COURAGE, TRUE HEARTS

Title: Courage, True Hearts
Sailing in Search of Fortune

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Release Date: May 18, 2012 [eBook #39729]

Language: English

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Produced by Al Haines.

Courage, True Hearts

Sailing in Search of Fortune

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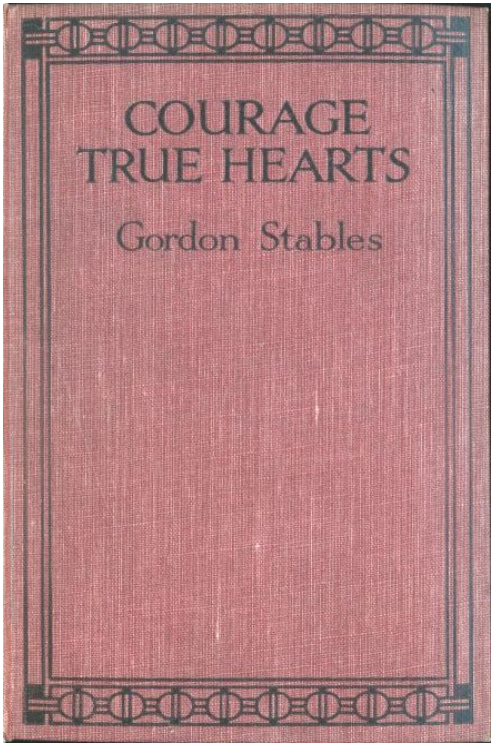

Cover

GORDON STABLES

Author of "The Naval Cadet" "For Life and Liberty"
"To Greenland and the Pole" &c.

"I've wandered east, I've wandered west,
Through many a weary way;
But never, never can forget
The love of life's young day."

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WITH IT FELL CONAL!

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Printed in Great Britain by Blackie & Son, Ltd., Glasgow

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BOOK I

IN SCOTTISH WILDS AND LONDON STREETS

CHAPTER I–HOPE TOLD A FLATTERING TALE

Had you been in the beautiful and wild forest of Glenvoie on that bright and blue-skied September morning–on one of its hills, let us say–and heard the music of those two boys' voices swelling up towards you, nothing that I know of could

have prevented you from joining in. So joyous, so full of hope were they withal, that the very tune itself, to say nothing of the words, would have sent sorrow right straight away from your heart, if there had been any to send.

"Cheer, boys, cheer, no more of idle sorrow,
Courage, true hearts, shall bear us on our way;
Hope flies before, and points the bright to-morrow,
Let us forget the dangers of to-day."

There was a pause just here, and from your elevated situation on that rocky pap, looking down, you would have rested your eyes on one of the prettiest rolling woodland scenes in all broad Scotland.

It was a great waving ocean of foliage, and the sunset of autumn was over it all, lying here and there in patches of crimson, brown, and yellow, which the solemn black of pine-trees, and the funereal green of dark spruces only served to intensify.

Flap-flap-flap! huge wood-pigeons arise in the air and go sailing over the woods. They are frightened, as well they may be, for a moment afterwards two guns ring out almost simultaneously, and so still is the air that you can hear the dull thud of fallen game.

"Hurrah, Conal! Why, that was a splendid shot! I saw you take aim."

"No, Duncan, no; the bird is yours. You fired first."

"Only at random, brother. But come, let us look at him. What a splendid creature! Do you know, Conal, I could almost cry for having killed him."

"Oh! so could I, Duncan, for that matter, but the capercailzie[1] is game, mind, and won't father be pleased. Why do they call it a wild turkey?"

[1] The letter "z" not pronounced in Scotch.

"Because it isn't a turkey. That is quite sufficient reason for a gamekeeper. The capercailzie is the biggest grouse there is, you know, and sometimes weighs very many pounds."

"And didn't we find the nest of one in a spruce tree last spring."

"Ay, and six eggs that we didn't touch; and I've never put any faith again in that ignoramus of a book, that would have us believe the birds always build on the bare ground."

"Written by an Englishman, no doubt, Duncan, who had never placed a

foot on our native heath. But now let us get back to breakfast. I wonder where our little sister Flora is."

"I heard her gun about ten minutes ago; she can't be far off. Besides Viking is with her, so she is safe enough. Give the curlew's scream and she'll soon appear."

"Like the wild scream of the curlew,
From crag to crag the signal flew."

Duncan threw down his gun beside the dead game, and, placing his fingers in his mouth, gave a perfect imitation of this strange bird's cry:

"Who-o-o-eet, who-o-o-eet (these in long-drawn notes, then quicker and quicker), who-eet, who-eet, wheet, wheet, wheet, wheet, who-ee!"

The boys did not have long to wait for an answer. For Duncan, the elder, who was about sixteen, with a stalwart well-knit frame, and even a budding moustachelet, had hardly finished, when far down in a dark spruce thicket sounded the barking of a dog, which could only belong to one of a very large breed.

He entered the glade in which the brothers stood not many seconds after. He entered with a joyous bound and bark, his great shaggy coat, black as the raven's wing, afloat on his shoulders and back; his white teeth flashing; and a yard or two, more or less, of a red ribbon of a tongue hanging out of his mouth.

Need I say he was a noble Newfoundland.

He stopped short and looked at the 'cailzie, then snuffed at it, and immediately after licked his master's cheek. To do so he had to put a paw on each of Duncan's shoulders, and his weight nearly bore him to the ground.

But see, here comes little Flora herself–she is only twelve; her brothers are both dressed in the kilt of hill tartan, and Flora's frock is but a short one, showing to advantage a pair of batten legs encased in galligaskins; fair hair, streaming like a shower of gold over her shoulders; blue eyes, and a lively very pretty face. But across that independent wee nose of hers is quite a bridge of freckles, which extends half-way across her cheeks.

Now a child of her tender years would, in many parts of England, be treated quite as a child. It was quite the reverse at Glenvoie. Flora was in reality a little model of wisdom, and many a bit of good advice she gave her brothers–not that they bothered taking it, though both loved her dearly.

Flora carried a little gun–a present from her father, who was very proud of her exploits and worldly wisdom, and across her shoulders was slung a bag, which appeared to be well filled.

"Hillo, Siss!" cried Duncan. "Any cheer?"

"Oh, yes, three wild pigeons! But what a lovely great wild turkey! I'm sure, Duncan, it was a pity to kill him!"

"Sport, Sissie, sport!" said Duncan.

Yet as he looked at the splendidly plumaged bird which his gun had laid low in death, he smothered a sigh. He half repented now having killed the 'cailzie.

Homeward next, for all were hungry, and in the old-fashioned hall of the house of Glenvoie breakfast would be waiting for them. Through the forest dark and deep, across a wide and clear brown stream by stepping-stones, a stream that in England would be called a river, then on to a broad heathy moorland, with here and there a cottage and little croft.

Poor enough these were in all conscience, but they afforded meal and milk to the owners and their children. Chubby-cheeked hardy little chaps these were. They ran to gate or doorway to greet our young heroes with cheers shrill and many, and Flora smiled her sweetest on them. Neither stockings nor shoes nor caps had they, winter or summer, and when they grew up many of them would join the army, and be first in every bayonet charge where tartans would wave and bonnets nod.

Laird M'Vayne himself came to the porch to meet his children. These were all he had, and their mother was an invalid.

An excellent specimen of the Highland laird was this Chief M'Vayne. As sturdy and strong in limb as a Hercules, broad in shoulder, and though sixty years and over, as straight as an arrow. His was a fearless face, but handsome withal, and he never looked better than when he smiled. Smiling was natural to him, and came straight from the heart, lighting up his whole face as morning sunshine lights the sea.

"Better late than never, boys. What ho! a capercailzie!"

Then he placed his hand so kindly on Duncan's shoulder.

"It was a good shot, I can see," he said, "and now we won't kill any more of these splendid birds. I want the woods to swarm with them."

"No, father," said Duncan, "this is the last, and I shall send to Glasgow for eyes, and stuff and set him up myself."

Then the Laird hoisted Flora, gun, game-bag and all, right on top of his broad left shoulder and carried her inside, while Viking, enjoying the fun, made house and "hallan" ring with his gladsome barking.

Ever see or partake of a real Highland breakfast, reader? A pleasure you have before you, I trust. And had you been at Glenvoie House on this particular morning, the very sight of that meal would have given you an appetite, while partaking of it would have made you feel a man.

That was real porridge to begin with, a little lake of butter in the centre

of each plate and creamy milk to flank it. Different indeed from the clammy, saltless saucers of poultice Englishmen shiver over of a morning at hotels, making themselves believe they are partaking of Scotia's own *own* dish.

All did justice to the porridge, and Viking had a double allowance. There was beautiful mountain trout to follow, cold game, and fresh herrings with potatoes. Marmalade and honey with real oat-cakes finished the banquet.

About this time, gazing across the lawn from the great window, Duncan could see the runner bringing the post-bag. Runner he might well be called. He had come twenty miles that morning with the mails, trotting all the way.

Duncan threw open the window, and with a smile and order for postie to go round to the kitchen for a "piece" and a "drink", he received the bag.

The arrival of the runner was always one of the chief events of the day, for the Laird "let" his shootings every season, and had friends in every part of the kingdom.

So had the boys.

"Ah!" said their father, opening a letter which he had reserved to the last. "Here is one from our distant relative, Colonel Trelawney."

"Oh! do read it out," cried Flora impulsively.

Her father obeyed, as all dutiful fathers do when they receive a command from juvenile daughters.

"*Maida Vale, London.*

"*My dear 42nd cousin,–I think that is about our relationship. Well, I was never good at counting kin, so we must let it stand at that. Heigho! That is my 42nd sigh since breakfast time, and it isn't the luncheon hour yet. But I couldn't quite tell you what I am sighing for; I think it must be for the Highland moors around you, on which I enjoyed so glorious a time in August. Heigho! (43rd). Your hills must still be clad in the crimson and purple glory of heath and heather whence scattered coveys or whirring wings spring skywards (Poetry!).*

"*Well now, I've got something to propose. Since his poor mother died, my boy Frank–fifteen next birthday, you know–has not seemed to thrive well. He is a capital scholar, and is of a very inventive turn of mind. He delights in the country, and when he and I bike away down into the greenery of fields and woods he always looks better and happier. But at home he has nothing to look at that is natural–a few misshapen trees only, a shaven lawn, evergreens, and twittering sparrows.*

"*He is lively enough, and plays the fiddle charmingly. He is only a London lad after all, and his pale face bears witness to the fact.*

"*Well, cousin, fair exchange is no robbery. Send me your two boys up here to spend the winter, and then I'll send the whole three down to you to put in the spring*

and summer. Expected results? Is that what you ask, cousin mine? Well, they are these. A little insight into London life will assist in toning down the fiery Highland exuberance of your brave lads, and will help to make them young men of the world. While a spell among your Highland hills shall put more life-blood into my boy, and make him stronger, braver, and heartier."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Duncan. "He is going to civilize us, is he, daddy dear? We'll have to wear frock-coats, long hats and long faces, and carry umbrellas. What do you think of that, Conal?"

"Why," said Conal disdainfully, "umbrellas are only for old wives and Sassenachs. The plaid for me."

"And me!"

"Well, but listen," said the Laird laughing.

"*Your boys,*" says the colonel, "*must come to us dressed in their hill-tartan kilts, and have dress tartans to wear at evening parties. The English are fond of chaffing the Scot, but, mind you, they love him all the same, and can quite appreciate all the deeds of derring-do he accomplishes on the field of battle, as well as his long-business-headedness on the Stock Exchange. Heigho! (sigh the 44th), had I been a Scot I'd have been a richer man to-day instead of having to maintain a constant fight to keep the wolf from the door. But you, dear cousin, must be fairly wealthy.*"

It was Laird M'Vayne's turn to sigh now, for alas! he was far indeed from rich, and, young as they were, both his boys knew it. And between you and me and the binnacle, reader, the lads used to pray every night, that Heaven might enable them when they came to man's estate, or even before, to do something for the parents who had been so good to them.

"*Well,*" the letter ran on, "*I sha'n't say any more, only you will let the laddies (that is Scotch, isn't it?) come, won't you, cousin? and if we can only find out the time of the boat's arrival, Frank and I shall be at the dock waiting for them.*"

"Hurrah!" cried Duncan,

"Hurrah!" cried Conal.

"And you won't be sorry to leave me and the old home, will you?" said

M'Vayne.

"Oh, indeed, indeed we will, daddy," cried Duncan, "and we'll think about you all and pray for you too, every day and night. Won't we, Conal?"

"Of course we will."

Then the younger lad went and threw his arms round his father's neck, leaned his cheek against his breast, in truly Celtic fashion, and there were tears in his eyes.

"Besides," said Duncan, "the change will do us such a heap of good, and by all we read London must be the grandest place in the whole wide world."

"Streets paved with gold, eh? Houses tiled with sheets of solid silver that glitter daily in the noonday sun. No poverty, no vice, no crime in London. Is that your notion of London, my son?"

"Well," replied Duncan laughing, "it may not be quite so bright as all that, daddy, but I am sure of one thing."

"Yes?"

"If the streets are not paved with gold, nor the houses tiled with silver, there is money to be made in the city by any honest business Scot who cares to work and wants to win."

"Bravo, Duncan!

"In the lexicon of youth which fate reserves
For a bright manhood, there is no such word as Fail."

————

For the next two or three weeks, although the boys with their plucky little sister went every day either to the hill or woods to shoot, or to the burn to fish, there was very little talked about except the coming excursion to the great city of London.

Mrs. M'Vayne was at present confined to her room, and, being nervous, the thought of losing her boys even for a short four or five months made her heart feel sad indeed, and it took them all their time to reassure her.

"No, no, lads," she would cry almost petulantly; "I cannot be happy until I see you in the glen once more, safe and sound!"

Two weeks passed–oh, ever so quickly–away, and the last week was to be devoted wholly and solely to the packing of trunks, a very pleasurable and hopeful employment indeed.

Duncan was *facile princeps* at this work, and he kept a note-book always near, so that whenever he thought about anything he might need, he wrote it down–just as if it had not been possible to get every article he might require in

great London, from a needle to an anchor.

Only, as he told his brother Conal, "It is far better to be sure than sorry."

Well, the last day–the last sad day–came round at last and farewells had to be said on both sides.

Mrs. M'Vayne kept up as well as she could, and so did the boys. *Noblesse oblige*, you know, for although their father was but a Highland laird, and poor at that, he was connected by blood with the chiefs of the best clans in Scotland.

Poor honest Viking had watched the packing with the very greatest of interest, and so sad did he appear that Duncan and Conal made up their minds to take him with them. And when they told him so, there really was not a much happier dog in all the British islands. For Viking was wise beyond compare, and there was very little, indeed, that he did not understand.

But Florie's grief at the loss of her brothers was beyond control, and she made no attempt to hide her tears.

Yes, the laird himself journeyed with his boys as far as Leith, and saw them safe on board.

When the good ship steamed away at last, he waved them a silent adieu, then turned and walked quickly away.

CHAPTER II.–HURRAH FOR "MERRIE ENGLAND"!

Neither Duncan nor Conal was a bad sailor, for, their father's estate being near the western sea, many a long summer's day they spent in open boats, and they sometimes went out with the herring-fishers and were heard of no more for clays.

But this was to be a voyage of more than ordinary rigours, for, as bad luck would have it, a gale of wind arose, with tremendous seas, soon after they passed Berwick.

The waves made a clean breach over the unfortunate ship, and at midnight, when the storm was at its worst, the boys were suddenly awakened by the strange rolling motion of the steamer, and they knew at once that some terrible accident had happened.

The engines had stopped, for the shaft was broken; and high over the roar-

ing of the terrible wind they could hear the captain shouting:

"All hands on deck!"

"Hands make sail!"

It was but little sail she could carry, indeed, and that only fore-and-afters, jib and stay-sails.

The boys had a cabin all to themselves, and the companionship of honest Viking, the Newfoundland. The poor dog did not know what to make of his situation. If he thought at all, and no doubt dogs do think, he must have wondered why his masters should have forsaken their beautiful home, their wanderings over the hills still clad in crimson heather, or through the forests deep and dark, for a life like this; but to the lower animals the ways of mankind are inscrutable, just as those of a higher power are to us. We are gods to the pets we cherish, and they are content to believe in and trust us, never doubting that all is for the best. Alas! we ourselves hardly put the same trust in the good God who made us, and cares for us, as our innocent dogs do in those who own them.

"Well, Conal," said Duncan, "this is, indeed, a wild night. I wonder if we are going to Davie Jones's locker, as sailors call it?"

"I don't think so. The captain is a long-headed fellow. I guess he knows what he is up to."

"I shall light the candles anyhow. I don't like to lie awake in the dark. Do you?"

"Not much. If I was to be drowned I think I would like it to come off in good daylight."

After a scramble, during which he was pitched three times on the deck, once right on top of the dog, Duncan succeeded in lighting the candles.

These were hung in gimbals, so that the motion of the ship did not affect them.

It was more cheerful now; so, having little desire to go to sleep, knowing that the ship must really be in danger, they lay and talked to each other. Talked of home, of course, but more about the great and wondrous city of London, which, if God spared the ship, they soon should see.

Presently a bigger wave than any that had come before it struck the ship, and seemed to heel her over right on her beam-ends, so that Duncan almost tumbled out of his berth.

A deep silence followed, broken only by the rush of water into the boys' cabin.

Viking sprang right into Conal's berth, and crouched, shaking and quivering in terror, at his feet.

There was half a foot of water on the cabin deck.

The worst seemed to be over, however, for presently sail was got on her,

and though the wind continued to rave and howl through the rigging, she was on a more even keel and much steadier.

Presently the captain himself had a peep into the lads' state-room.

He had a bronzed but cheerful face, and was clad in oil-skins from his sou'-wester hat to his boots.

"Not afraid, are you, boys? No? Well, that's right. We have broken down, and it will be many days before we get into London; but we'll manage all right, and I think the wind is just a little easier already."

"So we won't go to Davie Jones's to-night, will we, captain?"

"Not if I know it, lad. Now, my advice is this: go to sleep, and–er–well, there can be no harm if you say your prayers before you do drop off."

The boys took his advice, and were soon fast in the arms of Morpheus. So, too, was honest Viking. He was one of those dogs who know when they are well off, so he preferred remaining in Conal's bunk to descending to the wet deck again. To show his sympathy, he gave the boy one of his huge paws to hold, and so hand-in-hand they fell asleep.

The wind was still blowing when they sat down to breakfast with the captain and first mate, for there was not another passenger on board save themselves. The old saying, "The more the merrier", does not apply to coasting steamers in early winter. The fewer the easier–that is more truthful.

The gale was a gale no longer, but a steady breeze. The ship was given a good offing, for the wind blew from the north-east, and to be too close to a lee shore is at all times dangerous.

But how very snug and cosy the saloon looked, when they were all gathered around the brightly-burning stove that night.

The skipper could tell many a good story, and the first mate also could spin a yarn or two, for they had both been far away at sea in distant climes, and both hoped to get ocean-going ships again.

So there they sat and chatted–ship-master and man, with their tumblers of hot grog on the top of the stove–till six bells in the middle watch.

Then the boys and Viking retired.

"I say, Conal," said Duncan that evening, just before turning in, "I think I should like to be a sailor."

"Well," replied Conal, "I should like to visit far-away countries, where hardly anybody had ever been before, and try to make some money just to be able to help father in his difficulties."

"Poor father, yes. Well, young fellows have made money before now."

"Ay," said Conal, who was wise beyond his years; "but, brother, they had a nest-egg to begin with. Now, we have nothing."

"Nonsense, Conal; we have clear heads, we have a good education, and we

have a pair of willing hands each. That makes a good outfit, Conal, and many a one has conquered fate with far less."

The voyage to London was a long and tedious one, for they had to struggle for days against head-winds, and tack and half tack isn't the quickest way to a port.

But long before they reached the mouth of the Thames, and were taken in tow by a tug-boat, the boys had cemented quite a friendship with Captain Talbot and his mate Morgan. They promised to correspond, and the honest skipper told them that he had a great project on, and that if it came to a head, he would be willing to take them both to sea with him as apprentices, if their father would let them go. This was real good news for our young heroes, and they parted from Talbot happy and hopeful.

Morgan, the mate, put them up to the ropes as to getting to Colonel Trelawney's residence, and a good thing it was that he did so, else assuredly they would have lost themselves. A bargain was made with a cabman, and he agreed for a certain sum to drive them all the way.

It was a damp and miserable day, the streets were inches deep in slimy mud, the houses all gray and dismal.

No wonder that the hearts of these two boys, accustomed to the green grandeur of forests and crimson-clad Highland hills, sank within them, as they gazed from the windows of their cab.

Was this the beautiful London they had heard tell of and expected to see? Nothing but discomfort and misery met their eyes at first, and when the conveyance stopped now and then, blocked by carts and wagons, they found they could scarcely understand a word of the jargon that fell on their ears from every side.

"Moaning piper!" cried a ragged urchin, shoving a newspaper right under Duncan's nose.

Duncan bought this morning paper.

"Did you notice what he said, Conal?"

"Yes; he said 'Moaning piper'. There must be something about a battle in it, and a Scotch piper must have been wounded. No wonder he moaned if he was shot through the chest or legs–eh, Duncan?"

"No indeed, that would make anybody moan."

But much to the boys' disgust there was nothing about a battle in the paper, nor about pipers, nor even about soldiers at all. So the newspaper was thrown down, and they contented themselves by looking from the windows at the crowds of people that were hurrying along the pavement, everyone intent only on his own business, and taking not the slightest notice of his neighbour. They had now got into a better part of the town. There were fewer guttersnipes and badly-

dressed men and women here, less apparent poverty, in fact, with the exception of the poor, white-faced, hungry-looking girls and women who were selling flowers. During a block one of these came to the window near which Duncan sat, and he made the lassie happy by buying two button-holes, and giving her sixpence for them.

The 'buses were objects of curiosity for our heroes.

The drivers were ideal in their own way, and of a class not to be met with anywhere out of London.

The boys criticised them unmercifully.

"Oh, Duncan, did ever you see such faces, or such slow-looking men!"

"Faces just like hams, Conal–and, why, they seem to be wearing about twenty coats! So solemn too–I wonder if ever those fellows smiled except over a pint of beer!"

"And look at those huge wooden umbrellas!"

"Yes, that is for fear a drop of rain should fall upon John Guttle, and he should catch cold."

"Shouldn't I like to see one of these John Guttles trudging over a moor!"

"He wouldn't trudge far, Conal; he would tumble down and gasp like an over-fed ox."

"I say, Duncan, I haven't seen anybody with a plaid yet."

"No, and you won't. Top-coats–nothing else–and tobacco-pipes. No wonder most of those male creatures on the tops of the 'buses are watery-nebbit or red-nosed."

Now, however, private carriages began to mingle with the traffic, and the boys had more to wonder at. But inside these they caught glimpses of fashionable ladies, some young, charmingly dressed, and of a cast of beauty truly English and refined. What astonished Duncan and his brother most was the coachman and flunkeys on the dickey, so severely and stupidly aristocratic did they look.

"Oh, Duncan," cried Conal laughing, "did ever you see such frights! and they've got on ladies' fur tippets!"

"Yes, that is to keep their poor shivery bodies warm, Conal."

"And they look just as if they owned all London, don't they?"

"Yes, that is one of the peculiarities of the flunkey tribe. What's the odds, Conal, so long as they are happy?"

The cab seemed to have reached the suburbs at last. Here were many a pleasant villa, and many a lordly mansion too, with splendid balconies, which were in reality gardens in the sky. There were trees, too, though now almost bare, and green lawns and bushes and flowers.

But none of these latter appealed to our young heroes because they were all so artificial.

Hillo! the cab stops; and the driver, radiant in the expectation of a tip, throws open the door.

"'Ere we are at last, young gents. 'Appy to drink yer 'ealth. Thousand thanks! Hain't seen a 'alf-crown before for a month. Nobuddy needn't say to me as the Scots ain't liberal."

One of the handsomest villas the boys had yet seen, and in the porch thereof stood Colonel Trelawney himself to welcome his guests.

"Right welcome to the Limes," he cried heartily. "Frank is out, but he'll be home to luncheon. Why, what tall hardy chaps you are, to be sure, and I'm right glad you came in your native dress. I wonder how my boy would look in the kilt. It's a matter of legs, I believe."

"Oh, sir," said Duncan, "he'll soon get legs when he comes to the Highlands, and climbs the hills and walks the moors for a few months."

"Well, come in, boys. James, here, will show you your room. We've put you both in the same, as I know young fellows like to talk before turning in."

The room was plainly, yet comfortably, furnished, and the window gave a pleasant view of gardens, shrubberies, and a cloudland of trees to which the autumn foliage still was clinging.

"'Ot watah, young gents."

"Thank you, James."

Duncan and Conal made haste to wash and dress.

James had opened their boxes, and was acting as valet to them in every way. But they were not used to this, and so they told James. God had given them hands and arms, and so they liked to make use of them.

Hark! footsteps on the stairs. Hurried ones, too; two steps, one stride!

Next moment the door was thrown open, and Frank himself stood before them, with both hands extended to bid them welcome.

CHAPTER III.–THE BOYS' LIFE IN LONDON.

"Cousin Frank!"

"That's me. And how are you, cousins Conal and Duncan? We're only far-

off cousins, but that doesn't matter, does it? I'm jolly glad to see you, anyhow. You'll bring some life into this dull old hole; and I'll find some fun for you, you bet."

"Did you ask if we betted?" said Duncan, smiling, but serious. "We wouldn't be allowed to."

"No, no. 'You bet' is just an expression; for, mind you, everybody speaks slang nowadays in town. Oh, I don't bet–as a rule, though I did have a pony on the Oxford and Cambridge last race."

"And did the pony win?" asked Conal, naïvely.

"Eh? What? Ha, ha, ha! Why, it's a boat race, and a pony is a fiver. I'd saved the cash for a year, and like a fool I blewed it at last."

Well, if Frank Trelawney was not very much to look at as regards body, he was frank and open, with a handsome English face, all too pale, however, and he seemed to have more worldly wisdom in his noddle than Duncan, Conal, and Viking all put together.

After talking a little longer to our Highland heroes Frank knelt down and threw his arms around the great dog's neck, and Viking condescended to lick his cheek.

"I'm so glad that old Vike takes to you, Frank," said Duncan. "It isn't everybody he likes."

"Of course," said Frank, "'old' is merely a term of endearment, as father would say."

"That's it. He is only a year and six months old, but already there is nothing scarcely that he does not know, in country life, I mean, though I suppose he will be rather strange in town for a time."

"Sure to be. But here comes James. Luncheon served, James, eh?"

"Luncheon all ready, Master Frank."

They found the Colonel walking up and down the well-lighted hall smoking a cigarette. He was really a most inveterate smoker. He smoked before breakfast, after breakfast, all the forenoon, and all day long. Rolled his own cigarettes, too, so that his fore and middle fingers were indelibly stained yellow with the tobacco.

"Horrid habit!" he always told boys, "but I've become a slave to it. Don't you ever smoke."

Though some years over sixty, Trelawney was as straight as a telephone pole, handsome, and soldierly in face and bearing. The only thing that detracted from his facial appearance was a slight degree of bagginess betwixt the lower eyelids and the cheek bones. This was brought on, his doctor had told him often and often, by weakness of the heart caused by tobacco and wine. But Trelawney would not punish himself by leaving either off.

The boys took to Mrs. Trelawney from the very first. She must have been

fully twenty years younger than the Colonel, and had a sweet, even beautiful, face, and was altogether winning.

Well, that was a luncheon of what might be called elegant kickshaws, artistically cooked and served, but eminently unsatisfactory from a Scotch point of view.

The dinner in the evening was much the same, and really when these Highland lads got up from the table they almost longed for the honest, "sonsy" fleshpots of Glenvoie.

Walnuts and wine for dessert! But they did not drink wine, and would have preferred a cocoa-nut or two to the walnuts. There would have been some satisfaction in that.

A private box for the theatre!

"Oh," cried Duncan, "that will be nice!"

"You have often been at the theatre, dear, haven't you?"

This from Mrs. Trelawney, as she placed her very much be-ringed fingers on Conal's shoulder.

"No, auntie," replied Conal; "only just once, with Duncan there. It was in Glasgow. They were playing 'Rob Roy', and I shall never forget it. Never, never, never!"

But to-night it was a play of quite a different class, a kind of musical comedy. Plenty of action and go in it, plenty of the most ordinary and musicless singing, which pleased the gallery immensely, and frequent spells of idiotic dancing. There were no serious situations at all, however, and no thread of narrative woven into the play.

Moreover, both Scotch boys were placed at a disadvantage owing to their inability to follow the English patois, which on the whole was thoroughly Cockney, the letter "R" being dead and buried, and the "H" being silent after a "W", so that the lads did not enjoy themselves quite as much as they had expected to.

Every now and then the colonel excused himself. He told our heroes he was going to see a man. That really meant lounging into the buffet to smoke a cigarette, and moisten a constitutionally dry throat.

A few days after this, however, the colonel, who, by some means or other known only to himself, was behind the scenes (virtually speaking) of all the best theatres, managed to get a box for the Lyceum.

That truly great tragedian, Irving, was playing in "The Bells", and the young M'Vaynes were struck dumb with astonishment; they were thrilled and awed with the terrible realism of the grand actor, and when the curtain fell at last both boys thanked the colonel most heartily.

"That is real acting, a real play!" cried Duncan enthusiastically. "I'm sure neither Conal nor I want to sit and listen to Cockney buffoonery after that."

Dear Mrs. Trelawney, as both boys called her, had evidently made up her mind to give the lads as pleasant a time as possible. Every fine day, and there were now many, she took them all for a drive.

"We sha'n't be back for luncheon, Tree," she always told her husband. "You must eat in solitary state and grandeur for one day."

"Indeed," she smilingly informed Duncan, "I don't care much to lunch at home. I like to be free, and not have extreme gentility and servants pottering about behind your chair, and listening to every word you say. I hate the proprieties."

Duncan and Conal both smiled. They felt just that way themselves.

After a drive in the park, Mrs. Trelawney would go shopping, and those two brown-faced, brown-kneed Highland boys created a good deal of sensation, though they seemed quite unaware of the fact.

Ah! but after the shopping came luncheon. And the colonel's wife knew where to go to. A charming hotel, not a million of miles from the Thames embankment. And that was a luncheon, too, or, as Frank called it, a spread!

It was a square meal at all events, and Mrs. Trelawney seemed delighted at seeing the boys thoroughly enjoying it.

"Now you lads must eat, you know, because you've got to grow many, many inches yet. And this is liberty hall anyhow. Isn't it delightfully free and easy?"

It was. This the boys admitted.

The more they were with Mrs. Trelawney the more they liked her. And the young M'Vaynes might have said the same of Frank. He was a charming companion. Moreover, he had many accomplishments that his 42nd cousins could not boast of. He could sing with a sweet girl-voice, and he played the violin charmingly, his mother accompanying him on the piano.

She, too, could sing, and in the evenings she often electrified her guests by her renderings of dramatic pieces. Everybody who visited at the Trelawneys' house knew that the colonel had married a young and beautiful actress, and that here she was–far more a woman of the world, and a more perfect lady than anyone at her table.

And the boys were a great attraction. They were so outspoken, yet so innocent, that conversation with them was full of amusement. They always donned their belts and dress tartans for dinner, and were a good deal admired. Moreover, they soon got to be asked frequently out to dinners, or to dances. These they very much enjoyed.

Well, a whole month passed away, and Duncan and his brother were now able to endure London and London life, though they never could love it.

Many a long walk did Frank take them. The carriage would drive them as far as the Strand, then the journey was continued on foot citywards.

Everything here was new–I can't say fresh, for there is precious little freshness about London streets–to the Scotch lads. They could have wished, however, that the pavements had been less crowded, that the people had been less lazy-looking, and that the vendors of penny wares had not thrust their unsavoury hands so often right under their noses.

Frank seemed determined to show his 42nd cousins every phase of London life. He even took them into a corner drink-palace, and there ordered lemonade, just that they might see a little of the dark side of city life.

They were horrified to behold those gin-sodden men and women, many leaning almost helplessly against the counter; the patched and semi-dropsical faces of the females, the maudlin idiotic looks of the males, Duncan thought he never could forget.

He shuddered, and felt relieved when out once more in the crowded streets.

One day Frank thought he would give his cousins a special treat, so he took them to the Zoo.

Both were much interested in beholding the larger wild beasts, the lions of Africa, the splendid tigers of India, the sulky hippopotami, and ill-natured-looking rhinoceroses. But it was a sad sight after all, for these half-starved-looking beasts were deprived of the freedom of forest and plains, and confined here in filthy dens, all for the pleasure of a gaping crowd of ignorant Cockneys.

But when they came upon the birds of prey, and their eyes caught sight of a poor puny specimen of the Scottish eagle, chained to a post, and almost destitute of feathers, Duncan's heart melted with shame and sorrow, and he turned hurriedly away.

As far as the Zoo was concerned, Frank's best intentions had failed to give his guests pleasure. But they were too polite to say so.

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Duncan and Conal had now been two months in London, and could understand even what the street boys said. On the whole they had enjoyed the wonderful sights of this wonderful city, for these really seemed unending.

Then came Christmas.

Christmas and the pantomime.

They enjoyed Drury Lane far more even than the parties or even the dances they were invited to. The scenery and scenes were exquisitely lovely. No dream of fairyland ever equalled these.

The boys gave themselves wholly up to amusement throughout all the festive season. But to their credit be it said, they did not gorge on goose, turkey, or pudding as everybody else did.

”No wonder,” thought Duncan, ”that the Englishman is called John Guttle in many parts of Scotland.” For he had never seen such eating or drinking in his life before.

Then after the festivities of the festive week came dulness and dreariness extreme. The people had spent all their money, and wretchedness abounded on every pavement of the sleet-swept streets of the city. Yes, and the misery even overflowed into the west-end suburbs.

It was about this time that Duncan made a discovery.

Frank had told him, frankly enough, that his father was not over-well off, but it was evident to him now that Colonel Trelawney was simply struggling to keep up appearances, and that, in all probability, he was deeply in debt.

Mrs. Trelawney, or ”dear Auntie”, as the Scotch lads called her, was ever the same. Nothing seemed to trouble or worry her.

But the colonel at breakfast used to take up his letters, one by one, and eye them with some degree of suspicion before opening them.

The waste-paper basket was close to him, and was wonderfully handy.

”The first application,” he would say with a smile as he tore up a bill and summarily disposed of the fragments.

”Second application”–that too was torn up.

Letter from a friend–put aside to be read at leisure.

A long blue letter–suspicious–disposed of without reading.

”Ha! Amy, love, here is Sweater & Co.’s fourth letter. Threatens us with–ah, you know.”

”Well, dear,” says Mrs. Trelawney with her sweetest smile, ”just let them sweat!”

”Give ’em a bill, I suppose,” the colonel says, as if speaking to himself.

And the letter is put aside.

So one way or another Trelawney got through his pile at last, and settled down to serious eating, that is, he made a hearty meal from a Londoner’s point of view. Then he lit a cigarette.

Well the month of January was raw and disagreeable, and seldom was there a day without a fog either white or yellow.

Is it any wonder that, brought up in a clear transparent atmosphere among breezes that blew over heathy hills, and were laden with the balsamic odour of the pine-trees, Duncan and Conal began to languish and long for home.

With great candour they told ”Auntie” they wanted to get home to enjoy skating, tobogganing, and white-hare shooting; and she promised to speak to the colonel.

”We will be so sorry to leave you, auntie, for you’ve been so good to us.”

”And I shall miss you, boys, sadly.”

"Yes, I hope so. It will give Conal and me pleasure to think that you like us. And of course Frank comes with us."

"I fear it is too cold for Frank."

"Oh no, auntie dear. One never feels cold in Scotland, the air is so bracing, you know."

So that very day it was all arranged, and Laird M'Vayne had a letter to that effect.

The parting was somewhat sorrowful, but the boys did not say "Farewell!" only "*Au revoir*", because both hoped to return, and by that time they declared that Frank would be as hardy as–as–well, as hardy as Highlanders usually are.

The last things that the boys bought in London were skates. Of course they could have got those in Edinburgh, but not so cheaply, and for this reason: there did not seem to be the ghost of a chance of any skating for the Londoners this season, and so they got the skates for an old song.

They went by sea to Edinburgh. The *Queen* was at present all but a cargo-boat, and besides the three lads and Vike, there was only one other passenger, an old minister of the Church of Scotland.

The same skipper and the same mate, and delighted they were to see the boys again, and they gave Frank a right hearty welcome on their account.

But Frank had that with him which secured him a welcome wherever he went–his fiddle, and when after dinner he played them some sad and plaintive old Scottish airs, all were delighted, and the minister got up from his chair, and, grasping the boy's hand, thanked him most effusively.

"Dear lad," he said, "you have brought the moisture to my eyes, although I had thought my fountain of tears had dried up many and many a long year ago."

Now here is something strange; although, when once fairly out of the Thames' mouth and at sea, it was blowing a head wind, with waves houses high, Frank was not even squeamish. I have seen many cases like this, though I must confess they are somewhat rare.

Nor was the minister ill; but then, like the Scotch boys, he was sea-fast, having done quite a deal of coasting.

"How goes the project you have in view?" asked Duncan that evening of the skipper.

"Well," was the reply, "it is not what the French call a *fait accompli* just yet, but it is bound to be so before very long."

"Well, my 42nd cousin Frank here would like to go to sea also. Could you do with the three of us?"

"Yes. You must be prepared to rough it a bit, and we'll be rather cramped for room, but we shall manage. Eh, mate?"

"I'm sure we shall, and this young gentleman must take his fiddle."

”And I’ll take the bagpipes,” said Duncan, laughing.

”Hurrah!” cried the mate. ”Won’t we astonish the king of the Cannibal Islands? Eh?”

It was Frank’s turn to cry ”Hurrah!”

”But,” he added, ”will there be real live cannibals, sir?”

”Certainly. What good would dead ones be?”

”And is there a chance of being caught and killed and eaten, and all the like of that?”

”Ay, though it isn’t pleasant to look forward to. Only mind this: I may tell you for your comfort that although, after being knocked on the head with a nullah, your Highland cousin would be trussed at once and hung up in front of a clear fire until done to a turn, you yourself would be kept alive for weeks. Penned up, you know, like a chicken.”

”But why?”

”Oh, they always do that with London boys, because they are generally too lean for decent cooking, and need too much basting. You would be penned up and fattened with rice and bananas.”

”Humph!” said Frank, and after a pause of thoughtfulness, ”Well, I suppose there is some consolation in being kept alive a bit; but bother it all, I don’t half like the idea of being a side dish.”

The weather was more favourable during this voyage, and though bitterly cold, all the boys took plenty of exercise on the quarter-deck, and so kept warm. So, too, did the old minister, who was really a jolly fellow, and did not preach at them nor dilate on the follies of youth. Moreover, this son of the Auld Kirk enjoyed a hearty glass of toddy before turning in.

Leith at last!

And yonder, waiting anxiously on the quay, was Laird M’Vayne himself.

His broad smile grew broader when his boys waved their hands to him, and soon they were united once again.

CHAPTER IV.–WILD SPORTS ON MOORLAND AND ICE.

Pretty little Flora M'Vayne was half afraid of the London boy at first. The violin won her heart, however, and before retiring for the night, when shaking hands with Frank, she nodded seriously as she told him:

"I'm not sure I sha'n't love you soon; Viking likes you, so you must be good."

Well, Frank was an impressionable boy, and he was very much struck by the child's innocent ways and beauty.

"I'm not sure," he said in reply, "that we won't be sweethearts before I leave. How would you like that?"

She shook her head. "No, no," she said, "you are very nice, but you are only an English boy. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

I do not think that any two boys were ever more glad to find themselves back once more, safely under the parental roof-tree, than Duncan and Conal. They had made many friends in London, it is true, and spent many a happy evening therein, and these they could look back to with pleasure and with a sigh; but the city and town itself, with all its strange ways, the ignorance of its lower classes, its murdered twangy English, its filth and its festering iniquities–they positively shuddered when they thought of.

God seemed nowhere in London. Here in this wild and beautiful land He appeared to be everywhere.

The pure and virgin snow that clad the moors and mountains was a carpet on which angels might tread; the tiny budlets already appearing on the trees were scattered there by His own hand; yea, and the very wind that sighed and moaned through the forest was the breath of heaven.

And when the sun had gone down behind the waves of the western ocean did not

> "The moon take up the wondrous tale
> And nightly to the listening earth
> Repeat the story of her birth,
> While all the stars that round her burn,
> And all the planets in their turn
> Confirm the story as they roll,
> And spread the truth from pole to pole".

Yes, in wild and silent lands, God seems very near. It was in a country like this that the immortal poet Lord Byron wrote much of his best poetry. And no bolder song did he ever pen than Loch-na-garr. Near here many of his ancestors–the Gordons–were laid to rest after the fatal field of Culloden. In one verse he says–

”Ill-starred, though brave, did no vision foreboding
Tell you that fate had forsaken your cause?
Ah! were ye then destined to die at Culloden,
Though victory crown’d not your fall with applause.
Still were ye happy in death’s earthly slumbers,
You rest with your clan in the caves of Braemar,
The pibroch resounds to the piper’s loud numbers
Your deeds to the echoes of wild Loch-na-garr.”

No wonder that, wandering amidst such soul-enthralling scenery, arrayed in the tartan of his clan, or thinking of the happy days of his boyhood, years and years afterwards he said as he sighed–

”England, thy beauties are tame and domestic
To one who has roam’d on the mountains afar!
Oh! for the crags that are wild and majestic,
The steep frowning glories of dark Loch-na-garr.”

But Frank Trelawney was a guest at Glenvoie, and, imbued with that spirit of hospitality for which Highlanders are so famous, the boys M’Vayne would have bitten their tongue through and through rather than say one disparaging word about England.

Nor was there any need, for tame and domestic though its scenery is, the whole history of the country, even before the Union, teems with deeds of derring-do, done by her brave sons, on many and many a blood-drenched field of battle.

As for Frank himself, he seemed not only to settle down to his life in the wilds in less than a week, but to become quite enthusiastic over ”Scotland’s hills and Scotland’s dells”; and he was not slow in reminding his 42nd cousins that he too had a drop of real Highland blood in his veins.

”We’ll soon make a man of you, dear boy,” said the Laird one evening. ”Now, myself, and my lads, with Vike and a setter, are going after the white hares to-morrow, and if you think yourself strong enough, we shall take you.”

”Oh, I feel strong enough now for anything,” replied Frank laughing.

”Mind it is terribly hard work; but there is a little snow on the ground, and we’ll be able to track the hares easily.”

”I don’t think that Frank should go, Ronald,” put in Mrs. M’Vayne; ”the boy is far indeed from hardy, and it may exhaust him quite. You’ll stay at home with me, won’t you, Frank?”

”Yes, aunt, if you bid me, but–” He hesitated.

"Oh!" cried Duncan, "that 'but' turns the scale, mother. Don't you ask him to stay, mother. All Englishmen have pluck if they haven't all strength. So Frank is coming."

The morning was very bright and beautiful, with just a slight "scriffen" of snow on the ground, and the sun rose over the eastern hills in a blue-gray haze, like a ball of crimson fire, and intimated his intention of shining all day long.

Duncan and Conal were up betimes, and had got everything in readiness long before Frank came down.

A sturdy keeper would carry the bags and the luncheon they should partake of on the hill.

But the young Englishman was full of life and go. After a hearty breakfast they started; Flora standing in the porch waving her hand to them, but with tears of sorrow in her eyes because she too was not allowed to go.

Viking was daft with joy, feathering round and round in wide circles, and now and then turning Dash, the Gordon setter, over on his back in the snow.

They passed the forest, now leafless and bare, and taking to the right, the ground soon began to rise.

The sheep under the charge of a plaided shepherd and his dog, were busy scratching away the snow to feed on grass and succulent mosses–a cold kind of breakfast, to say the least of it.

The ground rose and rose.

The dogs were kept well to heel, for indeed their services were but little needed.

Ha! here are hare-tracks!

"Take the front, Frank," said the laird; "you are the guest, and must have the first blood."

Frank's heart beat high with excitement, and he carried the gun low with a finger on the trigger.

"Hurrah! there she tips!"

Bang! and a white hare that had essayed crossing from one broom-bush to another, was tumbled; then off darted Viking and brought her in.

"Capital shot!" said Duncan. "Now we'll spread, and it will be every one for himself, and Viking and Dash for us all."

They lay out in skirmishing order, and marched on and up.

But soon they had to force their way through heather that came up even to the laird's and the tall keeper's waists, and all but buried little Frank.

He held his gun aloft, however, and struggled bravely on.

In about a quarter of an hour they had emerged, and the boys were shaking the snow from their kilts.

On and up. Why, it was always on and up.

They marched all that forenoon, sometimes around rocky spurs and paps of the mountains, sometimes along bare and barren glens, sometimes along the edges of fearful precipices, where a single slip or false step would have meant a terrible accident.

By the time they had reached the cliffy shelter of a very high hill, they had bagged eight white hares in all.

And now it was noon, and though the frost was fairly hard, the exercise had warmed their life-blood, and they felt no cold.

Hunger, though? Ah! yes, but that could speedily be appeased.

Plaids were spread on the ground, and down they all sat, the dogs not far off, and I'm sure that the keeper, sturdy chiel though he was, felt glad to be lightened of his load.

What a jolly meal that was to be sure! With her own lady fingers the laird's wife had made that splendid pie. Pie for five and almost enough for fifty. But then, of course, there were the honest dogs to be considered, and they easily disposed of all that was left.

Bread–that is, real oatcakes–cheese, and butter followed.

The boys washed all down with a flagon of milk, but in the interests of truth, I must add that the laird and his keeper had a modest glass or two of Highland whisky.

And now, after yarning for about half an hour, sport was resumed.

Farther up the hillsides they still went, and so on and on for two whole hours.

It had been a grand day, but as the sun was now declining towards the blue blue ocean, the laird called a halt.

"I think, boys," he said, "we've done enough, and as we are nearly ten miles from home we had better be retracing our steps. Donald has as many hares as he can carry. Haven't you, Donald?"

"Och! well, it's nothing," was the reply. "And it's all down-hill now you'll mind, sir."

"Yes. Well, lead the way, Donald."

Donald did.

For one of the party, and that was Frank, the journey was a terrible one. On the upward march there was all the excitement of the sport to keep him up. But now he had no such stimulant to stir his English blood.

When still three miles from Glenvoie mansion-house, Duncan observed that he was very pale and limped most painfully. In fact the poor boy's ankles were swollen, and his toes felt like whitlows; but although so tired that he could hardly carry his gun, that indomitable English courage of his kept him from complaining.

He confessed, however, feeling just a little tired, so the laird poured a small quantity of whisky into a measure, mixed it with snow, and made him swallow it.

After this he felt better.

When they arrived at the top of the very lower-most and lost hill, the house being but half a mile distant, they sat down for a short time to rest and gaze across the sea.

The sun's lower limb had just touched the wester-most wave, and red and fiery gleamed his beams 'twixt horizon and shore. It was a beautiful sight.

Many flocks of rooks were winging their way northwards to the shelter of the great forest, and now and then a string of wild ducks were seen in full flight towards the tall reeds that bordered an ice-bound lake.

Slowly sank the sun, the waves seemed to wash up across its blood-red surface, and gradually, so gradually, engulfed the whole.

"And the sun's last rosy rays did fade
Into twilight soft and dim."

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Frank Trelawney was indeed glad when he found himself once more in his own room. The man brought water, and with Highland courtesy insisted on bathing his feet.

He next hurried away for a cup of delicious coffee, after swallowing which Frank felt like a giant refreshed, and soon went down into the drawing-room.

He was still pale, however, for the terrible fatigue had temporarily affected the heart.

Little Flora was not slow to note this.

"Oh, cousin," she said, "how white and tired-looking you are! You shouldn't have gone. You're only a poor little English boy, you know."

Frank liked the child's sympathy, but he certainly did not feel flattered by the last sentence.

"That's all," he mustered courage to say. "I'm only a poor Cockney lad, and I think, Flora, I've had enough white-hare shooting to last me for a very long time. When next your father and brothers go after game of this sort, I'll stay at home and make love to you."

Frank, however, was as well as could be next day, and after a cold bath went hungrily down to breakfast.

The day was as still and bright as ever, and it was to be spent upon the loch.

Curling–which might be called a kind of gigantic game of billiards on the

ice–was to be engaged in. A party was coming from a neighbouring parish, and a strong club was to meet them.

At this most splendid "roaring" game there is no class distinction; lord and laird, parson and peasant, all play side by side, all are equal, and all feed together, ay, and partake of Highland usquebaugh together also.

Well, the laird's party were victorious, and all were invited up to Glenvoie house, to partake of an excellent dinner, laid out in the barn.

But the barn was beautifully clean, and along its wall, among evergreens, was placed many a bright cluster of candles.

The silver and crystal sparkled on the snow-white table-cloth, and that huge joint of hot corn-beef and carrots–the curlers' dinner *par excellence*–was partaken of with great gusto.

Bread and cheese and whisky followed this, then the minister returned thanks, and this was followed by more whisky, with song after song.

"Roof and rafters a' did dirl."

It was not till near to the "wee short 'oor ayont the twal" that the party broke up, and all departed for their distant homes, on horseback or in traps.

Did I say "all departed"? What an awkward thing it is to be possessed of a conscience! I have one which, whenever I deviate in the slightest degree from the straight lines of truth, brings me up with a round turn.

Well, *all* did not depart, for the corn-beef–let us say–had flown to the legs and to the heads of half a dozen jolly fellows at least, and they determined that they wouldn't go home till morning.

So they had some more toddy, sang "Auld Lang Syne", and then retreating to the rear of the barn, curled up amongst the straw and were soon fast asleep.

So ended the great curling match of Glenvoie.

CHAPTER V.– A HIGHLAND BLIZZARD–THE LOST SHEEP AND SHEPHERD.

It must not be supposed for a single moment that although the boys M'Vayne liked fun and adventure in their own wild land, just as you or I or any other boys do, reader, their education was neglected. Quite the reverse, in fact. For at the time our tale commences, both had just returned from the High School of Edinburgh, where they had studied with honour, and carried off many prizes.

One of Duncan's pet studies had been and still was–navigation. Not only of a theoretical kind, but thoroughly practical.

He had long since made up his mind to become a sailor, and he had left no stone unturned to learn the noble art of seamanship.

For this purpose he had prevailed upon his father to let him take several cruises in a barque plying between Leith and Hull. So earnest was Duncan, and so willing was both skipper and mate of this craft to teach him, that in a very short time he was not only up to every rope and stay, but could take both the latitude and longitude as well as could be desired.

He did all he could to put his brother up to the ropes also.

They were very fond of each other, these two lads, and it was the earnest desire of both that they should not be parted.

Well, all the stories they read were of the "ocean wild and wide", and all the poetry they loved had the sound of the sea in it.

Such poetry and such tales Duncan would often read to his brother and winsome wee Florie sitting high on a hilltop, perhaps, on some fine summer's day with the great Atlantic spreading away and away from the shore beneath them to the distant horizon.

Dibdin's splendid and racy songs, redolent as they are of the brine and the breeze, were great favourites.

But I do think there is a thread of romance in the life of every sailor. Nay, more, I believe that it is this very romance that first induces young fellows to tempt the billows, although they are but little likely to find a life on the ocean wave quite all that their fancy painted. Talking personally, I am of opinion that it was *Tom Cringle's Log* that first gave me an idea of going to sea. Well, I do not regret it.

Byron's *Corsair* was a great favourite with the boys. Indeed, I rather think that they both would have liked to become corsairs or dashing pirates. And little Flora would gladly have gone with them.

"Heigho!" she sighed one day when Duncan had closed the book. "Heigho! I wish I had been a boy. I think it was very foolish of the Good Man to make me a girl, when he knew well enough I wanted to be a boy."

The poor child did not know how irreverent was such talk.

Honest Vike used to lie by Duncan's side while he was reading, with one huge heavy paw placed over the boy's knee.

But it must have been monotonous for him; and often his head fell on the extended foot, and he went off to sleep outright.

No sooner was the reading ended, however, than Vike awoke, as full of life as a spring-born kitten. Then his game began. He used to loosen a huge boulder and send it rolling down the hill. As it gained force, it split up into twenty pieces or more, and bombarded everything it came across. Vike just stood and barked. But once, when a flying piece of the boulder killed a hare, the noble Newfoundland dashed down the hill at tremendous speed, and seized his quarry.

He came slowly up with it, and laid it solemnly down at Duncan's feet.

This was all very well; but one day, when the boys and Flora sat down about half-way up a hill, Viking, tired of the reading, found his way to the hilltop, and, as usual, loosened a boulder, and started it.

Thump, thump, rattle, rattle, rush! Fully a dozen great stones came down on our heroes in a cloud of dust, and with the force of an avalanche. The danger was certainly great, but it was all over before they could fully realize it.

Duncan hastily drew his whistle, and at its call the innocent dog instantly ceased working at another boulder he was busily engaged loosening, and came galloping down the hill.

Poor fellow! I dare say he deserved a scolding, but so full of life and happiness was he, that Duncan had not the heart to speak harshly to him. Only care was taken after this that Vike never got higher up the hill than the reading party.

Frank had been nearly three weeks at Glenvoie, before he became initiated into the mysteries of a real Highland snow-storm. Many of my readers have doubtless been out in such a blizzard, but the majority have not, and can have but little idea of the fierceness and danger of it.

The morning of the 10th of February, 18–, was mild and beautiful. Both Duncan and his brother had been early astir, and had taken their bath long before sunrise.

They went downstairs on tiptoe, as they had no desire to awake their guest.

"English boys need a lot of sleep," said Conal. "They're not like you or me, Duncan."

"N-no," said his brother; "but I could have done with another hour myself to-day. But we are Scotsmen, and must show an example. Noblesse oblige. Well," he added, "we'll have time to run up the hill anyhow, and see the sun rise."

So off they went, Vike making all the rocks and braes resound with his barking.

It was, indeed, a glorious and beautiful morning, and from their elevated situation they could see all the wild and romantic country on every side of them, for daylight was already broadening in the east. To the west the gray Atlantic ocean, the horizon buried in mist, away to the south woods and forests. Forests

to the north also, while behind them hills on hills successive rose.

But the eastern sky was already aglow with clouds of crimson fire and gold. What artist could paint, what poet describe, such glory?

Then low towards a wood shines forth a brighter, more fiery gleam than all, and even at this distance the boys can see the branches, aye, and even the twigs, of the trees silhouetted against it.

And that is the sun itself struggling up behind the radiant clouds.

They stayed but little longer, for by this time breakfast would be ready, and Frank himself getting up.

After this meal was discussed, as a light breeze, sufficient to ripple the stream, had sprung up, the young folks determined to go fishing.

They took luncheon with them, and spent the whole forenoon on the banks of the bonnie wimpling burn.

But so well engaged were they that they did not at first observe that the sky was becoming rapidly overcast, and that the wind had begun to wail and moan in the trees of the adjoining forest. It had turned terribly cold too.

Duncan became fully alive to his danger now, however, especially when the tiny millet-seed snow began to fall.

"Our nearest way is through the wood," said the boy. Duncan was always pioneer in every danger and in every pleasure.

"And there is no time to lose," he added. "Florie, I wish you hadn't come. I suppose Conal and I will have to carry you."

"I won't be carried," replied the stout-hearted little Scots maiden. "I daresay you think I'm a child."

Fishing-tackle was by this time made up, and off they started.

It was terribly dark and gloomy under the great black-foliaged pine-trees, but Duncan knew every foot of the way.

They got through the forest, and out on to the wide moorland, just as the snow began to fall in earnest.

This moor was for the most part covered with heather, with broom and with whins, but dotted over with Scottish pine-trees. These last had been planted, or rather sown, by the rooks, for the black corbies turn many a heathery upland in Scotland into waving woods or forests. They bear the cones away to pick the seeds therefrom on the quiet moors. Some of these seeds are dropped, and in a short time trees spring up.

Duncan now took from his pocket a small compass, and studied it for a moment.

"We sha'n't be able to see the length of a fishing-rod before us soon," he said. "Now, I propose steering due south till we strike the old turf dike[1] that leads across the mountains. By following this downwards we will be guided straight

to the pine-wood rookery behind our house."

[] Dike (*Scottice*), a low fence of stone or turf.

They commenced to struggle on now in earnest–I might almost say for dear life's sake–for wilder and wilder blew the blizzard, increasing in force every minute, and thicker fell the snow. But I was wrong in saying it fell, for it was carried horizontally along on the wings of the wind. Not a flake would lie on the hills or bare slopes, but every dingle and dell and gully, and every rock-side facing westward, was filled and blocked.

Duncan held Flora firmly by the hand, for if she got out of sight in this choking drift, even for a few seconds, her fate would, in all probability, be that of sweet Lucy Gray–she might ne'er be seen alive again.

Frank and Conal were arm-in-arm, their heads well down as they struggled on and on.

"Let us keep well together, boys," cried Duncan, as he looked at his little compass once again. "Cheerily does it, as sailors say."

Now and then they stopped for breath when they came to a clump of pines.

Here the noise of the wind overhead was terrific. At its lightest it was precisely like the roar of a great waterfall. But ever and anon it would come on in furious squalls, that had in them all the force of a hurricane, which swept the tree-tops straight out to one side and bent their giant stems as if they had been but fishing-rods. At every gust such as this the flakes were broken into ice-dust, with a suffocating snow fog that, had they not buried their faces in their plaids, would have choked the party one and all.

Many of these pines were carried away by the board, snapped near to the ground, and hurled earthwards with the force of the blast.

Long before they reached the fence of turf, called in Scotland, as I have said, a dike, Flora was completely exhausted, and had to submit to be carried on Duncan's sturdy back.

Frank was but little better off, but he would not give in.

At last they reached the dike.

"Heaven be praised!" cried Duncan. "And now we shall rest just a short time and then start on and down. Cheer up, lads, we will manage now."

Flora descended from her brother's back, and he sat down on the turf, and took her on his knee.

But where was Vike?

Surely he had not deserted them!

No, for a dog of this breed is faithful unto death.

But now a strange kind of somnolence began to take possession of the boys.

Duncan himself could not resist its power, far less his companions.

"Let us be going, lads," he cried more than once, but he did not move.

He seemed to be unable to lift a limb, and at last he heard the howling of the wind only like sunlit waves breaking on a far-off sandy beach.

He nodded–his chin fell on his breast–he was dreaming.

Ah! but it is from a sleep like this that men, overtaken in a snow-storm, never, never arise. They simply

"Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking".

In a few minutes, however, Duncan starts. The sound of a dog's voice falls on his ear. Ah! there is no bark in all broad Scotland so sonorous and so sincere as that of honest Vike.

Wowff! Wowff! Wowff!!

There is joy in it, too, for he has found the boys–ah! more than that, he has brought relief, and here are the sturdy kilted keeper and two farm hands, ready to help them safely home. The keeper has a flask, and all must taste–even Florie, who is hardly yet awake.

How pleasant looked the fire in the fine old dining-hall when, after dressing, the boys came below.

And Glenvoie himself was laughing now, and as he shook Frank's hand, he could not help saying:

"Well, my lad, and how do you like a Highland snow-storm?"

"Ah!" said Frank, laughing in turn, "a little of it goes a long way. I don't want any more Highland snow-storm, thank you–not for Frank!"

The gale seemed to be increasing rather than abating, and it kept on all that night, and for two nights and two days more.

Then it fell calm.

"I trust in Heaven," said M'Vayne, "that Sandie, our shepherd, has reached the shelter of some hut, but I fear the worst. The sheep may be buried, but they will survive; but without food poor Sandie cannot have withstood the brunt of that awful blizzard.

"Boys," he continued, "I shall start at once on a search, and the keeper will come with me."

"And we too."

"Wowff! wowff!" barked Vike, as much as to say, "You'd be poorly off

without my assistance."

It was a lovely forenoon now, with a clear sky, but not as much wind as would suffice to lift one feathery flake.

They meant to find the shepherd, but it was his hard-frozen corpse they expected to dig out of a snow-drift.

CHAPTER VI.–"THE BREATH OF GOD WAS OVER ALL THE LAND."

There were two huts on the moorland, one in the open, another close against a ridge of rocks, and in one or other poor Sandie would surely have found shelter.

So to the first they bent their footsteps. It stood with its back to the east, and on the west it was entirely covered with great banks of snow, some of them shaped like waves on the sea-shore, that are just on the eve of breaking.

It took the keeper and two men nearly an hour to break through the barrier and find the doorway.

They could see nothing when they opened it, for all were partially snow-blind.

But they groped around, and called the shepherd by name; then convinced that he was not there, dead or alive, they came sadly away, and joined the group outside.

There was still the other hut to be examined, and this was a good mile higher up the hill.

Thither, therefore, the party now wended their way, but so completely covered up did they find it, that another long hour of hard work was spent in reaching the doorway.

Like the last which they had explored, it was cold, dark, and deserted.

No one had any hope now of finding Sandie alive, but after a hurried luncheon they spread themselves out across the hill and moor somewhat after the fashion of skirmishers, and the ground was thoroughly searched.

But all in vain.

No frozen corpse was found.

They were about to return now sorrowfully homewards, when high up the hill and at the foot of a semi-lunar patch of rocks–an upheaval that had taken place probably millions of years ago–Vike was noticed, and his movements attracted the attention of all.

He was yap-yapping as if in great grief, tearing up the snow at the foot of a mighty drift and casting it behind him and over him.

A pure white dog was the Newfoundland at present, so laden was his coat with the powdery drift.

"Come on, men, come on," cried Glenvoie, "there yet is hope! The good dog scents something in spite or the snow. It may only be sheep, and yet poor dead frozen Sandie may be amongst them."

It took them but a few minutes to reach the cliff and the huge snowdrift that covered its western side. It was then that Duncan remembered something about these rocks.

"Why, father," he said, "now that I think of it, this is Prince Charlie's cave."

"You are right, lad, and my hopes are certainly in the ascendant."

"Conal and I have often been inside, and there is room enough inside to shelter a flock of sheep, or a regiment of soldiers."

"Now then, lads," cried the laird, "work away with a will. I'll take care you don't lose by it."

He handed them his flask as he spoke, and thus refreshed by the wine of their native land, they did work, and with a will too.

But hard work it was, from the fact that the snow was loose and powdery.

But at long, long last they reached the mouth of the cave.

And now a curious spectacle was witnessed, for to the number of at least a hundred, and headed by a huge curly-horned ram, with a chorus of baa-a-ing, out rushed the imprisoned sheep, kicking and leaping with joy to see once more the light of day.

Behind them came the shepherd's bawsont-faced collie Korran. But after licking Vike's ear he rushed back once more into the cave, and the rescuers quickly lighting a fire with some withered grass, found the body of the shepherd with Korran standing over it. Was he dead?

That had yet to be seen. They carried him out, and placing him on plaids, began to rub his face with snow and chafe his cold, hard hands.

In less than ten minutes Sandie opened his wondering eyes.

He could swallow now, and a restorative was administered.

I need scarcely say that this restorative was Highland whisky.

After about half an hour Sandie was able not only to eat and talk but to walk.

His story was a very brief one. He had, with the assistance of Korran, driven the sheep into the cave, and never dreaming that he would be snowed up, and remained with them for a time. Alas! it was a long time for the poor fellow and his faithful dog!

Two days and two nights without food and only snow to keep body and soul together. And the cold–oh, so intense!

"How did you feel?" asked Frank.

The shepherd hadn't "a much English", as he phrased it, but he answered as best he could.

"Och, and och! then, my laddie, she was glad the koorich (sheep) was safe, and she didna thinkit a much aboot hersel. But she prayed and she prayed, and then she joost fell asleep, and the Lord of Hosts tookit a care of her."

Well, this honest shepherd was certainly imbued with the sincere and beautiful faith of the early Covenanters, but, after all, who shall dare to say that there is no efficacy in real prayer. Not in the prayers that are said, but in the prayers that are prayed.

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Well, spring returned at last. Soft blew the winds from off the western sea; all the hills were clad in green; the woods burst into bud and leaf; in their darkest thickets the wild doves' croodle was heard, droning a kind of bass to the mad, merry lilt of the chaffie, the daft song of the mavis, or low sweet fluting of the mellow-voiced blackbird.

But abroad on the moors the orange-scented thorny whins, resplendent, hugged the ground, and here the rose-linnets built and sang, while high above, fluttering against some fleecy cloudlet, laverocks (larks) innumerable could be heard and dimly seen.

Oh it was a beautiful time, and the breath of God seemed over all the land.

Frank Trelawney had adopted, not only all the methods of life of his Scots 42nd cousins, but even their diet.

Almost from the date of his arrival he had taken a shower-bath or sponge-bath before breakfast, and this breakfast was for the most part good oatmeal porridge, with the sweetest of butter and freshest of milk.

Now that spring had really come, he went every morning with Duncan and Conal to a big brown pool in the woodland stream. So deep was it that they could take headers without the slightest danger of knocking a hole in the gravel bottom of the "pot". Having towelled down and dressed rapidly, they ran all the way home.

This new and healthful plan of living soon told for good on the constitution

of the London lad. His muscles grew harder and stronger, roses came on his cheeks, and he was as happy and gay as Viking himself, and that is saying a deal.

Many a long ramble did he and little Flora now take together through the woods and wilds, for he did not care to go boating or sea-fishing with the others every day.

Vike always accompanied the two. This certainly was not because he disliked the sea. On the contrary, he loved it. Whenever the boat came within a quarter of a mile of the beach he always sprang overboard and swam the rest of the way.

Arrived on shore he shook gallons of water out of his coat. If you had been standing between the dog and the sun, you would have seen him enveloped in bright little rainbows, which were very pretty; but if anywhere alongside of him, then you would have required to go straight home and change your clothing, for Viking would have drenched you to the skin if not quite through it.

But I suppose that this grand and wise Newfoundland thought the London boy and little Flo had more need of his protection.

Ah! many and many a day and night after this, when far away at sea or wandering in wild lands, did Frank think of these delightful rambles with his little companion. Think of them, ay, and dream of them too.

Often they were protracted till–

... "The moonbeams were bright
O'er river and forest, o'er mountain and lea".

Some poet of olden times–I forget his name–tells us that "pity is akin to love". Well, Flora began by pitying this "poor little London boy", as she always called him, even to his face, but quite sympathizingly, and she ended, ere yet the summer was in its prime, by liking him very much indeed. To say that she loved him would, of course, be a phrase misapplied, for Flora was only a child.

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With June, and all its floral and sylvan joys, came shoals of herring from the far north, and busy indeed were the boatmen catching them.

Glenvoie lay some distance back from a great sweep of a bay, at each end of which was a bold and rocky headland.

Few of the herring boats really belonged to this bay, but they all used often to run in here, and after arranging their nets, they set sail for their mighty draughts of fishes.

Duncan and Conal were always welcome, because they assisted right willingly and merrily at the work.

The boats were very large, and all open in the centre–the well, this space was called–and with a cuddy, or small living and cooking room, both fore and aft.

It used to be rough work, this herring fishing, and not over cleanly, but the boys always put on the oldest clothes they had, with waterproof leggings, oil-skin hats, and sou'westers.

They would be out sometimes for two days and nights.

The beauty of the scenery, looking towards the land at the sunset hour, it would be impossible for pen or pencil to do justice to. The smooth sea, with its patches of crimson, opal, or orange, the white sands of the bay, the dark, frowning headlands, the dark greenery of the shaggy woods and forests, and the rugged hills towering high against the eastern horizon; the whole made a picture that a Turner only could have conveyed to canvas.

The dolphin is–from a poet's point of view–a very interesting animal, with an air of romance about him. Dolphins are said to be of a very joyous temperament. Well, perhaps; but they are, nevertheless, about the worst enemies those hardy, northern, herring-fishery men have to encounter.

They come in shoals after the herrings, and go "slick" through the nets, carrying great pieces away on their ungainly bodies. And the boatmen can do nothing to protect their silvery harvest.

Once, while our young heroes were on board one of the largest and best of the boats, it came on to blow off the land–not simply a gale of wind, but something near akin to a hurricane. They were driven out to sea about sundown, and Duncan and Conal could never forget the sufferings of that fearful night.

After trying in vain to beat to windward, they put up the helm–narrowly escaping broaching-to–and ran before it.

But all through the darkness, and until the gray and uncertain light of day broke slowly over the storm-tossed ocean, the seas were continually breaking over the sturdy boat, and everyone was drenched to the skin. It might have been said, with truth, that she was swamped, so full of water was the well.

The great waves were now visible enough, each with its yellow sides and its foaming mane. It seemed, indeed, that the ocean was stirred up to its very bottom, and when down in the trough of the seas, with those "combers" threatening far above, with truth might it have been said that the waves were mountains high.

All the nets were lost, but no lives.

About noon the wind veered round to the west, and all sail was set, and the boat steered for land; but so far into the Atlantic had they been driven that it was sunrise next morning before they succeeded in reaching the bay.

And there sad news awaited them.

There would be mourning widows and weeping children, for two bonnie boats had perished with all their brave crews.

Well, there is danger in every calling, but far more, I think, in that of the northern fisherman than in any other.

But how doubly dear to him is life on shore, when he reaches his little white-washed cottage, after a successful run, and meets his smiling wife and happy children, who run to greet their daddy home from sea.

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Summer was already on the wane, and July nights were getting longer. Frank must soon seek once more his London home.

But he was healthier, stronger, happier now, by far and away, than when he first arrived at Glenvoie.

Ah! but the parting with everyone, but especially with bonnie young Flora, would be sad and sad indeed.

One morning, about a week before Frank was to leave for the south, Duncan came into his room.

"You and I and Conal are going up the hill to-day," he said, "all by ourselves, and I have something to propose which I feel sure you will be glad to approve of."

"All right!" said Frank.

So after breakfast the three boys slipped away to the hills, without telling anyone what they were after.

A council was to be held.

CHAPTER VII.–THE PARTING COMES AT LAST.

If Duncan M'Vayne were a mere imaginary hero, I should not take credit for any virtue that in him lay, but I don't mind telling you, reader, that very few of the heroes of my stories are altogether creations of my fairly fertile brain. Like most

sailor-men who have seen a vast deal of the world, I have so much truth to tell that it would be downright foolish to fall back upon fiction for some time yet.

And so I am not ashamed to say that Duncan was one of those *rara aves*– boys who think. I do not care to study the characters of boys who are not just a little bit out of the common run. Ordinary boys are as common as sand-martins in an old gravel-pit, and they are not worth writing about.

Well brought up as he had been, so far away in the lonesome wilds of the Scottish Highlands, and having few companions save his brother and parents, it is but little wonder that he dearly loved his father and mother. To tell the whole truth, the affection felt by Scottish boys towards their parents is very real and sincere indeed. It is a love that most assuredly passes the knowledge of southerners, and in saying so I am most sincere.

Well, neither he, Duncan, nor Conal either could help knowing that of late years circumstances connected with the estate of Glenvoie had become rather straitened, and although obliged to keep up a good show, as I may term it, his father was far indeed from being wealthy at the present time. The estate was not a large one certainly, but it would have been big enough to live well upon, had the shootings let as well as they did long ago.

Is it any wonder that talking together about their future, as they frequently did before going to sleep, Duncan and Conal used often to ask each other the question, "How best can we be of some use to Daddy?" And it was indeed a difficult one to answer.

Both lads had already all the "schooling" they needed to enable them to make a sturdy fight with or against the world, but the idea of going as clerks or shopmen to a city like Glasgow or even Edinburgh was utterly repulsive to their feelings.

They were sons of a proud Highland chief, although a poor one. Alas! how often poverty and pride are to be seen, arm in arm, in bonnie Scotland. But anyhow, they were M'Vaynes. Besides, the wild country in which they had spent most of their lives until now, had imbued them with romance.

Is that to be wondered at? Did not romance dwell everywhere around them? Did they not breathe it in the very air that blew from off the mountains, and over the heathery moorlands? Did it not live in the dark waving pine forests, and in the very cliffs that overhung the leaden lakes, cliffs whereon the eagle had his eyry? Was it not heard in the roar of the cataract, and seen in the foaming rapids of streams that chafed its every boulder obstructing their passage to yonder ocean wild and wide? Yes, and Duncan was proud of that romance, and proud too, with a pride that is unknown in England of the grand story of his never-conquered country.

And so we cannot be astonished to find the three lads sitting together, in

solemn conclave, on a bright summer's forenoon, far away on a green brae that overlooked Glenvoie.

Indeed, they had come here seriously to discuss their future.

Viking was lying close to Duncan with his great loving lump of a head on the boy's lap.

"You see," Duncan was saying, "it is precious hard for lads like us, who haven't any money to get a kind of a start in the world. If we could only get a beginning, I feel certain we should need no more. But our father is poor, Frank!"

"Heigho!" sighed Frank, "and so, alas! is mine."

"I know," continued Duncan, "that he would scrape the needful together somehow if we asked him. He could not sell any portion of the estate, because it is entailed, but I know that father would try hard to raise enough money to send Conal and me to sea as apprentices."

"And you really think you'll go to sea?" said Frank.

"As certain as sunrise, Frank. Mind I don't expect to find things quite so rosy as books paint them, but to sea I go for all that, and so will Conal."

"And so will I," cried Frank determinedly. "For my father is poorer far than yours. But I won't go before the mast, as I think you mean to."

"No?"

"No! because I have an uncle who has already promised to give me a little lift in life, and I haven't got so much Highland pride as you, so I'll ask him to apprentice me.

"I wonder," he added, "if dear old Captain Talbot would have me?"

"Oh," cried Duncan, "I had entirely forgotten. I have a letter from Talbot. He has given up the coasting trade, and is now in the Mediterranean, sailing betwixt London and Italy, a merchant ship, and I'm sure he will be glad to take you. He'll be back at the port of London in September. Why, Frank, old man, you're in luck.

"And as for Conal and I, we shall go before the mast."

"I'm sorry for you, boys."

"But you needn't be. Not the slightest wee bit. Many an officer in the merchant service, ay, and in the Royal Navy as well, has entered through the hawsehole."

"That means risen from the ranks, doesn't it?"

"Something very like it."

"Well," said Conal, "is it all arranged?"

"I think so," replied Duncan. "And the sooner we set about putting our resolves into force the better, I think."

Then he sighed as he bent down and gave poor Vike's honest head a good hug, and I'm not sure there wasn't a tear in his eye as he said:

”Poor Vike! your master is going away where he can’t take you. But you’ll be good, won’t you, till we come back again, and look well after your little mistress, Flora. I know you will, doggie.”

If ever grief was depicted in a dog’s looks, and we know it often is, you might have seen it in Viking’s now. I do not mean to say that he knew all his master said. He was too young for that, but he could tell from the mere intonation of Duncan’s voice that grief was in store for all.

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Chief M’Vayne was much averse at first to his sons becoming mere boys before the mast, but Duncan and Conal were determined, and so he came round at last and gave his consent.

I am going to say just as little as I can about the parting. Partings are painful to write about.

Not only the boys but M’Vayne himself were heroic. It does not do for clansmen to show weakness, but the mother’s tears fell thick and fast, and poor Flora was to be pitied.

It was the first cloud of sorrow that had fallen upon her young life, and she felt desolate in the extreme. She believed she would never survive it. She would have no pleasure or joy now in wandering over the hills and through the forests dark and wild.

”I will pray for you both.” These were about the last words she said.

”And for me too, Florie,” said Frank sadly.

”Oh, yes, and for you.”

Then he kissed her.

For the first time–wondering to himself, if it would be the last.

He had gotten a pretty little ring for her, with blue stones and an anchor on it. And of this she was very proud.

”Mind,” he said, ”you’re a sailor’s sweetheart now.”

Then they mounted the trap that was to drive them to the nearest station, and away they went, waving hands and handkerchiefs, of course, until a bend in the road and a few pine-trees shut the dear old home from their view.

BOOK II.

THE CRUISE OF THE *FLORA M’VAYNE.*

CHAPTER I.–THE TERRORS OF THE OCEAN.

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

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

Would he take Frank as his apprentice?

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

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

But Duncan, while he thanked him, was firm.

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

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

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

"Bravo, lad!" cried the colonel, laying his hand on Duncan's shoulder. "And

you remember what the poet says:

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

"Brave words, Colonel Trelawney," cried Talbot. "Why, sir, scraps of heroic verse have helped me along all through life. I'm a ship-master now, with a bit in bank. But my first voyage was to the Arctic and I had hardly clothes enough to keep out the terrible weather. My mother was a poor widow in Dundee, and I–being determined to go to sea–became a stowaway. I hid in a coal-bunker, and it came on to blow, so that I was very nearly killed with the shifting coals that cannonaded against my ribs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How well do I remember that forenoon. We were on the return voyage,

running before a light breeze, with every scrap of canvas set, low and aloft, and the sun shining bonnie and warm.

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

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

"He rushed to pull out a belaying-pin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But he checked them.

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

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

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

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

to the Sea of Ice after this.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was but a six-knot breeze when they started to stretch away and away across that seemingly illimitable ocean betwixt the Cape and Australia. Oh such a lonesome sea it is, reader! Six thousand miles of water, water, water, and

often never a sign of life in the sky above or in the sea below.

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

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

"Snug ship!" was the order now.

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

Nor was it.

A vivid flash of lightning and great-gun thunder first indicated the approach of the gale.

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

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

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

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

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

The splendid cities they visited when the vessel at last arrived in Australia quite dazzled our boys. And as the English language was spoken everywhere they felt quite at home.

Captain Wilson seemed to take a pride in having Duncan and Conal with him, and he introduced them as friends wherever he went.

Both lads were handsome, and in the city of Melbourne a rumour got abroad that they were of noble birth, and were serving before the mast for the mere romance of the thing. Well, even the Earl of Aberdeen was once found in the guise of an ordinary seaman; but there was something more than romance in our heroes' situation. However, the report, which they always contradicted, did them

no harm, and they were invited to more houses than one, being asked, moreover, to come in their sailor's clothes.

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

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

But that is a mere detail.

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

He broached the subject to Captain Wilson.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But it came at last, and they were free.

CHAPTER II.–A FEARFUL EXPERIENCE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"So do I," was the cheery answer.

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

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

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

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

Nearer and nearer it came!

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

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

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

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

And the officers where were they? Gone!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He called the hands aft.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There were several spare spars on board, and the men now set about rigging a couple of jury-masts, which, though only carrying fore-and-aft sails, would

greatly add to the good ship's speed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And the ship, sir?"

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

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

"I'm taking two mates; both have passed and own certificates. You, Duncan,

shall be acting third mate, and Conal I'll rate as auxiliary. You haven't neglected your studies, have you?"

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

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

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

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

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

"His form was of the manliest beauty;
His heart was kind and soft;
Faithful below he did his duty,
And now he's gone aloft."

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

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

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

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

"Say our ship, my lad."

"Well, our ship."

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

"Well, I am pleased."

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

And away went the jolly skipper.

CHAPTER III.–BOUND FOR SOUTHERN SEAS OF ICE.

Frank and Duncan spent a very happy evening indeed with their friend Talbot.

Without the aid of wine either, which no one with youth on his side should require to make him gay. But I do not mind telling you that the old skipper himself had a drop of the "rosy" as he called it. And the "rosy" meant rum, aromatic, and of great age.

Well, there was quite a deal to talk about; they told each other their adventures, and they spoke also of their future prospects, and the cruise of the *Flora M'Vayne*.

"She will be furnished and fitted complete," the captain said. "We shall make sure enough of the sea elephants, but I'm going to tap a whale or two also, if I don't find elephants enough. And, bother me, Conal," he added, "I don't see any reason why you shouldn't write a book about our cruise."

It was long past ten before the merry little meeting broke up. This isn't late for land-lubbers, but with sailors it is different. "Early to bed when on shore" is their motto.

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

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

It is Burns who says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He would have made an excellent actor. He had been told so more than

once, and his answer was: "Well, I shall turn an actor when all the seas run dry".

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But his master seemed to divine his thoughts.

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

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

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

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

"Oil-skins, Conal?"

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

"That is what I mean to do."

Poor Viking did not half like it though. There is no dog in the world makes a

better sailor's companion when far away at sea than a Newfoundland, and I speak from experience. But such dogs do not appreciate danger sufficiently high, nor have they good enough sea-legs to face a storm and walk the deck of a heaving ship. Therefore they often get washed into the lee scuppers.

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

"I shall wake the skipper," he told Duncan, speaking through the key-hole as it were. "Wowff!" he barked. "Wowff! wowff! What do you think of that?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"So am I."

"It just shows what the barque can do."

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

CHAPTER IV.–ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND.

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

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys (Duncan and Frank) were treading the deck that forenoon, talking, as sailors do, about anything or everything that suggested

itself. And two subjects that always came to the front on such occasions were home life and their life on the ocean wave.

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

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

"Yes."

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

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

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

"And now you're laughing at me."

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

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

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

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

He hesitated.

"When what?" cried Duncan.

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

Then Frank made a bolt for the companion-ladder.

It was high time, too.

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

But even at the risk of differing from Frank, I think a sailor's pleasures, if

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This sailor had dived his hand into the outside pocket of his coat to find his "baccy", when, instead of this, he felt the cold wriggling-wriggling thing; he gave a whoop like a Somali Indian with six inches of square-0 gin in his stomach! The scream started the snake from his lair, and he went girdling along the deck and disappeared below as usual.

But he was smashed at last and heaved far into the sea.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes," said Morgan, "and I shouldn't care to get spliced and settle down here

all my life, pretty and all as the girls are."

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

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

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

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

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

"No, that she didn't, but–I took it."

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

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

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

"Well, my man?"

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

The captain laughed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And I know it, oh, I know it, that he'll marry me".

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

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

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

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

Who knows?

CHAPTER V.–JOHNNIE SHINGLES AND OLD MR. PEN.

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

They went near enough to the island to witness one of the strangest sights in nature–the bird-laden rocks. There was little chance of landing on the island itself, owing to the terrible surf that beats for ever and aye around the cliffs; but Ibsen, who turned out to be a real handy fellow, had been here before, and pointed out to the captain some rocks in the lee of which a boat could land, and–

this being spring in these regions–soon find enough eggs to keep the crew in food for a month. His knowledge was taken advantage of, and a boat under his guidance called away.

In it went Duncan and Frank.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

at the beck and call of all hands, and to clean and feed the pets, including Viking, the red-tailed gray parrot, and Jim the ape.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This particular king had very intelligent eyes, with which he would stare at one fixedly for a minute at a time with his head on one side. Indeed, he was

always, to all appearance, seeking for information everywhere, and there was not much on deck that he did not examine.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Put life and mettle in their heels",

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pen was not always dressed as Mother Gamp. No, for he had a really good outfit, to which the neater-fisted seamen were always adding. So sometimes he would appear on the quarter-deck as a man-o'-war sailor, at others as a smart and elegantly-attired artilleryman, with his cap stuck provokingly on one side, and a little cane under his left arm.

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

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

with Pen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI.–"BACK WATER ALL! FOR LIFE, BOYS, FOR LIFE!"

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

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

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

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

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

They were still in the "roaring forties", as that part of the ocean 'twixt the latitude of the Cape and the fifties is called. But what a wide expanse of ocean is all around them! I have stood spell-bound on the fore or main-top, not admiring so much as adoring this mighty work of a mightier Creator: a turmoil of water, water, water in every direction one can look. And it is not so much the height of the waves one wonders at–though that is indeed vast–but their tremendous

breadth, the sweep, as it were, between one curling comber and another. High and of fearful force are the seas in, for example, the Bay of Biscay during a gale, but they are mere channel chops to these. And wide though the expanse of these latter, they race each other round the world with an earnestness, and even fury, that causes one to stand aghast.

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

"Look! Oh, look!"

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

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

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

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

Nor did it blow so high now.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then little Johnnie began to weep.

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

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

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

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

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

There are dangers innumerable in those Antarctic seas, and one of the most terrible is that of striking on a sand-bank or running foul of a sunken rock. These not being on the chart, the navigator has to sail along literally with his life in his hand, trusting all to blind chance. A bank does give some evidence before the ship gets on if there is an outlook in the foretop, and the cry of, "Below there! shoal water ahead!" is all too common. Next comes the shout of, "Ready about! Stand by tacks and sheets!"

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

Ice at last.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

————

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Of course there were no turkeys!

Alas! there were no geese.

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

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

Then there was the pudding. Ah! that indeed!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was indeed a joyous night. Vike and Pen, although they had a truly excellent feed, did not give way to excess, but the monkey being only one remove from a human being, ate so much pudding and so many nuts and cockroaches, that he suffered next morning from a violent headache. He was seen squatting on the capstan, clasping his brow with his left hand, and looking the very picture of Simian misery.

Frank took pity on him.

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

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

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

The main-yard was instantly hauled aback, and all preparations speedily

made to attack one at least of this great shoal.

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

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

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

It was a sort of whales' ball.

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

But the noise they made is indescribable, as they lashed the water with flippers and tails.

In the captain's boat only was the harpoon gun, and he alone would fire it. When a much younger man he had been whaling in the far-off Arctic, and knew a Right whale from a finner or sperm.

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

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

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

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

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

Nearer and still more near.

Everyone holds his breath.

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

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

Bang!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The harpooner holds up a warning hand.

"Be all ready to back astern, boys!"

"Way enough!"

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

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

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

"All speed astern!"

None too soon.

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

The sound would be heard miles and miles away, were there anyone to

listen to it in these lonesome seas, and–so dies the leviathan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the good luck of the *Flora* did not continue. Talbot had expected to find

sea-elephants in great evidence in these regions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

such beauty and rarity that it would have puzzled cleverer men than our heroes to classify them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What is the height, sir?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"On the light fantastic toe".

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

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

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

"Across the foaming billows, boys,
Across the roaring sea,
"We'll all forget our hardships, lads,
With England on the lee".

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

"The moon on the ocean was dimmed by a ripple,
Affording a chequered delight;
The gay jolly tars passed the word for the tipple
And the *toast*–for 'twas Saturday night,
Some sweetheart or wife that he lov'd as his life,

Each drank, while he wished he could hail her,
But the standing toast that pleased the most was–
Here's the wind that blows and the ship that goes,
And the lass that loves a sailor!"

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

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

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

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

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

But old Pen would be very solemn indeed. He was troubled with cold feet, and it was really laughable enough to see him standing there on one leg while he held up and exposed his other great webbed pedal apparatus to the welcome glow emitted by the fire.

Sometimes yarns were at a discount, though songs never were, and no matter how simple, they were always welcome, even if told without any straining for effect and in ordinary conversational English, if they had truth in them.

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

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

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

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

"Out with it, sir," cried one.

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

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

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

CHAPTER VIII.–CAPTAIN TALBOT SPINS A YARN.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"There never was a more simple-looking sailor than Assistant-Paymaster Mair (let us call him Mair). He was round-faced, fat, and somewhat pale, but always merry, and on good terms with himself and everybody else. He had the least bit in the world of a squint in his starboard eye. This ocular aberration was more apparent, when he sat down and commenced playing an asthmatical old flute he possessed. I don't think anybody liked this flute except Mair himself, and no wonder it was asthmatical, for we were constantly playing tricks on it. We have tarred it and feathered it ere now, and once we filled it with boiling lard, and left it on Mair's desk to cool. But Mair didn't care; our practical joking found him in employment, so he was happy.

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

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

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

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

"But how about simple Mair? Why, this only–he had done his duty nobly, coolly, manfully; he had gained admiration from his fire-eating captain, and got specially mentioned in a despatch. Mair looked red and excited all the afternoon,

but the flute never sounded half so cheerily before as it did that same evening after dinner.

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

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

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

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

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

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

there. He was gone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

She came tottering in, supported by the old dame.

"'Jack's ill!' she cried.

"The doctor did not reply.

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

"We did not answer. How could we?

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

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

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

"AN ADVENTURE IN SEARCH OF A QUID,

"For, from the very time Dawson and I shoved off in the dinghy boat until we set foot on Her Majesty's quarter-deck with the 'baccy, it was all adventure together. Our ship was the saucy *Seamew*, only a gun-boat, to be sure, but a most bewitching little thing all over; lay like a duck in the water, and, on a wind, nothing could touch her. Our cruising-ground was the east coast of Africa, well north, where the fighting dhows floated in the water, and the savage Somalis on shore speared each other when they hadn't any white men to practise on. We never provoked a fight, but when we did show our teeth, and that wasn't seldom, we peppered away in good earnest I assure you. Now, in such a ship in such a climate we might

have been as happy as the day was long, but we had just one drawback to general jollity. Our skipper was the devil. That's putting it plain and straight, but I've no other English for it. He was one of your sea lawyers, and lawed it and lorded it over his officers. No matter whether a thing was done rightly or wrongly, you got growled at all the same. There wasn't an officer he hadn't been at loggerheads with, and walked to windward of, too; and there wasn't a man forward he had not punished during the cruise. We had a regular flogging Friday, a most unlucky day for many a poor fellow on board the *Seamew*. There was, therefore, no love lost between the ward-room and the after-cabin, where the skipper lived in solitary grandeur; and the men would have given him to the sharks, if chance had thrown him in their way, and if the sharks were hungry. I remember once, at Johanna, a happy thought struck the skipper and a few of the petty officers at one and the same time: they thought they would treat themselves to a few fowls by way of change from the junk. The latter, therefore, asked permission of the former to make the purchase. 'Certainly not,' was the curt reply, 'unless you bring them dead on board.' Now, dead they wouldn't keep a day, so they were not bought; but the skipper's poultry were brought on board the same evening, and two nicely-filled hen-coops they were. Well, about the middle of the morning-watch, when the skipper slumbered peacefully in his cot, two figures might have been seen stealthily approaching those hen-coops. 'Softly does it,' said one.

'Right you are, Bill,' replied the other. Then something dark and square rose slowly over the bulwarks, and dropped with a dull splash into the sea; and this happened twice. And next morning when the skipper arose, happy in the prospect of 'spatch cock for breakfast, behold! there wasn't cock nor hen on board to spatch. But I should tire you were I to tell a tithe of the dirty tricks the skipper of the *Seamew* played his men and officers, so I will content myself with relating the one that bears reference to my story. Once, then, we were in terrible straits for grog and tobacco; we hadn't a drop of the one or a quid of the other on board–at least not in our mess–and hadn't had for over a month. Now, nobody liked a glass of rum better than the skipper, though he didn't smoke; so, as long as his own spirits held out, he didn't care anything for the dearth in the ward-room. But one day he rejoiced us all by informing us he would run down to Zanzibar and take in stores. Well, anyhow, he took us in nicely, for no sooner had we dropped anchor before the long white town, than he called away his gig and landed on the sands. He was back again in two hours with the important intelligence, which we had received, that a three-masted slave-ship was then cruising in the neighbourhood of the little island of Chak-Chak. There wasn't a moment to be lost–it was, 'All hands on deck, up anchor and off.' There wasn't a moment to be lost; but, mark you this, that beggarly skipper, who drank but did not smoke, came off with his gig laden to the gunwale with dainties, spirits

included, but not a morsel of the 'baccy our souls were longing to sniff. We never saw the three-masted slave-ship either.

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

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

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

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

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

"By seven o'clock the skipper was just mixing his third tumbler. By seven o'clock everything was in readiness: the oars were muffled and the rudder so shipped that it wouldn't unship by the under-kick of a breaker on the bar. Then, from well-greased blocks the boat was lowered, and silently, but swiftly, glided shorewards to the dreaded bar. We took with us but two trusty men, and two trusty sacks. Soon the white crests of the breakers were in view, and we could

hear their vicious, sullen boom. Not easy work this crossing of bars, as you are aware. Presently we were heading for the only dark gate in this ocean of breakers, I steering, Dawson with one helping hand on each of the oars. Now we have entered the gate. "Steady now, men!" A wave catches us up behind and hurls our tiny boat first heavenward, then, with inconceivable speed, onwards, through a swirl of surf, and, a few moments afterwards we are in smooth water, wet but safe.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"About a mile from the town we crept inshore and hid our boat in the bush, leaving one man in her. Now there is but one or two European merchants in the

town, and one of these we knew, but the way to his house we were ignorant of; but we knew where Comoro Jack lived in the outskirts. He had been our guide before, so thither we went, and happily found Jack at home: a tall young savage, arrayed only in a waist belt, and an enormous (42nd Highlander's) busby on, and a tall spear in one hand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IX.–TONGUES OF LURID FIRE, BLUE, GREEN, AND

DEEPEST CRIMSON.

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

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

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

"Nor me," said another.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Why, Frank?" said Duncan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Silence now as deep as death.

They were deserted even by the birds.

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

The ship was out of sight now, hidden by bluffy ice-covered rocks; and Talbot was acting as guide to the party, taking the direction which he believed

would lead him to the side of the mountain which appeared to be most accessible.

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

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

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

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

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

The skipper laughed.

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

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

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

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

"A lilt o' dool (grief) and sorrow ",

and all must now be brave and cheerful

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

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

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

"Onwards and upwards!"

"That's it, Duncan. As to the bold youth with his bold banner, I think he must have been somewhat foolish to start after sunset. Well, that was his lookout.

Anyhow, we have a twenty hours' long day before us, so I must now give the word–March!"

And on they went.

On and on, and up and up.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Norsemen have a legend that around the North Polar regions-at the Pole itself, indeed–there is a great open sea; that green luxuriant islands dot its blue surface, and that thereon dwell a people who have never committed sin, but

are still in a pristine state of innocence, just as God made them–"but a little lower than the angels".

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

So the march was resumed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What could be more marvellous!

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

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

stay-at-home mortals can possibly put faith in.

Another surprise–a cave.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER X.–SO POOR CONAL MUST PERISH!

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

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

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

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

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

Indeed, although an ascent of ten to twelve thousand feet may not be con-

sidered a tall record for accomplished club-men in the Alpine regions of Europe, it would be a terrible undertaking for even those among the perpetual snows of the Antarctic.

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

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

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

"Whatever a man dares he can do!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All but Ted.

"Is it me myself?" he said, drawing back, when asked to do as the others

had done. "Fegs! no. It is faint I would entoirely, and faint and fall over. Bedad! I've no raison to go to such a place as that before my time."

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

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

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

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

He handed the still-extended telescope to Duncan as he spoke and pointed to the south.

No open sea there! But the roughest, wildest kind of snow-clad country anyone could well imagine. Yet, far far away, the jagged peaks of many a mountain rose high on the horizon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And with it fell Conal!

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

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

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

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

So, poor Conal must perish!

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

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

How well named!

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

He watched them as they approached the last dread crevasse.

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

Suddenly he uttered a bitter cry of anguish and despair.

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

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

There had been six in all.

Now there were but five!

And these seemed now to be signalling for assistance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Thank God!" cried Frank fervidly.

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

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

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

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

Breakfast was speedily discussed, and now they were ready.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Should they be in time?

Or was Conal dead?

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

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

CHAPTER XI.–THUS HAND IN HAND THE BROTHERS SLEEP.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It did reach, with many fathoms to spare; so it was quickly hauled up and recoiled again.

A bight was now made at one end, and into this brave Frank quickly, and with sailor-like precision, hitched himself.

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

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

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

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

Is there hope?

Frank will not permit himself even to ask the question.

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

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

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

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

Duncan can do nothing.

He seems stupefied with grief.

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

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

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

The rubbing goes on.

Soon the eyelids quiver!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The circulation increases.

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

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

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

"Duncan, can you bear the news?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He even tries to smile.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Diamond stars are in the sky.

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

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

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

The boy opens his eyes.

"Is it you, Duncan?"

”It is me, my brother.”

”Then hold my hand and I shall sleep.”

Duncan did as he was told.

”Duncan!”

”Yes, Conal.”

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

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

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

”Ay, Conal, lad, and the music too.”

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

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

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

”Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber!
Holy angels guard thy bed!
Heavenly blessings without number
Gently falling on thy head.”

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

Thus hand in hand the brothers sleep.

CHAPTER XII.–WINTER LIFE IN AN ANTARCTIC PACK.

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

It was a snow-laden wind too, with the lowest temperature that had yet been logged.

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

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

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

The motion was somewhat less after that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In fate, or rather in Providence, they must put their trust; but whenever the weather cleared for a spell many an anxious eye was turned towards two

mountainous blocks of green ice that lay only about a hundred yards to the south of the ship's position. They must have been about ninety feet out of the water and eight times as much beneath. Should the wind act with sufficient force on their green glittering sides it would go hard with the *Flora M'Vayne*.

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

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

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

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

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

One morning Conal and Frank went on deck as usual.

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

They could see around them, therefore.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Wonders will never cease!" said Conal.

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

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

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

"'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Talbot laughed.

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

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

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

Hard work indeed, but it was finished eventually with the aid of good gunpowder. Small cases of this were placed under the packs of pancake by means of a long pole, and fired with waterproof fuses. The smashed-up pieces were thrust

in under the main pack, and so in time the *Flora M'Vayne* found herself on an even keel.

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

A whole month passed away.

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

Another month went slowly by.

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

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

Morgan did not answer directly.

He was thinking.

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

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

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

"Well, sir."

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

The motion was carried.

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

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

On the very night the survey was ended came another half-gale of wind from the south. There were the same terrible noises all around them, and as far as they could make out, the sea of ice was a perfect chaos.

No one could shout loud enough for his nearest companion to hear him, and the crew lived in constant terror of the ship being crushed.

When at long last the storm ceased, they discovered by the starlight, and very much to their delight, that the terrible neighbours, those monster bergs, had shifted their site during the gale.

They had, in fact, driven past the vessel's bows–what a mercy they came not near!–and were now fully seventy yards down to leeward.

The wind had fallen quite, and all had become still again.

"We have reason to be thankful to God for our marvellous escape," said Talbot.

"But may not the bergs drift back, or be blown down upon us?" said Frank, who was of a very inquiring turn of mind.

"Wherever they drift, Frank, we too shall drift, but the send of the current or sea beneath us is, I believe, northward now; and if the wind blows in winter as it must in spring, it will bear us towards the north-west. So one danger is removed or minimized."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, who was nothing if not impulsive, "hurrah!"

"No chance, I suppose, sir," he said, "of getting any letters from home?"

"Not for a day or two, Frank," said Talbot, smiling.

"Well, but it is a good thing we have books to read, isn't it, Conal?"

"And pens and ink?"

"Yes, pens and ink, and my fiddle."

"And my bagpipes," said Duncan emphatically.

"Oh, Duncan, we hadn't forgotten that or these."

"When I get them over my shoulder," said Duncan, "and put my drones in order, I don't think there will be much chance of your forgetting them."

Now wild winter had come in earnest,

"To rule the varied year".

It did not seem, however, that there was going to be a great deal of variety about it.

The wind was gone entirely for the time being, and the strange stars and Southern Cross shone down on the snowy and radiant plain, with a brilliancy that is quite unknown in more northern climes.

Great care was taken to keep the correct time, and to take observations three times a day.

A big ice-hole was made a few yards to the port side of the ship, and although the frost was now very severe indeed, they made a point of keeping this clear. This hole was about six feet in width, and, later on, it sufficed not only to draw water from for various purposes, but to afford some sport, as we shall presently see.

It had another and more scientific use. For the temperature of the water could here be taken, not only on the surface but many measured fathoms below it, and it told also the trend of the currents and their strength as well.

The self-same hours for breakfast, dinner, and supper were adhered to, but the men now had an additional allowance of tea served out to them, which, on

the whole, they preferred to grog.

Grog, they knew from experience, did not keep up the animal heat, though it seemed to for a brief spell. Then shivering succeeded.

As the spectioneer told Duncan, in a climate like this one doesn't quite appreciate buckets of cold water running down his back.

Tea time was a happy hour in the saloon. The duties of the day were practically over, and light though these may have been, each had its correct time, and nothing was neglected.

But now the talk was chiefly about home; all thoughts of making fortunes were banished as not in keeping with the calmness of the hour.

Cowper's cosy lines come to my memory as I write, and they are in some measure applicable to the tea-time hour and situation–

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast;
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loudly hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
Let us welcome peaceful evening in".

Johnnie Shingles it was who assisted the steward in serving out the tea, and Johnnie looked out for his own share in the pantry when all the rest were done.

CHAPTER XIII.–A CHAOS OF ROLLING AND DASHING ICE.

Being myself, reader, an "ice man" of some considerable experience, the manner in which the officers and crew of the beleaguered craft *Flora M'Vayne* whiled away the time during their long winter imprisonment may be said to be painted from the life.

At first it was supposed that the want of light would be a drawback to enjoyment, but the steward was one of those men who can turn their hands to

anything, and he proposed making purser's dips from the spare fat.

He had to manufacture the wicks from cotton refuse, but, this accomplished, the rest was simple enough.

Petroleum was burned only in the saloon, and it was stored in a hold right beneath this for greater safety.

They had to be saving in the use thereof, however, and as they could talk as well, if not better, by the flickering light of the fire, the lamp was always turned out when no one cared to read. But around the galley fire those purser's dips were a great comfort to the men when not yarning. For then one man was told off to read while the others sat around to smoke and listen.

And thus passed many a quiet and peaceful evening away.

The men, I am happy to say, did not seem to hanker after grog, and it was finally agreed by all hands that it would be better to keep it for what they were pleased to call the spring fishery, or as a stand-by in case of illness.

They had plenty of tea and coffee, however, and a daily allowance of lime-juice.

Then Saturday nights were kept up in quite the old-fashioned and pleasant way, and the main-brace was invariably spliced.

Song succeeded song on these happy occasions, and many a toast was drunk to the health of the dear ones far away on Britain's shore.

Nor was dancing neglected, the consequence being that fiddle, guitar, and clarionet were in great request. As usual, little Johnnie Shingles and that droll penguin, dressed as a merry old lady, or sometimes as a modest wee maiden of sweet sixteen, convulsed the onlookers with their droll antics as they sailed around in the mazy dance.

But the monkey one evening did not see why he should not also have a waltz with Madam Pen.

"Yah–yah–yah!" he cried, as he approached her most coaxingly.

This was much as to say: "It is our dance, I believe, miss."

He attempted to take hold of Pen's flippers in the meanwhile, and was rewarded with a dig between the eyes that sent him reeling back, and so Jim made no more offers to trip it on the light fantastic toe with Madam Pen, on this evening or any other. In fact, he used to content himself with lying in front of the fire with one of Vike's huge paws round his neck.

When Pen pecked the monkey he made an ugly scar, but poor kind-hearted Vike licked it every day several times with his soft warm tongue, and so it soon healed up.

————

Frank was by no means a very ambitious boy; he had not very much of the Scottish dash and go about him, and would at any time have preferred not doing to-day what could be just as easily done to-morrow, but he was clever for all that.

He it was who first attempted fishing in the ice-hole. But the ship had been imprisoned for well-nigh six weeks before he thought of it. The fact is, that by this time many of the men began to ail, and a peculiar kind of lassitude, dulness, and lowness of spirits were the first symptoms they complained of. Spots then appeared on the skin, every muscle ached when they moved. They suffered greatly from cold, and even their countenances grew worn and dusky.

The awful truth soon flashed upon Talbot's mind: these men were attacked by scurvy.

No less than three grew rapidly worse, and died one after the other–in spite of all that could be done for them. It was sad to listen to their last ravings and hear them speaking as if to friends at home; to a wife, a sister, or mayhap a sweetheart. Ah! but this was only when they were very near to the end.

A hammock had soon to be requisitioned after this, and the poor fellows were laid to rest many yards distant from the ship in a cold, icy grave.

Prayers were said over each, and there they will sleep probably for ever and for aye. For those buried thus never know decay till the ice around them may melt millions of years hence.

No medicine on board had any effect, and five in all were buried before the plague was stayed. It had been brought on, without doubt, from the want of fresh provisions, so Frank's idea of fishing adown the ice-hole was really a happy thought. For a whole day, however, like the apostle of old, he fished, but caught nothing. But on the day after he hooked a ray, and then a bonito.

From that very time fishing became a sport in which all the boys took part–and the plague soon left the ship.

Sorrowful indeed was Talbot at the loss of his men, still, grief is but transient on board ship. In a case like the present it would not do for it to be otherwise, for nothing is more depressing.

Moreover, the captain came now to the conclusion that the men had not enough exercise, so he proceeded at once to put into execution a plan that would meet the requirements of the case.

He instituted games on the ice.

Games in the dark! Is that your remark, reader?

But it was very far indeed from being dark. There was at the present time a moon, though it was at no great height above the horizon. Well, moonlight does not last long anyhow, but the bright beams from the star-studded heavens were far better than the moon at its best, and almost dimmed its splendour.

The sky was wondrously clear, and the stars seemed very large. So close

aboard, too, did they appear to be that you might have thought it possible to touch them with a fishing-rod.

There are probably no games so invigorating as those called Scottish, or more properly Highland. They tend to the expansion of the chest and to the bracing and strengthening of every muscle in the body.

So hammer-throwing, weight-putting, leaping, and tossing the caber soon became the rule every forenoon. Then in the afternoon, and before tea, Highland dancing was the rage.

This is dancing in every sense of the word. Quadrilles are only fit for old folks, and waltzing–well, it is nice enough in a brilliantly-lit hall, with soft dreamy music and a brilliant partner, but, after all, it is only just wiping your feet and whirling round.

A broad sheet of wood was spread on the ice near the ship for Highland dancing, quite a large platform in fact.

And Duncan, like Auld Nick in Burns's masterpiece, *Tam o' Shanter*,

"Screwed his pipes and gart them skirl
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl."

* * * * *

Nae cotillion brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels."

But these were not the only amusements the crew went in for, on the snow-clad ice, for while Conal and Frank were one day visiting those great bergs, the inventive genius of the latter was once more shown.

They found that a great portion of one side of the biggest berg was quite on the slope, and covered with frozen snow.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, "I've got another."

"Another what?"

"Why, another idea. This iceberg is just suited for tobogganing."

"Now," he added, "we sha'n't say a word to anybody till we try it ourselves first."

They, however, took the carpenter into their confidence, and he made them tiny sledges to sit upon. The slide was on a pretty gradual slope and altogether was about a hundred yards long from the top. Steps were cut at one side to make the getting up easy, and Frank himself was the first to make the descent.

"It is simply glorious!" This was his report.

"Flying," he added, "isn't in it."

And Conal himself confirmed this statement as soon as he himself had gone rushing down.

After this the great toboggan slide was in daily request, and the sound that came from the big berg was like the roaring of stones on a Scottish curling pond.

But high above the rushing noise, came the shouting and laughter of the merry-makers.

Poor Viking could not understand it, and I suppose he came to the conclusion that his human friends had all lost hold of the tiny supply of common-sense, which human beings can boast of.

But what with these games and dances, and then fun on board, the health of the crew continued excellent, though ever around the galley-fire at night (I mean before bed-time or at the tea hour) the men talked of home.

I myself, like most seafarers,–well, call us sailors if that sounds better,–dearly love

”A life on the ocean wave
And a home on the rolling deep,
Where the scattered waters rave
And the winds their revels keep”.

Yet wherever in this world I have been there always seemed to be a magnetic needle in my heart, and it always pointed to Home.

”Where’er we roam, whatever lands we see
Our hearts untramelled fondly turn to thee
* * * * *
Such is the patriot’s boast; where’er we roam,
Our first, best country, ever is at home.”

On the whole, during their long imprisonment, the officers and crew of the good barque *Flora M’Vayne* kept up their hearts.

At long last the sun came nearer and nearer the northern horizon. For days before he rose there was a twilight of about two hours. Then a galaxy of the loveliest clouds were lit up, but still no sun.

Before noon on the day after, however, Frank and Conal, who seemed now to be inseparable, climbed to the top of the tobogganing berg, and soon after caught a glimpse of the glorious sun.

Neither could speak for a time, and indeed tears were trickling down Frank’s face, which he took no trouble to hide. For, as we have seen before,

he was a very impressionable lad.

"Oh, the sun! the sun!" That was all he said, but next minute both were waving their hats to those on board and shouting:

"The sun! the sun!"

And such a cheer uprose from that long-imprisoned ship, as never before probably was heard in these southern regions of perpetual snow and ice.

High above all, the boys could hear the barking of noble Vike.

Yes, but a moment after, and high above even that, across the intervening ice came the wild skirl of Duncan's Highland bagpipe.

Duncan was playing the March of the Cameron Men as he walked boldly up and down in the waist of the ship, while Frank and Conal on the ice-block could not help chiming in with just one verse of that brave old song, which has thrilled so many a heart on bank or brae or battlefield:

"Ah! proudly they march, though each Cameron knows
He may tread on the heather no more,
Yet boldly he follows his chief to the field
Where his laurels were gathered before".

"Yes, Frank, but we shall tread the heather again, sha'n't we, friend?"

"I hope so, and I mean to have a good try anyhow," was Frank's hearty reply.

————

Their dangers, however, were not all over yet. Not by a deal. In a still ice-pack like that in which they had lain so long, there is not very much to be feared except the danger of a nip or jam. But when the ice begins to open and the wind begins to blow, ah! then toil and trouble commence in earnest.

From observations, Captain Talbot now discovered that the immense field of ice on which they had been lying, had been gradually forcing its way on the current almost directly north, and that even Mount Sabine and the Admiralty Mountains were now a long way astern to the west.

And soon now the wind began to blow and howl; almost half a gale from the south-east by east. The noise, as it roared through the rigging and bare poles, was almost deafening, but this did not prevent these brave mariners from hearing every now and then the loud explosions on the ice-pack that heralded the breaking up of the whole, and that had been but a day or two ago a vast plain strong enough to have reviewed all the artillery in the world upon, would soon be but a

chaos of rolling, dashing ice. The storm continued for more than a week, and all that time–every hour, in fact–the *Flora M'Vayne* had been in peril and danger.

Gallant ship! How well she stood the squeezing, the cannonading, the battering! A vessel less strong in every timber, or one built of teak instead of Scottish oak would have collapsed and gone down in a few minutes, carrying the crew with her, or leaving them almost naked, hungry, and helpless on the pack, to die a death ten times more cruel than drowning.

She got perilously near to the shore at last, however. It must have been somewhere close to Yule or Robertson Bay, for Cape Adare had been left a long way astern.

They were close enough to see that certain destruction awaited them if unable to change their position. The pancake and bay ice was piled along the rugged shore, hills high, one piece above another, by the terrible force of wind and current.

When soundings were taken, and it was found that there was but little depth of water to spare, and that even this was gradually lessening, then both Morgan and the skipper became alarmed.

"We must set sail," said the latter, "and try to bring her up a few points, or, depend upon it, our risky voyage will come to a sudden end."

All hands were called.

CHAPTER XIV.–"HEAVE, AND SHE GOES! HURRAH!"

"All hands on deck! Tumble up, my lads! Tumble up!"

The men needed no second bidding. They did tumble up, every man Jack of them, as merrily as if marriage-bells had called them.

"All hands unship rudder!"

That was the next order. For there was great danger of this being dashed to pieces by the cruel ice.

The rudder was about the only vulnerable portion of the ship indeed.

Two whole hours were spent at this work, for the men, unlike those who sail to Arctic regions, had never been drilled to such work.

The short day had almost worn to a close before the job was finished.

But sail was now got on her, and by means of long poles, twenty men overboard on the ice managed not only to clear the way for her by shoving the pieces to one side, but also to steer the vessel, by keeping her head in the right direction.

Frank was sent to the foretop-gallant masthead to see if he could, by aid of the telescope, descry water to the nor'ards.

The sun was almost setting in the north-west, and there was plenty of light, but no water was visible, only the great white ocean of snow-clad ice, all in motion.

The scene was indeed a strange and impressive one, and after shouting down that there was no open water anywhere in sight, Frank stayed in the crosstrees for quite a long time, hardly ever feeling the cold, so interested was he in all he saw around him.

One thing, however, was evident, namely, that the huge iceberg on which they had spent so many merry hours tobogganing was fast aground down to leeward of them.

The ship passed it slowly.

"Good-bye, old chap," Frank could not help saying. "Sorry we can't take you to England with us, but can't see our way. By, by! See you later on, perhaps."

Then slowly he came below to the deck.

He was happy that it was just tea-time. The ship was now considered out of present danger, but watch after watch must remain on the ice to pole and guide, perhaps for days to come.

"I want," the skipper said, "to make a good offing, for I don't half like the look of the land in there, and should prefer to show it a pair of clean heels, and, please God, we shall before long."

The tea was very comforting, and in spite of the noise above of high winds and flapping sails, the saloon was very jolly and cosy indeed, and Frank was in no hurry to go on deck again.

"Hullo! what is that?" said Talbot, "someone tumbled down the companion?"

"Yes," said Conal laughing, "but it is only Old Pen. He finds that the most expeditious way of getting below now. He just throws himself on his back, head down, and toboggans down the steps."

And a second or two after, Pen appeared in the doorway, and looked wonderingly at the group assembled round the fire.

"You all look very snug here," he seemed to say. "Is there room for poor Old Pen among you?"

"Come along, Pen," said Conal, "we can always make room for you. Sit there on your tail beside Vike, and warm your soles."

"Yah–yah–yah!" cried the monkey, offering Pen a cockroach in quite a friendly way. But delicious as this might be, the bird preferred a bit of tinned salmon.

"Pen," said Duncan, "knows on what side his bread is buttered."

The bird eyed him knowingly, as, leaning on his tail, he held one broad foot up to the blaze.

"Pen", he seemed to say, "prefers his bread buttered on both sides."

It was comparatively late to-night before anyone thought of retiring. Moreover, it was Frank's "all night in", but I do not think he slept a great deal. There was noise enough on deck, aloft, and around the bows on the ice to have awakened Rip Van Winkle himself, but slumber he did at last, though only to revisit in dreams his native land, and the wild and lonesome grandeur of romantic Scotland.

Nay, but I ought not to say lonesome, for how could he feel lonesome with his sweetheart Flora walking by his side, or darting off every now and then to chase a butterfly, or cull some rare and beautiful flower.

Ah! he could not help thinking, even in his dreams, if life were ever ever like this. Late in the middle watch he was awakened in a very unceremonious way indeed. In fact he was well-nigh pitched clean and clear out of his bunk. He wondered what was up, for there was a more sea-like motion about the ship. But, sailor-like, he just turned upon his back and went off to sleep again.

The explanation was simple. The ship had struck a very wide lane of open water. Open to a great extent that is, for many a dangerous and nasty piece of green ice battered the sides of the vessel as, glad to be free, she went dashing through the open water under all sail that could be safely carried. Boats, also under sail, were ahead of her to keep her in the right course.

But at daybreak the captain himself went aloft, and noticing that the open water was visible at least a dozen miles ahead, and that the lane grew wider towards the north, he had the main-yard hauled aback. The boats were then hoisted, and all the crew bore a hand in shipping the rudder once more.

The breeze still held, and a splendid day's record was made nor was there at night any reason to fear danger.

The pieces of ice, however, lay about in all directions, and sometimes three or four appeared ahead, suddenly too. As these could not always be avoided, the plan was to select the largest and steer straight stem-on to that. It is better to do so than to be struck on the broadside by a heavy piece.

But as she sailed through streams of smaller pieces the noise of the cannonading, as heard down below, was sometimes quite deafening.

It would have been very nice for all on board had this lane of water conducted the ship right out into the open northern ocean.

It did not, however, for by and by the wind fell, and slowly, but surely, the sides of the great natural canal came closer and closer together, and finally the good ship *Flora M'Vayne* was again completely beset, with no signs of water even from the mast-head.

Only all around was the white and dazzling pack. For a whole fortnight, or over, the frost continued, and never a cloud was seen.

One day, however, the active and busy little Frank Trelawney discovered, from the crow's-nest–a barrel high up on the main truck–a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, away down on the southern horizon.

It slowly increased, and before many hours was a huge and rolling mass of cumulus.

Other clouds also were rolling up, and it was evident they were bringing the wind with them.

About the same time the temperature rose, but the glass fell considerably, so that the skipper and Morgan shook their heads ominously.

"We're going to have a big blow, sir," said the latter.

"That is so, mate, and we are not in a very enviable situation."

"Listen, sir!"

The mate held up his finger.

There was a succession of loud reports almost alongside, and the screeching and caterwauling sounds that followed, showed that the ship was being nipped.

"We're in for it, mate; but she has a nicely-rounded bottom, and will rise twenty feet rather than be staved in.

"But," he added, "we can't afford to lose our rudder, so we'll have that unshipped once more."

This was done, and probably only in time, for the pressure increased every hour.

It was evident now the ship would rise if the ice did not go clean through her.

She did rise, and that too with a vengeance, for by next morning she was lying almost on her beam-ends on the adjoining floe.

The yard-arms had been hauled fore-and-aft, else they would have touched the snow.

To live on board now was impossible for days and days to come.

But boats and provisions were landed, and every preparation made to journey northward over the great ice-pack, should the ship go down after again righting herself.

The wind was bitterly cold, even in the poor ship's lee, but they managed to light fires and to cook, though it was indeed a wretched time.

Enveloped in rugs, the boys, with Viking, huddled together at night, but

for a long time after lying down sleep was impossible. And when slumber did at last seal their eyes, the dreams they dreamt were far indeed from pleasant.

But now came a warm and almost pleasant wind from the north-north-west, and the ice began to open.

Captain Talbot's anxiety was now at its greatest, for there was water on the starboard side of the ship and the berg or floe on which she lay.

Ropes were therefore attached to her masts, and all hands upon the ice bent on to these, pulling slowly with a long pull and a strong pull.

For more than an hour they made no impression on the vessel, and it was evident the cargo had shifted somewhat.

Talbot gave the steward an order to splice the mainbrace.

He countermanded this almost immediately after, however, for it was now evident the vessel was doing her best to get righted.

"Pull now, lads! Pull steadily all! Heave-oh and she comes!"

Every hand is laid on the ropes; every nerve is braced, and the veins start on the men's perspiring foreheads as they keep up the strain.

Viking barks as if to encourage them.

It is all the poor dog can do.

"Heave and she goes! Heave and she rips! Hurrah! lads, hurrah!"

"She is coming, boys! Heave-oh, again! Another pull does it! Easy! Slack off! Hurrah!"

A wild cheer rent the air as the brave and sturdy barque slid downwards off the floe and took the water like a duck or a penguin.

The men and officers paused now to wipe their faces.

Then all hands got on board and manned the pumps.

No, she was safe. Not a drop of extra water had she made, or was making.

What a relief!

The sun was already sinking low on the horizon, and his last beams lit up the great snow plain 'twixt the ship and sky, as if a canal of crimson blood was there.

Talbot was happy now. The recovery of the ship from her serious position was like a good omen, so, as soon as everything was got on board, he thought it high time to splice the main-brace.

And so did the men also.

————

All hands were as merry that night as the winning team after a football match.

The wind had gone down, but the weather continued fairly mild, and there was not a sound to be heard on the pack.

On board, however, there were plenty of sounds–sounds of mirth and music in the galley. For Frank had gone forward with his fiddle, and a dance was the natural consequence.

Johnnie Shingles, and old mother Pen, were once more in glorious form, and their dancing brought down the house, and elicited rounds and rounds of applause.

Then dancing became general.

But the fatigues of the day had been very great, so that it is no wonder pipes were soon got out, and a wide and cheerful circle formed about the fire. Songs and yarns were now to be the order of the evening, and although it was not Saturday night it bore a very strong resemblance to it.

Just one song–written and sung by Frank himself, was to-night twice encored. As to its composition I say nothing, except that everything pleases the true-born British sailor that has got the ring of the sea about it.

FRANK'S SONG.

And now, my boys, sit round the fire,
And pass the glasses round;
Our troubles all we'll soon forget
When we are homeward bound.

Ah! many a danger we've defied,
We've weathered many a gale,
Nor stormiest seas, nor grinding ice,
Have ever made us quail!

Though bergs are still about us, boys,
Far north the billows sound,
And we'll welcome every breeze that blows,
When we are homeward bound.

Why should we mourn for pals we've lost,
Or let the tear-drops fall,
They sleep in peace, their sorrows o'er,
Beneath the snow's soft pall.

So crowd around the fire, dear lads,
And pass the glasses round;
Our friends are moored on heavenly shores–

And we are homeward bound.

CHAPTER XV.–THE ISLES OF DESOLATION.

If to be sailing northwards and east with a spanking breeze, and the great sea of southern ice in which, and on which, so many adventures had been had, was being homeward bound–then were our heroes homeward bound.

It is a nice thing to sing about anyhow of an evening around a cheerful fire; but ah! as I've said before there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, and there is nothing certain at sea save the unexpected.

However, bold Captain Talbot had no intentions of returning to England with what he called only half a voyage.

"I'm going to do my level best," he told the boys about a fortnight after they had got clear and away, "to have a bumper ship, that shall recoup us all for our outlay, to say nothing of our sufferings."

"And now we're bearing up for Kerguelen, aren't we?" said Conal.

"That's the place, lad; and I'm a Dutchman if we don't find the elephant-seals there in countless thousands."

"And when we fill up, what then?"

"O, that question I was considering last night in bed, and I've concluded we had better leave our cargo at the Cape. We can sell well there at present, for oil is much needed. Then we shall clean ship thoroughly, and sail northwards by the Indian Ocean, picking up a cargo at the Cape, at Zanzibar, and wherever else we can find it. We can't go wrong."

"And back home through the Suez Canal. Is that your idea, sir?" said the mate.

"You've hit it completely, Morgan."

"You must remember," he continued after a pause, during which he had been watching the smoke that curled from his lips towards the roof of the saloon, "that I look upon this only as an experimental voyage, and as such it hasn't proved altogether a failure. We shall clear our feet and pay our way, boys; and our

adventures will be the theme of many a lecture when at last we reach the old country.

"And not that only, for our success will enable us to float a good company for sealing and steam-whaling in the Antarctic seas. You see, boys, I've been north and south. I've been what you well may term from pole to pole. Well, my opinion is, that although the Arctic lies handier to our own doors than the Antarctic, still it is almost played out. They have been going it among the baby seals a trifle too fast, and have given them no close season, so though I don't say they've killed them nearly all off, still they have scared them pretty considerably, and the modern Arctic seal isn't the innocent confiding creature he was in the days of my boyhood. No, he has got far more wary, and so packs of them are more difficult to find than formerly.

"And as for Right whales, well, they are far wiser than we have any idea of. Their kingdom is a boundless one. It is the ocean wild and wide, and if they cannot have peace to gather in schools, and enjoy their little parties in the north, why, they are free to come to the Antarctic. And that is just what they have done.

"Well, lads, we shall do something in it, be assured. But we've got to have steam. Strong screw steamers with all appliances to repair damages of every kind; and steam ice-hammers as well. You've thrown in your lot with me, boys, and my name isn't Talbot if I don't help you to make a good thing of it."

"The Antarctic is very far away from England," said Frank thoughtfully.

"There you're right, lad. You are thinking of the expense?"

"Yes."

"Ah! but our company will not bring their ships home to Britain. No, they will cruise from the Antarctic to the very nearest markets–in Australia, for instance. And so it will pay. For should we lose a ship or two, well, the insurance companies must pay that, and they are well able to.

"So that is my scheme, boys, and, on the whole, I don't think it is a bad one. There are so few ways of making fortunes nowadays that when one gets the ball at his foot, he is a fool if he does not hit it as hard as he knows how to."

————

The voyage to the Kerguelen islands was a very propitious one, and every one on board the sturdy *Flora M'Vayne* was as happy as the day was long. Vike seemed to have got a new lease of life, and wallowed in the sunshine.

"It is such a change, you know," he told Conal, "and I believe we'll soon be back once more in bonnie Scotland, and won't I tear around the hills just!"

The monkey was less melancholy now, and the cough which troubled him so much while in the ice, appeared to have quite gone.

And old Pen seemed to be almost beside himself with delight. He used to go tearing along the decks, flapping his wings and shrieking as if possessed, and even in his calmer moods he would sometimes leap up suddenly and practise waltzing all alone.

There was a delightful breeze nearly all the time. If not astern it was a beam wind, and so the *Flora* went ripping through the dark-blue seas, every wave of which sparkled in the sunshine.

Many whales were seen, but as Talbot depended most on getting among the elephants now, boats were never lowered to go whaling.

Frank spent much of his time in the crow's-nest.

He was not afraid to swing through the sky at that giddy height, although the first time he clambered up he believed that the crew would have to lower him down with block-and-tackle, he was so thoroughly frightened.

"On deck there!" rang the young fellow's voice one forenoon from the nest.

"Ay, ay, lad," from the skipper.

"Land in sight!"

"Where away?"

"On the starboard bow."

"And what does it look like?"

"I can only raise some mountain cones. They seem volcanic, and their sides are covered with snow."

"Bravo! Come down and I'll get up myself."

Frank was soon on deck.

"Well done, Frank," said Talbot laughing. "I promised a pair of canvas trousers to the man who should first sight land, and you shall have them."

"Yes, thank you, and I shall wear them too."

Away went the skipper up to the crow's-nest, and before long came an order to alter the course a point or two.

Close to the Islands of Desolation, as Kerguelen is called, it was fully a week before the *Flora M'Vayne* was able to reach and enter one of the friths or creeks. For on the very day on which land was sighted a fearful hurricane swept down on the ship, and so suddenly, too, that before sails could be taken in many were rent into ribbons, that cracked and rattled with a sound like the independent firing of troops in action. There was no standing against wind of this awful violence, and it was necessary to run for it under what is termed "bare poles", that is, the smallest amount of sail that can be carried with steering power.

But Kerguelen is the region of hurricanes, and few ships that visit these wild shores escape with impunity.

The coast of the chief islands was found to be iron-bound, high, barren, and rocky, but when they entered and sailed along one of the creeks, scenery of

quite a different kind was met with.

It would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the strange, wild, but solitary beauty of this scenery. Solitary, that is, as regards sight or sign of human being.

But bird life was in evidence everywhere; in fact, Kerguelen might be called the home of the sea-birds. They have seen but little of man, however, and know nothing of his evil or demoniacal ways. They look upon him only as a curious kind of biped, of the penguin species, but without feathers.

Well, when Duncan or Frank went on shore for a walk with the skipper, the gulls, the petrels, the penguins, the albatrosses, and cormorants flew around them in thousands, and the din they made was almost deafening.

Nor were our heroes free altogether from their attentions, which sometimes were rather of an objectionable character, especially when students of nature in the shape of huge yellow-cheeked penguins waddled up to the place where they were sitting, and began examining their jackets with the greatest curiosity. Pecking holes in them, too, and pulling at them.

When rudely thrust off they would retire but a little way, and stand watching the boys with great interest.

"Well, I never!" they seemed to say, looking at them from one side of their heads.

"Well, I'm gee-whizzled!" gazing at them with the other.

"Penguins, aren't you? But the ugliest lot ever we saw. We really wonder your mothers allow you go about like that!"

To-day Captain Talbot and his boys went exploring, but a man was with them to carry the game they killed, and these consisted chiefly of ducks and rabbits. The former showed no fear, but the latter scurried away at once.

They journeyed far inland, and made many interesting discoveries, which proved that these islands are not so utterly useless as they are supposed to be. Indeed, they could be worked profitably both for coals and oil.

And Talbot made a general survey of the regions traversed and took ample notes.

"This would make an excellent centre for our great Antarctic whaling and sealing expedition," he said. "And you and I, boys, might build ourselves a house just under the shelter of these green lichen-clad rocks yonder."

"Oh, it would be awfully nice!" cried Frank.

"And couldn't we have a garden?"

"Yes, and plant and grow crops."

"And trees?"

"Yes, again, and if we are spared to come back here we shall bring with us a few hundreds of young pine-trees–Scotch, and spruce–and plenty of seed."

"How delightful! I should like so much to be a Crusoe. But listen! Surely

that was a dog barking high up the hill yonder."

And so it was, for next moment down came Vike with a rabbit in his mouth.

"Why, Vike," cried Duncan, "we left you on board."

"Very likely," said Vike, speaking with his tail and eyes as he lay there panting from his exertions, with about two yards–more or less–of pink tongue hanging out over his alabaster teeth. "Very likely, but five hundred yards of a swim isn't much to a dog like me. And what is more. Wowff, wowff! you had no business to bolt away without me. Wowff! Don't do it again!"

"Well, now," said Talbot to his mate next day at breakfast, "what do you say to stay here till we lay in a real good cargo, for outside the elephants are in thousands, and the poor things have young beside them too."

"The idea is excellent, sir," said Morgan, "and I have another."

"Out with it, mate. We can't have too many ideas in this world, if we mean to be successful. These ideas of ours don't all hold water; but then we can go over them at our leisure and pick out the best."

"That's it, sir. Well, why not get all the skins we can procure, and then make off the oil. Coals are plentiful on shore, and we have cauldrons, you know."

"Bravo! Morgan. That is just what we shall do."

So after breakfast boats were called away, and returned in the evening laden to the gunwales.

So the vessel was shifted nearer to the open sea, and thus the whalers could go and return twice or even thrice in one day with their hauls.

It was no easy work, you may well believe, when I tell you that the skin and blubber of one of these huge sea-elephants sometimes weighed eight hundredweight.

Poor, great, innocent brutes, it did seem a shame to kill their young before their eyes! The sight of the blood made mothers and fathers frantic, and they rushed on shore as if bent on revenge, but only to fall victims to the rifles of the gunners.

It was a bloody and terrible scene, and I have no desire to describe it. Indeed, were I to tell the reader one quarter of the cruelties I have seen enacted by sealers, I should so harrow his feelings that his dreams would not be pleasant for one night afterwards.

Not merely for a fortnight, but for more than three weeks did the *Flora* lie at Kerguelen, but in a sheltered cove, so that the hurricanes, that on four or five different occasions swept down from the mountains with terrific violence, had but little effect on her. By this time they had boiled down all their oil, salted all their skins and tanked them, and were in reality a bumper ship.

I must not forget one little incident that took place about a week after their arrival.

One day that extremely wise and wondrous bird, Old Pen, went hopping down the starboard gangway and leapt into the sea.

Vike, who had been observing him, sprang right off the bulwark and tried most energetically to head him off.

The bird and dog met face to face, and it really seemed as if a conversation somewhat as follows took place.

Old Pen: "Hullo, what's your game?"

Viking: "I'm going to rush you back to your ship."

O. P.: "Your grandmother! I won't be rushed. I can swim better than you, and dive like a fish-hawk. So don't let us quarrel. In spring, you know, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. I've got an appointment on shore here. Ta, ta! Be as good's ye can."

Vike: "But I say, Old Pen–"

Old Pen had dived and was out of sight, and so Vike swam sadly back to the ship once more.

Just a few hours, however, before the anchor was got up, and while the crew were busy shaking out the sails before departing for the far west, something between a squawk and a squeal was heard alongside, and, sure enough, there was Old Pen come back again.

He was assisted on board, and shook himself as unconcernedly as if nothing unusual had happened.

But Viking's delight knew no bounds, nor did that of little Johnnie Shingles. The former went tearing round and round the deck, like a hairy hurricane.

"If I don't allay my feelings thus," cried Vike, "I shall go clean off my chump."

Now it happened that Frank was on deck with his fiddle, ready to play to the men as they got up the anchor.

But, seeing how matters stood, he instantly struck up a lively schottische.

"Squawk–s–squaw–awk!" cried Old Pen, waving his flippers.

"Hurray!" cried Johnnie, and next moment he and his strange partner were whirling round and round on the quarter-deck, in one of the maddest, merriest dances that surely ever yet was seen.

And I don't believe there was a soul on board who was not rejoiced that Old Pen had returned once again.

That evening they were far away on the quiet and lonesome sea, and, standing by the fire in the saloon warming his flat feet, one by one, as usual, was Old Pen, while near him, sound asleep, lay Vike.

"Awfully good of the bird to come off in time, wasn't it, boys?" said the skipper, relighting his pipe. "If he hadn't come back I should have believed I was about to be deserted by all my good fortune.

"We are glad to see you, Pen, and hope you'll never leave us again. But

what put it into your silly noddle to go away at all, Pen?"

Pen made two hops of the space between him and the captain. Then leaning his head on his knee he looked up drolly with one eye–which being half-closed gave him the appearance of winking.

"I did think of getting spliced, you know," he seemed to say, "and more than one lovely Lady Pen asked me to fly with her to a foreign shore. Nary a fly," says I, "not if Pen knows it. Marriage is a precarious kind of experiment, so after flirting around for a bit I remembered my old friends and just floated off again."

————

Fine weather all the way to the Cape, with stunsails set 'low and aloft most of the time.

Ah, reader, there isn't much to beat the life a sailor leads after all!

In foul weather? Yes, foul or fine, and it isn't always blowing big guns at sea.

And Jack has no undergrowth of care to curl round the very roots of his life, and try to swamp him.

If he does his duty–and what real sailor doesn't?–he may be as happy and jolly as the Prince of Wales, only a vast deal more so.

Besides, what Jack afloat is there, who has not some loved one to think of when far away at sea; someone that he knows right well is thinking, ay, and praying, for him. So even in storm and in danger Jack may sing:

"Blow high, blow low, let tempests tear
The main-mast by the board;
My heart with thoughts of thee, my dear,
And love well stored,
Shall brave all danger, scorn all fear.
The roaring winds, the raging sea,
In hopes on shore,
To be once more,
Safe moor'd with thee."

————

The crow's-nest had been taken down, but stride-legs on the foretop-gallant cross-trees sat Frank one sunny forenoon. Gently to and fro swings the ship, the top-masts forming the arc of a great circle. But Frank minds not the motion.

He is an ancient mariner now.

Or he thinks he is.

"On deck there!"

It is a shout which is half hysterical with joy.

"Land on the lee-bow. The Cape, sir! The Cape!"

Then a cheer rises up from far below that makes the very sails shiver.

Vike starts up and barks, and taking this for an invitation to dance, Old Pen with a squawk and a squeal springs up, and next minute Johnnie Shingles and he are wheeling round in fine style on the quarter-deck.

"Land! Land! Land!" And, for a time at least, the dangers of the deep are past.

BOOK III.

IN THE LAND OF THE NUGGET AND DIAMOND.

CHAPTER I.–SHIPWRECK ON A LONELY ISLE.

This book opens amidst scenery far different indeed from that which I had to describe in my last.

I should like the reader to bear in mind that my youthful heroes were very far indeed from being mercenary, and were just at that age, when wild adventure appeals to the heart of a young fellow who has any spark of manhood in his composition.

Certainly they had sailed in search of fortune, but it was not on their own account they were seeking for wealth, as I have endeavoured to show.

Well, even already, they had been fairly fortunate. They had not buried their talents in the earth, nor in the ocean either, and at the Cape of Good Hope their cargo brought them in so much, that the fortunes of all who had a share in the ship was not only doubled but tripled.

They had, immediately after clearing out, employed a gang of heathens, as

Morgan always called people with dark skins, to thoroughly scour and disinfect the ship. They had been employed for days at the work, under the lash of a ganger, the ganger himself being under the watchful eye of Morgan the first mate.

And so the work was perfectly done.

Then fresh and cleanly cargo was laid in, which would doubtless fetch a big price in the London market. This consisted of wool, firmly bound and packed into small compass; ostrich feathers, and wine, to say nothing of curios. They did not quite fill up, however, hoping to make even better bargains up the coast.

And so they did, especially as regards ostrich feathers, gum copal, pepper, nutmegs and arrow-root.

They called at Zanzibar, one of the strangest cities on earth, and here, while the *Flora M'Vayne* lay quietly at anchor in the beautiful open roadstead, where floated ships bearing the ensigns of at least half a dozen different nations, the boys went on shore, taking Vike with them, and enjoyed most thoroughly not only rambles through the crowded streets, but out in the beautiful bush, where they could revel in the rarest and most delicious fruits the world can grow.

I need but mention mangoes, guavas, and cocoa-nuts, to say nothing of huge pine-apples, with the tropical sun-tints on their rough but shining rinds, and perfume as sweet even as their luscious taste and flavour.

But here were no wild adventures, so that the lads were not sorry when the anchor was once more weighed, and the ship far away on the heaving sea.

It was the captain's intention to be towed through the canal, but lo! and alas! from the very first day of their leaving Zanzibar misfortune attended them.

One of these terrible circular storms, all too common in the Indian Ocean, and called typhoons, came roaring down upon them with scarcely a minute's warning.

The higher sails were blown into ribbons, the topgallant masts carried away, and the gallant ship thrown so much on her beam-ends, that the water came over the lee rails.

She righted again, it is true. And speedily too; and now like some living frightened creature she literally flew before the fearful storm.

As speedily as possible the sails that were not split were taken in. This was a very dangerous employment, and one poor fellow was blown off the yardarm.

Nicholson was his name, and he was a powerful swimmer, but useful though this art of swimming is, what could it avail him in a sea like that!

For just a moment or two his brave and handsome face was seen among the surf in the wake.

He waved his hand once, as if bidding his comrades all adieu, then sank to rise no more.

As a rule, circular storms do not last for a very long time, and a good sailor

like Talbot knows how to manoeuvre his ship so as to get clear as speedily as possible; but this typhoon ended in a gale, which in force was quite a hurricane.

And this kept on for several days.

The last night was the worst. About six o'clock in the evening the sun went down in a brassy haze, behind the foam-crested turmoil of waves; and the wind seemed still on the increase.

Not a star to-night.

It was pitchy dark, for the horizon was close aboard of the storm-tormented ship, and the clouds may have been half a mile in depth. There were two men at the wheel, and those who had to keep watch were fain to lash themselves to rigging or shrouds.

But keeping watch is here but a figure of speech. What watch could be kept in a dark so dark? There was no thunder that could be heard, but the occasional flashes of lightning that dazzled the eyes one moment only rendered the darkness more intense the next.

It must have been about four bells in the first watch, and those in the saloon were trying to obtain a kind of scrambling supper. Old Pen had come aft, and Vike was here too. Both knew that to-night there was danger on the deep.

Suddenly there came a shout from those on deck, this was followed by a crashing sound like the splintering of masts, a loud grating noise, and then all motion ceased.

"We are doomed, boys, but we must still continue to have faith in our heavenly Father."

"Do you think, sir," faltered Frank, "that–that we are wrecked?"

"We are driven on shore, lad, but where, it is impossible to say."

The ship was already battened down, so that, although the seas were making a clean breach over her, there was no immediate danger.

The mate found his way below.

His oil-skins were glittering with water, and his red face dripping too.

He shook the drops from his brown beard and sat down, with a strange uneasy kind of smile on his face.

"Not much to be done, is there, Morgan?"

"Nothing," replied the mate. "Seems to me we've just got to sit here and wait for death."

"Is that the view you take?"

A terrible wave at that moment dashed over the vessel, shaking her from stern to stem.

"Hark, sir! Isn't that the view you take?"

"While there is life there is hope, my friend."

The mate laughed half scornfully.

"There won't be much of either half an hour after this," he said solemnly.

The captain now essayed to go on deck. He ventured forward only a step or two. To have come farther would have been sheer madness.

Morgan was right. They had only to wait for death.

Wait and pray, however.

Ah, yes! for God the Lord is everywhere, on sea as well as on the dry land, and prayer is never denied us.

Morgan's half-hour was past, and another to that; still the sturdy ship gave no signs of breaking up.

On the contrary, the wind had gone down considerably, and the seas as well.

"Mate," said Talbot.

"Yes, sir."

"Are the men below?"

"Three, I think, were washed away; the rest are all in the galley or half-deck."

"It is very dreadful. But we have hope now. An hour ago I should not have ventured to serve out grog, lest in despair some might have broken into the spirit-hold. Come with me now, mate, and we will splice the main-brace. Come, steward, you know what is wanted."

It was very difficult even yet to get forward, so covered was the deck with wreckage. But they succeeded at last.

Sad, indeed, was the sight that dawn revealed.

The mizzen-mast alone was left standing, the fore and main having gone by the board.

The ship herself had been carried by a huge tidal wave, right in between two high volcanic-looking rocks, and there so jammed that at low tide it was perfectly possible to walk under keel.

Jibboom and bowsprit were also smashed, and a single glance at the ship would have told even a landsman that she was doomed.

Nor would it be safe even to remain on board, for at any time she might slide backwards and lie on the shingle beneath, broadside up.

Talbot was no pessimist.

"Thank God, boys," he said, "that our lives have been spared."

"Amen!" was said by all around, and that, too, with both reverence and fervour.

But the wind had fallen almost to a dead calm, and there was not a sound to be heard except the rustle of the shingle as it was hurled upon the beach by each advancing wavelet, and sucked back by the next.

"Now, men," cried the captain, "we'll go to breakfast at once, and then make

all speed to land the cargo and stores. This island is evidently uninhabited, and it may be many a long day, indeed, before we are discovered and able to get away."

On the shore side, and between the rocks, was a green bank, and into this the shattered bowsprit had been thrust. So that to make a rough bridge from the fo'c's'le to the shore was a very simple matter.

There were still thirty men left as crew all told of the unfortunate *Flora*, not to mention Johnnie Shingles, Viking, and Old Pen, neither of whose names were borne on the ship's books.

But with such hearty good-will did the men work that before sunset, not only had they erected a huge marquee with spare spars, the wreck of the masts and sails, but had got a very large quantity of the most valuable stores on shore.

It was a strange island indeed, and evidently of volcanic origin. Not very large, probably not six miles in circumference altogether. It was well wooded, though the trees were by no means high, and in the centre was a beautiful circular lake, in which a lovely little island-grove seemed to float or to hang.

Work was resumed next day, and the men now set themselves to build two strong, substantial, living huts, a big and a smaller, with a rough but dry shed for the stores and cargo, not forgetting the balloon and the varied apparatus for inflating it.

It took them a whole week and a day to get everything snug and comfortable; and all this time it continued calm.

But never a boat nor dhow was to be seen from the outlook. The last was simply a spare spar of considerable height, with rigging thereto. It was, moreover, a flagstaff by day and a beacon by night. But I may state at once that this uninhabited isle being fully two hundred miles from the mainland shore, and quite out of the way of any kind of commerce, licit or illicit, there was but small chance of any signal being seen.

What made the situation more desperate was the fact that not a boat had been left, all were smashed and washed away; three having gone before the vessel struck.

But the greatest misfortune of all was the almost complete destruction of the donkey-engine, so that it would be impossible to distil water.

They managed to save enough, however, to last for fully three weeks with economy, and as Talbot said, there was no saying what might not occur before then.

This water was carefully stored in casks, placed in sheltered corners, and raised on stones to defend them against the ravages of the terrible white ant.

A more terrible scourge than these *Termitidæ* constitute, it would be difficult to conceive. What makes it more serious, is that they work completely concealed–in galleries, that is. And so thin is the outer shell of wood which they

leave that their presence is not suspected until the whole of some structure–and this may be of any size, from a wine-box to a building,–suddenly gives way.

These white ants once, to my knowledge, attacked a library of books which had not been used for some time. They were evidently fonder of reading than the townspeople. We talk of devouring a favourite author. Well, in the case in point these terrible *Termitidæ* devoured their authors in a far more literal sense, and fairly ate them up, but they left the bindings all intact, so that when a volume was pulled out one day it turned Dead Sea fruit, and fell to dust in the librarian's hands. Then, and not till then, was the whole extent of the mischief discovered.

Our little shipwrecked colony now settled down to wait and watch.

There was but little else to do.

They lived in hope, however, and day after day many a straining eye was turned seawards, to seek for the sail that never appeared, and the last thing at night which Talbot or the boys did was to walk around the edges of the cliffs, in the expectation of seeing some mast-head light.

A fire was ready at a moment's notice to light as a signal, but alas! it was not required.

They had yet to find out, however, what these ants were capable of.

It was the water they dreaded most to lose. Without this they must soon sink and perish.

Just one fearful accident I must here record, though I have no intention to pile up horrors.

But in the expectation of rain one night a huge piece of waterproof canvas was spread, or rather hung, by the four corners between as many trees, hammock fashion.

The rain did come.

Water from the casks was at this time served out only in small quantities, so that the poor mariners were already suffering greatly from thirst. They were overjoyed, therefore, to find their great hammock almost full next morning.

They drank greedily of the apparently pure liquid, although some averred that it tasted bitter.

Alas! it was poisoned!

For in about half an hour afterwards the men were suffering the most excruciating agony.

Luckily, none of the officers had partaken of this water, which must have been poisoned by the copper or some other chemical, with which the canvas had been treated, to render it waterproof.

Before night, although Talbot gave everyone emetics of strong mustard and water, treating them afterwards with wine and spirits, no fewer than four poor fellows were dead. The others got better, but continued weak and ill for weeks.

CHAPTER II.–A WEARY TIME.

Yes, it was indeed a weary time that succeeded the alarming news brought one morning to Captain Talbot. For when the steward went to draw water from a cask, he found the wooden tap leaking, and naturally endeavoured to send it home a little. At the very moment he did so the whole collapsed, and the remains of the ant-eaten staves floated away in dust or little else.

All the other casks were found to be in the same condition, so that the mariners had nothing now to fall back upon except a kind of artificial rain-water well, which they had found on the surface of a rock, and this was most carefully covered over to prevent its evaporation by the rays of the sun.

What a terrible outlook! And no signs were there of further rain, not even the tiniest cloud.

Well might they pray for rain now as did the prophet of old, for if it fell not soon, sad indeed must be the fate of all.

The captain and first mate now held a consultation, and that night it was decided that they should endeavour to build a boat of some kind, and therein sail for the distant mainland.

Pity it was they had not thought of this sooner, for in two hours after the decision had been arrived at, another circular storm arose. Such storms in the Indian Ocean are not infrequent, and terrible they are while they rage.

Rain fell at first and at the latter part of it, otherwise it was a burning hot wind, that caused one to choke and gasp for breath. Nostrils and lips became dry, the mouth parched, and the eyes were like coals of fire beneath their lids.

On this occasion the sea rose higher than it had done before.

A huge ocean bore, that could be seen even in the uncertain light of the stars, came roaring on towards the rocks, and the spray dashed high over the camp.

Next morning not a timber of the unfortunate *Flora M'Vayne* was to be seen. She had been sucked backwards with that great tidal wave, and was engulfed in the deeper water farther out.

As ill-luck would have it, most of the carpenter's tools had been left on

board, for until the storm came on–when they had to rush on shore for dear life's sake–the men had been busy cutting out pieces of plank with which to fashion a boat.

There was not the slightest chance of building such a thing now, and the water grew scarcer and scarcer.

A raft was then thought of, but in the weakened condition of the men for want of water it would take a long time to build.

"There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! A weary time!
How glazed each weary eye!"

Once more fell rain. Once more the little rocky tank, which was always left exposed at night, was filled, and once again the men's eyes brightened.

During the gale of wind that had resulted in the wreck of the *Flora M'Vayne*, the poor monkey had been washed overboard, but old Pen was still here, and so, too, was honest Vike.

They had suffered as much from the want of water as anyone, but to the credit of our heroes be it told, they received their daily water ration.

Old Pen used to waltz with joy when he had taken a drink, but Vike was less demonstrative, only he never failed to lick the hand with loving tongue that served the water out.

But hope rose higher now. That water would last for weeks–would last, perhaps, till water came again. Hope rose to a pitch of excitement that no one who has never known shipwreck, or never known what it is to float a mere hulk upon a breezeless sea, can form any conception of, when, just as the sun leapt red and fiery above the main next morning, a steamer was observed but a few miles away in the west. God! how the men rushed to the cliff edge, and how wildly they waved their arms, their coats, and shouted. Shouted and shouted until every tongue

"Seemed withered at the root;
And they could not speak, no more than if
They had been choked with soot".

But all in vain!

The ship passed on.

”They cannot have seen us! They cannot have seen us! Lower the flag to half-mast. Light the fire; they will see the smoke.”

All this was done.

All this was done in vain. There was not breeze enough to float the flag.

The fire, too, was a failure. No smoke arose, for the flames licked it up.

No wonder the men gazed after the retreating vessel with weary, weary eyes.

Oh, cruel, cruel, to desert us so!

This was all anyone could say.

And now Duncan bethought him of the balloon.

Surely there was some hope left in that.

As they sat under the shade of some dwarf and straggling trees, our three younger heroes, with Captain Talbot and Morgan, they seriously reviewed the whole question of their situation. Not only Duncan, but even Conal and Frank had become somewhat more earnest in their manner of late. Their sufferings had sobered them.

”Boats, and even a raft, are denied us,” said Duncan, ”and ships do not come.”

”No,” answered Talbot; ”and yet some British cruiser, or even an Arab dhow, is bound to come this way before very long.”

”It is just that which I greatly doubt, sir,” said Morgan. ”We seem to be landed at the back of the north wind, and out of the way of everything.”

”But the balloon,” continued Duncan. ”I and Conal–”

”And I,” interrupted the Cockney boy.

”Well, and you if the balloon is strong enough.”

”It would carry you all, and a horse besides,” said the skipper with just the ghost of a smile.

”Well, we should ascend until we found a wind to carry us towards the mainland, where we could descend and find assistance.”

”It is a forlorn hope, Duncan.”

”Seems to me, though, that it is our last chance,” said Morgan. ”The water can’t last long. What if it rains no more for months. All that could ever be found of us in that case would be our skeletons bleaching in the sun.”

”Not so pessimistic, please, Morgan. I still have hope in God. If it be His will to help us we shall be rescued. If not, it is our duty to submit.”

Truly a brave man was Talbot.

And the merchant-service has many a thousand such, who, without doubt, will be of infinite service to their country in our day of direst need–when wild war comes,

”In a fostering power, while Jack puts his trust

As fortune comes–smiling he'll hail her,
Resign'd still, and manly, since what must be must;
And this is the mind of a sailor."

————

Talbot arose at last.

"I cannot go," he said, almost solemnly, after gazing for over a minute at the blue above and the blue below, the sky without a cloud, the sea without a ripple. "For weal or for woe, boys, I must stay with my men. Now am I resigned. I will pray for you, lads, and so shall we all."

"But," he added, "serve out some water and a modicum of wine. God bless our poor fellows yonder, for their conduct and discipline have been splendid. Many men in their hopeless condition would have broken into the spirit stores and died maudlin drunk, or murderously mad."

The men quickly came to the call of "All hands!" and just as quickly Talbot explained the position, and told them what the three youngsters proposed doing. The cheer that followed his words was not a lusty one, but it was very sincere.

And now, though with no nervous haste, the work of arranging and inflating the balloon was commenced and for some days steadily proceeded with.

On the third day dark clouds came sweeping down, and a thunder-storm broke over the island. What a God-send! Somewhat unusual, too, for the time of year. Not only was the rocky tank filled with water and rapidly-melting hail, but many hollows elsewhere, and every drop was precious.

Compared with Andrée's great Arctic balloon, the *Hope*, as Talbot's had been named, was quite a baby, but it was strong enough for anything, and could have supported and carried far more than they needed for weeks together.

Long before this, Talbot had instructed his youngsters in the art of managing a balloon, and now there was little more for them to learn on this score.

The inflation was completed at last. The net, a very strong one, was in its place. The car attached, and the splendid ball dragged impatiently at her moorings, as if longing to soar away into freedom.

Food, arms, ammunition, wine, and water–everything was in its place, everything secure, yet handy.

Then the last night came.

It was clear and starry, with a bright scimitar of a new moon in the west.

Duncan slept but little. His mind was in a whirl of anxiety. There were so many things to think about, and they came cropping up in his mind all in a bunch, as it were, all demanding explanation at once.

One thing which would grieve him very much was parting with Vike. An-

imals have died of grief many times and oft ere now, and somehow he felt that he would never see his favourite dog again.

But lo! about the first news he got next morning after getting up was that Viking was missing. He had evidently wandered away, it was thought, and tumbled over a cliff.

When the boys went to bathe for the last time that morning they were almost dumb with grief.

But while returning to camp they met Johnnie Shingles and Old Pen.

Both were capering with joy.

"Vike he all right, sah, foh true. Golly, I'se shaking wid joy all ober."

"And where is he?"

"In the sky-car, sah. O ees, he dere shuah enuff."

It was true. Vike evidently knew all about it, and had taken his seat already. Booked in advance!

He could not be coaxed out. But he took his breakfast when handed to him, and a drop of water afterwards.

"Boys," said Talbot, "you must take him. It seems very strange, but it also seems fate."

"Fate be it, then," said Duncan.

And indeed the poor fellow's mind was greatly relieved.

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That very forenoon the great balloon was cast off, and with blessings and farewells on both sides. Upward she soared into the clear blue sky, and was soon seen by those below only as a tiny dark speck, no larger than a lark.

CHAPTER III.–CHILDREN OF THE SKY.

I have been down in a diving-bell, and have traversed or been led through the dark and seemingly interminable seams of a coal-mine, and felt no very exaggerated sense of exhilaration in either situation, but the glad free feeling one has

when afloat in a balloon, and after the first nervous shudder of trepidation has passed off, is well worth risking life and limb to experience, and is, moreover, in my opinion, a proof that man was made and meant for better things than grovelling on earth like a stranded tadpole thrown out of its pond by the hands of some idle school-boy.

It is always the unknown that strikes the greatest amount of terror into man's soul. Therefore I claim for my young heroes the possession of an amount of courage and pluck, that you shall seldom find in any other hearts save those of British-born boys.

The balloon ascended with inconceivable rapidity at first, swaying just a little from side to side, and causing the inmates to grasp the sides of the car with some degree of nervous terror. When, however, they found that to fall out would be the most unlikely thing that could happen, they took heart of grace, and began to laugh and talk.

"Isn't it just too awfully lovely for anything," said Frank. "I say, you know, Conal, I'm a sort of sorry I didn't bring my fiddle."

"It's a fine sensation," said Conal. "It must be just like going to heaven."

"Yes"–from Duncan–"but we should have somebody to meet us when we got on shore there. But we don't know where this aërial tour may end."

"Well, we're going high enough anyhow," said Frank. "And," he added, "I'm not half so funky as I thought I'd be. I've often thought, mind you, that I'd like the going up in a balloon, 'cause there is plenty of sky-room, and nothing to knock your head against. It was the thoughts of alighting on earth again that always had terrors for me, hitting against poplar-trees and steeples and such, or spiked on the weather-cock of a town-hall and left to kick. But this is glorious, and I suppose we'll get down all straight."

Duncan held down his hand to Viking, and the honest dog licked it with his soft tongue.

"It is so good of you to take me, master," he seemed to say. "I don't know where in all the world you're off to, but you're here, and that's good enough for old Vike."

"I say, Duncan," said Conal, "aren't we taking an easterly direction?"

Duncan was rated "captain of the car", so all questions were referred to him.

"It really looks a little like it," was the reply, "unless the island down yonder, with our dear friends on it, has broken adrift, and is bound for the mainland."

They could talk lightly, almost joyously now, so bracing was the air, and so delicious the sensation of floating through space.

"I say, captain," said Frank, "hadn't we better put another man to the wheel, and tack and half tack for a time. Or suppose we lie to, eh?"

"Providence is at the wheel, Frank, but we're at the mercy of every breeze that may blow."

They were evidently being driven out to sea, but there was no help for it.

And so easterwards, ever easterwards, they drifted for many hours. The island itself was now but a little dark dot on the blue, and several other islets had come into view, and latterly, oh, joy! a steamer.

Evidently on her way to China or Japan!

Could they communicate?

In case of meeting a ship, several tin flagons had been prepared and ballasted, with letters in them.

The balloon was drifting but slowly now, and seemed to be on the turn.

Signals were accordingly made, while Conal, with the telescope, kept the ship's quarter-deck well under observation.

"Ha!" he cried, "they see us, and are signalling back."

Overboard now were thrown not one flask only, but three, and each would tell the same story of the ship-wrecked mariners, dying slowly for want of water on the lonely island far to the west. The latitude and longitude of this was given also.

It was evident that the flasks fell near the ship, for presently they could see a boat lowered, as if to pick them up. It soon returned to the ship and was hauled up.

But for a long time those in the balloon waited in vain for a signal. It came at last. A flag–bright red–was hoisted to the peak and rapidly lowered again.

Then the ship held on its course.

"Gracious heavens!" cried Duncan excitedly, "they are leaving our poor friends to their fate."

"I do not believe it possible," said Frank.

"No, it cannot be. See, see, they have stopped ship."

This was true. And it was evident also that a consultation was being held on board, as to whether they should really alter their course, and seek for the uninhabited island and perishing mariners or not.

"I know how it is," said Duncan. "It is, as usual, a question of money, like everything else in the world. That is no doubt a mail steamer, and the loss of time means a heavy fine, even though they might prove they had been on an errand of mercy."

But to their infinite joy our heroes saw at last the ship's prow turned westwards.

Night fell now, down on the sea that is. For at the great altitude which they had attained the sun was still visible.

The very last thing they noted was that the captain of that steamer had

apparently changed his mind once more, and that the vessel was stopped. There she lay without or breath or motion

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

”Cruel! cruel!” cried Frank.

”We must not judge,” said Duncan. ”Down there it is now almost dark, and in mercy let us believe they are merely dodging to await the moonrise.

When day returned, the brave balloonists found themselves not over the sea any longer, but over a dense dark forest of Africa’s mainland.

During the darkness a strange kind of stupor had weighed their eyelids down, and every one had slept.

But the balloon had changed its course, and was now driving inland on the wings of an easterly wind.

By aid of the telescope they could just perceive a long line of blue ’twixt the sky and the greenery of the woods.

But this itself soon disappeared as the balloon kept floating westwards and away.

The last thing they had done was to throw over the car at intervals, as they swept on, no less than six tell-tale flasks, and each had a little white flag over it.

But now came the question–what was to be done? Would it not be better at once to attempt a descent, and make their way eastwards through the forests and across the streams, which they could see here and there like silver strips among the woods and hills.

It was a question that needed some little consideration.

To alight in a forest did not seem feasible. Here, to say nothing of the danger of such a descent, they could find no natives to help them, and they should be exposed to the attacks of wild beasts and venomous reptiles.

They could see mountains far ahead, and among these there would doubtless be many an inhabited glen; so they agreed to keep on for a few hours longer.

”Besides,” said Duncan, ”there is a chance of a change of wind, which will blow us coastwards far more quickly than we could ever get on foot.”

All hands were hungry, so breakfast would be a most enjoyable pastime.

Something more than a pastime, however. They settled down to it seriously, poor Viking standing up to receive his share.

Breakfast in a balloon–how strange it seems!

What did they have to eat? Enough and to spare, but, saving the biscuits–a considerable percentage of which was weevils fresh and alive–all else was tinned

meat.

They made a hearty meal nevertheless, washing it down with a modicum of wine and water.

They were now ready for further adventures, but of course had no idea what was in store for them.

Well, the forest was soon left far behind, and, much to their astonishment, they perceived mountains ahead of them so high that snow lay white on their conical summits.

In an hour or two they were over a charming valley, and so low down that they could see the black natives running about in a great state of excitement, having evidently caught sight of the aeronauts.

"Fortune favours the brave," cried Duncan exultantly. "Here shall we descend, and make assurance doubly sure, and the safety of our friends certain."

With a little manipulation of the valves, a descent was made far more easily than any one could have imagined. Anchors were let go, and soon it was possible for all hands, including even Vike, to get out of the car.

An innovation awaiting them which they had little expected. Here were at least a thousand spear-armed warriors assembled, and as they came towards them, all threw themselves on their faces, or bent themselves in attitudes of worship.

"Here's a wind-up to a windy day," cried Frank laughing. "Why, these chaps evidently take us for gods!"

"It would seem so," said Duncan, "but I for one don't feel quite up to that form."

One of the savages was held aloft in a kind of sedan-chair, and was evidently the chief or king. He was the most hideous-looking savage it is possible to imagine; extremely corpulent, with a cruel, cut-throat expression of face; small deep-set eyes, and cheeks covered with parallel scars about an inch long. His hair in front hung straight down in tiny ringlets over a retreating forehead.

One should never show fear before savages. Duncan knew this, and walking boldly up to the huge travelling throne he saluted him in an off-hand way, and addressed him in English.

His majesty only shook his hideous head, but pointed with his spear towards his army.

Every one sprang up and stood erect, but silent as the grave.

"C'rambo!" said the king.

And C'rambo advanced smiling.

Very different was this tall, lithe, and supple-looking savage to any about him. His skin was yellow instead of black. His smile was a forbidding, sarcastic leer, and although our heroes knew nothing of African savages, any coasting

sailor could have told them this man was a Somali.

In his right hand he carried three ugly spears, one of which was attached by a cord to his wrist, while on his left forearm was a small round shield–such as are worn by the tribes on the eastern coast north of the line.

This fellow first salaamed to the chief, addressing him in a harsh and guttural jangle of words. Then he turned haughtily towards our heroes.

"Who am you, and whe' you comes from?"

"First and foremost," replied Duncan, quite as haughtily, "who are you? Whose country are we in, and how far from the coast are we?"

"Humph! You feels dam bold, eh? Suppose I holds up my leetle white finger, King Slaleema's men den cut all your troats plenty much quick."

In spite of a feeling of doubt and fear that dwelt at his heart, Duncan burst out laughing.

"Your little white finger, my friend, is as yellow as a duck's foot.

"You see this little revolver?" he added. "Your life and five more of your beastly lot, including your pig of a king, lie in these chambers. Have you any particular longing to be stretched? If not, civility will pay you. Now, will you answer?"

Both Frank and Conal, following their captain's lead, had laid their hands on their pistol-butts.

"Pay?" said the fellow. "S'pose you gift me, I do most anything. Wot you wants foh to know?"

"We will give you gifts. What would you like?"

"English food, tools, a lifel (rifle). Money no good."

"You're modest, but we are liberal. How far are we from the coast?"

"Foh one Englishmans six week. Foh one gentleman Somali, plaps one."

"How many miles?"

"I not count, free undled, plaps. Plaps mo'. Plenty savage, plenty folest (forest), lion, tiger, and 'gators in de ribbers. Pletty soon de gobble up poo' little Englishmans."

"Where did you learn your English?"

"At de court ob de Sultan ob Zanzibar. But I cut de troats ob two tree men and den fly in one canoe. I now King Slaleema's plime minister."

"And a bonnie ticket you are," said Duncan. "Now, listen; if you will carry a letter to Lamoo and bring an answer you shall have a gun on your return with the reply. The letter shall be for the Sultan. Are you agreed?"

The fellow seized Duncan's hand and pressed it to his brow.

"De bargain am made," he cried. "I'se ready. All de way I run. Carrambo hab de good legs."

"Who called you Carrambo?"

"De dam Portugee. I cut tree, four troats all de same."

The recollection caused him to laugh. But he now spat viciously on the ground.

"De Portugee all fools. Pah!" he cried in disgust.

"Now," he added, "I ver goot man. I not cheatee you. I come back plenty twick (quick). Bling de answer all same too. But take care."

"Care of what?"

"Ob you' dam troats. Dese savage tink you come flom 'eaben (heaven). I tell 'em, dis quite tlue. S'pose dey not b'lieve, den dey kill and eat you."

"Hah! Cannibals, are they? How very comforting!"

"Eberyone cannibals heah. De dog, dey tink, am de debbil. Again I say to Slaleema, all tlue."

"Well, Carrambo, perhaps you are a much more honest fellow than you look. And you don't look a saint."

"All beesiness, sah. You gib me one gun and plenty 'munition, den I selve (serve) you. S'pose a Portugee say I gib you tree gun, cut all der troats; I cut all your troats plenty much quick, and King Slaleema he gobble you up foh tlue."

"You're an honest, faithful fellow, Carrambo," said Duncan sarcastically.

"Beesiness, sah, beesiness," replied the prime minister. "Wot dis wo'ld be widout beesiness, tell me dat?"

Carrambo held his head a little to one side and both open palms out in front of him.

As, however, the question was too philosophical in its nature, Duncan made no reply.

"'Scuse me one moment, sah."

He hurried away, and presently afterwards reappeared from behind a hut, dragging a poor little naked girl by one hand.

"You take lifel and s'oot de chile," he said. "She foh de king's dinner. Dis will make one good implession on dese pore ignolant savages."

This might have been true, but Duncan nevertheless did not see his way to become the king's executioner.

He shot a fowl, however, and at the flash and report the savages, who had never seen white men before, and never heard the sound of a gun, screamed wildly, and rushed off with such precipitation, that they seemed to be all a mist of long black scraggy legs and arms.

But Carrambo's voice recalled them, and they returned awed and terror-struck.

The dead fowl, moreover, was evidence of the terrible power possessed by these great "children of the air".

What might they not do next?

These innocent wretches trembled to think. I call them innocent simply because they knew not sin.

"If then," says the apostle, "knowing these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

For knowledge brings with it responsibility, and this neglected is accounted to us as sin.

This night our young heroes spent in the car of the balloon, and honest Viking went on guard. But even if the savages–for savages they were of the most demoniacal type–possessed any longing to do them to death, fear, natural and supernatural, deterred them.

Next morning early, Carrambo, the king's prime minister, departed upon his long and dangerous mission, taking two young warriors with him, and promising faithfully to return in two weeks at the farthest.

"S'pose you not see me den," he added sententiously, "den I gone deaded foh tlue."

The place seemed more lonesome now that Carrambo had gone, for, scoundrel though he undoubtedly was, he was someone to speak to.

They now began seriously to consider their situation and prospects.

In their heart of hearts they believed that they had been the means of sending succour to their marooned shipmates, on that lonely isle of the ocean. Their minds were easy enough on that score, for if even the steamer they had hailed had resumed her course without making any attempt to find the isle and rescue the mariners, the Sultan of Lamoo, Duncan fully understood, had always been friendly with the British, and would immediately despatch assistance in some shape or other.

Duncan, before doing anything else, got out his instruments of observation, and as well as could be made out, the glen in which they were virtually imprisoned was between two and three hundred miles off the coast, and some degrees south of the line.

He was puzzled at first as to why the place had never been discovered by British explorers.

But there are hundreds of such tribe-lands that have never yet been trodden by the foot of Christian men.

There was one clue to the mystery, however, and this was probably the true one, but they did not find it out just then.

"Now," said Duncan, "for a visit of ceremony to that fat old pig of king. And we must take him some presents, too."

Duncan had not forgotten that there were on board the *Flora* many large and beautiful strings of beads, which had been intended for bartering with any natives they might meet, and he had stowed away many such in the balloon car.

”Come, Conal, or Frank,” he said, ”I don’t care which. But one of you with Vike must stay by the car and stand by your guns, in case the cupidity of these cut-throat natives gets the better of their fear.”

”I’ll stay,” cried the Cockney boy, as pluckily as ever Englishman spoke.

So down the hill towards the village, revolvers in their belts and rifles cocked, marched Duncan and Conal.

They found the king sitting cross-legged outside his kraal or great grass hut, and being assiduously fanned by his wives.

These were no beauties, but Duncan lifted his cap and salaamed to the king first and then to them.

They seemed both pleased and tickled, and giggled inordinately, until the king rounded on them, scowling and drawing his fore-finger across his throat in a most significant manner.

The young Britons, as they approached his majesty, tried not to look at the awful remains of his last night’s feast, but the sickening sight obtruded itself upon them in spite of all they could do.

Besides the beads, they had brought with them a four-pound tin of preserved beef.

They had expected his majesty to take a little of this, but were not a little surprised when he seized the tin and began digging out and swallowing huge lumps of it, with a guttural ejaculation of delight between each mouthful.

”Goo–goo–goo!” he exclaimed, as with about a yard of hideous tongue he finished off by licking out the tin.

”Nothing more horrible have I ever seen!” said Duncan.

”That is true,” said Conal.

The king threw down the empty tin–he couldn’t swallow that–smiled, nodded, and pointed towards the clouds.

”Goo–goo–goo–” he cried interrogatively.

Duncan nodded and smiled in turn, although he had wished the brute had choked himself.

But the horror of the brothers is not to be described when, at a call from the king, accompanied by a string of words that consisted mostly of vowels, two slaves came forward and offered them the roasted forearms of a child–no doubt those of the girl which Carrambo had asked them to shoot the day before.

They turned away, and shook their heads, but fearing to give offence, immediately presented his majesty with a string of beautiful beads.

His delight was childish-like and unbounded, and he immediately called for his sedan-chair of bamboo cane, and was trotted through the village of huts that his subjects might admire him.

That same forenoon Duncan, accompanied only by Viking, went on a voy-

age of discovery as he called it. He wanted to find out the lay of the land.

Two natives, impelled by curiosity, followed him, and when he beckoned to them and gave each a bead, they readily accompanied him as escort.

Vike kept aloof.

He didn't like the looks of these savages.

But after climbing a conical hill, Duncan found out the true reason for the isolation of these savages. Their country was at least a thousand feet above the level of the land. And this last, except on one side where the mountains hid their snow-capped heads in the clouds, everywhere were dark and seemingly impenetrable forests.

CHAPTER IV.–TREASURE-HUNTERS. THE FOREST.

The exact topography of Cannibal Glen, as the boys had named this blood-reeking territory, was, however, not the only discovery made to-day.

The other was singular in the extreme. It was nothing less than that of a ruined fort, at no great distance from the place where the balloon was anchored, but high up on the side of a hill and surrounded by a clump of trees.

The fort was built of stone, and still of considerable strength, and so constructed that it could be defended, if occasion demanded, by two resolute young men against four score savages.

Duncan thought it somewhat strange, that there was no footpath leading towards it, and that it seemed to be avoided by the natives.

They found out afterwards that the place had been the scene of a cruel massacre of white men–Portuguese without a doubt–and that it was now supposed to be the abode of evil spirits.

All the better for our young adventurers. And they made up their minds to take possession of the old fort the very next day.

That afternoon, however, they removed everything from the car of the balloon, and camped just a little way therefrom.

They had lit a fire really more for the sake of light than heat, and for, many hours after the sun's last glow tipped the snowy summits of the mountains with

pink and blue, and the stars had come out, they sat here talking of home. But not of home only, but of their future prospects.

"From several strange cavities I have observed in my rambles to-day," said Duncan, "I have come to the conclusion that the white men who built that fort were also miners. Everything points to this fact, and also, alas! to that of their murderous extermination by fire and by the spears of these fiendish savages."

"Yes, Conal, it may have been many long years ago, centuries perhaps, but who can say what discoveries we may not make next. There may be buried treasure!"

Both Conal and Frank opened their eyes wider now.

"What!" cried Frank, "you think–"

"I don't think, Frank, my boy, I am reasoning from analogy, as it were. First and foremost, it is not for nought the glaud whistles."

"I don't hitch on," said the Cockney boy.

"The glaud," said Conal by way of explanation, "is a wild Scottish hawk, that always whistles aloud before darting on his prey."

"The glaud in this case," said Duncan, "is the Portuguese, who never go into any savage country except for the sake of treasure or plunder.

"Secondly," he continued, "if the band were all massacred, they doubtless had hidden their dust, and it is evidently there still. Thirdly, these cannibal outcasts care nothing for gold, and would at any time give a large and valuable diamond for a coloured bead."

"I do declare," cried Frank, "I sha'n't sleep a wink to-night for thinking of all this. Duncan, you are clever!"

"Have you only just found that out?" said Conal, laughing. Conal was proud of his brother.

"And now," said Duncan, "shall we, after a few days of exploration, get into the balloon once more, and try to find our way to the sea-shore."

"Before I could answer that question myself," he added, "I would like to think it all out, and so I move that we curl up."

Wrapped in their warm rugs–for, at this elevation, though in mid-Africa, a rug is almost a necessity at night–the boys were soon asleep beside the fire, and no one was left on guard except dear old Vike.

He slept with one eye open, or one ear at all events, and was likely to give a good account of any savage who might come prowling around the camp.

But, by way of making assurance doubly sure, the adventurers slept with loaded revolvers close beside them.

They slept heavily.

And that, too, despite the roaring of lions far down in the plains below, and the unearthly shrieks of goodness knows what, that came, ever and again, from

the dark depths of the forest.

The sun was just rising over the distant green and hazy horizon when Duncan sat up.

He rubbed his eyes, and gazed around him almost wildly.

"Conal, Frank," he cried them, "awake! awake! Where is the balloon?"

Had there been any echo it might well have answered "Where?"

The balloon was gone!

The explanation was not difficult. For, relieved of its load, it had quietly slipped its moorings during the darkness and gone on a voyage on its own account, goodness only knows where. And our heroes would never see it more.

To say that they were not deeply grieved would be far short of the truth. The loss seemed to cut them off entirely from the outer world.

But their hearts were young and buoyant, and so they did not mourn long.

After breakfast, indeed Duncan, who was the recognized leader, laughed lightly, saying as he did so:

"Come, you fellows, don't look so blue. Perhaps the loss of the balloon is a blessing in disguise."

"I don't quite see it," said Frank.

"No, you don't see the balloon. You've looked your very last on that; but listen to logic: We might have journeyed away in that balloon and been carried into regions from which we never could have got free again."

"True enough!" said Conal.

Indeed everything his brother said was right in Conal's eyes.

"Well," said Frank after a pause, "I'm not going to bother about it. The Pope was correct in saying, 'What is, is right.'"

"It wasn't the Pope, Frank, but Pope the poet."

"Ah, well, it doesn't matter; only I had such grand dreams last night."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed. I was wandering through the diamond mines of Golconda, with Aladdin's lamp in one hand and a horse's nose-bag in the other. And I filled that nose-bag too, you bet."

"Well, Aladdin, or not Aladdin, I move now that we move up the hillside and take formal possession of the Portuguese old fort."

"I second the moving motion," said Conal.

So Duncan and Conal became the carriers; Frank, with Vike, remaining below on guard until everything was taken up.

It took them the whole of that day, and the next as well, to settle down in their new quarters, and to make everything snug and comfortable.

To their great delight, at the foot of a rock not far off they found a small well with a spring of the coldest water, bubbling up through the rocks.

It was partly no doubt on account of this very well, that the former inhabitants of the fort had chosen this spot as their habitat.

One room, and one only, of the ruin was roofed, and this they commenced to overhaul and thoroughly clear and clean.

They shuddered somewhat, however, when they came across human bones, and these had been charred by fire, and so told a terrible tale.

But Duncan and his comrades were not to be daunted, and determined to make this their living-room, for no matter how hard the rain might fall, their stores would be dry and safe.

Besides the door, there was one opening which had been a window.

It was at first proposed to barricade it up, but this would have prevented ventilation, and shown fear also.

"I have it!" cried Frank.

"Well?"

"Erect two skulls. There they are all ready to hand."

This was done.

The terrible relics were fastened to short poles, and one was stuck at each side of the window outside.

————

For a time, at all events, the boys might well consider themselves safe, for superstition is far more deep and rife in heathen lands than it is in Christian, and that is saying a good deal.

"I do think all this is rather jolly than otherwise," said Frank a morning or two after they had got nicely settled, as he termed it, "and I wouldn't mind living here for some time."

"I'm afraid we'll have to, Frank," said Duncan, laughing.

"Bar the vicinity of that ugly king, and his crowd," Conal put in.

"But you must admit, captain, that there is a spice of romance in this mode of life, and I wouldn't mind much what happened to me, if there was a groundwork of romance in it."

Frank was reminded of these remarks by his fellows some time after this, and after a thrilling adventure, in which he happened to be first-person-singular.

"But I say," he added, "what shall we call ourselves? Crusoes? Eh?"

"I think," said Conal, "that a Crusoe must live on an island."

"Hermits, then."

"No. You can't have a plurality of hermit. A hermit is a hermit, and he is all by himself. If a lot of people come and live in the same place he is a hermit no longer."

"Solitaires," suggested Duncan.

Conal laughed aloud.

"Why," he cried, "you stupid old Duncan, a solitaire is a sleeve-link or collar-stud or something."

"Foresters, then."

"Fiddlesticks! The forest is miles away."

"Treasure-hunters?"

"That's better. And we'd best leave it at that."

"Well, having made everything snug, suppose we go and see the fat king again."

"Good! and then go and fish. There is a nice little stream down here, and we might even have a peep into the forest."

"Happy thought!" said Frank.

Frank's mind, by the way, was partially built upon happy thoughts, and there was always one or two ready to bob up on the surface.

"What now, Frank?"

"We've lots of wine, and we won't drink it. Suppose we take King Pig a bottle."

They did so, and also some more beads.

They marched–that is, Frank and Duncan, Conal being left at home to keep house–straight to the king's kraal.

They sang as they entered the village, seeming to know by instinct what I had to learn from experience, that a happy, independent, and careless manner goes a long way to impress savages with one's superiority.

The cannibal king was just getting up. He had eaten too much the night before, and overslept himself. But he seemed glad to see our heroes, smiled, and poked his black, fat fingers funnily towards them.

His hut was a big one, but something in it immediately caught Frank's eye. It was a huge, black, and horribly ugly doll. The king's god, without a doubt. It was as black as the ace of clubs, with red lips and white tusks. The eyes seemed to glare at the intruders, but the intruders didn't mind.

Frank drew nearer to it, for something in this wooden god's head shone with a light that was perfectly dazzling. Anyone could have seen it was a diamond of the purest water.

How could he secure it? that was the question. Why, that stone was a fortune in itself. Robbing a cannibal king might not be much of a crime, but the treasure-hunters recoiled from the idea.

Barter! Ha! that indeed. Finance is a fine thing!

Frank held out a handful of beautiful beads, and pointed to the god's grinning head.

But the king looked frightened, and shook his head.

Frank replaced the beads in his pocket.

The king looked wofully sad.

"The wine," said Frank, and Duncan produced it. He poured some out into a little tin cup and drank, then corked the bottle.

"Goo–goo–goo!" exclaimed the king, excitedly.

"Why, the old rogue," said Duncan, "knows what it is. Let him smell the bottle."

"Confound him, no! He'd seize and drink the lot."

But he handed him some in a cocoa-nut shell, and having gulped that down, he handed the shell back to be refilled.

Frank laughed, but shook his head.

He now offered the beads and the bottle for the diamond, and at once the cannibal yielded.

He waddled over towards the god, and digging out the glorious gem with the point of an ugly crease–which doubtless had slit many an innocent throat–he handed it to the financier, Frank Trelawney.

Frank first put it carefully in his pocket, then he proceeded to insert three beautiful and large beads in the hole in the god's forehead, left empty by the abstraction of the gem.

"Goo–goo–goo!" cried the king.

"Don't be a big baby! You'll have the wine in a brace of shakes".

Determined to be honest, Frank not only placed a string of beads about the neck of the idol, but a larger and more handsome one over the king's broad brisket. Then he gave him nutful after nutful of sherry till there wasn't a drop left in the bottle.

The king thought he would sing now.

His song was like the snoring of an Indian frog. But the king was happy.

So was Frank.

"I say, Duncan," he said, "a knowledge of finance is an excellent thing. And honesty is the best policy, isn't it? Well, we've made one man happy this morning. It is very soothing to one's conscience, and really, Duncan, I wouldn't mind making a few more cannibals happy–"

"At the same price?"

"That's it," said Frank.

The king slept, and, leaving his wives to fan him, the boys slipped away.

They now went back "home", as they called the haunted fort, then arranged for a day's sport.

The stream they soon reached was close to the forest, and seemed alive with fish. The tackle which they used was simple but effective. Not original either,

for country boys in Scotland constantly use it, and though the marvellously-dressed and fully-equipped Englishman may fish all day and catch nothing, the ragged urchin not far off is making a string of dozens–a string that the Cockney eventually purchases and palms off as the result of his own prowess.

Such is life! But the tackle? Oh, yes, the tackle! Well, it was a bent pin, a short string and rod, with a morsel of an insect for bait.

But Duncan and Frank made a discovery to-day that was alarming.

After catching sufficient fish to suffice for more than one hearty meal, they hid their rods and tackle in the bush, and ventured to march towards the forest.

It was terribly darksome and gloomy, with very little undergrowth, and as they knew there were lions about they ventured forward with great caution, keeping close together, treading lightly, and keeping a good look-out on every side.

They had not gone far before they found that this great woodland was the abode of creatures, probably quite as much to be dreaded even as lions.

The first part they traversed, however, was apparently a land of delight, just as it was a land of the most brilliant flowering trees and shrubs, among which thousands of bright-winged birds chattered and sang, while parrots by the score mimicked them.

"Surely," said Frank, "we have come to paradise at last! Did ever you see such glorious fruit? Oh, we must indulge, Duncan, and carry back some guavas and mangoes to poor lonely Conal and Viking."

They did indulge, and that too without stint.

But this paradise soon drew to an end.

"Anyhow, Duncan," said Frank, cheerfully, "we shall know now where to find both fish and fruit."

"Hark!"

Well might he say hark.

The sounds that now broke harsh and terrible upon their ears would have appalled older and stouter hearts than theirs.

CHAPTER V.–FIGHTING THE GORILLAS.

Frank and Duncan had undoubtedly been rash. They had penetrated for fully a mile into the gloomy depths of this dark, primeval forest. The sun-life of beautiful birds and luscious fruits–Frank's paradise–they had left far behind. Here was nothing that could be called inviting: slimy, rotting leaves on the bare ground, with here and there a huge and ugly toadstool; and the branchless trunks of mighty trees covered with white and yellow mildew or flour-like fungi. And these trees towered skywards, forming a dark green canopy overhead, that no sunlight could ever penetrate, nor moonlight or star-rays at night.

The silence for some time had been both cold and irksome. I cannot otherwise describe it.

But now that dread silence was broken, and not only high overhead, but far away in front, the forest suddenly awoke into a sylvan pandemonium.

What yells, what shrieks, what hoarse and fearful cries!

The boys instinctively drew closer together, and stood ready to shoot.

But nothing appeared, though the awful noises increased rather than diminished.

Frank saw Duncan's lips moving, but he could hear nothing.

Surely they were in a demon-haunted forest.

They looked at each other, then at once commenced a speedy retreat.

They ran as fast as ever they had done at school, and up behind them came the roar of the demons. But they could see no creature as yet, though they often glanced furtively behind them.

The enemy, however, seeing that they were but little more than a hundred yards from the sunlight, mustered up courage for the attack.

And down from the trees they leapt–a score, at least, of hideous, long-armed, hairy gorillas.

If they did not possess the courage, they at all events had far more than the strength of ordinary men.

As they advanced they beat their breasts furiously, uttering savage cries.

"A clear head now!" shouted Duncan.

Both young fellows leaned their rifles against trees to make sure of their aim.

Br-rang! Br-rang!

The sound awakened the echoes of the ugly forest, and two gorillas fell dead.

There was a silence of fully fifteen seconds, and the boys went hurrying on again.

Then came wailings and howlings, as of grief, but these were quickly changed to yells of anger, and on they came once more. They soon overtook our two heroes, who, after firing with good effect, drew their revolvers and made a

running battle of it.

Luckily they never once allowed these fiendish monsters to get into grips, else speedily indeed would they have been throttled to death.

Out into the sunshine, the glorious life-giving sunshine at last. And now they were safe. They crawled rather than walked as far as a little stream that trickled from a rock, and threw themselves down exhausted.

But youth soon recovers from exertion, and terror too, and so they finally found themselves back at the ruined fort loaded with both fruit and fish.

Happy indeed was Conal to see them, for, far away from the fort though the forest was, he had listened appalled to the awful medley of yells and shrieks, and made sure they were being murdered.

"Hillo!" cried Frank, cheerful once again–and hungry also–and it seems to me Frank was always hungry–"Hillo! Why, you have actually dinner ready?"

"Yes," said Conal, laughing. "Vike and I found some sweet-potatoes and we cooked these."

"But that splendid fish you are broiling?"

"Ah! isn't she a beauty? But you should have seen the little girl who brought it, carrying it on a little grass rope. She was a beauty too. And we had quite a little flirtation."

"Conal! I'm–"

"Oh, are you, indeed? but I don't mind. I gave Umtomie–that's her pretty name–two lovely beads, and she sat there and sang to me, so sweetly! Then she brought me a calabash full of water, and, smiling over teeth quite as white and even as a pointer puppy's, she waved her hand, her lily hand–no, her raven hand–"

"That's more truthful, Con."

"And off she trotted once again."

"Then, I suppose," said Frank, "the sunshine went all out of your life, eh?"

"Well, there did seem to be a partial eclipse or something. But down you sit to chow-chow."

Down they did sit, and a right hearty meal they made.

It was Conal's turn to go sporting the next day. But he and Duncan gave the forest a wide berth, and so nothing very wild in the shape of adventure fell to their lot.

————

Much time was spent every day now in prospecting.

Duncan couldn't and wouldn't believe that the hands that built that strong fort had not dug for and found both gold and diamonds.

And he determined, if possible, to find some also.

Unluckily they had no mining-tools, neither spade, shovel, nor pick-axe.

But Frank was a boy of infinite resources.

"Why not make miners' tools?" he said. "We have chisels and hammers and what not, and there is a tree growing yonder that is as hard as iron!"

"What! Another happy thought, Frank?"

"Yes, Duncan, my brave old captain, and I haven't got half-way to the bottom of my mine of happy thought yet."

Well, picks and spades were now actually fashioned, partly by tools, partly by fire. And then the boys set to work with a will to open the old mines.

They had worked for a whole week, but without success, when one evening a loud and awful trumpeting told them that elephants had arrived on the plains below, or were passing through the country of the cannibals for pastures new.

"What a splendid chance for sport!" cried Frank.

"Yes," said Conal. "Fancy bagging a few elephants. Tuskers, don't they call them, brother?"

"Yes, in India the males are so named, but here in Africa both sexes have tusks, though those on the he ones are bigger, and are said to be better ivory."

It was determined, therefore, to march against the elephants next day, and neither Conal nor Frank could sleep very well for thinking of it.

Now, though I have no desire to be hard upon my heroes, I must say that I am not sorry for what happened, because elephants–next to our friend the dog–are probably the wisest and most innocent animals in the world.

When, therefore, Duncan next forenoon killed a lady elephant and Conal wounded a bull, the lady being his wife, it was no wonder he should lose his temper and charge right down on the lad.

To fly was impossible. There was no refuge anywhere. But Conal did attempt to retreat. He stumbled and fell, however, and next moment the awful foe was upon him. A less brave boy would have fainted, but there was no such weakness about Conal, though he felt his hour was come, and Duncan, who was fully eighty yards away, could not assist him. He put his hands to his eyes to avoid being a witness to the dreadful death of his brother, which now seemed inevitable.

The wounded monster had dashed forward trumpeting, but, once alongside, though blood was jerking from a wound through one of his eyes, he attacked immediately. He knelt beside the boy's prostrate form and attempted to tusk him. The terrible snorting, blood-streaming head was close over him. But, with the quickness and cuteness of a professional footballer, Conal rolled himself between his legs, and now the brute attempted to squash him to death with his knees, and Conal managed, strange to say, to avoid each stroke.

It was really a tussle for life, and, unable to bear the sight any longer, Duncan came rushing on now towards the scene of conflict, apparently determined to die with Conal if he could not rescue him.

The boy seemed to be dead, and was almost under the elephant. But Duncan took steady aim, and the bullet put out the poor beast's other eye. He staggered to his feet now, and, stumbling and trumpeting as he went, made directly back to the herd.

Conal was bruised and sore, as well he might be, but otherwise intact, and the two hunters now made for higher ground.

Now I do not know the reason for what followed. I can but guess it, and give the reader facts. Only, when the great bull regained the herd, which, by the way, numbered only about a score, he fell, or rather threw himself down in front of his companions.

"Kill me now," he seemed to plead. "My mate is dead, and I am blind and in pain. Put me out of my misery."

Next moment the killing had commenced. The bull never winced nor moved, and his companions trode him to death before the eyes of their human persecutors.

"Let us go back to the fort," said Duncan sadly. "A more heartrending sight I never have seen. Conal, I have shot my first and my last elephant."

When they told Frank all the sad story, he, too, agreed that elephant-shooting is not sport, but the cowardly murder of one of the most noble animals ever God placed on earth.

————

Strange to say, every day that Conal was left at the fort to do the watching and the cooking, little Lilywhite, as he now called the wee savage lassie, came to pay him a visit, her eyes all a-sparkle, her two rows alabaster teeth flashing snow-white in the sunshine.

Nor did she ever come without a fish, which she herself had caught. So tame did she become, that he could trust her to attend to the fire, for which she gathered wood, turn the fish with a wooden fork, and gather and cook the sweet-potatoes or yams.

Of course Frank chaffed Conal unmercifully about this lady-love, Lilywhite, of his.

But Conal cared nothing for that.

"You can't do less than marry her, you know," he said one day. "It would be cruel to trifle with the young lady's affections."

"I shouldn't think of doing less than leading her to the altar," said Conal. "I

should hate a breach of promise case."

They still paid many visits to the king, but though he frequently asked for "goo-goo" (wine), no goo-goo was given him for the present.

At last, oh joy! news came from the far-off outer world. For Carrambo returned.

A little thinner he looked, but maintained the same nonchalant air.

He handed Duncan a letter, and as it was written in a bold English hand he tore it nervously open.

"Flom de skipper of de *Pen-Gun*," said Carrambo. "When I see de gun-boat lie in de ribber of Lamoo, I say to myse'f, 'No good bother wid the Sultan.' Den I go on board. All boo'ful white deck; all shiny blass, and black big gun; and de men all dress in sca'let and blue. Oh, dam fine, I 'ssure you. De skipper he take me below and give me biscocoes and vine till I not can dlink mo'.

"He read the letter. He den write anoder and soon I go again."

"Ten thousand thanks, Carrambo. You have earned your rifle. My brother and I shall teach you to shoot, and if when we make an attempt to leave this wild land, you will come with us to be our guide to Lamoo many another present you shall receive besides."

Lieutenant-commanding H.M.S. *Pen-Gun* wrote most cheerfully and hopefully to Duncan, assuring him that he himself would steam at once eastwards, and if he was successful in finding the unhappy mariners, they should be immediately taken off, tenderly cared for, and landed at Zanzibar, to wait under the charge of the British consul until a ship should arrive and take them back to England.

"Thank God for all his mercies," exclaimed Duncan piously, after he had twice read the letter aloud to his comrades.

Then all hands shook Carrambo's hard fist, and noting that there was something more than usual on the tapis, Vike must jump up and go dancing all round the fort. But he made his way to the water to finish up with, for racing in Africa is hot work.

Carrambo received his rifle, and that very evening received also his first lessons in the use thereof.

Carrambo was indeed a proud man now.

He held his head erect and said to Duncan:

"We'n King Slaleema he want some piccaniny kill fo' to eat, I bling dat piccaniny down wid one lifel bullet plenty twick."

Then Duncan lost his temper.

He was a strong young Scot and athlete, and Carrambo, tough savage though he was, had no show after Duncan got hold of that rifle.

He wrenched it from his hand before anyone could have said "knife".

”You yellow-skinned scoundrel!” he cried, ”you do not touch the rifle again till you promise me on your honour–though I don’t suppose that weighs much–that you will never attempt to shoot, even at the king’s bidding, any child he wishes to destroy.”

Carrambo glanced one moment at Duncan, then, turning on his heel, walked off.

The boys thought he was gone for good; but presently he returned, holding in his hand a long thin root.

This he cut in two with his knife.

He placed one half in his bosom, and gave the other to Duncan.

”Carrambo plomise. Suppose Carrambo bleak dat plomise, den de debbil he cut Carrambo’s heart in two, and take he away to de ver bad place.”

This was an oath, though of a curious sort, but Duncan knew that this strange being would keep it, and so the rifle was restored.

The Somali now went off to see the king, but he first and foremost delivered the rifle into Conal’s keeping.

Presently he returned laughing.

”De king–ha, ha!–he want to see you, foh tlue.”

”Yes?”

”And he vant to see you vely mooch dilectly.”

”Well?”

”Well, ha, ha, ha!” Carrambo evidently couldn’t contain himself, ”he wants one bottle of goo-goo.”

The royal command was obeyed by Frank and Duncan, Carrambo accompanying them to carry the goo-goo.

The king laughed like one possessed when he saw the bottle, and made various signals for a drink, holding out the same old nutshell.

It was three times filled, and Carrambo himself was also presented with a nutful.

Then the king waxed communicative, and, after calling upon two of his wives to fan him, and two more to cool Duncan and Frank down, he said he would tell them the story of the fort, and Carrambo himself stood by to translate.

The story was certainly a sort of a ”freezer”, as Frank termed it, but Carrambo, I have no doubt, gave a very literal translation thereof.

Let me carry it on to the next chapter please.

CHAPTER VI.–AN INVADING ARMY–VICTORY!

"Goo-goo!" said the king.

Duncan shook his head as he sat on a block of wood near to him, and just where he could get a good look of his sable countenance.

"He say," Carrambo interpreted, "no goo-goo, no stoly."

But Duncan was firm. Savages are very like children in some of their ways, and Duncan knew it. He shifted the bottle farther back therefore.

"No story, no goo-goo. Tell him that, Carrambo."

The fat king grinned, slapped one of his wives, grinned again, and began to talk.

As translated by the Somali, the story ran somewhat as follows:–

"I king now. My fadder he king once. My fadder fadder he king befo'; my fadder fadder fadder he king too. 'Twas when fadder fadder fadder king. De boys all in de bush one day, make much fine spolt. Shoot de monkey fo' eat; shoot de lion and de spot-cat (leopard) all wid bow and arrow. Some dey kill wid spear.

"Plesantly, all as soon as nuffin, plenty much noise and shout in de bush. Den fire-sticks flash and plenty thunder, and one, two, tlee, nine, ten (the king was counting on his fingers and could go no further) ob my fadder's fadder's fadder's poor people lie down and bleed red, and die. But dis not all. De king's people fight, and many mo' all kill and bleeding, and so de king make peace.

"De white men dey take many wives away, den take de country, and de king he king no mo'. All de same he not conquer. Plaps he take revenge one day. You see plenty soon.

"Well, de white men wid de thunder-sticks, they build big big house–big, big, stlong, stlong, all de same as you young gemmans lib in now. So dey settle down and lib heah.

"Dey go spolt plenty in de bush, and kill much wild beast. Sometimes de wild beast–ha, ha!–kill dey, and chew up foh tlue.

"But all de same de white folks stay one two year. Dey gadder much glass

stone–"

"These," said Duncan, "were evidently diamonds."

"Were they like these?" said Frank, taking the splendid diamond from his pocket and holding it up.

"All same, all same, de king say," cried Carrambo.

"Dey go heah and dere all ober de mountain to seek fo' de glass stone, and many dey find and buly."

"Bury," cried Duncan, showing some little excitement. "Ask him, Carrambo, where the glass was buried. Wait a minute though," he added. "Frank, give him another nutful of goo-goo."

Frank did as he was told. Carrambo put the question, and the king's eyes sparked.

"What does he say, Carrambo?"

"He says de debbil guard the glass stones, and if he tell any white man where they lie, den de debbil take he plenty quick."

The king was offered a whole bottle of goo-goo if he would only divulge the secret, but he was obdurate.

"No, no, no," said Carrambo. "He say de debbil no catchee he foh many many long year yet."

Then his majesty proceeded with the story.

"De white men now begin to dig holes in the earf. Dey want to make hole for bad men to come up throo, and cut all de throats of my fadder's fadder's fadder's pore people.

"De ole ole king he fink, 'I no can stand dis no mo'." "Den one night in de dark folest he gadder his people togedder.

"He 'splain to dem all 'bout de big hole. 'Plaps,' he say, 'eben to-mollow de bad white debbils come up out ob de hole, and catchee us foh tlue.'

"And de ole king's people shake wid anger.

"'Kill, kill, kill, and eat the fire-stick men!' dey cly.

"Dey shake moh and moh wid anger, den de ole king say, 'Vely well, all kill'.

"Dat night, out on de plain de moon he shine. De moon hab one big led (red) face. He look down, he smile and laugh. 'Kill, kill!' he seem to say. 'Kill de white debbils and dair wives, kill de white piccaninnies too. Make much fine bobbery, much fine kill. I not tell.'

"But de white men dat night say, 'O, de black cannibal not come dis night. Too much moon!' So dey dlink goo-goo, and moh and moh goo-goo. Den dey sing–ha, ha!–den dey sleep.

"De moon he smile all de same. And the black man wid plenty spear and knife lie quiet in de bush.

”But the king cly now, and all at once de savage jump up.

”Plenty much branch ob tree dey cut.

”Plenty much fire.

”Den wid gleat stones de door fly all bloken, and de white men come out to fight.

”But too much goo-goo–he, he, he!–and dey fall and fall all in one big heap. Much blood. Much kick and scream!

”Not one alibe now, only de white women and de piccaninnies.

”Ha, ha, ha, how de king do laugh. My fadder, fadder, fadder, dat is.

”But now all de women am drag out, and all de piccaninny. Der troats–”

”Horrible!” cried Duncan. ”We will have no more. Give the old pig of a king more goo-goo and let him go and sleep it off. I have never heard, Frank, of a more diabolical massacre in my life.”

Said Carrambo now: ”What foh you open again de old debbil pits? Some night dey people rise and murder you tree pooh souls all same as dey kill and eat de odder white folks long, long ago. Carrambo know well. Dese sabages not hab de debbil pits open. Oh, no!”

”There is much truth,” said Duncan, ”in what Carrambo says. It would be a pity to leave this land of gold and diamonds without knowing for certain whether the mines are worth working; but I move that we leave the devil pits alone for a time until we try to reclaim these savages just a little.”

”I should reclaim them off the face of the earth,” said Frank.

”That is impossible, and were it not, we should only be reducing ourselves to their level. That is not the doctrine of Jesus Christ.”

So the ”debbil pits”, much to the joy of the king, were partially refilled. But just as they were shovelling in the earth, brave broad-shouldered Duncan struck something with his wooden spade.

”Hillo!” he cried, ”what have we here?”

Frank and Conal rushed up to see.

”Why, a nugget. And, boys, it is six pounds weight if an ounce.”

The excitement of the three young fellows now knew no bounds. They shook each other by the hand; they shouted aloud for joy, and then, while honest Viking capered around them, they raised their voices in song, Duncan leading in an old song, sung by the gold-diggers of California in days long, long gone by.

But a right cheery one it was.

”Pull away, cheerily,
Not slow and wearily,
Rocking the cradle,[1] boys, swift to and fro.
Working the hand about,

Sifting the sand about,
Looking for treasures that lie in below."

[1] The machine used for washing the "pay-dirt".

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Another and a truly British cheer. The savages far down below heard it and trembled.

"Plaps," said Carrambo, "dey tink all de debbils was let loose now foh tlue."

"Here, Carrambo, hurry down with a bottle of goo-goo to the old king, and tell him we are his friends now, and if an enemy comes we will help to fight him."

Carrambo came back the same evening rejoicing, but laughing his wildest.

"Plenty much fun!" he cried. "De fat king he dlunk, ebber so much dlunk. He do nuffin' now. Jus' lie on him back and sing. Ha! ha! ha!"

The boys went back to their fort to dine. Carrambo would be their friend, though to the savages he pretended not to be so. He was even entrusted with a revolver, and thus a right happy man was he.

Well, when Duncan talked about the invasion of an enemy he might have been speaking for speaking sake; but one evening a runner brought the alarming intelligence that a rich neighbouring tribe were preparing to fall upon and extirpate the inhabitants of these glens and hills.

"And a jolly good job too," said Frank. "We'll stand by and look on, won't we, Duncan?"

But Duncan shook his head.

"A promise even to a savage is sacred, Frank, and we must fight."

The Umbaloomi, as the invading tribe was called, did not keep the tribe long waiting.

They came in force on the very next day. The king himself marched along with his warriors, mounted on a huge elephant, while behind him, on another, rode his two favourite wives. The Umbaloomi potentate had promised them a great treat, and many heads with which to decorate their huts.

Now Duncan had determined that Goo-goo, as the fat king had come to be called, should attack the invaders first. If he failed to conquer, then Duncan, with Frank, Conal, and Carrambo, meant to give them a startler, and something like a surprise.

This was all as it should be, and the fight, as seen from the bush where our heroes lay *perdu*, was a fearful one.

What a horrible melée! What a murderous massacre! No wonder that the wild birds rose in screaming clouds, or that the echoes of the forest were awak-

ened by the bedlam shrieks and howlings of the gorillas!

"Now for it, lads!" cried Duncan, as he noticed that Goo-Goo's side was losing. "Steady aim. Give 'em fits, but don't fire until I tell you."

Nearer and nearer to the foe they crept under cover of the mimosa bushes.

"Fire!"

At the word a rattling volley was poured into the very midst of the foe.

Another and another, for the rifles were repeaters.

"Hurrah!" shouted Carrambo, "the fire-debbils have come!"

Whether the enemy understood him or not I cannot say, but they were staggered, and backward now they reeled in a confusion which is indescribable.

The elephants waxed wild, and, instead of flying, charged right towards the Goo-Goo tribe.

And the invading king, with both his wives, were instantly slain.

That completed the victory.

But after victory came the rout, the slaughter, and utter extermination of the invaders.

With the details of the fearful feast that followed, I should be sorry, indeed, to sully my pages.

So the curtain drops on a sadder scene than ever I trust any of my readers shall ever behold.

There was another feast, however, of a somewhat less terrible kind. For on the slain that night the beasts of the forest held high revel.

And thus ended the invasion of King Goo-Goo's land.

CHAPTER VII.–THE MYSTERIOUS STONE.

For the first time since their arrival Goo-Goo paid the boys a visit of ceremony, on the day after the battle.

Carrambo had apprised them of the honour they were about to be the recipients of, and they stayed at home in consequence.

Goo-Goo was very pompous–and precious little else.

He was elated with his victory, but did not hesitate to admit that Duncan

and his comrades had contributed a little to the turn of the tide of battle.

Goo-Goo was even boastful

Goo-Goo was also very thirsty.

So Duncan invited him to come inside.

He refused. Not even a whole bottle of his favourite sherry would have tempted him to cross the threshold of the fort, because–as he explained through Carrambo–"plenty much debbil lib (live) in one hole below de floor".

But he made very small work of a nut-shell of goo-goo that Duncan presented to him with his own hand.

Then he explained why he had come. It was to offer to our heroes the two tame elephants that had been captured in battle.

Duncan nodded to his fellows, and the gift was accepted unconditionally, and that very day the great wise beasts were taken over.

A huge compound was erected for them in a bit of jungle not far off; the king's men building it with their own hands.

Moreover, two men were told off to feed and care for the noble brutes, who soon became very great pets indeed, with all hands.

The larger of the two might well have been called immense or colossal. He seemed especially fond of Frank, and there wasn't a titbit Frank could think of that he did not bring to Ju-ju of a morning.

Ju-ju was certainly grateful. He had one very curious method of showing his gratitude, namely, by encircling the boy with his trunk and swaying him up and down, and to and fro.

"Gently, Ju-ju," Frank would say sometimes; "gently, Ju, old man."

Then Ju would set him quietly down and trumpet with delight.

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But as soon as it was dark, all was generally peaceful enough about the fort, for after a residence of some months in king Goo-Goo's country they had got quite used to the cry of wild beasts, and even the roar of lions did not disturb their slumbers.

But the nugget and the diamond–oh! these indeed. Duncan's eyes used to sparkle with delight as they were placed upon the table of an evening.

What possibilities did they not point to! What joy for the future seemed to scintillate from the diamond! One night something that the king had said during his visit to the fort suddenly flashed across Frank's memory.

He almost startled both Conal and Duncan by the eagerness with which he almost shouted:

"Cousins!" he cried, "I have the happiest thought that ever I had. Do you

not remember that the king refused to come into the fort because devils dwelt in a hole beneath the floor!"

"Yes, yes, he did say so."

"Duncan, those devils are diamonds, and, it may be, gold nuggets as well."

His comrades were thunder-struck apparently, but they admitted that in all likelihood Frank's surmise was correct.

"Then, boys," said Frank, "we shall open a devil hole right here where we sit."

This proposal was agreed to, and the work would have commenced the very next day had not a strange adventure happened to Frank.

It may be observed that mostly all the terrible adventures did happen to Frank. Some people are born unlucky, you know.

But next forenoon Duncan and he had gone towards the forest for the purpose of shooting hyenas, no great or very exalted sport, it is true, but they had become numerous and bold of late, and needed scattering.

Duncan had followed a wounded monster some distance for the sake of giving him his *congé*, when he came back—- lo! Frank was gone.

For hours and hours Duncan searched all that portion of the forest that he dared to enter, but in vain.

But he found his comrade's gun, and at some little distance his cap.

So he went sorrowfully home.

Further search was made next day, some of the bravest of Goo-Goo's native soldiers assisting.

But no more trace of the lost Frank could be found.

A whole fortnight went past, and he was mourned for as one dead, and even Carrambo gave up hopes.

Frank, he told them, must have been throttled by the gorillas and hung up in a tree.

But lo! and behold, one forenoon who should appear again *in propria persona*, but the laughing little Cockney boy himself.

By the hand he led a little long-armed hairy gorilla, that clung to him in terror when Viking began to growl.

Jeannie, as she was called, sprang trembling into Frank's arms, but he gently soothed her, and after having a cup of coffee he told his marvellous story.[2] It was briefly as follows:–

[1] This is no sailor's yarn, but founded on fact.

He had been captured by the awful gorillas, having been first stunned by a blow from a club. Then carried deep into the forest and up into a very high tree. There he found a shelter, quite a hut in fact, and far from being unkind to him, the gorillas fed and tended him every day, only guarding him at night.

"And this is my little pupil," he added. "Jeannie was given me to educate, I suppose; but early this morning the gorillas went off to do battle with some neighbouring tribe, and Jeannie and I slipped down the tree and ran for it.

"So here I am!"

"Heaven be praised!" cried Duncan with tears in his eyes. "You come to us as one risen from the dead."

"And what are you going to do with Jeannie?" asked Conal.

"Oh!" said Frank, "Jeannie is a sweet child. She shall go with us wherever we go."

"I hope," said Conal, "her parents won't come for her. It might be rather inconvenient."

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Two long months passed away, and our heroes were almost weary of this lonesome and wild land.

But they had not been idle all the time of their sojourn here. On the contrary, they had commenced to dig in the fort itself for buried treasure.

There was plenty of excitement about this, but for many a weary week no luck attended their excavations.

The excitement, however, was somewhat like that of gambling, and once begun they felt they could not give it up until they came to something.

So they dug and dug.

But all in vain.

They still spent much of their time in fishing and shooting, however. These were necessary sports. Food they must have.

A rather gloomy time arrived later on, when they had finally abandoned all hopes of finding any buried treasure. Tremendously heavy banks of clouds had rolled up from the horizon and overspread the heavens.

Then with terrible thundering and vivid lightning a short rainy season was ushered in. The stream became flooded, so that fishing was now out of the question.

But Conal's little Lilywhite visited the fort every day, and–though I cannot say where she found them–never came without a fish, while just as often as not she brought the boys a present of delightful fruit.

The rain-clouds were scattered at last, and soon the country all around

was greener and more lovely than ever the wanderers had seen it, while the most gorgeous of flowers seemed to spring into existence in the short space of twenty-four hours.

Sport began again once more.

They still paid visits to the king, but these were not so welcome now to his sable majesty, for the goo-goo was all finished, and he cared for little else–with, of course, the exception of human flesh.

Conal was exceedingly well developed, and under certain conditions he would not have objected being reminded of this.

But when the king one day felt his arm and said something which Carrambo translated: "Ah, num-num! you plenty good to eat," Conal hardly relished the verdict.

But the great elephants became a source of much pleasure to everyone. They were so perfectly tractable and manageable that the boys often went across country with them.

This was practice, and Duncan had a meaning for it.

Well, one day as Frank was entering the living-room of the fort, his eyes fell upon a curious mark upon a stone, which proved to be an arrow bent partly upwards. He followed its direction with his eye and on another stone found another arrow, then two or three more, and finally there was a square stone above the window with a cross over it, thus (cross symbol).

There were no more arrows.

Frank rushed out half frantic with joy.

"Duncan! Conal!" he shouted.

They were coming quietly up the hill.

"Come quick, boys, I've made a discovery!"

Then he led them in and pointed the arrows, and the stone marked with the (cross symbol).

"The diamonds are there," he said excitedly.

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The stone, however, was so firmly cemented in that it defied any ordinary methods to get it out.

So they determined to dine first, and go to work on it afterwards.

But no one could think or speak of anything else except their hopes of finding the treasure.

The boys had made cocoa-nut-oil lamps, and by the little flicker of light these gave, they now set about attacking the flint-hard cement in earnest. They chipped it out bit by bit, and hard, tedious work they found it.

But they succeeded at last, and stood silent and with a kind of awesome delight. For there before them was the glad sparkle of diamonds–a sparkle that seemed to dim the light of their poor oil lamp.

"Boys," cried Duncan, "our fortune is made!"

The diamonds, however, were but few–eight in all–but of great size, and apparently of high value, although the boys were no judges.

The hole where they had lain was carefully cemented all round, and besides the diamonds they found here two or three nuggets of gold, and a tiny brick of cement about six inches by four by three.

Just one word was engraved thereon.

That word was evidently Spanish, though partly obliterated–ABRIR–

They hoped to find diamonds inside.

They did not, however; only a piece of parchment, on which many words were written which they could not understand.

They were just putting in the stone again, after carefully storing away the diamonds and parchment, when Viking sprang up fiercely barking, and with his hair erect all along his spine.

At the same moment they perceived a terrible face at the open window.

It was that of a savage in his war-paint–the lips were painted red, great red rings were around each eye, and cheeks and brow were daubed with spots of white.

"Idle curiosity, I suppose," said Duncan, "or a trick to frighten us. For now that the goo-goo is all exhausted, I believe the king would like to see the very last of us."

When Carrambo came next day they told him about the terrible face at the window.

Carrambo considered for a moment, then shook his head.

"Dat no good," he said. "You close all de debbil pit?"

"Yes," said Duncan.

"Dat bad sabage see somefing, sah! He go tell de king. King make bobbery soon. Plaps cut all you troats, like he kill pore leetle Lilywhite to-mollow."

"What!" cried Conal, "kill Lilywhite! If he dares, I'll put a bullet through his fat and ugly phiz."

"Poh Lilywhite!" continued Carrambo, as if speaking to himself. "But," he added, "s'pose you come to-night, I take you to de hut. Lily come back heah; den not die."

Conal at once agreed, and Carrambo came for him some hours after sunset.

The butchering hut was at a considerable distance from the main village, and, strange to say, unguarded. But they crept in and found Lily bound hand and foot.

She was speedily rescued, and in an hour's time they were all back at the fort.

But Conal had seen something that night which seriously alarmed both him and his companions.

The savages were squatted out-of-doors around fires, and all in war-paint.

They looked fierce and terrible.

Very busy, too, were they, sharpening horrid knives and spears.

This was fearful intelligence to bring back, and Carrambo, being asked what it all meant, did not hesitate a moment in replying.

"It mean dis," he said; "dey tink dat you open de debbil hole again. To-mollow dey come plenty twick and cut all you troats, foh shuah."

"Carrambo," said Duncan after a pause, "can you guide us towards Lamoo?"

"Ees, sah, I guide you foh tlue!"

"Without having to go through that gorilla-haunted forest?"

"Ees, sah, ees," was the quick reply. "I myse'f not go t'loo de folast."

"Well, Carrambo, send for the men who attend to the elephants, and we shall start this very night."

The two elephant attendants were very sincere, and when Duncan promised them clothes and beads and many fine gifts, they readily consented to go with them to the coast.

So packing was commenced without a moment's delay.

And none too soon, as things turned out.

CHAPTER VIII.–THE BATTLE AT THE FORD.

Even Viking seemed to understand the seriousness of the situation, for while he watched with great earnestness, not to say joy, the hurried preparations for departure, he never once barked.

All was ready at last, and just a little before midnight a start was made.

Nothing had been forgotten, and luckily the two men who had charge of the elephants knew how to load these. On the first, a very large animal, was a low but strong howdah, in which were packed the instruments, spare arms, and

ammunition, food, cooking utensils, rugs and wraps, &c. It was built low and of wattle, not only for lightness' sake, but that it might not catch against any trees they might have to get under, during their long and dangerous march towards the coast.

But a strange and curious band they formed, had anyone been there to behold them. Let us count and see how many souls they numbered. Six men in all, Lilywhite and Jeannie, Viking, and the two elephants. Eleven all told.

Why, I do believe I have given a soul to each. But just listen, boys, while I, the author of this book, make a confession. The generality of us poor upstarts have an idea we are immensely superior to the beings we are all so fond of calling "the lower animals". We imagine–the majority of us, I mean–that these were all made for our use, and they are badly used accordingly. What utter rot, and what a shame! There is no great gulf fixed between us and them. Their minds differ but in degree, not in kind, from our own, and if we have a future existence, be sure and certain that your pet dog or cat that died not long ago–and whom you cannot forget–will live again also. Nothing good ever dies–only sin!

So I certainly should not think of withholding a soul from those two marvellously-wise elephants, and of course Viking was more wise and far higher in the scale of intellect than many and many a drink-besotted Englishman or Scotsman, whom I see making heavy weather and steering badly as he marches homewards of a Saturday night.

Well, Lilywhite and Jeannie occupied the other howdah, and I'm sure I should not be mean enough to deny the possession of a soul to either.

Pray, love the lower animals, boys, for, mind you, the same God who made you made them.

"Oh happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty may declare;
If springs of love gush from your heart
You bless them unaware."

Well, this good Somali, Carrambo, was to be depended upon. That was evident. He was indeed a strange being in many ways, and held every life but his own very cheap indeed, but he was going to be faithful to his employers. He had a certain code of morality which he considered binding on him, else he could have robbed our heroes and delivered them into Goo-goo's hands very easily indeed. But he had no such thought.

He now walked in front, as the elephants felt their way with cautious steps adown the hill towards a ford in the stream, an attendant close by the head of

each.

Carrambo did not mean to take his party through that demon-haunted forest, but by a more circuitous and safer route.

Well was it for all that they had abandoned the fort and the hill at the time they did; for the savages had worked themselves up into a kind of murderous frenzy, and determined to attack and slay the whites long before daybreak.

On looking behind them while still some distance from the ford, our boys could hear their bloodthirsty and maniacal howls, and knew they had reached the fort and found it empty.

And then they knew they were being pursued!

The full moon had now arisen, and its pure silvery light was bathing hill and glen and forest. Even the distant snow-clad mountain-peaks could be seen sparkling like koh-i-noors in its radiance.

But here is the ford, and it is quickly negotiated. None too quickly, however, for hardly are they on the other bank ere the savages had reached the stream.

A battle was now unavoidable.

So all wheeled.

Spears were thrown in a cloud from the other side, but each one missed its mark.

"Steady now, men!" cried Duncan. "Be cautious! Fire!"

It was a rattling and a most destructive volley they poured into that savage mob. The terrible shrieking increased, but it was now mingled with howls of pain and impotent rage.

Five more volleys were fired, and as the natives were crowded close together the effect was fearful.

They reeled, they turned, and were about to seek safety in flight when one painted wretch, more brave than his fellows, waving his spear aloft, dashed into the river and commenced to cross.

More than one were following, and had they succeeded in getting over, the fight would doubtless have had a sad and speedy ending.

But now something happened that at once turned the tide of battle.

Vike had hitherto been only a very interested spectator of the fight, but now, seeing that savage half-way across, with a howl and a roar he leapt into the river, and quickly ploughed his way towards him.

All the courage that the cannibal possessed deserted him at once, when he saw what he thought was an evil spirit coming towards him. With a yell that quite demoralized his companions behind, he dropped his spear and tried to rush back.

A man cannot walk in deepish water so quickly as a dog can swim, and so Viking seized him before he had gone many yards.

Do savages faint, I wonder? I never have seen one "go off", as old wives call it, and require smelling-salts and burned feathers. Nevertheless this fellow became insensible when Vike proceeded to shake him out of his skin.

So the dog towed him in.

Carrambo drew his knife, and would have killed him at once but for Duncan's interference.

"No, no," he shouted, "spare his life, Carrambo!"

Firing had never slackened, and now as the enemy gave way it was more rapid and deadly than ever. But in a few minutes' time there was not a savage left on the opposite bank. Only the dead, only the wounded tossing and writhing in agony in the moonlight.

There was still a chance, however, of the attack being renewed. For this reason: King Goo-goo had adopted a plan of his own for punishing those who were defeated in battle, and invariably the first half-dozen men who returned were clubbed to death. Goo-goo was rather partial to brain fritters, and cared very little whose brains contributed to this little *entrée*.

And now the march was resumed.

Sometimes the little band was so close to the forest that they could hear the howling and din of the gorillas, at other times they were stretching over arid tracts of a kind of prairie land. Nor were these silent and uninhabited. Beasts of the desert were leopards and even lions.

The former fled on sight, the latter did not dare to attack.

Yet when one leapt up almost close to the foremost elephants, and began slowly to retreat with head and tail erect and growling like loudest thunder, bold Carrambo levelled and fired. The bullet must have pierced the splendid beast's heart, for he at once dropped dead in his tracks.

Carrambo was indeed a proud man now, and although the boys knew the shot was only a fluke, he was patted on the back and permitted to wear the laurels he had won.

Yes, but Carrambo had the skin as well as the laurels. And this, after rubbing the inside well with a kind of earth he found near by, and which is often used as a preservative, he stowed it away in one of the howdahs.

On and on they marched all that night, often having to cross small rivers and streams, or journey long distances by the banks of larger ones, which proved unfordable, till at daylight they found themselves on a tree-covered little hill, and here Duncan called a halt for refreshment and for rest.

All were tired, except little Lilywhite. For with the child-gorilla in her arms she had slept most of the way.

She was helped down. Both the shes in fact, and Jeannie soon jumped into Frank's arms, caressing him in the most affectionate manner.

”Behold how she loves her father!” said the boy laughing.

”Well,” he added, ”I would rather have one little hairy gorilla who loved me, than a thousand hairless bipeds of men who didn’t give shucks for me.”

To a stream close by ran Lily, and in a surprisingly quick time returned with fish enough for all hands.

And these, one of the men having lit a fire, she speedily cooked.

Lily was, indeed, a jewel in her own way–though a black one.

After a hearty breakfast, of which fruit formed a not unimportant portion, rugs were spread in the shade, and leaving Carrambo on guard–his time for rest would come afterwards–all lay down to snatch a few hours’ sleep.

Lily squatted at Conal’s head, fanning him with a broad leaf, till finally he slept.

Jeannie curled up beside Frank, and Viking with Duncan. So everyone was contented and happy.

I do not think the boys ever slept more soundly than they did under the cool green shadow of those trees, and when the sun had gone a certain distance round, and Carrambo, acting on his instructions, awoke them, they felt as fresh as meadow larks, and quite fit to resume the journey.

”I hope we won’t have any more fighting, boys,” said Duncan.

”Why not?” said Frank the Cockney. ”I think fighting is good fun.

”Especially,” he added, ”when you win.”

”That’s just it, Frank; but the bother is, that if we are hard pressed, the other fellows will win next time, because our cartridges would soon be all expended.”

”Let us hope for the best,” said Conal. ”We have plenty of ammunition for our revolvers.”

”True, Conal; but when you are near enough to shoot a savage with a revolver, he is near enough to scupper you with his spear.”

They encamped that night close to the banks of a sandy-bottomed river, which Duncan said looked as if it contained gold. And once more Lilywhite assumed the responsibility of cooking.

Then, keeping the fire still alight to keep wild beasts at bay, the boys left Vike on watch and curled up.

In spite of the warm attentions of scores of very musical mosquitoes they slept long and soundly, and daylight was almost breaking before they awoke.

On and on they journeyed day by day, and many and strange were their adventures among wild beasts and wilder men. But although our heroes always showed a bold front when trouble seemed rising, they found it safest and best, if possible, to make friends with the different tribes they came into contact with.

The beads they still possessed went a long way to cement friendship.

They had been on the road for over a month, for they did not hurry, know-

ing the advantage of harbouring their strength in case of having to fight for dear life itself.

One day about this time, after crossing a high and desert upland, they descended a hill and found themselves among a very strange people indeed, and in a strangely beautiful country.

As the inhabitants were friendly, Duncan resolved to stay with them for a time, that all might recruit their health, and that Conal might regain his.

The poor lad, in a skirmish with some savages that had taken place farther inland, had been wounded by a poisoned arrow, and although he appeared to have recovered, the wound had broken out afresh, and he was now in so low a condition, that he had to be carried on a bed of grass made for him in one of the howdahs.

A cool grass hut was set apart for the poor white boy, as the natives called him, and Lily was a most attentive nurse to him. But indeed all the people near by were unremitting in their attentions, not only to Conal, but to everyone in the camp.

This was a country of villages, scattered here and there wherever the water was most plentiful for themselves and the cattle they owned. But scattered though these were, and but sparsely inhabited, yet if the tocsin of war sounded, they speedily flocked to one standard to repel an invading foe. It was a real republic, owning no king or chief, and placing the law in the hands of their elders in virtue of their age and wisdom.

As there was perfect peace and good understanding between these simple pastoral natives and Duncan's little band, the latter were very happy indeed.

Conal got slowly well, but all hands had to remain in this happy land for nearly six weeks before the journey could be renewed.

And poor little Lilywhite stayed here for better or for worse.

Here is how it happened. Shortly before Duncan was about to resume the march towards the big river and city of Lamoo, Carrambo one day came forward, leading a tall and rather ungainly young savage, and addressed Conal as follows:–

"Dis dam young rascal he say you all de same's one fadder to Lily. He want to mally Lily. He gib tree goat foh Lily."

Here he struck the suitor under the chin.

"Hol' you head up, Choo-ka!" he cried. "De white man no eat de likes ob you!"

Choo-ka would have blushed if he hadn't been black.

"Is Lily willing?" said Conal, laughing.

"Oh ees, sah, she plenty willin' 'nuff."

"Well, consider it all arranged."

So Conal lost his nurse, and Choo-ka gained a bride. As, however, the girl

had taken a great fancy for Jeannie, Frank gave the gorilla to her as a wedding gift, and Duncan presented her with a string of beautiful beads.

And so they were married, and no doubt lived, or will live, for my story does not date back any very extraordinary number of years, happy ever after.

The journey was now resumed, and with the exception of some adventures with pythons and alligators, they reached the river without much further trouble, and in a few days after this struck the outlying huts of the large Arab city of Lamoo, and were received in the most hospitable way, not only by the Portuguese, but by the Arabs, and even by the sultan himself.

A question now arose as to what they should do with the elephants. It would be impossible to take these to sea with them.

But a very wealthy Arab merchant offered to buy them, and after a considerable deal of haggling he became the purchaser, and the boys were paid in gold.

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They had half expected to find a gun-boat here, but were disappointed.

So after waiting for a whole week, they paid poor Carrambo off, after telling him that they meant to revisit his country another day and open the "debbil pits" in spite of old Goo-goo, then took passage in a large Arab dhow for Zanzibar, with all their goods and chattels, their gold and diamonds.

Two weeks after this there landed on the white sandy beach of that place, three as jolly and as happy boys as anyone ever shook hands with.

CHAPTER IX.–THE VERY IDENTICAL BIRD.

Zanzibar! The spotless sand, on which the blue waves broke lazily into foam, sparkled like silver in the rays of the noonday sun. Higher up were the walls of many a palatial-looking building, consulates, most of them, and each one flying the flag of its country, and with, here and there, gigantic cocoa-palms waving their dark-green foliage between.

Conspicuous above all, the palace of the Sultan, with above it the blood-red Arab flag.

There were many ships in the roadstead; some men-o'-war too, but none belonging to Her Majesty the Queen.

This was slightly disappointing, for our heroes had been told that the little gun-boat was here, and they longed with an indescribable longing to know if their dear friends had been rescued alive from the uninhabited island.

During their voyage from Lamoo–the town lies about fifteen miles inland, and on the banks of the river, and is navigable to vessels of light draught all the way up–the Arab skipper had been both courteous and kind to the young fellows, and when, after the landing of their chattels, they bade him good-bye, they felt truly sorry to part with him.

There were plenty of willing hands on the beach to carry their goods to the hotel. Indeed, they would have carried the boys themselves, and Viking too, had a few pice been offered them as a reward.

But here is the hotel. It has not been a long walk, albeit the narrow streets have been–as they always are–crowded to excess with Arabs, Parsees, Hindoos, Portuguese, Indians, and niggers of every size and shade. Through this crowd they had to jostle their way with many a shout of "Sameela! Sameela!" For neither the streets themselves nor those who fill them have the sweet savour of–

"A primrose by the river's brim".

Yes, here is the hotel, and though the street in front is fairly wide, the hostelry itself is not over-inviting. But the landlord, who happens to be a Frenchman, gives them a right hearty welcome, and asks them immediately what they will have for "deenir".

"Oh," said Duncan, "what can we have?"

"Eberytings, gentlemans; soup, feesh, entree, curry."

"Ah! let us have some real curry. No, not any soup; we want solids. And as soon as you are ready, we are."

"Sartainly, gentlemans."

"And now," continued Duncan, "we would like to see our bedrooms."

"I have put your luggash all in one big, big room. Three beds it have, 'cause I know young officers like to talk much togedder."

"Very thoughtful of you indeed!"

"And dare is a bat'room just off it."

"How luxurious!" cried Frank. "Why, boys, we are back once more into civilization!"

They certainly enjoyed their bath, as well as a change of raiment.

"Now, if we had some coffee," said Frank "we–"

He had no time to complete the sentence, for just as he was talking, the landlord re-entered the room smiling.

He bore, on a level with his forehead, a tray with a pot of the most fragrant coffee, flanked by cups.

Besides this, there was a huge basin of goat's milk.

"For your beautiful dog, sir officer."

Duncan thanked him most heartily, and Viking seemed most grateful also.

"I sincerely love all de animiles in de world," said the Frenchman. "One gentleman stay here now. Hab been stay many mont's, with one leetle blackamoor servant. He possess one very curious bird. Ha, ha! 'Scuse me laugh. But ven I play on my little flute, den the bird and de boy dance. It is all so funny!"

The boys exchanged glances.

"Can it be possible?" said Duncan.

"I declare," cried Frank, "I feel fidgety all over."

"And I," said Conal, "am cramful of nerves."

"Landlord, can you introduce us to the bird and the boy?"

"Sartainly, gentlemans. Follow, if you will be so kind."

He led them down and down a flight of stone stairs that seemed to have no end.

Then the young fellows followed him into a large room.

"Gol-a-mussy, gemmans, has you risen again flom de grabe?"

It was little Johnnie Shingles, and none but he.

"Grunt, grunt! squeak, squawk, and squawl!" Up rushed Pen himself.

Yes, the very identical bird!

"Wowff!" cried Vike, entering fully into the excitement.

"Wowff, wowff, wonders will never cease."

Then out came Monsieur T.'s flute.

And Monsieur struck up a merry lilt.

Up went the great bird's flappers, stretched out were Johnnie's arms, and next moment they were whirling together round and round that stone-floored room, in surely as daft a dance as ever yet was seen.

It was just at this moment, and while all three boys were convulsed with laughter, that a third person put in an appearance, and now for a time everything else paled before the pleasure of once more meeting, and grasping the hand of brave Master-mariner Talbot himself.

————

What anyone said for the matter of a minute or two is not worth recording, consisting, as it did, chiefly of ejaculations, and little brief sentences of wonder and pleasure.

"Of course, you will dine with us, captain," said Duncan at last, "for we have much to tell you, and your story will all be perfectly new to us."

"Another plate, landlord."

"Sartainly, sah."

To say that this was a happy meeting would be to print a mere commonplace.

It was more than happy, but it was agreed that they should not tell each other the story of their adventures, till dinner had been discussed.

Their anxiety, I may tell you at once, reader, did not prevent our heroes doing ample justice to the delightful little meal that the Frenchman had set before them.

He waited upon them himself, too, and presently informed them that dessert was laid upstairs. Duncan opened his eyes wonderingly.

"What!" he cried, "do you serve dessert in the bedrooms?"

Talbot laughed.

"No," he said, "not in the bedroom, but on the upper deck. Follow me, and see for yourself."

CHAPTER X.–THE WELCOME HOME.

Up and up and up! They were getting heavenwards, and presently found themselves in quite an aërial paradise.

On the roof, but covered with awning it was. From this place they could see all over the city and catch glimpses of the blue ocean itself, to say nothing of the greenery of the far-off woods.

But here were splendid palms in pots, flowers of every hue, orange and lemon trees, whose cool green foliage refreshed the eyes that gazed upon them. Settees or lounges also, mild cigarettes on the tiny tables, iced sherbet, mangoes, pine-apples, guavas, and great purple grapes.

And presently a waiter brought cups of black coffee, of far better taste and flavour than any they had ever drank on British soil.

"What a treat after our hard and terrible life in the land of the gorilla!" This from Conal.

"But, my dear boy," said Frank, "the gorilla is really a gentleman compared to the cannibal king Goo-goo. But now, Captain, we are all anxious to hear your story."

Captain Talbot did not reply at once. He simply smiled and smoked, leaning well back in his rocking chair with his eyes on the curling wreaths, just as he used to do of an evening on the deck of the dear old *Flora M'Vayne*.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, my brave lads, but the real truth is that I've got no story to tell.

"You know," he continued, "what our sufferings were before you left."

"Alas! yes," said Duncan.

"They grew worse instead of better after you sailed away. More men died. Died, I think, of fever brought on by thirst. I, too, should have died but for that child Johnnie. I do believe he brought me a portion, and a large one too, of his own allowance of water.

"Then it seemed to be all darkness, all night, and when I opened my eyes at last I was no longer on the little island but at sea.

"I was lying under an awning on the quarter-deck of a tiny British man-o'-war called the *Pen-Gun*."

"But," said Duncan, "soon after we left you we sighted and communicated with a big steamer, and as far as we could make out she started off to your rescue."

"Well, she came not near us. But as long as I live I shall never forget the unremitting kindness and attention bestowed upon us by the officers of the *Pen-Gun*."

"And Morgan the mate?"

"Morgan has gone to England with the remainder of my crew, but after hearing from you through the captain of the bold *Pen-Gun* I determined to wait and wait, and had you not put in an appearance in another week's time, I was about to undertake an expedition into your charming King Goo-goo's land and effect your rescue by hook or by crook.

"That is all my little story; and now for yours."

————

It was late that night before Talbot and his boys parted, for the tale of their adventures took a much longer time to tell.

Every word of that story was of the greatest interest to the listener, but

when they told him about the gold and the diamonds, and showed him their specimens, he must needs jump up from the chair and once more shake hands all round.

"Boys," he said, "you have made your fortunes. I do not mean to say that it is here, but there are more diamonds and there is more gold where these came from.

"Leave it to me, lads, but you may give yourselves the credit of being brave pioneers to a country bound, in the not far distant future, to be one of the richest and greatest in the world.

"As soon as we get back once more," he continued, "to the shores of Britain, we shall set about forming a great company, and this will speedily open up a road to your Goo-goo land, and open up the "debbil pits" also, in spite of all that wretched king shall urge against it."

"But we shall not call it Goo-goo Land," said Frank.

"No? Well, I shall leave the naming of it to you."

Then something very faint in the shape of a blush suffused the young fellow's cheeks for a moment.

"You know, Captain Talbot," he said, "my dear cousins know also how fond of little Flora I am!"

"Oh! she won't be so little by the time we get home," said Conal, laughing.

"Well, anyhow, when she grows bigger and grows a little older, she shall be my wife.

"Oh! you needn't smile; she has promised, and so after her I am going to call our newly-discovered El Dorado–Floriana."

————

We are back again in bonnie Scotland, and it was Conal himself who exclaimed, when bonnie Glenvoie, for the first time since coming home, and as he was nearing it, spread itself out before him:

"O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand!"

They had driven a great part of the way to Glenvoie, but had been seen while still a long way off coming down the glen, and not only the stalwart chief himself, but Frank's father, with about half a dozen dogs, came out to meet them.

Many of the dogs were old hill-mates of Viking's, so that was all right, and a glorious gambol they had.

But just as the principal actors and most of the company crowd the stage before the curtain falls, so they do at the end of a story.

If I tell you that the reunion was a happy one, I can do but little more.

Poor to some considerable extent both Colonel Trelawney and the laird were, but I speak the honest truth when I say that had their brave boys returned penniless and hatless, they would have been sure of a hearty Highland welcome under the old roof-tree.

Yes, Flora had grown very much too, but she had also grown more beautiful–I do not like the word "pretty"–and as she bade her brothers and her cousin welcome home, the tears were quivering on her eyelids and a flush of joy suffused her face.

And soon our young fellows settled down, and all the old wild life of wandering on the hills and of sport began again. For indeed the boys needed a rest.

Little Johnnie Shingles and that droll Old Pen took up their abode in the servants' hall, but were often invited into the drawing-room of an evening, when, to the music of Frank's fiddle, the boy and Mother Pen brought down the house, so to speak, by their inimitable waltzing. This was fun to everybody else, and even to Johnnie himself. But while whirling around in the mazy dance, with his head leant lovingly on the nigger-boy's shoulder, Pen never looked more serious in his life.

A great ball was given shortly after the return of our heroes, and Glenvoie House looked very gay indeed.

While dancing that night with Flora, Frank took occasion to say to his partner, in language that was certainly more outspoken than romantic:

"Mind, Flo, you and I are going to get hitched when we're a bit older."

"Hitched, Frank?"

"Well, spliced then. You know what I mean."

"She looked down to blush, she looked up to sigh,
"With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye."

I throw in these two lines of poetry just because they look pretty, and I sha'n't charge my publisher a penny for them either. But, to tell the truth–a thing I always do except when–but never mind–Flora neither blushed nor sighed.

”That means getting married, doesn’t it?” she said. ”Well, we’ll see; but do keep step, Frank!”

And this was all the wooing.

But years have fled away since then. Five, six, nearly seven of them.

The company was started. The parchment the boys had found in the old fort gave the clue to the situation. The ”debbil pits” were opened, and are, even as I write, being worked with success.

The boys are men!

Boys will be men, you know!

They are fairly wealthy, and happy also. Not that wealth makes people happy, only it helps.

Frank is spliced.

And where do you think Flora and he spent their long, long honeymoon? Yes, you are right. In Floriana, in the country of gold and diamonds. The land of the great Goo-goo.

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