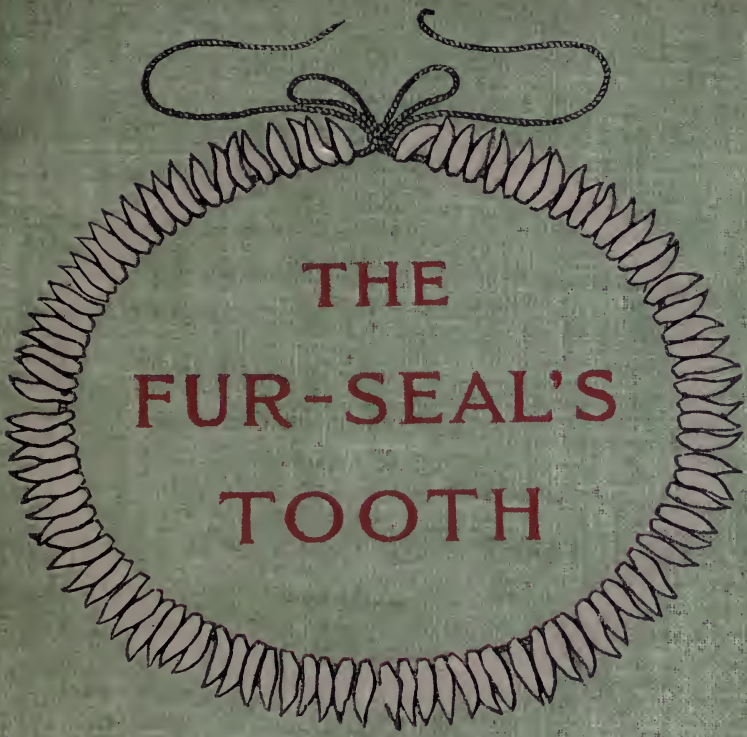
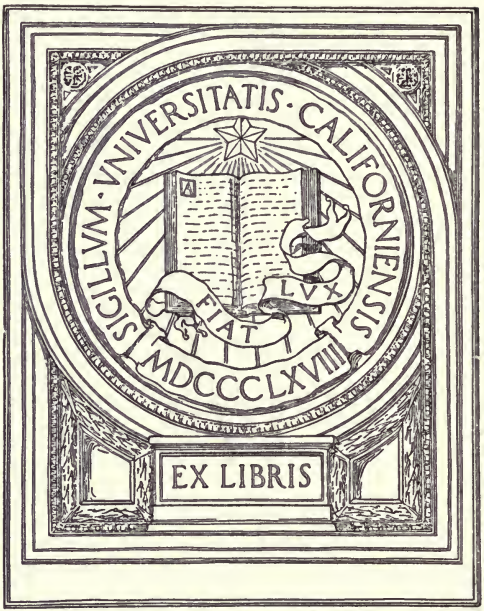


THE FUR-SEAL'S TOOTH

KIRK MUNROE


SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
FIAT LVX
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

Frederic Ullmann Jr.
282 – 48th Street,
Chicago,
Ill.

From Charlie,
Christmas, 1899.

"'THE FUR-SEAL'S TOOTH!' HE CRIED"

THE FUR-SEAL'S TOOTH

A Story of Alaskan Adventure

BY

KIRK MUNROE

AUTHOR OF

"DORYMATES" "CAMPMATES" "CANOEMATES"
"RAFTMATES" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK AND LONDON

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1899

ALASKA

A land of rock, dipped in the brine
Like a brown finger pointing toward the west

* * * * *

The little craft flies fast to the fair bay
Whose waters kiss the feet of Sitka town

H. E. H.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

ALASKA AND BEHRING SEA

THE FUR-SEAL'S TOOTH

CHAPTER I

PHIL AND SERGE

Although the sun was shining brightly over the pleasant little British Columbian city of Victoria, and the air was filled with the flower scents and bird notes of late spring-time, at least one of the strollers along its busy streets was so decidedly unhappy that he paid no attention to sunshine, birds, or flowers. Life just then seemed a very serious and perplexing affair to Phil Ryder, and, to quote an expression that he himself had often used in regard to others, he looked as though he had lost his last friend. If any one in all that strange foreign city had been intimate enough with him to suggest this to Phil, he would have replied, "And so I have, for I have lost my last dollar, and in a strange country I don't know of any better friend than the good old Yankee dollar."

How it all happened was this way: Phil was a New England lad, and hailed from the quaint old Connecticut town of New London. He was freckle-faced and curly-headed, not very tall, but so broad-shouldered that no one ever thought of asking him if he was travelling for his health. What with rowing, paddling, and sailing, skating and coasting, playing football until

he became centre rush and captain of his school team, going on long, delightful outing trips to the Maine woods with his father, who had been the most painstaking of teachers in the useful arts of shooting, fishing, and camping out, this boy had early developed into an all-round athlete of more than ordinary attainments. With additional strength had come an increase of self-reliance, until at the age of seventeen he was about as independent and manly a young fellow as one would be apt to discover in a long day's journey.

But this very independence often led him into trouble. Like most self-reliant boys, he was inclined to place an undue value upon his own knowledge and acquirements, and to make light of those of his elders. All except his own father, whom Phil regarded as the very wisest and best of men, and whose example in all things he was most anxious to copy.

And yet from this very father the boy inherited his worst fault, which was that of carelessness. Although his aunt Ruth, who had brought him up from the babyhood in which he lost his mother, made a point of providing him with a place for everything, and had almost hourly, during his whole life, impressed upon him the importance of keeping things in their places, he never yet had learned the lesson she strove so earnestly to impart. He would say, "Yes, Aunt Rue, I'll remember," give her a hearty kiss, and rush away with an instant forgetfulness of all she had just said. He lost and mislaid not only his own things, but those of other people, until at length no one who knew him would lend him anything of value. He forgot messages, and could not be trusted to go on errands. He was forever in hot water on account of broken engagements, and though naturally a bright student, was always in trouble over his lessons on account of having

to spend most of his study hours in searching for mislaid books. Generally they were found flung into a corner of the stone wall bounding the football field, tucked carefully under the steps of the boat-house, or hidden away in some other unlikely place that no one but he would have thought of, and any one but he would have remembered.

His son's heedlessness was Mr. Ryder's greatest trial.

"Philip! Philip! why won't you overcome it for my sake, if not for your own?" he would cry; and the boy would answer:

"I do try, Pop; indeed I do, but it's no use. I was born that way, and I expect I shall be that way so long as I live. After all, I am the one who suffers most from it."

"Hold hard, Phil! There's where you are wrong. No one can truly say that, for no one can ever know how far-reaching may be the consequences of his own actions. With every single act of carelessness you cause more or less anxiety and inconvenience to those about you. Sooner or later, just so sure as you fail to conquer this wretched habit, it will lead you, and probably others with you, into some unhappy predicament, from which I pray you may escape without the accompaniment of a life-long sorrow."

After a talk like this Phil would reform for a day or two. He would present himself to his astonished schoolmates as a model of punctuality, and would show an attention to trifles that was painful in its minuteness. These efforts at reform were always accompanied by such an unnatural restraint of manner, so severe an expression of countenance, and so stern a refusal to engage in any of the frivolities of life, such as football or even the minor sports of the season, that there was always a general rejoicing when in some sudden excite-

ment the young penitent forgot his vows, and relapsed into his old jolly, heedless self.

Even to Aunt Ruth these brief seasons of austere reform were periods of trial and anxiety lest by some unguarded act or word she should fail to set her nephew a proper example. So she, too, secretly breathed a sigh of relief when the day of penance was ended, and she could resume her accustomed way of quietly picking up and putting things to rights, after one of Phil's sudden inroads through the house in search of something that must be found at once, because all the fellows were waiting. He knew he left it right here! and what could have become of it?

Phil's father, Mr. John Ryder, was a mining expert, whose business of examining into the condition of mines, and reporting upon their value for the information of capitalists or stockholders, kept him travelling pretty constantly to all sorts of out-of-the-way nooks and corners of the world. Phil considered it the most delightful business in which one could engage, and longed for the time to come when he might follow in his father's footsteps. He even thought it a little hard that the latter would never allow him to go as his companion upon any of his distant journeyings, but insisted on his attending strictly to school and his studies.

Mr. Ryder always so arranged his affairs as to spend a part at least of every vacation with his boy, and then they took those long trips into the woods that, up to this time, had formed the most delightful episodes of Phil's life. At other times, when he was at home, Mr. Ryder devoted himself so entirely to his son, and entered so heartily into his pursuits and plans, that a very strong bond of sympathy existed between them, and the boy was never so happy as when in his father's company.

Now it happened that the very year in which Phil was to graduate from the New London High School found his father engaged on an important and prolonged survey of mining property in the distant and little-known land of Alaska. It was a great disappointment to both father and son that the former could not be present at the latter's graduation. At the same time there were compensations in a promise of glittering possibilities held out by Mr. Ryder.

"If you will only graduate within five of the head of your class, Phil, you shall come out and spend the summer with me in Alaska," he had said, and the boy knew that he meant it.

What a prospect was thus held forth! and what boy in his senses would refuse to work hard for such a reward as that? A whole summer in the distant wonderland of the far north, amid Eskimos and Indians, volcanoes and glaciers, wolves and bears, seals and salmon! Every fellow in the school, and nearly every boy in town, for that matter, knew of the splendid prize for which Phil was striving, and they watched him either with feelings of mean envy that secretly hoped he might lose it, or with an honestly outspoken hope that he might win it, according to their dispositions.

These New London lads knew, or thought they knew, a great deal about Alaska; for had not Serge Belcofsky, a young Russo-American from Sitka, attended one of their schools for a whole year? He had come on an Arctic whaler that had touched at Sitka on her homeward voyage. With an uncommon perseverance, and a longing for a better education than he could obtain at home, the lad had worked his way to New London on this whaler, had with infinite patience and self-denial worked his way through a whole year of schooling, and was now working his way back towards his distant home on a fishing-schooner that had been pur-

chased in New London by parties in Victoria, British Columbia, for use on the Pacific coast.

During his whole year of schooling Serge Belcofsky had been terribly homesick, and his intense longing for his far-away northern home had made it seem to him a veritable paradise. Thus from the outpourings of his full heart the other boys had learned that, while in certain portions of Alaska there were such things as cold weather, ice, snow, fogs, and in summer-time incredible swarms of the most blood-thirsty mosquitoes, and other unpleasant features, these were almost unknown in Sitka, which was by far the loveliest spot on the face of the earth.

There, according to Serge, for some reason not made quite clear, though probably on account of the heat from surrounding but perfectly harmless volcanoes, perpetual summer reigned, flowers bloomed incessantly, and the woods, always green, were filled with the most beautiful birds. Sitka itself was a great and wonderful city, containing a castle, a cathedral, a fort, a parade-ground for the troops always stationed there, a battery of heavy guns, a governor's residence, stately men-of-war in its harbor, Indians in its suburbs, and a thousand other attractive features. Besides all this, there were gold mines of fabulous richness on every side; in fact, the lofty mountains rising just back of the city were full of gold.

This last was the statement that the boys most doubted until it was confirmed by Phil Ryder, who happened to overhear both it and their incredulous exclamations. He knew, of course; for was not his father acquainted with all the gold mines in the world? and had he not even now gone out to set the seal of his approval on those of Alaska?

Phil did not know Serge Belcofsky very well; for though the latter was of about his own age, he was so

"IN FACT, THE MOUNTAINS BACK OF THE CITY WERE FULL OF GOLD"

far behind in his studies as to be in a lower class, and so infinitely removed from a fellow of the former's high attainments. At the same time, as the young Russo-American did not understand any of the games played by the Yankee boys in whose company he found himself, and was far too busy earning his daily bread to learn them, the leading athlete and ball-player of the school regarded him with a sort of pitying indifference. He did not altogether ignore him, and even on occasions listened with the smiling indulgence of a superior to the young Sitkan's marvellous tales of his native place.

For this, Serge, who regarded Phil with an admiration that almost amounted to reverence, was deeply grateful, and when the young hero of the ball-field went so far as to back up his most doubtful assertions, and so establish them as truth beyond further question, his gratitude knew no bounds. In a vague effort to express it, he ventured to present Phil with his most valued possession—it was the ivory tooth of a fur-seal exquisitely carved, that had been given to his father many years before, as a token of highest esteem, by a chief of Chilkat Indians — one of the most powerful and warlike of Alaskan tribes.

Phil deigned to accept this gift, and even went so far as to wear it attached to his watch-chain, to the unfeigned gratification of his sincere admirer and would-be friend. Although Phil's watch was but an inexpensive one in a nickel case, and its chain was of steel, this new ornament attracted so much attention from all who happened to note it, that the lad at length began to value it rather highly himself, and to study with interest the curious devices with which it was so beautifully carved.

CHAPTER II

WINNING THE PRIZE

Serge Belcofsky had departed early in the year, and Alaska was lost sight of by most of the New London boys amid the throng of more immediate, and to them important, interests that crowded thick and fast into their lives. These were Billy Bow's birthday party, the opening of the gymnasium, the launch of the new yacht, theatricals for the library fund, the last skating-match of the season, and a score of other things demanding their undivided attention. Phil Ryder managed to take some part in all of these, though he was by no means so active nor so much of a leader as formerly. That Alaska trip was to him a living reality, and he was striving for it with all his might. Some of the other fellows were provoked that he should neglect sports, in which he had so excelled, for the mere purpose of studying, while there was still so much time left in which to attend to that.

"There are two whole months yet before graduation," argued Al Snyder one day, when he was vainly endeavoring to persuade Phil to undertake the coaching of the nine. "Two whole months! And yet here you are grinding away as though examinations were to begin to-morrow. Catch me working like that!"

"Oh yes, you would," laughed Phil, "if you had the prize held out to you that I have."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Al. "You know you can go on that trip no matter where you stand. Your governor only put it that way to try and make you work

"IT WAS THE IVORY TOOTH OF A FUR-SEAL"

a little harder. It's just one of his tricks. They're all up to them."

"It is nothing of the kind!" retorted Phil, hotly. "And you don't know what you are talking about when you speak in that way of my father. He never said anything in his life that he didn't mean. If I am *inside* of number five I'll go to Alaska, and if I'm not, I won't. That's all there is about it. But I mean to be inside, and as I can't make sure of that and watch the nine at the same time, you see it is impossible for me to do what you want."

So Phil stuck to his books, and all of a sudden there came a letter from Mr. Ryder stating that, as his work was drawing to a close sooner than he had expected, and as he was more desirous than ever of having his son visit the wonderful country in which he was located, Phil might come out to him at once, without waiting to graduate, provided he stood better than number five in all his classes.

Here was a startling proposition! Did he stand better than five everywhere? The boy rapidly ran over his position in his several classes. He was within the magic number everywhere except in mathematics, and there he stood at exactly five.

"I could have stood better than five there too, if I had not given my chance to hump-backed Jimmy, the other day," he reflected, though he was too honorable a fellow to even have hinted at such a thing aloud. He knew it, and he thought Jimmy himself knew it, for he had seen a quick flush rise to the cripple's pale cheek when it happened; but he didn't believe any one else did, nor did he intend they should. Still, what could he do under the circumstances? He was not *inside* of number five in *all* of his classes.

The struggle was too hard a one for the boy to make alone, and he carried his perplexities to Mr. Blake, the

head-master of his school. After the latter had read Mr. Ryder's letter, and listened attentively to Phil's presentation of the facts, he laid his hand on the lad's shoulder, and said,

"Phil, do you remember the sentiment with which you headed your final composition of last year?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy; "of course I do. My father gave it to me, and I shall never forget it."

"What was its exact wording?"

"'Regard honor as more precious than life itself; for without the former the latter is valueless,'" repeated Phil, in a low tone.

"You would hardly care to sacrifice your life for the sake of this trip?"

"No, sir, nor my honor either!" cried the lad, with a brave tremble in his voice. "So, as I cannot say with perfect truth that I am inside of number five in all my studies, I will write to father to-night, and tell him the proposed trip must be given up."

"Spoken like the honest, true-hearted Yankee lad that you are, Phil Ryder!" exclaimed Mr. Blake, grasping the boy's hand, and holding it tightly clasped. "Stick to that principle through life, and you will have mastered the secret of all true success. But let us look into this matter a little further. I happen to have noticed a private transaction between you and lame Jimmy the other day. If you had not, as I believe purposely, made the same mistake that he did you would have gone above him, and would now stand number four instead of number five in geometry. Now, on account of that I have a proposition to make. While I am sorry not to have you graduate with your class, I know that your father has good reasons for wishing you to visit Alaska this summer, while with you the desire to join him there is very great."

"Indeed it is, sir!"

"Well, then, if you will give me your word of honor not to divulge a word of their contents, I will place the forthcoming examination papers of your class in your hands. If you can satisfactorily answer ninety per cent. of their questions, you will stand safely within the number named by your father, and I will give you a certificate to that effect."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried Phil, with such a revulsion of feeling from deepest disappointment to brightest hope, that even the sunset seemed suddenly to have taken on a new and more radiant splendor. "Of course I promise! and, of course, I shall be only too glad to try the examinations!"

"Very well," said Mr. Blake. "Come to my study to-morrow evening directly after tea, and we will make a beginning with English literature and Latin. In the mean time don't mention to any one, excepting your aunt, what you are doing."

How thankful Phil was that he had so used his time as to be able to approach this trial with confidence, and how hard he did work during the next three days in revising his studies of the previous year! What anxious minutes he spent at the conclusion of the third evening of examination, while Mr. Blake looked over and marked the last paper, the one in mathematics, that he had just handed in.

"It's all right, Philip!" the head-master finally announced, "and I do most heartily congratulate you on your success. This last paper brings your average up to ninety-three per cent., which, as compared with the class standings of the past ten years, lands you well within the limit named by your father. I therefore feel no hesitation in giving you that rank, and you may, with a clear conscience, start on your journey just as soon as your preparations can be made. Goodbye! God bless you! I trust you will have the glo-

rious time you expect, and which you have so honestly earned. I also hope that in the autumn you will return to us with a richly increased knowledge of our great country, and particularly of that vast Northern territory concerning which there is still so little general information."

If the last three days had been busy ones for Phil, they had been equally so for his aunt Ruth, for in that short time she had been compelled to do all the making ready and packing, for which she had expected to have as many weeks. In these few days, during the infrequent intervals that her nephew spared from his studies, she felt it her duty to stock his mind with stores of good advice and oft-repeated warnings against his besetting fault. He listened with what patience he could command, but finally laughingly declared that it would be necessary for him to live at least a hundred years to put all her precepts into practice.

"Oh, but Phil!" she exclaimed, pausing in the packing of his trunk to emphasize her remarks, "you are so young and so careless, and the journey before you is so filled with terrible possibilities! I declare I don't know but that I ought to go along to take care of you."

"Nonsense, Aunt Rue!" retorted the young athlete, at the same time picking up the slight figure of his anxious relative and swinging her, ruffled and indignant, into his father's great leathern arm-chair; "if I'm not old enough and big enough now to take care of myself, I never shall be. Of course I know that I have been careless at times, and heedless, and all that. I can assure you, though, that my careless days are things of the past, and that hereafter no graybeard of your acquaintance will afford a more perfect model of prudence than your humble nephew. As for you! well, the mere idea of a dear little thing like you wan-

dering away out there among the Siwashes to protect a fellow of my size is prodigiously absurd. It surely is."

"Absurd or not, Master Impudence, you'll see the day more than once, before this trip is ended, that you'll wish your old aunty was at hand with a little of her common-sense to help you out of some reckless scrape or other. Mark my words, you will."

"All right, Aunt Rue, I'll mark down your words as you suggest; mark 'em down to half-price. I'll also make a note in my log-book of every time I get stranded for want of your counsel. Then when the cruise is over I promise to make a full confession, and humbly beg for those chunks of wisdom that shall enable me to steer clear of all such rocks in the future."

"Get away with your foolishness, you young scapegrace!" cried Aunt Ruth, jumping down from the arm-chair and attempting a box on Phil's ear, which the boy skilfully dodged, as a preliminary to resuming her packing.

At length all was in readiness, the last lingering good-byes were spoken, and the boy was fairly launched on his travels. All his young friends, and apparently half the town besides, were assembled at the station to see him set forth. His trunk was checked, he carried an overcoat on his arm, in his hands were a stout travelling-bag, and in a canvas case the beautiful Winchester that had been his father's last birthday gift.

There was a grand shout of farewell from the fellows as the train finally moved out from the station, and Phil answered it with a wave of his hat from the rear platform of the last car. Then, going inside, he sat down to reflect upon his glorious prospects, that seemed to stretch away in a limitless haze of exciting adventure and daring exploit. If he could have had but one real glimpse of the varied hardships and bitter

experiences held by the immediate future, I am afraid he would have shrunk from them as did the poor little bear who found himself alone in the world with all his troubles before him. Fortunately for our hero's peace of mind, his vision was just as limited as is that of every one of us, who can have no possible inkling of what each coming day may bring forth.

CHAPTER III

AN UNDESIRABLE ACQUAINTANCE

According to the plan laid out by Mr. Ryder, Phil was to make his long journey across the continent by the Canadian Pacific Railway, which not only offers the most direct route to Victoria and a connection with the Alaska steamers, but passes through some of the grandest and most interesting scenery in America. Mr. Ryder's letter contained explicit instructions concerning each step of the journey, and Phil had read these over so often that he knew them by heart. It had also contained a bank check for $200, which formed an ample allowance for the proposed trip. In regard to this Mr. Ryder had written: "Above all, my boy, take care of your money, and never display it before strangers. You know we are not wealthy people, and though the sum enclosed is not a large one, its loss and replacement would cause me a real inconvenience."

"Of course I will take care of it," said Phil, when he and his aunt Ruth read this paragraph over together, and she added her caution to that of his father. "I may lose some other and less-important things now and then, but money is something I'm likely to keep a pretty solid grip on, and I'd like to meet the man who'd dare try and take it from me."

Here the sturdy young fellow glared about him as fiercely as though the room were filled with robbers, with whom he should take the greatest pleasure in trying conclusions.

In New London, Phil's ticket could only be pro-

cured as far as Montreal, at which place he was to purchase another that would take him to Victoria, check his trunk to the same destination, and engage his sleeping-car berth as far as Vancouver. This latter city is the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific, is situated on the mainland bordering Puget Sound, and is seventy miles by water from Victoria, which is on the island of Vancouver.

Before leaving home, Phil's money, in the shape of bank-bills, was placed in the new alligator-skin pocket-book which was Aunt Ruth's parting gift, and thrust carefully into the young traveller's inside vest pocket. There, in spite of his remonstrances, his aunt fastened it securely with two stout safety-pins.

Phil had taken the journey to Montreal so often with his father that he felt entirely at home in the Canadian metropolis, and knew just what to do when he reached there early on the following morning after leaving New London. With quite the air of an old traveller, and a slight feeling of contempt for the fluttering anxiety of those who were about to undergo their first experience with customs officers, he handed both his check and the key of his trunk to the Windsor Hotel porter, requested him to send the trunk to the Canadian Pacific station after it should have been examined, and stepped into the waiting hotel 'bus, with his mind relieved of all further anxiety concerning that portion of the business. As the overland train would not leave until evening, he now had the whole day before him, and was consequently free from hurry or worry of any kind.

After a capital breakfast, to which he devoted an hour of his ample leisure, he strolled into the great rotunda. Here he wrote a note to his aunt Ruth on the hotel paper, and felt imposed upon by being obliged to pay three cents for a Canadian stamp with which

to send a letter out of the country, into which a two-cent American stamp would bring it. This was so clearly an extravagance that Phil decided to deny himself the luxury of letter-writing until he should come once more within the lines of the United States mail-service. Having settled upon this plan for saving money, he purchased a silver souvenir spoon, the handle of which was surmounted by the Canadian beaver, and mailed it, together with his letter, to his aunt Ruth.

Phil argued that though this might appear extravagant, it really was not; for in return for all her kindness he owed something to his dear aunt, whose hobby was the collecting of souvenir spoons. Besides, if he neglected this opportunity for the securing of one of those beaver spoons, he probably would not meet with another.

This transaction had hardly been finished when the hotel porter, with a touch of the hat that drew a quarter from Phil's pocket, handed him the key of his trunk, and announced that it awaited him in the Canadian Pacific station. So Phil strolled down to the superb building that rears its massive granite front like that of a mediæval castle a short distance below the Windsor, bought his ticket, and checked his trunk to Victoria. Then, for twenty dollars more, he engaged a lower berth in a sleeping-car that would run to Vancouver without change.

These expenditures reduced his available cash to a one-hundred-dollar bill and a twenty. As the latter would be needed for meals, etc., *en route*, he tucked it into a vest pocket, but the larger bill he restored to his pocket-book, which now looked so flat it was hard to realize it was not empty.

While he was struggling to recommit this to the security of its safety-pins, and the sleeping-car clerk was watching him with a slight smile that caused the

lad's face to flush, he became conscious that a young fellow, apparently a few years older than himself, was standing near, and regarding his precautions for securing his money with something very like a sneer.

Instantly Phil was seized with a hot indignation, under the impulse of which he blurted out, "Well, sir! I trust that I afford you sufficient amusement to excuse your rudeness."

"Excuse me," said the young man. "Were you addressing me? I am glad you spoke, for I see by your ticket that we are to be travelling companions together across the continent. My name is Goldollar—Simon Goldollar—and I am from New York. I presume you also are from the States?"

Completely disarmed by this polite speech, and feeling heartily ashamed of his own, Phil accepted the stranger's advances, and allowed himself to be drawn into a conversation. At the same time he was not at all prepossessed by the other's appearance or manner. Still, he reflected that if they were to be shut up in the same car together for the next five or six days, it would be much pleasanter that they should be on friendly terms than otherwise. So he told Mr. Simon Goldollar his own name, confided to him that he was on his way to Alaska, and they walked out of the station together.

"Going to Alaska, are you?" asked the stranger. "Taking the regular tourist trip, I suppose?"

"I don't know what the regular trip is," answered Phil. "I am going as far as Sitka."

"Oh yes, just to the edge of Alaska, and then you'll come away thinking that you know it all, like the rest of the tourists. If you'd studied the country as I have, you'd realize that Alaska is a mighty big place, and that you must spend months and thousands of dollars in travelling over it before you know much about it."

"Have you done that?" asked Phil, simply.

"Well, no, not exactly; but I'm expecting to in the near future—that is," he added, with a slight air of confusion, "I have particular reasons for wishing to take the trip, and if things work out all right I hope to be able to do it. By-the-way, I suppose you've laid in your supply of hardware?"

"Hardware?" repeated Phil, in a puzzled tone.

"Yes; wet goods, you know. Montreal's the very best place for providing the stock."

"I can't imagine what you mean."

Again a slight sneer flitted across Mr. Simon Goldollar's face as he explained that "hardware" and "wet goods" were but polite terms for liquor, with a flask of which every "travelling gent" should provide himself before going aboard a train.

"I don't see why liquor should be more necessary on board a train than anywhere else," said Phil.

"Nor I," replied Simon Goldollar; "for to me it's just as necessary in one place as another."

"And as I am not a 'travelling gent,'" continued Phil, "and have never touched liquor in my life, and don't ever intend to, I can't see why I should provide myself with a flask of it."

"How about being ready for your friends?"

"I am always ready for my friends, and glad to see them, and willing to treat them to the best of everything I may happen to have; but none of *my friends* have any more use for liquor than I have."

"You and your friends must be a precious spooney lot," muttered Simon Goldollar to himself; but aloud he said: "Oh, well, you are young yet, and not rid of your Yankee notions. Wait till you've been out on the coast a few months, and you'll sing a different tune."

"I guess not," replied Phil, stoutly. "For I'm sing-

ing the same tune now that my father sings, and he has been out on the 'coast,' as you call it, for a good many years, off and on."

"Well, you must admit that it's a mighty good medicine to have along, and a fine thing for sickness."

"Yes," replied the lad, dryly; "I have often heard my father say that liquor was one of the best things in the world for sickness; but that he would rather not be made sick in that way."

"I suppose your father doesn't smoke either?"

"Oh yes he does; he smokes a cigar every evening after dinner."

"Then of course you follow his example, and do the same thing?"

"Then of course I do nothing of the kind. I don't know what I may do when I become twenty-one years of age; but I gave him my promise long ago never to smoke even a cigarette until that time. Besides, I'm on a football team, and a fellow who smoked would be fired out of that quick enough, I can tell you. Now, as we are at my hotel, I think I will go in and write some letters."

Phil said this with the hope of shaking off the companion whose presence was anything but agreeable to him; but the other remarked:

"Oh! you put up at the swell hotel, do you? Well, I guess I'll go in and write a letter too."

"I didn't know you were stopping here. I didn't see you at breakfast," said Phil.

"No, nor you won't see me at dinner, either, unless some of my friends happen to give me an invite. All the same, I write my letters to the firm from here, and send in my expense bills from here. That's the only way to make money on the road nowadays. Charge up first-class hotel prices, live at restaurants, and pocket the difference. See? That is the reason I'm going

West by this route, too," continued Simon Goldollar, who seemed anxious to show off his smartness before this new and evidently very verdant acquaintance. "The scheme is to charge up the highest possible railroad fares, and travel on scalped tickets. Oh, it's a great racket! and the sooner you get onto it the better for your pocket-book."

"Thank you," answered Phil, in a tone that expressed as much of disgust as he could throw into it. "Whenever I find it necessary to make my living by turning 'road-agent,' which is what I suppose you mean by 'going on the road,' I will remember your advice; but now you really must excuse me if I leave you for a while."

With this, and without giving the other a chance to reply, the lad turned and left the hotel. He took a long walk through the city, and when he returned for dinner was thankful to find no trace of his late companion. "I've almost a mind to stop over and take tomorrow's train in order to avoid him," he said to himself; but reflecting that this would be cowardly as well as extravagant, he decided to adhere to his original plan.

CHAPTER IV

ACROSS THE CONTINENT

In his journeyings thus far it may have been remarked that our careless hero had been a model of prudence and forethought. About this time, however, his old habits began to assert themselves. Thus, before the end of the first day out from Montreal his belongings were so scattered from one end of the sleeping-car to the other, that its good-natured black porter was kept constantly on the alert gathering them up and restoring them to their owner. At the same time, by his cheerful disposition and obliging manners the young fellow made himself a universal favorite. Especially was this the case with the weary mothers, whose restless children he was always ready to amuse and entertain.

To these children the quaintly carved tooth that dangled from his watch-chain was a source of never-failing delight. It was also considered a great curiosity, and examined with interest by the older passengers, while Simon Goldollar, who managed to maintain an appearance of intimacy with its owner, asked many questions concerning it. "Was it not a witch charm? Did its engraved figures represent totems?" etc., to all of which Phil had to plead ignorance.

One day he detached it from its chain to give it to a fretful baby as a plaything. At the same time he gave his watch to another child. Then, attracted by a bit of scenery that was best visible from the smoking-

room at the rear end of the car, he went off and forgot all about them.

A few hours later one mother returned his watch to him; while the other said that, after her infant had nearly choked himself in trying to swallow the fur-seal's tooth, she had taken it from him and laid it on the window-sill of Phil's seat. In the mean time the berths had been made up for the night, and it was nowhere to be seen. Its owner good-naturedly said, "No matter, it will turn up again somewhere," and thought no more about it until the next day. Then a vigorous search was instituted for the missing trinket, but with no avail. It was not to be found, nor was it again seen during the remainder of the journey.

Phil felt badly over the loss of the fur-seal's tooth, because the universal interest it had excited led him to believe it more valuable than he had at first supposed. Also because of Serge Belcofsky, of whom it had been a constant reminder, and whose good qualities grew more and more apparent to our hero with the lapse of time and distance. He wondered if any one could have stolen the bit of carved ivory; but being of a singularly honest and unsuspicious nature, he dismissed this thought almost before it was formed.

So the eventful journey wore on, with each day more full of strange and wonderful interest than its predecessor. The scenery of the first day was an almost unbroken forest with queer settlements at wide intervals. It was rather monotonous, and to beguile the time Simon Goldollar induced Phil to join him and two others in a game of cards. The lad did not care much for the game, and only entered it rather than appear ill-natured or disobliging. When at the end of an hour he expressed a wish to withdraw, Simon Goldollar informed him that he could do so upon payment of the two dollars he had lost, as they had been play-

ing for a shilling a point. At this Phil sprang from his seat in a sudden fury.

"So you are a gambler, are you! And I have been led blindfolded into your trap!" he cried. "Very well, sir; there is your wretched money; and now, if you ever mention cards to me again, or in fact if you dare speak to me on any subject, I will knock you down." With this the lad flung two silver dollars upon the table and left the room, almost choked with the tumult of his feelings.

He heard Goldollar's sneering laugh and his remark of "Pretty loud crowing for a bantam, eh?" and he heard one of the other men say something about its being too bad; but he did not wait for anything more.

Afterwards both the strangers apologized to him for their apparent share in the deception, saying that Goldollar had told them before the game began that it was understood by all they were to play for money. The author of this unpleasant scene did not, however, see fit to offer any apology for his share in it, nor did he and Phil exchange aught save black looks for several days.

Our lad was too manly a fellow to allow an incident of this kind to affect him for long, and he was soon enjoying the trip as keenly as ever.

The second day was passed amid the rugged scenery of Thunder Bay and the northern shores of Lake Superior, greatest of fresh-water seas. It was followed by their arrival in the early morning of the third day at Winnipeg, the old Fort Garry of fur-trading times. This fort had played so conspicuous a part in the stories of Phil's boyhood that he gazed about him on all sides with an eager interest, and was disappointed to find the Hudson Bay Company's post of romance grown into a fair and wide-spread city.

Here, with the crossing of the Red River, the forest

country ended, and the treeless plains of Manitoba, once the range of countless buffalo, but now one of the greatest wheat regions of the world, began. As the train rushed across the vast breezy levels at an accelerated speed the far-reaching view with its myriad objects of interest was exhilarating in the extreme, and Phil gazed upon it for the greater part of two days without a trace of weariness. Here were old buffalo trails and wallows; there a fleeing band of antelope or a skulking coyote. Now a party of mounted Blackfeet in all the bravery of savage decoration would dash up to some little station at which the train was stopping. A few minutes later it would whirl past a cluster of their tepees looking exactly like the pictures of Indian camps he had pored over so often in his books. He saw cowboys, too, and great herds of cattle. He saw a vast wheat ranch, containing one hundred square miles of land, divided into fields of such size that in them the ploughing of a single furrow was a day's work for a man and team.

At length, during the morning of the fourth day, soon after leaving the brisk little city of Calgary, Phil caught a glimpse, far ahead, of something that caused him to rub his eyes and look again. It was high up and of dazzling whiteness. It could not be a cloud. No, it must be snow. Yes, it actually was a snow-capped peak of the Rocky Mountains. As the discovery burst upon him in all its magnitude Phil uttered a shout of delighted wonder that attracted the attention of every one in the car, and all the passengers crowded to the windows to look.

From this on all was excitement, which, as the wondrous panorama of glistening peaks was unfolded and uplifted, until finally the train plunged into their very midst, increased with each moment. Now an open observation-car was attached to the train, and as it

sped up the narrow valley of the crystal Bow, the ever-changing and ever-fascinating view was unobstructed. On they hurried, past Banff, with its sky-piercing peaks, its boiling springs, and its stately hotel; and past Laggan, the point of departure on horseback for the marvellously beautiful lakes of the clouds. Ten miles further on the Great Divide was crossed, and with a thrill our young traveller realized that the rivulet flowing beside the track was the head-waters of the Kicking Horse, a tributary of the mighty Columbia, and the first Pacific waters he had ever seen.

From here, for a hundred miles down the western slope of the Rockies, and over the majestic Selkirk Range, the scenery was so indescribably grand, so filled with lofty mountain peaks, fathomless gorges, gleaming glaciers, and foaming cataracts, that no words can tell of it, and even the enthusiasts of the observation-car were awed into silence. As for Phil Ryder, who had never even imagined anything so marvellous, he sat and gazed alone, and with swelling heart, at the wonders unfolded by each succeeding moment. The majesty of that day's scenery was so overpowering that he was actually glad when night came and hid it from his wearied eyes.

On the following day, which was to be his last on the train, the strange grandeur of the mighty Fraser Cañon was almost as bewildering as that of the mountains already left behind, and the lad drew a long sigh of relief when the train finally emerged from it, and entered the comparatively level country that stretched away to the western ocean.

At one pretty little station where the train stopped for dinner, Phil, having exhausted his change, was obliged to take the one-hundred-dollar bill from his securely hidden pocket-book. Simon Goldollar watched him, and when, in the haste of departure, the lad thrust

"'I SAID IF YOU SPOKE TO ME AGAIN I WOULD KNOCK YOU DOWN'"

both his wallet and the wad of bills he had just received in change into one of the pockets of his overcoat, instead of putting it into the place where his treasure had been kept, the former noted this action also. A minute later the overcoat was carelessly flung into a seat of the sleeper, while its young owner joined a group of passengers who had called to him from one end of the car.

At the last stop before reaching Vancouver, Simon Goldollar approached Phil, who was walking beyond the end of the platform. "Let's make up and be friends," he said, extending his hand. "I don't bear no hard feelings, and to prove it I'll put you onto a big scheme by which you can double your money in no time. Buy opium in Victoria, run it into Alaska, and—"

"Mr. Simon Goldollar," interrupted Phil, regarding the other with blazing eyes, "I once said that if you ever spoke to me again I would knock you down, and I never go back on my word."

With this the young athlete stepped forward with so threatening and determined an aspect, that Mr. Simon Goldollar, with one terrified glance, sought safety in precipitate flight, nor did he pause until he had gained the shelter of the train.

CHAPTER V

FIVE BULL'S-EYES IN SIX SHOTS

"It doesn't seem exactly the thing to frighten a fellow half to death just when he is making friendly advances to you," reflected Phil, as he watched the flying figure of Mr. Goldollar, "but what else could I do? I had to try and keep my promise. Besides, how dared he to insult me with such a proposal? The idea of suggesting that I should turn smuggler!" At this thought the lad's blood boiled with such indignation that he felt inclined to follow Mr. Goldollar, and still further impress upon him the lesson he had just received. Before he could carry out this intention, however, the train started, and he was obliged to let well enough alone, at least for the present.

As for Mr. Simon Goldollar, his feelings had received a much greater hurt than that with which his body had been threatened, and as he slipped into a seat in the smoking-car, as far as possible from the one occupied by Phil, his dark features were distorted with rage.

"I'll pay you for this outrage, very suddenly and with compound interest, you canting young hypocrite you!" he muttered, at the same time shaking his fist vaguely in the direction of the sturdy lad, against whom in a fair fight he would have stood no better chance than an infant. He did not re-enter the sleeper until after the train reached Vancouver, so that Phil did not see him again, and wondered without much caring whether he had not been left behind.

During the last few miles of that eventful overland

journey Phil was so busy gathering up his belongings, repacking his bag, and bidding farewell to those of his fellow-passengers who were to stop in Vancouver, that he forgot all about the scenery. Consequently when the train stopped for the last time, and the porter called out: "Vancouver! Change here for Victoria, Japan, and China!" it seemed incredible that the sparkling waters visible through the car window could be those of the Pacific Ocean.

They were, though, or rather they were the waters of Burrard Inlet, an arm of Puget Sound, on which the new but rapidly growing city of Vancouver is located. Just across the wharf, at one side of which the train had stopped, lay a great white clipper-bowed steamship, bearing the name in letters of gold *Empress of India.* She was one of the fleet of superb ocean flyers that form the Canadian Pacific's connecting link between America and Asia. The mere sight of this beautiful ship, and of the Japanese stewards and cabin-boys clustered on her snowy decks, made Phil feel as though he had indeed joined the great army of "globe-trotters."

There was but scant time, though, for romantic reveries concerning the Orient, for near the *Empress* lay the *Premier*, another though much smaller white steamer, waiting to convey to Victoria such passengers and mail as the train had brought.

This boat had hardly left the wharf, with Phil comfortably seated on deck, his bag and gun beside him, and his overcoat lying across his knees, before the excitable lad sprang to his feet and ran to the opposite side. He had caught a glimpse as the steamer swung of what he believed to be a canoe. Yes! it was—a genuine Haida dugout with projecting beaklike prow, and an Indian crew who were wielding queer-looking sharp-pointed paddles. It was precisely like the pict-

ures in books of British Columbian travel, and Phil recalled at once that it was fashioned out of one of the huge straight-grained logs of yellow cedar that are only found on that coast. He remembered, too, that after it had been laboriously hollowed out, and shaped

"YES! IT WAS—A GENUINE HAIDA DUGOUT"

with fire, adze, and hatchet, it was steamed by means of hot stones and boiling water, until its sides could be flared out so as to give it beam and stability. They are held in this position by means of crossbars; but the process renders the wood so liable to split if exposed for any length of time to a hot sun, that when hauled up on a beach the canoe must be entirely covered with mats or blankets, and while in use water must every now and then be dashed over its sides to keep them damp.

While Phil was watching this canoe, and wishing he were in it instead of on board a prosaic every-day steamer, a gentleman approached him holding something in his hand, and saying, "I believe this is yours?"

It was a pocket-book.

"I don't think it can be mine, sir," began Phil, politely, at the same time clapping a hand to the side where he was accustomed to feel every now and then for his precious money. An expression of comical dismay overspread his face. "Good gracious! yes it is, too!" he cried, extending his hand for his property.

"I thought it must be," replied the gentleman, with a smile, "for I saw it drop from your overcoat as you left your seat to come to this side of the boat. It seems to me, though, that an overcoat is hardly the proper place for carrying a pocket-book. One is so apt to leave it lying round."

"That is just what I think, sir," answered Phil, with a laughably rueful expression of countenance. "I didn't mean to leave it there, I can assure you, and didn't know that I had. The sleeping-car porter picked it up from the floor while I was doing up my things, and as I had my overcoat on I just stuck it into one of the pockets for a second, meaning to place it where it belonged directly afterwards. Then we got in, and with the confusion I forgot all about it. But I will put it away safe enough now, and I am awfully obliged to you, sir, for I couldn't well afford to lose what it contains."

Thus saying, Phil restored the wallet that his carelessness had so nearly lost to his inner vest pocket, and after a prolonged struggle succeeded in securing it there with his aunt Ruth's trusty safety-pins.

The gentleman watched this proceeding with an amused smile, but with words of commendation for

the safety-pin plan. "I am glad to see," he said, "that you are, after all, an unusually prudent and careful lad, for I feared you might be one of the heedless tribe, and might thereby get into trouble. May I inquire if you are going to stop in Victoria?"

"Only until the Alaska steamer comes along," answered Phil. "I am on my way to Sitka, where I am to join my father."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the stranger. "Then we shall see a great deal of each other, for I, too, am on my way to Sitka. In fact, that is my home. If you will allow me, I will hand you my card."

On the card which Phil thus received and then thrust into a pocket of his own card-case was engraved simply "Mr. Arthur Ames," and of course the lad had no means of knowing that his new acquaintance was one of the most eminent and best-known men in the whole Northwest. As he handed out his own card in return, Mr. Ames said: "I wondered if I should not know your father, and now I see that I do. That is, if he is Mr. John Ryder, the mining expert."

"Yes, sir, that is his name," replied Phil, delighted at this recognition.

"Then I am doubly glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Ryder, and am obliged to the fortunate incident of the pocket-book that led to it."

Phil was greatly pleased with this new friend, who was able to point out everything of interest, and was possessed of such stores of information concerning Alaska, that the lad looked forward with pleasing anticipations to travelling in his company.

It was long after dark before the electric lights of Victoria were sighted, and Phil expressed disappointment that he could see nothing of the city.

"You will have plenty of time to-morrow," suggested Mr. Ames, "for our steamer is not due to ar-

rive here from Port Townsend until about this time to-morrow evening, and she will remain here an hour or so after getting in. So you will have an opportunity to visit Beacon Hill Park, Dunsmuir Castle, the museum, and go out to 'Squimault as well. I wish I might act as your guide to the city, but I cannot, and shall not even see you at your hotel, as I must stay at the house of a friend, with whom I have an amount of important business to transact that will occupy every moment until the steamer leaves. After that we shall see a great deal of each other, I trust."

"Indeed I hope we shall, sir," replied Phil, heartily, as he mentally contrasted this new travelling acquaintance with the one made in Montreal.

"By-the-way," continued Mr. Ames, "if you have a trunk, and care to intrust your check to me, I will have it put aboard the Alaska steamer with mine, and will guarantee its safe delivery in Sitka. By that means you will be saved a tedious trip down to the outer wharf to-morrow, and will gain at least two hours of extra time for sight-seeing."

The stranger had already inspired our hero with such perfect confidence that he handed him his trunk check without the slightest hesitation, at the same time expressing his gratitude for the kindness thus shown him.

A few minutes later the *Premier* was made fast to her wharf at the inner end of a tiny but perfectly protected harbor, at the head of which stands the capital of British Columbia. Here the newly made acquaintances parted, with promises of again meeting on the following evening. Mr. Ames was driven away to the house of his friend, while Phil took a carriage for the Driard, the hotel at which his father had instructed him to stop so long as he remained in Victoria. Here he found a letter from Sitka, that had been brought

down by the last steamer. It was such a loving epistle, and was so filled with the joyful anticipations of a speedy meeting, that Phil was moved to sit down and answer it at once, regardless of the fact that his reply could only reach its destination by the same steamer on which he expected to travel.

Having thus got himself into the mood for writing, Phil also indited a long letter, descriptive of his journey thus far, to his aunt Ruth. In this he made the triumphant assertion that his pocket-book was still securely fastened in its proper place by the safety-pins to whose sturdy clasp she had intrusted it, and that up to date he had not lost a single thing. In making this assertion the boastful lad entirely forgot the fur-seal's tooth, though he was soon to have ample cause to remember it.

Both these letters being mailed in the hotel box before he went to bed, Phil slept the sleep of him who has a clear conscience, and awoke the next morning as light-hearted and happy a lad as could be found in all British Columbia. After breakfast he took a stroll down Government Street and into the Chinese quarter, with the queer sights of which he was intensely amused and interested.

On his way back he stopped for a few minutes in a rifle gallery that presented an open front to the street. Here he was tempted by the bad marksmanship displayed by a group of sailors to show them a bit of Yankee shooting, and was lucky enough to make five bull's-eyes in succession out of six shots. This performance was greeted by a round of hearty cheers from the sailors, and these were repeated when Phil distributed among them the prize of cigars by which his skill was rewarded.

In the afternoon he rode by electric car out to Esquimault, or '*Squi*mault, as the splendidly fortified harbor

A STREET IN VICTORIA

and British naval station of the Pacific coast is called. Here he went on board the *Royal Arthur*, one of the finest cruisers in her Majesty's navy, and was shown all over the ship by a marine especially detailed for that purpose. Then he made the acquaintance of a middy, who invited him to dine with the steerage mess, and he had altogether such a fine time that the sun set long before he thought it ought to, and it was dark before he finally returned to his hotel.

Learning, by inquiry, that the Alaskan steamer was in, and that he had barely time to catch her, he ordered a cab to be in readiness, rushed up-stairs for his things, and then back again to the office, where it only remained for him to pay his bill and be off.

CHAPTER VI

PHIL'S SAD PREDICAMENT

As Phil stood in front of the hotel desk striving to unclasp the bewildering safety-pins that held his pocket-book so firmly a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a stern voice asked if he was Philip Ryder.

"Yes, that is my name," replied Phil, looking around inquiringly.

"Very well," said the owner of the voice; "then I shall have to ask you to come with me."

"I haven't time," replied the lad, "and, besides, I wouldn't go anywhere in a strange city at this hour of night with a person whom I do not know."

"I guess you'll come," retorted the man, with a grim smile, "when I inform you that I am an officer with a warrant for your arrest, and that you are wanted at the central police station."

"Nonsense!" cried Phil, stoutly; "you've made some mistake and got hold of the wrong party. I haven't done anything to be arrested for. I'm an American citizen on my way to Alaska, and I've only barely time to catch the steamer now. So I must request you not to detain me any longer with this foolishness, or you may have cause to regret having done so."

"I'll risk it," was the self-contained reply, "and I doubt very much if you will start for Alaska to-night, or for some nights to come. You know me," he added, turning to the hotel clerk, who was regarding this scene as coolly as though it were nothing unusual to

him, and as though the heart of the lad who a minute before had been so buoyant with hope and happiness were not near to breaking with an undefined agony of apprehension.

"Yes, I know you," answered the clerk, "and whatever you do is all right. You'd better go with him quietly," he added, turning to Phil, "for it won't do you any good to make a kick."

"But what am I arrested for?" cried Phil, with one more despairing effort to solve this horrible mystery. "Of what crime am I accused, and who is my accuser?"

"It is not my business to say," replied the officer, "but under the circumstances I don't mind telling you that the charge is an attempt at felonious assault, and that the complainant's name is Goldollar."

"Oh!" gasped Phil, as this light was thrown upon the situation. And then, eagerly, "But I can explain all that in a minute."

"Not here," said the officer; "this is neither the time nor the place. You must come with me, and at once too," he added, sternly, as he glanced at the little group of curious spectators gathering in the hotel office. "Now don't try to resist or make a scene, for it won't do the slightest good, and will only get you into further trouble."

So Phil Ryder went out into the night a friendless prisoner in a strange city, leaving his travelling-bag, rifle, and overcoat behind him, the clerk remarking significantly that he would take good care of them until they should be called for.

No word was spoken between the officer and his prisoner as they passed through the brilliantly lighted streets until they finally reached the police station, and the latter stood before the sergeant's desk, behind which that functionary was prepared, pen in hand, to

enter a record of this case in his blotter. Then a torrent of words sprang to Phil's lips. He told his story with such evident honesty and pleading anguish of soul that even the grizzled sergeant, accustomed as he was to scenes of this kind, was moved by it. "It does seem hard," he said, when Phil paused, more for want of breath than anything else, "that a young gent like you should be compelled to pass a night in the cooler. If you had any one to go on your bail now, we might get the justice to give you a private examination, late as it is, and perhaps he'd accept a bond for the night."

"But I haven't. I don't know a soul in the city," answered Phil, despondently. "How much do you think the bail would be?" he asked, with a sudden inspiration.

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe not more than a hundred or so."

"I have that much right here with me!" cried Phil, eagerly, "and I'd gladly give every cent of it rather than pass a night in a cell. That would be too awful, and it doesn't seem as though I could bear it."

"Let us see your money," said the sergeant, with a caution bred of long experience.

With eager but trembling fingers Phil fumbled at the hateful safety-pins that seemed determined never to relax their hold of his pocket-book. At length he drew it forth, and opened it with an air of anxious triumph. At least one of his assertions was about to be proved true.

Suddenly his face turned to a deathly pallor. The empty wallet, in which no bill remained, dropped from his nerveless grasp, and he clutched wildly at the rail of the sergeant's desk for support.

"I have been robbed!" he gasped. "Robbed of every cent I had in the world. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

The sergeant and officer exchanged significant glances, and for a few minutes only the ticking of a big clock and the boy's panting breathing that closely resembled sobbing broke the painful stillness.

"You certainly seem to be playing to hard luck, young fellow," remarked the sergeant at length, "and I don't mind saying that I'm sorry for you. You appear to be an honest, well-meaning sort of a chap, too. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. Though appearances are often deceitful and I've been misled by them a many times, I'm going to trust 'em once more. So, if you'll give me your word not to make any disturbance, nor the slightest effort to escape, I'll let you occupy my room, where you'll find a bed that is fairly comfortable. You can spend the night there, and it will be better than being locked up in a cell, anyway. Maybe in the morning something will turn up that will straighten matters out for you."

Phil's gratitude for this favor was expressed more by looks than by words, though he did manage to give the required promise.

Then he was shown into a small bare room, where, flinging himself face downward on a little iron bedstead that stood in one corner, he lay for a long time motionless and apparently unconscious. At length he began once more to think, but his thoughts were of the most gloomy and despairing nature. Was ever a fellow in such a scrape? What should he do? Was there any way in which he could get out of it? He could not communicate with his father, for the steamer must already have left. He had no friends in Victoria. He had no money. No money! For the first time in his life Phil realized the full horror of being absolutely penniless. He had not even money to buy breakfast with in case he should be set free on the following day. Perhaps a prison would prove his only refuge after all.

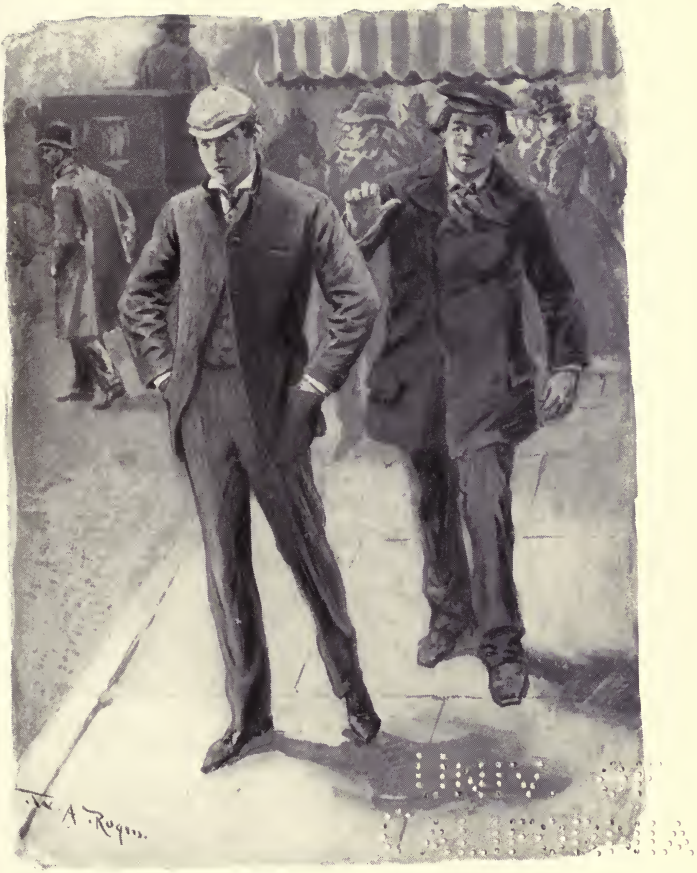
Where could that money have gone to, though? Some one must have taken it; but who, and when? It wouldn't have been Mr. Ames, of course; nor the porter of the sleeping-car. No; his very face was a guarantee of honesty. Could it have been Simon Goldollar? It must have been; he was just the mean, low-down fellow who would do such a thing; still, what chance had he had? Phil couldn't remember that he had had any. Still, the money must have been taken by some one, and while the pocket-book was in some other place than the one provided for it by his aunt Ruth, too. Oh, why had he forgotten her warnings and neglected her advice! Dear Aunt Ruth! How much better she knew him than he knew himself. Well, this was a lesson that should last him his life time. Never again would he get into such a scrape through carelessness. Never!

At length the unhappy boy fell asleep, and when he awoke it was daylight. An officer brought him a bowl of strong black coffee and a plain but plentiful breakfast of porridge. Phil drank the coffee, but could not eat. Then he waited, pale with anxiety, for the unknown fate in store for him. After a while he was summoned outside and conducted to a court-room. There he was placed in the prisoners' dock, together with the previous night's occupants of the station-house cells, men and women. He shrank as far as possible from contact with them, and they jeered at him. His case was one of the first called, but as no one appeared against him he was ordered to step aside and wait awhile longer.

Finally, last of all, Phil's turn came again.

"What is the charge against this prisoner?" demanded the judge.

"It is a case of assault, your Honor," answered the officer who had made the arrest.



"'IS IT PHILIP RYDER OR HIS GHOST!'"

"Let me look at the warrant. H'm, yes. Well, is the complainant Goldollar here in person, or represented by counsel?"

To this no one made reply, but another officer whispered something to the judge.

"H'm! Left the city, has he, without making arrangements to press the charge? Very well, then, the case is dismissed. You may go, young man, but I warn you that you have had a narrow escape, a very narrow escape, and you had better never let me see you here again."

A minute later poor bewildered Phil found himself out in the sunlight, once more free to go where he pleased and do what he liked. For a few blocks he walked mechanically, without taking note of where he was going. Then, with a forlorn hope that the steamer might still be waiting, he directed his steps towards the outer wharf. The walk was a long one, and at its end his worst fears were confirmed. The Alaskan steamer had indeed come in, and gone out again during the night. There would not be another for at least ten days. His trunk had gone, too, as he discovered by finding a porter who distinctly remembered seeing one marked "Philip Ryder, Sitka, Alaska," put aboard the ship. Mr. Ames—Judge Ames, they called him—had also departed for his northern home, as several persons could testify.

Now not a shred of hope was left. What would Mr. Ryder think, and what would he do when the steamer arrived in Sitka without the son for whom he was so anxiously watching? He was certain to meet Judge Ames and to see the trunk. How terrible would be his anxiety! Would he come to Victoria by return steamer in search of his boy, or would he wait for news of him by the next boat? In the former case he could not possibly get here in less than two weeks,

and perhaps not so soon. At any rate Phil was thrown upon his own resources for many days to come, and during that time how should he obtain food and lodging?

While vaguely trying to form some plan, he walked slowly back into the city, blind to the beauty of the day, deaf to the singing of birds, and careless of the scent of myriads of flowers which form so beautiful and striking a feature of this far western city. Here was the situation with which this story opens and to which we have been so long in coming.

Hardly noticing the direction of his footsteps, Phil reached Government Street, and walked slowly down that busy thoroughfare. Suddenly there came a quick footfall behind him, a hand was clapped on his shoulder, and a hearty friendly voice exclaimed, "Is it Philip Ryder or his ghost? Why, old fellow! what on earth are you doing here?"

The poor lad's heart gave a great throb of gratitude as he turned and found himself face to face with Serge Belcofsky.

CHAPTER VII

THE VALUE OF A TRUE FRIEND

THE meeting of Phil Ryder and Serge Belcofsky, who had parted months before in far-away New London, and who now so unexpectedly ran across each other in the busiest street of the westernmost city of the continent, was one of the happiest that ever took place in Victoria. Phil was so overcome by it that for a moment his voice failed him, and he could only hold his friend's hand in both of his, and gaze at him as though fearful that he might vanish as suddenly as he had appeared.

"Serge, old man," he said at length, "you have come to me like an angel from heaven, for never in my life have I needed a friend as at this very minute. I never half appreciated you before, but you may be certain that I do now. Oh, my dear fellow! if you could only know one part of how glad I am to see you!"

"Why, what is the matter?" inquired Serge, anxiously. "Are you in trouble? Is there anything I can do to help you? How do you happen to be here of all places? The *Seamew* got in two days ago; but I didn't find a single letter from New London, and I haven't heard a word of news from there since we started for the coast."

"Am I in trouble!" exclaimed Phil. "Well, I should say I am. I am in one of the very worst scrapes that ever a fellow got into. Can you help me? I rather think you can. I hope so, at any rate. You have helped me already more than I can tell. The mere

sight of your face, the sound of your voice, and the clasp of your hand have banished half my troubles, and given me new courage to face the rest. Why, old man, a friend was what I needed more than anything in the world, and now that I have found one, everything seems possible."

"You in trouble!" cried Serge, in amazement. It was hard to realize that this young hero of his admiration, the one who above all others had seemed so strong and self-reliant and free from care of any kind, could be in a position in which his humble aid could be of value.

"Indeed I am," replied Phil; "and to begin with I haven't a cent in the world, nor have I eaten a mouthful of food to-day. So if you have any money in your pockets, you will at once invite me to breakfast. After that I will tell you the whole story."

"You poor old chap!" exclaimed Serge, to whom hunger was of all things the most unpleasant. "Of course I've got money"—he had just one dollar, which represented his entire stock of wealth—"and the 'Poodle Dog' is just around the corner."

In another minute the lads were seated at a table in the best restaurant of Victoria, and Phil was giving the waiter a breakfast order that confirmed that individual in his previously formed opinion that Americans were not only the wealthiest people in the world, but were possessed of the most extraordinary appetites.

Although Serge, whose own breakfast had been eaten hours before, would willingly have shared another with his friend, a prudent regard for his finances compelled him to resist the temptation, and declare that he was not the least bit hungry. So he merely sat and watched with real pleasure Phil's demolition of the very heartiest and most thoroughly enjoyable meal of his life. As he ate, his courage and natural buoyancy of spirits

returned to him so fully, that when at length he pushed away his plate, declaring himself unable to eat another mouthful, he was again the self-reliant, independent, happy-go-lucky Phil Ryder whom Serge had known and admired in New London.

The bill for that breakfast amounted to exactly one dollar, and as Serge paid it, Phil wondered why he did not also tip the waiter, who had been unusually attentive. He was too polite to mention the matter, and concluded that his friend's oversight must be the result of his early training.

Serge knew well enough what was expected of him, however, and felt uncomfortable until the restaurant was left behind and he was beyond reach of the waiter's reproachful glance. "Now," said he, as they gained the street, "let's have your story. You haven't told me one word of yourself and your troubles yet."

"Troubles?" repeated Phil, inquiringly, as though such things and he were but the most distant of acquaintances. "Yes, of course, I have had some troubles; but they don't bother me now half so much as they did. I'll tell you all about them, though; but this is a poor place for talking. If you don't mind we'll go up to my room. It is close at hand, and we can be there in a minute. Then we can relate our several adventures, and discuss plans without fear of interruption."

Why Phil had not returned to his hotel for breakfast the very first thing after being set at liberty he could not have explained; but hungry, friendless, and penniless as he was that morning, he could no more have entered the Driard dining-room than he could have begged for a meal at a private house. Now, however, the situation seemed to him so entirely different that he walked into the hotel office as coolly as a young millionaire, and with quite the air of one demanded the

key of his room, ordered his bag sent up to it, and led the way to the elevator.

The clerk on duty, who happened to be the same who had witnessed his unpleasant encounter with an officer the evening before, regarded the young fellow with a mild surprise, but made no comment. He concluded that there must have been some mistake after all, but was too well trained in the hotel business to ask unpleasant questions of a guest. He did eye Serge a little curiously, for though the lad had on his best suit it was unmistakably the garb of a sailor.

As for the young Russo-American, he followed his friend into this swell hotel, listened to the orders that he issued, and which were so promptly obeyed, and finally accompanied him to his room with so comical an expression of bewilderment on his face that Phil noticed, and laughed at it.

"You are evidently thinking that my plea of poverty and these surroundings do not exactly match each other," he said.

"Well, yes, I must confess—"

"That I appear very much like an impostor. But really I am not one, old man. I was in such a desperate fix when you turned up, like a blessed angel to help me out of it, that in an hour more, if left to my own devices, I believe I should have jumped overboard."

"You would have done nothing of the kind," cried Serge, indignantly. "You are no such coward as that, and I know it."

"Well, perhaps not," replied Phil. "But it seems to me that hunger with no prospect of its relief can make cowards of the bravest fellows. And I was hungry, awfully hungry."

"I can well believe that," laughed Serge, "after seeing you eat. But tell me, why do you stay in this hotel?"

"Because I have no other place to go to, and have no money with which to settle my bill in case I wish to leave."

"But isn't it awfully expensive?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose they charge three or four dollars a day; but if it were only fifty cents a day I couldn't pay it, and so would have to stay on all the same. I think it's very lucky that I am stranded in so comfortable a place. But let me tell you the whole story from the beginning, and then you will see just what sort of a position I am in."

So Phil related his recent experiences, and when he had finished Serge only asked,

"What has become of the fur-seal's tooth I gave you, and which you used to wear on your watch-chain?"

"Lost it."

"Then that accounts for everything."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, according to what the old chief who gave that tooth to my father told him, it is a most powerful charm for good or evil. He said that whoever gave it away gave good-luck with it. Whoever received it as a gift received good-luck. Whoever lost it lost his luck, and whoever stole it stole bad-luck that would follow him so long as he retained it in his possession. According to this you who have lost it are suffering the consequences."

"Nonsense!" cried Phil. "I hope you don't believe in any such foolish superstition, or that a bit of carved ivory can possess the powers you claim for the fur-seal's tooth?"

"I don't claim it," protested Serge. "I only repeat what the Indian said. At the same time, almost every one in Alaska, or, at any rate, every one whom I know, believes in such things, and can tell you lots of stories about them."

"Yes. I've no doubt they can tell lots of stories, but the thing is to prove them. Now, I don't believe in superstitions of any kind, and am very sorry for those who do. As for my present bad-luck, it is entirely owing to my own carelessness and hot-headedness, but for which I should be comfortably on my way to Sitka at this very minute. As it is, here I am up such a very tall stump that, as far as I can see, there isn't the slightest chance of getting down from it inside of several weeks. My chance of visiting Alaska is knocked higher than a kite, too, for the money that would have taken me there will now have to be devoted to paying my hotel bill here."

CHAPTER VIII

ONE RESULT OF GOOD SHOOTING

"WHY not go with me?" suggested Serge, at the end of his meditation on Phil's situation. "The *Seamew* sails for Alaska this very evening."

"For what part of Alaska—for Sitka?" demanded Phil, eagerly.

"Not exactly," admitted Serge; "but in that direction. She is bound on a fishing cruise to the cod and halibut banks off the Shumagin Islands; but there are always vessels running from there into Sitka, and Captain Duff has promised to set me on board the very first one of these he runs across."

"My! but that is a scheme!" exclaimed Phil, who, having no conception of Alaskan distances nor the slightest idea of where the Shumagin Islands might be, imagined that, once in those waters, it would be an easy matter to reach Sitka. In fact, to him Sitka meant Alaska, and Alaska was the same as Sitka, for he could not remember ever having heard the one spoken of except in connection with the other.

"That would suit me to a T," he continued, "for I have hated the thought of giving up my Alaska trip, and I have hated worse the idea of spending two or three weeks in this place with nothing to do. Do you suppose that your captain would make the same arrangement with me that he has with you? My father would be glad enough to pay him my passage-money if he would only drop me at Sitka."

"I don't believe the *Seamew* is allowed to take pas-

sengers," answered Serge, doubtfully. "I am one of her crew, you know, only I am working without wages for the sake of getting home."

"No wages! Don't you get anything at all?"

"Oh yes! I get my passage and food, and I got an outfit of clothing to start with."

"Well, I should be glad enough to get a passage to Alaska on the same terms, and if your captain will only take me, I'll ship with him in a minute. But look here, old man, if you don't get any wages, how do you happen to have money to spend on breakfasts at expensive restaurants for your pauper friends?"

"I haven't," laughed Serge.

"Do you mean to tell me that you squandered your last cent on me this morning?"

"I don't mean to tell you anything about it."

"Well, if that doesn't make me feel meaner than dirt! If I had known you were spending your only dollar for my breakfast I wouldn't have eaten a mouthful."

"And so you would have made me very unhappy, instead of giving me one of the greatest pleasures of my life," returned Serge, reproachfully.

"All I can say, then, is that you are easily pleased. And that was the reason why you wouldn't eat anything, was it? Why, you must be almost as starved by this time as I was then, for even I am hungry again. Now, you just come down-stairs and take lunch with me in the hotel dining-room. After that we will visit the *Seamew*, and offer my valuable services to your Captain Duff."

Never in all his life had Serge Belcofsky eaten so sumptuous a meal as that set before him by the young pauper, who, with the air of a prince, played the host on this memorable occasion. Knowing the pecuniary circumstances of his entertainer as he did, Serge could

not but admire, while he marvelled at, the nonchalant air with which course after course was ordered, while he was urged to partake of this thing and that, until the resources of the Driard's larder were well-nigh exhausted.

After thus fortifying themselves for their anticipated interview with Captain Duff, whom Serge had not described as being a particularly affable man, nor one whom it was a joy to meet, the lads strolled down to the cove in which the saucy-looking schooner *Seamew* lay at anchor. When they finally got on board, Serge left Phil on deck, while he ventured alone into the cabin to make an application on his behalf.

For the space of a minute Phil heard through the open cabin skylight only the tones of an ordinary conversation, the words of which were undistinguishable. Then, all at once, came a thunderous roar of: "No, I tell ye! No! I'll have no more landlubbers aboard this craft at any price. So clear out and let me hear no more of it."

The next instant Serge, cap in hand, appeared abruptly at the opening of the companion-way almost as though he had been fired from it. He was closely followed by a big red-faced man with a stubby beard, who, the moment he set foot on deck, gave utterance to a snarl like that of a wild beast. Suddenly, as his eye lighted on Phil, he stood for a moment like one petrified. Then in a tone so soft and bland that Phil instinctively glanced around to see who was speaking, he addressed Serge and asked,

"Is this young sport the friend you was speaking of what 'ud like to ship for a cruise to the nor'ard?"

"Yes, sir," answered Serge; "this is my friend Phil Ryder, who is so anxious to get to Sitka that he is willing to ship for a voyage to the Shumagins without wages if you will furnish him with an outfit, and agree

to set him aboard the same vessel bound for Sitka that you do me."

"Will he sign to them terms on a shipping-paper?"

"I think so, sir. Won't you, Phil?"

"Certainly. I will sign any paper that is required."

Looking this new candidate over from head to foot, and still speaking in the blandest of tones, Captain Duff propounded the following questions:

"Be you a sailor?"

"I can handle a small boat."

"Humph! Do you know the dog-star from the cat-star?"

"No, sir."

"Nuther do I. Do you know a bull's-eye when you see one?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't ye plunk one yesterday five times out of six shots?"

"I believe I did, sir," replied Phil, greatly surprised at this turn in his examination.

"Could ye do it again?"

"I generally make six bull's-eyes in six shots at that distance with my own rifle," was the reply, not delivered at all boastingly, but as a simple statement of facts.

"So you've got a rifle of your own, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ever get seasick?"

"No, sir."

"Can ye be ready to start in an hour's time?"

"I shall be ready as soon as I get an outfit," answered Phil.

"Very good; let's go ashore and get it at once. Hold hard, though! There's the paper to be signed first."

So Captain Duff re-entered the cabin, where with

"THE COVE IN WHICH THE SAUCY-LOOKING *SEAMEW* LAY AT ANCHOR"

labored penmanship he added an article to one of the ship's papers, which Phil signed without reading it. His signature was witnessed by Jalap Coombs, mate of the *Seamew*, and by Serge Belcofsky.

"You understand that this is a fishing v'y'ge?" demanded Captain Duff, at the conclusion of this ceremony.

"I understand very little about it, sir," responded Phil. "I only understand that for me it will end at Sitka, and I am willing to undertake whatever may be necessary in order to reach that place."

"Humph!" growled Captain Duff. Then in a voice that sounded like the roar of a bull he bellowed out: "On deck there! Lively, now, and have a boat alongside!"

So promptly was he obeyed that by the time the occupants of the cabin regained the deck a light whaleboat, sharp-pointed at both ends, and containing three oarsmen, of whom Serge was one, awaited them.

Motioning Phil to enter this craft, Captain Duff ponderously followed, and standing in the stern, with one brawny hand grasping a long steering oar, he ordered the crew to give way.

A few sturdy strokes shot the boat across to the landing, where the captain ordered two of the men to await his return, and gave the lads to understand that they were to follow him.

He led them to a sailors' slop-shop, where in a very few minutes he had provided the latest addition to his crew with a heavy suit of duffle cloth, a pea-jacket, two flannel shirts, a pair of rubber hip-boots, another pair of stout cow-hide, a woollen toque, or sailor's nightcap, a long oil-skin coat, and a hat of similar material.

"There!" growled Captain Duff, viewing these things as they lay piled on the counter. "I call that an outfit such as mighty few shipmasters would pervide for

a landlubber. But when I undertakes to do a thing, I does it. D' ye hear?"

Both lads agreed that they did hear. In fact, they would have been very deaf indeed not to have heard. Phil expressed himself as gratified for so complete a supply of everything that seemed needful.

"So ye should be, ye young vil—I mean so ye should be!" roared Captain Duff. "Now give us a bag, ye swab, and make out your thundering bill, for I'm in a hurry. D' ye hear?"

This last was addressed to the shopman, who thereupon produced a heavy canvas bag of the kind known as a "sea-trunk," into which the two lads stowed all the recent purchases.

When the bill for these was presented, Captain Duff growled over each separate item, and after he had paid it, he said to Phil: "There, young fellow, I've invested fifty dollars in you, and you're bound to work it out afore your account is all squared. D' ye hear?"

"You are very good, I am sure," murmured the lad, not knowing what else to say.

"What! Me good! Who dares say I'm not good?" roared the captain, glaring about him with a ferocious expression.

As no one replied to this outburst, he ordered the lads to carry the recent purchases down to the boat, and get back to the schooner with all speed.

"I must go to my hotel first to transact some business," suggested Phil.

"Go to a hotel? What business have you with a hotel? I thought you said you'd be ready as soon as ye had an outfit?"

"I have some things there which I desire to see to," began Phil.

"Yes, I know. Rifles and things. Well, hurry up;

PHIL SIGNED THE ARTICLE WITHOUT READING IT

and mind ye, if you're not back inside of an hour, I'll have ye arrested as a desarter."

"I shall evidently get pretty well used to being arrested if I stay in this town long," thought Phil, as he hurried away.

In his room at the hotel he wrote three notes, two of which were to his father. They were both the same, and in them he stated that he was about to start for Sitka in the fishing schooner *Seamew*, and hoped to reach there before his father received this letter. In case he should be unexpectedly delayed for a few days, his father need feel no anxiety on his account, for he would surely turn up sooner or later. One of these he put in his pocket to mail for Sitka, while, with a forethought unusual in one generally so careless, the other was to be left at the hotel in case his father should come to Victoria in search of him.

The third note was addressed to the proprietor of the hotel. In it Phil regretted his inability to pay his bill for two days' board and lodging, but stated that it would be settled as soon as he could rejoin his father, whom he expected to see in a very short time. In the mean time he left a rifle, an overcoat, and a bag worth many times its amount as security. This note, together with one of those to his father, he left on the table. Then taking a few small articles from his bag, he left the hotel and hastened to the landing-place. There he found a boat awaiting him. A few minutes later he had bidden farewell to the city in which his short stay had proved so fruitful in strange experiences, and again stood on the deck of the craft in which the second portion of his eventful journey was to be undertaken.

CHAPTER IX

INTRODUCING "OLD KITE ROBERSON"

CAPTAIN DUFF was not visible when Phil reached the *Seamew;* but the mate received him, and in answer to his inquiry as to the whereabouts of his friend, pointed to the forecastle. There our lad found Serge, from whom he was desirous of obtaining some information concerning the schooner's master, in whose power he had so deliberately placed himself. Having had no experience in shipping as one of the crew of a vessel, Phil did not realize how fully he had done this; but he had seen enough of Captain Duff's peculiar manner to render him rather nervous now that the irrevocable step was taken.

Serge could only say that while the subject of their conversation was almost as much of a mystery to him as to Phil, he had at least proved himself a capital seaman. Also that while his frequent outbursts of temper were frightful to witness, no serious consequences had thus far resulted from them. No one had, however, ventured to thwart his will in the slightest, and all hands regarded him with more or less of fear.

While the two lads were thus talking there came a sudden call for all hands to up anchor and make sail, whereupon they tumbled up on deck and turned to with a will, Phil working with the rest to the best of his limited knowledge concerning what was to be done.

Before a light off-shore breeze the trim schooner slipped out of the cove, and, as the sun was sinking behind the snow-capped Olympic mountains, gained

the waters of the Strait of Fuca, through which she would reach the open sea.

While Phil stood gazing at the fast-fading land, feeling a little homesick and lonely, Jalap Coombs informed him that the captain wished him to bring his things aft into the cabin.

As the lad had not seen his recently acquired outfit since coming aboard, he had nothing to carry, and so entered the cabin with empty hands.

"Where is your rifle?" demanded the captain, as soon as he appeared.

"I left it behind, sir."

"What!" roared the other, springing to his feet with every appearance of violent rage. "Left it behind? Cheated me out of a first-class rifle? Never mind; it shall be charged to your account." Then, working himself into an increase of passion, he bellowed: "You young villain! I've a mind to brain you for this," and seizing a stool from the floor, he lifted it threateningly, at the same time taking a step forward.

Phil's first impulse was to fly from the presence of one whom he had every reason to believe a madman. On second thoughts he turned, and, with a very pale face but a steady voice, said: "You don't dare do it. You are a coward, and you know it as well as I do."

For the first time in all his sea-going life big, red-faced, bullying Captain Duff was bearded in his own den, and that by a mere slip of a boy, as he regarded the lad now so boldly confronting him. He was a coward at heart, and he knew it. His very air of bluster and bravado, assumed so long ago that it had become a second nature, was worn solely for the purpose of misleading his associates, and hiding from them his true character. This manner was so well borne out by his size and his ferocious expression that until this time

he had succeeded in inspiring awe merely by noise and aspect. Now his true character was known, the fraud he had perpetrated so successfully and so long was discovered, and like a great gorgeous soap-bubble his inflated wind-bag of bravery had been pricked and dissipated.

The collapse of this roaring pretence was so sudden and complete as to be staggering. For a moment the man stood motionless, with the stool still uplifted, but with every vestige of color fled from his ordinarily crimson face. Then the stool dropped to the floor with a crash, and he tottered limply backward into the huge arm-chair that he had occupied when Phil entered the cabin. His eyes rolled, his breath came in gasps, and a hoarse rattling issued from his throat.

During this extraordinary scene Phil stood his ground, outwardly calm and resolute, but wondering whether he was to be eaten or skinned alive for his audacity. At length, realizing that the enemy was powerless for the time being, he left the cabin, and reported to the mate on deck that he believed Captain Duff was having a fit, and needed attention.

Upon this Jalap Coombs cautiously approached the sky-light, and peered down into the cabin. Then he as cautiously tiptoed back to where Phil was standing. "I ruther guess we'd best leave him alone to fight it out," he said. "He's a born fighter, Cap'n Duff is, an' he's had 'em afore. As my friend old Kite Roberson uster say consarning fits: 'When a ordinary seaman takes a notion to indulge in 'em, roll him on deck, douse him with buckets of salt-water, and otherwise wrastle 'em out of him, fer he 'ain't no business with any such luxuries. With a cap'n, though, it's diffrunt. He's a priverleged character, and when he feels inclined fer a fit, he wants to enjoy it, and have it out without interference, same as ef it war a glass o' grog. So

"'YOU DON'T DARE DO IT. YOU ARE A COWARD'"

never interrupt a cap'n's fits ef you want to have peace *and* quietness aboard ship.' That's what old Kite uster say, and he must er knowed, 'cause he'd had more millions of experience than most."

"Who was this Mr. Robinson?" asked Phil.

"Who! Kite—old Kite Roberson? 'Tain't likely now that ye never heerd of him? Why, he was one of the best-known men. By his own 'count he'd been 'round the world more times than there is parallels of latitood, and some of his charts looked like spider-webs, they war kivered so thick with his tracks. Why, he come from the same place as me, old Kite did, and sometimes it makes me feel prouder 'n a mere mortal man orter feel to think that him and me was fashioned outer the same clay, as it war, and brung up on the same air."

"It must be a great satisfaction," remarked Phil, politely. Then, to show his interest in the subject, he asked: "But where is your native place, Mr. Coombs? You are a down-Easter, are you not?"

"Sartain I am," replied the mate. "A genuine down-Easter is the one thing on this watery earth I can surely claim to be. But whether I'm a Britisher or a Yankee is the problem I'm wearing my life out trying to solve."

"That seems queer," said Phil, reflectively.

"Queer ain't no name fer it. It's simply redickerlous. Ye see, when they settled the boundary 'twixt Maine and the Provinces, they run it plumb through my father's house, and as nigh as I can figger I was born straddle of the line. After that I was brung up fust on one side, and then on t'other; so that ef one man says I'm a Britisher and another says I'm a Yank, they ain't nuther of 'em lying, nor yet they ain't telling the truth. Sometimes I feel as ef I war a British subjeck, and again like a full-blown American citizen. It de-

pends mostly on the weather. When it's damp *and* foggy, like it is now, I ginerally feels like a subjeck. Old Kite Roberson he uster say—"

Just then came the note of a siren fog-horn over the waters from dead ahead. A dense mist had rolled in from the sea, obscuring the light on Race Island, the most southerly of the few light-stations maintained on the coast of British Columbia. All the time that he was talking with Phil, Jalap Coombs had also been keeping a sharp lookout for this light. Now, at the first note of its siren, he sprang up, transformed in an instant from a shambling, garrulous "subjeck," as he called himself, into an alert and thoroughly capable Yankee sailor.

"Ready about!" he shouted, in clear, crisp tones. "Hard a-lee!" And a minute later, as the lively craft spun round to a deafening accompaniment of rattling blocks and slatting canvas, "Draw away!" With this the schooner settled comfortably down on her new course, and bending gracefully over before a damp sea-breeze, sped swiftly away from the threatened dangers of Race Island rocks.

About this time Ebenezer, the black cook, announced that supper was ready in the cabin, and the mate, after a long careful look both to windward and leeward, suggested to Phil that they might as well go below and "stow a cargo of chuck."

In the cabin, which was fairly roomy and well ventilated, stood a table on which supper was spread, a small stove for heating purposes only, the captain's big arm-chair, several stools, and a short bench. On two sides were single tiers of comfortable-looking bunks, five in all. On the starboard side was a closed door that evidently opened into a small state-room, and on the port side was a narrow passage leading to the galley, an unusual luxury of appointment in schooners of the *Sea-*

mew's class, and one that assured the safe and speedy transmission of food from the stove on which it was cooked.

Captain Duff was nowhere to be seen when Phil and the mate entered the cabin, and in answer to Phil's inquiring glance, the latter pointed significantly with his thumb towards the closed state-room door. There were, however, two other occupants of the cabin, both young men. They were already seated at the table, and eating with silence and despatch. They did not speak to Phil nor he to them, and as the mate also ate in silence the meal was uninterrupted save by the steady clatter of knives, forks, and spoons against that peculiarly thick and indestructible form of china known as stone-ware.

The two young men finished first, pushed back from the table, lighted their pipes, and left the cabin.

"Who are they?" asked Phil, after they had disappeared.

"Hunters," was Mr. Coombs's laconic answer.

Then he too pushed back from the table, and Phil hastened to ask him before he could leave the cabin where he should find his bag, as he wished to get a pea-jacket from it.

The mate merely pointed to an end berth on the port side, in which, sure enough, Phil spied a new canvas bag that he now recognized as his own.

"Am I to bunk in here?" he asked, in some surprise.

"Sartain," replied Mr. Coombs, and then he too vanished up the companion-way.

CHAPTER X

PHIL DISCOVERS WHAT HE IS

"WELL, this is a queer go!" thought Phil, as he extricated the heavy pea-jacket from his "sea-trunk," and put it on. "I never heard of a green hand before the mast being fed and lodged in the cabin. I must find Serge, and ask him about it."

The night seemed intensely dark as he gained the deck, and for a few minutes he stood still to accustom his senses to it. He had found the slide drawn over the companion-way, and, as on emerging he shoved it back, he was gruffly requested by the helmsman to "shut it, quick!" Phil was enough of a sailor to know that this was so the glare of the cabin lamp might not blind the man and render it impossible for him to steer. So he immediately pulled the slide to, and then stood leaning against it.

He could feel the chill dampness of the mist on his cheek, and could see it driving by in the red and green blurs from the side-lights in the forward rigging. From the binnacle near at hand also came a faint glow of reflected light that vaguely outlined the man at the wheel. All else was a gray blackness, upon which the lofty masts and flattened sails were traced in deeper shadows, like Indian-ink against crayon. Two or three glowing sparks from lighted pipes showed where the watch on deck were gathered in the lee of the weather bulwarks. Phil started towards these, but ere he had taken half a dozen steps he

ran plump into the mate, who was standing facing him on the weather side of the deck.

"Hello, young feller!" cried that worthy, as soon as he recovered the breath of which Phil's sudden onset had deprived him; "ye seem to be blundering ahead like a June-bug in an electric flare. Aren't ye afraid ye'll walk overboard next, and step on the tail of a merrymaid?"

"No, sir," laughed the lad; "and I'm awfully sorry I ran into you. But I didn't see you, indeed I didn't."

"No wonder," replied the mate, good-naturedly, "for I'm too thin to make a respecterble shadder, much less to cast one. Ef it had been the cap'n now, ye couldn't have missed seeing him any more than ye could the broadside of a ship. By-the-way, had the old man turned out when ye left?"

"No, sir. I didn't see him."

"Waal, ye'd not only seen him, but heerd him fast enough ef he had. He gets so cramped up in that cubby-hole of his'n that when he comes out he has to roar to get his lungs in working order again. It's a marciful dispensation of Proverdence I'm not a cap'n, for I never could abide to sleep in one of them chicken-coops."

"He doesn't have to, does he?" inquired Phil.

"Sartain he does, to maintain his nautical dignity. All cap'ns has to occupy state-rooms, pervided their vessels has 'em, no matter whether they fit or not. Why, there was my friend old Kite Roberson, longer than I be by half, so that when he was only a mate he had to have two end-to-end bunks cut into one to give him stretching-room. When he come to be cap'n he had to take a state-room that had been built fer a short man, and couldn't in no way be lengthened. Poor old Kite naturally hated it, but for the sake of

his perfessional dig he uster crawl in there and double himself up like a shut jackknife. Bimeby it got so that in the morning they had to pull him out in sections, like a spy-glass, and rig preventer back-stays on his legs to keep him from getting sprung in the knees. As it was, he got so bent over that finally his head got under his left arm, and he uster turn round backward to see for'ard, but he never gave up his dig, which he allus said it war his proudest boast."

After Phil had politely allowed such time to elapse that the mate might think he was laughing over this yarn, he said:

"By-the-way, Mr. Coombs, when do I go on watch?"

"You?" replied the other. "You don't have to stand no watch. Hunters never does."

"Am I a—" began Phil; but his question was forced to remain unasked, for at that moment some subtle sense informed the mate that it was again time to change the schooner's course, and he bawled out, "Ready about!" In the confusion that followed he disappeared, and Phil stumbled forward, more anxious than ever to meet with Serge, and beg him to throw the light of his superior knowledge on the situation.

He discovered his friend snugly stowed away in a forecastle berth. Here, as half a dozen men constituting the watch below occupied other berths in the extremely narrow quarters allotted to the crew, the lads were obliged to converse in whispers to avoid being overheard, as well as not to disturb those who slept.

"Why haven't you been to supper, old man?" began Phil.

"I have, long ago," replied Serge; "but where have you been all this time? I was beginning to worry about you."

"Been in the cabin eating supper, mostly; but I didn't see you there."

"Eating in the cabin!" exclaimed Serge, springing up so carelessly in his excitement that he bumped his head against the bottom of the berth above him. "You don't mean it! Are you going to bunk there, too?"

"I'm afraid so. You see, I don't exactly like to ask a favor of Captain Duff, or I'd try for permission to sleep in here with you."

"Oh, pshaw!" ejaculated Serge. "You don't mean that. You know you don't. Why, man, the mere fact that you are billeted in the cabin instead of in the forecastle shows that you must be rated as a hunter."

"Why must I?" inquired Phil, in a puzzled tone. "And pray what is a hunter?"

"One who hunts, of course. He lives aft, and don't have to stand watch—"

"So Mr. Coombs said," interrupted Phil.

"Nor do any of the ship's work," continued Serge.

"Am I to be allowed to do anything at all except suck my thumbs and maintain my 'dig,' like old Kite Robinson?" asked the young hunter.

"Oh! you've heard of him, have you? Of course you will be allowed to do something. You will be allowed to shoot, and not only that, but you will be expected to shoot all day, and every day from sunrise to sunset; and mighty hard work you will find it, too, before you get through with it."

"Shoot!" cried Phil, forgetting all about the necessity for whispering. "Shoot what? Fish?"

"Shoot up, and stow yer jaw tackle," growled the sleepy voice of the forecastle wit from an upper berth.

"Shoot fish! of course not," whispered Serge. "You will shoot seals and sea-otter, if we have the good-luck to run across any. Oh! I am so glad you have got that berth, for I've been wondering and fretting over

how you'd get along as a foremast hand; but now it will be all smooth sailing."

"But I don't understand yet," protested Phil. "This is the first mention I have heard of seals or sea-otter. I thought this was a fishing schooner."

"So she is," replied Serge, a little impatiently; "but on this coast all fishermen are pelagic sealers as well whenever they get a chance, and they generally try to ship two or three good shots among the crew to act as hunters. The regular sealers, who go over on the Japan coast, fix for the business, and carry six or seven hunters. On this side, though, and especially if there is a chance of going into the sea, they generally clear as fishermen. It makes it easier to explain, you understand, if they happen to get nabbed by the cutters. We gathered in two or three hundred skins coming up the coast, and I heard Captain Duff say that if he could get hold of a first-class hunter he'd like to ship him. Strange that I never thought of you for that position, when I knew what a good shot you are, too. That must be why he changed his mind so suddenly about taking you along, for at first he declared he couldn't think of such a thing. I do wonder, though, how he happened to know that you could shoot."

Phil thought he knew, for he remembered the crowd of sailormen who were gathered about the shooting-gallery in Victoria the day before, and who had applauded his score; but he was too full of questions just now to waste time on explanations.

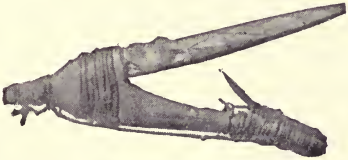
Where did people shoot seals and how? Out at sea or on land? With rifles or shot-guns? What did Serge mean by "pelagic sealers"? What did he mean by going into the sea? What did he mean by getting "nabbed"?

As our young traveller, to whom a new world of strange men, strange animals, and strange scenes was

about to be opened, poured forth these questions concerning it, Serge, to whom the whole business of sealing was an old story, laughed.

"It would take several hours to tell you the whole thing," he said, "and I've only two left in which to sleep before going on watch at midnight. So if, like a good fellow, you will turn in now, and restrain your curiosity till morning, I will then do my best to answer all your questions."

Apologizing for his thoughtlessness, Phil accepted his friend's suggestion; and making his way back to the cabin, took possession of the bunk Jalap Coombs had said was to be his. As he lay there listening to the gurgle of waters on the other side of the thin plank separating him from them, he could not help contrasting his present position with that of only twenty-four hours before, and marvelling at the wonderful changes that may be made in one's surroundings, circumstances, and whole plan of life in the brief space of a single day.



ALASKAN HALIBUT HOOK

CHAPTER XI

SEALS AND SEAL-SKINS

As it is as essential for those who wish to follow this story understandingly to know something of the fur-seal—its haunts, habits, and the methods of its capture—as it was to Phil Ryder, let us anticipate by a few hours the information that Serge is to give him, and learn a few of these things for ourselves.

Most of us have seen seals either in salt-water harbors or coast inlets, or at least in the tanks of zoölogical gardens; but the animals we have thus seen are hair-seals, which are so common as to be found in all the salt-waters of the world from poles to tropics. They are, however, most plentiful on the coasts of the north Atlantic, where they form an important food-supply for the Eskimos of Greenland and the natives of Labrador. Although the skin of the hair-seal is of little value, the oil extracted from its blubber forms so important an article of commerce that a large fleet of steam and sailing vessels leaves St. Johns, Newfoundland every year, for the sole purpose of capturing hair-seals, and the annual catch amounts to several hundreds of thousands of these animals.

The fur-seal is as different from its cousin the hair-seal as a sheep is from a goat. The most important point of difference between them is that while both are furnished with outer coats of stiff grayish hair, the former wears an under covering of soft velvetlike down or fur which the hair-seal is obliged to go without. It is this under-garment of the fur-seal that is so

highly prized, and from which are made the seal-skin jackets, cloaks, muffs, and other articles that are so expensive and valuable.

An immense amount of the most skilled and careful labor is devoted to preparing these seal-skins, besides that required in procuring them in distant seas and shipping them to London, where it can be had most cheaply. When removed from the animal the skin is salted, bundled, and shipped. Arrived at its destination it must be repeatedly wet, dried, and heated, scraped, shaved down to a uniform thickness, and softened. Then its outer coating of coarse, unsightly hairs must be plucked out by the roots, and the yellowish-gray inner coat of soft fur must be given eight to twelve coatings of dye, applied by hand with a brush, in order to produce the rich "seal-brown" color that fashion demands. The amount of labor thus expended on a single skin is enormous, and as several of them are required for a garment, while a heavy duty must be paid before they can re-enter this country, it is no wonder that seal-skin jackets are expensive luxuries.

One hundred years or so ago vast rookeries of fur-seals existed in the far southern waters of the Antarctic Ocean. During a period of eighty years these were so ruthlessly destroyed by the sealing-fleets of all maritime nations that in those waters the fur-seal became practically extinct.

About 1768 the Russian sea-otter hunters, who had discovered the Aleutian Islands, that wonderful chain of volcanic rocks that divides Bering Sea from the North Pacific, first noticed the annual migration of countless millions of fur-seals northward through the passes between the islands in the early summer, and southward in the autumn. For eighteen years they sought in vain to discover where these seals went to, and at length a Muscovite fur-trader named Gerassin

Pribyloff solved the mystery. For three years he had braved the terrors of Bering Sea, cruising over its length and breadth in a little old sloop named *St. George.* At length on a certain July day, when the fog was so dense that it hid one end of his vessel from the other, he heard the roar of a vast concourse of seals, and at the same time there was wafted to him through the sodden air the unmistakable odor of their rookeries.

With the lifting of the fog Pribyloff discovered the group of rocky islets that bears his name to this day. The nearest or most southerly of these he named St. George, after his vessel, while a much larger one some thirty miles to the north he called St. Paul. Two other insignificant islets named Otter and Walrus complete the group.

From these islands, which are enveloped in fog for half the year, and lashed by winter storms during the remainder, comes to-day the bulk of the world's supply of seal-skin. While they were owned by the Russians, the annual slaughter of seals upon them was something incredible, amounting to many hundreds of thousands. It sometimes happened that a hundred thousand skins would be cast into the sea and destroyed, in order to keep up the market price, and the utter extermination of the fur-seal appeared inevitable. Since 1867, however, when the Pribyloffs, together with the rest of Alaska, became the property of the United States, wise laws have so restricted the killing that the preservation of the seal herds is assured just so long as the laws can be enforced. Under these laws only one company, which pays handsomely for the privilege, may kill seals on these islands, and even it may only kill a specified number of young males between one and six years of age. Thus the old bulls, the females, and the pups are never molested.

On this little group of fog-enshrouded islands does

THE FUR-SEALS AT HOME

the fur-seal breed, and to them the vast herds return year after year with the regularity of the seasons themselves. They arrive in June and depart in October, when they move southward into the Pacific, spreading themselves over all its limitless area, between the coasts of North America and Japan, but never landing or leaving the water until they again return to their chosen home in Bering Sea.

In their annual northward journey the seals divide into two great herds, one of which follows the North American coast-line, and the other that of Japan, keeping as close to shore as do the schools of fish on which they feed, which is anywhere from one to two hundred miles. During this journey they are harassed and pursued by what is termed "pelagic" or open-water sealers, both American, who outfit at San Francisco or Seattle, and British, who sail from Victoria. Heretofore these pelagic sealers, who are said to kill and lose from five to ten seals for every one that they obtain, and who annually bring in several hundreds of thousands of skins, have been unrestrained by law. For some years they hunted in the waters of Bering Sea, as well as in the open ocean. Finally the Americans claimed the exclusive control of the sea, and the British denied that they possessed the right to do so. While the question was in dispute, both parties agreed that Bering Sea should be closed to all pelagic sealers, and both nations maintained war vessels in those waters to capture or drive away any sealers violating this agreement. In 1893 the vexed question was settled by arbitration, that gave to the Americans exclusive control of Bering Sea waters within a radius of sixty miles of the Pribyloff Islands, forbade the killing of fur-seals in any waters between the first of May and the last of July, and prohibited the use of rifles in seal-hunting at any time.

As the year of our story was before that of this settlement by arbitration, Bering Sea was closed by law to all sealers, though certain of them still dared the risk of entering it for the sake of the rich prizes they might bring out if undetected by any of the patrolling war-ships. At the same time pelagic sealing was briskly carried on outside of the protected waters, and the north-bound herds were harassed on all sides by swift sailing-vessels and even steamers fitted out for their destruction. Some of these attempted to pass themselves off as fishermen, and as such ventured inside the forbidden limits, trusting to their disguise to protect them.

It was on board one of these pelagic sealers, owned in Victoria and clearing as a fisherman from that port, that Phil Ryder now found himself shipped as a hunter. In this position he hoped and expected to make a speedy voyage to Sitka, in Alaska, which was at the same time one of the very last ports in which Captain Duff would have cared to find himself under the circumstances.

Most of the foregoing information concerning fur-seals was imparted to Phil by Serge on the morning of the first day out, and before the lesson was concluded the former's eyes were opened to many things. He had been awakened very early that morning by a startling crash, which for a moment caused him to imagine that the *Seamew* had struck a rock. At the same time the cabin was filled with the roar of Captain Duff's fierce voice. Reassured as to the safety of the schooner, Phil smiled as he recalled Jalap Coombs's theory of the necessary lung exercise indicated by the latter sound. The burly master of the *Seamew* seemed to have been entirely restored to his wonted state of mind by his night of seclusion, and to have decided to continue his practice of loud-mouthed bullying in spite

THE BERING SEA PATROL FLEET

of the surprising setback it had received the evening before. Consequently the moment he emerged from his state-room he glanced about him to see whom he might first devour. Just then the form of the schooner's black cook, Ebenezer by name, who was called "Ebb" for short, and sometimes "Slack Ebb" or "Low Ebb," as the nautical fancy of the crew suggested, appeared at the entrance of the narrow passage leading from the galley.

Snatching a plate from the table, and flinging it at the cook's head to emphasize his remarks, the captain roared out a query as to why breakfast was not ready.

Adroitly ducking like one well accustomed to such greetings, and thereby allowing the flying missile to crash against the side of Phil's bunk, Ebenezer grinned to show his appreciation of the captain's playfulness, and answered: "Yes, sah. Dreckly, in free minute, sah."

"Three minutes, ye black swab! See that it's on the table inside of one minute, or I'll have ye cut into fish-chum, and make halibut bait of your heart."

"Berry good, sah," responded Ebenezer, still grinning, though his eyes rolled wildly at this horrible threat, as he hastily shuffled from the cabin backward like a crab. Not until he gained the shelter of the passage did he cease to watch the captain's every movement. Then he turned and fled precipitately to the galley. Here he felt as safe as though in a fortified castle, for the passage was too narrow to be successfully navigated by so beamy a craft as the *Seamew's* master, and when that autocrat of the ship was on deck the cook took good care to keep the galley hatch closed and fastened on the inside.

At Ebb's flight, Captain Duff chuckled hoarsely, and muttered to himself, "That's the way to fix 'em."

"Good-morning, sir," remarked Phil at this moment.

"Eh! What's that?" demanded the captain, whirling around with surprising agility for a man of his size. "Why aren't you on deck, ye landlubber? I want you to understand that I don't allow no skulking below at this time o' day."

"Very well, sir. I'll go just as quick as I get my shoes on. I don't suppose you want me to do so barefooted."

"Barefooted, or web-footed, or club-footed, or without any feet at all! What is it to me how ye go, so long as ye do go!" roared the captain. "Am I master of this ship, I'd like to know, or am I only a howling figure-head?"

"You certainly are, sir," replied Phil, as with shoes in hand he moved towards the companion-way. "And I am certain that no one who is acquainted with you would doubt it for a moment."

With this parting shot the lad disappeared, leaving the captain to splutter and fume and wonder if there was any hidden meaning in his remark. "If it warn't for his shooting," he muttered, "I'd set him ashore on the first land we make, and I don't know but what I'd better get rid of him anyway, afore he stirs up a mutiny."

Then he went on deck, where he made things so lively for the next five minutes, and sent the crew scurrying hither and thither with such agility by his fiercely worded and loudly bellowed orders, that when he went below for breakfast he actually forgot to find fault with the cook for having served the meal so long before that its several dishes had grown cold.

CHAPTER XII

CAPTAIN DUFF'S SHREWDNESS

Although Phil Ryder was generally a hearty eater, he had a dainty taste, and was very particular about his food. It must be what he liked, it must be cooked just so, and, above all, it must be served with cleanliness, or he would rather experience a considerable degree of hunger than touch it. In this he had been encouraged by his aunt Ruth, and, to a certain extent, by his father. Now, therefore, he found the *Seamew's* table so far beneath his standard of perfection, and so very different from those to which he had been accustomed, that he barely tasted the food prepared for that breakfast. He refused the coffee—which, as Captain Duff was a great coffee-drinker, was of a better quality than that usually furnished aboard-ship—nibbled at a bit of hardtack, and then pushed back his stool.

"What's up?" inquired the captain, noting this movement with surprise. "Feeling squeamish? I thought you never got seasick."

"No, sir, I'm not feeling squeamish, and I'm not in the habit of getting seasick."

"Then why don't ye eat?"

"Because I'm not hungry."

"Humph! ye'd better say at once that it's because the victuals don't suit ye. Never mind, though; we'll try and have them fixed to your liking the next time."

After breakfast, the mate, who had been up all night, and had brought the schooner safely through the Strait

of Fuca into an open seaway, turned in for a long sleep, and Captain Duff took the deck.

Phil went forward for his talk with Serge, and learned, among other things, that the light-house tower of Cape Flattery, which was just fading from view, marked the most northerly light-station of the United States on the Pacific coast. When the young hunter wondered at this, and asked if there were no light-houses in Alaska, Serge replied that so far as he knew there was not one.

In this statement he was correct, for though many Alaska harbors and channels are well buoyed and marked by day beacons, yet on all of its thousands of miles of storm-beaten, fog-enshrouded coast not a light sends forth its cheery gleam, nor does a single fog-horn give warning of hidden dangers.

Phil was intensely interested in everything that Serge told him concerning seals, and now realized for the first time the importance of his position on board the *Sęamew*, and the reason why his skill in shooting had been so highly regarded by Captain Duff.

"What pay does a seal-hunter generally receive?" he asked, after a short period of thinking.

"One dollar each for the first one hundred skins, two dollars for the first two hundred, and so on up to four dollars each for the first four hundred, I believe," responded Serge.

"And how many does a good hunter usually secure? What is the average, I mean?"

"The best I have heard of in a three months' cruise is four hundred and sixteen skins," was the reply.

"Whew!" ejaculated Phil. "That would make his pay for three months' work something over sixteen hundred dollars. If I could only make half of that sum, wouldn't it be fine? How much do the green skins fetch?"

"Anywhere from ten to twenty dollars apiece, according to the demand."

"I had no idea they were so valuable, and I wish we could begin getting some right away. I should like to make enough money before reaching Sitka to replace what I lost by carelessness," remarked Phil. "I forgot, though," he added, with an abrupt change of tone and a comical expression of dismay. "I have agreed to work without wages, and I suppose that means that I am not to receive any commission, no matter how many skins I get. I wonder if I am shipped as a hunter or only as a sailor?"

"I am sure I don't know," answered Serge. "Didn't you read the paper before you signed it?"

"No; I was in too much of a hurry, and too glad to be taken on any terms. Did you read it?"

"No, for I thought, of course, that you had."

"Well," sighed Phil, "I have often heard my father say that one should never sign his name to a paper of any kind without knowing exactly what it contained. Oh, dear! If a fellow could only remember and do just what his father told him, how easy it would be to keep out of scrapes. I wonder why it is that we never think of these things until it is too late?"

"How lucky those fellows are who have fathers to tell them what to do. I haven't had one since I was a little chap and too young to appreciate him," said Serge, rather enviously.

At this point in the conversation Captain Duff called Phil aft, and said that he wished him to join in a shooting-match with the other two hunters, Ike Croly and Oro Dunn. A number of rifles and shot-guns lay on top of the cabin-house, while towing astern of the schooner, and bobbing in her wake at the end of a hundred yards of line, was a round billet of wood painted black, and about the size of a very small keg.

"Five shots apiece with rifles, six with shot-guns, and I will keep the score," announced the captain, adding, "and the one who does the poorest cleans the guns."

One after another the young men stepped to the rail and fired without a rest, with either rifle or shot-gun, as the case might be. Although the captain, who watched the target through a glass, would announce no results until the contest was ended, Phil saw so many splashes in the water while others were shooting, that though he was unable to judge of his own work, he was almost certain the gun cleaning of that day would not fall to him.

To his dismay, when the contest was ended, the captain, who had kept the score in a blank-book, declared that out of the eleven shots fired by each Ike Croly had scored nine hits and two misses, Oro Dunn eight hits and three misses, and Phil Ryder five hits and six misses. "You therefore may take the guns forward and clean 'em," he said to Phil. "And I must say I expected better work from you, judging by the way you bragged yesterday."

Phil could not understand it. He could not remember having shot so poorly as that in years. His defeat was the harder to bear on account of Captain Duff's scornful words and the triumphant looks of the other hunters, who, as he had seen from the first, were intensely jealous of him. Still, there was nothing to be said or done, and gathering up the guns he went forward to clean them. He was resolved, however, that when the time came for real action he would show those two who could bring in the most seal-skins, which was exactly the result that shrewd Captain Duff wished to obtain.

By the time the young hunter finished his task the morning was well spent, and he was beginning to sniff

"HE FOUND A BAILER WITH WHICH HE SET VIGOROUSLY TO WORK"

with some interest the savory odors of cooking that came from the galley. As he carried the cleaned guns into the cabin and placed them in their racks, he was glad to see that Ebenezer was setting the table for dinner.

When he again went on deck the captain ordered him to bail out the boat that was towing astern. Looking over the rail, Phil noticed for the first time that one of the three light whale-boats carried by the schooner was indeed towing astern by a short painter. He could discover no way of getting into her save by sliding down the rope by which she was held, and he wondered if the feat were possible. His hesitation was but momentary, however, for he saw that his hunter rivals and several of the crew were watching him curiously.

So the lad swung himself over the rail, and tightly clutching the rope with both hands and feet, slid downward. As he reached the boat, his weight resting on the bow caused it to sheer so abruptly that he was very nearly flung into the eddying water, but with a violent effort he managed to fling himself at full length into the bottom of the uneasy craft. As he scrambled up he saw, to his dismay, that the forward plug was missing, and through the half-inch hole thus left in the boat's bottom a stream of water was spirting viciously. Acting more from instinct than from knowledge he made his way hurriedly to the after end. Thus his weight sank the stern and at the same time lifted the bow, so that the volume of water entering the boat was very considerably diminished. Here he found a wooden bailer, with which he set vigorously to work.

After a few minutes of this he bethought himself that some one might toss him a plug from the schooner, and he hailed the deck at the top of his voice. Al-

though he shouted until he was hoarse, he received no answer, nor could he catch a glimpse of a human being on board the craft behind which he was towing. No one came to look at him over the rail, and she might have been sailing of her own accord at her own sweet will for aught that he could see of life or guiding intelligence. One thing he did discover, however, which was that the rope by which he was towing had been so lengthened that his boat was now twice the distance from the schooner it had been when he entered it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIRST SEAL-HUNT

For an hour or more Phil Ryder sat in the stern of the boat, alternately bailing, shouting, and casting hopeful glances at the schooner's rail every few moments in the full expectation of seeing some one who would relieve him from his unpleasant position. During this time he was painfully conscious of a most vigorous appetite, that was whetted by occasional tantalizing whiffs that came floating back to him from the galley. At length he began to believe that by some strange oversight he must have been forgotten, and that if anything was done to relieve the situation he must do it himself. He thought that if he could only haul his boat up close under the stern of the schooner he might be able to climb up the rope, and so gain her deck. As no other plan offered, he proceeded to put this one into execution, and stepping forward into the bow of the boat, without regard to the increase of water that this movement caused to flow in through the plug-hole, he seized the rope and began to pull with all his might. The instant the stern was raised and the bow lowered by this transfer of weight the boat sheered wildly to one side. Then she was brought back with a sudden jerk that very nearly capsized her, and immediately made a furious rush in the opposite direction, until her bow was so nearly dragged under that to save himself and restore the former state of affairs Phil was compelled once more to spring aft. His sole plan for escape had

resulted in dismal failure, and so much water had entered the boat during the experiment that to keep her from swamping he had need to bail furiously for another hour. At the end of that time he had once more got the better of the exasperating leak, so that he could rest for a few minutes. Then he must fall to bailing again. So in resting and bailing by turns the long afternoon hours were slowly worn away. The poor lad was faint from hunger, cold, wet, and furious at the supposed carelessness that had left him in such an unpleasant, not to say dangerous, position.

It was not until nearly sunset that the welcome sound of a voice came to his ears. Looking up, he saw Ebenezer's black face peeping over the rail, and heard him announce, "Suppah, sah!"

"Haul in on the painter, you grinning idiot!" shouted Phil, whereupon the negro placed his hand to his ear and called back: "Yes, sah. Suppah!"

"Oh, what an old stupid!" groaned Phil, sinking back despairingly in the stern of the boat. "I may stay here until I starve or drown for all the help he'll give me."

Just then came another shout, and a new hope sprang into the breast of the despairing lad as he saw the lank but powerful frame of Jalap Coombs rising above the rail, and felt that his boat was being drawn towards the schooner. When it was at length pulled up as close as possible the mate shouted:

"Now, lad, make a climb for it hand over hand, and I'll stand by to give ye a h'ist when ye get within reach."

A minute later Phil stood safe and sound on the *Seamew's* deck, but so angry that he broke out at once with:

"That's as mean a piece of business as I ever heard of, and if I can find out who is responsible for it,

I'll pay him back, see if I don't! It's an outrage! and—"

"Steady, lad! Steady!" interrupted Jalap Coombs. "Your trouble's all over now, and there ain't no use kicking it into life again. As my friend old Kite Roberson uster say—"

"Oh, hang Kite Robinson!" cried Phil.

"So, now! So! What did poor old Kite ever do to you that ye should want to hang him? 'Tain't right to speak so onrespectful agin them as is older than you be, and 'twon't do no good nuther. As my old friend uster offen say, 'Ef ye kick a trouble, it 'll kick back, but there ain't no trouble in the world kin stand up agin a good broad grin.' So jest ye give a grin 'stead of a kick, and ye'll feel all right."

Phil could not help laughing at the very homeliness of this advice, and with that laugh his recent experience did really begin to look as much like a joke—though a rather serious one, to be sure—as an outrage. In another moment he was following Jalap Coombs into the cabin, where Captain Duff and the two other hunters were already seated at supper.

How warm and bright and cosey the cabin did seem! Phil wondered how he could have thought it dingy and stuffy. How good it was to see a bountifully provided table once more, and people! He even felt an almost friendly feeling towards the captain, whose broad red face loomed above one end of the table.

"Hello, Ryder!" roared that individual. "Too bad ye was left out in that boat so long, but fact is I've been turned in all the afternoon, and I neglected to mention it to Mr. Coombs when he went on watch. The wust of it to me would have been the missing of my dinner; but I don't suppose you minded that, seeing as ye ain't pertickerler 'bout eating noway."

"The worst of it was that as a plug was out of the

boat, I had to bail nearly all the time to keep her from swamping," replied Phil.

"Sho, now! That so? Waal, it give ye something to do, and kep' ye from idleness, which some folks finds mighty hard to stand. I don't mind it much myself, but then we ain't all made alike."

Phil was too busy eating to make any reply to this, and at the same time he was wondering if a new cook had been found to take Ebenezer's place. Certainly nothing he had previously eaten on board the *Seamew* had tasted half so good as that supper.

It was a noticeable fact that from that time on our young hunter seemed to enjoy his meals as much as any of those who sat at the cabin table. It was also observed that Captain Duff every now and then broke into a hoarse chuckle at meal-times without any apparent cause.

Early the next morning, several seals having been seen from the schooner's deck, the three boats were cleared away and sent forth in pursuit of the shy but coveted game. In each boat were a hunter, a boat-puller, and a steersman; each was provided with a sail, oars, and a boat compass, and in each were stowed a breaker of fresh water and a bag of sea-biscuit. The hunter sat or stood in the bows forward of the mast, where he could have an unobstructed view ahead and on both sides. He was provided with both a rifle and a shot-gun, one or the other of which was always in his hands ready for instant use. He also carried a plentiful supply of cartridges.

The boat-puller sat amidship, and rowed or trimmed sail as occasion might demand; while the steersman, occupying the stern, not only steered the boat, but kept careful note of the courses taken by means of his compass, and of weather indications. He of course is always an experienced sailor. All three were warmly

clad, and each had an oil-skin suit ready at hand. A long-handled gaff or sharp hook of steel lay along the thwarts, where it could be readily reached by any one of the three.

When the boats left the schooner they separated until about half a mile apart, and then ran down the wind, all steering exactly the same course. They were followed by the *Seamew*, under shortened sail, and steering the same course as they. Thus, though they might lose sight of her through distance, darkness, or fog, they were pretty certain to find her again, though it often happens that seal-hunting boats are lost, sometimes to be picked up after days of anxious drifting, and not infrequently never to be seen or heard of more.

Serge was ordered to go as boat-puller in the craft of which Phil was the hunter, much to the satisfaction of both lads. As they were the least experienced of the three crews, they were given the schooner's best sailor-man for boat-steerer, no other than Jalap Coombs himself.

Phil felt rather nervous as he found himself actually embarked on the career of a seal-hunter, and realized how largely the success of the cruise depended on his individual efforts. To be sure, he had, by his own carelessness, cut himself off from sharing any of its profits, but he felt that he had a reputation at stake. So, like all young sportsmen, he was extremely anxious to make as good a "bag" as either of the other hunters who were on the same quest as himself. Thus he was determined to do his very best, if only to show Ike Croly and Oro Dunn that there were other people in the world who could shoot as well as, if not a little better than, they.

This first hunting day was a gray one, with occasional flurries of rain, but fortunately without fog—a

rare circumstance in those latitudes. For an hour or more the occupants of the mate's boat held their course without catching sight of the coveted game, though the eyes of all three searched the dull surface of the waters incessantly. They heard several faint shots from the direction taken by the other boats, and these only made them the more anxious to discover game of their own. Suddenly a sharp whisper of "There's one!" from the stern of the boat caused both lads to look around.

"Where?" cried Phil, eagerly, not realizing in his excitement that he was speaking aloud.

"Gone," answered the mate, dryly, but in a tone of great vexation, "to see who ye was hollering at." With this he pointed to the right, where the boys saw, already out of range, a dark object fleeing with incredible swiftness and a series of curious boundings, by which its body was thrown clear of the water by each impulse.

"Oh!" exclaimed Phil. "That's too bad! What an idiot I was!"

"Never mind, son," replied Jalap Coombs, consolingly. "Better luck next time; but mind and don't speak out loud again till your seal's in the boat."

The next was discovered by Phil himself, and, holding up his hand warningly, he pointed to it. It lay on the surface asleep, and ere its keen sense of smell, which in a seal is active even in slumber, warned it of the presence of its enemies, they were within range. As it finally lifted its startled head a sharp report rang out, and it was dead.

"Quick, Serge!" shouted the mate. "Row to it afore it sinks, as it surely will unless it had just drawn in a breath." The animal had sunk when they reached the spot, but so short a distance that the body could still be reached by the gaff and drawn into the boat.

"THE EYES OF ALL THREE SEARCHED THE WATERS INCESSANTLY"

Phil's eyes sparkled as he gloated over this his first seal, and while Serge was skinning it he eagerly searched for another.

The next one, discovered an hour later, took the alarm before they got within shot-gun range, and bounded away. "He's a lucky beggar!" said Jalap Coombs, in a disgusted tone; but Phil, dropping the useless shot-gun and snatching up his rifle, took a quick aim and fired.

"The very prettiest wing shot that ever I see!" cried the exulting mate, as three minutes later they hauled the dead seal into the boat. "Plumb through the head, too!"

So with varying fortunes the day wore on until it was time to return to the schooner, unless they wished to remain out all night. In the boat were five handsome skins and one seal, just killed, that still retained its glossy coat. Now their sole anxiety was to know whether either of the other boats had beaten them or not. The mate thought they were "high line" for that day, but Phil was doubtful.

CHAPTER XIV

OVERBOARD IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

As the mate's boat approached the *Seamew* at the conclusion of that first day's hunt, its occupants saw that the other two boats were already alongside, and that their cargoes were being transferred to the schooner's deck.

"They've beaten us," said Phil, despondently, as he noted the number of skins being handed up over the side. "I declare luck seems to be dead set against me!"

"If you only hadn't lost the tooth," murmured Serge.

"I'm glad I have," replied the other, sharply, as he caught these words. "I'm glad I haven't got it now, too, because there is no such thing as luck, and I'll prove it to you yet by getting more seals than both those fellows put together, even without any wretched tooth to help me."

"I'm sorry, then, that I ever gave it to you," retorted Serge, angrily.

"So am I; and after this I hope you will keep your witch charms to yourself."

"Hello, for'ard there!" cried Jalap Coombs, whose quick ear detected the angry tones, though he could not distinguish the words of their conversation. "What's to pay? You two aren't quarrelling, be ye? I hope not, for, as old Kite Roberson uster say, 'Any man as will quarrel with a friend don't desarve to have no friend.' So kiss and make up, same as the little lambs

does. I tell ye, lads," he added, earnestly, "in this 'ere onsartin v'y'ge of life the wise sailor-man takes advantage of the fair breezes and smooth waters of friendship, while the swabs is forever bucking agin the cross-seas and head-winds of strife."

Although both lads heard these words and appreciated their good sense, their anger still so rankled that they could not bring themselves to act upon the mate's advice. So as their boat ranged alongside the schooner they sat in a moody silence, and it rested with Jalap Coombs to reply to the questioning hails regarding the success of their first day's hunt.

"How many ye got?" shouted Ike Croly, from the deck.

"How many ye got yourself?" queried the mate.

"I got eight, and Oro he got seven," was the reply.

"Ye done well! Mighty well! Them's the figgers we 'lowed ye was making by counting your shots, and as we didn't want to make ye feel bad at fust start-off, we only brung in six of ourn. We're going to fetch along the rest to-morrow, though, so look out for yourselves."

So Ike Croly was "high line" for that day, and during the rest of the evening he showed both by looks and conversation how proud he was of the honor, and that he considered himself to be a very fine fellow indeed.

As for Phil, he was not only humiliated by his defeat, but heart-sore over his quarrel with Serge. How bitterly he repented of his hasty words! and how gladly would he recall them even now if only his wretched pride would permit! But it would not, and so at the supper-table he sat moody and silent, while the others eagerly discussed the events of the day.

"I tell ye," cried Jalap Coombs, moved to do a little

boasting for his side as an offset to that of Croly and Dunn, "that young feller"—here he nodded in Phil's direction—"has made the best fust day's record of any green hand at the business I ever run across."

"I might think so too," growled Captain Duff, "if it hadn't been for his big talk about how he could shoot at the start-off. As it is, I must say I am disappointed in the result."

"And I tell ye," continued Jalap Coombs, without paying the slightest heed to this interruption, "he made as pretty a wing shot to-day as ever I see. A clean kill at more'n two hundred yards, nigher two hundred and fifty, with the seal on end, jumping like all possessed, and tearing along like a blue streak. A man might live to be a thousand, like old Jerusalem—Methusalem, I *mean*—and never see a neater shot in all that time. Why, I couldn't have done better myself."

As it was a notorious fact that while Jalap Coombs was a capital judge of shooting, he was also one of the very worst shots in the world, this last sally raised such a laugh at his expense that even moody Phil was unable to resist a faint smile. It was quickly overclouded, however, as his thoughts reverted to Serge, and he was glad when, the meal being finished, he was at liberty to go on deck.

Here a busy scene was being enacted, which was at the same time so new and strange to Phil that he could not but regard it with interest. By the light of the setting sun the last three seals shot that day were being stripped of the precious skins for the sake of which they had been compelled to yield their lives. The three most expert seal-skinners of the crew, one of whom was Serge Belcofsky, were engaged in a match race at this business. Phil, who, having had some experience in skinning deer and other game, could appreciate the difficulties of the task, watched

with amazement the ease and rapidity with which his friend worked.

Serge had placed the body of his seal squarely on its back, and with a knife sharpened to the keenness of a razor he made a single straight cut through the skin from the lower jaw along the neck, chest, and abdomen to the root of the tail. Next came four swift circular cuts, one around the base of each fore flipper, one around the extremity of the body at the tail, and another around the head just back of the jaws.

The skin being now ready for removal, Serge grasped an edge of it, and with his keen blade rapidly "flensed" it or cut it free from the body, which he rolled over as the operation proceeded, until he literally rolled the seal out of its skin. After this, one of the crew carried the skin below, and laid it, hair side down, in a "kench," or bin constructed for the purpose. Here the fleshy sides of the skins are covered thickly with salt, and they are left in that condition until the end of the voyage. They are thus thoroughly pickled, and will keep in this state for an indefinite length of time.

As Serge finished his task nearly half a minute ahead of his most expert rival in this peculiar business, the spectators greeted him with shouts of applause and a vigorous hand-clapping. The young Alaskan acknowledged this with a smile and a bow, but at the same time glanced inquiringly to where Phil stood, to see if he were joining in these tokens of appreciation. But the young seal-hunter was not given to outward demonstrations of his feelings, and though his heart was peculiarly warmed towards Serge at this moment, and he longed for a reconciliation, he could not bring himself to let this feeling manifest itself before others. So he stood motionless and silent.

Serge, too, was longing for a renewal of friendship with the one of all his companions whom he most admired and loved, and was bitterly disappointed that Phil should give no sign of a similar desire. More to hide the expression of this feeling than anything else he picked up the body of the seal which he had just finished, and bore it to the rail with the intention of throwing it overboard. The deck was slippery with blood and blubber oil, and Serge was not just then in a mood to exercise caution. He was thinking of Phil instead of what he was doing. As a consequence, when he lifted the seal above his head and leaned far over the rail to fling it from him, his feet slipped, and in an instant he had plunged headforemost into the cold waters.

Phil uttered a cry of horror as his friend thus disappeared from view, for it instantly flashed into his mind that, like most natives of Alaska, where the water is too cold to tempt them to linger in its icy embrace, Serge did not know how to swim. The young hunter was so prompt to act that even as he cried aloud in his distress he was casting aside his coat and kicking off his heavy boots. Then, darting aft, he sprang on the rail, and with the same motion flung himself into the sea. As he came to the surface he caught sight of Serge struggling to keep his head above water but a few feet from him, and a couple of strokes took him to the side of the drowning lad.

"Rest your hands on my shoulders, old man," he shouted, "and I can support you. Don't grab me, or you will drown us both."

Half choked, blinded, and breathless as he was, Serge heard, understood, and obeyed.

By treading water, and at the same time paddling with his hands as a dog uses his fore-paws in swimming, Phil managed to keep both his own head and

that of his helpless comrade above water. It required a tremendous effort, however, and he realized that some unnatural weight was gradually dragging them down.

"Kick off your boots, Serge!" he cried.

"I can't," gasped the latter.

"You must! Unless you do I can't hold out a minute longer."

Somehow or other Serge managed to obey and get rid of his heavy water-filled sea-boots, though how he did it he never could tell. Fortunately they were several sizes too large for him, a fact over which he had previously lamented.

The relief from their weight was instant, and Phil felt that he was now good for several minutes longer.

"Can you see the schooner?" he asked.

"No," answered Serge, who was looking in the wrong direction.

"Look again, and look all around."

"Yes, yes!" screamed the other. "Here she is, right on top of us! Look out! or we shall be run down."

CHAPTER XV

PHIL BECOMES "HIGH LINE"

JUST as Serge uttered his terrified scream at the sight of what he believed to be the schooner about to run them down, he gave a lurch to one side that sent him clear of Phil and plunged him again beneath the surface. The swimmer seized him by the collar, and at the same moment was struck by something on the opposite side that he instinctively grasped. It was an oar belonging to the boat into which Jalap Coombs had slid as it towed astern of the schooner, and cutting the painter, had come to their rescue. As from his position in rowing he was not able to look ahead, he had not yet seen the lads, when a scream from under his bows warned him that he was upon them. The boat had appeared to Serge so suddenly and unexpectedly that to his bewildered eyes she looked as big as the schooner, and he believed his own fate and Phil's to be sealed.

It did not take the chilled and dripping lads long to scramble into the boat, for though they were so numbed as to be almost helpless, both they and Jalap Coombs were such experienced boatmen that all three knew exactly what to do. Relieved from the terrible strain under which they had labored, they felt so weak that they would gladly have lain down in the bottom of the boat; but Jalap Coombs said: "No indeed, ye'll do nothing of the kind. Set on that thwart, each take an oar, and row for all you're wuth to keep up a cirkerlation and get warm. Ef ye don't, I'll have to turn

to and give ye both the sound thrashing ye desarve, though I was brung up a Quaker, and are opposed to fighting on gineral principles."

He spoke so sternly that neither of them dared disobey him, and so they wearily rowed for all they were worth, which was very little indeed just then, until the returning schooner picked them up, and willing hands outstretched over her side drew them once more into safety.

In the meantime the lads, whose friendship had been sundered for a little, only to be welded more firmly than ever by the death struggle they had just shared, had exchanged a few broken but heartfelt sentences as they sat side by side on that weary thwart, and now all was again well with them.

Serge had said, "Oh, Phil! I shall never forgive myself!" And the latter had answered: "You don't have to, old man. If you will only forgive me, it will be more than enough." After that the mere touching of their wet shoulders had proved comforting, and given assurance of a friendship that neither of them believed could ever again be broken.

Youth and health can withstand almost anything, and so in the morning, after a night between warm blankets, the lads were as fit as ever for their day's work. As they started out in their boat in pursuit of seals, they felt none the worse for the experience of the previous evening, which was already become a memory, and one not altogether tinged with sadness. In fact, they were not inclined to regard their adventure half so seriously as did Jalap Coombs. He said:

"Ef it hadn't er been for me and old Kite Roberson, the *Seamew* would have lost two of her best hands."

"We know what would have happened if it had not been for you," replied Phil, gratefully; "but what had Mr. Robinson to do with it?"

"More'n a little," answered the mate, shaking his head and gazing into the remote distance, as he always did when referring to his late but still venerated friend. "Old Kite uster say: 'When two friends has quarrelled, and is trying to make up without knowing jest how to do it, then watch 'em, for they ain't responserble for their acts.' Remembering this as I did, I naturally felt it my dooty to keep an eye on you two last evening, though it war my watch below, and some would have said I hadn't no call to be on deck. Says I to myself, 'There's no knowing what they'll do.' Sure enough when I seed fust one plump overboard and then t'other, I knowed why I had been called, and acted according. S-s-t! there's a holluschickie [young male seal] now!"

As the fur-seal when sleeping in the water lies on his back with his fore-flippers folded on his breast, and as, when in this position only his nose and the heels of his hind-flippers are exposed to view, it would be hard to say how even Jalap Coombs's practised eye could distinguish a holluschickie, or bachelor seal, from a female, or even from a seecatch or old bull. His assertion was proved true, however, when this one was hauled into the boat, after a capital shot by Phil, and after Serge's powerful strokes had taken them so quickly to the spot that the sinking body could be gaffed.

Phil was glad of this, for he hated to kill female seals, such a proceeding not being at all in accordance with his sportsmanlike instincts or training. He was often obliged to do this, however, for the pelagic sealer must shoot quickly if he is to shoot successfully, and without pausing to discover, even if such a thing were possible, whether he is firing at a yearling pup, a bachelor, a female, or an "old wig," as the seecatchie or veteran bulls are called, on account of a patch of white hair on their shoulders.

As Jalap Coombs philosophically remarked, "They

all count in the day's catch, and numbers, not quality, is what we open-water fellows is after."

The crew of the mate's boat worked so well on this day, Phil shot with such quickness and precision, Serge rowed with such energy, and Jalap Coombs steered to such a nicety within range of the shy animals after they were once sighted, that before night a well-earned success had rewarded their efforts, and their boat was heavily laden with seal-skins.

Besides those they secured, many seals were shot at and missed, some were wounded and escaped, and still others sank beyond reach after being killed. Most of Phil's shots were made at mere black points that appeared but for a moment on this side or that as the seals came to the surface for a breath of air, only to dive again almost immediately. The whole body was rarely seen, save when the seals were at play, when they would spring clear of the water with graceful leaps, like so many salmon. At other times they swam a few feet beneath the surface with marvellous swiftness, and if one were noted as he came up for breath, he was too far away to be seen when forced to do so a second time.

With all these difficulties to contend against, the securing of twenty seals by a single boat was considered by Jalap Coombs a capital day's work, and as they approached the *Seamew* at sunset the heart of the young hunter beat high with the hope that he had at length scored more points than either of his rivals. Nor was he disappointed, though, when a dozen skins had been sent aboard, and no more were seen in the boat, a derisive laugh was heard from the schooner's deck. When, however, Jalap Coombs began to hand out the rest of the skins, which he had purposely hidden beneath the sail, this laugh was not only silenced, but was changed into exclamations of astonishment.

Oro Dunn had brought in eighteen skins, and had boastfully declared that he was "high line" for the day, as no young sport from the East was likely to beat that score, or even come anywhere near it. When Phil's twenty skins were counted out, Mr. Dunn retired to the cabin as crestfallen a seal-hunter as sailed the Pacific at that moment, and muttering unpleasant things about some people's luck.

Serge said he ought to add "Brown" to his name.

Jalap Coombs was triumphant. At the supper-table he boasted so tremendously of his protégé's shooting, that although Phil could not entirely repress his happy smiles, he was forced to remain as silent as on the previous evening. Even Captain Duff congratulated him in his own rough way, and said that if this thing were kept up he would soon be obliged to allow his youngest hunter the same commission as the others.

At the same time Serge was the hero of the forecastle, where the mate's crew, and Phil in particular, were praised to the full content of the young boat-puller.

For ten days longer this exciting business of seal-hunting on the high seas was continued, with varying success and in all kinds of weather. Occasionally a day, or at least part of one, would be fair and bright, but more often the sun was hidden by fog-banks or low-hanging clouds, while snarling squalls of wind and rain swept above the sullen waters. Once the sea was lashed into fury for twenty-four hours by so fierce a gale that the brave little schooner, hove to under a tiny storm try-sail and the merest corner of her jib, was taxed to her utmost to ride it out.

By the time that several hundred skins, of which a full third were credited to Phil's gun, were safely salted away in the kenches, the seals suddenly disappeared. Jalap Coombs said that the schooner must be within

one hundred miles or so of the Aleutian Islands, and that the game they had followed so far had doubtless passed through them into Bering Sea, where the reunited seal herds were by this time "hauling out" on the Pribyloff Islands.

"How I should love to see them there!" exclaimed Phil.

"Well, you're not likely to have a chance on this v'y'ge," answered Jalap Coombs, "and if ye did, ye'd be a long ways further from Sitka than ye be now."

This set the young hunter to thinking seriously of his original purpose in taking this cruise. Of course he had often thought of it before, though not very seriously; but now he began to watch anxiously for the promised vessel, to which he and Serge might be transferred with a view to reaching their desired destination. Once he ventured to mention the subject to Captain Duff, only to receive the gruff reply:

"Ye don't suppose I'm going hunting schooners just to set you aboard of, do ye? When we happen to hail one, I'll see. Meantime you can keep right on earning the money I've already laid out on ye, besides what's due for your passage."

As at the lowest estimate Phil had already earned several hundred dollars, of which he was not to see one cent, he considered that his account with Captain Duff was more than balanced, which belief was equally shared by Serge.

One morning soon after this Phil was surprised to find the *Seamew* at anchor. He looked eagerly about for signs of land, but none were to be seen. "Where are we? and what are we anchored here for?" he asked of Jalap Coombs, who happened to be on deck at the time.

"Outer edge of the Shumagin Banks, and I s'pose we're here to fish," was the brief answer.

They evidently were there to fish, and all hands were set at it as soon as breakfast was over. With bits of seal blubber for bait, they hauled in cod as fast as they pleased. Very soon a portion of the crew were told off to split and salt these, while the rest continued to add to the catch. By nightfall a sufficient number of fine large fish to suit Captain Duff's purpose had been caught, split, and salted away on top of the seal-skins already packed in the kenches below-deck. His desire for the valuable furs had only been increased by the successful issue of his voyage up to this time, and he had determined upon a bold move that would secure him as many more seal-skins as he already had if it could be successfully carried out. He did not disclose his intentions even to his mate, but merely ordered the anchor up at the conclusion of that day of fishing, and laid a course to the westward.

CHAPTER XVI

A VENTURE INTO FORBIDDEN WATERS

On the morning following that of the day of fishing the *Seamew* was skirting a wild-looking coast, against the bald headlands of which the huge blue billows of the Pacific thundered with a ceaseless roar. The scene was one of awful grandeur and desolation, though not of utter solitude, for though no sign of human life was visible, sea-lions disported in the tumultuous breakers, huge whales rolled lazily on the long swells, and myriads of sea-fowl circled with harsh cries above the precipitous rocks. Above all towered the symmetrical snow-capped peak of a lofty mountain, from the summit of which a thin banner of smoke trailed to leeward. It was Shishaldin, the most beautiful peak of all the Aleutian Islands, and as it was the first volcano Phil Ryder had ever seen, he gazed upon it with delight and wonder. The forbidding coast they were skirting, and which was Phil's first bit of Alaska, was the south side of the island of Oonimak, one of the largest of the entire Aleutian chain, and also the only one of any size absolutely without inhabitants.

After a while the schooner reached the western extremity of this inhospitable island, and turning into the broad channel of the Oonimak Pass, was soon breasting the green waters of Bering Sea. Here her course was again altered, so that she now followed the northern coast of the island, and was headed towards its upper or eastern end. This shore was much less abrupt than the other, and broad levels of mossy tun-

dra broken by foot-hills stretched away to the mountains that had risen so sheer from the Pacific side.

At length towards evening anchor was dropped in a small, well-sheltered bay at the extreme eastern end of the island, and Captain Duff caused himself to be rowed ashore. In a short time he returned, and to the surprise of all hands informed his crew that he wished his cargo of seal-skins broken out at once and transferred to a place on shore that he would point out.

So actively was this job of night-work carried forward, that before morning every seal-skin had been taken from the schooner, carried ashore, and safely salted away in a kench constructed within the ruins of an old stone hut. This was but one of a number still standing, which showed that at some previous time Oonimak Island had supported at least one populous village.

This mysterious proceeding having been carried out to Captain Duff's satisfaction, and only a scanty cargo of salted cod-fish left in his vessel's hold, her anchor was again lifted, and she was headed northward into the fog-hidden regions of Bering Sea. In these forbidden waters any vessel was liable at any time to be overhauled by some American revenue-cutter or British man-of-war, and subjected to an examination. If seal-skins were found on board she was seized and sent to some distant port, from which there was no chance of escape, and where her crew were detained as prisoners until such time as their case might be tried before the proper authorities.

The strange proceeding of the *Seamew's* master in discharging his cargo on a desolate island, carefully concealing it there, and then venturing into the forbidden waters, drew forth many eager and curious comments from his crew, all of whom wondered what the next act on the programme would be. None, however,

CARRYING THE SEAL-SKINS FROM THE SCHOONER

dared question the schooner's autocrat, for, as though well aware of their desire to do so, he became more of a bully than ever, and so roared and bellowed and snarled at every one and everything as to make all hands anxious to keep as far from him as possible.

None discussed the situation more earnestly than did Phil and Serge whenever they could get together beyond the captain's range of observation, for they were well aware that every mile of progress in this new direction found them just so much farther away from Sitka, as well as from the track of vessels bound for that port.

"I tell you what it is, old man," Phil remarked, on one of these occasions, "while I don't know where we are bound or when we will get there, it seems to me that shipping on board this schooner was a mighty poor move on my part. I might have known that I would never get to Sitka this way, if I had only stopped to think. But I didn't, and I don't suppose I ever shall until it is too late for thinking to do any good."

"What worries me most," responded Serge, "is that it was I who proposed the plan."

"Now don't you fret about that. You only did what you thought was for the best, and, after all, I don't know but it is just as well that I came on this cruise. I should have been certain to get into some other scrape equally bad, if not worse, if I hadn't. Why, when I recall that one of the only two nights I ever spent in Victoria was passed in a police-station, I tremble to think what might have happened if I had been left there for two whole weeks. I should really be enjoying this trip, too, if it wasn't for thinking of my poor father. He surely must be in a state of mind by this time. At any rate, I am seeing something of Alaska, or rather of its fogs and waters, and that is what I came out West for, you know."

"Yes," said Serge, anxious to encourage this brighter view of the situation, "and you are making a splendid reputation for yourself as a seal-hunter. Why, after this trip, if you want it, you can get a job any time at the very highest rates going. I tell you what! If I could only shoot as you can, I should feel fixed for life."

"But I sha'n't ever want any such job again," replied Phil. "To tell the truth, I am getting awfully sick of this killing business. It was exciting at first, but the keeping it up day after day is horrid. One might as well turn butcher at once, and be done with it."

"Oh!" said Serge, with a puzzled air, as though this sentiment were beyond his comprehension. "If you look at it that way—"

"Well, I do!" interrupted Phil, "and I hope I shall never be called upon to shoot another seal."

The reason why Serge was unable to regard the business of killing animals, whose skins represented money, in the same light that Phil did was because of the vastly different surroundings amid which he had been brought up. The most important industries of the great territory that claimed him as a son are hunting, fur-trading, and fishing. In fact, these and a little mining were the only business pursuits of which he had known anything until he started on his long voyage to the Atlantic coast. Thus from his earliest childhood he had been brought up to believe that fur-bearing animals were to be killed wherever found, and to regard a successful hunter with the same respect that Phil would accord to a successful banker or lawyer.

Thus we find individuals, communities, and even nations, regarding the same things from entirely different points of view according as they have been educated. Each honestly believes himself or itself to be

in the right, and that all others must be wrong. In this manner arise differences of opinion that sometimes lead to strife. Wherefore let us try to look at all things from our neighbor's point of view before concluding to differ with him concerning them.

The foregoing paragraph is a sermon, and though it is a very tiny one, it ought to apologize for intruding itself into a story. I am afraid, though, that, like many other sermons we are all acquainted with, it is so puffed up with its own conceit that it will do nothing of the kind.

So while Phil Ryder had arrived at the conclusion that the business of killing seals was one that no self-respecting hunter who also claimed to be a sportsman could follow, Serge Belcofsky regarded it as a most eminently respectable occupation, in which opinions both lads were right.

In the meantime, while these discussions were going on in forecastle and on deck, the *Seamew* flew northward for a day and a night. It was generally believed that she was in search of some new fishing-ground, for, as all hands knew, Bering Sea is one of the best-stocked fish-preserves in the world, and contains a supply of food fishes sufficient for the feeding of all the people in the world.

It is one of the very foggiest places in the world also, being even more foggy than the Bay of Fundy, and for the same reason, which is warm water and cold air. As the warm waters of the Gulf Stream enter the Bay of Fundy, so the warm waters of the great Japan current enter Bering Sea. In both places they meet waves of cold arctic air, by which evaporation is condensed into fog. If the air were as warm as or warmer than the water there would be no fog, as is the case in the tropics; but when warm water and cold air meet fog is the result.

The steam that we see issuing from the spout of a teakettle as it sits on top of a stove is nothing more nor less than fog. It is the vapor rising from the hot water in the kettle condensed by the much cooler air outside. If the outer air were as hot as that inside the kettle we would see no steam, though the invisible vapor would be passing from the spout just the same. To prove this it is only necessary to set the teakettle in the oven.

Thus Bering Sea is always foggy during the summer months, when its waters are warmer than its air, and that is one reason why the fur-seal, who dearly loves cool wet weather and foggy days, finds in it a congenial home and makes it his summer resort. Another reason is that these waters so abound in fish that form the seal's chief food, and to procure which he thinks nothing of swimming one hundred or more miles in a day from his rookeries on the Pribyloff Islands.

Although seals can exist for a long time without food, they must eat sooner or later. So the mother seal, having stayed on one of the islands with her pup until she is very hungry, will leave him gorged with milk sufficient to nourish him during her absence, and set forth on long fishing expeditions that may extend over two or even three days. When she returns she finds her own little one amid thousands of others that look exactly like him, just as surely as a human mother would select her own baby from a roomful. So anxious is the mother that her pup shall have enough food to make him grow into a strong, beautiful holluschickie that she will nurse none but him. Thus if she did not return from her long journey in search of food he would surely die of starvation, as all the other seal-mothers would be too busy supplying the wants of their own little ones to care for him.

CHAPTER XVII

CRUEL KILLING OF MOTHER-SEALS

It was because Captain Duff wanted more seal-skins, and because the seals insisted in resorting to Bering Sea, that he had taken the *Seamew* into those waters. He knew that the Pribyloff seals, in vast numbers, roamed far and wide in search of food; he knew that here they were less shy and more easily secured than elsewhere, and he believed that, hidden by the prevalent and friendly fogs, his swift little schooner could escape the vigilance of meddlesome patrol boats. Of course he ran the risk of losing his vessel by taking her into the forbidden waters for this purpose, and of course he was disobeying a law in so doing. Captain Duff was willing to run the risk, however, and as for laws—while he entertained a great respect for those that protected his interests, he had little regard for such as interfered with his schemes for money-getting. So, having hidden the seal-skins already secured in a place from which he, or those whom he might send, could reclaim them at some future time, and having provided himself with a supply of salted codfish, beneath which the skins that he now hoped to obtain might be concealed, foxy Captain Duff headed the *Seamew* into Bering Sea, and sailed her for a day and a night towards the seal-haunted Pribyloff Islands.

Only he of all on board knew whither she was being taken; or if Jalap Coombs suspected, he shrewdly kept his own counsel, as is always best for mates to do unless their advice is asked. He had become so

strangely taciturn during the last two days, that even his boys, as he called Phil and Serge, could extract no information from him.

Early in the morning of the second day the *Seamew* was hove to. With the first light the hunters were ordered into their boats, and sent in pursuit of the schools of seals that surrounded the schooner in every direction, as far as the eye could reach through the drifting fog. These were darting, diving, leaping high in air, gambolling with all the playfulness of kittens, and showing themselves by every movement to be the swiftest of swimmers, and the most graceful of marine animals.

Although Phil Ryder was not prepared for a flat disobedience of orders, he still moved towards the boat with such evident reluctance as to attract the captain's notice.

"I shall pay you the same commission as the other hunters for this day's work, Ryder," said Captain Duff, a day or two later, when the *Seamew* was well into Bering Sea, "and the hunter making the biggest score to-day will get a ten-dollar bonus. The same will be given to the steersman of his boat, and half as much to his boat-puller."

"Hurrah for Captain Duff!" yelled Oro Dunn. "That bonus has got to come to my boat, or I'm no shot."

"Don't ye be too sure of that!" shouted Ike Croly, whose boat had pushed off. "I've already laid out to spend that money myself."

"Oh, you have, have you?" muttered Phil, with all the old pride in his reputation as a crack shot fully aroused. "Perhaps you'd better not spend it until you get it, though."

"Come back to the schooner with each dozen that ye get, and we'll take care of 'em here," was Captain Duff's parting instruction as the boats put off.

Never had Phil imagined that so many seals existed as he saw that day, nor did it seem possible that these could be the same shy creatures he had encountered in the North Pacific. In the excitement of making a score he forgot all that he had said about seal-killing being butchery, and fired at every mark with the reckless ardor of an enthusiastic sportsman.

Five times during that day of slaughter did the mate's boat return to the schooner, and each time she bore a dozen seals. On the last return trip she was laden to the gunwales with a dozen and two more.

"Never in all my experience did I see sich a day's haul of seals!" exclaimed Jalap Coombs. "And I only wish my friend, old Kite Roberson, war here to see what a Yankee boy kin do with a pop-gun."

"I'm glad he isn't," replied Phil, who, weary and aching all over, was beginning to feel ashamed of and disgusted with his day of killing.

As he clambered up over the schooner's side he caught sight of something that caused him to start back as though he had been struck. On the deck, mingled with blood and blubber, was a white fluid that ran to the scuppers and trickled from them in streams.

"What is it?" demanded Phil, hoarsely, of one of the crew, who was busily skinning a seal. As he asked the question he pointed a trembling finger to a pool of the white fluid.

"That!" answered the man, indifferently. "Why, that's milk from the cows you fellows have been bringing in to-day."

"Cows! Do you mean seal-mothers? Where are their young?"

"What! the pups? Back on the rookeries, of course."

"And what will become of them?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose they'll die after a while. But what ails you? Be you sick?" With this the man paused for a moment in his work and gazed curiously at Phil's pale face.

"Sick! Yes, I am sick at heart!" cried the conscience-stricken lad, before whose mental vision was flashing a vivid picture of the helpless and starving pups whose mothers he had slaughtered that day. He seemed to hear their pitiful little voices growing weaker and weaker with each hour as they called in vain for those who would never return to them. He seemed to see them dying, after days of suffering, and for a moment he felt all the horror that comes to him who has committed a murder.

He was restored to his surroundings by Captain Duff's loud voice calling out: "Hello, Ryder! Here's your bonus; for you're high line to-day. If ye'll only do as well to-morrow and the day after, I'll promise to start ye for Sitka by steamer afore the week's out."

Thus saying, the speaker extended towards the lad the reward he had promised for that day's butchery—a ten-dollar gold piece.

With a cry of rage and a savage motion Phil snatched the glittering coin, and with all his might flung it from him into the sea. Then confronting the amazed man with blazing eyes and a wrathful voice, he almost screamed: "Did you think I would take your blood-money? I've sunk as low as murder, I know, but not so low as to take pay for it! And bad as I am, you are a thousand times worse, for I did not know what I was doing, while you knew all the time and urged me on. But never, so long as I live, will I take the life of another of those harmless creatures. Never! never!"

"What ever does the boy mean? Has he lost his senses and gone mad?" cried the captain, in bewilder-

"JUST THEN A SECOND GUN WAS FIRED BY THE PURSUER"

ment, at the same time retreating a step, as though fearful that Phil was about to spring at him.

At that moment came a startling interruption of this tragic scene. It was the deep boom of a heavy gun, evidently fired from a considerable distance to windward.

Instantly all eyes were turned in that direction, where through the twilight was still distinctly to be seen a white steamer, with a cloud of black smoke pouring from her yellow funnel, and headed in their direction.

The exclamation of "A cutter!" was heard from a dozen lips at once, and, sure enough, it was one of those handy little government cruisers that are so dreaded by evil-doers, and afford so great a protection to honest sailors. She had fired a blank shot from her single gun as a command for the *Seamew* to lie to and await her coming.

The schooner was under way, and running down the wind to the eastward under easy sail. Captain Duff could not afford to be caught thus, red-handed as it were, with the bodies of recently-killed seals on his deck, and the green hides of others still unstowed. The steamer was yet a mile away. The *Seamew* was remarkably fast in a moderate breeze and smooth water, and night was coming on. He could at least gain time enough to conceal his illegal freight and to transform his vessel, to all outward appearance, into an ordinary fisherman. He might possibly escape entirely, and the chance was worth taking.

"Bring her on the wind!" he shouted to the man at the wheel. "Trim in! trim in! Up with your main-topsail, flying-jib, and jib-topsail! Lively, lads! lively! Drop everything else, and get sail on to her! Mr. Coombs, break out the main-stay sail and set it. Here, you! Help me get in these boats!"

Phil was so carried away by the excitement of the

moment that before he knew what he was about he found himself working furiously with the captain and two other men at getting the boats that were still towing alongside out of the water and on deck.

By the time this was done the schooner was hauled on an easy bowline, which was her best point of sailing, and with every stitch of canvas that could be packed on her, was tearing through the water so swiftly that it seemed doubtful if even a steamer could catch her. Certainly, if the wind held, she could not be overhauled before night closed down. Still, while she was getting into racing trim, and on account of the alteration in her course, the cutter had made a decided gain, and was now much nearer than at first.

"Blow, good wind, blow!" shouted Captain Duff, as he stood on the after-deck, critically eying his sails. Phil Ryder stood a short distance from him, watching the cutter, and experiencing a return of the bitter feelings he had forgotten during the recent period of excitement and action.

"Oh, I hope she will catch us!" he exclaimed, aloud, though unconsciously.

Just then a second gun was fired by the pursuer, and with an angry scream a shot flew over the schooner, and plunged into the water far ahead.

"Then go below, ye swab, and stay there!" roared Captain Duff, furious at both the shot and Phil's words. As he spoke he gave the lad a violent shove that landed him at the foot of the cabin stairs, and at the same time the slide was drawn to above his head.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHASED BY A REVENUE-CUTTER

As Phil picked himself up from the cabin floor, his whole frame ablaze with anger, he muttered through his clinched teeth, "If that brute thinks I am going to stay down here like a rat in a hole, he is mightily mistaken, that's all."

Then, with a boldness born of his bitter feelings, he made his way through the narrow passage into the galley, out through it to the deck, and walking deliberately aft, assumed his former position. Now, however, he keenly watched Captain Duff's every movement, feeling certain that the latter was too great a coward to strike him while he was on guard.

The captain glared savagely at the only member of his crew who dared to openly defy him, but seemed uncertain how to act. Perhaps it was fortunate for both of them that in this emergency their attention was directed from each other by a third shot from the cutter. This time the range was so perfect that the hurtling missile passed through the schooner's maintopsail, in which it tore a jagged hole.

Although this being made a target for cannon-balls was a thrillingly novel sensation to our young hunter, his state of mind was such that it caused him neither fear nor anxiety. After standing still a minute or so longer, he walked slowly forward to find Serge, and ask him how he was enjoying the experience.

Ere the cutter could fire another shot darkness had

so set in that neither vessel was visible from the other, and only a red glow at the top of her funnel marked the pursuer's position.

Little by little Captain Duff altered his course by hugging the wind a trifle more closely, until at length even the glow above the cutter's funnel was no longer to be seen, nor the beat of her screw heard. Then the red-faced master of the *Seamew*, realizing that he had escaped the clutches of the law, gave a hoarse chuckle of satisfaction.

Phil found Serge quite as indifferent to the result of the chase as himself, though somewhat more nervous concerning the shots, and much relieved when he found there were to be no more. When, an hour later, supper was served aboard the schooner, the lads ate theirs together on deck. Then when Serge was relieved from watch, Phil crept into the narrow forecastle bunk with him, and they shared it together for the rest of the night.

While our lad was not willing to trust himself within reach of Captain Duff's arm during the hours of darkness, he was so ready to defy him by daylight that in the morning he returned to the cabin for breakfast, during which meal both he and his table companions, including the captain, preserved an unbroken silence.

The schooner, having been kept under full sail all night, was felt by all hands to have placed many miles of safety between herself and her pursuer by sunrise, or at least by the time the sun was supposed to have risen beyond the dense fog-bank in which the *Seamew* was again enveloped. So confident was Captain Duff that he was beyond his enemy's reach that, his cupidity being aroused by the sight of a sleeping seal, he determined to have one more day of slaughter before leaving those waters. He therefore ordered out the boats, and charged the hunters to do their best,

as this would be their last chance of that season to make any money by seal-killing.

To the amazement and consternation of the entire crew, the youngest of the hunters, boldly facing the bully, of whom they stood so greatly in awe, refused point-blank to fire a shot at a seal.

"I said last evening, when I discovered the crime of which I had been guilty, that I would never shoot another seal, and I never will," said Phil, with all the decision of which his voice was capable.

"Mr. Coombs," said the captain, in the blandest of tones, stepping to the rail and addressing the mate, who had already entered his boat, "will you oblige me by passing up that water-breaker? Thank you. And that bag of biscuit, if you please? Now, ye mutinous young swab!" he roared, turning to Phil with an abrupt change of voice and manner, "get into that boat, quick! afore I throw ye in!"

"Certainly, sir, I will get into the boat, for I do not intend to be mutinous, but I have promised myself not to shoot any more seals, and I cannot break a promise."

"Humph!" growled Captain Duff, "we'll see what your promises amount to. There is neither food nor water in your boat, and I'll see that neither you nor those with you get a mouthful of either till ye bring back a load of seals or their skins. You may choose to make your companions suffer for your fool notions, but I rather guess they'll find a way to make you change your mind. Shove off!"

When the schooner was lost to sight in the fog, Sergé rested on his oars, and turning to his friend, asked, "Do you mean to stick it out, Phil?"

"I certainly do not intend to shoot a seal this day," was the quiet reply.

"Well, then, though I can't exactly understand your feelings in this matter, I'll see you through with it,

and stand by you to the end, and here's my hand on it."

"Thank you, old fellow!" and with the warm hand-clasp that passed between the two lads the young hunter felt that his cause was won.

"Is it a clear case of conscience with ye, lad?" inquired the mate.

"Yes, sir, it is."

"Then ye can count me on your side too; for, as old Kite Roberson uster say, 'any man as 'll go back on his conscience ain't no right to call hisself a man,' and them's likewise my sentiments."

In the meantime seals were gambolling about the boat on all sides, and gazing fearlessly at them from the wave crests raised by a rapidly freshening breeze, while the distant sounds of rapid firing told of the work being performed by the other hunters. The occupants of the mate's boat talked in low tones of their situation and its possible results, while their craft drifted with the wind for nearly an hour.

Suddenly Jalap Coombs lifted his hand for silence, and listened intently for a moment. Then he said, "There's a screw-steamer bearing down on us, and she's not far away."

The commanding officer of the United States revenue-cutter *Phoca* was a far shrewder man than Captain Duff had given him credit for being. Although he had been disappointed at not overhauling the *Sea-mew* before darkness hid her from view, he by no means gave up all hope of capturing the saucy schooner, cleverly as she had escaped him for the time being. Watching her through a powerful glass, long after she was lost to the unaided vision, he noted that she was gradually hauling on the wind, and shaped his own course accordingly. Shortly before daylight he stopped his engines, and set a dozen pair of the keenest ears

among his crew to listening for any sounds that might come over the fog-obscured waters. He, too, heard the splashing of frolicking seals, and wisely concluded that a skipper who was so anxious to secure a few skins as to be willing to run the risk of hunting them in Bering Sea would, in his present state of fancied security, try for a few more before leaving it for good. Not long after this the correctness of his judgment was proved by the sound of shots borne faintly down the wind through the heavy air. Quickly was the *Phoca* got under way, and stealthily, like the white ghost of a ship, she sped through the mist in the direction of the shots.

"We'll pick up the hunting-boats and their crews first," said the commander to his first-lieutenant. "Then Mr. Skipper will find himself too short-handed to make sail in a hurry, and I rather guess that, like Davy Crockett's coon, he will conclude to come down."

The plan worked so well that in less than an hour from that time Captain Duff, Ike Croly, Oro Dunn, and the rest of the *Seamew's* company found themselves prisoners on board the revenue-cutter *Phoca*, while their own craft was in charge of a prize-crew of bluejackets detailed for that duty.

In the excitement attending this capture, and the hurried transfer of crews, the fact that a boat containing the schooner's mate and two others was missing was entirely overlooked until the vessels were again under way. Then, though guns were fired, and several hours were spent in search for the lost boat, no trace of it was found. In the meantime the wind freshened so rapidly into a gale that finally, fearful for the safety of the craft in his charge, with the rugged rocks of the Aleutian Islands under their lee, the commander gave the reluctant order to run for a pass, and the open waters of the Pacific.

Thus it happened that the boat in whose occupants we are most interested was left tossing alone on the storm-lashed waters of that desolate sea. Although its crew were thus placed in a most unpleasant and even dangerous position, it was one for which they had only themselves to blame. So close had the *Phoca* passed to them that they might easily have hailed her and been picked up, had they chosen to do so. Instead of this they kept perfectly quiet, or only conversed in low tones, and congratulated each other that, owing to Phil's firmness, no shots by which their presence would have been betrayed had been fired from their boat that morning. Their reason for this action was that they were unanimous in desiring to escape capture—Jalap Coombs, because he had no liking for an imprisonment, or at least a long residence on shore in enforced idleness; Phil, because his heart was set on reaching Sitka as soon as possible, and he fancied the captured schooner would be taken to Seattle or San Francisco; and Serge on the general theory that it is a bad thing to be captured under any circumstances.

Besides, when by the sounds that came over the sea the mate felt assured that the *Seamew* had been taken, he proposed a plan which seemed so feasible that both lads readily agreed to it.

CHAPTER XIX

CASTAWAYS ON OONIMAK

"You see, boys," began Jalap Coombs, after it was certain that the *Seamew* had been captured, "as my friend old Kite Roberson uster say, 'I ain't no pig in a poke.' Not that I've ever got onto the exact bearings of a 'poke'; but nigh as I can make out, it's some turrible dark place like a ship's hold with the hatches battened down, or maybe a tomb. Anyhow, I haven't been in the dark all this time so much as Cap'n Duff thought I was. He 'lowed he was the only navigator 'boardship, while I 'lowed there was two of us. So, while he kep' his log, I likewise kep' mine. Now, 'cording to my reckoning, we are not, at this blessed minute, more'n fifty mile from the island of Oonimak, with a breeze that's coming on a gale blowing dead for it. If we choose, we can make it inside of six hours, and I reckon we'll make it anyway, sooner or later, whether we choose or no, ef this wind holds. There is water there and maybe something to eat, both of which is wanting with us at the present time."

"There are seal-skins there too," interrupted Serge.

"Sartain there is, lad, and I was meaning to have fetched 'em on the next tack. Now the question is, who owns them seal-skins, and what shall be did with 'em? Ef they is left where they be too long, they'll spile. Ef the natyves finds 'em they'll be stole. Ef they stays there till Cap'n Duff can come for them, they'll be spiled. Ef the gover'ment finds 'em, they'll be confiskercated, though being took in the open sea

they ain't in no ways liable. Ef we find 'em, we'll save 'em and make good use of 'em. A part of 'em belongs to us, anyway, and the rest would naturally be ours by the right of salvage ef we saved 'em from destruction. So now I leaves it to you two ef our best plan ain't to clap sail onto this little packet, head her for Oonimak Island, do the best we can with our sealskins, and afterwards shape our course 'cording to sarcumstances?"

Both lads agreed that they could suggest no better plan of action than this, whereupon the mate remarked that "them was his sentiments and likewise old Kite Roberson's, who uster say, 'When ye sight a good thing, keep your eye on it; if not, what's the use of eyes?'"

So the whale-boat's sail was hoisted, she was got before the wind, and on the fierce breath of the rising gale she was whirled away like an autumn leaf in the direction of Oonimak Island.

So strongly did the gale blow by the time the day was half spent, and with such prodigious leapings did the light boat spring from crest to crest of the leaden seas, that every ounce of Jalap Coombs's strength and every atom of his skill were necessary to her safe steering and to keeping her from being swamped. While he stood up in the stern in order to get a better purchase on his long steering-oar, the lads, crouched in the boat's bottom amidship in order to steady her as much as possible, were obliged to devote most of their time to bailing. In spite of their thick clothing and oilskins, the damp chill of the wind penetrated to the bone, and they were drenched by incessant showers of flying spray.

After six hours of this terribly exciting and arduous sailing, all hands began to look anxiously for a break in the fog, and strained their eyes for some glimpse

of the land they felt sure must be near at hand. At length, in a momentary lift, they caught sight of Shishaldin's snowy cone, and knew that Jalap Coombs had indeed brought them to Oonimak. Now they heard the roar of breakers, though they could see nothing of the coast against which these were so furiously thundering. To keep on seemed suicidal; while to either halt or retreat in the face of the furious gale now raging was impossible.

A warning cry from Phil, a mighty sweep of Jalap Coombs's steering-oar, and their cockle-shell swerved from a jagged rock against which the hissing waves were churned to a yeasty froth. Their tremendous speed was apparent as they swept by this mark so swiftly that in a moment it was again swallowed by the mist, and had vanished behind them.

"If we can only have the luck to strike a beach," said Serge, though his words were unheard save by himself.

"Hold hard! and stand by!" shouted Jalap Coombs, as with set face and unflinching gaze he stared through the gray thickness at a line of leaping white, behind which was a dim background of land. "We're close in now, and she'll strike in another minute! When she does, then jump and run for your lives. Look out!"

Even as he spoke the whale-boat was lifted high in the air, poised for a moment like a bird in mid-flight, and then hurled forward amid a smother of foam and a roar of rushing waters. An instant later she struck with a crash that left her occupants bruised and breathless. There was no time, however, to consider bruises or aches, and almost with the shock itself they had gained their feet and leaped into water up to their knees.

Phil had grasped both shot-gun and rifle with the

hope that he might save them from the wreck. Whether or not he was overbalanced by their weight he never knew; but with his first step into the water he slipped on the kelp-covered rocks, fell face downward, and would have been swept away by the outward rush of the sea had not the mate seized his collar. With a single movement of the sinewy arm Phil was lifted to his feet, and in another minute had been dragged beyond reach of the breakers that chafed and roared in impotent rage at this escape of the prey they had deemed so surely their own.

The next sea sprang upon the boat, rolled it over and over, bit at it with savage teeth, and finally tossed it, hopelessly shattered, at the feet of its recent occupants.

Serge could have cried at this wanton destruction of that upon which they had so much depended, while Phil was equally disconsolate over the loss of his guns. To Jalap Coombs, however, these successive disasters seemed only to lend an access of cheerfulness and activity. Rushing into the ravenous waters, he snatched from them the boat's mast and sail, the long-handled gaff, a couple of oars, a coil of line, and some loose bits of rope.

"Don't ye be cast down, lads!" he cried, cheerily, after this had been accomplished, and the three stood together on the beach. "We've more to be thankful for than to grieve over. We've lost our boat, to be sure; but it's a marcy it brung us safe to shore as it did. There's no use in crying over it now; for, as old Kite uster say, 'What can't be mended had best stay broke.'"

"But what are we going to do for a living now that our guns are gone?" asked Phil.

"Guns?" cried Mr. Coombs, contemptuously. "Ef we hadn't nothing but guns to depend on in this

world, I reckon there'd be a-many of us wouldn't make no living. I know I wouldn't, nor do I think Kite Roberson would have ; for, good soul as he was, he never could a-bear the sight of a gun. Said his daddy uster lick him with a ramrod from the time he was broiling age till he run away to sea. What are we going to do for a living? Go fishing for one thing ; develop the resources of this here island for another. When we're tired of developing we can go into the fur business, and take to trading seal-skins. You've forgot the wealth we've got stowed away up yonder, haven't ye, and that we come here a-purpose to look after?"

"Yes, I had," answered Phil, soberly, "and I had forgotten our many other mercies as well. I had almost forgotten the miraculous preservation of our lives ; but I shall remember, and be thankful for it from this time on."

"We are fortunate to be cast away on this particular island," broke in Serge, "for, from what I have heard, it has plenty of water, which some of them have not, plenty of food, such as it is, plenty of material for making a fire, plenty of old houses in which we can find shelter, and, above all, it is located right in the track of all vessels going into or out of Bering Sea, as well as up and down the coast."

"If food, drink, fire, and shelter are awaiting us, let's go to them, and not keep them waiting any longer," cried Phil, "for I am hungry, thirsty, wet, cold, and tired, and if you two are not all of those things you ought to be."

"Speaking of fire," remarked Jalap Coombs, as he ruefully withdrew the shattered remains of what had been a water-tight match-box from his pocket, "I hope you boys have got some dry matches with ye, for mine are all spiled."

As neither of them had any matches, the mate's face

grew very sober; but he brightened as Serge remarked, confidently, "If you will provide food, Mr. Coombs, I will promise you the fire to cook it with, unless all the stories I have heard of this island are false."

"Good for you, lad! Fire's one of the most important things; but I must say I don't see how you're going to get it, unless ye mean to climb to the top of yon smoking mountain."

"I don't believe I shall have to go quite as far as that," replied Serge, "but I'll get it, and the question is where will you have it put. Do you know what part of the island we have landed on, or where the seal-skin cache is?"

"I do," answered Phil; "for I recognize that far point with the ugly-looking water just beyond."

"Right you are, lad," said Jalap Coombs. "It was just to the east'ard of this very place we landed the skins, and the cache isn't more'n half a mile away from where we stand. You're right in calling that 'ugly' water too, for it's the beginning of Krenitzin Strait, as nasty a bit of roaring tide-rip and eddy, rock and reef, as ye'll find on the coast. It's God's marcy that we warn't flung in there instead of on to this beach. Ef we had been, we wouldn't have stood no more show than a butterfly in a whirlwind."

CHAPTER XX

BRIMSTONE AND FEATHERS

While they talked, the three drenched and shivering castaways walked briskly up the beach, through a broad belt of golden-green moss, crossed a little stream of fresh water, from which they drank eagerly, and finally reached a wind-swept plateau overlooking both the sea and the mad waters of Krenitzin Strait. Here they found the ruins of many ancient dwellings huddled closely together, and marking the site of a once populous Aleutian settlement. Although the mate and the two lads knew that Oonimak Island had not been inhabited for many years, they could not help expecting to see human forms emerge from some of the ancient dwellings, and fancying that in the shriek of the wind over the roofless structures they heard despairing human voices.

Phil and Serge had never been there before, but Jalap Coombs had, though only in the night-time, and he pointed out the ruin that stood nearest the beach as the one containing the cache of seal-skins.

They did not visit it, but searched among the others for one suited to their purpose. At length they found an old barrabkie, or primitive Aleut hut, three walls of which were still standing, though the other wall and the roof had fallen in, filling the interior with a confused mass of rubbish.

"My! what a dismal-looking place!" exclaimed Phil, with a shiver. "If it wasn't for this terrible

wind that seems to blow right through me, I'd rather take my chances outside."

"Wait till we get through with it, lad, afore ye pass jedgment," said Jalap Coombs. "I never see a place yet so dismal but what a couple of live Yankees like me and you, one of which is likewise a subjeck, couldn't knock the dismalness out of. Now, Serge, my boy, ef ye'll only go ahead with that fire scheme of your'n, the rest of us 'll overhaul this shebang, and see ef we can't make it a little more ship-shape."

So Serge departed on his self-imposed mission, while the others began a vigorous cleaning out of the old barrabkie.

The floor of this ancient habitation, which was of the same style as those built by many Aleuts of to-day, was of hard-packed earth, and was sunk about four feet below the level of the surrounding surface. A stout frame of whale ribs standing about six feet high had been erected and enclosed in a wall two feet thick of tough, peaty sods. This in turn had been protected by an outer wall of loose rocks, while the whole had at one time been roofed with whalebone rafters and a thick thatch of the heavy sedge-grass that grows on all those islands.

For an hour Phil and the mate worked like beavers to clear this place of its ruinous litter. Then they returned to the beach and brought up everything that had been saved from the wrecked boat, including, of course, its sail. This with great difficulty, on account of the high wind, they fashioned into a sort of a tent roof, supported by oars, over one end of the barrabkie. This being finished to their satisfaction, the mate went to the beach for drift-wood in anticipation of their promised fire, while Phil gathered a quantity of sphagnum moss, which he spread thickly over the earthen floor of their shelter.

While the latter was wondering what he should do next, and what had become of Serge, and if any one else had ever been so hungry as he without the slightest prospect of supper, Jalap Coombs appeared staggering beneath an immense load of drift-wood, and greatly excited.

"Come, lad," he cried, as he seized the long-handled steel gaff, "let's go fishing. We may have to eat 'em raw, for I don't see any sign of Serge or his fire. But even that 'll be better than starving."

"Fishing for what?" called out Phil, as he hurried after his companion.

"Salmon!" shouted back the mate. "They're running in the strait."

Now Phil had seen salmon-fishing in Canada, where after hours of wading and patient labor an occasional fish had been lured with a fly, and finally hooked. Then, after a protracted struggle, in which the angler had displayed infinite skill and patience, the fish had either escaped or been brought within reach of a gaff. With this as his sole experience in salmon-fishing, he could not help thinking that Jalap Coombs must be crazy to fancy that without rod, line, reel, fly, or hook he was going to capture one of the wariest and gamest of fish with a gaff.

Nevertheless, that is just what our young hunter did see done. He also saw another sight that filled him with wonder. It was a stream of fresh-water flowing into Krenitzin Strait, and filled from bank to bank with salmon, thousands and tens of thousands of them leaping, crowding each other almost to suffocation, and eagerly working their way up against the swift current to their spawning-beds some miles inland. In these beds they had been born, and to them they returned as surely as came the seasons themselves. It is so with every Alaskan river and stream, from the

mighty Yukon southward. Every summer sees them swarm with uncounted myriads of this noble fish. Millions are caught for canneries and salteries, whence they are shipped to all parts of the world, and by the natives, who thus obtain their chief food supply for the ensuing year, while millions more are never even seen by man.

Phil had known of canned salmon, but had an idea that they came only from the Columbia River. He had never imagined that in far-away Alaska these splendid fish outnumbered those of the mighty Oregon stream a thousand to one. And he had just now been wondering if Jalap Coombs could catch one with a gaff! Had even laughed at the idea! Now he smiled as he reflected on his own previous ignorance concerning salmon and their ways. Why, he could catch them with his hands if he cared to go into the water; while to hook out any required number with a gaff was as simple as catching oysters with a rake.

Within three minutes the mate had secured two fine fish, weighing between ten and twenty pounds each. Then he and Phil went a short distance down the beach, and inside of fifteen minutes more had captured half a dozen great paper-shelled crabs, each as large as a soup-plate. Phil also filled his pockets with mussels, and laden with this abundant supply of food they again turned their steps towards the barrabkie.

As they approached it they were overjoyed to see a thin column of smoke rising above its low walls.

"Hurrah!" shouted Phil. "Serge has got a fire sure enough. But what a horrible, vile, dreadful smell! What can it be? Phew!"

"Smells like burning feathers," said Jalap Coombs. "Wonder who's fainted?"

Filled with curiosity, they hurried forward, and as they entered the barrabkie they beheld Serge on his

"MILLIONS ARE CAUGHT FOR CANNERIES EACH YEAR"

knees before a large flat stone in one corner. He was bending over it, and blowing with furious energy at a little bunch of something, from which a dense cloud of smoke and the most nauseous fumes were issuing.

Hearing the voices of his companions, he shouted joyfully, without looking up, and hardly pausing in his bellowslike blowing, "I've got it."

"What?" asked Phil, holding his nose. "The cholera? If so, keep right on with your fumigating. If not, do take pity on a suffering community, and feed your flame with leather, or rubber, or bones, or something else that is sweeter and pleasanter to the smell than the frightful stuff you are burning."

Just then the smouldering mass burst into a bright blaze, and Serge sprang to his feet, jubilant over his success.

"Isn't it glorious!" he shouted, as he added a few wood shavings to his blaze. Then lighting a sliver, he thrust it into a previously prepared pile of small sticks that he had placed directly before the open end of the tent. These were kindled in a moment. Larger sticks and billets of wood were carefully added, until in a few minutes more a fine, leaping, crackling, sparkling, and altogether lovely fire was banishing the last trace of gloom from the interior of the old barrabkie, and extending a cheery welcome of glowing warmth to the three castaways, from whose soaked garments little clouds of steamy fog began to ascend as they gathered admiringly about it.

At length Serge stood up, and stepped back a pace or two with an expression of triumphant satisfaction that said as plainly as words, "Now I am ready for congratulations." And the others did congratulate him most heartily. Jalap Coombs said, "I wouldn't have believed it could be did ef I hadn't seen it."

"It didn't take seeing to make me believe it," said

Phil. "Smelling was sufficient. What was the magic compound from which you produced such a frightful smell, and such satisfactory results?"

"Eider-down and sulphur," answered Serge, smiling.

"Brimstone *and* feathers!" shouted Jalap Coombs. "I knowed it. That's what old Mis' Roberson—she that was Kite's wife, you understand—allus kep' on hand for fainting fits. I've smelled 'em many a time, and to this day their parfume carries me back to my happy childhood."

"It was certainly strong enough to carry one 'most anywhere," interrupted Phil. "But where did you get 'em, old man, and how did you set em afire?"

"I had a long tramp after the sulphur," replied Serge, "and only found it in a cañon about three miles back of here, near the foot of the mountain. As I couldn't find any dry moss to go with it, I hunted for feathers as the next-best thing, and was lucky enough to discover an eider-duck's nest on the cliffs. Then I came back here and found my 'fire-stick,' that flat bit of flint-rock, in one of the old huts, also my 'striker,' that bit of quartz. After that the getting of fire was simple enough. I spread a layer of eider-down on the flat rock, sprinkled a little sulphur over it, and pounded the mixture with my quartz rock until it was set on fire by a spark struck from the flint."

"Well, if that isn't one way of getting a fire!" exclaimed Phil. "I say, Serge, what a wise sort of chap you are, anyway! I am only just beginning to find it out. Why didn't you tell us how much you knew back there in New London?"

"Because the kind of things I know best are only worth knowing in this country, where I learned them," replied Serge. "They would not be appreciated in New London."

"I suppose not," said Phil, thoughtfully; "and the

"WITHIN THREE MINUTES THE MATE HAD SECURED TWO FINE FISH"

kind of things I have been taught, such as Latin and English literature, don't seem to count for much out here. Neither does the thing that I know best of all seem to be appreciated by the present company. It is that I am as hungry as sixteen wolves, and want my supper."

With this startling statement Phil pounced upon an unoffending crab and thrust him without the slightest compunction into a bed of glowing coals.

CHAPTER XXI

LUXURY ON A DESOLATE ALEUTIAN ISLAND

Both Jalap Coombs and Serge quickly followed Phil's example so far as the crabs were concerned, and while these were baking, the lads amused themselves by roasting and eating the mussels with which the young hunter had filled his pockets. "My, but aren't these good!" cried Phil, smacking his lips over one of the little yellow mussels that he had just withdrawn steaming hot from its shell and eaten. "I wish we had a bushel of them."

"Ef ye had, ye'd be sorry ye ever seen a mussel afore ye'd finished with 'em," remarked the mate, with a knowing shake of his head. Disdaining to waste his time over anything so trifling and unsatisfactory as mussels, he was devoting himself to the spitting of a salmon on a long stick, which, by the aid of several bits of rock, he so arranged that the fish was held just above a bed of coals.

"Why?" asked Phil and Serge together.

"Because ye'd be made sicker 'n I be of my given name, which seeing as mussels was the cause of it, I never could abide the pesky things. I never have et 'em, *and* never will long 's I kin find anything else to starve on."

"How could mussels possibly be the cause of your having so qu—I mean so distinguished a name?" asked Phil, with undisguised curiosity.

"Waal, I tell ye what. It's quite a yarn how the hull thing kim about; but ef you boys will run down

to the beach once more for another load of firewood afore it gets plumb dark, and while I tend to the cooking of the fish, I'll spin it to ye after supper."

Agreeing to this, the lads, tired and hungry as they were, set forth into the outside darkness and chill, both of which were intensified by the brief period of firelight and warmth they had just enjoyed. The wind was howling with such an increase of fury that it was all they could do to force their way against it, while the fog had given place to dashes of sleety rain.

Glad enough were they when, their mission accomplished, they once more regained the barrabkie, bending beneath great loads of wood, which they flung down with sighs of relief.

How bright and cheery the once despised interior now looked! What a comfort it was to be sheltered from the tempest, and, above all, what deliciously tantalizing odors of cooking pervaded the whole place! The crabs, beautifully baked, had been drawn from the ashes, and with uplifted claws seemed to beckon the famished lads to come and eat them. The great salmon was nearly done, and was being basted with its own drippings caught in a mussel-shell that Jalap Coombs had thrust into the cleft end of a stick.

No second invitation from the big crabs was needed, for hardly had Phil and Serge caught sight of them before they pounced upon them with such ferocity that the mate was obliged to suspend culinary operations for the time being in order to obtain his share of the first course.

"I always thought that crabs were only good when deviled," remarked Phil at length, as he paused in his eating to look for something on which to crack a big claw. "That's the way my aunt Ruth cooks them. It's an awful bother, though, and why people should take all that trouble for nothing I can't imagine. I'm

sure these knock any deviled crabs I ever ate away out of sight."

Then came the fish, which was rather smoky, to be sure, and was served on a bit of board, without sauce garnishings, condiments, or accessories, but which the guests at this wilderness feast pronounced the very finest and best-cooked salmon they had ever tasted. Jalap Coombs congratulated his young companions on their splendid appetites, before which the great fish rapidly disappeared, until nothing was left but head, tail, and cleanly picked bones, and they complimented him upon his cooking.

"Wouldn't it make my aunt Ruth open her eyes, though!" said Phil. "She's a good cook, and she knows it too; but she never cooked a salmon like this —that is, not when I was around. Yes, indeed, Mr. Coombs, you certainly could give her points."

If Miss Ruth Ryder could have seen her fastidious nephew at that moment, seated on the earthen floor of a ruinous Aleutian barrabkie, and tearing with knife and fingers at a smoky half-cooked salmon, while in the glow of a drift-wood fire his honest freckled face shone with a complete satisfaction, she would have marvelled at him. Could she also have heard his unstinted praise of this rudely served meal, and his extraordinary comparing of her own dainty cooking with the rough-and-ready methods of the uncouth sailor-man who sat beside him in favor of the latter, she would have mourned over him as over one who had lost his mind, and knew not whereof he spoke.

Could she, however, have known how very, very hungry this same nephew had been but a few minutes before, and realized the wonderful properties of the sauce named appetite, she would have rejoiced with him both in his possession of it and his present opportunity for ridding himself of it. She might have been

shocked at his apparent forgetfulness of all her teachings in the matter of table manners, but she would have been comforted by his appearance of perfect content with his situation and its surroundings.

"I say, isn't this jolly?" he cried, as, having performed his share of clearing up by wiping his knife on a wisp of grass, he lay back luxuriously on his yielding couch of moss and basked in the fireglow. "I'm sure I don't know what a fellow could want in the way of camping out any better than this. We've a good shelter, comfortable beds, plenty to eat, an interesting country to explore, no one to bother us, the best fishing I ever heard of, and good shooting. You said there was plenty of game here, didn't you, Serge?"

"I don't know that I did," answered the young Alaskan, "but there is. I found fresh caribou tracks today, and wherever there are caribou there are big brown bears as well—in fact, I saw what I am sure must be a bear road."

"What do you mean?" asked Phil, showing his interest by rising into a sitting posture and gazing at the speaker.

"I mean what I said. A regular bear and caribou road. I never saw one before, but I have often heard hunters describe the well-beaten trail that starts away off on the mainland somewhere beyond the head of Cook Inlet and follows the Kenai peninsula for two or three hundred miles down to this very Strait of Krenitzin, and so to this island. Every summer many caribou follow it and come to Oonimak for the sake of the moss and lichens that grow here more luxuriantly than anywhere else. Wherever caribou go the bears follow, so I expect there are plenty of both on the island now."

"Oh, if I only had a rifle!" sighed Phil. "Is there anything else in the way of game?"

"Not much; only sea-lions, and hair-seals, and foxes, and any quantity of sea-fowl, including ducks and geese, and now and then a sea-otter."

"I call that a pretty fair list. By-the-way, what is a sea-otter? I don't remember ever to have seen one."

"Probably not," laughed Serge. "Along the southern coast of these very islands is about the only place in the whole world where they are now found, and even here they are rarely seen. I tell you the hunter who gets a sea-otter nowadays is in great luck; and yet the only money or trade goods that the four or five thousand Aleuts of these islands ever see come to them in exchange for sea-otter skins. It is the only paying kind of hunting that is left entirely to the natives, and in which white men do not engage."

"Why don't they?"

"Because it is too hard work and too dangerous."

"Is it any harder or more dangerous than seal-hunting?"

"I should say it was! The sea-otter is one of the shyest and most keen-scented of animals. If the tiniest bit of a fire is lighted to windward of him, even miles away, he will scent it and be off. If a man walks on a beach, many tides must wash out the scent of his footsteps before a sea-otter will approach that place. So when the wind is off shore the hunters have to go without fire, even for cooking, in winter as well as in summer, sometimes for weeks at a time. Then, too, the sea-otter never really comes ashore, but spends most of his time in the water among the great kelp-beds that you have seen floating in the North Pacific. Even their young are born in those floating cradles. The only place you can catch him ashore is on the rocky reefs and half-submerged islands lying twenty or thirty miles off the coast, and as he only lands on

them when driven to do so by the severest gales, it is then that he must be hunted."

"How do they hunt him?" asked Phil, who seemed to follow this investigation to its end.

"If the storm is off shore, like this one, the hunters wait till it shows signs of breaking. Then they launch their bidarkies, fasten their kamleikas tightly around the hatch coamings so that not a drop of water can get in, and run down the gale through seas that would swamp many a larger craft, until they reach the reef, and make a landing under its lee. Then they creep up to windward over the rocks, and generally catch Mr. Otter asleep in the sea-weed, where they kill him with short clubs. The story is told of two native hunters who once got seventy-eight in a single hour by this method."

"What is a bidarkie? And what is a kamleika?" asked Phil, to whom these were strange terms.

"A bidarkie," laughed Serge, "is a kyack or skin canoe, such as is used by all Aleuts. It is all covered over, and is absolutely water-tight, except for the round holes or hatches in which its occupants sit. Some bidarkies have three of these holes, some two, and many only one. As a general thing, sea-otter hunters go in couples, and use two-holed bidarkies. A kamleika is a loose water-proof over-garment made of sea-lion intestines. When a hunter, wearing one of these and sitting in a bidarkie, makes its skirts fast to the coaming of his hatch no water can enter his boat, no matter how many seas break over it."

"Do you mean to say that the only way of hunting sea-otters is to go thirty miles from land, in a gale, with a chance of finding an almost invisible reef of rocks and landing on it, or of being blown out to sea if you don't happen to hit it?"

"That's just about it," replied Serge, "though some

are shot in the surf, and some are caught by surrounds in the open water, where they are driven by a whole fleet of bidarkies until they are out of breath; for an otter is obliged to come up every now and then to breathe, like a seal."

"And what does it all amount to, anyway? I mean, what are the pelts worth?"

"I have known of a single skin bringing as high as eight hundred dollars," was the answer.

"Phe-w-w!" whistled Phil. "No wonder they are hunted. Did you say there were any left?"

"Not many. They used to be found along the entire American coast as far south as California, and on the northeast coast of Asia as well; but now, as I said, they are only to be found in the wilder parts of Alaska."

"Who buys the skins?"

"Traders who make that their sole business, and engage the hunters by the year, paying them fifty, sixty, and even as high as one hundred dollars a skin."

"I mean, where do they go finally?"

"Oh, to Russia and China mostly, where they are used to trim military uniforms and mandarin robes."

"Well," said Phil, who had been intensely interested in all this, "I don't know of anything I'd rather get a shot at, and if I only had a rifle I'd try for one, though I suppose I'd have to have a bid—what do you call it?—too."

"A bidarkie," laughed Serge. "No, not necessarily; sea-otters are often shot in the surf from the beach, and then the hunter waits until the waves bring the body ashore."

CHAPTER XXII

HOW JALAP COOMBS GOT HIS NAME

While the lads talked of sea-otters, their companion, who had cleaned up the dishes by the simple process of sweeping the remains of their meal into the fire, had been deliberately shaving bits of tobacco from a plug that had fortunately escaped a wetting, and filling his beloved pipe. This he had lighted with a live coal deftly picked up in his callous fingers, and he now sat, surrounded by a halo of fragrant smoke, blinking in the firelight, a picture of placid content. Seizing the opportunity of a pause in the conversation he broke in with:

"Sea-otters allers reminds me of old Kite Roberson who once said, consarning 'em, 'Jal'—he allers called me 'Jal,' short for Jalap, ye understand—"

"By-the-way," interrupted Phil, "you promised to tell us how you happened to have such an outlan—I mean, such a peculiar name."

"So I did, *and* so I will. To begin with, I want to say that I don't believe as a gineral thing in rebelling again' the name your parents have give ye, when like as not they didn't have nothing else *to* give. In some cases, though, it's difficult to become resigned. I've striv faithful to get reconciled to Jalap, without getting an inch nearer to it to-day than I was when I fust realized what a heathenish hail it war. Being the youngest of thirteen boys, and my father allers hankering fur a gal baby, I was naturally a turrible disappointment to him, in addition to being a mortal ugly

young duffer to look at. Seeing he was about run out of Scripter names for boys, my father was hard put to it to know what to call me, and as christening day drew nigh he was in a wuss quandary than ever.

"'Bout this time old Kite Roberson—he was young Kite then—came back from his fust v'y'ge, which he had been four years arter whales in the South Pacific. Now in my town and his'n mussels, such as you two was eating just now, was plenty, and the boys uster have mussel roasts as a reg'lar thing. Kite was mortal fond of 'em, and seeing as he hadn't had none in four years, made up his mind the fust thing when he got back to have the biggest kind of a mussel roast. And so he did. From all accounts he must have et nigh onto a bushel, and naturally they made him so sick that he like to ha' died. Now old Mis' Roberson, Kite's ma, was a master-hand at doctorin', and what she doctored with mostly was jalap. Of course she give this to Kite, and stood over him while he swallowed it, till he didn't know which was wust, it or dying.

"Fust time he got round he come over to our house, we being neighbors, to see me, which he hadn't ever sot eyes on me afore. My father fetched me out, and says, referring to me, ye understand, 'He ain't no beauty, is he?'

"'No,' says Kite, who was allers plain-spoken, 'he ain't, for a fact; and to tell ye the truth, Mr. Coombs, I can't think of anything he favors so much as he does a dose of jalap.'

"'Jalap,' says my father, meditating and turning of the word over in his mouth—'jalap. It's bitter but wholesome, and as he's the dose I've got to take whether or no, I'll call him Jalap, and done with it.'

"He kep' his word, and that's how I come to be sot agin mussels."

"I declare! I don't blame you, Mr. Coombs," said Phil, laughing at this quaint bit of family history; "and if I had been in your place I would have had it changed as soon as I grew up."

"No," said the mate, decidedly, "that wouldn't have done, 'cause, you see, it were all owing to the name, for which Kite naturally felt responserble, that he come to be so friendly with me. Sorter trying to make up for what he'd did, ye understand; and his friendship, he being a powerful smart man, made me what I be."

Phil wanted to laugh again at the evident pride with which the mate of the *Seamew* regarded his station in life, but realizing that it would be very rude, hastily changed the subject by inquiring: "By-the-way, Mr. Coombs, how soon do you think we shall be obliged to leave this island? If it wasn't for my poor father's anxiety I should like to stay here a month. You see, after what Serge has told me, I find there are ever so many things here that I want to see. In fact, I feel as if I must see a sea-otter. That is," he added, mischievously, "it seems as if a sea-otter was the one thing I otter see."

"Hey?" ejaculated the mate, taking his pipe from his mouth and gazing at Phil as though he feared something had gone wrong with the lad. Then, as a twinkle in the other's eye betrayed him, he exclaimed: "Get along, ye young villain! We'll stay here long enough to let you see all you want of this island, and more too, ef I'm not mightily mistaken in the weather. And now ye'd best follow your chum's example and turn in, for ef ye ain't sleepy, ye ought to be arter the day we've had and the to-morrows that is a-coming."

So the three castaways on that desolate northern island slept on their mossy couch as soundly and peacefully as though in their bunks on board the *Seamew* or

in the beds of their distant homes. All night long the wind howled about the stout walls of their shelter, the rain beat on the canvas roof above them, and a mighty roar from the sea filled the air; but none of these things disturbed them, and not until long after daylight did one of them awake.

For a solid week did the tempest rage with unabated fury, and long before the end of that time they were wearied almost beyond endurance with their enforced inaction and monotonous diet. To Phil in particular did the salmon and crabs, that he had thought so good on that first night, grow so distasteful that it became almost impossible for him to swallow the hated food.

During those seven long, weary days they only left the hut when forced to do so to obtain food, wood, or water. Serge went as far as the wreck of their boat, where he obtained several oak ribs and half a dozen nails. The latter were ground, or, rather, rubbed down to sharp points by his companions, while he busied himself in cutting out two of the great clumsy-looking wooden halibut-hooks, such as are used by the Indians about Sitka, and specimens of which are brought from there by every Alaskan tourist. At the proper point in each of these he inserted one of the sharpened nails, and Jalap Coombs lashed them solidly into place with bits of twine.

Phil ridiculed these, and said that any fish stupid enough to be hooked by them deserved to be caught; but Serge only smiled the superior smile of one who knows, and answered: "All right, we'll see!"

When the gale finally blew itself out Phil did see, and marvelled at the facility with which codfish and flounders were caught by these same despised wooden hooks, which he was forced to admit were as deadly as the finest sproats or Limerick bends he had ever used.

One morning, at the beginning of their second week

"A SECOND SHOT STRETCHED HIM DEAD AT THEIR FEET"

of captivity, the castaways were awakened by a burst of sunshine, and sprang from their couch of moss to be greeted by as glorious a July day as any of them had ever seen. It was made up of sunshine, blue sky, a dimpled sea, a landscape of plain, foot-hill, and snow-capped mountains all glowing with the yellows, reds, purples, and greens of mosses, lichens, and volcanic cliffs. Above all, Shishaldin reared his lofty crest that his filmy smoke-plumes might stream out bravely in the crisp morning breeze.

During the week just past our friends had discussed over and over again their plans for the future, and had decided that the first thing was to attract the attention of some passing vessel that might be induced to take them and their seal-skins to Oonalaska. This place, although lying many miles to the westward, was the nearest settlement and trading-post, and also the point of departure for the monthly steamer to Sitka. At Oonalaska they would dispose of their furs. Phil and Serge would engage passage for the destination they so longed to reach, and Jalap Coombs's future would be laid out according to circumstances. But first they must catch their schooner.

As vessels were more likely to be seen on the Pacific than on the Bering Sea side of the island, they decided first of all to climb a very considerable elevation that rose almost directly from Krenitzin Strait, and a couple of miles south of their camp. From this they hoped to see both waters. During their walk they caught glimpses of several small bands of caribou, and of one or two distant moving objects that Phil was certain must be bear. Never had he wished for a rifle so much as now. Venison and bear meat! How good either or both of them would taste! How he hated fish and longed for meat! But there was probably no gun of any kind within a hundred miles of

him save those that he knew of at the bottom of the sea; so what was the good of wishing for one?

They were disappointed to find that the Pacific was hidden from the elevation they ascended by another rising beyond it. As they descended into the valley between the two, with the intention of climbing the second hill, they were startled by the ringing report of a rifle-shot. A moment later three caribou came flying up the valley with the speed of the wind, rushed past them so close that they involuntarily stepped back for fear of being trampled underfoot, and disappeared. A fourth who was lagging behind, evidently wounded, stumbled, and halted but a short distance from them. Ere he could resume his flight, a second shot, still from some unseen source, stretched him dead at their feet.

CHAPTER XXIII

KOOGA THE ALEUT, AND HIS BIDARKIE

To say that our friends were startled by the sound of these rifle-shots in that wilderness, which but a minute before they would have sworn did not contain a human being other than themselves, but feebly expresses their astonishment and joy. To them, or at least to Phil Ryder, a rifle-shot indicated the presence of white men. These must belong to a vessel that would take him and his companions to some point from which passage might be engaged for Sitka. Thus, ere the breeze had dissipated the little cloud of blue smoke from that second shot, all the perplexities of the situation had vanished, and Phil felt as though the object of his long journey were at length attained. To his amazement and dismay, the figure that bounded into view from behind a jutting point of rock as the caribou fell was not that of a white man, but of a native. Although he was clad in hat, shirt, trousers, and boots of the quality adopted by all who lead rough out-of-door lives, his short figure, dark skin, and broad face proved him to be a full-blooded Aleut.

If the castaways were surprised to see him, he was equally so at their appearance, and at sight of them stopped short in his tracks. Then with a glance at his caribou to assure himself that it was dead, he slowly advanced towards where they stood.

Serge, with extended hand, stepped forth to meet him, and, in the Russian trade patois common to that

coast, told him how glad they were to see him, and asked how he happened to be in that place.

He replied that his name was Kooga, that he had come alone in his bidarkie from Oonga Island to act as hunter for, and keep supplied with food during the next three months, a party of sea-otter-catchers who were daily expected to reach that neighborhood from Oonalaska.

Having in turn learned who the strangers were, and expressed his gratification at meeting them, Kooga turned his attention to his game, which he proceeded to skin and cut up with the utmost dexterity.

As the others watched him with hungry anticipations, Serge continued to ply him with questions, and thus learned that he, like themselves, had been weather-bound on the island by the tempest of the past week, but for which his friends would long since have arrived. Now he thought they would leave Oonalaska in the traders' schooner that very day, and that the next one would witness their arrival off that point of Oonimak nearest the little outlying island of Saanak, where are the best sea-otter grounds of the coast.

"He also says," continued Serge, interpreting this communication for the benefit of the others, "that after leaving her hunters the schooner will run on to Saanak, where she will cache a store of provisions for their use, and will then return to Oonalaska, not to come back for three months."

"What a splendid chance for us!" cried Phil. "It is exactly such a one as we have been wanting. Talk about bad-luck now!" he added, with a sly glance at Serge. "It seems to me ours couldn't be much better than it is if we had arranged it to suit ourselves."

Serge paid no attention to this remark, for he was listening attentively to Kooga, who was again talking, and saying that in four days from that time another

trading-schooner bound for Oonalaska from the eastward was due to pass close to the north side of Oonimak Island.

"Better and better!" exclaimed Phil, when this was translated. "We surely can't miss them both, and must be taken off by one or the other. I hope it will be by the sea-otter fellow, though, as I should dearly love to see something of that hunting."

"And I," said Jalap Coombs, "hope it will be by the other one, seeing as it will be so much handier to load our seal-skins into her."

"Oh, I had forgotten them!" replied Phil, in a tone of disappointment. "Yes, I suppose we must take the north-side schooner."

"You speak as if you were certain of catching either one you wanted," laughed Serge; "but, for my part, I think there is a big chance of missing both of them. They may pass in the night, or in a fog, or too far out to notice our signals. Now I propose that we divide into two parties, and watch at both ends of the island at once. If Mr. Coombs is willing to remain in camp at the north end, you and I can go with Kooga to the south end, where we may have a chance to see something of sea-otter hunting. If at the same time we can catch that schooner, and persuade her to come round to this side of the island, we sha'n't need the other. If we miss her, or she refuses to take us, we shall still have plenty of time to get back here before the other is due."

"Good for you, Serge!" shouted Phil. "That's an immense scheme, and I don't see why I didn't think of it myself, only I never do think of things until afterwards."

"It shows the result of a sea-training," said Jalap Coombs. "I was jest a-considering of that same plan, and would have laid it afore all hands arter dinner,

which, it seems to me, is the thing to be thought of fust. So now, if our oakum-colored friend will give us a hunk of his meat, we'll lay a course for our own galley fire over yonder. Arter stowing a cargo of grub we'll consider what's the next thing to be did."

"That suits me exactly," agreed Phil, who had been casting longing eyes at the tempting-looking venison, "and the sooner that plan is carried out the better. So open negotiations at once—won't you, Serge, like a good fellow? I don't believe I ever was more nearly starved."

Serge laughed, and after a few minutes' conversation with Kooga, informed his companions that the native was perfectly willing to go with them to the barrabkie, and that they were welcome to all the meat they wanted, as his bidarkie would not hold half of it. The fact is that the young Aleut was fully as hungry as they, and possessed of an equal longing for fresh meat, the gale having so interfered with his hunting as to compel him to live on shell-fish ever since he reached the island.

This being settled, all four loaded themselves with venison and followed Kooga's lead to the place where he had made his lonely and cheerless camp, and where his bidarkie was carefully hauled up on the beach beyond high-water mark. His shelter was a tiny A tent, supported by paddles and spears, and pitched in the lee of a huge bowlder. A quantity of moss heaped within it had formed for him a bed similar to that of our castaways. He had not, however, been able to make a fire, his supply of tinder being wet, and he not having had the good-fortune to discover an eider-duck's nest.

The bidarkie excited Phil's curiosity to such an extent that it seemed as though he would never weary of examining it. It was one of the two-holed craft, and

"THE LIGHT CRAFT SHOT AWAY UP THE STRAIT"

after it had been carefully launched and laden the Yankee lad asked Serge if he thought Kooga would allow him to occupy its vacant hatch for the short cruise.

When Serge made the request the young native looked dubious, and shook his head. He had seen too many self-confident white men spilled into the icy waters of that coast from those ticklish craft; but as Phil insisted, he finally yielded a reluctant consent. He, of course, did not know that the white lad had been considered the most expert canoeman in New London, or that his own canoe was a tiny-decked affair of cedar every whit as crank as this bidarkie. His eyes therefore opened wide with surprise as his new companion stepped lightly into the canoe and settled himself in its forward hatch, with all the confidence of one who had always been accustomed to such things. When, in addition to this, Phil seized a double-bladed paddle and began to wield it with the practised skill of an old canoeman, the young Aleut actually laughed aloud with gratified amazement.

As under the influence of its two well-handled paddles the light craft shot away up the strait, Jalap Coombs and Serge watched it with a feeling of pride that their companion should thus prove himself the equal of a native in one of his own especial lines of business. The mate was especially outspoken in his admiration of this feat, which would have been as impossible to him as the navigating of a balloon. "I don't believe even old Kite Roberson hisself could have done it any handier," he said, as he resumed his burden of venison, and started with it along-shore in the direction of the barrabkie.

The canoe reached a point opposite the hut some time before the others, and when they got there it was already unloaded. Most of its cargo had been trans-

ferred to the hut, and its occupants were just returning for the few things that were left. Among these was Kooga's rifle, which Phil picked up and examined with interest. He marvelled to find it so good a one, for it was a Winchester of the latest pattern. As he lifted it to his shoulder and sighted it his eye was caught by a slight movement on a small rock nearly half a mile out in the strait. A hair-seal which had been sleeping there had just lifted its head. At that distance it did not look larger than a man's fist.

Phil drew Kooga's attention to it and offered him the rifle, signifying by motions that he should shoot; but the native shook his head decisively, and gave the former to understand that the mark was too small for such a distance. Upon this the Yankee lad, carefully adjusting the sights of the rifle, and assuring himself that there was a cartridge in its chamber, took a deliberate aim and fired.

The seal dropped its head as though it had again gone to sleep, and the native smiled.

"Tell him to go and get it," said Phil to Serge, who came up at that moment. When the latter repeated this request Kooga's pitying smile changed to an expression of incredulity. Nevertheless, he again placed his canoe in the water and paddled away. When he returned with the dead seal, shot directly through the brain, his expression was one of amazement.

"He must be the white man who makes guns," he said to Serge, "and command them to do his will. Take him away from here soon, for if he once gets among the kahlan [sea-otter] he will leave none for us."

A sea-otter hunt was, however, the one thing upon which Phil Ryder's heart was most set just then. Not only that, but he had determined to go on one in Kooga's company.

CHAPTER XXIV

A DOUBLE WATCH FOR SCHOONERS

Kooga the Aleut spent the rest of that day and the following night with his new-found friends. The dinner, to which all of them had looked forward with such interest, proved a great success. From his bidarkie the young native produced a small brass kettle, in which they made a venison stew that they ate with mussel-shell spoons. He also brought forth a basket so exquisitely woven of native grasses as to be perfectly water-tight. In this was his choicest treasure, a brick of tea, such as the Western Aleuts procure from Russian traders, and which they guard with most jealous care. From this, after the stew had disappeared and the kettle was thoroughly cleansed, he treated himself and his friends to a brewing of the fragrant leaf.

In the meantime bits of venison and seal meat were cooking and being eaten on all sides, while Kooga every now and then allowed himself an extra relish in the shape of a strip of raw seal blubber. He also showed the others how to roast the larger caribou bones, and extract from them the marrow, which Phil, tasting for the first time, pronounced "immense."

After the feast came to an end, owing to the inability of its guests to eat another mouthful, Kooga taught them to build a low scaffold of drift-wood, on which to smoke and dry by fire-heat strips of venison and split salmon. In procuring wood for this purpose, he and Phil visited the wrecked whale-boat. The tide was low, and while wandering about in the vicinity of the

wreck, the keen eye of the Aleut detected something buried in kelp at the edge of the breakers. Drawing this forth, he laid it at Phil's feet. To the lad's astonishment, it proved to be his bag of water-proof rifle-cartridges, lost when the wreck occurred. For an hour or more they searched among the slippery rocks with the hope of finding one or both of the lost guns, but without success. Then, as the recovered cartridges were of no use to him, Phil presented them to Kooga, whose rifle they exactly fitted, to the immense gratification of that young Aleut.

It having been decided that the plan proposed by Serge should be carried out, and a quantity of food having been prepared both for taking and for leaving behind, the two white lads and their native guide made an early start for the south side of the island the next morning. Jalap Coombs remained at the barrabkie, to which they promised to return in a day or two, or at least before the four days, at the expiration of which a schooner might be expected on that side, should have elapsed.

Phil and Kooga, who had struck up a wonderful intimacy, went in the bidarkie, which also carried their very simple camp outfit, while Serge followed down the shore of the strait.

As the little party set forth, Jalap Coombs called after them, "Mind, boys, and get back as quick as ever ye can, either with or without the schooner, for we'll be turrible lonely while ye're gone—me and old Kite Roberson will."

Owing to the intricate and dangerous navigation of Krenitzin Strait, which necessitated long détours and occasioned many delays, the bidarkie did not reach the south side of the island much before Serge, who had put in twenty miles or so of the toughest kind of tramping without a halt.

It did not take them long to pitch the little tent and collect materials for a fire, which Kooga lighted without difficulty by means of an old-fashioned flint and steel, his tinder being now perfectly dry. Drift-wood was so scarce on that side of the island that they were obliged to content themselves with a very small blaze. It was sufficient, however, to boil water for a kettle of tea, and this, with a few strips of dried venison toasted on the coals, constituted a meal that even Phil declared was better than some he had eaten.

After dinner, as there were still some hours of daylight left and no schooner was in sight, Serge, wishing to try for a halibut with one of his home-made hooks, proposed to Kooga to take him a short distance from shore in the bidarkie—a proposal to which the latter readily acceded.

So they went fishing, and Phil, still incredulous as to their success with such rude tackle, sat on the edge of a precipitous cliff and watched them. As he sat there he could not help feeling very lonely and rather homesick. His thoughts turned towards the father whom he loved so dearly. He wondered if he were very anxious about him, and whether he had gone to Victoria to search for him, or were still awaiting his coming in Sitka.

"Oh dear," sighed the lad, "how wretchedly I have mixed things up, anyway! Just as Aunt Ruth said I would, too. No matter. I'm on the right track at last, and I must reach Sitka very soon now. If I don't, it won't be my fault, anyhow. I wonder if Aunt Ruth has heard that I am lost, and what she would say if she could see me at this minute."

With this he glanced about him, and the vastness of his own surroundings filled him with a sense of his own insignificance and weakness. Before him was out-spread the limitless Pacific, whose mighty billows surged and

thundered against the black rocks hundreds of feet below. In the immeasurable distance the sun was sinking beneath the heaving waters. Behind him towered a range of frowning mountains, their gaunt frames seared and riven by the Plutonic forces whose ominous banner still floated from Shishaldin's lofty crest. A few sea-fowl circled and screamed about his head. How terrible it was to be there alone! Phil laughed for human companionship, and wished the other fellows would come back.

Suddenly he started up in affright. The bidarkie was not where he had last seen it. What had happened? Was he indeed alone in that awful place? No; there it was, and Phil heaved a great sigh of relief. But how far away it was! How could they have gained such a distance so quickly? Now it seemed to be coming towards him again, and at a tremendous speed. What could it all mean? He rubbed his eyes to be sure they were not playing him false. That they were not was proved by a sight of the frail craft right abreast of him, but madly dashing past, and above the surge of breakers the shouts of his companions came faintly to his ears.

For nearly an hour were the erratic movements of the bidarkie continued, and then slowly and heavily it approached the shore. Phil ran back and down the roundabout way leading to the beach to meet it. When he reached the water's edge he found the others already on shore, and just landing a halibut so huge that both the white lads estimated it to weigh fully two hundred pounds.

"You see," explained Serge, "we couldn't get it into the canoe, or kill it, or do anything except let it tow us round till it was tired out. Finally we got close enough for Kooga to spear it, and then we took our turn at tow-

ing. The hook held, though, and I don't believe it would if it hadn't been a good one."

"It certainly is a good one!" exclaimed Phil, "and I will never say another word against that style of tackle. But, oh, Serge, it was horrid here while you were gone, and I hope you won't ever leave me alone in such a place again."

"All right, old fellow, I won't," replied Serge, heartily.

After securing the precious bidarkie in a place of safety, and cutting a few steaks from the great halibut, the three lads returned to camp, where they passed their evening in cooking and eating another meal.

"I don't know how it is," remarked Phil, meditatively, as he washed the dishes by thrusting his sheath-knife into a tuft of moss, "but there seems to be something in the air of this country that makes a fellow want to eat about a dozen meals a day."

There seemed to be something in the air that compelled sleep, too. As there was a moon, the others agreed to Phil's proposition, born of his recent resolves, to take turns in watching all night for the schooner. Kooga, to whom the plan was explained by Serge, was to take the first, Serge the midnight, and Phil the morning watch. This scheme was carried out as arranged, except that the rising sun found the last watcher sound asleep. Awakened by its warm beams, he cast a glance at the sea, sprang to his feet, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. Then he gave a shout that brought the others to his side.

The sight that met their gaze was that of a placid sea, with a dozen bidarkies, fully two miles away, stretched out in a long line on its heaving bosom. Beyond them were the white sails of a schooner headed to the eastward.

"How could she have got past without you seeing her?" asked Serge.

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Phil, "unless it was that I had closed my eyes for a minute. You see, I was so awfully sleepy that I had the hardest kind of work to keep them open. Now I'll tell you what, though: Kooga and I will go out and overtake those bidarkies and find out when the schooner is coming back. We can catch them easy enough, for they seem to be waiting for something. I shouldn't wonder if they were going to make a surround, which is what I want to see more than anything."

"Well," agreed Serge, hesitatingly; "but don't you think I'd better go, as I can understand what they say?"

"Oh, that'll be all right," replied Phil, confidently. "There are sure to be some among them who can speak enough English to tell me what I want to find out."

"And you will be back before night?"

"Of course. Probably inside of a couple of hours."

Serge hurriedly explained Phil's proposal to Kooga, and that shrewd native, glad to have the company of so mighty a hunter as the Yankee lad, willingly agreed to take him along and show him how sea-otters are captured.

Then he hastily collected his weapons, and taking with him a few strips of dried meat to be eaten as they went, the young Aleut led the way to the cove, where his bidarkie was hauled up.

Phil, also snatching up some strips of meat, quickly followed, and Serge went down to see them off.

"Don't forget, Phil, that you're to be back before dark!" he shouted, as the light craft shot out from the cove.

"Never you fear, old man!" came back in laughing tones.

He who was left climbed up to the place Phil had

occupied the evening before, and watched the fleet of bidarkies until all of them had vanished in the dim distance. Then, with many misgivings as to the wisdom of the plan just pursued, Serge turned slowly away to prepare his solitary breakfast.

CHAPTER XXV

HUNTING THE SEA-OTTER

Although the long line of bidarkies of which Phil Ryder and his Aleut companion had started in pursuit were apparently moving very slowly, as seen from a distance of two miles, they were in reality skimming the water with swiftness and in perfect silence. Their occupants, while wielding their double-bladed paddles without a splash, and keeping the canoes well abreast of each other at intervals of a few hundred feet, maintained a keen watch for the slightest token of a sea-otter's presence.

Suddenly one man makes a silent signal that is flashed in an instant along the entire line. He has caught a glimpse of one of the coveted animals apparently asleep. Although no word is spoken, and no sound comes from end to end of the little fleet, the sharp-witted animal takes the alarm almost at the moment of discovery, and dives like a shot to the very bottom of the sea, leaving only a bubbling wake to mark his descent.

A few powerful strokes bring the bidarkie of the discoverer to the spot. There it is abruptly halted, and the hunter holds his paddle aloft while the others skim over the water like a flight of birds, until they have ranged themselves in a great circle half a mile in diameter about him. The otter must come up to breathe within fifteen or twenty minutes, and when he does so some one of the thirty pairs of keen-sighted eyes so eagerly watching for him is sure to detect the act,

even though he should show only the tip of his nose. A wild yell announces the discovery; the hunted animal again dives; another bidarkie, with uplifted paddle, marks the spot, and again the circle is formed. Thus the unfortunate otter, coming to the surface at shorter and shorter intervals, is made to dive and dive again, never being allowed to draw a full breath, until at the end of two or three hours he floats on the surface completely exhausted, and falls an easy victim to the nearest spear.

To an uninterested observer it is a pitiful sight to see a defenceless and harmless creature thus hunted to its death. At the same time the pursuit is possessed of the fascination that always attends the matching of human skill against animal cunning and powers of endurance. Then, too, there is the excitement of ever-present danger in thus venturing into the open sea, almost beyond sight of land, in such cockle-shells as Aleutian bidarkies. In that region of sudden squalls and fierce gales, dense fogs that settle over the water like vast smothering blankets almost without warning —huge whales and other sea-monsters that are always rising to the surface, and whose slightest touch would overturn a bidarkie as though it were a feather—the uncertainties of an otter-hunter's life are many and constant.

Two surrounds and captures had been made by the hunting-fleet in which we are interested ere, some time in the afternoon, it was finally overtaken by the bidarkie containing Phil Ryder and his Aleut companion. They were just in time to participate in a third surround, every movement of which the white lad watched with lively interest.

This was the longest chase of the day, and the sun was disappearing behind an ominous-looking cloud-bank before it was concluded. During its continuance

there was no opportunity to communicate with the hunters. The moment the capture was effected the entire fleet was headed towards a distant island, barely discernible to the eastward, and was urged with all speed in that direction.

Under the circumstances there was nothing for our friends to do but to follow them, and it is doubtful if Phil could have induced Kooga to do otherwise even had he been so inclined. He was not, however, for he realized that it would now be impossible to regain their starting-point of the morning before dark. Besides, he had not yet gained the information concerning the schooner's movements for which he had set out. So he must spend a night with the otter-hunters, and with the first streak of daylight he would set forth on his return journey to Oonimak and Serge.

"Poor Serge! what a lonely night this will be for him," reflected Phil, remembering his own brief experience of the evening before. "It can't be helped now, though, and I'm awfully glad it isn't my fault." In spite of this the lad's conscience insisted on whispering, "You know you came out to see the otter-hunt rather than to gain information, for Serge could have done that much better than you."

"Pshaw!" muttered Phil, "that's not true, to begin with; and even if it were, what difference will a single night make, anyway? I guess Serge can stand it, for he is more used to such things than I am. Then, too, I am certain the schooner has not gone back yet, for she couldn't have passed without me seeing her."

When the little fleet finally made a landing by the last of the twilight, and after a wearisome paddle of many miles, it was on the small outlying and terribly rugged island of Saanak, the favorite haunt of the sea-otter and the point at which the bulk of the world's supply of this immensely valuable fur is obtained.

Here the swarthy hunters glanced askance at the white lad, and not until Kooga had given a long explanation of how he happened to be there, and a glowing account of Phil's wonderful skill with the rifle, did they consent to admit him to a share of their scanty food supplies and still scantier shelter.

Although Phil did not, of course, understand a word of all this, he guessed what was being said, and was provoked that he should have placed himself in such a position. To his further chagrin, he could not discover one among all the hunters who could speak a word of English. So Serge had been right, and he had acted the part of a headstrong fool, after all.

While his hunger forced him to eat a share of the hunters' supper, which consisted of nearly raw meat, sea-biscuit so hard that they made his teeth ache, and a cup of tea as strong as lye, he did not relish it, and his thoughts turned with longing to the once despised cabin mess of the *Seamew*. As for the dainty home-table presided over by his dear Aunt Ruth, he dared not think of it.

If his supper was bad, how much worse were the sleeping accommodations that the bitter chill of the night forced him to share! As the cold wind swept in from the sea with ever-increasing force and charged with stinging sleet, it compelled all hands to crawl into the few wretched little tents, open at both ends, that afforded their only shelter from the inclement weather. They had no blankets, nor bedding of any description, and were forced to huddle together for warmth.

As poor Phil thus lay on the bare rocks between Kooga and another not over-cleanly Aleut, his mind once more reverted to his far-distant home, with its innumerable comforts, that he had once accepted as a matter of course, without a thought of how they were provided or any feeling of gratitude for them.

"Oh dear! what wouldn't I give for a few of those things at this minute!" reflected poor Phil. "A warm house, for instance, and a clean soft bed, and clean clothes and soap and towels, and a brush and comb, and, above all, for one of Aunt Ruth's delicious suppers. But what is the use! I can't have them, and I am having just what I set out for—a trip to Alaska and a sea-otter hunt. This misery will be over in a few hours at any rate, for I shall make Kooga take me out of this in the morning, and in a week or so from now I shall be looking back on it from Sitka, and telling of it as a most interesting experience."

Alas for Phil's hopes! When the morning light came it revealed such a mighty sea rolling in under the lashings of a southwesterly gale, and furiously hurling itself against the rock-bound coast, as would have prohibited the launching of a life-boat, much more a bidarkie. For three days did the gale continue, and for three days did it hold Phil Ryder and the native hunters close prisoners on the island of Saanak. At first the former raged at his detention almost as furiously as did the gale itself, though after a while he wisely determined to make the best of the situation, and discover whatever good points it possessed.

As the wind came off the sea, they could build as many fires as they chose without fear of alarming the wily game of which they had come in pursuit. Thus they could cook food and make tea, which, under the circumstances, was of inestimable comfort. In these occupations, together with smoking and sleeping, most of the hunters spent their time. On the second day, Kooga, taking his rifle and inviting Phil by signs to accompany him, set forth in search of sea-lions, which are highly esteemed as food by all natives of those northern regions. They also use its skin in making their boats, its intestines for their water-proof gar-

"AFTER LONG AND PAINFUL STALKING PHIL SHOT TWO SEA-LIONS"

ments, its back-sinews in place of thread, while the oil extracted from its blubber affords them both light and fuel.

As the sea-lion is extremely shy and difficult to approach in the daytime, he is generally hunted on moonlit nights. He is more than twice as large as the fur-seal, but, like the latter, is a fearless swimmer, and delights to sport in the heaviest seas at the very point where they break and hurl themselves against a rock-bound coast. Like the seal, too, the sea-lion loves to haul itself from the water, and, climbing the most rugged rocks, lie and bask for hours.

Realizing the difficulty as well as the importance of obtaining a sea-lion, as food was becoming scarce in camp, Kooga took Phil with him on this hunt, in the hope that the lad might be induced to make some of his marvellous shots. Nor was he mistaken, for, after a long and painful stalking of a small herd of these animals, Phil shot and killed two at a distance of over five hundred yards. On their way back to camp, where the entire body of hunters was turned out to go for their game, Phil had the further good-fortune to shoot an otter that was sporting far out in the surf. He waited to secure its body, while Kooga ran on with the joyful news.

As the natives came trooping up the beach they regarded the young white hunter with respect and admiration, while they greeted with extravagant delight the courtesy that led Phil to turn his first sea-otter into the common stock of the party. On the following day, after hours of weary and motionless watching, he succeeded in killing two more otters, one of which he gave to Kooga, while keeping the skin of the other for himself.

The gale blew itself out during the third night, and very early in the morning of the fourth day Phil

awoke his Aleut companion, to whom he indicated by signs that it was time for them to be gone. Upon this Kooga woke another native, and talked earnestly to him for a few moments. Then, to Phil's amazement, this fellow turned to him and said, in tolerable English:

"Why you go? Schooner gone three day, bime-by. You no catch him. Better you stay, hunt, catch plenty money. No go."

"You miserable rascal!" shouted Phil, seizing the speaker by the collar and shaking him violently. "You have been able to talk United States all this time, have you, and wouldn't? Now you want me to stay and hunt for you! Well, I'll see you hanged first! So you tell Kooga that if he isn't ready inside of five minutes to carry me back to where he brought me from, I'll fix his miserable rifle so that it will never shoot again."

This awful threat, together with the white lad's furious aspect and loud voice, so alarmed the natives that they were only too glad to get rid of so dangerous a character by letting him go in peace. So in less than five minutes later he and Kooga had launched the bidarkie and were off. It was noticeable, however, that the latter left his cherished rifle behind, probably being afraid that he who could shoot so magically would bewitch it.

CHAPTER XXVI

SERGE KILLS A BEAR, AND JALAP COOMBS DISAPPEARS

It cost Phil and Kooga the greater part of a day of unremitting labor to return to that point of Oonimak Island where they had left Serge. During that time the former had ample opportunity for reflection. He realized how reckless he had been in setting forth on such a wild chase at so critical a juncture, just to gratify a selfish whim, and now he bitterly regretted that he had not been more thoughtful, both for his comrades and himself. "The worst of it is," he muttered, "that not only have I missed the schooner on this side of the island, but I am afraid the other has gone by as well. It would serve me just right, too, if Serge had got tired of waiting, and had rejoined Mr. Coombs, and they had both been taken off by the other schooner. What shall I do, though, in that case? Return to Saanak, I suppose, and turn Aleut, and follow sea-otter hunting as a business for the rest of my life. But he hasn't gone; I know he hasn't! Old Serge is too true a comrade to do a thing like that. In spite of loneliness and uncertainty and everything else, I shall find him waiting for me; I know I shall."

And so it proved. As the paddlers wearily drew near to their journey's end late in the afternoon, Kooga first discovered a human figure on the beach of the well-remembered cove, and pointed it out. Phil knew it must be his faithful friend, and uttered a wild yell, a faint answer to which came back from the solitary figure. Then, inspired with a new energy, the tired

crew of the bidarkie so redoubled their efforts that their little craft fairly flew over the smooth waters, leaving a long shining wake of dancing bubbles behind her. Up to the very beach she dashed with unabated swiftness, and there was brought to a sudden halt by a powerful back-stroke from the flashing blades.

"Hurrah, Serge, old man! Here we are again!" shouted Phil.

"Oh, Phil! I am so thankful that you have come, and are safe. I had almost given you up for lost."

A second later the friends had grasped each other's hands, and were both talking at once, they had so much to tell and so many questions to ask.

"It is so good to see you again, Phil!" and, "Old man, I never was more glad to get back to a place in my life!" were exclamations repeated over and over again.

"Do you know," said Serge, "I was certain it must be you when I first sighted the bidarkie, so far away that she was the merest speck. Then, as she drew near, you looked so much like a native that I was filled with a horrid fear. You see, not having any hat on—"

"Oh yes!" interrupted Phil. "I lost that the day we were out after sea-lions. I tell you what, Serge, that's the grandest kind of hunting, right in the edge of great breakers that are dashing their spray all over you, and they look as big as elephants—the sea-lions, I mean—and they've got the wickedest teeth, and great shaggy manes, and they roar as if they meant to eat you up. Oh, it was fine!"

"And wearing that kamleika," continued Serge.

"That's so! I forgot I had it on. One of the hunters gave it to me the day I got my first otter and presented it to them. You'd better believe that takes careful shooting! It was the finest work I ever did,

and you ought to have seen those fellows' eyes stick out. I've brought a skin with me, too. By-the-way, did you know the schooner had gone back?"

"I should rather say I did," replied Serge. "She came past the day after you left. I managed to attract their attention, and in spite of the sea they got a boat ashore. Of course, I was awfully disappointed to find that you were not on board, and felt worse when they said they hadn't seen anything of you. They offered to take me to Oonalaska, but of course I wouldn't go. They couldn't stop to go around the island after the seal-skins either, because they were under charter to leave Oonalaska almost immediately for Sitka. So—"

"For Sitka!" groaned Phil.

"Yes. Isn't it too bad! So I traded a bear-skin with them for some groceries, and they went on."

"A bear-skin!" exclaimed the other. "Where on earth did you get a bear-skin?"

"Killed the bear," answered Serge, coolly.

"But you hadn't any gun."

"Didn't need one. I killed him with my knife. You see he got at my halibut the very first night. Hearing the noise, I went down and tried to drive him away by throwing rocks. One of them must have hit him and made him mad, for he took after me, and I ran back to the tent. He followed altogether too close for comfort, and when I went through it and out the back way he tried to do the same. Somehow he managed to knock out the poles, bring the tent down about his ears, and get all tangled up in it. You better believe he was furious, and the way he growled and snarled and tore round was a caution. I saw that it was my only chance, so I went for him with my knife, and finally killed him, though he tore my clothing some while I was doing it."

"Tore your clothing!" cried Phil, regarding his friend from head to foot; "I should say he did. Why, man, you are in rags! If that doesn't beat all the bear-hunting I ever heard of, though! Seems to me you have had about as exciting adventures as I have. But, by-the-way, did you say you had some groceries? Do let's go and sample them, for I know I'm hungrier than that bear was. I am curious to see if I shall recognize a grocery, too, it's so long since I've met with one. What are they? Coffee, sugar, milk, butter, flour, jams, biscuit, syrup, mince-meat, pickles, canned peaches, and—"

"Hold on!" laughed Serge. "How much do you think an undressed bear-skin, out of season and full of knife-holes, is worth in this country? They only valued it at two dollars; but they gave me some flour, tea, and sugar, a little lard, a few biscuit, quarter of a pound of baking-powder, a small iron kettle, half a dozen empty tin cans, a sail-needle, and some twine, which seemed to me a pretty good price under the circumstances."

"So it was," retorted Phil; "and if you haven't eaten all the tin cans let's go and tackle them."

Kooga, who had hauled up his bidarkie, and waited patiently for the lads to finish their conversation, followed them up to Serge's camp, at sight of which he uttered an exclamation of amazement. Kooga's tent, neatly repaired, had been re-erected, and a stone wall, about four feet high, had been built along two sides to serve as a wind-break. A small fire burned brightly, and above this a kettle of water boiled merrily. The interior of the tent was filled with a bed of softest moss, and it all looked so cosey that Phil declared he felt as though he had got home again.

In a short time Serge had ready such a supper as made the returned wanderer repeat this sentiment more emphatically than before. The ingenious lad

had converted several of his tin cans into cooking utensils. On one of these he had baked a sort of thin biscuit, made of flour, salt water, lard, and baking-powder. Another was his fry-pan, in which he cooked a quantity of small fish, like herring. A third was his teapot. A dozen fat little birds that he had trapped were nicely cleaned and spitted ready for cooking, while the bill of fare was completed by smoked halibut and thin strips of bear meat.

"Well!" cried Phil, as he sat down to this bountiful meal. "If there is anything finer than this in Alaska, then I don't want to see it, that's all. To think of having biscuit—actually hot biscuit—baked on a piece of tin, too! Serge, you are a genius! A genuine out-and-out genius! And if my aunt Ruth could see this lay-out I really think she would turn green with envy. And tea with sugar in it—real, truly sugar! Say, Serge, if you don't promise to take me in as a regular boarder, I'll—I'll—well, I'll go and get married, that's what I'll do!"

"It is pleasant now that you are back," said the young Alaskan, modestly. "It has been terribly lonely, though, and I had to work at something all the time to keep from thinking. I wanted awfully to go to the north side of the island and see how Mr. Coombs was getting along, but as it would have taken the best part of two days to get there and back, and you might have come in the meantime, I didn't dare to. Now, if he were only here!"

"Yes, and old Kite Robinson, our family party would be complete, and we'd be almost as well off as if we were in Sitka. I declare I could kick myself when I remember that if I'd only taken your advice we might have been on our way to Sitka in your schooner by this time!"

"I don't know about that," responded Serge. "We

couldn't have gone off and left Mr. Coombs alone on the island."

"That's so! I never thought of that. Poor old Jalap! I wonder how he is getting on all alone, and what he thinks has become of us. We must go over to-morrow and relieve his anxiety, and take him a cup of tea. Perhaps his schooner hasn't come along yet, and we shall be all right, after all."

Bright and early the following morning the little camp was dismantled and abandoned. Kooga took his tent, and bidding farewell to the lads into whose lives he had entered so strangely, shoved off his bidarkie, and started on his lonely return trip to far Saanak. After watching him out of sight, the others loaded themselves with their newly-acquired camp outfit, and started on their long, toilsome march to the north side of the island.

When, after many hours of tramping, they came in sight of the now familiar ruins and their own barrabkie they were struck with the latter's appearance of loneliness. There was no smoke nor sign of human presence. Filled with undefined anxiety, they hurried forward, only to find the hut abandoned, and a little heap of cold ashes in the place where its cheerful fire had blazed. The companion whom they had left there five days before had disappeared, nor could they find a clew to the time or manner of his departure.

"The schooner must have come, and he must have taken the seal-skins to Oonalaska in her," suggested Phil.

"I should think so, too," replied Serge, who had just returned from an inspection of the cache, "if it wasn't for the fact that the seal-skins are still here, and apparently untouched."

CHAPTER XXVII

PHIL SEES HIMSELF AS OTHERS SEE HIM

It is needless to say that our lads were wofully disconcerted by the unexplained absence of Jalap Coombs from the place where they had left him. Their home-coming, as they had termed their return to the barrabkie during that day's toilsome march, was not only robbed of all the pleasure they had anticipated, but was confronted by a mystery that filled them with anxious thoughts and gloomy forebodings. It did not seem possible that their comrade could have departed from the island without leaving some message for them. Neither could they understand why he should have gone without taking the seal-skins which he had prized so highly. Had he wandered to some remote part of the island, and become lost? or fallen down one of its tremendous precipices? or— But what was the use in such conjectures? An experienced sailor-man like the mate of the *Seamew* was not likely to have done any of these things. He was even so averse to walking, save on the deck of a vessel, that they could not imagine him as having gone any farther from the hut than was absolutely necessary to procure food, fuel, and water.

Remembering his friend's recent experience with a bear, Phil suggested that Jalap Coombs might have been attacked and carried off by one of those animals; but Serge at once pointed out the absurdity of such a theory. The bears of that country, he said, would not attack a man unless first wounded or provoked, and

the mate, as they both knew, was not one who would needlessly or recklessly affront a bear. Besides, such a struggle, as was suggested, could not have taken place without leaving unmistakable traces, and of these there were none. To be sure the interior of the old barrabkie was in great disorder. The lads particularly noted that the split caribou bones from which they had extracted the marrow on the last evening they had spent there, and which they had flung into one corner, were now scattered in every direction, some of them lying at quite a distance beyond the hut. For a while they could not account for this; but at length Serge discovered a fox track clearly imprinted in some damp ashes, and so one bit of mystery was removed.

They had so confidently expected to find a fire at the hut that they had neglected to provide themselves with the means for procuring one. Now they were too tired and disheartened to go off on a long search for sulphur and tinder. So they ate what remained of the slender stock of provisions brought from their last camp, and then, huddling close together for warmth beneath the tent-roof of the hut, they discussed their unfortunate situation and gloomy prospects for the future, until at length they fell into the dreamless sleep of utter weariness. Phil's last words before dozing into unconsciousness were, "I can't see that we've anything to hope for, not even a breakfast to-morrow morning, unless we—care—to—eat raw—fish; which I won't."

Then, save for the melancholy whistle of the wind, the ceaseless boom of breakers, and the occasional yelp of a prowling fox, the old barrabkie and its inmates were buried in a profound silence.

The summer nights are so short in that latitude that it was broad daylight when Serge found himself as wide awake as ever in his life, sitting up and listening nervously to certain mysterious and inexplicable

sounds. He heard shouts and laughter, the crashing of rocks, and another sound, which for the moment he could not define.

"Phil! Phil! Wake up!" he cried, in a low tone, at the same time shaking his drowsy comrade. "There are men outside! A lot of them! And I hear something that sounds like escaping steam."

"Oh, you must be dreaming!" replied the other, incredulously. "No, I declare you are right, for I hear them myself!"

With this both lads sprang to their feet and rushed outside. The sight that met their astonished gaze was that of a number of men busily engaged in tearing down the stone walls of the old hut in which the seal-skins were stored. Others were bearing the skins away and depositing them in a ship's boat that a couple of sailors were fending off from the rocks.

"Hello there!" shouted Phil, running down and plunging into the midst of this busy scene. "Who are you, and what do you mean by stealing our seal-skins?"

The men paused in their labor to gaze at this sudden apparition. "His seal-skins! Will ye listen to the cheek of that?" exclaimed one of them, mockingly. "The young beggar will be saying this is his island next."

"Yes, my seal-skins!" cried Phil, hot with indignation. "Even if they were not, they aren't yours. You are a lot of thieves and highway robbers, and if there is any law in this forsaken country you shall suffer for this outrage—see if you don't!"

A roar of laughter greeted this speech, and a number of insolent retorts would have been made to it had not a young man in uniform, who seemed to be the leader of the party, appeared at this moment from the interior of the hut.

"What's going on here?" he demanded, in a tone of authority. "Hustle those skins along lively, men!" Then, turning to Phil and Serge, he demanded, roughly, "Well, who are you, and what do you want here?"

"Supposing you answer my question first," replied Phil, hotly. "Who are you, and by what authority are you stealing our seal-skins?"

"Oh, they are yours, are they?" retorted the other, surveying the irate lad from head to foot with an amused smile. "Very well, if you claim them, the best thing you can do is to go off to the ship and present your claim to the captain. He is only too glad of a chance to settle all such matters. Coxswain, take these chaps aboard ship, present them to the captain with my compliments, and tell him that they are desirous of a settlement in connection with these seal-skins, which they claim as their property."

"I don't know that we care to go aboard your ship," said Phil. "Supposing your captain comes ashore and settles with us right here. We didn't invite him to this island, or ask him to take our seal-skins."

"Oh, I guess you'd better go," responded the other, with a peculiar smile. "You'll be apt to get better terms if you do. Besides, our captain makes a point of never going ashore before breakfast."

Phil was about to make some angry reply to this, when Serge nudged him, and said, in a low tone, "Be careful, old man, or you'll get us into trouble. Don't you see she's a cutter?"

A startled glance at the anchored vessel, to which, in his excitement, he had not paid particular attention before, satisfied Phil that she was, indeed, what Serge claimed. Another look at the young man in authority showed his uniform, though faded and bearing evidences of long service, to be that of the United States Revenue Marine.

"I don't care if she is," he answered, stoutly. "We'll go and see her captain, though, and find out by what authority he seizes the property of honest citizens. Come on, Serge."

A few minutes later the boat was run alongside the cutter's port gangway, and its cockswain was reporting to the first lieutenant: "Here are two men, sir, that Mr. Ramey ordered me to bring off. They say as them seal-skins are theirs and want to see the captain about 'em."

"Very well," answered the officer. "Follow me, you two, and I guess the captain will dispose of your case in short order."

Thus saying he led the way aft to the captain's cabin, which was at the same time the office in which he transacted his business. Knocking at the door, the officer was bidden to enter, and, ordering the lads to remain where they were, he did so. A minute later he reappeared, told them they might step inside, as the captain was ready to hear their story, and then returned to his post of duty on the upper deck.

As Phil and Serge stepped inside the roomy, well-appointed cabin, the former thought he had never seen a more comfortable, home-like appearing place. It contained a centre-table on which stood a pot of ferns, a number of easy-chairs, a writing-desk, and a cabinet organ. At one end was a small library of carefully selected books, and on a low sofa seat, at one side, were scattered a number of magazines and illustrated papers.

The most startling object in the room to Phil, however, was a large mirror that confronted him as he entered the door, and in which, for the first time in weeks, he saw his own reflection. He had forgotten that he still wore the kamleika of a sea-otter hunter, that he was hatless, that his feet and lower limbs were

incased in great cowhide boots, or that his hair was long and uncombed. Now to his dismay he realized that in general appearance he more nearly resembled a native Aleut than he did a civilized white lad, not to say a young gentleman. In his confusion he hardly realized that the captain of the cutter was speaking to them, and that Serge, who, for the moment was the more self-possessed of the two, was answering him. Suddenly he was recalled to his senses by hearing an exclamation of:

"Bless my soul! not Serge Belcofsky of Sitka! Of course it is, though. Why, Serge, you young scamp, how are you? and how, in the name of all that is mysterious, do I find you here masquerading as a seal-poacher? I saw your mother only a few days ago, and she is terribly anxious about you. Why aren't you in Sitka?"

To Phil's amazement, as Captain Matthews, who was a tall, fine-looking man with gray side whiskers, uttered these words he stepped forward, and, grasping the hand of his companion, shook it heartily.

"I am trying to get to Sitka, sir, the best I know how," answered Serge, laughing, as he shook hands with this old acquaintance, "and so is my friend here, Mr. Ryder, whose father is waiting for him there; but somehow luck seems to be against us."

"Ryder! Ryder!" repeated Captain Matthews, turning to Phil with a puzzled expression. "It can't be that you are the son of Mr. John Ryder, the famous mining expert whom I heard of in Sitka, and who is hunting all over the country for a lost boy?"

"I believe I am, sir," replied Phil, "for my name is Philip Ryder, and I seem to be very much lost, and my father is Mr. John Ryder, a mining expert."

"Well, bless my soul!" cried the captain. "If this isn't a most extraordinary state of affairs! And so you

"'I TOOK HER INTO SITKA HARBOR, WHERE SHE LIES NOW'"

two young scamps are the very Ryder and Belcofsky whose names appear on the *Seamew's* shipping-papers, and whom I wasted so much time hunting for. But where is Coombs — Quinine Coombs, or whatever his medicinal name is?"

"I am afraid we have lost him somewhere," replied Serge.

"Like as not," retorted the captain. "You seem to be capable of losing anything or anybody, including yourselves."

"Was it you who captured the *Seamew*, sir?" inquired Phil, curiously.

"Of course it was, and I took her into Sitka harbor, where she lies now, and where her case is to be tried before Judge Ames. As you formed part of her piratical crew, I want to know if there is any reason why I should not clap you two in irons as prisoners of war and deserters, and take you there too?"

"I only wish you would, sir," replied Phil, earnestly.

Just then a clear, laughing voice from behind them said, "I think, papa, it is about time that I were allowed to greet my old friend Serge."

Turning quickly, poor Phil beheld one of the very prettiest girls he had ever seen. As a thought of his own ridiculous appearance flashed into his mind, he blushed furiously, and wished that he were in the ship's hold, or a dungeon, or any other place that was dark.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PHIL AND SERGE AS PRISONERS OF WAR

Captain Israel Matthews, commanding the United States revenue-cutter *Phoca*, and one of the most highly esteemed officers in the service, had cruised in those far northern waters for two years, and during most of that time he had been accompanied by his motherless daughter May, who loved the sea as a sailor's daughter should. During these years May Matthews had made several long visits in Sitka, where there is always a charming colony of naval families and those of other government officials. Here she had also become well acquainted in the few old Russian households still remaining in that quaint Alaskan town. Of these the Belcofskys were the most prominent; so by this time she and Serge seemed quite like old friends.

On the present occasion, while she was greeting him, and laughing familiarly at his ragged and generally disreputable appearance, Phil edged towards the door in a vain effort to escape an immediate introduction. In this, however, he was frustrated by the captain, who, noting the movement, called out sternly:

"Hello there, prisoner! No dodging! Come back here and be introduced to your jailer, who will be held responsible if you escape. Daughter, allow me to present my friend Mr. Philip Ryder, dressed for his famous impersonation of an Aleut swell, in the Alaskan comedy of 'Bering Breakers.'"

"Don't mind him, Mr. Ryder," laughed Miss May, extending her hand with engaging cordiality to poor

"'DAUGHTER, ALLOW ME TO PRESENT MY FRIEND, MR. PHILIP RYDER'"

embarrassed Phil. "He chaffs every one just that way, and says the most horrid things. You ought to see him in his winter uniform. He looks so exactly like an Eskimo that even the dogs howl and run away at sight of him."

"Yes, my winter coat really does make them howl with envy," retorted Captain Matthews. "But come, lads, let us go into the wardroom and see if we can't provide you with some civilized toggery. After that, as a penalty for your recent acts of piracy, etc., I sentence you both to appear in this cabin and breakfast with Miss May and myself."

In the wardroom, or officers' quarters, the captain introduced Phil and Serge to several of the younger officers, who readily undertook to furnish them with an outfit of clothing suitable to an appearance at the cabin breakfast-table.

When, an hour later, after a welcome bath, after that member of the crew who acted as ship's barber had trimmed their hair, and clad in exceedingly becoming suits of uniform, our lads again presented themselves in the cabin, Captain Matthews insisted that they should introduce each other to him. Otherwise, he declared, he should never believe they were the castaways whom out of pity for their starving condition he had invited to breakfast.

"Just wait, sir, until you see us eat," remarked Phil, significantly.

Then the captain called them reformed pirates, and imitation lieutenants, and would doubtless have invented many other equally absurd names had not Miss May clapped her hands over his mouth, and declared she would not allow any further abuse of her prisoners.

It is doubtful if ever a merrier party sat down to a breakfast in all Alaska, and certainly no meal was ever more thoroughly appreciated than was that one by Phil

and Serge. The former pretended to have forgotten the use of forks and spoons, while the captain ordered the table-boy to serve the sharks' fins and whalebone as quickly as possible. Phil told how Serge tried to drive away a bear that was breaking into his halibut larder, and Serge in turn told how the master of the *Seamew* had taught Phil to appreciate Ebenezer's cooking.

This mention of the *Seamew* led the lads to inquire for further particulars concerning that vessel, and regarding affairs in Sitka. Therefore Captain Matthews said that, having learned from one of the schooner's crew of the cache of seal-skins on Oonimak Island, he had only remained in Sitka long enough to turn his prize over to the authorities, and had then hastened back to make a further capture of her hidden cargo.

"I wondered—" murmured Serge.

"Now," continued the captain, "I propose taking it, and you, too, and Mr. Ipecac Coombs, if I can find him, to Sitka for trial, though I must first run up to the Pribyloff Islands, and then stop in at Oonalaska on my way back."

"That will be fine!" exclaimed Phil. "Having got so near the seal islands, I hated the thought of leaving Bering Sea without seeing them, for it seems to me that those millions of seals must be one of the sights of the world."

"So it is, my boy," responded Captain Matthews, "and I am glad you are to have the opportunity of witnessing it. If it were on anything but an island, though, from which it would be impossible for you to escape, I don't think I should allow you on shore, except under guard, for I am bound you shall fetch Sitka this time, if it can be managed."

"I hope you will succeed, sir," laughed Phil, "though I don't know exactly what I shall do when I get there, so long as my father has left."

"I fancy he will be back again by that time. He is certain to find out in Victoria where you have gone, and will probably return to Sitka to await your arrival."

"So he will," said Phil, brightening, "for I left a note for him in Victoria, telling him just what I intended to do."

"Did you inform him that you proposed to become a seal-hunter, and then turn into a pirate, and then get cast away on Oonimak Island, and get lost among the sea-otters, and captured by a revenue-cutter, and be delivered to him in irons?" asked the captain, gravely.

"No, sir, not just that in detail," laughed Phil. "I left most of it to be understood."

"Well, I only hope he'll understand it. By-the-way, Serge, I've a bit of news that will interest you to the extent of nearly a thousand dollars. Do you remember showing me once a very curiously carved fur-seal's tooth that had been presented to your father by a Chilkat chief?"

"Yes, sir, I remember it well."

"Well, those Indians have been having very bad luck lately with their fishing, trading, and one thing or another, and have decided that it is all owing to the fact that they allowed that magic talisman, as they regard it, to pass out of their possession. So they sent a delegation down to Sitka to try and recover it from your mother. I saw them there last week, and they were terribly in earnest about getting it. They even offered your mother as high as ten of their finest old-time dance-blankets for it, and you know those are now worth anywhere from seventy to one hundred dollars apiece. Your mother told them that you had it, and had taken it with you on a long voyage. She said, though, that she had no doubt you would sell it to them on your return, and that you were expected

back every day. So they are waiting for you, and you may look forward to a very savage demonstration of welcome the moment you set foot on Sitka wharf. Have you the tooth with you? I should like to see it again."

"No," answered Serge, slowly; "I gave it away."

"You don't say so! How could you be so foolish? To whom did you give it?"

"To one who proved my best friend in a strange country," replied Serge, nodding significantly in Phil's direction.

"Oh!" exclaimed the captain, in a relieved tone. "So you are the lucky possessor of the magic tooth, are you, Master Phil? Then our Chilkat friends must drive their bargain with you. Would you mind allowing me to have it a moment? I want my daughter to see it; for, on account of its history and associations, I regard it as one of the most interesting of Alaskan curios."

"I am awfully sorry, sir, but I—"

"Don't tell me that you have given it away too."

"No, sir, but I have lost it. You see, I had no idea of its value, and failed to take the care I should of it."

"I might have known it!" cried the captain, in a tone of vexation. "A chap that can manage to lose himself as often as you have would lose anything. But there, lad, forgive me," he added, quickly, as he caught the look of mortification that swept over Phil's face. "I didn't mean to say rude things, and if you think the trinket has gone beyond hope of recovery we'll say no more about it."

Just then a knock came at the cabin door, and Mr. Ramey, the third lieutenant, who had been sent ashore to bring off the seal-skins, reported that he had completed this duty, and that they were all on board.

"Very good," said Captain Matthews. "You may ask Mr. Nelson to get under way for the Pribyloffs."

"There is one more thing, sir," continued the young lieutenant, hesitatingly. "Although not instructed to do so, I took the liberty of examining several other of those ruins on shore, and in one of them I found this, which I trust you will have no objection to my keeping."

"Certainly not, if"—began the captain, casting a careless glance at the object the lieutenant held out for inspection. It was the skin of some animal turned inside out, so that its real nature could not be determined.

Both Phil and Serge recognized it at once, and before the captain could complete his sentence the former exclaimed, "Why, it is my sea-otter skin that I had forgotten all about. I am ever so much obliged to you, sir, for bringing it off."

"You may leave it, Mr. Ramey," said Captain Matthews. "I was about to say that I had no objection to your keeping it provided no owner could be found; but as one has appeared, that of course settles the matter."

As the disappointed lieutenant walked away, he muttered to himself, "I do believe that this is the very chap who claimed the seal-skins. Now it seems that he owns everything else on the island, and I shouldn't be surprised if he owned this ship before we got rid of him."

In the meantime Phil was asking the captain's permission to present the sea-otter skin to his daughter before he should have a chance to lose it. Though the latter demurred at first, on account of its value, Phil so insisted that he finally consented. Thus, to her great delight, Miss May became possessed of one of

the finest pieces of fur in all Alaska, while Phil was happily relieved of a responsibility.

A few minutes later the swift cutter was speeding away over the green waters towards the Pribyloffs. Oonimak Island, with its many memories, was fading from view, and a new field of possible adventure was opening before our young seal-hunters.

CHAPTER XXIX

A CRUISE ON A BERING SEA CUTTER

NEARLY two hundred and fifty miles north from Oonimak lie the Pribyloffs, towards the larger and more northerly of which, the island of St. Paul, the swift revenue cutter *Phoca* was speeding her way. That day of steaming over the restless waters of Bering Sea was one of unalloyed pleasure to both Phil and Serge. Their troubles were over; they were really bound for Sitka at last, and, *en route*, were going to stop at the wonderful seal islands, of which both had heard so much as to fill them with curiosity. Above all, they were making this delightful trip in company with congenial companions, some of whom were friends.

It was a real pleasure now to watch the seals, that began to appear when the cutter was fifty miles north of Oonimak, and which increased in numbers as the day wore on. They exhibited very little fear even of the steamer, but would gaze curiously at her until they deemed her too near for their own safety, when they would suddenly sink out of sight and dart away like a flash.

"I never tire of watching the dear things," said May Matthews, as she and Phil stood together in the narrow space just in front of the pilot-house. "What with their quick movements and lovely great brown eyes, I think they are simply fascinating; don't you?"

"Indeed I do," answered her companion; "and though this is the first opportunity I have had for studying them from this point of view, I shall always

think of them after this as the most graceful and interesting of marine animals."

"Do you know," continued the girl, "they seem to me so nearly human that I don't see how any one can have the heart to kill them; do you?"

"No," replied Phil, boldly, "I do not; as I see them now, I would almost as soon think of shooting my dear old Irish setter Tab."

In making this reply the lad was but expressing the honest sentiments with which he now regarded the business that had once seemed to him so harmless. He was thankful to discover, as he thought he had from her conversation, that Miss May had no idea of what his position on board the *Seamew* had been, and determined that if he could prevent it she should never learn that he had been a seal-hunter. He was intensely chagrined, therefore, when, as he finished speaking, a voice from the pilot-house window directly above their heads said:

"Is not that rather a curious opinion for you to express, Mr. Ryder, seeing that you have so recently and successfully been engaged in that very business? For my own part, I can't see any more harm in killing one of those seals than in killing a sheep; but then I'm very practical and haven't a bit of sentiment."

Looking quickly up and with crimsoned face, Phil recognized his first acquaintance of that morning; but before he could utter the retort that sprang to his lips, his companion said, quietly:

"Then I, for one, am sorry for you, Mr. Ramey; for it does not seem to me that people who are merely practical get the fullest enjoyment out of life." Then, before the young lieutenant could make reply, she exclaimed: "Oh, there is a school of whales! Are you well acquainted with whales, Mr. Ryder? Let us go aft where we can see them better."

When they were beyond ear-shot of the pilot-house the girl said: "I hope you won't mind Mr. Ramey. He is horrid, anyway, and is always saying disagreeable things. He hates this ship and this station, and is awfully provoked because papa would not recommend him for a vacancy at San Francisco. I expect he bears you a grudge on account of the sea-otter skin, but you mustn't care."

"I only feel badly," replied Phil, "to have you know that I was a seal-hunter. Now you will let me explain—won't you?—that I only shipped on the *Seamew* because I'd lost all my money, and couldn't think of any other way of getting to Sitka. I didn't know until we were out at sea that I was to be a hunter. Even then I didn't realize for some time what the business really meant. When I did, I refused to have anything more to do with it; and that is the reason we were left behind when you captured the schooner and took her to Sitka."

"Yes, indeed. I know all about it," replied Miss May, enthusiastically. "Serge has already told me how nobly you behaved when that horrid captain ordered you out to shoot the poor mother-seals. It was a perfectly splendid thing to do, and it was to show that I feel just as you do on the subject that I said what I did a few minutes ago."

Phil's face was again crimsoned, though this time the flush was not one of anger. It was very pleasant to be thus appreciated, but he was too honest a fellow to take all the credit to himself.

Did he also tell you how finely he and Jalap Coombs backed me up on that occasion; and that if they hadn't I should have been forced to give in at last?"

"No! Tell me," exclaimed the girl, eagerly. "I love to hear of such things—I mean, of friends standing by each other through thick and thin, and being willing

to undergo all sorts of suffering and hardship for the sake of what they believe to be right."

So Phil told her of the stanch friends with whom he had been cast away on Oonimak, and they laughed together over "old Kite Roberson's" wisdom until dinner-time. Then they separated, for Phil and Serge had accepted an invitation to dine with the officers in the ward-room.

To the great relief of the former, Mr. Ramey did not appear at this dinner, being compelled to remain on duty until some officer who had finished his meal would relieve him. The other hosts of the occasion formed just such a genial, jolly party of bright fellows as is to be met with in Yankee wardrooms all over the world, and the dinner proved a great success. Although our lads were slyly chaffed on all sides concerning their recent experiences, and the first-lieutenant's account of how he had conducted them to the cabin as prisoners of war was received with shouts of laughter, the story of their adventures was listened to with closest attention, and both of them were complimented on their pluck in times of danger.

Early on the following morning the *Phoca*, steaming through the dense fog that nearly always envelops the Pribyloffs in summer-time, was suddenly surrounded by incredible numbers of screaming sea-fowl. Although the noise made by these was deafening, it was a welcome sound, for it was a certain sign of the vicinity of the island of St. George, whose precipitous cliffs are vast bird rookeries.

Two hours later the still, fog-laden air was pervaded by the far-reaching odor of the seal rookeries and killing-grounds of St. Paul. At the same time the dull roar of its restless seal millions filled miles of surrounding space, like that of a distant Niagara. The darting forms of fur-seals playing fearlessly about the ship

were to be seen on all sides, while at safer distances bands of hair-seals and big sea-lions could easily be distinguished from their more graceful cousins. From fog-hidden Walrus Rock came the deep bass roaring of hundreds of the unwieldy long-tusked monsters from which that islet derives its name, though it is chiefly noted as being the site of one of the most famous bird rookeries in the world. Here, too, as had happened off the bluff coast of St. George a few hours before, sea-fowl swarmed about the ship with deafening cries, both in the water and in the air.

Feeling his way carefully with a lead, Captain Matthews, who had been here many times, took his ship around Reef Point and anchored her in three fathoms of water, well to windward of St. Paul, nearly a mile off shore, and so beyond the influence of its horrible odors.

"Now," said he to Phil and Serge, after the vessel had been made snug, "I expect to remain here three days, unless driven from my anchorage by a sou'wester. During that time, while you would be heartily welcome on board ship, I should advise you to take up your quarters on shore, as there is so much for you to do and see that you would find it inconvenient to be constantly interrupted by coming off for your meals. The government and company people are always delighted to entertain visitors, and I will see that you have the proper introductions. Another bit of my advice is to put on your old Oonimak clothes, which will be in keeping with those universally worn on the island, and will prove more suitable to your explorations than anything else."

The lads accepted both these pieces of advice, and, after bidding good-bye to the officers and to Miss May, who positively declined to visit people whose sole business was the killing of her dear seals, they

set forth from the ship filled with eager anticipations of what they were to see.

"Remember," called out Miss May from the deck, "that you are to be on board in time to start for Sitka."

"Indeed we will!" answered both lads at once. "We won't miss it this time even if we have to accept your father's invitation to go in irons!" cried Phil. "Good-bye!"

Mr. Ramey, who had obtained permission to go ashore with his beloved camera, for which he hoped to find sunlight enough after a while, went in the boat with Captain Matthews and the lads.

As it approached the shore and the fog began to lift, both Phil and Serge uttered exclamations of amazement. To the left, as far as the eye could reach, literally covering the land, apparently ranged in platoons, companies, regiments, and armies, were the seals in countless myriads, an incredible mass of animal life. They were in ceaseless motion; and all, from old bulls to new-born pups, were roaring, barking, spitting, yelping, or plaintively calling, until the whole formed a mighty volume of sound that is never stilled, night or day, from the time the seals arrive in June until they depart in October.

From this scene, which they looked forward to visiting later, the lads turned their attention to the village of St. Paul, which occupied a rising ground on the right, directly above the beach. Here they were amazed to see a collection of nearly one hundred comfortable-looking frame-houses, a number of warehouses and other company buildings, a Greek church, a store, and a school-house, all painted white and neatly ranged along regularly laid-out, terraced streets. With its general air of prosperity, neatness, and comfort this sealing-station in far-away Bering Sea compared

favorably with thousands of other American villages scattered over more favored portions of the country. There were no shade trees, to be sure, nor is there a tree of any kind on the island; but then none is needed, for the almost perpetual fog does away with the necessity. High above the village, from the top of a tall pole, floated an American flag. As Phil Ryder stepped ashore and looked up at this well-loved emblem of his country, he realized as never before what a vast and far-reaching empire it is, and his heart thrilled with pride at the thought that it was his country and that was his flag.

CHAPTER XXX

THE THIRD LIEUTENANT'S HUMILIATING POSITION

A THRONG of villagers were assembled on the beach to witness the landing of the boat, for in that distant community the arrival of a ship bringing news from the great world is an event of general interest. Every one knew Captain Matthews, and all wanted to shake hands with him; but he found time to present our lads to the principal men of the place, such as the government inspector, the company's agent, the priest, and the doctor who has charge of the hospital in which all sick or wounded villagers are cared for free of expense to themselves. All of these extended a cordial hospitality, and promised that the lads should be well taken care of during their short stay, and shown all the sights.

A good-looking young Aleut, who was the possessor of such a tremendously long and mysterious name that neither Phil nor Serge dared try to pronounce it, was introduced to them as the school-teacher, and as there was no school at that season he at once offered to act as their guide.

"There is a drive going on now," he said, in such perfect English as to surprise them; "and if you care to see it we must go at once."

Agreeing to this, the visitors started off with their guide in the direction indicated.

"The one thing that gets me!" exclaimed Phil, holding his nose and making a wry face, "is, how you peo-

ple can stand this awful smell. It is enough to breed sickness and cause death."

"Smell?" repeated the guide. "Is there a smell? I suppose there must be, for I have heard other strangers complain of it; but I don't notice it."

"And yet you have a nose."

"Certainly I have; but then I was born here, you know. You would get so used to it in two or three weeks that you would not be troubled by it any more than I am."

"Would I?" asked Phil, incredulously.

"Yes. When I first returned from the East I must confess that I noticed it a little for a day or two, but I quickly forgot it."

"What part of the East did you visit?" inquired Serge, thinking that he meant eastern Alaska, and perhaps Sitka.

"Rutland, Vermont, where I was educated," replied the teacher, simply.

"You don't say so!" cried Phil; "why, I am from New England myself. New London, Connecticut, is my home, and that is where I met Serge, too."

"Then I am doubly glad to make your acquaintance," said the teacher, "for I love New England almost as much as I do this island. The people there were very kind to me. But here is the drive."

A thousand seals, all young males, were being slowly driven by half a dozen shouting Aleuts up from a beach, or "hauling-ground" as it is called, two miles away. They were strung out in a long panting line, for a seal finds it extremely difficult to drag himself along on dry land, and must be allowed to rest every few minutes. To Phil's surprise they were as docile as sheep, and much more easy to drive, because they could not run.

They had nearly reached the killing-ground when

our lads met them, and there they were allowed to rest for an hour, in order that they might cool off. If this were not done, and if they were killed when overheated, the hair and fur would drop out from the skin almost as soon as the latter was removed, rendering it worthless.

While the seals were thus cooling, the killing-gang of about twenty stalwart young natives, all armed with six-foot clubs and with keen-edged knives, arrived upon the scene.

"Where do they get those tremendous base-ball bats?" inquired Phil. "Do they come from the mainland?"

"Yes," laughed the guide, "and from the other side of it, too. They are killing-clubs, and are made on purpose for this work in your own town."

"Not New London, Connecticut!"

"That's the very place."

"But why do you call them killing-clubs? Surely they don't beat the poor brutes to death with those things."

"Not exactly. But they kill them with a single blow on the head, and then cut their throats."

"What a barbarous way!" cried Phil, indignantly.

"Oh no," replied the teacher. "It may seem so to you, but it really is not. The seal's skull is so thin that a heavy blow crushes it and kills him instantly."

"Why not shoot them?"

"Because that would be a less certain and more expensive method, and then the noise would alarm all the other seals. They are easily panic-stricken, tame and fearless as they seem. For that reason not a gun or a dog is allowed on these islands."

While they were thus talking the killing-gang, by command of their native foreman, was separating a

A SEAL ISLAND VILLAGE

"pod" of about two hundred seals from the rest of the drove. These were urged to a short distance from the others, where they were closely huddled together until they were directly beneath the uplifted clubs. At another word of command the cruel clubs descended with terrific force, and the work of killing was begun.

"Oh!" cried Phil, "I can't stand this! It is too horrible! Come on, Serge. Let's get away from here."

So, to the surprise of the teacher, who had imagined that his new friends would be particularly interested in this scene, to which he had become hardened by a a life-long familiarity, they turned from it and hurried away.

If they had remained they would have seen the dead seals skinned with marvellous dexterity, and the skins loaded into mule-carts to be driven to a salt-house, where they would lie in pickle for several weeks before being rolled into bundles of two each, and stored in the company warehouse. At the end of the season, which closes in August, during which month the seals shed their coats, the seventy or one hundred thousand skins representing the year's take would be shipped on the company's own steamer to San Francisco, and from there to London, to be prepared for use, as described in a previous chapter.

But Phil was too sick at heart and disgusted with the scene he had just witnessed to care for any further details of the business. So, followed by Serge and the teacher, he set rapidly off in the direction of the rookeries or breeding-grounds, in search of more agreeable scenes.

In the rookeries the lords of all they survey are the old bulls, huge shaggy fellows, from six to eighteen or twenty years of age. These arrive at the islands early in May, and each immediately takes possession of a

bit of the bowlder-strewn coast about twenty feet square.

"He files a homestead claim on it," as Serge laughingly remarked.

"Yes," said the guide, "and he is ready to defend it with his life, if necessary, against all rivals."

Here he remains, unless some bull more powerful than he drives him away, for the succeeding three months. During that time he neither eats nor drinks, never visits the sea, and only takes the merest snatches of sleep. His entire time is spent in roaring out fierce challenges to his neighbors, fighting savage battles with them, stealing their wives whenever he gets a chance, and in protecting his own against other seal wife-stealers like himself. He will attack a man who ventures on his domain as quickly as he will a brother-seal, and is altogether a most pugnacious and disagreeable old fellow. He is three or four times as large as the gentle little female seals who gather around him, and, always holding himself erect with defiantly uplifted head, towers above them to a height of several feet.

In the midst of all this fighting and incessant commotion the fat roly-poly "pups" are born, and here they spend a month or so, under the protecting care of their mothers. Then, as they are sociable little chaps, they begin to herd together in great "pods," and roam about the rookery until they finally reach the water, which they at first regard with great amazement and dislike. Gradually they paddle into its shallow pools, and begin to learn to swim. This is such a hard lesson that they do not master even its A B C for several weeks, and they study it for at least a month before graduating into the deep-water class.

These rookeries are never disturbed by the sealers, their drives being always made from among the count-

"EVERY TIME HE ATTEMPTED TO RISE THEY PROMPTLY KNOCKED HIM DOWN"

less thousands of "holluschickie," or young male seals, whom the old bulls will not permit to occupy the same ground with themselves, and who, when they wish to come ashore, are forced to "haul up" on the adjacent beaches.

Our lads were immensely interested in the fights of the fierce old bulls and fascinated by the comical antics of the pups, which at this time had just learned how to swim.

While they were wandering here and there amid the files of this vast seal army, whose members were too busy with their own concerns to pay the slightest attention to them—unless, indeed, they happened to intrude upon the domain of some old bull, who speedily warned them off—they suddenly came upon so comical a sight that it caused them to roar with laughter. It was nothing more nor less than the arrogant young third lieutenant of the *Phoca*, his uniform torn and covered with mud, seal hairs, and filth, trying to creep away on all-fours from the territory of two of the most savage old bulls on the rookery. As was afterwards learned, he had made a dash for a rocky ridge, from which he hoped to secure a fine photograph, when, half-way up, his foot had slipped, and, dropping his camera, he had pitched headlong directly under the noses of two rival bulls who happened to be contesting a bit of ground at the foot of the ridge. Instantly they devoted their entire attention to him, and every time he attempted to rise they promptly knocked him down. Then he tried to crawl away; but with each movement he made they would rush at him with open mouths and gleaming teeth, only to retreat a few feet and glare at him when he again lay still.

It was fortunate that our friends appeared on the scene when they did; for the victim of this awkward predicament might have been kept there until utterly

exhausted if they had not. As it was, they succeeded in so distracting the attention of the savage monsters that he effected an escape. His camera was ruined, and he was filled with wrath, not only against the seals, but against those who had witnessed his ignominious position. In particular was he wroth against poor Phil, probably because he of the three rescuers was least able to restrain his laughter. With each new mental picture of the situation he roared afresh until the tears streamed from his eyes. "Hang that fellow!" muttered Mr. Ramey to himself. "He's altogether too fresh! But I'll find some way to cause him to laugh from the other side of his mouth—see if I don't!"

CHAPTER XXXI

WHERE IS THE CENTRE OF THE UNITED STATES?

THE more Mr. Ramey reflected upon his recent ridiculous adventure, the more determined he became to keep its history from reaching the ears of his shipmates on board the *Phoca*, if such a thing were possible. He knew that if it once got into the wardroom he would never hear the last of it, for nothing more pleases a wardroom mess than a good joke at the expense of one of its members. The story is told and retold with such humorous additions as may suggest themselves from time to time. It is treasured up to be related through coming years in many different wardrooms until, unless its victim is sensible and good-natured, it weighs upon him like a chronic nightmare, and causes him much unhappiness. Fortunately, most wardroom men have had both these qualities thoroughly rubbed into them by a four-years' course of vigorous polishing at Annapolis, and so are in a condition to laugh as heartily over a good story at their own expense as at any other. Unfortunately, in the present case, Mr. Ramey was not an Annapolis man, and had not yet learned to take such things good-naturedly. Then, too, as he was very fond of jokes at the expense of others, he realized how bitter and nauseous the dose would be made for him. Therefore, he mentally vowed that, if he could compass it, neither Philip Ryder nor Serge Belcofsky should again set foot on the deck of the good ship *Phoca*. To this end he began to scheme, even while they were brushing

the dirt of the rookery from his uniform, and from the very first fortune seemed to favor him.

"I wouldn't mention this if I were you," he said in a low tone to the lads, "until we are once more aboard ship and away from the island, because there is such a strong feeling here against any one who disturbs a rookery that it might get me into trouble. Of course it is too good a yarn to withhold from the wardroom, but it will be all the better for being kept a few days."

"All right," replied Phil, striving politely to smother his laughter; "we won't speak of it on the island." At the same time the lad smiled to think how he should enjoy telling it to Miss May, and how heartily that appreciative daughter of the sea would laugh over it.

Captain Matthews dined ashore with the company's agent that day, while Mr. Ramey and our lads had accepted an invitation from the government inspector, under whose hospitable roof the latter were also to spend the night.

During the meal, at which, in honor of the guests, were served all the delicacies of the islands, Phil paid particular attention to a large omelette, a dish of which he was very fond. As he had seen no fowls about the village, he inquired of his host where he kept his hens.

"Oh, just around the corner!" laughed the inspector, "where we have a chicken ranch containing several millions of egg-laying fowls. By-the-way," he continued, more soberly, "that is one of the sights of this region, and you ought certainly to visit it before leaving here. It—Walrus Island, I mean—supports the most accessible as well as one of the most populous and densely-packed bird rookeries in the world outside of the Antarctic Ocean. That is where we keep our million or so of hens, only we call them gulls, murres,

arries, auks, chookies, sea-parrots, and cormorants. On the five or six acres of level surface offered by Walrus they are packed as tightly as sardines in a box; they are everlastingly quarrelling among themselves, and yet they are so perfectly fearless of man that they will scarcely move out of the way to avoid being stepped on. Yes, indeed, it is a sight you ought not to miss. A boat is sent over from here every few days after eggs, of which six men will collect several tons in as many hours. If I find that one is going over in time for you to make the trip, I will let you know, and I should advise you to take it."

"Thank you, sir," said Phil. "I should like it above all things."

"There is another thing on hand just now," continued the inspector, "that I think would interest you immensely. Have you ever seen a sea-lion?"

"Yes," replied Phil, "I shot two only the other day."

"Then you know what great ferocious-appearing monsters they are. Would you believe that a herd of them could be driven out on land, and kept for days at a time within a corral, or fence, of nothing but sticks, strings, and bits of fluttering cotton rags, such as a child could easily tear down?"

"No," answered Phil. "It doesn't seem possible."

"Well, it is," said the inspector, "and you can see that very thing to-morrow, if you care to visit Northeast Point. You see, as we kill all our seals for the year inside of a month, we made our last drive of this season to-day. A lot of our young men, being thus set at liberty, have gone over to Northeast to begin a sea-lion drive on their own account. The skins are valuable for making boats, you know, while the flesh is esteemed much more highly than that of a seal."

"But how can they drive sea-lions?" asked Phil.

"I thought they were so shy that a man couldn't get near them."

"So they are, and for that reason they can only be approached at night, when they are asleep on the beach, and then only by exercise of the utmost caution. The hunters creep along the beach, among its many bowlders, on all-fours, until they are between the herd and the water. Then they jump up with waving arms and a wild yelling that frightens the sea-lions almost out of their senses. Those that have been asleep, with their noses pointed towards the sea, rush into the water with such force that nothing could stop them, and so escape. At the same time, those who are so unfortunate as to be headed inland when thus rudely awakened, rush with equal precipitation in that direction. The natives close in behind them, dancing, brandishing weapons, screaming, making all sorts of frantic noises, and so drive them at a sort of a lumbering gallop for several hundred feet, when the frenzied animals, breathless and exhausted, fall panting to the ground. Instead of killing them where they are, the natives allow them to rest a few minutes. Then they rouse and urge them forward by all manner of devices, the most successful of which is the sudden opening of gingham umbrellas in their faces. When they have got the herd out of sight of the water, behind some sand-dune, they crowd them together and run a fence of strings around them in no time. The strings are supported by slender sticks thrust into the sand, each of which bears a bit of fluttering cotton cloth. Here the forty or fifty big brutes are as securely fenced as though behind stone walls, and here they remain for several weeks, or until three or four hundred of their kind have been secured and herded with them. During this time, instead of remaining stupidly quiet, as you might imagine, they are constantly on the alert,

writhing, fighting, and climbing over each other with incessant motion."

"Seems to me I never heard of anything so stupid!" exclaimed Phil.

"Did you ever hear of any one being afraid of ghosts?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, sir, I believe I have."

"Well, it seems to me that such people are just as silly and stupid as the sea-lions, who are afraid of bits of fluttering cotton cloth. Doesn't it to you?"

"Of course it does, sir!" answered the lad, heartily, for John Ryder had taught his son to regard all forms of superstition as the result of combined cowardice and ignorance. "But while I should hate to meet or know any person who is such a coward as to believe in and be afraid of ghosts, I should dearly love to see a herd of sea-lions in a corral of strings. So I think I will go over there to-morrow. I shall have plenty of time, sha'n't I, Mr. Ramey?"

"Certainly," replied the lieutenant, "you have still two days and two nights to spend ashore; or, rather, you have two whole days, for the nights here are so short now that they are hardly worth counting."

"By-the-way, Ramey," remarked the inspector, "speaking of nights, do you remember the questions you promised to look up for me when you were last here? One was whether sunlight was ever absent from all parts of the United States at once, and the other was, where is the centre of this country between the east and the west?"

"Yes, sir," replied the lieutenant, "I do and I have looked them up. In summer the sun may always be seen from one part or another of United States territory; for it rises over Eastport, Maine, before it sets on Attu Island. As to the east-and-west centre of the country, it is—"

"Where do you say?" interrupted the inspector, and putting the question to Phil.

"Omaha," was the prompt reply.

"Do you think so, too?" asked the inspector of Serge.

"No, sir. I should think it might be somewhere west of the Rocky Mountains."

Phil laughed at this, but the inspector said: "Don't laugh too soon, my lad. I expect he is more nearly right than you. How is it, Ramey?"

"They are both pretty far out in their guesses," replied the young officer, delighted at this opportunity of exposing the ignorance of "these youngsters," as he mentally termed them. "Omaha is away off the mark, and the 'somewhere west of the Rocky Mountains' is very indefinite. The truth is that Attu, the westernmost Aleutian island, being very nearly three thousand miles to the westward of San Francisco, makes that city practically the midway point. In reality, though, the point is still some sixty miles to the westward of the Golden Gate, while the exact geographical centre of the United States is at a point in the Pacific forty miles off the mouth of the Columbia River."

"Well!" cried Phil, laughing. "So that is the case—"

"I can assure you that it is," interrupted Mr. Ramey, stiffly, "for I made the calculations myself."

"I had no intention of doubting the correctness of your figures," responded Phil, in a tone that was painfully polite. "I was only about to say, if that is the case, when the seals leave here they seek winter-quarters in the very centre of the country."

This Mr. Ramey considered a very flippant manner of treating a problem upon the solution of which he had exhausted his entire stock of mathematics, and it confirmed him in his opinion that this young Ryder was decidedly "fresh."

Soon after this Captain Matthews and his third lieutenant returned to the cutter, while our lads visited the library, the hospital, the quaint Greek church, and the interiors of several native houses, which they found to be surprisingly neat and comfortable. Having thus seen all there was of interest in the immediate vicinity, they turned in to get a good night's rest, preparatory to their long trip of the morrow.

CHAPTER XXXII

WHY THE CUTTER DEPARTED WITHOUT HER PASSENGERS

Phil and Serge, in planning their expedition to Northeast Point to visit the sea-lion hunters, expected to walk the entire distance, which is about ten miles. At breakfast-time, however, they were told by the inspector that he had arranged to have them taken in a bidarrah, or large open boat, the wooden frame of which is covered with sea-lion skins. He also had a supply of provisions put up for them, had ordered out a crew of six men to row the bidarrah, and had taken every precaution to make their trip comfortable and enjoyable. The boat was to return that same day, and would bring the lads back in plenty of time for supper, which they had been invited to take with the priest of the little Greek church.

Although the morning was damp and chilly, both lads thoroughly enjoyed the unique trip up the coast. Phil had brought along his kamleika, which kept him perfectly dry, and Serge did not seem to mind the dampness any more than the natives themselves, who fairly revel in wet, foggy weather, and are never more uncomfortable than when the sun shines out warm, as it occasionally does, even over the Pribyloffs.

On the present trip there was just fog enough to keep the crew of the bidarrah in good spirits, without hanging so low as to conceal the shore line. Consequently, the wonderful seal-life in the water and on land, through and past which the boat moved, was

plainly visible. From end to end of the island the coast was crowded with it, and by the time the bidarrah reached its destination Phil declared that he believed all the "sea-bears" of the world must be collected in that one place.

They found the camp of the hunting-party in and about an old native hut that reminded the visitors of the one they had occupied on Oonimak Island. It was behind a range of low sand-dunes, and just beyond it they caught sight of the chief attraction of the place, a small herd of sea-lions, great shaggy fellows, very much larger than seals, ramping and floundering about behind an enclosure of strings. The situation struck our lads as so comical that they laughed at it until they were actually tired with laughing. For an hour they watched the frantic efforts of the uncouth beasts to discover some point of escape that was not guarded by a fluttering white rag. At the end of that time they were called to dinner, which was served in the old hut, and which proved so much better than they expected that they ate it with real enjoyment.

One of the hunters who could speak a little English told them that if the wind proved favorable that night he and his companions would make another drive, and Phil declared that he meant to stay, in the hope of seeing it.

"It must be one of the most curious hunting scenes in the world," he said, "and I shall probably never have another chance to see it. I don't live in Alaska, you know; besides, I'd a thousand times rather spend a night out here than in the village, where I must breathe the awful-smelling air of the killing-grounds. So if you will make my excuses to the priest, like a good fellow, I think I'll stay. We have plenty of time, you know."

"All right," replied Serge; "but as I want to see

those queer old Russian books the priest promised to show us, I think I'll go back in the bidarrah."

As this boat was ready to leave directly after dinner, the lads bade each other good-bye, Phil promising to make his way to the village on foot early the following morning, so as to reach it in plenty of time to rejoin the *Phoca.*

After his friend's departure he again visited the captive lions, and wondered, as he watched them, if they were the same as those he had read of on the so-called "seal rocks" of San Francisco. If his friend the inspector had been there, he would have told him they were not; that the seal-rock sea-lions were of a variety found only on the Californian coast, and that they do not attain more than half the size of their great Alaskan cousins.

When tired of this amusement Phil wandered to a point commanding a fine view of the great seal herds, and became so absorbed in watching them that the afternoon passed before he knew it, and he was surprised when the hunter who could speak English called him to an early supper. After it, Phil and this hunter went together to the beach, where, to the lad's great disappointment, the latter said he feared there would be no sea-lion drive that night, as the wind showed signs of changing.

While they talked of this a boat appeared, coming from the direction of the village. One of its occupants, all of whom were natives, stepped ashore, and talked for a minute with the hunter.

"He says," remarked the latter, turning to Phil, "that they are bound for Walrus Island after eggs, and that if you want to go they will take you. They will stay all night, but will start back for the village early in the morning."

"That suits me!" exclaimed Phil; "so long as there

isn't to be any lion-hunt, a hunt for birds' eggs in an Arctic rookery is the next best thing. Besides, if these fellows will carry me back to town in their boat, I shall be saved the long, lonely tramp, for which I didn't care very much anyhow."

With this Phil bade his hunter friend good-bye and stepped into the big boat, which was immediately shored off and headed for Walrus Islet, six miles away.

About an hour later the inmates of the hunting-camp were startled by the sudden appearance among them of Serge Belcofsky, hot and breathless, as though he had run all the way from the village.

"Where is my friend?" he shouted, darting searching glances about the dim interior.

"Gone to Morzovia for eggs," replied the English-speaking hunter.

"Oh!" groaned Serge. "How could he do such a thing? Now we shall be too late, and the cutter will go without us."

His distress was so real that, while not wholly understanding its cause, the good-natured Aleut took pity on him and said: "My bidarkie is here. It has two holes. If you like, we will go to Morzovia. You may then fetch your friend back. I will come in the bidarrah."

Anything was better than a whole night of inaction. It was possible that the cutter would wait for them, and they might yet get back to the village in time. Thus thinking, Serge eagerly accepted this generous offer, and a few minutes later the light bidarkie was skimming the darkening waters of the open sea in the direction of Walrus Islet.

To understand the existing condition of affairs we must have been at the village about the time Phil and Serge were eating dinner with the sea-lion hunters. A newly-arrived steamer had just dropped anchor near

the *Phoca*, and her master, a stoutly-built German named Kuhn, was on his way to visit and report to Captain Matthews. His ship was the *Norsk*, a tramp steamer from San Francisco, bound for the mouth of the great Yukon River, with men and supplies for a new Alaskan fur-trading company. He had touched at St. Paul for information and, if possible, to obtain a pilot.

More important than all the rest of his news, in Captain Matthews' estimation, was that of a certain mysterious schooner which the master of the *Norsk* had seen in Oonalaska harbor. He could learn nothing definite as to her movements, but it was commonly reported that she had been chartered at a big price to go into Bering Sea after seal-skins.

"Confound these poachers!" exclaimed Captain Matthews. "I no sooner get rid of one than another appears. Mr. Ramey, you will please go ashore with the gig, intercept Mr. Ryder and Mr. Belcofsky the moment they return from Northeast Point, and bring them back with you. Tell them we shall leave for the southward the moment they get on board, and that at any rate we must be out of here before sunset."

As the third lieutenant was rowed towards the village his mind was filled with unpleasant reflections. Those chaps were to come on board again, after all, and through them he would be made a butt of ridicule for the wardroom mess. It was tough luck, and he wished they were in Halifax, or some other distant port, at that moment, instead of on the seal island of St. Paul.

When he reached the landing he found that they had not returned. He also found the egg-bidarrah just about to start for an all-night's trip to Walrus Islet. Now Mr. Ramey had picked up a fair knowledge of the Aleut language, armed with which, and a silver dollar, he approached the native skipper of the

"'VERY WELL, MR. BELCOFSKY; DO AS YOU PLEASE'"

egg-boat. "The young white gentlemen," he said, "wish very much to visit Morzoria. They are now coming in a bidarrah from Northeast Point. Here is a dollar, which is yours if you will kindly stop when you meet that bidarrah and invite them to go with you."

The native willingly agreed to do this, and a moment later he had the satisfaction of seeing the egg-boat shove off. "The scheme may work, or it may not," he said to himself. "At any rate, it is worth trying. It gives me one more chance, and it won't hurt those young beggars to wait here a week or so longer, until some other ship comes along to take them off."

Half-way up the coast the egg-boat met the other bidarrah, and Serge received an invitation to go to Walrus Islet, which he declined. When he reached the village he found Mr. Ramey patiently waiting.

"Where is Ryder?" asked the young officer.

"He decided to stay behind and spend the night with the hunters," was the reply.

"Then he'll be apt to get left, for the cutter is to sail as soon as you and I can get aboard."

Serge was thunderstruck. For a moment he knew not what to do or say. Then a sudden plan flashed into his mind.

"Mr. Ramey," he said, "I am going overland to fetch my friend: it is the quickest way. Will you kindly beg Captain Matthews to wait for us just as long as he can? I know we can be back before midnight."

"Very well, Mr. Belcofsky; do as you please," replied the officer. Then without another word Serge set off on a run for the distant point where he expected to find Phil.

Mr. Ramey returned to the ship and reported that

he believed the young gentlemen had gone to Walrus Islet egg-hunting, and it was doubtful if they returned before the afternoon of the following day.

"The young scamps!" exclaimed Captain Matthews. "So they have given me the slip, after all! Well, I can't wait for them now, but will come back and pick them up after we run down this new poacher."

On hearing this Mr. Ramey was greatly troubled, and became filled with a fear that haunted him for some days.

So the *Phoca* sailed away, and her recent passengers were left behind.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN HOT PURSUIT

Captain Matthews had obtained the name of the suspicious schooner from the master of the *Norsk*. It was *Philomel*, and he at once recognized it as that of a well-known craft belonging to a sea-otter trader, which he had frequently seen plying her honest vocation among the islands of the Aleutian chain. "That is a new dodge and a good one," he muttered. "The rascals knew the risk of bringing a strange vessel into the sea, and so have chartered a well-known craft, thinking that she can go where she pleases without exciting suspicion. I am on to their game, though, and they must be a good deal smarter than I think they are if we don't have them alongside before many days are past."

The *Phoca* first ran down to Oonalaska and dropped anchor in Captain's Harbor on the second day after leaving St. Paul. Here her commander learned, without going ashore, that the *Philomel* had been chartered by one Jalap Coombs, and had cleared five days before for a general trading voyage to Oonimak Island and other Bering Sea points lying to the eastward.

"Ho! ho! my veteran poacher with the medicinal name! It is you, is it? and up to your old tricks!" said Captain Matthews to himself, as he ordered his vessel to be got under way for the eastward.

Late that same afternoon the schooner *Philomel* was reported at anchor off the northeast point of Oonimak, and close in shore.

"Very good, sir," said the captain to his first lieutenant, who made this report; "we will anchor for the night a cable's length outside of her, and you will at once send an officer on board to make a careful examination of her cargo. If he finds anything suspicious about her—any guns, extra boats, or other evidences of a sealing outfit—let him bring her skipper back with him."

To the surprise of those on board the cutter, she had barely dropped anchor before a small boat containing two men was seen to put off from the schooner and come towards her. Captain Matthews, who was curious to see what sort of a man he had to deal with, stepped on deck in time to receive a genuine surprise. Instead of the old sea-dog whom he expected, he beheld a fine-looking man of middle age, wearing an iron-gray mustache, and clad in the soft hat, corduroy suit, knee-breeches, worsted stockings, and heavy walking shoes of a gentleman tourist or sportsman. Lifting his hat as he stepped on deck and approached the captain, the stranger asked:

"Are you the commander of this vessel, sir?"

"I am," replied Captain Matthews. Then, thinking to display at once the extent of his information, he added: "And you, I presume, are the person who has chartered yonder schooner?"

"I am, sir," answered the stranger; "and my name is—"

"Coombs, is it not?"

"Oh no! Mr. Coombs is still in the boat, and we have come off to beg your assistance. As I was about to say, my—"

"Excuse me," interrupted the captain, "but I fear you are applying to the wrong person for assistance in the business in which you are engaged."

"Do you know what it is, then?" asked the stranger, with an air of surprise.

"I have reason to believe that you are after seal-skins," was the reply, given with an air that seemed to say: "Deny it if you can."

"I am willing to acknowledge that part of our business here was to secure certain seal-skins that had been left on yonder island. That, however, devolved entirely upon Mr. Coombs, and was something with which I had nothing to do. My errand here, and the one in which I hoped for your assistance, is the searching for a lost boy—my own son, in fact. He was known to be on Oonimak Island two weeks ago; but now, though we have scoured the island from end to end, we can discover no traces of him."

"Bless my soul!" cried Captain Matthews. "And your name is—"

"John Ryder; while that of my lost boy, on whose account I am suffering the greatest anxiety, is Philip—Philip Ryder."

"Yes, yes! my dear sir! I know him well, the young scamp! And you may instantly set your mind at rest concerning him. He is safe, sound, and hearty, not far from here—in a place from which he cannot possibly escape. Why! he was on board this very ship only a few days ago."

"But where is he now?" asked Mr. Ryder, eagerly.

"Just over here on one of the Pribyloff Islands, where you will find him as snug as a bug in a rug; only I defy you to distinguish him from a dozen of the other young Aleuts there."

"Then," sighed the happily relieved but still anxious father, "he is still three hundred miles away from me."

"Oh no! not so far as that. Barely two hundred and seventy. A mere step to one who, like yourself, has already covered such great distances in searching for him. You see, I know all about your fruitless trip

to Victoria. But how on earth do you happen to be here, and in company with Rhubarb—Hartshorn—Plague take the man's pharmaceutical name!"

"Perhaps you mean Jalap," suggested Mr. Ryder, laughing for the first time in many days.

"Jalap! That is it—Jalap Coombs. But never mind now. Come down into the cabin and meet my daughter, and take dinner with us. You can't imagine what a pleasure as well as a surprise this is to me. And we'll have Jalap down too. Then all our yarns can be spliced together, and served, until there's no sign of a break left. Mr. Nelson, will you kindly invite Mr. Coombs aboard, and in my name request the pleasure of his company at the cabin dinner-table. Let one of the men look after his boat. Now, Mr. Ryder, if you are ready."

Thus it happened that, a few minutes later, the very cabin which had so recently received Phil and Serge into its cheery presence was occupied by a group of those friends who were most deeply interested in or had shared their adventures and experiences. Captain Matthews and Mr. John Ryder were equally pleased with each other, while Miss May found the unique personality of Jalap Coombs so fascinating that she devoted herself to drawing him out and making him feel at home.

The honest sailor was at first shy and embarrassed amid his unaccustomed surroundings, but under the charming influence of his fair hostess his self-possession was soon entirely restored. Thus, when she finally said: "And now, Mr. Coombs, do begin at the very beginning, and tell us how you happened to desert those poor young lads and leave them without any one to take care of them on this desolate island," he readily replied as follows:

"Wal, marm—that is to say, miss—as old Kite Roberson uster say—"

"'WAL, MARM—AS OLD KITE ROBERSON USTER SAY'"

"I knew he would come in!" cried Miss May, laughing and clapping her hands.

"Who, marm?" asked the mate, turning a bewildered gaze towards the cabin-door.

"Your friend Mr. Robinson, of course."

"Yes, to be sure. You see, me and him's been friends so long—it's going on forty year off and on, boy *and* man—that now wherever you find one you're likely to run agin t'other on the next tack. Wal, he uster say, Kite did, that while a word's a word, it has as many sounds as there be people that uses it. So, while the word desartion has a pleasant sound coming from your lips, it's mighty ugly from some; and I'm proud of the chance to clear myself of the charge, seeing as I didn't do it intentional, but with the best of intentions.

"So, to begin with, the day on which I were left, or, as some might ignorantly call it, desarted, by my young shipmates, on that very day along comes a schooner, the same *Philomeel* that is now swinging under our starn. Although she were in charge of a crew of natyves, with a natyve cap'n, *and* in a powerful hurry, she stopped at my signal and sent a boat ashore to see what was up.

"Do all I could I couldn't strike no bargain with 'em, nor get 'em to wait till I could go for the boys. The best they would do was to offer me passage to Oonalaska, where her owner lived, who, so they said, would give me a charter in no time. So, seeing as I couldn't do no better, and thinking I'd be back again inside of three days, I left a note for the boys and went aboard. We made a quick run to Oonalaska, but when I tried to get a charter out of the owner, he wouldn't hear of nothing but cash down, and as I hadn't dollars enough to charter a dingy, let alone a schooner, there I was. For the best part of a week

I stayed in that melancholy seaport, wishing as I'd never heered of it, and laboring day by day with the shark what owns the *Philomeel.* I offered him a quarter of the seal-skins, then a half, and finally the whole of 'em, only to let his schooner go and fetch off the boys."

"What a horrid, avaricious old thing he must be!" cried Miss May, indignantly.

"It ain't no name for it, marm—that is to say, miss. He is a 'hunks' if ever there was one, and so I up and told him. He said he didn't believe I had any seal-skins, but just wanted to get his schooner for a poaching cruise in the sea. While I was thus jibing and filling without making an inch of headway, a Dutch steamer come in, and I offered the skins to him to go and fetch the boys back to Oonalaska; but the Dutchman was suspicious, like the rest of 'em, and said he was in a hurry to get to St. Michael's, which, of course, I knowed the boys wouldn't want to go there, anyway, seeing as it would make 'em wuss off than ever.

"Finally, when I was wellnigh desperate and at the end of my cable, the Sitka steamer came in, and I went aboard to see what I could do with her cap'n. There I run across the very Mr. Ryder what sits facing of me at this minute, who, when he heard me say as my name were Coombs, speaks up quick and sez, 'Jalap?' and I sez, 'Jalap it is.' Then he sez, fierce-like, 'Where's my boy?' With that I knowed for the fust time who he was, and I sez, 'Don't ask me, Mr. Ryder, but count on me to help ye find him, for,' sez I, 'I'm as bound as you be to do it, ef it takes every seal-skin I'm wuth.'

"That same day we had the *Philomeel* chartered for cash, with me in as cap'n, and was cracking sail on to her for this blessed island of Oonimak. We made port in fine style, with our flag a-flying, and

would have fired off our kerosene stove, only we didn't have any. But it warn't no use. There wasn't nary soul in sight, nor hasn't been from that day to this. The seal-skins was gone, too, and it's my opinion that blooming Dutchman come along and shanghaied 'em."

"No, he didn't," laughed Captain Matthews. "I seized them in the name of the United States, and they are in the hold of this very ship at this very minute."

"Wal," said Jalap Coombs, with a comical air of resignation, "ef government 's got 'em 'tain't no use, and I might as well do like old Kite Roberson said. He uster say, 'Jalap, my son, let by-goners be by-goners, and never waste time in fretting over lost fish.'"

CHAPTER XXXIV

MR. JOHN RYDER'S STORY

When the mate had thus finished his yarn, Captain Matthews turned to Mr. Ryder and said: "Now, sir, that Mr. Coombs has so satisfactorily explained his own movements since he was last heard from, perhaps you will have the kindness to relate your own experiences while in pursuit of your elusive son."

"I will do so with pleasure," replied Mr. Ryder, "provided that you will afterwards tell us how you discovered the lads, and how it happens that they are now at the Pribyloffs."

"Certainly," replied the former, whereupon Phil's father proceeded with his narrative as follows:

"When I learned definitely that my boy was to join me at Sitka by a certain steamer, I was filled with pleasant anticipations, and counted the days until he should arrive, for I think there is a stronger bond of sympathy between us than between most fathers and sons of Phil's age. I so arranged my business that we could spend the greater part of the summer in those hunting and exploring trips of which we are both so fond—in fact, all my plans were laid with reference to him; and when the steamer came in without him, I doubt if there was a more disappointed father than I in the United States. It brought a letter from him, written in Victoria, stating that he was ready and waiting to take that very ship, and it brought his trunk. I also discovered among the passengers an acquaintance named Ames—Judge Ames, you know—

who had met Phil in Victoria, planned with him what they should do together while coming up the coast, and was greatly exercised over the boy's nonappearance.

"Of course the chances were that he had simply got left, and would be along on the next boat; but, as I could not bear the thought of ten days of suspense, I determined to go back on the steamer that had just arrived—at least, until we should meet the up boat. Then, if Phil were on board, I could return with him; while, if he were not, I should be well on my way towards Victoria, in which place I should then know he must have met with some serious trouble. You know as well as I that I did not meet him on the second steamer, and did not find him in Victoria. I did, however, discover plenty of traces of him. First, there was a note for me at the Driard, stating that he had taken passage with a friend named Serge Belcofsky—whose mother I had met—on the fishing-schooner *Seamew*, for Sitka. Upon making inquiries I learned that the *Seamew* was more of a sealer than a fisherman, and that while she might possibly touch at Sitka, the chances were against her doing so.

"I also found at the hotel my boy's rifle—which, by-the-way, I have with me now—his travelling-bag, and overcoat, all of which he had left to satisfy a bill for board amounting to less than ten dollars. As I had provided him with plenty of money, I could not at first understand this. When, however, I discovered a wad of bills, most of them Canadian, amounting to very nearly one hundred dollars, inside the lining of his overcoat, and found the upper edge of an inner pocket partially torn from its fastenings, it was all made plain. I knew in a moment that poor Phil's careless habits had again got the better of him, and had this time brought him to quite serious grief.

"What worried me most of all was to learn that, on the second of the two nights he seems to have spent in Victoria, Phil was arrested. Of course I followed this up at once. I found and rewarded the police-sergeant, who had taken such pity on the lad as to allow him to occupy his own bed, instead of locking him up. Then I saw the judge before whom the case had come for examination. We discovered that we had known each other by reputation for some time, and he relieved my mind at once. He said he remembered the case very well. Phil had been arrested on a charge of threatened assault and battery, evidently trumped up to gratify some private spite, as the complainant never appeared to press the charge. The judge said that when Phil gave him his name it had a familiar sound, but that he did not identify it with mine until after the boy was dismissed and had disappeared. He also said that if the young scamp had only made himself and his trouble known he would gladly have assisted him to the extent of his power.

"I was still puzzled to know how the boy had obtained a position as a sailor, and what he was wearing, as his trunk, bag, and overcoat were now in my possession, and apparently nothing had been taken from the two former."

"He wasn't just a common sailor—he was a hunter," here broke in Miss May, proud of her acquaintance with the facts in this interesting case.

"So I afterwards discovered," replied Mr. Ryder, "and I must say that is his one act of which I feel ashamed. I never thought that a son of mine would become a pot-hunter, and pursue butchery as a business."

"Oh! but you don't understand!" cried Phil's fair champion, eagerly. "He didn't know at first that he was to be a hunter, and then he didn't realize what it

meant, and just as soon as he found out he refused to obey the captain's orders to hunt any longer."

"As clear a case of mutiny as I ever heard of," laughed Captain Matthews.

"Yes, and the wust of it were that he carried the best part of the crew with him, meaning me and young Belcofsky," added Jalap Coombs, "which if he hadn't ye'd have found him safe in Sitka when ye come back, as it now turns out."

"That is one of the best bits of news I have heard yet!" exclaimed Mr. Ryder, "and it lifts a load off my mind. As for being a mutineer, I hope my boy will be one all his life against cruelty, no matter what consequences may be threatened, or what results may follow. Now I am reconciled to my long delay in finding him, though when I returned to Sitka and discovered the schooner *Seamew* at anchor in the harbor, but without my boy aboard, I was wellnigh heartbroken. Of course I interviewed her skipper, and got all possible information from him, but he was a surly fellow and gave me but slight comfort. My only consolation was that he spoke so highly of Mr. Coombs, and claimed that he would get my boy out of his scrape if any one could."

"Which I thanks him hearty!" exclaimed the mate, "and could say the same for him ef I had to; bearing in mind old Kite Roberson's advice, allers to speak the truth when ye're compelled."

"After learning all I could from Captain Duff," continued Mr. Ryder, "I made some inquiries about the Oonalaska steamer, which happened to be in port, and then went to see what mail had been laid on my desk, which stands in one corner of Gifford's store. Among my letters was one for Phil, which, under the circumstances, I thought I might take the liberty of opening. It was very badly written, but I managed to make out

that the writer, who evidently was some sleeping-car porter, enclosed and forwarded a trinket that Phil had lost and he had found in his car. The article in question was in the shape of an animal's tooth, and bore some sort of carving. Not thinking it of any particular value, I left it lying on my open desk while I went to call on Mrs. Belcofsky, from whom I wished to learn what she had heard from Serge."

"It wasn't a fur-seal's tooth, was it?" interrupted Captain Matthews, with eager interest.

"I am sorry to say that it was, and, moreover, that it was *the* fur-seal's tooth, as I discovered a very few minutes later. I found Mrs. Belcofsky full of trouble on account of the importunities of some Indians who were demanding something from her. After I had driven them away she explained that they were bound to obtain a certain charmed talisman in shape of a fur-seal's tooth, that had once been the property of their tribe, but which had afterwards fallen into her husband's hands. He had left it to her, and she had given it to Serge.

"I at once identified it with the one that had just come so queerly into my possession, and, promising to fetch it in a few minutes, hastened back to my desk—but I was too late. The tooth had disappeared; nor could I discover a trace of where it had gone.

"When I reported this to Mrs. Belcofsky she said it was only what she had expected, because, while it would bring good-fortune to me, to whom it was a gift, and evil to him who stole it, it possessed such a fascination for certain persons that they could no more resist the temptation to take it than they could help breathing. 'The Indians say that it was stolen in the first place,' continued Mrs. Belcofsky, 'all carved as it is from the oldest and wisest seecatch that ever lived in Alaska, and that it will continue to be stolen to the end of

GREEK CHURCH AND CUSTOM-HOUSE AT OONALASKA

time, save when it is guarded by a shaman (medicine man) from whom none may steal it.'

"The next day I left Sitka on the Oonalaska steamer, determined to continue the search for my boy along the entire Aleutian chain, through Bering Sea, and to the north-pole itself, if I failed to find him short of there.

"Our trip was without incident, except that our purser, a young fellow from Sitka, met with a series of strange accidents, one on top of another, that finally culminated the day we reached Oonalaska in his falling and breaking a rib. When we undid his shirt we found the fur-seal's tooth suspended by a string from his neck, and he acknowledged to having stolen it from my desk in Sitka. Said he intended to sell it to the Indians when he got back."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Captain Matthews at this point. "I am relieved to learn that you finally recovered that pesky thing. Now will you be kind enough to let me look at it? I want to show it to my daughter."

"I am very sorry," began Mr. Ryder, "but—"

"Don't say that you have gone and lost it again!" cried the commander of the *Phoca*, with a comical aspect of despair.

"No; but I am inclined to think that it was again stolen. You see, just then Mr. Coombs appeared; and, in the confusion of the moment, I thrust the tooth into an inside overcoat-pocket, and for some time thought no more about it. I lunched that day on board the *Norsk*, a German steamer that happened to be in port. While at the table I happened to relate the history of the fur-seal's tooth up to date, and, as the captain expressed a desire to see it, I directed the Japanese table-boy to fetch my overcoat, which was hanging in a state-room. He did so, but, to my great

mortification, I found that I had again allowed the tooth to slip through my hands. It had disappeared, nor have I since heard from it. The *Norsk* left Oonalaska that evening, and the next day we came here, only to meet with the disappointment of which you have already learned. The only thing we have discovered is a fragment of the note left by Mr. Coombs for the boys. As it was at a distance from the hut, and badly chewed, we concluded that the foxes got it instead of those for whom it was intended."

"Well," exclaimed Captain Matthews, "it is a mighty interesting yarn, and I wish you every good-fortune in your search for those boys. If you'll take my advice, though, you'll start for the Pribyloffs just as quick as the wind will allow, for they are as slippery as cats, and there's no knowing what they'll be up to next. In the meantime I'll jog back to Sitka, and leave you to bring them along as soon as wind, tide, and accidents will allow."

CHAPTER XXXV

JALAP COOMBS'S PHILOSOPHY

THE little *Philomel* had a hard time getting to the Pribyloff Islands. She was buffeted by head-winds and forced to sail nearly one hundred miles out of her course by a gale. Then she became involved in such mazes of fog and perplexity that ten full days elapsed before she finally entered the region of screaming sea-fowl, and her people knew that the seal islands were at hand. Soon afterwards a lifting fog disclosed the low dark coast-line of St. Paul, which, forbidding as it appeared, gladdened Mr. John Ryder's eyes as though it had been the fairest scene on earth. Was not his boy there? And would not a few more hours see them reunited? He fondly hoped so, and in spite of his many disappointments could not believe that another was in store for him. No; Phil must be here, of course. It was not likely that he had been offered a chance of getting away, and even if he had he was pretty certain to have waited for the *Phoca's* promised return. So it was with a heart full of joyful anticipations that Mr. John Ryder finally landed at the village of St. Paul.

The usual crowd was collected on the beach to witness the arrival, and stepping up to the nearest white man, who happened to be the government inspector, Mr. Ryder handed him a note of introduction from Captain Matthews, saying, at the same time: "These are my credentials, sir; and my excuse for landing here, where I am well aware strangers are not

permitted save by authority, is, that I am in search of a lost boy, my son, Philip Ryder by name. I must confess that I am disappointed at not seeing him here, but you can doubtless tell me where to find him."

A strange silence fell over the little group at these words, which most of them understood; while the inspector turned pale, and the hand, that he held out to Mr. Ryder, trembled.

"This is terrible, sir!" he said, "and I know not how to tell you—"

"What? Has anything happened to my boy? Is he ill? or—or—dead?"

The unhappy father almost choked as he pronounced the last words.

"I hope not, sir! We hope not!" repeated the inspector, in a voice husky with emotion. "All we know is that he is lost, and has been for two weeks past—in fact, both he and his companion disappeared just as the revenue-cutter *Phoca*, on which they came to the island, left it, and we have been unable to discover a trace of them since, though parties have been out in every direction searching for some clew to the mystery. But come up to my house, gentlemen, and you shall be given all the particulars so far as they are known to us."

At the word "lost," Mr. Ryder, strong, self-contained man that he was, had staggered as though struck a heavy blow, and Jalap Coombs, who stood immediately behind him, grasped his arm.

"Don't ye give up, sir!" he cried, though even his usually hearty tone was a little shaky. "Your boy Phil ain't the lad to get lost so as he can't find hisself, nor into a scrape that he won't work his way out of somehow, not ef I know him, and I think I do. He's been lost before *and* found, same as he will be this time. Why, sir, it wouldn't surprise me one mite to

JALAP AND PHIL'S FATHER HEAR BAD NEWS FROM THE BOYS

see him turn up to-morrow bright *and* smiling As my old friend Kite Roberson uster say, 'Them that's lost the oftenest larns best how to take care of theirselves.'"

During the utterance of these homely words of comfort the little party had been walking up the ascent towards the inspector's house, and now within its friendly walls, that had so recently sheltered his boy, Mr. Ryder learned all that was known concerning Phil and Serge. The former had gone with a party of egg-hunters to Walrus Islet, and so was away when the captain of the *Phoca* was obliged to depart in search of a poaching sealer of whose operations he had just learned.

"By-the-way, her name was the same as that of the schooner in which you have just come! Could she have been the same?" asked the inspector.

At this the stricken father groaned aloud, while Jalap Coombs answered, "I expect she is, sir, though it was all along of a mistake."

"Of course it doesn't matter," said their host, "only it does seem rather hard. But, to return to my story, your son being away, his friend set out to fetch him, and went over to Walrus with a native, whose place Phil was to take for the return trip. They overtook the egg-hunters just as they were landing, the native was left with them, and the two lads started to return, in spite of the fact that, as night, accompanied by a thick fog, was shutting down, the hunters tried to dissuade them from the attempt.

"Your son shouted back: 'It'll be all right—we can't miss it; and we must take the chances anyway, for we're bound to get to Sitka!' That was the last seen or heard of them.

"We did not feel any anxiety here until the egg-hunters returned the following day, for we had not expected that the lads would get back that night; but

when the bidarrah came in without them we knew at once that something serious must have happened. By questioning the hunters, I learned that the wind had changed and blown fresh from the southward soon after the boys left them; also that the tide was flooding, with a strong current running north between Walrus and St. Paul. It seemed most likely, therefore, that the lads had been carried so far to the northward as to miss the island entirely, especially as the night was of unusual darkness.

"As soon as I obtained these facts I prepared for sea the little schooner that we use to maintain communication between here and St. George, manned her with a crew of picked men, and sent her out with orders to cruise back and forth to the northward of the islands for a week, in the hope of picking them up. Upon his return the captain of this vessel reported that he had been as far as one hundred miles to the northward, keeping the sharpest kind of a lookout all the time, but without avail."

"So you do not think there is the slightest chance that we shall ever see them again?" asked Mr. Ryder, in a voice that betrayed his own hopelessness.

"I will not say so," replied the inspector; "for, of course, there are always chances, and while doubt exists there is also room for hope."

"Of course there is, sir! a plenty of it and rightly, too!" broke in Jalap Coombs, who had followed the inspector's narrative with the closest attention. "My friend, old Kite Roberson, uster say that Hope was the thing of all in this world he had the greatest respec' *and* admiration for, 'cause ye couldn't kill it, and every time it got a knock-down it would pop up agin bright *and* smiling in some onexpected place. So I say, let's tie to Hope, and not give up those boys yet awhile. This gentleman has kindly give us the dark view of

this case, now 'spose we takes a squint at the bright side."

"Is there a bright side?" asked Mr. Ryder.

"Wal, I should ruther say so! Not sunlight, maybe, but bright enough to steer by. To begin with, a bidarkie is one of the best sea-boats there is long's ye keep her head to the sea or scudding, and especially if ye have kamleikas aboard. Did the lads have kamleikas, do ye know, sir?"

"Yes," replied the inspector; "Phil had his own, and Serge borrowed one from the native who owned the bidarkie."

"And how was they off for grub?"

"I don't believe they had any, except a few eggs that Phil insisted on taking as specimens for Miss Matthews."

"Then they couldn't have been better fixed!" cried the mate. "Eggs is meat *and* drink, both in one shell. Why, old Kite Roberson, who was one of the likeliest navigators as ever trod a deck, uster consider eggs the main part of a ship's stores. He knowed every egg island in three oceans, and uster visit 'em regular. Besides that, he carried along sich a stock of fowls that, no matter what ship he sailed in, she was allers called the 'Hen-coop.'

"So what's to hender two able young seamen, like Phil and Serge, with a good sea-boat under their feet and a locker full of the best of grub, from making a cruise to some one of the islands lying up here to the nor'ard? Nothing at all, I say. It would be right in the line of sich lads as they be, and I wouldn't be one mite surprised ef they was setting on some handy pint of rock this very minute, straining their eyes watching for us, and wondering why we didn't come along."

"Are there islands to the north of this?" asked Mr. Ryder, with a show of interest.

"To be sure. There's St. Matthew, and St. Lawrence, and Nunivack, and then up in the very middle of the strait, where the United States and Russia is less'n forty mile apart, is the Stepping Stones, two little islands with the line running between 'em, and so close together that an able-bodied biscuit-tosser, standing on the American island, could toss a biscuit over into Asia. To be sure, they're nigh on to a thousand miles from here, and there ain't no show for the boys to have fetched up there, nor yet on St. Lawrence, but it's jest possible they've brung up agin St. Matthew."

"We'll go there and see," exclaimed Mr. Ryder, roused into a new activity by the ray of hope thus skilfully brought to bear on the situation by Jalap Coombs.

"Besides," continued the mate, "the lads has a chance of being picked up by every one of the vessels cruising in these waters, of which there is a plenty—men-o'-war, whalers, revenoo-cutters, company ships, and the like, to say nothing of seal-poachers and walrus-hunters."

Thus it was decided that the *Philomel* should continue her search to the northward, and Mr. Ryder was in a feverish state of anxiety until they were again off. Before starting, he promised the inspector that, however their search might result, they would return to the Pribyloffs and report.

Two weeks later they did so. They had been to St. Matthew, where countless numbers of polar bears may be seen at all seasons, and where an outlying cone of basalt rises sheer a thousand feet from the sea, and like a huge chimney pours forth an unbroken column of black smoke. They had visited the savage walrus-hunters of Nunivack, and they had returned to the place from which they started without having dis-

covered a trace of or heard a word from the missing lads.

Now, with hope wellnigh extinguished in his bosom, though still lingering as a faint spark, John Ryder came ashore to make his last inquiry. If he heard nothing here, hope would indeed be dead. He wondered slightly at the unusual throng gathered on the beach to welcome them. Suddenly his despair, wonder, and all other feelings were merged in an overwhelming joy; for, while they were still some distance off, a clear, ringing voice shouted out:

"We have heard from them, and they are safe!"

"Didn't I tell ye it would turn out same as old Kite Roberson allers said?" remarked Jalap Coombs, in a tone of quiet exultation.

CHAPTER XXXVI

LOST AND DRIFTING IN BERING SEA

When Phil Ryder stepped from the bidarrah, or big open boat, in which he had made the six-mile trip from St. Paul to Walrus Island, and clambered up over the slippery rocks of the latter, he was nearly stunned by the volume of sound that ceaselessly rises from it. The shrieks of myriads of startled sea-fowl, the rapid beating of their pinions resembling a low roll of thunder, the gruntings, croakings, and hissings of sitting birds that refused to leave their splotched and dirt-smeared eggs, the roar of walrus, and the boom of surf, combined to form a pandemonium of sound at once deafening and distracting.

"How can I spend a night here?" thought Phil; "and what a fool I was to come."

He was standing, bewildered by the awful racket, with arms bent above his head, to defend it from the whizzing flight of clumsy birds that shot through the air in every direction; two enraged burgomaster gulls, whose nests his feet were invading, were pecking savagely at his legs, and he was just meditating a retreat, when some one pulled his sleeve. Turning, he was amazed to see the sea-lion hunter, who could speak English, and whom he had left nearly two hours before on Northeast Point.

As the latter could not make himself heard above the horrible din, he was pointing to the tiny cove in which lay the bidarrah. There, to Phil's greater surprise, he saw his friend Serge Belcofsky fending off

from the rocks a two-holed bidarkie that tossed, light as an egg-shell, on the heaving waters.

"What on earth brought you here?" he shouted, as soon as he had scrambled to his comrade's side.

"You did," answered Serge. "The *Phoca* is about to sail, and I've come for you. So step in quick, and let's be off. The hunter who came with me is going to stay in your place, and come back in the bidarrah."

"All right," replied Phil; "I'm more than willing to leave this beastly rookery, and more than anxious to start for Sitka. I must have a few of those eggs, though, for I promised Miss Matthews some for her collection."

Within two minutes as many dozen eggs of all sizes and varieties had been collected and stowed in the after-part of the bidarkie. Phil slipped into the forward hatch and fastened his kamleika about its coaming, while Serge assumed his position aft, and made the second hatch equally water-tight with the hunter's over-garment which he had borrowed.

It was nearly dark, and they could see a fog-bank rolling sullenly in from the southward. Even the native who held their canoe began to grow apprehensive. "Me fraid you no get," he said; "mebbe you stay here better till morning."

"Oh, we'll get!" shouted Phil, confidently. "Anyhow, I'd rather run the risk than to miss our one chance of a passage to Sitka. So shove off, Serge. Good-bye!"

Serge himself felt somewhat uneasy, but he had come too far and worked too hard on this errand to incline towards giving up now. Besides, he also was very anxious to reach Sitka. So he shoved off, and both the lads began to paddle with long sweeping strokes. In another minute the arrowy craft had shot away from the roaring islet, and was lost to view in the gathering gloom.

They had not covered more than a mile before the advancing fog enveloped them in its soft, moist folds.

"Whe-e-w!" gasped Phil, breathing rapidly from his vigorous paddling. "Isn't this smothering?"

"Yes," replied his companion, "and I'm getting somewhat dubious about finding St. Paul."

"Oh, I guess we'll find it all right. We've only got to keep the wind at our back. It is blowing from the eastward, you know."

"But this fog came in from the southward."

"Do you think so? It seemed to me to come from the east with the breeze."

"All right," agreed Serge. "Perhaps it did. I'm not quite sure of my compass up here. We've got to keep on now, at any rate, for we could never find Walrus again, while we can hardly miss hitting so big a mark as St. Paul. If we strike either coast we can cruise along it until we come to the village. I'm afraid, though, we won't get there in time to catch the *Phoca*."

"Oh yes, we will. Captain Matthews isn't the man to go off and leave us when he knows we are going to be back some time to-night. You said you sent word by Ramey, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Then he's sure to wait. What's his hurry, anyhow?"

"I believe he has word of some sealer poaching in the sea, and is going to hunt her."

"My! won't it be fun to be on the other side of such an affair? I tell you, we struck big luck when we met the *Phoca*—in fact, I think this whole cruise, as I look back on it, has been made up of a series of lucky events, even though we haven't had the fur-seal's tooth to help us."

So they talked, in disjointed sentences, as well as their rapid breathing and relative positions would al-

NOONIVAK ISLAND AND THE WALRUS-HUNTERS' HUTS

low, and all the while wielded their dripping paddles with the energy of young athletes striving for a prize.

Finally, Phil stopped paddling, and, half turning, said: "Let us listen a minute, old man. It seems to me we ought to hear the roar of seals on St. Paul by this time. I'm sure we've been an hour on the way." So the lads listened intently, but all they heard was the ceaseless roar and dash of the wind-swept waves.

Under circumstances such as those in which the occupants of the little bidarkie found themselves, there is no sound more depressing and awe-inspiring than this, nor one that conveys more clearly an idea of the immensity and terror of oceans. When it is accompanied by darkness and fog, the effect is so heightened as to be wellnigh unbearable.

As our lads listened to it and felt the chill breath of the wind-driven mist on their cheeks, they shivered, and a great fear began to creep into their hearts.

"This won't do!" cried Phil. "We must keep at work or we'll never get there. It is strange, though, that we don't hear anything. We ought to be almost on the beach by this time. Do you notice how big the waves are? It's lucky that our course is with them, for they'd be tough fellows to work against, and make an ugly sea to cross."

For an hour longer they paddled steadily and in dogged silence. Then both paused in their labor as though moved by a single impulse.

"We've gone wrong somehow," said Serge, without an attempt to conceal his anxiety.

"Do you mean, old man, that you think we have missed the island altogether?"

"I am afraid we have."

"Then may God help us, for we can no longer help ourselves."

"Amen," responded Serge, solemnly.

"I suppose we had better continue paddling, if only to keep her headed with the sea."

"And to keep from freezing," said Serge. "I'm chilled to the bone now."

So they resumed their labor, but they worked listlessly and without heart.

At length the short night came to an end, and daylight, dim and shadowy, began to steal over the tossing waters. Occasionally the round head of a seal rose above the surface close at hand, and the animal stared at them for a moment with great wondering eyes before again sinking silently from their sight.

"We could get one of those fellows if we wanted him," said Serge, his glance resting on the slender shaft of the native spear that was lashed on deck.

"What good would it do us? I thought we lost our interest in seal-skins some time ago," said Phil, bitterly.

"Seal-meat would save us from starving."

"How could we cook it?"

"We couldn't," replied Serge, significantly.

"Well, I must confess that I'm hungry, but I don't think I care to eat raw seal-meat just yet. I say, old man, do you suppose two fellows ever had such an unlucky trip as ours? We seem to have jumped from one trouble into another ever since we started."

"And this is the worst of all," answered Serge, despondently.

"Yes, I suppose it is; and starving to death does seem a very dreadful way of dying. I don't know but what I'd rather drown and done with it."

"Suppose we try an egg," suggested Serge, with a sudden inspiration.

"That's so! we have got eggs. I'd forgotten them entirely. Raw eggs aren't half so bad as raw meat.

I've eaten them before, and when I didn't have to, either."

"So have I," replied Serge, as, unfastening his kamleika, he reached behind him and drew forth a couple of the eggs Phil had brought along as specimens.

"H'm!" ejaculated the latter, as, after carefully removing a portion of the shell to see that the contents were fresh, he swallowed them at a gulp. "A little fishy, but not so bad as I expected. Let's have another."

After eating half a dozen eggs apiece, the lads felt decidedly better, and even a little more cheerful.

"It warn't much of a breakfust, but even a poor breakfust tastes good to a hungry man, as old Kite Robinson uster say," remarked Phil, and at the picture thus called up both lads actually smiled. Then, too, they caught a glimpse of the sun, which was a slight comfort, though not so great as it might have been, had it not shown them that they were headed due north, instead of west, as they had supposed.

"We are headed for the north-pole," said Phil. "Do you know of any place on which we might fetch up, short of it?"

"Yes," replied his companion, "there are islands somewhere to the north of here, though I don't know exactly where. I don't believe they are more than a hundred miles or so away, though."

"Let's make a try for them," cried Phil, with sudden energy. "Anything is better than lying still, and we are not done for yet, by a long shot."

So all that long, weary day the plucky lads tried to cheer each other as they alternately paddled, rested, and made melancholy pretence of enjoying their raw, fishy eggs. At length, however, their supply of these was exhausted, they were too utterly wearied to pad-

dle any longer, and night was again coming on. The fog had thinned during the day, but only so as to disclose a wider expanse of chill waters, and with the coming of night it closed in again as dense as ever. The only comfort was that the wind had gone down with the sun, leaving a smooth sea.

"I'm beat out, old man!" said Phil, at length, as he laid his paddle on deck.

"So am I," answered Serge, "and, what is worse—Here the lad suddenly checked himself. He would not add to his comrade's misery by disclosing, any sooner than he could help, the new source of dread that had just been revealed to him by a peculiar motion of their frail craft.

CHAPTER XXXVII

SAVED BY A MIRACLE

SERGE had noticed for some time that the movements of the tiny craft in which he and Phil Ryder were navigating the mighty waters of Bering Sea were heavy and lagging. It seemed to have lost life and buoyancy. Instead of gliding smoothly through the water, it seemed to drag, as though its bottom were foul with grasses or barnacles. Serge of course knew that this could not be the case, and, after puzzling over the matter for some time, concluded that the fault did not lie so much with the boat as in its exhausted crew, who no longer possessed the strength necessary to force it ahead with the same speed as formerly.

All at once he felt a movement of the bidarkie's skin between its wide-spread ribs, and heard a peculiar sobbing or sucking sound that instantly explained the situation. It also filled him with a dread before which even the fact that they were drifting helplessly over the vast expanse of the great northern sea seemed insignificant.

A bidarkie, or "bidarka," as it is often spelled, made of green sea-lion skins stretched as tightly as possible over a wooden or bone frame, allowed to dry in the wind until they become taut and smooth as a drumhead, and then liberally coated with seal-oil, is, for twenty-four hours or so, one of the swiftest, safest, smoothest, and most graceful of craft. A few years ago two wrecked sailors made a two-thousand mile voyage from one of the Aleutian Islands to San Fran-

cisco in a nineteen-foot bidarkie, but they hugged the coast, took inside passages wherever it was possible, and camped on shore every night. By so doing they were enabled to lift their frail craft from the water, and allow it to dry six, eight, or ten hours out of every twenty-four. Thus it retained its shape and remained serviceable during the whole of that tremendous voyage. If they had not been able to do this, their bidarkie would have been worthless by the end of forty-eight hours, the one great fault of this craft being that after a while its skin covering becomes water-soaked and will stretch. In this condition it sags in and out between the ribs with strange sounds, until the boat becomes wellnigh unmanageable. By-and-by, if the soaking and stretching process continues, the skins are so softened that the sinew threads with which they are sewn together pull out and the seams open. Then in a moment the bidarkie fills and sinks like a lump of lead.

In the present case the softening process had begun, and Serge was aware of it. Before another day was done their frail craft would have ceased to float, and they—well, they would be beyond the reach of human aid or knowledge. Their bodies would be hidden deep beneath the cold green surface of Bering Sea, while their unknown fate would serve as a matter for sad conjecture for many a day to the dear ones whom they should never again see.

All this flashed through the lad's mind in an instant, with the bidarkie's first sobbing intimation that its strength was nearly gone, and he was on the point of sharing his unhappy knowledge with his companion. But why should he? Poor Phil was wretched enough already. No; he would keep the discovery to himself, and his well-loved comrade should be spared its added terror as long as possible. So, when the latter laid

down his paddle, declaring himself utterly exhausted, Serge answered, "So am I, and, what is worse, I don't believe we will be able to stand watch during the night. Certainly both of us can't keep awake all the time, and so, old fellow, I would advise you to get a nap if you can. Before sleep overpowers me I will wake you, and so we will keep watch by turn as best we may."

"What shall we watch for?" asked Phil, in a hopeless tone.

"For the vessel that is to pick us up, to be sure," replied Serge.

The former uttered a bitter little laugh, as he said: "Then we might as well watch with our eyes shut. There is no wind to move a sailing-vessel, even if there were one in all this great awful sea, which I doubt. As for a steamer, she would have to pass within fifty feet before any one aboard could either see or hear us. So I am going to try and forget our troubles in sleep, and would advise you to do the same. Good-night, old man."

With this the disheartened lad slipped wearily down into the bottom of the canoe until his head rested on the hatch-coaming, in which position he was speedily oblivious of his melancholy surroundings. He dreamed of his adored father and dear Aunt Ruth, and was once more in his far-away, well-loved Eastern home. So he smiled as he slept.

As Serge sat there alone amid the immensity of that silent sea, he too thought of his home in green Sitka, of the mother and sisters who were watching for him, and he groaned aloud as he realized how little chance he had of ever seeing them again. Then the brave father, whose memory had been with him all these years, seemed to appear to him with loving words. By these he was so soothed and comforted that, after

a while, he too slipped down, and, with his white face upturned to the dim sky, dropped into a slumber so profound that it seemed as though nothing could ever waken him from it.

So for an hour, or perhaps more, the bidarkie, still upbearing its precious human freight, drifted through limitless watery space unguided and unwatched, save by Him who watches over all and takes note of all in this His world.

As she drifted, the tiny craft became aware of a sister-ship towering dim and formless through the mist, but drifting like herself. There is a bond of sympathy between drifting ships, called by some people the attraction of floating bodies, that impels the smaller to seek the company of the larger. So the little ship drew gradually nearer and nearer to its big sister, and was disappointed when the latter began to move away. In another minute she would have disappeared, and the sleeping lads would never have known of her presence any more than she knew of theirs, had not something so incredible and wellnigh impossible happened that it might never happen again in all the years of the world.

Just as the steamer began to move away, for the ship that had come so silently drifting through the fog was no other than the steamer *Norsk*, which had left St. Paul that very afternoon, something small and sharp struck Serge Belcofsky's face with stinging force. He started up with a piercing scream of pain and fright, but instantly wide awake.

His scream was answered by a loud "Hello! Who's there?" uttered in a clear, manly voice from the stern of the vanishing ship.

"Help! Help! Don't leave us! Help! Help!" yelled Phil and Serge, wild with excitement, hope, and fear. At the same time they tried with desperate

energy to paddle after the vision of safety that had so suddenly come to them, and now seemed about to disappear as mysteriously as it had come. It did indeed glide out of sight in the all-enshrouding fog; but ere they lost hearing of the many sounds now arising from it, a ship's boat, manned by lusty oarsmen who uttered cheery shouts of encouragement, shot out of the mist and, guided by the voices of the lads, came towards them. In the bow stood the sturdy, well-balanced figure of a man of thirty, holding a flaring torch above his head. The closely-bearded face thus revealed was to Phil and Serge as the face of an angel, and one they would never forget.

This man was Gerald Hamer, a Western Yankee, and leader of the Yukon Trading Company, that the *Norsk* was taking to Fort St. Michaels. It was he who, leaning over the after-rail of the ship, just as her engines were started, after being stopped for an hour for some slight repairs, heard and answered the despairing call for help, that apparently came from the very waters beneath him. The captain lay ill in his cabin, and the first officer, a thick-headed fellow, who understood English very imperfectly, was in charge of the ship.

When Gerald Hamer ran forward, told him of what he had heard, and begged him, in the name of humanity, to stop his ship and send a boat to the relief of those who were crying for help, the fellow refused to do so.

"Ids some of dem nadives," he said; "ve cannod vaste dime on dem."

"Natives nothing! you thundering blockhead!" roared Gerald Hamer. "If they were, you'd stop and see what trouble they were in, or I'd know why. But I tell you they are white men, and Americans. I know the Yankee tongue when I hear it, if you don't; so stop your ship, and stop her quick, too, or, by Hookey, I and my men will stop her for you!"

Thick-headed as he was, the mate realized in a moment that he could not safely refuse to obey this command, backed as it was by a score of sturdy Americans who, at the sound of their leader's voice, were gathering about him like a swarm of angry hornets. So he gave the requisite order in a surly tone, and the recently-started engines were again stopped.

"Bud I shall nod risg my mans for dot dirdy nadives," he said. "If a boad goes, den musd you dake it yourselluf."

"Take it myself! Certainly I will!" cried Gerald Hamer. "Do you suppose I'd let you or your lubberly crew have the honor of rescuing one of my countrymen? Not much! Here, men, I want half a dozen volunteers for dangerous boat-duty. Now don't all speak at once."

But they did, and, as though with the voice of one man, raised a mighty shout of "Aye, aye, sir!"

Their leader smiled as he detailed six men to lower a boat and go with him in it. To the others he said: "You fellows stay here, and see that this ship doesn't move an inch till I come back. Not an inch, if I'm gone a year. Do you hear?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"And keep the ship's bell ringing eight bells till I get back, too, so that I can locate her if we get out of sight."

"Aye, aye, sir!" and for the next fifteen minutes it seemed as though the clangor of that brazen-throated bell might have been heard from Bering Strait to Oonimak.

"White men, as I said; and Americans, I'll be bound!" cried Gerald Hamer, as the light of his torch fell on the object of his search. "Great Scott! they're only boys, and their craft is a water-logged bladder! How in the name of the good and the great— But

"... AND AMERICANS, I'LL BE BOUND!"

there, lads! no matter—you are safe now. Your troubles are all over."

As he spoke these last words the strong man's voice grew husky, and his eyes moistened, for poor Phil's overstrained nerves had given way, and he was sobbing hysterically, while Serge also seemed on the very point of breaking down.

Very tenderly were the rescued lads lifted from the frail little craft, that had upheld them so bravely, into the ship's boat. They were too stiff and numbed to stand. They could not even sit up, but sank limply into the bottom of the boat, their heads pillowed on coats gladly offered by members of the crew.

Then, with the bidarkie in tow, the boat was headed back through the fog towards the clanging bell. Ten minutes later, Phil and Serge, each surrounded by a group of rough but willing nurses, were between warm blankets, their bidarkie had been hoisted on deck, and the good ship *Norsk* was cleaving the waters of Bering Sea, on her way to the distant port of St. Michaels.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

JAPONSKI'S TEMPTATION AND THE FUR-TRADER'S OFFER

When the steamer *Norsk* left the harbor of Oonalaska, on the very day that Mr. John Ryder took lunch with her captain, she carried with her the fur-seal's tooth. Japonski, the table-boy, had listened with avaricious ears to the story of its value. He hoped soon to go to Sitka himself, for he had a brother there, employed as wardroom boy on an American man-of-war. How well it would be to have one thousand of those big American dollars to show to him and to spend! Japonski's brother had laughed when he sailed on the *Norsk*, and told him that not many yen could be picked up in the merchant-service. So it had proved; but here was a chance. A tooth would be a very little thing, and so easy to hide. The white man said, "He who stole it would have no good-fortune"; but he must have said that to make him, Japonski, afraid; but a Hakodate man was not afraid. He would prove it.

So Japonski slipped the fur-seal's tooth up his sleeve, even while, with innocent face, he handed the overcoat to Mr. Ryder. That night, in the privacy of his own cubby-hole, just off the pantry, he examined his prize, and gloated over it. The white man had gone without suspecting him, and the ship was already far on her way. Whatever this thing was worth, it was his, and no one would ever know how he obtained it. He smiled scornfully at the thought of its bring-

ing him any misfortune; but, as he looked at it closely, the smile faded from his face.

That bit of ivory had never been carved by Indian hands, nor by Aleuts, nor Eskimo. Nowhere in the world could such dainty work be done, save in his own country, and who would thus depict the frowning face of Buddha, terror of evil-doers, except a devout native of Japan. That was one emblem borne by the ivory tooth. On the opposite side was a fish. What could it be but the lucky fish of Queen Jung-gu, the conqueror of Corea?

Alas, that he had dared steal a curio of such omen as this; but he could not give it back. He dared not give it to any except him from whom he had stolen it. So he hid it away; but he thought of it all the time, and from that day all things seemed to go wrong with him. Never had he broken so many dishes, never spoiled so much food, never so incurred the captain's wrath. Still he clung to the tooth, and would not part with it. The white man had said it was worth one thousand silver dollars; that would be fifteen hundred silver yen, and on that sum he could live like a prince for many years in his own country.

At the Pribyloffs the *Norsk* took on board one Nikrik, an Aleut, who had been for some years employed at St. Michaels, to act as a pilot through the shoals of Norton's Sound. Although there was a strong general resemblance between this man and the cabin-boy, each of them regarded the other as belonging to an inferior race. As, however, they were both looked down on by the whites, they were almost forced into each other's society, and thus it came about that, very early in their acquaintance, Japonski displayed his treasure to Nikrik, and asked him what he thought of it.

Now the Aleut was too great a traveller not to

have heard of the fur-seal's tooth, for it was known—at least, by fame—to all Northern Alaska, and the moment he saw it he was determined to possess it. So he told Japonski tales of its strange power for evil over all but those native to Alaska, and tried to frighten him into giving it up. But Japonski only smiled blandly and said, "Alle same I keep him."

Still, he was made uneasy by these tales, and from that moment misfortunes seemed to crowd upon him more thickly than ever. At length he so enraged Captain Kuhn by his carelessness that that individual turned purple in the face, became speechless, and was threatened with an apoplectic fit. Japonski had seen him thus before, and knew just what to do. There was a certain medicine that must be given quickly. He prepared it, and forced a spoonful down the captain's throat. To his horror the captain turned white and rigid, and, to all appearances, died, then and there.

The terrified cabin-boy rushed out for aid, and the very first person he came across was the chief engineer, who was regulating a delicate bit of machinery. The engineer was so startled by Japonski's sudden appearance that he dropped a tool into the machinery, something snapped, and, a moment later, the engines were stopped for repairs. Then Japonski ran and hid himself in his cubby-hole, where Nikrik, finding him some time later, said that if the captain died and the ship was lost it would all be owing to the fur-seal's tooth, which he must give up at once in order to avoid further disaster.

Upon this, Japonski conceived such a horror of the bit of ivory, that he rushed frantically on deck and flung it with all his might into the sea. Almost at the same instant the engines were again started, and, when he went below, the first news he heard was that the captain was getting better. So he was glad of what

OLD BLOCK-HOUSES AT ST. MICHAELS

he had done, though it had cost him a fortune in silver yen.

Early the next morning, when Nikrik went on deck before any one else except the watch, he spied the bidarkie in which our lads had come, and examined it closely to see where it had been made, and by whom. As he turned it over, something rattled inside of its parchment skin. The Aleut reached in to feel for the cause of this sound, and, when he withdrew his hand, clutching the fur-seal's tooth that he had supposed was lost forever, his oily face was overspread with a broad grin of gratified surprise. He knew, of course, that Japonski had flung it overboard, and now he also knew that, by some miracle which he attributed to the magic power of the tooth itself, it had fallen into the drifting bidarkie. Nikrik had recognized the lads when they were brought on board the night before; but, with the usual reticence of his race, he had not yet mentioned this fact. Now he was glad of it, because it was possible that one of them might claim the treasure he had just stolen; for to an Aleut it is as much of a theft to take a thing from a bidarkie as from its owner. So Nikrik's guilty conscience caused him to avoid Phil and Serge as much as possible during the short time that they remained on the same ship.

The pilot's thoughts dwelt so constantly on his newly-acquired treasure that, in his absent-mindedness, he ran the *Norsk* ashore, when close to Fort St. Michaels, in one of the channels with which he was most familiar. This so enraged the mate that he ordered him from the bridge, and declared he should have no pay. That very evening, on shore, Nikrik engaged in a gambling game with some Yukon Indians, who had come to the fort to trade. In this, luck ran so strongly against him, that, before morning, he had staked and lost everything of value he possessed, including the

fur-seal's tooth. This fell to the lot of a young Indian, who, ignorant of its true value, traded it to a recently-arrived clerk of the post for a pound of tobacco. With an air of great satisfaction the clerk added this new charm to some others that dangled from his massive (plated) watch-chain. There it attracted curiosity, envy, and whispered remarks from all the natives whose eyes happened to light upon it.

Phil and Serge did not leave the bunks in which their friendly rescuers had placed them for a day and a night after going on board the *Norsk*, during which time they slept almost continuously. When they did appear on deck, they were so thoroughly refreshed that no trace remained of their recent terrible adventure, that now seemed to them only like some dreadful nightmare. Until now they had not known nor cared whither they were being carried; but the moment they stepped on deck, and while they were being warmly greeted by Gerald Hamer, their eyes turned wonderingly to a low coast visible on the right. As soon as they found a chance they inquired eagerly what land it was, and on being told that it was the southern coast of Norton Sound, while the Alaska Company's trading-post of Fort St. Michaels was directly ahead, they gazed at each other in speechless dismay.

"Is that where you were bound for when you got lost?" asked Mr. Hamer, politely; for he had not yet learned the story of their wanderings.

"No," answered Phil, with a melancholy smile; "we were bound for Sitka."

"Sitka!" exclaimed Gerald Hamer. "Then you have come from the north, I suppose?"

"No, we have come from Victoria, which, I believe, is somewhat south of this."

"Well, I should say it was! About three thousand miles! And, as Sitka is all of twenty-one hundred miles

from here, I wish you would tell me how you have managed to miss it so completely, and drift up into this latitude?"

As Nikrik ran the ship aground on a mud-flat just then, there was plenty of time, while waiting for the tide to float her off, for the lads to relate the story of their wanderings and adventures. The fur-trader listened to it with profound interest, and, when it was concluded, he said:

"If that doesn't beat all the roundabout travelling and hard luck that ever I heard of! I should think you would be sick of the sea, and willing to try dry land for a while by this time."

"So we are," answered Serge; "but, as the railroad isn't even laid out yet, I suppose we shall have to go back on this ship—at least, as far as Oonalaska."

"But she isn't going there," said Mr. Hamer. "She is chartered to carry a cargo of furs from here to China."

"Whew!" whistled Phil. "And is that where you are going?"

"Oh no, I am bound for Sitka," laughed the trader.

"What?" cried both lads, in amazement.

"Yes, I mean it; though, to be sure, I expect to reach there in rather a curious way. You see, I have in this ship a steamboat in sections, a saw-mill, some mining machinery, and a couple of hundred tons of merchandise. I am going to put my steamboat together as soon as we get on shore, load my freight aboard, and take her a thousand miles up the Yukon River to the mining camp at Forty-mile Creek. There I shall leave her for the winter and go out on snow-shoes, with dog-sledges, seven hundred miles across country to Pyramid Harbor, where I can get a steamer most any time for Sitka, or Juneau, either of which is only about one hundred miles farther. From one of those places I

shall go down to San Francisco for a new stock of goods, and have them up here in time to meet my steamboat again in the early summer.

"Most of the men I have with me now are ship-carpenters, who will go back on this steamer to San Francisco, by way of China; so only about half a dozen will remain with me, and I should be very glad of a couple more hands. Now, if you care to take this trip with me and are willing to work your passage, I will pay all your expenses, and guarantee to land you in Sitka, sooner or later. What do you say? Will you do it?"

CHAPTER XXXIX

SERGE RECOVERS A BIT OF LOST PROPERTY

On hearing the surprising and unexpected proposition made by the leader of the fur-traders at the close of the last chapter, Phil and Serge looked inquiringly at each other. Both of them were greatly pleased with Gerald Hamer, who displayed the strength of character, combined with an engaging frankness, that always appeals to manly lads, especially when exhibited by one a little older than themselves.

"What do you say, Serge?"

"I'd love to do it."

"So would I."

"I don't know what else we can do, anyway. I'm sure we don't want to go to China under the circumstances, and we haven't any money to live on here while waiting for some schooner to come along and take us away."

"No," said Phil; "and, as it is now well on into August, we might have to wait all winter, which would be horrid."

"It would be a splendid chance to see the country."

"So it would, and that is just what I came North for; while, thus far, I haven't seen much except the waters surrounding it, and a few islands. If it wasn't for my father, I'd say 'yes' quick enough. But what will he think?—in fact, what must he be thinking now? If I could only get word to him, somehow, that I was all right, and that there wasn't the slightest cause for anxiety."

"And if I could only send some comforting message to my poor dear mother," reflected Serge.

"There is a chance to do that," said Gerald Hamer, "which I suppose I ought to have mentioned in the first place. This steamer is obliged to stop somewhere near the Pribyloff Islands on her return voyage, to drop the native pilot who belongs there, and whom they are under contract to return. You might send letters by him as far as that, and run the chance of their being forwarded. I suppose you might make some arrangement to go that far yourselves as well, though I am afraid Captain Kuhn would charge a tidy sum for your passage. Still, if you want to ask him, and he is well enough to see you, I will—"

"We don't," interrupted Phil, resolutely. "We haven't any money with which to pay for a passage to the Pribyloffs, and I, for one, wouldn't go near them again, even if I owned the steamer—in fact, I am tired and sick of this miserable, cold, foggy Bering Sea, and long to get away from it. It seems to me that a trip on dry land is the thing I should most enjoy just at present. So, if—"

"Don't conceive a false impression of what I am proposing," laughed Gerald Hamer. "Most of my coming journey is to be made on the waters of the Yukon, and will be filled with hardships and trials. There will be fine hunting of moose, deer, bear, and other such game, if you care for that; but not much else in the way of recreation. Then, the last part of the trip will be made in arctic weather, over snowy plains and frozen lakes, up ice-bound rivers, and through mountain passes where the drifts will be hundreds of feet deep."

"That's so!" exclaimed Phil. "You did mention 'snow-shoes and sledges.' That settles it. I have always wanted to be an arctic explorer, and I'd rather

take a dog-sledge and snow-shoe journey than anything else in the world. Besides, as it really seems to be the only way for us to get to Sitka, it would be worse than foolish for us to throw away such a good chance. I've done so many foolish things already on this journey that I don't mean to be guilty of another between here and Sitka. So, Mr. Hamer, we not only accept your offer, but thank you heartily for making it, and are ready to go with you this very minute. Aren't we, Serge?"

"It's just as you say," laughed Serge. "So long as I got you into this scrape, I'm bound to see you through it, and stick by you till we get to Sitka, if it takes the rest of my natural life."

"You're a trump, old man!" cried Phil, heartily, clapping his friend on the shoulder as he spoke. "And our motto, like that of the fellow who was bound across the plains to Pike's Peak, shall be 'Sitka, or bust!' I'm awfully glad, though, that you feel as you do about having got me into a scrape, for I had a sort of uneasy notion that it was I who had brought you into one."

While Phil and Serge were writing the letters to be sent back by Nikrik, the *Norsk* floated off the mud-bank, and proceeded to an anchorage nearly three miles off St. Michaels, a nearer approach being barred by shoal water.

St. Michaels is the most northerly of the Alaska Fur Company's trading-posts, and is also the most northerly settlement of white men in Alaska. To be sure, there are two or three lonely whites in charge of the Government Reindeer Station at Port Clarence, one hundred miles farther north, while away up on the bleak shore of the Arctic Ocean, at the extreme northern point of the American mainland, the Stars and Stripes wave proudly above another brave little band,

who maintain the Government Relief Station of Point Barrow.

St. Michaels consists of the company's store and warehouse, an old loop-holed block-house, some twenty residences, a Greek church painted red, a school-house, and the few scattered huts or tents of visiting natives. It is located on the bluff, seaward point of a small barren island situated eighty miles north of the great Yukon delta, and affording the first bit of coast available for white occupation in all that distance of limitless swamps and mud-flats. As it is the only point at which sea-going vessels can approach anywhere near the coast, it is the great transfer station for the entire Yukon River trade, which, beyond here, is carried on by means of small stern-wheeled steamboats of less than three feet draught. It was on the island of St. Michaels, therefore, that Gerald Hamer proposed to land his cargo, set up his steamboat, and prepare for his long trip into the distant and almost unexplored interior.

As soon as the steamer *Norsk* came to anchor, he borrowed our lads' bidarkie, and, taking only Nikrik with him, went ashore to select a landing-place and camp site. It was late in the afternoon when he returned alone, wearied by his hard trip and angry at the reception with which he had met, but more determined than ever to proceed with his undertaking, in spite of all obstacles. The Alaska Company had for so long monopolized the fur trade of the vast region drained by the mighty Yukon and its tributaries that they were furious at the prospect of a rival, and determined to prevent it from establishing itself, if possible. Their annual supply-ship from San Francisco, bringing a large stock of merchandise, several new clerks, and the news of the world, including that of the formation of a rival company, had arrived and departed shortly before the coming of the *Norsk*. Consequently,

when Gerald Hamer went ashore and introduced himself to the agent in charge, he was very coldly received, and was forbidden to land his cargo within the limits of the post.

Upon his return, which he was obliged to make alone, Nikrik having disappeared among the huts of the visiting natives, the young fur-trader called his men together and addressed them as follows:

"Lads, we've got a fight on our hands. The people on shore say that we sha'n't land. The whole settlement is a trading-post belonging to the old company, who have fenced it in, as well as a long strip of the best beach. The only other place where we could make a landing is on a bit of beach just beyond their line, and I think they mean to fence and claim that to-morrow. Now, I don't intend to interfere with any one's established rights, nor am I inclined to yield my own. That strip of unfenced beach is government land, to which our right is as good as theirs. I propose, therefore, to steal a march on them by making a landing to-night with a raft of lumber, staking out a claim, and having our shanties up before morning. What do you say? Are you with me?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" came the hearty shout of the entire party, and then, in individual voices: "That we are!" "Only you lead the way, and we'll follow close enough!" "We'll euchre them yet!" "I'd like to see them try to drive us off from Uncle Sam's land!" and so on, until the smiling leader raised his hand for silence.

"Thank you, men," he said, simply. "I knew I could depend on you, and now let us get to work."

All night long, under the skilful direction of the leader, the labor progressed steadily and cheerfully. Boats plied incessantly between ship and shore, a huge raft of lumber was floated to the beach, and when,

some hours after sunrise, the sleepy inmates of Fort St. Michaels issued from their houses, they stared with amazement at what, but the evening before, had been a stretch of vacant land just beyond their boundary. Now, a large portion of it, including the beach, was staked out, a landing of log crib-work filled with rocks projected into the water, two rough board shanties and a dozen tents had been erected, camp-fires were blazing cheerily, and the sturdy colonists of this new settlement were busily eating their well-earned breakfasts.

In all this work Phil and Serge had displayed such willingness and activity as to draw forth the hearty approval of Gerald Hamer. Through the night he seemed to be everywhere, and in all places at once, always ready to lend a helping hand or speak a cheering word, and at breakfast-time Phil confided to Serge that, under such leadership, Sitka really seemed nearer at hand than it had since they started from Victoria.

As it had been begun, so the work progressed with perfect method and the utmost expedition. In ten days after the *Norsk's* arrival, her entire cargo was on shore and under cover, the steamboat was ready to be launched and receive her machinery, and it seemed certain that, early in September, the Yukon party would be off. All this had been accomplished in the face of heavy odds, and every impediment had been thrown in the way of the new company by the old settlers. If Gerald Hamer hired native laborers, threats and bribes were used to induce these to desert him. Those who did work for him were paid in silver coin, which was pronounced worthless at the company's store, and refused when offered in exchange for goods.

Native spies in the employ of the old company lurked about the camp at all hours; tools were stolen, or rendered worthless, at every opportunity, and boats

were set adrift, or had holes bored in their bottoms during the night.

At length Gerald Hamer asked Phil and Serge if they would get what sleep they could in the daytime, and act as camp-guards at night. "I feel that I can trust you two implicitly," he said.

They willingly agreed to do this, and on that very night, while they were patrolling opposite sides of the camp, Serge sprang upon a skulking figure who, by a violent effort, wrenched himself free and escaped, leaving only a broken watch-chain in the lad's hand. To his unbounded amazement, when he and Phil examined this trophy by lantern-light, he found attached to it, as a charm, the identical bit of carved ivory that he had given to his comrade in New London, and which the latter had lost so long ago.

"The fur-seal's tooth!" he cried, almost doubting the evidence of his eyes.

"It certainly is!" exclaimed Phil, as he examined it curiously.

"There must be magic in it, or how could it possibly have come here?" added Serge.

"Let me have that bit of chain and the rest of those charms, and I'll find out what magic there is about it," said Phil, mysteriously.

Serge gave them to him, and on the following day Phil went, for the first time, to the company's store in the trading-post.

"Do you know to whom these belong?" he asked of the first man he met, at the same time displaying the trophy captured the night before.

"Why, yes," answered the man, examining them closely. "They belong to that fellow over there."

Turning in the direction indicated, Phil beheld the man who, he believed, had injured him more than any one else in the world—Simon Goldollar.

CHAPTER XL

A PROSPECT OF SNOW-SHOES AND SLEDGES

"You scoundrel!" shouted Phil, springing to where Goldollar was seated at a desk, and standing squarely in front of him. "How dare you show your thief's face among honest men?"

"Oh, it is you, is it?" retorted the other, coolly, staring at Phil from head to foot. "What are you doing here, where you have no business and are not wanted, and what do you mean by calling me a thief?"

"I mean what I say. Didn't you steal this from me?" Here Phil produced the fur-seal's tooth.

"No, I did not. I bought it from a Yukon Indian a few days ago."

"That's false, and you know it. But never mind. Didn't you steal nearly one hundred dollars from me on the Canadian Pacific train?"

"No, I did not. I saw you stick a wad of bills in your pocket, and thought at the time you were the most careless fellow with money I ever knew; but I never touched it or thought of doing such a thing."

"Perhaps you will also deny having me arrested on a false charge in Victoria?" said Phil, his voice trembling with anger.

"Yes, I do deny having you arrested on a false charge, but not on a true one. The charge was threatened assault and battery, and I think I let you off pretty easy by not staying to press it. Now, if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head, and get out of here pretty quick, you'll find yourself in a worse fix

mighty sudden. Say, Jacob, where did I get that fur-seal's tooth I have been wearing as a watch-charm?" he asked of one of the group of clerks who had with angry looks been loitering about Phil during this scene.

"Bought it of an Indian, for I saw you do it," was the prompt reply. "So did I;" "and I," spoke up two more. "Hustle him out! What does he mean by coming here and insulting one of us!" cried others.

For once, prudence got the better of Phil's anger, and, though he believed at that moment he could thrash all the clerks in the store, he wisely concluded not to try. "I'll settle with you at some other time," he said to Simon Goldollar; "and, in the meantime, if you don't want to be pitched overboard, you'd better not come skulking about our camp in the night again."

Then, throwing down the fragment of watch-chain with all its charms, except the fur-seal's tooth, attached, he cast a contemptuous glance at the clerks, and strode by them and out of the store, before they could make up their minds whether to hustle him or not.

When Phil related this incident to Serge, the latter chided him for venturing into the "lion's den," as he called it, without taking him along.

"But it was my quarrel and not yours," answered the Yankee lad.

"Phil, you know better than to say that. In a friendship that has been cemented as ours has, by the sharing of dangers and pleasures, joys and sorrows, starvation and plenty, one cannot have a quarrel nor a trouble that does not belong equally to the other. That is what I take to be the very meaning of the word friendship."

"Right you are, old man! and I won't do so again. As it was, I came out of it unharmed; and now that we have recovered the fur-seal's tooth, luck, according to your belief, must be on our side."

Soon after this, depredations on the camp having almost entirely ceased, Gerald Hamer relieved our lads from guard duty, and set them to collecting drift-wood on the beach, to be cut up and used as fuel under the boiler of the new steamboat, the *Chimo*, as she had been christened at her launching.

As all the drift in the vicinity of St. Michaels had been gathered up for use in that fort, Phil and Serge were compelled to go long distances up the beach, gather what logs they could find into rafts, and pole them to the camp. After three of such rafts had been successfully landed, they went one day several miles from camp for the one more that would be necessary to complete their stock of fuel.

They worked hard all day at the collecting of this, and, at length, shortly before sunset, had made ready a larger raft than usual. They were in great haste, for they feared darkness might overtake them before they reached camp. Finally, Serge, who stood on the forward or outer end of the raft, push-pole in hand, called out to Phil, who had on long wading-boots, to shove off.

Into that shove Phil threw all his strength, so that the mass of logs had gathered good headway by the time the deepening water compelled him to scramble on board. He sat still for a minute, or until the raft was nearly one hundred yards from shore, to recover his breath. Then he suddenly sprang to his feet, crying "Stop her, Serge! stop her! I have left my pole on shore."

As Serge hurriedly tried to comply with this request, his pole, catching under the moving mass, was snapped short off. A strong wind was blowing off the land, and instantly both lads realized the danger of their situation.

"How could I have been so careless!" exclaimed

poor Serge, his face pale with dismay. "It wasn't your carelessness, old man; it was mine," replied Phil. "If I hadn't left that wretched pole on shore, we could have managed her easy enough. Now I am going to do my best to repair my fault."

As he spoke, the impetuous lad began pulling off his boots.

"No, Phil, you mustn't try that," said Serge, at the same time laying a detaining hand on the other's shoulder. "The water is too cold for you to swim to the shore and back again. Besides, I doubt if you could catch the raft, at the rate the wind is now moving her."

"But I can wade more than half-way," objected Phil.

"Not on this sticky mud bottom. I don't believe you could wade ten steps."

"What can we do, then? We can't sit tamely here and drift out to sea. Oh, Serge, the horror of it! the terror! the awfulness! We can't endure it again. Let us both take to the water, and make a try for the shore together. Yes, old man, that is what we must do! There is no other way."

With this, Phil, who had already got rid of his boots, began to throw off his coat.

"Hold on, Phil! I see something that looks like a boat! Yes, it is a native boat coming from up the beach, and towards us."

Serge was right. In a few minutes more a large bidarrah, filled with native employés of the trading-post, drew near, and its occupants stopped rowing a short distance from the raft, to see what the lads were doing.

"Come and take us off!" shouted Phil. "Don't you see that we are helpless?"

"How much you give?" asked a leathern-faced old

Eskimo, who sat in the stern, and seemed to command the craft. "You give ten dollar?"

"Yes," whispered Phil; "we will give you anything you want, when we get back to camp."

"No; give him now."

"But we haven't any money with us."

"Then me go. Good-bye." The bidarrah actually began to move ahead, while the face of the old image in the stern was rendered still more hideous by a malicious grin.

"Hold on!" screamed Phil, in desperation. "I will give you this, and it is worth many times ten dollars."

The bidarrah came a little closer, that the old man might see what was offered.

"All light," he said, holding out his hand for the coveted prize.

In another moment the lads had crossed the narrow divide between a deadly danger and certain safety, and the fur-seal's tooth had found a new owner.

Soon after this narrow escape from imminent peril, our lads bade farewell to the *Norsk*, which steamed away to the southward, bearing all of Gerald Hamer's party save those who were to follow his lead into the far interior. She also bore Nikrik, who carried with him a large package of letters wrapped in oil-skin, which he was instructed to deliver unopened aboard the first south-bound vessel that should touch at the Pribyloff Islands. Thus, although Mr. Ryder did not receive his son's letter, he learned of his whereabouts, and, filled with a new hope, ordered the schooner *Philomel* to be headed towards distant St. Michaels.

At length, one morning in late September, after many vexatious delays, the steamboat, with whose fortunes our lads had cast their own, was laden and ready to start for the Yukon. With fluttering flags and de-

"TOWING A DOZEN NATIVE BOATS BEHIND THEM"

fiant whistle she steamed away from inhospitable St. Michaels, towing a dozen native boats behind her.

"Hurrah!" shouted Phil Ryder, as he and Serge stood on her upper deck. "We are off, at last. Hurrah for snow-shoes and sledges! I say, old man, I'm glad we got away before that craft came in. She may be bound to Oonaláska, or somewhere down among the islands, and, if so, I suppose we should have felt it our duty to go with her. But you can't stop us now, old ship! You're too late!"

The craft to which he thus referred was a small schooner beating up the sound. From her deck Mr. John Ryder was scanning the oncoming steamboat through a powerful telescope. Suddenly it fell from his hands, as he cried out, in wild excitement:

"Thank God, Jalap Coombs, our long search is ended! There is my boy—there, on that steamer! We can hail him, and have him alongside in five minutes more."

"Right you are, sir," replied the mate, peering through the glass the other had dropped. "It looks like the young scamp, and I believe it is him, but don't ye be dead sartain ye've got him till ye lays hands on him. As my friend old Kite Roberson uster say, 'Eels is never so slippery as when they's caught.'"

THE END

BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

By THOMAS W. KNOX:

THE "BOY TRAVELLERS" SERIES. Illustrated. Square 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $3 00 each:

IN THE LEVANT.
IN SOUTHERN EUROPE.
IN CENTRAL EUROPE.
IN NORTHERN EUROPE.
IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.
IN MEXICO.
IN AUSTRALASIA.
ON THE CONGO.
IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE.
IN SOUTH AMERICA.
IN CENTRAL AFRICA.
IN EGYPT AND PALESTINE.
IN CEYLON AND INDIA.
IN SIAM AND JAVA.
IN JAPAN AND CHINA.

THE YOUNG NIMRODS IN NORTH AMERICA.—AROUND THE WORLD. 2 vols. Illustrated. Sq. 8vo, Cloth, $2 50 each.

By CHARLES CARLETON COFFIN. Illustrated. Square 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $3 00 each.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.—THE STORY OF LIBERTY.—OLD TIMES IN THE COLONIES.—THE BOYS OF '76.—BUILDING THE NATION.—DRUM-BEAT OF THE NATION.—MARCHING TO VICTORY.—REDEEMING THE REPUBLIC.—FREEDOM TRIUMPHANT.

SNOW-SHOES AND SLEDGES. By KIRK MUNROE. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

THE FUR-SEAL'S TOOTH. By KIRK MUNROE. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

CADET DAYS. By Captain CHARLES KING. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

LITTLE KNIGHTS AND LADIES. Poems. By MARGARET E. SANGSTER. 16mo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

THE STORY OF BABETTE. By RUTH MCENERY STUART. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 50.

AFLOAT WITH THE FLAG. By WILLIAM J. HENDERSON. Ill'd. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

SEA YARNS FOR BOYS. By WILLIAM J. HENDERSON. Ill'd. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

"HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE" SERIES:

THE MYSTERY OF ABEL FOREFINGER. By WILLIAM DRYSDALE.—A BOY'S TOWN. By W. D. HOWELLS.—CAMPMATES. CANOEMATES. RAFTMATES. By KIRK MUNROE.—PHIL AND THE BABY, AND FALSE WITNESS. By LUCY C. LILLIE.—FLYING-HILL FARM. THE MATE OF THE "MARY ANN." By SOPHIE SWETT.—DIEGO PINZON. By J. R. CORYELL.—YOUNG LUCRETIA, AND OTHER STORIES. By MARY E. WILKINS.—THE MOON PRINCE, AND OTHER NABOBS. By R. K. MUNKITTRICK.—THE MIDNIGHT WARNING, AND OTHER STORIES. By E. H. HOUSE. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25 per volume.

THE ADVENTURES OF JIMMY BROWN. Written by Himself, and Edited by W. L. ALDEN.—THE CRUISE OF THE CANOE CLUB. THE CRUISE OF THE "GHOST." THE MORAL PIRATES. THE NEW ROBINSON CRUSOE. By W. L. ALDEN.—TOBY TYLER. MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER. TIM AND TIP. LEFT BEHIND. RAISING THE "PEARL." SILENT PETE. By JAMES OTIS.—THE STORY OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS. JO'S OPPORTUNITY. ROLF HOUSE. MILDRED'S BARGAIN, AND OTHER STORIES. NAN. THE COLONEL'S MONEY. THE HOUSEHOLD OF GLEN HOLLY. By LUCY C. LILLIE.—THE FOUR MACNICOLS. By WILLIAM BLACK.—THE LOST CITY. INTO UNKNOWN SEAS. By DAVID KER.—THE TALKING LEAVES. TWO ARROWS. THE RED MUSTANG. By W. O. STODDARD.—WHO WAS PAUL GRAYSON? By JOHN HABBERTON.—PRINCE LAZYBONES, AND OTHER STORIES. By Mrs. W. J. HAYS.—THE ICE QUEEN. By ERNEST INGERSOLL.—WAKULLA. THE FLAMINGO FEATHER. DERRICK STERLING. CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO., AND DELTA BIXBY. DORYMATES. By KIRK MUNROE.—STRANGE STORIES FROM HISTORY. By GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON.—UNCLE PETER'S TRUST. By GEORGE B. PERRY.—CAPTAIN POLLY. By SOPHIE SWETT. Illustrated. Square 16mo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 00 per volume.

CITY BOYS IN THE WOODS. By HENRY P. WELLS. Illustrated. Square 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $2 50.

A CHILD'S HISTORY OF SPAIN.—A CHILD'S HISTORY OF FRANCE. By JOHN BONNER. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, $2 00 each.

COUNTRY COUSINS. By ERNEST INGERSOLL. Illustrated. Square 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $2 50.

FRIENDS WORTH KNOWING. Glimpses of American Natural History. By ERNEST INGERSOLL. Illustrated. Square 16mo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 00.

CAMP LIFE IN THE WOODS, AND THE TRICKS OF TRAPPING AND TRAP-MAKING. Written and Illustrated by W. HAMILTON GIBSON. 16mo, Cloth, $1 00.

AFRICAN ADVENTURE FOR THE YOUNG. By PAUL B. DU CHAILLU. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 00 per volume. (*Sold in sets only.*)

STORIES OF THE GORILLA COUNTRY.
THE COUNTRY OF THE DWARFS.
WILD LIFE UNDER THE EQUATOR.
MY APINGI KINGDOM.
LOST IN THE JUNGLE.

SAMUEL SMILES'S WORKS:

SELF-HELP.—CHARACTER.—THRIFT.—DUTY.—MEN OF INVENTION AND INDUSTRY.—LIFE AND LABOR; OR, CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN OF INDUSTRY, CULTURE, AND GENIUS. 12mo, Cloth, $1 00 each. JASMIN: BARBER, POET, PHILANTHROPIST. 12mo, Cloth, $1 25.

ROUND THE WORLD. By a Boy. Edited by SAMUEL SMILES.—LIFE OF A SCOTCH NATURALIST: THOMAS EDWARD.—ROBERT DICK, BAKER OF THURSO; GEOLOGIST AND BOTANIST.—JOSIAH WEDGWOOD.—JAMES NASMYTH, ENGINEER. An Autobiography. Edited by SAMUEL SMILES. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, $1 50 each.

THE LIVES OF THE STEPHENSONS. Illustrated. 8vo, Cloth, $3 00.