

BORN TO WANDER
VOLUME. II
BY
WILLIAM GORDON
STABLES

Born to Wander Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

Chapter One In Distant Lands On Moorland and Mountain

“Yon wild mossy mountains sae lofty and wide,
That nurse in their bosom the youth of the Clyde,
Where the grouse lead their coveys thro’ the heather to feed,
And the shepherd tends his flocks as he pipes on his reed.
Not Gowrie’s rich valley, nor Forth’s sunny shores,
To me hae the charm o’ yon wild mossy moors.”

Burns.

Scene: The parlour of an old-fashioned hotel in the Scottish Highlands. It is the afternoon of an autumn day; a great round-topped mountain, though some distance off, quite overshadows the window. This window is open, and the cool evening breeze is stealing in, laden with the perfume of the honeysuckle which almost covers a solitary pine tree close by. There is the drowsy hum of bees in the air, and now and then the melancholy lilt of the yellow-hammer—last songster of the season. Two gentlemen seated at dessert. For a time both are silent. They are thinking.

“Say, Lyle,” says one at last, “you have been staring unremittingly at the purple heather on yon hill-top for the last ten minutes, during which time, my friend, you haven’t spoken one word.”

Lyle laughed quietly, and cracked a walnut.

“Do you see,” he said, “two figures going on and on upwards through the heather yonder?”

“I see what I take to be a couple of blue-bottle flies creeping up a patch of crimson.”

“Those blue-bottles are our boys.”

“How small they seem!”

“Yet how plucky! That hill, Fitzroy, is precious nearly a mile in height above the sea-level, and it is a good ten miles’ climb to the top of it. They have the worst of it before them, and they haven’t eaten a morsel since morning, but I’ll wager the leg of the gauger they won’t give in.”

“Well, Lyle, our boys are chips of the old blocks, so I won’t take your bet. Besides, you know, I am an Englishman, and though I know the gauger is a kind of Scottish divinity, I was unaware you could take such liberties with his anatomy as to wager one of his legs.”

“Seriously talking now, Fitzroy, we are here all alone by our two selves, though our sons are in sight; has the question ever occurred to you what we are to do with our boys?”

“No,” said Fitzroy, “I haven’t given it a thought. Have you?”

“Well, I have, one or two; for my lad, you know, is big enough to make his father look old. He is fifteen, and yours is a year or two more.”

“They’ve had a good education,” said Fitzroy, reflectively.

“True, true; but how to turn it to account?”

“Send them into the army or navy. Honour and glory, you know!”

Lyle laughed.

“Honour and glory! Eh? Why, you and I, Fitzroy, have had a lot of that. Much good it has done us. I have a hook for a hand.”

“And I have a wooden leg,” said Fitzroy, “and that is about all I have to leave my lad, for I don’t suppose they bury a fellow with his wooden leg on. Well, anyhow, that is my boy’s legacy; he can hang it behind the door in the library, and when he has company he can point to it sadly, and say, ‘Heigho, that’s all that is left of poor father!’”

“Yes,” said Lyle; “and he can also tell the story of the forlorn hope you led when you won that wooden toe. No, Fitzroy, honour and glory won’t do, now that the war is over. It was all very well when you and I were boys.”

“Well, there is medicine, the law, and the church, and business, and farming, and what-not.”

“Now, my dear friend, which of those on your list do you think your boy would adopt?”

“Well,” replied Fitzroy, with a smile, “I fear it would be the ‘what-not.’”

“And mine, too. Our lads have too much spirit for anything very tame. There is the blood of the old fighting Fitzroys in your boy’s veins, and the blood of the restless, busy Lyles in Leonard’s. If you hadn’t lost nearly all your estates, and if I were rich, it would be different, wouldn’t it, my friend?”

“Yes, Lyle, yes.”

Fitzroy jumped up immediately afterwards, and stumped round the room several times, a way he had when thinking.

Then he stopped in front of his friend.

“Bother it all, Lyle,” he said; “I think I have it.”

“Well,” quoth Lyle, “let us hear it.”

Then Fitzroy sat down and drew his chair close to Lyle’s.

“We love our boys, don’t we?”

“Rather!”

“And we have only one each?”

“No more.”

“Well, your estate is encumbered?”

“It’s all in a heap.”

“So is mine, but in a few years both may be clear.”

“Yes, please God, unless, you know, my old pike turns his sides up—ha! ha!”

“Well, what I propose is this. Let our lads have their fling for a bit.”

“What! appoint a tutor to each of them, and let them make the grand tour, see a bit of Europe, and then settle down?”

“Bother tutors and your grand tour! How would we have liked at their age to have had tutors hung on to us?”

“Well, Lyle, we might have had tutors, but I’ll be bound we would have been masters.”

“Yes. Well, boys will be boys, and I know nothing would please our lads better than seeing the world; so suppose we say to them, We can afford you a hundred or two a year if you care to go and see a bit of life, and don’t lose yourselves, what do you think they would reply?”

“I don’t know exactly what they would reply, but I know they would jump at the offer, and put us down as model parents. But then, we have their mothers to consult.”

“Well, consult them, but put the matter very straight and clear before their eyes. Explain to our worthy wives that boys cannot always be in leading strings, that the only kind of education a gentleman can have to fit him for the battle of life, is that which he gains from his experience in roughing it and in rubbing shoulders with the wide world.”

“Good; that ought to fetch them.”

“Yes; and we may add that after a young man has seen the world, he is more likely to settle down, and lead a quiet respectable life at home.”

“As a country squire!”

“Oh yes; country squire will do, and we might throw Parliament in, eh? Member for the county—how does that sound?”

Major Lyle laughed.

And Captain Fitzroy laughed.

Then they both rubbed their hands and looked pleased.

“I think,” said Fitzroy, “we have it all cut and dry.”

“There isn’t a doubt of it.”

“Well, then, we’ll order the lads’ dinner in—say in three hours’ time, and you and I will meanwhile have a stroll.”

In about three hours both Leonard and his friend Douglas Fitzroy returned to the inn, as hungry as Highland hunters, and were glad to see the table groaning with good things.

“We’ve had such a day of it, dad,” said Leonard; “though we had no idea of the distance when we started, but I’ve found some of the rarest ferns and mountain flora, and some of the rarest coleoptera in all creation. Haven’t we, Doug?”

“Yes, Leon. Your sister will be delighted.”

“Dear Eff!” said Leonard; “I wish she’d been with us.”

It was a grand walking expedition the two young gentleman and their fathers were on, and it is wonderful how Captain Fitzroy did swing along with that wooden leg of his. He was always in front, whether it was going up hill or down dell. There really seems some advantage, after all, in having a wooden leg, for once an angry adder struck the gallant captain on the “timber toe,” as he called it; and once a bulldog flew at him, and though it rent some portion of his clothing, it could make no impression to signify on that wooden leg, and finally received a kick on the jaw that made it retire to its kennel in astonishment.

After they had dined Captain Fitzroy explained the travelling scheme to the lads, and recommended them to think seriously about it after they had retired to their bedroom, and give their answer in the morning.

I do not think there is any occasion to say what that answer was when the morning came.

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Chapter Two. At Sea in the “Fairy Queen.”

“Oh! who can tell save he whose heart hath tried,
And danced in triumph o’er the waters wide,
The exalting sense—the pulse’s maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?”

Byron.

“The moon is up; it is a lovely eve;
Long streams of light o’er dancing waves expand.”

Idem.

Scene: The deck of the Fairy Queen. Douglas and Leonard walking slowly up and down the quarter-deck arm-in-arm. Hardly a cloud in the sky, stars very bright, and a round moon rising in the east and gilding the waters.

Three years have elapsed since the conversation related in the last chapter took place—years that have not been thrown away, for our heroes—by that title we ought now to know them—have been sensible and apt pupils in the world’s great school.

It must be admitted that it was both a strange and an unusual thing for two fathers, to each make his only son an allowance, and tell him to go and enjoy himself in any way he pleased. After all, it was only treating boys as men, and this, in my opinion, ought to be done more often than it is.

They drew their first half-year’s income in London, then went quietly away to their hotel to consider what they should do.

“A couple of hundred a year, Doug,” said Leonard, “isn’t a vast fortune.”

“No,” replied Douglas, “it isn’t unspendable.”

“That is what I was thinking. But you see, by making us this grant—and it is all they can afford, and very handsome of them—we are positively on parole, aren’t we?”

“Yes, we are bound not to exceed. To do so would be most unkind and ungentlemanly.”

“Well, if we go on the continent it won’t last long, will it?”

“No; besides, I don’t hanker after the continent. My French is shocking bad, Leon, and I should be sure to quarrel with somebody, and get run through the body. No; the continent is out of the question.”

“Yes; although a fellow could pick up some nice specimens there. But let us go farther afield. We can’t go abroad far as passengers—suppose we go as sailors? We both have been to Norway in a ship, and we went together to Archangel, so there isn’t much about a ship we don’t know. Let us, I say, offer our services as—”

“As what?”

“Why, as apprentices. We’re not much too old.”

“No.”

“Well, is it agreed?”

“Yes, I’m ready for anything, Leon. I want to see the world at any price.”

So the very next day off they had gone to see an old friend of Captain Fitzroy’s who lived down Greenwich way, and who was a city merchant in a big way of business.

They explained their wishes and ambitions to him.

“Well,” he replied, “come and dine with me to-morrow, and I’ll introduce you to one of the jolliest old salts that ever crossed the ocean. I’ll do no more than introduce you, mind that.”

Nor did he.

But after dinner Captain Blunt, a thorough seaman every inch of him, with a face as rosy and round as the rising moon, began spinning yarns, or telling his experiences. He had ready listeners in Leonard and Douglas, and when the former opened out, as he phrased

it, and introduced and expatiated on the subject next his heart and the heart of his friend, it was Captain Blunt's turn to listen.

"Bother me, boys!" he exclaimed at last, pitching away the end of a big cigar, "but I think you are good-hearted ones, through and through, and if I thought it was something more than a passing fancy I'd take you along with me."

"Take us and try us. We want no wages till we can earn them, nor will we live aft till we are fit to keep a watch. Our station on deck must be before the mast, our place below a seat before the galley fire, and a bunk or hammock amidships. We want to learn to set a sail, to splice a rope, to heave the lead, box the compass, turn the capstan, reef and steer—in fact, all a sailor's duties."

"Bravo!" cried Captain Blunt, "I'm but a plain man, and a plain outspoken sailor, but I'll have you; and if there isn't some life and go in you, blame me, but I'm no reader of character."

That is the way—an unusual one, I grant—in which our heroes joined the merchant service, and here—after three years all spent in Captain Blunt's ship—here, I say, on this lovely night, we find them both on deck, one keeping his watch, the other keeping him company, for they are having a talk about bygone times.

They have seen a bit of life even in that time, for the good ship Fairy Queen was seldom long out of active service.

They kept strictly to the terms of their engagement, and have been till now before the mast, refusing even to mess in the cabin, although invited to do so by kindly old Captain Blunt.

Both Douglas Fitzroy and Leonard Lyle were, as mere children, fond of the sea. What British boy is not? A ship had always had a strange fascination for each of them. When much younger they had often been taken by their parents to Glasgow, and they preferred a stroll among the shipping at the Broomielaw to even a saunter in the park itself. Beautiful in summer though the park might have been in those days—and there was but one—it was in Leonard's eyes too artificial. The lad loved Nature, but he liked to meet her and to woo her in the woods and wilds.

At school in Edinburgh both boys were what are called inseparables. They just suited each other. It was not a case of extremes meet, however, for the tastes of both were identical. Although their books and lessons had by no means been neglected, still, task duty over, and off their minds for the day, they were free to follow the bent of their own

wills. More beautiful or more romantic scenery than that close around Scotland's capital there is hardly to be found anywhere. Our heroes knew every nook and corner of it, every hill and dell, every dingle, rock, and glen, and all the creatures that dwelt therein, whether clad in fur or feather. But for all that, they were as well known on the pier of Leith as "Mutchkin Jock," the gigantic shore-porter, himself was. Never a ship worth the name of ship had entered, while they were at school, that they did not visit, scan, and criticise. They coolly invited themselves on board, too. Now this might have been resented at times had they not been gentlemanly lads. Gentlemanly in address, I mean. So, though they might often and often have been found "yarning" with sailors forward, whose hearts they well knew how to win, they were just as often invited down below to the cabin, and hobnobbed with the captain himself.

It would have pleased the surliest old ship captain who ever peeped over a binnacle edge, to have two such listeners as young Leon and Doug. How their bright eyes had sparkled, to be sure, as some skipper newly or lately arrived from foreign lands sat telling them of all the wonders he had seen! And how they had longed to sail away to summer seas, and behold for themselves wonders on a larger scale than any they could meet with among the mountains of their own country!

It was thus perhaps that a taste for wandering and a fondness for the sea had been engendered early in the breast of each of the boys.

It was this, I'm sure, that caused them once to write home to their respective parents, informing them that the 250-ton brig, Highland Donald, was to sail in a fortnight for Norway and the Baltic, and that the skipper had offered to take them if they could obtain permission.

Permission had been granted, and having been provided with suits of rough warm clothing, they had embarked one fine spring morning, and sailed away for the cold north.

Now, if any young reader thinks he would like to be a sailor, and has been led to believe, from books or otherwise, that a seaman's life is one of unmitigated pleasure and general jollity, let him induce his father or guardian to place him on a grain, tar, or timber ship bound for Norway or the Baltic. If, after a month or two of such a life, he still believes in the joys of a seaman's existence, let him join the merchant service forthwith, but I fear there are few lads who would come up smiling after so severe a test.

Our heroes, however, had stood this test, though they had roughed it in no ordinary way. True, they had been all but shipwrecked on an iron-bound coast, where no boat could have lived a minute; they had been in gale of wind after gale of wind; their

provisions and fare had been of the coarsest; their beds were always wet or damp, and sometimes the cold had been intense, depressing, benumbing to both mind and body.

But their long voyage north had made sailors of them for all that, and that is saying a very great deal. It had proved of what mettle they were made, and given them confidence in themselves.

This is the first voyage, then, in which Leonard and Douglas have trod the deck as officers, and I do not deny that both are just a trifle proud of their position, although they feel fully the weight of responsibility the buttons have brought. They certainly took but little pride in the uniform which they wore, as some weak-minded lads would have done, albeit handsome they both had looked, as they sat at table on that last night at Grayling House. So, at all events, Leonard's mother and poor Effie thought. The latter had done little else but cry all the day, that is, whenever she could get a chance of doing so unseen. This was the second time only that her brother and brother's friend had been home since they went to sea for good. They had stayed at home for a whole month, and now were bound on a perilous cruise indeed, sailing far away to Arctic seas, Captain Blunt's ship having been chosen to take stores and provisions out to Greenland for vessels employed in finding out the North-West Passage.

Something had seemed to whisper to Effie that she would never see her darling brother again. So no wonder her heart had been sad, and her eyes red with weeping, as our heroes left; or that a gloom, like the gloom of the grave, had fallen on Grayling House, as soon as they were gone.

Great old Ossian had come and put his head on her lap, and gazing up into her face with those brown speaking eyes of his, and his loving looks of pity, almost broke her heart. The tears had come fast enough then.

The Fairy Queen had sailed from Leith. Both parents had accompanied their sons thus far, and blessed them and given them Bibles each (it is a way they have in Scotland on such occasions), and bade them a hearty good-bye.

Yes, it was a hearty good-bye to all outward appearance, but there was a lump in Leonard's throat all the same that he had a good deal of difficulty in swallowing; and as soon as the Fairy Queen was out of sight, the two fathers had left the pier—not side by side, remark we, but one in front of the other, Indian-file fashion. Why not side by side? Well, for this reason. There was a moisture in Major Fitzroy's eyes, that, being a man, he was somewhat ashamed of, so he stumped on ahead, that Captain Lyle might not notice his weakness; and between you and me, reader, Captain Lyle, for some similar reason, was not sorry. I hope you quite understand it.

However, here on this beautiful summer's night, with a gentle beam wind blowing from the westward, we find our friends on deck. There is a crowd of sail on her, and the ship lies away to the west of the Shetland Islands. They do not mean to touch there, so give the rocks a good offing.

Save for the occasional flapping of the sails or a footstep on deck, there is not a sound to break the solemn stillness.

They did encounter a gale of wind, however, shortly after leaving Leith, but the good ship stood it well, and it had not lasted long.

"I say, old fellow," said Leonard, "hadn't you better turn in? I think I would if I had a chance."

"No, I don't feel sleepy; I'm more inclined to continue our pleasant chat. Pleasant chat on a pleasant night, with every prospect of a pleasant voyage, eh?"

"I think so. Of course good weather cannot last for ever."

"No, and then there is the ice."

"Well, now, I'm not afraid of that. Remember, I superintended the fortifying of the ship, and you could hardly believe how solid we are. But of course ice will go through anything."

"So I've heard, and we saw some bergs while coming round the Horn—didn't we?—that I wouldn't care to be embraced between."

"Not unless the ship were made of indiarubber, and everybody in it."

"I wonder how all are at Grayling House to-night. Poor sister Effie! Didn't she cry! I'm afraid old Peter was croaking a bit. He is quite one of the family, you know, but very old-wifeish and crotchety, and thinks himself quite an old relation of father's. Then there is that ridiculous superstition about the pike."

"Yes, do you know the story?"

"Yes, and I may relate it some evening, perhaps, what little story there is; though it is only ridiculous nonsense. But look! what is that?"

“Why, a shoal of porpoises, but they are just like fishes of fire.”

“Phosphorescence. These seas on some summer nights are all alive with it. What a lovely sight! Strange life the creatures lead! I wonder do they ever sleep? Heigho! talking of sleep makes me think of my hammock. I believe I will turn in now, though it is really a pity to go below on so lovely a night. Ta, ta. Take care of us all.

“A Dios, Leonard.”

Yes, it was indeed a lovely night; but, ah! quickly indeed do scene and weather change at sea.

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Chapter Three.

On the Wings of a Westerly Gale.

“And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong;
He struck with his o’ertaking wings
And chased us north along.
And the ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And northward ay we flew.”

Coleridge.

Scene: A ship on her beam ends, not far off the coast of Norway, the seas all around her houses high; their tops cut short off by the force of the wind, and the spray driven over the seemingly doomed ship, like the drift in a moorland snowstorm. The sky is clear, there is a yellow glare in the west where the sun went down. A full moon riding high in a yellow haze.

A gale of wind got out of its cave—for according to the ancients the winds do live in a cave. It was a gale from the west, with something southerly in it, and I feel nearly sure, from the rampancy with which it roared, from the vigour with which it blew, and the capers it cut, that this gale of wind must have taken French leave of its cave.

It seemed to rejoice in its freedom, nevertheless. No schoolboy just escaped from his tasks was ever more full of freaks and mischief.

It came hallooing over the Atlantic Ocean, and every ship it met had to do honour to it on the spot, by furling sails, or even laying to under bare poles.

If these sails were quickly taken in by men who moved in a pretty and sprightly fashion, all right—the gale went on. But if lubbers went to work aloft, or the wheel was badly handled—then “Pah!” the wind would cry, “I’ll shorten sail for you,” and away would go the sails in ribbons, cracking like half a million cart-whips, and perhaps a stick at the same time, a topmast or yard, and if a man or two were lost, the wind took neither blame nor further notice.

The gale came tearing up Channel, and roaring across the Irish Sea, and lucky indeed were those ships that managed to put back and get safely into harbour, where the storm could only scream vindictively through the empty rigging.

The gale went raging over towns and cities, doing rare damage among stalks and spires, ripping and rolling lead off roofs, and tossing the tiles about as one deals cards at whist. It swept along the thoroughfares, too, having fine fun with the unfortunate passengers who happened to be abroad, rending top coats and skirts, running off with the hats of old fogies, and turning umbrellas inside out.

The gale came shrieking over the country, changing a point or two more to the south'ard, so as to shake the British Islands from aft to fore. It picked up great clouds as it went northwards ho! and mixed them all together, so that when it descended on the vale of the Tweed, it came with thunderclap and lightning's flash, and a darkness that could almost be felt. It tore through the woods and forests, overturning vast rocks, and uprooting mighty trees, that had grown green summer after summer for a hundred years.

In the avenue of Grayling House it spent an extra dose of its fury, it bedded the ground with dead wood, and wrenched off many a lordly limb from elm and chestnut.

Effie heard the voice of the roaring wind, and saw the destruction it was doing, and prayed for her brother and brother's friend, who were far away at sea.

She stood by the parlour window beside her father, who was gazing outwards across the lawn, and her hands were clasped, as if in fear, around his left arm. Mrs Lyle herself had retired to her room.

Suddenly a flash shot athwart the trees, so dazzling and blinding that Effie was almost deprived of sight. The peal of thunder that followed was terrific.

About ten minutes after this, while the wind still roared, while the rain and hail beat the leaves ground-wards, and the grass was covered as deep almost in white as if it were mid-winter, old Peter—he is looking very old and grey now—staggered into the room. He had not waited even to knock. “Sir, sir, sir!” he cried.

“Well, Peter, what is it? Speak, man! You frighten the child.”

“Oh, sir, sir! Joe, sir, Joe!”

“Is dead?”

“Ay, as dead as a mawk. The great rock that o’erhung the water is rent in pieces, tons upon tons have fallen into the loch, the palin’ is washed away, Joe is dead, and there is an end to Glen Lyle. You mind the gipsy’s rhyme—

“When dead yon lordly pike shall float,
While loud and hoarse the ravens call,
Then grief and woe shall be thy lot,
Glen Lyle’s brave house must fall.”

“Hush, hush, hush, man!” cried Captain Lyle; “everything that lives must die; all things on earth must have an end. Why bother yourself about the death of a poor pike, man? Come, Peter; I fear that you are positively getting old.”

“By the way, Effie,” he added, turning to his daughter, “run and see how your mother is.”

Effie went away. She was used to obey. Dearly loved though she was by both her parents, she had many lonely sad hours now that her brother had become a wanderer, only to appear now and then at Glen Lyle to stay for a short time, he and Douglas, then disappear, and leave such a gloom behind that she hardly cared to live.

But she had never felt so sad as she did now. What was going to happen to her father or to her brother? She did not go to her mother’s room. She did not wish to show her tears. But she went to her own, threw herself on her bed, and cried and prayed till she fell asleep.

“Effie, child, are you here?”

It was her mother’s voice, and she started up. The moon was throwing a flood of light into the room.

Next moment she was in her mother’s arms, who was soothing her, and laughingly trying to banish her fears.

We leave them there and follow the gale.

It had gone careering on, over mountain, moorland, and lake, seeming to gather force as it went. It must have been at its height when it swept over the bleak, bare islands of Shetland, and made madly off for the Norwegian coast. Old, old, white-haired men, who

had lived their lives in this ultima Thule, never remembered a fiercer storm. On one of the most barren and bleakest islands, next morning, the beach was found bestrewn with wreckage from some gallant ship, and the merciless waves had thrown up more than one dead body, and there they lay as if asleep, with dishevelled hair, in which were sand and weeds, hands half clenched, as if, in the agony of death, they had tried to grasp at something, and cold, hard, wet faces upturned to the morning sun.

The Fairy Queen was trying to round a rocky cape when the white horses of that gale of wind first appeared on the horizon, heading straight for them. Once round the point they would be comparatively safe.

“Look!” cried Leonard to Douglas, whose watch it was. The sun was going down behind the western waves. Wild and red he looked, and shorn of his beams, and tinging all the water ’twixt the barque and the horizon a bright blood-red.

On came the white horses. It was a race between the barque and the gale of wind. Before her loomed the rocky promontory. The cliffs rose straight up out of the sea, and their heads were buried in haze. Close to the wind sailed the barque, as close as ever could be.

On and on she speeds, but the white horses are almost close aboard of her.

“Hands, shorten sail!”

The wind is on her. To shorten sail now were madness. The wind is on her, the brave ship leans over to it, till the water rushes in through the lee scuppers.

The wind increases in force every moment.

The great black rocks are close above her lee bow. Looking upwards, the wild flowers can be seen hanging to the banks and cliffs—saxifrages, heath, broom, and golden gorse. So close is the barque that the sea-birds that have alighted on the cliffs as the sun kissed the waves, startled by the flapping canvas, soar off again and go screaming skywards.

The sun is down now altogether, and the gale has rushed at the vessel like a wild beast seeking its lawful prey; the seas are dashing over her, the spray flying high over the bending masts.

The gale has leapt upon them, too, from a pillar of cloud, and with forked and flashing lightning.

Are they round the point? No one on that deck can tell as yet. The roar and the surge is deafening. The gloom is appalling, men can hardly breathe, the words the captain tries to shout to those at the wheel are carried away on the wind. The crew clutch at the rigging, and feel choking, drowning.

“Keep her away now!” It was Leonard’s voice in a wheelman’s ear. They were round the point!

The barque is flying. The topsails are rent in ribbons. What matters it? The open sea is before them. Yes, but like a tiger baulked of its prey, the squall suddenly increases to the force of a hurricane, and next moment the good ship is helpless on her beam ends.

Had the force of the gale been kept up many minutes the ship would have foundered, none would have been left alive to tell the tale. In some sandy bay in through those rocks and cliffs other dead swollen bodies would have been cast up like those on the Shetland shores, to lie with lustreless eyes in the morning’s sunshine.

The squall abated, the sky cleared, the gale itself has spent its fury, and goes growling away to leeward.

With hatchet and knife in hardy hands the wreck is cleared away at last, and the Fairy Queen rides in the moonlight on an even keel.

The captain shakes hands with Leonard and Douglas. “You saved her,” he said. “My boys, you saved her! It was excellent seamanship. Had you shortened sail when the wind got stiff we never would have rounded that point, and the sharks would have had what was left of us.”

“Captain Blunt,” said Douglas, “take credit to yourself as well, for you superintended the ballasting of the barque. Had that shifted, then—”

“Davy Jones, eh?” said the skipper, laughing.

He could afford to laugh now.

There was much still to be done, so no more was said. All hands were called to make the barque as snug as could be for the night.

When morning broke in a grey uncertain haze over the sea, and the rocky shore began to loom out to leeward and astern, the extent of the damage was more apparent, but after all the ship had come out of it fairly well. The fore topmast was gone, the mizzen

damaged, the bulwarks broken, and more like sheep hurdles than anything else, but there was little other damage worth entering in the log-book.

The sky cleared when the sun rose, and after breakfast the men were set to work repairing damages.

The Fairy Queen had little business on the Norwegian coast at all, but she had been driven far out of her course by adverse winds.

In a few more days the breeze was fair, and the ship was making good way westwards, albeit she was jury-rigged. It was sincerely hoped by all on board that the terrible gale they had just encountered was the worst they would meet. The ship had borne it wonderfully well, and leaked not in the least; for many a day, therefore, everything went as merry as marriage bells on board.

Captain Blunt was happy, so were our heroes, and so, for the matter of that, was every one fore and aft. The crew of the Fairy Queen were all picked men. They were not feather-bed sailors; most of them had been in the Arctic regions before, and knew them well. But albeit a good seaman is not afraid to face danger in every shape and form, he is nevertheless happiest when things are going well.

So now, every night, around the galley fire, songs were sung and stories told, and by day many a jocund laugh around the fo'c's'le mingling with the scream of the circling sea-birds told of light hearts and minds that were free from care.

Everything in these seas was new to young Douglas and Leonard. They passed the strange-looking Faroe group of islands to the north, and in good time Iceland to the south, and bore up, straight as a bird could fly, for Cape Farewell, the southernmost point of Greenland.

Those Faroe Isles, as seen from the sea, are indescribably fantastic and picturesque. Let me see if I cannot find a simile. Yes, here it is: take a number of pebbles and stones, with a few good-sized smithy cinders. Let these be of all sizes. Next take a broad, shallow basin, which partly fill with water stained dark blue with indigo; now place your stones, etc, in this water, with one end of each sticking up. Paint these ends and tip them and streak them with green, with white, and with crimson, and lo and behold! you have a model of the Faroe Islands.

The Fairy Queen called at Reykjavik, and the good people of that quaint wee "city" came trooping on board. Even the Danish parson came, carrying in his own hands—for he was not proud—a string of firm, delicious-looking rock cod as a present for the captain.

Almost every boat brought a gift of some kind. Well, I daresay they did expect some presents in return, and it is needless to say they got them. This was, after all, only a very pleasant and very justifiable way of doing a barter; much better, in my opinion, than if they had lain on their oars and said,—

“We have fresh fish, and mountain mutton, and eggs and game for sale; how much tobacco, biscuits, knives, hatches, and cooking utensils have you to spare?”

The good little clergyman innocently inquired whether the war betwixt England and France was still going on, and was astonished to be told it was over years ago.

But nothing could exceed the kindness and hospitality of these people to our young heroes when they went on shore. Had they eaten and drunk a hundredth part of what they were pressed to partake of, they would have been cleverer far than the Welsh giant I used to read of in my boyhood in “The Wonderful Adventures of Jack the Giant-killer.”

The Fairy Queen lay at Reykjavik—having to take in water—for three days, and then sailed away. But would it be believed that in this short time Leonard and Douglas won so many hearts among old and young, that there was hardly a dry eye in the village the morning they left, so primitive and simple were those people then?

Born to Wander Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Four.

On Silent Seas.

“And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold,
And ice, mast high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

“And through the drifts the snowy clits
Did send a dismal sheen,
Nor shapes of men nor beast we ken—
The ice was all between.”

Coleridge.

Scene: The Arctic Ocean. One solitary ship in sight. Ice all about, against which, in contrast, the water looks black as ink.

Yes, everything they saw in this voyage and in these seas was indeed very new to Leonard and Douglas. They certainly were pleased they had come. It was like being in a new world.

They saw so many icebergs before they reached Cape Farewell that they ceased to fear them. Nothing very tremendous, though, but of all sizes, mostly covered with snow, and of shapes the most fantastic. Everything on earth seemed to be mimicked in shape by these bergs. Churches and houses, or halls with domes and minarets, were common objects. Furniture of all kinds came next in order of frequency; then came animals of all sorts, pigs, sheep, lions, bears, giraffes, geese, swans, horses, cattle, cocks, and hens. And the most amusing part of the business was this: as the ship sailed past them, or through the midst of them, they kept altering their shapes or forms with the greatest coolness, so to speak.

A giraffe, for instance, developed into a ginger-beer bottle, a cow turned into a cab, a church into a chair, a pig became a pigeon, and a hen a horse, while, perhaps, a monster lion or couchant bear became a daft-looking old wife with a flap-cap on. It was funny.

Some of the smaller of these icebergs were tenanted by seals.

What a delightfully easy life those lovely creatures seemed to lead! There goes one, for instance, basking on a bit of ice just like a sofa, pillow and all complete; and his snowy couch is floating quietly away through that blue and sunny summer sea, rising and falling gently on the waves in a way that must be quite delightful. He just raises his head as the ship sails past, and gazes after the Fairy Queen with a kind of dreamy interest, then lets it drop again, and recommences his study of the birds that go wheeling and screaming round in the sky.

Yonder a walrus pops a monster tusked head and goggle eyes out of the water, looking at the ship as fiercely as an angry bull.

“What are you?” he seems to ask, “or why are you disturbing the placid waters of my ocean home?”

Then he disappears, and presently is seen far away to the north.

Yonder, ploughing his lonely way through the silence of the dark sea, is a monster narwhal. He makes no remark. If a boat were to attack him, he might lose his temper, and try to stave her with his mighty ivory horn; but the Fairy Queen is nothing to him, so he looks not to right or to left, but goes on and on and away.

Here comes a shoal of dancing porpoises, all going south. How they dance, and how they plunge, and how they caper, to be sure! They take little heed of the ship, do not even go out of their way to avoid her. Perhaps they are going on a summer holiday, and are so full of their own happiness and joy that they have little time to think of anything else. Bless the innocent creatures! I’ve often and often felt pleasure in beholding their gambols; and thanked God from the bottom of my heart, because He has made them, made the earth and its fulness, the sea and all it contains, so full of life and love and beauty.

But look away down yonder, and you will perceive—for the ship is now becalmed—a triangular, fan-like thing above the water, and a dark line close by it. It is the back of the huge and awful Greenland shark. And look! there is a sea-bird perched on it, just as a starling might be on the back of a sheep. I do not like to think about sharks nor see them, and I could tell you many an ugly story about them—awful enough to make your

blood run cold, but that would be a digression; besides, I feel sure the reader does not want his blood to run cold. But there is a more terrible-looking monster far than the Greenland shark in these seas. I allude to the gigantic hammer-head, who is more ugly than any nightmare.

But lo! here comes an honest whale. I do like these great monsters; I have seen quite a deal of their ways and manners. I am sure they have far more sagacity than they get credit for. I should like to own a little private sea of my own, and have it enclosed, with a notice board up, "Trespassers will be prosecuted," and keep a full-sized whale or two. I feel sure I could teach them quite a host of little tricks. Stay, though—they would not be little tricks. Never mind, I and my whales would get on very well together. But if one did get angry with me, and did open his mouth, why—but it will not bear thinking about.

The whales our heroes saw in the Greenland ocean were leviathans. Leonard could not have believed such monsters existed anywhere in the world, and they had a thorough business air about them, too. Some came near enough the ship to show their eyes. Good-natured, twinkling little eyes, that seemed to say,—

"We know you are not a whaler, so pass on, and molest us not, else with one stroke of our tails we will send you all to Davy Jones."

Then they would blow, and great fountains of steam would rise into the air, with a roar like that which an engine emits, only louder far. This is not water, as is generally supposed, but the breath of the vast leviathan of the ocean.

A Whale's Garden Party.

This is no joke of mine, because I have been at one, and Leonard and Douglas on this memorable voyage had also the good luck to witness an entertainment of the sort.

It only takes place at certain seasons of the year, always pretty far south of the main ice pack, and always in a spot unfrequented by ships. There is another *sine qua non* connected with this garden party—namely, plenty to eat, and whales do not require anything to drink, you know. So the sea where the party is held is so full of a tiny shrimplet that it is tinged in colour. But why do I call it a garden party you may ask; are there any flowers? Does not the sun shimmering on the small icebergs already described, and on the clear ice itself, bring forth a hundred various tints and colours, more gorgeously, more radiantly beautiful than any flowers that ever bloomed and grew? Are there not, too, at the sea bottom flowers of the deep—

“Many a flower that’s born to blush unseen—”

Lovelier far than those that bloom on land? Yes, I am right in calling it a garden party. But what do the whales do at this garden party of theirs? Sail quietly round and look at each other? Discuss the possibility of uniting in a body, and driving all the whaling fleet to the bottom of the sea? Consider the prospects of the shrimp harvest, or debate upon the best methods of extracting a harpoon from fin or tail, and the easiest method of capsizing a boat? No; nothing of the sort. They have met together to enjoy themselves, and in their own exceedingly cumbersome way they do enjoy themselves. They enjoy themselves with a force and a vengeance that is terrible to witness. The noise and explosions of their wonderful gambols can be heard ten miles away on a still night. To see a porpoise leap high out of the water like a salmon is a fine sight, but to see two or three whales at one and the same time thus disporting themselves, while some lie in the water beating time with their terrible tails, others playing at leap frog, and the sea for acres round them churned into froth and meerschaum, is a sight that once seen can never be forgotten. The boldest harpooner that ever drew breath would not venture near those gambolling whales, and I verily believe that the biggest line-of-battle ships that ever floated would be staved and sunk in the midst of that funny but fearful maelstrom.

This gives you, reader, but the very faintest notion of a whale’s garden party. It is one of the wonders of the world, and one which few have ever seen and lived to tell of, for there is no surety of the huge monsters not shifting ground at any moment, and sweeping down like a whirlwind on some devoted ship.

The Fairy Queen sailed on, and in due time sighted and passed Cape Farewell, then northward ho! through Davis Straits to Baffin’s Sea, and here they had the great good luck to fall in with the vessels they had come to succour.

Some delay was caused in unloading, and as the summer was now far advanced, and Captain Blunt had no desire to winter in these dismal regions, he was naturally anxious to get away south as soon as possible.

They were cleared at last, however, and bidding the research vessels farewell, with three-times-three ringing cheers, all sail was set that the ship could stagger under, and on she rushed through an open sea, although there were plenty of icebergs about.

For a whole week everything went favourably and well. Then, alas! the tide turned with a vengeance. One of those dense fogs so common in these regions came down upon them like a wall, and so enveloped the ship that it was impossible, standing at the windlass, to see the jibboom end; and at the same time.

“Down dropt the wind, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea.”

But worse was to come.

For now, up-looming through the dismal fog, came great green-ribbed icebergs, the waves lapping at their feet and the spray washing their dripping sides.

In the midst of so great a danger Captain Blunt felt powerless. There was absolutely nothing to be done but wait and wait, and pray the good Father to send a breeze.

When we pray earnestly for anything we should never forget to add the words of Him Who spake as never man spake, and say, “Thy will be done.” No prayer is complete without that beautiful line; and yet, though easy to say it, it is—oh! so hard sometimes to pray it. But then we poor mortals do not know what is best for us.

In the present instance our heroes’ prayers were not heard, and days and weeks flew by; then the sky cleared, and they saw the sun once more, but only to find themselves so surrounded by ice on all quarters that escape was impossible. Besides, the season was now far gone, autumn was wearing through, the sun was far south, and the nights getting long and cold and dreary.

Frost now set in, and snow began to fall.

They were safe from all dangers for six months to come, at the least.

“Never mind,” said Blunt cheerily to Leonard, “we have provisions enough to last us for a year at the very least. So we must do the best to make ourselves comfortable.”

“That we will,” replied Leonard, “though I fear our friends at home will think we are lost.”

“That is the only drawback—my dear wife and child, and your parents, boys. Well, we are in the hands of Providence. God is here in these solitudes, and just as easily found as if we were in the cathedral of old St. Giles’.”

It was indeed a dreary winter they passed in the midst of that frozen sea. No sun, no light save moon or stars and the lovely aurora. Silence deep as the grave, except—which was rare—when a storm came howling over the pack, raising the snow in whirlwinds, and often hurling off the peaked and jagged tops of the weird-looking icebergs.

But the sun appeared at last, and in due time. With a noise and confusion that is indescribable the ice broke up, and the Fairy Queen began to move slowly—oh, so slowly!—through the ice on her way southwards, with danger on every quarter, danger ahead, and danger astern. She sailed for many, many miles without a rudder; for lest it should get smashed it had been unshipped, the men steering ahead by means of boat and hawser, and the ship often being so close to an iceberg that the tips of the yard arms touched, and when the berg moved over with a wave it threw the vessel upwards from the bottom. On these occasions poles were used to edge her off.

It was tedious work all this, but it came to an end at last, and the water being now more open, the rudder was re-shipped, and more sail clapped on, so that much better way was made.

Another week passed by. They were well south now in Davis Straits, albeit the wind had been somewhat fickle.

They had high hopes of soon seeing the last of the ice, and both Douglas and Leonard began to think of home, and talk of it also.

It was spring time once more. The larches, at all events, would be green and tasselled with crimson in the woods around Glen Lyle, primroses would be peeping out in cosy corners in moss-bedded copses, and birds would be busy building, and the trees alive with the voice of song.

“In three weeks more,” said Douglas, “we ought to be stretching away across the blue Atlantic, and within a measurable distance of dear old Scotland.”

“Ay, lad!” replied Leonard, “my heart jumps to my mouth with very joy to think of it.”

In this great chart that lies before me, a chart of the Polar regions, I can point out the very place, or near it, where the Fairy Queen was crushed in the ice as a strong man might crush a walnut, and sank like a stone in the water, dragging down with her, so quickly did she go at last, more than one of her brave crew, whose bones may lie in the black depths of that inhospitable ocean,—

“Till the sea gives up its dead.”

Midway 'twixt Nipzet Sound and Cape Mercy, just a little to the nor'ard of Cumberland Gulf, I mark the point with a plus.

It was in a gale of wind, and at the dead of night, when she was surrounded by an immense shoal of flat bergs, of giant proportions, and staved irremediably. The water came roaring in below. Pumping was of no avail. She must founder, and that very soon. So every effort consonant with safety was made to embark upon the very icebergs that had caused the grief. Stores and water were speedily got out, therefore, and long ere the break of day the end came, the ship was engulfed. There was no longer any Fairy Queen to glide over the seas like a thing of life—only two wave-washed bergs, each with a huddled crew of hopeless shipwrecked mariners.

And these were already separating. They had bade each other adieu.

They were gliding away, or south or north or east or west, they knew not whither.

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Chapter Five. Afloat on an Iceberg.

“Midnight soft and fair above,
Midnight fierce and dark beneath,
All on high the smile of love,
All below the frown of death:

“Waves that whirl in angry spite
With a phosphorescent light,
Gleaming ghastly in the night,
Like the pallid sneer of Doom.”

Tupper.

Scene: In Baffin's Sea. Shipwrecked mariners afloat on an iceberg, which rises and falls on the smooth-rolling waves.

Morning broke grey and hazily; the wind, as if it had done its worst and spent its fury, went down, but the sea still ran very high, dashing in cold spray over the bergs on which the shipwrecked mariners were huddled together for warmth, and leaving a thick coating of ice on top of the sail that covered them.

Captain Blunt had gone on board one berg with half the crew, about ten all told, and Leonard, with Douglas, on board the other, along with the remainder, the two friends determining to be together to the bitter end, if indeed the end were to come.

The sea itself went down at last, as far as broken water was concerned; only a big round heaving swell continued, on which the icebergs rose and fell with a strange kind of motion that made all on board them drowsy.

When Leonard looked about him in the morning sunlight never a sign could be seen of the other berg. Nor all that day was it seen or on any other. It was gone. Other icebergs there were in dozens, but none with men on them.

Leonard heaved a sigh, and wished that he only had the wings of one of those happy sea-birds, that went wheeling and screaming round in the air, sometimes coming nearer and nearer, tack and half-tack, so close, out of mere curiosity, that they could have been knocked down with a boat-hook. All that day and all the next and next the berg floated silently on,—

“As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.”

Almost every day strange, wondering creatures came up out of the water to gaze at them. The tusked walrus, the gazelle-eyed seal—yes, even the narwhal must have spied them, and felt curiosity, for he shifted his course, and ploughed down towards the berg to have a look; then, as if satisfied that his mind could not fathom so great a mystery, went on his silent, solitary way once more.

Happily for the poor sailors, they had provisions. Had the ship gone down at once when struck, as vessels do sometimes go, they would now have been in a pitiful plight indeed.

But the cold was intense. There was no keeping it out by day hardly; only by constant exercise, which, thanks to the magnitude of the iceberg, they were able to maintain.

But at night it was intense, chilling every one to the bone and spinal marrow.

They lay there pressed together; not a corner of the sail was left open to admit a breath of the frost-laden air, but even then they were not warm. It was impossible to sleep for hours and hours after lying down, and when at last they did drop off, the cold, the bitter, bitter cold, was with them still—with them in their dreams, with them in their hearts, and on their very brains.

When morning light came they would stagger up, looking wonderingly at each other's pale, pinched faces. To stand for a time was an impossibility. They managed to light a little fire of wood on an iron slab, morning, noon, and evening, to make a little coffee; this, with biscuit and raw pork, was their only diet, and right thankful they were to have such fare.

It was on a Tuesday the Fairy Queen went down, and five long weary days rolled slowly on their course. For five weary nights they suffered and shivered, and when the Sabbath morning came round they were, to all appearance, as far from help as ever.

Hope itself began to fade in their hearts, especially when two of their number sank and died before their eyes.

They committed their bodies to the deep, and, horrible to relate, saw them devoured; for till now they had no idea that the sea around them was swarming with sharks. Some they had seen, it is true, but nothing like the number that now came up to the ghastly feast.

It was the Sabbath, and although every morning and evening they had prayed and sung hymns, after the fashion common in Scotland on this day—His day—many chapters of the Book of books were read, and first Douglas and then Leonard gave the men some earnest exhortations. Leonard never knew his friend Douglas could speak so feelingly before, or that his heart was such a well—now bubbling over—of religious feeling and fervour.

“Ah, my dear fellows!” he ended with these words, “we never really feel our need of a Saviour until the prospect of death stares us in the face. Then we feel the need of a friend, and, looking around, as it were, we find Him by our side, and right willing are we to take Him then, to grasp His hand, and trust our all in all to Him.”

“Amen!” said the sailors fervently.

Then some verses of that bonnie hymn-psalm were sung, commencing:—

“The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want,
He makes me down to lie
By pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.”

A strange sight on that clear, still, dark ocean, the white iceberg with its living freight drifting aimlessly about. Strange sound, this song of praise, rising from their cold, blue lips, and from hearts that hardly dared to hope.

Another day and another went by, and on the Wednesday an accident happened that had well-nigh proved fatal to nearly all on board the berg. More than one-third part of their ice-ship parted and fell away. Luckily it first gave voice, and showed the rent before finally dropping off.

There was no denying it, the danger was now extreme. They had been drifting slowly southwards, and the iceberg was being influenced by warmer currents, and slowly wearing away.

It might, moreover, topple over at any moment. Things came to their very worst that same evening when another piece of the berg plunged into the sea, and when morning broke, there was barely room for the men to huddle together, looking fearfully around them, and down into the still black water, and at those hungry sharks, who now seemed to gambol about as if in momentary expectation of their prey.

“Look!” cried Douglas about noon that day, “what is that dark object yonder on that immense iceberg that we have been skirting these last two hours?”

“Seals, I think,” said Leonard, in a feeble, hopeless voice.

“I think not, Leon. Oh, lad! I think they are men.”

“Let us signal, anyhow.”

A jacket was waved and—answered.

Next moment half-a-dozen swift kayaks or Eskimo boats were dashing from the shore to their rescue.

“Thank God!” said every man, and the tears rolled down the cheeks of many now, and half-choked them as they tried to speak.

But they clasped each other’s thin, cold hands, and looked the joy they could not utter.

They were Eskimos who had come to the rescue, and it was from the mainland they had come, and not from any iceberg, or even island.

Their joy was redoubled when they drew near and found Captain Blunt and their old shipmates waving their hands and hats to them from the snow-clad shore.

So happy a reunion no one can fully understand or appreciate except those who have been in the same sad plight, and saved as if by a miracle.

Longfellow, in his beautiful poem “The Secret of the Sea,” tells us how Count Arnaldos—

“Saw a fair and stately galley
Steering onward to the land.

“How he heard the ancient helmsman
Chant a song so wild and clear,
That the sailing sea-bird slowly
Poised upon the mast to hear,—

“Till his soul was filled with longing,
And he cried with impulse strong,
‘Helmsman! for the love of Heaven,
Teach me, too, that wondrous song.’

“‘Would’st thou so,’ the helmsman answered,
‘Learn the secrets of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery.’”

Yes, reader, the sea hath many, many secrets. We may never know them all. Not even those who have been down to the sea in ships may fathom half the mysteries that everywhere surround them, or can ever hope to explain to those who dwell on land a tithe of what they know and feel.

What says the poet?

“Ah! what pleasant visions haunt me
As I gaze upon the sea!
All the old romantic visions,
All my dreams come back to me,—

“Till my soul is filled with longing
For the secret of the sea,
And the heart of the great ocean
Sends a thrilling pulse through me.”

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Chapter Six. The Far North Land.

“O! the auld hoose, the auld hoose,
Deserted though you be,
There ne’er can be a new hoose
Seem half sae dear to me.”

Lady Nairne.

“Beside a weird-like Arctic bay,
Where wild and angry billows play,
And seldom meet the night and day.”

Symington.

Scene One: A cottage not far from St. Abb’s Head, a garden before the door, and a porch, around which summer roses and honeysuckle are entwined. The occupants are three. They are out of doors now, seated on the lawn which stretches down to the shingly beach on which the waves are lisping and rippling.

Captain Lyle (speaks). “Well, Ethel dear, and you, Effie, you are both very silent. Are you breaking your hearts because we have had to give up Grayling House for a time, and come to live in this tiny cottage by the sea?”

Mrs Lyle, looking up from her sewing, and smiling kindly but somewhat sadly: “No, Arnold, I was thinking about our dear boy.”

Effie, dropping her book in her lap. “So was I, mother. I was thinking of Leonard and— and poor Douglas. It is now the second summer since they went away. It is wearing through, too. See how the roses fall and scatter their petals when you touch them. Oh! do you think, papa, they will ever, ever come again?”

Captain Lyle, smiling. "Yes, love, I do. Here, come and sit by me. That is right. Now you know the country they went away to is a very, very strange one."

Effie. "A very, very terrible one."

Captain Lyle. "No, I think not, dear, else those who have been there would not always wish to return to it. It is wild and lonely, and silent and cold, Effie, and there are no letter-carriers about, you know, not even a pigeon-post, so Leonard can't very well write. The fact is, they've got frozen in, and it may be even another summer yet before we see them."

Effie. "Another summer? Oh, papa!"

Captain Lyle. "Yes, dear, because he and honest Douglas are in the regions of thick-ribbed ice, you know; and once it embraces a ship, it is difficult to get clear. But cheer up, lass; I won't have you fretting, there! Now, promise me you—ha! here comes dear old Fitzroy, swinging away on his wooden leg. Good-afternoon, my friend; there is need of you here. My wife and daughter are doing nothing but fretting."

Captain Fitzroy. "Oh! come, Effie, come, Mrs Lyle. Look at me; I don't fret. The boys will return as sure as the sun will rise to-morrow."

Effie, smiling through her tears. "Thank you, Captain; you always give us hope."

Captain Fitzroy. "And I suppose you mourn because you've had to leave bonnie Glen Lyle—eh!"

Mrs Lyle. "Oh yes. We dearly love the old house."

Captain Fitzroy. "Well, then, let me prophesy. First, the boys will return safe and sound, red and rosy; secondly, you'll get over your difficulties, and return to Glen Lyle; thirdly, we'll live together happy ever afterwards."

Effie laughs now in spite of herself, for the old Captain always looks so cheery and so comical.

Captain Lyle. "Hear that, darling! Now, bustle about, Effie, and get us some nice brown tea and brown toast, while we sit here and chat."

Captain Fitzroy, looking seaward. The ocean is a sheet of blue, with patches of green here and there, where cloud shadows fall, and sails like sea-birds far away towards the horizon.

“What a heavenly day, to be sure! Why, there is health in every breath one inhales on this delightful coast. Don’t you feel cosy now and happy in this sweet little cottage? Nothing to do. Nothing to think about except the absent ones. No care, no worry except that of making war upon the weeds in your little garden. I declare to you, Lyle, my lad, I consider such a life as you now lead in a manner quite idyllic.”

Lyle, looking thoughtfully for a moment or two on the ground, then up at his friend’s cheerful face.

“One of the chief pleasures of my present existence, dear Fitzroy, lies in the fact that I have you for a neighbour. But to tell you the truth, I do feel happier since I let the lauds of Glen Lyle and got rid of an incubus. I feel, and know now, I am retrenching, and that in a few years I shall recover myself.”

Fitzroy. “And don’t you think you ought to have let the house as well?”

Lyle. “No, no, no; I could not bear to think of a footstep crossing my father’s hall. Old Peter will see to the gardens with the help of a lad, and the ancient cook, who is indeed one of the family, and whom I could not have dismissed, will keep on peat fires enough to defy the damp.”

Fitzroy. “And how does your little gipsy lass Zella suit as a housekeeper?”

Lyle. “Excellently well. There she comes with the tea; judge for yourself.”

Zella, tall, handsome, and neatly attired, comes upon the scene to place a little table near the two friends and lay the tea. What a change from the wild waif! We last saw her springing up at the end of the Gothic bridge, and startling the horse of Bland’s emissary. She is still a gipsy, but a very civilised one.

Captain Lyle. “I am expecting old Peter every minute.”

Fitzroy. “Talk of angels, and they appear. Lo! yonder comes your Peter, or your Peter’s ghost.”

Old Peter opens the gate at the sea-beach as he speaks, and comes slowly up the walk.

Lyle. "Come away, Peter. Why, you pant. Sit down and have a cup of tea. How goes all at the dear old house?"

Peter, smoothing the head of Ossian the old deerhound, who has arisen from his corner to bid him welcome. "Bravely, sir, bravely and well. But would you believe it, though it's no a month since you left, they will have it that the hoose is haunted? Heard you ever the like?"

Lyle. "No, Peter, it is strange."

Peter. "And they will have it, sir, that the pike wasna canny, and they say that, dead though he be, his ghost still haunts the auld loch."

Fitzroy, laughing. "The ghost of a pike, Peter? Well, well, well; we live to learn."

Peter. "And what for no, sir?"

Fitzroy. "Did you bury him, Peter?"

Peter. "No, sir, no, on land. I put him cannily back into the loch again. He lay on his side for a whole day, then sank to the bottom afore ma ain een. Dead as a door nail."

Fitzroy. "I doubt it, Peter."

Peter. "Sir?"

Fitzroy. "Nothing, Peter, nothing. By the way, Lyle, how came this uncanny fish, that seems so strangely connected with the fortunes of Glen Lyle, into your possession."

Lyle. "Peter can tell you better than I. He is old, and remembers."

Peter. "When the auld laird lived, nane kenned o' the whereabouts o' that bonnie fish except himsel' and me and the gipsy Faas. They gipsies, sir, were part and parcel o' the estate; they would have died for the auld laird, or for ony o' his folk or kin. Goodness only kens how auld the fish was himsel'. He was, they say, as big as a grilse when first ta'en in the Tweed and brought up to the river that runs through bonnie Glen Lyle. And woe is me, they tell me that was an awfu' day, for bonnie Prince Charlie was in full retreat from England. He stayed and slept a night at Glen Lyle, and next week but one the foremost o' Cumberland's rievvers were there. The old Lyles were out. They were wi' Charlie, but not a thing living, my father told me, did they leave about the place, and they would have fired the hoose itself had they not been obleeged to hurry on, for

Charlie's men were ahead. But things settled down after that; Cumberland's rievvers were quieter coming back. The beasts they were killed or gone, so they left the auld hoose of Glen Lyle alone. The laird was pardoned, and peace and plenty reigned ance mair in the land.

"Time flew on, sirs. The auld laird was fond o' fishing. There were poachers in plenty in those days, and the laird was kind to them. Let them only leave his '45 pike alane, and they might take a' the trouts in the stream. But in later times, when the auld laird got aulder still, cockneys came, and they were no sae particular, and one day an English body hooked and brought the pike on shore. He had the gaff raised to hit him on the head, when all of a sudden the gaff was knocked out of his hand, and he found himself just where the pike had come frae, wallowin' in the middle o' the pot. (A large pool in a river is so called in Scotland.)

"That same nicht, lang past, the shortest hour o't, when everybody was fast asleep but mysel', two o' the Faas came to the auld hoose. They had the half-dead fish, with the bonnie gowden band around his tail, in a pot. And together we went to the loch and ploupit him in. The owlets were cryin' and the branches o' the pine trees creakin' in the wind, and if I live to be as auld as Methuselah, I'm no likely to forget that eerie-some nicht. But, heigho! Joe is dead and awa', and the hoose o' Glen Lyle is tottering near its fall. Wae's me that I should hae lived to see the like!"

Captain Fitzroy. "Drink that China tea, Peter, and things will look far more cheerful."

Long before the major's departure things do look more cheerful.

Ethel, hope in her heart now, has brought out her harp, and is bending over it while she sings a plaintive old Scotch ballad, while the rest sit listening round. The setting sun is throwing tall rock shadows over the blue sea. The waves seem to form a drowsy accompaniment to the harp's wild notes, and the sea-birds are shrieking their good-night song. Let us leave them, and hie us away to the far north and west.

Scene Two: Summer in the Arctic seas. A little Indian village to the north of Cumberland Gulf. Yet not all Indian, for then; are houses here now as well as Eskimo huts, and white men are moving about busy at work, in company with the little brown-skinned, skin-clad natives.

Had the shipwrecked crew of the Fairy Queen landed on the south side of the Cumberland Gulf or Sound, it is probable they would have made an attempt to find their way through Labrador to some English or other foreign settlement. But this gulf is a sea

in itself, and they had no boats, while the kayaks of the natives were far too frail, even if they had been numerous enough, to be of much use.

They had to be content, therefore, to remain prisoners where they were until the long night of winter set in.

They were not idle. Indeed, the life they now led was far from unpleasant while summer lasted. It was a very wild one. There were deer and game on the hills, and every stream teemed with fish, to say nothing of the strange creations that inhabited the sea-shore.

Among other things saved from the wreck of the Fairy Queen, and safely landed by Captain Blunt's party, were guns and a goodly store of ammunition, which they had managed to keep dry.

What with fishing and hunting, manufacturing sledges and training the dogs, the time fled very quickly indeed.

The days flew quickly by, and autumn came; then they got shorter and shorter, till at length the sun showed his face for the last time, and after this all was night.

In a month more everything was ready for the journey south.

So memorable a march, too, has seldom been made. Some of my readers may ask why they chose the winter season for their departure. For this reason: they could go straight along the coast, winding only round the mountains. In summer the gulfs and streams would have formed an insurmountable barrier, but now these were hard as adamant.

All being ready, and the friendly Indians accompanying them to the number of twenty or more, to act as guides and see to the care of the dogs, they left the Esquimo village about the end of October, and were soon far away on the silent, lonely midst of the Cumberland Gulf.

Luckily Captain Blunt had saved his compass, else even the almost unerring instinct of the natives would have failed to steer them across the ice. Had it been clear weather all the time the stars would have been sufficient to keep them right, but storms came on long before they had got over the gulf. And such storms! Nothing in this country could ever equal them in fury and confusion. Not the wildest winter's day that ever raged among the lone Grampian Hills could be compared to them. The winds seem to meet and unite in and from all directions. The snow filled the air. It did not only fall; it rose, and the darkness was intense. To proceed in the face of such terrible weather was of

course impossible. Dogs and men huddled together in the lee of an iceberg; it was found at times almost impossible to breathe.

They encountered more than one of these fearful storms; but at last the sky cleared, the stars and the radiant aurora-bow danced and flickered in the air above them, and after a week of toil they had crossed the gulf, and stood on terra firma on the shores of Labrador.

But their trials were only beginning. They found they could not make so straight a way as they had at first imagined, owing to the mountains and rough state of the country.

These men, however, were British—their hearts were hearts of oak—so they struggled on and on, happy, when each day was over, to think they were a step nearer their native land. The dogs were staunch and true, and the natives simple, honest, and kind.

To recount all the hardships of this journey, which occupied in all four long months, would take a volume in itself. Let me give a brief sketch of just One Day's March.

They are well down in the middle of Labrador. Hardened as Leonard and Douglas now are, and almost as much inured to the cold as the Indian guides themselves, the bitterness of the night just gone has almost killed them.

All the camp, however, is astir hours before the stars have given place to the glaring light of a short, crisp winter's day. Dogs are barking and howling for their breakfast, and the men are busy preparing their own and that of their officers. It is indeed a meagre one—sun-dried fish and meat, with snow to eat instead of tea or coffee, that is all. But they have appetites; it is enough, and they are thankful.

Then sledges are got ready, and the dogs having been fed and harnessed, Captain Blunt and his young friends put on their snowshoes, and all in camp follow his example.

Then the start is made. The pace is slow, though the dogs would go more quickly if allowed. Their path winds through a rough and broken glen at first, and at sunrise scouts are sent on ahead to spy out the land from a mountain top. They can see but little, however; only hill piled o'er hill and crag o'er crag.

They cross a wild frozen stream, and at sunrise rejoice to find themselves on the borders of a broad lake. It will be all plain sailing now for some hours to come.

But, alas! the wind gets up, and there is no shelter of any kind here. On a calm day one can walk and keep warm with the thermometer far below zero. But with a cutting wind the cold and the suffering are a terrible punishment.

The wind blows higher and higher. It tears across the frozen lake—a bitter, biting, cutting blast; there is hardly any facing it. Even dogs and Indians bend their heads downwards, and present their shoulders to the wind.

The skin garments of the Esquimos, the coats of the dogs, and beards and hair of the sailors are massed and lumped with frozen snow, and cheeks and ears are coated with ice as if they had been glazed.

Struggling on thus for hours, they cross the lake at last, and gain the shelter of a pine wood. Here wood is gathered, and after much ado a fire is lighted. They dare only look at it at first, for well they know the danger that would accrue from going too near it. But this in itself is something, so they begin to talk, and even to laugh, though the laugh hangs fire on their frozen lips, and sounds half idiotic.

On again, keeping more into shelter; and so on and on all the day, till, despite all dangers and difficulties, they have put fifteen miles betwixt them and the camp-fire of the previous evening.

They find themselves in the shelter of some ice-clad rocks at last, with ice-clad pine trees nodding over them, and here determine to bivouac for the night.

The wind has gone down. The sun is setting—a glorious sunset it is—amidst clouds of crimson, gold, and copper.

How delightful is this supper of dried fish and broiled deer now! They almost feel as if they had dined off roast beef and plum pudding. So beds are prepared with boughs and blankets and skins, a prayer is said, a hymn is sung, and soon our heroes forget the weary day's journey, their aching, blistered feet, and stiff and painful joints.

Ah! but the cold—the cold! No, they cannot forget that. They are conscious of it all the night, and awake in the morning stiffer almost than when they lay down.

During all their long and toilsome march our heroes never saw a single bear nor met a hostile Indian. But the country now, I am told, is peopled by nomadic tribes.

Civilisation at long, long last. Only a little fisher village, but men dwell there who speak the English tongue, and a right hearty welcome do they accord to the wanderers.

Born to Wander Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Seven. A Saturday Night at Sea.

“Meanwhile some rude Arion’s restless hand
Wakes the brisk harmony that sailors love;
A circle there of merry listeners stand,
Or to some well-known measure featly move,
Thoughtless as if on shore they still were free to rove.”

Scene: The upper deck of a barque in mid-Atlantic, homeward bound. Sailors dancing amidships to the music of flute and fiddle. Aft, under an awning, a table is spread, at which sit Leonard, Douglas, Captain Blunt, with the skipper of the vessel, and one of his officers.

Skipper James, of the timber barque Black-eyed Susan, was a sailor of the good old school. He was homeward bound, and happening to call at a village on the west shore of Newfoundland, he heard that a shipwrecked crew of his countrymen were residing at a small fishing station on the Labrador coast. He did not hesitate a moment. He put about, and sailed back right away to the nor’ard and west and took every soul on board. Men like Skipper James, I fear, are, nowadays, like angels’ visits, few and far between. Ah! and they are angels, too, when you find them; rough enough to all outward appearance, perhaps, but good in the main, and men, too, who carry their hearts upon their sleeves.

Skipper James and our heroes got friendly at once. And before they were three days on board they felt as if they had known this kindly skipper all their lives.

“My ship’s only a rough one,” he had told them frankly; “and your fare may not be first-class; but by my song, gentlemen, you are right welcome to the best I have.”

It was a Saturday night. They had been three weeks at sea, with fine weather nearly all the time, so no wonder all hands were happy, fore and aft.

Now I have said that this skipper was an old-fashioned sailor, and so he was; and this being Saturday night, he determined, as he always did, that his men should enjoy themselves forward as much as the officers aft. There was singing, therefore, and

dancing, and sea-pie. A glorious sea-pie steamed on the table of the quarter-deck, and a dozen of the same sort aft.

Rory O'Reilly was the mate's name; the life and soul of the mess he was. He could sing a song or tell a story with any one.

"Dear Captain James," he said to-night, "do tell us a story. Do you believe in the sarpint, sorr?"

Captain James quietly finished his second plate of sea-pie, and put the plate in a corner so stayed up that the ship's motion could not displace it. For this skipper was a most methodical man. Then he took his old brown clay with its tin lid, and proceeded to fill it. He shook out the "dottle," as the unburned portion of tobacco in the bottom was called, and put it carefully on Rory O'Reilly's open palm, held out in a friendly and obliging way for James's benefit. Then he loaded up to near the top with fresh cut, broke up the dottle and put that above, then pinched up the dust and put that over all, then slowly and solemnly lit up. When he had blown a few blasts of such density of volume that further proofs of the pipe's being well lit up were needless, the skipper cleared his throat and commenced—

A Strange, Strange Story.

"Rory asked me," he said, "if I believed in the great sea-serpent. He asked me with a kind of incredulous smile on his face, which spoke volumes as to his own disbelief. Well, I am not sitting here to-night to lay proof before you as to the actual existence of sea-serpents of a monstrous size, but I beg to remind my friend here, that not only one or two officers of the mercantile and fighting navies of the world, but dozens have come forward, and given their oath, that such monsters were seen by them, or by their whole crew, at certain times and in certain latitudes and longitudes. And these men, both at the times of the awful visitations, and at the times of their swearing to what they considered facts, were neither intoxicated nor otherwise out of their minds.

"But my story is not about sea-serpents altogether, though it may throw a new light on those submarine monsters.

"It is a strange, strange story—one told me years and years ago by my gallant old grandfather. I remember, as though it were but yester evening, the first time I heard him tell it.

"Grandfather, mates, had at this time retired from the army. He was of an old Scottish family, that had been crushed at Culloden, so that with the exception of the half-pay a

stingy government granted him, he had little else to live upon. He resided in a pretty little cottage about a quarter of a mile from our house, and it used to be my delight to visit him in the gloaming. I would go quietly in, and seat myself on a stool in a corner, and wait to be recognised. By-and-bye I would lead him to speak of the olden times, and of the battles and sieges by sea and land he had taken part in.

“But this story I am going to tell you he has repeated to me again and again, in different words maybe, but the facts were always the same.

“It was in the days of the American war, the war of freedom and independence, which, to my way of thinking, are the birthrights of every man born, and of every nation as well. England, mates, did not fight in an over-gentlemanly fashion in those days, and I think it is a stain on our country’s escutcheon that the Indians of the Far West were armed and employed at all.

“But this is not what I am sitting here to discuss, only my grandfather and Tom Turner, a junior of his, both belonged in those days to Pontius Pilate’s guards (the 1st, or Royal Scots Regiment), and were stationed at the same place.

“Though Tom was a few years younger than grand-dad, they were inseparables, so to speak, and always in the same ’ploy, whatever that ’ploy might be. To say that they were both Highlanders is equivalent to telling you they were both fond of field sports; and when one day Wild Eye, Chief of the Cheebuk Indians, promised them some first-rate hunting if they could get leave for a few days, you may be sure they were not long in applying for it—ay, and obtaining it, too; for young Tom Turner had a wonderful tongue for getting round his colonel, and, as the troops were in garrison, the services of these officers wouldn’t be much missed.

“It was a lovely morning when they set out on their journey west, mounted on three half-bred horses, as fleet as the wind, and just as independent.

“Now it would seem that hiring Indians was a game that in those days two could play at; and though the honour of the idea should be awarded to the British, as having been the inventors, as it were, still tit-for-tat, you know, and everything is fair in war, so the Yankees were not far behind.

“There were, in reality, two different sets of Indians on the warpath, both bent upon getting as many scalps as possible for the decoration of their wigwams, for the Christmas season, as one might say.

“This fact made travelling a very risky kind of a business.

“The first day passed over without almost any kind of adventure, only it was summer on the prairie they were passing over, and there was no shade of bush nor tree, and the insects were almost as much of a torture as the sun’s rays.

“Old Wild Eye, the chief, must have been a clever fellow, indeed, for on this rolling plain there was neither road nor track, except the trails of wild animals; to have followed those would have led my grand-dad a queer dance.

“When the sun went down at last, glaring red through the haze of blue, it got almost cold, but they dared not think of lighting a fire, because of the hostile Indians, so they hobbled their nags, ate their supper, and sat huddled up in their blankets beneath the stars till long past twelve. They were listening to Wild Eye’s adventures on the warpath.

“Wild Eye was a border chief, and friendly with the British; in fact, he had been once to Quebec, and so considered himself about half a Christian. Wild Eye was as bald as the back of my watch, and had no more teeth than a tin whistle. He had scars innumerable, only one ear, and about half a nose, for he had been twice put to the torture, and saved as if by a miracle.

“His scalp, he told my grand-dad, hung in many wigwams. The fact is, Wild Eye wore a wig, and when he lost one in warfare, he wore a morsel of buffalo hide until he was able to negotiate with his barber in Ontario. Each wig was paid for not in coin but in land. Each wig cost Wild Eye twenty acres of territory, and they say that the descendants of his barber are millionaires to-day.

“But my grand-dad and his friend fell sound asleep at last, and not even the presence of a grizzly bear, who came round to snuff after the remains of the supper, awoke them until the sun was so high that it nearly hardened the whites of their eyes, as heat does the white of an egg.

“‘I say, John,’ said Tom Turner to my grand-dad, ‘we’ve got five days’ leave. I feel so happy, that I think we ought to make it a fortnight.’

“But grand-dad laughed. ‘No,’ he said, ‘that wouldn’t be fair, Tom. Let us stick to our furlough, and be back in five days if we can.’

“About evening on the second day they bade farewell to the rolling prairie, and plunged into a deep ravine, and bivouacked in a pine-clad gorge near the banks of a stream. This river was teeming with fish of the most delicate flavour. They caught enough for supper, and once more settled themselves to listen to the tales of the Indian chief.

“There were strange, unearthly noises in the forest that night which my grand-dad could not Understand—shrieks and yells and awful howlings, but he dozed off at last and dreamt he was head keeper in a kind of pandemonium.

“Next morning sport began in earnest, for they found they were near the head-quarters of the grizzly and wilder cinnamon bear.

“Next to our friend the Arctic Bruin, there is no creature in the world with which a man has less chance in a fair stand-up fight than with the cinnamon. I don’t say, mates, but that any bear will prefer shuffling off to coming to close quarters, but don’t you catch a grizzly or cinnamon unawares behind a rock or a bush. I tell you that the only comfort you can have at that awful moment is the memory that you’ve made your will, and don’t owe your tailor anything to signify.

“Tom Turner was following up a grizzly, who was well on ahead, so he had eyes for nothing else; but on rounding a point on the hill-top, he was startled with a roar that went through him like a rip-saw, and found himself face to jowl with a cinnamon bear. Tom sprang back so suddenly that he burst his waistcoat buttons. His musket went off at the same moment, and Bruin made a spring to hug Tom Turner. The bullet found a billet in the beast’s neck, but didn’t stop his way, and next moment the bear and Tom both were tumbling down, down, down over a precipice. The bear fell on the top of a rock, and was killed. Tom alighted on the top of a juniper tree, and wasn’t a bit the worse, for Tom was a tough lad.

“There were three or four bears altogether killed that forenoon, and I daresay a good many more frightened. However, about one o’clock the three friends were seated on the top of a breezy eminence overlooking the bonnie glen, and in sight of their horses, while they enjoyed their lunch or tiffin.

“‘What a lovely day!’ said Tom, as he lay at full length on the greensward. ‘How wildly sublime those hills are! Wooded almost to the summits everyone of them; and look, John, at that river far beneath yonder, like a silver thread winding away through the greenery of the forest. You’re not looking, John.’

“‘I’m looking at something else,’ said my grand-dad.

“Ugh!” cried the Indian chief, springing to his feet, seizing his gun, and pointing with it to a hill-top beyond the ravine.

“There were figures there—dark, creeping figures, no bigger apparently than coyotes.

“They were Indians.”

A Gallop for Life and Freedom.

“They were Indians sure enough, and doubtless only scouts of a bigger party.

“There was no time to lose. Sport and all was forgotten; they must mount their horses, and be off back to the prairie land. There they would be clear, at least, of an ambush, and could trust to the fleetness of their horses.

“They hurried madly down hill, reaching and mounting their mustangs just as a volley was fired from both sides of the stream, the bullets peppering the trees about, and splashing on the rocks and stones. They were off like the wind next minute. Rough though the path was, round rocks, over fallen trees, and slippery, mossy banks, the good nags kept their feet, and soon the prairie was gained.

“Once fairly in it, they ventured to look behind. To their surprise they found themselves followed by several mounted Indians—a dozen in all, at the very least.

“Out on the open prairie, the half-bred mustangs seemed to fly over the ground, but they were not so fresh as the horses of the pursuers, and the pace soon began to tell, and three out of the four savages came rattling on abreast.

“A bullet or two flew over them. It was evident they must fight. At a given signal, then, they wheeled their horses, and took deadly aim, and next moment there were two empty saddles; again they fired, and the bewildered third Indian came tumbling down over a dead horse.

“But the others came thundering on behind with yells for revenge, yells for blood and scalps.

Away went our gallant trio once again, but now, alas! Tom’s horse tripped and fell, and at the same moment the chief’s steed was shot.

“They must fight on foot now, and with terrible odds. But they were all determined to sell their lives dearly.

“Now, whatever old chroniclers may say to the contrary, American Indians never did fight fairly if they could do the reverse. So in this case, instead of coming on with a wild rush or a warlike shout, they paused, and quietly waited till their companions swarmed

up. Meanwhile, Wild Eye had killed his horse, and also Tom's fallen one. Why leave the poor brutes to fall into the hands of the enemy? Then the three entrenched themselves as well as they could behind them, and waited events.

"They had not very long to wait, either. A volley was fired by the savages who had guns. It was returned with interest, and as they were crowded together it must have had terrible effect.

"The yelling and buzzing was now frightful. It was as threatening as that which proceeds from a hollow tree with a hornet's nest in it when you kick the trunk.

"And just as hornets rush out from their hive, so rushed those Indians now on, spreading out, and entirely surrounding the three brave men, shrieking and brandishing their tomahawks.

"My grand-dad said he never understood what put it into Wild Eye's head to sing out 'Surrender!' but he did, and at once there was peace and a parley. The two Britishers would have preferred fighting to the bitter end, and having it over; but as most of the attacking savages had laid down their weapons, they felt in duty bound to cease firing, and submit to the fortune of war—to the inevitable.

"Tom and my grand-dad were bound with withes and tied together. Wild Eye was tied to an Indian, then without further palaver the march westward was commenced.

"My grandfather forgot how long they were on that terrible journey into the fastnesses of the far west. It must have been, he thought, fully a fortnight.

"They were fatigued beyond measure, footsore, heartsick, and weary. If they had entertained any hopes at first of being treated as prisoners of war, and in due time exchanged, every day's journey served to dispel the illusion.

"Poor Wild Eye fell sick, and was slain. His wig was hung at the girdle of one of his captors, his body left to swelter in the sun, till birds and beasts should eat his flesh and ants pick his bones.

"Grand-dad was sufficiently conversant with the language of this tribe to know what the doom was that he and Tom had to look forward to. They were being hurried away to the wigwam village of their captors, to be tortured at the hands of squaws. The chief of the party even condescended to enliven the last few miles of the journey, by telling his prisoners such tales of the torture, that, brave though they were, made the blood run cold along their spines.

“At last they reached the Indian village, which they entered just as the sun was setting among clouds all fringed with gold and crimson above the western hills.

“What a smiling, peaceful valley it seemed. The purple mist of distance hung like a gauzy veil over the mountain tops, a blue haze half hid the greenery of the woods, there were parks of verdure dotted over with flowering trees and bushes, in which bright-winged birds flitted or sang. Deer roamed quietly about, or stood drowsily chewing the cud, and up through the trees on the banks of a broad, placid river, rose the smoke from the village fires.

“The whole scene was almost home-like in its gentle beauty. Who could have believed that it had been and would be the scene of a torture so refined and terrible that one shudders even to think of it?”

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Chapter Eight

Captain James Continues his Story—On the Subterranean River

“Forth from the dark recesses of the cave
The serpent came
With searching eye, and lifted jaw and tongue,
Quivering and hissing as a heavy shower
Upon the summer woods.”

Scene: The quarter-deck of the barque. Officers at the table. Men crowded with eager faces, respectfully listening to their captain's story.

The preparations for the torture were finished ere the village sunk to slumber that night. Tied hand and foot, my grandfather and Tom lay beneath a tree. They could not sleep, and they cared not to talk; all hope had fled, and the gloom and terror of death were in their hearts.

“The night was clear and beautiful, and the stars never looked brighter or more impressive, but cold and heartless, as indeed seemed everything. Sometimes a dog would come round and snuff at them, then start back in alarm, and sit for long minutes and howl. When the dogs were silent there were wild, unearthly shrieks heard in the distant woods, doubtless the voices of birds and beasts of prey.

“Towards morning both prisoners fell into an uneasy doze, and were awakened at last by the joyful shouts of a band of Indians from a neighbouring village, who had come to share in the festival in which Tom and my grandfather were to play so prominent a part.” Skipper James paused a minute here to relight his pipe.

“Ah, mates!” he continued, “I’ve often wondered what my grandfather’s feelings and poor Tom Turner’s must have been when they were dragged out, and tied to trees on the torture ground, with the female executioners all ready, and pining to see the white men’s blood, the knives sharpened, the torture irons heated to redness, and that awful circle of upturned faces, in which they must have looked in vain for one pitying glance.

“Good-bye, John,’ cried Tom.

“Good-bye, Tom,’ cried my grandfather, as two vicious-looking squaws approached him, one carrying a knife, the other a white-hot iron rod.

“Hold!’ cried an old white-haired chief, stalking into the circle.

“Every one looked impatiently towards him.

“Why, they asked, should even a chief of chiefs attempt to spoil the sport?

“But this was none other than Red Bull himself, one whose word had been law for years.

“He quickly gathered around him a dozen of the head warriors of the tribe.

“Your father would speak,’ said Red Bull, when they had seated themselves around him, and close to the stakes or trees to which the prisoners were tied. ‘Your father would speak. To torture a white man is no pleasure. The white man screams like a squaw. Then he faints, soon he dies. Then gone for ever is the sport, for he feels no more. Send them rather beneath the earth to the silent spirit. The great river rolls through our valley. Soon it disappears. Every year our young men are drawn beneath. Send the white men to seek them in the caves of darkness. If they come not back the great serpent has devoured them.’

“The awful truth was soon revealed more plainly to the prisoners. They were to be placed in separate canoes, and sent adrift upon the river that flowed through this romantic valley, and which a few miles nearer the mountains entered a yawning cave, and was never seen again.

“Such a fate would have been enough to make the bravest hearts that ever beat stand still with fear. The torture itself seemed pleasure in comparison to it.

“But the old chief’s speech was hailed with shouts of acclamation, while those fiendish squaws brandishing their knives danced in a yelling circle around the prisoners.

“A certain amount of liberty was now granted them, but they were so well guarded that thoughts of escape never entered their minds. They were even fed on milk and fruit, though they couldn’t have had much heart to eat.

“Next morning all preparations for this terrible voyage were completed. There were three canoes in all—one for grand-dad, one for Tom, and one loaded with meat and

grain as provisions. The three canoes were lashed together, and both prisoners were supplied with paddles.

“They had been told the story of the great serpent the evening before, in order to add, if possible, to the torture of their terror.

“The tradition about this frightful snake was, my grandfather said, common among a great many tribes, so you know there must have been some little truth in it. Whether it ever left its subterranean abode in summer or not no one was able to say; but when frost was hard and winter’s snow lay thick on the ground, it used to emerge at night from the black waters and caves of such rivers as that which flowed through this lovely fertile valley, and which suddenly disappeared. It used to emerge, I say, and travel far inward in search of prey, killing and swallowing whole buffaloes and even grizzly bears, which latter it would follow to their dens, and devour them there. The trail it always left behind it told the beholder its size. It was as if a wide-beamed boat had been dragged along, with here and there at each side the imprint of gigantic claws.

“One white man is said to have seen the monster on a bright moonlight night, and its appearance was dreadful to behold. It was hurrying back towards the river at its point of disappearance, with something in its jaws; it was snorting, and the breath from its nostrils rose like steam-clouds on the clear night air, its eyes glanced like green stars in a frosty sky. Arrived at the river, it sprang in, going out of sight at once with a booming splash.

“Amidst the yells and shouts of the savages the canoes were started, the Indians following down the banks on both sides, brandishing knives and tomahawks. Just before its disappearance, the river narrows considerably, and goes swirling through a gorge with great rapidity.

“My grandfather says that at this point Tom Turner started singing ‘Rule Britannia!’ and that his manly young voice could be heard high over the shouts of the savages. But grand-dad’s heart was too full to join him.

“He cast one wild, despairing glance around him at the rocks with their wild flowers, at the greenery of the hanging trees, the blue sky, the fleecy cloudlets, at the great sun itself; then everything was blotted out of sight in a moment, the canoes were swallowed up in the inky darkness.

“There were a few minutes of silence deep as death itself, for my grand-dad and Tom both were praying.

“‘Tom,’ cried grandfather at last.

“‘John,’ said Tom.

“And their voices sounded ringing-hollow, awful.

“‘Speak low, Tom.’

“‘Yes,’ whispered Tom, ‘but the suspense is terrible.’

“‘Where are we hurrying to? How I wish it were all over! I think I’m going mad, John. I believe I shall leap out of the canoe and meet my fate.’

“‘No, Tom, no; be brave, man, for my sake. A minute or two ago you were singing.’

“‘It was but to keep up my sinking heart.’

“‘Well, sing again.’

“‘Nay, nay; I dare not.’

“‘Well, Tom, stretch your hand out here, and let me grasp it. Thanks. This seems a little comfort, anyhow.’

“‘Shall we talk, Tom?’

“‘No, I feel more inclined to sleep. I feel a strange, unaccountable drowsiness steal—steal—’

“Tom said no more. He was fast asleep.

“So was grand-dad.

“How long they slept or how far the canoes had drifted on through the subterranean darkness they never could tell, but they awoke at last, and found that the boats had grounded at the side.

“Tom struck a light, and lit a torch.

“Nothing around them but black wet rocks, and the black water rippling past.

“‘Tom,’ said my grand-dad, ‘it is possible enough, you know, that this river may run but a few more miles, then emerge into the light.’

“‘Oh, wouldn’t that be glorious!’ cried Tom.

“‘Well, let us push off again, and try to keep awake.’

“Tom extinguished the torch, and the boats were once more shoved into the stream.

“‘John,’ said Tom after a time.

“‘Yes, Tom.’

“‘Don’t you remember when we were at school reading in heathen books of the awful river Styx, that flows nine times round the abode of the dead.’

“‘Ay, Tom, and we seem on it now. It would hardly surprise me to see a door open in the rock, and the three-headed dog Cerberus appear, or the fearful ferryman.’

“The boats rushed on now for hours, without ever grounding, though at times they touched at either side; and all this time those poor despairing souls sat hand in hand, for the silence was as saddening as even the darkness.

“Gradually, however, a sound began to grow upon their ears, and increase and increase momentarily. It was the roar of a cataract far ahead.

“Tom speedily lit his torch, and they paddled in towards the side, and grounding, leapt on shore, and drew up the boats.

“If they could have been surprised at anything the warmth of the shore would have caused them to wonder, but they felt, in a measure, already dead, and their senses were benumbed. One sense, however, was left—that of hunger. They extracted provisions, and, strange to say, both ate heartily, then almost immediately sank to sleep.

“‘Tom,’ said grand-dad, awaking at last.

“‘John,’ said Tom.

“I think, Tom, we had better end this at once. Down yonder is the cataract. We have but to push off into the stream, and in a minute more all will be over.’

“Nonsense,’ replied Tom. ‘Come, John, old man, I’m getting hopeful; and I do think, if we can drag the boats along this gloomy shore, we may avoid that waterfall, and launch again below it. Let us try.’ So Tom lit the torch again, and away they went, dragging the light canoes behind them.

“It was rough work, but they succeeded at last.

“Once more the boats were launched, once more the same irrepressible drowsiness stole over them, and they slept for what seemed to them, when they awoke, a wondrously long time.

“Again they grounded, ate, and slept.

“And so they kept on and on and on, rushing down the mysterious subterranean river, but they came to no more cataracts.

“On and on, for days perhaps; for aught they knew for weeks.

“The regions in which they now found themselves were oppressively hot, but they only slept the sounder. Awakening one night, if one may so speak of a time that was all night, they were surprised in the extreme to find themselves in the midst of a strange glimmering light. It was a light by which they could see each other’s faces, and blue and ghastly they looked, but a light that cast no shadow, at which they marvelled much, till they found out that the river here had broadened out into a kind of lake, that the rocks all round them were covered with fungi or toadstools, all emitting a phosphorescent glimmer, and that the water itself contained thousands of strange fishes, and that these all gave light.

“There was but little current here, so paddles were got out, and the boats helped onwards, though, to tell the truth, both my grand-dad and Tom Turner were more frightened at the strange spectral light that now glared round them, than they had been of the darkness.

“The fishes, too, looked like things uncanny, and indeed they were wholly uncouth and quite dissimilar in shape and actions from anything they had ever seen in the world above.

“They had reached a part of the river when it began once more to narrow and the current to become stronger, while at the same time it began to get darker, and the spectral-like fishes fewer. But suddenly Tom clutched my grand-dad by the wrist with his disengaged hand, and with a visage distorted by terror he drew his attention to something that lay half curled up at the bottom of a deep slimy pool.

“However dark it had been they would have seen that awful creature, for its body from stem to stern was lit up with a phosphorescent gleam. It was in the shape of a gigantic snake, full twenty fathoms long, with two terrible alligator-like arms and claws in front. It had green glaring eyes, that never closed or winked. Its whole appearance was fearsome enough, my grand-dad said, to almost turn a beholder into stone.

“Whether it was asleep or awake they could not tell, but it seemed to glide astern as the boat swept over it, and gradually to lose shape and disappear. In a few minutes more they were plunged once more in Cimmerian darkness.

“For many days the boats plunged on and on over the subterranean river, till their very life became a burden and a weariness to them, that they would gladly have laid down for ever.

“But one time, on awaking from a deep sleep, they found that something very strange and unusual had occurred. They were still in darkness, but not altogether in silence; the water made a lapping sound on the rocky river bank, and the boat was no longer in motion.

“Moreover, it was less warm around them than usual.

“Tom lit a torch, and they landed. Yes, there was the water lapping up and receding again.

“‘Can you give us more light?’ said my grand-dad.

“‘We may burn the centre canoe,’ replied Tom, undoing it as he spoke, while his companion held the torch on high. There are no more provisions except enough for once and a few pounds of tallow.

“The canoe was broken up and set fire to. The flames leapt up, and lo! in front of them was the end of the mysterious river, a black and solid rock, beneath which no man or boat could penetrate.

“Tom looked at my grand-dad, and grand-dad looked at him.

“‘Lost! Imprisoned! The end has come!’

“These were the words they uttered.

“‘Let us eat our last meal, then,’ said Tom.

“‘Yes,’ said my grand-dad.

“When it was finished, they lay down with their feet towards the grateful blaze, and in a moment or two were once more sound asleep.

“When they awoke what a change! All was light and beauty. They were in a cave with a river rolling silently at their feet away out and joining the blue sea. Yonder it was, and the sky, too, and white fleecy clouds, and screaming sea-birds, and the glorious sun itself.

“They understood all now. They had come to the end of the river while the tide was up; it was now ebb, and they were free.

“They rushed out wild with delight, and wandered away along the sea-beach. It was weeks and weeks before they managed to attract the notice of a passing vessel, and their adventures on shore were many and strange, but I must not tell them now, for it is time to turn in.

“But I believe you know, and so did my grand-dad, that they had been actually in the home of the great sea-serpent, that he dwells in mysterious subterranean rivers like these, venturing out to sea but seldom, and hardly ever appearing on the surface.”

“Are you done?” said one sailor.

“I’m done.”

“Well,” said Rory O’Reilly, “it’s a quare story, a very quare story, deed and indeed. But I can’t be after swallowing the big sarpint.”

“I can believe the first half of the yarn,” quoth Captain Blunt.

“You can, can you?” quoth Rory. “Well, sure, it’s all roight after all; you belave the first half, and he belaves the second half himself; what more can you wish? Faith, it’s as roight as the rainbow.”

“Well, Rory,” said the skipper, laughing, “can’t you tell us a story yourself every word of which we can all believe?”

Rory scratched his head, with a comical look twinkling in his eyes and puckering his face.

“Deed and indeed,” he said, “if it be my turn, I won’t be after spoiling the fun.”

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Chapter Nine Rory O'Reilly's Queer Story

“Till now we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did blow;
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

“The upper air burst into life,
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about,
And to and fro and in and out
The war stars danced between.”

Coleridge.

“Deed and indeed,” said Rory, “if it be my turn I won’t be after spoiling the fun; and sure, boys, thim is the very words my great-grandfather said when he and a dozen more were going to be hanged at Ballyporeen in the troublesome times.

“And is it a story you said?”

“Yes, Rory, a story.”

Now Rory’s religious feelings and his sense of humour used oftentimes to be strangely at loggerheads. The fact is, he would not tell a wilful falsehood for all he was worth.

“But, sure,” he would say, “there can’t be a taste of harm in telling a story or two just to amuse the boys.” Yet, to make assurance doubly sure, and his conscience as easy as possible, he always prefaced his yarns with a bit of advice such as follows—“Now, boys, believe me, it’s lies I’m going to be after telling you entirely. Believe me, there isn’t a morsel av truth in any av me stories, from beginning to ind, and there’s sorra a lie in that.”

On this particular occasion, instead of commencing at once, Rory took his pipe from his mouth, and sat gazing for about a minute into dreamland, as one might say, with smiles playing at hide-and-seek all over his face.

“Thim was the glorious toimes, boys,” he said.

“What times, Rory?”

“Did I never tell you, then?” replied Rory, trying to look innocent.

“What! not about the beautiful island, and the mighty mountains, and the goold, and the jewels, and the big turtle and all?”

“No, Rory, never a word.”

“Well, then, to begin with, it’s ten years ago, and maybe a bit more, so I wasn’t so old as I am now. I hadn’t been more’n a year or two at sea, and mostly coasting that same would be, though sure enough my great ambition was to sail away beyond the sunrise, or away to the back av the north wind and seek me fortune. It was living at home in ould Oirland I was then, with mother and Molly—the saints be around them this noight!—and a swater, claner, tidier bit av a lass than me sister Molly there doesn’t live ’tween here and Tralee, and sure that is the only bit av real truth in the whole av me story.”

“We perfectly believe that, Rory.”

“Well thin, boys, it was crossing the bog I was one beautiful moonlight night about five o’clock in the morning, and a big wild bog it was, too, with never a house nor a cot in it, and nobody at all barrin’ the moor-snipes and the kelpies, when all at once, what or who should I see standing right foreninst me, beside a rick av peats, but a gentleman in sailor’s clothes, with gold all round his hat, and a bunch av seals dangling in front av him as big as turkey’s eggs. And sure it wasn’t shy he was at spaking either, boys.

“‘The top av the mornin’ to ye,’ says he.

“‘The same to you,’ says I, quite bold-like, though my heart felt as big as peat; ‘the same to you and a thousand av them.’

“‘Is it poor or rich ye are?’ says he.

“‘As poor as a peat creel,’ says I.

“Then sure,’ says he, ‘I daresay it isn’t sorry to make your fortune you’d be.’

“I’ll do anything short of shootin’ a fellow-bein’,’ says I, ‘for that same.’

“Well,’ says he, ‘it’s lookin’ out for nate young fellows like yourself I do be, and if you’ll sail with me to a foreign shore, thir you’ll see what you’ll see.’

“I’m your man then,’ I says.

“You’ll have lashin’s o’ atin’ and drinkin’,’ says he, ‘and lashin’s o’ gold for the gatherin’, but there is one thing, and that isn’t two, which I must tell you; you’ll have to fight, Rory lad.’

“I’m your man again,’ says I. ‘Sure there isn’t a boy in all the parish I can’t bate black and blue before ye could sneeze. And I spat in my fist as I spoke.’

“Ah! but,’ says he, ‘the cave where all the gold is is guarded by the ugliest old goblin that ever was created. It is him you’ll have to help fight, Rory; it’s him you’ll have to help fight.’

“Och!’ I cries, ‘no matter at all, at all; the uglier the better, so long as he’s got the goold behind him. Rory will walk through him like daylight through a dishcloth. Hurrah!’

“And I began to jump about, and spar at all the ugly old imaginary goblins I could think of.

“The gintleman laughed.

“You’ll do fust-rate,’ he says, says he; ‘shake hands on the subject.’

“And he gave me his hand, and truth, boys, it felt as cold and damp as the tail av a fish. And more betoken, I couldn’t help noticing that all the time he was speakin’ to me, he kept changing his size. At one moment he didn’t look a morsel bigger than a pint bottle, and next—troth, he was tall enough to spit on me hat.

“But two heads are better than one,’ says I to myself; ‘next mornin’ I’ll go and see the priest.’

“It was a mere optical allusion,’ said the priest, when I told him how the gintleman was sometimes big and sometimes small, a ‘mere optical allusion, Rory,’ he says; ‘had you been tasting the crayture?’

“Troth, maybe I had,’ says I.

“Well,’ says he, ‘that was it. To my thinking this sailor gintleman is an honest man enough. Meet him, Rory, in Dublin as he axed you, and sail with him, Tim; sure it’ll make a man o’ ye, and your mother and Molly as well, Rory.’

“Well,’ says I, ‘give me your blessin’, your riverance, and I’ll be after going.’

“I’ll not be denying ye that same,’ says his riverance.

“But it was mother and Molly that wept when I told them where I was going. Och! they did weep, to be sure; but when I told them of all the foine countries I’d see, and all the goold I’d bring home, troth it’s brighten up they did wonderful, and for all the fortnight before I sailed we did nothing but talk, and talk, and talk, bar that all the time they were talking it is mending me shirts and darning me stockings the dear craytures were.

“Well wi’ this and wi’ that the time passed away quickly enough, and at long last I bade them good-bye, and with a big lump in me throat, away I started for Dublin Bay.

“I mind it well, boys; it was the dark hour av midnight when we got up anchor and sailed away, and there was such a thunderstorm rattling over the big hill o’ Howth as I’d never seen the likes of in my born days. There wasn’t a breath av wind either, but somehow that didn’t make a morsel av difference to the ship one way or another. She was a quare ship.

“We were far out of sight av land next morning, and with niver another ship to be seen. It didn’t seem sailing we were, boys, but flying; it didn’t seem through the water we went, but over it, boys. It’s a foine ship she was, and a purty one as well.

“Talk av white decks, boys! ours were alabaster, and the copper nails in her weren’t copper at all, but the purest av gold, and the brass work the same. Sure didn’t I get me ould knife out just to try it.

“Don’t you be scraping at that,’ says the captain, right behind me, ‘and spoiling the looks av the ship. It’s plenty of that we’ll get where we’re going to.’

“Then I looks up, and there stood the captain right a-top av the binnacle, and sorra more than one eye had he. ‘By the powers!’ says I, ‘what have ye done with your other eye, captain?’

“Whisht, Rory!’ says he; ‘it’s in the locker down below I keep the other. One eye is enough to use at a time.’

“‘If it’s a good one,’ says I, talking friendly loike.

“‘It’s me weather eye, Rory,’ says he; ‘but go and do your duty, Rory, and keep silence when ye talk to your supairior officer.’

“The crew av this strange ship, boys, were forty av the foinest fellows that ever walked on two legs, barrin’ that niver a one o’ them had more than one leg apiece, and it was hop they did instead av walking like dacint Christians. ‘Only one leg apiece,’ says I to the bo’swain’s mate.

“‘One leg is enough to go to sea with,’ says he; ‘but go and do your duty, Rory, and keep silence when ye spake to your supairior officer.’

“It was a quare ship, boys, with a one-eyed captain and a one-legged crew.

“It was, maybe, a fortnight after we sailed, and maybe more, when one day the sky grew all dark, the wind blew, and the thunders rolled and rattled, and the seas rose mountains high, and sure I thought the end of the world had come, and what would poor mother and Molly do without me. But short was the time given me to think, boys.

“‘It’s all your fault,’ cried my messmates, swarming round me.

“‘Out with one eye,’ cries the captain.

“‘Off with one leg,’ cries the crew.

“‘Never a one av me eyes will ye have, ye spalpeens!’ I roars; ‘and as for me legs, I manes to stick to the whole lot av the two av them. Come on,’ I cries; ‘stand up foreninst Rory if there is a bit av courage among ye.’

“But what could one man do among so many av them, boys? And it’s down they’d have had me, and me one leg would have been off in a jiffey, if I hadn’t made the best use av the pair av them. ‘Bad success to ye all,’ I cries, jumping on to the bowsprit, ‘ye bog-trotting crew; I’ll trust to the tinder mercies av the sharks afore I’ll stop longer among ye.’ And over I leapt into the boiling sea. The water went surging into my ears as I sank, but even at that moment it was me poor mother and Molly I was thinking most about, and whatever they’d do athout me at all, at all.

“Boys, when I came to the top av the wather agin, sorra a ship was to be seen anywhere; the sky was clear and blue, and the wind had all gone down. ‘Rory O’Reilly!’ says a voice near me.

“And with that I looks round, and what should I see, but the ugliest craythure av an ould man that ever was born.

“‘You’re well rid o’ the lot,’ says the craythure.

“‘Thrue for you,’ says I; ‘and as ye spake so frindly loike, maybe you’d be after tellin’ me how far it is to the nearest house av entertainment.’

“‘Take a howld av me tail,’ says the craythure, ‘and sure I’ll tow ye there in a twinklin’.’

“‘Is it a merman ye are, then,’ says I, ‘or the little ould man av the sea?’

“‘It’s a merman, sure enough,’ he replied; and wi’ that I catches howld av his tail, and away we goes as cheerful as ye plaze, boys, and all the toime the ould craythure kept tellin’ me about the beautiful home av the mermaids beneath the blue says, and their couches av pearl and coralline halls, and the lovely gardens, with the flowers all growing and moving with the wash av the warm waves, and av the strange-shaped fishes with diamonds and sparkling gems in their heads, that swim round and round av a noight to give the purty damsels light, to ate and to drink and to dance in.

“‘And do you dwell among all this beauty?’ says I to the ugly old craythure.

“‘What!’ says he, ‘the loikes o’ me dwell in sich places? No,’ says he, ‘Rory O’Reilly, it’s only a slave I am, for there is a moighty difference twixt a mermaid and a merman. But here you are at the island.’

“And with that he gave his tail a shake, and I found myself lying in the sunshine on the coral sands, with no little ould man near me at all, at all.

“Now, boys, what should happen next, but I should fall as sound asleep as a babe in its cradle. Maybe it was the pangs of hunger that wakened me, and maybe it wasn’t, for before I opened me eyes, I had opened me ears, and such a confusion av swate sounds I’d never heard before, and sartainly never since.

“I kept me eyes firmly closed, wondering where I was, and trying to think back; and think back I did to the goblin ship and its goblin crew, and the little ould man av the sea that towed me on shore with his tail. The sounds were at first like the murmur av bees,

then bird songs were added to them, sweeter than all delicious strains av music, that stirred every pulse in me body. And with that I opened me eyes.

“I’ll give ye me word av honour, boys, and me hand on it as well, I was so astonished at all I saw around me, that never a thing could I do at all, at all, but lie still and stare.

“It was in fairyland I was, sure enough. What were those beautiful beings, I kept asking myself, that glided over the golden ground, or, with trailing, gauzy garments and flowing hair, went floating through the sky itself, keeping time every one of them to the dreamy rhythm of the music that filled the air, and didn’t seem to come from any direction in particular? Were they peris, sylphs, fays, or fairies, or a choice selection of mermaids come on shore for a dance?

“I’d fallen asleep on the snow-white sand. There was no sand here now, sure; all was green and gold, and shrubs and flowers and coloured fountains were all around me. But it was night all the same. And the strange thing was this, every leaf and flower gave out light of its own colour. But, glimmering down through the beautiful haze, I could see the twinkling stars, and I offered up a prayer and felt safe.

“The music grew quicker, merrier, madder, and at last sure I couldn’t stand it a moment longer, and up I starts.

““Och! if you plaze,’ I says, ‘I’ll mingle in the mazy dance meself, and there isn’t a boy in Ballyporeen can bate me at the rale ould Oirish jig.’

“But sure, boys, as Burns says—

““In a moment all was dark.’

“Away went shrubs and flowers and fountains and sylphs and fairies and fays and all, and there stood poor Rory O’Reilly on the sands once more, with the wee waves frothing up at his feet, and scratching his head, and feeling more like a fool than ever he did in his born days.

““Well, sure,’ says I to myself, ‘there is no knowing what to make av it. But,’ I says, ‘a little more sleep won’t hurt me, anyhow.’

“So down I lies again on the sand.

“It was daylight when I awoke again once more. But where was I now? No fairies this time. But sure I was among the strangest race of beings imagination could conceive av. The country all around me was honest and purty enough; trees, fields, hills, and houses, and all might have been a part of ould Oirland itself. But the people, boys—why, it was indiarubber they must have been made av, and nothing else. At one moment a man would be as tall and thin as a flagstaff, next moment about the shape and fashion of a bull frog. They could stretch their arms out till twenty yards long, and make their mouths big enough to swallow a sheep. It wasn’t in at the door either they’d be going when entering their dwellings, but straight through the keyhole.

“It was, maybe, a handy arrangement one way or the other, but troth it frightened poor Rory O’Reilly, and as none av the ugly craytures seemed to take any notice av me, I made my feet my friends, and got quietly away.

Well, after wandering in this enchanted island for more than a week, and never tasting a bit or a sup all the time, right glad I was to find meself by the sea once more.

“Escape I must, at all hazards. But how was I to get a boat I was thinking and wondering, when all at once me eyes fell on a great turtle-shell.

“The very thing, boys; nothing could be easier than to make a boat and sail away in this.

“It didn’t take me long either to step a mast, and to load up with fruit and with shell-fish; then I got my boat afloat, and with my jacket for a sail away I went, and before long the enchanted island went down below the horizon, and I niver felt happier in my life before, than when I saw the last of it.”

Rory O’Reilly stopped to fill his pipe, and having done so, smoked quietly on for a few minutes, while all waited patiently for the completion of his yarn.

“Well, Rory,” said Skipper James at last. “Go on; that isn’t all, surely? How did your adventurous voyage end?”

“Is it how did it end?” said Rory. “Well, boys, there arose a terrible storm, and the waves dashed over me, and the cowld hail and snow and rain—”

“And thunder and lightning, Rory?”

“Yes, Captain James, and thunder and lightning; but sure in the midst av it all came an angel’s voice from the clouds, singing—oh! iver so sweetly—

“There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet
As the dear little vale where the waters do meet.
Ah! the last link of freedom and life shall depart,
Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.’

“And by this and by that, boys, I opened me eyes again.”

“Opened your eyes again, Rory?” cried the skipper.

“Yes, sure, and there I was in me own mother’s cabin, and there was my sister Biddy, the darlint, standing foreninst me and singing like a sylph, and sprinkling me face wid wather. And troth, boys, it was all a drame, ivery word I’ve been telling ye.”

“Well done, Rory,” cried Skipper James, “and now for a song and dance, boys, for Saturday night only comes once a week.”

The fiddler struck up a hornpipe, and once more the deck was filled; and so with music, with dancing, and song the night sped merrily on.

Born to Wander Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Ten. The Wanderers' Return.

"I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high,
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.

"It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy."

Hood.

Scene: Glen Lyle in spring time. The larch trees already green and tasselled with crimson buds. The woods alive with the song of birds. The rooks busy at work on the tall, swaying elm trees. Two young men approaching Grayling House, arm in arm.

It was early on this spring morning, not long past eight of the clock. Douglas and Leonard had stayed at a little inn some eight miles distant on the night before, and started with the larks to march homewards, for even Douglas looked upon Glen Lyle as his home.

As they neared the well-known gate, Leonard became silent. Thoughts of his happy boyhood's days crowded fresh and fast into his memory. Every bush and every tree brought up some sad yet pleasant reminiscence of days gone by—sad, because those old, old days were gone never to return.

"Come, old boy," said Douglas cheerfully. "Aren't you glad to be so near home?"

They were at the gate now.

"Glad," said Leonard, yet strangely moved. "Douglas, what means all this? See, the walks are green, the blinds are mostly down. Only from one chimney does smoke issue. Oh, my friend! I fear something is wrong. I never thought my heart could beat so! But see, yonder comes old Peter himself."

And down the path indeed the ancient servitor came shuffling.

His very first words reassured poor Leonard.

“The Lord be praised for a’ His mercy! Hoo pleased your father and mother and Effie will be!”

The joy-blood came bounding back to Leonard’s heart. He returned the ardent pressure of Peter’s hands.

“Oh!” cried Peter, “I want to do naething else noo but just lie doon and dee.”

“Don’t talk of dying, my dear Peter. Where are they?”

The old man wiped his streaming eyes as he answered,—

“At Grayling Cottage, St. Abbs. And you have na heard? Come in, come in, and I’ll tell you all.”

About three hours after this the two young men had once more left Glen Lyle, and were journeying straight, almost as the crow flies, for the cottage by the sea.

On the evening of the second day, having been directed to the house, they were walking slowly along the beach.

It was the gloaming hour.

Yonder in the horizon just over the sea shone the gloaming star.

“Just above yon sandy bar,
As the day grows fainter and dimmer,
Lonely and lovely, a single star
Lights the air with a dusky glimmer.

“Into the ocean faint and far
Falls the trail of its golden splendour,
And the gleam of that single star
Is ever refulgent, soft, and tender.”

Both young men stopped short at once. There was one figure on the beach, one solitary female figure.

“It is she,” half-whispered Douglas, pressing Leonard’s arm.

Then they advanced.

“Effie!”

“Oh, Leonard!”

Next moment she was sobbing on her brother’s shoulder. They were tears of reaction, but they washed away in their flood-gates the sorrow and the hope deferred of long, dreary years.

“How silly to cry!” she said at last, giving her hand to her brother’s friend with a bonnie blush.

“Right welcome you are, Douglas,” she added. “Oh, how glad I am to see you both!”

“There now, Eff,” said her brother, in his old cheery way, “no more tears; it must be all joy now, joy and jollity.”

Douglas ran off home now to see his father, and I pass over the scene of reunion betwixt Leonard and his parents.

“Dear boy,” said his father more than once that evening, “I don’t care for anything now I’ve got you back, and I don’t mind confessing that I really never expected to see you more.”

But in an hour or two in came Captain Fitzroy and Douglas.

Then somehow or other the household horizon took a cheerier tone; there was such an amount of indwelling happiness and pleasantry about the honest Captain’s face, that no one could have been in his company for five minutes without feeling the better of it.

About nine o’clock Captain Lyle got up and took down from its shelf a large volume covered with calfskin. It was,—

“The big ha’ Bible, ance his father’s pride.”

Solemn words were read, solemn words were spoken, and heartfelt was the prayer and full of gratitude that was said when all knelt down.

Family worship was conducted thus early, lest, as Lyle said, everybody should get sleepy. But this did not close the evening. For all sat around the fire long, long after that, and if the whole truth must be told, the cocks in the farmer's yard hard by had wakened up and begun to crow when Douglas and his father bade good-night to the cottagers, and went slowly homewards along the beach.

You see there had been such a deal to talk about.

A day or two afterwards who should arrive at the cottage but Captain Blunt himself, and with him honest, kindly, rough old Skipper James. It is needless to say that the latter received a royal welcome.

"We can never, never thank you enough," said Mrs Lyle, "for bringing back our boys."

"Pooh!" said Skipper James, "my dear lady, that is nothing; don't bother thanking me, mention me and my old ship in your prayers, when we're on the sea."

"That I'm sure we will never forget to do."

Lyle and Fitzroy were walking together on the beach about a week after the wanderers' return.

"I've been trying to get my boy to stay at home now altogether," said Lyle.

"Well, and I've been trying mine."

"But mine won't; he says he was born to wander, and wander he will."

"Just the same with mine."

"And Leonard has given up his allowance, dear boy! He says he will work now for his living, and that the seamanship he has learned must stand as his profession. He is full of hope though, and I fear we'll soon lose our lads again."

"For a time—yes, for a time. Be cheerful, remember what I prophesied; all will yet be well, and if they really are born to wander nothing can prevent them."

"What's that about being born to wander?" said Captain Blunt, coming quietly up behind them. "Because," he added, "here's another."

"What!" said Captain Lyle. "Are you going to sea again?"

“I’ve just left your lads,” replied Blunt, “and I’ve made them an offer that they both jump at. You see, I’ve made a bit of money, and though I have been in the merchant service all my life, I can’t say that ever I have seen the world in a quiet way. Had always, in port, to look after my men and cargo, and hardly ever could get a week to myself. So now, in a barque of my own, I’m going round the world for a bit of an outing, and your boys are going with me. I’ve offered them fair wage, and, depend upon it, I’ll do my best to make them happy, and I won’t come back without them. What say you two fathers?”

“What can we say,” said Lyle, grasping Captain Blunt’s rough horny hand, “but thank you?”

“And boys will be boys,” added Fitzroy, with a ringing laugh that startled the very sea-birds.

Two months after this our heroes had bidden their relations once more adieu, and were afloat on the wide Atlantic.

But before this the whole party had gone to the Clyde, where Captain Blunt’s barque was building, and in due form, with all due ceremony, Effie, with a blush of modesty and beauty on her sweet young face, had christened the ship.

And her name was the Gloaming Star.

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