

THE OPAL MOUNTAIN



HENRY ·
· FRITH

THE OPAL MOUNTAIN.

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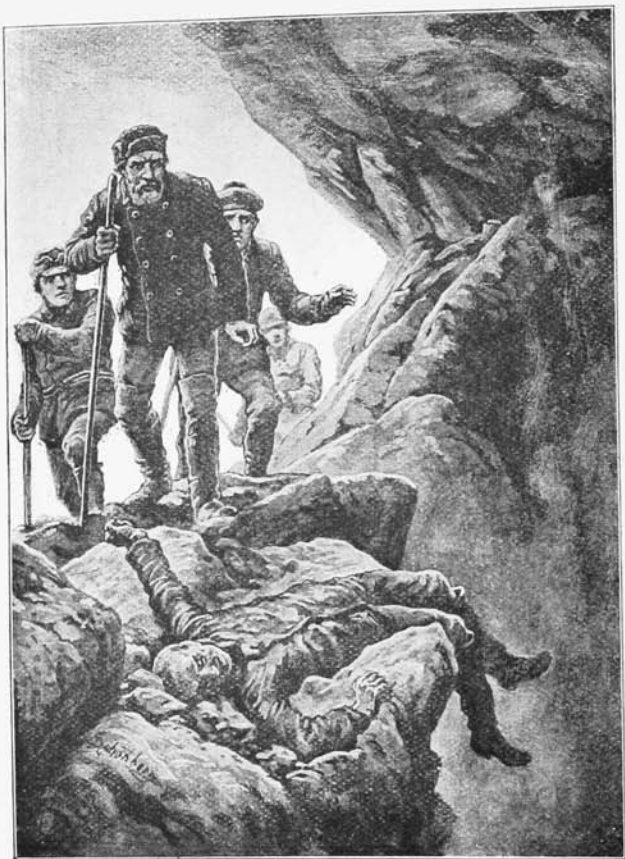
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GRIFFITH FARRAN OKEDEN & WELSH,
NEWBERY HOUSE,
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At the mouth of the cavern.—*Page 336.*

THE
OPAL MOUNTAIN

A TALE OF ADVENTURE

BY
HENRY FRITH

AUTHOR OF "UNDER BAYARD'S BANNER;" "THE CAPTAINS OF CADETS;" "THE
CRUISE OF THE 'WASP';" "ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. SCHONBERG



GRIFFITH FARRAN OKEDEN & WELSH
NEWBERRY HOUSE
LONDON, AND SYDNEY



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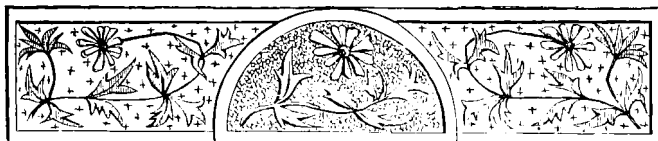
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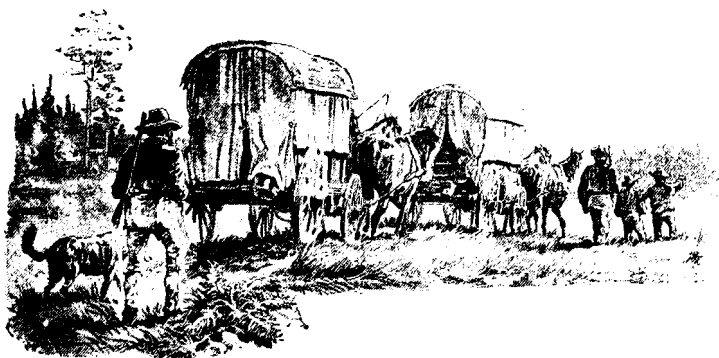
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THE OPAL MOUNTAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE WAGGON TRAIN—THE TRAVELLERS IN THE
WILDERNESS—MISSING.



WAGGON train making its slow but steady way eastward ; the horses' heads set in the direction of the Atlantic ; a man in front, armed with rifle and ammunition ; a man behind, similarly equipped. Running hither and thither, but always

taking care not to leave the track, are two lads, brave, bright, bonnie, and brown, in civilised costume, full of health and spirits. Inside the waggon are two other lads, equally bright but less active, if not less tanned by sun and wind. They were conversing. The man in front of the horses was the uncle, the man in rear was the father, of one of the two lads. The other two boys were also brother and cousin. All were enjoying the lusty spring-time.

The waggons had issued from the woods, and were proceeding along the more open country in the midst of dust, which half-choked the errant lads. They soon had had enough of it, and were glad to climb up into the waggon in which their more soberly-disposed relations were seated.

"Well, Reg, hope you've had enough hunting for one while," said his brother Percy Upton, his senior by two years. Reginald was sixteen, a pleasant-faced, manly lad, with frank blue eyes and rather fair hair.

"Guess I have," replied his brother; "I'm nearly dead beat. But it's all Jim's fault; he won't let me alone. He's always wanting some beastly beetle or insect for his old collection."

Then ensued a little tussle, for Reg kicked Jim, and Jim, not to be behindhand, proceeded to get Reginald's head into "chancery," and ruffle his fair locks somewhat roughly. When they had tired of this amusement, Percy said:

"Harry and I will put you two out in a brace of shakes if you are not quiet. Be easy, now, and lie quiet."

"What are you and Harry so busy about?" enquired Jim, after a pause, partly filled up by gesticulations at his cousin; "anything new turned up?"

"No; we were discussing our journey, and our chances of success in the Nor'-West Territory. We hear things look better there," said Percy.

"Well, they need," added Harry, who had hitherto remained silent. "I am sure father and uncle have dropped enough on farming yonder. If we don't 'strike ile' soon, we may as well go back to England."

"Father won't, if he can help it," said Jim; "you bet your boots, Harry. No; guess we'll be all right, boys. As for oil, there's lots of it about in these regions."

"Yes," said Percy; "but we can't prospect for it. Besides, it may give out. Why, didn't you hear Frank Bassett's tale of the town up here somewhere which he found deserted, regularly built—stores, hotels, and all, and nothing in it but cats; there are lots of such stories."

"Cats and nine tails, perhaps," suggested Master Reginald, who had an evil genius for "punning." "Good again, Percy! If we find the place we'll have a 'time'!"

"You deserve a flogging for your wretched joke," said his brother. "But here's father; let's hear what he has to say."

Mr Upton approached, his rifle on his shoulder, equipped in the hunter's fashion. He was of middle height, broad-shouldered, with shaggy brows, sandy beard, and piercing brown eyes; his broad, high forehead was nearly concealed by his wide-brimmed

hat, but when it was removed the whole expanse of brow was fully revealed. A line of demarcation was very distinctly visible where the hat shaded the forehead.

Josiah Upton had been unfortunate. He had certainly made money, had emigrated westward to Carolina, where he had joined his brother Frederick. He was a widower, and Josiah, or Josh, or Uncle Josh, as he was variously called, had also lost his wife on the farm. She had succumbed to some fever. Then things "got wrong." The men had sold their holdings, and determined to move eastward up into Canada. If things did not promise well there, the Uptons had already determined to "up-stick and go for the old country." They were rather unstable, speculative men, of the class who are very superstitious about "luck" and "chance," although by no means ignoring the All-powerful Hand that guides the universe.

Josiah Upton had two sons, Percival and Reginald. His brother Frederick also had two sons, Harry and Jim. These lads generally paired off. They were all tremendous friends, full of fun and frolic, brimming over with good humour, and looking upon life generally as a holiday. They had been educated after a fashion, but they knew more of Nature and natural history than of Euclid; and though they could "figure up" a sum pretty well, they could track a bear better. They could ride and shoot splendidly, and help to fell a tree expeditiously; they hated "Injuns," loved animals of all kinds, save "serpents, baars, and skunks," as Jim said. They had picked

up the fine American language, and if they could not do sums, they could calculate, reckon, and figure-up with any one. Having natural ears for music, they had adopted the nasal accent they so continually heard, and many people believed them free-born citizens of the great American Republic. "Why, certainly!"

Frederick Upton was taller than his brother, and of a more military bearing. He had excellent abilities, but had not always used them to the best advantage. Nevertheless he was a very good fellow, pleasant, lively, and boyish with the boys; kind and tender-hearted to all with whom he came in contact, except when roused by an enemy or by any wild animal. Then he slew and spared not.

There was another member of the family, a dog named *Punch*, of the Irish wolf-hound species, a shaggy, strong, and swift-paced animal. His name had been given him out of compliment to the beverage of his country, where punch was at one time much in evidence.

The reader has now been introduced to every member of the party, with the exception of a couple of "helps," who were also emigrating from the farm. These men, named Job and Lot, were immediately designated by the boys as a *job-lot*. This statement was so far true, as they were rather "casual" workers, and were by no means perfect even in their own line; but they were handy, good-natured, and steady, if inclined to be idle. Lot was dark, almost a negro; Job was copper-coloured, so they formed a pleasing variety to the party. They were good friends, and

Punch was devoted to them. With this introduction we will proceed on our way.

As the afternoon declined, Josiah Upton and his brother roused out the "helps," and bade them take the guard while their master sought some rest. It was essential to settle on some plan of action, and to decide upon the camping ground for the night.

"We must try and fetch some pool, Fred," said his brother. "Water we must have; if we could reach Breaker City, all the better."

"Well, it can't be far away. It's somewhere up in these oil hills. Lot will scent it out; he has a nose for oil! Let's see, where are we now?" said Fred Upton.

"I reckon we are in Kentucky, we've come across the Tennessee border. The mountains are well behind us. Let us make for the Ohio, and get up to Pittsburgh. Bob will help us on there."

"Yes, I daresay he will, Josh," replied Fred, absently.

"I say, Fred," remarked his brother after a pause, "does anything tell you we are on the eve of some important deed or discovery?"

"My dear old Josh, you are in another mystic dream. Why, what has come over you? Been dreaming again?"

"No; only a presentiment," replied his brother, musing himself. "I feel, as the lads say, as if 'something were going to happen!'"

"Well, unless it's a thunderstorm, I don't see much chance. Hallo! See, Lot is turning to the left up the divide. He has some reason for this. Surely our way is straight on."

"He has a keen perception, let him be. Depend upon it, he will find us a night's lodging—no bad thing, as I think there is a storm coming up."

The boys in the other waggon had already arrived at the same conclusion, and they now came to enquire why the trail had been left. They, too, felt a curious impression, they said.

"Say, father," cried Percy, "isn't old Lot going wrong? Our trail is ahead. We'll get lost in these everlasting woods!"

"Let Lot alone," replied Josiah Upton. "Depend upon it, he has his reasons. We shall want shelter to-night, I can tell you. Lot isn't much account generally, but he's a whale for oil, and can scent out the workings miles away."

"Then you think we are happening upon an oil city, uncle?" said Harry, his nephew.

"I do, and so does your father. If so, we may have a chance for a bore. Who knows, we may 'strike ile' with the best of them!"

Frederick Upton laughed. "My dear old man," he said affectionately to his brother, "don't be visionary! There's been many a slip 'twixt our cups and our lips. We may have another!"

"Particularly in such an oily region," remarked Reginald, flippantly. "Shouldn't wonder!"

A shout, and a general pursuing of Reginald by the other boys, was the immediate result of his remark. They darted after him into the woods which lined the track. The waggons passed on, the merry voices became fainter and fainter. At length the men with the slowly advancing waggons heard a shout.

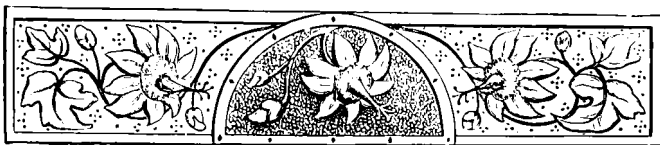
The train halted and waited. Two lads, hot, flushed, torn, and generally unkempt, came up wearily in the gathering gloom.

"Thank goodness, we have found you, Daddy," said Harry, who with his cousin Percy came limping along. "Have those young scamps returned? Reg led us a pretty dance!"

"Do you mean to say that Reggie and Jim are not with you!" exclaimed Mr Upton. "Halt, stop, I say, we must camp and search. The boys are lost in the woods!"

The horses—four in each waggon—came willingly to a standstill. Lot and Job hurried up, and looked very grave when the news had been communicated to them. Lost in the wilds of Kentucky! In a deserted region! This was indeed a fulfilment of Josiah's presentiment. Something *had* happened indeed. No time was to be lost in searching for the lads.

The remainder of the party scoured the woods in the places indicated by Percy and his cousin, but though they searched carefully till nightfall, and till gleaming lightning quivered through the trees, not a trace could they find of the missing boys. Shots were often discharged, but no response came, and the thunderstorm fell heavily upon a most wretched and dispirited party.



CHAPTER II.

A SEARCH IN THE FOREST—JOB'S AND LOT'S OPINIONS—"TOO HIGH."

NEXT morning, to Frederick Upton's dismay, *Punch* was missing. He immediately communicated his discovery to the others.

"I'm glad of it," remarked Lot, quietly. "He's on the young masters' trail, I 'spect."

So said Job, of course. These brothers in harness always hunted in couple. "I'm drestle glad," said Job.

A melancholy breakfast was despatched, and then the important question arose, "Shall we break camp or remain?" Some took one view and some another.

"Now, Lot, we have confidence in your opinion," said Josiah Upton, "shall we proceed or remain and search again?"

"I says, master, go ahead," replied Lot, promptly.

"So don't say I—not all out," remarked Job.

Such a difference was unprecedented. True, the difference was not great, but any divergence of opinion between two such men was extraordinary, not to say ominous.

"Speak out, Job," said Percy, quickly, "give your reasons and say what you mean."

"Well it's this way," he replied : "young masters is wandering. They ain't by no means likely to come out again now on this trail, air they? No : certainly not! Well then, they must come som'ere else, and they'll make north as we goes north. So I says, go ahead but quiet—scour and scout back and front, or even camp at mid-day and scour again!"

"I agrees, master," said Lot ; "Job's right."

"Then we will begin and search," said Josiah. "Blaze your trail through the trees and return at noon by the sun. You boys stay here and defend the camp."

Remonstrance was useless, the lads were compelled to remain with the waggons and horses. Harry was unusually silent.

"Cheer up, Harry," said Percy, "they will be found all right. *Punch* is after them, depend upon it. They will turn up soon."

"I hope so," said Harry, rather mournfully ; "but I wasn't exactly thinking of them that minute. I say, Percy, did you see that awful light in the storm last night."

"What awful light? I saw plenty of lightning a *little* too close for my nerves. It made my hair stand on end—electrified!"

"I'm in a fix about that light. It was over yonder," said Harry, pointing north-west—"a most terrible fiery glow, as if a whole city was burning—a column of fire!"

"You dreamt it, sonny!" was his cousin's answer. "The lightning mingled in your dreams with the wandering Israelites. Cheer up."

"No, I didn't dream it; and it occurred to me that perhaps poor Reggie and Jem have set fire to the woods there, and that the trees were burning."

"If so we should see the smoke now," remarked his cousin. "But when the others return we will tell them."

Time passed slowly enough. No one came along; the road appeared deserted. There were cart tracks, but grass had partly covered them. The trees had preserved the trail from sun, and the dust was not thick. On the other hand—indeed, on both hands—the forest extended very thickly, and it seemed a poor chance for anyone who had wandered away in the wilderness of foliage and swamp.

The sun was near the meridian when the first of the party, Josiah Upton, returned. At intervals he was followed by the remainder of the searchers, but no trace of the boys had been discovered. Hope had fallen as the sun ascended, and mid-day found our party at the nadir of expectation.

While the usual meal was being prepared Percy recounted Harry's dream, as he termed it, and some animation was at once infused into the silent circle. But neither Josiah nor Frederick Upton had seen the light, and could not explain it. It had suddenly sprung up, Harry said, during the storm.

"Never heard of such a thing," said his father. "There are no towns lighted up near here. Had it been a fire in the woods the smoke would have rolled in this direction and the fire would have advanced. There is something very strange in this, Josiah, eh?"

"Yes: perhaps Lot may explain the phenomenon

when he has finished his cooking. Here is dinner. Oh, those poor lads, they may be starving!"

No one could eat much. The meal was merely tasted. The thought of the boys wandering in the forest, tired, hungry, and perhaps wet to the skin, was quite sufficient to quench all appetite. Water was freely indulged in, but little food was taken.

Lot and Job with considerable fortitude made a good meal, and it seemed to agree with them as much as they agreed with each other. Dinner over, they were called to the council, and Harry related his experience.

"Uncommon queer *I* called it," remarked Lot. "Eh, pardner?"

"Aye, certainly it is," replied Job. "But I think I can guess at it—it's a forest fire!"

"No, it cannot be," said Josiah; "it is some mysterious warning. I am certain it bodes us some harm, or at any rate there is some hidden influence connected with it which will affect us! I am sure of that!"

The others exchanged glances. Josiah was a superstitious man, but this savoured of fatalism. As no one made a reply, Lot said:

"Job here ain't far out—I agrees with *him*: he's grit, pure gold down to bed rock is Job! But this isn't a forest fire—I agrees with Job."

"But," began Harry, "Job says it *is*!"

"No, master, he only *guesses* it's one. Now I *guessed* so too, but my 'pinion is *it's a gas well*!"

"A gas well!" exclaimed the others, all except Job, who muttered, "Jest so—I was a-comin' to it!"

"A gas well! In these coal and oil districts, master, gas is gen'rated and finds a vent. Sometimes I've know'd a column o' fire a hundred, aye a hundred and fifty feet high. Moses' pillar of fire ain't a patch on it for high! This gas escapin' is what ye saw, Master Harry Upton, and no mistake!"

"That's all very well," said Frederick Upton, "but gas can't light itself."

"No," said Job, anticipating his partner, "but lightnin' can light gas. Seen it many a time: haven't I, Lot?"

"Ye have, Job," replied his friend, promptly. "Thet ye have! yes, comrades and partners, it's a gas well!"

"Then you think there is an oil city near here, Lot?"

"Aye, I do so. I'm makin' fur it. That means shelter and rest awhile."

"But the boys, will they find it?" asked Josiah. "Yes," he continued, suddenly brightening up, "they will have seen the glare, and will make for it. Let us do the same, and we may find them!"

"We will remain here a little longer," said his brother, after a pause for consideration. "We will line the wood and fire a few volleys; if we hear no reply, we will harness up again and proceed. Heaven will protect our sons!"

The whole party then tracked into the woods. They turned on the trail and beat about in the proximity of the spot at which the lads had entered the forest. Then they made their way in single file in different directions, searching and firing guns. Not even an echo replied, and with some difficulty,

and after considerable delay, they rejoined the waggons, which had remained all this time unprotected.

"We must proceed," was the verdict grudgingly arrived at, and once again the train was in motion.

As day declined, a distant glare in the north-east became visible ; as night advanced the glare became more pronounced. The track led generally in the direction of the flame, but many detours were made to avoid "bad places" and swampy ground. Thus the travellers did not seem to get much nearer to the beacon which was guiding them, and the boys began to grumble.

"*Festina lente*," remarked Frederick Upton. "Slow and surely goes far in a day. Remember a little delay may enable your poor cousin and Jim to pick us up again. We will camp here, Josh, and go on at daybreak."

Again the camp was formed, and all could perceive the lurid glare of the flames, which seemed perfectly steady and incessant.

For a long time the whole party watched it, comparing notes, and wondering how far it was off. Then, tired, they sought repose, leaving Job and Lot on guard for the first watch.

"Say, Job," whispered Lot, when all was quiet, "ye shouldn't 'a done it like that this arternoon."

"Done what, pardner?" asked Job in astonishment. "Which?"

"Why, got me to say as ye had seen lightnin' fire a gas well, and also 'many a time' ! It ain't quite fair and square, Job ; for though I'd do that and

more for ye, it ain't quite in my line. I'd draw the line at lightnin', if I was you, in futur."

"So I will, Lot, so I will, by thunder! But I ain't going back on it this time. Ye don't want me to proclaim Ananias, do ye?"

"No, let it be, pardner; it's gone and done with. But don't set fire to wells again with yer greased lightnin'. It's a trifle strong, Job! Though it *may be true, it's a little too high*—so drop it!"





CHAPTER III.

THE ADVENTURES OF REGINALD AND JAMES UPTON —A FEARFUL SIGHT!

NOW, as it may be surmised, Reginald and James Upton had not had a very pleasant time in the forest. They had started off in high spirits, thinking it fine fun to hide and seek amid such surroundings, and their companions followed them, but with caution. Reggie and Jim fortunately kept together and hid—poor lads, they did not guess how effectively—behind a fine old tree, which but too effectually sheltered them.

They had moved some paces from the track, faintly indicated, by which they had entered, and perceived with delight that the other lads passed them again and yet again without seeing them.

"Hush!" whispered Reggie. "They will never find us if we are only quiet. Let them go on; then we will cut round here and rejoin the train before they can reach it. They will be surprised, I guess."

So the boys remained in hiding for a while, but not hearing anything of their companions, they came

to the conclusion that the others had returned, and were also hiding.

"I say, Reggie," said Jim, "they are playing 'foxy.' Let us be first. This is the way. You remember that big white tree? Well, that's it."

"I suspect it is about time to go," said Reggie. "Quick, they may be waiting for us."

The lads advanced in the direction of the tree, and then turned to the side on which they believed the track lay. It was not far, they "knew," and so botanising and looking for insects, they managed to pass fifteen or twenty minutes comfortably.

"Come on, Jim," said Reggie at last, "your father will be getting savage with us. Which way now?"

"Why, you old muff, there is the same tree; don't you remember it? Look at the white stem, and the patches on it. The moss, too, is all on one side."

"But there is another tree, just the same, Reg, and it has moss on the same side, and patches too. Yonder is another."

"So there is!" said the elder lad. "Oh, I say, Jim, suppose we have made a mistake! *Suppose that this is not our tree at all.* Suppose——"

"Suppose rubbish! Suppose your grandmother," exclaimed impetuous Jim. "What a regular old goose you are, Reg. Why, look here. Here is the very branch I cut; no, this is it. Eh! no, here it is, it must be—what? Well, if this tree isn't it, that's it!"

He felt a horrible chill as he walked away from the tree. He had been "cock-sure" of its identity, and his disappointment was extreme. But he was too brave to say much. He went to the other tree and examined it.

No, it was not the tree he had chipped. These



branches and the bark were quite uncut ; no blade of

woodman's knife had stripped the hardy trunk. The hand of Nature only had touched that hoary old King of the forest; no human fingers had left any sign, mark, or wound upon the tree. The boys had never seen it before. They stood and gazed around them, and at each other.

"We're gone 'coons," remarked Jim with a bitter kind of smile.

"And can't climb trees either, as 'coons can do," replied Reggie. "We must find our way out, Jimmy. That's a fact!"

But it was not so easy to find their way out. They made up their minds quickly to proceed in what they believed was the right direction, and continued in it, but they lost themselves entirely. They wandered about, endeavouring to find footsteps or track of some kind, but no human trace was visible. At length Reggie exclaimed:

"Here we are! Here is their track. Look, it leads to the proper tree! We are lucky, Jim; it will be dark in an hour or so!"

Fortunate indeed they imagined themselves. They hurried on, and in a few minutes reached the tree. Without pausing they still continued their way, getting nearer and nearer, as Jim declared, but never reaching the confines of the wood. At length they did reach a place they remembered, and felt happier.

"I remember this," said Jim. "There is the tree, and there is the path."

"But didn't we see that path before?" cried Reggie. "Isn't this the very same tree that we passed half-an-hour ago? I begin to think that we have been walking in our own tracks, Jim! We are lost, lost!"

"I am awfully afraid you are right, Reg; what *can* we do? Oh! what will father and uncle think?"

"They will think of us, I expect," replied Reginald. "But we must do something: we cannot stand here all night. Listen! didn't you hear thunder? I fancied that I did."

"It will not be very nice in here if it rains," said Jim. "The lightning won't hurt us much, will it?"

"No; it generally kills slap off, right slick away," said Reggie. "There is, I understand, that consolation—you have no anticipation, if not nervous, Jim: you get killed outright!"

"Or blinded, Reggie! How awful to be blinded, and wandering about this horrible forest in the dark! Oh! is there any danger?"

"Plenty," replied Reginald, frankly; "animals, reptiles of all kinds, thunderstorms, centipedes, rain, fever, colds, starvation, thirst,—a fine array of dangers, I think! But we are not dead *yet*, Jimmy!"

This was plucky of Reginald, because his heart misgave him, and he had no idea what would become of him and his cousin unless assistance arrived, and there seemed no chance of that.

"Here is a fine tree," he said; "we must chance it. If the rain does come on we shall not get very wet here, Jim; and as soon as it is light we must be off."

"Yes; but meantime I am awfully hungry," said Jim.

"So am I," replied Reginald; "but unless we eat roots, I am afraid we must remain so. There are no berries, and we have no firearms."

Adventures of Reginald and James Upton. 21

"I have my little revolver," said Jim.

"Splendid!" remarked Reginald; "and I have some crackers (biscuits) in my pocket, so we need not starve. I had quite forgotten the crackers."

Chattering thus they managed to keep up each other's spirits. As evening came on the thunder-storm approached, and the noise of the tempest drowned all other sounds. After the storm had cleared away, and when the boys, worn out, rose from their mossy, damp couch, they perceived the red glow of flame beyond the trees.

"They have lighted a fire for us," said Reginald. "Hurrah! can you walk, Jim?"

"I am awfully tired, but anything will be better than lying on that damp moss," he replied. "We can go in the direction of the fire at anyrate."

Wearily, and with halting steps, the boys proceeded in a north-westerly direction, until they had almost cleared the forest. They crossed a trail, grass-grown, but passable. Had they known it, and had they waited for a few hours, they would have been overtaken by the waggons and rescued. But fate was adverse to them.

At length in sheer despair they halted, tired almost to death. They had tasted no food but berries and a few biscuits, and now Reginald proposed to shoot anything he could see, and eat it raw. Jim smiled even in the extremity to which they had been reduced. "Anything" might include a bear; and a revolver such as his would hardly kill Bruin!

They no longer saw the glow in the sky; daylight was rapidly extinguishing the glare. The boys lay

down and slept soundly beside a small spring which had slaked their tormenting thirst and refreshed them. They must have slept some hours, when Reginald, who was first to awake, felt something cold touch his hand. He started into a sitting posture in terror, thinking a snake had touched him, but he was quickly reassured, for *Punch* was by his side.

His delight was extreme, and the dog's joyful bark soon aroused Jim, who was as pleased as *Punch* and Reginald. How had he found them? In which direction had he come? In which direction must they proceed? These were questions which the boys put to *Punch* time after time, and of course received no answer, unless a series of barks in various keys could be termed replies. No doubt they were intended for the fullest information, but the lads could make nothing of them.

Neither would *Punch* "go home." He insisted upon remaining with Reginald and his cousin. They endeavoured to make him lead the way back, but he was obstinate. He went off for a while, but invariably returned to them again. At length as they were rested, though tremendously hungry, they determined to proceed in the direction of the burning beacon, which, as night came on, again illuminated the sky. Some wild fruit and an unfortunate squirrel was all the food they had had. The squirrel had been roasted in a very primitive manner, but it sufficed; and now once more in semi-darkness the young travellers proceeded. They determined to trust to *Punch* to guide them, so they knotted their handkerchiefs tightly together, and fastened one end round

the dog's neck. This left little rope, but a long twig was entwined into the other end, and so a "leading string" was improvised. With this assistance, and with the aid of a waning moon in the later hours of the night, they made steady progress.

At length as morning was about to dawn, they struggled up a rising ground clothed with trees nearly to the summit, but they knew that the summit was the limit of the wood. The blaze of light was near at hand; had it not been for the glare the lads would never have persevered as they had done, but curiosity sustained effort, and they struggled on. They were rewarded on reaching the summit, for from the further slope of the hill they beheld a town with some large buildings and hotels and houses stretched out before them, all illumined by an enormous jet of lighted gas which roared from a pipe standing upright in the ground under the hill.

It was a terrible but a magnificent sight!—the silent sleeping town, in which no early mover nor late traveller wandered! Several animals, dogs and cats apparently, prowled about, and the great gas-lamp threw its fiery radiance over all! Such a sight as this had probably never been seen before, and the boys, with *Punch* at their feet, almost forgot their fatigue as they gazed.

"Did you ever see anything like that, or read of such a thing?" said Reginald at last. "*I* never did! What is it—gas?"

"I suppose so," replied his cousin. "It is very dangerous. I wonder the people are not afraid of it. You can hear the roaring up here. I could not



sleep so soundly if that pipe were kicking up such a fuss."

"Well, it's a blessing that we have reached civilization," said Reginald. "It isn't sun-up yet. Suppose we lie down here, and wait until the place wakes up. Some fellow may draw on us if he finds us prowling about."

Punch displayed some symptoms of impatience, and once he howled in a most depressing manner, but notwithstanding this rather melancholy announcement, the lads lay

down, and, in spite of the increasing daylight and

the roar of the pipe, which was audible for a considerable distance, slept again more soundly than before, being in safety and within the bounds of civilization. They continued to sleep until the sun was high in heaven, and the roaring gas-jet paled in his beams. Jim was the first to rouse himself, and to "guess" it was time for breakfast.

"Hurry up, Reg; those lazy beggars have not turned out yet, but we must get something to eat. *Punch* is half dead too."

Poor old *Punch* was hanging his head and lolling out his tongue in a very unusual manner, so Reginald, stiff and sore, rose, and the trio made their way down the slope into the valley as well as they could.

They wandered down and into the streets which were deserted. No living creatures but a few dogs, which looked very angrily and suspiciously at *Punch*, were to be seen. The whole place seemed to have been abandoned.

"What can be the meaning of this?" cried Reginald. "Look, here are furnished rooms, sitting-rooms, bed-rooms up-stairs I daresay. Is this a hotel? If so, we'll have a blow out!"

The lads entered a house which had the appearance of an inn or small hotel. There was no one in the place, and no provisions were to be found. So they left *Punch* in earnest conversation with a small wild-looking terrier, which had, with some others of the canine species, neglected to follow its master, and proceeded on their search expedition. They had not gone far before they reached a store, but the door was locked.

"Blow the lock away, Jim," cried Reginald ; "we must not stand on ceremony now. I wish that pipe would cease roaring : it's confusing."

Jim needed no second bidding ; he drew his nickel-mounted revolver, a small and handy weapon, and in a moment the door had been forced.

"Hurrah !" exclaimed the boy. "Now we shall have grub, and to spare. What this ? a ham ! Can we cook it ? Light a fire, Reggie."

"Not here," said Reggie. "We must take what we want, and have our meal in white-man fashion in a house, properly. There is a respectable place next door : let us take possession of that digging."

They loaded themselves with crackers, a ham, some wood for firing ; knives, plates, and forks were speedily procured from the vacated inn, where were drawers full of necessaries, and a considerable number of bottles. Reginald superintended the cooking of the ham, while Jim foraged with much success, and in half-an-hour some hot rashers and warmed crackers crackled on the table in the deserted house.

"Well, Reg," said Jim, with his mouth full, "this beats cock-fighting and Robinson Crusoe. Eh, *Punch* ? Hallo, whose *your* friend ?"

"Poor old dog !" said Reggie ; "why, he has got a partner. Look, I say, Jim, here's a spree ! Look at the cats and dogs ! Oh, this is just too funny for anything !"

Indeed, the scene had something very comic in it. *Punch* had returned with the terrier before-mentioned, and these two had been followed at a respectful distance by four more dogs, quite puppies, and

about sixteen cats, all staring-eyed and hungry, and purring in chorus. It appeared that the four puppies were the exclusive property of this terrier, for she and her family had remained behind when the stampede from the town had taken place.

It was an amusing and yet a pitiful sight to see the cats sitting in observant attitudes, hungry, watchful, and fearless, not to say fierce; the dogs, nearer the boys, equally watchful, while every now and then a *miow* or a stifled bark or yelp would remind the lads that the lower animals had appetites as well as man or boy.

"Give them something, Jim. Chuck some ham to the puppies. We have heard of 'throwing physic to the dogs;' this is a new reading. I am much better," remarked Reginald, contentedly, as he paused in his breakfast to contemplate the cats which were tearing and chewing the meat, their heads now on one side, now on the other. The dogs simply bolted the biscuits and the meat indifferently.

After about a quarter of an hour of this amusement, the boys put away the remains of the feast, and started for a walk through the town, followed by the dogs and pups, and by the wistful glances of the feline animals.*

* This "deserted" town is not all fiction. Many an oil city grew up and was deserted in the manner described when the oil-fever was raging in the States.



CHAPTER IV.

A DESERTED OIL CITY—EXPLORATION—"THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA"—A MEETING.

THE appearance of the deserted town was most depressing. The houses and sheds were strangely silent, and yet other traces and remains of human occupation and toil were everywhere visible—derricks, machinery, wheels, miles of piping and many boilers, some rusty, some still unused. There were cuttings and borings, and oily little streams in the grass, but the boring had been abandoned, the oil had "caved in," the "city" was a failure! Dead!

The boys continued their walk and tour of inspection.

"Reggie," said Jim, "this is a queer shop, isn't it? It can't have been deserted so very long either."

"Why not," asked Reggie. "Do you judge from the boilers here? They may have been preserved from rust by the oil."

"No, I was not thinking of the boilers; the cats gave me the idea, for you see they are tame still; and if they had been here long by themselves, they would be wild. Eh?"

"Very likely you are right, James ! But I wonder we have not met anyone going away. I suppose all these things came from Pittsburgh !"

"Guess so," answered Jim ; "and now they belong to us, don't they ? If we take possession we may make some money. Shall we bore, Reggie ?"

"It isn't very likely that we shall find oil where experts failed," replied Reginald. "Do you know, Jim, I am in hopes that the governor and uncle may come along. If so, they may find something very valuable, and all our fortunes may be made !"

"Something bearing a slight resemblance to the whale is possible also, laddie. No, my dear Reg, we shall *not* strike ile this journey ! But come along, let us go back and prospect the town."

They returned down the hill, and explored many houses. Some were furnished, some were unfurnished. One dwelling particularly interested them. It was a small shanty, like a miner's hut. It had apparently been occupied by people, or by a person, of the seafaring persuasion, for there were some old charts, a telescope, a chest with the initials "M. J. J." on it, besides some other articles which indicated the late occupier as a man of seafaring tastes, if not an actual "old salt."

There was an inner room. On the door of this apartment was a paper, on which were inscribed the words, "Come in !"

"Hullo ! this is a funny idea," exclaimed Jim. "'Come in !' Well, it would be rude not to accept the invitation. Come on, Reg."

Jim Upton pushed the door open, and entered.

Reginald stayed behind, examining the chest, and endeavouring to find some clue to the late owner. Suddenly his cousin hurried back, and whispered in terrified tones :

"There's a man in there, Reggie!"

"A man where? In that room?"

"Yes; an old fellow."

"Is he alive or dead?"

"I can't say. I *think* he moved, but I was too frightened to wait."

"Perhaps he is dying from starvation, Jim; let's see!"

"Take care, Reggie; he may be mad, or pretending. He may shoot us!"

"Not he!" replied brave Reggie. "He's been left behind, poor chap! that's what's the matter. They've left him here to die, perhaps. Come in! Don't you see, he's fixed that up on the chance!"

Reginald did not hesitate a moment. He advanced boldly, and pushed open the door. On a pallet bed lay a man whose white hair and beard proclaimed him of a great age. His eyes were closed when the lads entered, and remained so even after they had been gazing at him for some few minutes. By this Reginald concluded that the man was either dying or deaf. After a while the lad approached the bed, when the old man became aware of his presence, and opened his eyes.

He gently moved his head, and then with some difficulty raised his right hand, and with emaciated finger pointed to his mouth.

Reginald hurried away, and brought a jug of water



Finding the old man in the deserted town.—Page 30.

back. He also found a cup, from which, when assisted, the old man drank greedily.

"Hungry?" asked Jim, in a loud voice.

The man shook his head slowly.

"Very ill?" enquired Reginald, as he drew a stool up to the bedside and seated himself.

The old man murmured something, which the lad could not distinctly catch. It sounded like "all gone."

"Yes, they have all gone!" shouted Reginald. "Town's empty!"

"Who are you?" enquired the old man, more clearly.

"Strangers makin' north from Carolina. We lost our way."

"Ah! goin' north, are ye? Alone? or are you sailin' in company?"

"In company; we have lost our train in the forest. They may find us here."

The old man shook his head. "No one will come here again; the town's played out; the oil is out, too," he gasped. "Water!"

Jim gave him some, and then they waited in silence. The old man appeared to be dying. He would have no food, and towards night-time he began to wander. His senses were evidently leaving him.

The boys were a little frightened, and no wonder! Alone in the deserted "city" with the dying man, whose end was made more terrible by the ghastly surroundings, and by his faltering confessions. They listened, and caught such sentences as these:

"Aye, it's there! See the glitter of the Rock.

Opals! aye, hundreds—and diamonds too! The Secret! Did you say *the Secret*? It's here—*here*—but I have sworn not to divulge it. I won't tell! No, no, you won't tear it from me. The box; yes, the box! Let me see! Get away—stand aside, I say; I am captain here!”

With a bound he leaped to the floor and rushed into the adjoining room, where he quickly opened the chest and plunged his hands into it. He was half-dressed, and, just then, very violent; but after he had pushed and pulled about the contents of the chest, he fell exhausted on the floor—helpless.

The boys, after a pause for consultation, carried him back to the other room and laid him on his bed again. Then they silently stole away.

“This is a serious thing, Jim,” said Reginald. “If the old man dies and we are found here, we might get into trouble. But we can't leave him, for all that.”

“Of course not,” replied James Upton. “He's a queer old fellow. Didn't he say something about a Secret!”

“Yes, and Opals and Diamonds. Some nonsense, I suppose. People often fancy their thoughts are true. I suspect this old boss has been thinking and dreaming of opals or something of that kind, and believes he has them hidden somewhere.”

“Very likely,” replied Jim, “but he certainly talked about a Secret. I have also a secret yearning for food, which I should like to satisfy, Reg.”

“Let us go back for a while. The old fellow is

asleep again. We can return after tea. I saw some tea and sugar in the store.”

All this time the dogs had been waiting outside—some sleeping, yet the pups generally were gambolling, and pinching each other's ears, tumbling about like canine acrobats, seemingly refreshed.

But as soon as the boys appeared, *Punch* awoke, and then he, with the terrier and her family, trotted along as quietly as possible, as if Reginald and James Upton had a claim upon the allegiance of all.

“Now for tea,” said Reg. “Then we'll bring some down to the old Sinbad yonder, and cheer him up. Perhaps he'd like something stronger; a little brandy might revive him.”

“And might excite him,” remarked Jim. “Perhaps we had best let him alone; I mean, feed him, of course, but not try to doctor him. We might kill him, you know.”

“All right, Jim. Look here! I declare if the cats ain't drawn up in a line again! Queer critters, cats. We must feed them every day, I suppose.”

“Pity we have no milk, but they will drink water. Now for the tea.”

The lads, quite accustomed to act for themselves, were not long in procuring water from the well in the yard or court of the house near by, an open space to which all had access. The dogs and cats watched this operation with interest, and *Punch* barked, asking for some as plainly as possible. So Jim had to draw water, and pour it into some shallow dishes. To these both dogs and cats immediately repaired, and it was amusing to see the cautious and “gingerly” tasting

by the cats, and the bold hearty lapping of the dogs. Neither animal interfered with the other : a common danger cemented friendship, and Pussy thought, no doubt, that misfortune had made her acquainted with some very strange companions.

While James Upton was thus mercifully employed, his cousin had not been idle. The fire had been again lighted, matches and flint and steel being part of the young travellers' equipment. The tea proved to be excellent, and when they had satisfied their hunger, and distributed some biscuits amongst the audience, the lads retraced their steps in the twilight to the shanty, carrying a jug of tea to quench "Sinbad's" thirst.

"What day is this, Jim?" asked Reggie. "I've half forgotten how long we have been wandering, and I don't half like this place. Can't we get away?"

"We will try to-morrow. Let me see, this is the second night, we quitted on Monday week, then this is *Thursday*, Reg. We had been tracking a week, you remember. It must be Thursday."

"Thought it must be—I'm so myself," said Reginald; "thirsty, I mean. Never mind, Jim, it ain't original. Now, here we are. I wonder if Sinbad is awake!"

"He's more like the Old Man of the Sea than Sinbad," retorted Jim. "I will peep in if you like, I'm not afraid."

"Well, make haste, it's getting dark," said Reginald. "I will wait here and cool the tea."

James hurried into the hut. The dogs again lay

down at Reggie's feet, and watched him intently. One of the pups improved the occasion with a short nap, and woke in two minutes apparently much refreshed, when James came out.

"He's alive and kicking," said he; "I mean all right, as sensible as a judge, but very weak. I don't think he'll last long, poor chap."

"Oh dear!" said Reginald, "this is bad news. Let us give him some tea."

The youths entered, and gave the old mariner the tea, for which he was extremely grateful, and pressed the lads' hands.

"Kind lads, good lads," he whispered. "Listen, close; have ye a father?"

"Two," said Reggie, quickly. "I mean," he continued, seeing the shade that passed over the old man's face, "we are cousins; we hope our fathers will find us here."

"I have a Secret which I will tell you, you may some day think it worth while to hunt up. In my chest are papers: they are yours! A map, it is yours! Charts, all yours! My name is Michael Jeremiah Jackson. I'm an Englishman, a sailor, a navigator in my day; ah, my breath—some drink!"

He was greatly exhausted, and lay down again. The boys watched him as he sank into a quiet slumber, and they left him for a while.

By this time twilight had set in, and the brilliant gas flame on the other end of the street was burning brightly, illuminating the town and the hills even up to the trees near the summit. The lads stood still, and watched the tremendous flame.

"There is something white moving slowly up there, Jim," said Reginald after a silent pause. "Don't you see it?"

"I can see something, but cannot make it out," said Jim.

"Then!" exclaimed Reginald joyfully, "I can tell you, old boy, it's the white tilt of a waggon. There's another—the light is on them plainly now. O! suppose it's our train!"

"Suppose! it *must* be our train," shouted James Upton. "There! look at old *Punch*! he sniffs something in the wind. Come along, *Punch*. Race, good dog! master! master!"

The boys forgot all else—the silent street, the dying man, his curious and as yet undivulged secret. Off they went, the dog yards ahead, stretching out at a gallop, for he had scented his master, or seen him. The boys came panting behind, and keeping the white tilts in view amid the dark trees, soon reached the base of the rising ground.

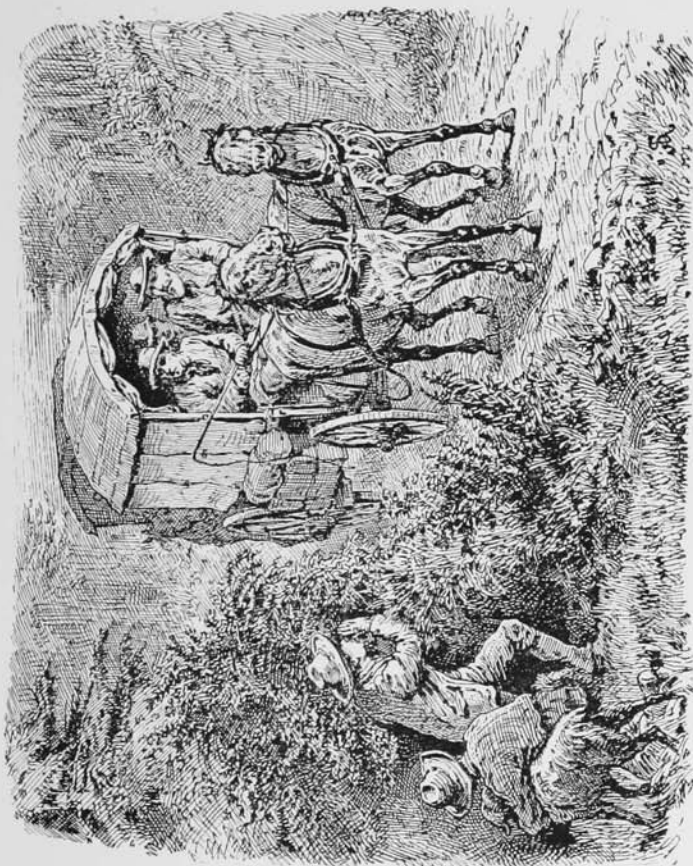
"Yes," gasped Jim, "there they are; it could be no one else—two waggons and the cart; our train. Oh, Reggie, this is lovely! Won't the governor be delighted!"

"I daresay we shall *catch it* from my *Pater*," said Reginald. "Uncle Fred won't say much, but my governor will give us a 'ferretting,' I guess."

"Never mind, he will be just as glad. We will give them a fright first. Stand back here, behind this rock in the cliff. I will challenge them."

"No, Jim, they may let fly at us, and they don't miss *much*."

"I'll have a bit of fun, you'll see. Lie down, Reg. Now, are they coming?"



"Yes, some distance off yet though. Gently, Jim." Jim was all ready, and when the train was slowly

wending its way down the rough and zig-zag path, he cried in as gruff a voice as he could assume :

"Stand there ! who are ye ?"

"Who are you ?" was the reply in Josiah's voice ;
"step out and show yourself."

"Nary bit !" was the answer to the challenge ;
"you are surrounded. One shot will be your death signal. Halt and surrender !"

"Not to an invisible enemy," said Josiah. Then the train advanced again boldly.

"What shall we do, Reg ? they are coming on," whispered Jim, who was laughing silently. Reginald was unable to reply ; he was afraid of a volley, and dreaded consequences.

"Halt, or I fire," shouted Jim, defiantly.

The train halted. Reginald looked up and chuckled.
"Halt," he cried in turn.

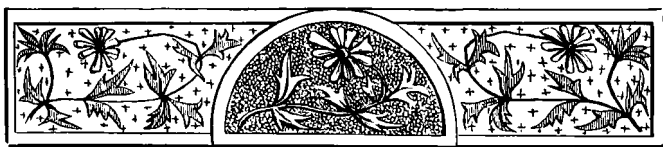
"There's more than one," said Job to Lot, "and we can see nothing."

"But here's *Punch*. Hallo, *Punch*, old man !"

"*Punch !*" exclaimed Josiah, "then those young rascals are at some trick. All right, boys, we can see you. Come out."

"Oh what a *corker !*" muttered Jim. "See us, Reg, why, we can't see ourselves. But *Punch* has betrayed us. Come along."

Then they rose, and came out into the open, laughing loudly.



CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO JACKSON—HIS DEATH, AND HIS SECRET— A CURIOUS DREAM—THE SEALED PACKET.

“**W**ELL, you are a pair of precious young scamps!” was the salutation addressed to our young heroes by their respective parents. “Where have you come from? What do you mean by stopping us in this way?”

“Only fun, father,” cried Reginald, as he embraced Mr Upton.

“Only a lark,” added Jim. “I say, Percy, did you recognise my voice?”

“No, you had a narrow escape though, for Job and Lot had been detached to stalk you down, and in five minutes you might have had a bullet or two flying around.”

The two men mentioned then came up, and warmly greeted the young gentlemen.

“Thought it were Master Reg, didn’t I, Job?” cried Lot. “Says I, it’s him, or a ’coon, with his voice, somewhere. *Eh*, Job?”

Job rubbed his head, and then as if struck with a sudden idea, replied hastily: “Oh yes, Lot, that you

did, pardner!" then in a low tone he murmured, "Guess that squares the lightnin' and the gas well!"

But these trifling romances were not counted against the worthy pair. They were unfeignedly glad to see their young masters, and for some time the train remained stationary, greatly to the disgust of the horses, which had long ago anticipated stabling, food, and water, and made some remarks in their vernacular to remind the "boss" that "progress" should be reported.

"That's a gas well, sure enough," remarked Frederick Upton. "What a fearful blaze. Did it guide you, my boys?"

"Yes, father," replied Jim; "we saw it, and walked on and on until we thought we never would reach it; suddenly it seemed quite close, and then we went into the town."

"Were the people kind to you?" asked Josiah. "Eh?"

"People, uncle! There is no one in it," replied Jim.

"Only one man," remarked Reginald, "and he is dying!"

Lot and Job exchanged glances. Neither liked to claim the prophecy this time, so neither spoke until Josiah said:

"Didn't you say something about an oil city, Lot?"

"Well, master, I might, or Job here—it's all the same. We said it somehow; didn't us, Job?"

"We did, sir. Lot, he began it."

"No, Job, you started it, I remember, because——"

"Never mind, it's a gas well, isn't it? And, boys, you say there is no one in the town except one man?" continued Josiah Upton.

"And a few cats and dogs," said Reginald, smiling.

"A deserted city," cried Josiah. "How did you manage to live?"

"There is plenty to eat, uncle," said Jim. "Come along, and we will show you the hotel!"

"The hotel!" exclaimed the brothers and cousins. "Is there a hotel, really?"

"Really and truly, Percy, a fine building; also a church and chapel, and capital adobe houses. First-rate place!"

"I quite expect it's a given out oil plot," said Lot. "That's what it is; a dead city! I've heard of 'em many a time. Gee up, hoss!"

Then the train descended the hill, and in a few minutes reached the level. The horses were alarmed at the fire, so a *détour* was made, and the town reached about midway. On the left was the pillar of fire, on the right the end near which the shanty was situated, and Reginald urged his father to go there and see the man.

"He may be near death, father, and he has some great secret to tell. Perhaps it may enrich us all. *Do* come. Here's a lantern."

Mr Josiah Upton yielded to his son's entreaties, and while the remainder of the party proceeded in search of quarters and refreshments, Josh and Reginald made for the shanty.

They found the old man extremely weak, so much so that he could scarcely turn his head to see who had entered his room. He was lying on his back, and when Mr Josiah Upton came in, the dying man fixed his eyes upon him intently. The glazing orbs lighted

up a little when Reginald appeared, and a movement of the thin bony hand upon the coverlid indicated that the old mariner had recognised his benefactor.

"Has he been left here to die?" asked Mr Upton. "Poor fellow!"

"I expect so, father," replied Reginald. "We found him, and did all we could, and he is very grateful to us; but we could not save his life."

Mr Upton then advanced to the poor and ill-covered bed, and asked the man if anything could be done. "We have our train here in this deserted spot, and may take you with us. Will you come?"

"No," replied the old sailor, "I came here to die! It is fate! I've bin a sailor, and navigated the north and south seas. I'm an Englishman, boss, born in Somersetshire, and went early to sea. I came down in the world, but I have in my possession yonder a Secret which would have enriched my mates, had not they treated me bad; the cursed Yankees! No, never will I let them know it. You are English born, I can see; to you I will tell the Secret, if I can! You may leave your lantern!"

These sentences were gasped out jerkily, one by one, with considerable difficulty. Mr Upton, being quite incredulous concerning the Secret, did not pay much attention to them. He was more interested in obtaining some information as to the locality and the means of retreat from the Dead City.

"Ay, we are English, sure enough," he replied, his mouth close to the man's ear. "But can you tell us where we are? How came this place in such a condition? Oil fail?"

"Yes, it gave out. There's some still here if you can find it. No one here could. The people ran away as quick as they came. They thought nothing about me lyin' here, cuss them! I was sick and a burthen. Yankees! Bah! I hate them!"

This was sheer prejudice evidently, but the Uptons had little consolation to offer him, so they agreed with him outwardly.

"You shall know all," he gasped. "Let me find the papers. Call your friends. It concerns them too. Your lad, the one named Jim, a fine lad. Go; I will find you the papers. Quick!"

"One question first. How long has this place been deserted?" asked Josiah Upton.

"'Bout a week—maybe more—a week, I suspect. Now, go for your boy Jim. I like him—he's no Yankee cuss. Be smart, now."

"Come, Reg, we will find Master Jim, and bring him here. But mind, my friend, take care! We will bring you something to revive you in a few minutes."

"You'll have—to—bring it—pretty sharp—then," replied the old man with an effort, as father and son quitted the hut.

"I wonder what his secret is, father!" said Reginald, as they hurried back.

"Nothing at all," replied Mr Upton; "why, nearly every old salt has some wonderful tale of his adventures—a gold beetle, a mine, or some hidden paper or treasure, like Captain Kidd's. Don't you build your hopes on such a sandy foundation, my boy. Ah! here we are at our 'hotel,' and it is by no means to be despised!"

"Jim! where are you?" shouted his uncle. "We must humour the poor chap," he added.

Jim was in the stable, where Lot and Job were harmoniously trying to make the horses comfortable, and listening to Jim's narrative with great pleasure, taking to themselves all the credit for his preservation, and confessing to an omniscience and power of prediction which would have put the old prophets in the shade, had the statements been reasonably correct!

"Lot did it, Master Jim. He's a powerful mind, has Lot."

"Likewise Job is not without his pints," said Lot. "A fine fellow, and knows things by tuition, *he* do!"

Jim had a dim idea that most people gained their knowledge by "tuition," but he recognised immediately that the "in" had been left out, and assented to the statements. At this moment his father called him, and he hurried off.

Meanwhile Frederick Upton and his sons had been arranging the sleeping rooms, and by the light of the gas making a cursory inspection of the ground near the well itself. "We may find oil," he exclaimed, "and if so our fortunes will be made."

Josiah Upton and the two boys hurried down to the hut, and entered. All was silent, and almost dark; a gleam from the tremendous gas-lamp penetrated the rooms, that was all. The lantern had either gone out of itself, or had been extinguished. But a glance round, when the eyes of the Uptons had become accustomed to the gloom, revealed the state of affairs.

The lantern was lying by the side of the chest. Kneeling at it, his hands plunged into its miscellaneous contents, was the old sailor. He never moved. Josiah touched him, he was warm ; he raised him up in his arms, and turned his face to the gleam of gas. He was dead !

The boys were struck dumb. They had never before been brought face to face with death in this shape, and the conditions were sufficiently alarming. The gloom, the silence, the white-haired old man thus taken as he was seeking for his treasured secret, were circumstances calculated to excite nerves stronger than Jim's and Reginald's. They retired to the door, while Josiah Upton laid the body on the bed.

They then locked the door, and retired after putting the room in order. The outer room they searched with the aid of the relighted lantern, but found nothing besides the chest and its contents which would repay investigation.

"He gave us the chest, father," said Reginald ; "we are quite entitled to the contents."

"Let us leave it here, no one will touch it," said Reginald.

"Let us have the papers, Reggie," pleaded Jim. "Uncle, do you think he was romancing about his secret?"

"I am afraid it is only a myth. But you can have the papers ; they may be useful to trace his friends, if he has any. We can investigate them at our leisure. He made you his heirs, did he?"

"Yes ; he said there were papers, maps, and charts, which were all ours. His name was Jackson. So we

are quite entitled to the papers. It will be rather funny examining them."

"Very well," said Josiah, "bring them along; the chest and the other things we can leave here. We will fasten the door for the night, and will bury the poor old man before we quit."

The trio having taken possession of all the papers, a well-thumbed map, and some navigating charts of the Northern Seas, retired and returned to the hotel, where some supper was quickly prepared by Job, and served by Lot.

"These are not bad quarters," remarked Percy. "One might put up very comfortably here."

"Yes, and waste your time in hunting for oil," remarked his uncle. "A very dangerous speculation. Look at the sums of money which have been sunk here in boring, machinery, and piping."

"And to a very bad tune," remarked Harry, drily.

A gentle laugh repaid the perpetration of this remark, which Reginald highly appreciated. He was not jealous of another's jokes.

"Yes," he said; "Harry has hit the nail on the head this time, and now if you have all finished supper, suppose we investigate old Jackson's 'dead secret.'"

"By all means," said Frederick Upton, "I am interested in this very much."

"You, uncle! *You*, father!" were the exclamations that this remark gave rise to.

"Yes, boys. You need not laugh, Josh, I am serious. I had a very curious dream last night, and this discovery has quite confirmed it. First, I will tell you

my dream,—mind, I have heard no details of your supposed secret,—and, if my dream in any way is confirmed by your papers, then I will go into partnership with Lot and Job here, and set up for a prophet!”

“We don’t get much out of it,” muttered Job. “Eh, pard?”

“And so says I,” murmured Lot. “Profits ain’t a payin’ business these times, there’s too much spec’ about.”

“Now listen. You can remain, Job and Lot, and you shall hear my curious dream of which I am reminded by these papers.”

Last night, when we were considerably anxious about you two young scamps,” said Frederick Upton, “I lay awake for a long time, thinking where you could have got to, and though I was unaware of it, sleep must have overtaken me, for I had a dream or a vision. I fancied I was climbing up a mountain covered with snow, but glittering on the summit with sparkling diamonds or some such jewels.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Reginald, involuntarily.

“Jewels,” continued Uncle Fred, “which seemed to change colour as some stars do. There were three men there, and I remember their faces. One was tall, slim, and had the usual ‘goatee’ beard, which men wear out here; another was shorter and broad-shouldered, with a curious cast in his eye: it seemed as if one eye moved into the other and came out again. The third man was kind and gentle-looking, most good-natured, but he joined the other men, and gave them a packet; and as he was chatting with

them, he killed them as quietly as possible! He simply shot them dead without turning a hair. I was on the mountain, and he came towards me, but I managed to elude him, and he fell down; so did I somehow, and then I found I was staring at the stars, and that Job was keeping watch close by with his gun barrel glinting in the moonlight. Your packet of papers here reminded me of the dream, that's all!"

"And you actually dreamt of a jewelled mountain!" cried Jim. "That is very curious, because the sailor told us of such a mountain sparkling with diamonds and opals, and he said that his papers would reveal the secret."

"Let us see the papers," cried Josiah. "There *may* be something worth investigating. Never lose a chance, say I."

"Dreams always go by contraries, you know," said Percy, smiling.

"Well, I am superstitious, I grant," said his father, "and Uncle Fred has some belief in the supernatural too. At anyrate it is a curious coincidence, and something may turn up. But there is no such mountain as that described, I am sure."

"We cannot tell," replied his brother, thoughtfully. "There may be mountains in distant countries which sparkle in the manner described. My mountain, I am disposed to admit, was evolved from the dark shadows and the stars, which impressed me when I was half asleep."

"Let us see, however," said the boys. "It is getting late, and we had better look into this before we go to bed."

This consensus of sensible opinion was in itself a very remarkable instance, and was hailed as an omen of success by the elders, laughing.

"Something is goin' to happen," whispered Lot to his friend. "I know'd it would!"

"Well, in course it is," was the somewhat testy reply. "Things don't go on without happening, do they, stupid?"

"You're pretty right for an idiot," was the confidential answer; and by this passage of arms, readers will guess that unity was with Job and Lot only skin-deep, for public occasions, and mutual benefit.

Meanwhile the packet of papers had been opened, and the documents displayed upon the rough deal table at which the party was seated.





CHAPTER VI.

THE READING OF THE PAPERS—THE OPAL MOUNTAIN—APPEARANCE OF THREE REMARKABLE PERSONAGES IN THE “DEAD CITY.”

THE whole party sat in fixed expectancy while Josiah Upton arranged the papers, and his brother spread out the chart and map upon the table. The boys looked on in delightful anticipation of some fun. Everything in their minds pointed, primarily, to “fun,” or, as Jim said, “sprees.” The elder lads tempered their “sprees” a little with experience, but the younger ones devoured them like larks.

“Now,” said Josiah, “as we are a united band, there need be no secrecy between us, so you two men, Job and Lot, may remain. There are here six documents, I perceive, which certainly appear genuine. They are, you can see, faded and worn in the creases, but perfectly readable. The first is the least important, probably; I will read it. It is dated ‘Carleton.’ Where is that, boys?”

“Carleton, Carleton,” muttered Percy, as if a repetition of the name would help him to a solution. “Let me think. Well, it’s—*you* ought to know, Jim.”

"Why ought *I* to know? It's somewhere in—well—Ireland, isn't it?"

"Not much," exclaimed Harry, "it's in—oh, bother; never mind. Go on, uncle. I think it's in America—I mean Canada."

"Canada!" jeered Reggie. "It's the name of a man who writes books. I've seen his name."

"Master Harry is right," said Lot in his deep tone. "Carleton is in Canady, on Chaleur Bay. I've heard of it. It's in Canady!"

"It is so," murmured Job. "Not that I've bin there. But Lot's right!"

"Well, then, supposing that Carleton be in Canada, we have an important link to begin our chain of evidence, for the subsequent letters speak of a trip north, and the island of 'Belle Isle.' There is continuity in these papers. Now, I will start again. Listen and judge, all of you. There are no dates. Here's the document.

"'CARLETON, *July*.

"'If you survive me, old Jack, do this for your own advantage and profit. Have you the old salt pluck in you, lad? Then go and sail up the Straits again, where we have had a rovin' time together. Let all alone, but keep a true course for the Mountain. It is in——'"

Here Josiah Upton paused. "There are figures," he said, "but they are indistinct. The first numbers appear to be 7615; then comes a letter, a very bad M or an N; then more figures in the crease of the paper. It is most unfortunate that the letter should

have been folded over this most important line. The remaining figures are, apparently, a 5, then another 5, a 1, and a nought."

"Let me see," said his brother. "Ah! I think the first number is 6, not 5. Let us get on to the other papers."

Josiah continued: "'It is in so-and-so, and if you get there, make for the eastern face, where it beams; climb it—you are a made man!'"

"Is that all?" cried Jim. "Slightly disappointing, I call it."

"Wait a moment, little Jim," said Percy; "father has not finished."

"Here is another paper, seemingly full of memoranda. 'Opal Mount'—'great riches'—'see Jack'—'navigate Straits'—'Green coast'—'bear up'—(I can't make this out) 'Dig. N.W.' What is that—a town, a river, or what?"

"If we had a map," said Frederick Upton, "we could find out; but we have not."

"Isn't this a map?" cried Harry. "It may help us, though it is very rough."

"It *may*," said his father, "but I doubt it. Let us see. There is a waving line here, certainly, and near the end of it a round dot like a small *o* filled in. There is a dotted line, and—yes, a Cape. Look, Josh, I believe the thing *is* a Cape!"

"We are getting warm," said Harry. "Let us get red hot, blazing, white hot!"

"Be patient until the letter is *read through*," said Reggie, winking at Jim.

"Silence, punster!" said Uncle Fred. "Now, Josh."

"Well, the other papers seem merely memoranda; hints for finding a path somewhere, along the river—or up the mountain, perhaps. Stay, here is something in another handwriting—Jackson's, probably."

"The way to reach the Mountain where the opals are is to follow the directions in letter from Carleton, cross Lab., strike river (there it is, you see), and ascend. Will try it. Thousands in it—fortune for all! Dick is right.'"

"Who's Dick?" asked Percy, after a pause.

"His friend, of course," replied Jim, hastily. "I see it all."

"Do you?" said his father. "Then perhaps you will kindly explain."

James Upton was by no means abashed, and he replied:

"Father, uncle, good cousins, and retainers. Hem! This is a very serious matter, and I think we have struck ile."

"Opals, you mean," said Reginald. "Go ahead, old pal."

"We have struck ile, I repeat," continued Jim, with mock solemnity. "I can smell a rat. The mountain——"

"Oh, drop your fables about rats and mountains," said Harry, for the elders did not interfere. They were conversing in low tones and consulting the map and chart. "Drop your nonsense, and come to the point, or sit down."

"On the point, if possible," said Reggie. "Dry up, Jim."

"No, I will not. Father, uncle, please listen. I have the clue. The Mountain is a solid fact, I feel sure. You dreamt of it, remember, father, and we have found the papers. I am convinced that the mysterious figures and letters hold the clue—*Dixi!*"

"Dick's fortune, you mean, silly," said Harry, with a burst of laughter. "Rubbish, Jim!"

"Well, I am rather inclined to agree with Jim," said Josiah Upton. (Here Jim made a gesture of derision at his brother.) "He is correct, I think!"

At this Jim rose and executed a *pas seul* behind the backs of his seniors, repeating for his cousin's benefit the contemptuous and rude gesture, which consists, as Ingoldsby says, in putting "his thumb unto his nose," and stretching "his fingers out." It is not refined, but is expressive to a degree!

"Do you really think there is anything in the suggestion?" asked Percy.

"Yes; if we could unravel the mysterious letters and figures, I am pretty sure we would find a clue."

"If I may venture, masters," said Job, "me and Lot here has a idea."

"One between you, Lot?" asked Reggie, pertly.

"Yes, one 'atween us, a rattlin' big un it is, as big as two or'nary idee, young master! Our big idee is as them figures means latytood, and the letters londitood."

"Bravo, Lot and Job, you've hit it," cried Percy. "I declare, father, the 'helps' are right."

"A help in need (no reflection on your legs, Job) is a help indeed!" said Reginald. "A reward is due to you both."

"Yes," said Josiah, with considerable animation. "They have hit the mark very nearly."

"Only the figures and letters must be compared with the map," said Fred Upton. "Look again! Seven, six, fifteen—five thousand. No, no; I see it means 76 degrees, 15 minutes; and the indistinct letter is N—north! Well done, Job and Lot!"

"Oh you silly," whispered Harry to Percival, "why didn't you see that at first."

"Ditto, ditto," whispered Percival to Harry, "why didn't you? Muff!"

"Then," continued Fred Upton, "the other figures mean 65° 10' west longitude. Now in our map, where is that point? does it agree with the position of this Opal Mountain?"

All heads were immediately bent over the map, the younger boys pushing each other and struggling in their eagerness to see.

"Yes," said Josiah, "the parallels would meet about that spot; and see, the dotted and waving lines on the map are near also. This is interesting! A treasure mountain—an Opal Mountain is a novelty. But what is Dig?"

"Do you really think there is anything in it, father?" asked Percy.

"It is impossible to say. The evidence points that way. The poor man Jackson evidently believed it."

"And his informant lays down the position very correctly. Then this chart, which gives the route and soundings up the Strait, and the entrance to the mouth of the Bay, seems genuine," said Uncle Fred. "Upon my word, I am inclined to believe it."

"Well, it isn't much good whether we believe it or not," remarked his brother. "We cannot reach it."

"Why not?" asked Frederick, quickly.

"Why not? why, my dear fellow, how can we go up the coast—a very desolate coast too? We have no means; how is it possible?"

"In a ship," suggested Reggie, quickly.

"Hold your tongue, Reg," said his father. "You are not serious, Fred."

"Well, I am," said the other slowly. "We have no prospects here."

"And would you pursue such a chimera as this?" exclaimed Josiah.

"It is not altogether a chimera," replied his brother. "We have evidence."

"Yes; but we are quite ignorant of the localities. None of us have ever been up in those latitudes."

"Beg pardon, but Lot have," said Job, interrupting.

"Lot! Have you been up in the North Seas?" exclaimed Mr Upton.

"Yes, I've bin there and further—Greenland too; ask Job."

"It's dreadful true; he have," said Job, as his master looked at him, and he added, as if to emphasise the fact, "I'd a gone too if I had the chance!"

This was indeed independent testimony. Lot was a navigator, then. He had "been up north," he said, in connection with the United States Exploring Commission and Trading Company, in which trading was more important than exploration, and the Hudson's Bay Company had complained. Perhaps Jackson

had seen the Americans up there, and conceived a dislike to them.

"The Hudson's Bay Company sent many expeditions up north," said Josiah, "and as the animals they pursued became scarcer, the trappers penetrated as far as the Polar Seas. Was your company a new one, Lot?"

"No; I was workin' for the Saint Louis Fur Company for a while," he replied; "the American company. The Hudson's Bay people sent an expedition to find a passage out to the Pacific once. We tried Labrador and Greenland."

"And, in your opinion, is there any foundation for these papers and this Opal Mountain?" asked Mr Fred Upton.

"I believe there is such a mountain. I've heard of it, so has Job; haven't ye, Job?"

"Many a time," replied the faithful one, as he coughed deprecatingly. "The hill is there, sure enough, and full of jewels as a toad."

"Pull up, partner!" whispered Lot, "that will do! Slack down on the toads!"

Job subsided, fearing he had expressed himself too fully. Josiah then took up the scheme, and after an animated discussion, a serious proposal to try the mountain was made.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Josiah; "nonsense! It is impossible. We shall lose our money, and be laughed at into the bargain. Much better remain here and bore for oil."

But the spirit of adventure had seized on his younger brother, and it need scarcely be said that

the boys were more in favour of the trip to the North than of remaining in the deserted oil town.

"If there is oil, why didn't the borers find it?" said Harry.

"Whose property is this?" enquired Percival, quickly.

"Nobody's. We can claim (if we take inventory) under the State, and come in here. We can settle and prospect, defend our claim, and make money," replied his father. "Much better settle here, for a while at anyrate."

"How can we find oil?" asked Harry.

"Never mind oil," said Reggie. "Let us go north amongst the bears and seals, and other animals."

"Chimeras, for instance," suggested Percival.

"Never heard o' them critturs," remarked Job. "Are they seals?"

"No, dragons; monsters with lions' heads," replied Percy.

"Sea lions! oh, I know them!" said Lot. "Tough customers, sometimes! I'm all for the mountain, master, and the cameras. *Cameras obscuras*; I've heard of 'em."

"So have I!" cried the three younger lads.

Percy was silent. Then the whole question was again discussed, the immense wealth pointed out, the papers read aloud again, until the conversation was suddenly interrupted by Jim, who exclaimed:

"Hullo! here are some fellows listening to our plans!"

All looked up, some turned round, and beheld, standing at the doorway, three Americans, attired



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like woodsmen and hunters. They had evidently been listening to the discussion, and were interested.

"Evenin', boss," said one, nodding to Josiah Upton; "got snug quarters here? Seen our pard, Jackson, yonner?"

"Yes; who are you?" enquired Josiah, as he carefully collected the papers.

"We're Jackson's pals. We cleared out to Pittsburgh for medicine and assistance when the others went. Old Jack hates me, 'cos I'm a Yankee; but I couldn't bear him dying,—no, sir, not for long. Here we are, got a horse litter outside."

"But he's dead," said Fred Upton.

"That's a fact," replied the man, "and his box is on our dray. Now, we've heard your plans, and wants a share in the plunder,—yes, sir!"

"In what plunder?" enquired Josiah, quietly.

"In your everlastin' opals. We're Jack's pals, and his heirs, and successors, and assigns. We don't want fightin', but we go shares."

"He left his papers to me and my cousin," said Jim, boldly.

"Did he? Oh! well, sorry for *you*! We air goin' to keep them papers. Hand over, boss!"

"You shall not have them," replied Josiah; "at least, wait. Where have you come from?"

"From Pittsburgh; not far off, it ain't."

"Do you know Mr Bates—Robert Z. Bates?"

"Well, he's a boss miner. Every one knows him."

"He is my relative, so you can apply to him for my character, which," continued Josiah Upton, suddenly drawing his revolver and presenting it at the Ameri-

can, "is one that will stand no bullying! 'Hands down!' as your road agents say, or I will fire!"

The other men behind the Yankee spokesman stood back; the English party, including the two helps, leaped to their feet, and the new comers perceived that any resistance was useless. Then the leader said:

"Wall, boss, you've bested me: I can't go no better than your brag, I guess. I cave. Say, don't let go at me. Hands down, honour bright!"

Josiah lowered his weapon and pocketed the papers. Then he said: "You are at liberty to take your dead friend to Pittsburgh to-morrow. Tell Mr Bates that we are here, if you please. We will follow you quickly. Good-night."

"Blamed if you ar'n't about the coolest old cuss as ever drew breath, remarked the American. You're a 'cute possum, sir."

"Maybe I am," replied Upton. "I was born in England, and have cut my eye teeth in your country. Good-night. These are our rooms."

"Well, that beats," was the comment. "Good-night, old boss. We'll have a tussle for your mountain yet, you bet! I swear we *will*. So look out. Keep your eyes skinned, take warnin'. *We intend to have that mountain*: it's our right. So look out!"

Then with a defiant nod and a contemptuous snapping of the fingers, the burly Yankee and his associates quitted the hotel, and proceeded down the deserted street. When they had gone, Frederick Upton roused himself from his attitude of astonishment, and cried:

"My dream! My dream has come true! Those were the men. Did you notice the little man? Did

you see his eyes? Those men are our enemies, depend upon it!"

"Are you serious, Fred?" asked Josiah. "You cannot really mean this?"

"I do," said his brother. "If you don't try for the Treasure, they will. I for one have made up my mind to go!"

There was a pause after this very decided announcement, and then all the boys, including Percy, cried, "Hurrah! Hurrah for the Opal Mountain."

"Well," said Josiah Upton, in his slow, quiet way, such a contrast to his brother's more cheerful and easy tone, "well, so be it, but before we retire from here, I would suggest registering our claim to the hill yonder. In my opinion there is oil up there."

"There can be no objections," said Fred. "By all means let us have another iron in the fire. We must go north as arranged. Let us make enquiries about the opal district. If we cannot find out anything satisfactory, we will give up the expedition, and return here for oil. Meanwhile, let us cross to Pittsburgh, see Bob Bates, put him up to this oil business on our account, give him a share, let him work it. So if we fail in our 'wild goose chase,' as you call it, we shall have a 'piece of resistance' to fall back upon. Is that sound?"

"Yes; I agree. I see the lads are all for adventure. Job and Lot, will you accompany us?"

"Yes; we'll go, master. We ain't particular where 'tis, so long as we've food and clothing and wages. Job and me will hang on still."

"Very well. Now, having arrived at this conclusion

and midnight, some of us will go to bed. We had better keep watch. I will take the first two hours," said Fred Upton. "I am not sleepy. Boys, vamoose!"

And they vamoosed accordingly, delighted with the idea of a whole summer of fun, one continuous and "high old spree!" The helps also retired. Josiah, after a few words with his brother, followed the young people, and left Frederick Upton to keep his solitary vigil.





CHAPTER VII.

PITTSBURGH—A POET'S GRAVE—A STARTLING DIS-
CLOSURE—OFF TO THE NORTH.

TACKSON was decently interred by the Yankees whom he had so abused. Those men, who had attached themselves to him with a view to share his secret, and, if possible, lay violent hands upon his wealth, had, at last, with a tenderness and good feeling which was not hardened by disappointment, buried him—had performed for him the last offices which so many others had neglected. Why those men had tracked him, how he first became acquainted with them, or where they had guessed his important secret, must remain for ever unknown. He had hated and feared them, and they did all they could for his lifeless body at the last, without fee or reward, and with a rankling disappointment in their hearts, under the influence of one of them.

After the departure of the men, our travellers, with the assistance of the ever ready Job and Lot, made some small borings in the hillside at a place some distance from the original sinkings. The rods came up oily, and without any definite hopes of great

success the prospectors came to the conclusion that the well, if sunk, would repay labour and machinery. They accordingly started a claim, put up notice, signed it, worked hard, got an inventory of certain things out, and generally took possession of the one-street city, with its flaming gas, its empty houses, and its cemetery in which poor Jackson was laid. Then two days later they tracked out for the city of Pittsburgh to interview Mr Bates, an important man there.

Pittsburgh! The boys were fairly astonished when they came within a mile or so to behold the huge volumes of smoke which poured upwards, to hear the clang of hammers and the whirr of the machinery as they passed along. Since our travellers were there the city has increased and multiplied her businesses: iron, coal, glass, and cannon-founding have each a place in the city no longer smoky, for gas is fuel.

Pittsburgh! Every schoolboy will remember it, the city on the Ohio; the first American river with which the writer was ever acquainted in the ditty running, I think, thus—

“ Row, row, boatman, row,
Singing down the *ribber* Ohio ! ”

Pittsburgh! The past can tell of Fort Duquesne and General Braddock; the celebrated conflicts round the “block house” erected in 1764, a house that may still exist; it was to be seen not long ago, curiously loop-holed for musketry. The history of the old fort, erected at the junction of the rivers, would fill many pages. French, English, Indians, and Americans have disputed and fought for it. Besieged by Red-

skins, burned by Frenchmen, it still remains a memento of the last century.

But our young travellers took more interest in the manufactories and foundries than in Washington, Con-treckur, Braddock, or the "Whisky war." Where Braddock was defeated we have now fine steel-works. The old fort is a railway depôt. Duquesne has disappeared—its block house remains. To describe Pitts-burgh would interfere with our narrative, but a reference to the very exciting scenes which history relates for us is not undesirable. Now the river is alive with steamers passing from Saint Louis, New Orleans, and other places, and returning, while freight trains, passenger trains, and steamers from all directions make for the once "Smoky City," unload, load, and dart away again on the smooth rail or on the very uncertain waters of the unstable rivers, whose traffic has been filched by the swifter locomotives, because the streams are so uncertain that freight has often to lie in the mud for weeks.

There was one monument in the Alleghany Cemetery which their relative, Mr Bates, took them to see—the grave of Stephen Foster, the composer of their favourite songs, "Old Folks at Home" and "Willie, we have missed you." The grave was new, but the fame of the young composer will last longer than the stone above his head. How many thousands of us used to sing "Come where my love lies dreaming," and "Old Dog Tray," little thinking that the hand that penned them was just then laid in the "cold, cold ground," which the composer had, as it were, etherealised in the song. Who does not remember "Uncle Ned," and the appeal to "Susannah" not to cry?

Our lads *did* remember, and with some feeling of regret came back again into, even then, busy Pittsburgh. The seniors had made an arrangement with Mr Bates, who at once despatched men to "strike the ile," if possible, in the new claim, which had a special interest for him, as he was an oil refiner. The result was not definitely known for some days, and before the good news arrived, the whole party, fitted out liberally by Bates, had quitted Pittsburgh for Quebec, another historical city.

A long consultation with Mr Bates had resulted in the expedition which might or might not have a fortunate termination. I think if the travellers had had any definite idea of the troubles, adventures, and hardships of the journey, they would have decided to remain at home. But if they had remained at Pittsburgh, or in Canada as originally intended, their adventures would never have been written. Now, which of these two is the lesser evil I will leave my youthful readers to judge. One thing I may mention, the boys did not repine. "They had such fun," they said ; "they wouldn't have missed it for anything."

Before quitting Mr Bates' hospitable roof, Josiah and Frederick Upton made inquiries about the three men whom they had met at Place City, as the deserted town was called. Mr Bates could not give them any information about them, but a man employed in the works told them that the tall man, Loskins, he said his name was, was a "very respectable horse thief," a man who, if he *did* occasionally do a trade in horses, had the grace to behave politely to all with whom he came in contact. He never bullied nor

ill-treated the defenceless, and if compelled to act on the defensive, was honourable so far that he never took a mean advantage, and wouldn't draw a bead on an unarmed man, if he could help it. No, Loskins—Stephen J. Loskins—was a respectable man compared with "Swivel Eye," the small man, whose name the informant opined was Britton. Didn't know much about him, except that he had been at one time in command of a desperate band of "white Injuns," robbers who often disguised themselves as red-men, and perpetrated (*qua* Indians) terrible atrocities. Of the third individual the description was not recognised.

"I think that will do," remarked Josiah. "We have a nice trio of scoundrels on our trail."

"On your trail," exclaimed the foreman. "Are them skunks after you? Then if I was in your skins, blamed if I wouldn't sleep with a derringer in each fist, or train one to shoot by itself."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Reginald. "I would like to train a revolver up in the way it should go off."

"Yes, it ain't easy, not altogether; but when you've done it, you'll never regret the trouble," said the foreman.

"We will make Lot do it," whispered Jim to Harry. "He and Job will declare they know all about it, and have seen it done."

"Then you think we shall have some dangers to contend against?" said Percy.

"I don't think, boss, I'm *blamed sartin*. If 'Swivel Eye' can do you a bad turn, kiss my grandmother if he doesn't."

No one expressed any particular wish to embrace the old lady ; and Jim, observing the foreman, fancied he might as well take his chance with "Swivel Eye." The elders said nothing, but I think there was a general desire to give way on the subject of the foreman's relative, and no lively competition for the suggested honour was expected or announced.

The travellers became acquainted with a few more particulars concerning their probable enemies before they quitted the city. The third man, who was described as quiet, was a most liberal, good-natured, even pleasant-mannered murderer. He never *injured* any one, he declared. If he drew, he *killed*. He was particular as regards appearances ; was clean shaved, save for a moustache ; mild in manner, and, when not murdering, "quite a gentleman." No murder had ever been brought home to him. He had considerable education, and some talent. He was well known out West, but though frequently suspected of evil deeds, he had never been captured red-handed, nor had even conclusive circumstantial evidence ever been brought forward against him. His name was Christian Nathan.

When all arrangements had been made, surplus stores and the waggons disposed of, and farewells taken, our party set out by rail for Canada, and after an uneventful journey to Quebec, passed on to Carleton, where along the shores of Chaleur Bay, at Dalhousie and other places on the coast, they spent their time and money in seeking some information concerning Jackson, the sailor, and his correspondent Dick, a navigator. For some weeks the Uptons made these

fruitless inquiries, while Job and Lot were away in the East at Carlisle, Bonaventure, arranging for a vessel, for the expedition had been determined upon in any event.

"It's no use, father," said Percival, one day; "the summer is going, we cannot start this year; the helps will return to-morrow. What can we do?"

"There is time to explore a little of the coast. The summer is not very forward yet, the ice may still be thick up north. In June and July the Straits are full of ice. It's hardly June yet, remember."

"But we have not started yet," remarked Reginald.

"And have heard nothing of Dick, whoever he may have been," said Harry. "Perhaps my father will bring in some news this evening."

"Very possibly," replied Josiah. "If not, and if the hands return to-morrow with any feasible arrangement, we shall go. I am tired of hunting phantoms."

That same evening Lot and Job returned, and had very good news. They had searched for a convenient craft, and had pitched upon a smart schooner about one hundred and fifty tons, which had been in the sealing trade the previous season, up from Gloucester way.

"She's a tidy craft, masters," said Lot, "and will serve us well."

"Surely we cannot all fit into such a small vessel," said Harry. "We shall be 'cribbed, cabined, and confined' in such a ship."

"No," replied Lot; "no you won't. Will we, Job?"

"By no means," was the expected reply. "She has beds and to spare."

"How about the crew?" asked Josiah, "and the captain?"

"There's us two," said Lot, indicating Job and himself, "there's three hands and the skipper, and a boy, a young antibilious animal——"

"Amphibious, you mean, Lot!" said Percival, smiling.

"Amphibilious? all right—a fine young specimen—that's the crew. The skipper, his name is Armstrong—a regular pickled hoss; he'll go for your terms, and bring us all back again!"

"Did you tell him our object, then?" enquired Josiah, hastily.

"Did you ever catch a weasel asleep?" was the reply. "No; me and Job here keeps our mouths shut—eh, Job?"

"Tight as wax," was the answer to this confident appeal. "But there's another vessel also a-fittin' out. She's called the *Cat-fish*."

"Well, I suppose other vessels will be going up too," remarked Josiah. "What of the *Cat-fish*?"

"I knows one of her men," remarked Lot, carelessly, his eyes fixed upon the ceiling of the room as he was speaking.

"Good for him," muttered Harry. "Well?"

"Well? no, *sir*, it ain't *well*, though it's uncommon deep, you bet!"

"Lot, what are you driving at?" cried Josiah Upton; "you and Job are as mysterious as a pair of Sphinxes this afternoon."

"It's just here," replied Job, interrupting. "Spinks or no Spinks, whoever *he* is, the *Cat-fish* is fittin' out

for Mister Swivel Eye and Company. That's a fact?"

"For our rivals? Are *they* going?" cried Josiah.

"Yes, *siree*; you may depend they've got on the scent, and intend to follow us or make mischief."

"Is our vessel armed? Has she a gun on board?"

"One little one—a fog cannon."

"Then get a couple of four pounders and some ammunition; find them somewhere, anywhere! Be off. Tell Captain Armstrong I am death on this business, and mean snakes."

"Who's talking of them reptiles!" asked a voice, and Reginald, assuming an American air and tone, entered. "Snakes! Gentlemen, Romans, Countrymen, and Brothers, hear me! We have found the very oldest man in the whole world! He confesses to having seen the Flood, and has some general ideas concerning the Tower of Babel."

"Don't be silly, Reginald," exclaimed his father, Josiah Upton; "you are too old to chatter such nonsense——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Reggie; "my dearest dad, *it's true*—in some respects; ask uncle Fred. We have seen the very oldest man you can think of. He is salted, apparently, and keeps that way."

"You are incorrigible," said his father, smiling at his handsome, bright boy. "But here is your uncle, he will give us some facts. So you have interviewed Methuselah, Fred?"

"Well, yes! Him or his younger brother. Never saw such an old 'coon in my life. He has confirmed Jackson's manuscript, though!"

"Then there is such a hill as the Opal Mountain, uncle?" said Percy.

"Yes, apparently so. This old man we unearthed with some difficulty, and his name is Richards."

"It's Dick! it's Dick himself, I am certain," cried Reginald. "He knew all about Jack, as he called him, and was much interested in his fate."

"Quite true," assented Frederick Upton, to whom his brother looked for the confirmation of this exciting statement. "The man knew Jackson well, and related to us the story of the mountain."

"For a consideration," said Jim, who had hitherto remained silent.

"Yes, we paid him ten dollars, and if we return with plunder, he is to have five hundred."

"Whew!" whistled Josiah; "that's a large sum."

"But isn't his information worth it? He has given us the bearings, which, I may add, *differ materially from those in the paper!* We told him our instructions, and he laughed. 'They are wrong,' he says; 'old Jack wasn't right.'"

"Who is this elderly gentleman?" asked Percy; "where does he peg in?"

"Some distance away in a lonely cabin. We were directed by a man who was fishing."

"But who told you that the man was to be found?"

"Oh, the fishermen there opposite. We made enquiries for Dick and Jackson, and one man remembered Jackson. Then he sent us to a cottage where lived a woman—an elderly dame—who told us of Richards, who lived, so she said, in Carleton. But a man we met, and of whom we made other enquiries,

guided us to the lonely cottage where we found old Richards. He is a fine man still, very grey and stooped, but has eyes that could see through a brick wall. Poor old chap!"

"He didn't seem to me to be so very old," remarked Jim. "His voice was not much cracked. He was weak apparently, but his hands clenched tightly—I could see so much."

"Jim always does see so much," remarked his cousin Reginald. "Richards is as old as the hills. He's quite fun. I wish you could see him, Percy; he *would* amuse you."

"I will call on him, if possible," replied Percy. "I like a character in his line."

"So will I call," muttered Jim; "he's a humbug!"

Uncle Fred was then informed of the result of the helps' expedition to Carlisle, and he with Josiah agreed to go thither and make final arrangements.

"We will start to-morrow," said Josiah, "and leave the boys. If the other vessel be our enemy, we will arm and start right off on the 15th June. Now, boys, be steady! Percy, we leave you in charge, mind!"

"Yes, father, I will look after the young ones," he said; "Harry and I will chastise them if necessary."

"First catch your hare, Percy," said Jim. "Reginald and I are going on an expedition. Ha! ha!"

"Come, no nonsense," said Josiah and Frederick Upton together. "Now, go and see about our 'traps,' for we may be off in three days."



CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE EXPEDITION UNDERTAKEN BY REGINALD
AND JAMES UPTON, AND OF THE STRANGE
DISCOVERY THEY MADE.

NEXT morning, at a very early hour, the father and uncle of the lads left them to their own devices, under the nominal guardianship of Lot and Job. The "helps," as they were often called, were really much attached to the young men. They came from Canada, and had a kind of free and easy way with them, but they were not disrespectful. They mingled English, American, and Canadian phrases, called their employer "boss," or "master," indifferently, and sometimes "sir," because Josiah Upton was rather a stickler for the "proprieties," and had not got over his British prejudice for respectful decorum in his followers. But the men were good hands, willing and obliging.

"Now, Lot," said Jim, "you and Job have plenty to do. You have your hands full, eh?"

"Ah, that we have, with you and your brother and cousins to look after!"

"What do you mean, Lot?" cried Reginald. "Look after us!"

"Yes," replied Job for self and partner.

"Then you shall. You climb up there," indicating a rocky hillock, "and you *shall* 'look after us.' We are going to cross the Bay!"

"Across the Bay! Why in thunder do you want to cross at all?"

"Because we wish to pay an afternoon visit to our friend Methuselah, Lot."

"Oh, indeed. And who may 'we' be, sir?" asked Lot.

"All of us. My cousins and my brother. So off we go!"

"You'll get into mischief, I'm afeard, said Job. "Mr Percy here, he'll be cautious. Won't you?" he cried to Percival.

"Yes; now lads," said Harry, "come along. You are sure of your way, Reggie? Don't get lost again."

"Rather," was the reply. "Just a very few."

This answer, ambiguous as it was, and almost unmeaning to some minds, seemed perfectly satisfactory to Percival Upton. The lads managed to find a boat with a sail, and quickly crossed the Bay on their expedition.

"Now, Master Reggie," said his cousin Harry, "perhaps you will fully enlighten us respecting this expedition."

"With pleasure," replied Reginald. "The fact is, Jim and I have made a discovery—at least we think so—but we did not dare to say a word to the governors. There would have been a fearful storm."

"A regular 'tit-up,'" interpolated Jim. "Fact is, Methuselah is a myth!"

"What!" exclaimed Percy. "Have you been hoaxing your uncle?"

"No, indeed, Percy. We mean that Methuselah is really not an old man at all!"

"An impostor?" suggested Harry, pausing to examine a pebble.

"Yes; a rank impostor. I am certain he was disguised. There!" exclaimed Reginald.

"Disguised! But, my dear Reg, what could he possibly gain by disguising himself?"

"I don't know at present. I haven't thought it out, but his hair was a wig," said Jim, decidedly.

The elder lads were silent. Who could be playing them a trick? Suddenly the idea occurred to him that perhaps Lot or Job might have been up to some "lark," and had taken in Mr Frederick Upton. But reflection banished this suspicion.

"Do you suspect any one, Reggie?" asked Harry.

"No; but here we are, yonder is the hut. Now if the place is empty, we may conclude that some trick has been played, for the old fellow was apparently quite unable to move much yesterday."

"He seemed as old as the hills at least!" said Jim.

"No older?" asked Percy. "Are you sure he is not older?"

"I am only sure of one thing, and that is, Methuselah is an impostor," retorted Jim. "Now look, you fellows, do you see that little hut beyond the village yonder?"

"Yes," said Percy and Harry, together.

"That is the old man's lair. If he be an old man I will eat my cap!" said Jim. "Eh, Reggie?"

"Decidedly, and I will help you. Here we go—Run!"

They raced along, keeping away from the Bay, and tending inland by degrees until they came within a few hundred paces of the house or hut in which lived the "innocent old fossil," as Percy called him. There our young heroes halted to take breath and consult again.

"Suppose he is a ruffian and shows fight?" suggested Harry.

"We are armed, and four to one," replied Reginald. "I have one revolver, and Jim has another."

"Then you anticipate mischief," said Percy. "Well, as Harry and I have no revolvers, and as anyone attacking us will go first for me, I think I will trouble Jim for his shooting-iron!"

Jim handed it over with some grumbling, but he acquiesced in the arrangement nevertheless. Then they went on to the hut, and knocked boldly at the rickety door.

No friendly quavering voice bade them enter this time. A silence ensued, then Percy knocked more loudly, and then as the inmate remained still silent, the lads advanced and pushed the door wide open, but did not enter.

"Any one at home," cried Reginald, looking in.

No reply came to this question, and Harry, pushing his cousin aside, entered boldly. The cabin was empty! There was no sign of habitation, no preparations for any meal, no appearance of comfort or of sleeping place. A table and a couple of rough chairs, one an arm-chair, constituted the furniture of the hut.

No plates, no dishes, no tea things even. An empty



rum bottle was the only relic. There were, however, signs that the house had been occupied.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Reginald, as he looked round; "the place has been almost dismantled! I thought the old man was a humbug! Hallo! here we are. This *is* a game! Look here!"

Reggie had been examining a cupboard, and from its recesses he now pulled out some worn garments, some articles of feminine attire, and a white wig and beard! Long venerable locks, moustache, and all complete.

"There! a nice way you were taken in," said Percy. "I think I can see daylight through this trick."

"What do you mean, Percy?" asked Harry; "what object could anyone have in playing such a trick, and masquerading in a white beard?"

"A very plain object, my lad. Didn't father say that he had told the supposed old man the latitude and longitude of our Opal Mountain, and other particulars, and the old man tried to put him off Jackson's trail?"

"Yes, he certainly did tell him. The old fellow made a lot of enquiries," said Jim. "He said our bearings were wrong!"

"Then you may depend upon it, those filibusters, Jackson's or Dick's partners or enemies, have done this. They knew we have been looking up information, and have trapped us nicely."

"So they have," assented Jim. "Well, we have been taken in and done for. If we could only get hold of these ruffians, Swivel Eye and his gang——"

"Yas, wall, suppose you could, what then, youngster?"

The lads turned quickly round. Behind them,

listening to their conversation, stood the Yankee with the "goatee" beard, the same man who had made a demand for Jackson's papers in the deserted City of the Gas Well. The boys were all so taken aback that not one of them could answer.

"Wall," said the man again, "hev ye lost your tongues? Can't ye give a civil answer to a civil question? What air ye goin' to do with me? Am I to be shot or tortured? and is my friend to be hung? Come, speak up!"

The last words were delivered with some impetuosity in a tone of command, but no one replied, until after some exhibition of impatience on the Yankee's part, Percival Upton answered, boldly:

"You have overheard our conversation, and can put on it any construction you please. You or your associates have deceived us, and we will 'pay you out' for it!"

"Oh, really! Don't be *too* cruel, Master Englishman. My friend here, a kind-hearted man, will give us some hints, I daresay."

The friend referred to was at the door, his hands were in his trouser pockets, in each of which a revolver rested. Some men prefer to fire from the hip-pocket in which the weapon is more generally carried, but this mild-mannered man preferred to draw from the side-pockets, and in a flash, as he would have expressed it, drill his opponent. This was Christian Nathan, the third of the party. Swivel Eye was presumably otherwise engaged.

Nathan sauntered in quietly, and said calmly:

"Did you call me, Lossy? Here I am! Good afternoon, gentlemen."

"Yes, I called you," said the man Loskins, who waited for no response from the Uptons; "I called ye, because these young skunks have been rummaging my cupboards, and turned out my things and fixin's. Now you see they've found out our *cache*, and have told us theirs—the mountain, I mean, Nat!"

"Aye," replied Nathan. "They've found our *cache*; we've done better though. Now you want me, don't ye?"

"Only to settle what we should do with these young skunks. It would be a pity to spoil them."

The boys' spirits revived. They had quailed a little at first, but now they felt somewhat reassured. This kind-faced Nathan, with his pleasant smile, could scarcely be a ruffian.

"No, we won't knife them, we'll make 'em draw lots for choice, and spread-eagle *him*."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Percy. "Let us pass out, please, or——"

"Don't draw your pistol, please," cried Nathan, "I wouldn't advise ye, youngster. I'm a dead shot, and you'll be glad you didn't."

Percy was rather grateful in his heart for this warning. The other lads were too frightened and indignant to argue the point; even Reginald was subdued, though fully alive to all the proceedings.

"Now boys, draw lots," continued Nathan. "Get the sticks, old hoss!"

The American desperado addressed by this antiquated and quadrupedal term of affection went out, leaving Nathan on guard, and returned with four pieces of dried grass in his hand. His knife was held

open suggestively between his teeth, as he manipulated the straws. Nathan motioned the boys into the small enclosed courtyard behind the house.

The boys whispered together. They could not imagine what they were to draw lots for, and why outside?

"What does this mean, Percy?" asked his brother.

"Don't know. Can you guess, Harry?"

"Not one little bit," replied his cousin. "We are in the lions' den, and shall feel his claws and teeth, I am afraid."

"Now, you young gentlemen, hurry up," said the polite Nathan. "Take your lots—draw."

"What for?" inquired Harry. "We have no intention of doing anything of the kind. You may as well let us pass. Our friends will be here presently."

"Oh! you threaten, do you?" snarled the tall Yankee, Loskins. "Say, Nat, shall we target them at once? We have no time to spare."

"No, let 'em draw. Now, lads, you must draw lots, or" (here he whipped out his pistols, one in each hand, like a flash) "or be shot as you stand. We're givin' you a chance. We sail to-night, and, thanks to your kind information, hope to reach your Opal Mountain before you. You will, if you live, give C. Nathan's compliments to your fathers, and say he's much obliged. Now, Loskins, the sticks."

Loskins advanced, holding in his hands the pieces of dry grass. There were four pieces, all even at the end, visible, but the true length was concealed by his left hand.

"Now, whichever of you gets the shortest lot will

be 'spread-eagled' for Nathan and me to practise at. We shan't want many shots at ye," said Loskins, grimly.

The lads turned pale. Fixed up like a scare-crow to be fired at by these murderers! Oh, what a death to die! How devoutly they all prayed for assistance!

"Draw," said Nathan, impatiently, his pistols held ready to fire.

"I hope I may be the one," said Jim, in a muffled voice; "I'm the youngest, and not much good. Here goes!"

Gulping down the rising sensation in his throat, poor Jim picked out one of the straws. It came out a little way, then more and more. The operation was watched by his brother and cousins. A long straw was pulled. Jim was safe for the present!

"Saved your carcase for a bit," growled Loskins. "Now, come on."

Despairingly, yet with an assumption of courage, and with a firm hand, Percy drew next. A short lot!

"Oh!" gasped the others. "Oh, Percy, Percy!"

"Never mind," said he, with a quiver in his voice, "I'll not flinch."

"Draw," said Nathan; "no chatter."

Harry and Reginald successively pulled out the remaining lots. That which Harry seized was longer than Percy's, but Reginald's lot was the shortest of all—an inch only. Reginald was doomed!

The reaction was terrible. The brave boy could scarcely see the piece of grass, so blinded with tears were his eyes.

"Percy," he said, "dear old lad, I must be the victim. I am glad for the dear dad's sake that *you* are all right. Kiss me, old fellow ; forgive me all my folly, and you, too, Harry and Jim. I'll die game anyhow! There," he continued, dashing away his tears, "I'm ready. You cowards, do your worst!"

Percy's hand sought his revolver, but Nathan kept him still under his pistol. A movement might be fatal to all.

"Trice him up," said the polite Christian. "Don't hurt him, Los ; just fix him to the palings, and then tie up the others."

"Tie us up! Are you going to murder us all, then?" cried Percy.

"No ; only leave you a while here till we get under way. Your friends will find ye kind o' hungry, I expect," replied Nathan, quietly.

Meanwhile Loskins had produced some rope and some boards, which he had made suitable for his fiendish purpose. He split them into laths, and bidding Reginald stand upright against the paling outside, he proceeded to fasten his hands to the upper part of the railing. Then driving two of the laths or sticks into the ground, he tied the lad's feet to them. In this position, a painful one, poor Reginald waited his death warrant.

He had submitted to be pinioned without a murmur. His handsome face was pale and stained with tears ; his eyes were dim, his mouth twitched, and his lips trembled, but he did not utter a sound nor ask for a reprieve. His arms and legs were extended as widely as possible in the form of an X. His head

was held tight in a noose, and when he had been tied up, the others ran towards him and stood in front of him.

Then said Percy : "Nathan or Christian, whoever you are, you *shall* not commit this horrible crime. We have not harmed you. We have never wronged you in word or deed. Have you no mercy?"

"If you don't stand aside, young man, you'll have a bullet in your darned British trunk in a 'coon's jump. Los, kick him away."

Loskins advanced, and was about to proceed literally to execute Nathan's mandate, when Percy knocked him down with a well-directed upper cut beneath the chin. The Yankee sprawled on the ground. Nathan smiled grimly.

"Mind his knife, stranger. If I was you, I'd be wary," said he.

Then Percy retreated out of the line of fire with his relations, and Loskins came on with a rush.

"Hold!" shouted Nathan. "Back, down, Los. One at a time. Come here. You can manage him after."

Very unwillingly Loskins obeyed his chief, swearing and grumbling loudly, and threatening Percy with his knife.

All this while poor Reginald was bound up, his head fastened with a noose. Amid breathless horrified silence, Nathan raised his pistol, carelessly smiling. Just as he was about to pull the trigger, a loud baying and barking was heard. The pistol exploded, and the ball cut the noose under Reginald's left ear. In another second an immense dog leaped over the

pailings, and seized Nathan by the throat. It was *Punch*.

At the same moment the three boys, animated by the hope of rescue, rushed at Loskins, and almost overpowered him before he could level his pistol and fire at Reginald or themselves.

By this unexpected assault Reginald was saved, no doubt, but it would have fared badly for the others had not Lot and Job, followed by Josiah, and he, at a little distance, by Fred Upton, scrambled over one side of the enclosure, tumbling almost on the group of combatants. *Punch* was invaluable.

Nathan and Loskins defended themselves for a few seconds, and fired wildly. But they did no damage. Their arms were struck up, and in three minutes they were prisoners, helpless, disarmed, and raging in their disappointment and chagrin, guarded by Lot and Job and the dog.

The first care of the rescue party was to relieve Reginald, whose ear was bleeding, so closely had the bullet passed his head. When the paling was examined, the ball was found embedded in the wood below the place on which his head had rested. The very smallest movement to the left would have resulted in his death.

Nathan and his worthy associate lay on the ground foaming with rage. It is rather doubtful whether the former actually intended to kill Reginald. He was such a trained shot that there is little doubt that he could have killed him outright; but, on the other hand, the torture he inflicted deserved any punishment, and he no doubt meant to torture.



The Rescue from the Filibusters.—Page 90.

The mode of retaliation had to be determined. Job and Lot were for the "target" practice—the same method already employed, which had been so nearly fatal to Reginald. The ruffians were disarmed and bound, not without difficulty in Loskin's case, for Nathan made little or no resistance. He seemed to be a fatalist.

"Ain't you afraid to die, you skunk?" said Job. "Burn me if I wouldn't be shakin' in my boots if I had been half as bad as you."

"Very likely, squire," replied Nathan, calmly as ever. "But I shan't die yet. I'm good for some few years still, you bet. You can't string me up—it's murder."

"No, only *lex talionis*, Lynch law," replied Josiah Upton. "Here, Job, string one to this baulk, run the noose over the top of the strut, and let this gentleman dangle from yonder beam. His toes may perhaps touch ground. No, they will not. There. Now, lads, get away, make for the creek. We will remain here and settle our accounts."

Josiah Upton, grim, determined, and hard to move under ordinary circumstances, was in this matter adamant. The lads tried to interfere—even Reginald, who had so nearly met death, and had been so brave with that prospect before him, pleaded for his enemies. But Josiah was inexorable. He, as if utterly unconcerned in the matter, issued directions pitilessly, and in half-an-hour both men were hanging in the dusk of the evening, in the shadow of the house, their faces to the rising moon.

Then without pausing to contemplate the results of

their horrible Lynch law, the Uptons hurried away, accompanied by Job and Lot, in pursuit of the boys and *Punch*, who were all slowly proceeding in the direction of their boat in Chaleur Bay, thankful for their deliverance and for the rescue.





CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOONER FITTED OUT—THE MUSTER—THE
SEALARK AND THE ICEBERG—A VENTURESOME
EXPEDITION UNDERTAKEN.

WE must pass over the incidents of the next day or two while the boys were recruiting their strength and pulling themselves together in thankfulness and gratitude to Heaven for their escape. Their fathers, and their henchmen, Job and Lot, had been meanwhile indefatigable in their exertions in fitting out the schooner for the intended expedition. The guns and ammunition could not be procured up at Chaleur, and it was determined to wait until they could be got at St John's or in some American port.

But on the second day after the adventure recorded in the last chapter, Lot came back with the news that the *Cat-fish* had sailed.

"The *Cat-fish* sailed!" exclaimed Fred Upton. "Then my friend Lot was wrong in thinking that those ruffians had chartered her."

"No, sir, Lot ain't far out," replied that individual. "Them varmint has found their pals hangin', has cut 'em down and buried them, or carried off the corpses.

They *have* set sail, sir, and will bury the bodies at sea, maybe."

"Well, Lot, you may be right. I was thinking of running over to the hut and having these scoundrels buried. We shall get into a terrible fuss if the thing becomes known. Already a warrant may be out for our apprehension. We are not Americans, and not in America, you know. But flesh and blood could not put up with such ruffianism."

"I am kind o' sorry we didn't hand those men over to the police executive," said Frederick Upton.

"They would have claimed to be sent across the border, and made their escape. But let us go across to the hut, and see what we can do."

The elders, accompanied by Percy, and Harry, and *Punch*, crossed the Bay again, and, unobserved, made their way to the hut. It was quite deserted. The party approached cautiously, but nothing alarmed them. Silence reigned around.

"If we had not heard the pistol shot we could not have come so quickly. *Punch* barked so savagely that we knew before that that you were in some danger. His barking alarmed the ruffians. Here we are! Now, *Punch*, go in, sir!"

Punch needed no second bidding. He remembered his enemy, and made for the court or enclosure. But no defiant barking was heard.

"Let us peep over the pailings," said Fred Upton.

They scrambled up and looked into the enclosure. There was nothing there.

"Let us get over," suggested Lot; "we did it before."

They got over with more difficulty this time, for the great incentive was wanting, and found no traces whatever of their late adversaries. Their friends had apparently carried them off.

"Just as I expected," said Lot; "they have cleared out. We must clear out also, and just as quick as we can, too."

"Well, I am glad they have been carried off. We must have been compelled to inter the bodies, and then some investigation would have ensued. I am glad the place is so lonely. On the other side there might have been a pothor. Back now, I think; and then hurrah for the Opal Mountain!"

The news that Nathan and Loskins had disappeared, or had been spirited away, rather alarmed the boys, and they all discussed it while their preparations were made. The day for their departure was fixed for the following Sunday afternoon, and by that time all hands were on board. *Punch* did not quite understand his new quarters at first, but he would speedily become accustomed to the motion of the schooner, which was named *Firefly*.

"Now, Captain Armstrong," said Josiah Upton, who, being the elder of the brothers, took the lead, "if you please, we will muster the crew, and if we approve, all will be well."

There were three men, the "boy," who acted as cook, and the captain. The men and the boy came aft when "all hands tumble up" was shouted, in Armstrong's stentorian tones. He had a voice like a fog horn, and Reginald, the accepted jester of the party, nicknamed him "Cheststrong" at once.

"Now, my men, what are your names, and where do you hail from?" asked Josiah. "Number one, you're a fine fellow! What is your name?"

"Stevens, sir; born in Warwickshire, England; took to the sea, got shifted on a 'liner,' was reduced for drunkenness, took the pledge, and here I am! Acting mate, sir."

"That is candid, at anyrate," said Frederick Upton; "I hope you have kept your pledge?"

"Yes; never touch a drop, sir. That's true, ask the skipper."

The skipper confirmed the statement, and the examination proceeded. Two men were "Canadians," making three in all; the boy was an Irish "bhoys" of eighteen, handy, and amusing with all the native love of fun and adventure. These, with Job and Lot, who were "mates," and had already made themselves very popular, composed the crew of the schooner.

"Very well, my lads, we have already arranged terms with you, and if you suit we shall not regret our forty dollars a month. Of course Murphy will not get so much, we will give him ten or twelve less."

"Make it *tin*, yer honour. Tin dollars won't break ye, anyhow."

"Thirty dollars a month for you? Do you mean that?"

"Yis, yer honor!" replied Paddy.

"Well, if you do your duty, we will not mind. Now, to work!"

"*Tin* dollars!" muttered Jim Upton; "I have heard of paper, silver, and gold dollars, but never *tin*!"

The *Firefly* was pitching at her moorings a little,

but the young travellers did not mind that. *Punch* fancied he was on the edge of a perpetual earthquake, and couldn't find his sea legs anywhere. The lads and their parents went downstairs to arrange the cabin-saloon, for there was only one room for their accommodation. The captain had a pantry all to himself, and the men, when not on duty, bedded forward.

Those who wish to follow the further fortunes of our adventurers will perceive with the aid of a map that Chaleur Bay is a fine estuary opening from the Gulf of St Lawrence to the north-east. A pretty fair roll runs in there at times, and a north-east wind is apt to shake up the gulf and bring down icebergs. To reach the position of the mainland in which the Opal Mountain was supposed to be situated, our schooner had to navigate Belleisle Straits, a rather unpleasant "gut," and thence round Labrador into Hudson's Straits. Then turning south into the Bay, they would reach the mouth of the river along which their route lay.

They had a considerable cargo on board, the captain having thought a little trading with the Esquimaux desirable, so iron in various forms and cutlery had been provided. The four-pounder guns had not been found, but Captain Armstrong was a man of resource. He had managed to "loan" a small cannon, which would carry a three-pound shot, from a friend who had one in his garden, a relic of buccaneering days, the captain hinted, but the Uptons were too discreet to enquire further. He had also procured ammunition, some rifles of Springfield pattern, and

many necessities and warm clothing, for he expected much ice.

Thus armed and equipped our young adventurers felt equal to any amount of pirates and "Yankee-doodles." The men were all "more or less" English, generally less, but they were staunch; the name of the *Firefly* was altered, and when Reginald suggested *Sea-lark* as most appropriate, Captain Armstrong generously got out his paint pots and had the name changed.

"We can manage the boats," said Percy. "Let us paint them; we shall want something to do!"

But, alas, the boats were not painted! In the first place sea-sickness interrupted; then the novel sights, and finally the ice put an end to any decoration or changes of name thenceforth.

"*Sea-lark*—a lovely name, and I guess we'll have a lark on land also," said Harry. "I am very anxious to see the Opal Mountain."

"You ain't the only one," remarked the skipper. "Here, Stevens, look out; give that berg a wide berth, if you please. We don't want to be wrecked!"

"I am doin' all I can," replied the man. "She won't answer helm. We're drifting on it, or it is drifting on us! Best get the boats out, sir!"

This was alarming. The lads and their parents had recovered their usual spirits, and were on the look out for ice. The berg in question had been seen in the distance and admired, but it came nearer and nearer, so the captain interfered as already recorded. The prospect was not altogether cheering. The iceberg was an immense mass, and as it came nearer, the

cold became greater. Not long before the heat had been somewhat oppressive; now greatcoats and wraps were the order of the day, for when a big berg comes near it brings a cold welcome.

"Mind your helm, you Irish lubber," cried Armstrong. "Here, Stevens, come aft and take the spokes. We must clear this one."

Stevens came, but the berg was not to be denied.

"Is there any danger?" inquired Josiah, as the sails flapped; "the wind is failing us!"

"No, it's that blessed berg that has got us under its lee," said Armstrong. "We can't be crushed unless it 'turns turtle,' and falls on us. Then we may shake hands!"

"There is something on it on the top," said Reginald; "I can see it move. Hi, *Punch*, boy, what is it? Let's fetch it."

Punch barked and wagged his tail. He was quite ready.

"Can we land on the berg, captain?" enquired Percy.

"You *can*, but I wouldn't advise you to it," replied Armstrong. "There's nothing to see when you are there, and the blamed thing may turn over with you!"

"I don't suppose our weight would make much difference," said Harry, seriously.

"No, young sir, but when the underneath structure comes away, the upper part is bound to dip! I remember hearin' a song once about icebergs, or Arctic latitudes, and it described it. The words were—

'The bergs begin to bow their heads,
And plunge and sail in the sea.'

I've never forgot it, and that's just what they *does*. They bows most polite, and then plunges !”

Meanwhile the iceberg which had given rise to these remarks and fears was approaching nearer and nearer. There was no possibility of escape unless the wind suddenly changed, for the schooner would perforce lie close to the ice mountain by reason of its attraction, and in this position would drift with the current down the straits again, with the “off chance” of being crushed against the floe or another iceberg. Not a pleasant prospect.

“We can't tow her off,” said the captain, “so we must make up our minds to be quiet, and whistle for a change of wind.”

“But suppose some of those pinnacles fall ?” said Percy.

“Then to the bottom we go !” replied Armstrong, as he went below for a chart. This was not consolatory. The iceberg was a magnificent sight indeed, glistening in the sun with not *quite* so many pinnacles as has Milan Cathedral, but a large number nevertheless ; white, and blue, and shining, coruscating as it seemed. At the top was something, and the more the lads gazed, the more curious they became to find out what the object was.

By degrees the schooner was drawn in beneath the ice-cliff, and although any damaging contact was—but with great difficulty—prevented by the employment of the ice-poles, the situation was very critical.

“Ever had an experience of this kind, Lot ?” asked James Upton.

“Yes, sir ; oh, yes. Icebergs are common things up

here. Once I was becalmed four days under a berg, and was nearly frozen to death. We took to the boats, and fell in with a whaler, which took us aboard."

"And what became of your ship, Lot?" asked Harry, who was listening.

"Oh, the ship! well, guess she remained. We passed the berg after, and that vessel was restin' *high up* on *the other side* of the berg! Ask Job!"

"What is it, mate?" enquired that individual. "What d'ye want?"

"Why, you know about the *Mary Jane* and the iceberg; she was high up on the side, wasn't she?"

"Aye, I seen it," began Job.

"Oh, Job, you have never been in the Arctic Regions before!" exclaimed Reginald, who had meanwhile approached; "you said so yourself."

"Yes, Master Reg, and what I says I sticks to. I seen it in the picture which Lot showed me of it. I never said I *were there*."

Lot heaved a sigh of intense relief.

"Yes, the ship was high up the opposite side," he continued. "The berg had turned round under water, and come up again, liftin' our vessel right up, and flinging her high and dry on the mountain side."

"The mounting side, you mean, Lot," suggested Harry. "How very curious! what did you all do?"

"Do? Why, we landed on the berg, and boarded our vessel; lived in her for many days, drifting about, until one day the ice broke, and let us down into the sea, right side up; then we sailed away again. If we hadn't, should I be here to tell you? Should I?"

"I wonder you are here now," remarked Percy

drily. "But you have some experience, and can guide us up the berg if we go. An old hand like you will be invaluable."

"Job is as good," replied Lot. "I haven't a hankerin' for such another adventure. Once is enough," he muttered, as he walked forward.

"Nearly pulled me in that time, mate," whispered Job; "why, you *must* be careful. I was never up here afore, remember that. I'd do a many things, old pal, but the Arctic Ocean isn't my line. If it was the 'Quator, now!"

"All right," whispered Lot, "tell them about the 'Quator, and I'll stick to it."

Such unanimity was almost touching, but the seniors on board were not attending to Lot's yarns. The captain had brought up a chart, which he spread on the companion hatch, and was comparing notes with Stevens and the Uptons.

"We shall be carried down," said Armstrong, "unless we can sheer off. "This wind will serve us to drive up the Straits, but we can't get clear yet. There, what's that?"

A tremendous roar arose from the interior of the iceberg, and Josiah declared it was like the explosion from a volcano.

The boys were rather alarmed, and showed it. The captain was also uneasy, for he feared that the side would fall outwards and wreck the schooner. But when a few more explosions had been heard and no evil consequences resulted, the men and boys became quieter.

Suddenly a shower of ice blocks was shot into the

air, as if discharged from a crater. Some large fragments fell on and around the schooner. A general cry of consternation succeeded.

"What is the matter?" enquired Josiah. "Is anyone hurt?"

Nobody complained, and so after a while the conversation was renewed, but again interrupted by an explosion from the berg.

"We must investigate this," cried Frederick Upton. "Is there any particular danger, captain?"

"Well, I won't say that you can't get up and down, but suppose the berg bursts."

"We will risk it; I am curious to ascertain the cause of this phenomenon. Now, lads—volunteers!"

Of course his sons and nephews immediately sprang up, and clamoured to be taken on the berg.

"I think Lot had better accompany us," said Reginald, rather mischievously; "he has had considerable experience of icebergs. On one occasion he lived on a berg, he *says*."

"Then come along, Lot; make haste. We may as well go at once; eh, captain?"

"Yes, but I wouldn't advise it. Anyway, you'll want provisions; you'll find plenty of fresh water up there, you may depend."

Provisions were furnished, and the party, all but Percy, who excused himself, made ready to ascend the ice mountain. As they could not ascend directly from the ship, a boat was launched, and into this dropped Frederick Upton, Reginald, James, and Harry, with Lot, who came much against his will. Some provisions, warm clothing, and some spirits

were then put into the boat, which was rowed by Lot and Reginald. *Punch* leaped in at the last moment.

"Good-bye," they cried. "Hurrah for the ice volcano!"

The captain and Josiah saw them depart and disappear round the corner of the berg, seeking a landing-place, with some misgivings.

"They mustn't wait too long," he muttered. "There's dirty weather approaching. After this hot day the first rainstorm will raise a fog, and then good-bye to the iceberg."

"Then you think there is danger?" remonstrated Josiah. "Why didn't you stop them?"

"Oh, there's time enough," replied Armstrong. "But I didn't say there is any danger. They will return before the storm comes on. Now, let's study our course, sir."





CHAPTER X.

ON THE BERG—AN EXPLOSION—*PUNCH* AND THE
BEAR—A VERY DANGEROUS PREDICAMENT.

WE will leave the *Sea-lark* to occupy herself and her crew in keeping clear of the jagged sides of the berg, and follow our more adventurous spirits into the recesses of the monster of whose extent they had but a limited idea. Even Frederick Upton, who had had some experience in travel, was surprised at the enormous extent of the mountain of ice, alongside of which the boat coasted for many minutes before any indication of a foothold could be perceived.

At length Reginald, who was in a state of great excitement, exclaimed, "Here is a place! Let us land! It's quite a little harbour! Fancy a real harbour in an iceberg!"

He was not far wrong in his description, for the berg had broken away, and within a tiny inlet lay a small patch of dark-blue water, which reflected the glistening sides of the enclosing walls. High above were pinnacles and boulders of ice, while every now and then an explosion from within the berg told of some forces at work.

"Gently does it," said Lot, who was as greatly

interested, and much more timid, than those who had never climbed a berg! Several times he had been appealed to as an "old hand," but Lot had a fit of modesty, and declined to hazard any decided opinion. This was remarkable in a man who had sailed in Arctic Seas, whaled in Greenland waters, and sealed on the coast of Labrador! But all truly great men are modest!

"In oars," said Frederick Upton. "I will pilot her in. Gently! well done, Reginald. Hold her now; steady. There, you were nearly in then. Remember you are treading on ice. Go on, *Punch*!"

"It almost seems as if we were on a glacier, like those men you read about in Switzerland, father," said Harry. "Up we go. Oh, it's quite easy. Come along, Lot. Hie on, *Punch*, boy."

Bang! Boom! Another explosion from the interior part of the ice, and this time several rather large lumps came rattling down into the sea. *Punch* barked, and hung back.

"Never mind, it is only a salute," cried Jim, as he patted the dog.

"Saluting guns are not shotted," said his father. "That was a broadside of grape. Let us get on before another explosion occurs. The berg can't be more than two hundred feet high."

But it was. It was close on a hundred yards above the water, and was in extent some six or seven acres. There was no great difficulty or danger in climbing it, and in a short time the whole party had reached the summit just as another discharge of ice and water was shot into the air.

"This is quite a geyser-berg," said Jim. "We are practically in Iceland, so we must expect the springs."

"We must find out the cause of this. Yonder is the crater of this submarine volcano. Come on and see."

They approached cautiously towards an aperture like a deep natural well with jagged, slippery, and in places sloping sides. A very dangerous place indeed. One foot on the glassy side of the opening, and the slightest impetus would have hurled any of the party to destruction. This well was right down to the water, which seemed greatly agitated. Water was dripping from the sides, some immense icicles had been formed, and these gigantic needles were in places torn off by the upward flight of the water and ice blocks which came from below.

There was also a regular beating noise, something like a pump in action, and as the strokes tallied with the heaving of the iceberg on the sea, it was thought that the waves were forcing their way, hissing and pumping, through the ice.

The lads, attended by *Punch*, peered down into the chasm; then they wandered about the summit, and came upon the carcase of a young bear, which had strayed and died. *Punch* barked loudly, and began to worry the animal; when, to the astonishment of all, the apparently dead bear rose up and began to hug the hound with more ardour than affection.

Great was the excitement amongst the travellers, who did not like to interfere between the enraged

combatants, which fought fiercely. The bear seemed to have the advantage first, then *Punch* dragged him through the pools of fresh water which had accumulated on the berg, until the animals reached a point dangerously near to the well-volcano.

Still the adversaries fought, and neither seemed inclined to give in. The bear had seized poor *Punch* tightly, and the brave dog could not bring all his powers to bear. So he was rapidly getting the worst of it, when Frederick Upton drew his revolver and fired. The combatants were almost on the edge of the crater. The bear relaxed his hold, slipped, and slid down into the well with a growl. *Punch*, much bruised and bleeding freely, lay panting just out of reach.

But as the party were washing him and attending to his wounds, another explosion occurred—the dead body of the bear was shot up high into the air, and fell beyond the berg, into the sea, or on the deck of the *Sea-lark*, while a fearful shower of ice blocks came tumbling and crashing in all directions. Then a tremendous cracking and creaking was heard, a terrible noise, indescribable. Then all was still again.

"This is a warm corner," remarked Harry. "Eh, Lot; this is beyond your experience, eh?"

"It is, and no mistake," replied Lot. "The sooner we make tracks the better."

"There can be no two opinions on the subject," remarked Frederick Upton; "but as we are here, let us explore a little farther. We may sight the *Cat-fish* from here."

"Oh I had quite forgotten her," remarked Reginald. "Come along. We shall be quite safe here at this end. Suppose we lunch while we look out. It's warm enough now."

"Fancy a pic-nic on an iceberg," cried Jim. "What fun. I wonder how these bergs are made. Do you know, father?"

"They are immense masses of ice-like glaciers, which after years and years of attachment to the mainland suddenly break away; the sea has perhaps already undermined its base, it topples and comes down headlong. Then the late base becomes the head, and it floats until the top again becomes too heavy, and over it goes again."

"There are bigger bergs than this, though," said Lot. "Some are quite a thousand feet high, aye more."

"There is another one yonder," said Reginald, indicating a small berg which no one had hitherto noticed. "It must have come up from under water. I wonder where Mr Bruin is, by the by."

This mention of Bruin again directed attention to *Punch*, who was lying down, patiently waiting for his young masters to move. He had licked his wounds and they had ceased bleeding.

"Are there many bears up in these regions?" asked Harry of Lot.

"Plenty," replied that worthy. "The polar bear will astonish you. He is capable of anything. Hollo, Mr Upton, wasn't that a gun?"

"A gun. No, I did not hear it. Did you, boys?"

"No," they replied simultaneously. "Perhaps it is a signal of recall."

"Yes, very likely. Let us get down; I don't quite like the look of the sky," said Frederick Upton. "We may have to scud, and should be on board soon."

All the party hurried back to the crater, which had not given any alarm since the bear had been shot up. But the crater had disappeared.

The boys looked at each other in surprise, mingled with consternation. Lot grasped the situation, so did Mr Upton.

"The berg has split in two," said the latter. "That iceberg which Reggie thought had risen from the sea is the other portion of our mountain. This is a cheerful prospect. Where is the boat?"

"Then that *was* a warning gun from the schooner," said Jim. "Will they reach us? We are drifting pretty fast."

"Can't say whether *they* will reach *us*, but I am a'most certain we can't reach *them*," remarked Lot. "We're in as tight a place as they make them, Mr Upton."

"We are so," was the melancholy comment on this speech. "Now, if the storm rises——"

"Which it will," remarked Lot.

"We shall be drifted up the Straits again, or crushed on the coast of Labrador, or upset, or frozen to death, or drowned," said Harry. "Eh?"

"A nice catalogue of terrors; you have given us a choice, at anyrate," said the father. "But we must be serious, and keep up heart. That we are in some danger it is impossible to deny, but let us not be panic-stricken nor careless. There is the other

portion of the berg, the schooner will take us off when the wind rises."

"Hadn't we better descend and try for a place to escape from," said Reginald. "Surely the boat will come for us. It may be there now."

Reginald's practical hint was adopted. But when the party reached the ledge at the edge of the summit of the iceberg, they found only an icy precipice sheer to the sea. In vain they skirted the edge all round. Only white or dazzling blue surface met their gaze. Escape was impossible.

"I guessed as much," muttered Lot. "We can't reach them. I said so, didn't I?"

He checked himself suddenly, for his partner was not present to confirm his statements. But no one disputed his reasoning. No one could.

"Well, we must do our best," said Frederick Upton. "We fortunately have some provisions. If the bear were here now we could have been sure of fresh meat. *Punch*, you are a bad dog! Oh, *Punch*, *Punch*!"

Punch wagged his tail, but made no vocal answer to this censure. Then said Jim:

"As we are here, we may as well do something. If a storm arises, we shall want shelter. Let us build a house!"

"We have no timber," said Harry.

"Lots of snow, though," replied Reginald. "We can build a beautiful hut, or dig it out in the snow. Can't we, Lot?"

"We can. Here goes—all help! Quick, young gentlemen, there's a storm approaching."

There could be no doubt about it: a squall from

the north-east was rapidly coming down upon the wind, which suddenly rose in fitful gusts. The schooner was seen to pull away from the remaining portion of the iceberg; and with furled canvas and brailed up spanker and jib, run a little way. The party on the berg gave three cheers. Then the squall came pattering along, hail and rain mingled with an ominous growl of thunder, which echoed heavily in the air.

The weather turned suddenly cold, wraps were put on, and as soon as the squall had passed, the derelicts began to make their snow shelter. The schooner, with canvas set, came close and hailed the berg. The captain's loud voice was easily heard.

"Iceberg, ahoy! Can't you come down?"

"No!" shouted all the Iceburghers in chorus. "Can't you assist us?"

"Will try. Don't see how. Have you an axe?"

"No. What for?"

"To cut steps, o' course."

"Can't you sling one aboard us?" shouted Lot. "Job can go aloft, or send up Pat."

"Ay, ay, we'll have a shy at ye," roared Armstrong. "Come as low as ye can."

In two minutes two sailors had leaped into the rigging of the schooner and climbed to the fore and main mast heads respectively, but this elevation was not nearly sufficient. The ice-bound travellers were still as far from rescue as ever.

"I believe we shall have to remain here," muttered Fred Upton. "I don't see any way off this berg."

"Have you a rope?" hailed the captain again.

"Only a short length," was the reply.

Then came silence—a kind of despair fell upon the party on the ice. Was there no way out of this dilemma? There surely must be some means of reaching the topmasts of the schooner, they did not look so very far away. Then Frederick Upton hailed the captain:

“*Sea-lark* below there!”

“Hallo! what’s up?”

“Can you see any place which gives us a fair chance to climb down?”

“I’ll send the boat to prospect; keep up,” shouted Armstrong.

“We seem likely to keep up,” muttered Reginald. “It’s very nice as an experiment once, but a repetition would be disagreeable.”

For some time no further communication was kept up verbally with the schooner. The boat had examined the berg, and returned to the *Sea-lark*. Then Armstrong hailed:

“There is a rather better slope on the right hand side. Go round and look; the boat will indicate it.”

The Iceburghers, as Jim had nick-named the party, went across, and craning over, they could perceive the boat. Between them and it lay a dangerously steep but somewhat rugged slope of ice, which, had an axe and rope been handy, would have presented no very formidable difficulties to active climbers. But a false step would inevitably precipitate the venturesome one into the sea, or worse than that, upon the rugged ice debris at the bottom of the slope, where lay some blocks formerly ejected from the

"submarine volcano," which the "Sea-larks" had endeavoured to explore.

One after the other each member of the party looked down and shook his head. Frederick Upton saw that the descent was impracticable without some implements to arrest momentum, for a *glissade* under such conditions was not so pleasant as on the snow-slopes of the Swiss or Italian mountains. They could not face the danger! As they glanced down, and then at each other's faces, a blank expression on every countenance told of hope dismissed and misery at hand.

"I have it," said Reginald, suddenly, after a long pause.

"Have what?" asked his father, staring at the lad's hopeful eyes now gleaming with anticipated triumph.

"We're saved, hurrah! brilliant idea—splendid, *Al*."

"Don't *be too* sure, Master Reg," said Jim, who had as suddenly caught his cousin's high spirits; "what's your plan?"

"Why," continued Reginald, looking at his father, "*Punch*, of course. Send him down; he can carry up a rope's end; with its aid we can haul up *poles*, and with *poles* we can go *rushin'* down. "That's quite original!"

They all laughed loudly. A little thing will amuse under such circumstances.

"Bravo, Reggie!" cried his father. "I never thought of *Punch*. Here, *Punch*. *Punch*, hie down, boy. Go on!"

Punch limped up in a very stiff way, but did not long hesitate to obey. He wagged his tail and barked twice as he watched Mr Upton's face, then he advanced to the edge of the slope, and hesitated,



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barking. The men in the boat, with whom was Josiah Upton, called the dog, which whined a little, but at length proceeded cautiously down the steep ice slope.

"Send him up with a whale line and a few stout poles," shouted the Iceburghers.

"Right!" came the answer, and then the boat with *Punch* on board returned to the schooner, which was lying to under the lee of the berg, fended off with ice poles, for the sea was rougher, and there was fear of "chafing" on the icy wall. But as soon as the news came aboard, a whale line and some short stout poles were put on board, and then the schooner was towed out a few yards until she caught the breeze. Then the boat cast off, and pulled in for the berg, while the *Sea-lark* stood off and lay waiting to pick her up when ready.

Punch proved equal to the occasion. With a whale line round his neck he made the ascent, and then with the line the poles were drawn up. Then the descent began. The boys went first, but had not gone far when they returned and suggested that the poles should be fixed in the ice and snow, and the cord tied to them, and that the other end of the line should be held firmly in the boat, and thus a kind of guide rope would be formed to which they could cling, for it was "awful slippery," said Harry.

This suggestion was adopted. The line was attached to two of the poles, and gripping the rope, the boys started again one at a time. They succeeded in reaching the boat with a slight wetting, the edge being slippery and the boat unsteady. Then Lot came

down, and then Mr Upton. The rope remained fixed, it could not be released, so a rifle was discharged at the poles, the bullet cut the rope, which soon parted, and then the rescued voyagers returned to the schooner.

"Well, old pard," exclaimed Job, as his companion came on board, "did ye enjoy it as much as the first time?"

"Look a here, Job," replied his friend, "I believe there's such things as judgments. I *did* lay it on rather thick about the ship for the young ones' benefit, but I've had a fright, I can tell you. It was near a case of starve and freeze. It's terrible cold up there, so I think I'll let you do all the 'painting up' in future, Job."

"Well, ye won't desert an old friend, Lot, will ye?"

"No, I'll stick to you, but don't be *too florid*. I have a conscience, Job?" Then the pair went down to their berth, mutually pleased with the arrangement.





CHAPTER XI.

A STRANGE SAIL—WHO IS IT?—THE *CATFISH*—A SURPRISE FOR THE VOYAGERS.

FOR some days the weather was miserably cold and foggy. The ice came tearing down the Labrador coast on the current, and the *Sea-lark* had to shape her course as well as she could lay it for the middle channel, and so across the strait. During the time thus spent amid the thuds and grinding of ice, the lads had some respite from sight-seeing. The *Sea-lark* made her way slowly against the current of Davis Strait, having West Greenland on the starboard hand, and opposite desert Labrador. Her crew were fully occupied in working the ship, while our young heroes dipped into literature and “read up” information concerning the whale fisheries, the natives of Greenland, the *flora* and *fauna*, and the geology of the district, as recommended by their parents.

“It strikes me, Percy,” said Harry, “that one subject is quite enough for one of us. If you will choose whaling, I will dip into the *flora* and *fauna*. Reggie may study geology, and Jim do the natives, &c. Fair is fair!”

"Governors expect us to know something of each branch," said Percy.

"But just think, Percy, how can any one study all? No, we have—we all have—to learn these things, so let us divide the study, and give the information as required. We will only reply to our own branch-questions."

"All very well," said Jim; "but suppose my *pater* questions me in geology, I can't reply in Esquimaux—I mean, with 'tips' about them."

"No, Reg will do the geology answers for you. Try it!"

That very day they set to work in earnest, full of zeal to acquire the necessary information before the fog lifted, if possible.

"I wonder why the sea up here is so green," said Jim. "Greenland is not green at all,—quite the contrary,—so it can't be the reflection. Now, Harry, that's your branch, '*flora, fauna, climate, &c.*' Speak up!"

"I suspect," replied Harry, laughing, "that I don't know; but, if you will wait a moment, I will refer to my books. Oh, yes! 'small and almost invisible specimens of the *Medusa* species are so numerous as to tinge the water to an olive-green in many places.' There you are! This is the shop for real information! 'The truly green sea in which these animals mostly abound is the happy hunting ground for whales.'"

"Are not we to fish for whales—we have lines and harpoons?" asked Reginald. "I should like to catch a cetacean!"

"A 'how much'?" exclaimed Jim. "Don't call

the fish names. If you call a spade a spade, call a whale a whale ! ”

“Whales are not fishes,” remarked Harry, pompously.

“Ain’t they ? Then ask Percy. Fish are animals which live in water. Whales live in water ; they have fins and gills and a tail, they swim and dive ; they must be fish, eh, Percy ? ”

“No, they are warm-blooded, everyone knows that,” replied Percy.

“Then it’s greatly to their credit, for this temperature, and in the water, too, is enough to chill anyone’s blood,” said Jim. “But are we to fish ? ”

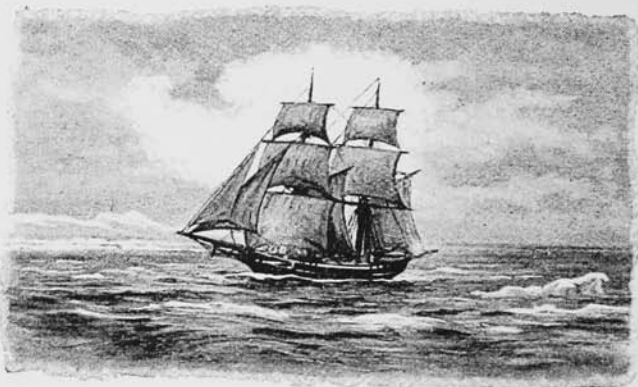
“I think Captain Armstrong intends to do so up in the strait. We shall meet whaling ships, and see the Esquimaux ; that’s my line,” said Harry.

“Sail, ho ! ” was shouted at this moment on deck.

“Hullo, let’s go up and see ; the fog is clearing,” cried Percy ; and off went the lads as quickly as possible to see what they could, leaving their books for a more convenient season.

The young fellows tumbled up as quickly as possible. The weather had certainly improved. The high and ice-bound shore of Greenland lay at some little distance on the right hand. On the left, the strait enveloped in mist, but the outline of a vessel was dimly visible in the fog. The sound of the packing and bumping of the ice, and the loud crackings which were continually audible, prevented the occupants of either vessel from hearing any hail which otherwise would have been distinctly audible in such an atmosphere and at such a distance.

The vessel which attracted the attention of our voyagers was a very smart brig, with tapering spars, and a generally ship-shape appearance which was almost man-o'-war like. Her jib, foresail, foretopsail, maintopsail, and mainsail were all drawing. She was pushing the ice aside in bluff fashion from her strong bows. She carried few men apparently, but, nevertheless, looked very trim indeed.



"What can she be?" asked Josiah Upton. "She isn't a whaler; she isn't a Hudson's Company vessel; she isn't a war-brig, I think, she's too clumsy—can't make her out."

"She's a good sailer," remarked the captain, "and unless my glass deceives me, she carries a couple o' barkers; she's armed, sir."

"A pirate," whispered Reginald to Percy.

"Nonsense," replied the latter. "There are no pirates in the straits here."

"She's a cruiser—a Government vessel," suggested Frederick Upton. "Here, Lot, you know all about these waters."

"Eh, what's that?" exclaimed Armstrong, the captain. "*He* an old salt? Why, if I can't tell you what yonder craft is, bet ye a dollar *he* don't!"

"I'll take you, captain, with all respect," replied Lot, as he came aft quietly. "Lend me your glass, please. Ah, I thought so! So did Job."

"That I did, sure," replied the patient one. "'Twas me as whispered to Lot that vessel's number. Says I——"

"Oh, never mind your 'Says I,'" interrupted Josiah Upton. "Mind your p's and q's, and pay attention. Do you know what that brig is?"

"Yes I do, and so does Lot. Eh, partner?"

"Well, either of you speak out or go overboard. Come, now."

"She's the *Cat-fish*," replied both men together, stolidly.

"The *Cat-fish*! our rival ship!" exclaimed all present. "Are you certain?"

"Certain as sin! she's the *Cat-fish*, sure enough. She's managed to pick us up, and now comes the tug o' war," said Lot, grimly.

"How do you mean?" asked Captain Armstrong.

"Why, she's bound on the same errand as ourselves," replied Lot, looking at his master.

"And what may that be in particular?" enquired the captain. Then, as the men were silent, he continued:

"Pleasure, a little tradin' and whalin', maybe. But

how that *Cat-fish* can interfere with your sealin' and whalin', I don't see."

Meanwhile Josiah and his brother were conferring together. The captain had not been definitely informed concerning the object of the voyage. He must be told sooner or later, and so the leaders of the expedition, which Josiah had regarded as a wild goose chase, determined to take Captain Armstrong into their confidence.

Leaving the young people with the crew to watch the movements of the brig, which lay low in the water, and showed no bunting, the elder Uptons requested Armstrong to descend with them into the little cabin, as they had an important communication to make to him.

"Keep your eyes skinned," was the captain's advice to the helmsman. "If the ice pack, let me know. Now, gentlemen."

The three responsible men descended, and when they were seated, Josiah Upton took from his pocket-book a paper, and unfolding it, said :

"See here, captain, did you ever hear of the Opal Mountain anywhere along this coast?"

"No, sir. No such mountain has ever been heard of to my knowledge."

"No hill, no place, no locality bearing the name in the Icelandic or Greenlandic tongue?" suggested Frederick.

"No, sir; never heard of it. Why?"

"Because we have come up to find it. That's why!"

"Whew!" whistled the captain. "That's your game, is it?"

"That's our game," replied the Uptons, coolly.

"Hum," remarked the captain. "And the brig?"

The Uptons looked at each other, and at the captain. Then Josiah said :

"Why do you mention the brig, Armstrong?"

"Because, unless I'm mistaken, and considerable, too, the *Cat-fish* is on some game which may spoil yours! She's American built, and a clipper."

"You are pretty smart, Captain Armstrong."

"Needs to be," he replied. "Needs to be up here. Needles is our idea, pint and eyes! We're sharp and seein'; also capable of some mischief if pushed too far. Yes, sir; needles is our idea!"

"So I should think," replied Josiah, smiling. "Then you put our trip and the brig's presence on 'all fours,' as they say."

"Certainly, you're anxious; that's enough for me. That man of your's a bluffin' kind of 'coon; he spotted her and knew her, so he's been lookin' at her afore. He wouldn't a taken so much notice if she hadn't a interested him kind o' some, and so I conclude she's a spoke in your wheel, sort of, eh?"

"Captain Armstrong, your penetration is worthy of the best needles."

"Mister Upton, my eye teeth's filed for this voyage. Thank you, sir!"

After this exchange of compliments the Uptons confided to Armstrong their secret and its source; the latitude and longitude of the supposed Opal Mountain, and its bearings.

"Why, tar and feather my grandmother, if that ain't up by Cape York. It's a nasty place is Melville

Bay, at times 'tis. The whalers is up there about now."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Uptons. "We thought it was a deserted coast!"

"Not a bit of it! There's plenty of society in whalers up there. Opals! Well, I never heard of 'em. But there's what they call 'the Arctic Highlands' up along there. Never been amongst 'em. It's dangerous—bears and wolves just about chew you up!"

"A pleasant prospect!" muttered Josiah.

"There's mountains," continued the captain, "and as much ice and snow as you want—and more. Sometimes in summer we come across a green space, and perhaps it may be called Greenland in consequence. But the hills and valleys are dreadful!"

"And you think we are doomed to disappointment then, captain?"

"No, I don't. There's many a queer thing which I don't know. There may be an Opal Mountain, but I never heard of it. Then again, it isn't very likely as I would, because I've been sealin' over Labrador way mostly; so I say, come on. But about the brig?"

"She is manned by our sworn enemies, and will molest us if possible. Her commander will stick at nothing to accomplish his revenge."

Then Josiah related the incidents of the spread-eagling, and the hanging of the ruffians who had tortured the boys.

"I guess I've heard something of your friends," said the captain, when he had been told the names

and objects of the gang. "A nice crew. Let's go on deck."

The brig had, of course, kept the *Sea-lark* in sight, and was going up the straits, but under somewhat different circumstances. She had got away from the shore amid the current ice, and had greater difficulties to contend against than the schooner had. From this Captain Armstrong argued that the brig was not commanded by a very skilful, or at anyrate, not by a seaman experienced in those waters.

"They are accommodating their rate of sailing to ours," remarked Percy. "They have brailed up the mainsail."

"Ay, they have the heels of us," remarked Lot. "Listen! didn't you hear a shout?"

The wind had dispersed the fog a little, and as the breeze increased it acted on the ice-hunks and bergs, checking their progress on the current, and making a more continuous flow. The captain anticipated that by degrees the now severed blocks would unite, and perhaps enclose his rivals in a firm prison.

"Hollo. Hoy, what ship's that?" came the hail from the brig.

"The *Sea-lark*; who are you?" was Armstrong's reply.

"Heave to a minute, and we'll come aboard."

"Will you?" muttered Reginald.

"Can't wait," shouted Armstrong, and his tremendous voice actually echoed from the cliffs. "Meet higher up."

"Heave to, I tell you, or I'll make ye," shouted the brig's commander.

"Go to Halifax," was the skipper's reply. "Steady. Make us, will you; you'd better try."

So the *Sea-lark* proceeded quietly, but had not sailed many yards when a puff of white smoke broke into the fog; a flash, and then a something came hopping along the ice. It was a small cannon ball.

The boys watched it with considerable curiosity. They did not quite realise the fact that the schooner was actually being fired at by those filibusters, who seemed determined to prevent the progress of the *Sea-lark* by any means. Piracy had apparently no terrors for them, and we know they were most unscrupulous in their dealings.

"This is rather too big," remarked Josiah. "What shall we do?" he asked, as they all watched the ball which had passed ahead of the schooner, and afterwards sunk in the ice. "We can't retaliate."

"We will though," replied Frederick, boldly. "We can't stay here and be made a target of. See, they are sending a boat, I do believe. Let us lie to, and then give them the slip."

The captain gave the necessary orders, and backed the topsails, telling the men to stand by meanwhile.

"Say, captain, do you intend that we shall be boarded?" asked Reginald.

"No; they won't reach us afore dark. Ye see we are forging ahead gently in the eddy, which I guess they don't calculate on. Then every yard they drive up that middle passage keeps them off. The boat will take a long time to come all round the floe here. You wait."

"Captain Armstrong knows what he is about,"

remarked Jim Upton. "Percy, let us get our rifles and muskets ready."

The crew all this time were holding converse together, Lot and Job being foremost in the consultation. The men had already heard enough of the ultimate destination of the *Sea-lark* to make them anxious to succeed in their undertaking. Anything, therefore, that threatened to interfere would be met with resistance; and when the interference of such men as Swivel Eye and his associates became imminent, the resistance was all the greater.

The schooner continued to drift along shore, while the brig, within a cable's length or so, was rapidly closing in with the ice. This position will be the better understood if we explain the natural causes of it.

The manner in which the ice is formed in the straits and bays so called, such as Baffin's Bay and Davis' Strait, is known to navigators, and they have by experience ascertained what common-sense hinted—viz., that ice forms thickly along the coast and beach. This ice in time becomes massed into bergs, and the floe stretches many a mile across the gulf, bay, or strait, when winter sets in. We have already noticed the detaching of the iceberg, but they, with the smaller fry of blocks, when warmer breezes loosen them, meet in mid-channel, small and tortuous paths between the floes and the mainland being frequently left. In early spring the ice hugs the coast of Labrador, and captains make across towards Cape Farewell in Greenland, getting under shelter of the west territory, or again crossing into Hudson's Strait. The

Cat-fish had hugged the Labrador coast too nearly, the brig then made for Cape Desolation or Brill, but got entangled in the ice, and when the fog lifted she was somewhat in the middle passage, cutting her way through the floating floes. The resistance was great, and finding she could not get into the shore channel, she treated the *Sea-lark* very cavalierly.

Captain Armstrong, a fine old crusted "salt," had long ago made up his mind. He did not intend to do the men of the brig any harm, but he was minded to give them a dance. So he did not really altogether check his vessel's way, although he seemed to be doing his best to heave to.

"They'll have a nice pull round," remarked Harry. The elders had again gone below to consult the chart.

"Yes," replied Percy, "they will be locked up if they don't take care. See, the ice here is closing in on the boat. They may have to return."

"Like their impudence, firing at us," remarked Harry. "Can't we pitch into them somehow, Lot? Come, you and Job might do something for the *Sea-lark*."

"Well, ye see unless we fire we can't hurt them; but the ice will keep them back. They can't come aboard. Job, here, he says he doesn't believe they think we are aware of their game, and don't know about the *Cat-fish*. They may want to pass for a Government vessel, but we know better."

"Then you do not think they will reach us, Lot?"

"No; and they certainly won't board. We'll crush their boat with a few pigs of ballast if they try it. Eh, Job?"



The Filibusters' Boat attack.—Page 135.

"We will, Lot ; what we says we sticks to," replied the other.

While this conversation was proceeding, the elders had been studying the chart, and had come to a conclusion as to the position of the schooner. It seemed, so far as they were able to discover, that Disco Island was close ahead. The promontory in front which loomed out in the mist was, Armstrong opined, Cape Chidley, where the shore tends west and north, to jut out east again at Cape York, some eight degrees away. In the hollow thus indicated lies, first, Disco, then the bay called Jacob's Bight (N.E. Bay), the Woman Islands, and Baffin's Islands. After passing the dangerous promontory of the Devil's Thumb, Melville Bay opens north in a wide sweep, but a very awkward place it is with a south-west wind. Westward is Cape York, and the mountainous coast is termed the "Arctic Highlands," after Ross's nomenclature.

"If this fellow persists in his pursuit," said Lot, "I would say run under Disco, and give him the slip. But he won't do us any harm this journey."

"By Jove, his boat is coming on well," cried Reginald, who had been for a long while silently watching the craft through the telescope. "He means mischief."

"Well, we will give him as good as he can give us," remarked the mate, who was listening to the lads' conversation. "Say, lads," he added to his men, "clear away the old 'barker' yonder : train her aft here, and let us show these pirates that we can bite as well as they."

The men obeyed : the lads willingly lent a hand ; the gun was brought aft, and pointed through the

hawser hole astern, having been previously loaded with powder and a wad.

"Now," said Percy, "if we intend to show fight, perhaps we may as well arm ourselves and inform Captain Armstrong and the governors both. What do you think, Reginald? I'll go down and tell them."

"I hope there won't be any fighting," he replied. "Lend me the glass. I say, Harry, look here, who are in that boat? Am I mistaken or not?"

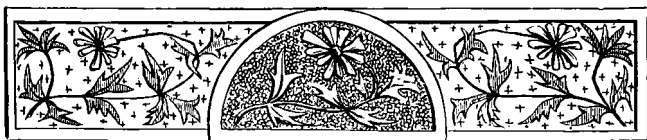
"What?" exclaimed Harry and Jim together, "who is it?"

"Look," replied Reggie, calmly; "this is a curious thing!"

Harry took a long and steady gaze at the boat, which was gradually overhauling the schooner, then he handed the telescope to Jim, saying:

"We're in for it; Christian Nathan and Loskins are in that boat. They were not hanged after all. Call up the captain, Jim. There's bound to be a row over this job."





CHAPTER XII.

AFTER THE ATTACK—A TERRIBLE STORM AND ITS
CONSEQUENCES.—HARRY UPTON'S ACCIDENT—
THE ICEBERG.

THE appearance of the leaders of the gang of filibusters is not difficult to account for. They had been left hanging, as readers will remember, in the enclosure of the hut, where Reginald and his relatives had been so nearly trapped. But the would-be murderers had not been so secured as to prevent their toes touching the ground. By much struggling and wriggling they had succeeded in stretching the cords a little—a very little certainly, but this movement, while it nearly brought about the catastrophe they would avoid, had a beneficial effect—a firmer stand was obtained, the tension of the cords was relaxed, and the men breathed again. The swelling of the muscles of the throat which both ruffians managed to accomplish had still further improved their chances, so when their associates arrived, Nathan had partially recovered, and though his companion Loskins was not lively, he was not, unfortunately, defunct.

The first use the men made of their restored speech

was to swear. Then they bound themselves with many strange oaths to hunt down, pursue, kill, maim, or in some manner send to "kingdom come" the "varmint" who had insulted, and nearly killed, such noble-minded American citizens. An American citizen is still a person who is supremely conscious of his dignity, and any interference therewith, or any fancied slight, is at once resented in a decided manner. You mustn't annoy the Eagle. No, sir; he bites, sometimes in a rather backhanded style, but he can use his bill and claws, you may depend! He can also flap his wings in the jaws of the British Lion, and soar out of reach. This is a decided advantage. Nevertheless, take him all in all he is a fine bird, and worthy the admiration of all thoughtful people.

The American citizens we have to do with, though not worthy of admiration at all, had their own ideas of right and retaliation. They soon satisfied themselves concerning the *Sea-lark*, and having kept watch on the unsuspecting schooner, now determined to pounce down on her; and, having taken possession of stores and cargo, proceed to the coveted destination and enrich themselves for life.

The *Cat-fish* had, therefore, dispatched her boat, pulled by armed men, and guided by Nathan the Cruel, to board the schooner *Sea-lark* under spurious pretences, and then under the guns of the brig to capture her—a bold project, and one quite worthy of the filibusters who contrived it.

Percy Upton had hurried down to the cabin, and at once informed his father and uncle and Captain Armstrong of the preparations which had been made,

and in a few minutes Harry came rushing in with the intelligence that Nathan the Cruel was in command ; he was not hanged after all.

"Then he runs a considerable good chance of being shot," remarked the captain, drily. "If them that's born to be hanged will never be drowned, then them that's born to be shot will never be hanged ; and something tells me that your *friend* Nathan is one who maybe won't be hanged after all."

"Let us go on deck," said Josiah ; "we must not leave the command in junior hands. This is a risky time."

"It is so," assented Armstrong, as he mounted the stairway.

The boat which contained the filibusters was now quite close, and our adventurers could perceive that the crew was armed. Several muskets lay in the boat, and some cutlasses were also made out. So Captain Armstrong called to the men to cease pulling. Almost immediately afterwards he told his men in an undertone to let fall the foretopsail, and haul up the jib again. He was not "going to be boarded like a lamb," he said, without considering the metaphor.

"What do you want ?" cried the burly captain as the *Sea-lark* again gathered way, and tracked a tortuous passage through the floating ice.

"To come aboard. We have something serious to discuss with you," replied Nathan, standing up in the boat.

"Then discuss it where you are," replied Armstrong, "for into this vessel you do not come. Keep off now, or we will fire !"

"Fire then!" cried Nathan, suddenly raising his hand, and pulling the trigger of the revolver he was all this time grasping unperceived. "Guess I've first blood!"

Armstrong had not time to avoid this treacherous bullet, nor had he any inclination to flinch. The ball struck him in the shoulder, and his left arm fell powerless to his side.

When Nathan fired he threw himself back almost in a reclining posture in his boat, bidding his men do the same. They were in the act of pulling, but obeyed; Nathan at the same time pulled the tiller over, and by this measure he managed to elude the volley of musketry which saluted him in reply to his treacherous shot.

"Load and fire again!" cried Armstrong. "It will be our fault if any of them go back alive."

But before the guns could be brought to bear, Nathan had slipped round again; the breeze carried the *Sea-lark* out of range, while Nathan exhorted his men to pull for the brig, which was flying a recall signal for her boat.

Captain Armstrong was suffering acutely from his wound, and had to resign the command to his first officer, Stevens, the man who had been on board the Atlantic liner. Josiah Upton immediately attended to Armstrong, and searched for the bullet which he believed had lodged in the shoulder; but on examination he found that it had only grazed the arm, occasioning considerable pain and bleeding from the surface. The thick clothing worn by the captain had saved him from a very serious wound; the ball

was discovered in the thick inner jersey behind the shoulder blade. The bullet had struck the arm above the elbow, grazed the muscles, and passed beneath the arm-pit, tearing the flesh considerably, but doing no serious damage.

"You've had a lucky escape, captain," said Josiah. "We must punish those scoundrels, or we shall never be free from prosecution. Now, let me dress your arm. I'm a bit of a doctor, you must know, and then you must rest a while."

"Rest! Not a bit of it! We're in danger, sir, and I'm goin' to have my share. Stevens is good, but he isn't up to Arctic seas."

"There is Lot," suggested Josiah.

"Lot! why, he is of no account. He *believes* all he says, that is his merit; but Lot—no, he is too superstitious also."

"Superstitious!" exclaimed Josiah. "Well, so am I; but that is no discredit."

"No; but again Lot declares he has seen ghosts up here, and such talk frightens the crew. As if ghosts would ever come up here, even if they exist in nature. Jolly cold for them! We will keep Stevens in command, if you please, Mr Upton, only a while."

"As you please," replied Josiah. "You are easier now. Do rest for a while, and if any danger or any necessity for your presence on deck arises, I will come for you."

"Mind them Yankees," was the captain's admonition. "Board them."

"We will see," replied Josiah. "You rest a while. Evening is coming on. It looks dark."

"Guess it's a storm," replied the captain. "Tell Stevens to mind his canvas."

Josiah hurried on deck, and was absolutely startled at the change which had come over the scene. When he had gone down to the cabin the air was pure and nearly clear; the coast was plain on the right, and the brig to leeward quite visible. Now all had changed. The mist had not again come down certainly, but the cold-looking sunbeams were almost entirely obscured. The precipices and peaks looked black in places, and shadowed the water darkly. The ice seemed thicker and thicker, the crashing around the vessel became louder and louder, and the lads could see the blocks lifted upon each other with terrible roaring and general smashing.

"It's the tide," remarked Job. "Isn't it, Lot?"

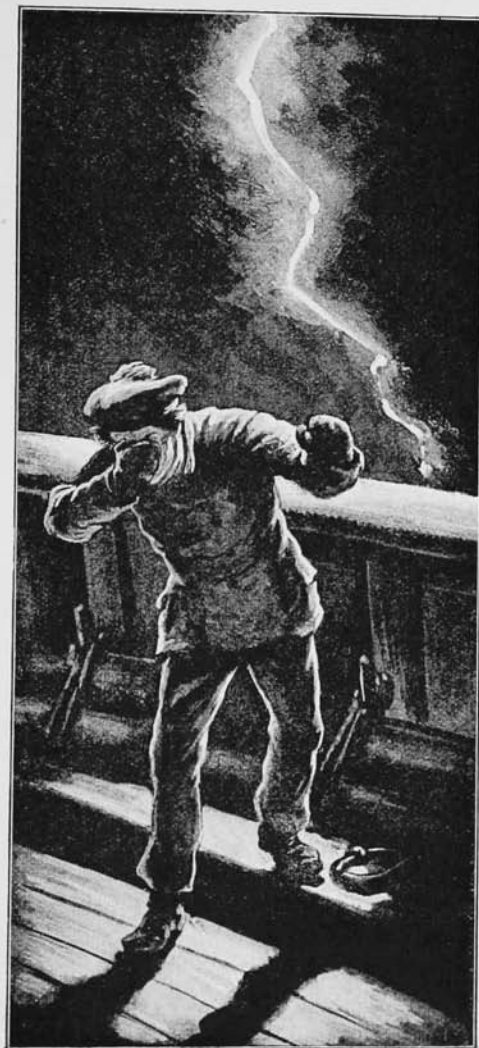
"It is," he replied. "The tides rush up here as bad as in the Bay of Fundy. You'll see presently, that is if there is any light. We're in a narrow place here, and may get jammed."

Josiah approached Stevens, and took council with him. "What is your opinion, Stevens?" he said.

"If we had more room I would feel better satisfied," was the mate's reply. "There's a storm coming in—a bad one, and we may be carried up on the tide if it's a big one. Then again the Esquimaux may board us and hamper us, considerably; or the Yankees may make another attempt, so——"

"So," interrupted Josiah, "you think we may be wrecked or boarded, and killed anyway?"

"We may," replied Stevens, "if we are not careful."



"Bedad, I'll not be murdered alive," said Murphy. "Hollo, sir, here comes somethin'!"

"Take in the foresail, and get another reef in the mainsail," cried Stevens. "Look slippy, mates!"

"Ugh, isn't it cold!" muttered Reginald, who with his cousins and Percy came aft. "It's getting darker and darker too."

Flap, flap went the canvas. A dead calm suddenly fell on Nature. The wind was about to change, perhaps.

"Furl all!" shouted a trumpet voice which they all recognised. "Ho! Let the jib alone yet," continued Armstrong, after a pause, and leave

the gaff-topsail set. We shall want steerage way, I expect."

Boom, rattle, *bang*, came the thunder immediately overhead, as it seemed. Every one had noticed the lightning, and flinched.

"Oh! Ah, my eyes!" screamed Harry. "I'm blinded!"

"Such a terrific flash it was, a fearful forked gleam, which darted just overhead and flickered into the ice-pack apparently.

A rush was made for Harry, who was rubbing his eyes, and standing by the bulwarks helplessly.

"Can't you see us, Harry?" inquired Percy.

"No," he replied. "Where's father?"

"Here I am," said Fred Upton. "My poor lad, is it possible that your sight is gone!"

"I don't know, I can't tell," moaned the lad.

"But I can't see. Oh, father, father!"

"My poor lad!" exclaimed Mr Upton. "We will take care of you, dear fellow, your eyesight will return. It is only temporary blindness, I am sure."

"Oh, no it isn't!" cried Harry, as the tears coursed down his cheeks. "I can't see anything; I never shall see anything again!" Then the boy quite broke down, and cried bitterly.

It was a terrible trial indeed, and we must not blame him for giving way in that manner. He had been suddenly deprived of sight, and we must remember what that means to anyone who has had full use of his eyes, and enjoyed Nature as Harry did. To be suddenly plunged into darkness, and never to be able to see the beautiful world again,

never to see his parent, his brother, his cousins any more! No wonder Harry Upton cried bitterly. We fancy that most boys would have done the same.

After a while they succeeded in getting him into the cabin, where they bathed his eyes, and took the greatest care of him, but he remained almost insensible to all their efforts, for he was still lamenting the great misfortune which had fallen upon him. Meanwhile the terrible forked flashes lighted up the little bull's-eye windows of the cabin, while the thunder roared in a fearful manner through the inky clouds close overhead, which contrasted with the ice-field, or rather the ice-blocks, that were crammed and jammed, and dashed against each other, thundering in opposition to the echoes from the precipitous crags. The rattle and roar seemed almost continuous, and was perfectly appalling.

Nor were the wild inhabitants of those wild solitudes mute. The storm alarmed them too. Loud growlings were heard at intervals, and a kind of barking noise, both of which sounds emanated from the alarmed bears, and which were again supplemented by the cries and shrieks of hundreds of whirling sea-birds disturbed by the uproar. On one side, and for some distance ahead, a white crystallised surface was visible; this was the ice-field—compact, fastened to the land, but upheaving under the advance of the high tide, cracking and lifting as if an earthquake were at work. On the port-quarter and abeam was a black tossing waste, studded with white masses, which at times drove into each other with loud crashes. The *Sea-lark* rose and pitched, lounging heavily

forward, and then pulling up again suddenly and sullenly. The topsail had been furled, and only the jib remained set now. Such a scene was one not to be readily forgotten.

While overhead, and all around the fury and desolation of the elemental warfare and the scenery were marked, the *Sea-lark* remained silent, or nearly so. Now and then the hoarse voice of a sailor was heard giving warning of an ice block. Then the impact of the mass would follow, then the grinding of the swirling block, and sometimes the rush for the ice-poles to fend off the more than usually inconvenient masses. Down in the cabin a number of sympathetic men and lads stood silently around the berth of one who, with sightless, streaming eyes, lay sobbing as if his heart would break.

They could not immediately comfort him, but after a while, when the first shock had in some degree passed away, he became calmer. His uncle and father, assisted by Job, did all they could to cheer him and console him, telling him of cases in which people had remained blind for days, and had then recovered their sight. Job related an anecdote (from his own experience) to the effect that a person whom he knew well had been struck blind by lightning, but had been after many years recovered by another flash, which had restored to him his vision on the homœopathic principle. No one questioned this statement, but Harry only shook his head, and turned away.

At length he seemed disposed to sleep, and everyone quitted the cabin. Night had come, the storm had rolled away, and a thick fog had commenced to

form. The schooner was close hauled, and lay near to the ice in as sheltered a course as possible, and all was made snug. The cousins had no inclination for supper. They remained on deck, wrapped up, watching the coruscations of a reddish tinted Aurora which flashed through the mist. Crunching and crushing of ice was heard close by, but no one paid any particular attention to it. The watchman was lying down, the captain was in his own room, Mr Josiah and Fred Upton were in bed, and still the boys did not go down. Stevens kept peering through the fog uneasily.

"I can't go down," said Reginald. "To think of poor Harry there, makes me so miserable. He may never be able to see us any more."

"And the Opal Mountain too," said Jim. "Poor fellow! Tell you what it is, I could almost cry over it this moment. Whoever would have fancied that lightning would come so close."

"It was the intense glare," replied Percy. "I *felt* it rather than saw it. But I am in hope that Harry will recover. Hush! didn't you hear something?" he asked, suddenly.

They all listened intently. No, only the cracking and banging of the ice was audible.

"There is nothing particular," said Jim.

"I was afraid that some of the Esquimaux might take it into their heads to attack us. They may have seen us, and as they are amphibious animals, could reach us easily enough," said Percy.

"I am more anxious concerning the Yankees," said Reginald. "Suppose *they* attack us!"

"They are too far off. Hullo! we're wrecked. Up quick. All hands ahoy!"

The schooner had struck on, or had been struck by, an immense hummock of ice, which caused her to tremble from stem to stern.

"Luckily we were not going fast," remarked Stevens to the captain who had rushed upon deck. "We can't see a blessed thing in this fog. Are we struck?"

"Guess we are fixed in the berg," replied the skipper. "You see it towers down upon us pretty high. Heaven grant it don't fall."

"Can't we fend her off with the poles?" cried Lot. "Come, my lads, try again. Now altogether, yo, ho!"

But all the pushing and the "yo-hoing" were perfectly useless; the *Sea-lark* remained "bow on" on the lower ledge of the berg, on which she had run as upon a rock, and remained fixed until such time as the ice should melt or break. In this event there was, however, the chance of the berg simultaneously "turning turtle," as it is termed, and falling upon the schooner. This was the danger eventually. Meantime the *Sea-lark* was quite at the mercy of the iceberg, which would propel it down the straits, and into the Atlantic once again, unless it could be shaken off.

But such masses are not so easily to be shaken off; and there the *Sea-lark* remained, her bluff bow well landed on the ice shelf, while the mountain was making its chilly way out to sea. Thus at one blow were quenched the hopes of the voyagers! Unless they could get free very quickly, they must say farewell for ever to the Opal Mountain.



CHAPTER XIII.

A CRITICAL SITUATION—A MUTINEER SATISFIED—
VERY ALARMING POSITION OF THE *SEALARK*—
WITCHCRAFT OR LEAKAGE?



CONSULTATION was immediately held on deck. Daylight was rapidly approaching, and with daylight the fog would lift; then the next tide would probably crush the schooner between the hummocks and the berg. The situation was sufficiently alarming.

"Did you ever hear of any such accident, captain?" enquired Josiah Upton.

"Never," replied Armstrong. "We have struck on ice, and have been hammered by the floating blocks, but I never heard of anyone having been grounded on a berg before."

"What do you advise, captain?" said Stevens.

"What's your opinion?" retorted the captain. "You were in command when she drove on, so you may as well get her off."

"Then I may as well bully the man at the wheel," said Stevens, calmly. "I wasn't steering."

"What do you mean?" asked Josiah, rather angrily.

"Why, sir, the skipper pitches into me—don't

defend myself, but I didn't run the schooner on the berg! He was in his cabin and couldn't see! no more couldn't I, in the fog—not a blessed yard. It's my opinion that we didn't run on the berg at all."

"No, of course not," interrupted Armstrong, who was out of temper, "and we are not on it now, are we? Oh no!"

"I mean, sir," said Stevens, turning to Josiah, "and it is my opinion, that we did not strike the berg. *It struck us!*"

"All the same in the end," growled Armstrong.

"All the same in the beginning," said Stevens; "we are on the blessed berg, and it ain't our fault. Let us endeavour for to try to get out of it, captain. Here's the sun coming up as red as a peony. Give him a cheer, lads!"

This spirited conduct on the part of the mate had an exultant effect on the crew. Lot and his *fidus Achates* recovered their usual spirits, which had been considerably damped by the terrible catastrophe that had deprived Harry Upton of his sight. But Stevens cheered them all.

"Hurrah!" cried Lot, "there's life yet. *I said the berg was on us*, not us on the berg!" He continued, "Didn't I, Job?"

"I think you mentioned it casual like," replied Job cautiously, "but I said at the time, didn't I? 'There's many a slip 'twixt berg and ship!' Now it's run into us, as *you* said. Why, I remember reading of a man who was wrecked on an iceberg and enjoyed it!"

"Come, come, my lads, no nonsense," cried Captain Armstrong. "Business: Duty! Stevens, I ask your pardon! There's my fin, I can't say more, and I

won't," roared the bluff old salt. "Now, all hands aft, if you please, Stevens."

The men came at Steven's call, and the skipper explained the circumstances.

"My men, we're in a fix. We are in imminent danger, and a considerable tall hole. Just cock your ears now, and listen to me. If we've sprung a leak, down we go! If the berg smashes up and comes down, also we go! If we can't shove off, we shall be pushed willy nilly into the Atlantic, or be jobbed into matches in the floe. We may be boarded by the Huskies."

"What's them?" cried one or two of his auditory.

"The Esquimaux, who are not very friendly. We may be chewed up by bears or wolves, or attacked by the filibusterin' Yankees. This is the situation."

"And, bedad, it's a situation I never engaged for," remarked Murphy. "Ah, captain, alanna, what'll we do at all!"

"I suggest that all the stores and cargo shall be shifted aft. We may in this manner slide off the berg, and if we have not sprung a leak, we shall get away."

"I'll see about the leak. Come with me, Job," said Stevens, as he hurried off.

"I agree with Captain Armstrong, men," said Josiah. "I am responsible. We will all do our best. Double pay and extra grog to all while we are wrecked here. We must work, but I will pay you well."

"Yes, supposin' we don't die," muttered one fellow, Goring by name. "Promises is easy."

"Aye they are," remarked Lot, who was standing by the speaker, "and I can promise you a tidy cow-

hiding if you give any cowardly advice here! The boss pays if he says he will, so you shut your mouth."

"All I said was supposin' we live, who's to pay if we don't?"

"That won't matter to you if you're dead," said Lot. "If you live you'll be paid by some one. But let's to work!"

Josiah Upton had not waited to hear this argument. He had descended to the cabin again, and informed his brother of the facts of the case.

"I am afraid there is some dissatisfaction on board," he said. "One of the men is already grumbling, and anxious for his pay.

"Pay him and put him ashore," suggested Frederick Upton, grimly.

"Not yet! We had better be lenient with him. He is not a very good character, though, I am afraid," mused Josiah. "He may spread dissatisfaction!"

"Well, then, pay the pig his wages, double, as you said; he will come round soon. Send for him. Here Lot, ahoy!"

Lot came down in a minute, and soon the man Goring, who had grumbled about his money, appeared. He looked round rather suspiciously, but made no remark except to Josiah.

"Told I'm wanted, sir!"

"Yes," replied Mr Upton. "We have sent for you to satisfy you that we mean honestly in this matter. You have complained about your wages. Now," continued Josiah, turning to a locker behind him, "here is your money!"

The man watched him intently with greedy glisten-

ing eyes. The dollars in coin and currency were all there. He saw the sum already due to him counted out correctly. Then an extra ten dollars were added for the period the captain expected to be lying up on the berg, a week's pay nearly in addition.

"There," said Josiah. "Now, are you satisfied? If your mates want their money, they can have it on the same terms. But we shall put you ashore at the first opportunity, my man. You can go!"

"All right," muttered the fellow. "I'll go ashore when I please, sir, and not afore that time. You don't want to murder me, I s'pose?"

"No," said Frederick Upton, "we do not; but we do want to have your receipt for this money!"

"Then ye can't trust a hand on board yer own ship!" said the fellow.

"No; when our hands do not trust us, we will not choose to alter the relationship," replied Frederick, while Josiah replaced the pocket-book, purse, &c., in the box, and the latter in the locker. "Your quittance, please."

He was writing a receipt as he was speaking. The man took the pen, and watched by the brothers, and in the hearing of poor blinded Harry Upton, signed the acquittance, and declared himself satisfied.

"Now, go to your duty," said Josiah, curtly, as he turned away.

"Aye, that I will," said the man with meaning. "I knows my way, *and I'll take it!*"

"The fellow is a scoundrel," said Josiah to his brother. "I'm not quite satisfied concerning him. He cannot do us any harm at present, however."

"Not without compromising his own safety, and he

has too great a regard for his own skin to try any little game on here," said Frederick in reply. "Is Harry asleep?"

"No," replied the lad, gently. "I heard him. Can you bathe my eyes, father? They pain and burn terribly again."

While his father busied himself about the injured lad, his brother reascended on deck, and found the men had already been at work to some purpose. Stevens came forward, and reported that no water had come in; so, unless the ice had actually pierced the ship, and at the same time plugged the hole, there could be no immediate danger, and meantime, perhaps, if no such accident had occurred, the *Sea-lark* might float off again when lightened.

All the boys were at work, and in excellent spirits. Occupation and the sense of personal danger had removed their misgivings about the Yankees for the time being.

"I wonder how thick this berg is under water?" asked Stevens.

"Let us measure it above water," said Armstrong. "It isn't very high, but it's pretty big. How high do you suppose it is, now?"

"Almost ninety feet," hazarded Reginald, who was listening with much interest.

"No, not sixty feet," replied the captain. "Not fifty from this deck, you bet. Now, icebergs are always four times as deep under water as they are above it. So this one must be, say, 240 feet under water—forty fathoms. He won't float long—he'll ground!"

"That ain't quite a first-class reckoning," said Stevens. "Beggin' your pardon, captin, you know

that salt water ice is lighter than fresh water ice, and floats higher, so most likely the berg is only thirty or twenty-five fathom below. Now, either it will sink and drag us with it, or topple over!"

"Can't we break off the ledge, or blast it with gunpowder?" suggested Josiah.

"We shall be running a tremendous risk. If we do we may also bring down the ice altogether, and shatter the ship," said Armstrong. "May be the berg will break up of itself, and gently separate."

"Not likely," remarked Stevens; "no such luck."

"But all this time we are drifting back again," remarked Josiah; "and unless we can manage to escape, we may give up the Opal Mountain for this season. Our first duty is to lighten the vessel forward."

"The men are shifting the loading," said Stevens. "We have piled all aft that we can on deck, and now the cargo, such as it is, must be moved."

"There is only one other method," said Armstrong, after a while. "Can't we land on the berg, and cut the schooner adrift?"

"We can try if you like, captain," said Josiah; "but it looks a very formidable task for the axes. Wait a while, I say."

"Very well, sir; the vessel's yours, so to speak," replied Armstrong. "So to work. I'll go and examine it again forward."

He went away as he was speaking, and then Percy came up, and said:

"Father, suppose we send Lot and Job down as divers. They can then find out whether the berg is really a thick ledge under water or not."

"Why, you would kill the men," replied Josiah Upton. "Do you imagine we are in Pacific waters? The poor fellows would be frozen."

"They don't mind going if you will give the order," persisted Percy. "It will only be down and up again."

"No," replied his father, "not until all other means fail. As a last resource we may have recourse to diving, but I am in hopes that the berg will break away, and release us."

"Or fall from the top, and turn us over," suggested Percy, as he turned away, and resumed the work he had been engaged upon.

The fog gradually cleared, but the wind did not in any way assist the schooner to back off. On the contrary, the north-east breeze was contending against the current at that time, and the berg, with the *Sea-lark*, remained almost stationary, drifting more towards the land under the influence of attraction, and thus the schooner ran some risk of being wrecked by being crushed between the drifting and the stationary ice.

"How deep is the water hereabouts?" enquired Josiah Upton.

"About fifty fathom," replied Stevens, "and much less inside."

"No fear of our grounding then?" continued Mr Upton.

"No, *we* shall float, but the berg won't; it will mayhap fix solid to the bottom, and hold the schooner for a few weeks in its cold grip."

"We can do no more now," said Josiah. "We have

lightened her forward, and she does not move. There is no leak, you say?"

"No, sir, tight's a drum she is. Ask the captain."

Captain Armstrong, who had been attentively observing the ice, and measuring its distance round the schooner, now approached, and said :

"There's some land yonder, ahead. Is that Disco, Stevens, think you?"

"I'll just find our position," said the mate. In a few minutes he returned with the information :

"We have just escaped the Savage Isles, it seems," he exclaimed. "If we had run on them in a fog we were 'gone 'coons' to a certainty. That's Cape Chidley, and beyond it is Disco. Say, captain, what's the matter?"

"I have been telling the 'boss' here that we're in a queer fix. I don't understand it," replied the captain very seriously, and lowering his voice to a growl.

"There's some influence at work in this ship."

"What? D'ye think we're bewitched?" laughed Stevens.

"No," said Josiah, "*I* cannot believe in that ; but Armstrong here declares that the schooner is settling down!"

"Settling down! sinking!" exclaimed Stevens. "Impossible! She's as tight as wax below. Strained a bit maybe, but there's no leakin'!"

"Come here then, Stevens, and you, Mr Upton," whispered the captain in his gruff tones, as nearly as nature would permit him to indulge in a whisper, "come here, and then deny it."

The two men accompanied the captain to the stern of the vessel and peered over the taffrail into the belt

of water surrounded by broken masses of ice in which the *Sea-lark* lay. The ice was crunching and dashing; the coast, just visible through the haze, was lofty, bold, and precipitous, deep in snow, and apparently uninhabited. Not even a seal or walrus, bear or snow-owl was there visible, though doubtless if the sun appeared, the seals would come out and bask, and birds would arrive in myriads. The scene just then, however, was desolate in the extreme.

"Now," said Captain Armstrong, "look ye there. See that blue streak o' paint runnin' round the counter."

"Yes, what of it?" asked Josiah and Stevens together.

"Wait and see," replied the captain, oracularly, "wait and see—or, rather, don't wait," he continued, grimly. "Come back in ten minutes."

The others stared at the captain, and the captain nodded. Stevens hurried in search of the carpenter, who could assist him in ascertaining whether any water was being made by leakage, and if so, to clear the pumps. To sink in such a place, off such a desolate portion of the coast, meant, if not immediate destruction, probable and great privation.

He made his examination, and found the schooner was perfectly water-tight.

"This is some delusion of the skipper's," he muttered. "We're on a rock of ice hard and fast, and I wish we were not; but we can't be sinking, unless the heaving down has let us in a bit lower. That's what it is! The skipper doesn't remember that we've shifted bulk!"

So he returned to the deck in excellent spirits, and strolled aft.



The *Sealark* on the Iceberg.—Page 152.

"Well, Stevens, all taut?" enquired Josiah Upton.

"Yes, all tight and trim below. Why, captain, you've forgot that we've shifted stores, and of course the stern will be lower."

"Teach your grandmother!" retorted the captain, angrily. "D'ye think I'm a blamed idiot not to know how much we've dipped. Bah! Go and see for yourselves." Then came a muttering like distant thunder, but it was only the captain's strong language repressed, and dying away in the deep cavernous recesses of his spacious throat.

"Go and see for yourselves," he repeated.

Then Josiah and Stevens hurried to the counter of the schooner, and looked for the blue line which streaked the broadside and all round the vessel. It had completely disappeared!

They measured with their eyes the continuance of it round to the bows, and were constrained to admit that it had also sunk down there in proportion also. The *Sea-lark* was decidedly "settling," as the captain had said.

The men looked at each other with blank amazement in their faces. Witchcraft? No; ridiculous. A leak? No, certainly not. The ice perhaps was accumulating underneath, and weighing the vessel down.

At anyrate the *Sea-lark* was slowly but surely sinking, bodily, into the ocean. When the men next endeavoured to find the blue streak it had disappeared, even from the fore part of the vessel it was almost invisible. The schooner was doomed—pulled down, down, beneath the sea by an irresistible and mysterious hand.



CHAPTER XIV.

A CONSULTATION—PERCY UPTON'S ADVENTURE—
THE CAPTAIN'S VOICE—STILL SINKING!—
“STEADY, MEN!”



MID the terrified silence which had fallen upon the three responsible men, the footfall of Frederick Upton as he came across the deck was quite audible.

“Why, what’s the matter?” he exclaimed. “Are you all rehearsing for mutes? I think poor Hal is better. That’s good news anyhow! He’s asleep now.”

They were all unfeignedly glad, but the gloom again settled down on them, and the puzzled perplexed faces aroused Fred Upton to enquire, “What in thunder” ailed them? Had they seen a ghost?

“We must tell him,” said the captain in a double bass note. “Tell him yourself, Mr Upton.

Thus adjured, Josiah communicated the terrible news to his brother. The *Sea-lark* was on a berg, as he was already aware, but nevertheless she was sinking rapidly! They had ascertained that fact beyond dispute.

“Then the berg is sinking,” said Fred Upton, “you may depend.”

They had not thought of that ! This was a fresh complication—berg and vessel were sinking together apparently.

"But do bergs ever sink?" asked Josiah, suddenly.

"Yes," replied the captain in sepulchral tones; "yes, they do, *when they're about makin' up their minds to turn turtle!*"

"So you think the berg is about to turn over this side?" asked Fred Upton, as calmly as he could.

"I do that," was Armstrong's reply. "We shall all be in kingdom come to-morrow unless we take to the boats pretty smart."

"Wait a moment, do not hurry," said Josiah; "let us tell the others gently, let us have no confusion. We will first inform Lot and Job, and get the whale-boat ready for poor Harry. Call the boys."

Stevens, who had not said much lately, walked forward, and told Percy, Reggie, and Jim Upton that their father and uncle wanted them aft.

"The captain has something to tell you," he added, "so look alive, but keep as mute as mice."

"It's a lark ashore!" cried Reginald; "we can have a bear hunt, or a walrus worry. I'm all for a walrus worry. Eh, Stevens?"

"Yes, I guess it's a worry," replied the mate drily. "It will also be a case of bear and forbear, I expect. Run astern!"

"Four bears!" cried Jim, who had only partially caught the mate's speech. "What luck! Are they white or black?"

"Looks pretty black just now," replied Stevens, as

he winked at Percy. The two younger lads were off in a moment, but Percy remained.

"There is something wrong," he said quietly to the mate.

"There is," replied the mate. "Something? Aye, everything!"

"What do you mean?" asked Percy hastily. "My father——"

"Oh *we're* all right, and I thank the Lord your cousin is better. It's the schooner!"

"Isn't she right then? Quick, tell me, is there danger?"

"She's sinkin', aye gradually sinking with the iceberg, which maybe in a few hours will topple over and smash us into matches!"

"Can it be possible!" cried Percy; "let's look at the berg."

They hurried up to the forecastle, and taking an ice pole, Percy leaped lightly upon the slippery sloping ledge on which the schooner was, as it were, stranded.

The men who saw him applauded his pluck, and the dexterous manner in which he managed to retain his footing on the slippery surface.

Percy remained a few minutes on the ice, carefully examining the marks of the collision. Then, to the astonishment of all, he waved his cap, and, fully clothed as he was, and burthened also with the pole, began to work his way round the rugged corner of the ice mountain.

"Come back," roared the captain, and the stentorian echoes returned from the lofty ice peaks, making the pinnacles totter.

"Guess if you don't moderate your voice, skipper, you'll have a catastrophe to answer for," said Josiah, quickly.

"You shook the pinnacles!" added Fred, "and Percy mustn't be murdered in that way!"

Captain Armstrong looked rather abashed. He had not calculated on the effect he had produced.

"It ain't a bad idea," he said presently, when Percy Upton had disappeared round the corner.

"What isn't?" enquired his auditors.

"Speak low," muttered Reginald, as he nudged his cousin.

Captain Armstrong turned round quickly, but Reggie's calm face gave him no opening for an explosion, so he said:

"Why, the idea you have given me, and which I will return with interest for all. The shoutin'!"

"The shouting! What shouting? *Do* hurry up," said Fred Upton.

"The shoutin'. Holloing! If, as you gentlemen say, my voice 'ill bring down the berg, why not shake a few pinnacles off and lighten her top hamper? Then she won't turn turtle so soon! There's the idea."

"But suppose we bring down the pinnacles *on ourselves* by the echo."

"Then the echo won't answer," said Reginald; "it's risky."

"You're as bad as any echo," retorted the captain, who had not forgiven Reginald his caution as to speaking.

"How so, captain?" asked the lad, smiling.

"Because you're bound to have the last word,"

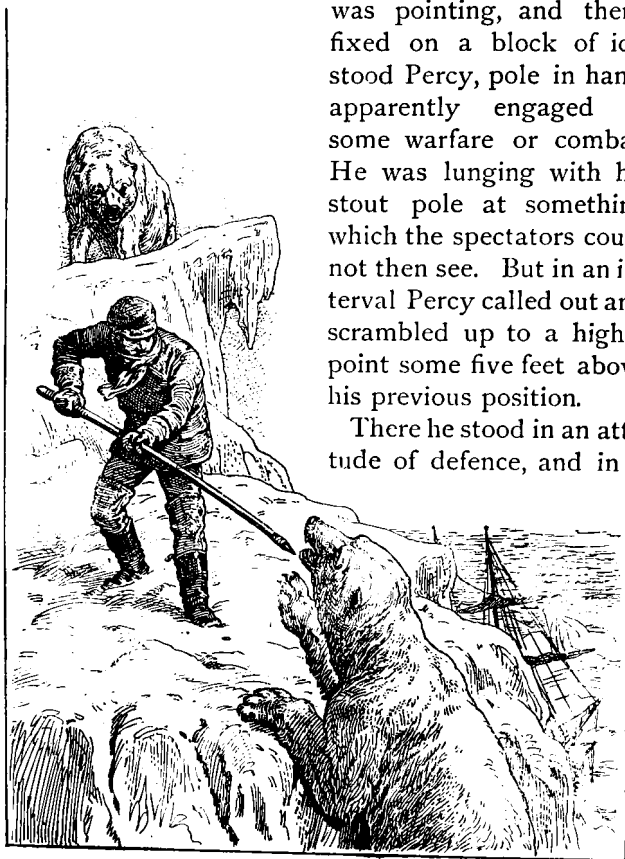
replied Armstrong. "I'm blessed if ever I heard such a boy. But this ain't business."

"Where is Percy?" enquired Jim, suddenly. "O! Look!"

All his hearers looked in the direction in which Jim

was pointing, and there, fixed on a block of ice, stood Percy, pole in hand, apparently engaged in some warfare or combat. He was lunging with his stout pole at something which the spectators could not then see. But in an interval Percy called out and scrambled up to a higher point some five feet above his previous position.

There he stood in an attitude of defence, and in a



few minutes the horrified spectators beheld a good sized white bear coming cautiously round below his intended victim.

Reginald did not utter a word, but dashed down into the cabin, and in a moment reappeared with his rifle.

"Don't fire, Reginald," cried his father, "you may shoot Percy."

"Or bring down the ice on him," muttered the captain.

"He will be killed," screamed Reginald. "Oh, let me shoot; I can hit the beast."

Mr Upton made no reply. The bear was beginning to climb up, but Percy was keeping him at bay bravely. At last Bruin managed to get the pole in his mouth and pull it out of Percy's hands by sheer strength of jaw.

"He's in a tight fit," said Armstrong. "Great Jehoshaphat! there's the other bear behind him! Shoot, ye lubber, he's dead anyway!"

But before Reginald could take aim, "crack" went a rifle. The bullet hit the pinnacle of ice behind the newcomer (the female bear), and splintered it, but did no other damage.

Reginald then pulled at the first bear and hit it evidently, for the brute staggered for a moment, but returned to the attack with greater fury than before. Percy seemed doomed. There was no means of escape. No help could reach him, and shooting was very risky.

The young man realised his danger, but he had not yet become fully aware of it, because he had not seen the second bear; but when he turned to climb

up higher, and so give the shooters a chance, he perceived Mrs Bruin awaiting him.

The female bear was close to him, but fortunately was prevented from touching him by the existence of a huge crevasse which lay between the base of the pinnacle at which she was standing and the ridge to which the unhappy Percy was clinging. The wounded bear was growling loudly, and Reginald had another shot which did some damage, but only made the animal rush up after Percy, badly wounded as it was.

"He's killed," roared the captain, in his most terrific voice, which was echoed by all who were impotent witnesses of the scene. As this terrible chorus rose, simultaneously two rifles cracked; then came a fearful roar and rush and rattle, which alarmed the spectators afresh. Large lumps of ice came bumping on deck, tearing the rigging, and smashing the bulwarks; one big piece was split into grape-shot on the anchor, and the missiles flew amongst the crew, knocking over Stevens, who had fired from the forecastle, and severely wounding Lot, who was with Job just starting to the rescue of Percy, unbidden.

But the results to the berg and the bears were even more disastrous. The pinnacle had fallen, and carried Mrs Bruin into the crevasse with its main portion. The upper part had come toppling on deck. The thin, delicate spire, as it had appeared to those on deck, had proved itself a very compact and heavy mass of ice, beautifully tapered, but very solid. The first bear was lying dead, pierced by two bullets at once; he could no longer sustain himself, and he had

fallen headlong, pitching with fearful violence upon the ice floe, which cracked beneath the impact.

Percy was safe after all. The men gave three cheers.

Then Lot and Job leaped upon the ice, and hurried to his rescue, while others hastened to pick up the carcass of the larger bear. The female they could not expect to find in the recesses of the ice, but they could cut up the male animal, and cook themselves savoury meat.

The Uptons and Captain Armstrong had been watching the episode with the greatest anxiety. Josiah could not move, he was in a terrible state. He declared afterwards that he felt paralysed, and "could not have moved to save his life." But Fred and Captain Armstrong were positively dancing with nervousness, watching the effect of Reginald's and Stevens' bullets, till the final catastrophe came, and then the captain roared like a tornado. It was fortunate that the ice was firm then, or the whole party on the berg might have been sacrificed.

There was great rejoicing on board the *Sea-lark* when Percy came back again, escorted by Lot and Job.

"I knew it," exclaimed the former; "Mister Percy Upton ain't the man to be eat by bear. We said so, me and Job, and we found him. Eh, Job?"

"We did; he was there. Still we found him, and have brought him back safe and sound, as we meant it."

These good-natured boasters apparently believed that their own action had preserved Percy, and that

they had discovered the young man who was in full view most of the time. But with all their swagger the hunter-sailors were perfectly aware of, and admitted, Percy's pluck.

"Thanks a thousand times, Lot and Job, you rescued me; but who killed the bears? Those were fine shots both."

"Reginald and Stevens were the marksmen," said his father. "I think," he added, smiling, for all were in high spirits now, notwithstanding their precarious position, "you must thank Captain Armstrong for killing the smaller bear."

"Why, captain," cried Percy, turning from Stevens and Reginald to clasp Armstrong's great hand, "why, captain, you're a wonder. How did you manage to totter down that mass of ice?"

"I just blew my trumpet at it," replied the captain modestly. "Joshua hadn't no monopoly at Jericho. I'm a free trader, *I* am."

"Don't quite understand," replied Percy. "You shouted it down, eh?"

"Exactly so. Your father and uncle here warned me, and I think it's a caution how we succeeded. You managed the first bear beautiful."

"Yes, I didn't mind the other so much. I can't tell why, but——"

"*I* can tell then," interrupted Reginald, laughing to himself.

"Why then?" asked the captain. "Some queer reason, I'll bet."

"No," said Reggie. "It was not so strong, only the *second bruin*, sir."

"You wretch." "Oh!" "Turn him adrift." "Get out," were some of the remarks which greeted this sally.

"You ought to be buried alive for that, Reg," said Percy, smiling kindly. "Thanks, old fellow, your aim was better than your pun, fortunately for me."

A series of handshakes and congratulations now succeeded, after which Percy said :

"I think we are forgetting the poor fellow below, and our own peril. I am awfully pleased I am back safe and sound, thanks to your pluck and courage. I can never say enough ; it *was* horrible having that bear clawing at me, I can tell you, lads. But I have some news——"

"Out with it," said the captain, cheerfully.

"Well then, *the iceberg is not sinking at all*. I saw so much."

"Not sinking!" exclaimed the captain. "Why, the schooner is down already some inches. You are mistaken, Mister Percy."

"No, I am perfectly certain I am right, captain. I had noticed the settling of the schooner, and, like you, fancied that the berg was pulling her over. I noted the place where the iceberg floated, and unless my ideas are all wrong, you will find my mark—the mark I made with the pole—uncovered. If, therefore, the iceberg is not sinking, and turning, why is the *Sea-lark* sinking gently by herself?"

Reginald hurried to the side of the vessel, followed by Stevens, who seemed very greatly preoccupied.

"There, you see, Stevens, we have gone lower a

little; the blue paint is further under water than it was," said Reginald.

"I am certain we are sinking," replied Stevens. "There is some extraordinary attraction dragging us under water. We shall go down all standing, and never know what is the matter. We must float the vessel."

The pair rejoined the group, and reported that the *Sea-lark* was still slowly, very slowly, but decidedly settling lower and lower.

"We must get out planks, and casks, and bladders, suspend them from the hull, and run them out. If we had an air-pump we could fill some of the tin cases and buoy her," said Josiah Upton.

"That's so," remarked the captain. "I would give ten dollars to know what the schooner is about. Did anyone ever hear of a ship dropping into eternity taut and sound as this? It's magic."

"Perhaps it's magnetism; is there a loadstone rock about?" suggested Jim.

"Perhaps the 'Arabian Nights' is about," laughed Percy. "It is incredible," he continued, rousing himself. "I can't believe that the schooner is actually sinking. I will measure the distance."

With a cord, carefully plumbed, the exact height of the deck above water was measured, and noted down.

Then it was determined to tell the remainder of the crew. They were all mustered on deck, headed by Lot and Job, who appeared perfectly unconcerned.

"My men," said Josiah Upton, who stepped forward, with his brother Fred and the captain on either hand, "listen to me. We have had a prosperous voyage

hitherto, and no particularly bad weather; but now we have struck this berg, and are running a risk."

"All right, sir, we won't flinch," cried the men, led by the example of Lot and his coadjutor, who cheered loudly.

"Thank ye, lads, thank ye," said Josiah. "I am sure we can all depend upon each other. But we find that a very curious thing has occurred—is occurring. Have you noticed the schooner's floating level?"

"No!" they cried, and two men ran to the side.

"She's sinking, by ——!" they exclaimed. Josiah was silent.

"She is," cried the captain. "The *Sea-lark* is doomed, unless we can ascertain how she is being dragged under water, and float her. We can heave out the water-casks—empty. We can try to hold her with hawsers to the ice. We can even make the ice-blocks float her for a while; but when the ice melts ——"

"Down we goes to Davy's locker," cried the fore-castle hands. "Well, mates, what says you?"

"I ain't a goin' to be drowned like a darned cat," muttered the man Goring, a half-Canadian, half-American fellow. He had already been grumbling about his pay, and had received it as related.

"Then you'll be shot like a darned skunk," shouted the captain. "If you want to go—go. Be off and join the Yankees. We'll land you on Disco, by thunder, if ever we get there."

"Guess I'll quit before that then," he replied, roughly. "Mates," he cried suddenly, "d'ye hear? The schooner's sinking under us! Come, who's for a Robinson Crusoe life among the Huskies?"

No one replied, for Frederick Upton's very handy revolver was already in hand, and his elbow was pressed close to his hip ; his finger was on the trigger of the weapon : another moment, and Goring would have measured his dead length on the deck, had he not anticipated matters by throwing up his hands in sign of submission.

"Cur," muttered Armstrong, and the word rolled through the misty atmosphere like distant thunder. "Hasn't the grit of a centipede !"

"You leave the schooner the first opportunity," said Josiah. "Go into the cabin until I come down."

The man sauntered aft with a very poor assumption of indifference. His eyes were fixed on Fred Upton who still remained steady, pistol in hand.

"Are you firm, men ?" cried Armstrong.

"We are : we're all grit," replied the men.

"Mr Stevens, report how much we have sunk since your last measurements, please," said the captain, with some pomp of manner, as if some most beneficial announcement was about to be made. If he were a chairman at a public meeting about to announce a substantial dividend, he could not have displayed much more importance.

A pause of some seconds ensued, then Stevens came back, and formally touching his head-gear of fur, replied :

"We've settled three-quarters of an inch, sir, nearly, in a few minutes."

"Very well. Then serve out the grog, and give the men their supper, Mr Stevens. We will arrange for floating the ship afterwards. Steady, men, steady!"



CHAPTER XV.

PREPARATIONS FOR ESCAPE—GORING RESTIVE—A
MELANCHOLY DUTY—THE MUTINEER'S PUNISH-
MENT—MAD !

THE coolness of the captain had a most beneficial effect on all. Not only were the remainder of the men, including Lot and Job, encouraged, but they were also admonished by Upton's revolver, or "shooting-iron," as he termed it. Josiah had retired to the cabin, where he administered a severe lecture to the mutinous Goring, deprived him of the extra pay, and then informed him that he would be put on shore the very first opportunity.

To this lecture and to his deprivation of pay the man listened sullenly, but immediately his employer had quitted the cabin, he glanced round, and then quickly advanced to the money chest which he fancied might be open, or left with the key inserted in the lock. But Josiah was too wide-awake to act thus; he had locked his chest.

Goring swore under his breath, and paused to look around him. The cabin was empty now, the others were on deck or at supper, why shouldn't he break open the chest ! No ; prudence restrained him ! He

would bide his time, and then he would have his revenge!

So he crept quietly out of the cabin, and went on deck, and then into the fore-castle, where his mates received him with scant civility.

"Ah, you poor fools," he said, scornfully, "you'll have a nice time of it in this sinkin' ship. Mark my words, *death will haunt ye!* You'll die one by one, rot like sheep, and then, where will your Opal Mountains be! Bah, you idiots!"

This and other less choice language had a certain effect on Biscoe, the Canadian, and on Pat, the Irishman. Lot and Job did not feel altogether comfortable either, for they had imbibed a strong leaven of superstition from the Uptons. But their reflections and remonstrances were cut short by a terrible cry which emanated from the cabin.

Lot and Job rushed up and aft in a moment. The other men sat in silent astonishment, listening. Then hearing a word which infused a new terror into them, they hurried on deck.

It was deserted. No one, not a creature, not even *Punch* was there. They looked round. The carcass of the bear was dimly visible on the iceberg; no sound save the occasional creaking of the ice was to be heard! There was no wind. The sea was calm. The ice was quiet.

It was near midnight, and would have been fairly light but for the overhanging clouds and fog which hung, like a pall and a veil beneath it, over the landscape. The three men stepped aft, and peered into the cabin, which was now full of light of lamps.

All the rest of the ship's company, the captain, Stevens, the Uptons, father, uncle, son, and nephews, were crowding round the berth in which the form of poor blinded Harry Upton lay motionless.

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the Canadian, Biscoe; "he's dead!"

"God help us!" muttered Pat, piously.

"Ha, what did I tell ye!" muttered Goring, with a sneer. "My words has come to pass already! Death is hauntin' ye! He is here! Ha!"

"Shut yer croakin' mouth," said Pat. "Hould yer whisht, or be japers, I cut the tongue out o' ye! Mind that!"

Goring was so utterly astonished that he actually made no reply to this defiance from a man so much his junior and inferior. The three men peered into the cabin in silence, awed by the scene, and by the fulfilment of the sinister prediction. Goring, like many other dabblers in mystic science, was somewhat disturbed at the rapid and correct result of his own efforts and prophecy.

"Poor young chap," muttered Paddy, "I wondher how he died. Perhaps he isn't dead intirely."

"He wasn't murdered, I suppose," said Biscoe. "Who was last in the cabin, Goring?"

"I was, and what of it?" retorted the mutineer.

"Nothing; only if he has died by violence, the yardarm will be your gallows, my lad, and I'll lend a hand on the 'whip.'"

"Murthered is it!" exclaimed Pat. "Then the owld gintleman will have his own! Gorin', yer a limb o' Satan, so ye are!"

"Am I? If so, I'll teach you manners, any way."

So saying he delivered a sounding blow on Pat's ear, which brought the young fellow to the deck after a vain endeavour to recover himself.

Pat rose, and shook his head and rubbed it. He had received a hard knock, and did not for a moment seem inclined to resent it. But as soon as he had recovered himself, he darted at Goring, and by a well-aimed blow knocked out a tooth, and covered his opponent's face with blood.

A fierce tussle ensued, and the fight might have been attended with serious consequences, for Goring, now gory, had drawn his knife, had not Captain Armstrong and Stevens rushed up and separated the combatants.

"Bear a hand here, Biscoe; Lot, come here and disarm this cur. Ha, would you?" roared Armstrong, as Goring in his rage aimed a blow at him with his knife, "would ye? Discipline, lad!"

He clinched his enormous fist and launched it like a battering-ram at the mutineer. The knuckles came in terrific contact with Goring's face just where the nose unites with the forehead. The bridge of the nose was flattened as with a hammer, a big red lump rose on the forehead in compensation, and with a thud the wretched man fell to the deck stunned, and lay bleeding, disfigured, and motionless.

The spectators gazed on the scene with awe. The captain could hit, that was a fact.

"He ain't dead," said Armstrong, contemptuously; "such vermin as him is hard to kill. Disarm him bind him, and leave him on his back."

The men in silence obeyed. This terrible captain could fell an ox!

Meanwhile Stevens was measuring the height of the schooner above the water. The *Sea-lark* had subsided three-quarters of an inch more. The subsidence was sure and steady.

"Bitter bad luck," he muttered. "The boy dead, mutiny aboard, a sinking ship, and desolation all around us. Curse the Opal Mountain! I don't believe it exists; it's a mirage!"

The worthy Stevens was unconsciously echoing the sentiment of the song in the opera, "L'or c'est un chimère."

Having seen his orders obeyed, Captain Armstrong returned to the cabin, in which a scene of affecting grief was to be witnessed. Harry, poor blinded Harry, had apparently died suddenly from exhaustion, or from the effects of the electricity. His father had long before noted the gradual quietness which was stealing over his afflicted son, but had attributed it to a desire to rest and to sleep. Consequently he did not disturb the lad, who remained as he lay until midnight, when they thought he would require some nourishment.

Frederick and Reginald had accordingly proceeded to the cabin, the one to examine, the other to report progress, and to fetch anything that might be required by his unfortunate cousin. But when they approached the berth they found him stiff and almost cold, and then arose the cry which had resounded through the ship—weird and sad as the cry in Egypt

on that memorable night when there was not a house in which one had not died.

Death had come full early to poor Harry Upton. A fine young fellow, he was a good son and a good brother. No one had hardly ever heard him say an unkind word. Critical he was, but not cruel, firm but obedient, pleasant, cheerful, with a kindly thought for all. No wonder his relatives mourned him bitterly, and one must not blame the men or the boys, as with drooping heads and clasped hands of sympathy, they mingled their tears by the bedside of "dear old Harry," as they affectionately termed him. So said his cousins and mates.

No trace of pain was visible on the marble face. It even wore a kind of smile. The lips were closed firmly too—an unusual thing, but the hands were open and lifeless, the heart no longer gave circulation to the blood, the limbs were not rigid, but just bent a little. The lad lay peacefully on his back, his head high, his eyes closed, and had not the coldness of death chilled his limbs, the spectators would have believed him sleeping.

Then Josiah and Frederick Upton upbraided themselves for having come on such an expedition, and, having come, for not having had a doctor on board. True, they themselves were fairly capable of prescribing for any ordinary malady, their experiences in the woods had done so much for them ; and they had successfully contended against the common maladies to which poor humanity is prone. But here was a case which came not within their ken ; they had not anticipated that the brilliant servant, which does our behests

with such correctness and rapidity, would deprive the dear one of sight, and kill him by concussion.

"It is God's will," said the mourning father, "let us not repine overmuch. Mayhap his peaceful death has been better than our own may be. Who can tell what is in store for us?"

"Who, indeed," echoed Josiah, pressing his brother's hand. "Dear lad! He is at peace, and in his eternal rest. His soul may be even now hovering around us."

The boys said nothing; they were sobbing audibly, and had they spoken, would have broken down completely. It was a solemn scene, and weird. The fur-clothed group, lanterns in hand, surrounding the berth, and watching for a sign in the death-cold face; the "struggling misty light" outside; the snow and ice, the murky heavy pall of cloud which was still hanging sullenly over land and sea, the strange surroundings of the cabin, all impressed the captain as he came down to explain the cause of the scuffle on deck.

He said little, no one paid much attention. Then after a while Frederick Upton with breaking heart kissed his son, an example followed by all with tears and sobs. One look, a kiss on the cold marble forehead, and then one by one the mourners silently stole away on tiptoe, as if any sound would disturb the motionless form. Alas! alas! for Harry Upton.

Up on deck the now reduced party held a melancholy consultation. Sharp as were the pangs which rent every heart, the brave men did not forget the living in their sorrow for the dead. The late quarrel was discussed, and Goring's action generally con-

demned, but he was unanimously acquitted of any attempt at murder.

Then the position and condition of the schooner demanded instant attention. Observations showed plainly enough that the ice was beginning to melt. The north-west wind was heralding its approach in a manner only perceptible by inanimate objects, and the soulless creation. Man, with all his gifts and attainments, is much more ignorant of Nature's forecastings than the little eider duck or the savage bear and wolf.

Those animals, birds and beasts alike, knew that the great *débâcle* was at hand. They knew that Providence was about to send the soft wind from his heavens to melt the snow and ice, warm the water, disperse the fogs, and cause the burning Arctic summer sun to glow on ice and mountain, to sparkle on the ocean, and laugh upon the snow-born river plunging to the sea.

The birds and the amphibious animals knew what was approaching, and Man only obtained his information from them. It seems curious that the highest of created beings should have to depend upon the instincts of lower animals for his teaching and learning in those matters which Nature carries on unaided. So it is, and all our boasted intelligence cannot determine the changes of weather and season so well as the wild duck, or the insect in the lichen.

But Man, as represented by Captain Armstrong, is an observing animal, and he ascertained by watching the birds and seals, that the expected change was at hand. Then he called a council of his peers, and

communicated to them what the ice—the cold, soulless ice—and the birds knew, and what they would have told, if they could.

“The warmer wind is approaching,” he said. “The ice will ‘give’ and melt; this berg which is so curiously attached to us, will sail away, and we must die on board with our vessel unless we can manage to reach the land.”

This was the sum and substance of his warning. The fog was lifting, the birds began to nest again, the clouds parted, the sun came out to release the frost-bands, the seals began to sun themselves on the floes, and Nature rubbed her hands to warm them.

“We must land,” said Josiah; “there is no help for it. We *will* land——” Here he paused, and continued in a broken voice, “We will bury poor Harry.”

“The berg has not sunk,” said Percy, that afternoon. “The mark I made and the piece of wood I placed on it yesterday are in the same place; the *Sea-lark* has sunk a little though.”

So preparations were made hurriedly for quitting the schooner. The boats were launched, and after considerable trouble, lifted on the ice. The whole energies of the crew, captain, and passengers, were directed to the unloading of the schooner. So many articles and so much of the lading had already been shifted, that the work was not so difficult as had been anticipated. Many diverse articles had been collected aft, from stern and counter the stout boats were laden, and their contents transferred to the boats on the ice.

The mainland looked desolate, snowbound, and precipitous. Barren, bare, and mountainous tracts

overlooked the iron-bound shores, and many very anxious eyes were cast at them. Some of the mountains are 4000 feet high. Granite, syenite, mica-slate, and other primitive rocks compose the tracts. Those who study the geology of Greenland will tell us also of secondary formations, and of the few alluvial deposits which exist. Minerals are numerous, and beautiful stones are frequently met with: garnets, crystals, rose-quartz, spars, magnetic iron ore, iron pyrites, cryolite, galena, &c. Potstone and talc are formed into various utensils by the natives; the golden mica was in former times, in the reign of Elizabeth and other periods, actually taken for, and carried to England as gold by early explorers!

Our adventurers, however, were too deeply impressed by the necessity for exertion, to pay much attention to scenery and surroundings. Their first care was to transport the laden boats to land, and this was by no means an easy task, for the high tides of those latitudes crush and cram the ice into large and fantastic forms, which cannot be overstepped and must be turned. The journey of a couple of miles thus became nearly six, and it was only with difficulty and by working all night that the first boat was dragged ashore, the "team" of men having many times dropped into holes or penetrated treacherous ice. A convenient beach on which a quantity of drift wood had been cast, served them for a resting place at the curve of a small fiord. High hills receded from the water and ice level; deep valleys full of glaciers, and more hills lay snow-capped beyond. There was no fresh water, although some traces of an old torrent were visible hard by.

In this desolate spot the tent was erected, and in it were placed the articles which had been carried ashore: tinned provisions and a medley of stores, guns, ammunition, furs, and sail-cloth, with some iron tools and looking-glasses, &c., in case the Husky native came to barter. *Punch* was left in charge, and then the party returned to the schooner.

Another boat load succeeded, and still the schooner sank. The *Sea-lark* had no buoyancy. She had no leak, she had been sensibly lightened, and yet it seemed that the lighter she became the more rapidly she sank. This was a phenomenon which puzzled everyone. Now and then some remarks were made, and here and there a cheer was heard as the boats proceeded; but, as a rule, the melancholy duties were performed in silence and sorrow. Death was dogging their footsteps!

Goring, now released, was pressed into the service. He presented an ugly appearance, and his surly face and insolent threatening manner indicated a murderous temper. Several times he hinted at mutiny to the men, but they remained firm, and but for fear of his knife he would have been well cuffed and kicked. At first he flatly refused to do anything, then orders were given that he was to have no rations served to him. This treatment sobered him, and he consented to work, bruised as he was.

After these arrangements had been made, the most melancholy duty remained—the funeral of Harry Upton. It was a sad and touching ceremonial. He was, it seemed, destined to be laid to rest amid the eternal ice and snows, as so many greater, but perhaps not nobler characters, had been. In his case the grave

would be known and marked ; in the cases of too many brave explorers the veil of snow and mist open just to give us a glimpse of the party ; then they are hidden for ever from our sight in this world, and no man knoweth of their sepulchres to this day.

“ A band of gallant hearts,
Well ordered, calm, and brave ;
Braced for their closing parts—
Their long march to the grave.”

Nothing could exceed the care and tenderness of Josiah Upton and his sons for their brother, uncle, and cousin. Everything connected with the last preparations was performed by them, but Fred Upton insisted on making the coffin in which his son was to be buried. Lot and Job dug the grave while the crew were on shore arranging the stores in the tents. On the third afternoon all the necessary preparations had been completed. A lovely day, a few clouds chasing each other across the white blue sky ; a brilliant sun, sparkling ice, rippling water, and crisp curling waves clad in ocean's uniform of blue and white. Birds flew about in hundreds, seals lazily basked, or slid into the water to enjoy a bath. Nature even in those latitudes was, for the nonce, animated and gay, and seemed to mock the grief of poor humanity !

“ Wouldn't Harry have been glad to see all this ? ” murmured Reginald to Percy. “ Dear old fellow, we shall miss him awfully ! ”

“ Yes, indeed,” said Percy and Jim together. “ How jolly he always was ; it seems almost cruel that he should have died,” added his brother, bitterly.

“ Remember he might have been blind for life had



The Struggle in the Cabin.—Page 189.

he been spared, Jim," said Percy. There are hidden mercies, my boy, as well as evident ones ! "

"Yes, I know that," replied Jim ; "but father said his eyes were much better, he was certain, before he had the fit."

"The fit !" cried his cousins ; "we never heard of that ! When did he have a fit ? "

"Father didn't tell anyone, and wouldn't have told me, only I came in. It was the day before he died, in the afternoon. But he recovered it, and nothing was said. I promised not to tell, and I didn't mean to ; it slipped out ! "

"Poor fellow !" said Percy ; "I am sure whatever happens is for the best, hard as it seems. Let us go on board. There is no one there ; we can do something, and see him again for the last time ! "

The three young men, as we may designate them, crossed the ice and found the skiff moored to the edge of the floe. They had only a few yards to scull, but ere they had settled themselves in the boat, a terrific, unearthly yell and a cry for help rang out from the schooner. It was a startled, fearful cry, as of one suddenly alarmed. An awful despair was in it !

"Pull," shouted Percy ; "something is wrong, pull."

Three minutes sufficed to bring the skiff alongside, and in a few seconds more the lads were in the cabin, whence sounds of strange import proceeded.

They did not enter. They dared not. By the money chest knelt Goring, his eyes starting from their sockets, his face black, a vacant awful look of terror in his face. He was demented, dying ; for, grasping him by the throat, with all the muscular strength of a strong arm, stood Harry Upton, alive and furious !



CHAPTER XVI.

"HARRY IS ALIVE!"—THE INVALID'S TALE—HIS
OPINION OF THE SITUATION—A SUCCESSFUL
ATTEMPT—SHE RISES.

TO say that the cousins were surprised is nothing ; they were at first alarmed, and remained grouped by the door, afraid to enter the cabin. So puzzled were they at the sight they beheld, that they did not interfere between Harry and his opponent, though the latter was sinking rapidly into insensibility. When, however, they perceived the imminent danger in which he was, Percy rushed in, and then, assisted by Reginald and Jim, pulled their angry relative from Goring's throat.

"Is it possible, Harry, that you are alive?" cried Percy, breathlessly.

"And can see?" added Reginald. "My dear old fellow, this is a miracle."

Jim said little ; he was trying with affectionate tenderness to lead his brother back to his berth. Harry made no resistance after he perceived his adversary was *hors de combat*, and the three young fellows lifted him once more into his berth. Then

Reginald rushed on deck with a loaded revolver, and fired it three times in the air.

This signal, as Reggie anticipated, brought the crew and the chiefs of the expedition off to the ship in a few minutes. Scarcely had the echoes resounded from the barren cliffs, scarcely had the frightened birds commenced to wheel and scream in the sunshine, when Frederick and Josiah had launched a boat, and with the captain and Stevens, had pushed off for the schooner.

"What is the meaning of this, Reginald?" enquired his father, sternly. "This is no time for amusement."

"Yes it is, father, yes it is," cried Reginald, dancing with sheer delight. "Harry is alive. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

Frederick Upton staggered back as if he had received a blow. He put his hand to his head, stared wildly around him, and if he had not clutched his brother's arm, he would have fallen to the deck.

"Where is he?" enquired the perplexed uncle. "In the cabin? How did you find this out, lads?"

Reginald explained, adding that Percy and Jim were still below in charge of Harry and the traitor Goring.

"Come down with me," said Frederick Upton, hoarsely, "come down, Josh, I cannot believe that this is all true."

The brothers went down, and found Jim keeping guard over the still prostrate form of Goring. The open chest, the scattered papers, and the money-box, of which the lid had been forced, told the tale of treachery, avarice, and robbery. The lust for gold had

proved too much for the sailor, and he had fallen under the temptation.

Harry Upton lay in his bunk, weak and prostrate after the severe struggle he had sustained with Goring. He could only reply in disjointed sentences to the questions asked so quickly by his father, his uncle, and cousins. He remembered nothing, he said, after the fit he had had. He had some recollection of having been taken ill, and then he had remained quite unconscious until he had opened his eyes and seen Goring kneeling at the chest. It appeared to him that he was dreaming, for by degrees his memory returned, and he recollected the lightning, and his blindness and pain. Then he recalled the sudden fit which had, as it were, paralysed his body, though his brain was not wholly obscured.

"Oh father, uncle, you can't tell what I suffered! I was conscious in a dim and distant fashion that you believed me dead, and I could not move. Suddenly my eyes opened, it seemed as if light had been flashed into them. Then my senses became more acute, but I could not stir nor talk, I could hear your preparations, and guessed that I must be buried; but the agony I endured was awful. Then, as I lay, I perceived that fellow Goring enter, and he actually looked at me, so I shut my eyes, and waited. I could do nothing of course, but I felt sure he was up to some mischief, and I kept my eyes on him. Then as all seemed quiet, he broke open the chest and looked over the papers until he came to the money. All this time I was raging, I felt boiling, as it were, and longed to jump up and collar him. I felt my hands clench, and

I wished, prayed, for life again. Suddenly I felt I could stand it no longer ; and before I could realise the fact, I was up and out of my bunk ; in another second I had him by the throat, and nearly choked him ! He yelled when I rose for him ! ”

“ You never saw a man so terrified,” said Percy, when, after a while, Harry had given these particulars in a disjointed manner. “ The fellow’s face was perfectly black, he was choking, his eyes staring, and he looked as if he had been frightened out of his senses ! ”

“ I believe he is out of his mind,” said Jim. “ I can’t make him understand anything.”

“ Perhaps he is only shamming,” said Reginald. “ But what need we care ! Harry is alive, and if not exactly kicking, he can grip still. It is too delightful. Hope it isn’t all a dream.”

“ No, Reg,” muttered Harry, “ it is true ; I hope soon to be about again when I recover my strength.”

“ I don’t think that wretch Goring will complain of your want of muscle, lad,” said Uncle Josh. “ Here come the men, the captain and Stevens are already on board. Call them down, Jim.”

Jim Upton, nothing loth, obeyed, but not only Armstrong and his mate Stevens, but Lot, Job, Biscoe, and Paddy all came to pay their respects to “ Master Harry.”

“ Bedad, he’s resserected,” said Pat, “ as like my owld grandmother as two pays ! ”

“ How can he be like your owld granny ? ” said Lot ; “ one’s male and the other’s a woman. Shut your mouth, man ! ”

“ My owld granny died and came to life afther, just

when we had found her stockin' wid the money in it ! Oh, but it was a grate disappointment entirely."

Meanwhile Armstrong had whispered his congratulations to Harry, who had no difficulty in hearing them.

"As for that ruffian, we will hang him," continued the captain. "Come here, sirrah, d'ye hear!"

But although the captain's tones were not greatly modulated, Goring did not move. He looked round vacantly, and laughed.

"By thunder, he's a luny!" cried Armstrong. "He's as mad as a hatter—madder! His senses have been frightened out of him!"

Stevens, meanwhile, had approached the thief cautiously, and found him vacantly staring at the money in his hand.

"He's crazed, sir, that's a fact. Mister Harry's sudden appearance was too much for him. What shall we do with him?"

"Take him ashore," said Armstrong. "Now, lads, clear out. Mr Upton will be glad to have the place quiet. All hands on deck!"

Armstrong led the way, the mate and all the men followed. Lot and Job conducted the unhappy Goring, who seemed perfectly helpless. The red and black marks of Harry's fingers and thumbs were visible on his throat. The sudden grip had nearly strangled him, and had crushed out his senses. He believed the body had risen from death to condemn him, and his conscience finished what bodily, and superstitious, terror had begun. They put him under the care of the Irishman, who was lost in contempla-

tive pity, and in a series of comparisons between his own aged relative, who had come to life again so opportunely, and Harry Upton.

"Did ye ever hear anything like it?" remarked the captain in a generally genial way to his auditors, Stevens, Lot, and Job.

Stevens shook his head, and made no answer, but Lot looked at Job, and apparently finding comfort and encouragement, remarked casually:

"It isn't so dreadful uncommon, captain!"

"O! isn't it!" replied Armstrong the Thunderer. "Really, now!"

"No, sir, you ask Job, he can confirm it! We once knew a man who lived for three weeks in a trance, or fit, like. And when I sees Mr Harry Upton like that, says I to my mate here, 'Job,' I says, 'mark my words. Didn't I, partner?'"

"Ay, Lot, you said that!"

"But what were your words? Come now!" said Stevens, "out with them!"

"My words was, 'Mark me, Job, we haven't seen the end o' this yet.' Those was them, and we hadn't!"

"No, we hadn't; Lot was right," asserted his friend. "He said that to me, and you see it come to pass."

"You quite agreed with me, Job," continued Lot, patronisingly, for he wished to repay his friend's devotion. "*We* agreed, and it came to pass!"

"You are a wonderful pair, I'm sure," said Armstrong.

"Hallo!" cried Reginald, who suddenly appeared, and heard the captain's remark. "I'll bet you that

either Job or Lot knew that Harry would recover, and said so, but only to each other. Eh, Lot?"

"You are quite right," said Stevens. "They guessed as much. But can any one explain the reason of his recovery?"

"Not yet, unless the electric shock partially paralysed him, and affected the limbs suddenly. Then the fit, or convulsion, finished it. Nature rested, a strong will prevailed, a yearning desire perfected the impulse, and he rose again!"

"I remember reading an instance," said Armstrong, "in which a deaf and dumb man, a sailor who had lost his faculties in hot climates, went to see the clown Grimaldi in England; and when his messmates were enjoying the jokes, their dumb partner cried out, 'What a very funny fellow' the clown was. He could both speak and hear, for the tremendous desire to say something had exerted some influence which restored him; and that's a fact!" added the captain.

Lot and Job looked at each other and nodded, but they made no remark. The captain and the others saw this little pantomime, and Stevens thought he would pay them off.

"You don't believe that, eh, mates?" said he. "The captain here arn't the man to repeat lies, you know—you must credit *him*."

"So we do," replied Lot. "I *know* it's true—there, Mr Stevens."

Stevens was staggered. "Have you heard it before?" he asked.

"No," replied Lot, calmly, "*but I am the man as*

was deaf and dumb, and Job here was with us at the time."

"That's a fact," added Job, with a glance at Armstrong.

A shout of laughter succeeded, amid which the partners went off to their duty ashore, and returned to the tents where *Punch* remained still on guard, though sorely exercised in his mind by the presence of some seals which he regarded with astonishment, not unmingled with awe.

"Lot," said his faithful ally, "you paid him out nicely."

"Job," replied his partner, "without your assistance I'm a baby. If you didn't come and back me, partner, I'd be sometimes discredited, I do believe."

"Never, Lot; not you! Why, it's true, leastways, partly. You did say, 'Mark my words,' I remember them; well—I——"

"All right, old pal, you're true grit. But ye needn't mind, there's no one here now, and ye needn't put it up. However, it's a miracle is young Upton's comin' to; and I'm bound to say *I* never heard the like."

"Nor me either," assented his friend, "as we're alone."

"Look yonder, partner," said Lot, "isn't that a walrus?"

"Certainly it is; come and give it snakes. Guess we'll kill him."

Not taking *Punch* with them, but armed with harpoons and revolvers, our voracious friends hurried across the ice, making a detour to get to leeward of, and behind the animal they intended to capture.

We may leave them to their hunting and return on board the *Sea-lark*, where joy, and gladness, and hope had taken the places of sorrow, sadness, and despondency. Stevens fancied that the schooner had not sunk so much; the captain roared orders without any trumpet across the ice; the men also felt the influence, while the Uptons, as may be imagined, were in a perfect whirl of happiness. The only one who did not share in the general joy and excitement was Goring.

When it had been ascertained beyond a doubt that Harry was in a fair way of recovery, that he could see again, if not as well as ever, still plainly, and that his strength only wanted nursing, he was carried ashore, and placed in a comfortable tent well wrapped up, well fed, and generally spoiled and coddled. He was not permitted to look at the dazzling snow and ice, but was amused as well as possible, and the curious behaviour of the *Sea-lark*, which persisted in sinking when lightened, was strongly commented on.

"There is something underneath," said Harry, after a long pause, during which his cousins thought him asleep.

"Yes," said Reginald, "there is ice. We have settled on an ice-ledge, and now our schooner is going to Davy Jones."

"But," murmured Harry, "ice will melt or rise. The *Sea-lark* ought to lift again."

"She doesn't," said Percy; "she sinks more and more."

Another long pause, then Harry said:

"Have you examined her? Has anyone examined the keel?"

"No; think of the risk and the cold."

"When father comes, tell him I want him," was the only reply; "tell him I want him particularly."

"What are you thinking about, Harry?" asked Percy. "Don't worry."

"All right," replied his cousin, "don't mind me; I am much better."

He would not say any more, but shut his eyes, so his cousins, leaving Jim to watch and wait, went out and busied themselves on the schooner. She was still sinking. Only three feet six inches from the water, which was nearly level with the deck. In a few hours the deck would be a-wash, and nothing could possibly save her. The dead lights were up, the ports were closed, all that could have been done to keep the water out had been done. Casks and tanks had been floated, masses of ice also had been towed alongside, every available means had been tried to keep the *Sea-lark* up; but still, mysteriously, she settled down, slowly, it is true, but the progress was evident. The casks, &c., kept her up longer, but even they were being dragged into the depths by degrees. Most mysterious!

All this Jim communicated to Harry, who listened attentively, and, as his reasoning powers returned, argued the question in his mind. Then he fancied he had found the solution, but he would not communicate the result of his cogitations to any one except his father. He was so positive upon this point that Jim hurried off to fetch Fred Upton.

When he entered the tent he was delighted to see the improvement in his son's appearance. Harry's

eyes were bright and clear, his features had lost the drawn and weary expression, he had more colour in his face, and he could converse with less difficulty and with greater fluency. Will and reason had returned, and were acting for his good.

"Well, Harry, so you want me, I hear."

"Yes, father; I have been thinking about the *Sea-lark*. There is something underneath."

"Yes, laddie, ice; plenty of it too," replied his father.

"Yes, but something besides. There must be *something in the ice* which is heavier and weighing it down!"

"By thunder!" exclaimed Frederick Upton, "it may be!"

"I think it must be so, father," continued Harry, else why cannot the schooner float? She is upright, isn't she?"

"Yes, laddie. Then you think there is something on the keel, Harry?" said Frederick Upton, nodding at Jim, who at once came close to him. "Ask your uncle to come here," whispered his father. "I am afraid Harry is not so well again. Now," he resumed, addressing the invalid, "tell me all you think, but don't worry about the *Sea-lark*."

"No, I am not worrying," replied Harry; "why should I?"

His father regarded him intently, and the young man perceived that his kind parent was troubled.

"You needn't mind, father, I am much better. My idea is that some heavy substance has been frozen to the keel of the schooner, and when the ice melts and

releases the substance, the vessel will float. Now, you may say what you like, that's my notion."

"Nothing like lightning for brightening up the brain," said Uncle Josiah, who had overheard the remark. "Fred, I think Harry is right; let us have a search. Can't we melt or break away the mass under the keel?"

"We will try," said his brother. "Let us fire our cannon, or send down a diver."

"Lot shall go," replied Fred Upton; "he can ascertain the truth. There is no time to be lost either; let us go at once."

After seeing Harry again comfortably disposed, the brothers went in search of Lot and Job; but these gentlemen had, as we are aware, gone off on an expedition after the wily walrus, and could not be discovered. The consequence was that Stevens and the captain were first consulted.

"I'm not salt nor sugar," said Stevens. "I'll go and have a look. I'll put on my indiarubbers and fasten a line round me; I can find out in half a minute. Never say die!"

But this chivalrous offer no one would accept.

"You will be frost-bitten," said Armstrong, "or frozen to death! No; we'll lay a train. Talkin' of india-rubber, we'll lay a fuse, and blast the ice away. I believe Mister Harry Upton has struck ile!"

This suggestion was adopted with a modification, and the Uptons worked hard. The fuse was made, the train was ready, but it had to be fixed to the ice. They couldn't expect to blow up the mass without some certainty of contact. At the depth it was almost impossible.

"There's some blasting oil in the fore-castle," said the captain. "Let us put some in a biscuit cylinder, and fire it by concussion underneath with the gun. We will lower it to the ice and explode it!"

Stevens had meantime prepared the gun, and loaded it. It had, with the other stores, been brought on the ice-floe.

"Let me have a try with the bar," he said; "anything will do. There's an old iron bar, pointed at one end, and bulky. It will go through ice and water. We'll depress the muzzle and let fly!"

After some delay the cannon was launched in the whale-boat, which was lashed to the jolly-boat. A kind of platform was made, the gun was loaded, primed, and all ready.

"Stand clear, mind the recoil. If I hit the old schooner 'twixt wind and water, we're done brown! I've fastened a line to the bar."

"It's kill or cure," muttered the captain. "Fire! Try it, anyhow!"

The mate fired. The gun recoiled, and nearly crushed his foot. The iron bar was launched like a harpoon under water—a crash!—some bubbles arose, and then after a while some fragments of ice; then a block came up—a mass of ice!

"Hurrah," said the mate. "Haul in the rope. Here we are! Once more. *The schooner rises*. Here the rope is fixed! What's up?"

The *Sea-lark* was! She rose several inches, and again sat gracefully on the water, her bow only resting on the ice."



CHAPTER XVII.

THE *SEA-LARK* HERSELF AGAIN—THE “RIGHT”
WHALE IN THE WRONG PLACE—AN EXPEDI-
TION—AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE ESQUIMAUX.



HIS was indeed a surprise. The small masses of ice which had been displaced by the bar could not have greatly affected the position of the schooner, and yet here she was, floating at her usual measurement, ay, and even above it. The stern and bow alone were still fast, but the increased buoyancy of the stern portion almost lifted the bows from the ice-ledge.

The rope was fast beneath the water. The pointed iron bar or sharpened wedge which had been discharged from the gun still remained fixed in something, and fixed deeply. Whatever that something was it had in all probability been fixed to the schooner, and prevented her floating. As the ice melted it had dragged her down. The substance itself now demanded examination.

“There is something very queer about this,” remarked Stevens. “But we have managed well with the bar, so far. The water can’t be very deep!”

"Yes," assented the captain, "but the question now is, 'What's at t'other end?'"

"Haul it in," cried Reginald. "Come along. Hi, Biscoe—Pat. Come here, and pull like fiends. Now, Captain Armstrong, your arms are strong, I know."

"Ay, ay; name and natur'," replied the captain, cheerily. "Now then, mates and young gentlemen—yo heave ho—why, here's the lunny Goring coming out. Bear a hand, ye lubber—yo heave ho—Hi! Now then, altogether!"

A steady and continuous pull was the result. Even Goring, who seemed perfectly dazed, seized the rope, and assisted. After a while the mass in which the bar had fixed itself was moved—it came up slowly.

"How deep is the water, think you?" gasped Stevens.

A deep growl which sounded like "sixteen fathom" came from the captain's throat.

"Then haul!" cried Stevens. "Here she is—a whale, as I'm a sinner!" he shouted after a pause, during which all hands pulled like men engaged in a "tug-of-war." "Hurrah!"

He was right. A small-sized whale was pinned by the bar, harpoon fashion. The pointed iron, propelled with considerable velocity, had struck the thin coating of ice and fastened itself beyond the "eye" to which the rope was fixed, in the animal's body. It was not a large whale, but it was sufficient to give some trouble had it been alive.

"A dead right whale!" cried the captain. "Well, I'm darned!"

"This bangs Banagher," said Pat; "a dead whale in ice!"

"There are toads in stones, why not whales in ice?" said Jim. "Harry had the right idea, captain! The right whale in the wrong place!"

"He had," replied Armstrong; "this blessed whale got embedded and froze in the ice. The ice got fixed to the schooner, the schooner fixed on the berg, and we got into a fix all round! That's what's the matter!"

"This doesn't account for the schooner sinking so steadily," said Jim.

"Yes it does!" exclaimed Reginald. "Why, it's as clear as day! The whale was encased in ice——"

"Say in a *glace case*, while you are about it," suggested Jim.

"In *ice*," continued Reginald, "no puns, please. When the ice began to melt, the whale's weight was felt; so——"

"Oh, poetry, gentlemen," cried Jim, who was in high spirits. "The ice began to melt, and the whale's weight was felt! When the ice was opened, the whale began to sing! Isn't this a dainty tale to tell at home next Spring! Beautiful!"

Armstrong, Stevens, and Percy laughed loudly, the deck hands smiled, and Goring, who was perfectly harmless, and quite as mad, danced round, snapping his fingers.

"Poor chap!" murmured Percy; "he's tamed, but at a terrible price for *him*!"

"The truth is pretty evident," remarked Armstrong; "we've had a fine old scare, and now we may up stick and load again. The schooner is all right—we must rip her off the ledge and go ahead, close hauled."

"That whale ye see ain't much good to us ; it's too small," said Stevens. "Leave it for the bears and the birds !"

"Too small !" echoed Jim. "Why, I would call it a monster ! It's how long ? Why, ten yards long !"

"Ten yards ! and what is ten yards for a whale ?" said the captain.

"Just the same as for any other animal," retorted Reginald, "thirty feet !"

"Thirty feet's nothin' for a whale ; I wouldn't give thirty pins for a creature of only thirty feet."

"And you've only *two*, captain," said Jim, rudely, "so you're worth only two pins ! There !" he added, saucily, as he darted away.

"I wouldn't give two pins for your skin when the captain catches you," shouted Stevens after the lad.

"Let him alone," growled Armstrong ; "he is only a boy, and a good plucky one. He don't hurt me, bless ye ! Now then, lads, some of ye go up and tell Mr Upton that we're going to load up again and be off. Where's them two beauties, Lot and Job ?"

No one knew for certain. "They had gone on a foraging expedition and had not returned," Pat hinted.

"In which direction did they go ?" asked Reginald.

Pat Murphy opined it was "that-a-way," pointing north-westward.

"Are you certain ?" asked Jim and Percy together.

"Well, thin, I'm not ! It was to me lift hand, sir."

"Which is your 'lift' hand, then ?"

"This one, sir !" replied the Irishman.

"That's *right*," said Reginald, smiling.

"Right, is it? Begorrah, thin I'm a 'Kithogue'—me lift's me right!"

"No, you stupid, that *is* your left hand right enough. So they went eastward—astern of us?"

"No, sir, they went ahead of us, that-a-way."

"You said to your left side just now, you idiot. Your left is eastward, astern."

"Yes, sir, but me face was with me back to them, and they went that-a-way."

"Chuckle head!" muttered Percy. "Go and tell my father that I and my brother and Mr James are going along the coast for a while. Bring back three shot-guns, ammunition, and something to eat. Take Goring with you, and put him in safe custody."

"Yis, sir. Will I bring back the dog, sir?"

"You may as well; we may want him. Be off, now, ye son of a sea-cook!"

"Bedad I'm not, sir," cried Paddy; "my father was a churchyard archytect."

"What in thunder's that?" cried the captain, who had been an amused listener to their dialogue.

"A gravedigger, yer honor, in Glasnevin; a mighty fine place to be buried in, so it is; convanient to Dublin for corpses and their friends. Oh, bedad, many's the fine funeral I've seen at Glasnevin; that's the place for the pathriots."

"Ay, it's the best place for *some* of them," said Stevens. "But be off, Paddy, ye'd talk the hind leg off a donkey."

"Bedad, *your* legs is all on anyhow," replied the son of Erin, with a grin; and amid the laughter his retort evoked, he retired, octopus-like, safe behind the screen of his own raising.

"Paddy's a true Pat," said the mate, "one of the old style — a pleasant, respectful, amusing, clever fellow. Ah, the old race is dying out!"

"Yet you like Irish in America, don't you?" said Percy to the captain.

"Sometimes," replied Armstrong, winking.

"And you favour Home Rule, I understand?"

"Yes, because we'd get rid of the Paddies then," said the captain. "But never mind, we've other things to do besides talkin' politics. I hate 'em!"

The subject then dropped, and the captive whale was examined, pending the return of Paddy with the weapons and food.

"He's been dead some time," remarked Stevens, who was examining the whale. "You'll see some bigger game than this up in the strait. Perhaps he has been struck, and died on the ice. Shouldn't wonder."

"You have been on a whaler, haven't you?" asked Jim, who had come back quietly, and unmolested by the captain.

"For one season," replied the mate. "Some time ago it was. Whales are higher up now than they used to be. The lower waters are fished out, or the whales have got warier, which is perhaps the true reason."

"I suppose the chances are very uneven," remarked Percy.

"Very, sir. Sometimes a whaler will bring in as many as forty whales, sometimes only a dozen, and even only one. I have heard of a case in which the vessel came home 'clean'—not a single fish. Beg pardon, you will tell me whales are not fishes."

"Jim might, I won't," said Percy. "But how many 'fish' would be considered an average voyage?"

"Oh, well, nine or ten! They yield, say, about 100 tuns of oil, and supposing you get £30 a tun, you see you can live. Why, my father's old mate Souter once carried home forty-four whales in his vessel, and he had 299 tuns of oil; he got, including whalebone and so on, £11,000 for his turn. Why, Scoresby,—you remember him, I daresay?—well, in twenty-eight years he made over £150,000. He *did*!"

"Then there's money in whaling," said Reginald.

"Yes, and there's trouble, risk, and privations—terrible. Why, you may be frozen, drowned, or cut in two with a running rope. You may be shipwrecked and die, or die of scurvy, or come home frost-bitten. It isn't no joke, isn't whalin', young gentlemen, and it's *messy* work."

"Horrible, I should imagine," said Percy. "Where do the whalers hail from?"

"Oh, lots of places. England and Scotland and Holland send numbers; Hull and Aberdeen, Peterhead, and many other ports. London used to do the biggest trade. The French also fit out fleets, and Russians go sealing too. We are certain to meet some of them up the strait. Here comes Paddy."

"And he has brought the arms and ammunition, and something in a bag," said Reginald. "Now we will have a little expedition."

"Mind yourselves," said the captain. "The ice is treacherous. Keep on the shore as much as possible. I wonder where Lot and Job are!"

"Concocting some yarn, I daresay," replied Jim.

"Come along, we shall return by sunset, if there is such a time up here in this weather."

"Not much," replied the captain. "The sun keeps his weather-eye open pretty much. You'll be cautious now, sir."

"All right," said the lads simultaneously. "No fear, captain. We'll find Lot and Job. Come along, *Punch*, old fellow."

They started in capital spirits, and we will accompany them in their little expedition along the shore.

"This I look upon as real fun," remarked Reggie. "I only wish Harry could have accompanied us. He will next time."

"His recovery seems almost a miracle," said Percy. "He must have had a terrible electric shock which affected his nervous system entirely. I wonder if he suffered!"

"He will tell us all when we return," said Jim. "Wonder where our two 'romancers' are? What 'crackers' they *do* tell, sometimes."

No one made any reply, and all three lads—pretty big lads, too—continued their way along the rugged shore, near which lay several islands, rocky portions of earth which almost appeared as if they had fallen into the sea from the cliffs or mountains.

"There is something moving on that little island—the brownie one," said Jim. "I believe it's a morse."

"A walrus, you mean. Morse is a telegraph," said Reginald.

"Rubbish," replied Percy. "Walrus and morse are the same. *Mr* Morse invented the instrument."

"I shouldn't like to address him as Mr Walrus,

though it *is* all the same animal," remarked Reginald. "Fancy receiving a lawyer's letter headed '*in Re-Morse*'!"

"Father says that always succeeds a law-suit. But now let us stick to Mr Morse. Come, boys, let us find the walrus."

"Gently. Let us see whether we can cross by the ice to the island. We can't wade, that's certain," said Percy.

"Get the boat," suggested Jim, pausing. "I vote we pull round."

"No time. We can cross, the tide is low. There! Why, the island isn't an island except at high water, which comes up pretty high, you see. Now, *Punch*."

"Where is the walrus?" cried Percy.

"Hush, just beyond the point. Gently, be ready," cried Reginald. "If he moves, fire."

"We can't until we see him," said Jim. "Then we'll *hide* him."

The boys crept up as quietly as possible, and peeped round the rocky corner. The morse lay extended on the ice, but just as the guns were brought to the "present," Mr Morse, as the boys called him, slid gently off and plunged into the water.

"Mean cusses, walruses," remarked Reginald. "He might have waited. *I* never did like them much, I hate them now. Beasts!"

"Too late, I am afraid. He's off into the deep water. We must hide and watch him. Next time he turns up we will give him a turn."

"Never mind," said Percy. "We can go on and

look for our men ; they are along here somewhere. Hollo ! what's that ? A swan or a goose ? ”

“ A goose ; let's have it. You fire, Percy, ‘ *seniores priores.* ’ ”

“ There's another—my bird,” cried Reginald. “ Now, fire.”

They fired together, two geese were slain, and a small duck which rose from her nest fell a victim to Jim's aim. This was a “ canvas-back,” and when the lads had picked up the eggs they felt quite satisfied. The eggs were greenish in colour, and Jim declared they were “ bad.”

“ They are good enough ; I suspect it's their natural tint,” said Percy. “ We have made a very excellent beginning, I think.”

“ We missed the walrus, remember,” said Reginald. “ But what can have become of Lot and Job ? ”

‘ They will come home and bring their *tales* with them, like the sheep of Miss Bo-Peep,” remarked Percy, drily.

“ You are coming out in Reggie's line,” remarked Jim, laughing. “ Yes, Percy, I expect we shall have some nice tales from Lot and Co.”

The young men proceeded, carrying their game and the eggs up a kind of ravine from the shore, which apparently led to a dell or basin in the land. As they went, hoping to find a place from which they would be enabled to view the surrounding country, and “ spot ” the walrus, as they said, the leader, Percy, remarked on some newly indented impressions of feet, some being very clumsy, some neat, and more like American boots. There were also traces of paws,

and Reginald noticed that *Punch* frequently halted and examined these latter traces.

"Do you see these footprints?" asked Percy; "strikes me there have been armed men and dogs up here."

"*'Arma virumque cano,'* as Reginald translated it," said Jim. "I can't see the arms, but the legs are undoubted—at least the feet. There are paws and flat kind of marks and boot heels. Perhaps Lot and Job have been here."

"Very likely; and that fact would account for our not seeing them anywhere else. It is possible—by Jove!" ejaculated Percy.

"What is possible, Percy?" cried the others.

"They may have been taken prisoners by the Esquimaux. The tribes up here are not always friendly; indeed, I have heard that they are very unfriendly at first to any stranger. Our men may be in the clutches of these natives, and they are not very charming people—cruel and barbarous if annoyed, and very greasy at the best."

"Terrible thieves," added Reginald. "But how can we ascertain?"

"Let us follow the trail," said Percy. "Nothing easier! We may come to their village and rescue Lot and Job."

So the travellers continued their way, which led them away from the schooner in a north-westerly, and nearly northerly, direction.

"I wonder whether our men are really in the hands of the natives," said Reginald. "If they oppose us we must fight. We have our fire-arms luckily."

"They may not attack us; if they do, we must

defend ourselves," said Jim, stoutly. "But father and uncle will be mad if we get into any mess."

"We will take care," said Percy. "You must not be too precipitate if we do come across any Huskies."

"Why are they called Huskies?" asked Jim. "Lie down, *Punch*."

"Because they have such hoarse voices, I suppose," replied Reginald. "Here we are at the summit, and here are some specimens of the Huskies. Halt!"

Our young adventurers halted in a line, and with some curiosity waited to perceive the intentions of the natives. There were no huts visible, so perhaps these gentry had come on a foraging expedition, or on a seal hunt, and finding two unarmed white men, had bagged them instead of the seal or walrus. There were three sufficiently fierce Esquimaux dogs, which set up a tremendous barking at the strangers. *Punch* was in no degree backward in his defiance, and even if the humans could have understood each other, they could not have heard each other speak.

The visitors stood still and waited events. The natives set up a yell which sounded like *tar-yar*, and a shout like *wan-ve*.

"What on earth do they mean?" said Reginald. "Let's do the same." So he and his companions, having a dim idea that these savages meant a welcome because they did not immediately attack, set up a similar *tar-yarring* and *wan-veing*, a proceeding which caused the Esquimaux to brandish their harpoons and spears in a very hostile manner; but they

did not advance. The dogs, however, seemed very savage, and made rushes at *Punch*, but he prudently retreated behind his masters.

The Esquimaux, as our adventurers supposed them to be, were dressed in a curious fashion in skins, wore hoods to their over-garments, wide trousers and mocassins. They disdained hats and caps, but their black lank hair served them for head-covering very well. Their faces seemed swarthy, and a general air of untidiness seemed to pervade them. From all accounts it seems very probable that these people are much the same in dress and their mode of living as they were in the sixteenth century when Frobisher, who sailed into those parts, described the Esquimaux as "like Tartars with long black hair, broad faces, and flat noses; having boats of sealskin with a keel of wood beneath the skin!"

Nor was his description of their habits inaccurate. Here is his verdict briefly. "They seek by hunting, fishing, and fowling, to satisfy their greedy paunches, which is their only glory!" They have no tables nor cloths; sometimes a skin is spread, which serves as bed or cloth. Their general practice is to lick things clean, "for they never seem to wash." Under such circumstances, and considering the nature of their food—blubber and fat and oil—one might be excused from taking an *igloo* (house) for the summer in Greenland.

These were the kind of gentry who, armed with harpoons and small spears, seemed inclined to dispute by force the advance of the Europeans. Matters were brought to a climax by the sudden rush of *Punch*,

who pinned one of the three dogs to the ground, and shook him, big as he was, nearly to death.

Then with a yell the Esquimaux advanced, flinging



their darts at *Punch* and at the boys themselves. A tussle was imminent!





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RETREAT—A COUNCIL OF WAR—THE EXPEDITION TO THE ESQUIMAUX VILLAGE—THE *ANGEKOK!*

“**T**HESE fellows mean mischief,” said Percy. “Fire over their heads. They will respect our muskets!”

He and his companions were not armed with rifles; they were merely fowling-pieces. But the shots had a splendid effect. The Huskies retreated, yelling, for a short distance, and their dogs followed them. *Punch* was somewhat severely bitten, but one of the Esquimaux dogs was hardly able to move. So the victory remained with *Punch*!

“Cowards,” screamed the three explorers. “Bah, afraid of a few shots.”

“Tar-yar yar!” roared the Husky ones, who had not retreated far, and remained brandishing their spears. A more distant cry was heard from the valley behind them, and then the excitement of the natives became more intense. They waved their arms more and shouted louder than ever. Then another body of Esquimaux were seen approaching, so the visitors deemed discretion the better part of valour.

"We must retreat," said Percy. "There is no fun in getting stuck by a native with a harpoon. Come along, they are five to one, and all armed."

"I wish we could find Lot and Job," said Reginald. "Do these natives eat men?"

"No; they were at one time supposed to be cannibals, but they are not. They live on the fat of the land," said Percy; "the whale, the walrus, and the seal."

"*Vamoose*," said Jim. "Here they come, give them a volley. Drop your eggs and geese."

The boys turned and suddenly discharged their guns. They had no intentions to hurt the men, but two dogs fell dead. The echoes of the discharge rolled back from the cliffs; the natives halted and screamed in unison; the sea-birds took up the note, and screamed too. In the midst of this uproar the adventurers hurried down the sunny ravine, and escaping the darts which the exasperated Huskies flung after them, gained the beach in safety, but out of breath, and paused to consider their future proceedings—minus birds and eggs.

"Routed by the natives!" panted Percy. "Ignominiously defeated in our first engagement. They are enemies evidently."

"I don't think we quite understand them," remarked Reginald, drily. "Perhaps if we could converse with them, we would find them pleasant and agreeable people."

"Not to our outer senses," said Jim. "Oh, the oil! ough! I can smell it still."

"Come, let us return to the *Sea-lark*, and report what

we have seen. Perhaps Armstrong may understand the language. He has been up here many times."

"Then we'll tell him our adventure, and make a raid on the village to-morrow—or to-day, if we have light enough. So be it," said Reginald.

They accordingly turned back to the *Sea-lark*, which had been at length floated off the iceberg. The trim top-sail schooner was now at anchor, riding prettily on the calm water, and the boys admired her very much.

"Looks like business this," cried Jim; "but I can't see as well as I might—I think the reflection has affected my eyes."

"Luckily there was not much sun, we might have been snow-blind. We must get out our spectacles next time," said Percy. "Hurrah! there's Harry."

When the party again assembled, Percy related the adventure he and his companions had met with; and as Lot and Job had not made their appearance, it was determined to act on the suggestion already made, and invade the Esquimaux village next day.

"Then," said Armstrong, "if you will take my advice you will return as soon's ever you can, and leg it up to the bay you mentioned—your destination, I mean."

The captain winked as he delivered himself of this caution. He had of course been put in possession of the secret, but all the crew had not, and so, being cautious, Armstrong merely winked.

"Do you understand the Husky language, captain?" asked Reginald.

"A few words only, my lad. I can tell you that 'Pussay' is a seal, and 'Awak' is a walrus."

"The walrus we saw was very wide awak' indeed, remarked Jim, "so he is rightly named. But what is the meaning of *wan-ve*?"

"*Wan-ve*, let me think," said Captain Armstrong. "Why, an egg, I think."

"Surely," remarked Stevens, the savages wouldn't call out eggs to us."

"Are you sure it *was* '*wan-ve*'?" continued Armstrong.

"Sounded very like it," replied Percy.

"Was it *twan-ve*, think you?"

"Likely enough," said Jim. "What's that in English."

"Get out—clear off—vamoose—that's about the size of it," said the captain, laughing.

"Then that's what they said. It's a pity that 'eggs' and 'be-off' are so similar in sound. We might be intending to present a fellow with an egg, and really offer him a rebuff, or *reb-æuf* if you prefer it," said Reggie.

"Reginald you are too ridiculous," said his uncle, who had come up in time to hear the last two sentences. Now, boys, on board. Harry is on deck, and will be glad to see you. Most of our stores have to be arranged, and we are short-handed. You didn't find Lot, then?"

"No, uncle, he's a prisoner, we believe. To-morrow we are going to release them, both Lot and Job. They are in some *igloos* yonder."

"What's an *igloo*?" asked Stevens. "I thought *tou-pick* was a hut in their language?"

"*Igloo*, I think," said Percy. "Isn't it, captain?"

"Isn't what?" enquired Armstrong, who had not been attending.

"*Iglloo* is a 'hut' in Greenlandish, isn't it?" repeated Percy.

"Yes, a *snow* hut. A hut of whalebone, a summer residence, is 'toupic!' Now, the boat is waiting—all aboard!"

The party then went on board the schooner, where they found the two men very busy. Goring was sitting dazed, and talking to himself. He had quite lost his senses, and, under the circumstances, was an object of great commiseration to all, especially to Pat, the "boy," who seemed to have a superstitious reverence for idiots, which Stevens afterwards declared arose from "fellow feeling." But Pat had floored Stevens!

Harry Upton was on deck well wrapped up, and seemed much better. He was warmly greeted by all, and was greatly interested in the details of the expedition which the cousins had undertaken.

"I wish I could go to-morrow," he sighed, "but I am not fit yet. Oh, Captain Armstrong," he cried, suddenly, "have you looked at the compass? It is smashed!"

"Smashed!" exclaimed the captain, "you don't mean that!"

"Well, no; I mean out of order. The point is broken."

A general chorus of disappointment went up. What was to be done? The captain smiled.

"Oh, is that all! I wonder none of you noticed it before. I've had to keep it level for some days. It's only the dip of it."

"The dip! What do you mean?"

"Why, don't you understand that the needle dips down as we come up. You might have noticed it before this. We're close to the magnetic pole now, and you will find the needle dipping very much."

"I thought it had some reference to the schooner," said Harry.

"Not a bit; it's the pulling of the magnetic pole which we are told is in about 70 degrees north. Now, we are precious near that, so our needle dips. Up in Hudson's Bay you may see it pointing down as far as it can."

"And does the South Pole make a similar dip?" asked Jim.

"I believe so," replied the captain. "I was never there, but they say so. The south magnetic pole is somewhere in 75 degrees south—down New Holland way!"

"This is rather interesting," said Percy. "I should like to hear more about it. I never thought of the magnetic pole—we talk of the North pole—but——"

"Ah, that's a different thing altogether," said the captain. "That's a kind of fixture; the magnetic poles vary with the heat. It's electricity, I guess."

"Then our needle will dip more and more perhaps until it points down ninety degrees. I suppose it can't go better," said Reginald.

"That's about its maximum, of course," said Armstrong. "I must work it level again. The schooner's as tight's a drum, and as soon as you've got those helps of yours, Mr Upton, we can start up. We'll have to tack."

"To-morrow we will visit the Esquimaux. But mind, boys, no violence, no nonsense," said Mr Upton. "Your uncle and I will accompany you, the captain will be interpreter, and we will leave Harry with Mr Stevens."

"How is Goring?" asked Percy.

"Quite a lunny," said Stevens. "He's harmless as possible, and quiet. We can't leave him with the Huskies this time. I'm kind of sorry for him, too!"

"Perhaps he will recover some of these days," said Reginald. "Now, it is really eleven o'clock in the evening. Quite light, I declare."

"Why, certainly!" replied Stevens. "You can read by daylight in Stockholm at eleven P.M. in the month of July. I've done it myself."

"It's queer all this everlasting daylight. I should get very sick of all day every day," said Jim.

"And all night every night. Wouldn't we sleep, just!" said Harry.

"Yes, at first," said Armstrong. "You'd get precious tired of sleeping all day and all night, I can tell you. You'd be hungry in twelve hours. We ain't *dormouses*."

"Nor even *dormice*," remarked Jim, with a wink. "Fancy being a dormouse!"

"You might be worse," said the captain. "A dormouse don't chatter so much as some boys!"

This hint was not lost upon Jim, who was rather inclined to be rude at times. It was on this occasion followed up by a strong remonstrance from his father, which had an excellent effect. Jim was not ill-natured, but he had rather a good opinion of his

own capabilities and correctness, so a little judicious snubbing did him good.

The matter then dropped. After some necessary rest, preparations were made for a visit to the Esquimaux village, and arrangements were entered into by which if needful, a rescue could be carried out. Captain Armstrong was too wise a man not to secure his retreat. He knew the people with whom he and his friends would have to deal, and he gave orders that a scout should be sent half way—to the commencement of the ravine—so that relief might be near.

Josiah, Armstrong, and three boys were to form the first party. Stevens would send Biscoe out as scout to keep "touch" of them, and if anything happened, to alarm him. He, Stevens, and Pat Murphy, with Frederick Upton, if necessary, would come well armed to the rescue. *Punch* remained on board.

Those preliminaries arranged, arms and ammunition distributed, and a code of signals agreed on, the advance guard having enjoyed an excellent breakfast went over the side fully equipped. They landed on the ice, and gained the "beach" in safety. The ice was in masses, heaped up in places, and difficult to pass; but the boys had noted the way, they made a cast, and within half-an-hour the expeditionary force had gained the ravine, deep in snow, and threatened with overhanging ice-cliffs and forbidding masses of barren rock.

"This wouldn't be a pleasant place for an ambuscade, if any such idea ever enters a Husky head," remarked Josiah Upton. "We would have a bad chance here, I'm thinking."

"No fear," replied Captain Armstrong, "we shall be able to walk right up to the village. The Huskies won't hunt us if we are persuasive. We have some knives and ornaments : an Esquimaux would barter his soul, if he knew he had one, for a big knife."

"It will be rather fun seeing them," remarked Percy, after a pause. "We have read of the villages and the curious dresses of the women, but of course have never seen them. The ladies are queer things, I believe."

"Women is women all the world over," said the captain, drily. "You may call them any name you like—English, Yankee, Savage, or Husky—but they're women still, with all their little arts and coquetting ways—even in Greenland. Yes, sir ; women is women, that's a fact !"

No one was inclined to dispute this evident proposition, and no more was said on that subject. The party soon gained the summit of the ravine, and halted to make ready for the march, and to recover breath.

"Yonder is the place we discovered the natives," said Percy, indicating the battle ground. "They made off into the valley, I think."

"Most likely," replied Armstrong. "We can easily follow their trail, at anyrate. They will not be far from the sea !"

"Look !" cried Josiah Upton, "turn to your left. There are the boats."

There they were, several *kayaks* and *oomiacks* in a small ice-bound bay beyond the western side of the ravine ; and if the boys had not turned up the slope, they would have come upon the "ships."

"Then I guess the village is in front, and not to the right," remarked Armstrong, "unless there are two villages."

"Or unless the winter huts are yonder to the north-east under the hills, and the summer houses above the bay," suggested Josiah.

"There are a number of boats," remarked Reginald. "What are those galleys?"

"Those are the women's boats—*oomiaks*, used, and one may say 'manned,' only by women and children. The *kayak* is the man's boat."

"If those boats represent the population, guess there's a pretty considerable number of Huskies yonder," said the Captain, as the party proceeded in the direction last indicated. "Let's keep north-west, and try to get above the bay. We shall then find the village, maybe an encampment."

Turning rather to the left, the party, well armed and ready for action, followed the trail backwards—that is, they proceeded across country on alternately rising and sloping ground, until, these ridges crossed, the party came in sight of the huts, or tents, beneath the shelter of a higher spur of the hill—a convenient spot for habitation and observation. Beyond the camp or village was a hollow in the ground of considerable extent. This hollow sparkled in the sunlight, and the captain said that in a few days of such weather the snow would melt and form a rivulet which would be useful for the Esquimaux. It was for this reason that they had pitched their camp in such a place, which was particularly warm and sheltered considering the season.

"Come now, close up, sonnies," cried Armstrong. "If the animals attack us, we must give them a hint of musketry."

"You wouldn't shoot them, captain," cried the boys.

"No, I wouldn't; but I'd scare them *some*. You have your fowling guns loaded, so you can let fly over head if they want a lesson."

The advance in line was unopposed, however, and and it was not until the party were close to the first tent that any sign of life was presented. Not even a dog rushed out barking, and if a dog had been there, it would have been out quick enough, for of all dogs your Esquimaux is the most quarrelsome in his native haunts, and fights like a demon on the very smallest provocation, with his companions too.

But on this occasion no dogs came out as the party approached, and they had almost gained the first tent when an elderly and horrible-looking individual, swarthy, dirty, clad in skins and boots, a curious cap on his head, advanced, and extended his arms. He seemed very old and wizened.

"Methuselah!" whispered Reginald to Jim.

"Or Peter the Hermit," suggested Jim. "Who is he anyhow?"

"I guess he's the *Angekok* or Sorcerer," replied the captain. "He's warning us."

"Let him warn," said Josiah. "Ask him where our men are."

Then Captain Armstrong, with some preparatory gesticulation, cried "Kina! Eh? Coblonak!"

But the native gentleman made no reply. If he did

not understand, he might have been excused, but unless he were stone deaf he must have heard.

"Bad shot, captain; try another loading," said Josiah Upton.

"The shot was right enough," muttered Armstrong. "I said, 'What, hold, Englishman!'"

"Perhaps your accent isn't quite right," suggested Reginald. "Try again. There's a good man."

"Coblonak," shouted the captain. "Cob, lo, nack," he repeated slowly.

The ancient one moved his eyes, and looked round, then he said, "Chymo!"

"Abb," replied the skipper, producing a knife.

This was sufficient. The idea of doing a little business on his own account pleased the old gentleman very much. He looked delighted, and handed out a fine bear-skin in return for the trumpery knife. The word "Chymo" means business, trade; so the arrangement was quickly concluded.

Again the captain called out the mystic "Coblonak," and held up two fingers. The old man either would not or could not understand.

"We will overrun the blessed tents until we find them," said Reginald. "Let us explore the place."

But the old man continued to bar the way until Josiah pushed him aside roughly, and entered his tent, which was constructed in the usual manner with a centre pole and sticks. It was well warmed by a stone lamp, and covered with walrus' skins. Other skins on the ground served for bed: it was one of those which the old man had presented to the captain. A few harpoons and some "chunks" of seal

lay in the corners. There was no furniture, and it was doubtful if the old "boss" had ever looked in a mirror in his life.

"If he could only see himself, Jim, what an old image he is!" said Reginald; "but he is not in uncomfortable quarters. There's another kind of inner tent. Listen, didn't I hear a cry? Hark!"

They were about to pass on when the old man angrily pushed them back, and, seizing a harpoon, seemed determined to defend himself.

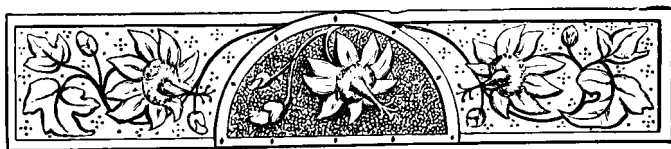
"He's a game old cock," said Percy, "but we must cow him. I am inclined to think that he knows more than he will say about our men."

"Come up, old hoss," cried Reggie, "make way there."

He pushed the man aside, but the Esquimaux did not like being interfered with, and made a half thrust at his opponent. The captain saw the action in time, and with his revolver struck down the weapon, but the pistol exploded, and the explosion was immediately succeeded by a shout from the inner tent.

"Hold hard!" exclaimed the captain, "they are there."





CHAPTER XIX.

FOUND AT LAST—THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE
WOLVES—AN ALLY—THE START FOR THE BAY
—AN OLD ENEMY.

THERE they were in a kind of inner tent, bound together, and lying most uncomfortably on the cold hard ground. It was a kind of alcove, and perhaps served for a married chief only ; as in some cases happens, there was no raised platform or flooring on which the wives of the chief could rest. There was a small lamp burning in this inner tent, which kept the temperature pretty high, fortunately for the two men. On the other hand, the outer tent was more airy, and the atmosphere there was less vitiated.

The captain had quickly pulled aside the curtain of skin which shielded the entrance, and at once perceived the faithful friends Lot and Job, bound in a most uncomfortable way, for if one turned, the other had to lie on his back, and so on. A mutual agreement had to be arrived at before either could move.

"Cheer up, Job," cried Lot, "here comes the captain. I thought you wouldn't desert us ; I said so, didn't I ?"

"I don't know," replied Job, rather testily. "Don't ask me any more of your riddles, Lot. Why did you ever get us into this hobble? It was all your fault."

"Lie quiet," said the captain. "Gentlemen, you mind that Husky, we'll trice him up in a minute. You old ruffian, why did you do this, eh?"

"He didn't," replied Lot, "his mates did; he is only left to keep guard on us. He isn't a bad sort, let him alone."

While Lot was speaking, the captain was busy cutting the thongs which bound the men, and then, presenting a pistol at the guardian Esquimaux, he threatened him by signs, which could hardly be misunderstood by any one, with instant and immediate death if he stirred or gave the alarm.

The unhappy native evidently understood the first part of the captain's remarks in English, interlarded with some Esquimaux terms, but the latter portion he evidently did not entirely comprehend, for he set up a yell, a piercing shriek, which might be heard a mile off. Whether this was in fear of punishment or with a view to summon assistance, did not appear, but it succeeded in collecting some natives, whose voices and the barking of dogs were heard in reply at a distance (amid the hillocks apparently).

"We are in for a row, captain," remarked Josiah Upton. "We shall have to fight these cusses, I'm afraid. Come outside; don't let us be killed like rats in a trap."

The thongs and ties had by this time been removed from Lot and Job, and after a good rubbing down, they felt quite fit for duty. While Percy was chafing

their arms and rubbing their backs, the captain and the other three members of the party had gone outside.

"We must muzzle this old dog," said Lot. "He is the *Angekok* or Astrologer, I think, and he may do us harm. Just hold him, Job, while I pin him."

Job in a twinkling caught the man's elbows, and in half-a-minute he was helpless on the ground. There they let him lie.

"We cannot have an enemy in our rear," said Percy. "You are quite right, Lot, but don't hurt him."

"He's all right. Now for the rest. Listen to the Tar-yar! I never heard such a noise," cried Job. "It's as bad as wolves."

"Come out quickly if you don't want to be eaten alive," shouted the captain, as he discharged his musket.

The men in the tent rushed out, and a most unexpected sight met their gaze. A few paces from the tent a wounded or injured Esquimaux dog was lying, apparently dying; behind him, now at a respectful distance, stood, in a kind of irregular semicircle, a pack of wolves, whose distant snarlings the party from the *Sea-lark* had fancied were the cries of the natives, which are of a harsh and discordant nature.

The wolves had halted at the sudden appearance of the party, and the dog, accustomed to men, struggled on nearer to the tent. But the unfortunate animal could not quite reach it; he staggered and fell; a wolf made a dash after him as he lay, but at that moment the remainder of the party rushed out

in response to the captain's summons and his discharged musket. The venturesome wolf fell dead, shot by Reginald.

A distant report from the gully or ravine by which they had ascended, came to their ears. Biscoe had heard the alarm, and was calling for further assistance.

"We shall be all right," said Josiah; "Biscoe has heard us. He will soon come up with the others. Steady, my friends, one at a time; don't waste your fire, but pick out your game and kill it."

The wolves remained at the same distance, snarling and worrying, but they were getting more savage; and to make matters worse, they were being reinforced by others, stragglers, which were coming up behind.

"We shall be surrounded," cried Percy. "Look, the beasts are extending their line, and actually planning an attack. They are pretty clever, and there—see! some are actually eating their dead friend already! Did you ever see such creatures?"

"They're uncommon brave," remarked the captain. "How are we off for ammunition?"

"Not very well," said Josiah. "I have my revolver and musket loaded."

"So have I, so have I," said all the others, except Lot and Job, who had only muskets. But Percy added, "I have some powder and shot here besides."

"All the better," said Armstrong. "Now we must be careful. There are fifty of them at least, so far as I can count. We have not fifty shots, I am afraid. But our companions will come to our assistance."

The wolves had by this time become angry, exciting each other to combat, and it became evident to the voyagers that the attack would not be long delayed. The captain and Josiah, after a brief consultation, determined to act on the offensive.

"If we kill a few, perhaps the others will retire. At anyrate they will devour the dead ones, and we may obtain assistance by that time. Now, captain, you fire again, and then we will all shoot in turn."

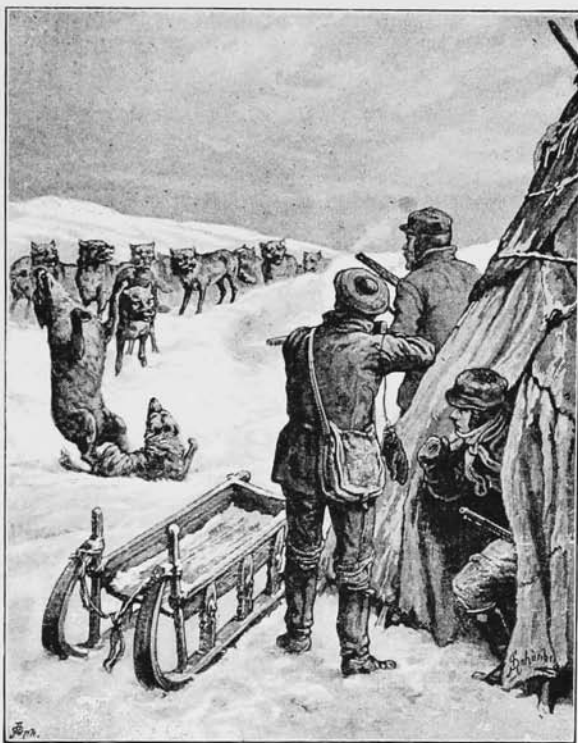
Armstrong was ready. He had loaded his musket from the supply handed to him by Percy, who had so fortunately brought it. A big wolf rolled over in the snow, biting and struggling in his agony. He did not live long! But as the breath was out of his body, he was set upon by his nearest friends, and eaten warm. Wolves are not particular after a long fast in cold weather.

Instead of appeasing their hunger, the morsel they had devoured seemed to whet it, and so Josiah, Percy, and Reginald fired in rapid succession, and each one brought down his quarry. The same fate attended these animals as the other. They were quickly disposed of, and then the remainder of the pack evidently prepared themselves for an attack.

"We must keep firing," said Josiah. "Volley them; let them have all we can, and send them to the right-about. We cannot remain here. When you are all ready, say so."

"Ready," was the reply from each member of the party, after a pause.

"Then fire together. Mind the word—one, two, three—FIRE!"



The fight with the wolves.—Page 234.

A terrible volley rang out, and echoed far and near like thunder. It died away in a growl amid the hillocks, from behind which a white mass moved like a snow-clad rock at a distance.

It was a white bear! Behind him came some dozen natives with dogs baying and barking. They were evidently surprised at the sound of fire-arms, and had halted. The bear only continued his way.

Here was a diversion for the wolves! Their enemy was delivered into their hands (or paws). A great prize this. They immediately deserted the tent, and ranged themselves in front of the white bear, a fine specimen of his kind.

"Well done, bear, you have relieved us nicely," said Reginald.

"Yes, but we have the Esquimaux to settle with instead," said Jim, who had been preternaturally quiet during the engagement with the wolves. "Don't halloo till you have cleared the *wolf*," he added.

"Give them another volley," said Josiah. "Let them have it."

Another well-directed volley rang out from the muskets. "We have no more ammunition," cried Percy, as he felt in his pouches."

"We have our revolvers," said Josiah. "Have you not one charge for Lot and Job?"

"No," replied Percy; "my pouches are empty. We can leave now, I think. Look at the bear."

The wolves had scampered off to the hillocks, against one of which the bear had made ready for battle. He had reared himself on his hind legs, and as soon as a wolf came within reach he boxed his ears in a manner which caused his assailants very con-

siderable inconvenience, for each one thus saluted rolled helpless and dying on the ground, while the Esquimaux dogs with perfect impartiality worried bear and wolves.

The voyagers, quite forgetting the man they had tied up in the tent, made their way in the direction of the ravine as quickly as possible. The Esquimaux, perceiving this movement, started to intercept them, and came on hurriedly, shouting and brandishing their spears and darts. When they separated in their advance, the explorers perceived that they numbered sixteen at least, and seemed very ferocious. Fortunately, the formidable dogs remained behind, and stuck to the bear and the wolves.

"We shall weather them right enough," said Armstrong. "They won't come to close quarters, you may depend."

But on this occasion the captain was wrong. The natives seemed to be very much annoyed about something, and squalled like a pack of angry children. They came within fighting distance, and seemed quite ready to launch their harpoons, when a few shots over their heads deterred them and gave them pause.

Taking advantage of this, the voyagers continued their retreat, and succeeded in gaining the top of the ravine, where they met their comrades hastening to their assistance. They were delighted to find them all safe and well.

"We had considerable fears for your safety," said Frederick Upton, "when we heard your volleys; and what a row they made. We fancied you beset by Esquimaux, and hurried up. But we are glad all's well. Ha! Lot and Job, you are here then!"

"I am not so sure whether all is well," replied Lot, after acknowledging the greeting. "These natives are uncommon nasty, and will attack us if they can. My advice is, give them a 'dressing.'"

"They have not harmed us," said Josiah.

"They bound me and Lot," said Job, "though I am still bound to confess it was our fault, or rather Lot's. He was too familiar."

"Let us retire," said Frederick. "The schooner is ready; the breeze will almost suit us for running: its off-shore, you see. We can make tracks and gain on the Yankees."

This settled the matter. The retreat was conducted in orderly fashion, but the Esquimaux followed and shouted their defiance or contempt at the party. They did not, however, proceed to any extremes, and by the advice of the seniors of the *Sea-lark*, no retaliation was made. Javelins were brandished, and spears shaken in a very truculent manner, but it was all show; no offensive acts were committed, and an occasional revolver shot in the air quelled even these demonstrations.

The Esquimaux then returned to kill the bear, and the party returned in safety to the *Sea-lark*, where Harry and *Punch* were impatiently waiting for them.

All the stores were on board again, and there was nothing to delay the departure of the schooner. Everyone, save the unfortunate Goring, was in high spirits at the prospect of finding the Opal Mountain.

"We have plenty of ice and trouble before us yet," remarked the captain; "and you may believe it; if the *Cat-fish* and her pleasant crew come across us, we shall have a lively time."

"Mind," said Josiah, "if they attack us, or in any way interfere after their late conduct, we will shoot them without mercy. We have no tribunals up here, and must take the law into our own hands. On this point I am determined!"

"Quite right, boss," said the captain, "we'll do that, and more. The Opal Mountain is ours by right, and we'll have it—if it's there!"

"Do you think we have made any mistake?" asked Percy.

"Well, you may have, and you mayn't," was the cautious reply. "Ye see a very little difference in latitude or longitude will make a considerable deal in fact, and a man isn't always accurate."

"Not even when a parson," murmured Reginald, smiling at the captain's pronunciation of the word accurate.

"Shut up, Reggie," whispered Percy, "the captain will be savage! Don't be rude!"

"Sorry I spoke," replied his brother. "Won't do it again until next time!"

"We must have a look at the charts again. Here is Disco, I suppose. A pretty big island too. Anything to be found there?" asked Jim.

"Nothing so far as we are concerned," replied his father, "for we are going on as fast as possible. There is plenty of ice still, and we must keep our eyes open."

"We shall fall in with some whalers, I daresay," said Biscoe, who was at the wheel.

"And have a whale hunt!" exclaimed Reginald. "I want a whale hunt, a seal hunt, and a walrus hunt. Fancy coming all this way to the Arctic Regions and not having a whale hunt!"

"Perhaps you won't like it, young gentleman, when you've seen it," said Stevens.

"Why, is it very horrible?" asked Reginald.

"No, not horrible, but it isn't pleasant. If you are not hurt or killed in some way, there is always fatigue, anxiety, and worry. It's dreadful cold work too. This is warm compared to whaling in an open boat, tossing about, and getting chilled to the bones—dreadful."

"Guess we'll leave whaling for another time," remarked Jim. "It seems to me, Stevens, that weeping and whaling go together."

"Yes, sir, something like it; it's hard, but very exciting work. There's some whalers up yonder round the point off Disco. See."

Josiah Upton had already his glass to his eye, and he made no reply.

"What d'ye think, boss?" enquired Captain Armstrong.

"What do *you* think?" asked Josiah in turn, as he handed the captain the telescope. "There are spars yonder, I believe."

Captain Armstrong assumed his most important air, and after an attentive gaze, during which every one was silent, they hardly knew why, he turned and said slowly, and with emphasis:

"Blamed if I don't think that there's the *Cat-fish*! It looks uncommon like her topmasts. Eh, boss?"

"Just what I was thinking," replied Josiah. "You look, Fred."

His brother had already a telescope pointed over the taffrail to steady it.

"That's the vessel, I believe," he said. "We must make ready."

"If so, it will be uncommon awkward," remarked Stevens. "We must either stand on and fight her, tacking, or run over to the other side."

"Can't we pass her without any notice in the dark?" suggested Harry.

"There is so little dark now-a-days," replied Percy, "that we can't try the old plan. We must take our chance!"

"It is a poor one," said Stevens, "but maybe she is only waiting for us to pilot her. She may not know the exact spot, or even the indicated spot, and may be waiting for us."

"Yes, but she will surely attack us—won't she?" asked Reginald.

"No one can say what those ruffians will do. At anyrate we will do all we can to prepare for them! Put our arms under the bulwarks with plenty of ammunition, and load our big gun. We may escape. I know the channels," continued the brave captain, "and if he does not wing us, I will lead him a dance! So long now—prepare for a chase and a free fight. Anyone who wants may go below!"

No one moved. Even Harry remained, and as twilight began to creep over the rocks and mountains, the *Sea-lark* ran under the cliffs of Disco.

"Now, get your arms, load the guns, and I will slip across the strait as far as I can this tack. Starboard, Stevens!"

"Starboard it is, sir," replied Stevens, shifting the helm. "This breeze will serve us well. Now for it!"



CHAPTER XX.

ATTACKED BY THE *CAT-FISH*—BECALMED—A TREACHEROUS ACT—POOR GORING!—AN ALARM!



UFF! bang! a rush of smoke, and a skipping shot came bounding along the open water, and fell ahead of the *Sea-lark* on the ice, into which it sank and disappeared, throwing up a slush of ice and water as it fell!

"Bully for you, old *Cat-fish*," exclaimed Lot. "Job said we should be peppered. Eh, mate?"

"I never said anything of the kind!" retorted Job. "You're out of it this time, partner. So you may put *your* shutters up!"

"Well, hang me to the bowsprit if I didn't think you said it—or something about pepper," exclaimed Lot, who was considerably taken aback by this flat contradiction. The mate, Stevens, too, was astonished, for any discord between such men was to be avoided.

"Then what in thunder *did* you say, Job? I declare to Congress I don't know if it wasn't pepper, or somethin' like it," cried Lot.

"I said they was a warm crew to tackle yonder

when they was mustered, in the *Cat-fish*, o' course. That's what I did say. I never dreamed nor thought of pepperin'—it's not likely we'll be hurt!"

"Well, never mind, old pard, we're all right; mustard was it? I thought you said pepper. So, here's another pill for us. Look out, mates and gentlemen all."

Another flash and puff of smoke came from the smart-looking *Cat-fish*, and this time a small cannon ball flew over head, singing between the masts of the *Sea-lark*; and plashing into the open water just at the edge of the ice beyond, sank.

"Too much elevation," remarked Armstrong, coolly. "Let him alone; he won't hurt us yet—we are gaining on him."

"There goes his canvas," shouted Reginald. "Now for a sailing match."

"But suppose we are disabled," said Percy, seriously. "Captain, that fellow has no right to fire on us! the *Cat-fish* is simply a pirate!"

"Just so," replied Armstrong, "and if we can catch one of them filibusters we'll give him goss, you may depend! We'll leave some of him for the bears and foxes. Here's another compliment."

Bang and boom, came another shot. The *Sea-larks* watched the effect in great anxiety. First the flash and jet of smoke; then, a few seconds afterwards, the dull echoing boom of the gun, and then the shot. This aim was better; the ball struck the gaff of the mainmast, and the topsail and mainsail suffered considerably, hanging helplessly from the broken spar.

Fortunately only the extremity of the gaff was broken ; the portion nearest the "top" still remained firm, so the sails were only partly torn, but the mischief was bad enough under the circumstances. Mercifully no one was touched.

The *Sea-lark* immediately lost way, and it became evident that as soon as the *Cat-fish* had drawn away from the land, she would pepper the unfortunate explorers unmercifully.

"Bad luck to her," muttered Paddy. "I'd like to sink her, so I would."

"Give her one shot now," cried the captain. "She is near enough."



"We may hit her. Let her have it, boss !"

"Josiah and his brother, assisted by Job and Lot, prepared the gun which had been procured ; and as

the *Cat-fish* was coming on full sail, and anticipating an easy capture, the little cannon rang out. The smoke cleared away, there was a crash, and the enemy was apparently disabled. She stopped dead ; her foretopmast broke like a stick, the after sails shivered, and in that one moment she lay helpless, a hole in her mainsail ; almost a wreck.

"A splendid shot !" exclaimed Jim.

"She's run ashore," remarked Stevens, quietly. "Those reefs have got her."

"Serve her right," said Percy. "She's quiet now."

"Give her a cheer," suggested Reginald, as the *Sea-lark* gathered way, and gradually drew out of range. Ah, you cowards !"

A salutation of mingled cheers and groans went up from the schooner, and the crew of the *Sea-lark* perceived that the enemy was in a bad way. Their men seemed alarmed, there was much fuss and hurry on board, and things seemed mixed.

"She's injured pretty bad," remarked Armstrong ; "she's on rock, you bet, and she won't get off in a hurry. When the tide rises, she may float—for a *while* !"

"Is she a wreck, think you ?" asked Josiah Upton.

"Looks uncommon like it," replied the captain. "You drilled her mainsail, you see, and she fell off ; the head sails didn't draw well, I suppose, and she drifted smack on the rock under her lee. A nice mess she is in ; the current may smash her up."

"I suppose we ought to rescue her crew," remarked Frederick Upton.

Captain Armstrong looked at the speaker in surprise.

"Rescue them cut-throats," he said ; "no sir. They have boats and provisions, let them alone. We have no room for them, and if we had, with my consent none of those murdering skunks should come aboard this vessel. No, *sir!*"

The captain then walked forward and back again to cool himself. Stevens and another hand were busy in an attempt to splice the gaff. The after sails were lowered as soon as the *Sealark* had got out of range, and she tacked with head canvas only.

"We shall make a mess of this," remarked Lot. "Say, captain, let's anchor, and fix up the timber, that other won't hurt us."

"Let her run as she goes," replied Armstrong. "I'm the commander here, but if you want to take the post, I'll retire."

Lot cooled down, and said no more. He forgot that he was under Armstrong's orders, and that the captain was tenacious of his authority. Job grinned and whispered to his partner :

"Gently, old man ; we ain't in Carolina now."

The *Sea-lark* proceeded slowly. She had considerable difficulty in avoiding the ice, which did not appear to diminish in quantity or in mass. Some beautiful effects of aurora were seen as twilight increased, but the sun quickly dissipated the exhibition. The continual daylight was becoming monotonous ; but the gaff could be mended more quickly, and the men took advantage of the light.

While the repairs were being done, the young

Uptons kept their telescopes fixed on the *Cat-fish*. They could perceive that two boats had been launched, and that provisions and some other things were being embarked.

"I believe they intend to abandon her," remarked Harry, who had one glimpse, for he was specially careful of his eyes, and wore spectacles to shield them from the glare in the sunlight.

"Looks like it. They will never reach American waters in those boats," remarked Jim.

"Some whaler will pick them up, I dare say," said Josiah, "and I wish them joy. Hollo!"

This exclamation was caused by the sudden flapping of the sails. The wind seemed to drop suddenly. The sea assumed a rosy and glassy appearance, and the *Sea-lark* had no longer any way on her. She seemed inclined to drift upon the southern ice, and the captain immediately ordered out the boats to tow her away.

"Can't we anchor?" suggested Percy.

"No holding ground," replied Armstrong. "It is too deep here; we may fix up to the ice presently. If the middle ice comes down from Baffin's Bay we may be fixed for days, or forced back again."

"Depends on the wind," muttered Stevens. "If we can get a good breeze aft we may smash through. What does this calm mean?"

"I don't like it much," remarked Captain Armstrong. "We can do nothing unless we tow the schooner. It's dreadful provoking, for we have plenty of open water yonder. Eh, boss?"

"Strikes me we are in for a storm," replied Josiah,

who was usually addressed by the captain as "boss." "I have seen such calms ashore, and they nearly always result in some violent hurricane. I remember a terrible tornado out west, which was preceded by just such a dead and sudden calm as this."

"The mercury is quiet," said Reginald, who had run down to look at the barometer, "so no storm is likely yet."

"Well, we'll make fast and put all snug," said Armstrong. "Now, Stevens, have you fixed that gaff yet?"

"Yes, captain, she is spliced, but not quite secure; we give it another turn or two and send it up again. Biscoe is at it."

"Where's the madman Goring?" enquired Frederick Upton of his brother. "We haven't seen him lately."

"I will enquire," said Josiah. "The fellow must be guarded, though I believe he is harmless. Come down with me and let us have a look at the chart. I am feeling very uncomfortable about our position."

"Why?" asked Frederick, as they descended.

"Because you see in the first place we are within reach of those filibusters so long as the calm continues. Secondly, the ice may drift down and enclose us for a week or more; or we may meet with contrary winds and beat about for days in this place. Let us see where we are."

"There's Waggan Island," said his brother. "We have a long way to go yet. These islands are legion. I suppose they are merely rocks or bits broken from the mainland."

"Some are inhabited," replied Josiah. "Oh, for an

easterly wind or a south-wester ; we could make some progress then. We could tack up even with a nor'-wester, Fred."

"Hum! We have a goodish bit to sail yet," muttered Frederick, "and we shall want all our time. Baffin's Bay opens about here. We can see the water is clear for a space, but I am doubtful about it higher up."

"The whalers manage it, don't they? So we can. Let's look. Ha! Well. We *must* do it, Fred. I am convinced that we are right in coming up here. We may find riches enough for all for life!"

Frederick Upton only nodded. He was studying the barometer, and made no answer. He was so long silent that Josiah asked him what was the matter.

"The glass is falling rapidly, Josh. We must prepare for a storm. See, the mercury is sinking very quickly."

"It is indeed," replied his brother. "Armstrong should know this."

As he was speaking a shout from the deck caused them to hurry up.

When they reached the deck they perceived all the crew, including Goring, who was the only apparently uninterested spectator, gazing very intently at two boats filled with men and stores. These boats were pulling in the direction of the *Sea-lark*.

"The filibusters!" exclaimed Josiah Upton, as soon as he perceived them.

"No doubt of that, boss," replied the captain. "Their vessel will probably founder. They have quitted it. The rats have deserted the sinking ship. The brig is doomed!"

"Let the vermin drown," muttered Stevens, contemptuously.

"We cannot let them perish," said Frederick Upton, doubtfully. "A big storm is approaching, captain; the mercury is falling rapidly."

"Guessed as much," muttered Job, turning to his friend.

"Said so myself," remarked Lot. "Captain, excuse me, but shall we make fast to the floe, or wait the hurricane as we are?"

"Let be for the present; we may have to scud. If we tie up yonder the gale may smash us. Heaven only knows from which direction it will come!"

"There isn't a sign in the sky yet," murmured Reginald to Percy; "but I'm feeling kind o' scared somehow. The silence and stillness is rather awful."

"Yes," replied his brother, "but luckily we have a little sea room here. These boats are approaching, though."

"Get your muskets and revolvers ready, gentlemen," cried the captain. "I'll chew my boots if they're going to board this craft. If you please, Mister Upton, I'll take command."

"By all means," asserted Josiah and his brother, simultaneously. "We are all under your orders, captain."

"Man the braces," cried Armstrong, "and stand by to run; we'll have the breeze presently, and a southeaster, or I'm mistaken. See the bit of a cloud astern. Now, Stevens, we'll test your tackle. Hoist the mainsail with a clew in it. Never mind a reef now—with it."

The yards of the schooner—she was a topsail-

schooner, remember, and carried square sails on her foremast—were braced full to catch the first puffs.

“Stand by to furl all if the breeze freshens,” shouted Armstrong. “We are already drawing ahead. That will do, Stevens. You may furl that topsail, we shan’t want it. Handsomely now ; in with it, lads. Mr Upton, will you attend to the firearms, if we need them? Lot, you can take the helm till Stevens is ready. Here we have it. We’ve to cut and run!”

“The *Cat-fish* won’t live very long if the gale rises,” said Jim.

“You may be certain we shall not see her again,” replied Reginald. “She is doomed ! But the boats will want looking after.”

“Hallo ! dead calm again !” cried Armstrong, as the wind suddenly dropped after a steady freshening for a few minutes. “Down all ; we may be taken aback !”

The sails were rapidly taken in, but the men stood by the sheets and waited orders. In this duty the boys also assisted.

Meanwhile the filibusters’ boats were approaching, making good way through the smooth water. At length came a hail.

“*Sea-lark*, ahoy there.”

“Ay, ay,” replied Armstrong in his fine voice.

“We want to speak you. We are wrecked !”

“Speak away,” cried the captain, “but we can’t have ye too near. I’ve half a mind to fire into ye ! you varmint !”

“Don’t be hard ; we give in—hands up ! There, let’s come aboard !”

"See you darned!" was the polite answer.

"But, captain, it's murder," expostulated one of the men in the foremost boat. "We can't outlive the storm."

"Then die in it," replied Armstrong. "You fired at us, and have attempted our lives. It's only because the boss is humane, that we have spared you this time. Go on; be off with you."

"For the love of heaven, captain, carry us out of the ice!"

"Much you know of the love of heaven," replied Stevens. "Sheer off! Train that gun aft, young gentlemen, please."

"Mind they don't rush us," said Josiah. "I don't trust them!"

"It's horribly cruel to leave them here, isn't it?" said Percy to the captain. "They may starve."

"Not they," replied Armstrong. "They'll never die of drowning either. A good rope is ripe for them, I'll swear! Boats ahoy! Sheer off, I tell you. Mind your helm, Lot. Stevens, look out—here's the wind?"

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, a terrific gust came down from the westward. Had any sails been set they must have gone clean at once; but Captain Armstrong's precautions had prevented any loss of canvas.

"Up with the jib," roared the captain; "let her go."

The *Sea-lark*, with her bow to the north-west, had felt the sudden fury of the wind forward, and almost on the broadside. She heeled over, and went astern for a minute. This action of the wind enabled the

boats which were to leeward of her to get nearer, and with a cheer they dashed on. The men were fully armed, and in a moment were within the range of the cannon which had been aimed for a longer distance. To attempt to fire it, as the schooner heeled down, was impossible, and for a moment the filibusters' boats were lost sight of, so quickly did the crew take advantage of the confusion.

"Boarders," shouted Armstrong. "Repel the cusses!"

He snatched up a handspike in his left hand, and drew a revolver with the other. "Let no one lay a finger on the schooner," he yelled in his excitement. "Bravo!"

The jib drew, the schooner paid off, and guided by Stevens, rushed up the Bay, with the wind on the quarter, the sea tossing badly, and roaring around the ice blocks like thunder!

"Touch and go," remarked Stevens. "Look out. Lie down!"

The warning was very necessary, for the treacherous crew of the *Cat-fish* discharged a volley of musketry, one bullet lodging in the mainmast, and just escaping Stevens' head by a miracle!

Josiah responded by discharging the cannon, but the ball passed over the boats as the occupants had doubtless anticipated. The boys fired their muskets, and, judging by the confusion, some damage was done. One man ceased pulling, then both boats stopped rowing.

"Safe once more!" cried Armstrong. "We have had a narrow escape, boss. No damage done, eh?"

"No, they all cried. None hit!"

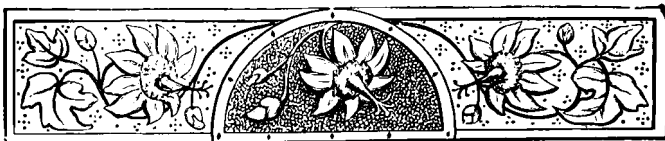
"Yes, there is," shouted Percy, running aft. "Goring is shot."

The captain rushed forward, followed by some of the others, and picked up the body of the unfortunate Goring, who had been shot through the breast, and lay across the grating of the hatchway.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Percy. "It was a merciful death! Here, Job, Pat, come and help me!"

They carried him down into his berth, and reverently covered his body with a bear-skin which Josiah supplied. But the men were still engaged in their melancholy work when a commotion on deck became audible. They hurried up as quickly as possible, and were astonished at the sight that met their gaze. The whole aspect of the scene had changed, and a terrible prospect presented itself to the adventurers. The hurricane! "Go below, young gentlemen!" said the captain. "You had better not face this blast for a while."





CHAPTER XXI.

AN ARCTIC STORM—THE WATERSPOUTS—RUNNING FREE—BREAKING THE BLOCKADE.



HERE was no question about it. The hurricane from the south-south-west had sprung up, and the chances of the *Sea-lark* reaching her destination were materially diminished. Those on board the schooner had no time to look after the boats, which the treacherous *Cat-fish* had dispatched against them with honeyed words, but with strife in their hearts. The roaring of the wind, the rain, and hail; the rending, tearing, and smashing of the ice; the intense blackness of the sky, and the whiteness of the bergs which threatened every moment to fall upon or to sink the schooner by collision, powerfully affected all on board.

There is no necessity to describe in detail this terrible storm. The *Sea-lark* plunged amongst the blocks, while many immense hummocks and not a few bergs of considerable size threatened her with destruction. The irregular and, in places, precipitous coast of Baffin's Bay produces every variety of icy formation, the numerous bays and inlets being particularly full. This ice in winter extends for miles out in the bay, and this becoming separated from each

side meets in mid-channel, as already stated. This is termed the middle-ice. Between it and the land-ice, still attached, there usually exists a precarious passage. By this tortuous course, the whalers and our friends the *Sea-larks* had already so far proceeded, till obliged to cross to the western side, to avoid the brig.

But the tremendous south-south-west wind compelled them to fly up the bay amid the ice. Through some of it the vessel rushed, bumping terribly, and almost shivering her timbers in her mad attempts to leap the intervening barriers.

"We shall smash up into matches if we go on like this," muttered Stevens. "Say, captain!"

"Hallo," roared the skipper beside him, "what now?"

"Take in that foresail, much as ye can, I'd advise, let her drift! She'll bear up here."

"Can't do it. She'll be pounded by the drift-ice. There's a fresh hand at the bellows now. We *must* drive through this into the open water. Where's them boats?"

"Swamped, I guess," replied the mate, making a trumpet of his hands; for close as he was to the captain, he could hardly make himself heard. "They've gone ahead of us, to kingdom come!"

"Belay that," shouted the captain in reply. "We'll weather it yet! This schooner wasn't built last season. There, look ye yonder, the boats of the *Cat-fish* won't weather *that*!"

The mate turned round, and in the open water beyond the tossing, raging, mountainous ice, he beheld a sight that filled him with dismay.

It was a column of water rising gradually, pillar-like, from the sea, and whirling in its spiral movement some white blocks of ice which were caught up and tossed away again like dice or bits of wood, as if unsuited for some mysterious purpose of the demon of the waterspouts.

"Well, I've been in these latitudes many a time, and never saw the like o' that," remarked the captain, as clutching the rail he gazed, shading his eyes with his other hand, at the waterspout.

"No more did I," cried the mate. "Blessed if here isn't another. Call the young gentlemen up, Biscoe. They will never see such a sight again!"

Biscoe delivered his message, and in a few minutes the "boys" came tumbling up. The *Sea-lark* had the wind nearly abaft, her strong timbered bluff bows kept hammering the ice, and she made way too, more in consequence of the propulsion of the ice by the terrible gale, than by reason of her own aided efforts.

Percy, his brother, and cousins had no difficulty in reaching the deck, but having reached it, the puzzle was to stand upright and steadily. Shock after shock disturbed their equilibrium, and the furious following wind seem bent upon tearing their limbs and clothes off.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed the two foremost of the quartet. "A wreck? Oh!"

"Ah, that was a bump! Are we in danger, Captain Armstrong?" shouted Percy.

But he might have saved his breath. The boisterous wind took his words, and he nearly had to eat them as they were forced back in his face. The

gloom was peculiar ; a kind of subdued light as in the days of eclipse. A sullenness lay over the scene, as if the land and sky and water resented the interference of their boisterous enemy and his attendants, hail and rain.

By clinging to the bulwarks and guiding himself along, each of the lads in turn reached the stern of the vessel, where the captain and Stevens—their clothing bulging out in front, and the rounded contours of their backs well accentuated—stood by the wheel endeavouring to avoid some blocks, and to mitigate the concussions of others in the terrible race.

“What’s that?” shouted Reginald, who first cast his eyes to windward. “A waterspout?”

“Ay, and yonder’s another,” said Armstrong. “Keep her away, Stevens. Steady!”

“Will they reach us?” asked Percy.

“Expect not,” was the reply; and short though it was, it was comforting. But in such weather silence was the safest course, and speech was golden, too precious to be thrown to the winds.

“It’s an awful scene,” murmured Jim; “we are drifting fast!”

“We are,” replied Harry. “Here come father and uncle.”

The two elder Uptons, who had been forward with Lot and Job, endeavouring to fend off the ice-blocks, now struggled aft against the wind, and clung on, as the captain suggested, “like a possum to a gum tree.”

“Those two spouts will meet, and then you’ll hear something. Do you see those ice-blocks? why, they’re

pounds and pounds weight, and yet tossed about like skittle-balls! I wouldn't be in the *Cat-fish's* boats for a trifle!" concluded the captain.



His great voice was borne to windward, and reached Job and Lot on the forecastle. They doubtless imagined that the storm-fiend was rushing past them on the wings of the wind.

"What *will* become of them?" said Frederick Upton. "Are not we responsible for them? I fear we are!"

"Rubbish, Fred," replied his brother. "If we had permitted them on board, we would have been murdered by this time. They may run ashore before the wind."

"And perish in the wilderness! Well, they certainly deserve no mercy at our hands, still we should not judge them."

No one made any answer, partly because the speaker was very imperfectly heard, and partly also because his sentiments did not meet with entire approval. Again public attention was fixed chiefly upon the expected point of collision of the two waterspouts, which threatened to be a serious one; and there was also the pleasing uncertainty concerning the place at which the spouts would collide.

The rain which had at first mingled with the snow, now gave way to a sudden hail-storm, which flew in lines of white across the clouded landscape, interminable threads of white, which had no beginning and apparently no end. Then a sudden rush downwards of the tremendous grey cloud, as the wind checked for an instant. Then the lines in parallels, produced to infinity, resumed their course, hurried onwards by the blast.

"This bangs Banagher," roared Paddy. "I'm perished to death, so I am. Me fingers is all thumbs, and me feet is nowhere at all! I'm standing on my calf-bones this minute!"

No one minded him, the danger was too great. Every eye was fixed momentarily upon the waterspouts, and then again on the ice.

"There is one chance for us," remarked Armstrong to his "boss" Josiah. "If those spouts will only unite and clear away yon ice, we will thank them."

"Do you think it probable or possible?" asked Josiah.

"Well, I think it's possible and not altogether probable," was the captain's reply.

"Have you ever seen the like?" persisted Josiah,

for he began to think the case was desperate if their safety depended on the attraction of a couple of waterspouts.

"No," said the captain, "*I* have not, but no doubt Job or Lot has. There's nothing possible or impossible that one o' them hasn't witnessed!"

"If the waterspouts will clear that berg away ahead of us, we shall be thankful. I am afraid we shall either drive into it or into the spouts," said Josiah.

Those phenomena had, "as is their nature to," been gradually approaching one another. In many books which our young adventurers had read, the waterspouts always came and nearly swamped vessels in critical moments, when something very terrible or threatening was about to happen; and it was quite according to the fitness of things that these spouts should also draw nigh and catch up the *Sea-lark* in their watery embrace, and dash her to pieces on an iceberg, from which the crew and passengers and faithful *Punch* would all be eventually rescued.

In this veracious narrative, however, we regret that we cannot comply with these conditions. We cannot make waterspouts meet in defiance of all probability and nature, no, not even under these thrilling circumstances, because we cannot alter facts; and to state that the *Sea-lark* was in imminent danger from the spouts would be untrue, and so, of course, a departure from the general type of this book. So, readers, do not be alarmed, the waterspouts were avoided successfully, but they were principal figures in the landscape, and not lifted into the picture as accessories, as Lord Howe was in the showman's

tableau of the *Death of Nelson*, "only introduced to complete the groupin'!"

The waterspouts, as is recorded by our young adventurers, came nearer and nearer. It was expected that, as soon as ever these whirling enemies reached the ice on either side, they would collapse and die weeping in each other's arms. But they did nothing of the kind. They were foes evidently, but also foes who respected each other; they seemed to change their watery minds, and proceeded beside each other up the narrow water-way, clearing the small blocks, catching them up and flinging them into each other's tortuous arms in a manner marvellous to behold.

That such an incident was as unprecedented as wonderful we are assured by Lot and Job, both of whom declared that they had never seen, and had not even imagined, such a sight.

The wind after a while blew with less fury; it rushed up the bay, carrying destruction with it, and hurrying the whirling spouts through the ice. Many a small berg was twisted round, and many a hummock cast aside. The way lay clearer in the track of the spouts; and Stevens, who could now make himself understood, suggested to the captain that the schooner should follow its phenomenal leaders.

"Yes, for certain," replied the captain. "It's an interposition in our favour. We are led by them pillars of cloud and water. True it is, boss, you're in luck!"

Josiah smiled. "Then you believe in this apparent miracle?" he said.

"Well, there it is. Don't you think it looks like it?"

"No ; it is only the natural course of the cloud and the water. I am ready to confess it is unusual, and these circumstances most particularly convenient, but there's no miracle."

Bumping, pushing, and grating against the ice, the *Sea-lark* continued her way. Armstrong, finding that the wind was lulling, shook out his cloths again, hoisted his mainsail, and ran free up the strait in the wake of the waterspouts. Many a collision happened, yet all serious encounters with ice were avoided for a considerable time, but at length the waterspouts were observed to tremble and quiver. They stopped their progress suddenly ; a tremendous tearing and rending was heard by all on board the schooner ; the spouts parted ; the upper columns separated from the lower, and dissolved in a smoky vapour, so to speak ; the lower portions thundered on the ice with blocks and boulders ; and in another moment nothing was left of the magnificent display but the widely agitated surface of the strait, and a heavy black funnel of cloud, which bore no inconsiderable resemblance to the trunk of some enormous elephant, waving in defiance or farewell to the *Sea-lark*.

"Joy be with ye, and a bottle of moss ; if ye never come back, yer no great loss," remarked Paddy, as the cloud hurried away in the direction of Cape York, carrying with it a promise of more storm and tempest.

"There'll be wrecks in the bay this time," remarked Stevens.

"What wrecks ?" inquired Percy, as he watched the sky intently.

"Whalers, sir. It's a terrible place is Melville Bay ; and with this wind and the driving ice-blocks, I wouldn't be in it for ten Opal Mountains!"

"You're right," assented the captain. "We've had the tempest bad enough, but up yonder, my stars, they've felt it, poor things!"

"Hallo, aft there," shouted Lot from the forecastle.

"Ay, ay," roared Armstrong.

"Ice floe ahead, can't pass it," came the answer.

"How wide—is it thick?" was the next question.

"Not wide ; pretty thick, I judge, broken a bit here and there."

"All hands make sail," shouted Armstrong. "Up with the foresail and topsail ; quick, smart, my lads!"

"Make sail, sir?" exclaimed Stevens, "she will not carry it all. If she does, she will run on the floe yonder."

Stevens put the helm down a trifle, and altered the schooner's course to windward a bit.

"Keep her away," cried the captain, "right before the wind. No skulkin'. I command this vessel. Give me the helm!"

"Take it and welcome," replied Stevens. "I'm no skulker, but I ain't going to wreck this schooner on an ice-field if I know it. Ye can't pass it, captain. Mr Upton, I am doing my duty."

"Can't pass it," replied the captain. "Who says I can't? You'll see! Look 'a here, boss, am I in command?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Upton, "my brother and I have the fullest confidence in you."

"Then here goes," said the captain, glancing at the

spreading canvas which bellied out to the wind. "Ease off the main sheet; let her drive. Now, I'll show you some Arctic sailin'! Quiet, **you boys!** Do **you see where the sea is beating** on the ice?"

"Yes, captain, almost in front."

"Yes, that's the place. It's open water beyond there, and we are going through the crack! The ice has divided, as it often does, and with this wind *we'll put the schooner through!*"

"Hurrah!" cried the Uptons. "Hurrah!" echoed the men; "Three cheers!"

"There now," resumed Armstrong. "Stevens, go forward and *con* the schooner for me. Mind you guide her right into that track there—stem on—we'll risk it!"

As the *Sea-lark* approached nearer to the ice there were some misgivings on board. Suppose she struck and foundered! There was but a small channel through which she could pass with all the captain's skill to guide her, and if she missed the weak place, she might damage her bows very much. Stevens was decidedly uncomfortable, for the *Sea-lark* was rushing apparently to her own destruction at the rate of six miles an hour.

This was a very delicate operation. On each side lay ice, and almost in the direct line were floating pieces, any collision with which would be injurious. So Captain Armstrong had very considerable difficulty in avoiding all these bits, but, with Steven's assistance, he thought he could manage the business.

The captain commanded all who could to go forward with poles and endeavour to assist the *Sea-lark*

in **her** progress through the flaw in the ice. These preparations **having been** made, the ship's company remained silently at their posts awaiting events. The only sounds of human voices which broke the stillness were those of Stevens and Captain Armstrong, who called out, and replied, "Starboard," "Port," "Steady, sir!" "Steer small!" and now and then an exclamation from one of the boys.

"Hard a starboard!" came the word; "Hard it is," was Armstrong's reply, as the wheel came "handed" round, and was held steady for a moment. Then it flew back again, the sails were full, and drawing all seven miles an hour, as the *Sea-lark* swept on.

A crashing blow resulted. The *Sea-lark* actually rebounded from the piece of ice against which she had struck, and staggered. She had broken the floe near the crack, however, and then Captain Armstrong's forethought was appreciated. As the pieces broke off, Lot, Job, and Biscoe, with their poles, assisted by the others, pushed the fragments away. Then the schooner gathered way again, and the men leaped out on the broken lumps, hanging to the guys, or striking away the pieces. Again the schooner pressed on, the ice parted, the men raced and leaped on board, scrambling in anyhow. One more thud, one more dash, the wind came up, and the *Sea-lark* sailed on in the open water beyond the floe! Safe!



CHAPTER XXII.

A CHAT OVER THE CHART—STEVENS EXPLAINS THE
ICE TERMS—CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG OVERBOARD
—CUTTING A WAY—A CURIOUS SIGHT.

SA FE as a church!" exclaimed Lot. "Well done, captain! We're all right now. Here's open water at last. Hurrah!"

Lot's cheer was taken up by all the others on board. Armstrong said little; he relinquished the wheel to Biscoe, and replied simply:

"I told ye I would show you sailin'. Well done, lads, you backed me up well, I will say. We're safe for a spell now, and I'll have a squint at the chart, boss. Come you down."

"Let's go and see whereabouts we are," suggested Reginald. "We must be in strange waters. I wonder whether any explorers have been here, Jim?"

"We are makin' good tracks," remarked the captain, as he spread out the charts. "If we spin along with this wind, we shall soon reach the bay, and lie under Cape York. Blessin's on the sou'-sou'-wester!"

At that moment Stevens came into the cabin and said: "There's a large opening to the westward, sir. It's Lancaster Sound, I guess. The ice is packin' in front. Shall we make fast? The wind is droppin' a bit."

"Wait a while," replied Armstrong. "We mustn't tie up until the wind fails, unless to a loose berg. Keep her safe, Stevens, and do as you think best in ten minutes. If you want me, sing out."

"Ay, ay," replied Stevens. "All right, skipper, I'll keep my eyes open full."

Then he went up again and assumed the command.

"Lancaster Sound!" exclaimed Jim; "why, isn't that the same inlet as Sir James Lancaster's Sound discovered by Bylot?"

"Yes," cried Harry; "you may be sure Lot had some hand in it."

"Lancaster Sound has often been navigated, and through it the North-West Passage was recommended to Franklin. You see it unites with Barrow's Strait, and there is a passage right away to Melville Island, though I have never been so far myself," said Armstrong.

"Then we are only sixty miles or so below Cape York," remarked Mr Upton. "Will the ice keep us out there?"

"I'm afraid so with this wind," replied the captain; "but on the other hand, the season is advancing, the snow ought to be melting under the sou'-wester, and we may possibly have very hot weather."

"Our needle is dipping still; we can't be far from the pole," said Reginald.

"No," replied his uncle. "If I am not mistaken, the actual magnetic pole is to the eastward, on the western coast of Boothia. Ross fixed it as near as he could, and I believe erected a monument to mark it. Eh, captain?"

"If ye want figures I can supply them," replied Armstrong. "The true spot is $70^{\circ} 5' 17''$ N., and $96^{\circ} 46' 45''$ West, as near as they find it. But this isn't doin' the *Sea-lark* any good. We have to consider our own position, and let the pole go."

"There is no doubt about our position," replied Josiah. "We are south of Cape York, and we want to reach Melville Bay or Dudley Digges and the Arctic Highlands."

"Then you imagine the Opal Mountain to be in those Highlands," said the captain, pointing to the marks on the chart.

"Certainly," said Frederick Upton. "We have come all this way on that supposition, at anyrate. Pleasant if we are doomed to disappointment at the eleventh hour."

"We won't be disappointed!" cried the boys. "Don't you believe it, captain? We intend to have our jewels, our opals, our gold, our diamonds and pearls—riches incalculable!"

"Well, all I say is, I wish you *may* get them, and when you do you will give me a percentage, I hope. Now it strikes me that if this wind should rise a bit, we can run up into Melville Bay, and across the mountains from there. If we cannot enter the bay, we will round Cape York, and attack the Highlands from that side. Is that agreed, gentlemen?"

"Yes," replied Josiah; "my brother and I are quite of your opinion."

"And so are we," remarked Reginald. "This agreement amongst so many relations is absolutely unprecedented!"

"Not to say touching," remarked Jim, as he turned to go on deck.

"You young cynics!" cried the captain, "be off with you! Go and help Stevens. He may require hands on deck."

The young fellows in excellent spirits acceded to this suggestion, and proceeded to the "quarter-deck," where they found Stevens contemplating a wonderful arrangement of suns in the sky, with halos and bows—an extraordinary phenomenon.

"Refraction," he said in reply to Reginald's question. "Queer thing it is; up here you have plenty of it, and to use apparently an Irish expression, you can see the sun before he is visible!"

"How do you mean, Stevens?"

"Why, suppose you were here, say in winter, you would calculate on seeing the sun on a certain day, but as a matter of fact he would be refracted and appear some days before you had expected. Those fog bows are splendid now."

"Are we anchored?" asked Jim, suddenly.

"Yes; fixed to the ice till the wind helps us again. Why?"

"Because," replied the youth, "I am going to ask you a question or two. We are getting up very far; and I want to know all about these places, about the ice, and particularly why you called that whale we found in the ice a *right* whale."

"That's sailin' round the compass pretty well, Master James," replied the mate, good humouredly. "All about these places, and ice, and whales, is what you may term a goodish kind of order to carry out."

'These places' are all known to navigators. I can't tell you much, for I haven't had time to read it, and have never seen the red snow, even. But as for ice and whales, I think I can do somethin'. Ice is different in places."

"Well," cried Percy, who was listening, "I should have fancied that ice never varied. Ice is ice!"

"We call it by different names," continued the mate, glancing round to take in the surroundings. "There is a *field* of ice, a small field is a *floe*. When a field or floe is knocked about by the sea, and broken up by the tide into biggish pieces, it is called *pack* ice; if broader and leveller, it is a *patch* or a *stream* according to its length. Loose ice, such as we came through yonder, and which I hope to pull through again, is *drift* ice, or, when small, *brash*. *Sludge*, you can understand, is the half congealed water, and when this is frozen into small pieces they are called *pancakes*. A *hummock* is a lump of ice forced upwards by the surrounding pressure, and you have seen plenty. There is one thing we did not see, and that is an iceberg calf. Glad we didn't."

"What's that?" enquired Jim, smiling.

"A piece of ice which comes up when detached from the bottom of a berg. I have known them drive a hole in a whaler. If you moor too near an iceberg, mind its calves!"

"And don't tread on its toes, I suppose," remarked Reginald. "So that's all about the ice! Fields, flocs, packs, patches, streams, drift, and brash!"

"We will remember those names," said Percy. "I have often heard them applied, but never could decide

which was which exactly. The ice blink is the reflection from the ice, I remember."

"Yes. When the blink is quite white you can be sure of ice, miles away; but if you find it a dirty white, yellowish, I mean, you can expect snow," said Stevens. "Hurrah! here's the breeze again, rather more westerly, though. We shall have enough presently to weigh."

"That will be difficult," remarked Harry, smiling.

"What will be difficult?" asked Stevens, suddenly turning round.

"To weigh the wind," remarked Harry, with a beautiful blush at his temerity in paraphrasing the mate's remark.

"I'm glad you're feelin' so much better," was all Stevens said in reply.

After a pause, Percy ventured to suggest something about the *right* whale. "It is a proper oil whale, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, the true Greenland whale. There's the right whale, the razor-back, the finner, the broad-nose, the spermaceti or cachalot——"

"Shall we *catch a lot* of them?" enquired Reginald, mildly.

"All hands up anchor," shouted the mate, disgusted at this unseemly interruption. "Clear away the ice there, and man the capstan. Now my lads, bear a hand, please, and help the men."

Captain Armstrong heard the order and came up. He found the small anchor coming home rapidly. The wind was almost aft (on the quarter), and the schooner seemed disposed to ride rapidly.

"We'll do it, skipper," remarked Stevens. "I'll run

her full tilt on the ice floe when it cracks. We can drag her with the hawsers over that bit ahead, and there's opening water for us. To-morrow will be the 4th of July, skipper!"

"Independence Day," he exclaimed. "So 'tis. Well, we'll be independent out o' this ice-floe, I hope, to-morrow. A good sign. Let her go."

This remark was intended for the steersman. The same manœuvre was repeated with success. The *Sea-lark* bounded forward, and pushed aside the already loosened masses of ice. She was making way merrily.

"Overboard, some of you, on yonder cakes, and give her a haul. Come, volunteers; I'll show you the way, my lads."

The gallant old skipper let himself over the side, and stood on the floe at some distance from the schooner. Lot heaved him a line, and followed it overboard. Then the others came. All hands, including Josiah and Frederick Upton, tugged manfully at the rope; the *Sea-lark*, steered by Stevens to a nicety, came swishing and crashing along some sixty yards astern. The sails propelled her too, and the ice was almost surmounted.

"All aboard," cried Armstrong. "Quick's ye can, she'll run the rest and drive over. Be smart, lads."

They all hurried back, and clambered as well as they could into the schooner. Biscoe assisted the "young gentlemen" on board, while Lot and Job remained on the ice to hoist them. They were all laughing, and Stevens had his eyes aloft on the canvas, when a cry alarmed them all. But no one

was missing, apparently ; Josiah and Frederick Upton looked at each other.

"Where's Captain Armstrong?" enquired Stevens. Didn't he come aboard?"

"Hallo! hallo! *Sea-lark* ahoy," came from the ice.

All turned to the port quarter, and there was Armstrong standing on a floating piece of ice about ten yards square, rough measurement, holding the tow rope, and being dragged through the "sludgy" ice and water. His appearance was truly comical. Fortunately he had not let go the rope, else he would have been left behind, and might have perished. As it was, he seemed uncommonly uncomfortable, and kept shouting to "heave to," adjuring Stevens in stentorian tones to lie up, while his appearance almost provoked laughter. He had been dragged over the ice too.

"Lower away the quarter boat," cried Stevens; "brail up the mainsail, and round with the yards."

At the same time he put the helm down, and brought the *Sea-lark* up in the wind.

Just in time! The vessel had reached the ruffled open water, and had not the captain's position been immediately discovered it would have become even more unpleasant. It was bad enough as it was, and he came on board with, for him, a very sheepish look. He evidently expected a considerable quantity of quizzing, but he received nothing but smiling sympathy.

"Nearly lost, boss," he exclaimed. "That lump of ice might have been my everlastin' restin' place."

Then occurred an event—I can call it nothing else—

in this true history. Josiah Upton replied with a joke, thus :

"Yes, captain, your 'hummock' might have been your hammock that time, as you say !"

"Great Jehoshaphat !" exclaimed Armstrong, "are *you* at it. Then I give up ! Here, Stevens, take charge. I'm going below, dead beat !"

It is very probable that the worthy skipper made this little jocosity his excuse for leaving the deck. He appeared exhausted, and when we remember the circumstances, and how he had been dragged through ice and water, and over ice, by the rope, bruised and half frozen, we cannot wonder at his wishing to recruit himself.

The sea was now more open. The ice had either melted considerably, or had been driven up by the storm into higher quarters, and stranded in the creeks and multitudinous bays of the coast-line, amongst the islands and precipices. The mate thought this a favourable opportunity to bury the luckless Goring, so he was rapidly sewn up in his hammock, and reverently committed to the deep. Josiah read the prayers for the dead, and the hammock, weighted with shot, dipped into the chilly ocean, and no stone marked the resting-place of poor Goring.

"Down, down, beneath the deep,
That often triumph bore him :
He sleeps a sound and peaceful sleep,
With the salt waves dashing o'er him."

The captain, of course, came up on deck for the ceremony, but did not in any way interfere with Stevens' arrangements. Personally he was pleased

that the body had been buried ; and then he rested a while, for he had been sorely bruised.

The sun now had nearly dispersed the clouds and fogs. Nature resumed her most cheerful northern garb. Great sea monsters tossed, and swam, and basked in the sea and sunshine. The heat became great, and our adventurers were glad to remove their wrappings, and discard them for a season. Everyone felt the cheerfulness of the climate, and watched the many interesting sights, unfamiliar to many of the party, which hourly presented themselves. The days passed rapidly. The sun remained a burning beacon in the heavens, and our voyagers reached Melville Bay at last.

All was joyousness and ease. Meals were partaken of in the open air on deck. An awning would have been acceptable. The reflection was painful, even with glasses on, at times. Every precaution had been observed, and no sickness nor any symptom of scurvy had been experienced on board. Everyone was light-hearted, and anxious to see the wonderful Opal Mountain, which they had sailed so many hundreds of miles to discover. The men discussed it freely. Biscoe and Paddy had quite gained the regard of Lot and Job. They all argued and disputed at times, but no one ever questioned Lot's authority in yarn-spinning ; and when he appealed to Job, or Job to him, the question, whatever it was, was regarded as settled, once for all. He knew it, they knew it!

"I know all about it," "you can't tell *me* anything," were the usual phrases ; and although there was many a slip 'twixt eye and lip, the partners in general were pretty right. They were shrewd and amusing.

Next day, with a brisk breeze, the *Sea-lark* opened up a fine bay ; but a mass of ice, and something that was not ice, attracted their attention.

Captain Armstrong and his friends the Uptons had quickly made out the obstruction.

"In the first place," said the captain, "it's ice, and on the ice are wrecks and shipwrecked men!"

"Whalers!" suggested Josiah, as he continued to gaze at the bay.

"Ay, whalers! They've been smashed up in that everlastin' hurricane," murmured Armstrong. "Poor critters, we'll rescue them."

"Perhaps they may be the *Cat-fish* crew," said Percy.

"I think not," replied Stevens. "Guess you'll see more than them. It is a bad place to be caught in, is Melville Bay."

"Then this is Melville Bay?" said Frederick. "Where is the Opal Mountain?"

He again had recourse to his telescope, to ascertain whether any of the summits within range was the long anticipated mountain. But he could of course not distinguish any of them, for on none was an opalescent hue apparent. So the treasure seekers had to be contented with a general inspection of the range of hills.

The view was splendid aloft ; the rocks and mountains, the semi-summer appearance of the lower ground, the already melting snow and breaking ice. But on acquaintance the voyagers found that the masses melted little. The snow and ice never disappeared except from some sun-scorched cliffs.

A more extraordinary appearance was presented by the ice. In it were clasped some half-dozen vessels, evidently whalers, which had been suddenly overtaken and shut in by the tempest. The ice had been heaped around them in such an extraordinary manner that it seemed an impossibility to ever release them again. As the *Sea-lark* approached she was loudly hailed and cheered, being evidently regarded with considerable curiosity. She was not a whaler, that was evident, and the shipwrecked ones wondered.

The schooner did not run any risks. Captain Armstrong had no intention to "give himself away," as he termed it. He came to an anchor at some distance from the ice, taking care to keep his ship's head to the westward and southward, so that any symptoms of a breeze on a lee shore might be followed by a beat out of the bay before the weather got bad.

"I say, Harry," cried Reginald, "look at these fellows yonder. I declare they are dancing and singing. It's a fair."

"A fair!" exclaimed Harry. "Nonsense!"

"It *is*! Take the telescope—look there; can't you see the fellows by the tents capering about! We shall see them plainly presently. "What a curious set of whalers!"

The captain then came forward, and after a pause, said:

"These fellows have been wrecked, and have got out the spirits, you see. We must be careful what we do. Yet I'm kind o' sorry for them too. But let us be on our guard with them gentlemen!"



CHAPTER XXIII.

THE "ARCTIC FAIR"—THE WHALING FLEET—A
SAD DISASTER—DOCTOR SNOW—NEWS OF THE
OPAL MOUNTAIN AT LAST.

THE scene as the *Sea-lark* approached the icy barrier of Melville Bay was almost unique. There was a considerable number of men, and judging from face and costume, of different nationalities. Some of them in the vessels appeared dejected and quiet, others on shore had erected tents, and were endeavouring by dance and song to pass the time sailor-fashion, full of the present enjoyment, careless for the future, and seemingly utterly indifferent whether the ice broke up or kept them in its freezing grasp for evermore.

"Madmen!" ejaculated Armstrong. "Why, tar and feather my aunt, if those fellows are not going to burn the boat! Great Jehoshaphat!"

This was the captain's strongest term of astonishment, and he kept it for use on rare and curious occasions.

"Burn the boat, surely not, they cannot be so mad! Why, they will never get home again!" cried Fred Upton.

"Are they English, or French, or Dutch, think you, Stevens?" asked Mr Upton.

"Mostly English, I think. That shouting man is a Frenchman, I expect. We had better land, and see what they are."

"Land and see!" muttered Reginald. "Very good for Stevens, only it's not correct!"

A boat was manned. Mr Upton, his brother, Stevens, and two of the boys embarked; two of the lads pulled. The captain preferred to remain on board with Biscoe and Paddy, and keep an eye on the weather. Job and Lot also remained.

The scene when the voyagers actually got within speaking distance of the tents, was one perhaps unparalleled in the records of Arctic adventure. On the rough ice, twisted and heaped in every direction by the tremendous pressure which had enveloped the vessels in a common ruin, were erected tents of sails, which had actually been stripped from the wounded and shattered masts and booms. These tents were spacious and as comfortable as circumstances admitted of, but the full force of the tragedy did not even then strike the visitors. It seemed to them incredible that sailors—even sailors—should continue to eat and drink and rise up to play, as these men were doing daily amid such surroundings.

Yet it was true. The summer was at hand: eatables and potables, the latter especially, were in plenty. Scattered over an immense expanse of ice-covered water in the bay were numerous clusters of canvas tents, amid and around which singing and dancing, smoking and frolic, horse-play and amuse-

ments of any kind were taking place. Some parties on their way across the ice were encountered by the new comers, but from them Josiah and his companions could not obtain any true representations of the case. They were out on an expedition—"on the spree!" The French element of light-heartedness seemed grafted in the recklessness of the British tar, and the combination under some circumstances praiseworthy, in this case was criminal.



The astonished arrivals made their way slowly amid the tents and neglected whalers. One or two men they found on board the hitherto uncrushed craft. One boat was already in flames, and another had already been consumed to get the stores out.

"What horrible profligacy!" exclaimed Josiah Upton. "Here these fellows are burning timber worth its weight in gold to the Esquimaux, and in this way also cutting off their retreat. These vessels are still almost unharmed though. They may sail in

them," he added, significantly. "The majority will die, I fear, a horrible death."

A few sensible individuals came up from the vessels, and then clustered round the new arrivals. Astonishment was freely expressed at the appearance of the *Sea-lark*, and numerous questions were asked concerning her objects and destination, enquiries which the voyagers parried as skilfully as possible. Nevertheless Josiah made up his mind to find out something concerning the Opal Mountain if he saw his opportunity.

"Rather a bold adventure yours," remarked a middle-aged man. He had a somewhat professional air, and Josiah Upton took him for a surgeon. The "boss" was right. This gentleman was Isaac Snow, belonging to the whaling fleet.

"Yes, perhaps so," replied Josiah, "we have had our troubles and disasters. A terrible storm that, a few days since."

"Ah! you may well say so," replied the surgeon. "It was worse than the former, which was the beginning of our misfortunes. Our vessels were crushed up in the ice like nut-shells; you see some of them. We are in hopes of getting those afloat again when the ice moves, but many others further north are hopelessly smashed."

"How can you tell that, sir?" enquired Stevens.

"We have communication regularly across the ice," replied the doctor, turning calmly to the mate of the *Sea-lark*. "We have established a 'North Mail,' which is maintained every two days. We are quite accustomed to our express by this time."

The younger Uptons stared at this announcement.

"Then you have made up your minds to remain here?" asked Percy.

"No! No! Some *must* remain, many probably will. How they are all to quit this place, *I* cannot tell. It is a fearful thing, gentlemen," continued the surgeon, seriously, "a terrible thing. Nearly two hundred human beings here and yonder are in daily deadly peril, and not twenty of them seem to care what becomes of them and their companions. Come with me."

The surgeon led the way, and the others followed, wondering. They had come prepared to witness strange sights in the Arctic Regions, but had not expected any such as now were presented to them.

After a scramble over the rugged surface of the ice, and winding their way amid the hummocks, the travellers came to the tents which they had perceived. These were commodious, and were supplied with fires to leeward, though the wind was light, and no immediate change in the temperate weather was anticipated. The men were chiefly British sailors—merry, half-tipsy, careless dogs, who had food, liquor, and no work. There were some Frenchmen, and a few more phlegmatic Dutchmen, who smoked and occasionally hummed a tune, while Jack and Pierre fraternised, danced, sang, shook hands, and occasionally disputed and quarrelled, to shake hands, sing, dance, and fraternise all over again, and so on *da capo*.

"Is it possible," exclaimed Upton, "that these fellows have lost all, and have little chance of returning home to their families? Do you know, I feel some-

thing as Dante must have felt when gazing on the lost souls. Poor fellows ! ”

“ It is quite like a fair,” said Reginald, ‘ Baffin’s Fair.’ ”

“ That’s just what they call it,” replied the surgeon. “ I am compelled to remain, in honour bound, or I would ask you to give me a passage.”

“ Willingly,” replied Josiah. “ You have been here before, I presume ? ”

“ Yes, Oh yes, but never have had such a smashing up. Look and see the other side of the picture, and I will tell you our adventures as we go along.”

“ We shall be glad to hear your narrative,” replied the others. “ We had a taste of the gale ourselves, down the strait.”

“ Ah ! here it was awful. The wind suddenly came in from the S.S.W. There were six of us here—the *Swan*, the *Rattler*, the *Ville de Dieppe*, and three others. The rest had gone on farther for the first shoot at the whales, but we got caught. My ship’s the *Brothers*, from Dundee. Well, this gale found us comfortably anchored beside the floe, waiting for it to permit us to move ahead. We hadn’t much water under us. We had been beating up the opposite shore, but the bergs were too thick, so we ran across, you see.”

“ Yes,” replied Stevens, “ that was all right.”

“ Ay ! but when the storm came we were fixed. The bergs came over and pressed us, and the floe moved across with them. We were, as you may perceive, anchored stem and stern, bowsprit and booms ;

but when the gale came, we found no protection. The men tried to saw out a space to lie in, but they couldn't; the floe came upon us, and my vessel was lifted bodily up by the ice, as you see her. She jumped on the ship in front and severed her mizzen, nearly stove her counter. Then we were carried along while the ice continued its career. Awful! You can't conceive anything like it if you haven't seen it!"

The boys acquiesced. They could see the results, at anyrate.

"It's almost enough to unman one," continued the surgeon, looking round him, and then at his auditors. "See, there's the *Dieppe*, *Rattler*, and *Baffin*. Shattered! Look! These vessels, as fine whalers as ever swam, are matchwood. In ten minutes the ice had them in bits! The floe came on, ripped them up, tossed them aside, their masts went by the board, and all this amid a noise as if an earthquake had happened. The men? Why, they leaped ashore as they were. Many of them had only time to catch up a few clothes, and jump out. One ship has been regularly eviscerated—turned inside out!"

"Terrible!" exclaimed Percy; "and all in one day!"

"One day, my lad! *In less than twenty minutes* the vessels were all wrecked and smashed, as you see. The *Dieppe* may float, and one of the others maybe, though there's water in them. We got out what boats we could, drew them across, and then made up our tents as soon as possible."

"How long ago is this?" enquired Stevens.

"Only a few days. Then we learned that our mates higher up are almost as bad. So we established a 'post' with them. Some of our skippers have gone exploring, some are ill. Our misfortunes began ten days ago, they culminated about four days since!"

The visitors were silent. They were thinking of their own chances. At length Reginald said to the surgeon:

"Do you think the season has settled now?"

"Yes; I believe we're in for summer; and there's plenty of whales up here. But how can *we* fish? We have hardly a serviceable boat. I'd like to find out what our mates are about."

"Where are they, think you?" enquired Upton.

"Beyond the point there. If they have any boats they will fish. I am afraid our season is done with. Well, gentlemen, here we are. This is my wreck. I can still sling a hammock in it, you see, but it is a very rickety old scow now."

The aspect of the *Brothers* was astounding. She had been split and twisted, strong timbers—she was a fine vessel—had been broken like laths. It was impossible to tell which was bow and which was stern. The masts were flung into the crevasses, and remained sticking up in a helpless way, which only accentuated the ruin.

"I only got out by the skin of my teeth," remarked the surgeon. "The ice came in at one end of the cabin as I rushed out, half-dressed, at the other. Several men were up to the waists in water before they could stir a step. It has been a terrible catastrophe."

"We will take you on board with us if you will come," said Frederick Upton. "Come for a while, at anyrate. You know this coast, and may give us some information."

"Oh, I'll go quick enough for a while, but I can't leave these fellows. My mate is laid up, and I must remain near on hand. But I'll go aboard your craft, and hear your news."

When they came near the schooner again, they found that several others of the whalers had also boarded the *Sea-lark*, and were examining her with considerable curiosity. Captain Armstrong indeed evidently had begun to think them too persistent, and he welcomed the return of the party with expressions of relief.

"Blamed if I didn't think we were going to have a fuss with some of these jolly larkers. They want everything they see, and I nearly put one fellow overboard," said Armstrong.

"We must not offend them," said Upton. "They will do no harm if we are firm and quiet. Keep our own counsel, and we will soon dismiss them quietly."

Meanwhile the sailors roamed over the deck, and criticised the *Sea-lark* freely.

"I say, Bill, here's a set out o' guns. This is a fowlin' ship, I take it. Any blubber, mister?"

"None," replied Stevens. "We have not been after whales."

"Haven't ye? What may ye be doin' then? Tradin'? Up here? Oh!"

"That's our business," said Percy, hastily, "and money-making."

"Business! Ho, Jack, here's a long-shore Johnny

with *business* in the North Pole. Goin' to open a bank, sir?" he continued with mock respect. "Jack, here! Here's a young gentleman as is come out to open a bank for the seals and the spouters. Up the spout shop, I suppose."

"No, Bill, it's for us to put our savin's in. Thank ye, master. I haven't had no pay here yet, but we can manage it. Don't overdo it."

Percy Upton was very much annoyed, but wisely kept his temper. There were several men on board who would have proved "ugly customers" to quarrel with, and the doctor advised submission. No more was said, the sailors had the best of it, and sauntered away. At length, finding there was nothing more to be had, and recognising in Captain Armstrong a master mind, the reckless intruders retired, and left the *Sea-lark* for the time being.

"They gave it you nicely, Percy," laughed Reginald. "I wonder you didn't 'go for them,' with their spouting shop."

"They meant no harm," replied Percy. "But I *was* savage! A North Pole Savings Bank was a ridiculous idea."

"I am glad you did not anger them," remarked the surgeon, as he accompanied the Uptons to the cabin to have a meal with them. "They would have attacked you, and then we might have had a free fight. There are over two hundred men here at present, and they are under no kind of control. You should continue your way. I would."

There was a pause for a while, and then Josiah, after glancing at his brother, said:

"Doctor Snow, you are not eating or drinking. Come, sir, a glass all round to the success of the *Sea-lark*."

"I will respond to that toast," replied Snow, with pleasure. "Here's success to the *Sea-lark*," he cried, emptying his glass of rum and water. "But may I enquire in what particular line you are?"

"This is the point concerning which I am desirous to consult you," replied Upton.

The doctor stared. He might well regard Josiah with considerable astonishment. Was it possible that this man and his fellows had come out without knowing why? Were they mad?

"Excuse me," he said, "I am at a loss to understand your meaning."

"The fact is, doctor," continued Josiah, "we have come out on a very curious expedition. You have been up here before." (The doctor nodded.) "Did you ever hear—mind this is in confidence—did you ever hear of the Opal Mountain?"

"The Opal Mountain," repeated the doctor, slowly. "Well, I think I have. A supposed treasure place, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes," cried the others, impatiently. "Then it *does* exist. It is no myth; it's all true. Hurrah!"

The doctor smiled at the lads' enthusiasm, and at the credulity of their elders, and replied:

"You don't mean to say that you have made this voyage on purpose to find this volcanic rock?"

"It's a volcano, then!" exclaimed Reginald.

"I did not say so," replied Snow; "I said it was or is a volcanic rock. It is up in the 'Highlands' yonder. How did *you* ever hear of it?"

"We had certain papers given to us by a sailor who claimed to have discovered the treasure there, a man named Jackson."

"Jackson, Jackson! let me see; there are many Jacksons. Some two seasons ago there were some nice rascals up here—Americans, and one was named Jackson. They were ostensibly whalers and explorers, but virtually pirates. They robbed any unsuspecting vessel, and nearly got shot. I thought they had been hanged by this time."

"These are the same gang, but Jackson, apparently, fell out with his friends. My lads here found him, and assisted him; but he died after telling them the secret he had carefully preserved from his associates."

Then Josiah gave the doctor a brief account of the scene in the deserted town. Mr Snow listened attentively, and then asked to see the papers.

They were speedily produced. He studied them attentively and in silence for some minutes. The others also remained silent, or spoke only in whispers, while the doctor was thus occupied. At length he looked up.

"Well!" was the general exclamation.

"The bearings appear to me to be correct. There is a peculiarly tinted rock yonder, which, in consequence of the parti-coloured vegetation and the interposed snow, gives a distant spectator the idea of Opals, the red and white being curiously blended; but——"

The doctor paused and smiled as he looked from one to another of the expectant faces round him. He then calmly proceeded with his meal.

"Then," said Frederick Upton, in a disappointed tone, "you think we are, generally speaking, or rather particularly speaking, idiots for our pains."

"I think in this instance you are on a wild-goose chase certainly."

"But the mountain is there?" said Harry.

"Undoubtedly."

"And the papers give the directions," he continued.

"Decidedly, clearly."

"And Jackson had no object in deceiving us, had he?"

"None apparently."

"Then I think there is something in it," said Harry, decidedly. "The man was dying, he was under an obligation to us; he wished to evince his gratitude, and he did so. He believed it, at anyrate."

"Most likely," replied Snow, "but I do not."

"Excuse me," interrupted Jim, "that proves nothing. Now, Harry has some reason on his side."

"Meaning that I have none," said the doctor, laughing. "Thank you."

Jim blushed. "No, Doctor Snow, I didn't mean that. I meant—well—we *do* believe it—that's what I mean."

"There are many things true which appear perfectly impossible," remarked Reginald, sagely. "Why shouldn't there be gold or something really valuable in this Opal Mountain?"

"It's like a pirate tale," said the doctor. "Sort of Kidd!" he added, smiling.

No one else smiled. They did not quite understand the later British slang then.

"Well, Kidd or Goat, we intend to have a shy at

it," said Percy. "Will you come with us, doctor? Is it far?"

"No, a day's fair run. Then you land beyond the headland and climb up the rocks. After you must find your own bearings. The hill or mountain is reported volcanic. There is a crater in the hillside, I have heard."

"Suppose it blows up!" cried Jim. "Rather unpleasant."

"Very unlikely," said the doctor. "It is perfectly harmless, and no one has ever seen it in eruption. It is dead! Well, now, with your leave I'll go ashore and return in a few hours, if I may."

"Certainly. We will overhaul our whaling gear meanwhile; we may find a whale yonder, and the lads want a hunt, they say—just for once."

"Then I'll join you, sir. We shall meet again. You may depend that I will respect your confidence, and if there *is* anything in your mountain, it will be found this time."

A boat landed the doctor on the ice, and those on board the *Sea-lark* watched him.

"Will he come back, Harry, do you think?" said Jim.

"He will," replied Harry. "He knows we are on the right track, and he and father exchanged grips. He's a 'Mason,' Jim. So he has cemented our friendship."



CHAPTER XXIV.

A WHALE HUNT—A GREAT LOSS—A DISAPPOINTMENT—A SAD RETURN.

FOR the next few hours all was excitement on board the *Sea-lark*. Stevens was pleased with the idea of whaling. The other men also wanted some amusement. Even Lot and Job had not told any one "so" for several days. Indeed it was remarked that their usual prescience had failed them, for when Jim calmly enquired whether they hadn't impressed him and Reginald that the whaling fleet would be found smashed in Melville Bay, Lot replied :

"Me and Job, Master Jim, arn't conjurors."

"Well, conjurors or not, what one swears the other sticks to ; that's like the thing. But didn't you expect the fleet would be in a mess?" continued Jim, mercilessly.

"No, we didn't, at least *I* didn't ; Job might have," said Lot.

"And Job didn't neither. No, we knew nothin' about *that*."

"Very curious indeed," remarked Jim. "But seri-

ously, men, what do you think of the mountain? You heard what the doctor said, didn't you?"

"Partly we did. Lot and I is quite agreed, Master James. You will find the mountain, but ye won't find riches without some assistance. If the fellow Jackson was with us now he would be of use; without some one as knows the very spot, it's unlikely we shall find anything."

Jim reported this conversation to his father and his uncle, but they made light of it. Captain Armstrong laughed, and said that if they found the mountain the treasure would come to light; the same information that led to the one would lead to the other.

When the arrangements had been perfected, and farewells said to the whalers, who were at length making some preparations for getting away, though the chances were sadly against them, the doctor came on board, and sail was made once more.

Everyone, from the captain down to Paddy, was on the tip-toe of expectation. A parting cheer was given to the whalers, who returned it. Poor fellows, they did not then think that few of them would ever see their native land again. After a while the *Sea-lark* came in sight of the other encampment on the ice, and perceived the remainder of the whaling fleet. There were only a few in this detachment, those who could having already proceeded to the whaling grounds farther north beyond Cape York.

This fine promontory doubled, the *Sea-lark's* course was laid for Cape Dudley Digges, and after dinner the crew were all on the look out for a whale.

"We must have a few whales, captain," said Harry,

who had now quite recovered his usual spirits. "The oil will pay our expenses."

"We haven't room to stow it," replied the captain, "but we can have a hunt if you see a chance. The men are quite as anxious as you are, and they will be off on the very first opportunity. We can capture our whale and tow him astern, and sell him."

"All right," said Harry. "The implements are all ready."

He informed his brother and cousins, who were very much delighted at the prospect. But, unfortunately, that day no whale was sufficiently polite to come and be killed.

"I suspect the animals have disappeared," remarked Josiah. "The whalers have alarmed them, and we may have a long time to wait."

Stevens, who was very eager in the chase, volunteered to keep watch. He mounted the rigging, and seating himself in the look-out man's perch, technically called the "crow's nest," ranged his glass around the horizon.

"Yonder's the mountains," he hailed. "Guess the Opal one is there, somewhere."

All eyes were instantly directed to the starboard bow, and sure enough, inland, were perceived some precipitous mountains of considerable elevation, but none which bore any resemblance to the expected treasure hill.

After a while the boys and their parents decided to go below and rest.

"We shall have plenty of work to-morrow, I dare say," remarked Frederick Upton; "so let us sleep while we can."

Some of the men were of the same opinion, so the captain having taken the wheel, the others lay down. The wind was steady, and the sails were full. There was no prospect of any change except for the better, and Armstrong, with Stevens watching ahead, was quite comfortable. The ice did not give so much trouble. Every now and then a large piece would strike the bows and glide off, but the captain steered beautifully, and with Stevens' assistance, managed to avoid any mishap.

Nothing occurred for a few hours. One by one the men rose and came on deck. Job relieved Stevens, and the latter took the wheel. The captain went down to his cabin, leaving all snug, but he had not lain himself down ten minutes when Lot hailed the deck :

"Spout, yonder ! Port your helm."

Stevens acquiesced, and then as his eye caught the well-known sign, he shouted :

"Tumble up, there ! A fall ! A fall !"

The boys and their parents were awake, and heard the call. They imperfectly understood the term "fall," but considered it the proper summons.

"A whale !" shouted Lot.

This decided the question. The men were up in an instant, and ready with the boat. Armstrong hurried up again, and Stevens relinquished the helm to Paddy. The captain sighted the whale, and gave orders to take in sail.

"We will drift down a while, then I will run in and anchor by the ice. Is the boat ready ?"

Yes, the boat was ready, and already being launched. The whale was still at a considerable distance, but

even then it was necessary to be very cautious in approaching him. The whale boat, or the boat which was to do duty for it, though not quite so large as the usual craft, had been suspended ready for launching, and in a few minutes it was in the water. Stevens was appointed harpooner, and Lot, Job, and the two elder Upton boys were to row. Captain Armstrong steered.

"Can't we go?" cried Jim.

"You can follow in the other boat," replied his father. "If Stevens is fortunate, you will see the hunt quite well, and in greater safety in it."

"Bring some spare line," said the captain, "we may want it."

Then the whale boat pulled rapidly away as silently as possible in the direction of the monster, which was visible from the deck of the *Sea-lark*.

"Well, this is what I call disappointing," remarked Jim. "Eh, Reggie? we did expect to see a whale hunt."

"Don't be impatient," replied his father, "your uncle and I will be ready in a few minutes. You two can row us close up, only mind you do not get entangled in the line in any way. You would be carried overboard, perhaps, or have your leg cut off if you fouled the line."

"Perhaps it's as well we didn't go on the whale boat," remarked Reginald; "we might have got mixed with the lines and whales. Now we are ready, I think. The doctor is not coming, he says."

"Then," replied Mr Upton, "we will leave *Punch*

on board with Biscoe. Paddy, you can come with us. Good-bye, doctor."

But *Punch* wouldn't remain on board when his masters had left. He quickly leaped into the water, and had to be dragged into the boat.

"Go forward, sir," said Reginald; "lie down, bad dog."

The animal whined and looked very piteously at Mr Upton, but he was banished to the fore part of the boat, which Reginald and Jim pulled quickly after the other.

"How much line have they?" enquired Mr Upton of Paddy, presently.

"Och, thin, it's lashin's they have, sir," was the reply.

"How much is a lashin'?" asked Reginald. "If you tell us that, we may work out the sum."

"Bedad, and I don't know, sir," said Pat; "but they've a power o' rope."

"How much, you stupid?" asked Fred Upton, sternly. "Speak out!"

"About twelve hundhred feet, sir, I b'lieve. So I hear Mr Stevens say."

"Why couldn't you tell us that at once? Pull, boys. Pat, get that rope ready to tie on to Mr Stevens' cord if necessary."

"Ay, yer honour, I will so," replied Paddy.

Meanwhile Stevens and his party had been rapidly approaching the whale. He had a harpoon in his hand, and was ready to strike. The boat was nearing the animal, the oars having been laid in, and Captain Armstrong sculling from the stern, gently propelling

The Opal Mountain.

the boat through the water with very little noise, for it is necessary to be extremely cautious. The other occupants of the boat had cleared the line, which was coiled in ship-shape fashion in the boat ready to run out quickly.

"Shall we take a turn round the post, Stevens?" said the captain, "it may check the beast."

"Not yet, captain," replied the harpooner. "If he runs us close we will try the 'bollard;' but he may drag us down if we ain't cautious. Hush! Silence now, for your lives!"

All were mute as mice. The boat glided on, and after a pause, which appeared of interminable duration, Stevens rose and darted his swift harpoon unerringly into the immense mass in front of him.

"Look out!" shouted the harpooner; "if he strikes us, we're dead men."

But the whale did not touch the boat. Sometimes he strikes one and smashes it into matchwood. On this occasion he simply dived the moment he felt the harpoon, which penetrated a considerable distance into his soft side.

"Bravo!" shouted the Uptons in the hinder boat. "Well done!"

The lads and men in the whale boat responded. Then the Uptons came nearer to Armstrong's boat.

"Steady," cried Stevens, "the beggar is running hard. Have you your line ready?"

"Yes, here it is; look out, Pat."

Stevens rapidly joined the end of the fast running line to the reserve coil, and then took a hitch with it

round the post or bollard, which in a measure checked the speed, but made the line smoke again.

"Keep pouring water on it," said the harpooner to Harry Upton; "just keep it from firing. He *is* a traveller, this one," he added, alluding to the whale.

He was indeed. The animal seemed to be swimming both down and distantly. His first plunge appeared to be almost perpendicular, and then he swam laterally, and still continued his course in that direction.

"Ready with your line, Pat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come close, then; clear away everything. Stand by!"

The rope came rushing out now, unchecked by the bollard, and almost immediately a piercing cry followed by a shout was heard. Then the men in the whale boat saw a shaggy body and a headless form thrown into the air. Two splashes in the water, and all was over. Almost before any one could exclaim, "What's that?" Paddy shouted out:

"Oh murther, the poor dog!"

"*Punch*," cried the boys, forgetting the whale, lines, and all.

"Yes, sir; he was caught by the rope, and his head was amputated clane and clever, poor thing!"

A dull feeling of disappointment settled down on the party, and when the whale at length ceased running, and speculation should have begun as to his place of rising, the whole party were silent on the subject. Poor *Punch*!

The facts were sufficiently apparent. He had

managed to get somehow entangled in the line, and paid the penalty.

"It's lucky it's no worse," remarked Stevens; "one of you might have had your legs cut off. I've known a man cut in half that way. Now, where is our whale?"

"Never mind the whale," said Percy, "we've lost *Punch*."

"Ay, ay, young master," retorted Captain Armstrong, "that's true, and we're all sorry; but there's my harpoon and lines, and a stock of blubber and whalebone to be had. No, sir, we'll land that whale."

It was quite twenty minutes after this decision that the whale came up, and those minutes had been utilised in the boats in endeavouring to calculate the place at which he would rise. Lot passed from the whale boat to the other with lances and harpoons, and then the whale boat began hauling in the line, the lads pulling gently so as not to disturb the whale. The other boat passed to windward, having separated from her consort.

When he came up, Lot and his associates were nearest. A shower of lances were darted at the prey. He dived again, and another run took place, this time not far, but deep. Preparations were now made to kill him, and when the whale appeared again, he was again struck. But ere he had gone a hundred yards, the boat heeled down, the water rushed in, and in five minutes the party in the whale boat would have been swamped had not Stevens cut the line promptly. The boat righted, fortunately, owing to the united efforts of the occupants; but the whale and lines, lances and harpoons, were all lost.



Loss of *Punch*—Page 301.

Stevens gave vent to a volley of expletives, and then exclaimed :

"There goes as fine a prize as we are ever likely to see. How did the rope get gone?"

No one knew. But the captain complimented Stevens on his presence of mind.

"And presence of knife, captain," replied the mate. "If I hadn't had my knife handy, we shouldn't all have been here now."

The men in the other boat came up at once, having seen the accident from a little distance.

"What now?" cried Josiah Upton; "the whale's gone!"

"Yes, lines and fish all together," grumbled Stevens. "Can't be helped."

"Our whaling is over for this voyage," said Armstrong, gloomily.

"Why?" asked Reginald.

"Because we have no more lines—leastways not enough, and our best harpoons are gone too. Say, boss, let's return to the schooner?"

"By all means," replied Upton. "It has been a most unlucky day. Poor old *Punch*!"

"He'll never see the Opal Mountain," muttered Lot.

"Shall *we* see it either?" whispered Job. "Do ye know, Lot, I had my fears over that dog."

"How so?" enquired his friend with some curiosity.

"Why, didn't you see how he looked at the boss when he sent him forward? If ever a dog knew that his time had come, *Punch* did. I guessed it!"

"All right, partner, I don't dispute it. But don't go and say you knew it."

"Why not, if I did?"

"Why not? Why, they'll keel-haul ye for not telling them and giving them warning. Let the dog alone, is my advice, whether ye knew or not that he was doomed."

The men chatted as they returned to the vessel but in an undertone. The rest of the party were almost silent, lamenting the ill-luck which had attended them, and feeling very melancholy.

"I hope our luck hasn't turned sour," remarked Armstrong, as the boats reached the schooner. "We must make tracks for the Opal Mountain to-morrow, gentlemen."

This suggestion was immediately adopted. The whole question was again discussed, and when the wind rose about "midnight," as it would have been in more southern latitudes, the *Sea-lark* spread her canvas wings, and passed into seas hitherto unexplored by anyone on board save Doctor Snow.

"A very appropriate name," whispered Jim, "though he's genial enough; and taking him all round, he's about the most impressionable snow we have seen."

"He's not so soft as you think," retorted Reginald.

"I'm sure he isn't hard," began Jim, when his remarks were interrupted by Harry enquiring of whom he was speaking.

The boys told him, and appealed laughingly for confirmation—hard or soft!

"Well," said Harry judicially, "I think, considering he belongs to the fleet yonder, and is on board ship, you may put his condition down at what mountain climbers call *névé*—a little of both."

"*Névé*," muttered the boys. "Awful!"



CHAPTER XXV.

THE ICE-CASCADE — THE OPAL MOUNTAIN DISCOVERED—THE ASCENT IS BEGUN—ANOTHER ALARM !



WHEN they had recovered from the astonishment into which Harry's attempt at punning had thrown them, the younger lads busied themselves in making preparations for mountain climbing.

"We shall have a climb ; the doctor says so," was all the reason they had to give. Some poles were hastily fashioned into the semblance of *alpenstocks*, and other arrangements completed.

As the *Sea-lark* approached the shore, the mass of mountains which had appeared piled up gradually unfolded themselves, and became more detached ; the slopes could be defined ; but a much greater novelty than any yet met with was the existence of an ice-cascade, which seemed a veritable frozen waterfall.

This magnificent mass of ice was closely scrutinised by all, none, including Doctor Snow, having ever seen such a phenomenon.

"It is surely a frozen waterfall," said Reginald. "Look at the foam and the rocks jutting out !"

"Foam would also be frozen, and turn to ice," said Percy. "Can you make it out, captain?"

"Guess its icebergs," remarked Armstrong. "There's no waterfall down the mountains, is there, doctor?"

"Not to my knowledge; but features change frequently," he replied. "I haven't been up here very lately. But I suspect the icebergs have more to do with the cascades than waterfalls."

"Then how do you account for the foam?" asked Reginald, who maintained his point. "Stevens, come here, take my telescope. Now, isn't that foam?"

"It looks like it, but it's only snow!" replied the mate as he handed back the glass. "The ice has formed between the mountains, and the sea piled up. The rocks beyond the icebergs look like the stones in a waterfall, and the snow is the foam. It's a pretty picture!"

"Pretty! It's magnificent!" cried Josiah. "Great heavens! Here's a man who witnesses one of the finest scenes on earth, and calls it pretty!"

"It is certainly very fine," said Doctor Snow. "But that arrangement of bergs is in our way. It's an unique thing, that's certain."

"Look at it a little sideways, and you will see castles, and towers, and spires," exclaimed Percy.

"There are trees, too," cried Harry, "and some queer shaped animals."

"I can make out statues," said Reginald.

"I can see elephants and ostriches," remarked the doctor.

"And there's a temple!" cried Jim, "a regular portico, and steps up round that side. Splendid!"

"That's an enchanted palace, yonder," said Lot. "Me and Job have seen such afore. It's all smoke—air I mean—beyond the cascade. See?"

"A mirage! Do you think so, father?" asked Reginald.

"No; the great refractive power of the air causes these to appear larger and nearer than they are. Yonder mountain—that one far off round the point—I venture to say, is invisible under ordinary circumstances."

"Really! But what makes them appear so in this atmosphere?" asked Harry.

"The evaporation and the currents of cold air acting unequally," said the doctor. "I have frequently seen vessels, in the air, upside-down!"

"I have read of such things, but never seen them," remarked Frederick Upton. "But the cascade is changing its form. Look!"

It was even so. The masses of ice became separated, and as the *Sea-lark* approached the desolate and inhospitable coast, the formation of the cascade was materially altered. But still it was a grand sight.

"We shall never forget the ice-cascades," said Reginald. "Can we land there, captain? Shall we have to climb the ice?"

"Not if we can reach the mainland any other way," replied the captain. "But the coast is precipitous, and we may have to scale the ice."

"Suspect those bergs are stranded," remarked Josiah Upton.

"Then we can climb them," said Stevens.

"Wait a while," remarked Doctor Snow. "How do we know that they are in contact with the cliffs?"

"And we haven't got the proper place, perhaps," said Harry.

Then a silence fell on the whole party. Harry had touched them all, and checked the flow of hope. Were they ever to reach the Opal Mountain?

They continued gazing in silence at the shore as the schooner made her way cautiously towards it. Suddenly Percy exclaimed:

"There it is!—yonder, look!—a sparkling hill! Oh, it must be it!"

They all looked in the direction he indicated on the starboard bow well forward, and there they perceived a kind of ruddiness in the mountain side. On this reddened surface sparkled snow and ice like gems scattered over the rugged summit. It seemed as if a fire were underneath illuminating the surface through a thin crust of snow-covered lava.

"That's the Opal Mountain, I'll swear!" exclaimed Josiah Upton. "Fred, we've reached it at last! Three cheers, my lads, three cheers! Percy, you discovered it; you shall have an extra share of the booty."

"If any!" the doctor was going to say, but he would not spoil the general feeling of pleasure at the sight. Even he could not deny that the mountain deserved the title then.

"Yes," he remarked aloud. "I am inclined to believe that is the mountain your information refers to. But it is only seen in its full glory at a certain season and at a certain time of the day. You can imagine that the fogs and clouds will often interfere with its brilliancy."

"Yes, indeed," assented Josiah. "Now, my lads and friends all, I am convinced that we are just going to strike ile on this mountain. We must get up our instruments, and find the exact spot in which Jackson mentions the treasure. We may have to search for some time, but we will find it."

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" cried his audience.

"Now," continued Josiah, "I am not going back on my word. We understand each other. Captain Armstrong, you and your men share with us. No matter what we find, we go shares, all of us."

"Three cheers for the boss," cried Stevens.

Lot, Job, Paddy, Biscoe, and Stevens himself joined in the cheer; but their voices were quickly overpowered by the captain's *basso profundo*. His tones soon dominated the cheers, and he said:

"First catch your coon. Don't you reckon your brood until they're incubated. No, sir; don't do it."

"Oh, captain," cried Frederick Upton, "you are not going to throw cold water on our expedition, I hope?"

"No, sir; it's cold enough without my interference; so's the scent—cold as ice a'most. But the more you reckon, the less you'll be satisfied. Isn't that true—everlastin' true? Well, then, I say don't reckon at all. Wait and see what turns up."

"Captain, you're a 'Job's comforter,'" cried Percy, smiling.

"Didn't know as he wore 'em," replied the captain. "Anyway, Job here finds comforters mighty useful in cold weather, eh? But never you fear, boss, I'm grit, and we'll do our level best. We can't do more, even in America, I believe. Now, ready about. Biscoe, down

with your helm—round she goes; jib haul. There, now; we can see your blessed Pishah, or whatever you call it, on the other tack."

The Captain's vehemence had effectually silenced the others. Their enthusiasm was somewhat damped by his eloquence, but they nevertheless had made up their minds to explore the hills, and it would have to be proved actually impossible of execution before they would abandon their expedition.

The aspect of the mountain was very imposing. Though of no great elevation, the curious sheen and sparkle, the rugged sides, the surrounding hills and massive icebergs, the ice-fields and sparkling waters beneath, the distant sails of vessels, the curious animals, the multitudinous birds, and, above all, the strange mantle of desolation which, notwithstanding all these features, seemed only partly removed from, while it shaded, the landscape, made a splendid picture. It seemed unreal. The younger ones could hardly persuade themselves that they were actually in the flesh gazing at reality. It almost seemed to them that they were looking at a photograph.

"There is no opposition at anyrate," remarked Armstrong, as he swept the sea and coast with his glass. "A few whalers yonder, too busy to mind us, and a boat inshore. We can run right in, boss."

"We will take our observations, captain, I think. We have the latitude and longitude in the memorandum."

"It doesn't do to trust too much to memoranda," remarked Doctor Snow. "Latitude certainly may be pretty correct, but the maps are often quite wrong in longitude. I remember, on my first trip to East

Greenland, we found six, seven, aye, even ten degrees of difference between our charts and our observations. But that is some time ago, I'll allow."

"Well, latitude or not, we intend to scale yonder mountain, find our booty, and clear back to Canada," said Josiah.

"And suppose you do not find any booty or treasure, what then?" asked the captain.

"Then we shall equally clear out o' this; and, perhaps, you'll land us at Montreal. Now to business. No more chatter. Work!"

The lads, with Job and Lot, made their preparations at intervals as the necessity for their attention to the vessel permitted. During the evening the *Sea-lark* ran close in shore, and ascertained that the cascade was in reality a combination of icebergs. The boat seen by the captain had disappeared!

That night was a busy one. It was not night in the usual acceptation of the term, because there was no darkness. Everyone was preparing for the expedition of the next day. The *Sea-lark* was anchored, and then the momentous question arose, "Who was to remain on board?"

"Why, o' course, I will," said the skipper. "A man must stick to his vessel. Me and a couple more will remain. Go you and find your treasure. When you return with it, we'll welcome you, you may depend."

"Still sceptical!" cried Fred Upton. "Well, captain, who'll you have with you?"

"Why, my feelings incline to your nevvv there, Reginald. He's a nice, quiet, steady, and amusing young man—he'll do."

"He'll be hanged if he does stay," retorted Reginald. "Not, uncle! He's quiet and amusing, but he won't be here. He's going up the mountain."

Captain Armstrong winked, and he laughed. "No," he said, "o' course I want some one useful. Suppose Lot remains?"

"Can't let Job go alone," said Lot, quickly. "No, captain, keep Paddy; he'll suit you."

"I'll remain," said the doctor. I don't care for climbing volcanos. There may be an eruption, you know."

"Can't you cure it, doctor?" asked Jim. "It may come out in several spots at once. It will be dangerous."

"Very likely," replied the doctor, smiling. "Your impudence is too great, Master Jim. I shall not try to cure you at anyrate. Captain, I'll remain."

"Very well. All right. You and I and Paddy will stay on board; or if Pat goes, Biscoe will stay. I'd rather both remained. We shall want a hand, mayhap."

It was then decided that all the Uptons, with Stevens, Job, and Lot, would go; and the captain, the doctor, and the two men would stay on board the *Sea-lark*, and look out for squalls.

These preliminaries settled, the party quitted the ship, taking with them instruments, provisions, and all the available accessories for climbing, not forgetting a rope. The mountain was apparently very steep, but only about six thousand feet high, so some fatigue, if no danger, was anticipated. They reached the shore in safety, and landed underneath the immense stranded icebergs already mentioned.

There was a subdued feeling of expectation in the hearts of all. They had come on a very venturesome, if not a foolhardy, expedition on the faith of some memoranda given to them by a dying man, whose *bona fides* they had no means of ascertaining. If his landmark proved wrong, then all their trouble and expense would prove in vain.

"We shall remember the Opal Mountain," said Percy to Reginald. "If we manage to get clear of this ice, we have no distinct track to the summit."

"I hope the 'boss' does not undervalue the business," remarked Harry. "This cascade seems to me rather difficult to get round."

"And then we have to scale the snow slope," said Reginald.

"And then to find the place where the treasure is supposed to be," added Jim. "Near the summit it is."

"Yes," remarked Percy; "and then to find the treasure itself. That's the ticket."

They struggled manfully over the ice-blocks, now turning some large mass which threatened to tumble, now descending to an easier bit, and anon wishing they had remained in the other place. Scrambling around the base of the cataract as they called it, they had some idea of the immense extent of the consolidated bergs.

When, with considerable difficulty, the party had passed these first obstacles, they found the precipice rose sheer for a space, and then tended gradually upwards, the ground being partly denuded of snow, and covered with moss. Farther on some grass was observed; but, evidently, almost the entire area was

unfitted for cultivation, even of the most hardy plants. The amount of sunlight is not sufficient to grow anything.

"We can't climb this rock," remarked Stevens. "We must try to find a gully, or at anyrate a less precipitous place."

"Rather disappointing if we cannot reach the mountain after all," said Job. "Eh, Lot?"

"Shouldn't be surprised ; but all the same I think we can climb up there."

He indicated some loosely placed rocks which seemed to have fallen from the summit, and had so made the ascent of the cliff possible. But very considerable care was necessary, as some of the smaller pieces of rock gave way when trodden on, and very nearly brought about a catastrophe by falling on the men below.

"We had better ascend in detachments, said Percy, as one more boulder bounded down, and striking another rock, split into small pieces, which fell in a shower of *mitraille* over the adventurers underneath.

"Hallo, father, mind us," cried Reginald. "If we remain here, Percy, there will be no second instalment to ascend. There are *detachments* up there."

The younger men with Job moved accordingly to a safer place. The ascent was fatiguing, for many times the senior Uptons and their companions paused to take breath, and to mop their already blistered faces. Every now and then a roaring sound echoed from the cliffs, and bergs gave evidence of a falling mass of rock or ice. Numbers of birds flew about, and occasionally incommoded the explorers in their ascent.

"Suspect the thaw, if we can call it so, has loosened

these strata," said Percy. "When frost ceases we often have a break-up."

"It looks more like a break-down yonder," said Jim. "They are all hopping about and jumping like my ancestor Crow. They seem to have found running water there too!"

"We will wait until they have gained the top," said Reginald. "Does anyone know the time?"

"About eleven at night, I reckon it," replied Job, "and the sun must be melting the snow up above. Kind o' queer, isn't it?"

"Things seems topsy-turvy generally," remarked Harry. "Night is turned to day, ships are seen upside down, waterfalls are icebergs, and the snow is melted by the sun at midnight. These ideas would suit the Chinese, I imagine: they like doing things in the opposite way to other nations."

"Then this would be their South Pole, perhaps," said Jim. "If so, we have come to the wrong shop. Their compass points south, they shake their own hands instead of their visitors, and wear white when we wear mourning. Hallo! They're up. Let's go!"

The younger ones immediately started, and after many slips and much exertion in consequence of slipping, and slippery rocks, the exploring detachments were safely united again in the upper cliff on a rugged, mossy, desolate coast, below the snow-line of the mountains.

"Suppose we camp," suggested Stevens.

"Suppose we sup," suggested Fred Upton. "It is nearly midnight by the sun. We will have a supper, and start again in the early morning. What do you say?"

This suggestion was adopted. A cold meal was despatched, and washed down with tea, which is by far the best liquid for climbers. At 1 A.M. the Uptons and their faithful followers having given a parting cheer to the *Sea-lark* and those on board, set themselves steadily to the task of scaling the mountain whose opalescence had somewhat dulled in the midnight sunlight.

"Isn't it curious," said Percy, "that where we are now the hills are so much denuded of snow. One would have imagined that it would have remained here all the year round."

"It has been remarked equally in other northern latitudes," said Josiah Upton. "The heat during the fine days is continuous, and no chill night-frost interferes with the melting of the snow, as in lower European and American latitudes."

"That's the reason, no doubt," said Reginald; then after a pause, he said, "Isn't this funny soil. It's like what we see in furnaces; slag, isn't it?"

"The doctor is right," remarked Fred Upton, who at once examined a piece of the stuff indicated by Reginald. "This is a volcanic region. We shall come to ashes by and by, I daresay."

"Curious that a volcano should be in a snow region," said Lot.

"Hecla is in Iceland, remember," said Jim.

"And there are many volcanoes in Alaska," said Josiah. "It is not the surface that supplies the heat, it is the interior."

Chatting thus, but at intervals, for the air was rather rarified, the adventurers continued their way across the rough and desolate land which lies at the

base of the mountains. They plodded on after a while in silence, and hardly any one spoke during the rest of the climb, until the actual base of the Opal Mountain had been reached.

"Here we are," said Lot, throwing down his pack ; "and I'm not sorry."

None of the others objected to the rest they all needed ; and in a few minutes men and lads were all reposing in comfortable attitudes, with eyes closed, seeking sleep.

But they did not remain long in these picturesque poses. A distant "bang," as from a gun, aroused Lot, who was only half asleep. He quickly aroused the others, and in three minutes the whole party were erect, on the tip-toe of expectation, listening for a repetition of the alarm. But none came !

"Are you sure you heard anything, Lot?" asked Josiah.

"Yes ; I'll swear I heard a report like a small cannon. It was distant, but distinct enough, boss."

"Perhaps Captain Armstrong has seen us from the schooner, and is saluting us!"

"Very likely," said Stevens. He may be able to see us, though at present we cannot discern the *Sky-lark*. That's what it was. Shall we proceed?"

"After breakfast," said Jim. "We have been walking for four hours, and I am as hungry as a hunter, and quite warm. Let's have something to eat."

Again the provisions were unpacked. The party seated themselves on the slope of the mountain, and were enjoying their meal, when a second report caused them to turn round in dismay.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ASCENT CONTINUED—A THUNDERSTORM—THE
MYSTERIOUS SOUNDS—THE EARTHQUAKE, AND
THE ERUPTION OF THE OPAL MOUNTAIN.

THERE was some little alarm, mingled with the surprise expressed by the voyagers, when the second detonation arose and echoed round the cliffs. Various opinions were expressed as to the cause, but only Josiah and his brother guessed at an acceptable solution.

"It is the Opal Mountain saluting us," they said. "It is a volcano, and we are apparently to be treated to a fusilade."

"Very likely," said Percy. "But the first shot was not the same as the second. Is there any danger?"

"Not at present; yet I should not like to ascend very near the crater," replied his father.

"We may as well proceed," remarked Stevens. "We can hardly expect to reach the summit, make any investigations, and arrange our camp before afternoon. It is a pretty steep climb."

As no more explosions were heard, and no signs of any smoke were visible, the Uptons considered that there was no danger. A volcano generally gives

warning by grumbling and smoking for a while before it bursts into activity.

"Certain tremblings and such like preparations are usually audible in all properly conducted volcanos ere they reach an active stage," said Fred Upton.

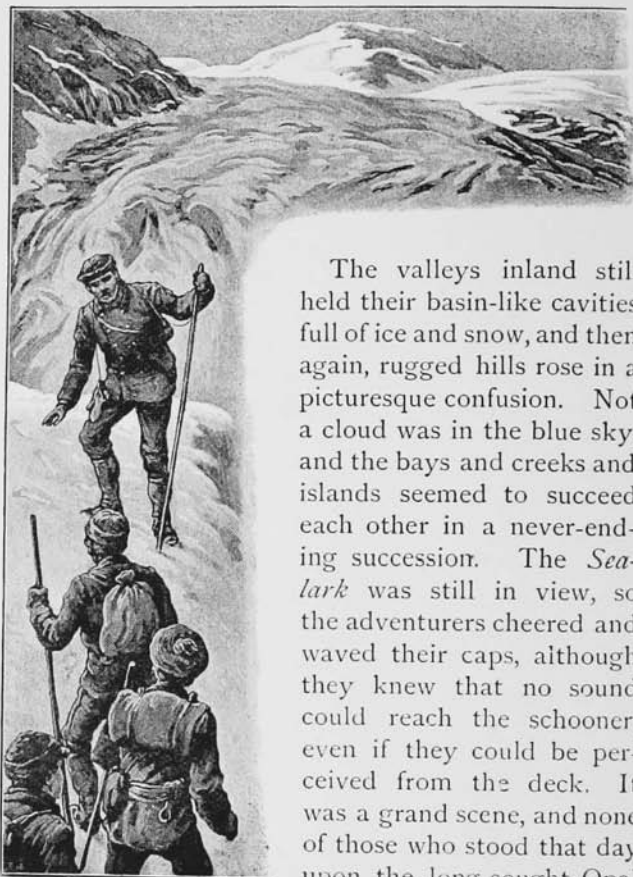
"Perhaps the Opal Mountain may *not* be a properly conducted volcano!" suggested Reginald. "I wish we had some guarantee of its respectability."

"It looks respectable, as mountains go," said Jim.

"Mountains don't go," replied Reginald, pertly, "they stand; and I rather distrust it. Never mind, come on!"

The whole party were in a few minutes once more in motion, packs were shouldered, sticks grasped, revolvers looked to, for all the men and lads were armed, and then the real ascent began over rough ground, which left no doubt, as they advanced, of the volcanic nature of the mountain. Ashes were frequently trodden on, and scorix, with other tokens of the kind, became evident. The prospect as the party advanced became more and more extensive, and the atmosphere became hotter and hotter. Many rills ran down from the snow above, and made tiny water-courses. The view was very pleasing. The sea was flecked with bergs, families of them, now uniting, now separating, as human families do. Now and then some of the individuals would approach each other cautiously, and then a crash would come, in which the weaker went to the water, and were crushed into another shape. The breeze ruffled the straits, and the sun sparkled on the ice, on which

seals and walruses reposed peacefully in thorough enjoyment.



The valleys inland still held their basin-like cavities full of ice and snow, and then again, rugged hills rose in a picturesque confusion. Not a cloud was in the blue sky, and the bays and creeks and islands seemed to succeed each other in a never-ending succession. The *Sealark* was still in view, so the adventurers cheered and waved their caps, although they knew that no sound could reach the schooner, even if they could be perceived from the deck. It was a grand scene, and none of those who stood that day upon the long-sought Opal

Mountain will ever forget the impressions they received.

After feasting their eyes upon this unique panorama, the spectators turned their attention to the mountain and their feet. Suddenly Stevens uttered an exclamation.

"What's the matter," cried Job. "Hurt yourself, partner?"

"No, look there! Footsteps! Europeans' or—certainly not—natives', eh?"

Robinson Crusoe could not have been more alarmed at the impression of the footprints in the sand than were our adventurers at the appearance of these indications of humanity, at such a place and at such a time.

They stared at the marks, and soon discovered that no less than three people had already, and quite lately, ascended the mountain. The footsteps could be plainly seen for some distance, and marks were also visible in the snow above. Then the same idea occurred to several members of the party, and Fred Upton said:

"The Yankee filibusters have been here! The captain saw a boat, remember. This is serious!"

There was no other reasonable conclusion to arrive at. The traces were certainly those of strangers. The boots were wide and uncouth in shape, indeed, but they were not of native manufacture. Decidedly their opponents had been beforehand with them! What was to be done next? A consultation was hurriedly held.

The young men were for proceeding, the elders for waiting a while, and "skirmishing around."

"We may lose all the treasure if we delay," remarked Percy.

"We may lose our lives if we proceed too hastily," said Fred Upton. "Job and Lot, you are good at guessing and at 'prophecy.' Come now, tell us, you pair of patriarchs. Don't say *afterwards*, 'I told ye so.' Tell us *now*."

Thus directly appealed to, the staunch comrades looked at each other, and then at the assembled audience. They cast about, and like greater warriors in other climes—

"Each looked at sun, and stream, and plain,"
and then at each other once again.

"Look ye here, gentlemen and partners," said Lot, "I am speakin' only for myself, if Job chooses to chime in, let him, but my opinion is, go on and fight for it, if so be we must. I am ready!"

"So'm I," cried Job. "Yes, mates and friends, we've come so far, don't let us be cowed by a hidin' set of cowards up yonder!"

"Bravo, Job!" exclaimed Reginald; "you have done well. They shall have all the 'hiding'!"

"But how can you judge they are hiding?" asked Josiah Upton.

"My senses, boss; my eyes and my ears. Didn't ye hear the signals before? They was musket shots, and one carried a bullet!"

This interpretation of the so-called explosions had not occurred to anyone save the hunter, Job, who had not even confided his suspicions to his old partner, Lot.

"Then if these scoundrels are in ambush, we ought to make our advance all the more carefully," said

Stevens. "The boss is right. We had better go skirmishin' round."

"In my humble opinion," remarked Harry, who had been lately intent on the weather signs, "we had better prepare for a storm. The clouds are coming across the bay very quickly."

This hint turned everyone's attention to the sky. Stevens saw the reasonableness of the remark, and, indeed, the sudden appearance of the clouds was rather alarming. The wind rose into sharp swift gusts, and whirled about the mountain, catching up the ashes and the more distant snow in an ominous fashion.

"I hope it will not be another thunderstorm," said Harry, who was naturally a little nervous, for he believed, as many do believe, and with reason, that some individuals are more susceptible to electric influences than others, and have greater powers of attraction.

Some rocks were quickly reached, and under their lee the adventurers, packed closely, faces to the mountain top, awaited the approaching tempest, but not in silence. The mode of progress was discussed at length.

The conversation was frequently interrupted by the blasts, or the intermittent flashes which gleamed through the rapidly increasing darkness, though the thunder was distant. The storm was approaching very rapidly, however, and all objects likely to prove dangerous were covered by the wraps carried by the party. The highest rocks were abandoned, and some of less elevation chosen as the resting-places of the climbers.

"As soon as the storm passes we will ascend. Is that the general opinion?" asked Josiah, at last.

It was so agreed; and then the party sat in almost silent expectation as the hail and snow began to fall. Rain soon succeeded hail and snow—a terrific rush of liquid arrows, as the rain appeared to be, darkened the landscape even more effectually than the brave English bow-men were wont to do in former days of battle. Flash after flash darted across the sky, and playing round the summit of the mountain, darted into the hollows, and at times the electricity actually crackled in the surrounding rocks in the pauses of the storm.

After a brisk fusilade of fifteen minutes the clouds passed, the sun came out again, and the adventurers, rather damp but uninjured, left their temporary shelter and continued their way.

Before long they reached the snow, and here found some indications of footprints. These they followed, and reached, after a steep climb, a hollow basin in the side of the mountain, from which issued a thread of steam from a small aperture amidst the rocks.

"This is the crater, I suppose," said Josiah Upton. "There is fire underneath apparently, the volcano is smcking."

"Never mind, this is a cosy place to stay and make comparisons," said his brother. "We have the papers with us. Let us see the plans, spread them on the ground. Hallo! Did you see anything?"

"See anything," repeated Josiah, "no. What did you see?"

"I fancied the papers undulated—moved up and down."

"Nonsense! your eyes are out of focus. Did any of you notice anything peculiar?" continued Josiah.

"I fancied I perceived a slight movement," said Stevens, "but it must have been my imagination; I felt none."

Nobody else had noticed anything particular, and the incident passed without further discussion.

The men lay down at full length some distance from the crater basin, and literally put their heads together over the plans.

"We have come very well," remarked Percy. "Here is the basin, yonder is the cone, and the compass gives us our bearings. The treasure, if it exists, is somewhere about this crater-hole."

"Somewhere is vague. Besides, there is another crater higher up, and it may be the right one. The plan does not say which."

They were all busy examining it when a curious grumbling noise like distant thunder was heard. All listened intently. The sound was not immediately repeated, but some consternation was expressed, and a move was made higher up the mountain, about midway between the summit and the lower crater.

This advance was cautiously made in consequence of their fears of the American party, who might be watching their movements. The features of the Opal Mountain near the summit facilitated such a manœuvre, for a row of jagged rocks fringed the slope on one side, and some ravines ran through these rocks, fissures made probably by some long past earthquake or eruption. By these clefts the party were enabled to make an unobserved advance.

But it was by no means easy. The sheltering rocks had from time to time thrown fragments of themselves down the ravines and lateral glens, which grievously incommoded the travellers. The ascent was steep also, and fatigue began to assert its authority. To make matters worse, a curious haze surrounded the sun; clouds were again rising in huge grey masses; the curious terral grumbings were heard at distant intervals, and at length a death-like silence, a heavy atmospheric depression, hung over nature.

"Suppose we camp here," suggested Stevens. "We cannot expect to do much in the way of search without rest and food, and here we are in a great measure sheltered from any rain or hail. We can rig up a tent with our wraps and poles between these rocks, and have a splendid night's rest."

"Isn't it calm," said Harry. "It's like a Sunday in the country."

"After a calm comes a storm," said Percy. "Look at the sun; did you ever see such a curious haze?"

"Yes, I did," said Lot, "I saw it in South America some years ago, and I ain't likely to forget it."

"Is it a story, Lot?" enquired Reginald. "Let's have it!"

"Get supper ready first," said Josiah, and then tell your tale."

A fire was dispensed with under the circumstances, and a cold meal was quickly disposed of. Then pipes were lighted, and all the party lay down or sat under the improvised tent, smoking. Then Reginald asked Lot for the "halo story."

"It's very short, but it's full of meanin'," replied the man, seriously. "Shall I relate it, boss? It may interest us *all*!"

"By all means," replied Josiah, who was rather struck by the man's tone. "We will listen—go ahead! It's no make up, I suppose?"

"No, sir; it's too, unfortunately, true. It happened in, well—'51 was it?—can't be quite certain. Anyhow I was out in the Cordilleras, on the mountains, and was coming back to Buenos Ayres, tramping it, having sold my horse. One night I saw a terrible blue and red meteor, following on a sunset the like of which I had never seen. It was a curious red haze, as if fine dust had got mixed up with the clouds; something like that sun was just now, only worse a deal, but it reminded me of it. This meteor, or shootin' star, rather alarmed me; and knowing I had a good bit to go, I hurried on. It was impossible to reach Mendoza that night, so I camped on the road. During the night I heard curious grumblings, but they didn't trouble me. There was nothing to alarm me, and next day I reached Mendoza.

"I went home, and was smoking my pipe, when one of my windows flew open. There was no wind, and I took no particular notice, believing my dog had jumped in. So I looked under the table to find him, when open came the window again, and I was nearly upset, chair and all. I recovered my balance only to be flung across the room, and bit my pipe stem in two; then I felt kind o' sick. I rushed out as soon as I could, and found an earthquake going on like steam, and a grumbling in the earth like thunder.

Only a little damage was done that time ; but the earthquake before that knocked the town to bits, and killed hundreds in less than a minute. That's a fact !”

He paused and looked at Mr Upton. “Well ?” asked the latter.

“Well, boss, it's my opinion as there's somethin' up here, so, perhaps, we'd best make tracks to the schooner !”

“And relinquish the mountain !” exclaimed Fred Upton. “Nonsense !”

“Maybe,” was the quiet reply, “I've told you a parable case, or par'lel, if you like. There it is ! We've heard shots and rumblin's. Very well ! Take it or leave it. My 'pinion is it's an eruption comin' !”

“I am inclined to agree with you,” said Stevens. “We had better return.”

“Have you all turned cowards ?” cried Percy, indignantly. “Is a romance of Lot's to put us off our aim, and after all our exertion and trouble ?”

“And return with our tails between our legs,” said Reginald. “Impossible !”

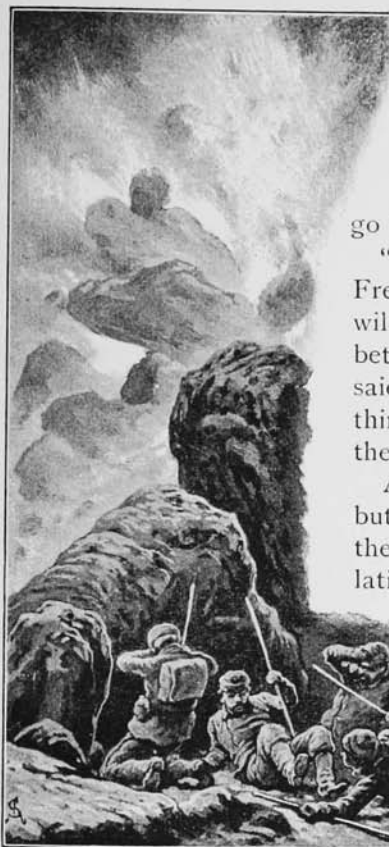
“Better that than return without your legs or your head, or not at all,” remarked Lot. “I am all for goin' up and searchin' ; but if there's an eruption comin', or an earthquake, we shall repent it.”

Another and more distinct grumbling underground emphasised Lot's warning.

“I suppose we had better descend,” said Josiah. “I confess this rumbling is rather alarming.”

Scarcely had he finished speaking when some

vaporous flames slipped, as it were, from the upper crater and vanished in the air.



"Did you see that?" cried Lot.

"The gases are already escaping."

"It didn't hurt us," said Jim. "It seems so mean to go back."

"Remember the French proverb, 'We will only retire to make a better jump next time,'" said his father. "And I think we must go. Now, then, march!"

All rose to their feet, but did not long remain there. A sudden undulation of the ground

caused the whole party to fall flat on the mountain slope, on which some rolled, and some lay still in dread anticipation.

A thundering roar—a wave, as it seemed, rolled underneath, the upper crater shot out some stones and fire, some black masses which fell around, an immense cleft was rent in the mountain side, and from this escaped horrible vapours and thick steamy smoke. Then a jet of stones and earth came up—these fell hissing in the snow—followed by another roar like thunder, and all was still.

The whole performance did not last three minutes, but ere it had ceased our adventurers had rolled and run some hundreds of yards down the mountain, and were, when it was over, huddled behind a big rock, in painful anticipation of another explosion.

Never was rout more complete. Lot's veracity was thenceforward unquestioned ; and even Job shone with the reflected light from the lamp of Truth which illuminated his friend.





CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FINAL STRUGGLE—THE FILIBUSTER—THE
TREASURE CAVE—THE DISCOVERY—MORE SUC-
CESS—THE RETURN—CONCLUSION.



WHEN the adventurers had recovered themselves a little, they had an opportunity to question each other as to damages. It turned out that some of the party had been struck by some small missiles, but all had fortunately escaped the fall of the black masses of rock, or some other substance, which had been flung many yards into the air.

Notes were compared, bruises examined, abrasions inspected. Jim and Lot and Stevens had some deep scratches and some bruises, and when the return of wounded was requested, everyone had some injury to complain of, none really serious; a few nasty cuts from falls were the worst, apparently.

"Well, I think we ought to be very thankful that matters are not worse," said Josiah. "Lot, you were right, but we treated you Cassandra fashion, and discredited your prediction. I'm sorry."

"Never you mind, boss, I'm all right. I just gave you warnin'. Young masters here didn't like it; but ye see it's true. All is over now, I suspect."

"I guess it is," said Fred. "It was sharp while it lasted. How long did the 'quake last?"

"Much less time than *our quaking did*," laughed Jim. "My! how you did scuttle down! We must have come a hundred miles an hour."

"Don't you talk, Jim," retorted his father; "you rolled in sheer fright."

"I did, and I was properly funkcd, I can tell you. Did you see those black things flung up? Just in one second a gush of smoke, and then the blacks! Awful!"

"You can have blacks and smoke in other places," said Reginald. "I've read of such things in London, England."

"We all felt pretty 'skeared,'" said Fred Upton. "I suppose the genii of the mountain revenge themselves this way on anyone who dares to scale its opalescent sides."

"Nevertheless, under advice, I am willing to try again," said Percy.

"So are we all," said Josiah. "Oh, yes, we shall ascend again. The danger is over, I daresay."

"Better remain where we are for a few hours. If no more rumblings come round, we'll try again," said Lot. "I don't reckon on another bust at present."

"Let's keep our eyes and ears open," said Stevens. "Anyone who perceives anything suspicious, please report. I'm for resting a while."

Lot being most experienced, agreed to keep watch while the others rested. So he lighted his favourite pipe, and sat down at a little distance from the rest.

After about four hours had passed, Lot rubbed his

eyes. He had also been dozing. He turned, and found Job wide awake. He beckoned him to him.

"Suppose you and I goes and explores this mountain, pardner?" he suggested.

"Couldn't do it," replied Job. "The boss is awake, and besides we didn't ought."

"Then I don't see why not, if they're afraid. Howsumdever it's all safe now, I believe. There's been no rumblin's nor fire. The sun is clearin' too. Up we go."

A hurried meal was eaten; all superfluous articles were left behind the rock, and the party braced themselves for the final struggle with the Opal Mountain.

Traces of the earthquake were found in many places as the adventurers ascended. Here and there a small fissure in a ravine told of the forces which had been at work; but as the upper portions of the mountain were successively reached, these openings were larger. One had apparently closed and gripped some ice-block and rock in its vice-like grasp. A thin vapour still rose up in these places.

Reginald and Jim had kept rather to the right when the rock valley and ravines were passed. They did not like the effluvia of sulphur, &c., and kept as far from the smoke as possible. They were proceeding in the direction of a mass which had fallen; they raced to reach it, and then recoiled in horror and astonishment.

A loud shout summoned the rest of the party to their side. When they came up they also stood stupefied.

The black mass was the dead body of the leader

of the filibusters—the American bully! He lay amongst the crystals of the Opal Mountain—dead!

It was burned and charred, but perfectly recognisable. Was it then true that he had been hurled into the air by the first explosion with the masses of rock? If so, then he and his companions had scaled the mountain. They must have reached the shore after the storm, and made their way in advance of the party from the *Sea-lark*! They had gained the crater!

The adventurers could do nothing then. The man was dead. So after a hurried consultation he was left where he lay until their return; and in a somewhat excited frame of mind the party continued the ascent on the snow. It was not difficult but laborious, and when they reached the still smoking crater-side, they climbed up the side of the rocky basin to windward, and peeped over the natural wall of rock which guards the south-western side of it.

The crater, so far as could be ascertained, consists of a basin-like opening, presumably some five hundred feet deep, and perhaps seven hundred in diameter at its widest part. It is not circular, but approaches an oval shape, gently inclined. Within the circumference of the crater, at the north-west side, is a cavern, from which water trickles into the crater itself, the bottom of which was not at that time plainly visible in consequence of the vapours which rose, and were dispersed to the north-east.

But at the mouth of the cavern, hanging over the abyss, was a human body, and Josiah Upton pronounced it to be another of the American desperadoes.

"That's where the treasure is, you may depend," he said, as he handed his glass to his brother. "They discovered it! But for the earthquake they might have killed us all and carried it off. We could never have reached the summit!"

All his hearers felt the truth of his remarks, and all burned to descend into the cavern. But this was impossible. Fragments of rope were found fastened to the rock above the chasm. It was then presumed that the men had let themselves down, and had been killed by the explosion of the volcano, or suffocated by the fumes.

"We can do nothing at present. When the smoke subsides we may perhaps be able to enter the cavern," said Josiah.

"That's true," said Stevens, regretfully. "But we can wait here a while. There is no prospect of another explosion, and it wasn't a big 'bust' either."

"Quite big enough for those filibusters," said Jim; "and serve them right!"

"Jim, *de mortuis*, if you please. They are dead, boy. Silence!" said his father sternly.

"Sorry for you, Jim," whispered his cousin Reginald. "Just as you were making tracks for a lovely joke, something about 'fill of bustin',' eh?"

"Shut up, you imp! You're worse than I am. Well, I suppose we must return home, father?"

"No, we will remain until we receive assistance and means to enter the cavern. You and Reginald can return to the *Sea-lark*, and get ropes; by that time the smoke may have ceased to rise. Go as quickly as

possible. Bring Armstrong with you if he will come, and the doctor."

The descent of the mountain presented no difficulties to the youths. They started off and reached the schooner in a short time, but Captain Armstrong would not let them leave again for six hours. Then he and the doctor and the lads, carrying some yards of stout line, candles and matches, started again. Fourteen hours after the lads' departure they, with the addition to their party, were again on the summit of the Opal Mountain.

The captain and the doctor were warmly welcomed. No time was lost in rigging up the means of descent. The crater was still shrouded in vapour, but the noxious fumes had nearly altogether subsided.

"Who will go first?" inquired the captain.

"I will," said Josiah. "If there is any treasure I will call to you; if not, and if you hear nothing in five minutes, haul me out."

"Better let some one go with you," said Stevens; "Mr Frederick will."

"Yes, I'll go; I intended to go pretty soon, I can tell you. Now, if anything is there, we will shout. What are you doing, captain?"

"Knotting this rope so as to have another kind o' ladder to go down on, one won't be enough. Go on, we'll follow ye."

The men quickly descended hand-over-hand, clinging to the knots. The difficulty lay in swinging into the cavern. But Josiah was an active and fearless climber; he swung himself in, and caught the flooring near the edge with his feet, at the same time using

his pole to steady himself. By sheer muscular power he succeeded in standing firmly and restraining the rope ; but in his efforts to keep his footing, he displaced the body of the unfortunate filibuster, which fell sheer into the crater and disappeared, greatly to Josiah's horror and regret.

This startled the others very much. They perceived that the rope had slackened, and they had seen a body fall. In a moment the greatest consternation reigned, but a few words reassured them. By that time Captain Armstrong's second rope had been fixed, and proved a great assistance to Fred Upton who, also helped by his brother, soon entered the cavern with candles and matches. Before they had gone ten paces, Stevens and Percy joined them.

"We are all coming," said Percy, "never fear. Here are Jim and Harry." Then they and Lot and Job and Reginald were successively assisted into the cave. Captain Armstrong and the doctor brought up the rear.

"Well, here we are ; I wonder how we shall return !" remarked Reginald, to his brother.

"Never mind that now," replied Percy. "Come along."

Amply provided with light, the party searched the opening, which was of no great extent beyond the first ten yards. The passage then narrowed very much, and water came falling through the roof. It required some skill and caution to keep the candles alight ; but after much searching no treasure, nor any signs of the existence of any treasure, were found. The doctor picked up a few specimens of carbonised sub-

stances and crystals, and put them in his pocket for future examination, but nothing else worth carrying away was discovered.

"This is disappointing!" was the general verdict. "Nothing to be found!"

"Perhaps the filibusters took it all," suggested Job. "They may have all the booty in their pockets."

"If so we shall never recover it!" said the captain, whose voice awoke the echoes. "Where is the third man? dead, I suppose. "Well, let's have another try."

"What kind of stuff do you call this; is it a curious earth or clay?" asked Harry. "It is like sandstone, something, isn't it, doctor?"

"It is curious to meet with such a deposit in such surroundings," replied the doctor. "We are not very deep down either. This must have been upheaved, I imagine, and is, perhaps, coal sandstone. These crystals appear to me very fine."

"Oh, never mind those old bits of crystals; let's look for treasure, doctor," cried Reginald.

They did look, and looked in vain. No trace of the third man could be found, and after a most exhausting search the adventurers were fain to return to earth again, disappointed and fatigued.

While the men were setting up the tent, the Uptons went round the crater to the northern side, and discussed their ill-fortune. But they soon halted in dismay, for they came upon a dead man, whom they at once guessed, and guessed rightly, to be the third member of the American filibustering band of Jackson's companions.

This is the third man ; how thin and wretched he looks. He has been killed by a falling rock—see !”

The man had evidently been crushed by an immense stone, which had felled him, and then remained embedded in the soil beside him.

“There is something in his hand,” said Percy. “See, there it has fallen out ! Here are other things—why—oh, look here ! Boys, boys, DIAMONDS !

“Diamonds ! never !” exclaimed Harry. “Oh, I say ! pick them up ! come !

Percy hesitated, then he said, “Well, he is dead !” then he took the stone which had fallen from the listless palm and fingers. The other boys also gathered up several more, and then the young men hastened back.

Meanwhile Doctor Snow had been testing his crystals and specimens.

He soon called Mr Upton, and said, “This is carbon, pure carbon, and carbon is diamond ! I fancy your treasure is in these crystals.”

Great excitement ensued. The men came running up, and when the boys returned, the diamonds confirmed the doctor’s suspicions. He at once pronounced the stones found by Harry to be diamonds, and another expedition was immediately organised. Everything which glistened was dug out with knives when practicable ; but although several small specimens were found, the want of proper tools prevented the searchers from getting all they wanted.

“I suspect that poor fellow who fell into the chasm had secured a good number, and you will find some on the other body,” said Armstrong.

"When the party reached the tent, Lot and Job were missing. After a long interval they returned, and held out four large stones in their hands to the "boss."

"We found 'em square, and no mistake. He'd been robbin' your property. Good ones, I reckon."

"Good ones, indeed!" said the doctor. "Splendid! These have not been dug out; they are part of some plunder. These large ones, I suspect, were placed in the cave for safety, or left by some diamond searcher who perished long ago."

"How much are they worth, doctor, do you think?"

"Well, I can't say off hand; but let us look at them all together." The gems were faithfully produced, and the doctor weighed them in his sensitive palm. "Some are rough, very; and not pure, I suspect; but, taking them altogether, I estimate the stones will weigh—about 150 carats, or a little less."

"And how much is a carat?" asked Job.

"Four grains! Four times 150 are 600 grains. This will be reduced by cutting, some. So, say you have diamonds of 400 grains, or 100 carats. At thirty-five dollars a carat, say seven pounds a carat, you have some thousands of pounds, perhaps £50,000 in all—most likely more."

"Fifty thousand pounds!" exclaimed Josiah. "Why it's only seven hundred pounds!"

"No, no, my friend. If a diamond of one carat is worth £7, a diamond of two is worth *two squared* and multiplied by 7, which means $4 \times 7 = 28$. So this four carat stone, say, is worth £112 at anyrate

when cut. At this rate 100 carats will be worth £80,000!"

There was a silence. Such a sum had not entered into their calculations. It seemed enormous for a handful of small stones! The boys were silenced for once, and drew in their breath slowly, expelling it again in low whistles.

"We shall find some more, I expect, if we look," said Stevens at last. "These men may have dropped some. I wonder whether Jackson left them, or whether he had heard of the *cache*?"

"The soil is not unsuited for diamonds," said the doctor; "but in the side of a volcano it seems curious to find them. Still we may find more by digging. We will go and fetch implements from the ship."

It was arranged that they would do so, and a splendid haul was anticipated. Captain Armstrong was already calculating on retiring from a seafaring life, and the doctor saw a practice in the distance. On the way down the body of the filibuster was hastily buried in a roughly made grave, and in the process of interment a small bag was picked up. This when opened was found to contain some more stones, some of them beautiful diamonds.

"Where did you find this, Job?" asked his master.

"Here, sir, lyin' on the ground in the snow."

"We cannot take it," said Josiah. "Put it in the grave with him."

"You'd never do that, boss!" cried Stevens. "A dead man can't take his goods with him. He stole them!"

"I will not touch them," said Josiah. "You and

the others may divide them if you will. We—my brother and I, and our sons—have plenty. We have our hands and heads, and at least £50,000. We want no more.”

“No more diamonds!” cried the captain. “Jehoshaphat! I’ll have a few, you bet. Why, mister, you’re not going to turn round?”

“No, I am not. I am going on board the *Sea-lark*, and you can go back. I have done enough, and to tell you the truth, Fred,” he said, turning to his brother, as he descended the rugged slope, “I never intend to set foot again on the Opal Mountain!”

He had gained the treasure, and when he had found it it was like ashes in the mouth. Why had he taken all this trouble, and gone to such an expense? To make a fortune! He had made it, and he did not care for it!”

This is often the case with men. But the younger ones, and even the captain, did not think so. The *Sea-lark* remained on the coast for many days, which extended into weeks. With great labour some more diamonds were dug up, and a few picked up. The men were not satisfied even then. Disputes arose, and the pleasant feeling of companionship seemed likely to die out.

Josiah and his brother perceived, with much regret, the turn things were taking. They had grave doubts whether Biscoe and Pat, who, with the mate, had been permitted to go up the mountain, would ever return. The captain was also becoming anxious as days passed, and the sun began to withdraw earlier and earlier, and rise later. Autumn was near, and

the terrible winter threatened. At length Nature settled the question. The cavern fell in during one night, and the treasure cave of the Opal Mountain existed no longer!

The men returned to duty, rich and envious. They began by talking of what they would do in the States, when Josiah and Captain Armstrong brought them to their senses temporarily by telling them that unless they did their work they would never see the States again. A sharp snow-storm, and the formation of the ice, did more to cool their ardour than any amount of breath expended on them. The north-west wind helped them, the north-east wind did not delay them long, and with thankful hearts the Uptons passed Disco Island, and laid a southerly course for Newfoundland.

The trip had succeeded. The Opal Mountain had proved a treasure-house beyond expectation, and though the riches did not bring increased happiness to all, the greatest good-feeling was common. Captain Armstrong's powerful voice echoed once more from the cliffs as he cheered the farewell speech of Josiah Upton to the shores of Greenland.

One day in September the *Sea-lark*, with all her crew and passengers well and hearty, including Doctor Snow, who accompanied the Uptons, entered the River St Lawrence, and with a nor'-easter bowled up to Quebec. Here a halt was made, as Captain Armstrong did not want to go up to Montreal: he had to beat round again to Chaleur. Here at Quebec the diamonds were valued, and found, if not super-excellent, at anyrate worth the finding. A division

was made, and Armstrong and his men shook hands, and bade the Uptons and the doctor farewell, with light hearts and heavy pockets.

The Uptons, the doctor, and their attendants, less poor old *Punch*, proceeded to Montreal, where another parting took place. Doctor Snow returned to Europe by the next steamer, with the long-desired practice in his breast pocket. He fortunately did not share the fate of the whalers' crew, of whom comparatively few ever reached civilisation again.

At Montreal the Uptons, once more rich and as united as ever, put up at the hotel they had known in former days, and when their name became known, were objects of the keenest curiosity. Several people congratulated them, and Lot and Job came in for many "slings" and "cocktails," and other compounded drinks, wondering how the expedition had got about so soon.

"We are famous, it seems," said Fred Upton, to one curious individual, who came to interview them.

"Yes, you've hit the mark. Your telegram told us who you are."

"My telegram! Why, I only sent it to my relative in Pittsburgh."

"Just so; that's it!"

"But the message said nothing of our voyage and the Opal Mountain, diamonds, and Greenland."

The man stared. Others put their heads in, and came after their heads to listen, pushed from behind.

"Diamonds! Greenland—why, what's that? We haven't heard of it."

"Not heard of it. Then why all this fuss and excitement?"

"Why, ain't you Josiah and Fred Upton; and your boys and helps here?"

"Yes; what of it? Can't ye get on, man."

"What of it. Why your oil territory has been settled and parcelled out. Your friend in Pittsburgh is worth three million dollars now; and you and your brother are good for as much. The story is in all the papers."

"Oil! The Dead City! The played out town!" exclaimed Percy.

"Ay, it's not dead yet. Your friend, why he set to and had it plumbed and bored. He found oil in tons—millions of gallons. He and your family are just beginning to be the biggest bosses in the States. Vanderbilt must take a back seat when you come along."

This most astonishing news was true. Next day the Uptons set out for Pittsburgh, where the information was confirmed. Their other adventures also got wind, and they were everywhere fêted. The money came in in rolls and rouleaux, too fast indeed. The Uptons were liberal and prudent, invested thousands, gave away tens and fifties. Job and Lot shared their prosperity as they had shared their ill-fortune, faithfully, and supported each other as before.

Thus the Upton expedition came to an end. The young men came to England afterwards, and some are here now. If this tale should meet their eyes, I trust they will pardon the author, and after reading the story of their success, may say a kind word for

the Opal Mountain for the sake of Auld Lang Syne!

But after all there was one little bit of mystery in the adventure, viz., How the diamonds got there? and how did Jackson know they were there? Did he and his companions light on the mine, or did they conceal them there for the purpose of deluding people to take a share in a syndicate? The truth will, I fear, never be ascertained.

THE END.

