The Coxswain's Bride
Vol.I

By
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The Coxswain's Bride
Chapter 1.
The Rising TideA Tale of the Sea.

The coxswain went by the name of Sturdy Bob among his mates. Among the women of the village he was better known as handsome Bob, and, looking at him, you could not help seeing that both titles were appropriate, for our coxswain was broad and strong as well as good looking, with that peculiar cast of features and calm decided manner which frequently distinguish the men who are born to lead their fellows.

Robert Massey, though quite young, was already a leader of mennot only by nature but by professionbeing coxswain of the Greyton lifeboat, and, truly, the men who followed his lead had need to be made of good stuff, with bold, enthusiastic, self sacrificing spirits, for he often led them into scenes of wildbut, hold! We must not forecast.

Well, we introduce our hero to the reader on a calm September evening, which blazed with sunshine. The sun need not have been mentioned, however, but for the fact that it converted the head of a fair haired fisher girl, seated beside Bob, into a ball of rippling gold, and suffused her young cheeks with a glow that rudely intensified her natural colour.

She was the coxswain’s bride elect, and up to that date the course of their true love had run quite smoothly in spite of adverse proverbs.

“I can’t believe my luck,” said Bob, gravely.

He said most things gravely, though there was not a man in Greyton who could laugh more heartily than he at a good joke.

“What luck do you mean, Bob?” asked Nellie Carr, lifting her eyes from the net she was mending, and fixing them on the coxswain’s bronzed face with an air of charming innocence. Then, becoming suddenly aware of what he meant without being told, she gave vent to a quick little laugh, dropped her eyes on the net, and again became intent on repairs.

“To think,” continued Bob, taking two or three draws at his short pipefor our hero was not perfect, being, like so many of his class, afflicted with the delusion of tobacco!“to think that there’ll be no Nellie Carr to morrow afternoon, only a Mrs Massey! The tide o’ my life is risin’ fast, Nelliealmost at flood now. It seems too good to be true”

“Right you are, boy,” interrupted a gruff but hearty voice, as a burly fisherman “rolled” round the stern of the boat in front of which the lovers were seated on the sand. “W’en my Moggie an’ me was a coortin’ we thought, an’ said, it was too good to be true, an’ so it was; leastwise it was too true to be good, for Moggie took me for better an’ wuss, though it stood to reason I couldn’t be both, d’ee see? an’ I soon found her wuss than better, which”

“Come, come, Joe Slag,” cried Bob, “let’s have none o’ your ill omened growls to night. What brings you here?”

“I’ve comed for the key o’ the lifeboat,” returned Slag, with a knowing glance at Nellie. “If the glass ain’t tellin’ lies we may have use for her before long.”

Massey pulled the key from his pocket, and gave it to Slag, who was his bowman, and who, with the exception of himself, was the best man of the lifeboat crew.

“I’ll have to follow him,” said Bob, rising soon after his mate had left, “so good bye, Nellie, till to morrow.”

He did not stoop to kiss her, for the wide sands lay before them with fisher boys playing thereonapparently in their fathers’ boots and sou’ westersand knots of observant comrades scattered about.

“See that you’re not late at church to morrow, Bob,” said the girl, with a smile and a warning look.

“Trust me,” returned Bob.

As he walked towards the lifeboat housea conspicuous little building near the

pierhe tried to blow off some of the joy in his capacious breast by whistling.

“Why, Slag,” he exclaimed on entering the shed, “I do believe you’ve been an’ put on the blue ribbon!”

“That’s just what I’ve done, Bob,” returned the other. “I thought you’d ’ave noticed it at the boat; but I forgot you could see nothin’ but the blue of Nellie’s eyes.”

“Of course not. Who’d expect me to see anything else when I’m beside her?” retorted Bob. “But what has made you change your mind? I’m sure the last time I tried to get you to hoist the blue peter ye were obstinate enoughdead against it.”

“True, Bob; but since that time I’ve seed a dear woman that I was fond of die from drink, an’ I’ve seed Tom Riley, one of our best men, get on the road to ruin through the same; so I’ve hoisted the blue flag, as ye see.”

“That’s a good job, Slag, but don’t you forget, my lad, that the blue ribbon won’t save you. There’s but one Saviour of men. Nevertheless, it’s well to fight our battles under a flag, an’ the blue is a good oneas things go. Show your colours and never say die; that’s my motto. As you said, Slag, the glass is uncommon low to day. I shouldn’t wonder if there was dirty weather brewin’ up somewhere.”

The coxswain was right, and the barometer on that occasion was a true prophet. The weather which “brewed up” that evening was more than “dirty,” it was tempestuous; and before midnight a tremendous hurricane was devastating the western shores of the kingdom. Many a good ship fought a hard battle that night with tide and tempest, and many a bad one went down. The gale was short lived but fierce, and it strewed our western shores with wreckage and corpses, while it called forth the energies and heroism of our lifeboat and coastguard men from north to south.

Driving before the gale that night under close reefed topsails, a small but well found schooner came careering over the foaming billows from the regions of the far south, freighted with merchandise and gold and happy human beings. Happy! Ay, they were happy, both passengers and crew, for they were used by that time to facing and out riding gales; and was not the desired haven almost in sighthome close at hand?

The captain, however, did not share in the general satisfaction. Out in “blue water” he feared no gale, but no one knew better than himself that the enemy was about to assail him at his weakest momentwhen close to land. No one, however, could guess his thoughts as he stood there upon the quarter deck,

clad in oil skins, drenched with spray, glancing now at the compass, now at the sails, or at the scarce visible horizon.

As darkness deepened and tempest increased, the passengers below became less cheerful, with the exception of one curly haired little girl, whose exuberant spirit nothing could quell. Her young widowed mother had given in to the little one's importunities, and allowed her to sit up late on this the last night at sea, to lend a helping hand while she packed up so as to be ready for landing next day. Consent had been the more readily given that the white haired grandfather of little Lizzie volunteered to take care of her and keep her out of mischief.

The other passengers were as yet only subdued, not alarmed. There were men and women and little ones from the Australian cities, rough men from the sheep farms, and bronzed men from the gold mines. All were busy making preparations to land on the morrow. With the exception of those preparations things on board went on much as they had been going on in "dirty weather" all the voyage through.

Suddenly there was a crash! Most of the male passengers, knowing well what it meant, sprang to the companion ladderthose of them at least who had not been thrown down or paralysedand rushed on deck. Shrieks and yells burst forth as if in emulation of the howling winds. Crash followed crash, as each billow lifted the doomed vessel and let her fall on the sands with a shock that no structure made by man could long withstand. Next moment a terrific rending overhead told that one, or both, of the masts had gone by the board. At the same time the sea found entrance and poured down hatchways and through opening seams in cataracts. The inclined position of the deck showed that she was aground.

The very thought of being aground comforted some, for, to their minds, it implied nearness to land, and land was, in their idea, safety. These simple ones were doomed to terrible enlightenment. Little Lizzie, pale and silent from terror, clung to her grandfather's neck; the young widow to his disengaged arm. With the other arm the old man held on to a brass rod, and prevented all three from being swept to leeward, where several of the women and children were already struggling to escape from a mass of water and wrecked furniture.

"Come on deckall hands!" shouted a hoarse voice, as one of the officers leaped into the cabin, followed by several men, who assisted the people to rise.

It is usual to keep passengers below as much as possible in such circumstances, but the position of the schooner, with her bow high on a bank, and her stern deep in the water, rendered a different course needful on this

occasion.

With difficulty the passengers were got up to the bow, where they clustered and clung about the windlass and other points of vantage. Then it was that the true nature of their calamity was revealed, for no land was visible, nothing was to be seen around them but a hell of raging foam, which, in the almost total darkness of the night, leaped and glimmered as if with phosphoric light. Beyond this circle of, as it were, wild lambent flame, all was black, like a wall of ebony, from out of which continually there rushed into view coiling, curling, hoary headed monsters, in the shape of roaring billows, which burst upon and over them, deluging the decks, and causing the timbers of the ship to writhe as if in pain.

“We’ve got on the tail o’ the sands,” muttered a sailor to some one as he passed, axe in hand, to cut away the wreckage of the masts, which were pounding and tugging alongside.

On the sands! Yes, but no sands were visible, for they had struck on an outlying bank, far from shore, over which the ocean swept like the besom of destruction.

It was nearly low water at the time of the disaster. As the tide fell the wreck ceased to heave. Then it became possible for the seamen to move about without clinging to shrouds and stanchions for very life.

“Fetch a rocket, Jim,” said the captain to one of the men.

Jim obeyed, and soon a whizzing line of light was seen athwart the black sky.

“They’ll never see it,” muttered the first mate, as he got ready another rocket. “Weather’s too thick.”

Several rockets were fired, and then, to make more sure of attracting the lifeboat men, a tar barrel, fastened to the end of a spar, was thrust out ahead and set on fire. By the grand lurid flare of this giant torch the surrounding desolation was made more apparent, and at the fearful sight hearts which had hitherto held up began to sink in despair.

The mate’s fears seemed to be well grounded, for no answering signal was seen to rise from the land, towards which every eye was anxiously strained. One hour passed, then another, and another, but still no help came. Then the tide began to rise, and with it, of course, the danger to increase. All this time rockets had been sent up at intervals, and tar barrels had been kept burning.

“We had better make the women and children fast, sir,” suggested the mate, as

a heavy mass of spray burst over the bulwarks and drenched them.

“Do so,” replied the captain, gathering up a coil of rope to assist in the work.

“Is this necessary?” asked the widow, as the captain approached her.

“I fear it is,” he replied. “The tide is rising fast. In a short time the waves will be breaking over us again, and you will run a chance of bein’ swept away if we don’t make you fast. But don’t despair, they must have seen our signals by this time, an’ we shall soon have the lifeboat out.”

“God grant it,” murmured the widow, fervently, as she strained poor little trembling Lizzie to her breast.

But as the moments flew by and no succour came, some gave way altogether and moaned piteously, while others appeared to be bereft of all capacity of thought or action. Many began to pray in frantic incoherence, and several gave vent to their feelings in curses. Only a few maintained absolute self possession and silence. Among these were the widow and one or two of the other women.

They were in this condition when one of the crew who had been noted as a first rate singer of sea songs, and the “life of the fo’c’s’l,” had occasion to pass the spot where the passengers were huddled under the lee of the starboard bulwarks.

“Is there never a one of ye,” he asked, almost sternly, “who can pray like a Christian without screechin’? You don’t suppose the Almighty’s deaf, do you?”

This unexpected speech quieted the noisy ones, and one of the women, turning to a man beside her, said, “You pray for us, Joe.”

Joe was one of those who had remained, from the first, perfectly still, except when required to move, or when those near him needed assistance. He was a grave elderly man, whose quiet demeanour, dress, and general appearance, suggested the idea of a city missionaryan idea which was strengthened when, in obedience to the woman’s request, he promptly prayed, in measured sentences, yet with intense earnestness, for deliverancefirst from sin and then from impending deathin the name of Jesus. His petition was very short, and it was barely finished when a wave of unusual size struck the vessel with tremendous violence, burst over the side and almost swept every one into the sea. Indeed, it was evident that some of the weaker of the party would have perished then if they had not been secured to the vessel with ropes.

It seemed like a stern refusal of the prayer, and was regarded as such by some

of the despairing ones, when a sudden cheer was heard and a light resembling a great star was seen to burst from the darkness to windward.

“The lifeboat!” shouted the captain, and they cheered with as much hearty joy as if they were already safe.

A few minutes more and the familiar blue and white boat of mercy leaped out of darkness into the midst of the foaming waters like a living creature.

It was the boat from the neighbouring port of Brentley. Either the storm drift had not been so thick in that direction as in the neighbourhood of Greyton, or the Brentley men had kept a better look out. She had run down to the wreck under sail. On reaching ita short distant to windwardthe sail was lowered, the anchor dropped, the cable payed out, and the boat eased down until it was under the lee of the wreck. But the first joy at her appearance quickly died out of the hearts of some, who were ignorant of the powers of lifeboats and lifeboat men, when the little craft was seen at one moment tossed on the leaping foam till on a level with the ship’s bulwarks, at the next moment far down in the swirling waters under the mizzen chains; now sheering off as if about to forsake them altogether; anon rushing at their sides with a violence that threatened swift destruction to the boat; never for one instant still; always tugging and plunging like a mad thing. “How can we ever get into that?” was the thought that naturally sprang into the minds of some with chilling power.

Those, however, who understood the situation better, had more legitimate ground for anxiety, for they knew that the lifeboat, if loaded to its utmost capacity, could not carry more than half the souls that had to be saved. On becoming aware of this the men soon began to reveal their true characters. The unselfish and gentle made way for the women and children. The coarse and brutal, casting shame and every manly feeling aside, struggled to the front with oaths and curses, some of them even using that false familiar motto, “Every man for himself, and God for us all!”

But these received a check at the gangway, for there stood the captain, revolver in hand. He spoke but one word“back,” and the cravens slunk away. The mild man who had offered prayer sat on the ship’s bulwarks calmly looking on. He understood the limited capacity of the boat, and had made up his mind to die.

“Now, madam, make haste,” cried the mate, pushing his way towards the widow.

“Come, father,” she said, holding out her hand; but the old man did not move.

“There are more women and little ones,” he said, “than the boat can hold.

Good bye, darling. We shall meet againup yonder. Go."

"Never!" exclaimed the widow, springing to his side. "I will die with you, father! But here, boatman, save, oh, save my child!"

No one attended to her. At such terrible moments men cannot afford to wait on indecision. Other women were ready and only too glad to go. With a sense almost of relief at the thought that separation was now impossible, the widow strained the child to her bosom and clung to her old father.

At that moment the report of a pistol was heard, and a man fell dead upon the deck. At the last moment he had resolved to risk all and rushed to the side, intending to jump into the boat.

"Shove off," was shouted. The boat shot from the vessel's side. The bowman hauled on the cable. In a few seconds the oars were shipped, the anchor was got in, and the overloaded but insubmergible craft disappeared into the darkness out of which it had come.

The wretched people thus left on the wreck knew well that the boat could not make her port, land the rescued party, and return for them under some hours. They also knew that the waves were increasing in power and volume with the rising water, and that their vessel could not survive another tide. Can we wonder that most of them again gave way to despairforgetting that with God "all things are possible?"

They were not yet forsaken, however. On the pier head at Greyton their signals had indeed been observed, but while the Brentley boat, owing to its position, could run down to the wreck with all sail set, it was impossible for that of Greyton to reach it, except by pulling slowly against wind and tide.

The instant that Bob Massey saw the flare of the first tar barrel he had called out his men. One after another they came leaping over the rockseager for the God like work of saving life.

It is one of the grand characteristics of our lifeboatmen that on being summoned to the fight there are often far more volunteers than are required. Joe Slag, as in duty bound, was first to answer the call. Then several of the younger men came running down. Last of allalmost too lateTom Riley appeared, buckling on his lifebelt as he ran. His gait was not quite steady, and his face was flushed. The coxswain was quick to note these facts.

"Take that lifebelt off!" he said, sternly, when Riley came up.

No need to ask why. The tippler knew the reason why only too well, and he

also knew that it was useless as well as dangerous to disobey the coxswain. He took off the belt at once, flung it down, and staggered away back to his grog shop.

A powerful young fishermanwho had felt almost heart broken by being refused permission to go for want of roomgladly put on the belt and took Riley's place. Another minute and they were out of the harbour, battling with the billows and fighting their way inch by inch against the howling blast. At last they got out so far that they could hoist sail and run with a slant for the wreck.

Story 1 Chapter 2.

It was daylight by the time the Greyton lifeboat arrived at the scene of action, but the thick, spray charged atmosphere was almost as bad to see through as the blackness of night.

"I'm afeared she's gone," shouted Slag to the coxswain, putting his hand to his mouth to prevent the words being blown bodily away.

"NoI see her bearing sou' west," was the brief reply, as Bob Massey plied his steering oar.

A few minutes later, and the despairing people on the wreck, catching sight of the boat, greeted her with a long, wild cheer of reviving hope.

"What is it?" asked the widow, faintly, for she had been growing gradually weaker from prolonged exposure.

"The lifeboat, darling," said her father. "Did I not say that He would not forsake us?"

"Thank God!" murmured the poor woman, fervently. "Look up, Lizzie; the lifeboat is coming to save us!"

The child, who had been comparatively warm and sheltered, at the expense of her mother, looked up and smiled.

Soon the boat was alongside, and much the same scene that we have already described was re enacted; but there were no rebels this time. By the captain's resolute bearing at first many lives had probably been saved.

When most of the people had been lowered into the boatnot without great risk and many bruisesthe widow, who, cowering with her father and child under the forecastle, had been overlooked, was led to the side with her child.

“Not together, ma’am,” said the captain. “You’d likely drop her. Let me lower the child down first; or come first yourselfthat will be better.”

“Give Lizzie to me,” said the grandfather. “I’ll hold her till you are safe, and ready to receive her.”

“Look alive, ma’am,” urged one of the lifeboat men, who had scrambled on deck to render assistance.

The widow was soon in the boat, and held out her arms for little Lizzie. Somehowno one could tell howthe men made a bungle of it. Perhaps the very fear of doing so was the cause. Instead of being caught by the boatmen, Lizzie slipped between the boat and the vessel into the boiling sea. Giving one agonised cry, the grandfather leaped after her, but the surging boat swept in at the moment, and the old man fortunately fell into that instead of the sea. He was not hurt, for strong arms had been upraised to receive him. The little child rose above the foam as she was whirled past the stern of the boat by a swift current. Bob Massey saw her little out stretched arms. There was no time for thought or consideration. With one bound the coxswain was overboard. Next moment the crew saw him far astern with the child in his arms.

“Get ’em all aboard first!” came back, even against the wind, in Bob’s powerful, deep toned voice.

Another moment, and he was lost to sight in the boiling waste of waters. Slag knew well what he meant. If they should cast off the rope before rescuing all, for the purpose of picking up the coxswain, there would be no possibility of getting back again to the schooner, for she was fast breaking up. Every current and eddy about these sands was well known to Joe Slag, also the set of the tidesbesides, had not Bob got on his lifebelt? He felt, nevertheless, that it was a tremendous risk to let him go. But what could poor Slag do? To cast off at once would have been to sacrifice about a dozen lives for the sake of saving two. It was a fearful trial. Joe loved Bob as a brother. His heart well nigh burst, but it stood the trial. He did his duty, and held on to the wreck!

Duty, on that occasion, however, was done with a promptitude, and in a fashion, that was not usual in one of his sedate nature. Fortunately, none but men remained on the wreck by that time.

“Tumble ’em insharp!” cried Slag.

The lifeboat men obeyed literally, and tumbled them in with a celerity that might almost have awakened surprise in a sack of potatoes!

To haul up the anchor would have been slow work. Slageconomical by

naturebecame extravagant for once. An axe made short work of cable and anchor.

“Let ’em go!” he growled, as the boat drifted away.

The sail was set with miraculous speed, for now the wind was in their favour, and the gay lifeboat bounded off in the direction where Bob had disappeared, as though it felt a lively interest in the recovery of its coxswain. It seemed as if the very elements sympathised with their anxiety, for just then the gale sensibly abated, and the rising sun broke through a rift in the grey clouds.

“There he isI see him!” shouted the man in the bowpointing eagerly ahead.

“It’s on’y a bit o’ wreck, boy,” cried a comrade.

“Right you are,” returned the bowman.

“There he is, though, an’ no mistake, this time. Port!port! hard a port!”

As he spoke, the boat swept round into a sort of cross current among the waves, where an object resembling a man was observed spinning slowly round like a lazy teetotum. They were soon alongside. A dozen claw like hands made a simultaneous grasp, and hauled the object on board with a mighty cheer, for it was, indeed, the coxswainalive, though much exhaustedwith his precious little curly haired burden in his arms.

The burden was also alive, and not much exhausted, for the weather was comparatively warm at the time, and Bob had thrust her little head into the luxuriant thicket of his beard and whiskers; and, spreading his great hands and arms all over her little body, had also kept her well out of the waterall which the great buoyancy of his lifebelt enabled him easily to do.

Shall we describe the joy of the widow and the grandfather? No; there are some sacred matters in life which are best left to the imagination. The sunshine which had begun to scatter the clouds, and flood both land and sea, was typical of the joy which could find no better means than sobs wherewith to express gratitude to the God of mercy.

We have said that the gale had begun to abate. When the lifeboat escaped from the turmoil of cross seas that raged over the sands and got into deep water, all difficulties and dangers were past, and she was able to lay her course for Greyton harbour.

“Let’s have another swig o’ that cold tea,” said Bob Massey, resuming his rightful post at the helm. “It has done me a power o’ good. I had no notion that cold tea was so good for warmin’ the cockles o’ one’s heart.”

Ah! Bob Massey, it was not the cold tea, but the saving of that little girl that sent the life's blood careering so warmly through your veins! However, there's no harm done in putting it down to the credit of the cold tea. Had the tea been hot, there might have been some truth in your fancy.

"What's the time?" asked Bob, with a sudden look of anxiety.

"Just gone ten," said Slag, consulting a chronometer that bore some resemblance to an antique warming pan.

The look of anxiety on the coxswain's countenance deepened.

"Ease off the sheet a bit," he said, looking sternly over the weather quarter, and whistling for a fresher breeze, though most men would have thought the breeze fresh enough already.

As if to accommodate him, and confirm the crew in the whistling superstition, the breeze did increase at the moment, and sent the lifeboat, as one of the men said, "snorin'" over the wild sea towards the harbour of Greyton.

It was a grand sight to behold the pier of the little port on that stormy morning. Of course, it had soon become known that the lifeboat was out. Although at starting it had been seen by only a few of the old saltswhose delight it was to recall the memory of grand stormy times long past, by facing the gales at all hours in oiled coats and sou' westersthe greater part of the fishing village only became aware of the fact on turning out to work in the morning. We have said that the gale had moderated, and the sun had come out, so that the pier was crowded, not only with fisher folk, but with visitors to the port, and other landsmen.

Great was the hope, and sanguine the expectation of the crowd, when, after long and anxious waiting, the lifeboat was at last descried far out at sea, making straight for the harbour.

"All right, Bill," exclaimed an old fisherman, who had been for some time past sweeping the horizon with his glass, "the flag's a flyin'."

"What does that mean?" asked a smart young lady, who had braved the blast and run the risk of a salt wash from the sprays at the pier end in her eager desire to see the boat arrive.

"It means, Miss, that they've managed to save somebodyhow many, in course, we can't tell till they come."

There was a strong disposition on the part of the crowd to cheer when this was

said.

After a few minutes' further observation, the old man with the glass murmured, as if speaking to himself, "I do believe she's chock full o' people."

When this was repeated, the suppressed cheer broke forth, and the excitement increased. Soon the people with good eyes could see for themselves that the swiftly approaching boat was as full as she could hold of human beings. At the same time, those who were in the boat could see the swarms of sympathisers on the pier who awaited their arrival.

But there was one man who took no note of these things, and seemed indifferent to everything around him. The coxswain of the lifeboat was spiritually absent from the scene.

"You seem to've got the fidgets, Bob," remarked Joe Slag, looking earnestly at his friend. "That swim has been too much for 'ee."

"'Taint that, Joe," replied Bob, quickly. "What's the time now, lad?"

Pulling out the antique warming pan again, Slag said it was nigh a quarter past ten, and added that he, (Bob), seemed to be "uncommon consarned about the time o' day that mornin'."

"And so would you be, lad," returned the coxswain, in a low voice, as he advanced his mouth to his comrade's ear, "if you was in my fix. I've got to be spliced this day before twelve, an' the church is more'n two miles inland!"

"That's awk'ard," returned Slag, with a troubled look. "But, I say, Bob, you've kep' this uncommon close from us alleh? I never heerd ye was to be spliced so soon."

"Of course I kep' it close, 'cos I wanted to give you an' my mates a surprise, but it strikes me I'll give some other people a surprise to day, for there's no time to put on clean toggery."

"You'll never manage it," said Slag, in a sympathetic tone, as he once more consulted the warming pan. "It's gettin' on for half arter ten now, an' it takes a mortal time to rig out in them go to meetin' slops."

"Do I look anything like a bridegroom as I am?" asked the coxswain with a curious glance.

"Sca'cely," replied Slag, surveying his friend with a grim smile"(mind your helm, Bob, there's a awk'ard run on the tide round the pier head, you know.) No; you're not wery much like one. Even if your toggery was all ship

shapewhich it ain’tit would stand dryin’, and your hair would be the better o’ brushin’to say nothin’ o’ your beardan’ it do seem, too, as if a bit o’ soap might improve your hands an’ face arter last night’s work. No, Bob, I couldn’t honestly say as you’re exactly ship shape as you stand.”

“Listen, Joe Slag,” said Bob Massey, with sudden earnestness. “I’ve never yet come in after a rescue without seein’ the boat hauled up an’ made snug. ‘Dooty first, an’ pleasure arter,’ that’s bin my motto, as you know. But dooty lies in another direction this day, so you promise to see her hauled up, an’ cleaned, an’ properly housed, won’t you?”

“In coorse I does.”

“Well, then,” continued Bob, in the same low, earnest tone, “arter that’s done, you’ll go an’ invite all our mates an’ friends to a jolly blow out in the big shed alongside o’ my old mother’s house. Don’t tell who invites ’em, or anything about it, an’ ask as many as like to comethe shed’s big enough to hold ’em all. Only be sure to make ’em understand that they’ll get no drink stronger than coffee an’ tea. If they can’t enjoy themselves on that, they may go to the grog shop, but they needn’t come to me. My mother will be there, and she’ll keep ’em in order!”

“What!” exclaimed Slag, with a look of slight surprise. “Your mother! Her what’s bin bed ridden for years, an’ hasn’t got no legs at allleastwise not to speak of?”

“Just so, lad. We’ll lift her in, bed an’ all. Now you be off to the bow. Oars out, lads; stand by the halyards!”

They were by that time close to the pier head, where the people were shouting and cheering, some of them even weeping, and waving hats, ’kerchiefs, sticks, and umbrellas, almost wild with joy at seeing so many fellow creatures rescued from the maw of the hungry sea.

The first man who leaped out when the lifeboat touched the pier was the coxswain, dripping, dirty, and dishevelled.

“Bless you, my gallant fellow!” exclaimed an irrepressible old enthusiast, stepping forward and attempting to grasp the coxswain’s hand.

But Bob Massey, brushing past him, ran along the pier, leaped a fence, and sprang up the steep path that led to the cliffs, over the top of which he was finally seen to bound and disappear.

“Poor fellow!” exclaimed the irrepressible enthusiast, looking aghast at Slag,

“exposure and excitement have driven him mad!”

“Looks like it!” replied Slag, with a quiet grin, as he stooped to assist the widow and little Lizzie to land, while ready hands were out stretched to aid and congratulate the old grandfather, and the rest of the rescued people.

The coxswain ranay, he ran as he had been wont to run when he was a wild little fisher boyregardless alike of appearances and consequences. The clock of the village steeple told him that the appointed hour had almost arrived. Two miles was a long way to run in heavy woollen garments and sea boots, all soaked in sea water. But Bob was young, and strong, and active, andyou understand the rest, good reader!

The church had purposely been selected at that distance from the village to prevent Bob’s comrades from knowing anything about the wedding until it should be over. It was a somewhat strange fancy, but the coxswain was a man who, having taken a fancy, was not easily turned from it.

In order to her being got comfortably ready in good time, Nellie Carr had slept the night before at the house of an uncle, who was a farmer, and lived near the church. The house was in a sheltered hollow, so that the bride was scarcely aware of the gale that had been blowing so fiercely out at sea. Besides, being much taken up with cousin bridesmaids and other matters, the thought of the lifeboat never once entered her pretty head.

At the appointed hour, arrayed in all the splendour of a fisherman’s bride, she was led to the church, but no bridegroom was there!

“He won’t be long. He’s never late,” whispered a bridesmaid to anxious Nellie.

Minutes flew by, and Nellie became alarmed. The clergyman also looked perplexed.

“Something must have happened,” said the farmer uncle, apologetically.

Watches were consulted and compared.

At that moment a heavy rapid tread was heard outside. Another moment, and Bob Massey sprang into the church, panting, flushed, dirty, wet, wild, and, withal, grandly savage.

“Nellie!” he exclaimed, stopping short, with a joyful gaze of admiration, for he had never seen her so like an angel before.

“Bob!” she cried in alarm, for she had never before seen him so like a

reprobate.

“Young man,” began the clergyman, sternly, but he got no further; for, without paying any attention to him whatever, Bob strode forward and seized Nellie’s hands.

“I dursen’t kiss ye, Nell, for I’m all wet; but I hadn’t one moment to change. Bin out all night i’ the lifeboat an’ saved over thirty souls. The Brentley boat’s done as much. I’m ashamed, sir,” he added, turning to the clergyman, “for comin’ here like this; but I couldn’t help it. I hope there’s nothin’ in Scriptur’ agin’ a man bein’ spliced in wet toggery?”

Whether the clergyman consulted his Cruden’s Concordance with a view to clear up that theological question, we have never been able to ascertain; but it is abundantly clear that he did not allow the coxswain’s condition to interfere with the ceremony, for in the Greyton Journal, of next day, there appeared a paragraph to the following effect:

“The marriage of Robert Massey, the heroic coxswain of our lifeboat, (which, with all its peculiar attendant circumstances, and the gallant rescue that preceded it, will be found in another part of this day’s issue), was followed up in the afternoon by a feast, and what we may style a jollification, which will live long in the memory of our fisher folk.

“Several circumstances combined to render this wedding feast unique. To say nothing of the singular beauty of the bride, who is well known as one of the most thrifty and modest girls in the town, and the stalwart appearance of our coxswain, who, although so young, has already helped to save hundreds of human lives from the raging sea, the gathering was graced by the presence of the bridegroom’s bed ridden mother. Old Mrs Massey had been carried in, bed and all, to the scene of festivity; and it is due to the invalid to state that, despite rheumatics and the singularity of her position, she seemed to enjoy herself exceedingly. Besides this, the friends and comrades of the coxswainbacked by the enthusiastic groomsman, Joe Slagwould not permit Massey to don wedding garments, but insisted on his dancing himself dry in the rough garb in which he had effected the rescue. This he had no difficulty in doing, having already run himself more than half dry in hastening from the lifeboat to the church, which latter he reached only just in time.

“The little girl whom Massey personally saved was also present, with her mother and grandfather; and one interesting episode of the evening was the presentation to our coxswain of a gold watch and a purse of fifty sovereigns by the grateful old grandfather. Another peculiarity of the proceedings was that Massey insistedalthough the clergyman was presenton his old mother asking

God’s blessing on the feast before it began. All who are acquainted with our liberal minded vicar will easily understand that he highly approved of the arrangement.

“To crown all, the feast was conducted on strictly teetotal principles. We have frequently advocated the principles of total abstinence in these columnsat least for the young, the healthy, and the strongand we are glad to acknowledge that this wedding has greatly helped our cause; for the fun and hilarity in all, the vigour of limb in dancing, and of lung in singingin short, the general jollitycould not have been surpassed if the guests had been swilling rivers of beer and brandy, instead of oceans of tea. Yes, as one of the Irish guests remarked, ‘It was a great occasion intoirely,’ and it will be long before the event is forgotten, for the noble deeds of our Greyton lifeboat are, from this day forward, intimately and inseparably connected with her coxswain’s wedding!”

Thus spake the Greyton oracle; but, prophet though that journal professed to be, the oracle failed to discern that from that time forward the names of Robert Massey and Joe Slag would very soon cease to be connected with the Greyton lifeboat.

Chapter 3.

Soon after the wedding recorded in the last chapter an event occurred which entirely altered the character and current of our coxswain’s career, at least for a time. This was the sudden death of the bed ridden old mother, who had played such an interesting part at the wedding feast.

To our hero, who was a tender hearted man, and a most affectionate son, the blow was almost overwhelming, although long expected.

“I don’t think I can stay here much longer,” he said one evening to his pretty wife, as they sat together outside their door and watched the village children romping on the sands; “everything minds me o’ the dear old woman, an’ takes the heart out me. If it wasn’t for you, Nell, I’d have been off to the other side o’ the world long before now, but I find it hard to think o’ takin’ you away from all your old friends and playmatesand your Aunt Betty.”

A peculiar smile lit up Nellie’s face as her husband concluded.

“I should be sorry to leave the old friends here,” she replied, “but don’t let that hinder you if ye want to go away. I’d leave everything to please you, Bob. And as to Aunt Bettywell, I’m not ungrateful, I hope, butbut she wouldn’t break her heart at partin’ wi’ me.”

“Right you are, Nell, as you always was, and always will be,” said Massey. He laughed a short, dry laugh, and was grave again.

It was quite evident that Aunt Betty would not be a hindrance to the departure of either of them and no wonder, for Betty had received Nellie Carr into her family with a bad grace when her widowed brother, “old Carr,” died, leaving his only child without a home. From that day Betty had brought the poor little orphan upor, rather, had scolded and banged her upuntil Bob Massey relieved her of the charge. To do Aunt Betty justice, she scolded and banged up her own children in the same way; but for theseher own young onesshe entertained and expressed a species of affection which mankind shares in common with cats, while for Nellie Carr she had no such affection, and contrived to make the fact abundantly plain. As we not infrequently find in such circumstances, the favoured childrenwhich numbered sevenbecame heart breakers, while the snubbed one turned out the flower of the flock.

“Then you’re sure you won’t think it hard, Nell, if I ask you to leave home and friends and go wi’ me over the sea?”

“Yes, Bob, I’m quite sure. I’m willin’ to follow you to the end o’ the world, or further if that’s possible!”

“Then the thing’s settled,” said Massey, with decision, rising and thrusting his short pipe into his vest pocket, the lining of which had already been twice renewed in consequence of the inroads of that half extinguished implement.

In pursuance of his “settled” purpose, our coxswain proceeded to the lifeboat shed in search of his bowman, Joe Slag, and found him there.

“Joe,” said he, in the quiet tone that was habitual to him, “Nell and I have made up our minds to go to Australia.”

“To Austrailly!” exclaimed Slag, leaning his arms on the mop with which he had been washing down the lifeboat.

“Ay; I can’t settle to work nohow since the dear old woman went away; so, as Nell is agreeable, and there’s nothin’ to keep me here, I’ve decided to up anchor and bear away for the southern seas.”

The bowman had seated himself on a cask while his friend was speaking, and gazed at him with a bewildered air.

“Are ’ee in arnest, Bob?”

“Ay, Joe, in dead earnest.”

“An’ you say that you’ve nothin’ to keep you here! What’s this?” said Slag, laying his strong hand tenderly on the blue side of the boat.

“Well, I’ll be sorry to leave her, of course, an all my friends in Greyton, but friends will get along well enough without me, an’ as for the boat, she’ll never want a good coxswain while Joe Slag’s alive an’ well.”

“You’re wrong there, mate,” returned the bowman, quickly, while a look of decision overspread his bluff countenance, “there’ll be both a noo cox’n and a noo bowman wanted for her before long, for as sure as the first goes away the tother follers.”

“Nonsense, Joe; you’re jokin’ now.”

“Yes, I’m jokin’ if you’re jokin’; otherwise, I’m in dead arnest tooin as dead arnest as yourself, if not deader. Wasn’t you an’ me born on the same day, Bob? Didn’t our mothers crow over us cheek by jowl when we was babbies? Haven’t we rollicked together on the shore ever since we was the height of our daddies’ boots, an’ gone fishin’ in company, fair weather an’ foul, to the present hour, to say nothin’ o’ the times we’ve lent a hand to rescue men an’ women an’ child’n i’ the lifeboat? No, no, Bob Massey! if you lay yer course for Austrailly, Joseph Slag follers, as sure as a gun.”

Finding that his comrade was in downright earnest, and possessed of a will as inflexible as his own, Bob made no effort to dissuade him from his purpose. On the contrary, he approved of the determination, for he was pleased at the unexpected demonstration of affection which his announcement had called forth in one who was by nature undemonstrative, and who, having thus given vent to his aroused feelings, quickly resumed the reserve from which he had been so suddenly drawn out. Massey, therefore, shook hands with him, by way of sealing an unspoken compact of eternal friendship, and suggested that they should proceed together to the office of an emigration agent, who had recently made his appearance in the village.

In the office they found a very small boy, with an air of self possession that would have been suitable in his grandfather.

“Is the agent in?” asked the coxswain.

“Yes, but engaged. Sit down; he’ll attend to you directly.”

The lifeboat men obeyed, almost sheepishly, the one speculating as to whether highly developed precocity was not almost criminal, the other wondering how such a boy would look and act if obliged to undergo the process of being

rescuedsay by the hair of his headfrom a wreck.

Their minds were diverted from this subject of contemplation by the entrance of a man and woman. These, like themselves, were told to sit down and wait. The man was long, thin, and lugubrious. The woman short, slight, and lackadaisical, though rather pretty.

Evidently the agent was a busy man, for he kept them waiting some time. When he at length appeared he almost took the breath away from his visitors by the rapid and enthusiastic way in which he described the advantages of the great island on the other side of the globe. There was goldyes, enormous quantities of gold in all directions. There was land of the finest quality to be had for next to nothing; work for all who were blessed with good bone and muscle; a constant demand for labourskilled or unskilledat high wages; a climate such as the Olympian gods might revel in, andin short, if all England had heard the oration delivered by that man, and had believed it, the country would, in less than a month, have been depopulated of its younger men and women, and left to the tender mercies of the old and middle aged.

Our two fishermen were captivated. So were the lugubrious man and his mild little wife. The end of it was that, three weeks later, these four, with many other men and women of all ranks and conditions, found themselves on board the good ship Lapwing, ploughing their way through the billows of the broad Atlantic Ocean bound for the sunny isles of the Antipodes.

Wheels within wheelsworlds within worldsseems to be the order of nature everywhere. Someone has written, with more of truth than elegance

“Big fleas have little fleas upon their legs to bite ’em,

And little fleas have lesser fleasand so ad infinitum.”

One’s native land is to millions of people the world in which their thoughts centre, and by which they are circumscribed. A farmer’s homestead is the world to him, and one of the farmer’s cheeses contains a mighty world in itself. But the most complete, compact, and exclusive world in existence, perhaps, is a ship at seaespecially an emigrant shipfor here we find an epitome of the great world itself. Here may be seen, in small compass, the operations of love and hate, of wisdom and stupidity, of selfishness and self sacrifice, of pride, passion, coarseness, urbanity, and all the other virtues and vices which tend to make the world at largea mysterious compound of heaven and hell.

Wherever men and womennot to mention childrenare crowded into small space, friction ensues, and the inevitable result is moral electricity, positive and negativechiefly positive! Influences naturally follow, pleasant and

unpleasantsometimes explosions, which call for the interference of the captain or officer in charge of the deck at the time being.

For instance, Tomlin is a fiery but provident man, and has provided himself with a deck chaira most important element of comfort on a long voyage. Sopkin is a big sulky and heedless man, and has provided himself with no such luxury. A few days after leaving port Sopkin finds Tomlin's chair on deck, empty, and, being ignorant of social customs at sea, seats himself thereon. Tomlin, coming on deck, observes the fact, and experiences sudden impulses in his fiery spirit. The electricity is at work. If it were allowable to venture on mental analysis, we might say that Tomlin's sense of justice is violated. It is not fair that he should be expected to spend money in providing comforts for any man, much less for a man who carelessly neglects to provide them for himself. His sense of propriety is shocked, for Sopkin has taken possession without asking leave. His self esteem is hurt, for, although Sopkin knows it is his chair, he sits there doggedly, "like a big brute as he is," and does not seem to care what Tomlin thinks or how he looks. Besides, there is thrust upon Tomlin the disagreeable necessity of claiming his own, and that, too, in a gentlemanly tone and mannerfor it will not do to assume beforehand that Sopkin is going to refuse restitution. Tomlin is not aware that he thinks all this, but he knows that he feels it, and, in spite of himself, demands his property in a tone and with a look that sets agoing the electrical current in Sopkin, who replies, in a growling tone, "it is my chair just now."

Ordinary men would remonstrate in a case of this kind, or explain, but Tomlin is not ordinary. He is fiery. Seizing the back of his property, he hitches it up, and, with a deft movement worthy of a juggler, deposits the unreasonable Sopkin abruptly on the deck! Sopkin leaps up with doubled fists. Tomlin stands on guard. Rumkin, a presumptuous man, who thinks it his special mission in life to set everything wrong right, rushes between them, and is told by both to "mind his own business." The interruption, however, gives time to the captain to interfere; he remarks in a mild tone, not unmixed with sarcasm, that rough skylarking is not appropriate in the presence of ladies, and that there is a convenient fo'c's'l to which the gentlemen may retire when inclined for such amusement.

There is a something in the captain's look and manner which puts out the fire of Tomlin's spirit, and reduces the sulky Sopkin to obedience, besides overawing the presumptuous Rumkin, and from that day forth there is among the passengers a better understanding of the authority of a sea captain, and the nature of the unwritten laws that exist, more or less, on ship board.

We have referred to an incident of the quarter deck, but the same laws and influences prevailed in the forepart of the vessel in which our coxswain and

his friend had embarked.

It was the evening of the fifth day out, and Massey, Joe Slag, the long lugubrious man, whose name was Mitford, and his pretty little lackadaisical wife, whose name was Peggy, were seated at one end of a long mess table having suppera meal which included tea and bread and butter, as well as salt junk, etcetera.

“You don’t seem quite to have recovered your spirits yet, Mitford,” said Massey to the long comrade. “Have a bit o’ pork? There’s nothin’ like that for givin’ heart to a man.”

“Ay, ’specially arter a bout o’ sea sickness,” put in Slag, who was himself busily engaged with a mass of the proposed remedy. “It ’ud do yer wife good too. Try it, ma’am. You’re not half yerself yit. There’s too much green round your eyes an’ yaller about yer cheeks for a healthy young ooman.”

“Thank you, II’d rather not,” said poor Mrs Mitford, with a faint smileand, really, though faint, and called forth in adverse circumstances, it was a very sweet little smile, despite the objectionable colours above referred to. “I was never a great ’and with victuals, an’ I find that the sea don’t improve appetitethough, after all, I can’t see why it should, and”

Poor Mrs Mitford stopped abruptly, for reasons best known to herself. She was by nature rather a loquacious and, so to speak, irrelevant talker. She delivered herself in a soft, unmeaning monotone, which, like “the brook,” flowed “on for ever”at least until some desperate listener interrupted her discourteously. In the present instance it was her own indescribable feelings which interrupted her.

“Try a bit o’ plum duff, Mrs Mitford,” suggested Massey, with well intentioned sincerity, holding up a lump of the viand on his fork.

“Oh! pleasedon’t! Some tea! Quick! I’ll go”

And she went.

“Poor Peggy, she never could stand much rough an’ tumble,” said her husband, returning from the berth to which he had escorted his wife, and seating himself again at the table. “She’s been very bad since we left, an’ don’t seem to be much on the mend.”

He spoke as one who not only felt but required sympathyand he got it.

“Och! niver give in,” said the assistant cook, who had overheard the remark in passing. “The ould girl’ll be all right before the end o’ this wake. It niver lasts

more nor tin days at the outside. An' the waker the patients is, the sooner they comes round; so don't let yer sperrits down, Mr Mitford."

"Thank 'ee, kindly, Terrence, for your encouragin' words; but I'm doubtful. My poor Peggy is so weak and helpless!"

He sighed, shook his head as he concluded, and applied himself with such energy to the plum duff that it was evident he expected to find refuge from his woes in solid food.

"You don't seem to be much troubled wi' sickness yourself," remarked Massey, after eyeing the lugubrious man for some time in silence.

"No, I am not, which is a blessin'. I hope that Mrs Massey ain't ill?"

"No; my Nell is never ill," returned the coxswain, in a hearty tone. "She'd have been suppin' along with us to night, but she's nursin' that poor sick lad, Ian Stuart, that's dyin'."

"Is the lad really dyin'?" asked Mitford, laying down his knife and fork, and looking earnestly into his companion's face.

"Well, it looks like it. The poor little fellow seemed to me past recoverin' the day he came on board, and the stuffy cabin, wi' the heavin' o' the ship, has bin over much for him."

While he was speaking Nellie herself came softly to her husband's side and sat down. Her face was very grave.

"The doctor says there's no hope," she said. "The poor boy may last a few days, so he tells us, but he may be taken away at any moment. Pour me out a cup o' tea, Bob. I must go back to him immediately. His poor mother is so broken down that she's not fit to attend to him, and the father's o' no use at all. He can only go about groanin'. No wonder; Ian is their only child, Bobtheir first born. I can't bear to think of it."

"But you'll break down yourself, Nell, if you go nursin' him every night, an' all night, like this. Surely there's some o' the women on board that'll be glad to lend a helpin' hand."

"I know one who'll be only too happy to do that, whether she's well or ill," said Mitford, rising with unwonted alacrity, and hastening to his wife's berth.

Just then the bo's'n's stentorian voice was heard giving the order to close reef tops'ls, and the hurried tramping of many feet on the deck overhead, coupled with one or two heavy lurches of the ship, seemed to justify the assistant

cook’s remark“Sure it’s durty weather we’re goin’ to have, annyhow.”

Chapter 4.

The indications of bad weather which had been observed were not misleading, for it not only became what Terrence O’Connor had termed “durty,” but it went on next day to develop a regular gale, insomuch that every rag of canvas, except storm sails, had to be taken in and the hatches battened down, thus confining the passengers to the cabins.

These passengers looked at matters from wonderfully different points of view, and felt accordingly. Surroundings had undoubtedly far greater influence on some of them than was reasonable. Of course we refer to the landsmen only. In the after cabin, where all was light, cosy, and comfortable, and well fastened, and where a considerable degree of propriety existed, feelings were comparatively serene. Most of the ladies sought the retirement of berths, and became invisible, though not necessarily inaudible; a few, who were happily weather proof, jammed themselves into velvety corners, held on to something fixed, and lost themselves in books. The gentlemen, linking themselves to articles of stability, did the same, or, retiring to an appropriate room, played cards and draughts and enveloped themselves in smoke. Few, if any of them, bestowed much thought on the weather. Beyond giving them, occasionally, a little involuntary exercise, it did not seriously affect them.

Very different was the state of matters in the steerage. There the difference in comfort was not proportioned to the difference in passage money. There was no velvet, not much light, little space to move about, and nothing soft. In short, discomfort reigned, so that the unfortunate passengers could not easily read, and the falling of tin panikins and plates, the crashing of things that had broken loose, the rough exclamations of men, and the squalling of miserable children, affected the nerves of the timid to such an extent that they naturally took the most gloomy view of the situation.

Of course the mere surroundings had no influence whatever on the views held by Bob Massey and Joe Slag.

“My dear,” said the latter, in a kindly but vain endeavour to comfort Mrs Mitford, “rumpusses below ain’t got nothin’ to do wi’ rows overheadleastways they’re only an effect, not a cause.”

“There! there’s another,” interrupted Mrs Mitford, with a little scream, as a tremendous crash of crockery burst upon her ear.

“Well, my dear,” said Slag, in a soothing, fatherly tone, “if all the crockery in

the ship was to go in universal smash into the lee scuppers, it couldn't make the wind blow harder."

Poor Mrs Mitford failed to derive consolation from this remark. She was still sick enough to be totally and hopelessly wretched, but not sufficiently so to be indifferent to life or death. Every superlative howl of the blast she echoed with a sigh, and each excessive plunge of the ship she emphasised with a weak scream.

"I don't know what you think," she said, faintly, when two little boys rolled out of their berths and went yelling to leeward with a mass of miscellaneous rubbish, "but it do seem to be as if the end of the world 'ad come. Not that the sea could be the end of the world, for if it was, of course it would spill over and then we would be left dry on the bottomor moist, if not dry. I don't mean that, you know, but these crashes are so dreadful, an' my poor 'ead is like to splitwhich the planks of this ship will do if they go on creakin' so. I know they will, for 'uman made things can't"

"You make your mind easy, my woman," said her husband, coming forward at the moment and sitting down to comfort her. "Things are lookin' a little better overhead, so one o' the men told me, an' I heard Terrence say that we're goin' to have lobscouse for dinner to day, though what that may be I can't tellsomethin' good, I suppose."

"Something thick, an' luke warm, an' greasy, I know," groaned Peggy, with a shudder.

There was a bad man on board the ship. There usually is a bad man on board of most ships; sometimes more than one. But this one was unusually bad, and was, unfortunately, an old acquaintance of the Mitfords. Indeed, he had been a lover of Mrs Mitford, when she was Peggy Owen, though her husband knew nothing of that. If Peggy had known that this manNed Jarring by namewas to be a passenger, she would have prevailed on her husband to go by another vessel; but she was not aware of it until they met in the fore cabin the day after leaving port.

Being a dark haired, sallow complexioned man, he soon became known on board by the name of Black Ned. Like many bad men, Jarring was a drunkard, and, when under the influence of liquor, was apt to act incautiously as well as wickedly. On the second day of the gale he entered the fore cabin with unsteady steps, and looked round with an air of solemn stupidity. Besides being dark and swarthy, he was big and strong, and had a good deal of the bully in his nature. Observing that Mrs Mitford was seated alone in a dark corner of the cabin with a still greenish face and an aspect of woe, he

staggered towards her, and, sitting down, took her hand affectionately.

“Dear Peggy,” he began, but he got no further, for the little woman snatched her hand away, sprang up and confronted him with a look of blazing indignation. Every trace of her sickness vanished as if by magic. The greenish complexion changed to crimson, and the woebegone tones to those of firm resolution, as she exclaimed

“Ned Jarring, if you ever again dare to take liberties with me, I’ll tell my ’usband, I will; an’ as sure as you’re a sittin’ on that seat ’e’ll twist you up, turn you outside in, an’ fling you overboard!”

Little Mrs Mitford did not wait for a response, but, turning sharply round, left the cabin with a stride which, for a woman of her size and character, was most impressive.

Jarring gazed after her with an expression of owlish and unutterable surprise on his swarthy countenance. Then he smiled faintly at the unexpected and appallingnot to say curiousfate that awaited him; but reflecting that, although lugubrious and long, Mitford was deep chested, broad shouldered, and wiry, he became grave again, shook his head, and had the sense to make up his mind never again to arouse the slumbering spirit of Peggy Mitford.

It was a wild scene that presented itself to the eyes of the passengers in the Lapwing when the hatches were at last taken off, and they were permitted once more to go on deck. Grey was the prevailing colour. The great seas, which seemed unable to recover from the wild turmoil into which they had been lashed, were of a cold greenish grey, flecked and tipped with white. The sky was steely grey with clouds that verged on black; and both were so mingled together that it seemed as if the little vessel were imbedded in the very heart of a drizzling, heaving, hissing ocean.

The coxswain’s wife stood leaning on her stalwart husband’s arm, by the foremast, gazing over the side.

“It do seem more dreary than I expected,” she said. “I wouldn’t be a sailor, Bob, much as I’ve bin used to the sea, an’ like it.”

“Ah, Nell, that’s ’cause you’ve only bin used to the sea shore. You haven’t bin long enough on blue water, lass, to know that folks’ opinions change a good deal wi’ their feelin’s. Wait till we git to the neighbour’ood o’ the line, wi’ smooth water an’ blue skies an’ sunshine, sharks, and flyin’ fish. You’ll have a different opinion then about the sea.”

“Right you are, Bob,” said Joe Slagg, coming up at that moment. “Most

people change their opinions arter gittin' to the line, specially when it comes blazin' hot, fit to bile the sea an' stew the ship, an' a dead calm gits a hold of 'e an' keeps ye swelterin' in the doldrums for a week or two."

"But it wasn't that way we was lookin' at it, Joe," returned Nellie, with a laugh. "Bob was explainin' to me how pleasant a change it would be after the cold grey sea an' sky we're havin' just now."

"Well, it may be so; but whatever way ye may look at it, you'll change yer mind, more or less, when you cross the line. By the way, that minds me that some of us in the steerage are invited to cross the line to nightthe line that separates us from the cabinto attend a lectur' therean' you'll niver guess the subjec', Bob."

"I know that, Joe. I never made a right guess in my life, that I knows on. Heave ahead, what is it?"

"A lectur' on the 'Lifeboat,' no less! But it aint our lifeboat sarvice: it's the American one, cause it's to be given by that fine young fellow, Dr Hayward, who looks as if suthin' had damaged his constitootion somehow. I'm told he's a Yankee, though he looks uncommon like an Englishman."

"He's tall an' 'andsome enough, anyhow," remarked Massey.

"Ay, an' he's good enough for anything," said Nellie, with enthusiasm. "You should see the kind way he speaks to poor Ian when he comes to see himwhich is pretty much every day. He handles him, too, so tenderlyjust like his mother; but he won't give him medicine or advice, for it seems that wouldn't be thought fair by the ship's doctor. No more it would, I suppose."

"D'ee know what's the matter wi' him?" asked Mitford, who had joined the group.

"Not I," returned Massey. "It seems more like gineral weakness than anything else."

"I can tell you," said a voice close to them. The voice was that of Tomlin, who, although a first class passenger, was fond of visiting and fraternising with the people of the fore cabin. "He got himself severely wounded some time ago when protecting a poor slave girl from her owner, and he's now slowly recovering. He is taking a long voyage for his health. The girl, it seems, had run away from her owner, and had nearly escaped into Canada, where of course, being on British soil, she would be free"

"God bless the British soil!" interrupted little Mrs Mitford, in a tone of

enthusiasm which caused a laugh all round; but that did not prevent some of the bystanders from responding with a hearty “Amen!”

“I agree with you, Mrs Mitford,” said Tomlin; “but the owner of the poor slave did not think as you and I do. The girl was a quadroonthat is, nearly, if not altogether, white. She was also very beautiful. Well, the ownera coarse brutewith two followers, overtook the runaway slave near a lonely roadside tavernI forget the name of the placebut Dr Hayward happened to have arrived there just a few minutes before them. His horse was standing at the door, and he was inside, talking with the landlord, when he heard a loud shriek outside. Running out, he found the girl struggling wildly in the hands of her captors. Of course, he demanded an explanation, though he saw clearly enough how matters stood.

“‘She’s my slave,’ said the owner, haughtily. He would not, perhaps, have condescended even with that much explanation if he had not seen that the landlord sympathised with the doctor.

“This was enough, however, for Hayward, who is a man of few words and swift action. He was unarmed, but carried a heavy handled whip, with this he instantly felled the slave owner and one of his men to the ground before they had time to wink, but the third man drew a pistol, and, pointing it straight at the doctor’s head, would have blown out his brains if the landlord had not turned the weapon aside and tripped the man up. Before he could recover Hayward had swung the girl on his horse, leaped into the saddle, and dashed off at full speed. He did not draw rein till he carried her over the frontier into Canada, and had placed her beyond the reach of her enemies.”

“Brayvo! the doctor,” exclaimed Slag, heartily.

“Then he found,” continued Tomlin, “that he had been wounded in the chest by the ball that was meant for his head, but made light of the wound until it was found to be serious. The ball was still in him, and had to be extracted, after which he recovered slowly. The romantic part of it is, however, that he fell in love with Evathat was the girl’s nameand she with him, and they were married”

“Ah, poor thing,” said Mitford; “then she died and he married again?”

“Not at all,” returned Tomlin, “she did not die, and he did not marry again.”

“Howwhat then about that splendid wife that he’s got in the after cabin now?” asked Mitford.

“That’s her. That’s Eva, the quadroon. She’s not only as white as Mrs Massey

or Mrs Mitford there, but she's been educated and brought up as a lady and among ladies, besides having the spirit of a real lady, which many a born one hasn't got at all."

There were many fore cabin passengers who "crossed the line" that night in order to hear the gallant American lecture, but chiefly to see the beautiful lady who had been so romantically rescued from slavery.

"Not a drop of black blood in her body!" was Mrs Mitford's verdict after the lecture was over.

"An' what if there was?" demanded Slag, in a tone of indignation. "D'ee think that white blood is worth more than black blood in the eyes o' the Almighty as made 'em both?"

The lecture itself was highly appreciated, being on a subject which Bob and Joe had already made interesting to the steerage passengers. And the lecturer not only treated it well, but was himself such a fine, lion like, yet soft voiced fellow that his audience were quite charmed.

Soon the Lapwing was gliding through the warm waters of the equatorial seas, and those of the passengers who had never visited such regions before were immensely interested by the sight of dolphins, sharks, and especially flying fish.

"I don't believe in 'em," said Mrs Mitford to Mrs Massey one day as they stood looking over the side of the ship.

"I do believe in 'em," said Mrs Massey, "because my Bob says he has seen 'em."

Not long after this double assertion of opinion there was a sudden cry that flying fish were to be seen alongside, and Mrs Mitford actually beheld them with her own eyes leap out of the sea, skim over the waves a short distance, and then drop into the water again; still she was incredulous! "Flyin'" she exclaimed, "nothin' of the sort; they only made a long jump out o' the water, an' wriggled their tails as they went; at least they wriggled something, for I couldn't be rightly sure they 'ad tails to wriggle, any more than wingsnever 'avin' seen 'em except in pictures, which is mostly lies. Indeed!"

"Look out!" exclaimed Slag at the moment, for a couple of fish flew over the bulwarks just then, and fell on deck almost at Mrs Mitford's feet. When she saw them there floundering about, wings and all, she felt constrained to give in.

“Well, well,” she said, raising her hands and eyes to heaven, as though she addressed her remarks chiefly to celestial ears, “did ever mortal see the likes? Fish wi’ wings an’ no feathers! I’ll believe anything after that!”

Peggy Mitford is not the first, and won’t be the last womanto say nothing of manwho has thus bounded from the depths of scepticism to the heights of credulity.

Chapter 5.

Dr Hayward, who had given great satisfaction with his lecture, possessed so much urbanity and power of anecdote and song, that he soon became a general favourite alike with steerage and cabin passengers.

One sultry forenoon Terrence O’Connor, the assistant steward, went aft and whispered to him that Ian Stuart, the sick boy, wanted very much to see him.

“I think he’s dying, sor,” said Terrence, in a low tone.

“Has the doctor seen him this morning?” asked Hayward, as he rose quickly and hurried forward.

“He’s seed him twice, sor,” said Terrence, “an’ both times he shook his head as he left him.”

It was evident that the steerage passengers felt death to be hovering over them, for they were unusually silent, and those who were in the fore cabin at the time Hayward passed cast solemn glances at him as he descended and went to the berth of the poor boy. It was a comparatively large berth, and, being at the time on the weather side of the ship, had the port open to admit fresh air.

“My poor boy, do you suffer much?” said the doctor, in soothing tones, as he sat down beside Ian, and took his hand.

It was obvious that Ian suffered, for an expression of weariness and pain sat on his emaciated countenance, but on the appearance of Hayward the expression gave place to a glad smile on a face which was naturally refined and intellectual.

“Oh, thank youthanks” said Ian, in a low hesitating voice, for he was almost too far gone to speak.

“There, don’t speak, dear boy,” said the doctor, gently. “I see you have been thinking about our last conversation. Shall I read to you?”

“Nono. Jesus is speakingto me. His words are crowding on me. No need

forreading when He speaks; ‘Comeunto MeI will neverleave’”

His breath suddenly failed him, and he ceased to speak, but the glad look in his large eyes showed that the flow of Divine words, though inaudible, had not ceased.

“Motherfather,” he said, after a short pause, “don’t cry. You’ll soon join me. Don’t let them cry, Dr Hayward. The parting won’t be for long.”

The Doctor made no reply, for at that moment the unmistakable signs of dissolution began to overspread the pinched features, and in a few minutes it became known throughout the ship that the “King of Terrors” had been there in the guise of an Angel of Light to pluck a little flower and transplant it into the garden of God.

Hayward tried to impress this fact on the bereaved parents, but they would not be comforted.

They were a lowly couple, who could not see far in advance of them, even in regard to things terrestrial. The last words of their child seemed to have more weight than the comfort offered by the doctor.

“Cheer up, David,” said the poor wife, grasping her husband’s hand, and striving to check her sobs, “Ian said truth, it won’t be long afore we jine him, the dear, dear boy.”

But even as she uttered the words of cheer her own heart failed her, and she again gave way to uncontrollable grief, while her husband, dazed and motionless, sat gazing at the face of the dead.

The funeral and its surroundings was as sad as the death. Everything was done to shroud the terrible reality. The poor remains were tenderly laid in a black deal coffin and carried to the port side of the ship by kind and loving hands. A young Wesleyan minister, who had been an unfailing comforter and help to the family all through the boy’s illness, gave a brief but very impressive address to those who stood around, and offered up an earnest prayer; but nothing could blind the mourners, especially the parents, to the harsh fact that the remains were about to be consigned to a never resting grave, and that they were going through the form rather than the reality of burial, while, as if to emphasise this fact, the back fin of a great shark was seen to cut the calm water not far astern. It followed the ship until the hollow plunge was heard, and the weighted coffin sank into the unknown depths of the sea.

An impression that never faded quite away was made that day on some of the more thoughtful and sensitive natures in the ship. And who can say that even

amongst the thoughtless and the depraved no effect was produced! God's power is not usually exerted in visibly effective processes. Seeds of life may have been sown by that death which shall grow and flourish in eternity. Certain it is that some of the reckless were solemnised for a time, and that the young Wesleyan was held in higher esteem throughout the ship from that day forward.

Some of the passengers, however, seemed very soon to forget all about the death, and relapsed into their usual frames of mind. Among these was Ned Jarring. For several days after the funeral he kept sober, and it was observed that the Wesleyan minister tried to get into conversation with him several times, but he resisted the good man's efforts, and, when one of his chums laughingly remarked that he, "seemed to be hand and glove wi' the parson now," Black Ned swung angrily round, took to drinking again, and, as is usually the case in such circumstances, became worse than before.

Thus the little world of ship board went on from day to day, gradually settling down into little coteries as like minded men and women began to find each other out. Gradually, also, the various qualities of the people began to be recognised, and in a few weeksas in the greater worldeach man and woman was more or less correctly gauged according to worth. The courageous and the timid, the sensible and the vain, the weak and the strong, the self sacrificing and the selfish, all fell naturally into their appropriate positions, subject to the moderate confusion resulting from favouritism, abused power, and other forms of sin. It was observable also that here, as elsewhere, all the coteries commented with considerable freedom on each other, and that each coterie esteemed itself unquestionably the best of the lot, although it might not absolutely say so in words. There was one exception, namely in the case of the worst or lowest coterie, which, so far from claiming to be the best, openly proclaimed itself the worst, gloried in its shame, and said that, "it didn't care a button," or words, even more expressive, to the same effect.

Ned Jarring belonged to this last class. He was probably the worst member of it.

One night an incident occurred which tested severely some of the qualities of every one on board. It was sometime after midnight when the dead silence of the slumbering ship was broken by perhaps the most appalling of all sounds at seathe cry of "Fire!"

Smoke had been discovered somewhere near the fore cabin. Fortunately the captain had just come up at the time to speak with the officer of the watch on deck. At the first cry he ran to the spot pointed out, telling the officer to call all hands and rig the pumps, and especially to keep order among the passengers.

The first man who leaped from profound slumber into wide awake activity was Dr Hayward. Having just lain down to sleep on a locker, as he expected to be called in the night to watch beside a friend who was ill, he was already dressed, and would have been among the first at the scene of the fire, but for an interruption. At the moment he was bounding up the companion ladder, a young man of feeble characterwho would have been repudiated by the sex, had he been born a womansprang down the same ladder in abject terror. He went straight into the bosom of the ascending doctor, and they both went with a crash to the bottom.

Although somewhat stunned, Hayward was able to jump up and again make for the region of the fire, where he found most of the men and male passengers working with hose and buckets in the midst of dire confusion. Fortunately the seat of the conflagration was soon discovered; and, owing much to the cool energy of the captain and officers, the fire was put out.

It was about a week after this thrilling event that Mrs Massey was on the forecastle talking with Peggy Mitford. A smart breeze was blowingjust enough to fill all the sails and carry the ship swiftly on her course without causing much of a sea. The moon shone fitfully through a mass of drifting clouds, mingling its pallid light with the wondrous phosphoric sheen of the tropical seas.

Mrs Mitford had been regaling her companion with a long winded and irrelevant, though well meant, yarn about things in general and nothing in particular; and Nellie, who was the personification of considerate patience, had seated herself on the starboard rail to listen to and comment on her lucubrations.

“Yes, as I was sayin’, Nellie,” remarked Peggy, in her soft voice, after a brief pause, during which a variety of weak little expressions crossed her pretty face, “I never could abide the sea. It always makes me sick, an’ when it doesn’t make me sick, it makes me nervish. Not that I’m given to bein’ nervish; an’, if I was, it wouldn’t matter much, for the sea would take it out o’ me, whether or not. That’s always the wayif it’s not one thing, it’s sure to be another. Don’t you think so, Nellie? My John says ’e thinks sothough it isn’t to be thought much of what ’e says, dear man, for ’e’s got a way of sayin’ things when ’e don’t mean ’emyou understand?”

“Well, I don’t quite understand,” answered Mrs Massey, cutting in at this point with a laugh, “but I’m quite sure it’s better to say things when you don’t mean them, than to mean things when you don’t say them!”

“Perhaps you’re right, Nellie,” rejoined Mrs Mitford, with a mild nod of assent; “I’ve sometimes thought on these things when I’ve ’ad one o’ my sick ’eadaches, which prevents me from thinkin’ altogether, almost; an’, bless you, you’d wonder what strange idears comes over me at such times. Did you ever try to think things with a sick ’eadache, Nellie?”

With a laugh, and a bright look, Mrs Massey replied that she had never been in a position to try that curious experiment, never having had a headache of any kind in her life.

While she was speaking, a broad backed wave caused the ship to roll rather heavily to starboard, and Mrs Massey, losing her balance, fell into the sea.

Sedate and strong minded though she was, Nellie could not help shrieking as she went over; but the shriek given by Mrs Mitford was tenfold more piercing. It was of a nature that defies description. Its effect was to thrill the heart of every one who heard it. But Peggy did more than shriek. Springing on the rail like an antelope, she would have plunged overboard to the rescue of her friend, regardless of her own inability to swim, and of everything else, had not a seaman, who chanced to be listening to the conversationcaught her with a vice like grip.

“Hold on, Peggy!” he cried.

But Peggy shrieked and struggled, thus preventing the poor fellow from attempting a rescue, while shouts and cries of “man overboard” rang through the ship from stem to stern, until it became known that it was a woman. Then the cries redoubled. In the midst of the hubbub the strong but calm voice of the captain was heard to give orders to lower a boat and port the helm“hard a port.”

But, alas! for poor Nellie that night if her life had depended on shouters, strugglers, shriekers, or boatmen.

At the moment the accident happened two men chanced to be standing on the starboard side of the shipone on the quarter deck, the other on the forecastle. Both men were ready of resource and prompt in action, invaluable qualities anywhere, but especially at sea! The instant the cry arose each sprang to and cut adrift a life buoy. Each knew that the person overboard might fail to see or catch a buoy in the comparative darkness. He on the forecastle, who chanced to see Nellie fall over, at once followed her with the life buoy in his arms. Ignorant of this act the man near the stern saw something struggling in the water as the ship flew past. Without an instant’s hesitation he also plunged into the sea with a life buoy in his grasp.

The faint light failed to reveal who had thus boldly plunged to the rescue, but the act had been observed both at bow and stern, and a cheer of hope went up as the ship came up to the wind, topsails were backed, and the boat was dropped into the water.

Twenty minutes elapsed before there was any sign of the boat returning, during which time the ship's bell was rung continually. It may be better imagined than described the state of poor Bob Massey, who had been asleep on a locker in the fore cabin when the accident occurred, and who had to be forcibly prevented, at first, from jumping into the sea when he heard that it was Nellie who was overboard.

At last oars were heard in the distance.

"Stop that bell! boat ahoy!" shouted the captain.

"Ship aho–o–oy!" came faintly back on the breeze, while every voice was hushed and ear strained to listen, "All right! all saved!"

A loud "Thank the Lord!" burst from our coxswain's heaving chest, and a wild ringing cheer leaped upwards alike from passengers and crew, while warm tears overflowed from many an eye that was more intimate with cold spray, for a noble deed and a life saved have always the effect of stirring the deepest enthusiasm of mankind.

A few minutes more and three dripping figures came up the gangway. First came Nellie herself; dishevelled and pale, but strong and hearty nevertheless, as might be expected of a fisher girl and a lifeboat coxswain's wife! She naturally fell into, or was caught up by, her husband's arms, and was carried off to the cabin.

Following her came two somewhat exhausted men.

The cheer that greeted them was not unmingled with surprise.

"The best an' the worst men i' the ship!" gasped Joe Slag, amid laughter and hearty congratulations.

He was probably right, for it was the young Wesleyan minister and Ned Jarring who had effected this gallant rescue.

The performance of a good action has undoubtedly a tendency to elevate, as the perpetration of a bad one has to demoralise.

From that day forward Black Ned felt that he had acquired a certain character which might be retained or lost. Without absolutely saying that he became a

better man in consequence, we do assert that he became more respectable to look at, and drank less!

Thus the voyage progressed until the good ship Lapwing sailed in among some of the innumerable islands of the Southern seas.

Chapter 6.

Darkness, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, is probably the greatest evil that man has had to contend with since the fall. At all events, the physical and mental forms of it were the cause of the good ship Lapwing sailing one night straight to destruction.

It happened thus. A pretty stiff breeze, amounting almost to half a gale, was blowing on the night in question, and the emigrant ship was running before it under close reefed topsails. For some days previously the weather had been "dirty," and the captain had found it impossible to obtain an observation, so that he was in the dark as to the exact part of the ocean in which he was sailing.

In an open sea this is not of serious moment, but when one is nearing land, or in the neighbourhood of islands, it becomes cause for much anxiety. To make matters worse, the ship had been blown considerably out of her course, and worst of all the night was so intensely dark that it was not possible to see more than a few yards beyond the flying jibboom.

The captain and mate, with several of the men, stood on the forecastle peering anxiously out into the darkness.

"I don't like the look o' things at all," muttered the captain to the chief mate.

"Perhaps it would be well, sir, to lay to till daylight," suggested the mate.

Whether the captain agreed with his chief officer or not was never known, for just then a dull sound was heard which sent a thrill to the bravest heart on board.

"Breakers ahead!" cried the look out, as in duty bound, but he was instantly contradicted by the mate, who shouted that they were on the starboard beam, while another voice roared that they were on the port bow.

The helm was instantly put hard a port, and immediately after the order was given "hard a starboard," for it was discovered that the sound of breakers came from both sides of the vessel. They were, obviously, either running in a narrow strait between two islands, or into a bay. In the first case the danger was

imminent, in the second case, destruction was almost inevitable.

“Clear the anchor, and stand by to let go!” cried the captain, in loud sharp tones, for he felt that there was no room to turn and retreat. The order was also given to take in all sail.

But before either order could be obeyed, a cry of terror burst from many throats, for right in front of them there suddenly loomed out of the darkness an object like a great black cloud, which rose high above and seemed about to fall upon them. There was no mistaking its nature, however, for by that time the roar of the breakers right ahead told but too plainly that they were rushing straight upon a high perpendicular cliff. At this moment the vessel struck a rock. It was only a slight touch at the stern, nevertheless it tore the rudder away, so that the intention of the captain to put about and take his chance of striking on the rocks to starboard was frustrated.

“Let go,” he shouted, in this extremity.

Quick as lightning the anchor went to the bottom but with such way on the ship, the sudden strain snapped the chain, and the Lapwing rushed upon her doom, while cries of terror and despair arose from the passengers, who had by that time crowded on deck.

To the surprise of the captain, and those who were capable of intelligent observation, the ship did not immediately strike again, but sailed straight on as if right against the towering cliffs. Still onward it went, and as it did so there settled around them a darkness so profound that no one could see even an inch before his eyes. Then at last the ill fated vessel struck, but not with her hull, as might have been expected. High up above them a terrific crash was heard.

“God help us,” exclaimed the captain, “we’ve sailed straight into a cave!”

That he was right soon became evident, for immediately after the crashing of the topmasts against the roof of the cave, a shower of small stones and several large fragments fell on the deck with a rattle like that of musketry. Some of the people were struck and injured, though not seriously so, by the shower.

“Get down below, all of you!” cried the captain, himself taking shelter under the companion hatchway. But the order was needless, for the danger was so obvious that every one sought the shelter of the cabins without delay.

The situation was not only terrible but exceedingly singular, as well as trying, for as long as stones came thundering down on the deck it would have been sheer madness to have attempted to do anything aboveboard, and to sit idle in the cabins with almost certain death staring them in the face was a severe test

of endurance.

From the motion of the vessel several facts could be deduced. Although the scraping and crashing of the masts overhead told eloquently of destruction going on in that direction, the heaving of the ship, and her striking occasionally on either side, proved that there was deep water below her. That they were not progressing into an interminable cavern was made evident by the frequent plunging of the shattered bowsprit against the inner end of the cave. This action sent the vessel reeling backwards, as it were, every time she struck, besides shattering the bowsprit. That the cave, also, was open to the full force of the sea was only too severely proved by the rush of the billows into it, and the frequent and severe shocks to which they were in consequence subjected. These shocks had extinguished the lamps, and it was only by the aid of a few candles that they were delivered from sitting in absolute darkness.

In these awful circumstances the young Wesleyan proved that, besides the courage that he had already shown in facing danger on a sudden emergency, he also possessed that far higher courage which can face the slow and apparently sure approach of death with equanimity and self possession. Moreover, he proved that the Word of God and prayer are the true resources of man in such extremities.

Calling those who were willing around him, he led them in prayer, and then quieted the timid among them, as well as comforted all, not by reading, but by quoting appropriate passages from Scripture, in which he was profoundly versed.

“D’ee know when it’ll be low water, sir?” asked Joe Slag of the captain, when the ship gave one of her upward heaves and rasped her timbers again on the sides of the cave.

“Not for three hours yet, but it’s falling. I expect there will be less sea on in a short time. If the ship holds together we may yet be saved.”

There was a murmured “thank God” at these words. Then Bob Massey expressed some fear that there might be a danger of striking the rocks underneath before low water.

“I wish it was the risin’ tide,” he said, and the words took his mind back, like a flash of lightning, to the time when he used them in a very different sense. Then all was peace, hope, sunshine, and his bride was sitting like a good angel beside him, with a sweet smile on her fair face. Now, something like darkness visible, showed him his poor wifestill beside him, thank Godbut clinging to his arm with looks of terror amounting almost to despair. “What a contrast!” he thought, and for the first time a feeling of rebellion arose in his mind.

“There’s no use o’ sittin’ here to be drowned like rats,” he cried, starting up. “I’ll go on deck an’ take a cast o’ the lead, an’ see what chances we have.”

“No, you won’t, Bob,” cried Nellie, throwing her arms firmly round him. “There’s big stones falling all about the deck yet. Don’t you hear them?”

As if to corroborate her words, a piece of rock nearly half a ton in weight fell on the sky light at that moment, crashed completely through it, through the table below, and even sank into the cabin floor. Fortunately, no one was hurt, though Slag had a narrow escape, but that worthy was not easily intimidated. He rose up, and, saying that, “it was as well to be killed on deck doin’ somethin’ as in the cabin doin’ nothin’,” was about to ascend the ladder when Dr Hayward suddenly entered, all wet and dishevelled, and with blood trickling down his face.

“No use going up just now, Joe,” he said, as he sat down beside his wife, and permitted her to tie a kerchief round his head. “Only a slight wound, Eva, got while taking soundings. I find that there are sixteen fathoms of water under us, and, although I couldn’t see my hand held up before my face, I managed to make out by the flash of a match, which burned for a moment before being blown out, that the sides of the cave are quite perpendicular, not the smallest ledge to stand on. The tide, however, is ebbing fast, and the water in the cave calming, so that if no bad leak has been made by all this thumping we may yet be saved. Our only chance is to stick to the ship.”

While he was speaking the vessel again surged violently against one side of the cave, and another of the huge masses of rock that were brought down by the swaying masts came crashing on the deck.

“There is no bad leak as yet,” said the captain, re entering the cabin, which he had quitted for the purpose of sounding the well. “If we can keep afloat for an hour or two we may be able to use the boats. Just now it would be useless to attempt launching them.”

Although the captain’s words were not particularly reassuring, his confident tone and manner infused hope, and comforted the people greatly. Some of the male passengers even volunteered to face the shower of stones, if need be, and lend a hand in launching the boats, when the time for doing so arrived.

These boats, three in number, were lying bottom up on deck, and to reach them involved the risk of death to whoever should attempt it. They were therefore compelled to wait.

It is difficult to form even a slight conception of the horrors of that night. For

several hours they sat in the after cabin, and the ship surged and plunged in the wildly heaving water, striking the sides continually, while rocks fell at intervals on the deck, thus adding to the noise of wind and waves as they raged with echoing, deafening noise in the black cavern. Each moment it seemed as if the ship must have her planks stove in and be sunk, but she was a new vessel and strong. Of course she leaked considerably, but when the tide went down the sea calmed a little, the rocks ceased falling from the roof, and they were enabled to rig the pumps and work them vigorously. The boats, meanwhile, were cast loose and got ready to launch at the first glimmer of daylight! Fortunately, they had received no serious injury from the falling rocks.

Oh, how they longed and prayed for the day! It came at last, a gleam so faint that it showed nothing of their surroundings save the outline of the cavern's great mouth.

"Shall we launch the boats now, sir?" asked the first mate, who was becoming anxious, because the carpenter had just reported that the water in the hold was increasing dangerously in spite of the pumps.

"Not yetnot yet," returned the captain, hurriedly. "We must have more light first. The loss of a boat would be fatal. I'm afraid of the rising tide."

"Afraid of the rising tide!" Again the words struck strangely on Bob Massey's ears as he stood wiping the perspiration from his brow after a long spell at the pumpsand once more carried him back to the sunlit sands of Old England.

Soon the increase of water in the hold was so great that the getting out of the boats could no longer be delayed. The first launched was a small one. It was lowered over the stern by means of the studding sail boom, with a block and whip, which kept it from dropping too quickly into the water. Massey and his friend Slag, being recognised as expert boatmen in trying circumstances, were sent in it, with two of the crew, to run out a line and drop an anchor in the sea outside, so that the heavier boats might be hauled out thereby. Two hundred and fifty fathoms of rope were given themmore than sufficient for the purpose. On getting outside, Bob and his friend, according to custom as lifeboat men, kept a sharp look out on everything around them, and the feeble daylight enabled them to see that the black cliff which had, as it were, swallowed up the Lapwing, was full six hundred feet high and a sheer precipice, in some places overhanging at the top, and without the symptom of a break as far as the eye could reach in either direction.

"A black look out, Joe," muttered Massey, as he assisted his comrade to heave the anchor over the side.

"Ay, Bob, an' the worst of it is that the tide's risin'. A boat can live here as

long as that ridge o’ rocks keeps off the seas, but in an hour or so it’ll be rollin’ in as bad as ever.”

“I knows it, Joe, an’ the more need to look sharp.”

Returning to the ship, our coxswain made his report, and recommended urgent haste. But the captain required no urging, for by that time the ship’s main deck was level with the water, and the seas were making a clean breach over the stern. The passengers and crew crowded towards the port gangway where the large boat was being brought round to receive the women and children first. This was such a familiar scene to the two lifeboat men that they kept cool and self possessed from the mere force of habit. Seeing this, the captain ordered Mitford to get into the boat first, and help to stow the others, for it would be a tight pack, he said, to stow them all. Dr Hayward was ordered to assist. Ned Jarring volunteered to help to fend the boat off during the operation, and, without waiting for permission, jumped into her.

Mitford had consigned his wife to the care of his friend Massey, who at once undertook the duty by tying a kerchief round Peggy’s head to keep her hair out of her eyes, after which he did the same for Nellie. Both women were perfectly quiet and submissivethe first owing to fear and exhaustion, the last from native courage, which enabled her to rise to the occasion. Massey then stripped off all his own clothes, except shirt and trousers, so as to be ready for swimming, and, catching up a rope, advanced towards his wife, intending to fasten it round her waist.

“Peggy first, Bob; I’ll wait for you,” said his wife.

“Look sharp!” cried the captain.

Bob turned at once to Peggy, and in a few seconds she was lowered into the boat. Mrs Hayward followed. Then Massey insisted on his wife going, and the obedient Nellie submitted, but, owing to a lurch of the ship at the moment, she missed the boat, and dropped into the water. One of the men attempted to pull her in, but could not, and, as all the others were engaged at the moment in trying to fend off the rocks, Massey at once jumped into the sea, and helped to get his wife into the boat.

At that moment there arose a cry that the ship was sinking, and a wild rush was made for the long boat, which had also been successfully launched. Of course it was instantly overcrowded, for all discipline was now at an end. Before anything else could be done the Lapwing sank in sixteen fathoms of water, carrying the long boat and all the people in her along with it, but those in the other boat had shoved off at the first wild cry, and hauling on the anchored cable, just escaped being sucked down by the sinking ship.

Bob Massey clung to the boat's gunwale, and thus escaped. Rowing back instantly, however, to the spot where the ship had gone down, they sought eagerly for swimmers. Only three were discovered and rescued, but the othersseventy souls in allfound a watery grave in the dark cavern of that unknown land.

Chapter 7.

So rapidly did the final catastrophe take place that it was difficult for the rescued party at first to credit the evidence of their senses. On the spot where the Lapwing had been beating her sides against the cruel walls of the cavern, and where so many hearts had been throbbing wildly between hope and fear, no living creature remained; nothing but a few feet of the shattered masts appearing now and then above the surging waves was left to tell of the terrible tragedy that had been enacted there.

For upwards of an hour the party in the boat hovered about the place, not so much with the hope of rescuing any of their shipmates as on account of the difficulty of tearing themselves away from the fatal spot. Perhaps the natural tendency of man to hope against hope had something to do with it. Then they passed silently out of the cavern and rowed slowly along the base of the tremendous cliffs.

At length the feeling of self preservation began to assert itself, and Bob Massey was the first to break silence with the question

"Does any one know if there's anything to eat aboard?"

"We'd better see to that," observed Dr Hayward, who was steering.

Bob Massey pulled in his oar, and, without remark, began to search the boat. It was found that all the food they had brought away consisted of nine tins of preserved meat and three pieces of pork, a supply which would not go far among ten persons.

The ten survivors were Dr Hayward and his wife; Massey and Nellie; Joe Slag; John Mitford and his wife Peggy; Terrence O'Connor, the assistant cook; Tomlin, one of the cabin passengers; and Ned Jarring. All the rest, as we have said, had perished with the ill fated Lapwing.

Little was said at first, for the hopelessness of their condition seemed so obvious that the men shrank from expressing their gloomy fears to the women who sat huddled together, wet and cold, in the bottom of the boat.

As we have said, as far as the eye could see in any direction, the frowning cliffs rose perpendicularly out of deep water. There was not even a strip of sand or a bay into which they could run in case of the wind increasing.

“There is nothing for it but to push on till we come to an inlet or break of some sort in the cliffs by which we may land,” said Hayward, speaking encouragingly to the women. “God helping us, we are sure to find some such place ere long.”

“Don’t look very like it,” muttered Black Ned, gloomily.

“We can see how it looks about as well as you can,” retorted John Mitford, indignantly. “If ye can’t say somethin’ to cheer the women, there’s no need for to look blue an’ tell us what a mere babby could see for itself.”

This remark, coming as it did from lugubrious Mitford, caused Terrence O’Connor to smile.

“True for ye,” he said, “we can see what’s fornint us, but even Black Ned can’t see round the corner.”

“Besides, there may be a flat shore on the other side o’ the island,” added Bob Massey in a cheerful tone; “I’ve often noticed islands o’ this build, and when they’re so high on one side they usually are low on the opposite side; so we’ll only have to pull roundan’ mayhap there are people on itwho knows?”

“Ay, natives pr’aps,” growled Jarring, “an’ cannibals who are fond of eatin’ white folkspecially women!”

“Shut up your black muzzle, or I’ll heave ye overboard!” said Mitford, fiercely, for like many easy going, quiet men, he was unusually savage when fairly roused.

Whatever Black Ned may have felt, he gave no expression to his thoughts or feelings by word or look, but continued calmly to pull his oar.

All that day, and all that night, however, the party pulled steadily along the shore without finding an opening in the cliffs or any part which could be scaled by man. During this period their plight was miserable in the extreme, for the weather at the time was bitterly cold; they were drenched through and through with spray, which broke so frequently over the side as to necessitate constant baling, and, to make matters worse, towards evening of the second day snow began to fall and continued to do so the greater part of the night. Fortunately, before dark they came to some small rocky islets, on which they could not land as the waves washed over them, but in the lee of which they

cast anchor, and thus were enabled to ride out a furious gale, which sprang up at sunset and did not subside till morning.

It need scarcely be said that the men did all that lay in their power to shelter the poor women, who had exhibited great fortitude and uncomplaining endurance all that weary time; but little could be done for them, for there was not even a bit of sail to put over them as a protection.

“Nellie, dear,” said Massey, when the boat was brought up under the lee of the rocks, “d’ee feel very cold?”

“Not very,” replied his wife, raising her head. “I’m strong, thank God, and can stand it; but Peggy here is shudderin’ awful bad. I believe she’ll die if somethin’ isn’t done for her.”

“I think if she could only ring the water out of her clothes,” whispered Mrs Hayward to her husband, “it might do her some good, but”

“I know that, Eva: it would do you all good, and we must have it done somehow”

An exclamation in the bow of the boat at that moment attracted attention. It was John Mitford, who, having taken off his own coat, and wrapped it round his shivering wife, had gone to the bow to rummage in a locker there, and had found a tarpaulin. Massey had overhauled the locker for food before him, but the tarpaulin had been so well folded, and laid so flat in the bottom, that it had escaped his notice.

Retiring aft with this god send, the lugubrious man speedily, with the assistance of his comrades, covered over the centre of the boat so completely that a small chamber was formed, into which the women could retire. It was not high enough, indeed, to stand in, but it formed a sufficient shelter from wind and spray.

“Now, Peggy, my dear,” said her husband when it was finished, “get in thereoff wi’ your things an’ wring ’em out.”

“Th–thank you, J–John,” replied Peggy, whose teeth chattered like castanets, “but ’ow am I t–to d–dry ’em? For wet c–clo’es won’t dry wi–without a fire. At least I n–never ’eard of”

The remainder of her remarks were lost to male ears as the tarpaulin dropped around her after Eva Hayward and Nellie had led, or half lifted, her under its sheltering folds. How they managed to manipulate the shivering Peggy it is not our province to tell, but there can be no doubt that the treatment of her two

friends in misfortune was the cause of her emerging from under the tarpaulin the following morning alive and comparatively well, though still far from dry.

The aspect of things had changed greatly for the better when the unfortunates resumed their voyage. The wind had abated, the sea, although still heaving, was smooth. The snow had ceased, and the sun arose in a cloudless sky, so that when poor Mrs Mitford raised her dishevelled head and felt the sun's cheering rays she exclaimed, with a sigh of relief: "La! if the sun ain't blazin' 'ot! An' I'm so 'ungry. Dear, dear, 'ave you bin rowin' all night, John? 'Ow tired you must be; an' your 'ands blistered, though you are pretty tough in the 'ands, but you couldn't 'old a candle to Bob Massey at that Yes, yes, Nellie, I 'ear you, but la! what does it matter 'ow your 'air an' things is deranged w'en you're wrecked at sea and"

The abrupt disappearance of the dishevelled head at that moment suggested the idea that Mrs Mitford had either fallen backward suddenly or been pulled under cover by her companions.

"She's all right, anyhow," said O'Connor, adjusting his oar.

"She's always all right," remarked Mitford in a funereal tone, which, however, was meant to be confidential. "Bless your heart, I've seen that woman under all circumstances, but although she's timid by nature, an' not over strong in body, I've never seen her give in or fairly cast down. No doubt she was pretty low last night, poor thing, but that was 'cause she was nigh dead wi' coldyet her spirit wasn't crushed. It's my solemn conviction that if my Peggy ever dies at all she'll die game."

With a profound sigh of satisfaction at having thus borne testimony to the rare and admirable qualities of his wife, the worthy man applied himself to his oar with redoubled vigour.

It is quite a pleasure in this censorious world to see any man absolutely blind to his wife's faults, and thoroughly awake to her good qualities. The opinion formed of Peggyby Mrs Massey and Mrs Hayward respectively, did not quite coincide with that of John Mitford.

"How did you get on with poor Peggy last night, Eva?" asked Dr Hayward of his wife, in an undertone, as they breakfasted that forenoon beside the tiller, while the rest of their companions were similarly engaged in the middle of the boat, and at the bow.

"Pretty well, Tom, but she's troublesome to manage. She is so unusually timid, poor creature, so prone to give way to despair when things look bad, yet so sweetly apt to bound into high spirits when things are looking hopeful,and

withal, so amusingly garrulous!”

Strange to say, at the very moment that this was uttered, Nellie was remarking to her husband in a low tone that, “poor Peggy was quite a puzzle, that she was all but dead at one moment, and quite lively at another, that she professed to be all submission, but was as obstinate as a pig, and that her tonguesoft though it waswent like the clapper of a mill!”

We have referred to breakfast, but the meal spread before the castaways hardly merits that name, for it consisted of only a small slice of pork to each; a few pieces of ship’s biscuit that Slag had discovered in his pockets; and a cup of water drawn from the pond which had accumulated in a hollow of the tarpaulin during the night.

“It is lucky that one of the pieces of pork happened to be cooked,” observed Dr Hayward, as he served out the allowance, “for I would have been sorry to break into the preserved meat tins till forced to do so. We must keep these as a reserve as long as possible.”

“Right you are, sir!” said Slag, with his mouth full, while with a clasp knife he carefully cut off another morsel to be ready, “right you are! That ’minds me when we was starvin’, me and my shipmates in the Arctic regions, so as our ribs was all but comin’ through our skins, an’ we was beginnin’ to cast an evil eye on the stooard who’d kep’ fatter than the rest of us somehow, an’ was therefore likely to prove a more satisfyin’ kind o’ grub, d’ee see”

“I say, Joe,” said Hayward, interrupting, for he feared that Slag’s anecdote might not tend to render the pork breakfast more palatable.

“Sir?” said Slag.

“Will you just go to the bow and take a squint ahead? I think there seems to be something like an end o’ the cliffs in viewyour eyes are better than mine.”

Slag swallowed the mouthful on which he was engaged, thrust after it the morsel that was ready to follow, wiped the clasp knife on his thigh, and went forward to “take a squint.”

It turned out that the “end” of the cliffs which the doctor had only supposed possible, was a reality, for, after a long gaze, Slag turned and said

“Your eyes are better than you think, sir, for the end o’ the cliff is visible, an’ a spit o’ sand beyond is quite plain.”

As this report was corroborated by Bob Massey, and then by all the other men, it sent a thrill of gratitude into the hearts of most of the partyespecially the

women, who, having lain so long wet and almost motionless, were nearly benumbed in spite of the sunshine. Longer exposure, indeed, would probably have proved fatal to poor Mrs Mitford, possibly also to Mrs Hayward, who was by no means robust. As for our coxswain's wife, having been reared among the health giving breezes of the sea shore, and inured from infancy to exposure and hard work, she suffered much less than her female companions, and busied herself a great part of the time in chafing their cold limbs. In doing this she reaped the natural advantage of being herself both warmed and invigorated. Thus virtue not only "is," but inevitably brings, its own reward! Similarly, vice produced its natural consequences in the case of Black Ned, for that selfish man, being lazy, shirked work a good deal. It is possible to pull an oar in such a way that, though the rower may be apparently doing his best, he is, in reality, taking the work very lightly and doing next to nothing. Acting in this way, Ned Jarring became cold when the sleet and spray were driving in his face, his blood flowed sluggishly in his veins, and his sufferings were, consequently, much more severe than those of his comrades. Towards the afternoon of that day, they rounded the spit of sand mentioned by Joe Slag, and came upon a low lying coast. After proceeding a considerable distance along which, they discovered a good harbour. This was fortunate, for grey clouds had again covered the sun and a bitter east wind began to blow.

"Thank God, Eva," said Hayward, as he steered into the bay, "for if we had not come upon this harbour, your strength and that of poor Peggy, I fear, would have failed, but now you'll be all right in a short time."

"Oh, no, sir, I don't think as my strength would fail," said Peggy, in a feeble voice, for she had overheard the remark. "Not that I shouldn't be thankful all the same, I allowfor thankfulness for mercies received is a dooty, an' most on us do fail in that, though I say it that shouldn't, but my strength ain't quite gone yet"

"Stand by, Slag, to fend off with your oar when we get close in," said the doctor, interrupting Peggy's discourse.

"Have any of you got matches in your pockets?" asked Massey, clapping his hands suddenly to the various receptacles about his person, with a look of unwonted anxiety.

"Ye may well ax that, Bob," said O'Connor, using his own hands in the same way. "Cold, wet weather, and no house! It 'ud be death to the women, sure, av"

"Here you are!" shouted Tomlin in a burst of triumph, in spite of his naturally reserved disposition.

He held up a box of vestas which, being a smoker, he fortunately had in his pocket.

“I hope they ain’t wet,” remarked Black Ned, suggestively.

“Wrap ’em well up,” said Slag.

Tomlin drew out his handkerchief and proceeded to do so. At the same moment the boat’s keel grated softly on the shingly shore.

Chapter 8.

Seldom have the mysterious sparks of life been sought for more anxiously, or tended and nursed with greater care, than were the little sparks of fire which were evoked with difficulty from Tomlin’s match box.

Drizzling rain had commenced just as the wrecked party landed. The tarpaulin had been set up as a slight though very imperfect shelter; the ground underneath had been strewn with twigs and grass, and a large pile of dead branches had been arranged to receive the vital spark before any attempt was made to create it.

“Everything must be quite ready, first,” said Hayward to Tomlin, “for our very lives depend, under God, on our securing fire; so keep the matches snug in your pocket till I ask for them.”

“I will,” replied Tomlin, “D’you know it never occurred to me before how tremendously important the element of fire is? But how will you ever manage to make the branches catch, everything being so thoroughly soaked?”

“You shall see. I have had to make a fire in worse circumstances than the present,” returned Hayward, “though I admit they are bad enough. Have you got the small twigs broken and ready, Slag?”

“All ready, sir.”

“Now look here, Tomlin.”

As he spoke, the doctor picked up a dead but wet branch, and, sheltering himself under the tarpaulin, began to whittle it with his penknife. He found, of course, that the interior of the branch was dry. The thin morsels which he sliced off were handed to Slag, who placed them with great care in the heart of a bundle of very small twigs resembling a crow’s nest. A place had been reserved for this bundle or nest, in the heart of the large pile of branches lying on the ground. Meanwhile, Slag held the nest ready in his hands.

“Now, Tomlin, get out your matches,” said the doctor.

With the utmost care the anxious man unfolded the kerchief, and, opening the box, looked into it earnestly.

“Wet?” asked Hayward.

Tomlin shook his head. “I fear they are.” He took one out, while the whole party assembled round him to note the result.

The first match dropped its head like a piece of soft putty when scraped on the lid. The second did the same, and a suppressed groan escaped from the little group, for it could be seen that there were not more than ten or twelve matches in the box altogether. Again and again a match was struck with similar result. The fifth, however, crackled a little, and rekindled, sinking hope in the observers, though it failed to kindle itself. The seventh burst at once into a bright blaze and almost drew forth a cheer, which, however, was checked when a puff of wind blew out the new born flame.

“Och! let Bob Massey try it!” cried O’Connor. “Sure he’s used to workin’ in throublesome weather.”

“Right, boy,” said Slag, “hand it to the coxs’n.”

Tomlin readily obeyed, only too glad to get some of the failure shifted to other shoulders.

Massey readily undertook the task, and success attended his first effort.

“I knowed it!” said Nellie, in a quiet tone, as she saw the bright flame leap up and almost set her husband’s beard on fire. “Bob never fails!”

The burning match was quickly plunged into Hayward’s handful of shavings, which blazed up as he thrust it into Slag’s nest; and Slag, holding the nest with the tender care of a loving sick nurse and the cool indifference of a salamander till it was a flaming ball, crammed it into the heart of the pile of sticks. Tremendous was the volume of smoke that arose from the pile, and anxious were the looks riveted on it.

“Sure ye’ve smothered it intirely,” gasped O’Connor.

“Oh, me!” sighed Peggy in a voice of mild despair.

“No fear, it’s all right,” said Massey, in a confident tone, while Joe Slag, on his knees, with cheeks inflated and nose all but kindling, blew at the glowing heart with unwearied determination, regardless alike of friend and foe.

“It’s going to do,” remarked John Mitford in his most dismal tone.

“Any child might tell that,” said Nellie, with a light laugh.

The laugh seemed infectious, for the whole party joined in as a glorious gush of flame rushed among the sticks, dried up the dampness, and effectually changed the pillar of smoke into a pillar of fire.

The fire thus kindled was rightly deemed of such vital importance that it was not permitted to go out thereafter for many months, being watched night and day by members of the party appointed to the duty by turns. It had, indeed, not a few narrow escapes, and more than once succeeded in reaching what appeared to be its last spark, but was always caught in time and recovered, and thus was kept burning until a discovery was made which rendered such constant attendance and care unnecessary.

“Now,” said Dr Hayward, when the fire was safely established, “we have not much daylight left, so it behoves us to make the most of it. You are a man of action and experience, Robert Massey, what would you advise us to do first?”

“Well, doctor, since you’re good enough to ask me, I would advise that we should appoint a leader. You see, mates,” he continued, addressing himself to the company in general, “there’s no possibility of a ship gettin’ along without a captain, or an army without a general. If we was going off to a wreck now, with or without a lifeboat, I would claim a sort o’ right to be coxswain in virtue o’ past experience; but, as we’ve now begun a sort o’ shore goin’ business, which requires a deal o’ general knowledge, besides seamanship, an’ as Dr Hayward has got that by edication, I move that we make him our leader.”

“Right you are, Bob,” said Joe Slag. (“As he always is,” said Nellie, sotto voce.) “So I second the moveif that’s the reg’lar way to do it.”

“Hear, hear!” said every one with right good will, and a gleam of pride flashed from Eva’s pretty brown eyes as her husband was thus unanimously appointed leader of the shipwrecked band.

Like a sensible man, knowing his capacity, he at once accepted the command without any display of undue modesty, and proved his fitness by at once going to work.

“The first thing, then, is to thank God for our deliverance, which we all do, I am sure, most heartily.”

This was received with a responsive “Amen” from every onenot even

excepting Black Ned.

“Next, we must find fresh water and boil a bit of pork”

“Ah, then, we haven’t a kittle!” exclaimed O’Connor.

“Haven’t we a big baling dish, Terrence?” said Hayward.

“Sure we have, sor, an’ it’s a tin wan as’ll stand fire,” returned Terrence with a reproved look.

“Well, then, you go fetch it; wash it well out and get the pork ready. Jarring and Tomlin will gather as much dead wood as they can find and pile it beside the fire. Mitford will search for fresh waterthere must be a spring or brook not far offand Massey and I will rig up some sort of shelter for the night.”

“Please, sir, may I go with Mitford to seek for water?” asked Nellie.

“By all means, if you wish to.”

“And I will keep you company, Nell,” said Mrs Hayward energetically.

“So will I,” chimed in little Mrs Mitford, feebly. “I was always fond of water. As a child I used to paddle about in it continually, an’ sometimes tumbled into it, for of course young people will”

“No, Peggy, you must sit by the fire with my wife,” said the doctor. “Neither of you is fit for work of any kind yet, so sit down and warm yourselves.”

Eva was too wise and Peggy too weak to offer objection, so these two sat by the fire while the others went to work.

Energy of action tends to lighten the burdens that may be laid on human spirits, and to induce the most favourable view of the worst circumstances. The toil which the party now undertook was such a blessed relief to them after the prolonged exposure to cold and comparative inaction in the boat, that all returned to the camp fire in a much more cheerful state of mind than they left it. The searchers for water came back first, having found what they sought close at hand; and Terrence, filling his baling dish, soon had the pork boiling, along with some mysterious herbs gathered by the doctor to convert the liquid into soup. Tomlin and Black Ned returned heavily laden with firewood, and Bob Massey discovered a tree with branches sufficiently spreading and leafy to protect them to some extent from rain.

“’Tis as well we have found overhead protection, Massey,” said the doctor, when our coxswain led him to the spot, “for I have been thinking that as we

have no blankets, we shall be obliged to use our tarpaulin as a quilt rather than an umbrella."

"That's true, sir," returned Massey, "but how about the women?"

"Well, I've been thinking about that," said Hayward, "and I've devised a plan for to night at least; to morrow I hope to hit on a better arrangement. First of all, we'll spread in front of a fire, which we will kindle beneath this tree, a layer of branches and grass. In the middle of this the women will lie down side by side, after having dried and warmed themselves thoroughly at the fire. Then we'll take two of the floor planks from the boat, and put one on each side of thempartially frame them, as it were. Then one half of us men will lie down on one side of the frame, the other half on the other side, and we'll draw the tarpaulin over us all."

"Hm! not very comfortable," said Massey, "for the poor women to be framed like that."

"Admitted; but what else can we do?" said Hayward. "It would risk our lives to sleep without covering of any kind in such cold weather, and with sleet falling as it does now. Better have the sheet spread upon us than merely over our heads. So now let's kindle another fire, and do you arrange our couch, Bob."

In spite of the cold and the sleet, things looked much more cosy than persons unacquainted with "roughing it" could believe possible, and they became comparatively happy when the couch was spread, and they were seated under the sheltering tree, with the fire blazing and crackling in front of them, suffusing their faces and persons and the leaf canopy overhead with a deep red glare, that contrasted well with the ebony black surroundings, while a rich odour of pork soup exhaled from the baling dish.

"Ah! now there's nothin' wantin' to produce parfit felicity but a pipe," said O'Connor with a sigh.

"That's so, lad," assented Tomlin, echoing the sigh, and feeling in his pocket from force of habit, though he knew too well that nothing was to be found there.

"Here, Terrence," said Massey, handing him an empty pipe, at the same time asking him to shut his eyes and draw, and try to imagine himself smoking, but Terrence shook his head.

"I couldn't do that, Bob," he said, "but I'll sing ye a stave in praise o' the weed."

Without waiting for permission, the jovial Irishman at once began:

“Oh! it’s ’baccy as is my chief joy,

At mornin’, noon and night;

An’ it’s verily my belief, boy,

That I love it with all my might.

If your liver an’ lungs are squeakin’,

An’ your head is growin’ cracky,

There’s nothin’ so sure to kill or cure,

As fumes o’ the strongest ’baccy.”

“If it would improve your voice, Terrence,” observed Mr Mitford, meekly, “I’m sure I wish ye had pounds of it, for it’s that harshthough, of course, I make no pretence to music myself, but”

“Just listen to that now, ‘Harsh!’ an’ that to a man whose own mother, by the father’s side, towld him he shud make music his purfession! Arrah, howld on, Black Ned, ye spalpeen; ye’ve had two helpin’s already!”

This latter remark had reference to the baling dish of soup which was being passed round the party, so that each might help himself to two mouthfuls of soup before passing it on. As they had no spoons, the doctor had extemporised ladles of folded bark which served the purpose pretty well.

“Haven’t ye a small bit o’ ’baccy in the corner o’ wan o’ yer pockets, doctor, dear?” asked Terrence, insinuatingly. “May be ye’d find a morsel if ye’d try.”

“Quite useless to try, my poor fellow,” returned the doctor, with a look of affected pity, “for I’m a non smoker. I never indulge in such an absurdity.”

“Sure, it’s a true proverb that says ‘doctor’s differ,’” retorted O’Connor, “for most o’ the saw bones of my acquaintance have smoked like lime kilns.”

“More’s the pity, Terrence, but if you’ll heave on some more firewood you’ll have a smoke that may do as a substitute at present.”

By heaping quantities of fresh branches on the fire till it was large enough to roast an ox, the party managed to pass the night in comparative comfort, in spite of cold and sleet. Hayward watched the fire during the first part of the

night. Then he was relieved by our coxswain, who was succeeded by Joe Slag, and no Vestal virgins ever tended their fire with more anxious solicitude than those three men guarded theirs during that first night on the island.

As if to make up for the sufferings of the past few days, the morning that followed broke with unclouded splendour, and the rising sun shone upon as beautiful a scene as could well be imagined, for it revealed an island richly clothed with verdure, which, rising out of a calm blue sea, sloped gradually upwards, until its western ridge met the bright sky. Evidently that terminating ridge was the place whence descended the precipitous cliffs, along which they had sailed immediately after leaving the cave of the wreck.

There is no accounting for the eccentricities of weak minded females, whether pretty or plain. The first thing that pretty little Mrs Mitford exclaimed on opening her eyes and beholding the glorious view was

“Oh! I do so wish that we had oysters for breakfast!”

If she had expressed a desire for elephant chops, she could not have taken Eva Hayward more by surprise. As for Nell Massey, she went off into a hilarious giggle.

“I fear there are no oysters hereabouts,” said Hayward, “but I shouldn’t wonder if we were to find mussels and things of that sort. Come, lads, we’ll go and have a search for them, while the ladies fill and boil our kettle.”

Limpets, mussels, and other shell fish were found in great abundance. With these warm soup was soon made, and after a hearty breakfast, Hayward organised the party in two bands which were sent off in different directions to explore the island, Peggy and her husband being left behind to cook the dinner and keep up the fire.

Chapter 9.

For several days the shipwrecked party continued to live chiefly on limpets and mussels gathered on the sea shore. Only a very little of the pork was used, for the purpose of converting the food into soup. As they could not tell, of course, how long they might be compelled to live there, it behoved them to be very careful of the food supply already in possession. Fortunately, the weather continued fine, though cold, so that it was not necessary at first to make any alteration in their camp arrangements.

During this period much of their time was necessarily spent in laying in a stock of shell fish, and in attempting to bring down with stones some of the

gulls which flew inquisitively about and very temptingly near to the camp, but none of the party was a good marksman with stone ammunition, and it soon became evident that unless some other means of obtaining food were discovered there was every prospect of starvation ending their career.

In this emergency Dr Hayward organised an exploring expedition on a more extended scale. He divided the party into three bandsone consisting of Ned Jarring, Tomlin, and himself, to examine the shores; another comprising Joe Slag, John Mitford, and O'Connor, to penetrate the interior and higher lands; while it was appointed to Bob Massey, who had by that time come to be more frequently addressed by his old title of "coxswain," to stay at the camp, keep the all important fire going, and guard the women.

"You see, we must go about this business thoroughly," said the doctor, when they were all assembled in the camp one day after their frugal meal, excepting O'Connor, who was a short distance off, trying, with unwearied perseverance and unvaried failure, to kill gulls with stones. "And for this purpose, we must hold a council of war. Where's Terrence?"

"He's pelting the gulls as usual," said Black Ned.

"A missin' of 'em, you mean," suggested Mitford.

"Hallo, Terrence!" shouted Hayward, catching sight of the Irishman at that moment. "Here! we want you."

"Comin', sor, jist wan more shot at this baste. He's bin flyin' round me hid for half an hour at laste, winkin' at the stones as they go by him. Och! missed againbad luck to ye!"

As he uttered the malediction the disappointed man heaved a last stone, angrily and without an attempt at an aim. He did not even look up to observe the result, but turned sharply round towards the camp.

That stone, however, was like the arrow shot at a venture. It hit the bird full on the breast and brought it down, which fact was made known to the sportsman by a cheer from the camp and a heavy thud behind him.

"Well done, Terrence!" cried Hayward as he came up with his prize. "I regard it as a good omena sort of turn in the tide which will encourage us on our contemplated expedition."

The leader then gave minute instructions as to how long they were to be away; how much food they were to take; the direction to be followed, and the work to be done.

“In short,” said the doctor in conclusion, “we must use our eyes, ears, and limbs to the best advantage; but bear in mind that the grand object of the expedition is”

“Grub,” suggested O’Connor.

“Just so. Grub is our first and greatest necessity. Meanwhile, Peggy, Nell, and Eva will do what they can to make our camp comfortable: gather mussels and other shell fish and see that the coxswain does not eat more than a fair share of victuals, and conducts himself in all respects like an obedient and trusted servant.”

With such and similar touches of pleasantry Hayward sought to cheer the spirits of the party and divert their minds from dwelling too much on the fact that their case was a very serious onealmost desperate, for they were on a comparatively small island, far to the southward of the usual track of ships, without food or shelter, and without any of the ordinary means of procuring either.

The remainder of that day was spent in making preparation for the projected expedition. As they had no offensive or defensive arms, except two gully knives, their first business was to provide each man with a spear. Fortunately, some of the surrounding trees had very straight branches of various sizes, so they had only to cut down such as were suitable, and peel the bark off. But the formation of hard points gave them some anxiety, until Tomlin hit upon the idea of utilising the bones of their pork.

“The very thing!” said Mitford, with a look of melancholy satisfaction.

Having no turn whatever for mechanics, he never saw difficulties till they met and overcame him, and was always ready to rush in where mechanical angelsif we may say sofeared to tread.

“And how would you propose to cut the bones, John?” asked Slag, with an air of modest simplicity.

“Cut ’em? eh! wellwi’ the knife, of course.”

It was found, however, that the knife made but slight impression on the bones, and after one or two vain attempts, they turned to a more effective method. Finding a huge boulder of some kind of sandstone they broke it up, and on the rough surface thus produced, ground the bones into sharp points, and by an ingenious method known to Slag, who learned it from the Eskimos, they fixed these firmly on the ends of their spears.

Thus armed, and with a small quantity of cold pork, and a large allowance of cold boiled limpets and mussels in their wallets, they set out on their explorations.

It is impossible to accompany two parties at once. Let us follow just now the one composed of Joe Slag, Terrence O'Connor, and John Mitford. These, with Joe as their leader, proceeded along the shore some miles in a northerly direction; and then, turning into the bush, which was nowhere thick, they pushed into the interior of the island. After advancing about ten miles they came on a wide stretch of sandhills or downs, and found that, having crossed a sort of isthmus, they had come out again on the sea shore.

"This won't do," said Slag, on making the discovery. "We'll have to steer d'rect for the highest land."

"That's so, Joe," said Mitford, "and yonder's a height away there, right in the wind's eye, that will act as a beacon to us."

"I sees it, Johnbut, I say, what's the matter wi' Terrence?"

This question was drawn forth by the action of the Irishman, who had walked on about fifty yards in advance of his comrades. He was standing in the attitude of an ancient Roman about to discharge a javelin. Stooping low as if to render themselves less conspicuous, Mitford muttered, "hallo!" and his comrade whispered, "Sh! he sees suthin'!"

Whatever it was he saw, O'Connor evidently felt too far off to act effectively, for, after standing a moment in the classic position just referred to, he suddenly lowered his spear, dropped on hands and knees, and made a slow, undignified advance of a few yards. Then he rose again, became classic once more and discharged his spear, in a manner that would have done credit to Achilles himself.

The growl that followed, and the "bad luck to ye," that came faintly back on the breeze, told too plainly that the result was a miss.

"Sure it's a rabbit I saw," he said, returning to his companions, "an' if I'd only sent it two yards more to the left, I'd have hit the baste!"

To the satisfaction of the explorers, it was found that the sandhills were burrowed all over by rabbits, and that there existed there a large colony of them. Cheered by thisin spite of their bad javelin playthey made for the high ground, and soon found themselves threading a belt of wood, after crossing which they reached the foot of the range of hills that bounded the island to the westward.

It was a weird, rugged spot, covered with great boulders that had rolled down the hill sides, and with gaps and chasms here and there of considerable depth, that suggested the idea of volcanic action having visited the place at some remote period. These chasms or rents in the earth were overgrown with trees or bushes in many places, and obliged the travellers to make wide detours in some places to avoid them.

Thus they were so much delayed that night was upon them before they had reached the higher parts of the hill range where they had intended to encamp.

The difference between blanketing and gossamer is great, yet it is inconceivably slight compared with the difference between gossamer and nothing! In the pride of their strength the members of the exploring party lay down to sleep without covering of any kind, for the good reason that they possessed none, and before morning they would gladly have given a fabulous price for even a gossamer coverlet.

“It’s freezin’ I am, if not froze,” said Terrence O’Connor at the end of the second sleepless hour. “If we could have only brought away some o’ the fire in our pockets, what a comfort it would have bin!”

He got up, shook himself, and slapped his arms across his breast vigorously.

Slag and Mitford followed his example.

“I’m beginnin’ to feel better on the outside,” continued O’Connor, pausing, “but my spinal marrow isn’t properly warm yet.”

“’Minds me o’ Baffin’s Bay,” growled Slag, with a mighty slap of the arms between each word.

Mitford seemed to think any remark superfluous, for he only groaned.

“Pity it’s too dark to see yer face, John,” said Terrence. “It must be a sight worth seein’. Och, av I only had a good sized pocket han’kicher I’d wrap me feet in it, anyhow.”

“Suppose we cut some grass and try that?” suggested Mitford.

The suggestion was acted on.

It was slow work cutting grass with a clasp knife; tearing it up in handfuls was still slower, but the labour warmed the tired explorers, and when they lay down again under this Adam an’ Eveic bedding, they fell asleep almost immediately, and did not waken till the sun was pretty well up in the eastern

sky.

“Breakfast fust,” said Slag, on completing a tremendous stretch and yawn. “It’s always bin my way since I was a babbybusiness first; pleasure to foller. Grub is business, an’ work is pleasureleastwise, it ought to be to any man who’s rated ‘A. One’ on the ship’s books. Hallo! sorrowful monkey face, clap a stopper on yer nose an’ tumble up,d’ye hear?”

Mitford did not hear, but a touch of Slag’s toe caused him to feel and to rise.

O’Connor was already astir, preparing breakfast. Cold boiled mussels and a bit of pork may be good food, but it is not appetising. Consequently they did not linger long over the meal, but were soon striding up the mountain side rejoicing in the fresh air and sunshine.

There was a certain phase in John Mitford’s character which had not yet been discovered by his friends, and was known only to his wife. He was romanticpowerfully so. To wander through unknown lands and be a discoverer had been the dream of his youth. He was naturally reticent, and had never said so to any one but Peggy, who, being the reverse of romantic, was somewhat awe stricken by the discovery, and, in an imbecile way, encouraged him to hope that, “one of these days he’d ’ave ’is desires gratified, as there was nothink to prevent ’im from goin’ to Novazealandif that was the right way to pronounce itor to Van Demons landnot in a sinful way of course, for they had given up transportin’ people there nowthough wherever they transported ’em to she couldn’t imagineanyhow, there was nothink to prevent his tryin’.” And John did try, which was the primary cause of his being a member of the exploring party now under consideration.

Influenced by his romantic spirit, Mitford betrayed a troublesome tendency to wander from his comrades in pursuit of the Unknown. O’Connor, with the straightforward simplicity of his nation, set it down to pig headedness. Slag, being a man of feeling, opined that it was absence of mind.

“The spalpeen! he’s off again,” said O’Connor, turning round as they halted to rest a minute, after breasting the hill for half an hour. “Hallo, John! Where are ye, boy?”

“Hereall right,” shouted a voice in the distance, “I’m exploring behind the knoll here. Go ahead; I’ll meet ye at the top o’ the hill.”

By that time they were within about an hour’s walk of the highest ridge of the island, so they pushed on without delay, expecting to find their lugubrious friend there before them, or not far behind them. It turned out as had been supposed. The mountain ridge formed the summit of the great precipice along

the foot of which they had sailed after quitting the cavern, or, as they had come to call it, the wreck cave. For some time the two stood on the giddy edge, looking in silence on the tremendous depths below, and the sublime spectacle of illimitable sea beyond, with its myriad facets gleaming in the sunshine.

Then they bethought them of their comrade, and turned back to look for him; hallooing now and then as they went, and expecting every moment to see him emerge from one of the gorges that led to the ridge. But there was no answering shout or any sign of his having been there. Soon, becoming anxious and then alarmed, the two men set to work in earnest to search for their lost comrade, but they sought in vain. Returning to the spot where they had last heard his voice, they continued the search in that direction, and made the rocks echo with their shouting. Still no John Mitford was to be found, and the curious thing was that there seemed to be no very rugged or precipitous formation of land where he could easily have met with an accident. At last, evening approached.

“We must go back at wance,” said O’Connor, with anxious looks, “an’ rouse all the men out to seek for him wi’ torches.”

Without another word they turned and made for the camp as fast as they could go.

Meanwhile, Dr Hayward and his party had been successful in their exploration, for they not only discovered a rabbit warren, but had observed seals basking on the rocks, and found the tracks of goats, or some animal of that kind with divided hoofs. They had even succeeded in getting between a young seal and the water and speared it, so that there was something like jubilation in the camp on their return at the prospect of a fresh meal and better fare in future.

But this was abruptly put an end to by the arrival of Slag and his comrade with the news of Mitford’s disappearance. Poor Mrs Mitford was thrown into a state of terrible alarm, and at first insisted on accompanying the search party, but under the united entreaties of Eva and Nelly she was prevailed on to remain behind.

With torches made of resinous wood which burnt admirably they searched all that night, and, taking only a few hours’ rest, continued the search all the following day, but without success. Day after day the search was continued, even after all hope of ever again seeing their comrade alive had died out, but at last they were compelled to give it up and devote themselves to the urgent duty of procuring better shelter and food.

As for poor Mrs Mitford, she sank into a state of helpless and hopeless despair.

Chapter 10.

Men in straits cannot afford to sit down to grieve and mope over their sorrows. Although a deep gloom had been cast over the shipwrecked party by the loss of one whom they had learned to respect, the urgent need of obtaining better food and shelter compelled them, as we have said, to give their whole mind and attention to this work.

They pitied poor Peggy sincerely, however, and endeavoured to comfort her a little by raising the hope that her husband might have merely lost himself in the woods of the island, and would yet, perhaps, be found alive and well. But, although their intentions were kindly, they could comfort neither Peggy nor themselves with such a hope; for their experience convinced them that the woods, although thick and tangled, were not extensive enough for any one to be permanently lost in them, and it seemed quite certain that if the lost man had not met with some fatal accident, he would certainly have made his way to the coast, by following which he could have easily found the camp.

“It is very sad to give over our search for poor Mitford,” said Dr Hayward one morning, while seated on a ledge of rock near the beach, taking counsel with his male companions as to the order of procedure for the day, “but we cannot afford to delay our operations longer. This poor fare of mussel soup, with such a small allowance of pork, is beginning to injure the health of our women, not to mention ourselves; besides, the pork won’t last long, even though we put ourselves on the shortest possible allowance; so I think that to day we must go on an expedition after the seals we saw the last time we went to the southern end of the island. What say you, comrades?”

“All right, cap’n,” answered Massey. “You’ve only got to say the word. But who’s to stop at home to mind the camp fire and the women?”

“I’m afraid,” returned Hayward, with a deprecatory smile, “that it’s your own turn, Bob. I would say that I’m sorry for you, were it not ungallant to pity a man for being condemned for a day to female society.”

The way in which the coxswain received this showed that he did not repine at his fate. He did not even object to O’Connor’s remark that, “Faix, he might consider himself the luckiest man o’ the lot!”

Accordingly, Massey remained at the camp while the doctor, Slag, O’Connor, Tomlin, and Jarring set out on a hunting expedition with two days’ cooked provisions in their wallets. The doctor and Tomlin armed themselves with

spears, but Jarring and Slag preferred clubs.

“You see,” said the latter, “I’ve heardthough I can’t rightly say I’ve seed it done myselfthat the seal hunters o’ the north do their work wi’ clubs; so, if one man can kill a seal wi’ such a thing, I don’t see why another shouldn’t.”

And, truly, there was some reason for this covert boast; for Joe, besides possessing arms of prodigious power, had cut and shaped for himself a knotted club which might have suited the hand of Hercules himself.

It turned out that Bob Massey’s satisfaction at being left behind that day was not altogether the result of regard for female society. While he was sauntering back to the camp, after his comrades had left, he congratulated himself aloud on having at last a chance of making his experiment without being laughed at during the trial. “That isif Nellie has got enough of line made.”

At that moment Nell was busy with the line in question, and at the same time doing her best to comfort Mrs MitfordMrs Hayward being engaged in preparing dinner; by no means a difficult duty, which the women undertook day about.

“Keep up your spirits, dear Peggy,” said Nell, in that sweet, cosy toneif we may say sowhich played such havoc in Bob’s bosom at the time when she was known as the coxswain’s bride. “I feel sure that your dear husband will return to us. No doubt, some sort o’ misfortune has come to him; but he’s such a sensible, handy man, is John, that I can’t help feelin’ he’ll come back to us; an’ when I feel anything very strongly, d’ee know, I’ve almost always found it come true. Do you believe in strong feelin’, Peggy?”

Poor Mrs Mitford, who had been sitting with her hands clasped in her lap, and an utterly woebegone expression on her pale face, raised her head with a troubled look on being thus directly appealed to.

“Believe in strong feelin’s, Nellie? I should just think I do. Not to mention my own feelin’swhich are so strong that I never felt nothink like ’em beforeany one who has been married to my John must know well what st–strongoh! no, I shall never see ’im again; dear Nellie, don’t tell me,” she said, beginning to cry. “I knowI know”

“There, nowthere’s a good soul. Don’t go off again. Look! D’ee know what this is for?”

As she spoke, Nellie held up a ball of what appeared to be twine, and her companionwhose mind resembled that of a child, in that it could be easily divertedsaid no, she didn’t know what it was for, and that she, (Peggy), had

seen her making it when the men were off excursioning, and had asked about it; and why didn't she, (Nellie), relieve her curiosity before, upon the point, instead of waitin' till now?

"Well, you see, Peggy," replied her friend, with the confidential air of one who has a secret to tell, "my Bob has took it into his head to give his mates a surprise by fishin' for albatrosses."

"Lawks! Nellie, an' that will give 'em a surprise!" interrupted Mrs Mitford, drying her eyes. "How ever can any man fish for a birdunless, indeed, it goes under water an' changes its nature, which no creetur can do; though, now I come to think of it, I have seen flyin' fish, an' so, perhaps, there may be albytresses, or other birds, that"

"Hallo! Nellie, hard at the twine, lass? You've made about enough of it now," cried our coxswain, entering the camp at that moment, sitting down beside his wife, and examining the ball of cord which she had been so busily spinning.

"I'm glad you think there's enough, Bob, for I've come to the end o' the stuff you gathered for me."

"Plenty more where that came from, Nell; but there's no need to gather more than enough; for enough, you know, is as good as a feast. Well, Peggy," he added, turning to the poor woman, and patting her gently on the shoulder, "has Nell been tellin' you what I'm goin' to try?"

"She was beginnin' to tell me, Mr Massey, when you came in, something about fishin' for albytresses, an' I always thought albytresses was birds, and"

"Quite right, Peggy. See, this is how it is: you bait a hookbut come," said the coxswain, rising suddenly, and taking up the ball of twine, "they do say example's better than precept. Come along wi' me an' Nell, an' we'll show you how to do it."

So saying, Massey led the two women down to the boat, telling Mrs Hayward, whom they passed on the way, to heave some more sticks on the fire, as it was getting low.

"Never fear," said Eva, who carried the baling dish full of shell fish in her hands. "I shall never forget the fright we got that time Joe let it get so low that it was almost at the last spark. You won't be long away, will you?"

"Not long. Anyhow, we'll be sure to turn up for dinner."

During their short residence on the island, the coxswain had observed that albatrosses paid them frequent visits. The giant birds had exhibited some signs

of curiosity as to the doings of the new arrivals on the island; so he resolved to capture one of them, with a view to soup!

Embarking in the boat, he rowed towards a point of rocks jutting out into the sea, over which albatrosses had been seen hovering many times. On the way, Nellie, who had previously been taught what to do, fastened a small bit of wood to the end of the line she had spun. Hanging from this was a hook that the coxswain had made from a gull's breast bone. It was baited with a piece of pork. Before arriving at the point of rocks, they saw that an albatross was soaring over it on its mighty outspread wings. On observing the boat, it flew away and disappeared in the distance; but Bob was not much concerned about that.

"Now, Nell," he said, on landing, "carry this bait out to sea as far as the line will let you, lay it on the water, an' then pull back into yon cove, and see that you hide the boat an' yourselves well, and keep quiet. You mustn't even talk, Peggy! Yon fellow will soon be back."

Nellie did exactly as she was directed; and then her husband, holding the shore end of the line, concealed himself among the rocks.

He was right about the bird. Ere long, it was seen returning, and soon, on motionless, expanded wings, it hovered over the rocky point. Then it caught sight of the floating bait. With a majestic swoop, it dived, caught it up, and next moment was flouncing wildly about, hooked by the tongue, while Bob Massey hauled in the line. He had provided himself with a stick, and when the huge bird came within reach he felled it, to the immense delight of the watchers in the cove, who had already begun to smell savoury soup by anticipation!

While these were thus engaged, the sealing party was even more successful in the opposite direction. They had not gone half a dozen miles when they sighted a group of seals, sleepingor sunning themselveson a flat rock, near high water mark.

"Now, then, Hercules, lead the way with your club," said the doctor to Joe Slag, in a whisper. Joe at once shouldered his weapon and led the party round by some sheltering rocks, so as to get between the seals and the sea; then, rushing forward in a body, they took the creatures by surprise, and intercepted two of them. On coming to close quarters, however, they found that the seals were much more formidable to look at than anything that any of them had ever seen in the Arctic Seas; and when Joe brought his club down on the skull of the foremost with a terrible thwack, it refused to tumble over, but continued to splutter and flounder towards the sea. Dr Hayward, however, used his spear at

this moment with such effect that the seal fell, and another blow from the Herculean club finished its career.

As this animal was about half a ton in weight, they left it on the beach with the intention of cutting off some steaks on their return, and sending the boat round afterwards to fetch the remainder of the carcass.

Considerably elated by their success, they pushed on. In a valley which led towards the interior hills they found fresh tracks of goats, and saw one of those animals in the distance. Rabbits were also seen, but none killed at that time. They had not gone far into this valley, when a most interesting discovery was made. On opening up a new turn in the valley they came on the ruins of a hut.

With feelings of profound interest, they enteredfor there was no door to bar their progressand gazed around on the silent, mouldering walls.

“Good luck!” exclaimed O’Connor, springing forward, and grasping an object which lay on the ground. It was a hatchet, covered with red rust. “Here is something else that will be useful,” said Tomlin, picking up a file, which was also covered with rust.

The party at once began an eager search in the hope of finding other things that might be of use to them, and they were not altogether disappointed; for Jarring found a clasp knifemuch rust eaten, of course, but still fit for use. Slag found a much battered frying pan, and Tomlin discovered a large cast iron pot behind the hut, with a chip out of its rim. A bottle was also found, and the party crowded round to watch while the doctor examined it.

“Gin, I hope,” said Jarring, in a low tone.

“Physic, I think,” murmured Slag.

“A paper!” exclaimed the doctor, holding it up to the light; then, breaking the bottle, he unfolded the paper, but much of the writing on it had been obliterated by water which had leaked in. The few sentences, however, that were more or less legible, conveyed the fact that a vessel had been wrecked on the island in 1848; that the crew had lived there eighteen months when a ship, chancing to pass that way, rescued them; that they had no provisions to leave for the use of unfortunates who might chance to be cast away there in future; and that there was a garden, with some vegetables in it, about

Here the writing became quite illegible.

“Now, we must find that garden,” said the doctor, “and as we’ve not much daylight left, we must begin at once. Come along, lads.”

In half an hour they found the garden, with potatoes growing in it, and a few other roots that were new to them.

Rejoicing over their discoveries the party started back without delay for the camp, carrying the pot, the frying pan, etcetera, along with them, and not forgetting a good slice of the seal in passing. Arriving late that night, they found Bob Massey and the women already enjoying a supper of albatross soup.

“Hooroo, Bob!” exclaimed O’Connor, flourishing the frying pan in his excitement, “we’ve found some praties, boy! Shovel out some o’ that into this, honey, an’ I’ll soon let ye smell the smell of an Irish stew!”

Next day the party removed from the camp and took up their abode in the old hut, which was soon repaired sufficiently to keep out wind and rain, and the skin of the sealwith that of another killed next daywas large enough to screen off part of the hut as a separate chamber for the women.

From that time forward they had no lack of food, for they succeeded in killing plenty of seals, and in snaring a great many rabbits, though they failed entirely to kill any of the goats. And thus they lived for several months in comparative comfort, though suffering considerably from cold and bad weather.

During all that time the poor women were kept pretty busy cooking, looking after domestic matters, and mending the garments of the men. This last they accomplished by means of needles made from albatross bones and the finely divided sinews of various animals instead of thread. When the European garments were worn outwhich they were, long before deliverance was sent to themNell Massey proved her fitness for a Robinson Crusoe life, by actually splitting the sealskinswhich were as thick as sole leatherso as to obtain material thin enough for clothing.

Of course, a flagstaff had been among the first things erected. It stood on a prominent hill, and a seal skin flag was hoisted thereon, to attract any vessel that might chance to pass that way, but the flag fluttered in vain, for, as we have said, the island lay far out of the usual track of commerce.

Although poor Mrs Mitford appeared to become resigned to her great loss as time passed by, it was evident to her kind hearted female companions that she was not recovering from the shock she had received. In spite of their care of her she grew thinner and older looking every day, and although she quietly took her share of the work, she had become sad and silentcaring little apparently for what was going on around her, and never indulging in those prolonged observations of an irrelevant nature to which she had been addicted before her husband’s disappearance.

Things were in this state when, about two months after their landing, a boat voyage to the western cliffs of the island was arranged for purposes of further exploration.

Chapter 11.

Within the dark recesses of a great cavern in the western cliffs, in the midst of a mass of wreckage, there sat one morning a man whose general appearance might have suggested to a beholder “the wild man of the cave”or, at the least, an unhappy maniacfor his grey locks were long and unkempt, his eyes bloodshot and wild, his garments torn, so that his wasted limbs were exposed in numerous places, and his beard and moustache dishevelled and bristling.

No one looking at that gaunt creaturenot even the mother who bore himwould have easily recognised John Mitford; yet it was he.

On the day when he mysteriously disappeared he had come upon a great hollow, or hole, of about sixty yards in diameter, which appeared to descend into the very depths of the earth. The sides of the hollow sloped towards the centre, and were covered with bushes. Noting this, our romantic friend resolved to explore the spot. He descended cautiously till he came to a place where the hole had narrowed to about twenty feet in diameter, and the herbage ceased because of the absence of the earth to sustain it. Filled with eager curiosity, the reckless man held on to a branch and stretched his head over the edge of the hole. He saw nothing but blackness. He soon felt something, however, for the branch suddenly broke off, and John went headlong down into that hole!

Then and there he would certainly have paid for his curiosity with his life, had not a mass of earth, a few feet further down, and against which he struck, broken his fall in some measure, and shunted him off to the opposite wall of the rock. This latter proved to be a slope so steep that it let him slide, like lightning, to the bottom, a depth of about thirty feet or more, where he was stopped with such violence that he lay stunned for a considerable time.

Recovering, he found that no bones were broken, and that, indeed, he was not much damaged considering the violence of the fall; but the satisfaction and thankfulness that this undoubtedly caused him were diminished by the fact that he was in total darkness, and at the bottom of a hole of unknown depth. A feeling of horror rushed over him at the thought of being thus, as it were, buried alive. Springing up, he felt all round the walls of his prison for some inequalities or projections by which he might climb out, but none such could he find. The place was like a well of not more than about ten feet wide, with

smooth rocky sides, which were almost perpendicular as far up as he could reach. On looking upward, he could see the mouth of the hole, through which he had fallen, glimmering like a little star above him.

After a fruitless search of nearly half an hour the poor man sat down on a piece of fallen rock, over which he had stumbled several times in his search, and a deep groan burst from him as he began to realise the fact that escape from the place was impossible, and that a lingering death awaited himfor he could scarcely hope that his companions would find him in such a place. Hope, however, is hard to kill in the human breast. Perhaps they might hear him if he shouted. Immediately he began to shout for help with all the strength of his lungs. Then, as no answering shout came down from the little star aboveat which he continuously gazeda feeling of wild despair took possession of him, and he yelled and shrieked in mortal agony until his vocal chords refused to act, and nothing but a hoarse whisper passed his parched lips. Overcome at last, alike with horror and exhaustion, he fell to the ground and became partially unconscious.

How long he lay thus he could not tell; but, on recovering and looking up, he found that the star was gonetelling plainly that night had set in.

Then it was, when all hope of delivering himself, or of being delivered by others, had fled, that a word which had been uttered by Dr Hayward to a dying man on board the ship, leaped into John Mitford's mind like a gleam of light. "Call upon Me in the time of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." He had seen this invitation accepted by the dying man and deliverance obtainedif a happy smile and a triumphant gaze across the river of death were to be regarded as testimony. "But, then," thought John Mitford, "that was spiritual deliverance. Here it is a hard physical fact, from which nothing short of a miracle can deliver me. Noit is impossible!"

Was it a voice within him, or an old memory, that immediately whispered the words, "With God all things are possible?" At all events, the poor man rose up slowly in a somewhat calmer frame of mind, and began once more to feel round the walls of his narrow prison. He found nothing mew, save that once he narrowly escaped falling down what seemed to be a still deeper hole among the fallen rocks already referred to. Then he lay downor rather fell on the floor exhaustedand slept till morning. The fact that another day had begun was only ascertainable by the shining of the star like mouth of the hole. He attempted again to shout, but found that his voice had left him, and that even if his comrades should return to the place he could not make them hear! In the fit of despair which followed he went round and round his living tomb like some wild beast in a cage. During one of these perambulations, he stumbled again over the fallen rocks, dropped into the hole behind them, and slid a few feet

downwards, but not rapidly, for the slope was gradual, and it terminated on a flat floor. Looking cautiously round, on reaching this lower depth, he saw what appeared to be a faint light far beneath him, and considerably in advance of the spot where he stood, or rather to which he clung.

Gradually his mind calmed, and, resolving to make for this light, he groped his way downward. It was a long and wearisome scramble, involving many a slip and slide, and not a few falls, (for it was made, of course, in total darkness), and the distant light did not appear to become stronger or nearer. At last it seemed as though it were growing. Then John found himself on ground over which he could walk, guiding himself by touching perpendicular walls of rock on either side with his hands. It was a great split in the mountain, caused perhaps by those mighty subterranean forces, which some men recognise as volcanic action, whilst others, admittingbut passing beyondsecond causes, recognise them as tools with which God is moulding this world according to His will.

“Strange!” thought the man, as he moved slowly forward. “Was this split made hundredsperhaps thousandsof years ago, for the purpose of enabling me to escape?”

“Certainly notabsurd, presumptuous idea,” answered Unbelief, smartly.

“It was,” remarked Faith, slowly, “made, no doubt, for hundredsit may be millionsof other purposes, but among these purposes the saving of your life was certainly in the mind of Him who ‘knows all things from the beginning,’ and with whom even the falling of a sparrow is a matter for consideration.”

We do not assert that John Mitford’s reasoning took the precise form of these words, for many minds can think somewhat profoundly without being able to express themselves clearly; but some such thoughts undoubtedly coursed through John’s mind, as he moved through that subterranean labyrinth, and finally emergedthrough a narrow crack, not so large as an ordinary doorupon the inner margin of a stupendous cavern.

With a fervent “Thank God!” and a hopeful leap of the heart, the poor man beheld the waters of the sea rushing up to his very feet; and beyond the cave’s mouth lay the grand ocean itself, like a bright picture in a black frame. But what was that projecting from the water, not twenty yards from where he stood? The broken mast of a sunken wreck! Mitford’s heart almost stood still, for he became aware that he had made his way to the very cavern in which the ill fated Lapwing had met her doom, and around him were masses of wreckage that had been washed up and thrown on the rocks at the inner end of the cave where he stood.

An involuntary shudder passed through the man’s frame as he glanced round expecting to see the dead bodies of his late shipmates. But nothing of the kind was visible, and the spars, masts, and other wreckage which had reached the rocks had been shattered into “matchwood” by frequent gales.

John Mitford now hastened in eager hope along the sides of the cave towards its mouth, intending to go out to the base of the cliffs, forgetting, in his eagerness, that the mouth could not be reached without a boat. He soon discovered this, and was then thrown into another fit of despair by remembering that he could not swim.

Oh! how bitterly he blamed himself for having neglected to acquire such a simple accomplishment. He might have learnt it when young, had he not been indifferent, or lazy about it. Often had he been advised to learn it by companions, but had treated the matter lightly and let the chance go byand now, only fifty yards or so of deep water intervened between the end of the ledges of rock and the outside of the cavern, where he might perhaps find foothold enough to scramble along the base of the cliffsbut those fifty yards were equal to the Atlantic to him, he could not swim that distance to save his life. Once or twice, in a fit of desperation, he had almost plunged in to attempt it, and take his chance. Fortunately his courage failed. Had he taken the plunge his fate would no doubt have been sealed.

Returning to the inner end of the cave he searched among the wreckage for wood with which to make a raft, but it was so shattered that he found no pieces large enough to be thus used. He found, however, a barrel of pork and another of pease jammed into a crevice. These proved an immense relief to his feelings, for they secured him against absolute starvation, which he had begun to think stared him in the face.

From that time forward the unfortunate man made incessant and wild efforts to get out of the cave. He climbed and scrambled about until his clothes were almost torn off his back. He gathered the largest masses of wood he could find and tied them together in bundles until he had made something like a raft; but John was not a handy workman; his raft overturned the first time he tried it, and went to pieces, and he would have been drowned at that time if he had not been within grasping distance of the rocks. As it was, he got a fright which made him finally turn from that method of escape in despair.

Then the raw pork and hard pease tried him severely, and brought on a complaint which lasted a considerable time and greatly reduced his strength, but John was tough, and recoveredthough not much more than the skeleton of his former self remained.

Thus he continued to exist in that cavern, during all the time that his wife and friends were mourning him as dead; and in this condition was he there seated on the morning in which this chapter opens.

“Weary, wearydesolation!” moaned the unfortunate man, lifting his head and gazing round with the air of one from whom all hope has long since departed.

It is said, or supposed, that when a spoke in Fortune’s wheel is at the lowest there must needs be a rise. Mitford’s experience at this time would seem to give ground for belief in the saying; for the word “desolation” had scarcely passed his lips, when distant voices of men were heard, causing his heart to bound violently. Next moment a boat glided in front of the cave’s mouth.

John Mitford sprang up and gave vent to a yell!

Hope raised to strong life after being long deferred; despair suddenly trampled in the dust; joy bounding as from the tomb into rampant beingand a host of indescribable sentiments and passions found vent in that tremendous, that inconceivable howl!

And its effect on those in the boat?Well

That morning our exploring party had resumed their voyage with somewhat saddened hearts, for they remembered the look of the coast well, and knew that an hour or so would bring them to the cave where the Lapwing had gone down. Even Black Ned had become sentimental, and given vent to a few expressions of a semi religious nature!

“We can’t be far from it now,” said Dr Hayward, as the men ceased rowing, and the boat glided slowly, silently along.

“It’s a gruesome place,” remarked Black Ned, in a low voice.

“To think that so many lives were lost hereor hereabouts,” murmured Tomlin.

“An’ their ghost, maybe, hangin’ about!” suggested Slag, with a superstitious glance over his shoulder.

Just then Hayward bade O’Connor get up and stand in the bow with the boat hook, ready to fend off,an order which the Irishman, having been somewhat awed by the tone of the conversation, obeyed in silence.

It was at this point that they glided in front of the cave, and drew forth the yell which burst upon them like a clap of thunder. The shock to the nervous system of each was terrific. In the case of O’Connor it was visible, for he fell flat back into the bottom of the boat and fetched Jarring a tremendous whack on the

head with the boat hook in falling. Afterwards, Terrence asserted stoutly that a slip of the foot as he stood on the th'ort was the cause, but those who knew him best held that it was "a case of nerves."

Need it be said that, on recovering nervous equilibrium, the joy of rescuers and rescued was intense?

"Come along, let's take 'im home at wanst," cried the Irishman, when they had got the poor dazed man into the boat. "Isn't it Peggy that'll open her eyes an' screech for joy when she sots her eyes on ye!"

"We'll have to wash and comb an' clothe him first," said Tomlin.

He did not say "shave," for they had no razors,and by that time the beards of most of the party were as long as Mitford's; but their locks had been trimmed by means of a clasp knife super sharpened, whereas Mitford's were in wildest disorder.

That night they encamped in the wreck cave, made a fire, and prepared a splendid supper of pork and pea soup for John and themselves, after which they subjected their recovered comrade to a scrubbing and cropping and repairing of habiliments that almost proved fatal to his constitution. Next day they loaded the boat with all the pork and pease they could find, as well as portions of cordage that might be useful. Then they started off on the return journey.

It was a fine day when they reached the encampment, where the coxswain and the women were on the look out. Massey, of course, was the first to observe, as the boat approached, that an extra hand was in it; but he wisely said nothing at first. Then his heart began to beat as it used to do when he brought in rescued men and women from wrecks, for the truth suddenly flashed upon him. He glanced at Peggy. Poor thing, her sad eyes had wandered from the approaching boat and were resting wistfully on the horizon beyond.

"Nell," murmured the coxswain in a deep, earnest whisper to his wife, who stood at his elbow, "the tide's a goin' to rise again wi' poor Peggy, if my eyes are tellin' truth."

"What d'ee mean, Bob?" asked Nellie, with a quick, anxious look.

"Five men went away, Nell; six are comin' back!"

As he spoke, a tall figure rose up in the stern of the boat and waved a hand.

Nellie glanced quickly at her friend. She was standing with glaring eyes, parted lips, and a deathly pallor on her worn face.

“Peggy!”

The familiar word came rolling to the shore, and a piercing shriek replied to it as the poor woman threw up both hands and fell backward into the ready arms of the coxswain’s wife, who had sprung to her side in anticipation of some such catastrophe.

There was the voice of prayer and thanksgiving that night in the hut on the lonely shoresuch thanksgiving as we might conceive filled the hearts of Jairus and of the widow of Nain in the days of old.

Chapter 12.

The state of things on the island was now considerably improved. Peggy, under the influence of gratitude for restored felicity, became more helpful than she had formerly been, and more loquacious than ever. Her female companions, being amiable and easily pleased, were rather amused than otherwise at the continuous flow of discursive, sometimes incomprehensible, and always good natured small talkparticularly small talkwith which she beguiled the hours that might have otherwise hung heavily on their minds while their hands were busily engaged with the bone needles and sinew threads which the coxswain had manufactured for them. For the clothes with which they had landed on the islandespecially those of the menhad begun to wear out after eight or ten months, and new garments had to be made, while repairs never ceased.

Meanwhile, the men were fully occupied each day in hunting seals or fishing, cutting firewood with the axe they had found in the hut, and in making their home more comfortable. A door was fitted to the hut; a wooden partition was put up to cut off more effectually the women’s apartment from that of the men; the open crevices in the walls were stopped up with moss, and many other improvements were made. A few nails extracted from the walls of the hut were converted into fish hooks, by means of the file which had been found, and Nellie spun some excellent fishing lines from flax found growing wild in abundance. The file also enabled them to strike fire with broken flints picked up on the shore. The ash of burnt cotton, as the doctor knew, makes good tinder; so in the public interest, John Mitford agreed to part with the ragged remains of the cotton shirt he had long wornquite unnecessarilyover his woollen jersey. Thus they could afford to let the fire go out, and were relieved from constant watching, as well as anxiety in regard to it.

They did not, however, cease their nocturnal vigils, for the hope of deliverance never died out, though it at last sank very low. Besides keeping their seal skin

flag flying, they kindled a beacon fire every night, to guard and replenish which became the nightly duty of one or other of the menwatch and watch aboutall the time they stayed on the island.

During the earlier part of each night, however, the beacon fire was not watched. It was merely lighted and left for some hours to look after itself. During this period, after supper, the whole party were wont to draw round the blazing fire in the hut, and each contributed his or her share to the entertainment of the social circle. Then it was that lugubrious John Mitford developed amazing powers of inventive story telling, and Joe Slag came out strong with thrilling lifeboat tales, every word of which Bob Massey corroborated, while Terrence O'Connor displayed powers of sarcastic criticism of the highest order, and Tomlin, Black Ned, and the women proved an intensely appreciative audience. But the latter were not merely listeners. True, Peggy did nothing for the general good. Having quite exhausted her lungs with incessant talk during each day, she was fortunately almost incapable of speech in the evening, but Nellie, who possessed a voice as sweet as herself, and clear and true as that of a nightingale, was induced to "favour the company"chiefly with pathetic or patriotic ditties and hymnswhile Eva thrilled her audience with terrible tales of slavery, in many of which she had acted a part. Of course Dr Hayward lent his aid, both with song and story; but, like a true leader, he devoted himself chiefly to drawing out the powers of his companions, directing or diverting the flow of conversation, and keeping order. He also instituted what may be truly styled family worship at night, by repeating from memory portions of the word of God and engaging in prayer just before retiring to rest. Bob Massey and Tomlin were induced to help him in this, and never was a prayer put up from that hut in which there was not an earnest petition that a ship might be sent for their deliverance.

"But a ship is long, long o' comin'," said Slag to Jarring as he accompanied the latter part of the way to the beacon fire one night when it was Black Ned's turn to watch.

"A ship'll come, Joe, when God sees fit to send it," said Ned.

Slag glanced at his comrade in surprise, the reply was so very unlike Ned's usual style of speech that he felt uncertain whether it was uttered in earnest.

"The only thing I feel an awful longin' for now, at times, is a bit o' 'baccy," continued Ned.

"So does I, Ned, an' I sometimes think Dr Hayward has got the advantage of us there, for he never smoked, so he says, an' in coorse it stands to reason that he can't have no longin' for a thing he don't wantan' he seems as jolly an'

happy as the best of us without it!”

“Ay, jollier and happier!” replied Ned, shortly.

“But, I say, Ned, don’t ye ever feel a longin’ for grog? Ye used to be raither fond of it.”

“Nonot now, Joe. It’s the best thing as ever happened to me, bein’ cast on this here islandwi’ Dr Hayward to give a feller a word of advice.”

Slag, who felt a sort of self righteous superiority over his comrade, inasmuch as he had never given way to drink, said, “You should be thankful for that, Ned.”

“I am thankful,” returned the other in a tone that induced Slag to say no more.

It was a very dark night, and cold, so that Black Ned involuntarily shuddered as he approached the beacon fire aloneJoe having left himand commenced to heap on fuel. Then rain began to fall heavily. There was no shelter, and the watchman was soon drenched to the skin. Heaping on more logs till the fire roared again, he tried to warm himself, and stood so close to the blaze that his garments smokedthey would have burnt had they not been wetbut no heat seemed to penetrate the shivering frame of Black Ned.

Next morning the poor man was smitten with a raging fever. From the first the doctor had little hope of his recovery. With a constitution fatally injured by dissipation and drink, his chance was very small; but of course every effort was made to save him. He was laid on a soft bed of moss in the warmest corner of the hut, and the women took their turn in nursing him, night and daythe coxswain’s wife, however, being the chief nurse; for, besides being sympathetic and tender by nature, she had been trained in a rough school where self reliance and capacity were constantly called into action in circumstances of difficulty, so that she was better fitted for the post than either of her companions. But their efforts were of no avail. After a week, Black Ned died, with a smile of gratitude on his dark face as he gazed in Hayward’s eyes, and held his hand until the spirit returned to God who gave it.

The gloom cast over the little community by this sudden appearance of the King of Terrors lasted for many days, and had the good effect of turning the thoughts of all of them to those subjects which are obviously and naturally distasteful to fallen manthe soul and the world to come. But gradually the gloom passed away, though it left in the party a greater longing than ever to escape from their island prison.

One day, while some of them were at breakfast, Terrence O’Connor rushed

into the hut with the news that a ship was in sight! Instantly the boat was manned, and they rowed with all their might towards the vessel, which was seen like a white speck on the horizon. They rowed to within four miles of her, with an oar set up as a mast, and a jacket attached thereto as a flag, but a breeze sprang up, and the strange sail actually passed on without taking the slightest notice of themthough the people on board could not have failed to see the boat!

Profound was the disappointment, and violent the indignation, that filled the thoughts of the castaways as they rowed slowly back to land.

“Sure it’s devils that must live in the bodies o’ some men,” growled O’Connor, in the bitterness of his soul.

“You’re too hard on the devils, Terrence,” said Bob Massey. “Some men in this world do the worst that they can, an’ surely devils can do no more than that.”

This incident, however, aroused the hopes and expectations of the party to a high pitch, so that the beacon fire was kept burning more steadily and brightly than before, and the look out hill was more frequently visited; still, weeks and months passed by, and no deliverance came to them.

During this period, the seal hunting, fishing, clothes mending, etcetera, were carried on with unflagging energy, and the nightly entertainments became more and more entertaining, by reason of use and effort developing new capacities and talents that might in less favourable circumstances have lain altogether dormant. All this was due very much to their leader; for, besides being a God fearing man, Hayward was pre eminently cheery, and full of fun as well as vigour. The coxswain, too, was like minded, and of great capacity in every way; while his wife’s voice was so charming that the party became almost dependent on it. They could scarcely have gone to rest at last without Nellie’s hymn or song as a lullaby! We must state, however, that Tomlin did not share in this pleasure. That poor man had been born musically deaf, as some people are born physically blind. There was no musical inlet to his soul! There was, indeed, a door for sound to enter, and music, of course, sought an entrance by that door; but it was effectually destroyed, somehow, in passing through the doorway, so that poor Tomlin showed no symptom of pleasure. What he heard, and how he heard it, is known only to himself!

Once or twice during this time they visited the cavern of the wreck, with the view, if possible, of recovering something from the sunk vessel, but though most of the men could swim, none of them could dive, therefore the result was failure.

They succeeded, however, in making soap by boiling wood ash and seal's fat in their cast iron pot. Those who are accustomed to the celebrated "Pears" can scarcely understand what an addition to cleanliness and comfort resulted from this coarsely manufactured article.

Gulls' eggs were found in great quantity on the cliffs, and the discovery and capture of wild pigs added to the luxury of their tablewhich latter, by the way, was an ingenious contrivance of Joe Slag. Binding four sticks together in the form of a stout oblong frame, Joe had covered thisfilled it in as it werewith straight branches about a finger thick, laid side by side and tied to the frame. This he fixed on four posts driven into the ground, and thus formed an excellent, if not an elegant, table.

One morning at breakfast, Terrence O'Connor was observed to be unusually busy with a large hook.

"Are you goin' to fish for sharks to day?" asked Slag.

"Faix, no; it's to the woods I'll go fishin' to day, Joe. Now, Nell, gi' me the stoutest line ye've got on hand, mavourneen."

"Will that do? I made it the other day specially for sharksor whales!" said Nellie, with a light laugh, for she expected him to reject the line she held up.

"The very thing, Nell. Hand it over. Now, boys, I'm off to try my luck i' the woods, for I'm gittin' tired o' the say."

O'Connor went off alone, bestowing a mysterious wink on Peggy Mitford as he left.

The Irishman had observed that the wild pigs were particularly fond of a certain root which was plentiful in a valley about three miles distant from the hut. Repairing to that valley, he dug up one of the roots, baited his hook with it, hung it from a low branch to attract attention, fastened the other end of the line to a tree, and went off to hide and bide his time. Before half an hour had elapsed, a gay young pig visited the scene of its former festivities, saw the pendent bait, smelt it, took it in its mouth, and straightway filled the woods with frantic lamentations. The struggle between the Irishman and that pig was worthy of record, but we prefer leaving it to the reader's imagination. The upshot was, that the pig was overcome, carriedbound, and shriekingto the hut, and tamed by Peggy. In a short time, other pigs were caught and tamed. So, also, were rabbits. These bred and multiplied. The original pig became the mother of a large family, and in a short time something like the sounds and aspects of a farm began to surround the old hut. Still furtherby means of the cast iron pot, which already boiled their soup and their soapthey managed to

boil sea water down into salt, and with this some of the pigs were converted into salt porkin short, the place began to assume the appearance of a busy and thriving backwoods settlement.

“It’s risin’ tide with us again, after a fashion, Nell,” said the coxswain to his wife, as they stood one evening on the sea shore watching the sunset.

Nellie sighed. “It is, Bob,” she said, “and I’m very thankful; butbut I’d rather be at home in Old England among kith and kin, even though the tide was low!”

“What! alongside o’ Aunt Betty?”

“Yes, even alongside o’ Aunt Betty; for if this voyage has taught me anything at all, it has taught me that, after all, ‘there’s no place like home!’”

“Right you are, Nell,” said Joe Slag, who came up at that moment, “there’s no place like homewhen it’s a happy one; but if it ain’t a happy one, there may be difference of opinion even on that pint, d’ee see?”

That very night, a great ocean steamer, bound from the Antipodes to Old England, chanced to diverge from her true course, and sighted the beacon fire which Tomlinon duty at the timewas stirring up to fervent heat. The Captain was not one of those whom Terrence O’Connor credited with diabolic possession. He was a good man; and, knowing that men did not light beacon fires on lonely islands merely for amusement, he resolved to lay to till daylight, which was due in about an hour from the time the island was sighted. Meanwhile, he sounded his steam whistle.

At the sound, the hut instantly disgorged its male inmates, who, recognising the familiar noise and the steamer’s lights, sent up a shout of mingled joy and thanksgiving.

“Get out the boat, boys!” cried Hayward, as he ran back to the hut to rouse the women.

“Get ready, quick! Eva; a steamer at last, thank God, in the offing! Don’t lose a moment. They may have little time to wait. Boat will be ready in a few minutes.”

“Ay, an’ pack up all you want to carry away,” cried the coxswain, crossing the threshold at that moment.

“So it is all going to end suddenly like a dream!” said Eva, as she hastened to obey orders.

“Home, sweet home!” murmured Nellie, trembling with joy at the prospect.

“Wherever you are, my dear, the home will be sweet,” said Peggy. “Though of course it wouldn’t be that without your ’usband, for it takes two to make a fight, you know, an’ it takes two no less, I think, to make things pleasant, butdear, dear, what a disagreeable thing it is to ’ave to dress in a ’urry, though one shouldn’t”

“Look alive, there! look al–i–ve!” roared O’Connor, putting his head in at the door. “Daylight’s a breakin’, an’ they won’t”

“Oh! Terrence, that reminds medon’t forget our pets,” cried Nellie, who had steadily declined to speak of them as “live stock.”

“All right, missis. It’s lookin’ after them I am this minnit.”

The Irishman ran, as he spoke, to the styes and hutches where the pigs and rabbits were kept and opened the doors.

“Out wid ye!” he cried, “the Act of Emancipation’s passed, and ye’re all freeivery mother’s son of ye.”

Accustomed to his voice and his caressing hand, the astonished creatures seemed to look up at him in surprise.

“Be aff, at wance, hooroo!” cried the excited man, with a clap of his hands and a Donnybrook yell that sent all the “pets” leaping and squealing into their native jungle.

Soon after that the boat was bounding out to sea under the impulse of strong arms and willing hearts. A few minutes more, and they were receiving the warm congratulations of the passengers and crew of the steamer. Then the order was given to go ahead full speed, and the engine’s great heart seemed to throb sympathetically within the hearts of the rescued ones as the vessel cut her way swiftly through the Southern Oceanhomeward bound for Old England! Nevertheless, there was a touch of sadness in the breasts of all as they turned their farewell gaze on the receding island and thought of the pets, the old hut, the long period of mingled pleasure and suffering, and the lonely grave.

We cannot part from the friends whose footsteps we have followed so long and so far without a parting word or two.

On returning to his native village, Bob Massey found that his successor as coxswain had died, and that another man had not yet been appointed to the lifeboathe was therefore installed, with much rejoicing, in his old position as a

rescuer of human lives. Joe Slag, naturally and pleasantly, also fell into his old post at the bow. Nellie found that Aunt Betty had had what the villagers called “a stroke” during her absence; which crushing blow had the effect of opening her eyes to many things regarding herself and others, to which she had been particularly blind before. It also had the effectindirectlyof subduing much of the evil in her character and bringing out much of the good. As evil begets evil, so good begets good; and one result of this law was, that the seven children, whom she had broughtor bangedup, became seven repentant and sympathetic and reasonably good creatures when they saw the old mother, whom they used to think so harsh and so physically strong, reduced to amiable helplessness. Thus it came to pass that there was not in all the village an old woman who was so well looked after by her progeny as Aunt Betty.

Terrence O’Connor continued to rove about the world in the capacity of a ship’s cook till near the end of his days. John Mitford and Peggy unexpectedly came into a small inheritance soon after returning home, and settled down for life close to the coxswain’s cottage. Tomlin went to New Zealand to seek his fortune. Whether he found it or not, we cannot tell! Last, but not least, Dr Hayward and his wife returned to their native land, and for many years afterwards kept up a steady correspondence with Nell Massey, in which, you may be sure, there were frequent and pleasant allusions to the time which they had spent together on the lonely isle in the southern seas.

One morning, Nellie presented her husband with a baby boy. Bob was out with the lifeboat rescuing a shipwrecked crew at the time the presentation was made. On his return, he opened the door and stood before his wife dripping wet.

“Fifteen saved this time, Nell,” he began, but the nurse stopped him by exhibiting the baby boy.

“Thank the Lord!” he said, with a glad look in his wet eyes.

“You mustn’t come near us,” said the nurse, with a look of warning. “Only a look just now.”

“The tide has risen to the flood now, Bob,” murmured the young mother, softly.

“Ay,” said the coxswain in a deep voice, “an’ it’s a high spring tide too. God bless you, Nell!”