

COURAGE, TRUE HEARTS
VOLUME II
BY
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STABLES

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

THE CRUISE OF THE FLORA M'VAYNE.

CHAPTER I THE TERRORS OF THE OCEAN

Long months have passed away since that sad parting at Glenvoie; a parting that seemed to raise our young heroes at once from the careless happiness of boyhood to the serious earnestness of man's estate.

They had stayed in town until Captain Talbot arrived. He was just the same brave and jolly sailor that Duncan had first known.

Would he take Frank as his apprentice?

Why, he would be glad to have the whole three. They were so bold and bright, there was not the least fear of their not getting on.

Wouldn't they come? His present ship was not so large as he would like it to be, but he would make shift somehow.

But Duncan, while he thanked him, was firm.

"Well," said Talbot, "I'll tell you what I'll do for you, for somehow I have acquired a liking for you all Frank here, then, shall come with me, not as an apprentice belonging to the owners, but as a friend who wishes to get well up in seamanship and eventually pass even for master-mariner. You see, Frank, you will be rated as apprentice to me, and not to the company, else they would hold you to the same ship for years. And my reason is this: in about a year or a little over, I shall, please God, have a ship of my own. It is to be a great project, but I am promised assistance, and many of the savants in London say the project is well worthy of the greatest success. I shall voyage first to the Antarctic regions, and come home with a paying voyage of oil and skins of the sea-elephants, and this shall smooth my way to exploring further south than any ship has yet reached.

"So you see, Duncan, as you and your brother will not be bound to any tie as regards apprenticeship, you can both sail with me to the South Pole, and who knows but you may yet become the Nansens of the Antarctic."

"Too good to be true," said Duncan laughing; "but I'm just determined to do my best, and no one can do more."

"Bravo, lad!" cried the colonel, laying his hand on Duncan's shoulder. "And you remember what the poet says:

""T is not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more...; we'll deserve it""

"Brave words, Colonel Trelawney," cried Talbot. "Why, sir, scraps of heroic verse have helped me along all through life. I'm a ship-master now, with a bit in bank. But my first

voyage was to the Arctic and I had hardly clothes enough to keep out the terrible weather. My mother was a poor widow in Dundee, and I--being determined to go to sea--became a stowaway. I hid in a coal-bunker, and it came on to blow, so that I was very nearly killed with the shifting coals that cannonaded against my ribs.

"Luckily the storm did not last long, but when they hauled me out at last I was as black as a chimney-sweep and covered with blood.

"I was too ill to be lifted and landed at Lerwick. The doctor said I was dying. The first mate, who was never sober, said, 'Serve the young beggar right!' But, boys, I knew better. Dundee boys don't die worth shucks, and so I was on deck in ten days' time. There were two dogs on board, and my duty was to feed and look after them, and also to assist the cook.

"I roughed it, I can tell you, lads; but, Lord bless you, it did me a power of good. We were out for six months, and by that time I was as strong as a young mule. How old was I? Oh, not more than sixteen. But I felt a man. And I could reef and steer now, and splice a rope, and do all sorts of things. For the bo's'n had taken me in hand, and right kind he was.

"Ah! but that rascally mate! A long black, red-cheeked chap he was, and not a bit like a sailor, but he kept up his spite against me, and, when half-seas over--which he always was when not completely drunk--he would let fly at me with a belaying-pin, a marling-spike, or anything else he could lay his hands on.

"'Why don't you land him one,' said the bo's'n one day, 'right from the shoulder?'

"'That would be mutiny, wouldn't it?' said I.

"'Nonsense, lad, the skipper likes you, and he wouldn't log you for it.'

"I determined to take the bo's'n's advice next time the drunken mate hit me.

"Well, I hadn't long to wait. You see I had come to really love the dogs under my charge. So one day the mate kicked one of them rather roughly out of his way.

"'Don't you dare kick that dog,' I cried; 'they are both in my charge.'

"How well do I remember that forenoon. We were on the return voyage, running before a light breeze, with every scrap of canvas set, low and aloft, and the sun shining bonnie and warm.

"But the mate grew purple with rage when I checked him. He could hardly speak. He could only stutter.

"'You, you beggar's brat,' he shouted, 'I'll give you a lesson.'

"He rushed to pull out a belaying-pin.

"I tossed off my jacket and threw it on the top of the capstan.

"I twisted the belaying-pin out of his hands before you could have said 'knife'.

"'Fight fair, you drunken scamp!' I cried.

"Pistols and rifles lay ready loaded in boxes at the top of the cabin companion, and he made a stride or two as if to take one out.

"'Mutiny!' he muttered, 'rank mutiny!'

"I sprang between him and the box, and dealt him a square left-hander that made him reel. I followed this up with a rib-starter, then with one on the nose.

"Down he went, and he actually prayed for mercy.

"That bulbous nose of his was well tapped, and there was no fear of him taking apoplexy for a while anyhow.

"But when I let him up he seemed to lose control of his senses, for the demon drink was now in the ascendant. He faced me no longer, however, but rushed for poor, faithful Collie, and before I could prevent it, had seized and pitched him overboard.

"The men, untold, rushed to haul the foreyard aback and to lower a boat.

"But he checked them.

"What! lower a boat for a dog?' he cried.

"Lower a boat for a man then,' I shouted, 'and just as I was I leapt upon the bulwark and dived off it. Next minute I was alongside Collie. Ay, lads, and alongside something else. A huge shark sailed past us, and passed us so near I could almost have touched him. He must have been fully fifteen feet long.[1] I knew that nothing but splashing and shouting could keep him at bay, and I did both as well as I knew how to."

[1] The *Scymnus borealis*, or Greenland shark, is often eighteen to twenty feet in length.

"But the boat came quickly to our rescue, and we were soon safe on board. The skipper liked me, and did not log my mutinous conduct. In fact he became my friend, and I was apprenticed to his very ship. So I had many and many a voyage to the Sea of Ice after this.

"There is a glamour about this weird and wonderful frozen ocean, boys, that none can resist who have ever been under its bewitching spell. It is on me now, and this it is which has determined me to seek soon for adventures in the Antarctic, which very few have ever sought to explore.

"Now, Duncan and Conal, I'll tell you what I shall do with you. There is a big Australian ship to sail from Southampton in about a month. The captain is a personal friend of mine, and will do anything for you. I shall give you a letter.

"Mind this, he is strict service, and if you do your duty, as I'm sure you will, you'll soon have a friend on the quarter-deck."

Captain Talbot--or Master-mariner Talbot as he liked best to be called--had been as good as his word, and now our young heroes were far away at sea.

The Ocean's Pride was a full-rigged Aberdeen clipper-built vessel, and could show a pair of clean heels to almost any other ship in the trade. The skipper and his two mates were all thorough sailors, and gentlemen at heart. The skipper, whose name was Wilson, soon began to take an interest in Duncan and Conal, and knowing that they were studying in their idle moments, invited them to come daily to his own cabin, and there for a whole hour he used to teach them all he could.

Duncan could soon be trusted to take sights, and even "lunars", and gave every evidence of possessing the steadiness and grit that goes so far to make a thorough British sailor.

They touched at the Cape in due time, and Conal acted as clerk or "tally-boy" while cargo was being landed and fresh stock taken on board.

The boys found time to have a look at the town. They went with one of the mates who had been often here before.

Well, the hills all around, clad in their summer coats of dazzling heaths and geraniums, were quite a sight to see. But the town itself they voted dismally slow, and so I myself have found it, there being so many heavy-headed Dutchmen therein.

They were not a bit sorry, therefore, when they found themselves once more on the heaving billows.

And the billows around the Cape of Good Hope do heave too with a vengeance.

Such mountain waves Duncan could not have believed existed anywhere. Tall and raking though she was, the Ocean's Pride was all but buried when down in the trough of the waves.

There was but a six-knot breeze when they started to stretch away and away across that seemingly illimitable ocean betwixt the Cape and Australia. Oh such a lonesome sea it is, reader! Six thousand miles of water, water, water, and often never a sign of life in the sky above or in the sea below.

There was, as I have said, but a light wind to begin with, and it was dead astern, so that stunsails were set, and the great ship looked like some wonderful bird of the main, as she sailed, with her wings out-spread, eastward and eastward ho!

But before noon the sky in the west began to darken, and great rock-shaped or castellated clouds rolled up from the horizon. Snow-white were they on top, where the sun's rays struck them, but dark and black below.

"Snug ship!" was the order now.

In came the stunsails, the men working right merrily, and singing as they worked. In came royals and top-gallant sails, and close-reefed were the topsails. The captain was no coward, but right well he knew that the storm coming quickly up astern would be no child's play.

Nor was it.

A vivid flash of lightning and great-gun thunder first indicated the approach of the gale. Then away in the west a long line of foam was seen approaching. In an inconceivably short space of time it struck the ship with fearful violence, and though she sprung forward like a frightened deer and dipped her prow into a huge wave, she seemed engulfed in raging seas. The skipper had battened down, but so much water had been taken on board that the good clipper could not for a time shake herself clear. Perhaps the shivered bulwarks helped to save the ship.

In a few minutes she was rushing before the wind at a good twelve knots an hour.

"What a blessing it is," said Captain Wilson, "that we got snug in time!"

"Yes, sir," said the mate, "and it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Why, this gale is all in our favour, and will help us along."

Our heroes had far from a pleasant time, however, for the next few days. Then wind and sea went down, and peace reigned once more on the decks, and in the rigging of the good ship Ocean's Pride.

The splendid cities they visited when the vessel at last arrived in Australia quite dazzled our boys. And as the English language was spoken everywhere they felt quite at home. Captain Wilson seemed to take a pride in having Duncan and Conal with him, and he introduced them as friends wherever he went.

Both lads were handsome, and in the city of Melbourne a rumour got abroad that they were of noble birth, and were serving before the mast for the mere romance of the thing. Well, even the Earl of Aberdeen was once found in the guise of an ordinary seaman; but there was something more than romance in our heroes' situation. However, the report, which they always contradicted, did them no harm, and they were invited to more houses than one, being asked, moreover, to come in their sailor's clothes.

The boys obeyed. In fact they had none other, but they had a kind of best suit, and very well the broad blue collar and black sailor's-knotted handkerchief became their handsome young faces.

I don't think I am far wrong in saying that some of the Australian ladies fell in love with them.

But that is a mere detail.

Now, having reached Australia, Duncan had about half a mind, more or less, to try his luck at the gold diggings.

He broached the subject to Captain Wilson.

"Well," replied the skipper, "mind, though I should be grieved to part with you, I would rather put another spoke in your wheel than hinder you, if I thought there was the ghost of a chance of your making your fortune. But I don't think there is."

"Then we shall be advised by you," said Duncan.

So after a very pleasant time spent in Australia the Ocean's Pride spread her wings once more to the breeze and sailed for distant Japan.

Thence homewards round stormy Cape Horn. It took them six weeks to weather the Cape, so close was the ice.

But worse was to befall them, alas! than this.

They were now bearing up for home. Right cheerily too, for they had caught the trades, and finally fell into the doldrums in crossing the equator.

Here they tumbled about for no less than three weeks, not a breath of wind blowing all this time to help them along.

But it came at last, and they were free.

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CHAPTER II A FEARFUL EXPERIENCE.

Once more the Ocean's Pride was spanking along before a delightful breeze with the dark blue sea sparkling in the sunlight around her, and Mother Carey's chickens, as sailors call the stormy petrels, flitting past and re-past her stern.

Seamen say these birds are always the forerunners of storm and tempest. This is not so, but in this case the prophecy turned out to be a correct one. A fearful hurricane or tornado struck the ship, and raged for days and days.

There was no such thing as battling against it. So it ended in their being driven far away to the west into unknown or little frequented seas. I am wrong in saying it ended. For the end was of a far more terrible nature than anything I ever heard of before, or ever experienced.

On the fourth day the tempest seemed almost played out, and the sky was brightening somewhat in the east.

The skipper was rubbing his hands and saying to his mate:

"I think we shall be able to shake a reef out before long."

"So do I," was the cheery answer.

Both the young fellows M'Vayne were below at present, and the vessel was battened down.

"Oh, look, look!" cried the mate, seizing the skipper by the arm and pointing fearfully towards the east.

"Good Lord preserve us!" said Captain Wilson in terror.

And well he might be so, for yonder, quite blotting out the clear strip of sky, a huge wave or bore had arisen. It was of semi-lunar shape, and must have been fifty feet high at the very least. The top all along was one mass of foam.

Nearer and nearer it came!

The sailor men crouched in fear, or hastened to make themselves fast by ropes' ends to rigging or shroud.

And now the fine vessel is struck--is wallowing in the midst of that hurricane-tossed turmoil of waters--is on her beam-ends, without any apparent hope of recovery.

But recover she did after a time, and the ocean wave swept on.

What a wreck! The half-drowned men, or those who were left alive, gasped for breath as they stared wildly around. Two masts gone by the boards, only the pitiful foremast left standing; every boat staved and washed away, bulwarks gaping like sheep hurdles, and the poop crushed in.

And the officers where were they? Gone!

Yes--and my story is told from the life and the death--not only bold Captain Wilson himself but both his mates had been swept overboard and drowned.

Five men were missing; nor had all escaped down below. The cook was severely injured, and but for the presence of mind and speed of two ordinary seamen, the ship would have caught fire, for the blazing coals had been dashed out of the range and ignited ropes and twine that lay not far off.

And poor Duncan! He had been dashed to leeward and so stunned that his brother and a sailor who had picked him up, believed him to be dead.

For three days he lay unconscious, but in two more days he was to all appearance himself again.

Although suffering from a bad scalp wound, he was able to go on deck.

And sad indeed was the sight he now beheld. With the binnacle washed away, without an officer to guide or direct the vessel; and the men, in almost hourly expectation of death should the wind spring up again once more, had allowed the ship to drift with the current. They were helpless, ay, and hopeless.

And I am sorry to add that many of them had found their way to the spirit room, and were lying on deck drunk and asleep.

Duncan now proved himself the right man--or boy, for he was but little over seventeen--in the right place.

He called the hands aft.

"Men," he said, "we cannot continue in this state; some effort must be made to save our lives and the valuable cargo."

"Ah! young sir," said the bo's'n sadly, "all our officers are dead. There is no one to guide or navigate the ship. We must drift on till we strike reef or rock and so go to pieces.

"Never fear, sir, we'll die like true-born Britons."

"But," cried Duncan, "there need be no dying about it. I myself can navigate the ship, if sextant and chronometer still are safe."

They crowded round this brave though youthful navigator and shook him by the hand, while tears of joy streamed down many a sea-browned weather-beaten cheek.

"Can you, sir? Oh, can you? Then take charge and we will obey."

Luckily the rudder and wheel were uninjured, and as soon as he had taken sights and found out where he was, he had a jib and new foresails set, the helm was put up, and slowly the Ocean's Pride began to sail for the nearest land.

This was one of the Azores. Very far away indeed, but still Duncan hoped to reach it ere long and in safety.

The young fellow's orders followed each other quickly enough, and were obeyed with great alacrity.

The spirit-room was locked, and an armed sentry placed over it. He was to bludgeon any man who should dare to approach it with intent.

Several of the worst cases of drunkards he put in irons.

Then all hands were told off to temporarily repair the ship.

The poop was mended and made water-tight, and the bulwarks roughly seen to. This occupied a whole day, and as soon as daylight succeeded darkness the busy crew were at work once more.

There were several spare spars on board, and the men now set about rigging a couple of jury-masts, which, though only carrying fore-and-aft sails, would greatly add to the good ship's speed.

But more than this had to be done, for she had shipped quite a deal of water, and the donkey-engine had to be repaired and rigged to get clear of it.

While work was going on cheerily enough a poor drink-demented wretch, who had escaped from below, rushed wildly up, and sprang with a shriek, that none who heard it ever forgot, right into the sea.

There was not a boat to lower, and small use would it have been anyhow, for those who looked fearfully over the bulwarks saw but a red circle on the waves, and rising bubbles. It was the poor man's blood and breath, for he had been torn down by a shark.

The other cases recovered, and begged of Duncan not to log them.

The young acting-commander promised he would not, and they returned to duty.

It was a long and a tedious voyage to the Azores, but every one was for the most part happy now, although still sad when they thought of the awful catastrophe which had caused such loss of life.

At the town where the Ocean's Pride at last lay at anchor, additional repairs were made, and in due time Duncan sailed with a fair wind for England's shore.

It was the month of July when the ship was once more lying alongside the quay, and hearing of her terrible adventures the people crowded down in hundreds, and would have crowded on board, too, had not Duncan given strict orders that no one should cross the gangway, except on business.

This did not prevent reporters from getting over the side, however, and although Duncan was very reticent, the whole town was soon ringing with his praise.

But the owners were still more delighted. The cargo was valued at fully five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and the young navigator had saved it all.

A meeting was held at which it was unanimously agreed to present Duncan with the very handsome sum of one thousand, and his brother, who had been but little less active than himself, with five hundred.

Duncan was indeed a happy young fellow now. But his good luck did not end here, for on the fourth day of the arrival of the Ocean's Pride, who should step on board but jolly Captain Talbot himself, and, neatly dressed in the uniform of a ship's apprentice, Frank walked alongside of him--on his port beam in fact.

That was a real happy meeting, as a Yankee would say.

Surely Frank never looked better nor more manly. He had lost all the looks of the "tender-foot", and was well coloured and hardy.

And Talbot himself was as usual bronzed and jolly. The honest grip that he gave Duncan's hand showed, too, that he was hearty and strong as ever. It was not a few fingers that this bold sailor presented to a friend, but the whole hand.

"And how are you, my brick of a boy? But I needn't ask when I look into those bright eyes of yours. Ay, and I've heard of your clever doings too. Do you see the papers?"

"I haven't much time just at present," replied Duncan, "nor has Conal here either."

"Ah, Conal, right glad to see you! But do you know that your brother is a hero? Why, all the newspapers from Land's End to John o' Groats are singing his praises!"

"It won't make a bit of difference to Duncan, sir," said Conal, somewhat proudly.

"But really, Captain Talbot"--this from Duncan himself--"I don't know what I should have done without Conal. But come into the saloon, sir, such as it is, for we were terribly knocked about."

"Yes, and it surprises me that you have got things so ship-shape again as you have. You've heard from your daddy?"

"Ay, and Florie too, and I'm going to run down for a spell as soon as I can get paid off."

"And I'll go with you, and Frank here as well. Won't you, lad?"

"Like a hundredweight of gunpowder, sir, with a spark put to it."

"And now, sir, sit down; I have half an hour to spare. Steward, bring the wine and biscuits. And how goes the project, Captain Talbot?"

"Getting on splendidly. I've formed a company, and nearly all the shares are sold, but really 'twixt you and me and the binnacle, boys, I've kept the most myself."

"Well," cried Conal laughing, "I and my brother are men of vast wealth now--ahem!--we shall have all that is left."

"No, you mustn't part with all your doubloons. Just half. The other shall be put in a bank as a kind of nest-egg, don't you see?"

"Very well," said Duncan, "we always did take your advice, and so we will now."

"That's right! Old Ben Talbot never gave a boy bad counsel yet."

"And the ship, sir?"

"Well, the ship's a barque, and a beauty she is. About eight hundred tons, and although not quite a clipper, she'll make up in strength what she'll lack in speed.

"A whaler she was," he continued, "but we have given her a rare cleaning. She's as sweet now as a nut. Double-skinned is she, and the bows all between the bends are solid teak, shod in front with iron. But you shall see her as soon as we haul out of dock."

"I'm taking two mates; both have passed and own certificates. You, Duncan, shall be acting third mate, and Conal I'll rate as auxiliary. You haven't neglected your studies, have you?"

"No, sir, and both myself and Conal mean to go in for our first exam, as soon as we get to London."

"Bravo! But I won't hinder you longer. Frank shall stay on with you a bit, and I expect you all to come and dine with me to-night at my hotel. Can you?"

"All but me," said Conal. This wasn't quite grammatical, but it was truth. "One of us must be ship-keeper."

"That's right. Never shirk your duty for anyone or anything. Do you remember the eulogy on Tom Bowling--when stark and stiff?"

And the pure and manly voice in which Talbot sang a verse of Dibdin's celebrated song, proved that, though this true sailor was over fifty, he was as hale and strong and hearty as many young fellows of twenty. Ay, and ten times more so, for at the present time thousands of lads ruin their health at schools--and not from study either.

"His form was of the manliest beauty;

His heart was kind and soft;

Faithful below he did his duty,

And now he's gone aloft."

Talbot was going, and Duncan was seeing him across the gangway.

"Oh, by the by," he said, still retaining his old friend's hand, "I'm a perfect fool."

"No, no, Duncan; there are other folks' opinions to be taken on that subject."

"But I was actually going to let you away without even asking the name of your ship."

"Say our ship, my lad."

"Well, our ship."

"And you'd never guess her name, but your dear wee tot of a sister christened her, and the barque's name is the Flora M'Vayne."

"Well, I am pleased."

"To-night, then; six o'clock to a tick."

And away went the jolly skipper.

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CHAPTER III BOUND FOR SOUTHERN SEAS OF ICE.

Frank and Duncan spent a very happy evening indeed with their friend Talbot. Without the aid of wine either, which no one with youth on his side should require to make him gay. But I do not mind telling you that the old skipper himself had a drop of the "rosy" as he called it. And the "rosy" meant rum, aromatic, and of great age. Well, there was quite a deal to talk about; they told each other their adventures, and they spoke also of their future prospects, and the cruise of the Flora M'Vayne. "She will be furnished and fitted complete," the captain said. "We shall make sure enough of the sea elephants, but I'm going to tap a whale or two also, if I don't find elephants enough. And, bother me, Conal," he added, "I don't see any reason why you shouldn't write a book about our cruise." It was long past ten before the merry little meeting broke up. This isn't late for land-lubbers, but with sailors it is different. "Early to bed when on shore" is their motto.

It was early in August--only the first week, in fact--when the boys and their captain found themselves back once more at Glenvoie. The colonel had expressed a wish to run down with them, but he had to defer it, owing to the surly way in which his liver asserted itself.

They found everything very much in the same state as when they left it, only Florie was now fourteen, and far more demure.

It is Burns who says:

"In Heaven itself I'll ask nae mair,
Than just a Highland welcome".

And a true Highland welcome they had. There were no tears shed except some of joy, which trickled over the somewhat pale cheeks of Mrs. M'Vayne herself when she noted how manly her boys had grown.

Frank hadn't grown an inch. Nor did he want to. You do not require very tall or leggy men as sailors. But the young fellow's heart was in the right place, and he was even more full of genuine fun and humour than ever.

But if we talk about a Highland welcome, what shall I term that which poor Vike accorded to Duncan and Conal, and in a lesser degree to Frank. Lucky it was that the meeting took place out-of-doors.

Had it been inside, this splendid Newfoundland would undoubtedly have knocked down tables, and demolished crockery in his mad glee.

As it was, he contented himself with knocking first Duncan and then Conal down, and licking their faces and hair as they lay, helpless, on their backs.

Then, laughing down both sides, as it seemed, with white teeth flashing and hair afloat behind him, he set out for a circular spin by way of getting rid of his superfluous feelings. For the time being indeed he had really resolved himself into a kind of hairy hurricane or tornado. But he gradually became calmer, and when he entered the house at last, where dinner was already laid, he threw himself down by Duncan's side with a sort of sixty-pounder sigh, as much as to say:

"I'm the happiest dog in Scotland, for I thought I'd never, never see my master again. And now that I have got him I mean to stick to him."

And he kept to that determination too, for nowhere would he sleep that night except in the boys' room.

All the dear old rambles over moorland and mountain and through the dark depths of the forest, were resumed next day, and kept up for over a week. I do not mean to describe these happy days, for soon indeed must we sail far, far away to wilder scenes, and our adventures will be more exciting than any that ever our heroes had in the romantic Highlands.

Florie was still Frank's innocent little sweetheart. So he told her, at all events, as he made her a present of a lovely locket with his own portrait in it and a copy also of hers.

Not that Frank was proud of his phiz. Oh, no; for in fact no one would have called him a real beauty, nor say his features were altogether regular.

But he had eyes that sparkled with the radiance of health, and his face changed in expression with almost every sentence he uttered.

He would have made an excellent actor. He had been told so more than once, and his answer was: "Well, I shall turn an actor when all the seas run dry".

And now having bidden farewell to Glenvoie, our heroes had to lie at Dundee for a whole week finishing the fitting-out of the good ship Flora M'Vayne. It was really a tiresome time, for the constant arrivals of visitors to see the ship and the crew that were about to embark on so long and so perilous a voyage was incessant all day long.

Nobody, therefore, was sorry to hear the last cheer that arose from an assembled multitude, although it was a right kindly one, and though prayers and blessings followed the barque.

That same evening they were far away from the eastern coast, for this was a lee shore, and they were wise to have a good offing before making direct for the south.

The barque might have been called somewhat clumsy, but nevertheless she carried a splendid spread of canvas, and sailed remarkably close to the wind.

Captain Talbot had told Duncan that he had made the Flora M'Vayne as sweet as a nut, and certainly he had done so. No one to walk her decks could ever have guessed she had been a greasy, grimy blubber-hunter not so long ago.

Why, everything on deck looked as bright and as clean as a brand-new sovereign. The quarter-deck was as white as wheaten straw, the binnacle was an ornament, that would have looked excellently well in the best of drawing-rooms. The brass and hard-wood work were as bright as silver, every rope's end was coiled on deck, as if the barque had been an old-fashioned man-o'-war, and the men were all suitably dressed and tidy. The bo's'n was a most particular man, and, although some men chewed tobacco, to have expectorated anywhere on deck, would have been an offence for which a rope's-ending would be well merited.

The galley was of the newest type; so, too, was the donkey engine, and this would be used at sea when very far from land for the purpose of condensing water.

All told, the mustered crew were eight-and-thirty. The men forward had been picked by Talbot himself, and every one of them had been to the Arctic regions more than once.

They were therefore good ice-men, and neither frost nor cold was likely to have any terrors for them. Nor the great green waves of far southern lands, that somehow always sing in the frosty air as they sweep past a vessel's sides.

But there was something else on board which I should draw especial attention to, and this was nothing less than a huge balloon. It was not filled, of course, but the means to inflate it were all on board, and having reached the great Antarctic ice-wall or barrier, the captain meant to make an aërial voyage of discovery, farther to the south than any traveller had ever been before.

There is nothing I love better than acts of daring and wild adventure, and Talbot was certainly to be commended on this score.

His balloon was certainly not anything like the size of *Andrée's*, yet it was capable of rising and floating for an indefinite period with three men, and provisions for as many months.

A special house had been built for this great uninflated balloon between the fore and main masts, and on each side, bottom upwards, lay the whalers, or boats with bows at each end, and steered by an oar only. These were to be used in the fishery.

The ship's ballast was water-filled tanks, and tanks laden with coals. But Talbot hoped to return to Scottish or English shores with ballast of quite a different sort, and better paying--oil, to wit.

The *Flora M'Wayne* was to touch nowhere on her voyage out until she reached the Cape. That at least was the good skipper's intention, but circumstances alter cases, as will presently be seen.

They had fine weather all the way till far past the dreaded Bay of Biscay. On this occasion two boys in a dinghy might have crossed it. But it is not to be supposed that they could go on for a very long time without encountering what Jack calls dirty weather. And so when, in about the latitude of Lisbon, and to the east of the Azores, it came on to blow, no one was a bit surprised.

"We'll have a gale, mate," said the captain; "but though abeam, or rather on the bow, we have plenty of sea-room; and on the whole I sha'n't be sorry, for I really want to see how the Flora behaves."

The wind, even as he spoke, began to roar more wildly through the rigging, but in gusts or squalls, that at times rose for a few minutes to almost hurricane pitch.

Before the storm had come on many beautiful gulls had been screaming around the barque and diving for morsels of food that Frank was throwing to them, but now they disappeared. Back they flew to the rocks that frown over the waters of their sea-girt homes. Little dark chips of stormy petrels, however, continued to dash from wave-top to wave-top, and for once in a way, they brought tempest.

But the ship was now eased, for the lurid sun was setting, and a dark and moonless night must follow. The men were hardly down from aloft when the storm seemed to increase, but it blew more steadily, so she was kept away a point or two, and now went dancing over the heavy seas as if she imagined she was the best clipper ever built.

A little heavy-headed she proved, however, so that she shipped a good deal of water over the bows, otherwise the thumping, thudding, buffeting waves seemed to make not the slightest impression on her.

The chief cabin or dining-saloon was down below, there being no poop, but a flush-deck all along. Both Frank and Duncan were off duty, and, seated in this small but comfortable saloon, the former could not help remarking on the strange feeling and sound of each heavy wave that struck the ship abeam. She appeared to be hit by a huge, soft boxing-glove, about a thousand times as large as any we ever use.

Immediately after there was the whishing sound of water on the deck, but although the vessel was heeled over somewhat by every awful blow, she took no other notice.

"Batter away, old Neptune," the barque seemed to say; "it amuses you, and it doesn't hurt me in the slightest."

About two bells in the first watch, Talbot came below, and supper was ordered.

His face was radiant, but shining with wet. The steward, however, assisted him out of his oil-skins and sou'wester, then, having wiped his face with his pocket-handkerchief, he sat down.

"Well," said Duncan, "Frank and I are waiting to hear the verdict."

"Why, it is this," said the skipper. "The barque is a duck, and well deserves the name of Flora M'Vayne. I don't believe a hurricane could hurt her, and she'll chuck the small icebergs on one side of her as I should chuck a cricket-ball. And ain't I hungry just. Sit in, boys. It's all night in with you lads, isn't it?"

"Not quite," said Duncan. "I kept the last dog-watch, and don't go on again till four."

Viking got up and seated himself by his well-beloved master's side.

He licked Duncan's hand, as much as to say, "When you go on deck so shall I."

But his master seemed to divine his thoughts.

"No, my good dog," he said, "you must stay below to-night, else the seas would sweep you off, and what should I do then?"

After supper Frank got out his fiddle and played for fully half an hour, then he and Duncan, who both occupied the same state-room, retired.

As a sailor always sleeps most soundly when the wind blows high, and he is really "rock'd in the cradle of the deep", it is almost unnecessary to say that these lads dropped soundly off almost as soon as their heads touched the pillows.

Nor did they awake until eight bells at the end of the darksome middle watch, when Conal came down to call them.

"Oil-skins, Conal?"

"Ay, Duncan, and you'll need them too. Better lock Vike in your cabin."

"That is what I mean to do."

Poor Viking did not half like it though. There is no dog in the world makes a better sailor's companion when far away at sea than a Newfoundland, and I speak from experience. But such dogs do not appreciate danger sufficiently high, nor have they good enough sea-legs to face a storm and walk the deck of a heaving ship. Therefore they often get washed into the lee scuppers.

On the present occasion Vike made up his mind to be as naughty a dog as he could.

"I shall wake the skipper," he told Duncan, speaking through the key-hole as it were.

"Wowff!" he barked. "Wowff! wowff! What do you think of that?"

Well, the sound could certainly be heard high over the roaring of the wind and the dash of angry waves.

The captain heard it in his dreams; but it takes more than the barking of a dog to awake a sailor born. So Talbot just hitched himself round, and went off to sleep on the other tack.

By breakfast time both wind and sea had gone down, and there was every expectation of fine weather once again.

"No damage done is there, mate?" said Talbot to Morgan.

"No, sir, nothing worth speaking about. Some of the coal tanks got a drop o' water in them, that's all."

"Well, that will make them last the longer. But, mind you, Morgan, I'm rather pleased than otherwise that we've had that blow."

"So am I."

"It just shows what the barque can do."

"That's it. If she is as good against the ice as she is against a sea-way, then, by my song, sir, she'll take us safely to the Antarctic, and just as safely back home again. Pass the sugar, sir."

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER IV ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND.

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching." So runs a line of the old Yankee war-song.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys (Duncan and Frank) were treading the deck that forenoon, talking, as sailors do, about anything or everything that suggested itself. And two subjects that always came to the front on such occasions were home life and their life on the ocean wave.

"So you thoroughly like the sea?" said Duncan.

"Well, Duncan, I never thoroughly liked anything, you know, but I think I love a sea-life better than most sorts of existence, with the exception, of course, of wandering over the hills of old Glenvoie; bird-nesting in the forests, or fishing in its beautiful streams. Only the sea has its drawbacks."

"Yes."

"Yes, for I do think it a nuisance to have to get up at all hours of the night to keep watch-blowing or calm. I always feel I should be willing to give five years of my life for another two hours' sleep, when the fellow shakes me by the shoulder and says, 'Eight bells, sir, if you please'. Just as if it would not be eight bells whether I pleased or not. Then, neither the tommy nor tack is quite up to shore standard, and one could do well enough without cockroaches about a foot and a half long--more or less--between his sheets, weevils in his biscuits, and spiders roasted and ground up with his coffee. The tea is always sea-sick too, and hens' milk^[1] isn't the best, especially if the eggs be old and decrepit. But I won't grumble, Duncan."

[1] An egg or two beaten up with water. Used at sea when no milk is to be had.

"No, I wouldn't, if I were you. Sailors never do."

"And now you're laughing at me."

"That's nothing, Frank; one may live a long time after being laughed at."

"Well, come along below, and I'll play you something that will make the tear-drops trickle down that old-fashioned Scotch nose of yours."

"Wouldn't you rather hear the wild and martial strains of the bagpipes, my little Cockney cousin?"

"Oh, yes," answered Frank punnily, but standing well beyond the reach of Duncan's swinger of an arm. "I dearly love the bagpipes when--"

He hesitated.

"When what?" cried Duncan.

"When they're o'er the hills and far awa'."

Then Frank made a bolt for the companion-ladder.

It was high time, too.

Well, when Frank Trelawney had that fiddle of his under his bit of a Cockney chin, all his troubles, if, indeed, he had any that could be called real, were forgotten, including weevils, hard tack, cockroaches, and all. For the time being, indeed, there was no one else in the world save he himself and the violin. And what worlds of romance and love and beauty were thus conjured up before him!

But even at the risk of differing from Frank, I think a sailor's pleasures, if he is one who calls at many and different ports, far outbalance any grievances he may have to growl about--short of shipwreck. What though the biscuit be hard, and one's bed like the biscuit! The wholesome healthy appetite one possesses, both for biscuit and sleep, makes up for all that; and one ought to be happy if he isn't.

But one chief enjoyment in a sailor's existence lies in visiting so many different lands, and seeing life in every form and shape. He cannot help being an anthropologist, and studying mankind. Not, mind you, that he lays himself out for that sort of thing; for sailors, especially young fellows, take the world as it comes, the rough with the smooth, or rather alternately, only always forgetting the rough while they revel in the smooth. But there must always be an element of comedy in Jack's delights, and when he goes on shore, take my word for it, "Jack's alive, and full of fun".

I am happy to say that drinking is much in the decrease both in the royal navy and merchant service. Why, even since I myself can remember--and I'm not a very aged individual--our blue-jackets were like babies, and if not in charge of an officer when on shore, would forget themselves, and come on board limp enough, with black eyes and broken heads, and garments drenched in gore.

Jack in those days really paid for his pint in more ways than one, for if he escaped the dangers of the shore, riot and wretchedness, the thieves and the female harpies who lay in wait to cheat and rob him, the day after coming off was for him a day of sadness and mourning.

If able to stand, he had to go on duty. Perhaps he had no more brains than a frozen turnip; perhaps his head felt so big that he borrowed a shoe-horn to put on his hat, nevertheless he was drilled on deck just all the same, and it took him four days probably to recover his appetite and equilibrium.

There was every appearance now that the Flora M'Vayne would have a pleasant voyage.

Talbot was kind to his fellows, and a rattling good crew they made. So, although they passed Madeira and the Canary Islands to the west, they looked in at Santiago, one of the largest in the group of Cape de Verde Islands.

Three days were spent here, and they managed to secure some really good water. It was only the distilled they used at sea, and this, to say the least of it, is always somewhat vapourish.

The men had leave, and behaved fairly well, returning sober and with many curios, which they hoped to take home to their sweethearts and wives, and also laden with fruit of many kinds, all of which is good for the health of the sailor.

Plenty of fruit was also secured for the saloon, so they put to sea again in capital heart and spirits.

One little incident is perhaps worth noting. A huge bunch of bananas was hung up to ripen against the saloon bulkhead. That was right enough; but when a venomous little snake--slender in form and about the colour of hedge-sparrow's egg--popped out his head and neck, and whispered angrily at Conal, then Conal called his comrades, and a court of inquiry was held. It was believed to be the best plan to take the bunch of bananas on deck by means of a blacksmith's tongs, and shake it over the sea.

But that beautiful green demon of the jungle thought perhaps that he did not merit the honour of a sailor's grave, so he popped out and skipped gaily into Duncan's cabin.

"Here's a pretty go," said Conal; "and I should be sorry to sleep in that state-room until the reptile is found."

So a search was instituted instanter, and a dangerous one it was. But wherever it had taken refuge that snake could not be found.

The young fellows took rugs on deck that night, and slept on the planks.

Theirs was the forenoon watch, and when turning out to keep it, lo! that little green demon glided quietly out from Conal's very bosom, and went leaping and rolling along the deck, aft, finally tumbling down the skylight and on to the table where the captain was lingering over his breakfast.

For more than a week that snake--known to be one of the most poisonous there is--was the terror of the ship. He was in entire command fore and aft, and the skipper was nowhere. The awful, though lovely thing, appeared in so many places, moreover, that it was believed to be ubiquitous. Sometimes it would glide out of a sea-boot or a sou'wester hat. It was twice found in the sleeve of an oilskin-jacket, once it curled up for the night with Viking, and once in the pocket of the man at the wheel.

This sailor had dived his hand into the outside pocket of his coat to find his "baccy", when, instead of this, he felt the cold wriggling-wriggling thing; he gave a whoop like a Somali Indian with six inches of square-o gin in his stomach! The scream started the snake from his lair, and he went girdling along the deck and disappeared below as usual. But he was smashed at last and heaved far into the sea.

Strange to say, Mr. Snakey, as he was called, appeared again all alive and beautiful next morning.

"He's the d--l for sartin," said a blue-jacket. "Dead one day and squirming around the next. Yes, Bill--what else can he be but the d--l, and maybe just the same bloomin' old snake as tempted Mother Heve in the Garding of Heden!"

But this snake was killed next, and there was no more trouble after this.

Captain Talbot, however, issued an order that before bananas were again brought on board the bunches were to be well examined. Or, in doctor's parlance, when taken, they must be well shaken.

Ascension was their next place of call. It is generally called a rock in mid-ocean. It is somewhat more than that, being over seven miles in length and fully six broad. It is hilly, its chief peak being about three thousand feet in height.

Well, the Flora M'Vayne was enabled to get coals here anyhow, and they found the place what I might call semi-garrisoned. Moreover a gun-boat lay here. The officers of the Flora visited her, and were hospitably received, and invited to dinner, everyone both afloat and on shore being anxious to receive news from England, while the papers the Flora had brought were a sort of godsend.

The beautiful island of St. Helena did not lie in their direct route, but Tristan d'Acunha--more than a thousand miles directly south--did, and here they determined to cast anchor for a spell, and give the islanders a treat.

(I have given the ordinary name to this lonesome isle of the ocean, but correctly, I believe it should be Tristan Da Cunha--pronounced Coon'ya. It is really a group of three, the chief being about twenty-one miles in circumference, and having in its centre a very lofty mountain peak more nearly 8000 feet than 7000 in height.)

They found about one hundred souls living on this isle. The settlement, or glen in which they have their habitat, is fairly fertile, and the ubiquitous Scot is so much in evidence here that the village is called New Edinburgh.

It is in reality a republic, and the oldest man is chief or governor. The cattle and sheep number about two thousand, and belong, of course, all in common. Well, they are happy enough, and crime is unknown, the chief reason of this being perhaps that drink is also unknown.

There were some really very pretty girls here, but when they were assembled an evening or two after the Flora's arrival in a barn to listen to the strains of Frank's fiddle, recitations, and songs, those girls looked laughably quaint in their strange old-fashioned dresses.

The concert was a great success, and really the skirl of Duncan's Highland bagpipe as he strode back and fore on the rude stage, quite brought down the house, to use theatrical parlance. It almost brought down the barn too, so thrilling and loud was it. Never mind, Duncan received no less than three hearty encores, and surely that was enough to please anyone.

"What a lonely life to lead!" said Conal next day at breakfast.

"Yes," said Morgan, "and I shouldn't care to get spliced and settle down here all my life, pretty and all as the girls are."

"Well, you would live long and be healthy anyhow if you did," said Captain Talbot.

The mate laughed as he helped himself to another huge slice of barracouta.

"Never mind that, sir. I wouldn't marry and live in Tristan if they gave me three wives."

"But aren't these girls shy?" said Frank. "Why, I asked one innocently enough to give me a kiss, and she blushed like a blood orange."

"Did she give you the kiss?" asked Morgan mischievously.

"No, that she didn't, but--I took it."

The Flora M'Wayne lay here for a whole week, fishing and curing each catch.

This was a rare holiday for the islanders, who were the gayest of the gay all the time.

One morning a sailor of the crew sought an interview with Captain Talbot on the quarter-deck.

"Well, my man?"

"Well, sir, it's like this. I've fallen in love here with the slickest-lookin' bit of a lass I ever clapped eyes upon 'twix' here, sir, and San Domingo; and if you please, captin, I wants to stay here and marry her right away, and live happy hever arterwards."

The captain laughed.

"My good fellow," he said, "I am truly sorry to disappoint you; but you signed articles for all the cruise, you know, and I fear I can't let you go. I'd be one hand short, you see."

"That you would not, sir, for there is Billy Ibsen, as good a seaman, I believe, as ever 'auled taut a lee main brace, and he'll be 'appy to exchange."

"Well then, Smith, if that's the case, and the substitute is suitable, I mustn't throw any obstacles in your way."

And so all ended well. Ibsen proved fit, and Smith went on shore. When the Flora sailed away he was the last man visible, standing on an eminence waving a red bandanna, with the girl of his choice standing modestly by his side.

Little did this island lassie think when the ship hove in sight that it was bringing her a lover and a husband.

But although rare at Tristan Da Cunha, the young ladies of that solitary rock, in the midst of the Atlantic broad and wild, do sometimes count upon the possibility of such an event, and may be heard singing:

"He's coming from the north that will marry me,
He's coming from the north, and oh happy I will be,
With a broad-sword by his side and a buckle on his knee,
And I know it, oh, I know it, that he'll marry me".

But the Tristan Da Cunha people are moral and good, and although they have no parson on board they have services on Sunday. As to marriage--well, the governor does the splicing, and it is considered quite as binding as if the ceremony had been performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Southward now they sailed away in a delightful breeze, and when the sun was slowly sinking towards the western sea, the weird wee island of Tristan appeared but as a hazy cloud far away on the northern horizon.

So strange a place our young heroes had never visited before, and for many days it seemed but an island of dreamland.

But that island, readers, is still there amidst its waste of waters, and it is within the kaleidoscope of events, that some of you may yet visit its iron-bound and surf-beaten shores.

Who knows?

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER V JOHNNIE SHINGLES AND OLD MR. PEN.

South, straight south. South as the bird flies. And with a fair and spanking breeze too. As for birds--once past the rocky and volcanic island of Diego Alvarez, few indeed bore them company. I believe anybody might have this rocky place who had a mind to. They found it to be the home of myriads--clouds, in fact--of gulls of every sort, including the well-known Cape pigeon, the puffin, the penguin, and albatross, to say nothing of the cormorant, and that strange, strange creature on its wondrous wings, that lives in the sky most of its time, and even goes to sleep as it soars high above the clouds--the frigate-bird.

They went near enough to the island to witness one of the strangest sights in nature--the bird-laden rocks. There was little chance of landing on the island itself, owing to the terrible surf that beats for ever and aye around the cliffs; but Ibsen, who turned out to be a real handy fellow, had been here before, and pointed out to the captain some rocks in the lee of which a boat could land, and--this being spring in these regions--soon find enough eggs to keep the crew in food for a month. His knowledge was taken advantage of, and a boat under his guidance called away.

In it went Duncan and Frank.

What a scene! It beats imagination. Tier after tier on the rocky cliffs sat those birds watching their nests and eggs.

They found a little cove in the tiny islet, and at the head of this the boat was beached on the dark sand. The ground was everywhere so crowded with nests that it was with difficulty they could walk amongst them without doing damage.

How beautiful they were too! Of every shade of blue and green, with the strangest of jet-black markings, were most of them.

But the king penguins did not cohabit with any of the gull families. They thought themselves far too aristocratic for this, and here, as on other lonely isles of the great southern ocean, they dwelt in a colony all by themselves, which must have numbered about one thousand all told. This colony had footpaths leading down to the shallowest parts of the shore, whence these droll birds could easily take to the water.

They are really droll, whether walking, standing, running, or swimming. They stand quite erect on their sturdy legs, so that a line dropped from their beaks would almost fall between their broad webbed feet. Wings they have none, a pair of broad flappers doing duty for these, which seems to aid considerably their progress in running. But these flappers are really paddles or oars in the water, and I know of few birds that can swim so fast or turn so quickly in the sea.

On the arrival of the boat's crew there was a general panic among this community. As regards the male birds, tall as they were, they did not show a very great amount of courage.

Sauve qui peut was their motto, and let the females take care of themselves. Like the pigs in New Testament times, when the cast-out devils got leave to go into them, they ran headlong down a steep place into the sea. Their motions as they waddled and scurried along, oftentimes tumbling over a stone or a tussock heap, were grotesque in the extreme, and everyone roared with laughter.

With the exception of little Johnnie Shingles. I'm sure I cannot tell you how he came to be called Johnnie Shingles, for pet names grow on board ship just as they do on shore. Johnnie was picked up somewhere abroad, and was looked upon as part and parcel of the good barque Flora M'Vayne. He was a nigger of purest, blackest breed, probably four feet four inches high, and in age something between nine and nineteen. Nobody knew and nobody cared. Johnnie Shingles was just Johnnie Shingles, no more and no less. Well, he couldn't have been much less. He was very funny, however, and consequently a favourite with everybody on board, from Mate Morgan to the monkey. His duty on board was really to be at the beck and call of all hands, and to clean and feed the pets, including Viking, the red-tailed gray parrot, and Jim the ape.

Well, you see, Johnnie was never allowed to land from the boat like any of the crew, but as soon as he came within reasonable distance of the shore he was simply thrown overboard, and left to struggle in through the surf as best he could.

But Johnnie didn't mind the surf much, and he didn't mind the sharks. Nor do I think the sharks minded Johnnie. In fact, my knowledge of sharks generally causes me to come to the conclusion, that they are somewhat particular in their tastes, and much prefer a white man to a black.

Well, at this islet, Johnnie Shingles was as usual pitched ceremoniously into the water, when about seventy yards from the landing-place. But as ill-luck would have it he met the whole shoal of male penguins putting out to sea. These birds are extremely bold and audacious in the water.

"Hillo!" one of the foremost shouted or seemed to shout, "here goes another o' them. Let us all pitch into him!"

And suiting the action to the word they seized poor Johnnie by the seat of his white ducks and dived with him under the water. Johnnie got up, but only to be seized by another, while half a dozen at least dabbed and pecked at him, till, had he been a white boy, he would have been black and blue.

I believe that if, in answer to his shrieks the boat had not put back, and laid those penguins dead with their oars right and left, poor Johnnie Shingles would have lost the number of his mess. Even after the angry king penguins had been routed nothing could for a time be seen of the little nigger boy. But presently up popped a penguin, and close behind it up popped Johnnie.

He came up smiling, as prize-fighters say, but he had got that penguin by the hind-leg all the same, and kick as it would Johnnie held fast till he and it were landed all alive in the boat.

Now, I do not know whether that king penguin had a wife and a family of eggs or not, but if he had he very soon forgot them and settled down to ship life as if he had been to the manner born. In fact, he became a general favourite on board owing to his grave and peculiar gait.

Old Pen, as he was called, became specially attached to Johnnie Shingles, and stuck to him as Johnnie had clung to him before they were hauled into the boat.

As to the penguin's eggs: they lay but two, a big and a bigger. They are good to eat--scrambled. But I am unable to say whether the king bird or cock comes out of the big shell, and the hen out of the smaller, or vice versâ.

This particular king had very intelligent eyes, with which he would stare at one fixedly for a minute at a time with his head on one side. Indeed, he was always, to all appearance, seeking for information everywhere, and there was not much on deck that he did not examine.

The coiled ropes were a source of great amusement to him, and after unravelling one end he would seize it, and walk straight off with it as men do with a hawser. When the men were washing down decks, before the weather got very cold he was never tired examining their naked toes. He used to straddle quietly up and separate them with his beak as a starling would.

If the men jumped and cried "Oh-h!" Old Pen held back his head and chuckled quietly to himself.

"I only wanted to know if you were web-footed," he appeared to say.

Well, if old Pen was grotesque and amusing when dressed only in his own feathers, he was infinitely more droll when the men dressed him up as a funny old girl with a black bonnet, a short dark skirt, a shawl, a pair of frilled white trousers, and a gingham umbrella.

Old Pen didn't care. If everyone else laughed he only nodded his head and seemed all the prouder.

I don't know whether Johnnie or he was the taller, only the grinning wee nigger used to give the singular old lady an arm, and together they used to walk up and down the deck in the most comical way imaginable.

But this was not all, for Johnnie taught her to waltz.

On board the *Flora* was a man who could play the clarionet, while another could bring very sweet music indeed from the guitar. This really was all the band, with, of course, Frank's fiddle. But very far indeed was it from bad, and dressed in their Sunday's best, the sailors used to be invited aft, and during that long, long voyage to the southern fields and floes of ice, many an evening concert beguiled the time.

But if the sailor musicians went aft, Frank often went forward, and it was on these occasions that old Mrs. Pen, as she was often called, was trotted out by the curly-polled

nigger-boy. It is a misappropriation of a term to say "trotted out", for certainly there was very little trot about the quaint old dame. But waltzing just suited her flat feet. Yes, and there is no doubt that she liked it too. She might be down below half-asleep before the galley fire, when the fiddle and guitar began getting into tune with the clarionet; but she now pricked up her ears at once and presently prepared to negotiate the broad companion steps or stairs that led to the upper deck. This was always a very serious matter for the great king penguin. Sometimes he tried to stride from one step to another, a foot at a time. But this plan was invariably a failure, so he found it more convenient on the whole to hop, and his lower limbs were wondrously strong.

Arrived on deck, Johnnie Shingles was there to meet him, and dress him as Susie. Then the he became a she.

But the men would be at it by this time, dancing the daftest and wildest of hornpipes. No chance of their catching cold when so engaged, nor after, for as soon as they had finished a spell that

"Put life and mettle in their heels",

they threw on their heavy jumpers and walked around defiant, enjoying the daft capers of their shipmates.

Then Susie and Shingles would appear on the scene arm in arm, the boy with his round face, his laughing eyes, and his two rows of alabaster teeth, looking a picture of radiant fun and good humour.

"Now, Massa Frank," he might cry, "gib me and my ole mudder a nice d'eamy valtz."

"A dreamy waltz, eh? Well, you must have it."

"I must foh shuah, sah. My mudder hab got a soft co'n, and rheumatiz, and all sorts ob tings."

There was no laughing about Susie. She took everything in grim earnest, but, with her chin resting on black Johnnie's shoulder, she evidently enjoyed both the movement and the melody, sometimes even closing her eyes.

Her partner, like herself, was barefooted even in the coldest of weather; but when once he tramped on Susie's toes, the old lady rewarded him with a dig on the cheek that made Johnnie howl, and taught him caution for all time to come.

Well, what with laughing and dancing, an evening thus spent sped away very quickly, and was worth a whole bushel of doctor's stuff. There was no surgeon on board, I may mention parenthetically. The law does not require such an officer to be carried when the crew, all told, is under forty men.

It is really somewhat marvellous that a bird like this big king penguin, should have taken so soon and so kindly to the company and customs of human beings; but then the poor bird was exceedingly well-treated, and whenever fish was served out, Pen was always in the front rank. Ah, well, it is only one more proof of the truth that amor vincit omnia--love conquers all things.

Pen was not always dressed as Mother Gamp. No, for he had a really good outfit, to which the neater-fisted seamen were always adding. So sometimes he would appear on

the quarter-deck as a man-o'-war sailor, at others as a smart and elegantly-attired artilleryman, with his cap stuck provokingly on one side, and a little cane under his left arm.

He was at times dressed as Paul Pry. And on these occasions, as he stretched his head and neck curiously out in front of him, he really seemed to say: "I hope I don't intrude".

Pen was a grand actor. Mr. Toole himself would have been nowhere in it with Pen.

Viking at first must have thought the bird something "no canny". He would start up with a wild "wowff" if Pen came anywhere near him, and quietly retire.

The monkey or ape, on the other hand, tried to get up a friendship with Pen. He would approach him with a peace-offering, crying "Ha! hah! hah!" which, being interpreted, signifieth, "Take that, old Pen, and eat it. It will taste in your mouth like butter and honey." As the peace-offering invariably consisted of a gigantic cockroach about three inches long, I think it may be doubted whether it tasted as well as the monkey would have had Pen believe. However, the presentation was kindly meant.

This huge monkey's mouth was always crammed with cockroaches. One side at all events, and that one side stuck out as if he were suffering from a huge gum-boil.

The men were somewhat sorry, I think, that they could not teach old Pen to chew 'baccy, but old Pen drew the line at this. I must, out of respect for the truth, state, however, that the bird could not be called a total abstainer, for he dearly loved a piece of "plum-duff" steeped in rum, and on this questionable delicacy I think he used at times to get about half seas over. Then he would commence wagging his head and neck very much from side to side, and indulge in a little song to himself.

Old Pen was not much of a singer, however, and never could have composed an opera. In fact his song was partly grunt, partly squeak, and partly squawk. But it pleased Pen, and that was enough.

After singing for a short time he would pinch a favourite seaman's leg. "Kack!" he would say, opening his mouth. This meant "Chuck us another sop, matie".

After receiving it he would be off, and take his usual stand near the galley fire, and begin to wink and wink, and nod and nod, till finally the lower eyelids would ascend over the beautiful irises, and Pen be wafted away into dreamland. He wasn't aboard ship any longer. He was back once more on his own little rocky sea-girt isle, with the gulls and the cormorants screaming high in the air around. Near him stood Mrs. Pen, his wife, and near her, and in front, his two youngsters--fluffy, downy, droll brats, gaping their red mouths to be fed.

On the whole, I think Pen was a curious bird, and eminently suited for a sailor's pet.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER VI

"BACK WATER ALL! FOR LIFE, BOYS, FOR LIFE!"

It was summer--strange, weird, and silent summer in the Antarctic Ocean.

November was wearing to a close. The days were long and sunny; so long, indeed, that the sun did not trouble himself to go down at all. At midnight he just made a feint of doing so, and lowered himself towards the horizon, but thought better of it, and was speedily mounting higher and higher again every minute.

A great, cold-looking sun it was, however, a bright and almost rayless disc of whitest light, that you could look at and even count the spots thereon.

The good barque Flora M'Vayne was still ploughing her way through the dark waters of that southern ocean, and the great glacial barrier was still far away. They could have told this even by the paucity of bird life around them. A long-winged frigate-bird went swiftly across the hawse now and then, and soared away and away towards the few fleecy clouds that hovered high in air like puffs of gunpowder smoke.

That mighty eagle of the sea--the albatross--was also a constant visitor. What a wondrous flight is his! At one moment beating up to windward, tack and half-tack, yet with a speed almost as great as that of a swallow, till one can scarcely see him, so far and far away is he; then, wheeling next moment, down he flashes on the breeze, but more quickly than any ordinary breeze e'er blew. Not straight before the wind, however, but with a kind of sidelong rush which brings into full view the vast outspread of his wondrous wings.

They were still in the "roaring forties", as that part of the ocean 'twixt the latitude of the Cape and the fifties is called. But what a wide expanse of ocean is all around them! I have stood spell-bound on the fore or main-top, not admiring so much as adoring this mighty work of a mightier Creator: a turmoil of water, water, water in every direction one can look. And it is not so much the height of the waves one wonders at--though that is indeed vast--but their tremendous breadth, the sweep, as it were, between one curling comber and another. High and of fearful force are the seas in, for example, the Bay of Biscay during a gale, but they are mere channel chops to these. And wide though the expanse of these latter, they race each other round the world with an earnestness, and even fury, that causes one to stand aghast.

I wish I had space to describe some of the sunsets our heroes beheld shortly after leaving the last land. No wonder that Duncan more than once grasped Frank by the arm, and pointed northward and west at eventide.

"Look! Oh, look!"

It was all he could say. Yet the salt tears almost blinded him as he spoke.

"Oh, to be an artist!" exclaimed Frank once.

"An artist!" cried Duncan, almost scornfully. "What artist would dare to paint the golden gray and crimson splendour that unites both sea and sky into one living gorgeous whole? Oh, Frank, even Turner himself, were he here, would throw down his brush, and confess that he was a mere caricaturist."

But in a few weeks' time the sunsets were nil, and all, all was day.

Nor did it blow so high now.

Sometimes, indeed, the sea was as calm as a mill-pond, except where rippled in patches by huge shoals of the fry of certain kinds of fish that inhabit these seas.

And these were invariably followed by denizens of the deep that preyed upon them--dancing, leaping, cooing dolphins, for example.

Some of these latter were harpooned, and their dark red flesh made an excellent change of diet from the somewhat salt provisions, eggs, or penguin flesh.

Once or twice, while the weather was calm and the surface of the sea smooth and glassy, they came upon patches of yellow--banks they were, in fact, over which they were drifting.

Men were now kept constantly in the chains, and sometimes the danger was so great that the anchors were let go to wait for even the lightest breeze.

This might have delayed the voyage somewhat, but nevertheless it was not time wholly misspent, for where the bottom is near to the surface fish are always found in abundance. So boats would be lowered, and real good hand-line sport enjoyed.

In this old Pen participated. But the first day he started fishing he swam so fast and so far away, that those in the boat imagined they would never see him more.

Then little Johnnie began to weep.

"Oh, poll deah Pen! Oh, my ole mudder Sue," he cried. "He done gone away foh ebbermoh."

But Johnnie's "weeps" were quite a useless expenditure of lachrymal fluid. This was evident enough when Pen came racing back again with a great silvery fish held proudly aloft. He delivered this, and went back for another. And this again and again, till a breath of wind springing up, it was deemed advisable to return to the Flora, who was "titting" at her anchor as if eager to be on the wing again.

That Pen loved the darkie was evident enough, for one day, when bent on to his line and hauling away with all his might, a huge bonito pulled the little lad right overboard, the strange bird went grunting and squawking round him in terrible distress.

Johnnie's position just then was not an enviable one, for although he could swim like a herring, there was many a monster shark hovering near that would have been pleased indeed to make a meal of the boy.

These sharks were sometimes caught, and although their flesh had no great flavour, parts of it served sometimes to eke out breakfast or supper.

There are dangers innumerable in those Antarctic seas, and one of the most terrible is that of striking on a sand-bank or running foul of a sunken rock. These not being on the

chart, the navigator has to sail along literally with his life in his hand, trusting all to blind chance. A bank does give some evidence before the ship gets on if there is an outlook in the foretop, and the cry of, "Below there! shoal water ahead!" is all too common. Next comes the shout of, "Ready about! Stand by tacks and sheets!"

But the rock hides its awful head and gives no sign. The ship strikes, then backward reels, and mayhap sinks before there is time to provision, water, arm, man, and lower the boats.

Ice at last.

But the Antarctic sea was wonderfully open this season, and the ice loose.

It lay in streams of small pieces at first, athwart the world, as Jack termed it; athwart the ship's course, at all events, so these they had to sail through. The good Flora was strong enough to negotiate them, but the battering and thumping along the vessel's sides, as heard below, was tremendous.

These ice streams became more and more numerous, and the pieces, or "berglets", got bigger and bigger, and, of course, more fraught with danger to the ship's vitality.

It grew appreciably colder too, but so slowly had they come into these regions of perpetual snow, that the change in temperature had no detrimental effect upon the health of either the officers or men.

It certainly had none on old Pen. In fact, the colder it got the more he seemed to like it. And now when waltzing with Johnnie, he used to sing in his own droll and dismal way.

Viking also believed in the cold, and the races and gambols he had up and down the deck, when he could induce anyone to throw a belaying-pin for him were wild in the extreme.

Moreover, he had a football, which Duncan had presented him with, and he got no end of fun out of this. He threw it in front of him, he hurled it along in front of him, and swung it about, and one day, when he fairly tossed it overboard, he made no bother about the matter, but rushing astern, jumped right overboard after it, quite regardless of the fact that the ship was going on at the rate of eight knots an hour.

As quickly as possible she was hove to and a whaler lowered.

Vike was found quite a quarter of a mile astern--but he had stuck to his ball.

He dearly loved it, and, strangely enough, he put it to bed every night as children do their dolls, covering it carefully up with a corner of the rug on which he slept.

Icebergs at last. A good thing it was for the Flora, that there was but little wind, for to strike against one of these huge bergs--bigger many of them were than St. Paul's Cathedral--would have meant certain destruction.

Yet although the wind was often but light, a current seemed to run rapidly enough, and the huge unbroken waves towered high above them, and more than once they narrowly escaped disaster from a huge berg being hurled down upon the vessel as if by Titanic force, as she wallowed in the trough of the sea.

Even sailing past to leeward of such ice as this took the wind for a time clean out of the sails.

Strangely enough, they reached the Antarctic Circle on Christmas day.

This was a sort of double event. Either would have been celebrated, but now both events must be rolled into one.

One would hardly imagine that King Christmas would venture into these lonely regions, but the old fellow is good-hearted, and where'er on earth a Briton goes there goes Christmas also.

Well, with the exception of Johnnie Shingles and the monkey--who, by the way, had been furnished with a brand-new scarlet flannel jacket to keep him cosy--there was not a soul on board who had not before leaving home been presented with a bunch of gay ribbons, by sweetheart or wife, to help to deck a great garland that was made, and hoisted high aloft and abaft on this auspicious morning.

Of course there were no turkeys!

Alas! there were no geese.

As for cooking an albatross--well, that has been tried before, and a more unsatisfactory dish I have never tasted. Fishy, oily, and as for downright toughness the wife of Beith with her iron teeth could make but a poor show in front of it.

But some splendid corn-beef took the place of more civilized dishes both fore and aft.

Then there was the pudding. Ah! that indeed!

And a splendid success this, or these, were. The cook went in that day for beating all previous records. And it was universally admitted that he did.

The Flora M'Wayne was an almost temperate ship, that is, the men had to content themselves with one glass of rum each per diem, man-o'-war fashion. But on this bright Christmas day there was but little limit or stint. Only, to everyone's credit be it said, there was no excess.

The evening, up till two bells (9 o'clock), was spent in games, in yarning, in dancing, and fun.

Both Vike and old Pen had dined right heartily, and were in rare form.

One of the chief dances to-night was the Scots strathspey and reel, and Duncan had got his bagpipes in order for the occasion, and as he played the fun grew fast and furious.

So excited did both Vike and Pen become at last that they must too chime in, the dog with a high falsetto howl, the bird with double grunt and squawk, so that Duncan's melody was somewhat interfered with.

This, however, did not discourage the Scotch portion of the crew. They only cracked their thumbs, danced the nimbler, and hooched the wilder, till with the frantic merriment the very sails did shiver.

It was indeed a joyous night. Vike and Pen, although they had a truly excellent feed, did not give way to excess, but the monkey being only one remove from a human being, ate so much pudding and so many nuts and cockroaches, that he suffered next morning

from a violent headache. He was seen squatting on the capstan, clasping his brow with his left hand, and looking the very picture of Simian misery.

Frank took pity on him.

"I know what will cure you," he said. "I know what a Christmas headache is; I've been there myself."

So he bound up the poor beastie's head with a handkerchief wrung out of ice-cold water, and the monkey felt really better, and was grateful in consequence.

For some natural reason or another, they now came into a sea of open water, and much to the delight and excitement of all hands, sighted a school of Right whales.

The main-yard was instantly hauled aback, and all preparations speedily made to attack one at least of this great shoal.

I do not suppose that these leviathans of southern polar seas had ever had their gambols so rudely broken in upon before.

Three boats were sent against them, each with one experienced harpooner. The captain commanded one, Morgan another, and the third whaler was given in charge of brave young Duncan. To tell the truth, he had really no experience of such "fishing", but the spectioneer that sat beside him had.

Surely it was a pity to disturb the enjoyment of those great ungainly monsters on so glorious a day. Thus thought Conal at all events, for without doubt the whales had assembled for a real frolic.

It was a sort of whales' ball.

Sometimes nothing was seen but the white spray or foam they raised, at other times their enormous bodies were seen shining silvery in the summer sun, for in their glee they actively leapt over each other's backs.

But the noise they made is indescribable, as they lashed the water with flippers and tails. In the captain's boat only was the harpoon gun, and he alone would fire it. When a much younger man he had been whaling in the far-off Arctic, and knew a Right whale from a finner or sperm.

Yet his was not the newest-fashioned mode of whaling. He used no explosive shells or bullets, which he looked upon as cruel in the extreme. I should be sorry indeed to argue the point either pro or con, for there is cruelty on both sides, but probably less with the shell, which may cause almost instantaneous death.

Was Captain Talbot going to attack that school of whales during their extraordinary gambols? He knew better. Were a whales' ball to take place in the midst of even a fleet of men-o'-war I should be sorry for some of the ships.

But see yonder, ploughing slowly along towards the herd, comes a huge and solitary leviathan.

Talbot hastily signals to the mate and to Duncan. The latter takes the steering oar, and, bidding him be cautious, the spectioneer, his great whale lance in his hand, goes cautiously forward to the bows, and the boat is kept on a line parallel to the great beast's course.

Nearer and nearer creeps the captain's boat. The excitement is intense. Will the whale dive before he gets close enough, the men are wondering?

Nearer and still more near.

Everyone holds his breath.

"Lie on your oars, men! Still and quiet!"

The boat drifts a little way further, but the gun is trained.

Bang!

The echoes reverberate from every berg, or far or near. The line all neatly coiled in the bows is whirling out, till the gunwale begins to fire. But it as speedily stops.

Grand shot! The monster is struck, and for a few seconds seems stunned, and lies still on the top of the water.

The school has dived and disappeared, to come up somewhere again miles and miles away.

And now the wounded whale recovers from the shot, and headlong dives, the line rushing out once again as before. Under way once again is the boat, but the leviathan now reappears as suddenly as he had sunk. Some instinct--whether of scent or hearing I cannot tell--causes him to take the same course as his fellows.

Mercy on us, how he rips and tears through the black-green water! But ever and anon he dives, and it is evident his exertions weary him a little.

And now the line is all run out, and the boat is taken in charge. The gunwale is cooled with hastily-drawn buckets of water, and forward she dashes, so quickly too that a wall of water stands up on each side of the bows.

The poor monster is in torment. The chief danger to the boat itself would lie in the beast swerving aside and diving under a berg, which would dash the brave whaler to pieces, and kill or drown every man on board. But he holds his course till, weary at last, he dives once more, and there remains for fully twenty minutes.

When he again appears the water around is red with his blood, but he moves along very slowly now, and the other boats with their lancemen get abreast and bear up to head him.

Duncan's is the first to get near enough, and now comes the tug of war. The whale is sick and weak.

The harpooner holds up a warning hand.

"Be all ready to back astern, boys!"

"Way enough!"

The lance is driven in full many and many a foot, and with one decisive twist a great and vital artery is severed.

"Back water all! For life, boys, for life!"

For life? Yes, but the men are as cool as if rowing in a regatta on the Thames.

"All speed astern!"

None too soon.

The blood spouts high as if from a fire-hose, but in awful jets, with every throb of the giant's heart. There is life in him yet, and while the red-drenched seamen pull well out of the way, he lashes the ocean's surface with his tremendous tail, one blow from which would stave in a torpedo-boat.

The sound would be heard miles and miles away, were there anyone to listen to it in these lonesome seas, and--so dies the leviathan.

The ship gets alongside and bends on her hooks in good time, and while the body is still hot and steaming, blubber and skin are hoisted up and up towards the yard-arms, till with its weight the vessel lists and lists, and it seems as if she would be on her beam-ends.

Long before the crew is done taking on board all that is valuable, the sharks have assembled, and are fighting and splashing as they gorge on their awful feast.

And when the decks are all clean once more, and the sails again filled, supper is had fore and aft, and then, but not till then, does Skipper Talbot order the steward to splice the main-brace.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER VII "HERE'S TO THE LOVED ONES AT HOME."

Captain Talbot was a brave man, but the ice for the present looked far too dangerous to venture in through. So he kept "dodging" along the great barrier-edge or cruising eastwards, and away towards what is known as Enderby Land.

Sometimes he encountered a storm, brief but terrible, and dangerous in the extreme. They saw around them great bergs coming into collision, their green, towering, wall-like sides dashed together by the force of wind and waves; heard the thunder of the encounter, and witnessed the mist and foam as they fell to pieces in a chaos of boiling surf.

At times dense fog would envelop the whole sea, and then sail had to be taken in, for the icebergs went floating past and past like mysterious ghosts.

But clearer weather prevailed at last, and two more monster whales were captured.

Three great leviathans! Nearly a voyage in itself. No wonder that the spirits of the men rose higher and higher, as they thought of those who would press them to their hearts on their return home from this adventuresome cruise. And--happiest thought of all!--they would have plenty of money to spend on fathers or mothers, wives or children. For my experience is that so long as they are unallured by the drink demon, British sailors are not really improvident.

But the good luck of the *Flora* did not continue. Talbot had expected to find sea-elephants in great evidence in these regions.

They are so called, it will do you no harm to know, reader, first on account of their immense size and unwieldiness, many of the males attaining a length of twenty feet or over, and from the fact that they have a kind of proboscis which, when alarmed or angry, they inflate till it looks almost like the trunk of an elephant. They are dangerous then, and, though as a rule peaceable, can give a good account of anyone daring enough to attempt an attack upon them, armed with the spiked seal-club alone.

They usually, however, go further north during the spring or pupping season, but now having returned, they ought to have been about somewhere. But they had evidently chosen fresh ground, and Captain Talbot was unable to find a trace of them.

He was not easily cast down, however, and taking advantage of a splendid westerly and north-westerly wind, he daringly set every inch of canvas--remember it was the long Antarctic day--and flew eastwards on its wings.

But his object was not only to get a paying voyage, but to do some good also to science and to geographical knowledge as well.

It was the duty of Duncan himself, and of Frank as well, not only to keep a log, but to enter therein, along with the ship's sailings, adventures, &c., the temperature of air and water twice a day.

The vessel again appeared to imagine herself a clipper-built yacht and to fly along, and by good luck she not only had a fair wind, but a clear sea, having only now and then to steer away from floating icebergs.

But now and then a boat was lowered to pick up some unusual form of seal, that might be observed floating along on a morsel of snow-clad ice. So tame were these that they only gazed open-mouthed at the advancing boat, and thus fell an easy prey to the gunner.

Very few more Right whales were seen, and none captured.

For a time the course held was about east with a bit of northerly in it, then on reaching the sixties they bowled along in fine style, and in the first week in February they were daringly--far too daringly as it turned out--steering almost directly south through a comparatively open sea towards the great southern ice-barrier in the seventies, which lies east of a mighty volcanic hill well-named Erebus.

It was autumn now--early autumn in these regions, but still a delightful time.

Do not imagine that this distant ocean was uninhabited. Far from it. There were still millions on millions of birds about, that later on would fly far away to nor'land lands and islands. Petrels of many sorts, especially the snow-white species, Cape pigeons, the smaller penguins on point ends of land, and gulls of such beauty and rarity that it would have puzzled cleverer men than our heroes to classify them.

Many of these were carefully shot and made skins of, to be set up when they reached once more their dear native land, if God in his mercy should spare them.

Mount Sabine itself is passed, and soon after, to the east of that mountain, they lie for a day or two at Coulman Island. Strangely enough, though floating icebergs are heaving about all around, this rocky and storm-tossed isle is bare, and they can land.

The captain, with Frank and Conal, go off on a lichen hunt inland. They take their rifles with them, but no wild creature is here that can hurt them.

They find beautiful mosses, however, and strangely beautiful lichens. Indeed, some parts of the rising ground are crimson or orange with these latter, and the green of the mosses stand out in lovely and striking contrast.

They continued their journey far inland, and although the rocks and the sea all about the shore was alive with birds, here it was solemn and still enough. The scene was indeed impressive and beautiful, and with the blue of the sky above and the bright blue of the ocean beyond, dotted over with green and lofty snow-capped ice-blocks, the whole seemed a little world fresh from the hands of the great Creator of all.

Captain Talbot took specimens not only of the flora--if so I may call the scanty vegetation of this island--but of its rocks as well, and the height of its chief hills, with many soundings around it, to say nothing of collecting marine algæ.

All the way southwards, as far as the great ice-barrier to the eastward of the land wherein was Mount Terror, he was at the pains of surveying and charting out for the benefit of future generations, for as laid down in the charts that he possessed the coast was very indolently described indeed.

He was a very ambitious mariner, this skipper of the *Flora M'Vayne*, and at the same time a bold, daring, true-blue sailor.

Now would be the time, therefore, to make his great ærial journey still farther to the southward. But could such a thing be successfully accomplished? That was the question that he and he alone had to answer for himself. There was no one to consult.

And he took a whole long day to consider it, keeping himself very much alone in his state-room that he might come quietly to a correct conclusion.

Thus far to the south had he come with the intention of penetrating still farther by balloon. But he had calculated on getting here much sooner.

He had no intention of doing anything foolishly rash. Had he reached 75° south latitude when the summer was still in its prime he might have reckoned on perpetual sunshine and constant shifting of wind, but now the breeze blew mostly from the south, and although by rising into the higher regions he might get a fair wind if he descended one hundred miles nearer to the Antarctic Pole, was there any certainty that he should ever return? Indeed, it was the reverse. It seemed as though there was not the ghost of a chance of his ever seeing his ship again.

Life is sweet, and so at long last he gave up all thoughts of his ærial voyage for the present season.

He communicated this resolve to his mates and youngsters that day at dinner.

But the sun had already begun to set to the south'ard, though so brief was the night that scarce a star was even visible.

"We shall now," he told them, "bear up for the north and the west once more, and if we reach the lone isles of Kerguelen in time, we may yet fall among old sea-elephants enough to pay us handsomely. For though I have never been there, I am told that they make that lone region a habitat throughout the greater part of the year."

"And then we shall be homeward-bound, sha'n't we, sir?" said Frank.

"Yes," was the reply. "But I say, young fellow, you are not tired of a sailor's life, are you?"

"Oh no! I would like to see all--all the world first, and then return and dream of my wild adventures, and fight my battles with the stormy main o'er and o'er and o'er again."

"Bravo! lad, though you are just a little effusive. Well, you are pretty strong in wind and limb, Frank, aren't you?"

"Fairly, sir. I haven't got real Highland legs like Duncan there, but they've always served me well on a pinch."

"Well, as soon as we get into the neighbourhood of Mount Terror again I mean to make an ascent, and I shall want the assistance of all you young fellows, and a hand or two besides. There are scientific instruments to take along, besides plenty of food, drink, and sleeping-bags, for I guess it will take us the greater part of three days to accomplish the journey to the top and back.

"What is the height, sir?"

"It is said to be nearly eleven thousand feet high, and it is volcanic."

"Don't you think," said Morgan the mate, "that the adventure is almost foolhardy?"

"It is risky enough, I daresay; but really, Morgan, my dear fellow, I hate the idea of going back home without having accomplished something out of the common."

And so, after some further conversation of an after-dinner style, the ascent was determined on.

This was Saturday night, and as usual wives and sweethearts were toasted, for Captain Talbot was a man who dearly loved to keep up old customs.

So after a hearty supper of sea-pie the men got up a dance, Frank and the man who played the clarionet forming, as usual, the chief portion of the band.

Old Pen was in grand form to-night, and his antics, as he danced and whirled around with little Johnnie Shingles, were laughable in the extreme. It would be impossible to say that Pen tripped it--

"On the light fantastic toe".

For his feet were about as broad and flat as a couple of kippered herrings, but he made the best use of them he could, and no one could have done more.

After the dance the chief yarn-spinners assembled in a wide circle around the galley fire. Frank and Conal made two of the party, with noble Vike in the rear.

It hardly would have needed the rum that the cabin steward dealt out to make these good fellows happy to-night or to cause them to spin short yarns and sing, so jolly were they to know the ship was homeward bound--

"Across the foaming billows, boys,

Across the roaring sea,

"We'll all forget our hardships, lads,

With England on the lee".

But the crew of the brave Flora M'Wayne took their cue from the skipper, and never a Saturday night passed without many a song and many a toast, and always an original yarn of some adventure afloat or ashore. Sings Dibdin:--

"The moon on the ocean was dimmed by a ripple,

Affording a chequered delight;

The gay jolly tars passed the word for the tippie

And the toast--for 'twas Saturday night,

Some sweetheart or wife that he lov'd as his life,

Each drank, while he wished he could hail her,

But the standing toast that pleased the most was--

Here's the wind that blows and the ship that goes,
And the lass that loves a sailor!"

So thoroughly old-fashioned was Captain Talbot that on some Saturday nights he did not think it a bit beneath him to join his men around the fire, and they loved him all the better for it too.

Well, no matter how crowded the men might be of a night like this, there was always room left in the inner circle for Viking, old Pen, and Jim the monkey.

Jim, with his red jacket on, used to sit by Viking, looking very serious and very old, and combing the dog's coat with his long slender black fingers.

This was a kind of shampoo that invariably sent Vike off to sleep.

Then Jim would lie down alongside him, draw one great paw over his body, and go off to sleep also.

But old Pen would be very solemn indeed. He was troubled with cold feet, and it was really laughable enough to see him standing there on one leg while he held up and exposed his other great webbed pedal apparatus to the welcome glow emitted by the fire. Sometimes yarns were at a discount, though songs never were, and no matter how simple, they were always welcome, even if told without any straining for effect and in ordinary conversational English, if they had truth in them.

On this particular Saturday night Captain Talbot came forward and took a seat in a corner to smoke his long pipe, while the steward brewed him a tumbler of punch with some cinnamon and butter in it, for the skipper had a cold.

"It's long since we've had a yarn from you, sir," remarked the carpenter.

The skipper took a drink, and then let his eyes follow the curling smoke from his pipe for a few seconds before replying.

"Well, Peters," he said, "I've had so many adventures in my time that I hardly ever know which to tell first. Once upon a time I served in a Royal Navy ship on the coast of Africa, and it is just the odour of the 'baccy, boys, that brings this little yarn to my mind."

"Out with it, sir," cried one.

"Yes, out with it, Captain. We'll listen as if it were a sermon, and we were old wives."

"First and foremost," said Talbot, "let me give you a toast--Here's to the loved ones at home!"

"The loved ones at home!" And every glass was raised, and really that toast was like a prayer.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER VIII CAPTAIN TALBOT SPINS A YARN.

"Why, boys, and you youngsters," said Captain Talbot, "when I look back to those dear old times I feel old myself, and that's a fact. As I said before, we were cruising about the East African coast, making it just as hot for the slaver Arabs as we knew how to. We had a bit of a fight now and then, too, both on shore and afloat.

"Well, your man-o'-war's-man likes that, simple and all though he seems to be. Simplicity, indeed, is one of the chief traits in the character of the true British sailor. I'm not sure that it might not be said with some degree of truth, that no one who wasn't a little simple to begin with, would ever become a sailor at all. Nobody, not even a landsman, grumbles and growls more at existence afloat than does Jack himself, whether he be Jack in epaulets or Jack in a jumper, Jack walking the weather-side of the quarter-deck or Jack mending a main-sail. But for all that, when Jack has a spell on shore, especially if it be of a few months' duration, he forgets all the asperities of the old sea life, and remembers only its jollities and pleasantnesses, and the queer adventures he had--of which, probably, he boasts in a mitigated kind of way--and by and by he gets tired of the dull shore, and maybe sings with Proctor:

'I never was on the dull, tame shore,
But I loved the great sea more and more'.

And then he goes back again. Another proof of Jack's simplicity.

"Well, but some of the very bravest men or officers I have met with were, or are, as simple in their natures as little children--simple but brave.

"Gallant and good--how well the two adjectives sound together when applied to a sailor. Did not our Nelson himself apply them in one of his despatches to Captain Riou, mentioned by Thomas Campbell in his grand old song 'The Battle of the Baltic':

'Brave hearts! to Britain's pride
Once so faithful and so true,
On the deck of fame that died
With the gallant, good Riou,
Soft sigh the winds of heaven o'er their grave!
While the billow mournful rolls,
And the mermaid's song condole--
Singing glory to the souls
Of the brave!'

"There never was a more simple-looking sailor than Assistant-Paymaster Mair (let us call him Mair). He was round-faced, fat, and somewhat pale, but always merry, and on

good terms with himself and everybody else. He had the least bit in the world of a squint in his starboard eye. This ocular aberration was more apparent, when he sat down and commenced playing an asthmatical old flute he possessed. I don't think anybody liked this flute except Mair himself, and no wonder it was asthmatical, for we were constantly playing tricks on it. We have tarred it and feathered it ere now, and once we filled it with boiling lard, and left it on Mair's desk to cool. But Mair didn't care; our practical joking found him in employment, so he was happy.

"Mair had never been in an engagement, though some members of our mess had; and, when talking of their sensations when under fire, Mair used frankly to confess himself 'the funkiest fellow out'.

"It came to pass that the old T---- had to engage a fort, and preparations were made for a hot morning. The captain was full of spirit and go--one of those sort of men who, when both legs are shot away, fight on their stumps.

"Mair had his orders the night before, given verbally, in an easy, off-hand kind of way. He was to stand by the captain on the bridge or quarter-deck, and take notes during the engagement or battle. Poor Mair! he didn't sleep much, and didn't eat much breakfast. We met just outside the ward-room door, Mair and I. We were both going to duty, only Mair was going up, while I was bound for the orlop deck. With the noise of hammering, and stamping, and shouting, I couldn't catch what Mair said, but it was something like--'Lucky dog, you'.

"Though stationed below--safe, except from the danger of smothering in horrid smoke--I soon had evidence enough we were getting badly hammered. I wasn't sorry when "Cease firing" sounded, and I could crawl up and breathe.

"But how about simple Mair? Why, this only--he had done his duty nobly, coolly, manfully; he had gained admiration from his fire-eating captain, and got specially mentioned in a despatch. Mair looked red and excited all the afternoon, but the flute never sounded half so cheerily before as it did that same evening after dinner.

"Talking about simplicity brings poor Nat Wildman of ours before my mind's eye.

"There wasn't a pluckier sailor in the service than Nat, nor a greater favourite with his mess-mates, nor a simpler-souled or kindlier-hearted. He was very tall and powerful--quite an athlete in fact. Once when a company or two of marines and blue-jackets were sent to enact punishment of some native tribes on the West African coast, for the murder of a white merchant, and for having fired on Her Majesty's boats, they encountered a strongly-palisaded village. Our fellows had no ladders nor axes, and the dark-skins were firing through. The village must be carried, and reduced to terms--and ashes; so the men hoisted each other over. Nat worked hard at this pitch-and-toss warfare; indeed, he could have thrown the whole ship's company over. But, lo! he found himself the last man--left out in the cold--for there was no one to help him across. When the row was over, Nat was found--simple fellow that he was--sitting on the ground crying with vexation, or, as one of his mess-mates phrased it, 'blubbering like a big baby'.

"I often think, boys, that it must be very hard to have to die at sea, especially if homeward bound; all the bustle and stir of ship's work going on around you; the songs of the men, the joking and laughing, and the din--for silence can seldom be long maintained.

"Jack Wright of ours--captain of the main-top--might have been called a tar of the real Tom Bowling type. He, too, like Nat Wildman, whom I mentioned above, was a very great favourite with his mess-mates. He was always kind and merry, but ever good, obedient, and brave. We were coming home in the old T----. Dirty weather began shortly after we left Madeira, and while assisting in taking in sail one forenoon, poor Jack fell from aloft. His injuries were of so serious a nature that his life was despaired of from the first. He lost much blood, and never rallied.

"This sailor had a young wife, who was to have met him at Plymouth. She was in his thoughts in his last hours. I was assisting the doctor just at that time of my life, a kind of loblolly-boy, and I heard the man say, as he looked wistfully in the surgeon's face: 'It seems a kind o' hard, doctor, but I've always done my duty--I've always obeyed orders without asking questions. I'm ready when the Great Captain calls, though--yes, it do seem a kind o' hard.'

"He appeared to doze off, and I sat still for an hour. It was well on in the middle watch, and the ship was under easy sail; there was now and then a word of command, but no trampling overhead, for even the officers liked and respected Jack. I sat still for an hour, then took his wrist in my hand. There was no pulse there. He was gone.

"I covered him up and went on deck, for something was rising and choking me. It was a heavenly night--bright stars shining, and a round silvery moon, with the waves all sparkling to leeward of us.

"'It does seem hard,' I couldn't help muttering.

"As the beautiful burial service was being read over poor Jack Wright, and his body dropped into the sea, many a tear fell that those who shed them needn't have taken much pains to hide.

"At Plymouth we were in quarantine for some time, and no one was allowed on board, but there were boats enough with friends and relations in them hanging around. In one of them was a beautiful young woman and an elderly dame, probably her mother. The whisper--it was nothing else--soon passed round: 'Yonder is poor Jack's wife.'

"Long before she came on board she was in tears; her sailor lad was not even at a port to wave a handkerchief. 'He must be ill,' she would have thought.

"'The doctor wishes to speak to you in his cabin,' a midshipman said, when she appeared on deck.

She came tottering in, supported by the old dame.

"'Jack's ill!' she cried.

"The doctor did not reply.

"'Jack is dead!' she moaned. 'My Jack!'

"We did not answer. How could we?

"Heigho! I've seen grief many times since, but I never witnessed anything to equal that of poor Jack Wright's young wife.

"But I'm saddening you, boys. Here, steward, if there is a dram more punch left, just send it round.

"And now, lads, I'll tell you one more true yarn, and I think I may just call it:

"AN ADVENTURE IN SEARCH OF A QUID,

"For, from the very time Dawson and I shoved off in the dinghy boat until we set foot on Her Majesty's quarter-deck with the 'baccy, it was all adventure together. Our ship was the saucy Seamew, only a gun-boat, to be sure, but a most bewitching little thing all over; lay like a duck in the water, and, on a wind, nothing could touch her. Our cruising-ground was the east coast of Africa, well north, where the fighting dhows floated in the water, and the savage Somalis on shore speared each other when they hadn't any white men to practise on. We never provoked a fight, but when we did show our teeth, and that wasn't seldom, we peppered away in good earnest I assure you. Now, in such a ship in such a climate we might have been as happy as the day was long, but we had just one drawback to general jollity. Our skipper was the devil. That's putting it plain and straight, but I've no other English for it. He was one of your sea lawyers, and lawed it and lorded it over his officers. No matter whether a thing was done rightly or wrongly, you got growled at all the same. There wasn't an officer he hadn't been at loggerheads with, and walked to windward of, too; and there wasn't a man forward he had not punished during the cruise. We had a regular flogging Friday, a most unlucky day for many a poor fellow on board the Seamew. There was, therefore, no love lost between the ward-room and the after-cabin, where the skipper lived in solitary grandeur; and the men would have given him to the sharks, if chance had thrown him in their way, and if the sharks were hungry. I remember once, at Johanna, a happy thought struck the skipper and a few of the petty officers at one and the same time: they thought they would treat themselves to a few fowls by way of change from the junk. The latter, therefore, asked permission of the former to make the purchase. 'Certainly not,' was the curt reply, 'unless you bring them dead on board.' Now, dead they wouldn't keep a day, so they were not bought; but the skipper's poultry were brought on board the same evening, and two nicely-filled hen-coops they were. Well, about the middle of the morning-watch, when the skipper slumbered peacefully in his cot, two figures might have been seen stealthily approaching those hen-coops. 'Softly does it,' said one.

'Right you are, Bill,' replied the other. Then something dark and square rose slowly over the bulwarks, and dropped with a dull splash into the sea; and this happened twice. And next morning when the skipper arose, happy in the prospect of 'spatch cock for breakfast, behold! there wasn't cock nor hen on board to spatch. But I should tire you were I to tell a tithe of the dirty tricks the skipper of the Seamew played his men and officers, so I will content myself with relating the one that bears reference to my story. Once, then, we were in terrible straits for grog and tobacco; we hadn't a drop of the one or a quid of the other on board--at least not in our mess--and hadn't had for over a

month. Now, nobody liked a glass of rum better than the skipper, though he didn't smoke; so, as long as his own spirits held out, he didn't care anything for the dearth in the ward-room. But one day he rejoiced us all by informing us he would run down to Zanzibar and take in stores. Well, anyhow, he took us in nicely, for no sooner had we dropped anchor before the long white town, than he called away his gig and landed on the sands. He was back again in two hours with the important intelligence, which we had received, that a three-masted slave-ship was then cruising in the neighbourhood of the little island of Chak-Chak. There wasn't a moment to be lost--it was, 'All hands on deck, up anchor and off.' There wasn't a moment to be lost; but, mark you this, that beggarly skipper, who drank but did not smoke, came off with his gig laden to the gunwale with dainties, spirits included, but not a morsel of the 'baccy our souls were longing to sniff. We never saw the three-masted slave-ship either.

"Well, as you doubtless know, there is a town on the east coast, pretty nigh on the equator, called Lamoo, a half, or, rather, wholly savage kind of place, ruled over by an Arab sultan. It lies not close to the sea, but about ten miles up a broad-bosomed river. Like all African rivers, it is belted off from the sea by a sand-bar, on which the water is shallow, and the green breakers tumble over it houses high. We had been up this river only once before, but the little Seamew got such a terrible bumping on the bar that our skipper had resolved never to try the same experiment again. But, one beautiful, clear-skied, moonlight night, we found ourselves just outside this bar once more, and, rather to our astonishment, the order was given to heave the ship to until morning. Of course we were delighted, thinking that boats might be sent up stream for fruit, and we might get a chance of the coveted quid; but we were doomed to disappointment, for the whole of next day was spent in taking soundings, and in the evening we were told that next morning we should complete the survey, and then cruise away north once more. So the ship was hove-to on the second evening. Dawson and I were at the time on the sick-list, not that there was anything the matter with us, but the skipper had been bullying us, and this was the method, with the assistance of the friendly surgeon, which we took to avenge ourselves. At this time the tobacco mania was at its worst. Our assistant-paymaster had been heard to mutter that, if the devil tempted him, he would be inclined to sell his soul for a bundle of whiffs, and Dawson had openly asserted that he would give ten years of his life for the sight of a snuff-box. But Dawson looked terribly like a conspirator, when he came stealthily into the ward-room on the evening of the first day's surveying.

"Hush! messmates, hush!" he whispered mysteriously, and we all crowded round him. 'I have it,' he continued. 'My friend and I are on the list. We cannot be missed.'

"Yes, yes; go on," we cried in a breath.

"While he dines, we will take a boat and steal up the river to Lamoo, and bring down 'bacca and grogs.'

"The skipper didn't know the meaning of that 'Hurrah!' that shook the Seamew from stem to stern. No wilder shout ever rang out as we boarded a dhow 'mid smoke and blood.

"By seven o'clock the skipper was just mixing his third tumbler. By seven o'clock everything was in readiness: the oars were muffled and the rudder so shipped that it wouldn't unship by the under-kick of a breaker on the bar. Then, from well-greased blocks the boat was lowered, and silently, but swiftly, glided shorewards to the dreaded bar. We took with us but two trusty men, and two trusty sacks. Soon the white crests of the breakers were in view, and we could hear their vicious, sullen boom. Not easy work this crossing of bars, as you are aware. Presently we were heading for the only dark gate in this ocean of breakers, I steering, Dawson with one helping hand on each of the oars. Now we have entered the gate. "Steady now, men!" A wave catches us up behind and hurls our tiny boat first heavenward, then, with inconceivable speed, onwards, through a swirl of surf, and, a few moments afterwards we are in smooth water, wet but safe.

"Well done,' said Dawson; 'but if we had capsized, the sharks would have been dining on us at this present moment."

"Beggin' yer pardons, gentlemen,' said one of the rowers, 'but I'd rather be three days and three nights in the belly of a shark, like Jonah was, than one whole blessed month atout tobaccer.'

"That were a whale, Jim,' said his mate. 'I don't care a dime,' said the first speaker; 'I knows I likes my pipe, and I likes a quid. Now, in a night like this, for instance, what a blessing it would be to light up, and--and--why, it won't abear thinkin' on, hanged if it will.'

"Now lay on your oars, men,' I said. 'I want to see what is inside a little bottle of medical comforts the doctor stowed away under here.'

"It was a bottle of sick-mess sherry, which we all shared, and pronounced the best ever we had tasted, and the doctor 'a brick'.

"Onwards now we sped, as fast as oars could pull us, Dawson and I occasionally relieving the men and taking a spell at the oars. It was moonlight, I said, and until we were fairly in the river this was in favour of us; now, however, it was all against us. None hate the English more than does your fighting Arab of slave proclivities. At any moment we might fall in with a slave dhow, and the crew thereof would certainly not miss such a favourable opportunity of paying off old scores. We had lots of arms on board, and so we meant, if attacked, to peg away at the beggars to the bitter end. However, discretion is the better part of valour, so we kept right in the centre of the stream, where we could be least seen. This was slow work, but safe.

"It must have been past ten o'clock, and we were well up the river, when, on rounding a point, we came suddenly in sight of a large-armed dhow, slowly going down stream. My first intention was to alter our course. 'No, no,' said Dawson, who is no end of a clever fellow, 'that will only create suspicion. Let me hail her;' and he did so in good Arabic. If suspicion was excited on board the strange dhow, it was, I feel sure, lulled again when

Dawson began, in stentorian tones, to sing a well-known Arab boating chant. The song, I feel sure, saved us, and so we kept it up nearly all the way to Lamoo.

"About a mile from the town we crept inshore and hid our boat in the bush, leaving one man in her. Now there is but one or two European merchants in the town, and one of these we knew, but the way to his house we were ignorant of; but we knew where Comoro Jack lived in the outskirts. He had been our guide before, so thither we went, and happily found Jack at home: a tall young savage, arrayed only in a waist belt, and an enormous (42nd Highlander's) busby on, and a tall spear in one hand.

"Well, you blessed Englishmen, what you want wid Jack?' Such was our greeting. We hastily told him, and the amount, and--

"Comoro Jack will go like a shot,' said the savage. The sandy streets were well-nigh deserted, and Comoro Jack, as he strode on beside us, thought himself no end of a fine fellow.

"London is one ver' good place,' he informed us, 'as big as Lamoo, and streets better pave, and girls better dress. You see it was like this: the French they take Myotta; poor king ob de island he go to London to see de British Queen of England, and I go too among de body-guard. But when the poor king come to de palace, 'Will you fight for me de dam French?' he say. 'Very sorry,' said the British Queen of England, 'but I cannot fight de dam French.'"

"And who', we asked, 'gave you the bonnet and plumes?'

"De British Queen ob England,' said Comoro Jack. 'She soon spot me out among de niggers, and she put it on my head. 'Here, poor chile,' she say, 'you not catch cold wid that.'"

"The house Comoro Jack led us to was that of a French merchant, and his hospitality was unbounded; but we refused all refreshment until we had first smoked a pipe. Oh, didn't that pipe make men of us. We spent a very pleasant half-hour with the merchant; then we filled our sacks and returned to our boat happier, surely, than Joseph's brethren could have been coming up, corn-laden, from the land of the Pharaohs. We had one or two little escapades going down stream, caught it wet and nasty on the bar, but got safely and quietly on board the Seamew one hour before sunrise, and to witness the joy on our mess-mates' faces when we cracked a bottle of rum and opened a box of Havanas, more than repaid us for all we had come through.

"Next morning, to his intense disgust, the skipper found us all smoking, and looking funny and jolly. But he never knew where we found the 'baccy.'"

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER IX

TONGUES OF LURID FIRE, BLUE, GREEN, AND DEEPEST CRIMSON.

Very little was talked of during the next few days except the coming ascent of Mount Terror. In the saloon mess non-success was not even dreamt of. It was only forward about the galley fire that doubts were mooted.

"Our skipper is just about as plucky as they make them nowadays," said old Jack Forbes, taking his short pipe from his mouth, "but, bless ye, boys, look what's before 'em."

"True for you, Jack," said a mate of his, "they'll be all frozen to death, and that'll be the way of it. Hope they won't ask me to go and help to carry things."

"Nor me," said another.

Nearer and nearer to the western land drew the bonnie barque, and in the beautiful sunshine she anchored at last in a bay close under the shadow of the mountain they were to attempt to scale.

Captain Talbot made all preparations at once. There was indeed but little time to lose now, for ere long the frosts would set in, and if not clear of the southern ice ere then, hard indeed might be their lot.

When going upon a dangerous expedition it is the duty of every brave man to do all in his power to guard against failure. Talbot, therefore, left not a stone unturned to ensure success; whether he secured it or not, he seemed determined to merit it.

Alpen-stocks were made for the purpose, and so, too, were ice-axes, though these latter were necessarily primitive.

Very little ammunition and few arms were to be taken. In the lone recesses of the hills and in that wild mountain, they had nothing to fear from savage man or beast. The land in here was as desolate and barren of everything but snow and ice as that worn-out world, the moon itself.

Ropes were also to be taken, they might come in handy in many ways. The skipper was an old Alpine-club man, and well did he know his way about.

Provisions for a whole week, and just a little rum in case of illness or over-exertion, for in the bitter cold of upper regions like those they were about to visit, exhaustion may often come on soon and sudden.

The captain himself made choice of three brave sturdy fellows to accompany the expedition and carry the necessaries as well as instruments of observation.

"And now, youngsters," said Talbot one evening, "which two of the three of you are to be of the party."

"I think," he added, "you better toss for it. I daresay you are all burning to come."

Duncan and Conal smiled and nodded, but Frank shook his head.

"I expect," he said, "there will be precious little burning high up yonder unless you happen to take a header into the crater. I'm not going to get frozen, I can assure you. I want to stick to all my toes, so toss away if you like, sir. Perhaps an Irishman or two might suit you best."

"Why, Frank?" said Duncan.

"Why? Because they're all fond of a drop of the crater (crayture), don't you see?"

"How could you make so vile a pun, old Frank?"

Vike seemed to know that an expedition of some kind was being got up. He put one great paw on Duncan's knee and looked appealingly up into his face.

"You might want my assistance," he seemed to say.

"No, doggie, no, not this journey," said Duncan, smoothing his bonnie head.

So Vike lay down before the fire, heaving a deep sigh as he did so.

Although all dogs sigh more or less--their intimate association with mankind being the usual cause--still sighing seems to be an especial characteristic of the noble breed we term Newfoundland.

Everything was ready and packed, including, of course, a long plank and a light but strong rope-ladder many fathoms in length.

It was a very bright and beautiful morning when the little expedition started; the crew manning the rigging and giving three times three of those ringing British cheers that are heard wherever our ensign--red, blue, or navy-white--flutters out on the breeze.

It was but little past sunrise. The oriel windows of the glorious S.E. were still painted in colours rare and radiant, but hardly a breath of air blew across the untrodden fields of snow that now stretched out and away to the westward--a good ten miles, until bounded at last by the great rising hills.

Silence now as deep as death.

They were deserted even by the birds.

But in a great snow-clad wilderness like this, with unseen, unheard-of dangers, mayhap, ahead, what a comfort it is to know that He who made the universe is ever near to all those who call upon Him even in thought, if in spirit and in truth.

The ship was out of sight now, hidden by bluff ice-covered rocks; and Talbot was acting as guide to the party, taking the direction which he believed would lead him to the side of the mountain which appeared to be most accessible.

For more than a mile the "road" was rugged indeed.

"There's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip," says the old adage. But here was many a slip 'tween the toes and the lip and many a stumble also. Soon, however, they came to a wide and level plain of snow.

"Cheerily does it now, lads," cried the skipper. "Who is going to give us some music?"

A stirring old song was soon rising high on the morning air, and everyone joined in the chorus.

But when the last notes had died away, Duncan produced his great Highland bagpipes and began to get them into position across his broad right shoulder.

The skipper laughed.

"I declare," he said, "there is no end to the enthusiasm and patriotic feelings of you Scots. But tune up, lad."

Duncan strutted on in front and soon started the Gordon Highlanders' march.

The bold and beautiful notes put life and spirit into every heart.

Then he played all kinds of airs, not forgetting either the pibroch or quick-step. But not the coronach. That wild wail is--

"A lilt o' dool (grief) and sorrow",
and all must now be brave and cheerful

Twelve miles as the crow flies they marched. And now they were at the foot of the wondrous mountain, and a halt was called for breakfast. Water was boiled with methylated spirits, and savoury coffee with bread and meat galore soon made all hands forget their fatigue.

Then the men and the skipper himself lit their pipes, and lay down to rest for half an hour on the top of the sunlit snow. They would need all their strength and courage now without a doubt.

"Now, my brave fellows"--it was Talbot's voice that broke the intensity of silence, and a cheery one it was--"now, my lads, our motto must be that of the youth who passed in such a hurry through the Alpine village while shades of night were falling fast--Excelsior!"

"Onwards and upwards!"

"That's it, Duncan. As to the bold youth with his bold banner, I think he must have been somewhat foolish to start after sunset. Well, that was his lookout. Anyhow, we have a twenty hours' long day before us, so I must now give the word--March!"

And on they went.

On and on, and up and up.

No thoughts of singing now, however. The ascent was steep, and scarce had anyone breath enough to spend in talking.

But the brave young mountaineer Duncan, alpenstock in hand, was first, with Captain Talbot by his side, and a little farther down struggled Conal encouraging the men, and now and then helping to carry their loads.

These, however, were not very heavy. But the lightest burden seems a great weight when one is climbing a mountain.

It was one o'clock before they had succeeded in reaching an altitude of four thousand feet, and the worst was all before them.

Everyone was tired enough by this time. Tired and hungry too.

But while coffee was being warmed and provision tins opened, those not actually engaged at the work lay down to rest, Conal and Duncan, with the captain and the other carrier, among the rest.

The sun had, of course, crossed the meridian, but though still brightly shining, his rays were far indeed from warm or inspiring.

Moreover, although there was no wind on the great snow-plains below, here a breeze was blowing, and it needed not only food but the hottest of coffee to enable them to stand the cold.

They had now a much longer rest than before, and more than one man fell so soundly asleep that his pipe dropped out of his mouth.

"Now, lads," said the skipper at last, "let us put another thousand feet in it. Never say die, boys. Excelsior, you know!"

He did not speak loud. No need to; for the slightest whisper could have been heard in the silence around them, even a hundred yards away.

The silence, indeed, was solemn, awesome; a silence that could be felt; a silence that seemed to creep round the heart and senses, and which no one cared to break. Not even the light breeze made murmur, or even whisper, as it swept over the plateau on which they now sat.

But from their elevated situation the scene spread out before them was wondrous in the extreme. To the north they could gaze away and away over the far-off blue ocean, and to the east all was ice.

It was towards the south, however, that Talbot's telescope was turned, with so many longing, lingering looks, before he resumed the upward journey.

The Norsemen have a legend that around the North Polar regions-at the Pole itself, indeed--there is a great open sea; that green luxuriant islands dot its blue surface, and that thereon dwell a people who have never committed sin, but are still in a pristine state of innocence, just as God made them--"but a little lower than the angels".

Was Talbot expecting to gaze upon just such another open sea as this, I wonder? If so, he was disappointed. So he shut up the great telescope with a sigh. Higher up he would see further, however.

So the march was resumed.

And now for many miles, although the hill-gradient was not so steep, walking was infinitely more arduous, and every here and there they came upon a crevasse in the ice, which had to be bridged over at its very narrowest part by the plank. This was fearsome and truly dangerous work, for that plank was but narrow, and, moreover, it was impossible to keep it from being slippery here and there.

Talbot was ever the first to walk across that terrible bridge; but he was secured to those on the other side by the long rope; and so handy did this bridge turn out that they gained an elevation that day of six thousand feet above the level of the sea.

At this point they reached a perpendicular ice-cliff that rose sheer up from a narrow plateau to a height of probably five hundred feet.

It was found impossible to scale it, so they had to wend their way around to the west side of this mountain, so well named Mount Terror.

The day was now far spent, and so Talbot determined to order a halt, and after supper to rest till another day should break.

Except when cliffs intervened, they had hitherto been quite in sight of the ship, and could even make out her signals. But now a shoulder of the mount itself intervened, and for a time they should see the Flora M'Vayne no more.

But now a new surprise awaited them. For just here, on this side of the hill, they found a stream, or spring of water, trickling down the mountain side, and forming in its way a clear and wonderfully-shaped icy cascade.

It was caused by the melting of the snow, certainly not by the sun's heat, but by the eternal volcanic fires that were pent up in the mountain itself.

What could be more marvellous!

Strangely beautiful, too, were these frozen cascades, for therein could be seen every colour of the rainbow, all of radiant light. Beauties certainly never designed to please man's eye.

Alas! what poor selfish mortals we human beings are! Everything made for our use, indeed! The very idea makes one who has travelled, and who has seen Nature in all its shows and forms, smile. It is a doctrine that only your poor stay-at-home mortals can possibly put faith in.

Another surprise--a cave.

They venture fearfully into it, feeling their way with their alpen-stocks.

They have not gone far ere a low, half-stifled roar, from far beneath apparently, falls upon their ears. It is like the first angry growling of a lion ere he springs upon his prey.

They pause and listen. The sound is repeated, and they will venture no farther for the present.

But here, in this vast cavern, which, when lighted up by torches which have been brought on purpose--for Talbot had expected to meet with caves--its beauty is of so extraordinary a character that it cannot be described.

A great galaxy of shining pillars that are found to be some strange form of stalactite, emitting on every side more than the light and colour and glory of a billion of diamonds!

By torch-light they ventured somewhat farther on, until an awful crevasse interrupted their progress. So dark, so deep and awesome it seemed, that all hands drew back, almost in a sweat of cold terror. But it was apparently from the bottom of this fearful gully that the muttering noises proceeded now and then, and holding each other as they gazed far down the dark abyss, they could see tongues of lurid fire, blue, green, and deepest crimson, playing about. Yet no suffocating odour arose therefrom. Hence Captain Talbot concluded that some other outlet and current of air carried these away.

Retreating some distance towards the entrance, Duncan found a piece of rock, and hurled it towards the crevasse. The result was wonderful. The hurtling thunder was deafening, and the echoes came rumbling from every portion of the cave, and continued for many minutes. But whence, or why the sound of explosions, as if cannonading were going on in every direction? Not even Captain Talbot himself, scientist though he was, could give a sufficient answer to a question like this.

But this cave must be their camping ground to-night. So once more the big spirit-stove was lit, and they prepared to enjoy their well-earned supper.

Then they sat and smoked and yarned for quite a long time.

Nor did Talbot forget to splice the main-brace, and surely no men were ever more deserving of a dram, as Duncan and Conal called it, than the three brave fellows who had struggled so far up the mountainside with their heavy loads.

"This is not Saturday night, men," said the skipper, raising his mug of coffee with a suspicion of whisky therein, "but nevertheless I must propose once more the dear old toast: 'Sweethearts and wives', and may the Lord be near them."

"Sweethearts and wives!" cried all the group. Then caps were raised, and cups were speedily drained.

"And the Lord be near us too, this night," said one of the men. "Ah! little does our people at home know where we are, sir."

"Well, the Lord is everywhere near to those who call on him," replied the skipper.

"I'm sayin', sorr," said Ted Noolan, a light-hearted Paddy whom no kind of danger could ever daunt; "saints be praised the Lord is near, but troth it's meself that's believin' the d-l--bad scran to him!--can't be far away either, for lookin' down that awful gulch, 'Ted,' says I to meself, 'if that ain't the back-door to the bad place, it's nowhere else on earth.'"

But his superstition did not prevent Paddy from curling up on his rugs when the others did, and going soundly off to sleep.

Nor did the far-off muttering thunders of the dread abyss keep anybody from enjoying a real good night's rest.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER X SO POOR CONAL MUST PERISH!

Duncan was first to the fore in the morning. He touched Captain Talbot lightly on the shoulder, and he awoke at once.

It took a whole series of shakings, however, to arouse Conal. He had been dreaming of his far-off Highland home, and when he did at last sit up and rub his eyes, it took him fully a minute to know where he was in particular.

Well, while the men prepared a simple breakfast of coffee, sardines, butter, and soft tack, the skipper and the boys left the cave and went in for as thorough ablution as was in their power at the snow-water rill. They felt infinitely refreshed thereafter; a large box of sardines, placed for discussion before each, disappeared almost magically, for bracing indeed was the breeze that blew high up on this dreary mountain.

And now, the sun being well up, climbing was resumed.

Only about two thousand feet more remained to be discussed, but this formed the toughest climb of all. For not only was the breeze now high and the gradient steep, but the cold was intense, while breathing was far from easy.

Indeed, although an ascent of ten to twelve thousand feet may not be considered a tall record for accomplished club-men in the Alpine regions of Europe, it would be a terrible undertaking for even those among the perpetual snows of the Antarctic.

It needed not only all the strength, but even all the courage that our heroes were possessed of, to finally succeed. For in many parts a single slip might have precipitated three of them at least into chasms or over precipices that were too fearful even to think of.

Indeed, several such slips did occur, but luckily the ropes held, and the foremost men, planting their feet firmly against the mountain-side, succeeded in preventing an accident.

The danger was quite as great, when steps had to be hewn on the sides of ice-rocks, and the labour in such cases five times as fatiguing, and happy they felt, on every such occasion, when they found themselves on a plateau.

"Whatever a man dares he can do!"

The grand old motto of, I believe, the clan Cameron; but many a man of a different clan has felt the force and the truth of these brave words. Both Duncan and his brother seemed to do so, when they stood at long last with their comrades on the very summit of Mount Terror, and on the brink of its terrible, though partially extinct, crater.

Who would venture to peep over into the awful gulf, which, by the way, Ted Noolan believed to be really an opening into the nether regions--the regions of despair?

Duncan was the first to volunteer. The others followed suit with one exception.

What a gulf! It must have been acres in extent, and fully one thousand feet in depth. The precipices that formed its sides were at times even black and sheer; in some places overhanging, and in others sloping so that one might have tobogganed down into the regions of perpetual fire. Not everywhere down yonder, however, were flames visible. It was more a collection of boiling, bubbling cauldrons, emitting jets of sulphurous smoke, the surface of the molten lava being continually crossed by flickering tongues of flame, transcendently beautiful.

Right in the centre was an irregular gaping mouth, and from this smoke now and then arose, accompanied by hurtling horrible thunders that made our strong-hearted heroes quiver. Not with fear, I shall not go so far as that, but no one could tell at what moment an eruption might take place.

To Duncan's waist the rope had been made fast, else he never would have ventured to lean over that awful crater.

It was the captain's turn next. Then came Conal's and the men's.

All but Ted.

"Is it me myself?" he said, drawing back, when asked to do as the others had done. "Fegs! no. It is faint I would entoirely, and faint and fall over. Bedad! I've no raison to go to such a place as that before my time."

Captain Talbot now proceeded to take his observations. His aneroid told him, to begin with, that the mountain was more nearly twelve than eleven thousand feet above the sea-level. Piercingly cold though it was, he took time to make a note of everything. But I should not have used the word "cold". This is far from descriptive of the lowness of temperature experienced, for the spirit thermometer stood at 40° below zero.

It was now four o'clock in the afternoon, and all hands were almost exhausted from fatigue. But Talbot was not so foolish as to give them stimulants. This would only have resulted in a sleepy or partially comatose state of the brain, and an accident would assuredly have followed.

"Now, men, we have seen all there is to see, and I've taken my observations, so it is time we were getting down again to our sheltering cave, in which we shall pass one night more. But we can say that we have been the first to ascend this mighty mountain, and human feet have never before traversed the ground on which you now are standing.

"See here," he continued, suiting the action to the word, "I place this little flag--the British ensign--and though storms may rend it, this mountain, and all the land and country around, shall evermore belong to us."

He handed the still-extended telescope to Duncan as he spoke and pointed to the south. No open sea there! But the roughest, wildest kind of snow-clad country anyone could well imagine. Yet, far far away, the jagged peaks of many a mountain rose high on the horizon.

And now "God save the Queen", was sung, and the very crater itself seemed to echo back the wild cheers that rose high on the evening air.

Solemn and serious all must be now however, for although the descent would not occupy so much time, it was quite as fraught with peril as the coming up had been, and even more so.

The rope was constantly kept taut, however, on every extra dangerous position, with the happy result that they reached the cave in good time, all tired, but all safe.

The cold was not nearly so intense here, however, and in the strange and beautiful--nay, but fairy-like cave--it was almost nil.

Never did brave and weary travellers enjoy a supper more. So sure were they of reaching their ship next day, that they gave themselves some extra indulgences, and tins of mock-turtle soup were warmed and eaten with the greatest of relish.

They sat long together to-night talking of home in the "olde countrie", and many a droll yarn was told and many a story of adventure by sea and land.

Bed at last, if one may call it a bed, with only the hard rock to lie upon, and a rug wherein to wrap one's-self, curled up like a ferret to retain all the warmth of the body. For sleeping-bags had been left behind after all.

What though subterranean thunders roared far beneath them many times and oft during the night, they heard them not, so doubly soundly did they sleep.

There is always one thing to be said concerning adventures of a very dangerous character, namely, that though kept up by excitement, we may not be sorry to enter into them, and go through with them, too, like Britons bold and true, still we are rather glad than otherwise when they are over.

Our heroes awoke next morning, therefore, betimes, and squatted down to breakfast, hungry and happy enough. Would they not soon be back once more on their brave barque, to tell their comrades of all their strange experiences?

It is doubtless a good thing for us that we are not prescient, else thinking of troubles to come would cast a gloom over everyone's life that nothing could banish.

Little did these officers and men of the Flora M'Vayne, as they resumed their downward journey, know of the trouble before them.

They had reached the very last crevasse, and were in full view of the ship, although at least five thousand feet above it, when an accident occurred of a very startling nature indeed.

The plank was just thrown across and Conal had stepped on to it, roped, of course, to his fellows, when, to their horror, it slipped, and was precipitated into the chasm.

And with it fell Conal!

The skipper and Duncan had held the rope taut, but it snapped as if it had been made of straw.

Luckily, although the wretched boy fell sheer down only a distance of about fifty feet, the rest he slid on loose pieces of ice and snow.

On referring to the log-book of Captain Talbot, which lies on my table before me, the abyss or ice-crevasse is stated to have been about two hundred feet in depth. And there was no outlet.

Nor any apparent means of saving the poor fellow, for although his companions would gladly have hurried to the ship for assistance they could not cross that ice-ravine, nor could they retreat for want of a plank.

So, poor Conal must perish!

It was about two bells in the first watch, and Frank with faithful Vike was walking to and fro on the quarter-deck.

He had a telescope under his arm, and every now and then he directed it to the far-off mountain, adown which he had observed his shipmates streaming since ever they had arrived on the easternmost side of Mount Terror.

How well named!

So good was the glass that he could count them as he came, and even make out their forms. Duncan's was stalwart and easily seen, Conal's lither far than Captain Talbot's, and the men were bearing their packages.

He watched them as they approached the last dread crevasse.

With some anxiety, he could not tell why, he saw the plank raised and lowered across the abyss, and noticed that it was Conal's light form that first began to cross.

Suddenly he uttered a bitter cry of anguish and despair.

"Mate, mate!" he shouted. "Oh, come, come! There has been a fearful accident, and Conal is killed."

As if hoping against hope, both he and the mate counted the number on the small ice plateau over and over again.

There had been six in all.

Now there were but five!

And these seemed now to be signalling for assistance.

There was but one thing to be done, however hopeless it might seem, and that was to get up and despatch a party to the rescue as soon as day should once more break.

Had they been ready they should have started at once. But Frank had a good head on his shoulders for one so young, and in a matter of life and death like this he was right in considering well what had best be done.

Of course he consulted with the mate, and he immediately suggested a rope of many, many fathoms in length.

"Doubtless," he said, "poor Conal is dead, or if stunned he will speedily freeze to death, but we would be all unwilling to sail away and leave the poor bruised body in the terrible crevasse."

"Have we rope enough on board to be of real service?" asked Frank in a voice broken with emotion.

"Bless you, yes, my boy, fifty fathoms of manilla, light, but strong enough to bear an ox's weight."

"Thank God!" cried Frank fervidly.

There was little thought of rest now till long past sunset.

A plank of extra breadth was got ready, and the rope was coiled so that several hands could assist in bearing it along.

Provisions were also packed, and so all was ready for the forlorn hope.

The relief party now lay down to snatch a few hours of rest, but, soon after the crimson and orange glory of the sky heralded the approach of the sun, they were aroused from their slumbers.

Breakfast was speedily discussed, and now they were ready.

There was no hesitation about Frank Trelawney, the Cockney boy, now. He was British all over, and brave because he was British. His dearest friend, Conal, lay stark and stiff in that fearful ice-gap; he would be one of the first to help the poor bruised body to bank, ay, and bedew it with tears which it would be impossible to restrain.

It had been an anxious and sad night for those on the hill. They could until sunset see the wretched Conal in that darksome crevasse, and they did all they could do, for they made up a bundle of rugs with plenty of provisions enclosed and hurled it down.

Strangely enough, he could talk to those on the hillside, and they to him, without elevating their voices.

They bade him be of good cheer, for signals from the Flora told them that preparations for rescue were already being made.

Frank's march across the great snow plains was a forced one, but an hour's rest and a good meal was indispensable before the ascent could be attempted.

Perhaps no mountain was ever climbed more speedily by men in any country. They had the trail of the captain and his party to guide them, but nevertheless the work was arduous in the extreme.

Should they be in time?

Or was Conal dead?

These were the questions that they asked each other over and over again.

They hoped against hope, however, as brave men ever do.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XI THUS HAND IN HAND THE BROTHERS SLEEP.

They arrived at the plateau in the afternoon, and cautiously, yet quickly was the plank placed over.

Frank did not wait to attach the rope to his waist, so eager was he. The yawning green gulf beneath him might have tried the nerve of Blondin. He paused not to think, however, but went over almost with the speed of a bird upon the wing, and more slowly the others followed.

They brought with them the end of the coils of rope, and these were speedily hauled across.

For a few moments Frank and Duncan stood silently clasping each other's hands; and the Cockney lad could tell by the look of anguish in his Highland cousin's face that the worst had occurred.

"Too late! too late!" Duncan managed to say at last, and he turned quickly away to hide the blinding tears.

"Poor Conal," explained the captain, "is lying down yonder--that black object is he enveloped in rugs, but he has made no sign for hours, and doubtless is frozen hard enough ere now."

"Come," cried Frank, "be of good cheer, my dear Duncan, till we are certain. Perhaps he does but sleep."

"Yes, he sleeps," said Duncan mournfully, "and death is the only door which leads from the sleep that cold and frost bring in their train."

"Come, men," cried Frank, now taking command, for he was full of life and energy, "uncoil the rope most carefully. I am light, Captain Talbot, so I myself will make the descent. I shall at once send poor Conal to bank, or as soon as I can get him bent on. Haul up when I shout."

When all the rope was got loose and made into one great coil, the end was thrown over into the crevice to make sure it would reach.

It did reach, with many fathoms to spare; so it was quickly hauled up and recoiled again. A bight was now made at one end, and into this brave Frank quickly, and with sailor-like precision, hitched himself.

"Lower away now, men. Gently does it. Draw most carefully up as soon as I shout. When poor Conal is drawn to bank, lower again for me."

Next minute Frank had disappeared over the brink of the abyss, and was quickly and safely landed beneath.

He approached the bundle of rugs with a heart that never before felt so brimful of anguish and doubt.

And now he carefully draws aside the coverings. A pale face, white and hard, half-open eyes, and a pained look about the lowered brows and drawn lips.

Is there hope?

Frank will not permit himself even to ask the question.

But speedily he forms a strong hammock with one of the rugs. Not a sailor's knot ever made that this boy is not well acquainted with. And now, after making sure that all is secure, he signals, and five minutes after this the body is got to bank without a single hitch.

Then while two men, with Captain Talbot and Duncan, commence operations on the stiff and apparently frozen body, the others lower away again, and presently after Frank's young and earnest face is seen above the snow-rift.

He is helped up, and proceeds at once to lend assistance.

Conal had been a favourite with all the men, and now they work in relays, the one relay relieving the other every five minutes, chafing and rubbing hands, arms, legs, and chest with spirits.

Duncan can do nothing.

He seems stupefied with grief.

After nearly half an hour of hard rubbing and kneading, to the skipper's intense joy the flesh of the arms begins to get softer. Presently a blue knot appears on one, and he knows there is a slight flicker of life reviving in the apparently lifeless body.

The lamp may flicker with a dying glare, and Talbot knows this well, so he refrains from communicating his hopes to disconsolate Duncan.

But he endeavours now to restore respiration, by slowly and repeatedly pressing the arms against the chest, and alternately raising them above the head.

The rubbing goes on.

Soon the eyelids quiver!

There seems to be a struggle, for the poor boy's face turns red--nay, almost blue. Then there is a deep convulsive sigh.

Just such a sigh as this might be his last on earth, or it might be the first sign of returning life.

Talbot puts his hand on Conal's cold wrist. The pulse flickers so he scarce can feel it; but it is there.

Operations are redoubled. Sigh after sigh is emitted, and soon--

"Heaven be praised!" cries Captain Talbot, for of his own accord Conal opens his eyes.

He even murmurs something, and shuts them once more, as if in utter weariness he fain would go to sleep.

But that sleep might end in death. No, he must be revived.

The circulation increases.

The life so dear to all is saved, for now Conal can swallow a little brandy.

Duncan's head has fallen on his knee and open palms as he crouches shivering on the snow, and the tears that have welled through his fingers lie in frozen drops on his clothing.

Gently, so gently, steals Talbot up behind him. Gently, so gently, he lays one hand on his shoulder.

"Duncan, can you bear the news?"

"Yes, yes, for the bitterness of death is past."

"But it is not death, dear lad, but--life."

"Life! I cannot believe it! Have you saved him?"

"Then," he added, "my Father, who art in heaven, receive Thou the praise!"

"And you, friend Talbot," he continued, pressing his captain's hand, "the thanks."

Conal was got safely back over the crevasse, and in his extempore hammock borne tenderly down the mountain-side until the plain below was reached.

But by this time he is able to raise his eyes and speak to his now joyful brother.

He even tries to smile.

"A narrow squeak, wasn't it?" he says.

His brother scarce can answer, so nervous does he feel after the terrible shock to the system.

The men, however, are thoroughly exhausted, and so under the shelter of a rock a camp is formed once more, and supper cooked.

Coffee and condensed milk seem greatly to restore the invalid, and once more he feels drowsy.

Soon the sun sets, and it being considered not unsafe now to permit Conal to sleep, the best couch possible is made for him, and a tin flask of hot water being laid near to his heart, his skin becomes warm, and he is soon afterwards sleeping and breathing as gently and freely as a child of tender years.

There is a little darkness to-night; but a moon is shining some short distance up in the sky and casting long dark shadows from the boulders across that dazzling field of snow.

Diamond stars are in the sky.

Yes, and there seems to be a diamond in every snowflake.

Duncan will not sleep, however, till he has seen his brother's face once more and heard him breathe. "For what," he asks himself, "if his recovery be but a dream from which I shall presently awake?"

His own rugs are laid close to his brother's, and he gently removes a corner of the latter, and lets the moon-rays fall on Conal's face.

The boy opens his eyes.

"Is it you, Duncan?"

"It is me, my brother."

"Then hold my hand and I shall sleep."

Duncan did as he was told.

"Duncan!"

"Yes, Conal."

"I feel as if I were a child again once more, but oh! how foolishly, how stupidly nervous."

"We are both so. Yet, blessed be Heaven, you will recover, Conal, and I shall also."

"When I was really a child, Duncan, my mother, our mother, used to croon over my cradle verses from that sweet old hymn of Isaac Watts. Do you remember it?"

"Ay, Conal, lad, and the music too."

"It is so sweet and plaintive. Sing it, Duncan. That is, just a verse or two; for sleep, it seems to me, is already beginning to steal down on the moonbeams to seal my aching eyes."

Duncan had a beautiful voice; but he could modulate it, so that no one could hear it many yards away. This does he now.

Singing to Conal as mother used to sing it. Singing to Conal and to Conal only.

"Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber!

Holy angels guard thy bed!

Heavenly blessings without number

Gently falling on thy head."

Sleep does steal down on the moonbeams ere long, and seals the eyes of both.

Thus hand in hand the brothers sleep.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XII WINTER LIFE IN AN ANTARCTIC PACK.

Changes in temperature take place soon and sudden in those far-off Antarctic regions, and on the very night succeeding the return of our heroes from the dangers of that daring but terrible ascent of Mount Terror, it came on to blow high and hard from the south.

It was a snow-laden wind too, with the lowest temperature that had yet been logged. So dense was the snow-mist that it was impossible to see the jibboom when standing close by the bowsprit. The drift blew suffocatingly along the upper deck of the Flora, and it was covered with an ice-glaze that, owing to the motion of the vessel, made walking a business of the greatest difficulty.

The vessel was driven northwards till she found herself close to an immense ice-floe, and to this they determined to make fast.

Anchors were at once got out, therefore, and landed and secured.

The motion was somewhat less after that.

What was most to be dreaded was a squeeze, for if any of those huge crystalline bergs were to rush them alongside, poor indeed would be their hopes of being saved. Indeed the vessel, strong as she was, would be crushed, as one may crush an egg-shell.

All hands were now called to endeavour, if possible, to make her more secure.

By and by the wind lulled somewhat, and the atmosphere cleared.

It would only be temporary, however, and well Captain Talbot knew it.

But they had now a chance of noting their position, and a dangerous one it was. The open water was getting narrower and narrower, so it was determined to seek for the safest ice. This was some pancake that lay to the north of them, so, just sufficient sail was got up to enable the ship to reach it.

This she did with safety so far, but the storm came on again with all its force, and with such fury, that it was found impossible to dock her.

To work in so choking and suffocating a cloud of ice-dust would have taken the heart out of anyone, save a true-blue British sailor. Moreover, as mittened cats cannot easily catch mice, so was it difficult for the men to work with heavy gloves on, and the order was, not on any account to take them off.

One poor fellow who, in a moment of thoughtlessness, pulled off his mittens, had both hands so badly-frost-bitten that he was incapable of duty for many many months.

They were now, however, in a comparatively safe position, for bay or pancake ice is a protection for a ship, if she has the misfortune to be frozen up in a pack like this.

In fate, or rather in Providence, they must put their trust; but whenever the weather cleared for a spell many an anxious eye was turned towards two mountainous blocks of green ice that lay only about a hundred yards to the south of the ship's position. They must have been about ninety feet out of the water and eight times as much beneath. Should the wind act with sufficient force on their green glittering sides it would go hard with the Flora M'Vayne.

This storm lasted not a day only, but over a week, and during all this time the limit of their vision was bounded but by a few yards.

Well for all was it that the Flora was strong, for on three separate occasions the good ship was nipped. This was undoubtedly owing to the pressure of the big bergs on the pancake ice.

But the pancake alongside was piled up by this pressure against the Flora's sides, like a pack of cards. The noise at such times was indescribable. It was a medley of roaring, shrieking, and caterwauling, with now and then a loud report, and now and then a dull and startling thud.

Moreover, the ice had got under the vessel's bows, and had heaved her up so high forward, that walking as far as the fo'c's'le was like climbing a slippery hill.

Viking, I verily believe, went now and then as far as the bowsprit, just that he might have the pleasure of sliding down again. But the great penguin and the monkey, who seemed to have sworn eternal friendship, preferred remaining below. Moreover, they seemed to think that a seat in front of the saloon fire was far more comfortable than the galley; and there they were, a most comical couple indeed, for as old Pen stood there on his tail, warming first one foot and then another at the stove, the kind-hearted ape sat close beside him with one arm placed lovingly around the great bird's shoulder.

One morning Conal and Frank went on deck as usual.

The sunrise clouds were still radiantly beautiful in orange, mauve, and crimson, but the wind was gone, and the storm fled to the back of the north pole or elsewhere.

They could see around them, therefore.

"Why, Frank," cried Conal, scratching his head in astonishment, "where on earth have they shifted Mount Terror to?"

Sure enough, the great volcanic mountain on which the young fellow had so nearly lost his life was a very long way astern indeed, and seemed endeavouring to hide its diminished head in a cloud of gray-blue mist.

"The explanation is simple enough, I think," replied Frank. "They--whoever 'they' may mean--haven't shifted the mountain, but we've been driven far to the nor'ard with the force of the gale."

"Oh!" said Conal, laughing, "I know better than that. We've never moved, Frank. There is the same ice about us still, and our big neighbours, the icebergs, are yonder also."

"Well," answered Frank, "we've been like the Irishman on the steamboat, we've been standing stock-still, yet all the while we've been moving."

"That's it," said Captain Talbot, who happened to come up at this moment. "That's it, Conal; Frank's right, and all this vast plain of snow-clad ice has been in motion northwards, and it has taken us with it."

"Wonders will never cease!" said Conal.

"Not in this world, nor the next either. But breakfast will soon be ready--earlier this morning, because we're going to work."

"Oh, by the way, sir, are you going on a balloon voyage now?"

"Alas!" said Talbot, almost sadly, "that, I fear, will have to be abandoned for the present cruise. My intentions were excellent, but

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men

Gang aft a-gley,

An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,

For promised joy'.

Another day and another voyage will be needed for the balloon adventures.

"Well," he added, more cheerily, "our cruise has not been in vain, you know. I have taken many meteorological observations. We have scaled the heights of mighty Mount Terror, and we have proved that Right whales do abound in these seas; so that we have really re-opened a long-lost industry."

"We sailed in search of fortune," said Frank; "we have got some, haven't we, sir?"

"If we manage to get clear of this somewhat dangerous pack and to reach Kerguelen Island, I think we'll lay in enough sea-elephant skins and blubber to make up a rich and splendid cargo.

"But," he added, looking towards the monster icebergs, "I do wish these fellows were farther off."

"I suppose we couldn't blow them up, could we?" said innocent Conal.

Talbot laughed.

"My dear boy," he answered, "if we could blow these blocks up, we might try our skill on the rock of Gibraltar next."

Although the autumn was already far advanced and dreary winter on ahead, still Talbot did not despair of getting clear before it came on.

This forenoon all hands were set at work to clear the ice from under the bows.

Hard work indeed, but it was finished eventually with the aid of good gunpowder. Small cases of this were placed under the packs of pancake by means of a long pole, and fired with waterproof fuses. The smashed-up pieces were thrust in under the main pack, and so in time the Flora M'Vayne found herself on an even keel.

The officers and crew could breathe more freely now, and sat down to dinner with that hearty appetite which hard work, if interesting, never fails to call up.

A whole month passed away.

There was no change, and seldom even a breath of wind, but the nights were now very long indeed, and soon, very soon, it would be all night.

Another month went slowly by.

It was now far on in May, and June in these latitudes means the dead depth of winter.

"There isn't the ghost of a chance, Morgan," said Talbot one morning while breakfasting by lamp-light; "there isn't the slightest chance of our getting clear away from here, till spring winds break up the ice and carry us north and away."

Morgan did not answer directly.

He was thinking.

"How about provisions, sir?" he asked at last.

"Well, we ought to have enough of every sort to last for a year, and by that time, please Heaven, we shall be safe in Cape Town harbour.

"But," he added, "I was going to talk to you on this very subject."

"Well, sir."

"Well, mate, I think it would be as well to take an inventory. Have a thorough overhaul, you know, and see what condition everything is in."

The motion was carried.

But it took them three days--if we can call them days--to complete the survey and restore everything, in a ship-shape condition, to its place again.

The stores were all not only abundant but excellent, with the exception of some casks of greens that they put much store on. They would now have to depend upon a daily supply of lime-juice to prevent hands getting down with the scourge of these seas, namely, scurvy.

On the very night the survey was ended came another half-gale of wind from the south. There were the same terrible noises all around them, and as far as they could make out, the sea of ice was a perfect chaos.

No one could shout loud enough for his nearest companion to hear him, and the crew lived in constant terror of the ship being crushed.

When at long last the storm ceased, they discovered by the starlight, and very much to their delight, that the terrible neighbours, those monster bergs, had shifted their site during the gale.

They had, in fact, driven past the vessel's bows--what a mercy they came not near!--and were now fully seventy yards down to leeward.

The wind had fallen quite, and all had become still again.

"We have reason to be thankful to God for our marvellous escape," said Talbot.

"But may not the bergs drift back, or be blown down upon us?" said Frank, who was of a very inquiring turn of mind.

"Wherever they drift, Frank, we too shall drift, but the send of the current or sea beneath us is, I believe, northward now; and if the wind blows in winter as it must in spring, it will bear us towards the north-west. So one danger is removed or minimized."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, who was nothing if not impulsive, "hurrah!"

"No chance, I suppose, sir," he said, "of getting any letters from home?"

"Not for a day or two, Frank," said Talbot, smiling.

"Well, but it is a good thing we have books to read, isn't it, Conal?"

"And pens and ink?"

"Yes, pens and ink, and my fiddle."

"And my bagpipes," said Duncan emphatically.

"Oh, Duncan, we hadn't forgotten that or these."

"When I get them over my shoulder," said Duncan, "and put my drones in order, I don't think there will be much chance of your forgetting them."

Now wild winter had come in earnest,

"To rule the varied year".

It did not seem, however, that there was going to be a great deal of variety about it.

The wind was gone entirely for the time being, and the strange stars and Southern Cross shone down on the snowy and radiant plain, with a brilliancy that is quite unknown in more northern climes.

Great care was taken to keep the correct time, and to take observations three times a day.

A big ice-hole was made a few yards to the port side of the ship, and although the frost was now very severe indeed, they made a point of keeping this clear. This hole was about six feet in width, and, later on, it sufficed not only to draw water from for various purposes, but to afford some sport, as we shall presently see.

It had another and more scientific use. For the temperature of the water could here be taken, not only on the surface but many measured fathoms below it, and it told also the trend of the currents and their strength as well.

The self-same hours for breakfast, dinner, and supper were adhered to, but the men now had an additional allowance of tea served out to them, which, on the whole, they preferred to grog.

Grog, they knew from experience, did not keep up the animal heat, though it seemed to for a brief spell. Then shivering succeeded.

As the spectioneer told Duncan, in a climate like this one doesn't quite appreciate buckets of cold water running down his back.

Tea time was a happy hour in the saloon. The duties of the day were practically over, and light though these may have been, each had its correct time, and nothing was neglected.

But now the talk was chiefly about home; all thoughts of making fortunes were banished as not in keeping with the calmness of the hour.

Cowper's cosy lines come to my memory as I write, and they are in some measure applicable to the tea-time hour and situation--

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast;

Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,

And while the bubbling and loudly hissing urn

Throws up a steamy column, and the cups

That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,

Let us welcome peaceful evening in".

Johnnie Shingles it was who assisted the steward in serving out the tea, and Johnnie looked out for his own share in the pantry when all the rest were done.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XIII A CHAOS OF ROLLING AND DASHING ICE.

Being myself, reader, an "ice man" of some considerable experience, the manner in which the officers and crew of the beleaguered craft Flora M'Vayne whiled away the time during their long winter imprisonment may be said to be painted from the life.

At first it was supposed that the want of light would be a drawback to enjoyment, but the steward was one of those men who can turn their hands to anything, and he proposed making purser's dips from the spare fat.

He had to manufacture the wicks from cotton refuse, but, this accomplished, the rest was simple enough.

Petroleum was burned only in the saloon, and it was stored in a hold right beneath this for greater safety.

They had to be saving in the use thereof, however, and as they could talk as well, if not better, by the flickering light of the fire, the lamp was always turned out when no one cared to read. But around the galley fire those purser's dips were a great comfort to the men when not yarning. For then one man was told off to read while the others sat around to smoke and listen.

And thus passed many a quiet and peaceful evening away.

The men, I am happy to say, did not seem to hanker after grog, and it was finally agreed by all hands that it would be better to keep it for what they were pleased to call the spring fishery, or as a stand-by in case of illness.

They had plenty of tea and coffee, however, and a daily allowance of lime-juice.

Then Saturday nights were kept up in quite the old-fashioned and pleasant way, and the main-brace was invariably spliced.

Song succeeded song on these happy occasions, and many a toast was drunk to the health of the dear ones far away on Britain's shore.

Nor was dancing neglected, the consequence being that fiddle, guitar, and clarionet were in great request. As usual, little Johnnie Shingles and that droll penguin, dressed as a merry old lady, or sometimes as a modest wee maiden of sweet sixteen, convulsed the onlookers with their droll antics as they sailed around in the mazy dance.

But the monkey one evening did not see why he should not also have a waltz with Madam Pen.

"Yah--yah--yah!" he cried, as he approached her most coaxingly.

This was much as to say: "It is our dance, I believe, miss."

He attempted to take hold of Pen's flippers in the meanwhile, and was rewarded with a dig between the eyes that sent him reeling back, and so Jim made no more offers to trip it on the light fantastic toe with Madam Pen, on this evening or any other. In fact, he

used to content himself with lying in front of the fire with one of Vike's huge paws round his neck.

When Pen pecked the monkey he made an ugly scar, but poor kind-hearted Vike licked it every day several times with his soft warm tongue, and so it soon healed up.

Frank was by no means a very ambitious boy; he had not very much of the Scottish dash and go about him, and would at any time have preferred not doing to-day what could be just as easily done to-morrow, but he was clever for all that.

He it was who first attempted fishing in the ice-hole. But the ship had been imprisoned for well-nigh six weeks before he thought of it. The fact is, that by this time many of the men began to ail, and a peculiar kind of lassitude, dulness, and lowness of spirits were the first symptoms they complained of. Spots then appeared on the skin, every muscle ached when they moved. They suffered greatly from cold, and even their countenances grew worn and dusky.

The awful truth soon flashed upon Talbot's mind: these men were attacked by scurvy.

No less than three grew rapidly worse, and died one after the other--in spite of all that could be done for them. It was sad to listen to their last ravings and hear them speaking as if to friends at home; to a wife, a sister, or mayhap a sweetheart. Ah! but this was only when they were very near to the end.

A hammock had soon to be requisitioned after this, and the poor fellows were laid to rest many yards distant from the ship in a cold, icy grave.

Prayers were said over each, and there they will sleep probably for ever and for aye. For those buried thus never know decay till the ice around them may melt millions of years hence.

No medicine on board had any effect, and five in all were buried before the plague was stayed. It had been brought on, without doubt, from the want of fresh provisions, so Frank's idea of fishing adown the ice-hole was really a happy thought. For a whole day, however, like the apostle of old, he fished, but caught nothing. But on the day after he hooked a ray, and then a bonito.

From that very time fishing became a sport in which all the boys took part--and the plague soon left the ship.

Sorrowful indeed was Talbot at the loss of his men, still, grief is but transient on board ship. In a case like the present it would not do for it to be otherwise, for nothing is more depressing.

Moreover, the captain came now to the conclusion that the men had not enough exercise, so he proceeded at once to put into execution a plan that would meet the requirements of the case.

He instituted games on the ice.

Games in the dark! Is that your remark, reader?

But it was very far indeed from being dark. There was at the present time a moon, though it was at no great height above the horizon. Well, moonlight does not last long

anyhow, but the bright beams from the star-studded heavens were far better than the moon at its best, and almost dimmed its splendour.

The sky was wondrously clear, and the stars seemed very large. So close aboard, too, did they appear to be that you might have thought it possible to touch them with a fishing-rod.

There are probably no games so invigorating as those called Scottish, or more properly Highland. They tend to the expansion of the chest and to the bracing and strengthening of every muscle in the body.

So hammer-throwing, weight-putting, leaping, and tossing the caber soon became the rule every forenoon. Then in the afternoon, and before tea, Highland dancing was the rage.

This is dancing in every sense of the word. Quadrilles are only fit for old folks, and waltzing--well, it is nice enough in a brilliantly-lit hall, with soft dreamy music and a brilliant partner, but, after all, it is only just wiping your feet and whirling round.

A broad sheet of wood was spread on the ice near the ship for Highland dancing, quite a large platform in fact.

And Duncan, like Auld Nick in Burns's masterpiece, Tam o' Shanter,

"Screwed his pipes and gart them skirl

Till roof and rafters a' did dirl."

* * * * *

Nae cotillion brent new frae France,

But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,

Put life and mettle in their heels."

But these were not the only amusements the crew went in for, on the snow-clad ice, for while Conal and Frank were one day visiting those great bergs, the inventive genius of the latter was once more shown.

They found that a great portion of one side of the biggest berg was quite on the slope, and covered with frozen snow.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, "I've got another."

"Another what?"

"Why, another idea. This iceberg is just suited for tobogganing."

"Now," he added, "we sha'n't say a word to anybody till we try it ourselves first."

They, however, took the carpenter into their confidence, and he made them tiny sledges to sit upon. The slide was on a pretty gradual slope and altogether was about a hundred yards long from the top. Steps were cut at one side to make the getting up easy, and Frank himself was the first to make the descent.

"It is simply glorious!" This was his report.

"Flying," he added, "isn't in it."

And Conal himself confirmed this statement as soon as he himself had gone rushing down.

After this the great toboggan slide was in daily request, and the sound that came from the big berg was like the roaring of stones on a Scottish curling pond.

But high above the rushing noise, came the shouting and laughter of the merry-makers. Poor Viking could not understand it, and I suppose he came to the conclusion that his human friends had all lost hold of the tiny supply of common-sense, which human beings can boast of.

But what with these games and dances, and then fun on board, the health of the crew continued excellent, though ever around the galley-fire at night (I mean before bed-time or at the tea hour) the men talked of home.

I myself, like most seafarers,--well, call us sailors if that sounds better,--dearly love

"A life on the ocean wave

And a home on the rolling deep,

Where the scattered waters rave

And the winds their revels keep".

Yet wherever in this world I have been there always seemed to be a magnetic needle in my heart, and it always pointed to Home.

"Where'er we roam, whatever lands we see

Our hearts untrammelled fondly turn to thee

* * * * *

Such is the patriot's boast; where'er we roam,

Our first, best country, ever is at home."

On the whole, during their long imprisonment, the officers and crew of the good barque Flora M'Vayne kept up their hearts.

At long last the sun came nearer and nearer the northern horizon. For days before he rose there was a twilight of about two hours. Then a galaxy of the loveliest clouds were lit up, but still no sun.

Before noon on the day after, however, Frank and Conal, who seemed now to be inseparable, climbed to the top of the tobogganing berg, and soon after caught a glimpse of the glorious sun.

Neither could speak for a time, and indeed tears were trickling down Frank's face, which he took no trouble to hide. For, as we have seen before, he was a very impressionable lad.

"Oh, the sun! the sun!" That was all he said, but next minute both were waving their hats to those on board and shouting:

"The sun! the sun!"

And such a cheer uprose from that long-imprisoned ship, as never before probably was heard in these southern regions of perpetual snow and ice.

High above all, the boys could hear the barking of noble Vike.

Yes, but a moment after, and high above even that, across the intervening ice came the wild skirl of Duncan's Highland bagpipe.

Duncan was playing the March of the Cameron Men as he walked boldly up and down in the waist of the ship, while Frank and Conal on the ice-block could not help chiming in with just one verse of that brave old song, which has thrilled so many a heart on bank or brae or battlefield:

"Ah! proudly they march, though each Cameron knows

He may tread on the heather no more,

Yet boldly he follows his chief to the field

Where his laurels were gathered before".

"Yes, Frank, but we shall tread the heather again, sha'n't we, friend?"

"I hope so, and I mean to have a good try anyhow," was Frank's hearty reply.

Their dangers, however, were not all over yet. Not by a deal. In a still ice-pack like that in which they had lain so long, there is not very much to be feared except the danger of a nip or jam. But when the ice begins to open and the wind begins to blow, ah! then toil and trouble commence in earnest.

From observations, Captain Talbot now discovered that the immense field of ice on which they had been lying, had been gradually forcing its way on the current almost directly north, and that even Mount Sabine and the Admiralty Mountains were now a long way astern to the west.

And soon now the wind began to blow and howl; almost half a gale from the south-east by east. The noise, as it roared through the rigging and bare poles, was almost deafening, but this did not prevent these brave mariners from hearing every now and then the loud explosions on the ice-pack that heralded the breaking up of the whole, and that had been but a day or two ago a vast plain strong enough to have reviewed all the artillery in the world upon, would soon be but a chaos of rolling, dashing ice. The storm continued for more than a week, and all that time--every hour, in fact--the Flora M'Vayne had been in peril and danger.

Gallant ship! How well she stood the squeezing, the cannonading, the battering! A vessel less strong in every timber, or one built of teak instead of Scottish oak would have collapsed and gone down in a few minutes, carrying the crew with her, or leaving them almost naked, hungry, and helpless on the pack, to die a death ten times more cruel than drowning.

She got perilously near to the shore at last, however. It must have been somewhere close to Yule or Robertson Bay, for Cape Adare had been left a long way astern.

They were close enough to see that certain destruction awaited them if unable to change their position. The pancake and bay ice was piled along the rugged shore, hills high, one piece above another, by the terrible force of wind and current.

When soundings were taken, and it was found that there was but little depth of water to spare, and that even this was gradually lessening, then both Morgan and the skipper became alarmed.

"We must set sail," said the latter, "and try to bring her up a few points, or, depend upon it, our risky voyage will come to a sudden end."
All hands were called.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XIV "HEAVE, AND SHE GOES! HURRAH!"

"All hands on deck! Tumble up, my lads! Tumble up!"

The men needed no second bidding. They did tumble up, every man Jack of them, as merrily as if marriage-bells had called them.

"All hands unship rudder!"

That was the next order. For there was great danger of this being dashed to pieces by the cruel ice.

The rudder was about the only vulnerable portion of the ship indeed.

Two whole hours were spent at this work, for the men, unlike those who sail to Arctic regions, had never been drilled to such work.

The short day had almost worn to a close before the job was finished.

But sail was now got on her, and by means of long poles, twenty men overboard on the ice managed not only to clear the way for her by shoving the pieces to one side, but also to steer the vessel, by keeping her head in the right direction.

Frank was sent to the foretop-gallant masthead to see if he could, by aid of the telescope, descry water to the nor'ards.

The sun was almost setting in the north-west, and there was plenty of light, but no water was visible, only the great white ocean of snow-clad ice, all in motion.

The scene was indeed a strange and impressive one, and after shouting down that there was no open water anywhere in sight, Frank stayed in the cross-trees for quite a long time, hardly ever feeling the cold, so interested was he in all he saw around him.

One thing, however, was evident, namely, that the huge iceberg on which they had spent so many merry hours tobogganing was fast aground down to leeward of them.

The ship passed it slowly.

"Good-bye, old chap," Frank could not help saying. "Sorry we can't take you to England with us, but can't see our way. By, by! See you later on, perhaps."

Then slowly he came below to the deck.

He was happy that it was just tea-time. The ship was now considered out of present danger, but watch after watch must remain on the ice to pole and guide, perhaps for days to come.

"I want," the skipper said, "to make a good offing, for I don't half like the look of the land in there, and should prefer to show it a pair of clean heels, and, please God, we shall before long."

The tea was very comforting, and in spite of the noise above of high winds and flapping sails, the saloon was very jolly and cosy indeed, and Frank was in no hurry to go on deck again.

"Hullo! what is that?" said Talbot, "someone tumbled down the companion?"

"Yes," said Conal laughing, "but it is only Old Pen. He finds that the most expeditious way of getting below now. He just throws himself on his back, head down, and toboggans down the steps."

And a second or two after, Pen appeared in the doorway, and looked wonderingly at the group assembled round the fire.

"You all look very snug here," he seemed to say. "Is there room for poor Old Pen among you?"

"Come along, Pen," said Conal, "we can always make room for you. Sit there on your tail beside Vike, and warm your soles."

"Yah--yah--yah!" cried the monkey, offering Pen a cockroach in quite a friendly way. But delicious as this might be, the bird preferred a bit of tinned salmon.

"Pen," said Duncan, "knows on what side his bread is buttered."

The bird eyed him knowingly, as, leaning on his tail, he held one broad foot up to the blaze.

"Pen", he seemed to say, "prefers his bread buttered on both sides."

It was comparatively late to-night before anyone thought of retiring. Moreover, it was Frank's "all night in", but I do not think he slept a great deal. There was noise enough on deck, aloft, and around the bows on the ice to have awakened Rip Van Winkle himself, but slumber he did at last, though only to revisit in dreams his native land, and the wild and lonesome grandeur of romantic Scotland.

Nay, but I ought not to say lonesome, for how could he feel lonesome with his sweetheart Flora walking by his side, or darting off every now and then to chase a butterfly, or cull some rare and beautiful flower.

Ah! he could not help thinking, even in his dreams, if life were ever ever like this. Late in the middle watch he was awakened in a very unceremonious way indeed. In fact he was well-nigh pitched clean and clear out of his bunk. He wondered what was up, for there was a more sea-like motion about the ship. But, sailor-like, he just turned upon his back and went off to sleep again.

The explanation was simple. The ship had struck a very wide lane of open water. Open to a great extent that is, for many a dangerous and nasty piece of green ice battered the sides of the vessel as, glad to be free, she went dashing through the open water under all sail that could be safely carried. Boats, also under sail, were ahead of her to keep her in the right course.

But at daybreak the captain himself went aloft, and noticing that the open water was visible at least a dozen miles ahead, and that the lane grew wider towards the north, he had the main-yard hauled aback. The boats were then hoisted, and all the crew bore a hand in shipping the rudder once more.

The breeze still held, and a splendid day's record was made nor was there at night any reason to fear danger.

The pieces of ice, however, lay about in all directions, and sometimes three or four appeared ahead, suddenly too. As these could not always be avoided, the plan was to select the largest and steer straight stem-on to that. It is better to do so than to be struck on the broadside by a heavy piece.

But as she sailed through streams of smaller pieces the noise of the cannonading, as heard down below, was sometimes quite deafening.

It would have been very nice for all on board had this lane of water conducted the ship right out into the open northern ocean.

It did not, however, for by and by the wind fell, and slowly, but surely, the sides of the great natural canal came closer and closer together, and finally the good ship Flora M'Vayne was again completely beset, with no signs of water even from the mast-head.

Only all around was the white and dazzling pack. For a whole fortnight, or over, the frost continued, and never a cloud was seen.

One day, however, the active and busy little Frank Trelawney discovered, from the crow's-nest--a barrel high up on the main truck--a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, away down on the southern horizon.

It slowly increased, and before many hours was a huge and rolling mass of cumulus.

Other clouds also were rolling up, and it was evident they were bringing the wind with them.

About the same time the temperature rose, but the glass fell considerably, so that the skipper and Morgan shook their heads ominously.

"We're going to have a big blow, sir," said the latter.

"That is so, mate, and we are not in a very enviable situation."

"Listen, sir!"

The mate held up his finger.

There was a succession of loud reports almost alongside, and the screeching and caterwauling sounds that followed, showed that the ship was being nipped.

"We're in for it, mate; but she has a nicely-rounded bottom, and will rise twenty feet rather than be staved in.

"But," he added, "we can't afford to lose our rudder, so we'll have that unshipped once more."

This was done, and probably only in time, for the pressure increased every hour.

It was evident now the ship would rise if the ice did not go clean through her.

She did rise, and that too with a vengeance, for by next morning she was lying almost on her beam-ends on the adjoining floe.

The yard-arms had been hauled fore-and-aft, else they would have touched the snow.

To live on board now was impossible for days and days to come.

But boats and provisions were landed, and every preparation made to journey northward over the great ice-pack, should the ship go down after again righting herself.

The wind was bitterly cold, even in the poor ship's lee, but they managed to light fires and to cook, though it was indeed a wretched time.

Enveloped in rugs, the boys, with Viking, huddled together at night, but for a long time after lying down sleep was impossible. And when slumber did at last seal their eyes, the dreams they dreamt were far indeed from pleasant.

But now came a warm and almost pleasant wind from the north-north-west, and the ice began to open.

Captain Talbot's anxiety was now at its greatest, for there was water on the starboard side of the ship and the berg or floe on which she lay.

Ropes were therefore attached to her masts, and all hands upon the ice bent on to these, pulling slowly with a long pull and a strong pull.

For more than an hour they made no impression on the vessel, and it was evident the cargo had shifted somewhat.

Talbot gave the steward an order to splice the mainbrace.

He countermanded this almost immediately after, however, for it was now evident the vessel was doing her best to get righted.

"Pull now, lads! Pull steadily all! Heave-oh and she comes!"

Every hand is laid on the ropes; every nerve is braced, and the veins start on the men's perspiring foreheads as they keep up the strain.

Viking barks as if to encourage them.

It is all the poor dog can do.

"Heave and she goes! Heave and she rips! Hurrah! lads, hurrah!"

"She is coming, boys! Heave-oh, again! Another pull does it! Easy! Slack off! Hurrah!"

A wild cheer rent the air as the brave and sturdy barque slid downwards off the floe and took the water like a duck or a penguin.

The men and officers paused now to wipe their faces.

Then all hands got on board and manned the pumps.

No, she was safe. Not a drop of extra water had she made, or was making.

What a relief!

The sun was already sinking low on the horizon, and his last beams lit up the great snow plain 'twixt the ship and sky, as if a canal of crimson blood was there.

Talbot was happy now. The recovery of the ship from her serious position was like a good omen, so, as soon as everything was got on board, he thought it high time to splice the main-brace.

And so did the men also.

All hands were as merry that night as the winning team after a football match.

The wind had gone down, but the weather continued fairly mild, and there was not a sound to be heard on the pack.

On board, however, there were plenty of sounds--sounds of mirth and music in the galley. For Frank had gone forward with his fiddle, and a dance was the natural consequence.

Johnnie Shingles, and old mother Pen, were once more in glorious form, and their dancing brought down the house, and elicited rounds and rounds of applause.

Then dancing became general.

But the fatigues of the day had been very great, so that it is no wonder pipes were soon got out, and a wide and cheerful circle formed about the fire. Songs and yarns were now to be the order of the evening, and although it was not Saturday night it bore a very strong resemblance to it.

Just one song--written and sung by Frank himself, was to-night twice encored. As to its composition I say nothing, except that everything pleases the true-born British sailor that has got the ring of the sea about it.

FRANK'S SONG.

And now, my boys, sit round the fire,
And pass the glasses round;
Our troubles all we'll soon forget
When we are homeward bound.
Ah! many a danger we've defied,
We've weathered many a gale,
Nor stormiest seas, nor grinding ice,
Have ever made us quail!
Though bergs are still about us, boys,
Far north the billows sound,
And we'll welcome every breeze that blows,
When we are homeward bound.
Why should we mourn for pals we've lost,
Or let the tear-drops fall,
They sleep in peace, their sorrows o'er,
Beneath the snow's soft pall.
So crowd around the fire, dear lads,
And pass the glasses round;
Our friends are moored on heavenly shores--
And we are homeward bound.

Courage, True Hearts Volume. II by William Gordon Stables

CHAPTER XV THE ISLES OF DESOLATION.

If to be sailing northwards and east with a spanking breeze, and the great sea of southern ice in which, and on which, so many adventures had been had, was being homeward bound--then were our heroes homeward bound.

It is a nice thing to sing about anyhow of an evening around a cheerful fire; but ah! as I've said before there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, and there is nothing certain at sea save the unexpected.

However, bold Captain Talbot had no intentions of returning to England with what he called only half a voyage.

"I'm going to do my level best," he told the boys about a fortnight after they had got clear and away, "to have a bumper ship, that shall recoup us all for our outlay, to say nothing of our sufferings."

"And now we're bearing up for Kerguelen, aren't we?" said Conal.

"That's the place, lad; and I'm a Dutchman if we don't find the elephant-seals there in countless thousands."

"And when we fill up, what then?"

"O, that question I was considering last night in bed, and I've concluded we had better leave our cargo at the Cape. We can sell well there at present, for oil is much needed. Then we shall clean ship thoroughly, and sail northwards by the Indian Ocean, picking up a cargo at the Cape, at Zanzibar, and wherever else we can find it. We can't go wrong."

"And back home through the Suez Canal. Is that your idea, sir?" said the mate.

"You've hit it completely, Morgan."

"You must remember," he continued after a pause, during which he had been watching the smoke that curled from his lips towards the roof of the saloon, "that I look upon this only as an experimental voyage, and as such it hasn't proved altogether a failure. We shall clear our feet and pay our way, boys; and our adventures will be the theme of many a lecture when at last we reach the old country."

"And not that only, for our success will enable us to float a good company for sealing and steam-whaling in the Antarctic seas. You see, boys, I've been north and south. I've been what you well may term from pole to pole. Well, my opinion is, that although the Arctic lies handier to our own doors than the Antarctic, still it is almost played out. They have been going it among the baby seals a trifle too fast, and have given them no close season, so though I don't say they've killed them nearly all off, still they have scared them pretty considerably, and the modern Arctic seal isn't the innocent confiding creature he was in

the days of my boyhood. No, he has got far more wary, and so packs of them are more difficult to find than formerly.

"And as for Right whales, well, they are far wiser than we have any idea of. Their kingdom is a boundless one. It is the ocean wild and wide, and if they cannot have peace to gather in schools, and enjoy their little parties in the north, why, they are free to come to the Antarctic. And that is just what they have done.

"Well, lads, we shall do something in it, be assured. But we've got to have steam. Strong screw steamers with all appliances to repair damages of every kind; and steam ice-hammers as well. You've thrown in your lot with me, boys, and my name isn't Talbot if I don't help you to make a good thing of it."

"The Antarctic is very far away from England," said Frank thoughtfully.

"There you're right, lad. You are thinking of the expense?"

"Yes."

"Ah! but our company will not bring their ships home to Britain. No, they will cruise from the Antarctic to the very nearest markets--in Australia, for instance. And so it will pay. For should we lose a ship or two, well, the insurance companies must pay that, and they are well able to.

"So that is my scheme, boys, and, on the whole, I don't think it is a bad one. There are so few ways of making fortunes nowadays that when one gets the ball at his foot, he is a fool if he does not hit it as hard as he knows how to."

The voyage to the Kerguelen islands was a very propitious one, and every one on board the sturdy Flora M'Vayne was as happy as the day was long. Vike seemed to have got a new lease of life, and wallowed in the sunshine.

"It is such a change, you know," he told Conal, "and I believe we'll soon be back once more in bonnie Scotland, and won't I tear around the hills just!"

The monkey was less melancholy now, and the cough which troubled him so much while in the ice, appeared to have quite gone.

And old Pen seemed to be almost beside himself with delight. He used to go tearing along the decks, flapping his wings and shrieking as if possessed, and even in his calmer moods he would sometimes leap up suddenly and practise waltzing all alone.

There was a delightful breeze nearly all the time. If not astern it was a beam wind, and so the Flora went ripping through the dark-blue seas, every wave of which sparkled in the sunshine.

Many whales were seen, but as Talbot depended most on getting among the elephants now, boats were never lowered to go whaling.

Frank spent much of his time in the crow's-nest.

He was not afraid to swing through the sky at that giddy height, although the first time he clambered up he believed that the crew would have to lower him down with block-and-tackle, he was so thoroughly frightened.

"On deck there!" rang the young fellow's voice one forenoon from the nest.

"Ay, ay, lad," from the skipper.

"Land in sight!"

"Where away?"

"On the starboard bow."

"And what does it look like?"

"I can only raise some mountain cones. They seem volcanic, and their sides are covered with snow."

"Bravo! Come down and I'll get up myself."

Frank was soon on deck.

"Well done, Frank," said Talbot laughing. "I promised a pair of canvas trousers to the man who should first sight land, and you shall have them."

"Yes, thank you, and I shall wear them too."

Away went the skipper up to the crow's-nest, and before long came an order to alter the course a point or two.

Close to the Islands of Desolation, as Kerguelen is called, it was fully a week before the Flora M'Wayne was able to reach and enter one of the friths or creeks. For on the very day on which land was sighted a fearful hurricane swept down on the ship, and so suddenly, too, that before sails could be taken in many were rent into ribbons, that cracked and rattled with a sound like the independent firing of troops in action. There was no standing against wind of this awful violence, and it was necessary to run for it under what is termed "bare poles", that is, the smallest amount of sail that can be carried with steering power.

But Kerguelen is the region of hurricanes, and few ships that visit these wild shores escape with impunity.

The coast of the chief islands was found to be iron-bound, high, barren, and rocky, but when they entered and sailed along one of the creeks, scenery of quite a different kind was met with.

It would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the strange, wild, but solitary beauty of this scenery. Solitary, that is, as regards sight or sign of human being.

But bird life was in evidence everywhere; in fact, Kerguelen might be called the home of the sea-birds. They have seen but little of man, however, and know nothing of his evil or demoniacal ways. They look upon him only as a curious kind of biped, of the penguin species, but without feathers.

Well, when Duncan or Frank went on shore for a walk with the skipper, the gulls, the petrels, the penguins, the albatrosses, and cormorants flew around them in thousands, and the din they made was almost deafening.

Nor were our heroes free altogether from their attentions, which sometimes were rather of an objectionable character, especially when students of nature in the shape of huge yellow-cheeked penguins waddled up to the place where they were sitting, and began examining their jackets with the greatest curiosity. Pecking holes in them, too, and pulling at them.

When rudely thrust off they would retire but a little way, and stand watching the boys with great interest.

"Well, I never!" they seemed to say, looking at them from one side of their heads.

"Well, I'm gee-whizzled!" gazing at them with the other.

"Penguins, aren't you? But the ugliest lot ever we saw. We really wonder your mothers allow you go about like that!"

To-day Captain Talbot and his boys went exploring, but a man was with them to carry the game they killed, and these consisted chiefly of ducks and rabbits. The former showed no fear, but the latter scurried away at once.

They journeyed far inland, and made many interesting discoveries, which proved that these islands are not so utterly useless as they are supposed to be. Indeed, they could be worked profitably both for coals and oil.

And Talbot made a general survey of the regions traversed and took ample notes.

"This would make an excellent centre for our great Antarctic whaling and sealing expedition," he said. "And you and I, boys, might build ourselves a house just under the shelter of these green lichen-clad rocks yonder."

"Oh, it would be awfully nice!" cried Frank.

"And couldn't we have a garden?"

"Yes, and plant and grow crops."

"And trees?"

"Yes, again, and if we are spared to come back here we shall bring with us a few hundreds of young pine-trees--Scotch, and spruce--and plenty of seed."

"How delightful! I should like so much to be a Crusoe. But listen! Surely that was a dog barking high up the hill yonder."

And so it was, for next moment down came Vike with a rabbit in his mouth.

"Why, Vike," cried Duncan, "we left you on board."

"Very likely," said Vike, speaking with his tail and eyes as he lay there panting from his exertions, with about two yards--more or less--of pink tongue hanging out over his alabaster teeth. "Very likely, but five hundred yards of a swim isn't much to a dog like me. And what is more. Wowff, wowff! you had no business to bolt away without me. Wowff! Don't do it again!"

"Well, now," said Talbot to his mate next day at breakfast, "what do you say to stay here till we lay in a real good cargo, for outside the elephants are in thousands, and the poor things have young beside them too."

"The idea is excellent, sir," said Morgan, "and I have another."

"Out with it, mate. We can't have too many ideas in this world, if we mean to be successful. These ideas of ours don't all hold water; but then we can go over them at our leisure and pick out the best."

"That's it, sir. Well, why not get all the skins we can procure, and then make off the oil. Coals are plentiful on shore, and we have cauldrons, you know."

"Bravo! Morgan. That is just what we shall do."

So after breakfast boats were called away, and returned in the evening laden to the gunwales.

So the vessel was shifted nearer to the open sea, and thus the whalers could go and return twice or even thrice in one day with their hauls.

It was no easy work, you may well believe, when I tell you that the skin and blubber of one of these huge sea-elephants sometimes weighed eight hundred-weight.

Poor, great, innocent brutes, it did seem a shame to kill their young before their eyes! The sight of the blood made mothers and fathers frantic, and they rushed on shore as if bent on revenge, but only to fall victims to the rifles of the gunners.

It was a bloody and terrible scene, and I have no desire to describe it. Indeed, were I to tell the reader one quarter of the cruelties I have seen enacted by sealers, I should so harrow his feelings that his dreams would not be pleasant for one night afterwards.

Not merely for a fortnight, but for more than three weeks did the *Flora* lie at Kerguelen, but in a sheltered cove, so that the hurricanes, that on four or five different occasions swept down from the mountains with terrific violence, had but little effect on her. By this time they had boiled down all their oil, salted all their skins and tanked them, and were in reality a bumper ship.

I must not forget one little incident that took place about a week after their arrival.

One day that extremely wise and wondrous bird, Old Pen, went hopping down the starboard gangway and leapt into the sea.

Vike, who had been observing him, sprang right off the bulwark and tried most energetically to head him off.

The bird and dog met face to face, and it really seemed as if a conversation somewhat as follows took place.

Old Pen: "Hullo, what's your game?"

Viking: "I'm going to rush you back to your ship."

O. P.: "Your grandmother! I won't be rushed. I can swim better than you, and dive like a fish-hawk. So don't let us quarrel. In spring, you know, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. I've got an appointment on shore here. Ta, ta! Be as good's ye can."

Vike: "But I say, Old Pen--"

Old Pen had dived and was out of sight, and so Vike swam sadly back to the ship once more.

Just a few hours, however, before the anchor was got up, and while the crew were busy shaking out the sails before departing for the far west, something between a squawk and a squeal was heard alongside, and, sure enough, there was Old Pen come back again.

He was assisted on board, and shook himself as unconcerned as if nothing unusual had happened.

But Viking's delight knew no bounds, nor did that of little Johnnie Shingles. The former went tearing round and round the deck, like a hairy hurricane.

"If I don't allay my feelings thus," cried Vike, "I shall go clean off my chump."

Now it happened that Frank was on deck with his fiddle, ready to play to the men as they got up the anchor.

But, seeing how matters stood, he instantly struck up a lively schottische.

"Squawk--s--squaw--awk!" cried Old Pen, waving his flippers.

"Hurray!" cried Johnnie, and next moment he and his strange partner were whirling round and round on the quarter-deck, in one of the maddest, merriest dances that surely ever yet was seen.

And I don't believe there was a soul on board who was not rejoiced that Old Pen had returned once again.

That evening they were far away on the quiet and lonesome sea, and, standing by the fire in the saloon warming his flat feet, one by one, as usual, was Old Pen, while near him, sound asleep, lay Vike.

"Awfully good of the bird to come off in time, wasn't it, boys?" said the skipper, relighting his pipe. "If he hadn't come back I should have believed I was about to be deserted by all my good fortune.

"We are glad to see you, Pen, and hope you'll never leave us again. But what put it into your silly noddle to go away at all, Pen?"

Pen made two hops of the space between him and the captain. Then leaning his head on his knee he looked up drolly with one eye--which being half-closed gave him the appearance of winking.

"I did think of getting spliced, you know," he seemed to say, "and more than one lovely Lady Pen asked me to fly with her to a foreign shore. Nary a fly," says I, "not if Pen knows it. Marriage is a precarious kind of experiment, so after flirting around for a bit I remembered my old friends and just floated off again."

Fine weather all the way to the Cape, with stunsails set 'low and aloft most of the time.

Ah, reader, there isn't much to beat the life a sailor leads after all!

In foul weather? Yes, foul or fine, and it isn't always blowing big guns at sea.

And Jack has no undergrowth of care to curl round the very roots of his life, and try to swamp him.

If he does his duty--and what real sailor doesn't?--he may be as happy and jolly as the Prince of Wales, only a vast deal more so.

Besides, what Jack afloat is there, who has not some loved one to think of when far away at sea; someone that he knows right well is thinking, ay, and praying, for him. So even in storm and in danger Jack may sing:

"Blow high, blow low, let tempests tear

The main-mast by the board;

My heart with thoughts of thee, my dear,

And love well stored,

Shall brave all danger, scorn all fear.

The roaring winds, the raging sea,

In hopes on shore,
To be once more,
Safe moor'd with thee."

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The crow's-nest had been taken down, but stride-legs on the foretop-gallant cross-trees sat Frank one sunny forenoon. Gently to and fro swings the ship, the top-masts forming the arc of a great circle. But Frank minds not the motion.

He is an ancient mariner now.

Or he thinks he is.

"On deck there!"

It is a shout which is half hysterical with joy.

"Land on the lee-bow. The Cape, sir! The Cape!"

Then a cheer rises up from far below that makes the very sails shiver.

Vike starts up and barks, and taking this for an invitation to dance, Old Pen with a squawk and a squeal springs up, and next minute Johnnie Shingles and he are wheeling round in fine style on the quarter-deck.

"Land! Land! Land!" And, for a time at least, the dangers of the deep are past.

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