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THE SHIP OF ICE

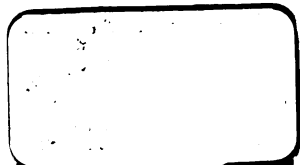
A
STRANGE
STORY
OF THE
POLAR
SEA



by S. Whitchurch Sadler, R.N.

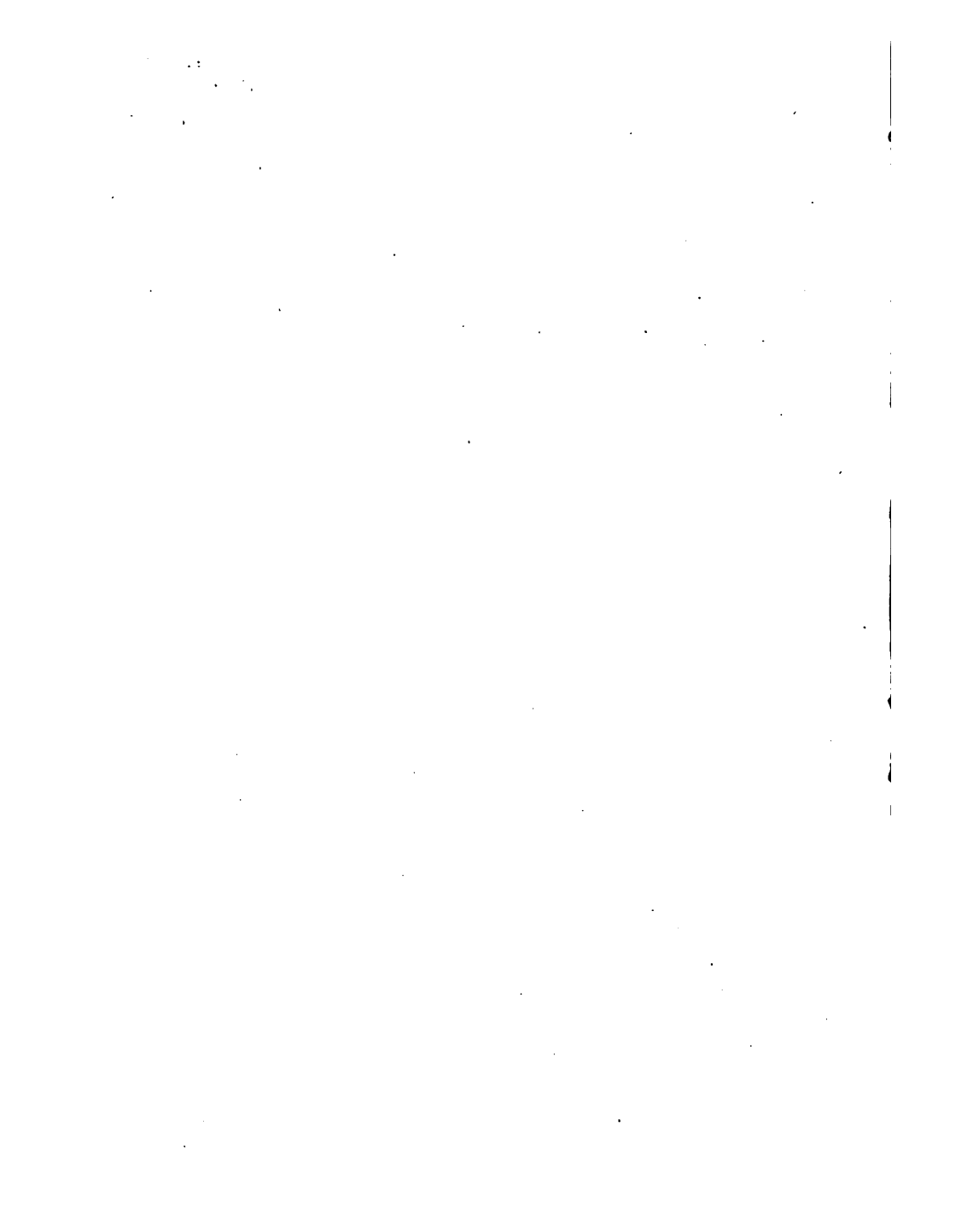


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THE SHIP OF ICE







A LIGHT SWIFTERLY BREEZE SENT THE
BOAT STRAIGHTLY ALONG "

CHAR. XXX.

The Ship of Ice

a strange story of the Polar Seas

BY

S. Whitchurch Sadler, R.N.



MARCUS WARD & CO., LONDON,
AND ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST.



THE SHIP OF ICE

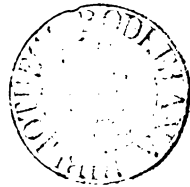
A Strange Story of the Polar Seas

BY

S. WHITCHURCH SADLER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF "MARSHALL VAVASOUR," "THE AFRICAN CRUISER,"
ETC.

"Miserable they
Who, here entangled in the gathering ice,
Take their last look of the descending sun!"



London:

MARCUS WARD & CO., 67, CHANDOS STREET

AND ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST

1875

251. c. 141.

The reader is assured that, although he may consider the *actors* in the story to be fictitious characters, the *scenery* is faithfully depicted, having been procured for the occasion from the best Arctic painters. For his courtesy in placing such materials at his disposal, the author begs to tender his acknowledgments to Sir Alexander Armstrong, K.C.B., Medical Director-General of the Navy.

It may interest many to learn that the prayer taken from the body of the frozen sailor (page 223) is a translation of one which was written by a German belonging to the "Polaris," and picked up on the ice after the floe broke adrift.

S. W. S.



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P R E F A C E .

AFTER a life of adventure in most parts of the globe, the author finds that narratives of Arctic exploration still possess the charm which, in his younger days, made "Parry's Voyages" dispute the palm of favour even with "Robinson Crusoe."

The marvellous voyage of a thousand miles made by a part of the crew of the "Polaris" on an ice-floe has recently added to the interest felt on the subject, and has been one cause of the perilous adventures of George Falkland and his gentle companion being revealed in the following pages.

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THE SHIP OF ICE.

CHAP. I.—THE RECTORY AT TYNEFORD.

IF the boy must go to sea, at least let him go as a gentleman. Your father was a post-captain, and I am sure you could get a midshipman's appointment for George if you were to ask the Admiralty."

So spoke the mother of George Falkland, and her husband, the rector of a country parish on the banks of the North Tyne, replied :—

"Yes, dear, that is all very well ; but Admiralty promises are long in fulfilment, and midshipmen's outfits are expensive. Now, here is this letter from my cousin, Captain Hardy—who, while on half-pay, seems to spend his large



“You shall have whatever Captain Hardy will give, if you persuade your mother to let you go in his ship.”

The young people being dismissed to the garden when breakfast was over, a serious consultation took place between the parents, which resulted in a letter being despatched accepting the offer; and the mother with a heavy heart began to prepare for her boy's departure.

A holiday was given in honour of the event, and a new game got up, called the “Polar Regions.” Arthur, the youngest boy, did not see the fun of this, as it appeared to consist chiefly in his being harpooned by a pin-pointed arrow; but George declared it could not really hurt much, as he always pulled the dart out again directly with a long line.

Later in the day a more brilliant scheme was planned by George.

“Don't you remember the four Russian sailors who wintered in Nova Zembla in a snow-hut, and how frightened they were when

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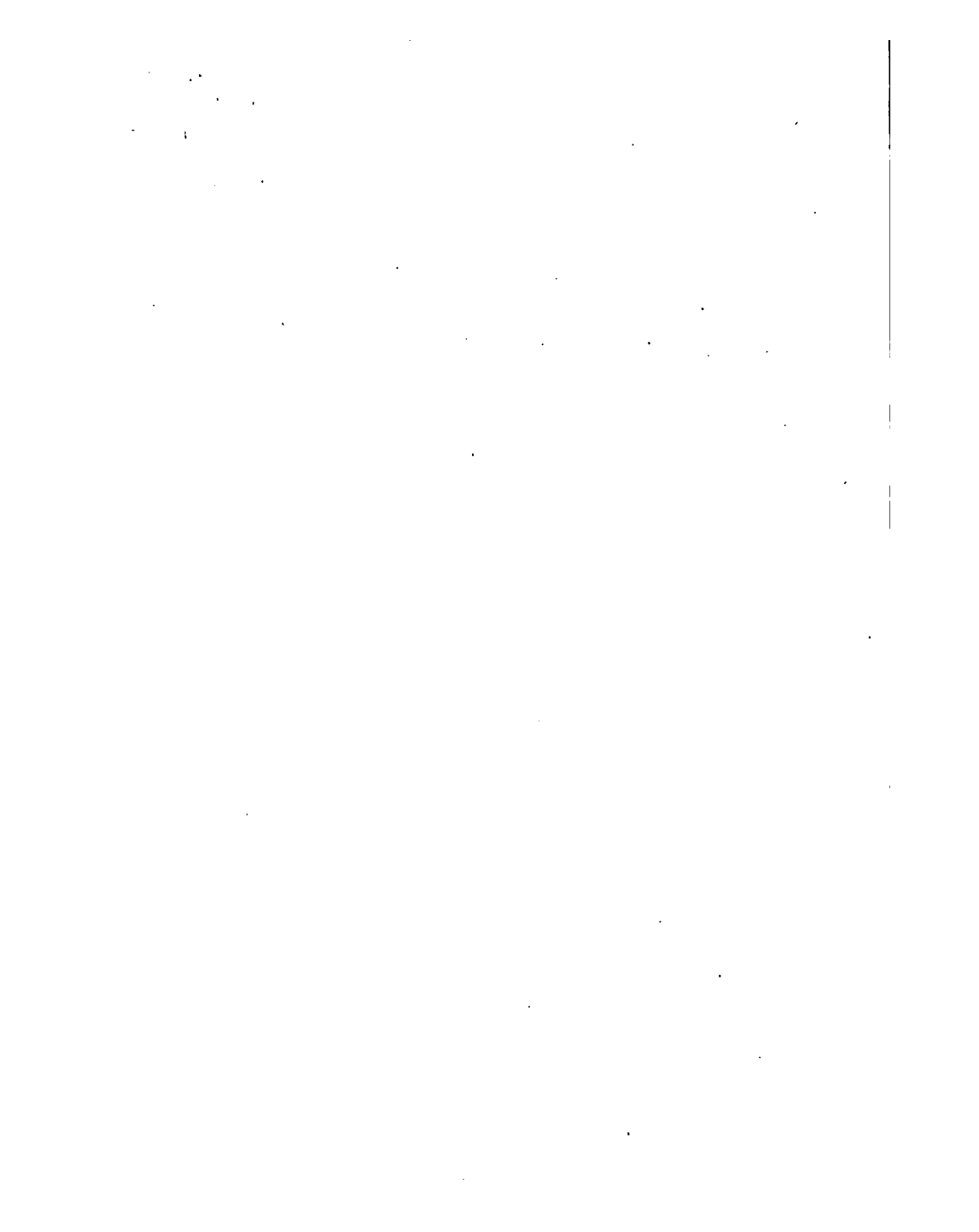
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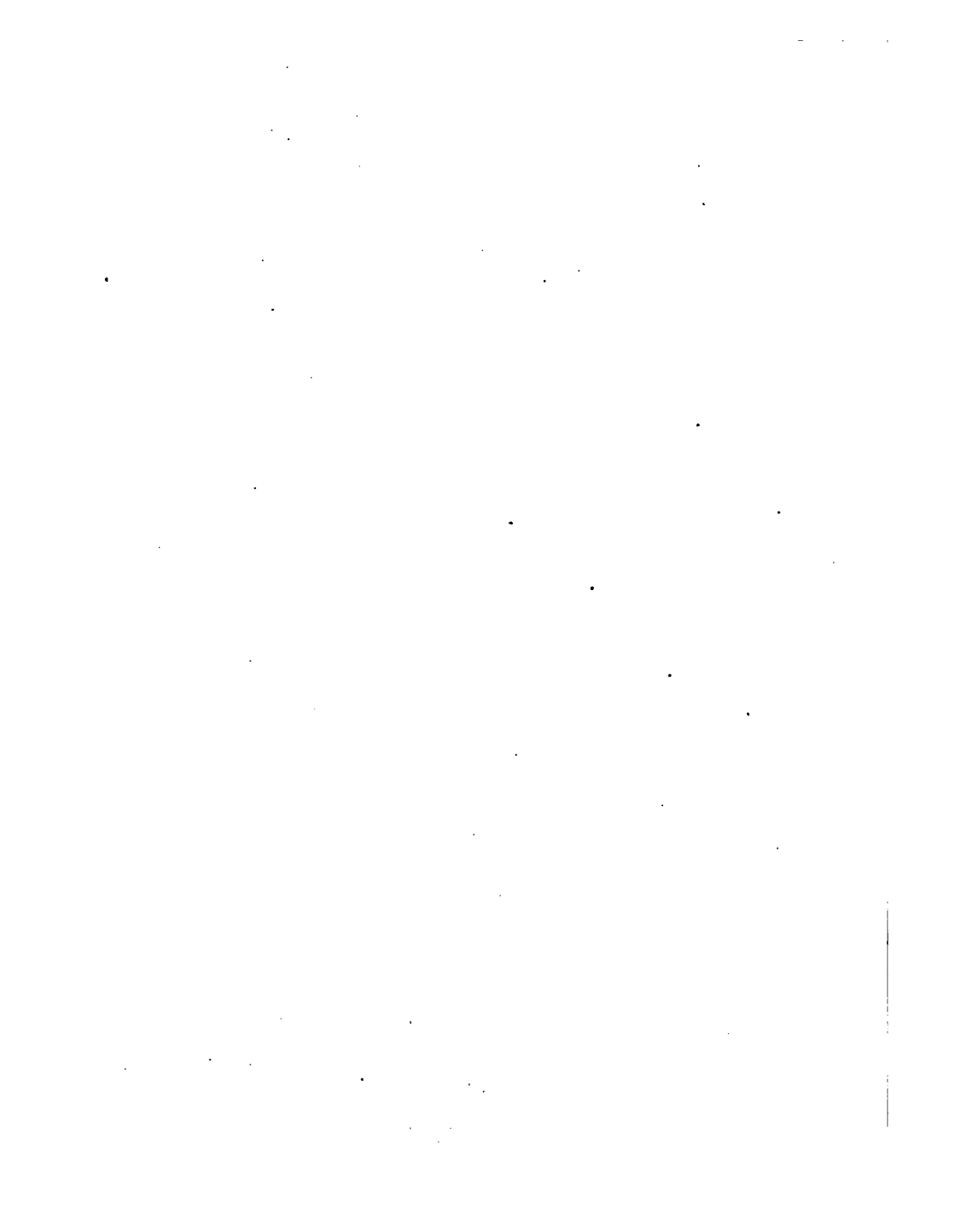


THE SHIP OF ICE



THE SHIP OF ICE







came a hurried breakfast, last kisses from those loving children, "God bless you, my own, own boy," from the weeping mother ; and his father and he were on their way to the little Tyneford railway station.

Mr. Falkland went with his boy as far as York. There was some time to spare before the train again started south, and the travellers found their way to the Minster. Evensong began as they entered, and it was a fitting service for father and son to join in during their last hour together in England.

Another parting at the station, and the York express carried off George to London, while Mr. Falkland returned to the home where the boy's bright face would be sadly missed.

It was nearly ten o'clock on the night of the 30th of January when the train reached King's Cross. George, taking a cab, told the man to drive to the "Four Swans" in Bishopsgate, the inn mentioned by Captain Hardy.

It was the boy's first visit to the great metropolis, and he wondered much, at that late hour, to see the streams of people which filled

the streets. City Road puzzled him greatly, looking like a road to a city of the dead, so encumbered was the pavement in front of almost every house with stone urns, weeping angels, broken pillars, and every kind of monumental device, most of them wonderfully ugly.

No person came to meet him at the inn that night. He ordered supper, and went to bed with a strange mixture of feelings—sorrow at leaving the dear ones at home, and a fearful joy at being his own master.

The “Four Swans” was at that time—it exists no longer—one of the few ancient London hostelries of the “Tabard” type. George found his way to the dark, old-fashioned coffee-room the next morning; and then, until breakfast was ready, amused himself with wandering about the old passages, and along the wooden balustraded gallery which ran round the house on three sides, overlooking the inn yard.

As he leaned over the rail watching the people going in and out, he saw a man, about

twenty years of age, dressed in a sort of naval uniform, enter the yard, and ask some question of a waiter. He fancied his own name was mentioned. In another minute the new-comer joined him on the gallery, holding out his hand as he spoke.

“I am very glad to see you, Mr. Falkland. Captain Hardy ordered me to call and put you in the right way about everything.”

George, too, was glad enough to be welcomed, and, shaking hands, asked if he belonged to the ship.

“Oh yes. I ought to have introduced myself. My name is James Winton, and I am chief officer of the “Undaunted.” In fact, I have sailed with Captain Hardy ever since he has taken to yachting.”

Breakfast being now ready in the coffee-room, they did full justice to the good things on the table. Winton, who possessed the frankness of a sailor, free from all coarseness, was just the person to win a boy's heart; and by the time the meal was over, Falkland and he were fast friends.

“ And when am I to go on board ?”

“ Well, Captain Hardy thought you would like a day to yourself, as it is your first visit to London, so you need not join until to-morrow morning.”

“ But how about my outfit ?”

“ That I am ordered to get ; and if you are ready, we will set about it at once.”

Off they started on this expedition—a very pleasant one for George. Winton led the way to a large outfitter’s warehouse in Leadenhall Street, said there was no limit as to expense, and guided the lad’s puzzled choice when the man brought down heaps of clothing, most of which was quite unfit for a Polar voyage.

At last a capital selection was made, ordered to be packed up at once in a sea-chest, and sent on board ; and a big chest it took to hold all the purchases.

George wished that Alice had been there when, pulling on a high pair of sea-boots over thick flushing trousers, and with a fur cap on his head, there was only wanting a brace of pistols stuck in his belt to make him just like

the pictures they used to draw of "The Bold Smuggler."

"One thing I had forgotten," said Winton, turning back as they were leaving the shop; "a piece of green crape."

"Green crape! What for?"

"To save you from snow-blindness. I have been only one voyage north, and that was enough to shew me its necessity."

"Now, where would you like to go?" asked Winton, as they again came out into the street.

George's new friend was fortunate in the manner in which he put the question. Had he said—"What would you like to *see*?" the answer would have been difficult; so thick was the London fog that morning, that there was no seeing anything, not even the opposite side of the street.

"The Tower," rose naturally to the boy's lips.

The old fortress was reached at last; but it was a difficult navigation through narrow Thames Street blocked up with waggons. Crossing Tower Hill, the explorers quite lost

their way, and many tacks were made in the black fog before they "fetched" the drawbridge.

Making their way west after leaving the Tower, the darkness began to clear up, and George enjoyed a good many sights before evening came on. Then his friend piloted him back to the inn, and giving full directions how to find his way on board the next morning, wished him good night.

A long letter home was written before Falkland went to bed, the last shore-going bed he was to sleep in for many and many a long month—perhaps for ever.





CHAP. III.—“ THE ANCHOR’S WEIGHED.”

AFTER breakfast the following morning, George paid his bill, and, it is needless to say, overpaid the waiter. In fact, he had not the least idea how much he ought to give to that grave attendant.

At first he put a quantity of silver into the outstretched palm. Then, seeing that the hand was still held out, he placed another shilling in it, looking at the man’s face the while to see if he were satisfied ; but not a twinkle of satisfaction was there. Another, and yet another. Still the waiter

“ Held him with his glittering eye.”

Nor was the hand withdrawn until the boy’s purse was emptied of its last piece of silver.

Then the money was pocketed in an aggrieved manner ; and with a sigh of resignation, which made George fear that he must be a dreadfully stingy fellow, the waiter announced—

“ Your cab is at the door, sir.”

There was a short drive to London Bridge, half-an-hour on board the Woolwich steamboat ; then, stopping at a pier near Deptford, the boy hired a waterman to take him on board the “ Undaunted.”

The ship had left the docks, and was moored, ready for sailing, in the middle of the stream. Falkland, as he came alongside, looked up with the deepest interest at his floating home ; and Winton, who was at the gangway, helped him up the ladder. Then for the first time in his life the boy trod the deck of a ship.

An officer of a tall, commanding figure, who was walking the quarter-deck on the starboard side, at once shook hands with George, and welcomed him to the “ Undaunted.”

“ Mr. Winton will take you over the ship, and shew you your mess-place. You will live with the other officers, and will find yourself

comfortable enough, I hope. I rather fancy your father seemed to think that you were going as a boy, and not as a midshipman."

George had a great deal to learn that day, but it was pleasant work. First, he went to the large cabin where he was to mess with Winton and the second and third mates. Then his friend took him below, and pointed out how the ship was strengthened for the special service by "ice-beams" running from stem to stern. He saw the holds, filled not only with the ordinary salt provisions, but with preserved meats and vegetables of every description; casks of carrots packed in dry sand, and cases of lime-juice to keep off scurvy.

Falkland was surprised to find that the "Undaunted" was fitted with a steam-engine.

"Yes," said Winton; "but it is of small power. The ship is really a sailing vessel, barque-rigged, with what is called an auxiliary screw, only to be used on emergencies; if, for instance, we are beset with ice, and cannot make our escape in any other way."

Going on deck again, he shewed George

three beautiful whale-boats, and two light ice-sledges fitted with iron runners. The boy's delight may be imagined when he saw these.

"What fun it will be sleighing!"

Then Winton, leaning over the side, pointed out how the ship was armed externally against the enemy she was so soon to encounter. There was a strong additional cutwater called an ice-stem; extra stout planking covered the sides; while the bows and the stem were fortified with plates of iron half-an-inch thick.

"Ah!" said the chief officer, when he had shewed all this, "you would scarcely believe that the "Undaunted" used to be one of the smartest yachts in Cowes Roads. Now she looks a regular old "*clumbungy*," doesn't she?"

"Oh yes," said George; though what a *clumbungy* meant he had no very precise idea.

Falkland made acquaintance with his two other messmates at dinner-time, which was twelve o'clock. Stanlake, the second mate, had served in the navy as quarter-master with

Captain Hardy, and although uneducated, was a kind, sailor-like man, whom it was impossible not to like. He took the midshipman aloft in the afternoon, pointed out the most important ropes, slung his hammock for him, and did all sorts of kind things to make the youngster feel at home.

The hammock itself was a puzzle at first. George no sooner jumped in than he was out again on the other side. "Never mind." The next time he managed to keep his place, and soon he slept as soundly as if he were in his old bed at Tyneford Rectory.

"What is the matter?" thought Falkland, as some dreadful noise disturbed him early in the morning.

Half-awake, and forgetting entirely where he was, he sat up in bed, thereby bumping his head smartly against the beam, which was within six inches of his nose. The blow roused him thoroughly. He put on his clothes and hurried on deck.

A tug had come alongside, making a great noise with her steam-pipe; the moorings were

cast off, and the "Undaunted" was under weigh. With deep delight the boy watched the moving panorama on the banks as the ship dropped quietly down the Thames.

The jib was hoisted, but the other sails were still furled. There being no particular duty going on, Stanlake came to Falkland's side, and pointed out various objects of interest as they glided by.

Deptford, the original naval-yard of England—wherein had been built Harry the Eighth's "Sovereign of the Seas," and the greater number of those war-ships which, under Blake's command, laid the foundation of England's maritime greatness—was soon passed. George wanted to see Sayes Court, where Peter the Great lived when he worked at the dockyard, and which he and his Muscovite attendants made so dirty; but the man-of-war's-man was all adrift there; his reading had not extended so far.

To make up for his ignorance on this point, Stanlake was able, as they reached Greenwich, to tell the story of the gallant French lieu-

tenant, Bellot, who perished in the search after Franklin, and in whose honour the grateful English nation placed on the river front of Greenwich Hospital the obelisk which bears his name.

Falkland gave a return story here. Stanlake had been saying that this was the best place for catching whitebait, the smallest eatable fish that swims.

"I suppose," said the boy, "you never heard of the largest fish that swims being caught here."

Stanlake laughed at the idea.

"But it is true," continued George. "In King Charles the Second's reign, a big whale, forty feet long, entered the Thames, came up higher and higher, got frightened at last, and then, trying to turn round at Greenwich, was stranded right across the river. What a commotion he must have made just here when he was lashing his great tail about! Well, everybody got into boats, and stabbed him with pikes and swords and knives, until the poor monster was dead. And then I suppose there

was oil enough to last the parish half through the winter."

By this time the "Undaunted" had reached Woolwich. "What is the name of that beautiful ship?" asked Falkland, pointing to a fine frigate at anchor. "Look at all those boys running up the rigging."

"That is the 'Warspite' training-ship; and I really think she is going to cheer us. I expect her captain knows we are bound for the North Pole."

Captain Hardy, seeing what was going on, ordered the tug to stop. Then the "Warspite's" two hundred boys, taking off their caps, and waving them over their heads, cheered heartily. The cheer was returned by the "Undaunted's" men in deeper tones, and the vessel proceeded on her course.

Stanlake said, wiping his face, which was very red after the excited manner in which he had done his part of the cheering, and putting on his hat—

"That is about the best God-speed we could have had. I don't see why I should be ashamed

of telling you that I was trained in the 'Warspite;' and no wonder I love the ship. This is how it happened:—You see, my father, who was boatswain of a frigate on the coast of Africa, died of yellow fever when I was a youngster, and poor mother could only just manage by needlework to keep herself and send me to school. Well, she died too, and there was no one to look after me. Then I used to go knocking about the docks, doing odd jobs and trying to get a ship; but I got monkey's allowance—more kicks than halfpence. Who wanted a ragamuffin boy like me?

"I was pretty nigh starved, I can tell you, when one morning, going along Bishopsgate Street, I saw stuck up on a board in a passage—'Marine Society, for training poor and destitute boys for sea.' 'That's me,' said I; 'anyhow, why shouldn't I try my luck?' So I went upstairs; and if ever good Samaritans could wear coats and trousers, I came across some that day; for they clothed me and fed me, and then they sent me on board the 'Warspite.' No

wonder my heart warmed towards the good old ship just now."

Neither did Falkland wonder, when he heard the story.

The next place to notice was Tilbury Fort, which, as well as Upnor Castle, George remembered reading as having been made very strong in King Charles's reign, *after* the Dutch had sailed up the Medway and burned our ships.

Gravesend was passed, the river widened, and Stanlake had to attend to his duties in getting everything ready for making sail.

Captain Hardy, who was walking the quarter-deck, now called George to his side, and entered into conversation. He wanted to find out of what stuff the boy was made—whether the idea of going to sea was only a schoolboy's whim, or whether he was determined, spite all dangers and disagreeables, to stick to a sailor's life and make it his profession. He himself, having gained post-captain's rank, and being tired of rusting on shore on half-pay, had fitted out the yacht for this voyage, partly for the

purpose of scientific discovery, and partly from the pure love of adventure.

George liked his new captain when the talk was over, and the captain liked him, saying as he dismissed the boy—

"If we get home from this voyage all right, and you still wish to follow the sea, make your mind easy; I will get you a midshipman's berth in the navy, and look after your interests in the service."

As they came near Sheerness, and passed the muddy Isle of Grain, George saw a bigger ship even than the "Warspite." She was a three-decker, with an admiral's flag flying at the fore, at anchor off Garrison Point.

The commander of this ship was an old friend of Captain Hardy's; and the "Undaunted" stood close in, and passing under her stern, lowered the ensign in salute. Three times was the flag dipped, and—not to be outdone in naval courtesy—three times were the line-of-battle ship's colours also lowered.

There was a crowd of officers assembled on the poop to take a last look at the discovery

ship, and the band played the parting air, "Should auld acquaintance be forgot." As Falkland gazed on the towering hull and tapering spars of that almost perfect structure, he passionately longed for the day when such a ship should be his home.

"I don't wonder you admire her," said Stanlake, as he saw the boy's flushed face. "There is nothing like the navy. I intend joining the service again myself when we come home. The captain says he can get me a boatswain's warrant."

The Nore light-ship was passed soon after this; the tug was cast off; and George heard the order given—"Hands make sail."

To his untutored eye, for some minutes all seemed confusion. Men ran about with ropes in all directions. He got bumped here and bumped there, and felt as if he were terribly in everybody's way.

Captain Hardy laughed. "Never mind, you will understand all about it in a few days."

And so he did. In a fortnight's time he knew the names and use of every sail and rope

in the ship. It is wonderful how soon knowledge can be picked up if one only works, as sailors say, with a will.

The breeze came fresh from the north-west, a cold enough wind on this 1st of February; and Falkland was not sorry when, at nightfall, the anchor was dropped in the Downs.





CHAP. IV.—“FAREWELL, OLD ENGLAND.”

MR. WINTON and George were invited to dine in the cabin that evening. When the dessert was on the table, Captain Hardy said—

“If you will hand me those charts from the shelf over your head, Mr. Winton, you shall see the route I propose to follow. I expect we are in for a longer voyage than you anticipate.”

With the chart of the Polar regions spread out upon the table, the captain then unfolded his plans.

It was his intention, he said, not to go north at once ; for which indeed the season was much too early ; but directing their course towards Cape Horn, either to double that cape, or, if

possible, pass through the Straits of Magelhaen. Then, being on the other side of America, they would sail north, and enter the Arctic seas through Behring's Straits.

"Now, look at this chart, Falkland; for I daresay your school geography did not put you up to the latest discoveries. You see that North America is really an island, separated in the far north from other lands by this strait."

Falkland's eye followed Captain Hardy's pencil

"Well, this passage, which I hope we shall reach through Behring's Straits, has several names, which were given by different discoverers as they gradually penetrated its dangerous waters. Banks' Strait on the western extremity, where we are to enter; then Parry Sound, Barrow's Strait, and lastly, to the east, Lancaster Sound, where, as you see, it opens into Baffin's Bay."

"And is that the way we shall go?"

"Yes, that is the way the good ship "Undaunted" will go, if the ice does not block her

up midway. And then, coming home through Baffin's Bay, she will really have made the North-West Passage."

George had read that some two hundred years ago the Dutch sent an expedition under Behrends to search for this passage, hoping their vessels might sail that way to the East Indies, and so escape the clutches of the Spanish ships, who were always lying in wait for these fat traders.

"Yes," said Captain Hardy; "but long before them our own Martin Frobisher had sailed the Polar seas, and since those days England has furnished a gallant host of Arctic discoverers. The names of Parry, Ross, Franklin, Back, Collinson, M'Clintock, and many others at once rise to the memory. But the actual glory of discovering the North-West Passage was reserved for Captain M'Clure."

"Did he sail right round North America, then?"

"He did not *sail* round, for unhappily his ship, the "Investigator," was eventually blocked up by ice and abandoned; but the crew were

rescued by other ships, and did actually come home through Lancaster Sound, having entered by Behring's Straits.

"How long ago was that, sir?"

"On the 10th October, 1850. Captain M'Clure, in company with Lieutenant Creswell and Dr. Armstrong, climbed a hill on Prince Albert Land, which they had reached from the westward, and saw the open water (ice-covered then) of Barrow's Strait stretching far away to the east."

"How glad they must have felt, and how they must have longed to return home at once with the news."

"But it was not until four long years had passed since that day of discovery that the "Investigator's" crew reached England. I belonged then to the "Waterloo," the flag-ship at Sheerness; and the officers were tried on board for the loss of the ship. I remember well Captain M'Clure's gratified look, when, at the close of the court-martial which honourably acquitted him, Admiral Gordon, the president, gave back his sword with the remark—

“‘ I am proud to return this to an officer who has served his country so well.’

“ Now, I think my lecture is pretty well over, and you had better turn in, for we shall get under weigh early to-morrow.”

Captain Hardy was anxious not to lose the benefit of the northerly wind. The next morning his steward was sent on shore with orders to bring off milk, bread, and whatever fresh provisions he could procure. Falkland went in the boat, and got a thorough ducking as they landed on the shingly beach opposite Deal ; but he rather liked it than not—it seemed real sailing. Then, too, it was pleasant to know that the men who were lounging about the beach, and with whom he chatted, were the Deal boatmen, of whose exploits in boarding sinking vessels on the Goodwin Sands he had so often read.

The steward was a long time getting all he wanted, and Falkland began to fear the captain would become impatient. He was right in his conjecture. The report of a gun made him look towards the ship, where he saw the smoke

curling away to leeward, and a flag flying at the mast-head, which the boat's crew told him was "Blue Peter," the signal for sailing. The sails were already loosed.

George grew as impatient as Captain Hardy. "Would that man never come!" At length he saw the steward running down towards the beach, carrying baskets full of all sorts of good things, which were soon stowed away. The Deal men helped to launch the boat over the shingle, and in ten minutes they were on board.

The boat was hoisted up the davits, the anchor—which was already hove short—weighed, and with a fair wind the "Undaunted" proceeded down Channel on her adventurous voyage.

A northerly wind in the English Channel is a smooth-water wind, and George spent the greater part of the day very happily in the maintop.

The chalk cliffs about Dover glittered in the bright sunshine, and white towns on the coast, with tall church towers rising in their midst, came in sight, and were left astern as the

breeze freshened. Pleasantly the hours passed. At sunset the ship was abreast of the Bill of Portland ; and in the first watch, Winton pointed to a bright light on the starboard bow.

“That is the Eddystone ; and now I think we may say good-bye to Old England.”

When George went on deck the next morning, he looked round. Not a speck of land was in sight, and the ship rose and fell gracefully on the blue water and long rolling waves of the Atlantic.

“Now that we are fairly at sea, you must set regularly about your duties,” said Captain Hardy, who was on deck. “You shall keep watch with Mr. Stanlake night and day.”

Nothing could have suited George better. He was proud at being ordered to keep night watch. By-and-by, when the novelty wore off, perhaps, like other youngsters, he thought four hours sliced out of his sleep rather too much of a good thing, and was glad enough, before a middle watch was half over, to prick for the softest plank, and take a snooze with his head reposing on a damp coil of rope. At present

he was, as Harrison the third mate, one of the rough kind of sailors, observed, only "a young bear with all his troubles to come."

"I want to say a few words to the ship's company, Mr. Winton," said Captain Hardy.

"Ay, ay, sir ; I will send them aft."

The men mustered on the quarter-deck—a fine, muscular, noble set of fellows, many of whom had served in the navy. The officers came to the front, and the captain spoke—his voice the only sound on that wide expanse of water, save the surge of the waves as they curled and broke.

"Men! I shipped you for a Polar voyage ; you asked no questions ; were content to go with me ; and I thank you. Now, we are not too well manned—thirty-five is all I can count besides myself—and there is no use in disguising the fact, that hardships, suffering, and danger lie before us. Please God, we will win through them all, and again see 'Old England on the lee.' If so, men, you shall not come back empty-handed to your sweethearts and wives. From this day, following the custom

of the Royal Navy, every officer and man on board the 'Undaunted' shall have double pay. I only wish I could serve out double rations too ; but we must take care of our provisions."

"Now then, men, three cheers for the captain!" sung out the chief officer ; and never were heartier cheers given, nor was there a happier body of men afloat than the crew of the "Undaunted" that day.





CHAP. V.—THE LAND OF DESOLATION.

DAYS and weeks passed ; and as the ship neared the tropics, our young midshipman greatly enjoyed the gradual change into warm weather. Then the north-east trade blew, and for days in succession they sailed under a cloudless sky, over a sea of the deepest blue, without having once to touch or trim a sail.

Falkland's amusement at this time was to get over the bowsprit to the jib-boom, and lie there, watching the dolphin and bonito as they glided through the clear water in pursuit of the flying-fish, who rose from the surface, glistening in the sunlight like jewels, only to drop into the jaws of their devourers after a short flight.

Once a flying-fish came so close, that George

stretched out his hands to grasp it; but instead of catching the fish, he overbalanced himself, and caught a ducking. Luckily, he struck out in time, and cleared the ship's bows, and the warmth of the water made the swim a pleasant one—very different from his cold bath in the North Tyne.

Still, although he knew his fall had been observed, there was a queer feeling at his heart as the ship passed on, leaving him far astern, a speck on the water. It was but momentary, for she was soon hove to, and a boat lowered; but it gave him some idea of what must be the despair of the sailor, who, half-suffocated by the driving spray, sees his ship sailing on and on, and knows that all chance of rescue—all hope for him in this world—is lost!

George rather laughed about his involuntary bath when he was again safely on board, but became grave enough when Stanlake remarked—

“You were really in great danger. There was a large shark following us this morning; and I am glad you did not know it, or you

might have been flurried. However, he is gone now. No! look there!

And the boy saw, and turned pale as he saw, the dorsal fin of a huge shark cutting the clear water not far astern.

Such thunderstorms and such vivid lightning as accompanied the ship on crossing the line, Falkland had never before seen. One afternoon the electric fluid struck the foremast with a loud explosion, but happily it passed harmlessly down without shivering the mast, or doing other damage.

When the storm was over, Winton pointed out a strip of copper, which led from each mast-head down the mast into the bottom of the ship, and passed through the planks, sometimes through the ship's sides, into the water.

"There," he said, "are Snow Harris's lightning conductors, and this one on the foremast carried off and dissipated into the water that shock just now, which would otherwise have splintered the mast, and perhaps left us an utter wreck. In the old days we had to hoist a wire conductor to the mast-head in the middle

of a thunderstorm ; not a very pleasant duty, I assure you."

One morning watch, eleven weeks after leaving England, Stanlake sent Falkland on the forecastle to look out for land, which the captain thought must be very near.

No ; there was nothing to be seen as the day broke, excepting perhaps in one spot where the clouds obstinately refused to disperse. Suddenly the mist cleared up, and a bold white headland stood out clear and distinct as Shakespeare's Cliff at Dover.

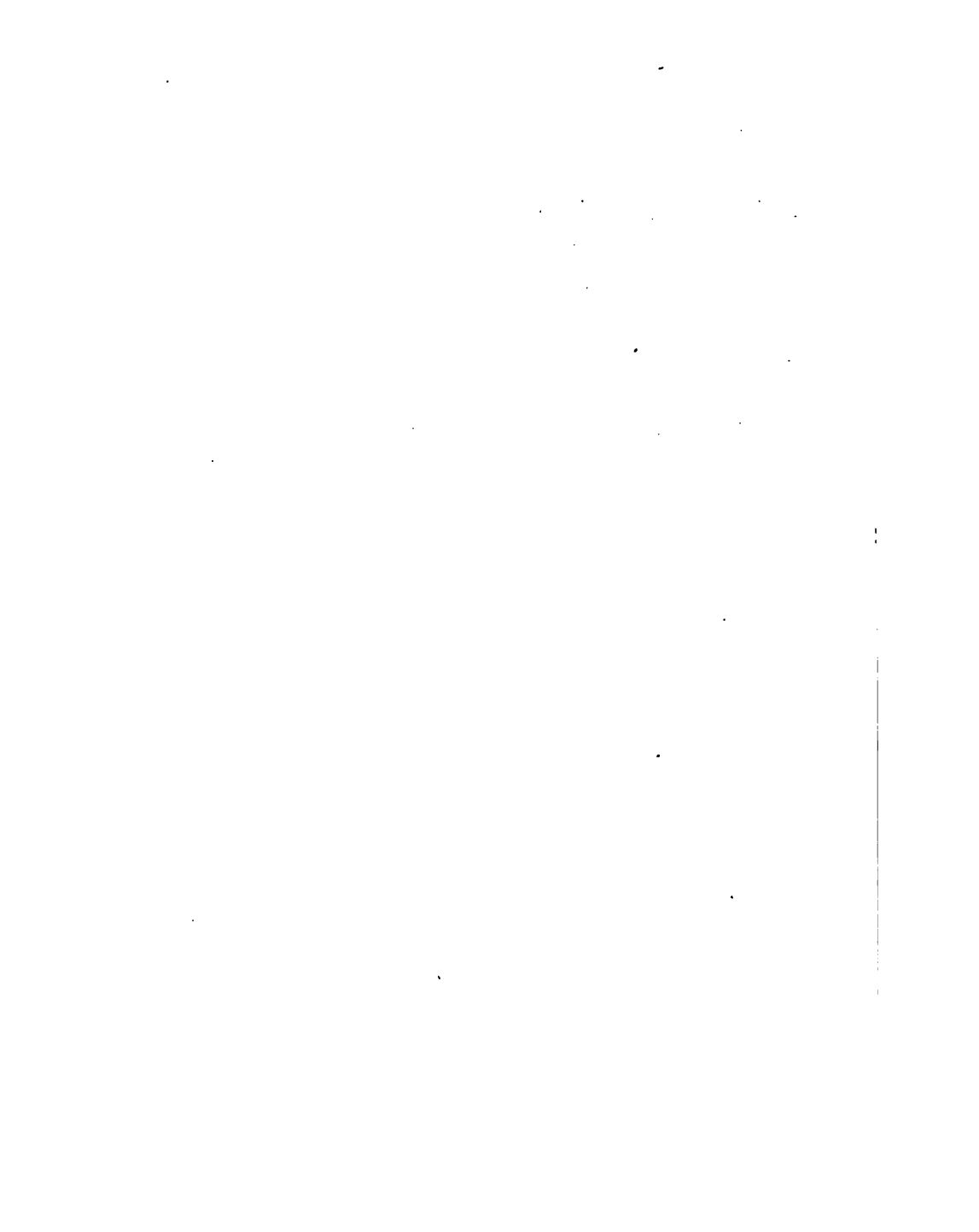
"Land ho !" cried the look-outs, and "Land ho !" echoed through the ship as George ran with the report to the captain's cabin.

It was Cape Virgins, at the northern extremity of Magelhaen's Straits. Captain Hardy came on deck, and the wind being fair, resolved to make the passage to the Pacific through the Straits, instead of going farther south and doubling Cape Horn.

It was the first time George's eyes had looked on a foreign land, and as he entered this celebrated passage, he watched the coast with the



THE LOOK-OUT.



deepest interest. They kept tolerably close to the Patagonian side, which was not at all the picture of desolation he had expected to see ; on the contrary, there was plenty of grass about, on which herds of deer were feeding—guanachos, Winton called them, after looking through his telescope. Not a single hut or native could be seen.

They had advanced a considerable way into the Straits when the wind sank ; and the anchor was dropped—for the first time since leaving the Downs—in a small bay with a sandy beach.

George dearly wanted to go on shore ; but Captain Hardy said he must wait till the following morning, when he intended to send away a seining party.

So two boats landed after breakfast with the seine, and as the ends of the net were gradually hauled closer, the sailors saw with delight that it was full of large fishes. The space of water enclosed was crowded ; some leaped from the surface and escaped, but hundreds remained, and soon the beach was strewn with fish of the

brightest colours, many of them of the oddest shapes.

Falkland, leaving the men to make another haul, began a voyage of discovery on his own account, and wandered about with a feeling of the wildest pleasure. Everything was new, everything was strange. It was a desolate spot—a strip of scanty herbage above the yellow sand, and then all barren rock.

Getting out of hearing of the noisy, laughing boat's crew, the boy sat down enjoying the novel solitude, and soon his thoughts flew towards the home thousands of miles away. A slight sound as of dropping water met his ear, and looking up, he saw a llama, some twenty yards off, stooping to drink. Unfortunately, the motion of his head disturbed the graceful creature ; it bounded away and disappeared.

George followed, but of course uselessly. He found, however, in the place the animal had been drinking, a crystal pool of water fed by a small stream ; a discovery of some importance, as it enabled Captain Hardy to fill his empty water-casks.

The whole of that day was spent at anchor ; and on starting the following morning, fires were lighted, and the "Undaunted" steamed through the smooth water at the rate of four or five knots an hour.

The Terra del Fuego side of the Straits now began to appear a land of desolation. The coast was inaccessible : rocky mountains with snow-capped summits rose sheer from the water's edge, their bold outlines broken here and there by gloomy ravines. Not a living object—not a bird or a blade of grass could be seen.

The gloom of the surrounding scenery even affected the spirits of the crew ; and every one on board felt happier when at length the smooth water was changed for the ocean swell, which rolled in as they neared the western end of the Straits. Then a wide expanse of blue sea opened out, and George knew that he looked on the Pacific Ocean.

Coal was much too valuable to be used when not absolutely necessary ; a ton or two might be the means of saving all their lives by-and-

by. So George was sent below to the engineer with orders to put out the fires, and the "Undaunted" became again a sailing-ship.

The weather was bitterly cold at this time. The south wind coming from the icy antarctic regions brought with it plenty of snow and sleet. It was a fair wind, however, and each day it blew them farther north, and the cold lessened.

Again the tropics were entered, the Equator crossed for the second time during the voyage, and once more the ship was in north latitude. It was now the middle of June, and the ship's head was pointed due north for Behring's Straits.





CHAP. VI.—THE MAIDEN OF GUAYAQUIL.

THE second morning after crossing the line it was Stanlake's watch. Falkland ran aloft to take his usual look round—which, as nothing had been sighted since leaving Magelhaen Straits, he was doing rather carelessly—when, to his surprise, he discovered a two-masted vessel not a mile away.

The brig was seen at the same time from the deck ; and as soon as the "Undaunted" came near enough, Mr. Winton and George were sent away in a boat to board.

The strange sail was evidently waterlogged and deserted. The fore-topmast had been carried away, and was hanging overboard, beating against the side, a tangled mass of wreck ; the main-topsail was still set, and flapping un-

by. So George was sent below to the engineer with orders to put out the fires, and the "Undaunted" became again a sailing-ship.

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The first thing I did was to
sit in the chair and
wait for the
doctor to come.
I had been told that
the doctor was a
man of great
skill and
experience.

The doctor came
and I told him
what had happened.
He examined me
and said that I
had a fever and
that I should
rest and take
some medicine.

The doctor gave me
some medicine and
told me to rest.
I took the medicine
and went to bed.
I felt better the
next day and
was able to get
up.



trimmed at every roll of the ship. At the mast-head floated an English ensign, union downwards—the signal of distress.

As the chief officer stepped on board over the low gangway, now nearly level with the water, the danger of the vessel sinking appeared so imminent, that he would allow no one but George to follow, and ordered the boat to keep well off, so as to be clear of the vortex in the event of her going down suddenly.

“We will just try and find out the brig’s name, that we may be able to report her loss, and then leave,” said Winton.

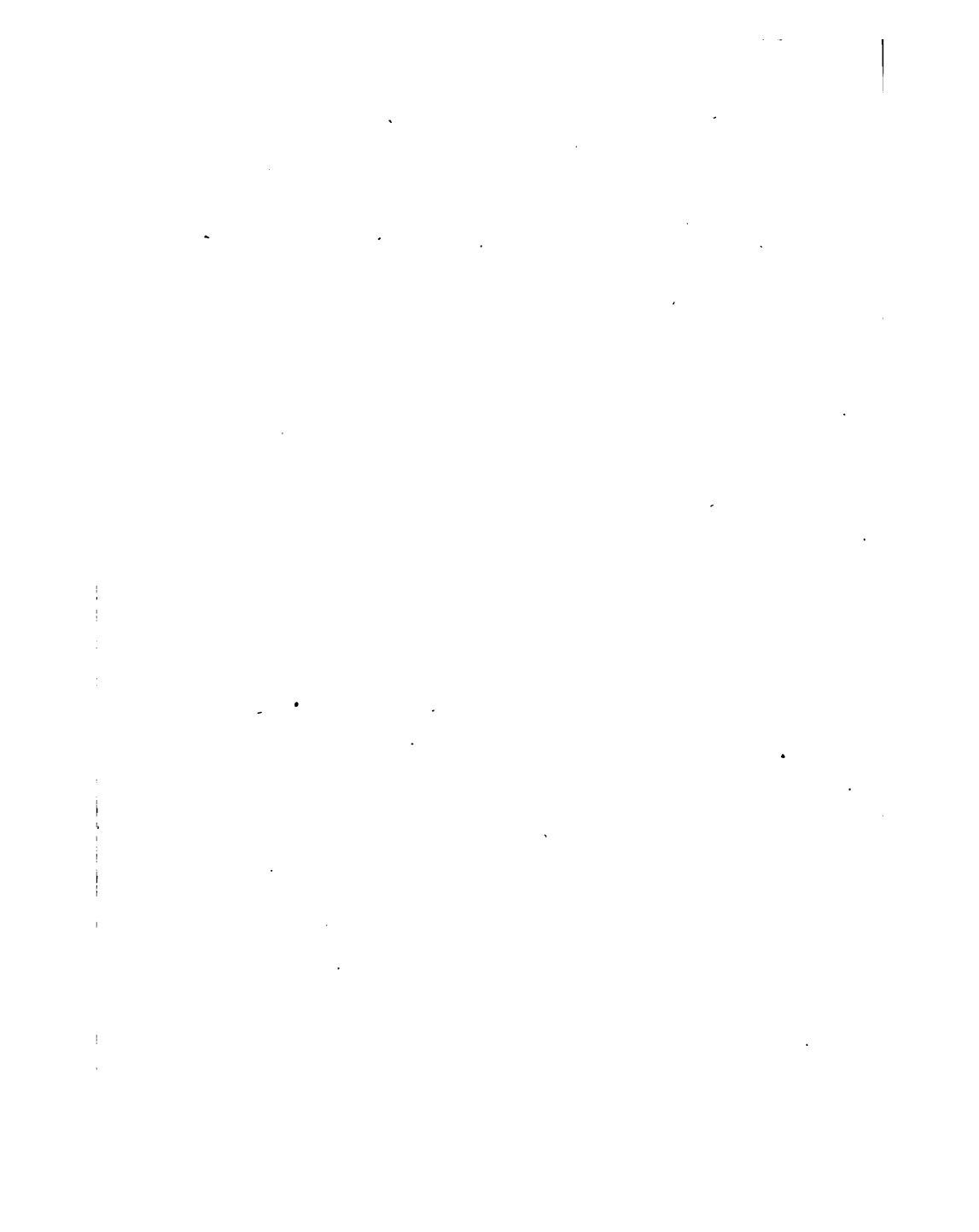
But Falkland’s quick eye had seen something. “Look, Winton !”

On the quarter-deck, under shelter of the bulwarks, lay the figure of a man, whether alive or dead they knew not ; and kneeling by his side a young girl, with pale, wasted features, and dark eyes unnaturally large.

She gave a cry of fear and surprise as the sound of the officers’ footsteps made her look up. Then a flush of joy passed over that wan face ; and exclaiming—“Father ! father ! we



THE WATERLOGGED BRIG.



are saved!" she rose and attempted to run towards her deliverers. Only one step could the poor famine-stricken child take; she stumbled, and had not George rushed forward and caught her in time, would have fallen on the hard deck.

There he held her until the boat was called alongside. As he placed her tenderly in the stern-sheets, she opened her eyes with an enquiring look, and tried to speak. George, bending down, heard the word—"Father?" and re-assured her by saying that he would be by her side in a minute.

Winton, assisted by one of the men, now carried the insensible form of the father into the boat, and ordered the crew to shove off at once, saying, as he turned towards George—"We are only just in time; she is sinking."

He was right. Before the boat reached the "Undaunted," the waterlogged vessel rolled heavily over to starboard, shewing the whole of her deck; then she went down head foremost, the English ensign at the mast-head the last

thing seen, until that too was dragged down beneath the waters.

“It is a happy deliverance for these poor things,” said Winton, as they came alongside.

But there was another deliverance close at hand for one of the two.

The girl, with youth on her side, soon began to recover strength; but her father, whose health had suffered from long residence in the tropics, only lingered three days.

He rallied sufficiently before he died to give Captain Hardy an outline of his story.

His name was St. Clare, and for many years he had been a resident merchant at Guayaquil, in the province of Quito, where he had accumulated a large fortune. He had married a lady of Spanish blood, and life altogether had gone happily until this present year, when a fever having carried off his wife, he resolved to return with his only child to Scotland, his native land.

Having at last settled his affairs, he and his daughter had left Guayaquil in a vessel carrying the English flag—a rotten old tub, chiefly

His intention was to go only, and there change England. Unfortunately, she sprung a leak, and the boat, leaving father and

week," continued Mr. Stone in the deserted ship; bits of biscuit, which she the hold. Long before as I should have died, had my girl's tender care." He pressed the hand which all resting in his, and then, to the child, he told her that alone a few minutes with

great difficulty, he said— "I tell that in a few hours my fatherless. She will not have the wide world. If I dared to should become her guardian, and you have preserved, I should be in grief indeed, but not

with the pang of feeling that she would be utterly friendless."

What could the kind-hearted captain do but promise to guard the young child henceforth as if she were his own daughter. But there was one difficulty: the ship was prosecuting a dangerous voyage. It was quite possible she might be ice-bound in the frozen regions of the north throughout the coming winter. How could the tender frame of a young girl bear the necessary privations?

Almost a smile flickered on the face of that gaunt man as he whispered—

"Ah, you will soon find out the power of endurance my child possesses when once she has regained her strength. I have had her on horseback with me for days in the wilds of South America, sustained by nothing but strips of sun-dried beef which we carried with us."

Mr. St. Clare now placed in Captain Hardy's hands a pocket-book containing the address of his agent in England, and a rough account of his property. Too much exhausted to speak again, he turned a look of longing towards the

door—a look well understood. The daughter came in. And in a few hours that daughter was an orphan indeed.

The funeral the next evening was the saddest sight imaginable. At sunset the ship's bell tolled, the ensign was hoisted half-mast, and there on the deck, while the captain read the burial service, stood the child, leaning against George, her hands tightly clasped in his, and her tears dropping fast on the flag that covered her dead father.

Young though she was, there was a kind of quiet dignity about her, while she wept silently, which she must have inherited from her mother. But when the sailors took off the flag, and the coffin was lowered into the water, the poor girl's sobs became so violent that George, at a sign from Captain Hardy, led her away into the cabin. Nor did he leave her until, quite worn out, her griefs were forgotten in sleep.





CHAP. VII.—ORIANA KEEPS THE FIRST WATCH.

NORTHWARD and still northward the “Undaunted” kept on her course. The heat of the tropics subsided into the pleasant freshness of the temperate zone; then came fogs and cold blasts, and the days lengthened, so that even at twelve o’clock at night it was twilight.

It was an anxious time when Behring’s Straits were entered. Fogs obscured all sight of the land; but at length one cold day in July the mists cleared up, a bright sun shone out, the latitude was taken at noon, and Mr. Winton, pointing out the ship’s position on the chart to Falkland, shewed him that they had just crossed the Arctic circle, and were in the Polar sea.

“And now,” he added, “we must prepare to meet the enemy.”

“The enemy ! What enemy ?” asked George, with his head at once full of sea-fights.

“No less a foe than the monarch of these regions, into the outskirts of whose kingdom we have already penetrated—ICE. These are the arms with which we fight.”

Then George looked on, while ice-anchors (grapnels shaped like the letter “S”), big chisels, saws, hatchets, whale-lines, and other gear were brought on deck in readiness for the coming struggle. A barrel was at the same time hoisted at the fore-topgallant mast-head, having a trap-door at the bottom just large enough for a man to creep through, and a canvas hood at the top as a shelter from the icy wind.

“What do you call that ugly thing ?” said George.

“That is a crow’s nest, and no look-out man could stay aloft without the cover it gives.”

It is needless to say, that with a boy’s proper curiosity George immediately went up the

rigging, entered the crow's nest, and poked his head out at the top. He was rewarded for his trouble. To his great delight he saw several shapeless monsters floating not far off; and while he looked, one of them blew a jet of foam in the air. They were whales; and there the boy stayed enjoying his first Arctic sight, until, notwithstanding the cover of the hood, he became much too cold to stop any longer.

A week later, and George was sitting in the cabin talking with the girl whom he had rescued from the sinking ship.

Captain Hardy had been puzzled what to do with this child whom Providence had cast so strangely upon his hands. If a vessel homeward bound had crossed his course, very probably he would have entrusted her to the captain's care; but now there was no help for it—she must go north.

One thing lessened his anxiety: the child's father had spoken truly with regard to her health and strength. She had gained colour and roundness, and as her spirits partly returned, she became the pet and the darling of

all on board. As to the sailors, they simply adored the bright little visitant, whose presence in the ship recalled memories of children or sisters of their own in far-off homes.

And a very pretty girl she looked just now, her Scotch blood tinting the cheeks which tropical suns and her Spanish descent had darkened, as she answered a question that George had just put.

“My other name? Well, you mustn’t laugh, for it belonged to some of my Spanish ancestors, although my father always said it was too fanciful, and that Alice St. Clare would sound better. It is Oriana.”

“Oh, what a pretty name! And there is one thing more I want to know, Oriana. How old are you?”

“I was thirteen on that very sad day when we went on board the ship at Guayaquil.”

Her lips began to quiver at the remembrance, and George, watching the changing face, tried to divert her thoughts by describing his old home at Tyneford. He made her laugh as he told of his fall through the ice.

“ Ah !” she cried ; “ I want to see this ice of which you speak. You know I have not been out of Quito before, and I never saw any, although we had plenty of snow from the tops of the Andes to cool our lemonade.”

At that moment the look-out in the crow’s nest called out—“ Ice ahead !”

“ Do you hear that ?” said George ; and wrapping the girl carefully in some of Captain Hardy’s warmest furs, he took her on deck.

It was a novel and a beautiful scene. The smooth water was dotted with pieces of ice, through which the steady breeze carried the ship with a succession of slight shocks. Farther ahead was visible the main pack—a lofty wall of ice glittering in the sun’s rays with all sorts of prismatic colours, and spreading in front of the ship, as if barring all further progress, and saying—“ Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.”

As they gazed with mingled feelings of delight and awe, a cloud obscured the sun, the brightness vanished, the air became colder, and the masses of ice looked dun and gloomy.

Oriana shivered ; but the next minute her face lighted up, and she cried, " Oh, look ! look ! "

It was another novel sight in these weird regions, where everything was new and strange. Asleep on large pieces of ice which had broken off from the pack were a number of walruses, groups of them lying huddled together. There they rested quietly, turning their grave eyes towards the ship, but taking no other notice until she came within a few yards, when they got up and tumbled into the water.

Captain Hardy called for his rifle, and, pointing at one of the largest, was about to fire, when a young walrus jumped upon the back of his intended prey. A natural pity prevented him from killing mother and young with the same shot ; he lowered his rifle, the animal jumped into the sea, cuddled the little one under her arms, and the next minute not a walrus was to be seen.

" I am glad you did not kill the poor thing," said Oriana.

Captain Hardy smiled. " I must not be so tender-hearted another time, for these creatures

make capital meat—‘marine beef,’ as sailors call it.”

And indeed the men, who had been hoping to enjoy a little roast beef, as a change from the perpetual boiled salt meat and boiled preserved meats, looked rather disappointed as the walruses disappeared.

The breeze began to freshen ; topgallant sails were ordered to be taken in, and some men went aloft for the purpose. It was troublesome work ; the sails were frozen hard like boards, ropes were stiff almost as iron bars, and encrusted with icicles.

So it happened that what would have been in ordinary weather five minutes’ work for a few men, now occupied the whole watch for an hour. At last the sails were furled after a fashion—for they bulged out in a manner that would have driven a smart first lieutenant in the Channel Fleet distracted—and the men began to creep down the slippery shrouds.

When half-way down, a young foretop-man lost his footing ; for a moment he hung by his hands, but his fingers, numbed by cold, had no

power, and he fell, striking the lower rigging once, and then rebounding into the water.

So far fortunate ; he struck the surface in a spot where it was clear of ice, and no limbs were broken ; but he was terribly weighed down by heavy Arctic clothing, and things looked bad as he floated astern.

Captain Hardy had taught his men to work quickly and smartly—man-of-war fashion ; and almost before the echoes of the cry—"A man overboard !" had died away, Mr. Winton, with a picked crew, had jumped into a whale-boat, lowered her, and were pulling hard to the rescue.

"We shall save him," said the chief officer, seeing the man's head still above the water. "Give way, boys."

The boat's crew needed no urging. Scarce a minute passed before the whaler had reached the spot ; but the head had disappeared. Winton peered down into the water. There was the poor fellow, the weight of whose clothes had at last dragged him down ; but he was not yet a yard below the surface. Taking

up a boat-hook, Winton thrust it into the water. Missed? No: "Hurrah! I have him!" And the drowning man, whom the boat-hook had caught under the arm, was pulled up, and lifted into the boat.

Meanwhile, the proceedings had been anxiously watched from the "Undaunted," and great was the joy on board when it was seen that the man was picked up. Blankets were got ready, and spread before the galley fire. The boat came alongside.

"Is he alive?" asked Captain Hardy.

"I don't think he is dead, sir," said Winton; "but he is regularly frozen."

The sailor was carried up the side as stiff as a piece of ice. So much colder was the air than the sea, that soon after the man was taken out of the water, his arms became fastened to his sides, and his legs frozen together, as if forming one block of ice.

With great care he was gradually *thawed*, rubbed well with warm blankets; and after swallowing some hot brandy and water, colour came back to the cheeks, and the poor fellow



"HURRAH! I HAVE HIM!"



Oriana keeps the First Watch. 73

seemed none the worse for his transformation into an icicle.

This had been an exciting day ; and in the ordinary course of things most persons would have been glad to light their bedroom candles, and go to sleep. But everything was extraordinary now. When evening came, or what should have been evening, it was still broad daylight, and the sun kept steadily above the horizon, evidently without the least intention of retiring for the night.

Oriana had gone to her cabin as soon as she heard that the rescued man was doing well. George was keeping the first watch. More than three hours of it had passed, and he was thinking how exceedingly long the last hour was, when some one touched his arm. It was Oriana. He began a remonstrance.

“Do you know it is nearly twelve o'clock ? You ought to be fast asleep.”

“I cannot sleep, it is so light ; and see, I have brought you some hot coffee.”

Well, the coffee was certainly very nice ; and as the wind had again gone down, and the

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on, night after night, with no one to admire or to thank Him for it !”

“ Perhaps,” said George, “ there are beings here, although we are not able to see them. I will tell you something I used to read :—

“ Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep :
All these, with ceaseless praise, His works behold
Both day and night.’

“ And now, you really shall not stay on deck any longer. Come.”

She went below at last, very reluctantly ; and as she turned round at the cabin door to give him a good-night kiss, she exclaimed—

“ I hope we shall stop in this beautiful north a long, long time !”

Poor child ! she had her wish.





CHAP. VIII.—SPLICING THE MAIN-BRACE.

A VERY different scene from the quiet loveliness of the preceding night broke upon Falkland's view when he turned out the next morning.

Sleet and snow dashed into his face as he stepped on the quarter-deck. A gale had sprung up ; the ship was beset with ice, through which, undaunted as her name, she struggled hard to force a passage.

It was emphatically what is called by sailors "dirty weather ;" not a particularly heavy gale, and with an open sea there would have been no danger. But from the mast-head, far as the eye could reach in every direction, only ice was visible. The ship was in a little lane of water, and loose pieces of floe were dashed violently against her by the force of the wind.

With perfect coolness and seamanship Captain Hardy manœuvred the ship, tacking through the narrow channels, backing and filling in order to keep clear of the huge floating masses, contact with which would be destruction.

At one time, the fate of the "Undaunted" seemed sealed. An immense berg, on which the ice lay piled up high as the mast-head, came speeding towards them. On it rushed; there seemed no way of escape; scarce a spot of clear water could be seen.

Captain Hardy knew well how imminent was the danger; and calling out to Mr. Winton to get some provisions on deck at once, in case the ship should be nipped, he ran forward. Casting a hurried look on the barrier that fronted him, to see if there might be a possibility of piercing it anywhere, it struck him that the ice appeared less firm and wall-like on the port bow.

It was the only chance. He gave the order in quick tones to the quartermaster at the wheel—

"Starboard your helm."

A sudden gust of wind at the moment gave the "Undaunted" more impetus ; the bows struck the ice at the desired spot with a crash that made the ship's bell ring, and threw the men who were on deck off their legs.

"All lost !" thought the captain, as, turning round, he saw the oncoming floe already towering above the stern.

But no ; his first judgment was right. The ice in front really consisted of pieces not firmly joined together. It began to give way ; the gale forced the ship along ; and the ice, closing again round her stern, formed a welcome barrier against the vagaries of her dangerous neighbours.

Falkland, who was quite able to understand the peril which had menaced the ship, now breathed freely again. He managed to run below, and tell Oriana that the danger was past ; but that was the only glimpse he had of her during the day. No sooner was the ship relieved from one critical position than a new one occurred. Often Captain Hardy tried to gain some clear lane of water which opened

out in front, but before the ship could reach the little channel it disappeared, blocked up by masses of ice.

Although the wind blew fiercely, yet so completely ice-locked were they that nothing but ripples disturbed the water ; nor was there any of the heaving swell which never rests in other seas, however smooth may be the surface.

Neither captain nor chief officer left the deck all through that anxious day. A few of the men were allowed to go below in turns to get some dinner ; and in the afternoon, seeing that all hands were pretty well worn out, Captain Hardy gave the welcome order—

“ Splice the main-brace.”

The men gave half a cheer when they heard the pipe, the restraint of discipline alone prevented it being a whole one. Soon was heard the noise of the cooper striking the hollow cask to start the bung—sound more musical in the ears of “ Jack ” than any

“ Woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree.”

Then, having swallowed their bumper of grog, the sailors, wiping their mouths with

their hands, went on deck with beaming faces, caring nought for gale or iceberg, and hauled the frozen ropes about as if they had been silken threads.

Towards evening the gale abated, the sky became clear and bright ; and Captain Hardy, in order to give his men a good night's rest, got the ice-anchors out, and made the ship fast to a large floe.

George was keeping the second dog-watch (from six to eight) with Stanlake ; and after talking about the day's adventures, remarked, laughing—

“ How wonderfully the men worked after splicing the main-brace. But that grog is nasty stuff. I put my lips to some to see how it tasted.”

“ And I hope you never will like it,” said Stanlake. “ I don't say but what it's necessary sometimes—upon a day like this, for instance—although even then I would rather have a basin of hot coffee.”

“ You have grog in the navy, though ?”

“ Yes ; and it is what I have seen in the

navy that makes me think sometimes it's almost better to be a teetotaller ; and yet the people of that sort that I have seen marching about Portsmouth streets, with bands and banners, always looked pale about the 'gills' somehow. However, that's neither here nor there. The real mischief was, that in the service a man could always get drunk regularly once in the week."

"How was that ? I thought there was only a small daily allowance for each person."

"So there is ; but, you see, it's managed in this way. We are divided into messes of about a dozen men. Well, the dinner grog is mixed in a big tub—three waters and one rum—and drank fairly, each man having his own allowance. Ah ! and very good the navy rum is ;" and Stanlake smacked his lips at the remembrance.

"Oh ho ! I don't think there's much chance of your turning teetotaller, after all."

"Perhaps not. Of course that glass at dinner is all very well. There is no beer ; and water on board ship doesn't go down very

nicely with salt junk. But there is a bad lower-deck custom, which gives the cook of the mess the whole of the supper grog; and, of course, it makes him half stupid."

"Is he able to turn in afterwards?"

"No; and now comes the mischief. Directly supper is over, there is the pipe to quarters, and then 'reef topsails.' The poor fellow swallows the grog to the last drop—it is no use leaving any, for the master-at-arms would very soon confiscate the secret treasure—hurries on deck with his head swimming, and hardly able to see out of his eyes. You may fancy what happens."

"You mean he falls from aloft?"

"Yes; there are more men lost overboard during the after-supper 'reef topsails' than at any other time, storm or calm. Of course, the captain of the top keeps his eyes open, and won't let the man lay out on the yard if he can help it. However, since I left the service, I hear that the supper grog is done away with altogether; and a good thing, too, in my mind."

Eight bells struck; the watch was over.

George went below, turned in, and slept soundly, after the hardest day's work his young life had ever known.

He rose the next morning without a trace of fatigue, and quite ready for another such day. In truth, the training George had gone through since he first set foot on board the "Undaunted" had strengthened him, body and mind. Nothing does a boy so much good as having constantly to face danger, and to think for himself. Altogether, George was a very different being from the youngster who left his father's rectory five short months ago.

A dead calm succeeded the storm of the previous day. The snow-white floe to which the ship was made fast glittered in the sun's rays, and the ice broke up, leaving large pools of water, pure and blue as the sky above.





CHAP. IX.—THE ADVENTURE OF THE BEAR.

IN the early days of August the “Undaunted” passed Cape Barrow, in latitude $71^{\circ} 30'$ —the most northerly point of Russian North America. From thence, Captain Hardy tried to force a passage due north.

Sometimes there would be a sudden shift of wind, the ice would get looser, and a few miles be gained. Then again the pack would become close and firm ; ice-anchors and saws would go to work, boats be lowered down to tow, and after a hard day's incessant labour, the ship would have advanced perhaps half-a-mile, perhaps a dozen yards.

“We shall never get to the North Pole, or to Barrow's Straits either, in this way,” said the captain one evening to Winton, as they pored over the chart which lay on the cabin table.

“I am quite sure of it, sir,” answered the chief officer. “Captain M’Clure met with the same impenetrable barrier when he tried the same thing.”

George was in a corner of the cabin sitting with Oriana, and began to fear (quite unnecessarily) that Captain Hardy was thinking of giving in; so he put in his oar—“But Captain M’Clure did get farther north after all, sir.”

“Oh yes, and so shall we,” said the captain, smiling; “only we must humour the ice, and turning eastward, coast along the land, where it will be, I hope, much looser.”

“How far north has any one ever been, sir?”

“Parry reached latitude 82° 45’ in sleighs from Spitzbergen, and no one has since approached so near to the North Pole. He was disappointed at not getting farther; but he found a strong southerly current; so that after travelling all day painfully over broken ice, he frequently had not really advanced a yard, or had even been carried backwards, just like the Irishman’s pig, you know—one step forward and two back.”

Altering the ship's course, Captain Hardy now steered east, keeping the northern coast of the American continent generally in sight. Capital progress was made for several days. The mighty Mackenzie River; which empties itself into the Polar Sea, was passed, and the next afternoon the ship anchored about two miles off the land.

"Now, Falkland," said the captain, "if you would like a run on shore, you may go in the whaler with Mr. Winton. Take Miss St. Clare with you; it will do her good."

Oriana danced with joy when she heard she was going; at least she tried to do so, but made rather a mess of it, the deck being slippery. She scorned help as she ran down the ship's side into the boat. Two or three rifles were handed down for the benefit of any quarrelsome natives that might be met with; and the boat's crew, as glad to get out of the ship as the officers were, gave way with a will.

Landing was rather difficult, the whaler grounding on the mud some way off shore. Falkland, who had on a thick pair of sea-boots

coming high over his knees—and was rather proud of them too—jumped out with the men, and together they managed to haul the boat a few yards closer in. Then she again stuck fast.

“Now, then, Miss St. Clare,” said Winton; “I daresay Falkland would like to carry you on shore; he thinks himself strong enough for anything now. But as I should not like to see you taking a cold bath in this half-frozen mud, you must please entrust yourself to me.”

The chief officer took the laughing girl in his strong arms, and, after one or two slips, deposited his burden safe and dry upon the beach.

What a treat it was to run about upon the grass! There was plenty of short grass upon the level ground, and for some time the whole party behaved very like schoolboys on a half-holiday—the sailors shouting, skylarking, and playing leap-frog.

Then, leaving one man in charge of the boat, they started in quest of adventures, determined to find *something*—seals, reindeer, Esquimaux, white bears, it mattered not which.

A dark object lying on the beach some distance off first attracted their attention. Winton, who had a rifle in his hand, looked carefully.

“That is a seal. Take the other rifle, Falkland, and come quietly with me ; we must try to dodge round, and cut him off from the water.”

Now, Stanlake, who was a trained “Excellent” seaman-gunner, had amused himself during the passage out by teaching George the rifle and cutlass drill ; and the boy, delighted with the chance, proved himself an apt scholar, and a capital shot. It was an ordinary evening’s amusement in the “Undaunted” to throw bottles overboard, and take flying shots as they floated astern. George rarely missed this difficult target ; and once, after smashing three in succession as they bobbed up and down on the tops of the waves, Captain Hardy dubbed him a “three-bottle man.”

So the boy, rifle in hand, felt ready for anything as he followed Winton. The boat’s crew were told to remain where they were ; but Oriana went with the officers, promising to

keep quiet and out of harm's way in Falkland's wake.

Oriana's bright eyes were sharp—sharper than her friends'. When they came a little closer, she said—

“The seal does not move, he must be dead ; but there is something alive on the other side of him—a white seal, I suppose, but how very much larger !”

“A white seal !” exclaimed Winton ; “it is a bear !”

A bear, indeed, it was, feasting on a seal he had killed. Raising his head, he looked up at the disturbers of his peace, evidently uncertain what to do. Then, making up his mind that discretion was the better part of valour, he uttered a short growl, and began to make off.

“What a cowardly beast !” said Winton, as he gave chase and fired.

A capital shot. The bear, who had been going along at a good round pace, rolled over, executing a complete somersault.

“Hurrah ! he is down !” cried George.

Winton stopped to reload, calling out—“Take

care ; I don't believe that shot has finished him."

But the boy, eager with excitement, was already within ten yards of the bear. Suddenly the huge brute gathered himself up, turned round, and, with a loud roar, rushed open-mouthed on his rash pursuer.

George stopped short, lifted his rifle, and, quivering with excitement, was about to pull the trigger.

Had he done so, and only wounded the infuriated animal, his fate was certain. But at the moment, he caught sight of Oriana, who, unperceived by him, had been running almost by his side, and now, before she was able to pull up, was already several steps in advance.

There she stood, breathless, her hand stretched out as if to ward off the cruel death which seemed inevitable, her face colourless. Not a cry, not a sound came from the brave girl's pale lips, as George, with nerves steadied by *her* danger, now with careful aim fired.

The ball struck well between the eyes ; the bear fell at Oriana's feet.



CHAP. X.—BRUIN ASTONISHES THE OLD SAILOR.

THE boy and girl stood looking at their prostrate foe, George triumphant and happy, hardly believing that he had really killed a white bear; but she, girl-like, now that the danger was past, realised it the more vividly, and her heart was full of gratitude. Clinging to George's arm, and with the tears half inclined to fall, she said—

“I love you so much, George; and I shall always like to remember that you saved my life.”

“Then you must please to remember, at the same time, that you saved mine. If you had not been so brave, but had shrieked out, as most girls would have done, I am sure my rifle would have swerved aside, and Bruin would have had us to a certainty.”

“I don’t think I was so very frightened,” Oriana said, slowly; “at all events, not when the bear first turned round, for I knew you would save me in some way; but when he came so close that I fancied I felt his hot breath on my face—ah! then, it was horrible;” and the girl shuddered.

Winton now came up, congratulating Falkland warmly on the cool manner in which he had planted the finishing shot, and adding—

“The prize is yours—well won—and the skin too; but who would have thought that the youngest hand in the ship would shoot the first bear! Now, I wonder if any of the boat’s crew understand flenching.”

“What is flenching?” asked Oriana.

“The name given by whalers to a very ugly operation, Miss St. Clare. In fact, it is the art and mystery of skinning and cleaning off the blubber from Polar animals.”

“Oh, I don’t care about seeing that, thank you;” and Oriana turned away.

George made her wait while the bear was measured by the sailors, who had now joined

the party. Bruin was pronounced to be $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet long—"a regular monster," they cried.

"Indeed he is not," said Campbell, an old hand, who had made several whaling voyages from Dundee, and who brought out his words in a calm tone of superior knowledge, which made his listeners feel very small. "I mind the last time I was in Lancaster Sound, our captain killed one on the ice, 10 feet long, and weighing over 700 pounds. This is a baby compared to the likes of him." And he gave the animal a contemptuous kick.

A low growl came in return from the supposed dead Bruin.

"Eh! gude save us! What is that?" the startled Scotchman cried; and he jumped a good three yards off.

The sailors shouted with delight at the sudden discomfiture of their knowing messmate; while Winton, putting his rifle to the bear's ear, sent in a ball to extinguish the spark of life which had so unexpectedly lingered, but which probably had gone out with the final growl.

Oriana's eyes sparkled with fun, and she laughed as heartily as the sailors; but as Campbell came back, and, opening his knife, leaned over the bear, she walked away, thinking George would follow.

But George was a boy who, when under petticoat government, was scolded by nurses as always wanting to know "all about everything;" in fact, one of those pests of the nursery and schoolroom who are for ever asking questions, and however much he was snubbed, he began the next moment. His thirst for knowledge now was enough to keep him from Oriana's side while he watched Campbell setting to work.

It certainly was not nice; but the experienced old whaler knew his duty so well, and did the flenching so quickly, that in ten minutes poor Bruin was skinless. This feat quite reinstated the man in the good opinion of his messmates, who had been deeply interested in the operation.

Master Bear was then cut up, and some prime pieces selected to be carried on board;

Campbell saying, that as the animal was young, the meat would be good and tender.

“Now, I think we may make a fresh start for the interior,” said the chief officer ; “ unless the snow comes down too heavily.”

A gun from the ship decided the question. A second was fired a few minutes afterwards to enforce the signal, and the boat's recall hoisted at the fore mast-head.

“The captain is right,” remarked Winton ; “ there is dirty weather brewing.”

He might have said already brewed, for a storm sprang up so suddenly, with such heavy gusts of driving sleet and snow, that it was difficult to make way against it. George, as he helped Oriana along, had hard work to move ahead at all ; but at length, completely drenched, they reached the boat in safety, and gave way for the ship.

Captain Hardy was waiting at the gangway to receive them, rather anxious, the sound of the three rifle shots having reached his ears. He saw a large heap in the bows of the boat covered with snow.

“What have you got there, Mr. Winton? Not a dead Esquimaux, I hope?”

“No, sir; a white bear, killed by Mr. Falkland.”

When the captain heard the whole story, he only said a few words, but coming from him they were very precious to George.

“I am glad to find you can be cool in moments of danger, Falkland. It is easy enough to be brave when excited; anyone can be that; but by your presence of mind you saved both your own and Miss St. Clare’s life. And now you will have a story to tell your mother when you take that bear-skin home to the Rectory.”

George went below, changed his clothes, and was having a yarn with Stanlake—who, of course, wanted to know all about the bear, and was rather disappointed at losing the fun—when the steward came, with the captain’s compliments, to say that tea was waiting in the cabin.

Oriana was sitting at the table when Falkland went in, with a brilliant colour in her cheeks after the shore excursion, and looking

prettier than ever. Tea was ready, and soon the steward brought in a dish of steak, hot and savoury.

“Try that,” said Captain Hardy, helping his guests. “Eating bear must be pleasanter than being eaten.”

Oriana did not care much for the meat, which had rather a fishy flavour ; but George liked it well enough. The captain—who, like most naval men, had seen strange dishes in all parts of the globe, and had eaten rats and bird’s-nests in China, and roast iguana in South America—said it tasted something like a manati, or sea-cow, which he had once dined off on the Spanish main.

Captain Hardy excused George from night-watch, and sent him to bed early, thinking he had done enough in the last twenty-four hours.

Tired, indeed, the boy was ; but he woke up two or three times with horrid dreams, in which a monster bear was ever in the act of springing upon Oriana, while he pulled and pulled at the trigger of his rifle, which, with all his efforts, would *not* go off.



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Now again the ice surrounded the ship ; but the captain, determined to make his way, took advantage of any clear water that presented itself ; and getting steam up, forced a passage through the loose ice. At the small floes he

would drive the ship full tilt, breaking them up, and striking with such a shock, that often the "Undaunted" would be brought up short, trembling all over.

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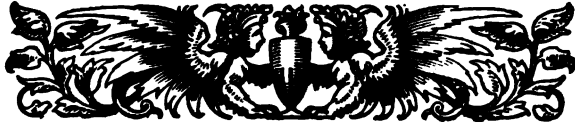
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CHAP. XII.—“OUR GOODLY SHIP IS GOING DOWN.”

THE boat was scarcely hoisted up to the davits, the last drop of the much-loved grog was still trickling down the throats of the boat's crew, the salmon on the fire was not yet cooked, George's numbed feet were still pricking and tingling as they thawed, when a heavy gale and snowstorm set in from the westward.

Fortunately, the ship was well sheltered by a point of land, and all hands were able to enjoy, without anxiety, the treat of fresh salmon for supper.

The wind howled, and the sleet dashed in icy showers upon the deck ; but below it was snug and warm, and the sounds overhead gave an additional zest to the comfortable feelings with which the officers sat down to the evening meal in their mess-place.

"Our goodly ship is going down." 111

"I wish," said Winton, as he helped the fish, "that the old days would come back—the good old times when salmon was so plentiful in England that servants refused to eat it oftener than three times a-week."

A tremendous gust made the ship tremble.

"I tell you what it is," said Stanlake, after a pause; "we are all very happy on board enjoying our supper; but if this gale had come on while the boats were among that broken ice, I doubt if we should have seen the old ship again."

The reflection made everyone grave for a minute; but "hairbreadth 'scapes" are part of the everyday life of sailors, and when over are soon forgotten. Not that Jack is ungrateful for his preservation, but he has enough to do in looking out for the next squall, and cannot lose time in thinking how well he weathered the last.

So the gravity was soon disturbed by Winton calling on Stanlake for a song—

"One of your real old navy songs now. I don't know what our fellows are coming to here. The other night I heard a man on the

forecastle drawling out a sentimental ditty about 'hearts and darts,' 'blisses and kisses,' only fit for a counter-jumper; I declare it almost made me sick."

"Almost as bad as my nose-rubbing friend on shore, I suppose," said George.

"A great deal worse, Master Falkland! Your Esquimaux only smelt of good honest blubber."

"And—dirt?" murmured George.

"Ah! well, perhaps we had better say no more about it. Strike up, Stanlake!"

"Very well," said the second officer. "When I first went to sea as a boy in the old 'Bellerophon,' I used to hear the midshipmen roaring out the chorus of this song so loud, that ten to one the first lieutenant, who was sitting overhead in the ward-room, ordered the master-at-arms to put the young gentlemen's lights out."

"Don't they sing it now, do you think?"

"No, they are getting something like your friend on the forecastle. Why, bless you, last time I was at Malta, even our boatswain never

missed an opera night, and often, when it was my middle-watch, he would come on board humming all sorts of Italian airs. Our captain was just behind him in a boat one night, and I heard him chuckling to himself, as the boatswain brought out something that sounded like 'Il segreto'—'Shade of Benbow! listen to that!'"

Stanlake struck up at last—

" 'Oh, we are the boys that fear no noise
When thundering cannons roar;
We go to sea for the yellow, yellow boys,
And spend them all on shore.'

I remember there was a tremendous chorus, something like—

" 'Then don't forget your old ship-mates;'

which always seemed the last straw that broke the first lieutenant's back.

" 'Oh, salt beef, salt beef is our relief,
And pork and biscuit fine;
While you on shore, with a great many more,
On dainty dishes dine.

" 'Oh, our hammocks are both wet and dry,
As on the deck we're lying;

While you on shore, with a great many more,
Soft feather-beds lie dry in.

“Oh, our goodly ship has sprung a leak,
Which puts us in a bother ;
For there's one at the wheel, and two at the pumps,
Abusing one another.

“Oh, our goodly ship is going down——”

“Stand by the best bower anchor! Let
go !”

The ominous word of command, sounding from the upper deck, brought the song to a sudden end. Pulling their caps well down over their brows, the officers rushed on deck. The storm was raging furiously ; the cable had parted, and the ship was drifting. Barely could they stand against the wind ; and the blackness of the sky, and the thickly driving snow, added to the wildness of the scene.

The splash of the second anchor in the water as it fell was unheard amidst the roar of the tempest ; but the cable rattled out furiously. Then the captain gave the order to make fast the stoppers. Now came the critical moment—would the cable hold ? If it parted, no

human power could save the ship; she must be driven on that desolate coast, towards which, although it was hidden in the gloom, the eye involuntarily turned.

Every breath was held, every heart seemed to stop beating, as the "Undaunted," on reaching the end of her tether, was suddenly brought up with a shock that almost threw the crew off their feet.

Hark! was that the snapping of the cable? It surged out a few links, then held on bravely, while the ship trembled like a frightened thing, with the knowledge of the danger she had escaped.

"Thank God!" burst from the pent-up bosom of George Falkland.

"Thank God!" was echoed in a lower tone, and George felt a little hand stealing into his.

"I have been on the deck all the time, although you did not see me," said Oriana.

The brave girl had crouched for shelter under cover of the bulwarks, silently watching the ship drifting, as she thought, to destruction; and, although longing to run to Falkland for

protection, had remained quiet, fearing to be in the way, until now, when she crept to the boy's side.

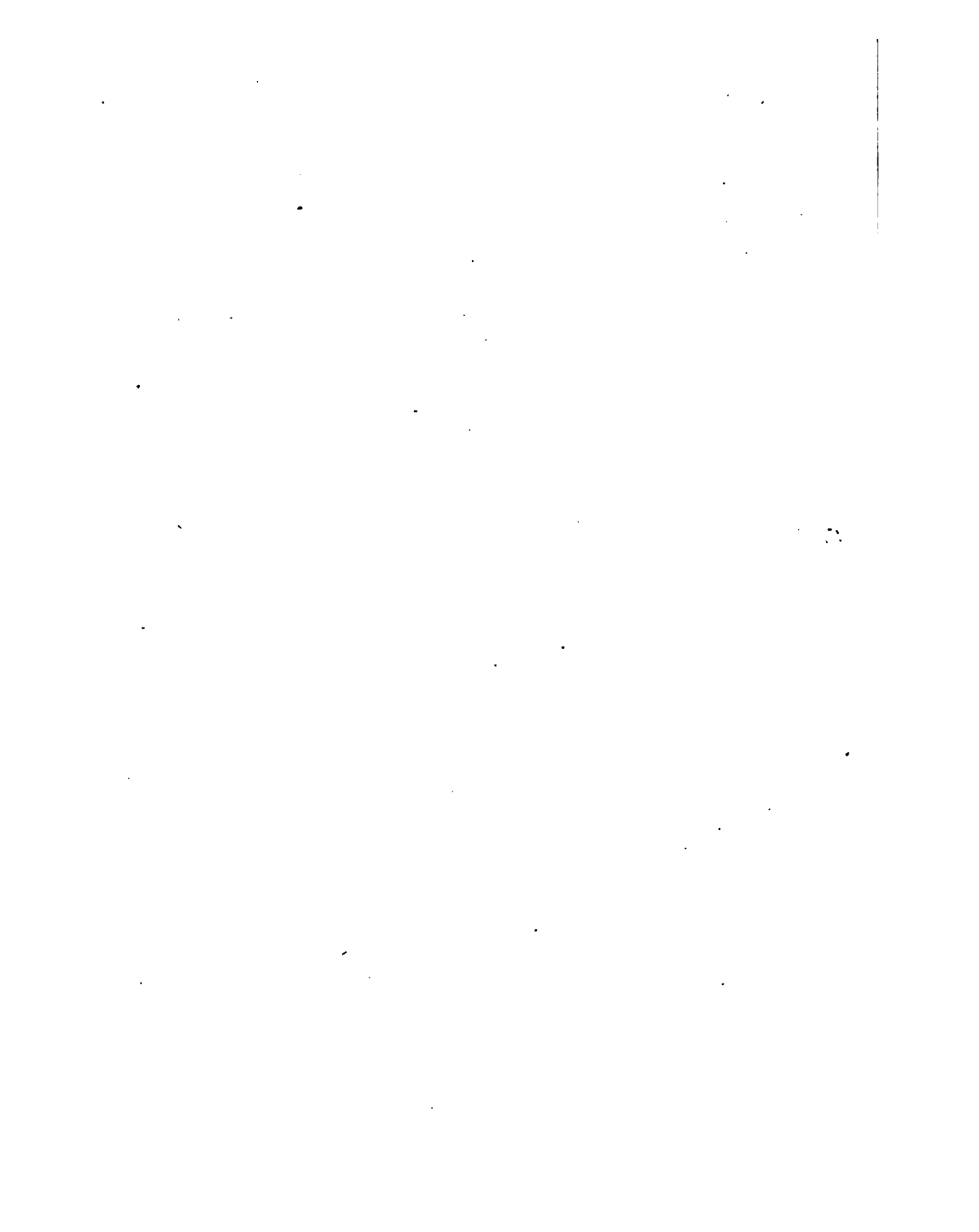
Captain Hardy told Falkland to take the shivering, drenched child below. They would far rather have stayed on deck, but obeyed orders, and spent the next two hours in momentary expectation of the cable parting, while the ship tugged and strained at her anchor like a startled horse struggling to get free.

It was a weary night, and the unusual gloom made the danger seem worse. The force of the wind sent heavy masses of ice careering madly over the water; and as they dashed against the bows, it seemed impossible that the ship should hold her own.

But honest English hearts and strong arms had welded the iron on which depended the safety of the gallant ship. Stoutly did anchor and cable bear the strain, until at length the gale began to abate; the clouds which had seemed almost to touch the mast-heads broke; light again cheered the hearts of the tired crew,



ORIANA ON DECK.



"Our goodly ship is going down." 117

and the icy storm of sleet no longer blinded their eyes.

Oriana had been silent for some time. As the light stole into the cabin, Falkland turned towards the face which was resting, child-like, on his shoulder, and was about to speak, when he saw that the eyes were closed: the fair girl had sunk to sleep in the midst of the storm. There was a peaceful smile on her face, and George would have endured anything rather than disturb that quiet slumber; but the sudden cessation of the noises which had lulled her to sleep awoke her, and she sat up.

"How quiet it is; the storm must be over."

"Yes; and you had better go to bed."

"Good night, then, dear George; or good morning—which is it? I never know the difference now."





CHAP. XIII.—A STRANGE SAIL AND A QUEER
SKIPPER.

“THE very best gale of wind that ever blew,” said Captain Hardy, as at noon the look-out man reported that the sea was clear of packed ice to the northward.

“Hands up anchor, Mr. Winton. ‘Gather we roses while we may!’ Which means, let us steer due north before the ice again closes round.”

“Ay, ay, sir.”

The cheerful twitter of the boatswain’s silver call made itself heard ; the men ran round with the capstan, the chain came rattling in, and the good anchor, which had so well done its duty, showed itself above the surface, with lumps of tenacious mud clinging to the flukes, to shew into what capital holding-ground its iron teeth had bit.

The sun shone out so brightly, that Falkland was glad to take off pea-jacket and sea-boots. Oriana, of course, was on deck enjoying the agreeable change; and altogether, as the ship sailed smoothly along, altering course occasionally to avoid the beautifully transparent icebergs of all sizes which floated on the clear water, it was the pleasantest day she had passed since the Polar Sea had been entered.

With a light breeze from the south-east the sails drew well. Cape Bathurst was left astern, and as it faded in the distance, land with snow-clad heights came in sight on the weather-bow.

"Those are Durham Heights on Baring Island," said Captain Hardy; "and now, keeping this land to our right, we shall, if all goes well, round its north-westerly corner and reach Barrow's Straits."

"And then," exclaimed George, "we shall turn the ship's head due east, and be really homeward bound!"

"Yes, we shall be homeward *bound*; but no one has yet found the straits free from ice, and

whether we shall get through and reach England that way is yet to be seen."

All went well for the rest of the day. A low point of land—Point Kellett, the captain called it—in lat. 72° N. was sighted and passed; the fair wind still held, and many miles northing were gained before it died away in the next morning watch.

George was at breakfast in the officers' mess-room, when an unusual commotion was heard overhead: being the youngest, he was sent on deck to find out the cause. The next moment he came running down, breathless—

"There is a strange sail in sight!"

Very little breakfast was eaten after this announcement. Cocoa and biscuits were left on the table; everybody was excited; and officers and men eagerly watched the stranger—a barque-rigged vessel with a screw—as she slowly approached under steam.

It was the only ship that had been sighted since Oriana's rescue from the sinking brig, and the men puzzled themselves with guessing what she might be—"a discovery ship, perhaps."

There was a little jealousy in that thought ; no one liked the idea of another vessel succeeding in making the North-West Passage at the same time as the "Undaunted."

"Hoist the ensign," said the captain.

The question was soon solved. Scarce had the glorious cross of St. George (for the "Undaunted" belonged to a yacht club authorised to carry the white ensign) waved languidly at the mast-head, when a flag was hoisted at the stranger's peak. The folds blew out, and disclosed the stars and stripes of the United States.

"An American whaler ; but very far away from their usual fishing-ground. Would you like to go on board with me, Falkland ?"

"Oh yes, sir, thank you !"

Would he not ! Had he not read old Captain Scoresby's account of the whale-fishery over and over again at home, until he almost knew the book—at all events, the anecdotes—by heart ?

The American stopped her engines ; the "Undaunted's" boat was lowered, and in a few

minutes Captain Hardy and George stood on the whaler's deck.

The boy's experience of ships was confined to the "Undaunted," where the captain's man-of-war instincts kept everything white and clean. He was rather taken aback, therefore, when, as he was climbing up the side, before he saw the decks, he *smelt* them. In fact, a lively reminiscence of his Esquimaux friend was wafted towards his olfactory nerves.

Yes, the smell was bad, but the sight was almost worse. The decks were covered with a thick coating of blubber and coal-dust; sawdust was sprinkled about to prevent the crew from slipping; and the slimy substance clung to the sole of the boot at each step.

The coal-bunkers had evidently been emptied to make more room for blubber, for there was a mass of coal piled round the main-mast. The quarter-deck was crowded up with whalebone; and everywhere, on masts, on sails, on rigging, on deck, on casks, on whalebone, was the same coating of grease and dirt.

The captain—a tall Yankee, with not much

the cut of a sailor about him, although probably his looks belied his knowledge—received the English visitors cordially, speaking in a peculiar drawl, which was new to George, and always laying emphasis on the small words and the closing syllable of a sentence.

“ You are welcome on board the ‘Minnehaha,’ captain.” Then turning to George—“ Guess you don’t like the blubber, young gentleman.”

George, who had slipped on the deck as he stepped on board, and by no means improved his personal appearance, laughed as he shook hands—

“ Oh no, I don’t mind it at all, thank you. I always wanted to see a whaler; and I am very glad you have been lucky, and that the ‘Minnehaha’ is not a ‘clean ship.’ ” *

“ Clean ship! No, she is well nigh as full as she can hold. One more fish will fix us; but if we don’t get it at once, I shall ’bout ship and steam away for Behring’s Straits before the ice nips us for the winter.”

* A ship that has not succeeded in capturing a single whale.

“ You think the season is getting late ? ” asked Captain Hardy.

“ Well, to-morrow will be the first of September ; and if any man wants to sit at his own fireside this winter, I calculate his ship’s head should be pointing home by that day. But it’s dry work talking ; come below, strangers, and liquor.”

George stayed on deck, while Captain Hardy went down to the cabin (which was just as black as the upper deck) with his host, who, calling his doctor and introducing him, covered the table with no end of different bottles, and was apparently inclined to make a night—or a day—of it.

“ Come, captain, you don’t drink. Well, you shall have some coffee if you like, but it’s wishy-washy stuff when you are near the North Pole.”

He was a kind-hearted man, this Yankee skipper ; had made many voyages, and knew the Polar Seas well ; although he said he had never been so far east as to sight Baring’s Island before. When he discovered that the

“Undaunted” was bound east, instead of returning by Behring’s Straits, he tried hard to persuade Captain Hardy to give up the attempt.

“You Britishers can do a great deal, I allow. In fact, there is only one thing you can’t do, and that is, to lick the United States; but no ship has ever made that passage yet, and my opinion is that no ship ever will. Take my advice now, captain, and turn back with me.”

“There is one thing alone would make me do that,” said Captain Hardy, “and that is, the thought of a dear little girl we have on board. However, if the worst comes to the worst, a winter in the ice won’t do her much harm.”

“You will have to winter in the ice to a *moral*. And that’s not all; you may be fast in the pack for a second winter, or a third.”

“Will you come and look after me if I am?” Captain Hardy asked, laughing.

“That will I, and here is my hand to it. If I am in these waters next August, see if I don’t steam slick up Banks’ Strait after you. I like

your pluck, captain ; and I wish you heartily a better voyage than I think you'll get."

While the two skippers were having their yarn, George was happy enough on deck, making friends with the American crew, and asking all sorts of questions about the whale-fishery.

The "Minnehaha" carried six boats, and each boat had its whale-lines—nearly half-a-mile long, the men said—and two harpoons. One of these weapons, to be thrown by hand, was of a size and shape that George knew well ; but the other, a shorter one, belonged to a harpoon-gun fixed in the bows of the boat—a modern innovation, which would have made Scoresby open his eyes.

"Do you think you are likely to see any whales about here?" said George to one of the mates, who had been very friendly in showing him everything.

"We don't call them whales, on board, but fish."

"But a whale is not a fish, you know," replied George.

“So a gentleman, that called himself a natural—leastways, a naturalist—told me one day; but what could he know about them? He had never seen a dozen swimming about at once, as I have.”

George laughed. “Everything that swims is not a fish. A duck swims.”

The mate looked posed, scratched his head, and declined pursuing the subject any further.

“Well, never mind. We’ve had great luck this voyage, and as the skipper declares this is our last day’s fishing, who knows but one will turn up yet. The sooner the better, for the ice is beginning to close round.”

As the mate spoke, there was a hail from the crow’s nest—“Fish right ahead!”





CHAP. XIV.—“DOWN, DOWN, BENEATH THE
DEEP.”

THE whaler's men had been lounging about the deck talking and laughing with the English boat's crew; but the cry from aloft acted like magic. The American skipper rushed from the cabin without his hat, followed by Captain Hardy; all was bustle and excitement; and in a few minutes three boats were in the water, pulling hard in the direction pointed out.

A fourth boat was manned alongside, into which the mate was stepping, when he turned round to Falkland.

“Can you pull an oar, mister?”

“Yes, to be sure I can.”

“Well, then, if you would like to see a *fish*

struck—not a whale, you know—you may come with me.”

“I will never say anything but ‘fish’ all my life!” exclaimed George, delighted.

To get Captain Hardy’s permission, and to seat himself on one of the thwarts, oar in hand, was the work of a moment.

There were six persons in the boat besides the mate, three oars of a side. The bow oar acted as harpooner, and the duty of the “stroke” was to attend to the running out of the lines. There was no rudder, the mate using an oar instead, so that the boat’s head could be twisted round in an instant out of the way of danger.

“Give way,” said the mate; and the boat followed in the wake of the others.

For half-an-hour the boats had pulled steadily without seeing anything, when the mate called out—

“There’s the fish! Hold hard, boys!”

George, looking round, saw three or four whales a little way ahead. In silence the boats’ steerers sculled towards them; but so bright and sunny was the day, that there was

no getting close; the wary creatures quickly disappeared with a splash of their huge tails.

One of the boats fired, but it was too long a shot.

“Missed,” said the mate, before the puff of smoke cleared away.

“How could you tell at this distance?” asked Falkland.

“She shewed no flag. Directly a fish is struck, the fast boat hoists a jack; and when another boat has made fast, she shews *her* jack. You will see ours flying soon, I reckon, if that fish comes up near about where I calculate. Pull a few strokes, boys. That will do.”

The mate was right in his calculations; the whale rose close to the boat. In a moment the gun was fired, and the harpoon quivering deep in the monster's back.

Down went the fish, taking the line out with such a rush, that the bollards round which it was coiled smoked with the friction, keeping George well at work pouring water over them.

It was a grand moment of excitement: the flag was hoisted; the men, half-frantic, shouted

—“A fall! a fall!” while a second boat, pulling up, at once made her lines fast to those in the first. Both boats were now dragged violently along; the line in the first soon ran out, half of that in the other one was gone, when a third rowed up and made fast.

Suddenly the line slacked; the fish rose to the surface a long way ahead, and began to blow, or, as the men called it, to “blast.” The water the poor brute threw up was tinged with blood, a sure sign that he was seriously wounded.

There was a sharp race among the boats, and to George’s great delight—who was as excited as any of the crew—his was the first to reach the whale. The hand-harpoon was raised.

“Stand by to back hard,” shouted the mate. “He will be dangerous when he gets that.”

The harpoon was launched. As it struck, the men backed; but before the boat was clear, the maddened fish flung his tail violently out of the water, and brought it down with terrific force full upon the bows. The boat capsized, and sunk in a moment.

George, 'entangled with the lines, was dragged down head-foremost. He struggled hard to free himself. In vain—down, down, he went; so deep, that the light of heaven could no longer penetrate the darkness of the waters. Ah! it was horrible thus to die—caught, as it were, in a net. The line slacked—with a frantic effort he tore it off—he was free, and rising to the surface. But oh, should he ever live to reach the top! This dreadful feeling of suffocation; how could he hold on! And yet, if he but once gasped, he was lost. Each moment of endurance seemed an age; but lighter and lighter grew the water as he gradually rose, until at last his head was free; he drew a long breath—he was saved.

The crew of the sunken boat had been already rescued by their friends, and the American sailors were heartily glad to see George make his re-appearance.

“Thank God, you are safe!” said the mate, as he lifted the breathless boy out of the water. “I gave you up for lost, and should never have forgiven myself for bringing you.”

Falkland's teeth were chattering after his cold bath, as well they might; but he took a long pull out of his friend's flask, and felt all right again.

The boat that had picked up George now joined her consorts, who were keeping as close as they dared to the unfortunate fish, which was floundering wildly, having already received three harpoons in his side, and many lance wounds.

Soon the "Minnehaha" steamed up, the skipper and Captain Hardy, wild with anxiety, having witnessed the disaster. Their fears being set at rest, the end of the line was passed on board from the third boat, and made fast in the ship. Scarcely had this been done, when the whale started off at a tremendous rate; he slackened his pace on feeling the strain; but such was his size and strength, that he towed the three boats and the ship at the rate of four knots an hour.

It was dangerous work for the boats; many floating pieces of ice were about, but by skilful steering and management any complete smash

was avoided—the harpooner keeping axe in hand, in readiness to cut the line in a moment.

“This can’t last long,” said the mate; “look at the water alongside.”

And as George looked, he saw it coloured deep with blood.

A shout from the foremost boat—the hunted creature was again in sight. The line slackened as he rose; a well-aimed harpoon was planted, and, amidst loud cheers from boats and ship, the whale turned over and died.

When George was tolerably comfortable again, in dry clothing lent by the Yankee skipper, he looked on while the unwieldy bulk of the prize was towed alongside, tail foremost.

The steam-winch was set at work, and the immense length of line hauled in—a great improvement on the old-fashioned way of taking it in, dripping and half-frozen, by hand. Then the whale was hoisted up by tackles, level with the deck, the bulwarks being cleared away, and the flensing began.

Men armed with peculiarly shaped spades, and with iron spikes on their boots, got on the

carcase, and set to work by cutting long strips of blubber, and throwing them on deck ; while another party cut the blubber with knives into pieces about two feet square, passed them down the hatchway, and stowed them away between decks.

“ Dirty work this,” remarked Captain Hardy.

“ Rather,” said the American skipper ; “ but not half so bad as the ‘ making off ’ will be. All this blubber has to come on deck again in a day or two, to be cut into small bits, and stowed away in the tanks.”

“ What is about the value of a whale of that size ? ”

“ Well, that’s the biggest fish we have taken this voyage—the crittur must be between fifty and sixty feet long ; what should *you* think she is worth, now ? ”

“ Oh, I am sure I cannot guess,” said Captain Hardy, laughing.

“ That fish, sir, will yield about twenty tons of oil, and I calculate my owners won’t make a cent less than five thousand dollars ; that’s a thousand pounds in your British money.”

“Not at all a bad day’s work. And now I will say good-bye, and wish you a quick voyage home.”

“Good-bye to *you*, sir. You brought us good luck to-day ; and see if I don’t pick you out of the ice next ‘fall,’ as sure as my name is Melchisedec Squash.”

George shook hands heartily with his friend the mate, and jumped down into the boat, followed by Captain Hardy. In a few minutes the “Undaunted” was reached, the boat hoisted up, and, dipping their ensigns in graceful salute, the vessels parted company ; the American steaming away to the westward for Behring’s Straits, and the English ship slowly making her way through the broken ice, with prow pointing due north.





CHAP. XV.—HOPES OF THE NORTH-WEST
PASSAGE.

WHEN George Falkland returned on board the "Undaunted," he tried to get below quietly without being seen, and have a good wash. There was no disguising the fact that he was not clean or nice—or sweet, said his nose.

Oriana was too quick ; she ran to welcome him.

"I am so glad that you are come back at last. But what is the matter ? and why are you wearing such funny clothes ?"

George had refused to take Oriana's hand, and resolutely kept his own behind his back. Besides, Captain Squash being a tall, thin Yankee, at least a foot higher than the English

boy, it cannot be said that the clothes were a good fit, or indeed very becoming.

“If you will not come quite so close, Oriana, I will tell you.”

She retreated a little; and the expression of her face showed that she was beginning to smell something stronger than the *Ghost* in “Hamlet” did when he moaned—

“Methinks I scent the *morning air*.”

George turned back the long sleeves of his borrowed coat, which hung far over the tips of his fingers, and displayed his hands.

“You would not think that I have already had one bath since leaving the ship?” and he ran below.

Falkland had been looking forward to a pleasant evening with Oriana, when he would tell her his adventure with the whale; but the day’s work and the ducking proved too much for him. After a bath he sat down in the mess-place, feeling dead beat. Winton, coming in at the time, saw the position of affairs, made him drink a hot cup of tea, and sent him to his hammock.

The next day George was ill and feverish. Captain Hardy came to see the patient, and immediately removed him to a spare sleeping-berth in his own cabin, where Oriana installed herself as nurse.

A very dear little nurse she made. And when in a couple of days George began to get better—feeling only very weak and unfit for work—he rather enjoyed the novelty, and would lie still for an hour watching Oriana as she sat by his side at work with an amusing gravity in her face.

Meanwhile, the “Undaunted” was steadily making her way to the North. The immense field of packed and floe ice, which had broken up for a short space of time, was gradually reforming; but between it and the shores of Baring Island there was still tolerably clear water.

The land was barren and uninteresting; low points of land jutting out here and there, which were successively passed with a fair wind, until at length, on the 7th September, Cape Prince Alfred was reached.

George, on that day, was up and dressed, although he had not yet gone on deck. He would have gone had Captain Hardy allowed him, knowing how much depended upon the state of the ice after this cape was rounded. The captain had been often in and out of the cabin during the day, and remarked the last time he left—

“In half-an-hour we shall know whether we are likely to make the North-West Passage this year or not.”

The chart was on the table, and patient and nurse knew exactly the position of the ship. On rounding the cape she would be in Banks' Strait, and if that was clear of ice, there was nothing to prevent the “Undaunted” from sailing east, and coming out through Barrow's Strait and Lancaster Sound, into Baffin's Bay.

The listeners in the cabin waited anxiously for some sign from the deck. Suddenly a loud and joyous cheer arose. Stanlake ran down the companion ladder, and put his head inside the cabin door—

“It is all right; we have got round the cape

and altered course to E.N.E., and there is clear water ahead as far as we can see."

The kind-hearted mate having delivered this bit of news, hurried on deck again to his duty.

"That is capital," said Oriana, clapping her hands; "and now each mile that we sail brings us nearer home."

But the word, as it fell from the girl's lips, brought back the remembrance of her lost father. Her high spirits fled at once.

"I don't know why I should care about getting to England. There is no home for me. Oh, George, George, I am so miserable!" and the poor child wept.

Oriana's perfect loneliness in the world had never struck Falkland so much before. He had been very sorry for her when her father died; then seeing her gradually become more cheerful when he was with her, he, with a boy's selfishness, lost sight of her desolate condition, and fancied she had also forgotten it.

In his own mind, George considered, as a matter of course, that she would go to Tyne-

ford, but would have been puzzled to give any reason for coming to such a conclusion. And now, as he tried to soothe Oriana, and talked about her going "home" with him, she, as the summer tempest of grief passed off, saw, with a girl's superior acuteness, the half-absurdity of the idea. Smiling before the tears were dried, she said—

"You dear old George, how do you know that your father or mother would have me? *You* like me, I know; but why should they? They would only think me a sort of half-wild Spanish girl, a great trouble in the house."

George did feel, when the question was put in such a prosaic way, that his family might not share his enthusiasm; and his face rather fell. But a thought struck him, and he brightened up a little.

"When they know how you have nursed me, they will make you come."

Oriana actually laughed at this.

"Now, you *are* a goose; why, you have not been so very ill, Master George.; and I don't know that scolding a boy when he declines

taking his beef-tea at the proper hour gives the nurse any special claim to live ever after in his father's house. But indeed"—and now she grew serious, and the blood mantled in the fair cheeks, as, clasping her hands, she exclaimed, with a fervour more Spanish than English—"I wish, I wish I could do you some great service, and really save your life. Oh, that would make me happy!"

Captain Hardy now came below in capital spirits.

"If this wind and weather only holds on for a week, our friend Melchisedec Squash will have some difficulty in finding the 'Undaunted' next year—unless he follows the ship to England."

Falkland was able to return to duty the following morning, although he was still excused night-watch. The first thing he noticed on going on deck, was the different character of the land on this the northern shore of Baring Island. On the western coast it was generally low, with a shelving beach; but here the land was bold and high, hill

after hill rising above each other in the interior, with intervening ravines and water-courses.

All was generally barren, with occasional patches of green in the valleys. Ice had closed in to the northward, and the captain's hopes were not quite so high as on the previous day. Still, there was a clear lane of water between the ice and the coast-line, and through this the ship steadily pursued her course, the deep water allowing her to keep so close in shore, that, in sailor's parlance, "you could pitch a biscuit upon it."

The sun shone bright; the water was clear and smooth; the ice very beautiful—now clear as crystal, now tinted with blue, now flashing back the sun's rays, like myriads of diamonds. The only sound was the gentle ripple of the water at the bows. Oriana, who had been looking over the side in silence for a long time, whispered—

"It is like a scene in fairyland."

"You mean that the sea is? But just come across to the starboard side and tell me what

the actual land is like ; there are some inhabitants, but not exactly fairies."

A huge white bear on a projecting point of land lifted his head as the ship passed, but did not trouble to move.

"Perhaps he is gorged with seals," said George ; "we passed some just now."

Presently several more bears were seen ; then a herd of reindeer, who bounded off frightened ; then seals basking in the sunshine, who gazed half-wonderingly out of their big round eyes.

But neither for deer nor for seal would Captain Hardy linger. Time was too precious ; and, as aided by an easterly current the ship sailed smoothly on, and still the lane of water kept clear, he walked the poop, stealthily rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

Thus Cape Crozier was reached—a fine bold headland, about the most northerly point of Baring Island—and then the following day, farther still to the eastward, Point Back.



CHAP. XVI.—THE BONES OF THE DISCOVERY SHIP.

WHEN off Point Back, the “Undaunted” was becalmed; and as the easterly current in the straits was running two or three knots an hour, carrying with it immense masses of ice, Captain Hardy, not liking to trust his vessel without steerage way to the pack, made fast with ice-anchors to a large floe which had grounded.

Here the ship lay tolerably snug. Inside of her was a bay some twelve miles in depth, clear of ice.

“We are in historical waters now,” said Captain Hardy—“that is Mercy Bay, inside which Captain M’Clure wintered during the adventurous voyage when he discovered the North-West Passage.”

“Is that the place where his ship was abandoned?” asked Falkland.

“Yes; the ‘Investigator’ entered the bay in September, 1851, and never again quitted it. Her gallant captain and crew left her at last in June, 1853, and, passing over the ice in sledges, gained Cape Hay, on the opposite side of Banks’ Strait, in nine days.”

“I suppose no one has seen her since?”

“Yes; an officer and party of men from another expedition visited the bay just twelve months afterwards. They found the tattered remains of the white ensign and pendant still flying at the mast-head; the snow had drifted so high that they walked on board over the gunwale, and the deck was nearly blocked up; oakum was hanging loosely out of the seams, and the water had leaked through until the hold was full of solid ice. One fact was ascertained which must have been a satisfaction to the ‘Investigator’s’ officers, as it proved they were justified in abandoning her—the ice which enclosed the ship had not once moved.”

George felt quite sorry as he pictured to him-

self the gallant ship deserted and left to perish in that desolate bay, and he wondered whether anything yet was left of her.

“Nothing, I should think,” the captain said. “No doubt, as the water gained on her, she gradually sunk, and at last went down at her anchors. However, I am going to send Mr. Winton to take a look round the bay, and you may go in the boat with him.”

It is needless to state that when George, on going below for an extra coat, told Oriana of the intended expedition, she wanted to make one of the party. But Captain Hardy, as he was not going himself and the fine weather seemed breaking up, kept her on board.

“Never mind, George,” she said; “you will have a story to tell when you come back. You already have achieved the adventure of the bear, the adventure of the whale, and the adventure of—what shall we call it?—the rubber of noses; and now, there will be another to add to the long roll of your knightly deeds. Good-bye.”

Evidently Oriana had profited by the stories with which George whiled away the evenings

in the cabin—'Morte d' Arthur,' and the life of the valiant knight of La Mancha, being especial favourites.

The whale-boat was soon lowered, and ready alongside. Winton and Falkland jumped down, a couple of rifles were handed in, and they shoved off, Oriana standing on the poop waving a farewell to her young knight.

After steering for some time right up the bay, Winton turned the boat's head towards the western side. Nothing was visible above the surface, but the water was so clear and smooth that, as they came closer in shore, the bottom was plainly seen.

A lead-line was in the boat, and several casts were taken—first at five fathoms, then lessening to four.

"It was in four fathoms that the 'Investigator' anchored," said Winton. "Now, pull easy, men."

Slowly they rowed for about fifty yards, Winton all the while peering down into the water. Suddenly he held up his hand, and called out—

“Lay on your oars. Look at this, Falkland, and tell me what you make of it.”

George leaned over the gunwale at the chief officer's side, and, shading his eyes, was able to make out at the bottom a tangled mass of wreck—hull, rigging, and masts, mingled in inextricable confusion.

“There lies all that remains of the ‘Investigator,’” said Winton—“a victim to the Giant of the North, whose domain she had so successfully invaded. Let us hope he will not have the picking of the ‘Undaunted's’ bones.”

The chief officer did not like the idea of returning to the ship empty-handed. If they landed, some sort of game might be shot; so they pulled towards a shelving beach, hauled the boat up, and sprung on shore.

There was rising ground a little distance from the beach, which the two officers, rifle in hand, began to explore. For an hour or more they wandered up hill and down dale, and not a living creature came in sight. Then Winton, who was a little way ahead, stopped, and held up his hand in signal to George, who, advancing

cautiously, gazed on a sight that set his pulses beating with excitement.

Seven or eight reindeer were feeding about two hundred yards off, headed by a fine buck. Fortunately, the officers were dead to leeward, and the deer quite unconscious of their presence.

Winton whispered to George to lie down flat, while he made his way to a rock flanking the herd, but much closer. *He* would make sure of the buck; and then, as the deer would probably take flight in Falkland's direction, the second rifle would of course bring down one of the does.

George stretched himself at full length, cocked his rifle quietly, and watched his companion, who, knowing something about deer-stalking, succeeded in creeping unperceived to his hiding-place. Scarcely had he reached it, when the buck, raising his antlered head, looked round startled and suspicious. A puff of white smoke from the rock, a sharp crack, and the buck leaped high in air. It was his last bound; when he touched the earth he was dead.

The remainder of the herd rushed off in wild

alarm towards George. He rose hastily, knelt on one knee, levelled his rifle; but Winton's shot had come sooner than he expected, and before he could draw the trigger, the herd was close upon him. The foremost deer suddenly perceiving the obstacle in her path, gave a spring; but it was not high enough, and George was ignominiously rolled over in the dust, the gun exploding as it fell.

“Oh, Falkland, what a chance you have missed!” cried Winton, who had waited to reload, and now came up laughing. “But when I saw the foremost deer bucking at you, I thought the others would all follow like a flock of sheep, and then your plight would have been worse than it is now.”

George gathered himself up, rather bruised, and exceedingly discomposed by his misadventure; the more so, because he saw that the men, who had witnessed the whole affair, were trying to look as if they were not laughing. He loaded his gun in silence, and, if it must be admitted, looked somewhat sulky.

But the momentary fit of ill-humour passed

away the next minute, as he limped up to admire the prize that had fallen to Winton's rifle—a fine buck, weighing over two hundred pounds. The men were slinging it to a couple of oars, when a dismal far-off howl struck their ears.

“Hold on,” said Winton; “that comes from a wolf, scenting the venison already. We will set a trap for the gentleman.”

The reindeer was left on the ground, and the party concealed themselves some distance off, but within gunshot.

They had not long to wait. A huge white wolf came slouching along, making straight for the dead buck, with head moving from side to side, and red tongue hanging out. With a savage snarl he threw himself on the carcase.

“Now then, Falkland,” whispered Winton; “here is a chance for you to recover your reputation. Fire away!”

George took a steady aim, and fired. The shot pierced the wolf's heart, and he fell dead before his teeth had time to meet in the animal's flesh.

“Well done! A capital shot!” cried the chief officer. “Better to roll him over than to be rolled over yourself; eh, Falkland?”

The wolf was a very big fellow, weighing nearly eighty pounds, and six feet in length. George felt as if he had regained his lost honour; and the whole party marched back to the beach in fine spirits.

The weight of the two prizes brought the boat's gunwale very low, and as the wind had got up, plenty of water toppled in—more than one man could bale out. George worked away with the boat's baler, and the stroke laid his oar in, and used his hat for the same purpose. Still the water gained; and Winton said—

“I am afraid our venison must go overboard to lighten the boat. Either the deer or ourselves will have to feed the fishes.”

“Send the wolf to them first,” cried George, looking up, but not stopping a moment from his work.

“Very well; overboard with it. But hold hard; they have seen us from the ship, and there is the cutter coming to the rescue.”

The cutter was a boat large enough to carry both crews. Winton and George, with their men, jumped into her, and after a long pull she came alongside the "Undaunted," with the whale-boat towing astern, half-swamped, but still containing the trophies of the chase.





CHAP. XVII.—BATTLING WITH THE ICE.

IT was agreed on all hands that the venison was excellent, better tasted than any in England. The meat of the wolf, too, was pronounced good by many of the sailors. However, none of it came so far aft as the cabin; the family likeness to dog was too strong.

Said Oriana that evening—

“You have been on board nearly three hours, and have not yet told me the adventure of the wolf or of the reindeer.”

Now there was a great deal of earnest mingled with Oriana's fun when she called George her knight; and since the day when he saved her life by shooting the bear, she did really in her inmost heart look upon him as a

hero. George could not help knowing this a little, and he felt rather shy about telling anything that might take off some of this knightly gloss.

However, he brought out the story bravely at length, making Oriana laugh heartily at the description of his roll over. Of course the adventure of the wolf was kept until the last, on the principle of the lump of sugar after the dose of medicine; and there he was a good knight once more, and his ladye praised him.

“But I think we had better say nothing about the other adventure. It is very nice to think of a knight biting the dust, overthrown by a lance in a tournament; but I never heard of one tumbled over and over by a deer.”

The “Undaunted” got under weigh the following morning; but the hope of soon reaching Barrow’s Straits was damped by a change in the weather.

A cold nor’-wester set in, with snow and sleet, and the channel was blocked up with ice. For a whole week the ship battled with the foe, and yet barely fifty miles were gained. But

that fifty miles of water had never before been traversed by ship's keel; and Captain Hardy felt proud of his success when Cape Hay, on the northern side of Banks' Strait, was sighted and passed.

"You see," he said to Falkland, "that, coming from the westward, we have now reached the farthest point of land to which discoverers have penetrated from the east. Not many miles from here is the harbour where Parry wintered in 1819."

Slowly and laboriously the ship made her way to the eastward; at times unable to move, and jammed between heavy floes; then under steam and sail charging the ice, splitting it into fragments, and dashing them on each side as she forged ahead.

Time passed, the first of October arrived, and many miles had yet to be sailed before Barrow's Straits were reached. Young ice now formed every night on the surface, a sure sign that the Arctic winter was approaching. The bright warm sunshine, which had occasionally lighted up the icebergs and softened their terrors,

had departed, leaving the sky obscured by clouds.

Oriana was on deck this morning, well wrapped in furs, and caring nought for freezing blast or snow. Indeed, she always declared that, after living so many years in the tropics, she had plenty of warmth (latent heat, Captain Hardy called it) to defy any amount of cold.

There was a heavy floe right ahead, entirely stopping up the way; beyond it open water could be seen. The captain, determined to clear away this obstruction if possible, ordered the engineers to get up steam. Then, after backing astern a little, to give the ship more space for the charge, he gave the order to "Go ahead full speed!"

"Hold on, Oriana, or you will be down. Look after her, Falkland."

The ship rushed ahead, and struck the ice with such force that she recoiled some yards, her whole frame shaking.

"Well done, 'Undaunted,'" said the captain, as a crack flew along the surface of the floe; "we will try again."

The second charge was made ; and this time there was no recoil. The ship, as she struck, stopped short ; while, with a crash, the floe splintered up in all directions. Through the fragments the "Undaunted" forced her way to the clear water beyond.

Then for some days there was only broken or "brash" ice to impede their course ; and the easterly current helping, the ship was carried along gaily. A week or two of pleasant weather—something like an Indian summer, albeit a cold one—succeeded, and the spirits of officers and men rose high in joyous anticipation.

So it was, that one evening in the middle of October, the ice-mate in the crow's nest sung out, "Land on the lee bow."

Captain Hardy, with telescope slung over his shoulder, ran aloft ; and coming down again after a short survey with a very pleasant countenance, George ventured to ask him what land it was.

"Cape Dundas, the northernmost point of Prince of Wales' Land ; and now we are actually at the entrance of Barrow's Straits."

The glorious news soon spread over the ship. A few hours later, as George was keeping the first watch, he stopped in his walk to listen to the men singing. It was a song of the homeward bound, and the words of the chorus floated up through the hatchway—

“For the canvas is spread, and away we go ;
And then, huzza for England, ho !”

The watch on deck caught up the words, and startling the silence of the Arctic night, the refrain burst forth—

“Huzza, huzza, huzza for England, ho !”

The song ceased ; the officers, who had joined in the heart-stirring chorus, resumed their walk.

“It warms the heart,” said Winton, “when you are homeward bound, to hear a song like that. But I cannot help thinking that we are a great deal too sanguine.”

“You mean that we shall not get home this winter, after all ?”

“I do not see the least chance of it. We have been wonderfully fortunate so far, and are *in* Barrow's Straits, but we are not *out* of them. Baffin's Bay must be blocked up with ice long

ago; there is not a Dundee whaler that fishes in those waters, but has left the bay a month since."

"Then we shall winter in the ice, and Captain Squash was a true prophet, and will pick us up next summer. Well, I want to show him to Miss St. Clare."

"No, you will not see your friend; American whalers from Behring's Straits never come so far to the eastward as this. Hark! do you hear the sails flapping? Our Indian summer, with its gentle breeze, has left us, and we may look out for squalls or biting north-easters, bringing down plenty of ice."

Winton's fears were too true. The dark and dreary Polar winter set in from that night, and no longer were homeward-bound songs heard from the lower deck of the "Undaunted."





CHAP. XVIII.—A NIGHT ON A LEE SHORE.

THE current bore the ship along steadily during the night, and every inch gained to the eastward was so much to the good ; but morning shewed ice all around.

Captain Hardy had steered close to the land on the south side of Barrow's Straits. On the north, heavy packed ice extended as far as the eye could reach ; in shore, there were grounded floes often piled up in a wonderful manner, high as the boldest headland. Between, there was a narrow space of water, now clear, now blocked up by floating bergs.

Along this narrow lane the "Undaunted" pursued her hazardous way under steam. The effects of the current were wonderful—huge pieces of ice were carried violently on, like corks

on a mill-stream ; frequently the passage would be entirely closed ; then, as the ship's course was arrested, mass after mass charged in quick succession upon her sides and stern.

Once, while the bows were hopelessly jammed, the stern was high out of the water. Then, as the obstruction still continued, fresh pieces were piled up—"more sacks to the mill," George said—until the ice reached as high as the gunwale.

The massive timbers of the ship, well strengthened as they were, began to groan, and the danger of being nipped was imminent.

Just then, when it was plain that a few minutes must decide the fate of the ship, the captain's boy rushed on deck, hair on end and white as a sheet, and stared wildly around—he had heard the ship's sides creak, and thought he should have been crushed flat in the cabin.

In the midst of all their peril, the sailors could not help laughing at the poor boy's fright.

George had brought Oriana on deck some

little time before this, and was standing close by Captain Hardy.

“Yes, take care of her,” the captain said; “either the ship or the ice must give way.”

Gallantly the stout ship bore the dreadful pressure. Suddenly the ice which blocked up her passage gave way; she forged ahead, and her stern, no longer upheaved, dropped down into the water.

The danger was past. It determined Captain Hardy, however, to run no more risks, but at once to search for winter quarters. It would have been better had he done so long ago; but the temptation of trying to force a passage through Barrow's Straits was too strong to be resisted.

The question was now what place of refuge to seek? Nothing like a harbour came in sight on that day or the next, as they still, through many dangers, made some way to the eastward. The coast was in general bold, and any open bays which they passed were blocked up by the land ice.

There was a sort of council of war held

in the cabin, and while Captain Hardy and Winton were poring anxiously over the imperfect chart of that coast, Stanlake came down to report that a rocky headland had just been sighted.

“That must be Leopold Island, at the entrance of Prince Regent’s Inlet,” said the captain.

“Why not try to enter the inlet and make for Leopold Harbour, sir?”

“Well, we will try ; and if, as I fear, we shall find it impracticable, we must make up our minds to winter in the pack, somewhere under the lee of the island.”

The short day of six hours soon passed, and Captain Hardy, fearing to let the ship drive through the darkness of the Arctic night towards an unknown coast, made fast by ice-anchors to a large grounded floe.

At nightfall the wind got up, and gradually increased to a gale ; the danger was great, lest any icebergs striking the ship should force her from her position. More anchors were laid out, but it was hard work ; thick-falling sleet covered

the decks, and the spray that was blown on board froze as it fell.

So miserable a night had not been spent on board the "Undaunted." Not a man went below throughout all those long hours. Oriana, ready dressed, waited in the cabin, her anxious suspense relieved only by occasional visits from George, who yet could cheer her with no good news.

The cold was piercing, and the darkness so dense, that when the dreaded danger really came, the ice was not seen until it crashed against the ship. The floe to which she was made fast split up, the anchors came "home," and the ship, heeling over on her broadside, drifted away on that wild sea.

Startled by the crash, Oriana, with pale face, knowing the danger, came on deck and *felt* her way towards George. Then she placed her little hand in his, and waited the result.

Captain Hardy, in readiness for the emergency, had kept the fires lighted; and now, getting clear of the floe, managed with much

difficulty to turn the ship head to wind. The gale still increased ; a heavy sea got up, which washed the decks fore and aft ; and though under full steam, the ship could barely hold her own.

The situation was critical ; all depended upon the engines. If anything happened to them, what hope could there be of saving the ship from being driven on the frowning shore of Leopold Island ?

Five minutes went by : Captain Hardy, standing by the mainmast, felt a touch upon his arm. It was the engineer, who said in low tones—

“The screw will not revolve, sir.”

The appalling intelligence, so quietly told by the brave officer to save a panic, was too true ; the hawsers by which the ice-anchors had been made fast were entangled in the screw, which had twisted them round until they were hopelessly jammed.

The ship at once fell off before the wind, and began to drift towards the iron-bound coast. Before the men had time to realise what had

happened, the captain's voice sounded high above the storm—

“Let go the best bower anchor!”

The huge mass of iron fell; the cable leaped and rattled through the hawse-hole. When it had run out half its length, the small bower was also let go—it was the last chance, and a desperate one. Would any anchors hold against that wind and that sea?

As the ship first felt the strain of the cables, and came up into the wind, she plunged madly, tearing a fathom or two more out of the hawse-holes. Again the cables were bitted: this time they held fast.

It was an anxious night. The ship dipped bowsprit under, green seas coming in right over the forecastle. There was no moving without holding on by ropes; and the snow, which flew in such heavy flakes that no one could look to windward, soon became a frozen mass on the deck a foot thick.

No more could be done. Everyone on board felt the horrible uncertainty of the cables holding on until daylight, and knew well that,

if they parted, the ship would be dashed to pieces on the lee shore close astern.

Then the noble character of the British sailor shone out. Captain Hardy, following the example of many a naval commander in like moments of peril, called his men aft, and in a few words thanked them for their good conduct during the voyage.

“And now, my men,” continued he, “you know the danger as well as I can tell it you—in all probability this is our last night in this world. Let us thank God for His mercies to us during our past life, and pray Him to save us yet from this danger. He can do it, and only He.”

Quietly, after this, the men separated into groups, wherever they could find some shelter from the sea, and awaited their fate with calmness.

During the long dreary hours, Oriana, though numbed with cold, never quitted Falkland's side, resisting all his entreaties to retire to the cabin.

“Why should I go below, dear George? I

am sure you do not think the ship will last till morning ; and I don't mind dying so much, if you are with me to the last. You won't send me away from you, will you ?”

“No, indeed, Oriana. If we are to die, we will die together.”

She lifted up her face as he bent over her.

“God bless you, dear !” said the loving girl, as she kissed him ; “you have been very good to me.”





CHAP. XIX.—WINTERING IN THE PACK.

ANCHORS and cables held on bravely. The morning dawned dim and grey, and with its light a ray of hope glimmered in the breasts of the "Undaunted's" crew.

The storm howled over their heads less furiously, the snow ceased to fall, and the wind, although still blowing a gale, gradually veered round to the southward, off shore; the heavy sea went down, and the freezing showers of spray no longer dashed upon the deck.

In the darkness the ship had drifted still further in than had been thought; and Oriana, pale and worn out, shuddered as the daylight disclosed the breakers foaming over the rocks of Leopold Island, close under the stern. She had not much time to look at them, for Captain

Hardy, assuring her that the ship was now quite safe, made George take her below. How deliciously comfortable her little sleeping-cabin seemed after such a night! The tired girl lay down in her bed, and had scarce said three words of gratitude for their preservation, when she was fast asleep.

Wind and sea continued to subside. The galley-fire, which it had been impossible to keep in during the night, was again lighted, and a breakfast of hot coffee served out. Then Captain Hardy wisely allowed the men some hours of rest to recruit their exhausted frames.

Winton volunteered to keep watch, while every one else went below. In a few minutes his were the only eyes open in the ship, and the deep bass of many probosces ascended through the hatchways. A momentary gleam of sunshine broke through the clouds, the icicles dropped from the rigging, the snow melted and ran through the scuppers, and the decks, half-thinking of drying, sent up tiny wreaths of steam.

It was a dead calm: even the very ship slept peacefully on the stilled waters, resting after the struggle of the night.

The chief officer manfully walked the quarter-deck for half-an-hour, then stopped and leaned against the side—only to think for a moment. His head began to nod, his eyes closed. He raised the head erect, he opened the eyes wide.

“I could almost fancy that I was dropping asleep. Rather too absurd an idea, seeing that I am officer of the watch. Quite impos—
si——”

And the officer of the watch slept soundly.

Two hours afterwards the captain's head appeared above the hatchway. He looked round, called—“Mr. Winton.” No answer, and no one to be seen. Then he came on deck, and soon discovered the object of his quest, comfortably sleeping in a very uncomfortable position.

Too kind-hearted not to find excuse for the manner in which sleep had overtaken his officer, and wishing to save his feelings, Captain

Hardy turned away, walked forward, and threw down a big block heavily on the deck.

The startled chief officer awoke at the sudden noise, rubbed his eyes hard, picked up the telescope which had dropped from his hand, and, seeing the captain, walked forward to join him, little dreaming that his quiet slumbers had been witnessed.

“Turn the hands up, Mr. Winton; we must try and steam into some sheltered spot before the wind gets up again.”

“Ay, ay, sir. Hands up anchor!” shouted the chief officer down the hatchway.

The men came tumbling up, ready for anything after their short rest—the capstan was manned—the cables, which had done their duty so well, clinked in merrily—the hawser was dis-entangled from the screw, and the “Undaunted” steamed away from the rocky coast which had so nearly proved her grave.

The short gleam of sunshine had long ceased to brighten the scene as the ship passed Leopold Island and gained Prince Regent’s Inlet. The barren land on each side was covered

with snow, and the entrance blocked up with ice.

“Any clear water inside?” the captain hailed to the ice-mate.

“No, sir; not a foot of clear water anywhere in sight up the inlet.”

It was as Captain Hardy had feared. Nothing now remained but to choose as safe a place as possible for wintering in the pack ice.

“We must not stop on the edge of the land ice, Mr. Winton, but find a berth for the ship a little closer in, and under the lee of Leopold Island. I remember Parry used to saw a kind of dock out of the ice, but we will try another plan.”

“Do you mean to blast it with gunpowder, sir?”

“Yes; get an empty spirit-cask up.”

The cask was got ready, and George, who was on deck, watched with great interest while it was being filled with about two hundred pounds of powder. A long fuse was attached; then the cask was sunk under the ice, which was nearly twelve feet thick.

The fuse was lighted, and the ship steamed a little way astern to wait for the explosion. It came—with a tremendous report the floe burst upwards—a cloud of broken ice and water was thrown into the air to the height of a hundred feet, followed by dense smoke. The “Undaunted” shook, the bells rang, and a shower of small ice rattled about the rigging. Some tiny fishes fell on the deck, awakening Oriana’s sympathies as they gasped out their little breath.

The mine had done its work well, and the ship steamed easily through the broken fragments, pushing her way until she was in a natural floating dock, with thick ice making a barrier all round, but not touching her. In that position she was made fast for the night.

The next morning—it was the nineteenth of October—the water in which she rested was smoothly frozen over, and the “Undaunted” had found her winter quarters.

It was a treat to everyone on board to walk out of the ship after their long confinement, and all dread of the terrible winter before them

was lost in the excitement and novelty of the position. Skating, sliding, and fun in general was the order of the day; and the captain was only too glad to let his men take a whole holiday and enjoy themselves as they liked.

During the following week there was plenty to be done, but to the sailors it was like holiday pastime. It was more play than work to shovel the snow about, and build a high wall with it all round the ship at about twenty yards' distance, which would keep out the snow-drift, and give a good sheltered walk.

Another party of men unbent the sails, stowed them away below, unrove the running rigging, and struck top-gallant masts, giving the ship a generally dismantled appearance, like a man-of-war going to be paid off.

"I suppose we may as well get those ice-anchors on board, sir?" said Winton.

"Yes; the grip of the ice saves all other fastenings," said the captain, laughing. "Stow them away, by all means; and unship the rudder before it gets crushed."

The next step was to house the ship over: this was done on the last day of October, and the hatchways closed. To prevent, in some degree, the cold penetrating below, the upper deck was covered over—first with a bed of snow more than a foot thick, and then with a quantity of sand and gravel, which the men stamped upon with their feet and beat down with shovels, calling it their garden path.

The cold now became something fearful, and frost-bites were of daily occurrence. The sun showed himself only just above the horizon, his level rays giving no warmth. At last—on the tenth of November—Captain Hardy called to George and Oriana—

“Come and say good-bye to an old friend.”

It was, or ought to have been, high noon; yet the only part of the sun visible above the southern horizon was a quarter of the disc. It rose no higher, began to sink, and finally disappeared, attended by clouds of crimson and gold.

“In England,” said George, “about this time of year, people begin to remark, ‘How the days

are drawing in!' *We* are to have no day at all."

"Why, how long will the night last?" asked Oriana.

"Only three months. It will be February before we see that dear old sun again."





CHAP. XX.—GEORGE FALKLAND'S NIGHTMARE.

THE days—rather the one long night—passed on, and various were the occupations resorted to in order to make the hours less gloomy.

It was a relief to Falkland, who had been looking forward to this month's total darkness, to find that there were several hours of twilight each day. He set himself to teach Oriana to skate, and an apt scholar she proved herself. Then she often joined George in exploring expeditions, in which, by the captain's orders, Stanlake generally made a third. Once they climbed the heights of Leopold Island, and looked down with thankful hearts upon the rocks, where, on the night of the storm, the "Undaunted" must have gone to pieces had the cables parted.

On returning to the ship after this expedition, George found that the two light sleighs had been brought up out of the hold. Captain Hardy, who was busily engaged inspecting them, looked up—

“I am going as far as Leopold Harbour tomorrow—two days’ journey, probably. If you like to come, Falkland, you may.”

Always ready for adventure, George gladly accepted the offer. If he had been invited to go straight off to the North Pole, he would have answered at once, “Yes, thank you;” and Oriana would have been only too glad to join him if she were allowed. In the present instance, the captain declined to expose his charge to the risks of sleigh-travelling in the Arctic winter.

The party consisted of Captain Hardy, Stanlake, George Falkland, and four seamen. Three days’ rations of preserved meats and pemmican were taken, and a small light tent for sleeping under during the one night that they expected to be absent. The two senior officers had rifles, and George a revolver.

When all was ready, the sailors, manning the ropes, ran away lightly with the sledge ; Oriana waving her handkerchief, and the men in the ship cheering—they were always ready to cheer at the slightest provocation.

All went smoothly for the first hour or two : the ice was got over at a capital rate. Then the shore was reached, and the sledge had to be dragged over rough ground at the foot of high cliffs. Here, indeed, it was hard work ; the treacherous snow covered everything with one smooth coat, and many a fall did the sailors get, and the sledge itself often bumped against a rock and capsized.

Officers and men worked with a will, and after six hours' hard labour, Whalers' Point, low and shingly, at the entrance of the desolate harbour, was rounded, and the wearied party came to a halt.

The twilight had nearly gone, and pitching the tent and lighting the fire was troublesome work. Firewood and matches had been brought from the ship, and George luckily stumbled in the dark upon a heap of driftwood. A bright

blaze soon sprung up ; a kettle, filled with snow, was placed on the fire ; tea made ; and after a tin pannikinful had been served out all round, the shivering party began to feel not quite so frozen.

The preserved meat, on being broken open by a hatchet, was a mere lump of ice ; but it went down very well, when thawed and made into a good hot stew with boiling water.

Tolerably warmed through, officers and men crept under the little tent ; and if any stranger had looked in a few minutes later, he would have seen—if the darkness allowed him—a queer sight. Seven blanket-bags, closely stowed, like herrings in a barrel, each containing some living creature, for it rose and fell with the breathing, but no face or limbs visible ; unless, indeed, a mass of fur, which stuck out at the end of each bag, might conceal a face.

Throughout the night, the seven sleepers rested well. George had tugged at the sledge ropes during the journey until he was dead beat, and he never stirred when the men turned

out in the morning. The fire was again lighted, breakfast enjoyed, and still he slept.

“Don't disturb him,” said the captain to Stanlake; “cover him up with more blankets, and leave the kettle of tea, that he may find it when he awakes. Meanwhile, we will have a look round.”

Off they marched, leaving the sleeping boy alone in the tent.

It might have been about an hour afterwards, when a noise and a gust of cold air disturbed George's slumbers. He awoke, opened his eyes, and, to his amazement, saw two other eyes close to his, looking down upon him with a half-surprised, half-savage glare, from under a shaggy brow, surmounted by two terrible horns. He tried to stand up, but, with his feet entangled in the blanket-bag, only rose to fall again, helpless.

The creature—whatever it might be—started at the movement, and with a loud snort, backed a few paces.

Truly, it was no wonder that George was astonished at being thus awoke by a grim,

horrid monster, such as haunted the dreams of mediæval saints. Gradually, as his momentary superstitious terror left him, he was able to realise the situation—anything but pleasant even now. There stood the disturber of his repose—a musk ox—which, impelled by curiosity, had upset the tent, and was smelling at the bundle of blankets beneath it when George awoke.

The animal, as George managed at length to struggle out of the bag and grasp his revolver, gazed at him with a ferocious aspect, began to paw the ground with his hoofs, and, bellowing loudly, lowered his head and charged. Quick as thought the boy fired; the beast stopped short; then, with a furious roar, dragging his wounded hind leg along, charged again.

Again George fired. The ball struck full in the forehead, and the brute fell dead.

George, delighted with his victory, examined his prostrate foe—a most formidable specimen of the musk ox, about seven feet in length, the hide of a deep brown. He celebrated his triumph by a pannikin of hot tea, and was finishing his

breakfast when Captain Hardy and Stanlake came in sight.

Fearful of some accident, the two officers, hearing the shots fired, had hurried back. Their fears were heightened on catching sight of the overturned tent, but quickly vanished when they saw George calmly munching his breakfast, seated on the body of his dead foe.

Port Leopold is well known in the annals of Arctic discovery ; and during the many expeditions in search of the noble and ill-fated Franklin, boats and large quantities of provisions had been left here in store.

George rambled about, hoping to come across some records of the various discovery ships which had spent the lonely winter in that place—from the “Enterprise,” under Sir James Ross, in 1848, to the “Fox,” in 1858, commanded by Sir Leopold M'Clintock, who at length succeeded in discovering Franklin's fate.

There were plenty of provisions still remaining, quite sound and fit for use ; but the casks were tumbled about in all directions. George

said it looked almost as if some people had been rolling them along in fun.

“They were four-legged people,” said Stanlake; and he pointed out the marks of Bruin’s teeth and claws on many of the casks.

No written records were found;* but there were five sad memorials at the head of the harbour—the graves of an officer and four seamen, from Sir James Ross’s expedition. Falkland could not tell why he felt more compassion for these poor fellows laid to rest in that icy solitude, than he would if they had

“——died in their own loved land,
With friends and kinsmen near them;”

or even if they had died at sea, and found the sailors’ grave; but he did pity them very much.

The captain now thought it time to begin the return journey, which would be a more difficult affair than the march of yesterday. The ox was far too precious to be left behind,

* Captain Markham, R.N., opened a tin cylinder in 1873, containing records, and sent the papers to the Admiralty. See that officer’s interesting work—“A Whaling Cruise to Baffin’s Bay.”

so he was, with a great deal of trouble, made fast to the sledge, and the party started, officers and men taking their turn at the ropes with no distinction of rank.

When the sleigh was capsized (which happened generally every ten minutes), it was no joke now to lift the unwieldy body of the ox and secure it again. The wind had got up a little, which made the cold more intense; and when at length the border of the ice was reached, every man of the party was thoroughly exhausted.

“It is no use trying to get any farther,” said the captain to Stanlake; “we must halt and sleep out a second night.”

“Even if we could go on, sir, we must leave the sledge behind, our hands are too frozen to hold the ropes.”

Which was true enough; and many faces were frost-bitten. Brisk rubbing with snow cured the frost-bites; and when a fire was lighted, and some scalding hot tea was drunk, the men began to cheer up considerably.

The tent was undisturbed that night by ox

or ravening beast; and the comparatively easy journey over the ice to the ship was performed early next day.

On approaching the "Undaunted," the men made George mount on the musk ox, and the sleigh party formed a sort of triumphal procession, the sailors on board welcoming their return with even louder cheers than had graced their departure.

Falkland's enthusiasm for sleigh-travelling considerably lessened after this experience. He went below to get thawed, and found stockings and mocassins frozen together in one solid mass; then there was nothing to do but to cut them clean away with a knife. Mits too were just as bad.

He was tolerably warm and comfortable at last, and was thinking of finding Oriana, who had not been on deck at the time the sleigh party came on board, when the steward brought the message—

"Miss St. Clare will be glad to see you, sir."

Oriana gave Falkland her usual warm greeting, and then said—

“What is this I hear? The steward says that you have been killing a musk—something; a musk rat, I suppose. What a very small thing to fight with!”

George laughed. “But my ‘musk—something’ was not a rat, but a big brute, seven feet long, with horns of terror and hoofs of iron. Now, listen.”

And he told the adventure of the musk ox, while she, at the thought of his danger, pressed the closer to his side.

“I only hope,” said George, as he finished, “that the next time I am awoke by such a horrible face looking into mine, I shall not have my legs tied in a bag.”





CHAP. XXI.—A STORY OF OLD CALABAR.

SLOWLY passed the weeks. Dark December followed on the heels of gloomy November, and Christmas-tide was welcomed by the crew of the "Undaunted," in their ice-bound ship, as heartily as if the blessed season had come to them in happy English homes.

No chime of bells rang for morning prayer when all hands assembled on the lower deck for church; but the familiar words of the service, as they were read by the captain, made many hearts thrill with home recollections. Heartily the sailors joined in the anthem—

"Hark! the herald angels sing"

And, for the moment, George, shutting his eyes, could almost fancy himself in the chancel of the quaint old Tyneside church, which he

knew would be that day echoing with the same melody.

Christmas-day is *the* feast-day of the year among sailors. In men-of-war—no matter in what part of the world the ship may be placed, tropics or Polar regions—the lower deck is decorated, mess-traps get an extra polish, and the health to “sweethearts and wives” goes round after dinner.

The ice-fields yielded no holly or mistletoe to adorn the “Undaunted’s” lower deck; but the men made not at all a bad substitute with cut paper. Fortunately a second musk ox had been recently killed, and a joint of roast beef stood at the head of each mess-table, flanked by some delicacy from the cabin stores.

Captain Hardy, with his officers—Oriana and Falkland bringing up the rear—walked round the lower deck before the men began their dinner, stopping at each mess to say a few kind words. Then wishing them all “A happy Christmas, and a still happier one next year in England,” he left them to their own enjoyments.

The officers dined that evening in the cabin

with the captain and Oriana. A large piece of drift-wood on the stove did duty as a Yule log; and after dinner, as they sat round the fire and drank to "absent friends," they formed a quietly happy party.

Stanlake was supposed to be keeping a watch on deck, but had joined the others, on the captain calling him down, with the remark—

"I don't much see the use of looking out, when we are frozen in."

Which was true enough, especially as the darkness and snow prevented anything being seen a yard ahead.

"I suppose," said Captain Hardy, "that most people would think that they could not spend Christmas in a more uncomfortable way than we are doing—fast in the grip of the ice, with no chance of escape for months to come."

"I have had a worse Christmas than this on board a ship, sir," said Stanlake.

"Where was that?"

"Up the Old Calabar, on the west coast of Africa."

It was just the time for story-telling, and

Stanlake was easily persuaded to go on with his yarn.

“I had shipped on board a Bristol palm oil trader—it was before I joined the navy. There were eight of us in the brig, besides the captain; and a merry lot we were, as we dropped down the Avon river, and passed Kingroad. Wages are good in the African trade; and as for fever, you always think that it is your mate who will die, and not yourself.

“We didn’t touch anywhere going out. The brig was an old tub, and it was almost two months before we got to the mouth of the Old Calabar—pretty nigh opposite Fernando Po, in the Bight of Biafra.

“You may believe that our good spirits were nearly knocked out of us by that time. The beef on board was bad, the biscuit worse; the water stunk so, that our fellows used to take their spirits raw—they said the water only spoilt it. There was not one of us but had a touch of fever or scurvy; and three were ill in their bunks when we towed the old brig over the bar of the river.

“ We passed Tom Shott’s Point, and anchored some miles up, off Parrot Island. It was more like a lagoon than a river : there was only one place where we could land, the rest was mud and mangrove swamp—lots of small islands about, with alligators lying upon them, like logs of wood. I couldn’t help thinking, when the river gave its first turn, and we lost sight of the open sea, ‘ It will be a happy day for you, my boy, when you catch a glimpse of the blue water again.’

“ Perhaps you don’t know the way the coast trade is managed. You land all your cargo, hand it over to the chiefs, and then trust to their honour to bring a ship-load of palm oil in return.

“ The black chiefs are honestest than many a white man, for they are sure to carry down the oil from the interior, some time or other. Meanwhile, you can do nothing but wait, wait, and think that they are never coming.

“ We landed everything at last ; and precious bad those ‘ trade’ goods were, to be sure. Muskets that would be sure to burst if only the powder would go off—being trade powder, of

course it did not; pretty coloured calicoes, that washed out the first time; and rum that was downright poison.

“When the ship was clear, we housed her over; and there we were, with nothing whatever to do for the next four months.

“The fresh yams and bananas sent the scurvy away from all of us who could move about; but the men ill in their bunks got worse. Two died in one night; and the third became frightened, and told me the next morning that he knew he should die too. I cheered him up; and the captain, who was a kind man, moved him into his own cabin.

“During the day he got half delirious, but kept tolerably quiet, only muttering a little now and then. I kept a close look-out when evening came, and would not leave the cabin a minute, knowing well what was going on 'tween decks.

“My patient took no notice while the two poor fellows were being carried on deck, sewn up in their hammocks; but the moment he heard the plunge in the water, he sat right up in bed, and began to cry like a child.

“I got him quiet at last ; and then, for two more days, he grew weaker, but he didn't lose his head. He asked me to read to him out of an old Bible which his mother gave him when he first went to sea.

“‘I don't seem to mind dying, Ben,’ he said once ; ‘but it's the being thrown overboard in this horrid river. Poor mother ! I am glad now that she is gone before ; it would well nigh have broken her heart.’

“He never spoke a word after that, but lay quiet and still until just before he died, when his face brightened up suddenly, and he looked for all the world as a man might who was landing at Bristol docks after a voyage, and had caught sight of his mother standing on the wharf. Then he went off quite peacefully.

It was Christmas-day when he died ; and afterwards it was weary work, day after day, to watch the black tide flowing in and ebbing out, and still with nothing to do.

“I often looked at the Cameroon's mountains far away inland, and longed to be at the top, where the white snow was, for a little cool air ;

but I never once put foot ashore. Two men took the jolly-boat without leave one night, and landed. The blacks brought them off three days after in a canoe, raving mad, what with the sun and the horrid stuff they had been drinking. Poor fellows! they never recovered their senses before they died.

“Well, my yarn is almost spun. The palm oil came down by degrees at last, and was put on board by the natives, for only the captain and three of us were left. After we crossed the bar, we couldn’t have hoisted the topsail, if a cruiser, which was outside, had not lent us some hands.

“I don’t know that I ever felt more thankful than when the old hooker began to tumble about once more, as the sea breeze sent her along, with her nose pointing due west.”

“Something like what we shall feel,” said Falkland, as Stanlake concluded, “when the dear old ‘Undaunted’ dips her bows into the water, homeward bound.”

“Yes, that will indeed be a happy day,” said Captain Hardy. “But what is all that

cheering on the lower deck? Go and see, Falkland."

The boy quickly returned.

"It is the men, sir, giving three cheers for their 'Little Queen, Miss St. Clare!'"

"Oh, then! I think it is but right that her Majesty should return thanks. Give her your hand, and we, the officers of state, will follow."

George led Oriana to the lower deck, where her appearance was the signal for renewed cheering; the gratified sailors all standing up and clapping their hands. Then there was a dead silence.

"You must say something," whispered George.

The beautiful young girl, her face beaming, delighted, yet very shy, curtsied low with Spanish grace.

"Thank you," she said, sweetly and simply.

Then she turned to Falkland to take her back to the cabin.

"Good-night, Oriana," said Captain Hardy, when alone with his young charge, placing his hand tenderly upon her head. "I am sorry I

brought thee into these terrible regions, little one."

"Oh, you must not say that. I am happy, quite happy. Why, of course I am, with you and dear George."

But the captain, knowing well what dangers had yet to be gone through before the ship could be released, looked very grave as Oriana went into her sleeping-cabin.





CHAP. XXII.—THE OLD SAILOR'S WARNING.

NEW-YEAR'S DAY was very gloomy on board the "Undaunted." A heavy storm, with snow-drifts, raged with such fury, that no one ventured outside the ship.

Blank and cheerless as was the prospect externally, there was some comfort in the thought that the sun was now gradually coming nearer, and that in another month the actual winter night would be at an end.

The six hours of dim twilight, which had lessened the darkness of the shortest day, lengthened out, and the light itself increased as January wore away. The cold was bitter as ever, the thermometer often standing at 50° below zero—that is, 82° below freezing-point. All sorts of devices were brought into play to

keep the men in healthy activity, body and mind.

On the lower deck, penny readings, with songs and music, were very popular, Captain Hardy and the officers bearing their part. Then there was an evening school, in which George took great delight, and found the rough sailors grateful scholars. Occasionally, Jack would take a fancy to a dancing evening, and the unfortunate fiddler was kept at work until his arms were ready to drop, the sailors succeeding each other at the hornpipe, without a thought of the musician.

Outside the ship, when the weather permitted, there was always some work or amusement; skating, sliding, building snow-houses, or, better than all, shooting whatever *could* be shot.

It was a grand day of excitement when a bear came in sight. Bruin is a creature full of curiosity; and espying the little tent, which was kept pitched as a shelter, would come sniffing close up, until a volley from his enemies lying in ambush put an end at once to his inquisitiveness and his life.

Three fine bears were thus killed, and their meat taken on board, the skins being left for the time on the ice, in company with the two hides of the musk oxen.

Campbell, of course, was always on duty at the flenching. Falkland rather began to like this grave, God-fearing Scotchman, whose good qualities quite made up for the bit of conceit which at first provoked a smile. He was sorry when, after the last bear was killed—which happened on the coldest day in January—Campbell said, pointing to his left arm hanging down stiff by his side—

“I have got a bad frost-bite, sir, and must make haste on board.”

George ran with him to the ship. The poor fellow was quite unable to bend the arm; and as he plunged the frozen limb into a basin of cold water, a thin film of ice formed at once on the surface. He was fortunate in not losing the arm altogether; but it was a whole month before he was able to move it about.

The fourth of February was a gala day. The air was still and fine, no clouds in the sky, but

rather hazy. Towards noon there was not a man left under the ship's housing: all were standing on the snow embankment, steadily gazing at the horizon, where a rich golden tint was gradually spreading over the bank of haze.

George stood a little apart with Oriana.

"There is the sun again, thank God!"

It was not very long that the sun remained above the horizon that day; but to see it at all, after a darkness of nearly three months, was a dear delight. The sailors particularly enjoyed the novel sight of their own shadows, welcoming them in fun as old friends whom they had not seen for a long time.

As the days grew longer, Captain Hardy gave the men plenty of work in overhauling and repairing sails and boats, getting provisions out of the hold to examine them, and other preparations for sea, which kept their minds from idleness and despondency.

The ice around the tent began to look like a little encampment. Casks of meat were rolled there and left, sometimes half-covered with snow-drift, sails and skins were scattered about,

the dainty sleigh stood not far off, and two of the ship's boats, the cutter and a very light whaler, had been run there over the ice.

It had been intended to repair these boats, but the cold was so intense that it was impossible to touch any iron tools with the naked hand, the skin came off as though it were scalded. So the carpenter's tools had been left in the boats, waiting for more genial weather.

The sun's rays by degrees gave out some little warmth, and Falkland began to take Oriana for short excursions on the ice. Poor child! the darkness of that long winter had blanched her complexion, and told a little on her spirits; and, as the ship was still housed over and gloomy, it was a treat to get out once more into the sunshine.

It was a fine morning towards the latter end of March, and George had asked leave for Oriana to go with him on one of these rambles.

"You may take her," said Captain Hardy, "if you can get Mr. Stanlake to go with you. The weather seems all right."

Stanlake was glad enough to make one of the party, and a little before noon they started in fine spirits. An extra bear-skin hung on the mate's arm for Oriana's comfort, if wanted—a precaution which the child, happy at the thought of a little change, laughed at, saying she was nothing but a mass of fur already—as indeed she was, only there was a fair sweet face peeping out of the fur.

Campbell was near the tent doing something to one of the bear-skins, and looked up as they passed by. He touched his hat respectfully, as Oriana greeted him with a smile, and said—

“I hope you are going to make that a fine soft skin for me to take to England, Campbell.”

“Indeed then, Miss St. Clare, it will be a beauty; I never saw a finer. But you are not going far to-day? There is a look in the sky as if snow was coming, and wind too, I expect.”

Stanlake looked round; he thought himself a pretty good judge of the weather, yet he had faith in the old sailor's foresight.

“Well, I don't see what can happen with a

gentle southerly breeze like this. However, we will be on the look-out for squalls."

Stanlake was well armed; besides his rifle, he carried a revolver stuck in his belt, a knapsack was slung behind, containing his flask, a tin of pemmican, and some biscuit. With a fur cap drawn down well over his head, covering the ears, he looked, as Falkland told him, like a Polar Robinson Crusoe.

George carried a light rifle, in hopes of coming across game of some sort. He also had a knapsack with provisions—a wise precaution in these excursions—and a pocket compass, which had more than once guided him to the ship when bewildered by sudden storms and snow-drifts. Still, the compass was not always to be trusted, a large allowance having to be made for variation on account of the nearness of the magnetic pole.

The little party went along merrily over the ice in an easterly direction, seaward. Once they turned, after gaining some distance, to look back at the "Undaunted."

Quiet and still the ship rested on her frozen

bed ; masts, sides, canvas housing, ropes, all one colour with the surrounding objects, draped with snow or crystallised with ice. Near the tent alone was there any sign of life ; there the men had hoisted a boat's ensign, which the sluggish breeze had just lifted. Sailors were moving about among the provision casks, and standing on the embankment was a man with his hand to his forehead, shading his eyes, watching their movements.

“There is that good old Campbell,” said George ; “I know he won't be happy until we are safe on board. But what a glorious piece of smooth ice stretches out before us. Shall we have a race, Oriana ? I have brought your skates with me.”

Away they went, and the sound of their happy voices was no longer heard by the watcher on the embankment.





CHAP. XXIII.—WHERE ARE THE LOST ONES ?

CAPTAIN HARDY, after his young charge had left the ship, remained some time in the cabin, writing up his journal. Busy at his work, three hours had passed when Winton disturbed him—

“There is a storm brewing, I think, sir. Shall I call the men inboard ?”

Glancing at the barometer, the captain saw that the mercury had fallen suddenly half-an-inch, and he replied—

“By all means. And Miss St. Clare—is she safe on board ?”

Finding that nothing had been seen of her, he ran on deck.

The gentle breeze of the morning had died away, and the calm which succeeded had been

rudely broken by a biting wind from the eastward, bringing with it storms of driving snow.

The men were running in for shelter from the encampment, and so fierce was the sudden storm, and so furiously did the snow dash into their faces, that it was with difficulty they managed to reach the ship.

Vainly the officers tried to look to windward in search of the missing party; the air was dark with snow and tempest, and nothing could be seen six yards away.

"We must do something for that poor child; this storm will kill her," said the captain. "Take five or six men, Winton—Campbell had better be one, and the others volunteers—and see if you can possibly find her."

The chief officer ran down to the lower deck, picked out half-a-dozen men—the whole ship's company would have joined in the rescue of their little princess, if he would have let them—but Campbell was nowhere to be seen.

The word was passed all over the ship, but to no avail. At last, a man remembered having noticed the old sailor running on the

ice to the eastward just before the storm broke out.

Hoping that Campbell might already have reached the stragglers, Winton was hurrying on deck with his volunteers, when a shout from the boatswain came down the hatchway—

“Hands save ship!”

Followed by the men, he rushed up the ladder, which—but the idea was absurd—he almost fancied moved under him as if the ship were at sea.

It was no fancy. With a sudden access of fury the hurricane tore away the canvas housing, sending it high in air, flapping madly to leeward, and disclosed to the startled gaze of the “Undaunted’s” crew a terrible sight. The ice was breaking up all round them.

In another moment, the ship, loosed from the frozen grip which had so long bound her, was flying before the wind to the westward. Utterly without control, she dashed along—head foremost, stern foremost, sideways, masses of ice now blocking up her way, now whirled along with her.

Seamanship availed nought. Rudderless, sailless, if the tempest swept the ship to destruction, captain and crew could only submit, they could not act; and as she struck violently against the ice—

“The boldest held his breath
For a time.”

One slight comfort there was in the fact that the coast was not a lee shore. The land ran east and west; and point after point, which had been painfully gained in last year's voyage, was now rapidly passed in the wrong direction.

“I think we shall weather it after all,” said Captain Hardy. “A storm like this will go down as suddenly as it got up.”

The captain was right. In two hours the wind sank to fitful gusts, and before night the air was still and calm as when that deceitful morn first dawned.

The “Undaunted” had suffered no severe damage, although the blows she received, when at the mercy of the wind, had strained her and caused some leaks. The ship was made fast to a large floe, the ice closed round, and in a

few hours she was beset as firmly as in her old winter quarters.

Yes, the "Undaunted" was again secure; but where was she, the fair girl who had been for so long the very life of the ship? and where the brave hearts who were with her?

No songs on the lower deck that night. Sadly, and in low tones, the men, sitting in groups, talked over the fate of the missing ones, and pondered on the chances of their safety.

In the cabin it seemed as if years had passed over the captain's head since morning—so worn and anxious did he look, while debating with his chief officer all possible means of rescue.

If the actual floe upon which the lost party were walking had not broken up at the time the ship was blown away, there might be good hopes of their safety; ample stores of provisions were upon the ice, and exposure to the cold air for a short time would be the principal inconvenience. But this was a hope the captain hardly dared to entertain. He feared—and his heart sank at the thought of the too probable truth of the fear—that the floe must

have split up into pieces. If so, that child whom he loved as his own daughter, and her companions, were indeed lost.

He turned from the thought, resolutely refused to admit it, and set to work with Winton to devise projects of discovery.

It was finally settled that at daylight two searching parties should start. The first, under Captain Hardy, should drag with them one of the two remaining light boats; the other, commanded by Winton, would explore the ice all round. The ship was to be left in charge of the third mate.

Neither captain nor chief officer slept that night. Winton, besides joining in the general worship of Oriana, had become very fond of George; and, looking back on the morning when he first saw his fresh young face at the inn in Bishopsgate, it was hard to think of him as dead and frozen in, or floating about in those cold waters.





CHAP. XXIV.—FROZEN TO DEATH.

THE men needed no pipe of boatswain's mate to call them away the next morning. At the first glimmer of daylight the two exploring parties began their preparations; but the fun and enjoyment with which this work had formerly been carried on was all gone.

Each man carried two days' provisions in his knapsack, and a supply of spirits was stowed away in the boat, besides warm furs for Oriana, in the fortunate event of her being found.

Then the expeditions quitted the ship in silence, no warm hurrah cheering their departure, but many prayers going up to heaven for their success.

The ship, in her wild career of yesterday,

had been driven past Leopold Island, to a spot eighteen or twenty miles distant from her former position. The first object now was, to get as near as possible to the place where she had broken adrift; it would then be seen whether any part of the floe had been left. If so, the missing ones might easily be brought across the intervening water in the boat.

For some miles, until the western end of Leopold Island was reached, the two parties kept together. Then Captain Hardy, calling Winton, gave his parting directions.

“You will proceed to the eastward, along the channel between the island and the coast; I will take the outer or northerly side, where there is more probability of finding broken ice or water. If you see anything, send at once to me with the news; or if dark, fire a signal rocket.”

“I understand, sir,” replied the chief officer.

The men parted company, the captain's party dragging the boat painfully over the ice, which now became rough and hummocky; while Winton's men, released from their slower

travelling companions, made their way along at a good pace.

It was through this very passage that the "Undaunted" had been driven the previous day, yet it was now completely blocked up with ice, over which there was no difficulty in walking, except in places where the force of the wind and sea had piled up rough masses of every size and shape.

Halting once or twice for rest and refreshment, Winton's party marched on. In about six hours after leaving the ship, the eastern end of Leopold Island was gained.

The well-known look of the land made the tired men hurry on. They were close to the old place—surely in another minute or two the remnant of the old floe, with the missing ones upon it, will gladden their eyes! The walk quickened into a run; the very spot, as near as they could tell, where the ship lay for so many months, was reached. Hopefully, anxiously they turned their gaze eastward—all round the compass. But no sign was there of living presence—no trace of the lost friends.

There was nothing to be seen of the encampment ; provisions and boats were all gone. The ice on which they stood had evidently been freshly driven there—the old had disappeared. Sadly, reluctantly the conviction that there was no hope forced itself into Winton's mind ; still, he would not give in, but made his way farther east, until his progress was stopped by lanes of water and loose ice, which gave way under the men's feet.

Then, perforce, he turned back, and picked out a tolerably sheltered position under the cliffs. There was no drift-wood to be found, and so, without a fire, he and his men spent a cold and miserable night.

Matters were no better in the morning. Captain Hardy joined company with his party, depressed and anxious. He had met with loose ice, and found much open water on which the boat had been launched, and many miles of Barrow's Straits rowed over—all without success.

The captain and Winton now climbed up the bold headland of Leopold Island. The day

was clear, and from the summit the view extended for leagues around ; but no trace of the objects of their search could be discovered, not a figure or a dark spot dotted the white surface that was spread out before them.

“I wish we had thought of coming to this look-out place yesterday,” said the captain ; “there might have been a chance then, if they are still alive. Well, we must go back, I suppose.”

There was no need to ask any questions of the searching parties when they returned to the ship that evening, the men’s looks showed too plainly their ill-success.

Hoping against hope, fresh expeditions were sent out, day after day—all coming back with the same tale. It seemed hard to go on exposing the men to the dangers of the ineffectual search—harder still to give it up.

The first of April came. Eleven days had gone by, when the whole ship was startled by the cry from a man at the mast-head—

“A boat on the starboard bow.”

The next minute Captain Hardy, with several

men, started off in the direction pointed out. They soon caught sight of the boat, in a place where the ice for the last day or two had been breaking up, leaving many clear spaces of water.

Winton now came running up breathless—having waited to bring some restoratives, in case of need—and joined the captain. Springing with difficulty from one piece of loose ice to another, they near the boat. One solitary figure is in the stern-sheets—where are the rest? They hail—

“Boat ahoy!”

The face of the lone man is towards them—his eyes are open—he makes no answer—he moves not. What does it mean?

The officers reach the boat, their hands rest on the gunwale, they look into those wide-open eyes, “dreadfully staring,” and they know what it means—

Death!

It was poor Campbell—lifeless, frozen hard as a rock, sitting bolt upright, with his hands still grasping the oar with which he had been

sculling. His feet were encased in solid ice at the bottom of the boat, and the spray which had dashed over his back and shoulders had frozen there.

With difficulty could the men wrench the oar from that death-grip. Then they covered the body of the good old sailor, who had perished in the attempt to save others, with a cloak, and carried their dead burden to the ship.

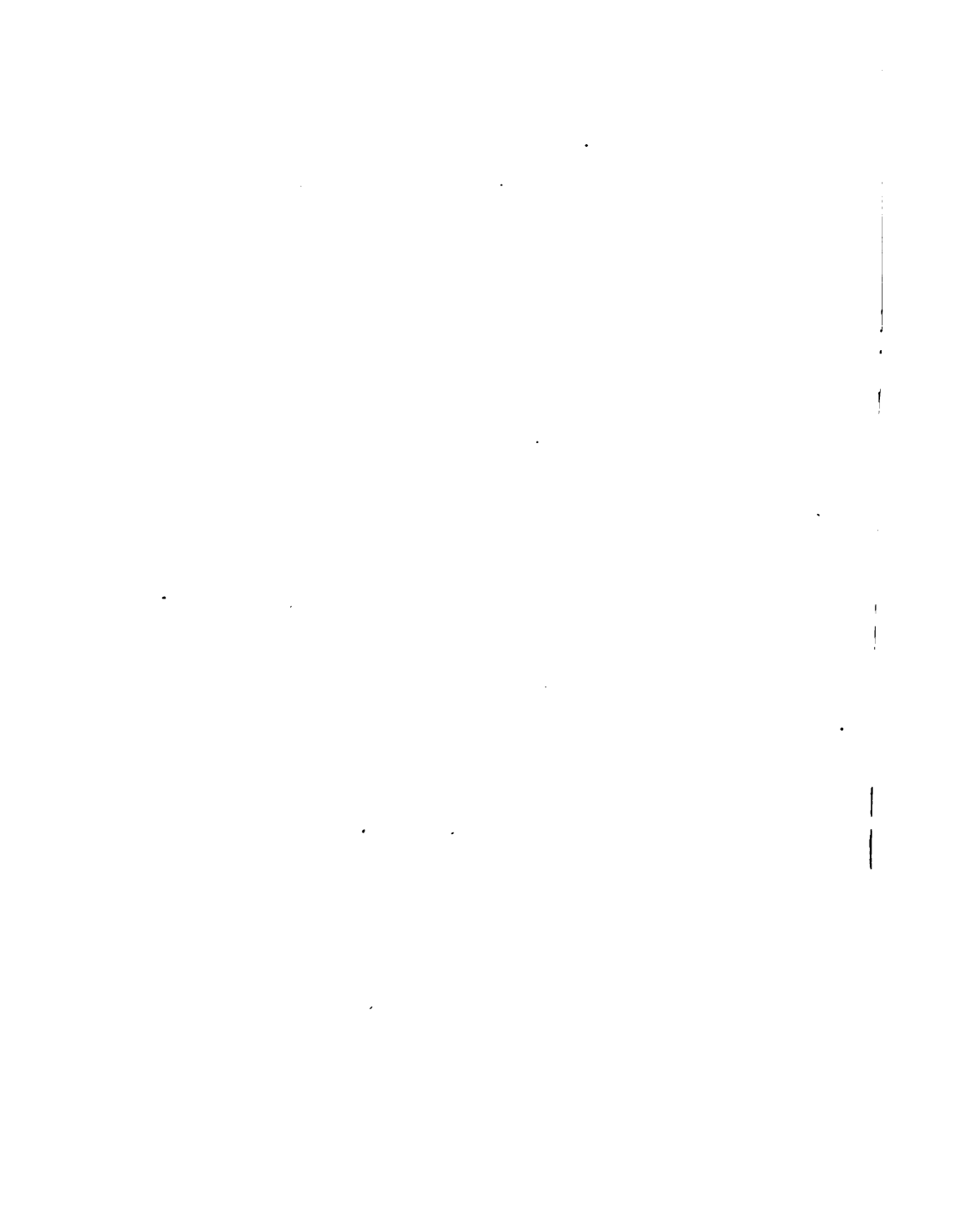
The boat was the smaller of the two which had been left at the encampment. How long the poor fellow had been in the boat, and why he was there alone, it was impossible to judge; neither was there anything to throw light on the fate of the three lost ones.

The same week—a large piece having been sawn out of the solid ice, reaching from the surface to the water below—the body found its resting-place.

The officers and crew stood round while the burial service “for those at sea” was read, and there was an odd feeling of pity amongst them on seeing their late shipmate plunged beneath



"BOLT UPRIGHT, WITH HIS HAND STILL GRASPING THE OAR."



the ice—more than there would have been if he had sunk in the open sea.

“Before you go back to your duty, men,” said the captain, “I want you to know how well our old friend was prepared for the death which met him in the act of duty. This prayer, which I am going to read, was pasted inside a small hymn-book, which was found on him when he died—

“All knowing Father, on Thee I call and pray, that Thou mayest look upon us in Thy mercy, and be with us in our cruise to the icy North! Thou alone knowest when we shall lay down our pilgrim staff. I pray that all in this ship may bow before Thee. Then, even if the icebergs cover our mortal part, or the fierce Polar bear tears it, we shall be safe with Thee. Hear my prayer in Thy great mercy, and for our Saviour Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.’”

From that day no more search expeditions set out from the “Undaunted.”



CHAP. XXV.—ADRIFT ON THE FLOE.

THE happy party of three, who left the “Undaunted” on the morning of the twentieth of March, found such a capital piece of ice for skating, that for two hours there was no thought of resting. Then, at last, Oriana said she was tired.

They stopped, made a hole in the contents of their knapsacks, and began to think about getting back.

The light breeze that was blowing when they started had subsided ; but notwithstanding the calm, the air had grown suddenly more chill, the sun had gone in, and, to their infinite disgust, a thick haze hid the ship entirely from their sight.

“It would seem that old Campbell was

right," said Stanlake; "and I am heartily sorry we came out so far."

"Never mind, we shall soon reach the ship," said George. "You are not *very* tired, Oriana?"

"Oh no; you shall see."

And it did not seem as if she were tired, for she kept up bravely.

Falkland's compass came into play, and by that they guided their steps; but so badly does the sailor's friend behave near the magnetic pole, that in this instance, although a direct westerly course was made, the needle pointed due south.

Half the distance back to the ship had been safely got over, when a sudden storm of sleet and snow sprung up from the eastward.

"There is no mistaking this for anything but an easterly wind; and if we keep it in our backs, we shall have a more trustworthy guide than your little compass," said Stanlake, laughing.

But there was no more laughing that day. The storm increased to a hurricane: the cruel, pitiless snow filled the air, blinding the travellers'

eyes, whirling round and pressing upon them, changing their dress into white shrouds, as if in mocking anticipation of the snow-heaps which should soon be their graves.

Wrapping Oriana completely up in the spare bear-skin which Stanlake carried, the two men—for Falkland had the strength of a man, now it was needed—lifted her up, and staggered on under their light burden. Often they stopped, planting their feet firmly in the snow, and leaning back to save a fall; and often, notwithstanding, did the fury of the wind blow them down. But Oriana was not hurt: they rose again, and pressed on with the feeling that every step brought them nearer to the ship—nearer to help, should strength at length fail, and the snow overwhelm them.

It was like struggling with some giant of superior strength. When George got up, panting, after one of his many falls, he felt as if he had received a knock-down blow; but he rose to his feet, with no more idea of giving in than if he were really fighting with some big bully at school.

“Another half-hour and we shall be on board,” he said, as he arranged Oriana’s cloak.

Looking up, Campbell stood before him.

It was no time for words. “Thank God, I have found you !” was all the sailor said. Then he took Falkland’s share in carrying Oriana, releasing the boy from the burden which must soon have exhausted his strength.

Things looked better now ; the storm indeed raged furiously as ever, but soon the ship would be reached. On they pressed, the minutes passed, the encampment came in sight. The tent, of course, was blown down ; but the heaps of snow, some large, some small, showed where the casks and boats were lying. The air was too thick for the ship to be visible.

Suddenly Campbell, who was a little in advance, stumbled, and would have fallen, but by a powerful effort he regained his feet. “Back ! back !” he cried fiercely, agitatedly, as Stanlake and George ran forward to help him.

Snatching Oriana up in his arms, the sailor ran back several paces. Then, as his com-

panions wondered at his strange behaviour, he said—

“The ice has broken up ; my foot slipped on a loose piece ; and the ship is gone !”

And the sound that came through the darkness, of roaring waters and crashing ice, told how true were the words.

It was a terrible moment, even to those brave hearts ; for who could tell how soon the floe on which they stood would crumble beneath their feet. With a fearful feeling of insecurity they awaited their fate.

Several minutes passed, each minute an age ; the snow began to clear up ; it became sensibly lighter. George led Oriana to the pile of snow collected over the largest boat. There she was well sheltered from the bitter wind ; and he made her drink some spirits from his flask, which gave fresh life to the poor chilled girl.

Meanwhile, the two men crept cautiously to the edge of the floe, and looked out over the seething mass of ice and water beyond. It was now light enough to discern objects at a considerable distance, but nothing could be seen of

the ship; still, although she must be exposed to great danger, there was no reason to fear that she was totally lost.

Turning their thoughts now upon their own situation, they found, with great satisfaction, after watching some time, that the floe which carried all their fortunes still remained firm, and even that the edges did not appear to wear away with the action of the waves.

With much easier minds they returned to the two younger ones, whose spirits also were greatly raised by the satisfactory report.

“Now, Miss St. Clare,” said Stanlake, “I think we can dig you a very comfortable snow-bed under the lee of this boat, and give you plenty of extra blankets.”

The storm shewed evident signs of breaking, and the little party began to grow quite cheerful, as they refreshed their tired frames with a meal of pemmican and biscuit. Campbell now told how, at the first breath of the storm and falling snow-flakes, he had started off to the rescue, without waiting for orders, and happily found them.

His strong arms and experience were of great use. The wind was still too high for the tent to be pitched ; but, a spade being found, a little cave was soon scooped out of the snow.

Then there was a long search for the various skins, all covered by one white mantle now. They were found at last ; and Oriana's small bed-chamber—where the snow did duty for white dimity—being warmly lined, she crept in, thanking them all sweetly, and giving George his good-night kiss, as contentedly as if she were going to bed in her own cabin.

“There is a big pile of driftwood under the snow somewhere,” said Campbell, “and I should like to put a light to it. We shall want a fire to-night.”

But it was decided not to trouble about the fire. There were plenty of warm skins ; another cave was dug out, and Oriana's protectors managed to pass the night somehow—not very comfortably, as their chilled and aching limbs too well showed in the morning.

Falkland at once went to Oriana, whom he

found well and cheerful. They were talking of the best way of getting back to the ship, when Stanlake and Campbell, who had been taking a look round, came up with scared faces. They beckoned George to speak with them a little way off ; but the young girl, seeing it, said quietly—

“Something has happened which you do not want me to know. You need not be afraid to speak out. See, I am quite calm.”

The men looked at each other. Then Stanlake spoke.

“Well, Miss St. Clare, first or last, you must know it. The fact is that the floe on which we are now standing has broken loose from the main body, and we are really on a floating island of ice, at the mercy of the current.”

The poor girl was pale enough when Stanlake began to speak, but the colour forsook her very lips as he finished.

Stanlake shook his head ; but George said, cheerfully—

“Oh, we are not going to despond like that. Come, Oriana, we will have a look at this

island of ours ; but first you shall have some breakfast."

Stanlake, rather ashamed of his temporary break-down, cheered up at the boy's words. The snow was shovelled off the heap of wood, a big fire soon blazed up, and the head was taken off a small cask of cocoa.

"Where is the kettle?"

There was no kettle, but an empty preserved meat can did duty in its stead ; smaller tins served for cups ; and somewhat warmed by breakfast, the little party set out to explore their domain.





CHAP. XXVI.—NO HOPE OF RESCUE.

THE surface of the floe was uneven, dotted by hillocks, but, on the whole, rising towards the centre. Stanlake calculated that it might be from four to five miles in circumference; the edges were fretted into miniature creeks and bays.

Campbell, who had been very quiet all the morning, after going a little way with the others, returned to the encampment, and busied himself about the smaller of the two boats.

“What are you doing, Campbell?” asked George, when they got back, seeing that the old sailor had cleared the boat from snow, and was putting a pair of oars in her.

“Why, Mr. Falkland, the water seems tolerably open out there to the westward, which is

where the storm must have driven the ship; and, with God's blessing, I intend to reach her in this boat, and send help to you and Miss St. Clare."

"But how can you manage the boat alone?"

"She is but a small one. I can scull well enough; and Mr. Stanlake must stay with you. It is the only chance of getting help. Just keep your eye on that outermost point of Leopold Island."

They watched, and then they saw how the current was gradually setting the floe to the eastward. It was too evident that if no rescue came from the ship, they would drift through Lancaster Sound into Baffin's Bay. Once entangled amongst the icebergs of that vast gulf, they would indeed be lost.

"We are losing precious moments even now," said Campbell.

No more objections were made; the boat was launched, provisions enough for three days stowed away; the faithful old sailor took the oar in his hands, waved a farewell with his cap, and sculled away to the westward.

They never saw him more.

“Rescue or no rescue,” said George, “I think we ought to be thankful. Picture our fate if the floe had parted in a different place, and left us without these goodly casks of provisions.”

“And with no means of shelter either,” said Stanlake ; “and that reminds me, had we not better at once hunt for the tent? Poor Miss St. Clare begins to look very white.”

She was indeed cold ; and, standing by the blazing fire of wood, one side of her face was scorched, and the other frost-bitten. She joined in the search for the stray tent, which was at length discovered under the snow, having been blown away nearly a quarter of a mile from its former place.

It was hard work pitching the tent, but the carpenter’s tools, which were found in the boat, helped matters. Holes were cut in the ice for the pegs, the cords well strained down, and, to keep out more of the cold, spare sails were thrown over the top, doubling and trebling the canvas.

When all was finished, Falkland, well pleased with the result, made Oriana come inside.

“Now, this is your chamber of state, and here is your Majesty’s throne.”

He made her sit on a large heap of skins, covered her up warmly, and was soon rewarded by seeing the colour returning to the pale cheeks.

With the comfortable feeling of warmth there came back a little of the old spirit of fun, which used to sparkle in Oriana’s eyes.

“And if I am the Queen, what post do you hold in the Royal household?”

“I am your Majesty’s Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces, and First Lord of the Scullery-maids.”

“Yes. And what is he?” pointing to Stanlake.

“He? Why, he is—the people.”

Oriana clapped her hands with glee at her Prime Minister’s sally, and then said, “I am hungry; let the banquet be served.”

Nothing had been eaten with the morning’s cocoa or afterwards, but pemmican or dried

meat; and Stanlake now went outside with Falkland to find out what stores the casks really did hold. The first one which they looked into, after clearing away the snow, contained salt beef. Well, that might be kept for an emergency. A second was opened. Biscuit—a real prize this. Some was taken out for present use, and the barrel covered up.

The head of another cask was lifted, and disclosed, instead of the wished-for preserved meats, several foul-smelling seal-skins, which Captain Hardy had stowed away.

Rather a chill passed over the two officers at this discovery; until then, they had imagined that all the casks held provisions. It was getting late. They were tired, and almost perishing with cold.

“Never mind. Let us try one more,” said Falkland.

A fourth was with difficulty pulled out from its bed of snow, and opened by Stanlake’s hatchet. “All right at last,” he said, pointing to symmetrically - packed tins of preserved meat.

Supper was soon ready now. Not, indeed, a regal banquet—cooking with a wood fire, the only utensils being meat-tins, is attended with difficulties. To a fastidious taste the hot stew might have appeared decidedly smoky, and the melted snow-water curiously dark in colour, not to say a thought greasy. Then, in the absence of spoons, the jagged edges of the small tins used as cups are apt to produce unpleasant sensations, cutting the lips in fantastic patterns. Occasionally, too, there is an awkwardness in holding the tins between the fingers when they are suddenly filled with boiling fluid, which causes an irrepressible desire to let them drop.

The supper party in the tent was not fastidious, however, and the various discomforts only caused a good-humoured laugh.

The light-heartedness soon died away, as the clattering of sleet upon the tent, and the moaning of the wind, told of another change in the weather. They looked at each other, and, although the name was not spoken, the same thought was in each mind. Poor Campbell! How would he get through the bitter

night in an open boat, without shelter. They could scarcely dare to hope that he had yet succeeded in reaching the "Undaunted."

Morning again dawned. No ship in sight—no boat. During the night the floe had drifted, drifted, until now the bold cliffs of Leopold Island were fading away into mist.

The hopes of the desolate little party became dim and faint as the distant land. Their ship of ice had reached almost the middle of Lancaster Sound; the current still set steadily to the eastward, bearing them every hour further from the "Undaunted" towards Baffin's Bay. The weather was bad—a north-easterly wind—although no snow was falling. After a long and steady gaze to the westward, Stanlake said—

"We may give up all hope of rescue from the ship. She must be frozen in again, or the captain would have found his way towards us long before now."

"Well, then," replied Falkland, "we must look the situation firmly in the face, and make up our minds to a long stay on the floe. First of all, let us build a snow-hut for Miss St.

Clare—the tent is wretchedly cold for her, after all.”

George had learned the art of making snow-huts from Campbell, who had picked it up from the Esquimaux during one of his former voyages. He began at once, but Stanlake stopped him—

“Why not go a little more *inland*? We are very close to the edge here, and it will be sure to wear away.”

It was a sensible idea. Looking into the tent, to let Oriana know what they were doing, they moved some three hundred yards farther away from the edge, and set to work.

George first drove a peg into the ice, to which he made fast a line; then taking the other end in his hand, he marked out a circle by running round, like a horse in a mill. The next thing to do was to build the walls. There was one spade and one hatchet, and with these tools slabs of snow were cut out, and placed one above another; but as the hut was to be made bee-hive fashion, and the builders were novices, the white bricks often toppled down inside, and had to be laid all over again.

But the work did the workmen good—warmed them, and left them no time for croaking thoughts. Once they burst into a laugh at their mishaps, which brought Oriana out, and she laughed too, and helped them; and when evening came, and supper came, they found that they were not half so miserable as they fancied they ought to be.

The following day the hut was finished, a very small opening being left at the bottom for entrance—so small, that Oriana had to creep through it; but that was all the better, there was less room for the cold to get inside. At night even this little door would be covered over.

“This is your Majesty’s winter palace,” said Falkland, when the hut had been made comfortable with skins and furs.

Oriana thanked him with rather a sad smile. All these preparations made her realise more vividly their complete isolation, and the uncertainty of their ever escaping from the icy solitude of the floe.



CHAP. XXVII.—VOYAGE OF THE ICE-SHIP.

“**F**AREWELL the tented field,” exclaimed Falkland, as he awoke shivering; “I will sleep under canvas no more.”

No sooner said than done. The officers set to work building a second snow-hut, and so expert had they become, that it was finished in one day, and taken possession of that same evening.

“I am so glad that you will be warmer at night,” said Oriana; “and glad, too, that you have built it so nice and close to my hut. I did not like your sleeping in the tent so far away.”

There was not much real night now; but George found, that when shut up during the few dark hours, Oriana felt afraid of the lone-

liness and of the horror of silence which reigned over the icy waste.

If the day was bright, a glimmer like twilight came through the snow walls; at other times, all was dark inside.

“We must find or make something to light up the hut,” said Stanlake; and he turned over every cask and package in the encampment. The snow was well cleared away, and it was easy to ascertain exactly what the treasures were.

“Not a barrel of oil or a case of candles among them,” said Falkland, lifting his head after an unsuccessful search. “But what is that?” he continued, pointing to a dark object on the edge of the ice.

It was a seal. Stanlake took his rifle, crept a little closer, fired, and killed it. “Here is our oil,” he said; “come just at the right time.”

The blubber was taken off, some of it boiled down, and poured into a small tin.

“Here is your lantern, Oriana,” said George; “only we don’t exactly know what to do for a wick.”

“I will manage that very easily. Bring me a small bit of canvas.”

Unravelling the threads of the canvas, the girl's clever fingers soon formed wicks, and the snow-huts were never afterwards without a light—although, as Falkland remarked, sniffing, “the oil might be of a purer quality.”

As there seemed no lack of provisions just then, no one cared about eating the seal; and when the blubber and skin had been taken off, he was thrown into the water. The animal had recently been breakfasting off shrimps, a number of them, some as large as a finger, being found inside.

The last days of March were bitterly cold, and Oriana rarely stirred out of her hut. With the first of April came sunshine, and the east wind sunk; and, revived by the change, she joined her two protectors, who were hard at work among the casks. George, delighted to get her with them again, rambled about, talking over the situation of affairs.

At this time the floe, having drifted past the entrance of Prince Regent's Inlet, had become

entangled with the land ice, on the southern side of Lancaster Sound. It would have been possible, perhaps, to reach the shore; but there was nothing to be gained by landing on that barren coast; rather they should stick to their floating island, where they had provisions and shelter.

There was no clear water in sight, loose ice stretched right across the Sound; but while they were looking, the current began to tell upon this ice, and set it in motion. One large piece struck their own floe heavily, forcing it away from the land ice, and once more they began to drift.

They were carried along at about two knots an hour; and it gave a strange sensation to Oriana to watch the shore which they were passing, and to know that the frozen mass which was bearing her away to the wide ocean owned no control. Rudder could not guide, anchor could not stay that ship of ice as it pursued its destined course.

Soon after the floe was again under weigh, Stanlake hailed for help. A large piece had

broken away from the edge, and the precious stores of provisions were now within a few feet of the water. The ice suddenly appeared to have become rotten in that part; before George could even reach the place, he saw two casks roll off into the sea.

To avert such a terrible disaster, Stanlake and George worked with all their might, shifting the casks away from the treacherous ice to the higher part of the floe, near the snow-huts. Oriana helped, and they did not prevent her, the emergency was too great.

“Hurrah! that’s the last of them!” cried Falkland, as he stopped, out of breath with rolling up a large barrel of salt meat.

He thought Oriana was by his side; but she had remained behind, nearer the edge. Receiving no answer, he turned round, when, to his horror, he saw the ice breaking up all about her. She drifted away on a small piece.

“George! George!”

The poor girl’s cry of agony has scarce been uttered, when she sees her deliverer running to her help. She stretches out her hands implor-

ingly, and, in the act, the ice upon which she stands turns over. She sinks. Falkland swims, wades, crashes through the water and broken ice, he knows not how—reaches the spot; but the last flutter of the dress has disappeared, the cold water is still and calm.

It is a moment of agony, but he dives—dives; vainly, oh, vainly! He can see nothing, feel nothing; he can hold his breath no longer in that icy water, he must rise. Ah, no! a little lower down there is something, he knows not what, floating. One more struggle, he touches it—grasps it. A few vigorous downward strokes with his feet, and he is on the surface, with Oriana's insensible form in his arms.

The boat had floated when the ice broke away, and was now close by, with Stanlake on board, who at once lifted the poor girl in. George tried to follow, but his strength was gone, and he would have fallen back and sank, had it not been for the officer's strong arms.

Two strokes of the oars sent the boat to the island, where, fortunately, a blazing fire was

burning near the snow-huts. But it was a long time before warmth and life came back to Oriana's chilled frame.

The colour did return to the pale cheeks at last. Stanlake made her some hot cocoa ; and George, who had tended her gently, lovingly, even as a mother would, covered her warmly with all the skins they could muster in her snow-hut, and told her to go to sleep.

But the child was too frightened to be left alone that night, and Falkland brought in his own bear-skins, and lay down on the opposite side of the hut.

Once in the night he was aroused by the wailing cry, "George ! George !" He ran to the poor girl, who was trembling violently, and awoke her with a kiss.

She threw her arms round his neck, sobbing, "Oh, George ! I thought I was sinking."

And once he started up, dreaming that the ice had given way beneath the hut.





CHAP. XXVIII.—EASTWARD HO!

ORIANA was very pale and quiet the next day. George was stiff and full of aches after his cold bath; and Stanlake's spirits had deserted him for the time.

"I cannot laugh about the adventure of the ice," said Oriana, "although you were my own dear, true knight."

The danger, unthought of before, that the floating island might some day break up entirely, had to be faced and prepared for. It was already sensibly smaller, many projecting pieces having been rubbed off by the land ice, or carried away by contact with other floes.

That part of their little domain where the encampment had stood was entirely gone; and the tent, with all the spare sails, had been

swallowed up, which was indeed a serious loss. The large pile of driftwood was safe as yet, but it rested on a tongue of ice which the water was slowly fretting away on each side.

“Our work is cut out for to-day,” said Stanlake. “If that wood is left for twelve hours more, it is lost.”

“And we might almost as well lose the provisions,” replied Falkland, carrying away a big log on his back, as a beginning, while he spoke.

They did nothing else all that day, knocking off only for meals. To make the precious substance the safer, a place for the new pile was picked out even farther from the edge than the huts. It was trying work, but satisfactory withal, to watch the stack growing, and the old one becoming smaller.

Oriana came outside her hut in the middle of the day, while Falkland was resting a minute, and wanted to carry the wood herself. Very fair and delicate she looked as her little hands tried to grasp the log. But George said laughingly, while he took the slender fingers away,

“You talk just like Miranda did to Ferdinand in the enchanted isle—

“‘Alas! now, pray you,
Work not so hard,
If you’ll sit down
I’ll bear your logs the while: pray, give me that,
I’ll carry it to the pile.’”

“Well,” said Oriana, “and of course Ferdinand behaved sensibly, and let her carry the log.”

“No, he didn’t; he made a very proper speech—

“‘No, precious creature,
I had rather crack my sinews, break my back,
Than you should such dishonour undergo,
While I sit lazy by.’”

“And so say I. So now for another log.”

The very last piece was removed to the place of safety before the officers turned in to enjoy their well-earned sleep. In the morning, Falkland’s first glance was towards the spot where the pile had first stood. It was gone—washed entirely away.

There was another piece of hard work to be

done, and that was to secure the boat. At present it was made fast by an anchor to the edge of the little island, but any chance blow from another iceberg might carry it away.

“Well, does it much matter?” asked George.

But Stanlake, older and more cautious, reminded him that in the terrible event of the floe quite breaking up, the boat would be their only means of safety.

The cutter was ten-oared, large and heavy. Stanlake first chipped away the ice with his hatchet, so as to make an inclined plane to the water's edge; then he and Falkland manned the painter, and tried hard to pull the boat up. She slid a foot or two, and stuck fast; nor could all their efforts move her any higher, even when Oriana took the rope and added her little strength.

“Now then,” said Stanlake; “one, two, three, and away.”

The boat creaked with the strain, but budged not one inch, and the attempt was at last given up.

The days gathered into weeks—every hope

of rescue was gone, but no wail of despair arose from the dwellers on that ice-island. Morning and evening the good custom, which Captain Hardy had introduced on board the "Undaunted," of reading prayers, was kept up. Then there was always some work for George and Stanlake ; and as for Oriana, she soon gave herself employment in making very necessary repairs in her own and her companions' clothing.

Thus working, there was no time for sinking into despondency. The greatest want was books, the only one they had being a small prayer-book belonging to Falkland.

On the twentieth of April, the floe, daily becoming smaller, was slowly drifting past a high, bold cape, with table-land at the top, which George conjectured to be Cape Hay. For another ten days the land remained in sight to the south ; and then, on the first of May, they passed out into Baffin's Bay.

This was an event in their rudderless voyage long looked forward to with dread and hope. Falkland was ignorant of the set of the current in the vast expanse of the bay. If the floe were

carried to the north, through Smith's Sound, the wanderers' fate was sealed; nothing but a miracle could save them from death by cold or starvation. If, on the other hand, the ice-island drifted to the south, they would be in the track of whalers, or might even find their way by some means to Disco, or any other Danish settlement on the west coast of Greenland.

With hands clasped in each other's, George and Oriana, at this crisis of their fate, stood watching the wild scene.

As the shores of Lancaster Sound receded, the easterly current, which had carried them so far, met the opposing stream in Baffin's Bay. Icebergs of every size were whirled round in confusion, many of them crashing against the floe, and breaking off large pieces. The agitated water sent the ice-island now a little way to the north—when Oriana, turning pale, would press George's hand despairingly—then back again to the south, at which she would lift her eyes with a smile to his face.

At length all doubts were over; the current

bore them steadily and slowly towards the south.

“Thank God, we may be saved yet.”

And the girl, generally so quiet and self-possessed, dropped on her knees, and raised her eyes, moist with grateful tears, towards heaven.





CHAP. XXIX.—“WILL HE DIE, DO YOU THINK?”

“COMPLETED the North-West Passage on an ice-floe!” said Stanlake, looking back at Lancaster Sound. “That will be worth talking about when we get to England—if ever we do get there,” he added, in a low voice.

In the excitement of watching the set of the current in Baffin’s Bay, the danger to which the boat was exposed had escaped notice; floating ice was knocking it about in all directions. At length, just after Oriana’s outburst of gratitude, a tall iceberg sailed majestically towards the floe.

“Our poor cutter,” cried Stanlake; “she will be crushed flat as a pancake. There she goes!”

The oncoming berg struck the boat, but there

was a projecting spur of ice a little under water, and the cutter, instead of becoming in an instant a mass of broken boards, was thrown on the floe, damaged, but not a wreck. Stanlake cried out—

"Well, now, that is a real blessing. I am carpenter enough to patch up that hole, and make her fit for service."

With great labour, wooden rollers being placed under the keel, the cutter was hauled up, and secured in a safer position than the place where the friendly iceberg had cast her, and the mate set to work with the carpenter's tools.

Up to this time there had been no particular anxiety about the provisions; the best had, of course, been given to Oriana, and the officers had taken what they needed. It was resolved now to make a regular overhaul, and see how much they really had left.

The examination concluded, Stanlake and Falkland looked at each other with rather blank faces.

The stock of provisions on which their lives

depended was much smaller than had been imagined.

Of cocoa, there was a good supply, enough for two months. Salt beef and biscuit would give a pound to each person for six weeks; but of preserved meats only about forty pounds were left. Tea, coffee, and vegetables they had been without from the beginning, and the want of the latter article in particular was felt by all. The two officers were ill and tired after the least exertion; and they often looked sadly at Oriana's pale cheek, from which all the beautiful colour was fast vanishing.

"One thing is plain," said Stanlake; "Miss St. Clare must have the preserved meat, and we will allowance ourselves with salt beef."

That was settled, and the daily ration of salt beef fixed at three-quarters of a pound. As to Oriana, the difficulty was to persuade her to take enough preserved meat: she said she had no appetite.

There was another serious question—how long would their fuel last? The wood was not wanted for light, for in the second week of May

the sun rose to set no more until winter; but the weather was often bitterly cold, and Oriana would perish without a fire. Then there was the cooking. The pile of wood was getting very low, and with the greatest care would only last till the first week in June.

"That sleigh is of no use," said George, pointing to the pretty little carriage in which the journey to Port Leopold had been made. So it was cut up and added to the small store of fuel.

There was no land seen after the voyagers once entered Baffin's Bay, except once or twice a dim coast-line in the distance. The floe drifted south, arrested sometimes for days by pack-ice; then again set free, and pursuing its solitary way; but whether moving or stationary, every day becoming smaller. Not only had it, as at first, other floes and the sea for its enemies, but now the sun's rays began to melt and thin the ice; the surface would for a short time be wet and rotten, then again frozen hard and slippery.

The ice-island became a very small one

indeed. On the terrible twentieth of March it had been a mile and a quarter in diameter; now, on the twentieth of May, George could walk across it in fifty paces.

He had just done so, sadly enough—for Oriana was lying in her hut, weak and ill—when he discovered an enormous bear climbing up the edge of the floe. Pointing out the beast to Stanlake, who had his rifle in hand, trying to bring down sea-birds, he ran to the hut for his revolver.

Stanlake fired—too hurriedly, he only wounded the beast. Falkland, the same moment, came out of the hut, made a false step on the slippery surface, and fell on one knee, the revolver flying from his hand. There was a bound, a savage growl, and the bear was upon him. A single blow of the mighty paw, with its horrid talons, and George was lying insensible, his face upturned to the sky.

The noise of the rifle-shot had disturbed Oriana. Looking from the door of her hut, she saw George prostrate, the bear's fore paw resting on his chest. At the same time she

caught sight of the pistol lying on the ice. In a moment the weapon was in the brave girl's hand—she fired two barrels, and the brute dropped dead.

Stanlake was by her side now. They lifted up poor Falkland, whose head fell back on Oriana's arm, as she passed it round his neck.

"Will he die, do you think?" she asked, looking up wildly.

Stanlake shook his head sadly; he could not raise his eyes to that piteous face.

She opened Falkland's dress, and the terrible wound made by the bear's claws was discovered.

"Oh! my darling, my darling!" Oriana hung over him, pressed her face to his, kissed the closed eyes.

It was but for a minute. The young girl, with a woman's duties before her, became a woman. She rose and said, quietly—

"We must take him into the hut—my hut."

They carried him inside, nor did she untwine her arms from Falkland's neck, until he was laid upon her own bed of skins. Then she tenderly bathed his lacerated chest with warm

water—there was nothing else—and for bandages, she tore up some of her own dress.

Still George continued insensible. There were a few precious drops of spirits left, and these Stanlake poured down his throat. The eyes partly unclosed—opened wide. Meeting Oriana's loving glance, an answering smile of love for a moment brightened Falkland's face ; then the features contracted with pain, and soon afterwards, without having spoken, he sank into a troubled sleep.

Over that dream-disturbed sleep Oriana watched—watched when it changed into high delirium—watched when all the power of Stanlake's strong arm could scarce restrain the wounded boy from rushing out of the hut in pursuit of some horrible and mocking fiend, the creature of his imagination—watched when he called her name in piteous tones, entreating her to come to him, unknowing that while he cried, "Oriana, *why* will you not come?" his head was cradled upon her bosom—watched, days after, when the loud ravings sank into the mutterings of low delirium—watched still when

the troubled features were again at peace, when that never-ceasing voice was hushed, when that always moving head was at rest, and when the watcher's own heart stopped with an awful fear lest the sleep of exhaustion had passed into the repose of death.





CHAP. XXX.—FOUNDERING OF THE ICE-SHIP.

BEFORE Falkland had received his dangerous hurt, Oriana had appeared to be losing strength every day. She was listless, cared for nothing, would scarce touch her food, and, in Stanlake's opinion—although he dared not tell George so—was slowly pining away.

It was wonderful to notice the change, now that Falkland's life depended upon her careful watching. Love gave energy and strength; she never left the sufferer's side, except when Stanlake made her lie down for a few hours' rest, when she would drop off into a profound sleep. Even the preserved meats, which she almost loathed, she would now take obediently at his hands, that her power of endurance might not fail.

Meantime, while the cries of delirium issued from the snow-hut, the ice-island wasted away daily ; and daily Stanlake scanned the horizon, in the vain hope of rescue from some passing whaler.

The first of June came, and the sun's rays were perceptibly warmer ; but, unfortunately, only the more did the little bit of ice, which was the voyagers' whole world, melt away. The fifty paces of ten days ago were reduced to twenty-five, and in rough weather the water lapped up almost to the base of the two huts.

The pile of wood was nearly gone, and the few pieces that were left, Stanlake kept for use in the boat. In the boat also he stowed away the remains of the provisions, in readiness for the time—which must come in a few days, he thought—when the floe would dissolve beneath their feet.

The bear which had brought such grief into their island was useful in his death. The meat was a change to the officer after his long bout of salt beef, and he eked out the small store of wood by burning the blubber as fuel.

Stanlake tried hard to interest Oriana in his proceedings, and told her of all his preparations for abandoning their floating house; but although she listened to what he said, she cared for nothing, would talk of nothing, but George.

It was the seventh of June when Falkland's delirium left him, and he lay in the sleep of exhaustion described in the last chapter. The sea had now encroached so much on the floating house of these three wanderers, that only half of Stanlake's hut was standing; the ice underneath the boat had melted, and the boat itself was again afloat, and secured by an ice-anchor.

Stanlake led Oriana to the door of the hut. The sea was calm, yet it rippled within two yards of her feet. "We ought to take to the boat at once," he said.

"But how can we move him now?" she exclaimed. "If we do, he will die."

It was agreed to wait twelve hours. Outside the tent, wrapped up in his bear-skins, the sailor watched; inside, the young girl.

During this watch, Falkland awoke from his sleep—calm, all fever gone, but utterly pros-

trate. He was too weak for words, but his eyes followed his young preserver about the hut, and he drank gratefully what she gave him. Then he slept again.

The twelve hours passed. Stanlake sat in the cutter; there was no longer room on the ice-island, and the boat's bows nearly touched the low door of the hut.

"Miss St. Clare, see, the water almost creeps to your door. Let me carry him into the boat."

"It is very calm, and a few hours will make so *much* difference to him; and he is asleep now," she replied, beseechingly.

In four hours Falkland awoke, drank the cocoa which was put to his lips; and once more Oriana heard his voice—"Thank you."

Those four precious hours of sleep and rest, which gave George a fresh chance of life, were passed by Stanlake in a fever of impatience. He watched the ice in momentary fear of its dissolving. At length the gentle ripple invaded the very floor of the hut; he waited no longer. Wrapping Falkland carefully in the furs and bear-skins, he laid him in the stern-

sheets ; Oriana followed, the anchor was taken in, and they cast loose.

The boat had scarce gone ten yards when the snow-hut fell, the ice dropped in pieces, and a few floating fragments alone remained of the island which had been the home of the adventurers for nearly three months.

Falkland had shivered at the first change from the warmth of the hut to the keen freshness of the outer air ; and Stanlake, seeing this, contrived a sort of awning with one of the boat's sails. Oriana looked pale and thin almost as her patient, and, to the sailor's eye, as fragile. Watching the two, it was difficult to say which was the least able to bear lengthened privations in an open boat.

How far south in Baffin's Bay they had drifted, Stanlake could not tell. He knew only that the desolate coast of Greenland must be somewhere to the eastward, and in that direction he steered by Falkland's pocket compass. The sail was hoisted, and a light southerly breeze sent the boat steadily along over the smooth water.

Worn out with fatigue and watching, Oriana rested her head against the boat's side; the gentle motion overcame her, and she slept profoundly. Stanlake, without waking the tired girl, laid her down softly by Falkland's side, covering them both warmly up. Then he took his place at the tiller.

The light breeze gradually freshened into a gale, the sea got up, the crests of the waves broke in foam, the sail was reduced to a small three-cornered patch, and the leaky boat drove wildly on towards the unknown and desolate shore, with Stanlake keeping his post at the helm, and the two sleepers motionless at his feet.





CHAP. XXXI.—THE “UNDAUNTED” TO THE
RESCUE.

THE ice in which the “Undaunted” was again beset, on the twentieth of March, gave no signs of moving throughout the month of April. The crew were often tantalised by the sight of tolerably open water, a few miles off, in Barrow’s Straits; but all attempts to reach it were fruitless.

April passed, May came, but still no signs of release. Captain Hardy, ever fretting over the loss of Oriana and Falkland, became more impatient as the days wore on. It was some relief to make preparations for sea, and the men recovered their good spirits while at work getting top-gallant masts up and bending sails.

Then suddenly, one morning in the last week

of May, the ice broke up. The rudder was quickly shipped; the almost-forgotten cry, "Hands make sail!" again heard; and once more the "Undaunted" heeled over to the freshening breeze, and moved through the sparkling waters.

When the wind fell, the impatient commander ordered steam to be got up—there was no need for saving coal now—and although ice again closed round the ship, he succeeded in forcing a passage through.

So it was that in a few days the "Undaunted" made her way through Lancaster Sound into Baffin's Bay—a distance which it had taken the voyagers on the ice-ship a whole month to drift.

Standing with Winton on the poop, looking back at the Sound, Captain Hardy said, with a sigh—

"A year ago, and I should have looked forward to this day, when we have accomplished the North-West Passage, as about the happiest in my life. And now——"

He did not finish the sentence. Winton

well knew the reason, but he had no hope, no consolation to offer.

It was the first of June when the ship entered Baffin's Bay. During the next week plenty of ice was met with, and often she was driven from her course, or for the time blocked up; still, on the whole, good southing was made.

Then they sailed out into clear water, and ere long a southerly gale sprung up, raising a heavy sea, and blowing right in their teeth.

"There's a boat on the lee bow, sir," sung out the look-out man aloft.

"A boat! and in weather like this!" said the captain. "Give me my glass."

He took a steady gaze at the object, and exclaimed, "It is a boat, and I see one poor fellow in the stern. Keep the ship's head a little away, Winton. That will do."

There was eager curiosity throughout the ship, and the forecastle was crowded with sailors. The boat gradually neared: sometimes it would be lost in the trough of the sea, then again come in sight on the crest of a wave—a

small three-cornered bit of sail alone keeping it from being entirely unmanageable. The man in the stern-sheets had turned round once to wave his hat, but all his attention was required to prevent the boat from broaching-to and being swamped.

At length the frail little craft was in comparatively smooth water under the lee of the ship. A line was thrown from the main chains, and caught by the man ; in doing so, his hat fell off.

A loud cheer arose from the "Undaunted," as the sailors recognised their old officer, Stanlake.

But Captain Hardy gave no cheer. Springing into the boat, he seized Stanlake by the arm.

"Where—where are they?"

The officer pointed to the stern-sheets, where the outlines of two figures were discernible under many folds of canvas, the faces lightly covered by the boat's ensign.

With a trembling hand the captain removed the flag. He saw the long-lost ones, with closed eyes, pale, death-like.

But it was not death ; they still breathed.

It was touching to see how tenderly the sailors carried the boy and girl out of the boat, and how they crowded round—those rough men, with tears in their eyes—to see the faces of the young sufferers before they were taken into the cabin.

But their sufferings were over now. And who can paint the happiness of that blissful moment, when Falkland and Oriana awoke from their sleep of exhaustion, to the consciousness of their safety on board the “Undaunted.”

Captain Hardy tried to hoist in the cutter, but the sea was too rough, and he was obliged reluctantly to cast it adrift. Stanlake watched the boat dropping astern, the sport of the waves, with a strange feeling of pity, remembering how it had been the only ark of refuge when the floe melted away.

That night, as George lay in the cabin, he was awoke by the noise of singing on the lower deck. He listened—“Homeward bound.”

“Yes, homeward bound, thank God!” he said, as he dropped again to sleep.

"Well, Falkland, how are you this morning?" said Winton, coming to the side of his cot early next day.

"Awfully weak, but so hungry. Do get me some breakfast; there's a good fellow."

"He will do," thought the chief officer, as he made his way to the steward's berth.

Captain Hardy's visit to the bedside of his fair ward was not quite so satisfactory; but she, too, soon began to gain strength.

On the second day after the rescue, George was telling the story of their adventures, when Oriana suddenly started up—

"Oh, Captain Hardy! what became of poor Campbell?"

There was no help for it. Oriana heard the dreadful fate of the brave old sailor, and for the rest of the day she refused to be comforted.





CHAP. XXXII.—“AND SO HE BRINGETH THEM
TO THEIR DESIRED HAVEN.”

ON a lovely July evening, five weeks after the rescue, Falkland and Oriana were sitting together on the quarter-deck. The “Undaunted” had that day anchored in Plymouth Sound, and Captain Hardy had gone on shore with letters, intending also to telegraph the safe arrival of the ship to Tyneford.

Rumours of the “Undaunted” having made the North-West Passage, and of the wondrous voyage of the young adventurers on the ice-floe, had begun to spread. Several boat-loads of sight-seers were alongside; and once or twice Oriana had to shift her position to escape the pointed finger, and the “That’s her,” of her west-country admirers.

The colour was coming back to her cheeks, and she looked very lovely, though still delicate. Falkland was strong and well as ever—only on his breast he bore, and would bear to his grave, the deep scars made by the bear's claws.

The fair girl gazed with delight at the magic scene of beauty which Plymouth Sound presented.

“And this is England. How lovely! They told me in Guayaquil that it was always cold and bleak.”

George laughed as he pointed to the green slopes of Mount Edgcumbe.

“Yes, this is not quite so bad as Leopold Island. But our Northumbrian moors are cold and bleak enough in the winter, as you will soon confess.”

Oriana did not answer. Every reference which George made to his own home made her feel the more acutely that she was homeless.

Captain Hardy had as yet told her nothing of his plans, nor where she was to live.

George had faith in his father, to whom he had written a full account of his adventures ;

and he waited anxiously for the morning which would bring the answering letter.

But Mr. Falkland was his own letter; and on the third day after the ship's arrival at Plymouth, he was standing on the quarter-deck with his boy clasped in his arms. Then turning to the young girl by his side, he kissed the sweet face that looked up into his, half-shyly, half-entreatingly.

“That kiss is from George's mother, and she says that if you will not come home with me to Tyneford, and let her bless you for what you have done for her boy, she will fetch you herself.”

Now, indeed, was Oriana happy, and her face rippled all over with smiles.

Mr. Falkland kissed her again—for himself this time—as he said, “Where else should George's preserver find a home but with George's mother?”

It was hard work saying good-bye to so many friends. The sailors were waiting on deck, and George and Oriana shook hands with every man and boy of them. Then, after ex-

changing warm farewells with Captain Hardy, Winton, and Stanlake, they left the "Undaunted."

"What place would you like to see first, my boy?" said Mr. Falkland, as they stepped on shore at Mount Wise. "Our train does not start till the evening."

"If you don't mind, father, we think that we should like to go to a church before we do anything else."

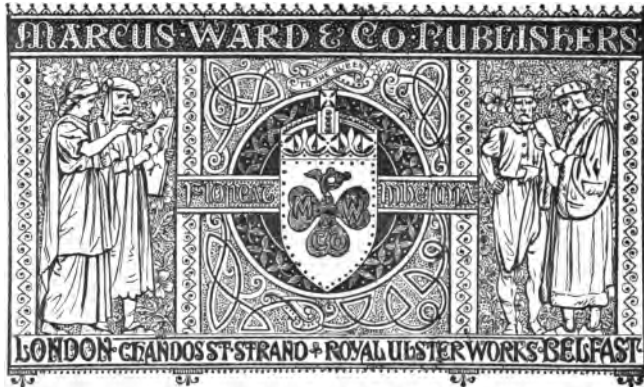
They went; and Oriana and George heard the psalm—

"They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters; these men see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep."

And, standing hand in hand, they sang—

"O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!"





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