now on their feet, brandish spears and wind their slings above their heads. Their



"ARE WE TO BE STONED TO DEATH?"

fiendish cries and furious gestures, with their ghastly chalked faces, give them an appearance more demoniac than human.

A stone is slung and a javelin cast, though both fall short. But will the next? They will soon be at nearer range, and the gig's people, absolutely without means of protection, sit in fear and trembling. Still the rowers, bracing hearts and arms, pull manfully on. But Captain Gancy is appalled as another stone splashes in the water close to the boat's side, while a third, striking the mast, drops down among them.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaims, despondingly, as he extends a sheltering arm over the heads of his dear ones. "Is it thus to end? Are we to be stoned to death?"

"Yonder's a Heaven's marcy, I do believe!" says Seagriff on the instant, "comin' to our help 'roun' Burnt Island. Thet'll bring a change, sure!"

All turn their eyes in the direction indicated, wondering what he means, and they see the water, lately calm, surging and whirling in violent agitation, with showers of spray dashing up to the height of a ship's mast.

"It's a *williwaw*!" adds the old sealer, in joyous tone, though at any other time, in open boat, or even decked ship, it would have sent a thrill of fear through his heart. Now he hails it with hope, for he knows that the williwaw (Note 3) causes a Fuegian the most intense fear, and oft engulfs his crazy craft, with himself and all his belongings. And at sight of the one now sweeping toward them the savages instantly drop sling and spear, cease shouting, and cower down in their canoes in dread silence.

"Now's our chance, boys!" sings out Seagriff. "Wi' a dozen more strokes we'll be cl'ar o' them—out o' the track o' the williwaw, too."

The dozen strokes are given with a will. Two dozen ere the squall reaches them, and when it comes up, it has spent most of its strength, passing alike harmlessly over boat and canoes. But again the other danger threatens. The Fuegians are once more upon their feet, shaking their spears and yelling more furiously than ever; anger now added to their hostility. Yet louder and more vengefully they shout at finding pursuit is vain, as they soon do, for the diversion caused by the williwaw has given the gig an advantage, throwing all the canoes so far astern that there is no likelihood of its being caught. Even with the oars alone the gig could easily keep the distance gained on the

slowly-paddled craft. It does better, however, having caught the breeze, and, with a swollen sail it glides on down Whale-boat Sound, rapidly increasing its advantage. On, still on, till under the gathering shadows of night the flotilla of canoes appears like tiny specks—like a flock of fowl birds at rest on the distant water.

“Thar’s no fear o’ them comin’ arter us any furrer, I reck’n,” says the old sealer, in a glad voice. “‘Tain’t likely that their country runs far in this direction.”

“And we may thank the Almighty for it,” is Captain Gancy’s grateful rejoinder. “Surely never was His hand more visibly extended for the protection of poor mortals! Let us thank Him, all!”

And the devout skipper uplifts his hands in prayer, the rest reverently listening. After the simple thanksgiving, he fervently kisses, first his wife, then Leoline. Kisses of mutual congratulation, and who can wonder at their being fervent? For they all have been very near to their last embrace on earth!

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Note 1. Seagriff does not exaggerate. Their skill with this weapon is something remarkable. Captain King thus speaks of it: “I have seen them strike a cap, placed upon the stump of a tree fifty or sixty yards off, with a stone from a sling.” And again, speaking of an encounter he had with Fuegians, “It is astonishing how very correctly they throw them, and to what a distance. When the first stone fell close to us, we all thought ourselves out of musket-shot!”

Note 2. A kind of telegraph or apparatus for conveying information by means of signals visible at a distance, and as oscillating arms or flags by daylight and lanterns at night. A simple form is still employed.

Note 3. The “williwaw,” sometimes called the “wooley,” is one of the great terrors of Fuegian inland waters. It is a sort of squall with a downward direction, probably caused by the warmer air of the outside ocean, as it passes over the snowy mountains, becoming suddenly cooled, and so dropping with a violent rush upon the surface of the water, which surges under it as if struck by cannon shot.

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## Chapter Eleven.

### Why “Land of Fire.”

The night is down; but, although it is very dark, the boat-voyagers do not bring in to land. They are still far from confident that the pursuit has been relinquished; and, until it is abandoned, they are still in danger.

Ere long, they have sure evidence that it is not. Along the shores of the sound flash up fires, which, like the smoke seen in the daylight, are surely signals. Some are down upon the beaches, others high up against the hill-sides—just such lights as Magalhaens beheld three and a half centuries before, while passing through the strait which now bears his name. (Note 1.) Hence, too, the name he bestowed on the unknown country lying south of them, “Tierra del Fuego”—“Land of Fire.”

The fugitives in the gig see fires on both shores—fifty or more—the lurid flames symbolising the fierce implacable hostility of the savages who have set them alight.

“We’re boun’ to keep on till we’ve got ‘em all astarn,” says Seagriff. “So long’s thar’s a spark ahead, it’ll be dangersome to put in. They’d be for headin’ us off jest the same to-morrer, ez thar’s another long narrer to pass atween this an’ Darwin Soun’. ‘Tair a bit lucky the night bein’ so dark that they can’t sight us from the shore. If they could, we’d ‘a’ had ‘em out arter us now.”

Under ordinary circumstances, the darkness would have made it difficult for them to proceed. But, oddly enough, the very thing which forces them to continue their retreat assists them in making it good, the fires on either side being like so many beacon-lights, enabling them to hold a course in mid-water. Thus guided, they run on as between two rows of street lamps, fortunately so far from either that the spread sail escapes being illumined by them. Fortunately, also, on reaching the next narrow, where it would be otherwise seen, there is a mist over the water. Screened by this, they succeed in passing through it unperceived, and enter Darwin Sound just as day is breaking. Here neither fires nor smokes are observed, a proof that they have passed out of the territory of the tribe which had attacked them.

Still, they do not yet seek the shore; the wind is too temptingly in their favour, and with sail up all day they run on into the north-west arm of the Beagle Channel, at length bringing to in a small cove on its southern side.

It is late afternoon when they make a landing; yet they have time to choose a camping-place ere darkness comes on. Not much choice is there, the only available spot being at the inner end of the cove. There a niche in the rocky beach forms a sort of natural boat-dock, large enough to admit the gig to moorings. And on the shore adjacent is the only patch of bare ground visible; at all other points the trees grow to the water’s edge, with overhanging branches.

Confident now that their late pursuers have been shaken off, they determine on making a stay here of at least a day or two. After this long spell of laborious work, with the excitement which accompanied it, they greatly need rest. Besides, all are now very hungry, having had no opportunity of cooking aught since they left the landing-place on the isle.

Where they are now there is no difficulty about fire, fuel being plentiful all about. And while Caesar is preparing the repast, the others transform the boat-sail into a tent, by setting up the oars, trestle-fashion, and resting the mast on them as a ridge-pole.

Having satisfied the cravings of appetite, and completed their arrangements for passing the night, it still lacks an hour of sunset, and with nothing better to be done, they sit by the fire and contemplate the landscape, at which

hitherto they have but glanced. A remarkable landscape it is—picturesque beyond description, and altogether unlike the idea generally entertained of Fuegian scenery. That portion of it which an artist would term the “foreground” is the cove itself, which is somewhat like the shoe of a mule—running about a hundred yards into the land, while less than fifty feet across the mouth. Its shores, rising abruptly from the beach, are wooded with a thick forest, which covers the steep sides of the encircling hills as far as can be seen, and to the water’s edge. The trees, tall and grand, are of three kinds, almost peculiar to Tierra del Fuego. One is a true beech; another, as much birch as beech; the third, an aromatic evergreen of world-wide celebrity—the “Winter’s-bark.” (Note 2.) But there is also a growth of buried underwood, consisting of arbutus, barberry, fuchsias, flowering currants, and a singular fern, also occurring in the island of Juan Fernandez, and resembling the *zamia* of Australia.

The sea-arm on which the cove opens is but little over a mile in width, the shore on its farther side being a sheer cliff, rising hundreds of feet above the water, and indented here and there by deep gorges with thickly-wooded sides. Above the cliff’s crest the slope continues on upward to a mountain ridge of many peaks, one of them a grand cone towering thousands of feet above all the others. That is Mount Darwin, wrapped in a mantle of never-melting snow. Along the intermediate space between the cliff’s crest and the snow-line is a belt of woodland, intersected by what might be taken for streams of water, were it not for their colour. But they are too blue, too noiseless, to be water. Yet, in a way, they are water, for they are glaciers, some of them abutting upon the sea-arm, and filling up the gorges that open upon it with façades as precipitous as that of the cliff itself. There are streams of water also which proceed from the melting of the snow above; cataracts that spout out from the wooded sides of the ravines, their glistening sheen vividly conspicuous amid the greenery of the trees. Two of these curving jets, projected from walls of verdure on opposite sides of a gorge, meet midway, and mingling, fall thence perpendicularly down, changing, long ere they reach the water below, to a column of white spray.

Such is the magnificent panorama spread before the eyes of our castaways, who, despite their forlorn lot, cannot help regarding it with wonder and admiration. Nor is their wonder diminished by what they see and hear close at hand. Little did they expect to find parrots and humming-birds in that high southern latitude; yet a flock of the former chatter above their heads, feeding on the berries of the Winter’s-bark; while numbers of the latter are seen, flitting to and fro, or poised on whirring wings before the bell-shaped blossoms of the fuchsias. (Note 3.) From the deeper recesses of the wood at intervals comes a loud, cackling cry, resembling the laugh of an idiot. It is the call-note of the black woodpecker. And, as if in response to it, a kingfisher, perched on the limb of a dead tree by the beach, now and then utters its shrill, ear-piercing scream.

Other fishing-birds of different species fly hither and thither over the water, now quite tranquil, the wind having died away.

A flock of white pelicans, in pursuit of finny prey, swim about the cove, their eyes looking into the depths, their long pick-axe beaks held ready for a plunge. Then, as a fish is sighted underneath, down go head and neck in a quick dart, soon to be drawn up with the victim writhing between the tips of the mandibles. But the prey is not secured yet. On each pelican attends a number of predatory gulls, wheeling over it in flight, and watching its every movement with a foregone and well-studied intent. For as soon as the fish is brought up, they swoop at it from all points with wild screams and flapping wings; and as the pelican cannot swallow the fish without first tossing it upward, the toss often proves fatal to its purpose. The prey let go, instead of falling back into the water, or down the pouch-like gullet held agape for it, is caught by one or more of the gulls, and those greedy birds continue the fight among themselves, leaving the pelican they have robbed to go diving again.

Night comes on, but not with the darkness anticipated. For still another wonder is revealed to them ere closing their eyes in sleep—the long continuance of twilight, far beyond anything of the kind they have ever experienced, Seagriff excepted. But its cause is known to them; the strange phenomenon being due to the fact that the sun, for some time after it has sunk below the horizon, continues to shine on the glistening ice of the glaciers and the snow of the mountain summits, thus producing a weird luminosity in the heavens, somewhat resembling the Aurora Borealis.

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Note 1. He discovered the Straits, or, more properly, Strait, in 1519. His name is usually given as “Magellan” by French and English writers, the Spaniards making it “Magallanes.” But, as he was a native of Portugal, and Magalhaens is the Portuguese orthography, it should be the one preferred. By sealers and others, Tierra del Fuego is often called “Fireland.” Lady Brassey heard it so called by the settlers at “Sandy Point,” in the Strait.

Note 2. The beeches are the *Fagus Betuloides* and *Fagus Antarchia*. The former partakes also of the character of a birch. It is an evergreen, while the leaves of the other fall off in the autumn. The “Winter’s-bark” (*Drimys Winletii*) is a laurel-like evergreen, which produces an aromatic bark, somewhat resembling cinnamon. It derives its name, not from the season, but from a Captain Winter, who first carried the bark to England in 1579.

Note 3. The Fuegian parrot, or paroquet, is known to naturalists as *Psittacus Imaragdinus*,—the humming-bird as *Melisuga Kingii*. It was long believed that neither parrots nor humming-birds existed in Tierra del Fuego; Buffon, with his usual incorrectness, alleging that the specimens brought from it were taken elsewhere; other learned closet naturalists insisted on the parrots reported to exist there being “sea-parrots” (auks).

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## Chapter Twelve.

### A Catastrophe Not Anticipated.

Another day dawns upon the castaways, with again a bright sun on the horizon; and Ned Gancy and Henry Chester, who have risen early, as they look out over the water, become witnesses of the curious behaviour of another Fuegian fishing-bird—the cormorant.

One of these birds, seemingly regardless of their presence, has come close to the ledge where the boat is lying, and has there caught a fish. But instead of gobbling it up or tearing it to pieces, as might be expected, the captor lets it go again, not involuntarily, but, as soon appears, designedly. The fish, alive and apparently uninjured, makes away through the water; but only for a short distance, ere it is followed by the cormorant and caught afresh. Then it is dropped a second time, and a third time seized, and so on through a series of catchings and surrenderings, just like those of a cat playing with a mouse.

In this case, however, the cruel sport has a different termination, by the cormorant being deprived of the prey it seemed so sure of. Not through the efforts of the fish itself, which now, badly damaged, swims but feebly; nor do the gulls appropriate it, but a wingless biped—no other than Ned Gancy.

“Chester, we shall have that fish for breakfast,” he says, springing to his feet, and hastily stripping for a swim. Then, with a rush over the ledge, he plunges in, sending the cormorant off in affright, and taking possession of the prey it has left behind.

The fish proves to be a species of smelt, over two pounds in weight, and a welcome addition to their now greatly reduced larder.

As they have passed a restful night, all the members of the forlorn little party are up betimes; and soon “the doctor” is bestirring himself about their breakfast, in which the cormorant-caught fish is to play a conspicuous part.

The uprising sun reveals the landscape in a changed aspect, quite different from that seen at its setting, and even more surprisingly picturesque. The snowy mantle of Mount Darwin is no longer pure white, but of hues more attractive—a commingling of rose and gold; while the icicled cliffs on the opposite side of the cove, with the façades of glaciers, show every tint of blue from pale sky to deep beryl, darkening to indigo and purple in the deep sea-water at their bases. It is, or might be called, the iridescence of a land with rocks all opals, and trees all evergreens; for the dulllest verdure here seems vivid by contrast with its icy and snowy surroundings.

“Oh, mamma! isn’t it glorious?” exclaims Leoline, as she looks around upon the wonderful landscape. “It beats Niagara! If I only had my box of colours, I’d make a sketch of it.”

To this outburst of enthusiastic admiration, the mother responds with but a faint smile. The late danger, from which they have had such a narrow escape, still gravely affects her spirits; and she dreads its recurrence, despite all assurances to the contrary. For she knows they are but founded on hope, and that there may be other tribes of cruel and hostile savages to be encountered. Even Seagriff still appears apprehensive, else why should he be looking so anxiously out over the water? Seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, pipe in mouth, he sends up wreathing curls of smoke among the branches of the Winter’s-bark overhead. But he is not smoking tranquilly, as is his wont, but in short, quick puffs, while the expression on his features, habitually firm, tells of troubled thought.

“What are you gazing at, Chips?” questions Captain Gancy, who has noticed his uneasy look.

“At that glasheer, Captin’. The big ‘un derect in front of us.”

“Well, what of it?”

“Tears to me it bulges out beyond the line o’ the cliff more’n we mout like it to. Please let me have a squint at it through the glass. My eyes aren’t wuth much agin the dazzle o’ all that ice an’ snow.”

“By all means. Take the glass, if that will help you,” says the Captain, handing him the binocular, but secretly wondering why he wishes to examine the glacier so minutely, and what there is in the mass of blue congelation to be troubled about. But nothing further is said, he and all the rest remaining silent, so as not to interfere with Seagriff’s observation. Not without apprehension, however, do they await the result, as the old sealer’s words and manner indicate plainly that something is amiss.

And their waiting is for a short while only. Almost on the instant of getting the glacier within his field of view, Seagriff cries out, “Jest as I sursepted! The end o’ the ice air fur out from the rock,—ten or fifteen fathoms, I should say!”

“Well, and if it is,” rejoins the skipper, “what does that signify to us?”

“A mighty deal, Captin’. Thet air, surposin’ it should snap off *jest now*. An’ sech a thing wouldn’t be unusual. I wonder we haven’t seed the like afore now, runnin’ past so many glasheers ez we hev. Cewrus, too, our not comin’ acrost a berg yet. I guess the ice’s not melted sufficient for ‘em to break away.”

But now an appetising odour more agreeable to their nostrils than the perfume of the fuchsias, or the aromatic fragrance of the Winter’s-bark, admonishes them of breakfast being served; the doctor likewise soon proclaiming it. And so for a time the glacier is forgotten.

But after the meal has been dispatched, it again becomes the subject of discourse, as the old sealer once more begins to regard it through the glass with evident apprehension.

“It ‘ud seem beyond the possibility of belief,” he says, “thet them conglomerations uv ice, hard froze an’ lookin’ ez tight fixed ez a mainstay, for all thet hev a downward slitherin’ motion, jest like a stream o’ water, tho’ in course thousands or millions o’ times slower.”

“Oh! that’s well understood,” asserts the skipper, acquainted with the latest theory of glacier movement.

“So it may be, Captin’,” pursues Seagriff; “but thar’s somethin’ ‘bout these breakin’ off an’ becomin’ bergs ez ain’t so well understood, I reckon; leastways, not by l’arned men. The cause of it air well enough know’d ‘mong the seal-

fishers ez frequent these soun's an' channels."

"What is the cause, Chips?" asked young Gancy, like all the others, interested in the subject of conversation.

"Wall, it's this, Mister Ned. The sea-water bein' warmer than the ice, melts the glasheer when thar's high-tide, an' the eend of it dips under; then at low tide,—bein', so to speak, *undermined*, an' not havin' the water to rest on,—it naterally sags down by its own weight, an' snaps off, ez ye'll all easily understand."

"Oh! we quite understand," is the universal response, every one satisfied with the old sealer's explanation as to the origin of icebergs.

"How I should like to see one launched," exclaims Leoline; "that big one over there, for instance. It would make such a big plunge! Wouldn't it, Mr Chips?"

"Yes, Miss, sech a plunge thet ef this child tho't thar was any likelihood of it comin' loose from its moorin's while we're hyar, he wouldn't be smokin' his pipe so contented. Jest look at thet boat."

"The boat! what of her?" asks the skipper, in some apprehension, at length beginning to comprehend the cause of Seagriff's uneasiness.

"Wall, Captin', ef yon glasheer war to give off a berg, any sort of a big 'un, it mout be the means o' leavin' us 'ithout any boat at all."

"But how?"

"How? Why, by swampin' or smashin' the only one we've got, the which—"

"Thunder an' airthquakes! See yonder! The very thing we're talkin' 'bout, I vow!"

No need for him to explain his words and excited exclamations. All know what has called them forth: the berg is snapping off. All see the breaking up and hear the crash, loud as the discharge of a ship's broadside or a peal of thunder, till at length, though tardily, they comprehend the danger, as their eyes rest on a stupendous roller, as high as any sea the *Calypso* had ever encountered, coming toward them across the strait.

"To the boat!" shouts Seagriff, making down the bank, with all the men after him. They reach the landing before the roller breaks upon it, but, alas! to no purpose. Beach, to draw the boat up on, there is none, only the rough ledge of rocks; and the only way to raise it on this would be to lift it bodily out of the water, which cannot be done. For all that, they clutch hold of it, with determined grip, around the edge of the bow. But their united strength will prove as nothing against that threatening swell. For the roller, entering the confined water of the cove, has increased in height, and comes on with more tempestuous surge. Their effort proves futile, and nigh worse than futile to Henry Chester. For, as the boat is whisked out of their hands and swung up fathoms high, the English youth, heedless of Seagriff's shout, "Let go!" hangs on, bulldog-like, and is carried up along with her.

The others have retreated up the slope, beyond reach of the wave which threatens to bear him off in its backward flow. Seeing his danger, all cry out in alarm; and the voice of Leoline is heard above, crying out to her mother, "Oh! Henry is lost."

But no, Henry is not lost. Letting go before the boat comes down again, with a vigorous bound backward the agile youth heads the roller, getting well up the bank ere it washes over him. Wash over him it does, but only drenches him; for he has flung his arms around a barberry-bush, and holds it in firm embrace; so firm and fast that, when the water has surged back, he is still seen clinging to it—safe. But by the same subsidence the boat is dashed away, the keel striking on some rocks with a harsh sound, which tells of damage, if not total destruction. Still it floats, drifting outward, and for a while all seems well with it. Believing it to be so, the two youths rush to the tent, and each



HENRY CHESTER IN DANGER.

snatching an oar from it, prepare to swim out and bring the boat back. But before they can enter the water, a voice tells them their hope is vain, Captain Gancy himself calling out, "It's no use, boys! The



gig's got a hole in its bottom, and is going down. Look!"

They do look, and they see that the boat is doomed. Only for an instant are their eyes upon it, before it is seen no more, having "bilged" and gone under, leaving but bubbles to mark the place of its disappearance.

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## Chapter Thirteen.

### A Change of Quarters determined on.

No greater calamity than the loss of their boat could have overtaken the castaways, save losing life itself. It has made them castaways in the fullest sense of the word, as much as if left boatless on a desert isle in mid-ocean. Their situation is desperate, indeed, though for a time they scarce realise it. How can they, in so lovely a spot, teeming with animal life, and Nature, as it were, smiling around them? But the old sealer knows all that will soon be changed, experience reminding him that the brief bright summer will ere long be succeeded by dark dreary winter, with rain, sleet, and snow almost continuously. Then no food will be procurable, and to stay where they are would be to starve. Captain Gancy also recalls the attempts at colonising Tierra del Fuego, notably that made by Sarmiento at Port Famine in the Magellan Straits, where his whole colony, men, women, and children—nearly three hundred souls—miserably perished by starvation; and where, too, the lamented missionary, Gardner, with all his companions, succumbed to a similar fate. (Note 1.) The Captain remembers reading, too, that these colonists had at the start ample store of provisions, with arms and ammunition to defend themselves, and renew their stores. If *they* could not maintain life in Tierra del Fuego, what chance is there for a party of castaways, without weapons, and otherwise unfitted for prolonged sojourn in a savage land? Even the natives, supplied with perfect implements for fishery and the chase, and skilled in their use, have often a hard, and at times an unsuccessful struggle for existence. Darwin thus speaks of it:

"The inhabitants, living chiefly upon shell-fish, are obliged constantly to change their place of residence, but return at intervals to the same spot.—At night five or six of them, unprotected from the wind and rain of this tempestuous climate, sleep on the wet ground, coiled up like animals. Whenever it is low-water, they must rise to pick shell-fish from the rocks, and the women, winter and summer, either dive to collect sea-eggs, or sit patiently in their canoes, and with a baited hair-line jerk out small fish. If a seal is killed, or the floating carcass of a dead whale discovered, it is a feast. Such miserable food is assisted by a few tasteless berries and fungi. Nor are they exempt from famine, and, as a consequence, cannibalism, accompanied by parricide."

The old seal-fisher, familiar with these facts, keeps them to himself, though knowing the truth will in time reveal itself to all.

They get an inkling of it that very day, when the "doctor," proceeding to cook dinner, reports upon the state of the larder, in which there is barely the wherewithal for another meal. Nearly all the provisions brought away from the barque were in the gig, and are doubtless in it still—at the bottom of the sea. So the meal is eaten in a somewhat despondent mood, as after it little will remain for the morrow.

They get into better spirits soon after, however, on finding that Nature has furnished them with an ample store of provisions for the present, near at hand. Prospecting among the trees, they discover an edible fungus, known to sealers as the "beech-apple," from its being a parasite of the beech. It is about the size and shape of a small orange, and is of a bright yellow colour. When ripe it becomes honeycombed over the surface, and has a slightly sweetish taste, with an odour somewhat like that of a morel mushroom, to which it is allied. It can be eaten raw, and is so eaten by the Fuegian natives, with whom, for a portion of the year, it is the staple article of subsistence.

The castaways find large numbers of this valuable plant adhering to the birch-beeches—more than enough for present needs; while two species of fruit are also available as food—the berries of the arbutus and barberry.

Still, notwithstanding this plentitude of supply, the castaways make up their minds to abandon their present encampment, for a reason that becomes apparent soon after they see themselves boatless.

"There's no use in our stayin' longer hyar," says Seagriff, who first counsels a change of quarters. "Ef a vessel should chance to pass along outside, we couldn't well be in a worse place fur signalling or gettin' sighted by her. We'd hev but the ghost of a chance to be spied in sech a sercluded corner. Ther'fore we ought to cl'ar out of it, an' camp somewhar on the edge o' the open shore."

"In that I agree with you, Chips," responds the Captain, "and we may as well move at once."

"Thet's true, sir, ef we *could* move at oncet. But we can't—leastways not to-day."

"Why not?"

"It's too nigh night; we wouldn't hev time to git to the outer shore," explained the carpenter.

"Why, there's an hour of daylight yet, or more!"

"Thet's cl'ar enough, Captin'. But ef thar were two hours o' daylight, or twice thet, it wouldn't be enough."

"I don't understand you, Chips. The distance can't be more than two or three hundred yards."

"Belike it aren't more. But for all that, it'll take us the half of a day, ef not longer, to cover it."

"How so?" queried the skipper.

"Wal, the how is thet we can't go by the beach; thar bein' no beach. At the mouth o' the cove it's all cliff, right down to the water. I noticed thet as we war puttin' inter it. Not a strip o' strand at the bottom broad enough fur a seal to bask on. We'll hev to track it up over the hills, an' thet'll take no end o' time, an' plenty o' toilin', too—ye'll see, Captin'."

"I suppose, then, we must wait for morning," is the skipper's rejoinder, after becoming satisfied that no practicable path leads out of the cove between land and water.

This constrains them to pass another night on the spot that has proved so disastrous, and the morning after, to eat another meal upon it—the last they intend tasting there. A meagre repast it is; but their appetites are now on keen edge, all the keener from the supply of food being stunted. For by one of nature's perverse contrarities, men feel hunger most when without the means of satisfying it, and most thirsty when no water can be had. It is the old story of distant skies looking brightest, and far-off fields showing greenest—the very difficulty of obtaining a thing whetting the desire to possess it, as a child craves some toy, that it soon ceases to care for when once in its possession. No such philosophic reflections occupy the thoughts of the castaways. All they think of, while at their scanty meal, is to get through with it as speedily as possible, and away from the scene of their disaster.

The breakfast over, the tent is taken down, the boat-sail folded into the most portable form, with mast, oars, and everything made ready for overland transport. They have even apportioned the bundles, and are about to begin the uphill climb, when, lo! the *Fuegians!*

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Note 1. There is now a colony in the Straits of Magellan, not far from Port Famine, at Sandy Point—the "Punta de Arenas" of the old Spanish navigators. The colony is Chilian, and was established as a penal settlement, though it is now only nominally so. The population is about fourteen hundred.

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## Chapter Fourteen.

### A Fuegian Fish-Hunt.

Yes, the savages are once more in sight, a canoe-full of them just appearing around the point of the cliff, closely followed by another, and another, till four are under view in front of the cove. They are as yet far out on the sea-arm; but as they have come along it from the west, the castaways suppose them to be some of their late assailants, still persistently continuing the pursuit.

But no! Captain Gancy, quickly sighting through his binocular, declares them different—at least, in their array. They are not all men, more than half being women and children, while no warlike insignia can be discerned—neither white feathers nor chalked faces.

Seagriff, in turn taking the glass, further makes out that the men have fish-spears in their hands, and an implement he recognises as a *fizgig*, while the heads of dogs appear over the gunwales of the canoes, nearly a dozen in each.

"It's a fishin' party," he pronounces. "For all thet, we'd best make a hide of it; thar's no trustin' 'em, anyway, so long as they think they hev the upper hand. A good thing our fire has gone out, else they'd 'a' spied it afore this. An' lucky the bushes be in front, or they'd see us now. Mebbe they'll pass on along the arm, an'— No! they're turnin' in toward the cove!"

This can be told by the apparent shortening of the canoes, as they are brought head around toward the inlet.

Following the old sealer's advice, earnestly urged, all slip back among the trees, the low-hanging branches of which afford a screen for concealment like a closed curtain. The bundles are taken away, and the camp-ground is cleared of everything likely to betray its having been lately occupied by white people. All this they are enabled to do without being seen by the savages, a fringe of evergreens between the camp-ground and the water effectually masking their movements.

"But shouldn't we go farther up?" says the skipper, interrogating Seagriff. "Why not keep on over the hill?"

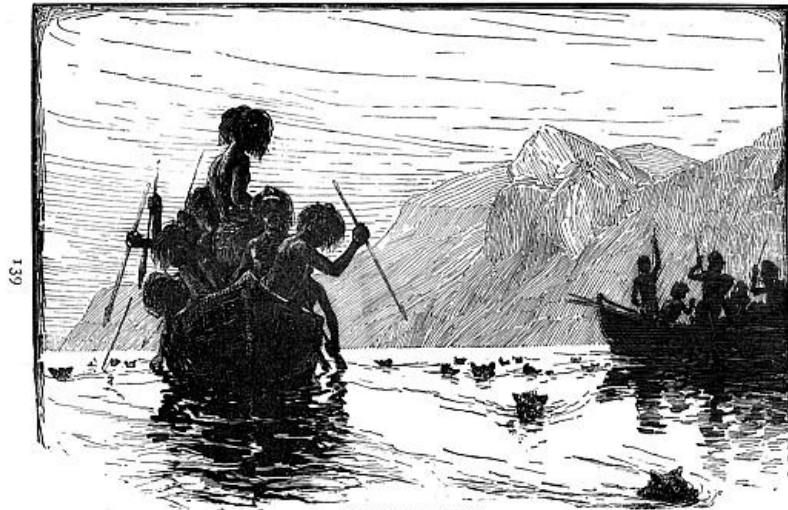
"No, Captin'; we mustn't move from hyar. We couldn't, 'ithout makin' sech a racket ez they'd be sure to hear. Besides, thar's bare spots above, whar they mout sight us from out on the water; an' ef they did, distance wouldn't sarve us a bit. The Feweebins kin climb up the steepest places, like squir'ls up a tree. Once seen by 'em, we'd stan' no chance with 'em in a run. Ther'fore, we'd better abide quietly hyar. Mebbe, arter all, they mayn't come ashore. 'Tain't one o' thar landin'-places or we'd 'a' foun' traces of 'em. The trees would 'a' been barked all about. Oh, I see what they're up to now. A fish-hunt—surround wi' thar dogs. Thet's thar bizness in the cove."

By this, the four canoes have arrived at the entrance to the inlet, and are forming in line across it at equal distances from one another, as if to bar the way against anything that may attempt to pass outward. Just such is their design, the fish being what they purpose enfilading.

At sight of them and the columns of ascending smoke, the pelicans and other fishing-birds take flight in a chorus of screams, some to remain soaring overhead, others flying altogether out of sight. The water is left without a ripple, and so clear that the spectators on shore, from their elevated point of view, can see to its bottom, all around the shore where it is shallow. They now observe fish of several sorts swimming affrightedly to and fro, and see them as plainly as through the glass walls of an aquarium.

Soon the fish-hunters, having completed their "cordon," and dropped the dogs overboard, come on up the cove, the

women plying the paddles, the men with javelins upraised, ready for darting. The little foxy dogs swim abreast of and between the canoes, driving the fish before them, as sheep-dogs drive sheep, one or another diving under at intervals to intercept such as attempt to escape outward. For in the translucent water they can see the fish far ahead, and, trained to the work, they keep guard against a break from these through the enclosing line. Soon the fish are forced up to the inner end of the cove, where it is shoalest, and then the work of slaughter commences. The dusky fishermen, standing in the canoes and bending over, now to this side, now that, plunge down their spears and



A FUEGIAN FISH-HUNT.

fizgigs, rarely failing to bring up a fish of one sort or another; the struggling victim shaken off into the bottom of the canoe, there gets its death-blow from the boys.

For nearly an hour the curious aquatic chase is carried on, not in silence, but amid a chorus of deafening noises—the shouts of the savages and the barking and yelping of their dogs mingling with the shrieking of the seabirds overhead. And thrice is the cove “drawn” by the canoes, which are taken back to its mouth, the line re-formed, and the process repeated till a good supply of the fish best worth catching has been secured.

And now the spectators of the strange scene await with dread anticipation the approaching crisis. Will the savage fishermen come ashore, or go off without landing? In the former event, the castaways have small hope of remaining undiscovered. True, they are well concealed, not an inch of face or person is exposed; the captain and Seagriff alone are cautiously doing the vidette duty. Still, should the Fuegians come on shore, it must be at the ledge of rocks where of late lay the boat, the only possible beaching-place, and not half a stone’s throw from the spot where they are concealed.

“The thing we’ve most to be afeerd of is thar dogs,” mutters Seagriff. “Ef they should land, the little curs’ll be sure to scent us. An’—sakes alive!—what’s that?”

The final exclamation, though involuntarily uttered aloud, is not heard, even by those standing beside him. Had it been the loudest shout it could not have been distinguished amid the noise that called forth and accompanied it, for it is drowned by the noise that called it forth. A thundering crash, followed by a loud crackling which continues for several seconds, and during its continuance drowning all other sounds. There is no mystery about it, however; it is but a falling tree—the one behind which “the doctor” had been standing, his hands pressed against it for support. Yielding to curiosity, he had been peering around its trunk contrary to orders, a disobedience that has cost him dear; for, as if in punishment, his bulky body has gone along with the tree, face foremost, and far down the slope.

Lost to sight in the cloud of dust that has puffed up over it, all believe him killed, crushed, buried amid the *débris* of shattered branches. But no! In a trice he is seen on his feet again coming out of the dust-cloud, no longer with a black skin, but chocolate-brown all over, woolly pate and clothing included, as though he had been for days buried in tan-bark! sneezing too, with violence. It is a spectacle to make the most sober-sided laugh, but the occasion is not one for merriment. All are too alarmed for that now, feeling sure of being discovered by the savages. How can it be otherwise, after such a catastrophe—nature itself, as it were, betraying them?

Yet to their pleased surprise it proves otherwise, and on the dust settling down, they see the savages still in their canoes, with not a face turned toward the land, none, at least, seeming to heed what has happened. The old sealer, however, is not surprised at their indifference, guessing its cause. He knows that in the weird forests of Tierra del Fuego there is many a tree standing, to all appearance sound in trunk, branches, everything, yet rotten from bark to heartwood, and ready to topple over at the slightest touch, even if but a gun be rested against it. The fall of such trees being a thing of common occurrence, and the natives accustomed to it, they never give it a second thought. The fishers in the canoes have not heeded it, while the sneezing of Caesar has been unheard by them amid the noises made by themselves, their dogs, and the shrieking seabirds still in full *fracas* overhead.

In the end, the very thing by which the castaways feared betrayal proves their salvation; for the Fuegians do land at length, and on the ledge. But, luckily, they do not stay on shore for any great time—only long enough to make partition of their spoil and roughly clean the fish. By good luck, also, the bits of fish thrown to them fully engage the attention of the dogs, which otherwise would have strayed inland, and so have come upon the party in hiding.

But perhaps the best instance of favouring fortune is the tree pushed down by “the doctor,” this having fallen right over the ground of the abandoned camp, and covered under a mass of rotten wood and dust the place where the tent stood, the fire-hearth, half-consumed faggots, everything. But for this well-timed obliteration, the sharp-eyed savages could not have failed to note the traces of its recent occupancy. As it is, they have no suspicion either of that or of the proximity of those who occupied it, so much engrossed are they with the product of their fish-hunt, a catch

unusually large.

Still, the apprehensions of the concealed spectators are not the less keen, and to them it is a period of dread, irksome suspense, emphatically a *mauvais quart d'heure*. But, fortunately, it lasts not much longer. To their unspeakable delight, they at length see the savages bundle back into their canoes, and, pushing off, paddle away out of the cove.

As the last boat-load of them disappears around the point of rocks, Captain Gancy fervently exclaims, "Again we may thank the Lord for deliverance!"

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## Chapter Fifteen.

### A Rough Overland Route.

As soon as they are convinced that the canoes are gone for good, Seagriff counsels immediate setting out on the journey so unexpectedly delayed. It is now noon, and it may be night ere they reach their destination. So says he, an assertion that seems strange, as he admits the distance may be but a few hundred yards, certainly not over a mile.

They are about taking up their bundles to start, when a circumstance arises that causes further delay; this time, however, a voluntary and agreeable one. In a last glance given to the cove ere leaving it, two flocks of gulls are seen, each squabbling about something that floats on the surface of the water. Something white, which proves to be a dead fish, or rather a couple of them, which have been overlooked by the hunter-fishermen. They are too large for the gulls to lift and carry away; hence a crowd of the birds are buffeting their wings in conflict above them.

"A bit of rare good luck for us!" cries young Gancy, dropping a pair of oars he has shouldered. "Come, Harry! we'll go a-fishing, too."

The English youth takes the hint, and, without another word, both rush down to the water's edge, where, stripping off coats, shoes, and other *impedimenta*, they plunge in.

In a few seconds the fish are reached and secured, to the great grief and anger of the gulls, who, now screaming furiously, wheel round the heads of the swimmers until they are on shore again.

Worth all their trouble is the spoil retrieved, as the fish prove to be a species of mullet, each of them over six pounds in weight.

Now assured of having something to eat at the end of their journey, they set out in much better spirits. But they make not many steps—if steps they can be called—before discovering the difficulties at which the old sealer has hinted, saying, "ye'll see." Steps, indeed! Their progress is more a sprawl than a walk; a continuous climb and scramble over trunks of fallen trees, many so decayed as to give way under their weight, letting them down to their armpits in a mass of sodden stuff, as soft as mud, and equally bedaubing. Even if disposed, they could no longer laugh at the cook's changed colour, all of them now showing much the same.

But no place could be less incentive to laughter than that which they are in. The humid atmosphere around them has a cold, clammy feel, and the light is no better than shadowy twilight. A weird, unearthly silence pervades it, only broken by the harsh twitter of a diminutive bird—a species of creeper—that keeps them company on the way, the dismal *woo-woo-a* of an owl, and, at intervals, the rattling call-note of the Fuegian woodpecker. The last, though laugh-like in itself, is anything but provocative of mirth in those who listen to it, knowing that it is a sound peculiar to the loneliest, gloomiest recesses of the forests.

After toiling up the steep acclivity for nearly two hours, they arrive at a point where the tall timber abruptly ends. There are trees beyond—beeches, like the others, but so dwarfed and stunted as to better deserve the name of



A FATIGUING WALK THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH.

bushes. Bushes of low growth, but of ample spread; for in height, less than twenty inches, while their branches extend horizontally to more than that number of

feet! They are as thickly branched as the box-edging of a garden walk, and so interwoven with several species of shrubs—*arbutus*, *berberis*, *chamatis*, *donaria*, and *escalonia*—as to present a smooth matted surface, seemingly that of the ground itself, under a close-cropped sward.

Mistaking it for this, the two young men, who are in the lead, glad at having escaped from the gloom of the forest with its many obstructions, gleefully strike out into what they believe to be open ground, only to find their belief a delusion, and the path as difficult as ever. For now it is over the tops of growing trees instead of the trunks of fallen ones, both alike impracticable. Every now and then their feet break through and become entangled, their trousers are torn and their shins scratched by the thorns of the *berberries*.

The others, following, fare a little better, from being forewarned, and proceeding with greater caution. But for all it is a troublesome march, calling for agility. Now a quick rush, as if over thin ice or a treacherous quagmire; anon, a trip-up and tumble, with a spell of floundering before feet can be recovered.

Fortunately, the belt of Lilliputian forest is of no great breadth, and beyond it, higher up, they come upon firmer ground, nearly bare of vegetation, which continues to the summit of the ridge.

Reaching this at length, they get a scenic view of "Fireland," grander than any yet revealed to them. Mountains to the north, mountains to the south, east, and west; mountains piled on mountains all around, of every form and altitude. There are domes, cones, and pyramids; ridges with terraced sides and table-tops; peaks, spires, and castellated pinnacles, some of them having resemblance to artificial masonwork, as if of Titans! In the midst of this picturesque conglomeration, towering conspicuously above all, as a giant over ordinary men, is the snow-cone of Mount Darwin, on the opposite side of the strait, fit mate for Sarmiento, seen in the same range, north-westward. Intersecting the mountain chains, and trending in every direction, are deep ravine-like valleys, some with sloping sides thickly-wooded, others presenting façades of sheer cliffs, with rocks bare and black. Most of them are narrow, dark, and dismal, save where illumined by glaciers, from whose glistening surface of milky-white and beryl-blue the sun's rays are vividly reflected. Nor are they valleys at all, but are arms of the sea, straits, sounds, channels, bays, inlets, many of them with water as deep as the ocean itself. Of every conceivable shape and trend are they; so ramifying and communicating with one another, that Tierra del Fuego, long supposed to be a mainland, is but an archipelago of islands closely clustered together.

From their high point of view on the ridge's crest, the castaways see a reach of water wider than the sea-arm immediately beneath them, of which, however, it is a continuation. It extends eastward beyond the verge of vision, all the way straight as an artificial canal, and so like one in other ways as to suggest the idea of having been dug by the same Titans who did the masonwork on the mountains. It occupies the entire attention of Seagriff, who, looking along it toward the east, at length says, "Thet's the Beagle Channel; the way we were to hev gone but fur the swampin' of our boat. An' to think we'd 'a' been runnin' 'long it now, 'nstead o' stannin' helpless hyar! Jest our luck!"

To his bitter reflection no one makes response. Captain Gancy is too busy with his binocular, examining the shores of the sea-arm, while the others, fatigued by their long arduous climb, are seated upon rocks at some distance off, resting.

After a time the skipper, re-slinging his glass, makes known the result of his observation, saying, "I can see nothing of the canoes anywhere. Probably they've put into some other cove along shore to the westward. At all events, we may as well keep on down."

And down they go, the descent proving quicker and easier than the ascent. Not that the path is less steep or beset with fewer obstructions, but their tumbles are now all in the right direction, with no backward slidings. Forward falls they have and many; every now and then a wild up-throwing of arms ends with a fall at full length upon the face. They succeed, however, in reaching the water's edge again without serious injury received by any, though all are looking very wet, draggled, and dirty.

At the place where they have now reached the beach, there is a slight curving indentation in the shore-line; not enough to be called a bay, nor to interfere with their chance of being seen by any ship that may pass along the strait. It might be supposed they would choose the most conspicuous point for their new encampment. But their choice is influenced by other considerations; chief of these being the fact that near the centre of the curve they find a spot altogether suited to their purpose—a little platform, high and dry, itself clear of trees, but surrounded and sheltered by them.

That they are not the first human beings to set foot on it is evinced by the skeleton of a wigwam found standing there, while on the beach below is a heap of shells recognisable as a "kitchen midden." (Note 1.) These evidences of former occupancy also proclaim it of old date. The floor of the wigwam is overgrown with grass and weeds, while the shell-heap is also covered with greenery, the growth upon it being wild celery and scurvy-grass, two species of plants that give promise of future utility. Like promise is there in another object near at hand—a bed of kelp, off shore, just opposite, marking a reef, the rocks of which will evidently be bare at ebb-tide. From this shell-fish may be taken, as they have been before, being, no doubt, the *raison d'être* of the wigwam and "kitchen midden."

In addition to these advantages, the beech-apples and berries are as plentiful here as at the encampment in the cove, with still another species found not far-off. At the western extremity of the indentation a slightly elevated ridge projects out into the water, treeless, but overgrown with bushes of low stature, which are thickly covered with what at a distance appear to be bunches of red blossoms, but on closer inspection prove to be berries—*cranberries*.

*Per contra* to all these advantages, other indications about the place are not so pleasing. The wigwam tells of their still being in the territory of the hostile tribe from which they so miraculously escaped.

"Ailikoleep!" is the exclamation of Seagriff, as soon as he sets eyes on it; "we're in the country o' the rascally savagers yit!"

"How do you know that?" inquires the skipper.

"By the build o' thet wigwam, an' the bulk of it. Ez ye see, it's roun'-topped, whereas them o' the Tekineekers, an' other Feweegins, run up to a sharp p'int, besides bein' bigger an' roomier. Thar's another sign, too, of its bein' Ailikoleep. They kiver thar wigwams wi' seal-skins, 'stead o' grass, which the Tekineekas use. Ef this hed been thatched wi' grass, we'd see some o' the rubbish inside, an' the floor 'd be hollered out—which it's not. Yes, the folks that squatted hyar hev been Ailikoleeps. But 'tain't no surprise to me, ez I heern some words pass 'mong the fishin' party, which show'd 'em to be thet same. Wal," he continues, more hopefully, "thar's one good thing: they haven't set fut on this groun' fur a long while, which air some airnest o' thar hevin' gi'n the place up fur good. Those dead woods tell o' thar last doin's about hyar."

He points to some trees standing near, dead, and with most of the bark stripped from their trunks.

"They've peeled 'em fur patchin' thar canoes, an' by the look of it, thet barkin' was done more'n three years ago."

What he says does little to restore confidence. The fact of the fishing party having been Ailikoleeps is too sure evidence that danger is still impending. And such danger! It only needs recalling the late attack—the fiendish aspect of the savages, with their furious shouts and gestures, the darting of javelins and hurling of stones—to fully realise what it is. With that fearful episode fresh in their thoughts, the castaways require no further counsel to make them cautious in their future movements.

The first of them is the pitching their tent, which is set up so as to be screened from view of any canoe passing along the sea-arm; and for their better accommodation, the wigwam is re-roofed, as it, too, is invisible from the water. No fire is to be made during daylight, lest its smoke should betray them; and when kindled at night for cooking purposes, it must be done within the wood, whence not a glimmer of it may escape outward. A lookout is to be constantly kept through the glass by one or another taking it in turns, to look out, not alone for enemies, but for friends—for that ship which they still hope may come along the Beagle Channel.

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Note 1. These shell-heaps, or "kitchen middens," are a feature of Fuegian scenery. They are usually found wherever there is a patch of shore level enough to land upon; but the beach opposite a bed of kelp is the place where the largest are met with. In such situations the skeletons of old wigwams are also encountered, as the Fuegians, on deserting them, always leave them standing, probably from some superstitious feeling.

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## Chapter Sixteen.

### By the "Kitchen Midden."

The programme determined on is carried out to the letter. But as the days pass, and no ship appears, their impatience becomes despondency—almost despair. Yet this is for the best, as it strengthens a resolution already in their thoughts, but not finally decided upon. This is to build a boat. Nor, in this case, is necessity—mother of invention—the sole impelling influence. Other circumstances aid in suggesting the scheme, because they favour its execution. There is timber in plenty on the spot, needing only to be hewn into shape and put together. The oars, mast, and sail are already on hand; but, above all, Chips is a ship's carpenter, capable of turning out any sort of craft, from a dinghy to the biggest of long-boats.

All these advantages taken into account, the task is set about without further hesitation, and hopefully. A great drawback, however, is their not being provided with proper tools. They have only a common wood-axe, a hand-saw, hammer, auger, and their sailor-knives; nor would they be so well off but for having had them on shore during their brief sojourn in the cove. Other tools left in the gig are doubtless in her still.

Doing their best with those on hand, the axe is first brought into play, the negro being the one to wield it. In early life he has cut down many a tree on the banks of the Mississippi, hundreds bigger than any to be found in the Fuegian forests. So with a confident air he attacks the tree which Seagriff points out to be felled first, saying, "Dis nigger fetch it down quick as de shake ob a nanny-goat's tail, see if him don't."

And he proceeds to confirm his boast by a vigorous assault upon the tree, a beech, one of those that have been barked. This circumstance, too, is in their favour, and saves them time, for the barked trees having been long dead, their timber is now dry and seasoned, ready for working up at once. But caution is called for in selecting those to be cut down. Were they taken indiscriminately, much of Caesar's labour might be thrown away; for, as has been said, many of the trees are heart-decayed, without showing outward sign of it, the result of an ever-humid atmosphere. Aware of this, Chips tries each one by tapping it with the auger before Caesar lays his axe to it. (Note 1.)

For days after, the chipping strokes of the axe, with the duller thuds of wood mallets on wedges, awaken echoes in the Fuegian forest such as may never have been heard there before. When felled, the trunks are cut to the proper length, and then split into rough planks by means of wedges, and are afterwards smoothed with the knives.

With such insufficient tools, the work is necessarily slow, and is still further retarded by another requirement, food, which has meanwhile to be procured. The supply, however, proves less precarious than was anticipated, the kelp-bed yielding an unlimited amount of shell-fish. Daily at ebb-tide, when the rocks are uncovered, the two youths swim out to it and bring off a good number of limpets and mussels; they also continue to catch other fish, and now and then a calf seal is clubbed, which affords a change of diet, a delicate one, too, the fry of the young seal being equal to that of lamb. The scurvy-grass and wild celery, moreover, enable "the doctor" to turn out more than one variety of soup.

But for the still pervading fear of a visit from the savages, and other anxieties about the future, their existence would

be tolerable, if not enjoyable. It is in no way monotonous, constant work in the construction of the boat, with other tasks, securing them against that; and, in such intervals of leisure as they have, kind Nature here, as elsewhere, treats them to many a curious spectacle. One is afforded by the "steamer-duck," (Note 2) a bird of commonest occurrence in Fuegian waters; it is of the genera of Oceanic ducks or geese, having affinity with both. It is of gigantic size, specimens having been taken over three feet in length and weighing thirty pounds. It has an enormous head—hence one of its names, Loggerhead duck—with a hard powerful beak for smashing open the shells of molluscs, which form its principal food. Its wings are so short and weak that flight in the air is denied it. Still it uses them effectually in flapping, which, aided by the beating of its broad webbed feet, upon stout legs set far back on the body, enables it to skim over the surface of the water at the rate of fifteen miles an hour! In its progress, says Darwin, "it makes such a noise and splashing that the effect is exceedingly curious." The great naturalist further states that he is "nearly sure the steamer-duck moves its wings alternately, instead of both together, as other birds move theirs." It is needless to say that it is from this propulsion by its wings, like the paddles of a steam-vessel, that the bird has derived the name by which it is now best known. But it has even yet another, or had in those days when steam was unknown, the old navigators of Narborough's time calling it the Racehorse, by reason of its swiftness. A flock habitually frequents the kelp-bed, so that the boat-builders have them almost continuously before their eyes, and derive amusement from watching their odd ways and movements; listening also to the strange sounds that proceed from them. At ebb-tide, when the rocks are above water, the steamers assemble on them, and, having finished their repast of shell-fish, sit pluming themselves, all the while giving utterance to a chorus of noises that more resembles the croaking of bull-frogs than the calling of birds. They are shy notwithstanding, both difficult to approach and hard to kill, the last on account of their strong bony skulls and dense coat of feathers. But no one much cares to kill them; their flesh tasting so rank and fishy, that the man must be hungry who could eat, much less relish it. Withal, sailors who have been for months on a diet of "salt junk," not only eat, but pronounce it highly palatable.

Seals are observed every day; on one occasion a seal-mother giving a curious display of maternal solicitude in teaching her calf to swim. First taking hold of it by the flipper, and for a while supporting it above water, with a shove she sends the youngster adrift, leaving it to shift for itself. In a short time the little creature becomes exhausted; she takes a fresh grip on its flipper, and again supports it till it has recovered breath, after which there is another push off, followed by a new attempt to swim, the same process being several times repeated to the end of the lesson.

A still rarer and more remarkable spectacle is furnished by a couple of whales. One calm clear morning, with the water of the strait waveless and smooth as a mirror, two of these grand cetaceans are seen swimming along, one in the wake of the other, and so close in shore that they might almost be reached with the boat-hook. As they swim past the spot where the boat-builders are at work, they, from their elevated position, can look down on their spout-holes, and even see them wink! The huge creatures, slowly gliding on, pass under a beech-tree growing by the water's edge, so near that their heads are almost brushed by its drooping branches. While still beneath it one of them blows, sending aloft a spout that, returning in a shower of spray, falls upon the leaves with a pattering as of heavy rain.

Soon after, sheering off into mid-channel, and continuing their course, they blow again and again, each steam-like spray, with the sun upon it, showing like a silvery cloud, which hangs in the air for more than a minute ere becoming altogether dissipated.

The marine monsters have come along the arm from the west, and are proceeding eastward—no doubt making the traverse from ocean to ocean, in the same direction as the castaways propose to go, if permitted to finish their boat. But will they be permitted? That is the ever-recurring question, and constant cause of uneasiness. Their anxiety about it becomes even keener as the time passes, and their task draws nearer completion. For, although weeks have now elapsed since the departure of the fishing party, and nothing more has been seen of them or any other savages, nor have any fires been visible at night, nor any smoke by day—still the Fuegians may appear at any moment; and their fears on this score are not diminished by what Seagriff says in giving the probable reason for their non-appearance:

"I guess they've gone out seaward, along the west coast, seal-huntin'. The old seals are tamer at this seezun than any other, an' easier stolen upon. But the year's on the turn now, an' winter's settin' in; therefur, we may look out any minute for the ugly critters comin' soon. Ef we only hed the boat finished an' afloat! How I wish she was in the water now!"

As all wish the same, there is no relaxation of effort to bring about the desired end. On the contrary, his words inspire them to renewed energy for hastening its accomplishment.

Alas! all to no purpose. One morning at daybreak, while on the lookout with his glass, Captain Gancy sees coming eastward, along the arm, a fleet of canoes crowded with people, to all appearance the same craft encountered in Whale-boat Sound.

Believing that they are the same, he cries out in a voice that quivers, despite his efforts to keep it firm, "There they are at last! Heaven have mercy on us!"

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Note 1. Nearly all the larger trees in the Fuegian forests have the heartwood decayed, and are worthless as timber. Out of fifteen cut down by Captain King's surveying party, near Port Famine, more than half proved to be rotten at the heart.

Note 2. The *Micropterus brachypterus* of Quoy and Guimard. The "steamer-duck" is a feature almost peculiar to the inland Fuegian waters, and has always been a bird of note among sailors, like the "Cape pigeons" and "Mother Carey's chickens." There is another and smaller species, called the "flying steamer," as it is able to mount into the air. It is called by naturalists *Micropterus Patachonica*.

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## Chapter Seventeen.

### Unwelcome Visitors.

"There they are at last! Heaven have mercy on us!" At these grave words, more fear-inspiring from being spoken by Captain Gancy, work is instantly suspended, the boat-builders dropping their tools as though they burned the hands that grasped them.

For some minutes the alarm runs high, all thinking their last hour is at hand. How can they think otherwise, with their eyes bent on those black objects, which, though but as specks in the far distance, grow bigger while they stand gazing at them, and which they know to be canoes full of cruel cannibal savages? For they have no doubt that the approaching natives are the Ailikoleeps. The old Ailikoleep wigwam, and the fact that the party that so lately visited the cove were of this tribe, make it evident that this is Ailikoleep fishing-ground, while the canoes now approaching seem to correspond in number with those of the party that assailed them. If they be the same, and if they should come on shore by the kitchen midden, then small hope of more boat-building, and, as is only too likely, small hope of life for the builders.

One chance alone now prevents the castaways from yielding to utter despair—the savages *may* pass on without landing. In that case they cannot be seen, nor will their presence there be suspected. With scrupulous adherence to their original plan, they have taken care that nothing of their encampment shall be visible from the water; tent, boat-timbers—everything—are screened on the water side by a thick curtain of evergreens. Their fire is always out during the day, and so there is no tell-tale smoke to betray them.

Soon Captain Gancy observes what further allays apprehension. With the glass still at his eye, he makes out the savages to be of both sexes and all ages—even infants being among them, in the laps of, or strapped to, their mothers. Nor can he see any warlike insignia—nothing white—the colour that in all other countries is emblematic of peace, but which, by strange contrariety, in Tierra del Fuego is the sure symbol of war.

The people in the canoes, whoever they may be, are evidently on a peaceful expedition; possibly they are some tribe or community on its way to winter quarters. And they *may* not be Ailikoleeps after all; or, at all events, not the former assailants of Whale-boat Sound.

These tranquillising reflections occur while the Fuegians are yet far-off. When first sighted, they were on the opposite side of the strait, closely hugging the land, the water in mid-channel being rough. But, as they come nearer, they are seen to change course and head diagonally across for the southern side, which looks as if they intended putting in at the old wigwam. Doubtless some of them may have once lived in it, and eaten of the molluscs, the shells of which are piled upon the kitchen midden.

The castaways note this movement with returning alarm, now almost sure that an encounter is inevitable. But again are they gratified at seeing the canoes turn broadside toward them, with bows set sharp for the southern shore, and soon pass from sight.

Their disappearance is caused by the projecting spit, behind which they have paddled, when closing in upon the land.

For what purpose have they put in there? That is the question now asked of one another by the boat-builders. They know that, on the other side of the promontory, there is a deep bay or sound running far inland; how far they cannot tell, having given it only careless glances while gathering cranberries. Probably the Fuegians have gone up it, and that may be the last of them. But what if they have landed on the other side of the spit to stay there? In this case, they will surely at some time come round, if but to despoil the kelp-bed of its shell-fish treasures.

All is conjecture now, with continuing apprehension and suspense. To put an end to the latter, the two youths, alike impatient and impetuous, propose a reconnaissance, to go to the cranberry ridge and take a peep over it.

"No!" objects Seagriff, restraining them. "Ef the savagers are ashore on t'other side, an' should catch sight o' ye, yer chances for gettin' back hyar wouldn't be worth counting on. They can run faster than chased foxes, and over any sort o' ground. Therefur, it's best fer ye to abide hyar till we see what's to come of it."

So counselled, they remain, and for hours after nothing more is seen either of the canoes or of their owners, although constant watch is kept for them. Confidence is again in the ascendant, as they now begin to believe that the savages have a wintering-place somewhere up the large inlet, and are gone to it, maybe to remain for months. If they will stay but a week, all will be well, as by that time the boat will be finished, launched, and away.

Confidence of brief duration, dispelled almost as soon as conceived! The canoes again appear on the open water at the point of the promontory, making around it, evidently intending to run between the kelp-bed and the shore, and probably to land by the shell-heap. With the castaways it is a moment of dismay. No longer is there room for doubt; the danger is sure and near. All the men arm themselves as best they can, with boat-hook, axe, mallet, or other carpentering tool, resolved on defending themselves to the death.

But now a new surprise and puzzle greets them. As the canoes, one after another, appear around the point, they are seen to be no longer crowded, but each seems to have lost nearly half its crew. And of those remaining nearly all are women and children—old women, too, with but the younger of the girls and boys. A few aged men are among them, but none of the middle-aged or able-bodied of either sex. Where are these? and for what have they left the canoes? About this there is no time for conjecture. In less than five minutes after their re-appearance, the paddled craft are brought to shore by the shell-heap, and all—men, women, children, and dogs—scramble out of them. The dogs are foremost, and are first to find that the place is already in possession. The keen-scented Fuegian canines, with an instinctive antipathy to white people, immediately on setting paw upon land, rush up to the camp and surround it,



ferociously barking and making a threatening show of teeth; and it is only by vigorously brandishing the boat-hook that they can be kept off.

Their owners, too, are soon around the camp; as they come within sight of its occupants, one after another crying out in surprise, "*Akifka akinish!*" ("White man!")

The castaways now see themselves begirt by an array of savage creatures, such as they have never seen before, though they have had dealings with uncivilised beings in many lands. Two score ugly old women, wrinkled and bleary-eyed, and with tangled hair hanging over their faces, every one a match for Macbeth's witches, and with them a number of old men stoop-shouldered, and of wizard aspect, each a very Caliban. Even the boys and girls have an impish, unearthly look, like the dwarfs that figure on the stage in a Christmas pantomime. But neither old nor young show fear, or any sign of it. On the contrary, on every face is a fierce, bold expression, threatening and aggressive, while the hoarse guttural sounds given out by them seem less like articulate speech than like the chattering of apes. Indeed, some of the old men are themselves more like monkeys than human beings, reminding Captain Gancy of the time when he was once beset in a South African *kloof*, or ravine, by a troop of barking and gibbering dog-faced baboons.

For a time all is turmoil and confusion, with doubting fear on the part of the white people, who cannot tell what is to be the issue. Mrs Gancy and Leoline have retired into the tent, while the men stand by its entrance, prepared to defend it. They make no demonstration of hostility, however, but keep their weapons as much as possible out of sight, and as calmly as possible await the action of the savages. To show distrust might give offence, and court attack—no trifling matter, notwithstanding the age and apparent imbecility of the savages. Seagriff knows, if the others do not, that the oldest and feeblest of them—woman or man—would prove a formidable antagonist; and, against so many, he and his four men companions would stand but a poor chance. Luckily, he recalls a word or two of their language which may conciliate them and, as soon as he has an opportunity of making himself heard, he cries out, in a friendly tone, "*Arré! Cholid!*" ("Brothers! Sisters!")

This appeal has the effect intended, or seems to have. With exclamations of astonishment at hearing an *akifka akinish* address them in their own tongue, the expression of their faces becomes less fierce, and they desist from menacing gestures. One of the men, the oldest, and for this reason having chief authority, draws near and commences patting Seagriff on the chest and back alternately, all the while giving utterance to a gurgling, "chucking" noise that sounds somewhat like the cluck of a hen when feeding her chicks.

Having finished with the old sealer, who has reciprocated his quaint mode of salutation, he extends it to the other three whites, one after the other. But as he sees "the doctor," who, at the moment, has stepped from within the wigwam, where he had been unperceived, there is a sudden revulsion of feeling among the savages—a return to hostility, the antipathy of all Fuegians to the African negro being proverbially bitter. Strange and unaccountable is this prejudice against the negro by a people almost the lowest in humanity's scale.

"*Ical shiloké! Uftucla!*" ("Kill the black dog!") they cry out in spiteful chorus, half a dozen of them making a dash at him.

Seagriff throws himself in front, to shield him from their fury, and, with arms uplifted, appealingly calls out, "*Ical shiloké—zapello!*" ("The black dog is but a slave.")

At this the old man makes a sign, as if saying the *zapello* is not worth their anger, and they retire, but reluctantly, like wolves forced from their prey. Then, as if by way of appeasing their spite, they go stalking about the camp, picking up and secreting such articles as tempt their cupidity.

Fortunately, few things of any value have been left exposed, the tools and other highly-prized chattels having been stowed away inside the tent. Luckily, also, they had hastily carried into it some dried fungus and fish cured by the smoking process, intended for boat stores. But Caesar's outside larder suffers to depletion. In a trice it is emptied—not a scrap being left by the prowling pilferers. And everything, as soon as appropriated, is eaten raw, just as it is found—seal's flesh, shell-fish, beech-apples, berries, everything! Even a large squid, a hideous-looking monster of the octopus tribe thrown on the beach near by, is gobbled up by them as though it were the greatest of delicacies.

Hunger—ravenous, unappeasable hunger—seems to pervade the whole crew; no doubt the fact that the weather has been for a long time very stormy has interfered with their fishing, and otherwise hindered their procuring food. Like all savages, the Fuegian is improvident—more so, even, than some of the brute creation—and rarely lays up store for the future, and hence is often in terrible straits, at the very point of starvation. Clearly, it is so with those just landed; and having eaten up everything eatable that they can lay their hands on, there is a scattering off amongst the trees in quest of their most reliable food staple—the beech-apple. Some go gathering mussels and limpets along the strand, while the more robust of the women, under the direction of the old men, proceed to the construction of wigwams. Half a score of these are set up, long branches broken from the trees furnishing the rib-poles, which are roofed over with old seal-skins taken out of the canoes. In a wonderfully short time they are finished, almost as quickly as the pitching of a soldier's tent. When ready for occupation, fires are kindled in them, around which the wretched creatures crouch and shiver, regardless of smoke thick and bitter enough to drive a badger from its hole. It is this that makes them bleary-eyed, and even uglier than Nature intended them to be. But the night is now near beginning, a chill, raw evening, with snow falling, and they can better bear smoke than cold. Nor are they any longer hungry. Their search for shell-fish and fungus has been rewarded with success, and they have eaten gluttonously of both.

Meanwhile, our friends the castaways have been left to themselves, for the time undisturbed, save by the dogs, which give them almost continuous trouble. The skulking curs, led by one of their kind, form a ring around the camp, deafening the ears of its occupants with their angry baying and barking. Strangely enough, as if sharing the antipathy of their owners, they seem specially hostile to "the doctor," more furiously demonstrating their antagonism to him

than to any of the others. The poor fellow is kept constantly on the alert to save his shins from their sharp teeth.

Late in the evening, the old chief, whom the others call Annaqua ("the arrow") pays the camp a visit, professing great friendship, and again going through the patting and "chucking" process as before. But his professions ill correspond with his acts, as the aged sinner is actually detected stealing the knife of Seagriff himself, and from his person, too!—a feat of dexterity worthy the most accomplished master of legerdemain, the knife being adroitly abstracted from its sheath on the old sealer's hip during the exchange of salutations. Fortunately, the theft is discovered by young Chester, who is standing near by, and the thief caught in the very act. On the stolen article being taken from under the pilferer's shoulder-patch of seal-skin, where he had dexterously secreted it, he breaks out into a laugh, pretending to pass it off as a joke. In this sense the castaways are pleased to interpret it, or to make show of so interpreting it, for the sake of keeping on friendly terms with him. Indeed, but that the knife is a serviceable tool, almost essential to them, he would be permitted to retain it; and, by way of smoothing matters over, a brass button is given him instead, with which he goes on his way rejoicing.

"The old shark would steal the horns off a goat, ef they warn't well fixed in," is Seagriff's remark, as he stands looking after their departing visitor. "Howsoever, let's hope they may be content wi' stealin', and not take to downright robbery, or worse. We'll hev to keep watch all night, anyway, ez thar's no tellin' what they may be up to. They never sleep. They're perfect weasels."

And all night watch is kept, with a large fire ablaze, there being now no reason for letting it go out. Two of the party act as sentinels at a time, another pair taking their place. But indeed, throughout most of the night, all are wakeful, slumber being denied them by the barking of the dogs, and yelling of the savages, who, making good Seagriff's words, seem as though sleep were a luxury they had no wish to indulge in. And something seems to have made them merry, also. Out of their wigwams issue sounds of boisterous hilarity, as though they were celebrating some grand festival, with now and then a peal of laughter that might have proceeded from the lungs of a stentor. Disproportionate as is the great strength of a Fuegian to his little body, his voice is even more so; this is powerful beyond belief, and so loud as to be audible at almost incredible distances. Such a racket as these wild merry-makers within the wigwams are keeping up might well prevent the most weary of civilised mortals from even once closing his eyes in sleep. And the uproar lasts till daylight.

But what the cause of their merriment may be, or what it means, or how they can be merry at all under such circumstances, is to the castaways who listen anxiously to their hoarse clamour, a psychological puzzle defying explanation. Huddled together like pigs in a pen, and surely less comfortable in the midst of the choking smoke, contentment even would seem an utter impossibility. That there should exist such an emotion as joyfulness among them is a fact which greatly astonishes Ned Gancy and young Chester. Yet there can be no doubt that they are contented for the time, and even happy, if that word can ever be truly applied to creatures in a savage condition like theirs; and their loud merriment is, perhaps, a proof of Nature's universal beneficence, that will not permit the life of these lowest and, apparently, most wretched of human beings to be all misery! Far more miserable than they, that night—or, at least, far more burdened with the *sense* of misery—are those whom fate has cast into the power of these savage creatures, and who are obliged to listen to their howlings and hyena like laughter.

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## Chapter Eighteen.

### Fuegian Food-Providing.

To the castaways every hour of that night is one of fear and agonising suspense. Not so much from apprehension of immediate as of future danger. With the occupants of the wigwam in such good humour, it is not likely that they can be contemplating an attack at present. But when those who are absent return—what then? This is the fear now uppermost in the minds of Captain Gancy's little party.

Nor does morning do aught to dispel their anxiety; on the contrary, it is intensified by the behaviour of the savages, who are again in a sour temper after their night's carouse. For, having eaten up all their gatherings of yesterday, they are again hungry. Young and old, there are nearly a hundred of them, all ravenous gluttons, to say nothing of the swarm of curs requiring to be fed.

By earliest daylight they come crowding around the camp, as though they expected to find something eatable there. Disappointed in their hope, they grin and chatter, showing their teeth like the dogs. More especially are their menaces directed toward "the doctor;" and the poor fellow is frightened to a death-like pallor, notwithstanding his sable skin. He takes refuge within the tent—still a sacred precinct—and does not dare to venture out again. To propitiate them, presents are made—the last things that can well be parted with. To Annaqua is given a pipe, with some tobacco, while the most importunate, and seemingly most important, of the women have each a trifle bestowed on them.

The gifts restore their good humour, or at least make them contented for the time; and, having obtained all that can be given them, they scatter away over the ground, going about their business of the day.

The wherewithal for breakfast is, of course, their first consideration, and this they find along the strand and around the edge of the woods, though more sparingly than in their search yesterday. Only enough is obtained to afford them a stinted repast—a mere luncheon. But the kelp-bed is still to be explored, and for this they must wait until the tide begins to ebb.

Meanwhile, they do not remain idle, another resource engaging them—a feat for which the Fuegian native has obtained a world-wide celebrity—namely, diving for sea-eggs. A difficult, dangerous industry it is, and just on this account committed to the women, who alone engage in it.

Having dispatched their poor breakfast, half a dozen of the younger and stronger women take to the canoes—two in each—and paddle out to a part of the water where they hope to find the sea-urchins. (Note 1.)

Arriving there, she who is to do the diving prepares for it by attaching a little wicker-basket to her hip, her companion being entrusted to keep the canoe in place, a task which is no easy one in water so rough as that of the sea-arm chances to be now.

Everything ready, the diver drops over, head foremost, as fearlessly as would a water-spaniel, and is out of sight for two or three minutes; then the crow-black head is seen bobbing up again, and swimming back to the canoe with a hand-over-hand stroke, dog-fashion, the egg-gatherer lays hold of the rail to rest herself, while she gives up the contents of her basket.

Having remained above water just long enough to recover breath, down she goes a second time, to stay under for minutes as before. And this performance is repeated again and again, till at length, utterly exhausted, she climbs back into the canoe, and the other ties on the basket and takes her turn at diving.

Thus, for hours, the submarine egg-gatherers continue at their arduous, perilous task; and, having finished it, they come paddling back to the shore, trembling, and their teeth clinking like castanets.

On landing, they make straight for the wigwams, and seat themselves by a fire—almost in it—leaving the spoil to be brought up by others.

Then follows the “festival” of *chabucl-lithlé* (sea-eggs), as they call it, these being their favourite diet. But, in the present case, the “festival” does not prove satisfactory, as the diving has yielded a poor return, and others of the savages therefore prepare to explore the kelp-bed—the reef being now above water.

Presently, enough of it is bare to afford footing, and off go the shell-gatherers in their canoes, taking the dogs along with them. For these are starving, too, and must forage for themselves. This they do most effectually, running hither and thither over the reef, stopping now and then to detach a mussel or limpet from its beard-fastening to the rock, crunch the shell between their teeth, and swallow the contents.

The Fuegian dogs are also trained to procure food for their masters in a manner which one of them is now seen to put into practice. On the more outlying ledges some sea-fowl, themselves seeking food, still linger fearlessly. Engrossed in their grubbing, they fail to note that an enemy is near—a little cock-eared cur, that has swum up to the ledge, and, without bark or yelp, is stealthily crawling toward it. Taking advantage of every coign of concealment, the dog creeps on till, at length, with a bound, like a cat springing at a sparrow, it seizes the great seabird, and kills it in a trice, as a fox would a pheasant.

The shell-gatherers remain on the reef till the rising water forces them to quit. But their industry meets with less reward than was anticipated, and they return to the shore all out of sorts and enraged at the white people, whom they now look upon in the light of trespassers; for they know that to them is due the scarcity of bivalves among the kelp, where they had expected to reap a plentiful harvest. Proof of its having been already garnered is seen in a heap of recently emptied shells lying under the trees near by—a little kitchen midden of itself.

Luckily the Fuegians have found enough to satisfy their immediate wants, so neither on that day nor the next do they make further display of violence, though always maintaining a sullen demeanour. Indeed, it is at all times difficult to avoid quarrelling with them, and doubtful how long the patched-up truce may continue. The very children are aggressive and exacting, and ever ready to resent reproof, even when caught in the act of pilfering—a frequent occurrence. Any tool or utensil left in their way would soon be a lost chattel, as the little thieves know they have the approval of their elders.

So, apart from their anxieties about the future, the white people find it a time of present trouble. They, too, must provide themselves with food, and their opportunities have become narrowed—are almost gone. They might have starved ere this, but for their prudent forethought in having secreted a stock in the tent. They do not dare to have a meal cooked during daylight, as some of the savages are always on the alert to snatch at anything eatable with bold, open hand. Only in the midnight hours, when the Fuegians are in their wigwams, has “the doctor” a chance to give the cured fish a hurried broil over the fire.

It is needless to say that all work on the boat is suspended. In the face of their great fear, with a future so dark and doubtful, the builders have neither the courage nor heart to carry on their work. It is too much a question whether it may ever be resumed.

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Note 1. The “sea-eggs” are a species of the family Echinids. Diving for them by the Fuegian women is one of their most painful and dangerous ways of procuring food, as they often have to follow it when the sea is rough and in coldest weather.

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## Chapter Nineteen.

### An Odd Renewal of Acquaintance.

For three days the castaways lead a wretched life, in never-ceasing anxiety—for three nights, too, since all the savages are rarely asleep at any one time. Some of them are certain to be awake, and making night hideous with unearthly noises; and, having discovered this to be the time when the whites do their cooking, there are always one or two skulking about the camp fire, on the lookout for a morsel. The dogs are never away from it.

When will this horrid existence end? and how? Some change is sure to come when the absent members of the tribe return. Should they prove to be those encountered in Whale-Boat Sound, the question would be too easily answered. But it is now known that, although Ailikoleeps, they cannot be the same. The cause of their absence has also been discovered by the ever alert ears of Seagriff. The savages had heard of a stranded whale in some sound or channel only to be reached overland, and thither are they gone to secure the grand booty of blubber.

The distance is no doubt considerable, and the path difficult, for the morning of a fourth day has dawned, and still they are not back. Nor can anything be seen of them upon the shore of the inlet, which is constantly watched by one or more of the women, stationed upon the cranberry ridge.

On this morning the savages seem more restless and surly than ever, for they are hungrier than ever, and nearly famishing. They have picked the kelp-reef clean, leaving not a mussel nor limpet on it; they have explored the ribbon of beach as far as it extends, and stripped the trees of their fungus parasites till none remain. And now they go straying about, seeming like hungry wolves, ready to spring at and tear to pieces anything that may chance in their way.

"There's an ugly look in their eyes, I don't like," said Seagriff, aside to the Captain, "specially in some of the old women. Wi' them 'tair a thing o' life or death when they get to starvation point, and that's near now. One of 'em 'ud have to be sacrificed, ef not one of us. You hear how they're cackling, wi' thar eyes all the time turning towards us."

By this time the old men, with most of the women, have drawn together in a clump, and are evidently holding council on some subject of general interest—intense interest, too, as can be told by their earnest speechifying, and the gesticulation that accompanies it. Without comprehending a word that is said, Seagriff knows too well what they are talking about; their gestures are too intelligible with the lurid glare in their ghoulish eyes. All that he sees portends a danger that he shrinks from declaring to his companions. They will doubtless learn it soon enough.

And now he hears words that are known to him,—"*ical-akinish*" and "*shiloké*," hears them repeated again and again. It is the black man, "the doctor," who is doomed!

The negro himself appears to have a suspicion of it, as he is trembling in every fibre of his frame. He need not fear dying, if the others are to live. Rather than surrender him for such sacrifice, they will die with him in his defence.

All are now convinced that the crisis, long apprehended, has come; and, with their weapons in hand, stand ready to meet it. Still, the savages appear to disagree, as the debate is prolonged. Can it be that, after all, there is mercy in their breasts? Something like it surely stirs Annaqua, who seems endeavouring to dissuade the others from carrying out the purpose of which most are in favour. Perhaps the gifts bestowed on him have won the old man's friendship; at all events, he appears to be pleading delay. Ever and anon he points in the direction of the cranberry ridge, as though urging them to wait for those gone after the whale; and once he pronounces a word, on hearing which Henry Chester gives a start, then earnestly listens for its repetition. It is—as he first thought—"*Eleparu*."

"Did you hear that?" asks the young Englishman in eager haste.

"Hear what?" demands Ned Gancy, to whom the question is addressed.

"That word '*Eleparu*.' The old fellow has spoken it twice!" says Henry.

"Well, and if he has?" queries Ned.

"You remember our affair at Portsmouth with those three queer creatures and the wharf-rats?"

"Of course I do. Why do you ask?"

"One of them, the man, was named *Eleparu*," answers Chester; adding, "The girl called him so, and the boy too."

"I didn't hear that name."

"No?" says Henry; "then it must have been before you came up."

"Yes," answers young Gancy, "for the officer who took them away called the man York, the boy Jemmy, and the girl *Fuegia*."

"That's so. But how did she ever come to be named *Fuegia*?"

"That does seem odd; just now—"

"Hark! Hear that? the old fellow has just said '*Ocushlu*!' That's the name the other two gave the girl. What can it mean?"

But now the youths' hurried dialogue is brought to an abrupt end. Annaqua has been out-voted, his authority set at naught, and the council broken up. The triumphant majority is advancing toward the camp, with an air of fierce resolve; women as well as men armed with clubs, flint-bladed daggers, and stones clutched in their closed fists. In vain is it now for Seagriff to call out "Brothers! Sisters!" The savages can no longer be cajoled by words of flattery or friendship; and he knows it. So do the others, all of whom are now standing on the defensive. Even Mrs Gancy and Leoline have armed themselves, and come out of the tent, determined to take part in the life-and-death conflict that seems inevitable. The sailor's wife and daughter both have braved danger ere now, and, though never one like this, they will meet it undaunted.

It is at the ultimate moment that they make appearance, and seeing them for the first time, the savage assailants

halt, hesitatingly—not through fear, but rather with bewilderment at the unexpected apparition. It moves them not to pity, however, nor begets within them one throb of merciful feeling. Instead, the Fuegian hags but seem more embittered at seeing persons of their own sex so superior to them, and, recovering from their surprise, they clamorously urge the commencement of the attack.

Never have the castaways been so near to death with such attendant horrors.

So near to it do they feel, that Captain Gancy groans, under his breath, "Our end is come!"

But not yet is it come. Once more is the Almighty Hand opportunely extended to protect them. A shout interrupts the attack—a joyous shout from one of the women watchers, who now, having forsaken her post, is seen coming down the slope of the spit at a run, frantically waving her arms and vociferating:

"*Cabrelua! Cabrelua!*" ("They come! they come!")

The savages, desisting from their murderous intent, stand with eyes turned toward the ridge, on the crest of which appears a crowd of moving forms that look like anything but human beings. On their way to the beach, they are forced into single file by the narrowness of the path, and become strung out like the links of a long chain. But not even when they come nearer and are better seen, do they any more resemble human beings. They have something like human heads, but these are without necks and indeed sunken between the shoulders, which last are of enormous breadth and continued into thick armless bodies, with short slender legs below!

As they advance along the beach at a slow pace, in weird, ogre-like procession, the white people are for a time



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entirely mystified as to what they may be. Nor can it be told until they are close up. Then it is seen that they *are* human beings after all—Fuegian savages, each having the head thrust through a flitch of whale-blubber that falls, poncho-fashion, over the shoulders, draping down nearly to the knees!

The one in the lead makes no stop until within a few yards of the party of whites, when, seeing the two youths who are in front, he stares wonderingly at them, for some moments, and then from his lips leaps an ejaculation of wild surprise, followed by the words:

"Portsmout'! Ingran'!"

Then, hastily divesting himself of his blubber mantle, and shouting back to some one in the rear, he is instantly joined by a woman, who in turn cries out:

"Yes, Portsmout'! The *Ailwalk' akifka!*" ("The white boys.")

"Eleparu! Ocushlu!" exclaims Henry Chester, all amazement; Ned Gancy, equally astonished, simultaneously crying out:

"York! Fuegia!"

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## Chapter Twenty.

Gone back to Barbarism.

This renewal of acquaintance, under circumstances so extraordinary as those detailed in the previous chapter, calls for explanation; for, although the incident may appear strange, and even improbable, it is, nevertheless, quite reasonable. How it came about will be learned from the following relation of facts:—

In the year 1838, the English Admiral Fitzroy—then Captain Fitzroy—while in command of H.M.S. *Beagle*, engaged in the survey of Tierra del Fuego, had one of his boats stolen by the natives of Christmas Sound. Pursuing the thieves, he made capture of a number of their relatives, but unfortunately not of the actual culprits. For a time he held the captives as hostages, hoping by that means to effect the return of the boat. Disappointed in this, however, he at length released them all, save three who voluntarily remained on board the *Beagle*.

These were two young men and a little girl; and all of them were soon after baptised by the sailors. One of the men had the name “Boat Memory” bestowed upon him, because he had been taken at the place where the boat was stolen. The other was christened “York Minster,” after a remarkable mountain, bearing a fancied resemblance to the famed cathedral of York, near which he was captured. “Fuegia Basket,” as the girl was called, was named from the wickerwork craft—a sort of coracle—that the crew of the stolen boat had improvised to carry them back to their ship.

Later on, the commander of the *Beagle*, while exploring the channel which now bears his ship’s name, picked up another native of a different tribe. This was a young boy, who was bought of his own uncle for a button—his unnatural relative freely parting with him at the price! The transaction suggested the name given him, “Jemmy Button.”

Returning soon after to England, Fitzroy, with truly philanthropic motives, took the four Fuegians along with him. His intentions were to have them educated and Christianised, and then restored to their native country, in hopes that they might do something toward civilising it. In pursuance of this plan, three of the Fuegians were put to school; the fourth, Boat Memory, having died soon after landing at Plymouth.

When Captain Fitzroy thought their training sufficiently advanced for his purpose, this humane officer, at his own expense, chartered a vessel to convey them back to Tierra del Fuego, intending to accompany them himself; and he did this, although a poor man, and no longer commanding a ship in commission; the *Beagle*, meanwhile, having been dismantled and laid up. Think of that, my young readers, and give praise to such noble self-sacrifice and disinterested philanthropy.

By good fortune, however, Captain Fitzroy was spared this part of the expense. The survey of Tierra del Fuego and adjacent coasts had not been completed, and another expedition was sent out by the British Admiralty, and the command of it entrusted to him. So proceeding thither in his old ship, the *Beagle*, once more in commission, he carried his Fuegian *protégés* along with him.

There went with him, also, a man then little known, but now of world-wide and universal fame, a young naturalist named Darwin—Charles Darwin—he who for the last quarter of a century and till his death has held highest rank among men of science, and has truly deserved the distinction.

York Minster, Jemmy Button, and Fuegia Basket (in their own country respectively called Eleparu, Orundelico, and Ocushlu) were the three odd-looking individuals that Ned and Henry had rescued from the wharf-rats of Portsmouth; while the officer who appeared on the scene was Fitzroy himself, then on the way to Plymouth, where the *Beagle*, fitted out and ready to put to sea, was awaiting him.

In due time, arriving in Tierra del Fuego, the three natives were left there, with every provision made for their future subsistence. They had all the means and appliances to assist them in carrying out Captain Fitzroy’s humane scheme: carpentering tools, agricultural implements, and a supply of seeds, with which to make a beginning. (Note 1.)

Since then nearly four years have elapsed, and lo!—the result. Perhaps never were good intentions more thoroughly brought to nought, nor clearer proofs given of their frustration, than these that Henry Chester and Ned Gancy have now before their eyes. Though unacquainted with most of the above details, they see a man, all but naked, his hair in matted tangle, his skin besmeared with dirt and blubber, in everything and to all appearances as rude a savage as any Fuegian around him, who is yet the same whom they had once seen wearing the garb and having the manners of civilisation! They see a girl, too,—now woman-grown—in whom the change, though less extreme, is still strikingly sadly for the worse. In both, the transformation is so complete, so retrograde, so contrary to all experience, that they can scarcely realise it. It is difficult to believe that any nature, however savage, after such pains had been taken to civilise it, could so return to itself! It seems a very perversity of backsliding!

But this is not a time for the two young men to inquire into the cause of this falling away, nor might that be a pleasant subject to those who have thus relapsed, so they refrain from appearing even to notice it. They are too overjoyed in knowing that they and their companions are no longer in danger.

Of their safety they have full and instant assurance, by the behaviour of Eleparu, who has taken in the situation at a glance. Apparently head of the community, with a shout and authoritative wave of the hand he sends off those who so lately had threatened to attack them. But all seem friendly enough, now that they see him so, having, indeed, no reason to be otherwise. Hunger chiefly had made them hostile; and now they need hunger no more.

Accordingly, they at once set about appeasing their appetites—on blubber! Not with indiscriminate appropriation of it, for it is a supply that must carry them over days, or perhaps weeks. Annaqua, with another of the old men, serves it out in equal rations, first cutting it into strips, like strings of sausages, then measuring off different-sized pieces, according to the sex and age of the recipients.

Strange to say, notwithstanding the keen hunger of those seeking relief, not one of them touches a morsel till the partition is complete and each has his share. Then, at a given signal, they fall to, bolting the blubber raw—only a few of the more fastidious holding it a second or two in the blaze of the fires, scarcely long enough to scorch it!

During these unpleasant *saturnalia*, mutual explanations are exchanged between Eleparu and the two young men of his former brief but memorable acquaintance. He first inquires how they come to be there; then tells his own story, or such part of it as he desires them to know. They learn from him that Ocushlu is now his wife; but when questioned about the boy, and what has become of him, he shows reserve, answering, "Oh, Jemmy Button—he not of our people; he Tekeneeka. English officer brought Jemmy back too—left him at Woolya—that his own country—lie out that way;" and he points eastward along the arm.

Observing his reticence on the subject of Orundelico, the questioners forbear asking further, while other matters of more importance claim their attention.

Meanwhile, Ocushlu is engaged in conversation with Mrs Gancy and Leoline. She is about the same age as the latter;



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but in other respects how different they are, and what a contrast they form! The poor Fuegian herself seems to realise it, and with sadness of heart. Who could interpret her thoughts when, after gazing at the beautiful white girl, clean-skinned and becomingly attired, her glance is turned to her own slightly-clad and uncleanly self? Perhaps she may be thinking of the time when, a schoolgirl at Walthamstow, she, too, wore a pretty dress, and perchance bitterly regrets having returned to her native land and barbarism. Certainly, the expression on her countenance seems a commingling of sadness and shame.

But whatever, at the moment, may be her reflections or feelings, ingratitude is not among them. Having learned that Leoline is the sister of one of the youths who so gallantly espoused the cause of her companions and herself in a far-off foreign land, she takes from her neck a string of the much-prized violet shells, and hangs it around that of the white girl, saying, "For what your brother did at Portsmouth."

The graceful act is reciprocated, and with interest, both mother and daughter presenting her with such articles of apparel as they can spare, among them the costly scarf they so nearly had to part with in a less satisfactory way.

Equally grateful proves Eleparu. Seeing the unfinished boat, and comprehending the design, he lends himself to assist in its execution. No slight assistance does he prove; as, during the many months passed on board the *Beagle*, York had picked up some knowledge of ship-carpentry. So the task of boat-building is resumed, this time to be carried on to completion. And with so great expedition, that in less than a week thereafter, the craft is ready for launching, and on the next day it is run off the "chocks" into the water, a score of the Fuegian men lending helping hands.

On the following morning, with the party of castaways and all their belongings on board, it is shoved off, and moves swiftly away, amidst a paean of friendly shouts from the savages. Eleparu leads the valedictory salute, and Ocushlu waves the red scarf high over her head.

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Note 1. A young missionary named Mathews, who had volunteered, was taken out and left with them. But Captain Fitzroy, revisiting Woolya, the intended mission station, a few days after, found Mathews threatened with death at the hands of those he had hoped to benefit. During the interval, the savages had kept the poor fellow in constant fear for his life, even Jemmy Button and York having been unable to protect him. Captain Fitzroy took him away, and he afterwards carried on missionary work among the Maories of New Zealand.

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## Chapter Twenty One.

### Boat Ahoy!

The new boat behaves handsomely, even excelling in speed the lost gig, the oars and sailing-gear of which, luckily saved, have fitted it out complete. Under canvas, with a fair wind, they easily make ten knots an hour; and as they have such a wind for the remainder of the day, are carried into the Beagle Channel without need of wetting an oar.

At sunset they are opposite Devil Island, at the junction of the south-west and north-west arms of the channel; and as the night threatens to be dark, with a fog already over the water, they deem it prudent to put in upon the isle, despite its uncanny appellation.

Landing, they are surprised to see a square-built hut of large size, quite different from anything of Fuegian construction, and evidently the work of white men.

"I reck'n the crew o' some sealin' vessel hez put it up," surmises Seagriff; in doubt adding, "Yit I can't understan' why they should a-squatted hyar, still less built a shanty, seein' it ain't much of a lay fer seal. I guess they must hev got wracked somewhar near, and war castaways, like ourselves."

About the builders of the hut he has surmised wrongly. They were *not* sealers, nor had they been wrecked, but were a boat's party of real sailors—man-of-war's men from the very ship which gave the channel its name, and at the date of its discovery. Nor did the island deserve the harsh name bestowed upon it, and which originated in the following incident:

A screech-owl had perched above the head of one of the *Beagle's* sailors who slept under a tree outside the hut, and awakened him with its lugubrious "whoo-woo-woah!" and so frightened the superstitious tar, that he believed himself hailed by one of the malevolent deities of weird Fireland!

"Well," says Captain Gancy, after an inspection of the untenanted building, "it'll serve us a turn or two, whoever may have built it. The roof appears to be all tight and sound, so we needn't be at the bother of turning the boat-sail into a tent this time."

A fire is kindled inside the hut, and all gather round it, the night being chilly cold. Nor are they afraid of the blaze betraying them here, as the fog will prevent its being seen from any distance. Besides, they are in every way more confident than hitherto. They have passed beyond the country of the Ailikoleeps with their lives miraculously preserved, and everything now looks well for getting to Good Success Bay—the haven of safety they are seeking. It is now not over two hundred miles distant, and with winds and tides favouring, in three days, or less, they may reach it.

Still, there is cause for anxiety, even apprehension, as the old sealer is too well aware.

"We ain't out o' the wood yit," he says, employing a familiar backwoods expression often heard by him in boyhood, adding, in like figurative phrase, "we still hev to run the gauntlit o' the Tekeneekas."

"But surely we've nothing to fear from them?" interrogates the younger Gancy; Henry Chester affirming, "No, surely not."

"Why hevn't we?" demands Seagriff.

"Because," answers the young Englishman, "they are Jemmy Button's people, and I'd be loth to believe *him* ungrateful after our experience with his old companions, and from what I remember of him. What do you think, Ned?"

"I agree with you entirely," replied the younger Gancy.

"Wal, young masters, thet may all be, an' I'd be only too pleased to be-hope it'll turn out so. But agin it, thar's a contrary sarcumstance, in thar bein' two sarts o' Tekeneekas: one harmless and rayther friendly disposed torst white people, t'other bein' jest the revarse—'most as bad as the Ailikoleeps. The bad uns are called Yapoos, an' hev thar squattin' groun' east'ard 'long the channel beyont, whar a passage leads out, knowed as the Murray Narrer. Tharfer, it'll all depend on which o' the two lots Mister Button belongs to."

"If he is *not* of the Yapoos, what then?" questions the skipper.

"Wal, knowin' thet, an' we'll know it afore comin' to the Yapoo country, it bein' beyont t'other, then our best way 'll be to make southart through the Murray Narrer. Thet 'ud take us out to the open sea ag'in, with a big 'round about o' coastin'; still, in the end, it mout be the safer way. 'Long the outside shore, thar ain't so much likelihood o' meetin' Feweegins of any kind: and ef we did meet 'em, 'twould be easier gettin' out of thar way, s'long's we're in a boat sech ez we hev now."

The last observation contains a touch of professional pride; the old ship's carpenter having, of course, been chief constructor of the craft that is so admirably answering all their ends.

"Well, then," says the Captain, after reflection, "I suppose we'll have to be guided by circumstances. And from what has passed, we ought to feel confident that they'll still turn up in our favour."

This remark, showing his continued trust in the shielding power of an Omnipotent Hand, closes the conversation, and all soon after retire to rest, with a feeling of security long denied them. For, although lately under the protection of Eleparu, they had never felt full confidence, doubting, not his fidelity, but his power to protect them. For the authority of a Fuegian chief—if such there be—is slight at the best, and made nought of on many occasions. Besides, they could not forget that one fearful moment of horror, to be remembered throughout life.

Having passed the night in peaceful slumber, they take their places in the boat as soon as there is light enough to steer by. There is still a fog, though not so dense as to deter them from re-embarking, while, as on the day before, the wind is all in their favour. With sail filled by the swelling breeze, they make rapid way, and by noon are far along



the Beagle Channel, approaching the place where the Murray Narrow leads out of it, trending southward. But now they see what may prove an interruption to their onward course. Through the fog, which has become much less dense, a number of dark objects are visible, mottling the surface of the water. That they are canoes can be told by the columns of smoke rising up over each, as though they were steam-launches. They are not moving, however, and are either lying-to or riding at anchor. None are empty, all have full complements of crew.

As the canoes are out in the middle of the channel, and right ahead, to pass them unobserved is impossible. There is no help for it but to risk an encounter, whatever may result; so the boat is kept on its course, with canvas full spread, to take the chances.

While yet afar off, Captain Gancy, through his glass, is able to announce certain facts which favour confidence. The people in the canoes are of both sexes, and engaged in a peaceful occupation—they are fishing. They who fish are seated with some sort of tackle in hand, apparently little rods and lines, short as coach-whips, with which at intervals they draw up diminutive fish, by a quick jerk landing them in the canoes. All this he made out through the glass.

But the time for observation is brief. The boat, forging rapidly onward, is soon sighted by the canoemen, who, starting to their feet, commence a chorus of shouts, which come pealing over the water, waking echoes along both shores. And something is seen now which gives the boat's people a thrill of fear. Above one of the canoes suddenly appears a white disc, seemingly a small flag, not stationary, but waved and brandished above the head of the man who has hoisted it.

At sight of the dreaded white—the Fuegian symbol of war—well may the boat-voyagers experience fear; for, from their former experience, they feel certain that this display must be intended as a warlike challenge.

But to their instant relief, they soon learn that it is meant as a signal of peace, as words of friendly salutation reach their ears.

The man who is waving the signal shouts, "Boat ahoy! down your sail—bring to! Don't be 'fraid. Me Jemmy Button. We Tekeneekas—friends of white people—brothers!"

Hailed in such fashion, their delight far exceeds their surprise, for Jemmy Button it surely is; Henry Chester and Ned Gancy both recognise him. It is on his side that amazement reaches its maximum height when he recognises them, which he does when his native name, Orundelico, is called out to him.

He waits not for the boat to come up, but plunging into the water, swims to meet it. Then clambering over the rail, he flings his arms wide open, to close, first around the young Englishman, then the American, but both in a like friendly, fraternal embrace.

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## Chapter Twenty Two.

### Tekeneeka Hospitality.

Once more are the castaways in a land-locked cove begirt by high wooded hills, with their boat moored at its inner end, and their tent set up on shore. It is a larger embayment than that where the gig came to grief, though not much wider at the mouth; and there is little resemblance between the two landing-places, since at the present one the boat is not the only craft. Ten or more of Fuegian canoes lie alongside her, while on a broad, grassy flat, above water-mark, stands alike number of wigwams, their smoke-blackened thatches in strong contrast with the white, weather-bleached boat-sail, which is again serving as a tent. The wigwams are of Tekeneeka construction, differing, as already said, from those of the Ailikoleeps, in being acutely cone-shaped and in having their floors sunk several feet below the surface of the ground. Their ribs, moreover, are stout tree-trunks instead of slender saplings, while the thatches are partly of rushes and partly of broad strips of bark.

Such are the dwellings of Orundelico's people, though but for a part of the year, while they engage in a certain fishery of periodical occurrence. On an island, down the Murray Narrow, they have a larger "wigwamery" of more permanent residences, and there the very old and young of the community now are, only the able-bodied being at the fishing-station.

When they were with the Ailikoleeps, the castaways believed themselves among the lowest and most degraded beings in the human scale; but about this they have now changed their minds, a short acquaintance with the Tekeneekas having revealed to them a type of man still lower, and a state of existence yet more wretched, if that be possible; indeed, nothing can come much nearer to the "missing link" than the natives of central Tierra del Fuego. Though of less malevolent disposition than those who inhabit the outside coasts, they are also less intelligent and less courageous, while equally the victims of abject misery.

Alas! Jemmy Button is no longer Jemmy Button, but again the savage Orundelico, he too having gone back to barbarism. His dress, or rather the absence of it, his greasy and mud-bedaubed skin, his long unkempt hair, and the wild animal-like expression of his features—all attest his relapse into a condition of savagery, total and complete. Not a vestige of civilised man remains with him to show that he has ever been a mile from the Murray Narrow.

But stay, I am wronging him—twice wronging him. He has not entirely forgotten the foreign tongue taught him on board the *Beagle* and during a year's residence in England; while something he remembers also—something better—the kindness there shown him and the gratitude due for it.

He is paying the debt now as best he can, and on this account Captain Gancy has consented to make a brief stop at the fishing-station. There are also two other distinct reasons for his doing so. Before proceeding farther, he wishes to

obtain more information about the Yapoos, and he needs a fresh supply of provisions—that furnished by Eleparu having been neither abundant nor palatable.

Orundelico can do better for them, even to providing fresh meat—a thing they have not tasted for a long time. They are now in a region where roams the guanaco (Note 1); and the Tekeneekas are hunters as well as fishermen. A party has been sent inland to procure one or more of these animals, and the boat-voyagers are awaiting its return before continuing their interrupted voyage.

Meanwhile, the hospitality shown them by Jemmy Button is as generous as his limited means will allow. To make their time pass agreeably, he entertains them with accounts of many odd manners and customs, and also of such strange phenomena of nature as are peculiar to his country. The Tekeneekas, he assures them, are a peaceful people, never going to war when they can avoid it. Sometimes, however, they are forced into it by certain neighbouring tribes that make marauds upon them. The Ailikoleeps are enemies of theirs, but a wide belt of neutral territory between the two prevents frequent encounters. They more often have quarrels with the Yapoos living to the eastward, though these are tribally related to them. But their most dreaded foes are the Oensmen, whose country lies north of the channel, beyond the range of high mountains that borders it. The Oensmen he describes as giants, armed with a terrible weapon—the “bolas.” (Note 2.) But, being exclusively hunters, they have no canoes; and when on a raid to the southern side of the channel, they levy on the craft of the Yapoos, forcing the owners to ferry them across.

Orundelico’s own people can fight too, and bravely, according to his account; but only do so in defence of their homes and at the last extremity. They are not even possessed of warlike weapons—neither the deadly club nor the flint-bladed dagger—their spears, bows, and slings being used only as implements for fishing and the chase.

Besides the *harmaur* (guanaco), they hunt the *hiappo* (sea-otter) and the *coypu*, or South American beaver, (Note 3), which is also found in Tierra del Fuego. The chase of the otter takes place out in the open water, where the amphibious animal is surrounded by the well-trained dogs in a wide circle; they then close in upon it, diving whenever it goes under to prevent its escape through the enfiling ring.

Of the tekeneeka mode of fishing he treats them to an actual exhibition. No hooks are used, the bait, a lump of seal flesh, being simply attached to a hair-line. The fish, seizing it, is gently drawn to the surface, then dexterously caught by the left hand, and secured before it can clear its teeth from the tough fibrous bait. The rods used in this primitive style of angling are of the rudest kind—mere sticks, no longer than coach-whip shafts.

In hunting the *harmaur*, or, as they also call it, *wanakaye* (evidently a corruption of “guanaco”), one of their modes is to lie in wait for it on the limb of a tree which projects over the path taken by these animals, the habit of which is to follow one another in single file, and along old frequented tracks. Above these, among the branches, the Tekeneeka hunter constructs a sort of wattle staging or nest. Seating himself on this, he awaits the coming of the unsuspecting creature, and, when it is underneath, plunges his spear down between its ribs, the blade of the spear being a bone taken from some former victim of its own species.

Orundelico also shows them the Fuegian mode of fire-kindling, the first sparks being obtained from the *cathow*, or fire-stone, (Note 4), two pieces of which every Fuegian carries about him, as a habitual smoker does his flint and steel or box of matches. The inflammable material used by the natives is of three sorts: the soft down of certain birds, a moss of fine fibre, and a species of dry fungus found attached to the under side of half-rotten trees. The *cathows*, rasped against each other like flints, emit sparks which ignite the tinder, when the flame is produced in the way that the old sealer has employed since they have been in the country.

From Orundelico his guests get to know more of those matters about which his former associate, Eleparu, was so reticent, and as they now learn, with good reason.

“York bad fella,” he answers, on being questioned, “he rob me after Inglis officer leave us all at Woolya. Took ’way my coat, trousers, tools—everything. Yes, York very bad man. He no Tekeneeka; him blubber-eating Ailikoleep.”

Strange words from a man who, while giving utterance to them, is industriously masticating a piece of raw seal flesh.

Is there a people or nation on earth that does not believe itself superior to some other?

Jemmy further declares that the hostile party encountered in Whale-Boat Sound must have been Ailikoleeps; though Eleparu had denied it. Still, as there are several communities of Ailikoleeps, it may have been one with which Eleparu’s people have no connection.

With a grateful remembrance of their late host’s behaviour, the castaways are loth to believe all that is alleged against him by their present generous entertainer; though they feel some of it must be true, or why should Eleparu have been so reticent as to the relations between them? (Note 5.)

Like York, Jemmy has become a Benedict, and his wife is with him at the fishing-station. They have also an “olive-branch,” which has been left at the other wigwamery—a daughter, who, if she grow up with but the least resemblance to her mother, will be anything but a beauty, Jemmy’s “helpmeet” being as ugly as can well be imagined. Withal, she is of a kindly gentle disposition, quite as generous as Ocushlu, and does her best to entertain her husband’s guests.

Notwithstanding all the hospitality extended to them, the castaways find the delay irksome, and are impatient to be gone. Glad they are when at length a shout heard from the hills announces the approach of the hunters; and still more gratified at seeing them issue from the wood, bearing on their backs the four quarters of a guanaco as large as a year-old bullock.

Note 1. The guanaco, by some supposed to be the llama in its wild state, is found on the eastern side of Tierra del Fuego. Its range extends to the farthest southern point by the Straits of Lemaire; and, strange to say, it is there of a much larger size than on the plains of Patagonia, with a rougher coat and a longer tail.

Note 2. Jemmy Button's "Oensmen" are the *Yacana-cunnees*, kindred of the Patagonians, who at some distant time have crossed the Magellan Strait, and now rove over the large tract to which Narborough gave the name of "King Charles's South Land." They are a hunting tribe, the guanaco being the chief object of their pursuit and source of subsistence.

Note 3. *Myopotamus coypus*. It is found in many South American rivers, and, less frequently, in Fuegian waters. In habits and otherwise the coypu is much like the beaver, but is a smaller animal, and has a rounder tail.

Note 4. Iron pyrites. It is found on several of the mountainous islands of western Tierra del Fuego, and is much-prized by the natives for the purpose indicated. Being scarce in most places, it is an article of inter-tribal commerce, and is eagerly purchased by the Patagonians, in whose territory it is not found.

Note 5. The robbery was actually committed. After being left at Woolya, York and Fuegia found their way to the country that they had been taken from farther west; but not until they had stripped their former associate of most of the chattels that had been given him by Captain Fitzroy.

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## Chapter Twenty Three.

### The Dreaded Oensmen.

From the information they have gained about the Yapoos, which shows them to be ferocious and treacherous, and hostile to white men, Captain Gancy decides upon running out to seaward through the Murray Narrow—a resolve in harmony with the advice given him by his Fuegian host and the trusted Seagriff as well. The inlet in which they are is just outside the entrance to the Narrow, on its western side, and once round a separating tongue of land, they will be in it. As if fortune favoured their taking this route instead of following the Beagle Channel, a fine breeze has set in from almost due north, and is still blowing when the spoil-laden hunters return.

To take advantage of it, immediate departure must be made, and is determined upon. Down comes the tent, and its component parts are transferred to the boat with all their other belongings. Enough, also, of the guanaco meal to last them for a much longer voyage than they hope to have the necessity of making.

What if they make no voyage at all? What if they are not even allowed to embark? But why should these questions occur to them?—for they do occur.

Because, just as they all have come down to the boat, and are preparing to step into it, something is seen on the water outside, near the opposite shore of the channel, which painfully suggests to them a fleet of canoes crowded with men, and evidently making across for the cove.

"The Yapoos!" exclaims Orundelico in a voice betokening great alarm.

But not so great as when, the instant after, he again cries out:

"O Lor'! The Oensmen 'long with them!"

Captain Gancy, quickly covering the canoes with his glass, makes out, what is yet undistinguishable by the naked eye of any other than a Fuegian, that there are two sorts of men in them, quite different in appearance; unlike in form, facial aspect, dress—everything. Above all, are they dissimilar in size, some being of gigantic stature; the others alongside of them appearing like pigmies! The latter are seated or bent down working the paddles; while the big men stand erect, each with an ample robe of skin hanging toga-like from his shoulders, cloaking him from neck to ankles.

It is seen, also, that the canoes are lashed two and two, like double-keeled catamarans, as though the heavy stalwart Oensmen dare not trust themselves to embark in the ordinary Fuegian craft.

"O Lor', O Lor'!" repeats Orundelico, shivering from crown to toe. "The Oensmen, shoo'. The time of year they come plunder; now *oosho* (red leaf). They rob, kill, murder us all if we stay here. Too late now get pass um. They meet us yonner. We must run to hills; hide in woods."

The course he counsels is already being taken by his compatriots; all of whom, men and women, on hearing the word "Oensmen"—the most terrifying bogey of their babyhood—have made a rush to the wigwams and hastily gathered up the most portable of their household goods. Nor do they stay for Jemmy; but all together, shouting and screaming, strike off into the woods—his own wife with them!

Orundelico, left alone with the boat's people, remains by them but for a brief moment, urging them to flight also.

"Oensmen bad—very bad," he keeps affirming. "They worse than Ailikoleep—more cruel. Kill you all if you stay here. Come hide in the woods—there you safe."

"What's to be done?" interrogates the captain, as usual appealing to Seagriff. "If we retreat inland, we shall lose the boat—even if we save ourselves."

"Sartain, we'd lose her, and I don't think thar's need to. Let me hev another look through yer glass, captin."

A hasty glance enables him to make a rough estimate of the distance between the cove's mouth and the approaching canoes.

"I guess we kin do it," he says, with a satisfied air.

"Do what?"

"Git out o' this cove 'fore they shet us up in it. Ef we kin but make 'roun' that p'int eastart we'll be safe. Besides, it ain't at all likely we could escape t'other way, seein' how we're hampered."

This, with a side glance toward Mrs Gancy and Leoline:

"On land they'd soon overtake us, hide or no hide—sure to. Tharfer, our best, our *only* chance, air by the water," he affirms.

"By the water be it, then," calls out Captain Gancy, decisively. "We shall risk it!"

"Yes, yes!" agreed the late *Calypso's* second and third officers. "Anything but lose our boat!"

Never did crew or passengers get more quickly on board a craft, nor was there ever a more unceremonious leave-taking between guests and host, than that between the castaways and Orundelico.

On his side, the hurry is even greater: he scarcely waits, as it were on the doorstep, to see them off. For as soon as he is convinced they are really going, he turns his back on them and hastily darts in among the trees like a chased squirrel.

The instant that everybody is in the boat it is shot out into the water like an arrow from a bow, and brought head around, like a teetotum. Then, with the four oars in the hands of four men who work them with strength and will, it goes gliding, ay, fairly bounding, on for the outside channel.

Again it is a pull for very life, and they know it. If they had any doubt of it before, there can be none now, for as they draw near to the entrance of the cove they see the canoes spreading out to intercept them. The big fierce-looking men, too, are in a state of wild excitement, evidently purposing an attack. They cast off their skin wraps from their shoulders, displaying their naked bronze bodies and arms, like those of a Colossus. Each has in his hand what appears to be a bit of cord uniting two balls, about the size of small oranges. It is the bolas, an innocent-*looking* thing, but in reality a missile weapon as deadly in practised hands as a grenade or bomb-shell. That the giant savages intend casting them is clear. Their gestures leave no room for doubting it; they are only waiting until the boat is near enough.

The fugitives are well-nigh despairing, for she is almost near enough now. Less than two cables' lengths are between her and the foremost of the canoes, each holding a course straight toward the other. It seems as though they *must* meet. Forty strokes more, and the boat will be among the canoes. Twenty will bring her within reach of the bolas.

And the strokes are given; but no longer to propel it in that direction, for the point of the land spit is now on her beam, the helm is put hard-a-port, bringing the boat's head round with a sharp sheer to starboard, and she is clear of the cove!

The mast being already stepped, Ned and Henry now drop their oars and hasten to hoist sail. But ere the yard can be run up to the masthead, there comes a whizzing, booming sound—and it is caught in the *bolas*! The mast is struck too, and the balls, whirling around and around, lash it and the yard together, with the frumpled canvas between, as tight as a spliced spar!

And now dismay fills the hearts of the boat's people: all chance of escape seems gone. Two of their oars for the time are idle, and the sail, as it were, fast furled. But no: it is loose again! for, quick as thought, Harry Chester has drawn his knife, and, springing forward, cut the lapping cord with one rapid slash. With equal promptness Ned Gancy, having the halyards still in hand, hoists away, the sheet is hauled taut aft, the sail instantly fills, and off goes the boat, like an impatient steed under loosened rein and deep-driven spurs—off and away, in gay careering dance over the water, quickly leaving the foiled, furious giants far—hopelessly far—in the wake!

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Frontispiece      UNEXPECTED SUCCOUR      See p. 237

This was the last peril encountered by the castaways that claims record here. What came after were but the ordinary dangers to which an open boat is exposed when skirting along a rock-bound storm-beaten coast, such as that which forms the southern and western borders of Tierra del Fuego. But still favoured by the protecting hand of Heaven, they passed unharmed through all, reaching Good Success Bay by noon of the third day after.

There were their hearts made glad by the sight of a ship at anchor inshore, Seagriff still further rejoicing on recognising it as a sealing vessel, the very one on which, years before, he had cruised while chasing the fur-coated amphibia through the waters of Fireland.

Yet another and greater joy is in store for them all—a very thrill of delight—as, pulling up nearer to the ship, they see a large boat—a pinnace—swinging by its painter at her side, with the name *Calypso* lettered on its stern. Over the ship's rail, too, is seen a row of familiar faces—those of their old shipmates, whom they feared they might never see again. There are they all—Lyons and nine others—and all uniting in a chorus of joyous salutation.

Now hands are being shaken warmly on both sides, and mutual accounts rendered of what had happened to each party since their forced separation. As it turns out, the tale of peril and adventure is nearly all on the side of those who took to the gig, the crew of the pinnace having encountered but little incident or accident. They had kept to the outside coast and circumnavigated it from the Milky Way to the Straits of Le Maire. They had fallen in with some natives, but luckily had not been troubled by them.

They who had been troubled by them more than once, and whose lives had been endangered and almost lost, might well be thankful to Captain Fitzroy, one of whose objects in carrying the four Fuegians to England and back to their own country is thus told by himself:—

“Perhaps a shipwrecked seaman may hereafter receive help and kind treatment from Jemmy Button's children, prompted, as they can hardly fail to be, by the traditions they will have heard of men of other lands, and by the idea, however faint, of their duty to God, as well as to their neighbours.”

The hopeful prediction has borne good fruit, even sooner than Captain Fitzroy looked for. But for his humane act Captain Gancy and all dear to him would have doubtless left their bones, unburied, on some lone spot in the *Land of Fire*.

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