

[Illustration: “He had my billy of water to his mouth and was pouring it down his throat.” _Page 195_]

AT THE BACK OF THE WORLD

WANDERINGS OVER MANY LANDS AND SEAS

BY

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At the Back of the World

CHAPTER I

I GO TO SEA

AS far back as I can remember the sea had a strange fascination for me, and if, as is the custom with old people to ask a boy, however small, what he is going to be when he is a man, I invariably answered “a sailor of course.” At school the lessons I liked best were geography, and the only books that interested me were those that told of travel in foreign lands. Born in Liverpool, that city by the sea, and living, for the first fourteen years of my life, within a mile of the docks, it was no wonder that I was passionately fond of the water, and all my spare time was spent at the docks talking to the sailors, amongst whom I had heaps of friends. The tales they told me of what they had seen in foreign lands, and the wonders of the deep made me long to grow up as quickly as possible, but it was not until I was fourteen that the opportunity came, and that in a curious way.

I had by that time become a great strong lad for my age, and was tired of school, so one day another school companion and I played truant and went down to the docks. After playing about for some time, we thought we would swim across the Mersey and back. I was a capital swimmer, and thought nothing of the feat, but my companion had not been across before. However, we got across splendidly, and after resting a little while we started back, following in the wake of one of the ferry boats. I reached the Pier Head wall first, and turned round to look for my companion--he was nowhere to be seen. I at once told the dock policeman, who took me along to the River Police Office, and after taking my name and address, and sending the men out with the boats to search for my missing friend, he gave me a jolly good thrashing and told me to get back into the water and look for the lad. I looked at him in astonishment, for I was feeling tired, and the thrashing had not refreshed me.

“Go along, now,” he said in stern tones, “and don’t you come back until you find that boy.”

“But I shall be drowned if I do that, I’m tired, sir,” I said.

“A good job, too,” he replied, “and then you’ll find him safe enough.”

For a few minutes I stood looking at him as he sat at his desk writing, and then he turned round as I walked slowly to the door.

“Come here,” he said sternly, looking me up and down until I felt fit to creep into a mouse-hole.

I stood before him expecting another thrashing.

“Have you a father living?”

“No, sir,” I answered.

“A mother?” he asked, his voice a little less stern.

“Yes, sir, and two sisters.”

“Well, you go straight home from here. I have already sent your mother word. I hope she will have sense enough to give you the best thrashing you have ever had in your life, and tell her from me to send you to sea. What you want is work, and plenty of it, and remember this--if ever I catch you round these docks again I’ll lock you up.”

When I reached home I found a warm welcome awaiting me, but not the same one as that given to the “Prodigal Son,” and I was glad enough to escape to my bedroom, feeling that I had got more than I deserved.

The next morning my mother said I need not go to school any more.

“You shall go to sea,” she said, “so get your cap and take this note to Captain Watson, he was an old friend of your father’s, and I sincerely hope he will get you on a ship, or there will be nothing but unpleasantness before you for a while, they have not found Harry Law’s

body and his people are in a dreadful state and blame you, which is quite natural.”

I made no answer, knowing that it was true, and feeling quite determined in my own mind that if Captain Watson could do nothing for me I would go and ask on every ship in the docks until I was successful.

When I arrived at Captain Watson’s house at Seaforth, there was no mistaking it, standing as it did in a small garden full of flowers, with a tiny grass plat facing the river, a flagstaff from which a Union Jack was fluttering in the breeze, and over the doorway in white lettering “The Mariners’ Rest” was painted.

On my asking for the Captain I was at once taken to him. After reading the letter the old sea-dog gazed at me out of the corner of his eye, then he laid his long pipe on the table.

“And so you want to go to sea, do you, how old are you?”

“I am turned fourteen, Captain, I would rather go to sea than anything else, would you tell me how to get a berth as apprentice?”

“I can tell you something about the life of an apprentice, my boy, and when I’ve done I think you’ll give up that notion. Your mother in her letter says you will have to depend on yourself, and a good job too, and the sooner you are able to do this the better for both of you. Most of the good firms, whose vessels sail out of Liverpool and London require a premium with a boy--generally speaking it amounts to fifty pounds, and this is paid back in wages during the four or five years’ apprenticeship. Half the boy’s time is spent in dancing attendance on the master and mates, doing the meanest work on the ship, that is if any work can be called mean, cleaning brasses, etc., and when his time expires often he is unable to put two ends of a rope together in a seamanlike manner.”

At this my heart sank, but the Captain went on:

“You must go in a small ship as an ordinary seaman where every man and boy has to do his share of the work, and then you will soon learn your business, and make a man of yourself. The premiums that are charged for boys are a fraud imposed on the parents, and a gross injustice for which there is no excuse.”

After a few puffs he resumed--“If anyone speaks to the ship-owner about it, he replies, ‘Oh, he cannot earn his keep the first two years.’ But that’s not true. They pay nothing for that boy, but if he were not on board they would require another boy or man, and the owners would have to pay port wages, so you see the fact of his being on board making up the complement of the crew is a gain to the owner.”

“Another thing--the Board of Trade stipulate that a ship shall carry a certain number of hands, but they do not say they must all be sailors, neither do they specify their ages. Many a good ship has been lost through having too many boys and too few men on board her. On these big ships the seamen get all the real good sailor work to do, such as knotting, splicing, strapping blocks, etc., and the dirty work falls to the lot of the apprentices. The officers often, finding so few seamen and so many duffers on board, vent their spleen on the boys, forgetting that it is the owners’ and not the boys’ fault.” Captain Watson grew warm on his subject, and it was pretty plain that he had suffered as an apprentice in his younger days.

“I know a ship,” he continued, “a four-masted vessel that carries nearly six thousand tons of cargo, a beautiful ship, heavily rigged, which goes to sea with a crew all told of thirty-eight hands. A fairly good number anyone would think! Yes, but notice how they are made up”--here he ran them off his fingers--“Captain, two mates, carpenter, sailmaker, boatswain, steward, cook, sixteen able seamen, and fourteen apprentices. The first, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh sleep in all night in ordinary times and weather, thus leaving one officer, eight able seamen and seven apprentices to work the ship at night.

Ah, it's shameful! But you meet me at noon at the 'Mercantile Marine Rooms,' and I will see if I can get you a berth from some of my old shipmates."

While Captain Watson had been talking, my eyes had been roaming round the room. It was a wonderful room, more like a museum than a living room. Catching sight of my wandering eyes he laughed a big hearty breezy laugh. "Ah, my boy," he said, "these are some of the things you'll see in other lands. See that ship," he said, pointing to a picture of a full rigged ship in a seaway, "that was the first ship I was master of, she was called the 'North Star' of Liverpool, a better ship never sailed. These boxes of shells hanging on the wall came home in her from the West Indies, the boxes of red and white coral are from the East Indies, now look here, this is a case of flying fish, and what people call sea horses; the flying fish came aboard, but the sea horses were caught by one of the apprentices by hanging a piece of teased out rope over the side, and the little things get caught in it, they don't live many minutes when they are taken out of the water as the air kills them. Now this is a queer weapon," he said, pointing to what looked like a bone sword, "it's the sword of a fish called by that name, and was taken out of a whale that had been killed by that swordfish and a thrasher, two sworn foes of the whale, and in the tussle the sword had been broken off and left in the whale's carcass, that was in the tropics. That is a shark's jaw on that black velvet mount, look at his teeth, no work there for a dentist, he likes to sharpen them on the good fat leg of a cow or pig, or a sailor who tumbles overboard through not looking out where he can hold on in safety to the rigging. These Indian spears, clubs, and bow came from Brazil, and this boomerang from

Australia. It is a deadly weapon in the hands of a native, and I have seen one thrown in such a manner that it returned to the hand of the one who threw it. These cedarwood boxes and inlaid trays and little cabinet came from China and Japan, so you see my lad what you can expect when you go to sea and have learnt your business. I always made it a rule to bring some little thing from every foreign port I went to,

and as my wages grew so did my curiosities. There is one other thing I want to show you, it is in the garden, it is the figurehead of another old vessel I was in, 'The Maori Chief,' a fine figurehead for as fine a ship as ever sailed on salt water."

"And now my lad," he said, when I had duly admired everything, both in that wonderful room and in the garden, "give my respects to your good mother, and tell her I will do my best to get you a ship, and after that it rests with yourself."

I thanked him heartily, and set off home with a light heart, and a mind full of what I had seen and heard. I was overjoyed at the prospect of seeing other lands and scenes, lands full of mystery and possibilities. My mother was pleased at my success, and she and my sisters began at once to get my clothes ready, while I told them of all the wonderful things I had seen at Captain Watson's.

There was little sleep for me that night--my mind was full of the future and what it might hold for me. I got up early, and after a good breakfast went to Water Street. Finding it was two hours off noon, the time it was arranged for me to meet Captain Watson, I went over to Prince's Dock, and admired the vessels loading there, and wondered if it would be my good fortune to get a berth on one of them, and so passed the time until noon, when I went to the "Marine Society's Rooms," and asked for Captain Watson. He was there waiting for me and introduced me to Captain Crosbie of the barque "Bertie," then loading in the Salthouse Dock and bound for Wellington, New Zealand. He was a smart, well-set man, one of the smartest men I have ever been with, tall, alert, with not an ounce of spare flesh on him, hair as black as night and a pair of eyes like gimlets that seemed to be looking both at you and in you.

"Um, ah," he said, "you want to go to sea, do you, what for?"

“I want to see foreign lands, sir,” I answered, “and I want to be a sailor.”

“You want to be a sailor, um. You want to look for trouble evidently. How old are you?”

“Turned fourteen, sir.”

“Well you’re big enough anyhow, and you look strong enough. Fond of work, eh?”

“I’ll do my share, sir.”

“I’ve no doubt you’ll do that and a bit over, remember a sailor’s life is not all sunshine and blue skies like you read of in books, there are stormy nights and days, and times when you have to hold on by the skin of your teeth. How would you like to be sent up aloft in a gale of wind, eh? I expect you’d wish yourself back on shore, there’s no back door at sea you know.”

“Well, sir, I’d have to do the same as the rest, and do the best I could.”

“Yes, you would, and perhaps your best wouldn’t be thought much of and you’d get a rope’s ending, or a kick or a cuff into the bargain, eh?”

I looked at him. “It seems to me, sir, that everybody thinks that all boys are good for is to be kicked and cuffed, my old grandfather used to say ‘when you meet a lad thrash him, if he doesn’t deserve it then he soon will.’”

They both laughed heartily.

“Was he a sailor?” Captain Crosbie asked.

“No sir, he was a farmer.”

“Well he ought to have been, he understood human nature as regards boys.”

I thought differently but said nothing.

After a few more questions Captain Crosbie engaged me as ordinary seaman at twenty-five shillings per month, and I was to join the ship the next morning. I thanked him heartily and wishing them both good day

left the room. What a man I felt as I wended my way home, what castles I built in the air, I was to be a sailor and some day a captain, of that I felt sure, so full of hope is youth, and it is well that it should be so, for has not one of our poets said:--

“A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
“And the thoughts of youth are long long thoughts.”

When I reached home my mother was very pleased at my success, and that night we had a long talk.

“My boy,” she said, “you are about to enter life’s battle on your own account, and your future will largely depend on yourself. You have no earthly father to give you wise counsel and advice; I have had to be, as far as I have been able, father and mother to you and the girls. You are starting with a bright prospect, but remember always that God sees you at all times, never do anything you would be ashamed for Him to see. You have chosen, and I have chosen for you, a sailor’s life; take Lord Nelson as your pattern, the greatest sailor, and one of the best Christians who ever lived, and all will be well. Do your work, however hard it may seem, not only for man but for God, then nothing can really harm you. Keep from the drink and bad companions. Never be ashamed of

your Bible, your prayers, or your God. Let us kneel together and ask God’s blessing on your new life, for without that it is useless to expect either health or prosperity. I shall look for your letters you

may be sure, and will do my best to let you have some in return.” We knelt in prayer, and oft-times in later years the memory of that hour came back to me with renewed help and comfort.

The following morning, after saying good-bye to my mother and sisters, and hearing, just as I was leaving the house, that the body of Harry Law had been found, which rather upset us all, I joined the “Bertie.” She was a strongly built wooden barque of 1,500 tons, and was in splendid condition. She was a perfect picture; all her yards to the royals were crossed, the white lines of her sails harbour-stowed, and each bunt tied up in fine style, all her running rigging was rove, the red ensign languidly shook at the peak, while the blue Peter lay, for want of air to expand it, like a streak of blue paint down the fore-royal mast. I felt my heart swell with pride as I went on board and realised that at last I was on the deck of a ship and that I was one of the crew who were to help to take her across the ocean.

The first mate, Mr. McLean, “Old Barnacle” the sailors called him, came forward and asked me what I wanted and seemed not ill-pleased at my answer. He was a rough, hard-looking Glasgow man; he had commanded several ships in his time, but the terrible curse of drink had pulled him down like a good many before him. He had lost one ship and berth after berth, until he was glad to take a first officer’s place. Once at sea, and out of reach of the liquor, a better seaman could not be found, and beneath that rough exterior a kind and loving heart beat.

The second mate, Mr. Weeler, was a splendid specimen of the British seaman. Trained on the “Worcester,” that noble institution on the Thames, from which so many of our gallant seamen have made their start, he had just obtained his chief-mate’s certificate. He was a good friend to me, and to any boy who came under his charge, an honest, upright, good-living man. Our crew were mostly Scandinavians, and a quiet, hard-working lot of men.

We sailed out from Liverpool that day, the 1st of July, 1870. As soon as Captain Crosbie came on board preparations were made for leaving the dock. It was a beautiful day, the sun shone brightly overhead, the river Mersey lay calm and peaceful, leading out into the great unknown sea beyond, everything was new and strange to me, and never shall I forget the feelings that came over me as we left the docks behind us. As I watched the sailors jumping to obey orders to let this or that rope or sail go, I wondered how long it would take me to learn them all, and how proud I was to answer to the call, "here boy, lend a hand," and did my best to be a help instead of a hindrance whilst we were getting clear of the channel.

On the first day out I was seasick and felt pretty bad, when the chief officer came along and saw me leaning against the ship's side.

"Hello," he said in his gruff way, "looking for New York, boy; had your dinner?"

"No, sir, only I feel queer and don't want any dinner."

"What is the dinner forrard to-day?"

"Hash, sir."

"Now look here, you just go along to the galley and ask cook for a good basinful and bring it here to me."

I did as I was told and brought it to him, and, to my surprise, he made me eat it. I had no sooner got it down than I had to rush to the ship's side.

"Go and get another basinful," he commanded, "and eat every bit, or I'll give you your first taste of a rope's end, now go."

I went, and never shall I forget the feeling of loathing with which I ate that food. I started again for the ship's side, when he caught hold of me. "No you don't," he said, "sit there and keep it down, and you'll

never be seasick again; if you don't you'll have to eat another lot."

Manfully I tried to keep it down and succeeded, but for a few days I felt squeamish, then it passed off, and I soon felt myself again.

CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF A SAILOR

BEFORE we had been out at sea a fortnight I was able to climb up the lower rigging, and had learned several things about the ship. I was very happy, I was never tired, and was only too ready to work off my superabundant vitality. I also learned how to wash clothes. My first attempt was a failure, a heavy shower of rain was falling, and one of the sailors coming along the deck with an armful of dirty clothes, called out to me: "Now then, Tommy, now's the time to wash clothes," and following his example, I brought my dirty gear on to the deck in the drenching rain, and soaping them well, tried to dolly the dirt out of them by stamping and jumping on them with my feet as they lay near the scuppers. Hanson roared with laughter at my efforts, and then came along and gave me a lesson. I lost count of the days, they passed so quickly, and were so full of interest. Every day I loved the sea more and more, each day showed me some new beauty in it, and on fine days, to see the sun rise and set on the water was a marvellous picture to me, of which I never tired.

As was the custom on board ship, I learned to tell what day it was by what we had for dinner, and what with the sea air, and the happy healthy life I was leading, I was growing taller and stronger every day. There was another boy besides myself on board, named Walter Jones,

a quiet, industrious boy. He was in the port watch, and we two spent many an hour together in the dog watch, which is the sailors' time for recreation, learning to splice ropes, make fancy knots, and other things that were necessary to the making of a good seaman. The chief officer, in his gruff fashion, told us one day that a sailing vessel

was like a young lady in her best clothes--to look complete she had to have them all on, and in good order; she must be washed and kept clean, painted to look smart, have a brooch on her bosom, called a figure head, jewel blocks and earrings for decoration, her dress must fit well. Then, for adornments, you will put knots of ribbon on her, single wall knots, single diamond knots, double diamond knots, Mathew-Walkers,

Turks' Heads, and half a dozen others; then you've got to know how she's built, and what the hundred parts of her are called; you'll have to find out all about the bending and unbending of the sails, rattling down and setting up rigging, the making of small stuff and so on. The second mate took a special interest in us, and was always ready to explain and show us anything that puzzled us. At night when it was our watch, "the starboard watch," on deck, he would call me aft on the poop, and teach me the names of the principal navigable stars, pointing them out to me and showing me their various positions during the night. He told me of the wonderful order they kept; how for ages they had kept their present position in relation to each other, never varying; just as the Almighty Father placed them so they remained, never tiring, never resting, never wearing out, or altering their distances, the strongest proof of the work of the Omnipotent God. While he talked to me, his young face would light up with a strange radiance.

"Ah, George," he said to me once, "if you ever doubt God, or His love and care for mankind, raise your eyes to those stars, and think of Him who planned and placed them there, and your doubts will vanish."

I never heard Mr. Wheeler bully or swear at the men; he was firm and just, he never asked a man to do anything he could not do himself, and show others how to do; the men soon found this out, and would jump at his call. To me he was an ideal sailor and a gentleman, and I learnt to respect and love him. One day, just before we got the trade winds, the ship was becalmed, and rolling about in a north-west swell. The sailors were aloft, singing and whistling while doing their various jobs. I was on the poop assisting the sailmaker by picking the old stitches out of the sail he was repairing; he was one of the best men at spinning yarns

I ever knew, and listening to him made the time fly and work easy. I had been thinking over what the chief mate had been saying about a ship being like a young lady, and had noticed that we always spoke of a ship as “she.”

“Sails,” I said during an interval of silence, “why is a ship always called ‘she’?”

“Why, because she is rigged out like a woman; she has stays, and crinoline, a waist, carries a bonnet on her square sails, tripping lines to trip them up; she carries thimbles, needles and pins, and above all she requires a man to manage her.”

Sails got no further with his yarn, and I had no time to reply to this explanation. The captain was sitting on the wheel gratings aft, near the helmsman; all of a sudden he jumped up and called out:

“Shark, oh, go for a hook, Sails; go to the steward, boy, and get a lump of raw pork.”

I flew along the deck to the steward, who gave me a piece of salt pork with the rind on, weighing about three pounds. The shark hook had ten feet of chain attached to it, and the hook was about the size of those you see outside the butcher’s shop for hanging quarters of beef to. Attached to the chain were about fifteen fathoms of three-inch manilla rope. When all was ready, the bait and hook were thrown over the stern, and slacked away about thirty feet. I looked round the ship, but not a sign of a shark could I see. The second mate at that moment called two of the sailors down from aloft to help pull up the shark.

Now to my young mind they were counting their chickens before they were hatched, but the captain, second mate and sailors were waiting to haul it up, and I supposed they knew what they were about, so I asked the second mate, whom I was standing near, if he could see the shark?

“No,” he replied, “but I can see his pilots, and I know he is near to us.”

I must have looked bewildered, for he took me to the taffrail, and, looking over the stern at the baited hook, I saw several small and pretty fish, about the size of a herring, with whitish stripes across their backs. “These,” he said, “are called pilot fish, they always accompany a shark as a kind of satellite, and lead him to his prey.” As he was speaking the pilot fish had been smelling round the bait, they now darted away under the ship’s counter.

“Look out, look out,” cried the captain.

And slowly from under the counter came a huge, ugly, brown, shovel-nosed shark, the first I had seen, a horrid brute, with two large greasy-looking eyes. As it approached the bait, it turned over on its side and shewed its white belly and its awful mouth with numerous rows of sharp, saw-like teeth. It did not attempt to take the bait at once, but just took a smell as it passed, swimming a few yards away. Then it turned and made straight for the bait. As it drew near it turned on its back, its mouth being right underneath, and making a dart swallowed the bait, hook and a few feet of chain.

“Haul, haul, haul away!” cried the captain.

And haul away we did with all our might. When we had got him close to the ship’s stern we found him heavier than we expected, so some of the men were called to assist.

“Stop hauling,” ordered the captain, looking over the stern. “If we get him on the poop, he will either burst the deck or the skylight with his tail. Pull him up in the waist.”

So a line was rove through a block on the main topmast backstay and bent on aft; then the order was given to haul away again, and away the sailors ran along the deck with the rope in their hands. It was grand sport for them, and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

When hoisted up to the block we saw the immense size of the creature. The bight of rope was thrown over it, and it was pulled inboard and lowered on deck. Then the rumpus began. It cleared everything within reach. With one blow of its powerful tail it broke the hatch block that was hooked near where it lay, and wriggling near the topsail halliards, it bit through two strands of the rope. Then it lay still for a moment, and the carpenter adroitly pushed a board under its tail, and with one swift stroke of his axe cut it off. The shark was powerless after this, and it was soon killed and cut up. It measured seventeen feet from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail. The girth just in front of the dorsal fin was seventy-two inches, the jaw when opened to the full extent measured twenty inches by eighteen. Its stomach was found to contain a dead fowl that had been thrown overboard that morning, and an old shoe that it must have got from some other ship. The liver was cut up into small pieces and put into an empty kerosene tin and placed in the foretop for the tropical sun to melt; when melted it is a good cure for rheumatism and stiff joints. The mouth contained eight rows of teeth, four on the top and four below, they were shaped like the teeth of a saw. The jaw bone was taken out and cleaned, and also the back bone, out of which two beautiful walking-sticks were made. For the benefit of my young readers I will explain how these sticks were made. The back bone was first cut into two lengths of thirty inches each. They were then put into pickle in the harness cask for one night, and hung up in the sun to dry. Then they were carefully scraped with a sharp knife, and all particles of flesh taken off. The small holes of the vertebræ were cleaned out with a sail needle and filled with putty mixed with black varnish. Then a thin steel rod was run through the centre hole where the spinal cord was, and screwed up with a nut. The whole was then varnished, and a beautiful stick was the result. The handle was made some time afterwards with the bill of an albatross caught off the Cape of Good Hope.

We got the north-east trade winds the following day, and I began to realize the true beauty of a sailor's life, sailing along with a cloudless sky and fine clear weather, when every breath is life full and free, and the sea just lumpy enough to remind you that you are out

of soundings. Every day we passed some homeward bound ships--in many cases two or three years had elapsed since they had sailed from dear old England. Then there would be signals, that language of the sea, and which I thought was wonderful, good wishes were exchanged for a pleasant voyage, the dipping of the ensigns, and away again. Then I saw the dolphins, porpoises, and flying fish darting hither and thither, and I thought how much more beautiful they looked in reality than in books, everything was wonderful and beautiful. My heart was young and knew no care.

We crossed the equator on the thirty-second day out, and two incidents happened on that day that I shall never forget. Just after breakfast the chief mate called me aft, and then sent me to fetch Walter Jones. Wondering what he wanted us for we went to him on the poop where he was standing with his long spying glass, looking over the ocean.

“Now boys,” he said, “we shall cross the equator to-day, and if you have good eyesight and a clear day, you should be able to see the line, now then, Walter, you look first.”

Walter looked long and earnestly through the glass.

“Can you see anything, here let me see,” and he took the glass in his hands again. After fixing it again he gave it back to Walter who had another good look.

“Why, yes, sir,” he said, “I believe I can see a line, it is very faint, but I think it is there.”

“Now, George,” said Mr. McLean, “you look, look well, and let me see if your eyesight is as good as it looks.”

I took the glass and raised it to my eyes, and there sure enough was a line right across. What a wonderful thing that it could be seen.

We thanked Mr. McLean and went back to our work, and it was many a long day before we found out that it was a joke that had been played upon us, and that the line we saw was a hair placed across the glass.

The other incident was a visit from Father Neptune--one of the few romances left to the sailor in sailing ships, and in this visit Walter Jones, two of the sailors and I, had the pleasure and privilege--which is doubtful--of taking part. In preparation for the event a topmast stunsail was rigged on the after skids and filled with salt water, about three feet above this a stage was also rigged, and this completed, all the visible preparations for the visit of his majesty.

We crossed the line on the thirty-second day out at noon, and precisely at that hour Father Neptune and his wife (the steward and sailmaker) accompanied by his retinue, which consisted of a doctor, barber, and policeman, came over the bow. Then, after a few preliminaries, the second mate read to the sea king a list of the introductions to be made. The captain and chief mate meanwhile standing on the poop watching and enjoying the proceedings.

I, as the youngest member of the crew, was the first to be introduced, and after the list was gone through, to my surprise I was captured by the policeman, roughly examined by the doctor, and hoisted on the stage. The policeman again seized hold of me, the barber having in his hand a can of lather made up of slush and filth from the galley, with which he started to lather my face, head, and neck.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"George Farrar," I began, but the filthy brush was into my mouth.

"Ugh," I spluttered.

"What port do you come from?" was again asked me.

"Liverpool," I said quickly. Again the brush was into my mouth, but I was too sharp for them and closed my teeth with a snap. "Ugh, ugh,"

I spluttered again, but it was no use, my face was then scraped with a bent hoop-iron razor, after which I was pitched into the stun-sail bath, well soused, and then allowed to emerge a Son of Neptune--a genuine deep-water sailor.

The list included Walter Jones, and two of the crew, named Hans and Peterson, much to their disgust but to my delight, for I had begun to think that I was the only one to be treated in that fashion, so now, having been shaved first, I had the pleasure of watching the others, who enjoyed it about as much as I had done. When the list was completed

we had a “rough house” in the stun-sail bath, but somebody cast a hitch adrift, and we came down on the main deck “lumpus.”

Following the shaving, three cheers were called for by the second mate for the captain, Father Neptune, his wife, and retinue, the ship and her crew. The disguises were taken off, and we enjoyed the rest of the day as a holiday.

A few days after our visit from Father Neptune, we got into the Doldrums, and after being driven hither and thither by the light winds which blew from all quarters, then having got through, we had strong, squally weather throughout the south-east trades. Here it was a constant round of furling and unfurling of the light sails, and Jones and I got quite proficient at it, and I felt a bit proud of myself, but true to the letter is the wise old saying that “pride comes before a fall,” for so it happened to me.

When the command was given one day to furl the main-topsail, I followed

in the rear of the other sailors, for I felt fit for anything, so up I went until I reached the under side of the maintop. Now the others had swung themselves up in the proper way by the futtock shrouds without a moment’s hesitation, for they were old hands, but when I looked at the overhanging top, and realized that I must climb around it with my head slanting away from my feet, my heart failed, and I clung motionless to

the shrouds.

“What are you about, you young fool, swarm up, swarm up will you.”

It was the voice of the first mate, hoarse with anger and it made me wince as from a blow.

“All right, sir,” I said, and made a desperate effort to go still higher. But, unfortunately, my right foot lost its hold upon the rope-ladder, and, in trying to swing it back my left foot also let go, and there I hung by my hands alone, unable to recover my footing, and certain that I should be dashed to death on the deck if my grasp failed, but luckily for me the first mate saw my danger.

“Look out for that youngster by the maintop there,” he shouted, for I was swaying with the pitching of the ship. “Look slippy, or he’ll drop.”

Hans, who was nearest to me sprang to the maintop, and sliding down through the lubber’s hole he reached out and caught me, drew me back into the shroud, so that I was once more able to get my feet upon the ropes.

“Here, give us hold of your hand,” he said, “and get up through the lubber’s hole, if you don’t know any better than that, it’s time you did.”

I was too glad at being safe to mind the contempt with which Hans had spoken to me, so I crawled up through the hole of the main-top provided for such emergencies. Hans went back to his place on the yard. As I watched the big square sail being clewed up according to Mr. McLean’s orders, I wondered how long it would take me to become so expert.

When

this was done and we returned to the deck, I followed, and would gladly have slipped out of sight, for I was vexed with myself at the sorry figure I had made in my first attempt to go up aloft, but no sooner was I on the deck than Mr. McLean called me to him.

“So that’s the way you go up aloft, eh,” he said, “you ought to have brought your nurse with you to sea. You stood a good chance of breaking your neck, what sort of a sailor are you going to make, if you go on like that.”

My blood boiled, although I was still feeling the effects of my fright, but I said nothing, and then he put his hand on my shoulder and said, “my lad, you’ve a lot to learn yet, and the sooner you set about it the better.”

A sudden resolution came into my mind, and, without waiting to think, I went to the main shrouds, and, climbing to the futtock-shrouds, set myself to the task of reaching the main-top in true sailor fashion. My muscles quivered and my breath came in short quick gasps as I leaned once more over that great space below me, but setting my teeth, and breathing a prayer to God to help me, I made another effort, and found to my relief that I had succeeded, and at last I was on the maintop. A glad sense of triumph filled my heart, and following the shrouds with my eyes to where they ended at the main-top-mast head, I determined to reach that too before I went down again.

“I’ll try, anyhow, it’s not as bad as what I have just done.”

So, climbing cautiously, I reached the head without any very great difficulty, and after holding on for a few minutes to rest, I came back to the main-top. When it came to leaving it for the deck I hesitated, but no, I said to myself, and sure enough I did and managed all right, without having to go through the lubber hole.

I thought no one had noticed me going up, and hoped they had not, but, to my surprise, the chief mate called me to him.

“I see you’ve got the right grit in you my lad,” he said kindly, “that’s the only way to learn the ropes, you’ll soon get the run of the rigging.”

CHAPTER III

A BURNING SHIP

ON the 20th August we sighted the island of Tristan d'Acunha: when about seven miles off, our yards were backed to see if any of the natives would put off to us to barter. This, of course, was all new to Jones and me, and we were talking to each other about it, and wondering what new experience we should have, when Mr. Weeler, the second mate, came along, and I asked him if he would tell me a bit about the island.

"Yes, boys," he said in his usual kind way of speaking to us, "I will willingly tell you what I know:

"Tristan d'Acunha is the largest of a group of three islands in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is about 1,500 miles from the nearest land, and has a circuit of 15 miles. It is both mountainous and volcanic, and one peak attains the great height or elevation of 8,000 feet above the level of the sea. Its position, which, of course, you do not yet understand, is in latitude 37° south, 15°w. 40° west, and is believed to have been uninhabited until 1811, when three Americans took up their residence upon it for the purpose of cultivating vegetables and selling the produce, particularly potatoes, to vessels which might touch there on their way to India, the Cape, or other parts of the southern ocean. These Americans remained its only inhabitants until 1816, when, on Napoleon Bonaparte being sent to St. Helena, the British Government deemed it expedient to garrison the island, and sent the Falmouth man-of-war with a colony of forty persons to the island; they arrived in the month of August and found that the chief of the American settlers had died, and only two were left--what became of these two is very uncertain. But the British garrison was soon given up, the colony abandoned, and all returned to the Cape of Good Hope, except a Scotchman, named Glass, who had been a corporal of artillery, and his wife, who was a Cape Creole. As time went on other families joined them, and thus a nation on a small scale was formed, Mr. Glass, the

founder, being the chief law-giver for all. The little colony increased as the years passed away, a considerable number of children having been born since the settlement. The different families built cottages and thatched them with the long grass of the island, and they had every appearance of English cleanliness and comfort. The north side of the island was well-cultivated by them, they are a quiet, industrious, social lot of people. The last time I came this route there were 107 people living on the island, 61 men and 46 women, they possessed 114 head of cattle, 37 sheep, 70 pigs, and about 300 fowls. They also have a Commonwealth Government, with a vigilance committee to keep order.

The produce of the island, you will see for yourselves, as four whale boats are being put off from it now.”

As Mr. Weeler finished speaking we thanked him, and turned out attention to the boats now rapidly approaching us, and it was not very long before they came alongside the ship and we saw that they were loaded with potatoes, cabbages, lettuce, water-cress, eggs, fowls, young pigs, birdskins, and a few large albatross eggs, weighing about two pounds each. For this stock they wanted in exchange tea, sugar, peas, molasses, and rice, and, of course, wanted twice the value of their own stock, needless to say they did not get this. They also gave us another interesting item of news, which, to Jones and me, who had been listening to Mr. Weeler’s graphic description of the island and its history, made it doubly interesting, a clergyman had arrived on the island a few weeks before to take up his residence amongst them, and during his first week on the island had the pleasure of uniting thirty-three couples in marriage. They seemed very pleased to impart this news, and after a great deal of hand-shaking and many “hurrahs,” they got into their boats again, well pleased with their bargains, and pulled for the shore. Our yards were trimmed to the wind, and with a brisk breeze we continued our voyage.

A few days after leaving these islands the weather became very rough and boisterous, with mountainous seas running after the ship and threatening to swamp her every moment. But she rose nobly to her

duty and remained staunch and tight. Our sails were reduced to lower top-gallant-sail and the dear old ship was staggering under the pressure of her canvas. I was in my element, as happy as a bird, and in the best of health. How I loved the sea in all its moods, whether wild and restless or calm and still, and the life on board with its ups and downs seemed to entwine itself more and more around my heart every day.

The more I saw of the work of the ship the more I loved it, and put my heart into all I did, and I was making good progress, and was a fair helmsman in moderate weather, fairly proficient in making all sorts of knots, splices, etc. Both officers and sailors were doing their best for me, and were quite as willing to teach me as I was to learn, and I felt that there was nothing to complain of and much to be thankful for.

On the fourth of September we sighted the desolate islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, passing close to them to see if there were any shipwrecked seamen on them, so many vessels and their crews were lost on that track, that the English Government have built a hut and erected a flagstaff on the island. A man-of-war visits the island and leaves provisions at intervals, with written instructions that anyone who has the misfortune to be shipwrecked, may use the provisions but not waste them, and they are requested to hoist the flag on the flagstaff, as all vessels going that route are expected to be on the look-out for the flag and take off anyone who may be stranded there. These islands are volcanic and have nothing on them to support life. As the flag was not hoisted when we passed, we concluded that there was no one there.

From thence we had a succession of westerly gales right up to Snares Rocks off the South Island of New Zealand. The crew were merely standing by to attend sails if required, the wind and sea being too rough to do any work about the decks, and many an hour did I spend under the fore-castle head listening to their yarns of other lands and of other ships they had been in, of hairbreadth escapes and shipwrecks. How eagerly I listened and how it stirred my heart, until I almost fancied I had been through such adventures myself.

On the night watches the second mate kept me aft on the poop to pass the word along if the men were required. One night when about a hundred miles off the South Island of New Zealand, the gale suddenly died away, and it fell dead calm, with a high sea, such as I had not seen, running. The ship wallowed and rolled unmercifully until every bone in our bodies ached with tumbling about. The officers were afraid of the masts coming down with a crash. All night the water fell on her decks in huge green seas, sometimes it seemed as if she had settled down, then she rolled and rose gradually, the water washing from side to side like cataracts, until about a foot remained on her decks, then another sea would sweep aboard, and under its sudden weight the ship would quiver and stagger like a frightened steed. Sometimes she literally seemed to buckle fore and aft, at others she laboured like a frightened animal, the tumult of seas literally leaping aboard the ship, until she seemed a mere plaything of the elements. And so the night passed and the day slowly followed, now and then the sea would rise above the rail so high that it looked as though nothing could save us from being engulfed, but by a merciful Providence the vessel lived through it. Then, towards evening, the gale moderated a bit, the night came on with a densely eerie darkness--pitch-dark the sailors called it--with the sea still like a boiling pot, still tumbling on board and filling the decks.

About midnight we heard a loud report to the south, and immediately out of the blackness great flames shot up, and we saw huge columns of smoke with flames darting here and there. As the fire increased we could see the outline of a large sailing ship. It was on fire and we were powerless to render her any assistance. There was not a breath of wind, the night was pitch dark, and no boat could have lived five minutes in the sea that was running. We could only look on and pray to God to help them. All hands were kept on deck ready to work the sails should a breeze spring up or the sea go down sufficiently to allow of the launching of a boat.

It was a terrible night, one never to be forgotten. "Oh, for a breeze!" was the cry of all on board our ship, but no breeze came and for four hours we had to watch a terrible struggle with death, and feel we were helpless. We could see the flames like angry demons leaping from shroud

to shroud, and from yard to yard, then only great dense volumes of smoke lit up by the flames behind. Then again the awful flames would belch forth and light up the whole heavens above them. We were too far off to distinguish any human beings. God alone knew their sufferings and heard their prayers, He alone saw that fight with death, and while we looked, our hearts wrung with a sense of our helplessness, without a moment's warning, the ill-fated vessel disappeared, and the night was black as before.

Our captain ordered several lights to be hung about the rigging, in case there were any boats, rafts, etc., afloat, but none were seen, and when towards daylight, a breeze springing up, our ship cruised about to pick up anyone who might have escaped by any means, not a vestige of the ship or boats could be seen to tell what ship she was, and what port she was bound for, nothing but a quantity of loose wreckage, so we continued our journey with sad hearts thinking of the unfortunate ship and her ill-fated crew.

Towards noon the following day the sea fell dead calm, and became as smooth as a millpond. A light breeze sprang up from the north-east, and presently we ran into a large shoal of bottle-nosed whales and grampus. The sea became thick with them, all leisurely lolling and tumbling about on the surface, and many apparently standing upright like great posts, or milestones in the sea. There must have been hundreds of them. The sailors, on seeing them, said we were in for a dressing down, the presence of the grampus on the surface being a sure sign of dirty weather, and their instinct or superstition, whichever it is called, was correct again, and presently I noticed that Mr. McLean, our chief mate was looking with earnest eyes at the horizon astern. I looked too and saw a large black cloud sailing up the sky exactly on a line with the course we were making. I have never before or since seen a body of

vapour wear such an ugly look. Its hinder parts wore the true aspect of thunder; its brow of pale sulphur, darkened into a swollen livid curve, its dreadful shape made one think of some leviathan, a flying beast, a mighty dragon, such as one reads about, or some huge horrible creature descending from another world, casting its strange shadow over its prey ere it descended to its work of destruction.

Little by little the cloud overtook us and then it overhung the vessel like an immense black canopy plunging us and the sea around into gloom

and then passed on, but before midnight we were in the midst of a fierce north-east gale or hurricane. Fortunately for us we were partly sheltered by Stewart's Island and did not get the high sea that we should have got had we been further to the westward.

On it came with awful speed and fury. At first there was a stifling heat in the atmosphere, then the clouds spread over the sky, shutting out the stars, mysterious changes seemed to be taking place in nature around, noiselessly for a time, then the war of the elements began with a burst of heaven's own artillery. At first it was distant, muttering, prolonged and fitful, like the rattling musketry of advancing skirmishers, soon a roar of deafening thunder rent the sky, another and another followed with blinding flashes of lightning between, corposant lights were seen on the yard arms, and the tips of the masts, then the rain came down in torrents. For twenty-four hours the hurricane lasted and the ship kept dodging under the lee of the south end of Stewart's Island, then gradually the storm abated and the wind veered into the north-west, the ship was put on her course for Wellington, where we arrived safely in a few days.

CHAPTER IV

NEW FRIENDS

I SHALL never forget the sensation that passed over me when the "Bertie" dropped her anchor, and made fast to the railway wharf on

arrival at Wellington. It was my first foreign port, and we expected to be there for four weeks before sailing for home. The sun was setting as we dropped our anchor in what looked to me like a picture I had seen of the Lake of Galilee, with the hills surrounding it, and this was Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, the land of the Maori Chiefs. There amongst those hills they had lived and fought and died. I wondered if I should see any of them, or if there would be any time to see something of the surroundings. I could scarcely take my eyes off the hills, with their lights and shades of purple and gold, bronze and scarlet, as the sun passed over the various strata of which the hills are composed. Before turning in, Jones and I had planned to go on shore together and see, as far as lay in our power, all that there was to be seen.

The day after we arrived two ladies and a gentleman came on board and asked if there were any boys or apprentices on the ship. The first mate called Jones and I to where they were standing and introduced us to them, and the ladies immediately gave us both an invitation to tea that evening, at the same time telling Mr. McLean they would look after us each evening during our stay to save us from getting into bad company, of which there was too much round the seaport. You may be sure Jones and I thanked them heartily, and almost counted the hours that must elapse before we could go over the shipside, after having been at sea three months.

When they had left the ship I asked Mr. McLean who they were, and why they troubled about two youngsters like Jones and I whom they knew nothing about?

“My lad,” he said, putting his hand on my shoulder, “there are plenty of kind hearts in the world, and here in Wellington several ladies and gentlemen from the different churches have banded themselves together for the sole purpose of looking after all the sailor boys and apprentices that come into this port. Many a boy has been saved from destruction by their kindness and care, for in a place like this

temptations abound, and before you know where you are you are led astray.”

At five p.m., when the day's work was done, we tidied ourselves up and donned our best clothes, and at five-thirty two gentlemen came on board for us, and we were soon walking along the wharf, our escort pointing out all the places of interest as we left the shipping behind us and came into Queen Street, and then turned into a large house, at the door of which stood the ladies who had given as the invitation. They gave us a hearty welcome, and hoped we should feel at home with them. To our surprise and pleasure we found there were eight boys, besides us, belonging to other ships lying in the harbour. You may be sure any shyness we felt soon wore away under the influence and the kindness of our hostess, the good tea, and the exchange of views regarding our ships amongst us boys, each, of course, thinking his own ship the best. After our hostess had returned thanks to God for the meal we had just finished, we went into another room. We then had some music and sang a few hymns. Some of us played draughts, some dominoes, and other parlour games, until seven-thirty, when one of the gentlemen asked us if we would like to join the Order of Good Templars. He explained to us what it meant and pointed out to us that by belonging to this Order we could visit any lodge, if there was one in a port that we called at, we should be made very welcome, and at once find ourselves amongst friends. We both agreed, and the other boys, who had already become members were very pleased, telling us that we should like the lodge they were sure. At eight o'clock we all went to the Temperance Hall a few doors further up the street, there we were made members of the Order. The members vied with each other in making us feel welcome and at home, and I felt that if this was a sample of the evenings spent in the “Good Templars' Lodges,” that would be where mine would be spent in any port where there was a lodge held. At the close of the evening several of the members walked down to the ship with us, and so ended one of the happiest evenings of my life.

It was with light happy hearts that Jones and I did our work the next day. Both the chief and second mate asked us how we had spent the evening, and seemed very glad that we had met with such friends. My work seemed nothing, so much did I long for evening to come.

At five-thirty our two friends came for us, and also some of the other boys and we set off to see the places of interest. That night we saw the Government Official Buildings, Lambton Quay, the General Post Office, Custom House Quay, and the Public Hospital, New Town. These buildings were all very imposing. We were also told about the two earthquakes that had wrought such havoc in the years 1848 and 1855, and

how that it was a long time before the effects had faded from the minds of the people, but once having got over it, the buildings had gone on quickly, and where, a few years ago, small farms stood, handsome villas and private residences had sprung up.

Another time we went to see the Parliament Buildings. We also had some side trips, to Lower Hut, and had tea at the Belle Vue Gardens, then to Wainmomata on the Saturday, going by rail to Lower Hut, and I had my first ride in a buggy to finish our journey. Again some of the Lodge members made a party up, and we went by steamer to Seatown

and Haraka Bay, each day brought its work and its pleasure, and each Sunday afternoon Mrs. Hamilton, our kind friend and hostess, gave us writing materials and made us write to our friends at home, she paid the postage, and herself posted the letters for us.

I had also seen several Maoris, one was a great, chief named Te Araroa, he had his face tattooed all over, this was considered an ornament, but I thought differently. Our last outing before leaving the port was to the Lighthouse on Somes Island. Before leaving for the ship that night Mrs. Hamilton gathered us all together and, after singing a few hymns, she asked us to kneel with her in prayer. Never shall I forget that prayer, and how she pleaded for us to be kept safe from sin and shipwreck. May God, whom she loved, bless and reward her for the

great
kindness she showed me and hundreds of boys who came to the Port of Wellington.

We finished loading at last, and had to say good-bye to our kind-hearted friends. Many of them came to see us off. Captain Crosbie seemed very pleased, and when they had gone he turned to me saying with
a smile:

“You seem to have had a good time, boys.”

“Yes, sir,” I replied, “a time I shall never forget, or Jones either.”

“That’s right, enjoy life while your hearts are young, it will help you to do your work better, and give you pleasant things to think of when you are old. Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, drink it in with all your eyes; it is a charmed draught, a cup of blessing. It is God’s handwriting.”

“Thank you, sir,” I said, and went to my work with a light heart. We left the wharf in the early morning with a full cargo of wool, tallow, hides, rabbit skins, etc., for London.

CHAPTER V

STORMY WEATHER

WE had fine clear weather when leaving Wellington, the sea was smooth so that the “Bertie” made fair speed through the water with every stitch of canvas set. When passing Chatham Islands we saw in the distance an unusual disturbance on the surface of the water, which, on our getting nearer, we found to be caused by a school of bottle-nosed whales. Hundreds of them were playing about, turning over and over on the surface of the water. The sailors said we should have a gale before the day was out, and sure enough we had. At sunset heavy woolly-looking

clouds began to rise in the south and the wind had a moaning, sad sound.

In search of information as usual, I went to the second mate, and asked him how they could tell that a gale was near while the weather was so beautifully fine.

“Ah, my boy,” he replied, “there are many signs that warn a watchful seaman of the coming storm, first, the falling barometer, then the appearance of the sky, then the swell, and the height the seabirds fly. The sea, too, has a peculiar smell like stale kelp. Nature has many ways of warning mariners to prepare for rough weather. The Almighty never sends a storm without first warning his children of its coming--look at that,” he continued, pointing to the sunset, it was a showering of gold under the raven black wing of a cloud, and the rolling sea was black and golden underneath that rain of splendour. “That is another warning given to us by the great Master Artist, much of the beauty and wonder of the sea lies in the lights and shadows which the mighty mirror borrows from the heavens above, many and marvellous, some awe-striking as the miracles of old, are drawn by the pencil of the Great Hand.”

I looked up into his face, and dimly read the earnest thoughts there, I felt more and more convinced that if there was on board the “Bertie” a good man and a gentleman it was Mr. Weeler, and besides this he was an ideal sailor and knew his work.

The storm was gathering force, the dancing white-capped waves had given place to huge seas, the wind began to howl menacingly about her as she bent over to the bidding of the swift succeeding blasts. The heavy seas were at times breaking over the rail amidships and flooding the decks, the crew were merely standing by and reducing sail as the gale increased. Day after day the gale lasted; the ship was under topsail and foresail, labouring heavily and ploughing her way through the black waves, while the snowy foam flew high over her stout bulwarks.

“Looks as though we are in for a hard time getting round, Mr. McLean,” said Captain Crosbie to the chief mate, as he eyed the barometer somewhat apprehensively, “the glass is still going down and the air is thickening fast.”

“It looks like it, sir,” responded the chief mate grimly, “but the ‘Bertie’ is a good staunch ship, and she’ll weather it all right.”

There certainly was something weird and depressing about the environment of the ship. The sky was hanging dark and lowering above her, with never a ray of sunshine to pierce the gloom, mysterious shapes darted hither and thither through the sullen waters at her bow, while the mollymawks screeched through the rigging and in her wake in scores.

Through those days of storm and stress, while the “Bertie” fought bravely with the wind and the waves, I learned a lesson that was stamped indelibly on my mind. Uncomfortable as it was on deck, I could not bear to be cooped up below, and though there was no work for me to do, yet I kept in the open air, loath to miss anything of that gallant contest.

So fiercely did the seas break over our bows that the men could not stay forrard, but were driven back to the waist of the ship, where they stood against the bulwarks, each one, however, having taken the precaution to secure himself with a bowline at his waist to prevent him from being swept into the scuppers by the heavy seas that leaped aboard from time to time.

Captain Crosbie had called me to the quarter deck and given me a post at the foot of the mizzen-mast, where I was safe from the seas, but partly exposed to the wind and spray, which I did not mind.

“Are you getting enough of the sea, my lad,” he said, standing beside me, “you did not reckon on having such a time at this, I expect?”

“Well hardly, sir,” I replied, “I thought the hurricane we had before we reached Wellington bad enough, and had no idea a storm could be so dreadful or keep up so long; but don’t think, sir, I’m wishing myself ashore for all that, I’ve just got to learn to get used to all weathers, that’s all about it.”

“That’s the only way to look at it, my boy,” Captain Crosbie replied, and his voice sounded as if he was pleased, “sailors need stout hearts, and those that haven’t them should stay on land, there are no back doors at sea, but there are no slates and chimney-pots to fall around our ears. The “Bertie” and I have weathered worse storms than this.”

Time and again it seemed to me that this must surely be the worst storm that ever raged, and that, good ship as the “Bertie” was, she must give in to the terrible buffeting. In spite of our running under almost bare poles the ship would again and yet again be pressed down and down

through the force of the blast, until her going over on her beam ends seemed only a matter of another few seconds. Then, if the wind eased for a moment, she would right herself, only to be met by a yeasty surge leaping madly aboard, ready to sweep the deck clear of everything that was not lashed beyond the possibility of moving.

It was well that the men had secured themselves to the rail by the bow-lines, or the waves would surely have washed them off the ship to a watery grave. The cook had a terrible time, for the men had to have meals, even if the storm still raged, and he was at his wits end how to prepare them, and more than once his big pot of soup that we were all looking anxiously for, was sent flying into the lee scuppers by a wave bursting into the galley, and the getting of the captain’s dinner into the cabin was a gymnastic display, at the conclusion of which we all breathed freely. But on the last day of the gale, even Tommy’s acrobatic feats were not sufficient to avert the catastrophe, for it happened that a leg of fresh pork had been boiled for the cabin dinner, and, as everyone knows, there is nothing more wobbly to carry in calm weather than that joint. Tommy had managed two or three journeys from

the galley to the cabin under difficulties. With an anxious look on his face he came out of the galley with the leg of pork smoking on the dish, the cook coming to the door to see its safe transit, when, as if in protest against such a comfortable meal being enjoyed by our much harrassed captain, a huge sea broke over the ship, down went Tommy and the dish, and the tasty leg of pork went slithering along the deck and through the main deck port, and was lost to view before one of us could make an attempt to stop it, leaving Tommy still clinging to the dish.

The weather moderated as we drew near the dreaded Cape Horn, and we soon repaired the damage done by the gale we had just passed through. We had a splendid crew, mostly, as I said at the beginning, Scandinavians, steady and willing men. The ship was rolling and surging along at about 9½ knots, the weather was clearer, but getting much colder. When within about two hundred miles of Cape Horn, running before a strong south-west wind, with a light haze, it was about 3 p.m., when one of the seamen, Johan Hansen went aft to the second mate, who had charge of the deck.

“Sir,” he said, “I think we are close to ice, and I think this haze is thicker than it seems to be.”

Mr. Wheeler was alert instantly.

“Can you see anything, Hansen?”

“No, sir, but I was several years in the Iceland trade, and though I cannot tell why or how, I feel that we are near field ice.”

“All right, go on the lookout and tell me if you can see any.”

Then calling me to him, Mr. Wheeler told me to ask the captain to come on deck. I did so, and he was up in a few minutes. He was engaged talking to the officer, when a tremendous yell came from Hansen on the lookout.

“Hard a-port,” he cried, “hard a-port! Ice ahead!”

In a moment every man aboard was on deck, the helm put down, the top-gallant halliards let go, starboard braces slacked away, the yards flew forward, and, as the ship came up with the wind, she heeled over and a heavy sea struck her amidships, shaking her from stem to stern, and filling the decks with water. Then came a crash aloft, and we found the fore and main top-gallant masts had been carried away and fallen alongside. A dozen hands were soon cutting away the wreckage, and looking to leeward, we were horrified to see the terrible fate we had just escaped. There, within a mile of us, floated a gigantic iceberg about 700 feet long and 300 feet high, shaped like a church, with a square tower at one end. Presently the haze lifting, the setting sun cast its rays on the iceberg filling it with flaming jewels of light, kindling all kinds of rich and glowing colours, the effect was beautiful, and truly magnificent. It seemed to stand on a mountain of pure crystal, bathed in silver radiance. We were not allowed much time to admire it, however, for there was work to be done, the wreckage to clear away, and the gear to secure for the night. We then wore ship, and stood towards the Horn again.

We had a marvellous escape for our ship had been pointed directly for the berg, in another few minutes our bows would have been into it, and the ship would have ground herself to splinters. Until daybreak came we went on our way very stealthily, and then we saw vast fields of ice to the south of us, stretching for miles away to the eastward.

When passing Cape Horn there was an awful sea running, the shadows of black clouds whirling overhead and darkening the air with heavy snowfalls, which blew along in thick masses like the contents of a feather bed. The tops of the dark green waves were on a level with our upper topsail yards, and their white roaring heads seemed to brush the flying scud of the heavens as they came rushing madly upon us. In no place in the world have I seen such mountainous waves as are met with off Cape Horn, the rigging was glazed with ice, the decks full of water, to let go of a rope, or obey an order, was to do so at the

risk of life and limb. At one minute the vessel was on a level keel in the trough, in a valley, with moving walls of water on either side of her, then for a brief moment there would be a lull, and you heard nothing but the howl of it on high, and the savage hissing of the foam. Then she would sweep up the huge liquid incline, up and still up with a sickening rush, until the deck looked like the roof of a house, then with the shrieking anew as she soared into the full weight of the gale, another moment's breathless pause, as she hung poised on the peak of the sea that had hoisted her up, when once more she would slip down again, reeling as she went, shuddering like a frightened thing, into the heart of the valley of water, with its terrifying interval of calm below, and uproar of storm above. But the "Bertie" was a splendid sea-going boat, buoyant as a bird, rising and falling like a thing on wings and full of life, and as I stood by the mizzen rigging watching those giant waves I thought of Christ on the sea of Galilee, and His words to the angry billows, "Peace, be still."

From Cape Horn we had a run to Falkland Islands, thankful to have escaped after our dressing down, but passing to westward we ran into another snowstorm, and in a remarkably short time the ship was covered with a thick white mantle.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

IT was still snowing as we were nearing the Falkland Islands. I was on the quarter-deck with Jones and some of the sailors. We had just finished taking in some of the sails, when Peterson called out to us: "I say, boys, just look astern at the fireworks, there's a sight." It was a truly magnificent sight, there above the horizon was a splendid display of southern lights. Imagine about twenty rainbows all clustered together, the centre one being straight and those on either side curved outward like an open fan, their prismatic hues lighting up every spar, rigging and sail with a wonderful glow of colour, the pure white snow with which the ship was coated reflecting the colours from a thousand

points. It was indeed a wonderful and a splendid sight, one that I shall never forget, and it is one I have never seen since.

After passing the Falkland Islands the weather moderated, and we had a spell of fine bright days, then began the usual overhauling of the rigging, sails, etc. This is the work that all true sailors like; Jones and I were delighted at the prospect of getting plenty of it. The officers and men were always ready to teach us boys anything we wanted to learn, and I must say we tried to do our best to repay them by always shewing ourselves ready and willing to oblige them. Nothing troubled us, we scarcely knew what it was to be tired, and as for a kick or a blow, or any unkindness from any of the men, we never experienced any such thing during the whole of the voyage.

One night in the first watch, the night being calm, with a cloudless sky, the second mate called me aft, and, pointing to the beautiful constellation of the southern cross, said:

“By the look of the cross, it must be close to four bells.” (10 p.m.).
“Go and look if I am right,” he added.

I went into the cabin, and looking at the clock found it to be five minutes past ten. I struck the bell, and wondering how Mr. Weeler could possibly tell the time by looking at the stars; I went back to him and asked if he would tell me how this was done.

“Certainly I will,” he said, “I am glad you have asked me this, there is no part in a seaman’s training so fascinating and so wonderful as the study of the stars, the more you learn about them, the more you will want to learn, that is, of course, if you want to get on in your profession, and from what I have seen of you I don’t think you’ll be contented with the forecastle all your life.”

“No, indeed, sir,” I replied, “I hope to work up to be an officer like you, sir, if you don’t mind my saying it.”

Mr. Weeler smiled.

“Here,” he said, “in latitude 28° south, the cross rises in the east and sets in the west At midnight, or six hours after rising, it bears due south, and this is the only time the cross seems to stand upright, so you see, when I called you, I had noticed the cross was about two-thirds distance between a horizontal and a perpendicular position, which would happen about 10 p.m.”

I thanked him, and from that day he regularly gave me lessons about the stars, and I grew more and more interested in them and in other heavenly bodies, as I learned more about their wonderful system as time went on.

All that night and the next day we lay becalmed, and the next night was as black as pitch with a light easterly wind. Towards midnight the sea became one perfect sheet of phosphorus--a silver sea, overhead the sky was quite black, but the light thrown off from the surface was sufficient to read a book by. We seemed to be a phantom ship sailing on a silver sea. After gazing for some time at the wondrous sight, I went aft to the poop, where I saw Mr. Weeler, bent on satisfying my curiosity as to the why and the wherefore of all I saw. He saw me as I got to the poop ladder, and calling me aft, asked how I liked the silver sea.

“I was wondering what caused it, sir,” I answered.

“It is caused by myriads of tiny fish like shrimps and jellyfish,” he replied, “and it is only on a night like this that we can see them.”

I stood and looked at it for some time, it was so beautiful, and through my mind passed the words from the “Good Old Book:” “They that go down to the sea in ships, these see the wonders of the Lord.” I felt how true it was, for every day shewed me some new wonder.

After crossing the doldrums, we had fairly good weather right up to the Island of Antonio--Cape Verde Islands. Here we got the north-east trade winds.

And then the work began in earnest--lockers, rooms, forecastle, cabins were all turned out in turn, cleaned, painted and polished up like a new pin, and woe be to the man who upset his paint, or made a mess after the place was once cleaned. Yards, masts and bulwarks each in their turn received attention, and then the decks were scraped with sharp steel scrapers, and afterwards holy-stoned fore and aft, until you could eat your food off them, they were so spick and span.

We passed a number of outward bound ships, among them the "Ivanhoe," "Roderick Dhu," "Portia," "Commonwealth," etc. We signalled them, and they all wished to be reported all well.

Our ship was sailing along at about nine knots per hour; the crew were making paunch, mats, sinnet, etc., and standing by to work sails, all the painting being done, and the stores expended, there was nothing much to do.

We lost the trades in 33° north, and then we had two days calm. On the morning of the second day, the sea being calm and smooth, an unusual disturbance arose on the water about a mile distant. A large fish was seen to spring about twelve feet out of the water, and go down head first. Then we saw the huge tail of a sperm whale rise out of the water and thrash the surface. As we drew nearer, we could see that the disturbance was caused by an encounter between a sperm whale, sword fish, and a thrasher. We now saw what looked like the vanes of a windmill revolving in the foam, and a wet black arm rose and fell out of the white seething water, like the blades of a propeller rotating under the counter of a light steamer.

"See that," shouted the chief mate, who was on the poop, "there's a fight that you don't often see, a fight between a whale, a thrasher, and a swordfish."

We all rushed aft to look over the side. As we got nearer the spectacle grew in magnitude and proved to be one of the most terrible pictures the imagination could conceive, even of the sea, that vast theatre of wonder and terror. There was so much fury of foaming water, the monster whale thrashing the water with his tail, spouting, and doing his best to dive below the surface, but his arch enemy, the swordfish, was there, watching his every movement, probing him with his terrible sword and keeping him on the surface; now and again we caught sight of a large space of the gleaming body of the huge whale, upon which the great arms of the thrasher were beating its blows, as it leaped out of the water and came down on the top of him, cutting great gashes in his side, the blows sounding like the blows from a giant blacksmith's hammer on an enormous anvil. Attacked as he was above and below, the whale seemed powerless between his two small, yet terrible, foes. The water around grew thick with blood and sperm. Presently, however, by a quick move on the whale's part, he caught the thrasher a blow with his tail, and killed it. Then he dived, and as far as we could see, the fight was over.

A breeze springing up from the west, we were heading for the Channel. The wind and sea steadily increased, until we were staggering under the pressure of canvas, heading for the Lizard. Three days afterwards we sighted and passed the famous Lizard's lights, and running up the Channel, before a westerly gale, were soon off the Ness. A fine cutter came alongside of us, and a pilot climbed out of her and over our side. With what interest and admiration did I look at his weather-beaten visage and survey his stout coat and warm woollen comforter, then a tug picked us up, and before long the coast of our dear old home lay fair and beautiful upon our port beam and bow. Two nights after we entered the West India Dock.

Finding the crew would not be paid off until the third day after our arrival, I went home to Liverpool by the Board of Trade arrangements, and they forwarded my wages on to me. Besides my wages, I received a sovereign from the captain, and one from Mr. Weeler. The captain spoke very kindly to me, and said he was pleased both with my work

and

conduct. He also gave me an ordinary seaman's discharge, and said he would be pleased to take me another voyage if I wanted to go.

I felt very sorry to leave them all, for a better crew it was never my good fortune to sail with. The captain was all that anyone could wish, and Mr. McLean's, the chief mate's, bark was worse than his bite; Mr. Wheeler I felt leaving more than all, for he was as good a friend as it was possible to be to me, and to all young sailors that he came in contact with, and many of his words and actions I shall never forget.

Thus ended my first voyage at sea. I thought then, as I think now, with all its ups and downs, its fair weather and foul, there is no life like a sea life, when one is young. Talk about danger, there is far more danger on land than on sea, and there is no place on God's earth where one sees the wonderful works of Almighty God as on the boundless, restless ocean.

"The twilight is sad and cloudy.
The wind blows wild and free,
And like the wings of the seabirds,
Flash the white caps of the sea."

CHAPTER VII

THE STONE BEGINS TO ROLL

WHEN I reached home after leaving the "Bertie" in London, a hearty welcome awaited me, every one exclaiming "my word, how you have grown."

The boys that I had known at school would come up in the evening and listen with eyes and ears wide open as I told them all about the voyage. I, of course, went to see Captain Watson, and spent the best part of one day with him, he was pleased at the way I had got on, and on my leaving he said: "I suppose you are going back in her, George? She is a good ship and has a good captain and officers."

I hesitated, for somehow I wanted to go further afield, and already I was tired of being on shore.

“I don’t know, sir,” I said at length.

“You’re not tired of the sea already, are you?”

“Oh, no, sir, only I should like to go to some other part of the world.”

“Of course you would,” he answered, “or you would not be a sailor, but don’t leave your ship every time she comes into a home port, make three or four voyages in her, it is not fair to those who have taught you to leave them as soon as you know a bit of the work, don’t be a rolling stone. When a chief mate looks at a man’s discharges and sees each one has a different ship’s name on it, he never thinks much of him because he feels he is only coming to suit his own convenience. No, I say stick to your ship, if she is a good one.”

I made no answer to this and said good-bye, neither did I mention the subject at home, as I wanted to be free in this matter.

I had now been at home a month. The “Bertie” had not come to Liverpool, but had sailed from London, but I had decided not to make another voyage in her. The roving, restless spirit was urging me towards the sea again. Nearly the whole of the time I had been at home the weather had been most trying, rain, sleet, snow or blowing a gale of wind. I was getting tired of the sight of bricks and mortar, and the dirty streets of Liverpool, I missed the regular life on board ship, the sweet pure air of the ocean, the rolling restless ocean, I was tired of the noise and bustle, and wanted to get away from it all. The longing to see other lands, to cross other oceans grew stronger each day, life to me at that time meant only one thing, to see all there was to be seen, all that was worth seeing, to verify all that I had read about India, China, Japan, Africa, Australia and numberless other places.

But Liverpool, I found, was at this time the centre of a great strike of seamen and firemen, and it was very difficult to join a ship, even if you got a chance, without getting your head broken by some of the loafers who infest our seaports, and who neither go to sea themselves nor let others go. A seamen's strike at that time was rarely, if ever, organized for the benefit of the seamen, but for, and by a lazy disreputable gang of crimps and boarding-house keepers, and they were the only ones who reaped any benefit from it. It was a sight to make one's blood boil; all around the shipping offices and along the line of docks these scoundrels would parade on the watch to prevent any poor sailor from going on board a ship and many a one, half starved with cold and hunger, was beaten and half killed by these wretches for trying to get on board a ship to get away from it all.

I had decided in my own mind to get a ship at once, and made my way to the Salthouse Dock. There I saw a beautifully shaped barque. She was, to look at, a perfect yacht, her tall tapering masts and long jibboom with a cutwater like a wedge, shewed that she could exhibit a clean pair of heels if driven. She was spotlessly clean, and her sails were white as cotton. I took a fancy to her at once, a nice model ship always appeals to a true seaman. Then I went to look at her bow to see what she was called, and found it was the "Stormy Petrel," of Liverpool. Thinking how well her name would suit her when she was out in the ocean with all sails set, I saw the mate on deck, and as there were no crimps about, I went up to him, and asked him if he had engaged his crew.

"No, my lad," he said, "I wish I had. The confounded strike is keeping the men away, and I want to get hold of some good men. Do you want a ship?"

"Yes, sir, where is this one going?"

“To Callao, Peru,” he answered, “come down to-morrow morning at seven

a.m., and you can start work at once. As far as I can see there are none but foreigners to be got in the port at present, if the captain has to engage a crew of foreigners, I will let you live with the carpenter, sailmaker, and cook in the half-deck.”

I thanked him, and promised to be on board at seven on the following morning, and made up my mind that if a crimp, or anyone tried to stop me from doing this, well, it would not be well for either of them.

Leaving the dock, I walked towards the Sailor’s Home where the strikers were congregated, to see if I could pick up any news. Here I found the real strikers were mostly foreigners, and many of them could not speak a word of English. There were Scandinavians, Greeks, Turks, Spaniards, Italians, French, and some Manilla men, the Scandinavians predominating. What a parody! The papers described the dispute as a strike of British seamen, the prime movers of the strike were boarding-house keepers and crimps, for reasons best known to themselves.

Several shipmasters, to save time and trouble, had engaged these same crimps to procure them a crew and bring them on board the morning of sailing and they would get a shipping clerk to sign them on on board the vessel. This was done by the captain of the “Stormy Petrel” and on the following day the boarding master brought as truly a cosmopolitan crowd of men on board, with their bags and baggage, as it has ever been my lot to see. A clerk from the shipping office attended with them to sign them on the ship’s articles, several of them could not speak a word of English. Our crew, therefore, consisted of the captain, the two mates and myself, British; carpenter, sailmaker, and cook, Scandinavians; two Frenchmen, two Spaniards, two Italians, one Greek, two negroes, three Turks, and one Manilla man. I signed on as an ordinary seaman, at two pounds a month.

The “Stormy Petrel” was, as the chief mate told me, bound for Callao, Peru. I had a particular desire to go to Peru at that time, having a relative out there whom I was very anxious to see. He had left Liverpool some fifteen years previously as engineer of the s.s. “Bogota,” of the Pacific Navigation Company and had found very profitable employment at Lima, and like many others, had forgotten the claims of those he had left behind.

We sailed from Liverpool on the Saturday morning. It was a miserably cold raw morning, and the sleet was falling fast. As the chief mate said, it was a day to drive a man to drink, or suicide, enough to make one leave the country in disgust, and seek one that had a climate, and not a bundle of samples.

Our crew, being foreigners, were sober, and that was something to be thankful for, although six of them could not speak one word of English, but, unlike Englishmen, they are remarkably quick at picking up a language. Under these conditions, Captain Glasson deemed it prudent to tow down until abreast of Tusker, in the meantime getting everything secure about the deck.

The river was teeming with life--there were barges and wherries, dark-sailed colliers, swarming along under full sail, ships in tow like ourselves, bound either up or down, huge metal ships gliding to their homes in the docks after days of strenuous passage through the great ocean or floating majestically past us to the far west or east.

Everything being now made snug and secure, the men were told to go and have a smoke, and in a little while all hands were called aft on the quarter deck to pick for watches. For the benefit of those who do not know, I may say that it is the custom for the master to take the ship out to her destination and the chief mate to bring her home, and as the second mate keeps the captain’s watch, he always has first pick. The men were ranged in line across the quarter deck, and the second mate, Mr. Ross, called George the Greek first, and the first mate, Mr. Menzies, called a big Frenchman, and so on alternately

until the watches were completed. I was again in the starboard watch, the carpenter, cook and steward always slept in, unless in cases of emergency when it was “all hands on deck.”

The two Frenchmen, Old George the Greek and the two negroes turned out to be thorough good seamen, but the others turned out to be duffers--and disagreeable duffers at that.

We then had the usual short speech from the captain. Now Captain Glasson was a bluff, hard, hearty, red-faced man in the prime of life, proud of himself, and of his ship, and always, as I found out afterwards, said the same thing each voyage to the crew after the watches had been picked. Walking the quarter deck, and dropping his words out between puffs of smoke from his pipe:

“Now men, if we get along well and work together we shall have a comfortable time, if not, there will be trouble, and you’ll be in the thick of it. All you’ve got to do is to obey your orders, and do your duty like men. If you don’t you’ll fare hard, I can tell you that beforehand. You do your duty to me and the ship, and you will find things all right, if not, then I’m as hard as nails. That’s all I’ve got to say. Starboard watch go below.”

We had a stiff breeze and a choppy sea crossing the bar, which increased as we drew down towards Point Lynas. When off Lynas the pilot cutter came in sight, and we hauled our courses up, dropped our Jacob’s ladder over the starboard side, one of the men standing on the rail forrard of the main rigging ready to heave a line to the boat. Presently a boat manned by four oarsmen and a coxswain got to windward,

the bow man stood up on the fore grating, and when the boat was abreast of our starboard rigging, the man in our main chains whirled the right hand coil round his head and hove it towards the boat with a mighty heave. It fell across her bow, and with almost unerring precision, the bow man caught it and made it fast to the thwart. The boat rose and fell on the choppy sea, and nothing but the skill of her coxswain

saved her from being smashed to pieces against the side. At last came a favourable chance, and the old sea-dog of a pilot caught the boat as she hung for a brief moment on the top of a wave opposite the rung of the ladder on which he was standing, and with the agility of a cat, he stepped on to the after-thwart, sitting down in the stern sheets as she swept into the trough of the sea, whilst the steward hove the pilot bag after him. With a wave of his hand and a "God speed you all," he left us and went on his way, as they cast off our line.

By noon the following day we were off the Tusker Lighthouse, and the wind being from the north-west, we set all square sail and cast off the tug boat. All hands then laid hold of the tow rope and hauled it in on the deck. It was then coiled up over the house to dry. The tug, meanwhile, dropped on the weather quarter, and the usual present of tobacco and brandy was passed on board along with the returns. Then she gave three long blasts on her whistle, and three cheers for the crew, and steamed back towards home.

During the next few days we were kept busy making and furling sails, the weather being very unsettled and squally. Captain Glasson, we found, never took a sail in, if the ship could carry it, so that when the order came to furl sails, it had to be done quickly, if we expected to get them in whole. The drilling with the sails brought out the merits of both officers and men, and shewed up their defects and tempers too.

CHAPTER VIII

VARIOUS KINDS OF STORMS

THE first mate, Mr. Menzies, was a man of wide experience and knowledge. He was a great powerful man, a thorough old sea-dog, with a face and fist like a prize-fighter. He was never happy unless paddling about the deck up to his waist in salt water; all his clothes were

white with brine. He was always on the alert, and never caught napping, in fact, he slept with his eyes open, which perhaps accounts for it. Well I remember the first time I went to his room to call him, and the fright he gave me. Opening the door gently, I was going to call him, when I saw him lying in his berth with his eyes wide open. Thinking he was awake, I closed the door and went forrard without speaking. At eight bells he did not appear to relieve the second mate, so I went aft again to his room, and after turning his lamp up I found he was lying in the same position looking straight at me with his eyes wide open, but the eyes had a glazed, dull appearance about them. I began to feel quite nervous. Speaking quietly I said:

“It has gone eight bells, sir.”

He never moved, but lay there with his eyes wide open. I gave one jump and was out on deck trembling like a leaf. Rushing up the poop ladder, I said to the second mate:

“Oh, sir, please go to Mr. Menzies, I think he’s dead.”

In a moment he had sprung down the ladder, and was at the mate’s room.

“Mr. Menzies,” he called out loudly, as he opened the door--the mate woke at once.

“Hello, what’s up? What does this mean why are you off the poop, Mr. Ross,” he asked?

The second mate ran up on deck again, and caught me by the scruff of the neck, and was just about to strike me for telling him falsely, as he thought, when the captain stepped out of the companion on deck. Seeing the action of the second mate, he called out:

“Here Mr. Ross, what’s this about, what has the lad done?”

“He told me a lie, sir, when I sent him to call the mate.”

“I did not,” I retorted, “I’m not in the habit of telling lies, I told you I thought the mate was dead.”

Just then Mr. Menzies came on the poop and asked what was the reason the second mate came off the poop at night to call him.

The second mate then told him what I had said.

“Oh is that so!”

Turning to me he said:

“When you come to call me in future, knock at the door loudly, you need not come in. Now go to your berth.”

I did so at once, for I was rather upset, it being my first experience of anything in the shape of a blow since coming to sea.

After I left the poop, the mate explained to the captain and second mate that he often slept with his eyes wide open he had been told, and no doubt it had given the lad a start. For my part, I took care that I never went into his room again to call him.

The second mate, Mr. Ross, was a young officer of athletic build, inexperienced, hot-headed, and stubborn as a mule. Overwhelmed with a sense of the dignity of his position, he thought the only way to impress a sailor was by knocking him down--a bad principle at any time, (perhaps some of his ancestors had been slave-drivers, and the taint clung.) He considered it quite beneath him to let a sailor explain anything to him. The man might have far greater experience, and might possibly be able to teach him far more than he knew, but he would never admit he was wrong, and was continually calling the men duffers and loafers. For instance, one of his Frenchmen had been twelve years boatswain in the French navy, and no duffer could hold that post, neither was he a loafer, for a harder working man I never sailed with. George, the Greek, had for years been acting second mate and boatswain in American ships, and it is well known that a man may be a duffer when

he joins an American ship, but they will make a sailor of him before he leaves her. And so it was with most of our crew, they were fairly willing workers, but their knowledge of the Queen's English was very limited and the second mate had not patience to try and explain to them, although the mate had no trouble with them at all. The second mate's arbitrary and tyrannical ways were causing a bitter feeling to spread amongst the men, and I heard many a smothered threat from them,

growing louder after each outburst on his part, vowing to be even with him some day when he least expected it.

Another thing I found out before we had been long at sea, and that was that the crew were a lot of confirmed gamblers, and every minute they could spare was spent in playing cards for stakes. I have since watched an English crew gamble day by day and night by night for weeks

together, and never an angry word from the loser, but not so with these men, they were like perfect demons while playing, their eyes gleamed with the gambling fever, fairly starting out of their heads, one hand meanwhile played with the sheath knife in their belt, and the moment a man began to lose he at once accused the others of cheating, and the end was a fight. They cannot stand a losing game. When they come to blows they generally grip the blade of their knife, leaving about half an inch of the blade protruding, and always cut downwards, or across the face, and arms, making superficial wounds that are rarely mortal or even dangerous, but are horribly disfiguring. When things got to this stage, Old George the Greek and the big Frenchman would step in and quieten them. The officers very seldom had to interfere, which was, perhaps, just as well.

One night, while running through the south-east trade winds, the weather was very unsettled and squally, and a hard-looking squall rose up to windward. Mr. Menzies saw it, and called out to stand by the royal and top-gallant halliards. The watch were in the fore-castle playing cards, and did not hear him. The man on the look-out heard the mate, and stamped his feet on the deck, but the watch were too intent

on their game, and either did not, or would not hear him. Seeing no one stirring about the deck, and the squall rising fast, the mate sang out to the man at the wheel, "Keep her off, hard up!" and then, rushing along the deck into the forecabin he seized the Spaniards by their throats, and fairly flung them out on the deck. Just at that moment the squall struck the ship with all sail set, and she heeled over until the lee rail was under water. I thought the masts would have gone over the side, but the helm being up the vessel rushed through the water like a frightened deer. But thank God there was no sea running, or it would have been disastrous. All hands now rushed on deck as fast as they could at the angle the ship was lying over. The captain sprang to the wheel, but the helmsman had already got it hard over, and the ship was paying off before the wind. The royal and small stay sails had all blown to ribbons. As the ship swung off before the wind, she came upright again--by this time the squall had passed over. The mate and second mate then set to with their fists and belaying pins, and laid about the four men who should have been on deck, and in a few minutes the deck was like the floor of a slaughter house with blood.

The captain came along the deck afterwards and ordered all hands to stop on deck until the torn sails were replaced. This was done in sullen silence, and the watch on deck, all cut and bruised with the blood running from their heads and faces, were sent aloft to send down the old sails and bend the new ones. By the time this was done it was four a.m.

But our troubles were not yet over--one of the Turks standing by me as the new sails were set, swore he would knife the mate for striking him. I told him to be careful of what he said, or he would get himself into trouble, if he had been on deck, as he should have been when the mate called, the sails would not have been lost, and there would have been no cause for the mate to strike him. No sooner had I said this than he struck me in the mouth and knocked me down, as I sprang up again I seized him by the ankles and jerked his feet from under him. Down he fell, striking his head violently against the hatchcombing. He lay where he fell, senseless.

The other one made a move towards me, knife in hand, but the mate came along the deck just then and caught hold of him. On learning the cause of the row, he put him in irons. The insensible man was carried aft, and it was seen he had a severe scalp wound. The captain dressed it, and the man on slowly coming to his senses was locked in a spare room until later on in the day.

I told the mate that the Turk threatened to knife him. He smiled and told me not to be alarmed as he was not. "I have sailed with those sort of men before" he said, and taking a six chambered revolver from his hip pocket, he showed it to me, remarking at the same time, "I am prepared for them one and all."

Strange though it may seem, from that day we had no trouble with them. They all seemed to pull together. Old George the Greek, in some way, got complete control over them. He was the most powerful man on board, standing six feet two in his stockings and built in proportion, with a long bristling moustache, and hair as white as snow. He was sixty years of age, the strongest and most active man on board, and withal, in his bearing and manner a courteous gentleman. I often thought what a model he would have made for a picture of a brigand chief.

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTMAS AT SEA AND GEORGE THE GREEK'S STORY

AFTER losing the south-east trades we had light winds and fine weather with smooth calm sea until we sighted the Falkland Islands; standing like two silent sentinels of that stormy region of the South Atlantic Ocean, they have been the scene of many a shipwreck. A cold, bleak, inhospitable rock-bound coast, around which almost perpetual gales blow. There are two large islands and several smaller ones with an area of about thirteen thousand square miles, very mountainous, situated in latitude $51^{\circ} 40'$ south, longitude $59^{\circ} 30'$ west. They are right in the

track of vessels going to and fro around Cape Horn.

We sighted the islands on Christmas Eve, my first Christmas at sea. It being summer time, we had twenty-two hours daylight, and very little darkness. The sun rose at 3 a.m., and set at 11 p.m. The mountains on the island were covered with pure white dazzling snow, while in the valleys you could see cattle grazing in beautiful green pastures, and the rocks by the water's edge were literally covered with seals.

Christmas day broke fine and clear, with the most beautiful sunrise human eyes had ever gazed upon. I have been in many parts of the world since then, but never have I beheld a sky like that on Christmas morning off the Falkland Islands. No words could describe it, for it was indescribable. There was just a gentle breeze, the sea rising and falling in gentle undulations, with a soft murmuring sound, whitened by the ivory of crumbling foam, then shaken into sparkle as though a rain of splintered diamonds was falling, each breath bringing with it the smell of the kelp from the rock-bound coast. The sky to the westward was slightly overcast, thinning out towards the meridian--and towards the east small feathery patches of cloud floated about in a silver sea, while down near the horizon it was a clear soft grey. Then the wonderful sight burst upon us, heralding the rising of the sun the most magnificent coloured rays spread over the sky. It would need a painter's brush, and a poet's language to describe their beauty. The watch on deck actually called out to the watch below to come and see it, it seemed to me a fitting scene to celebrate the day on which the Saviour of the world was born. Many years have passed since I stood spellbound by that sight, and my Christmas days have been spent in many lands, but it is as fresh in my mind as though it were yesterday, and every Christmas day has brought back the memory of that glorious sunrise off the Falklands.

About eight a.m. the breeze freshened from the eastward, and the "Stormy Petrel" had every stitch of canvas set, and was making about ten knots per hour. A course was set for the Straits of Le Maire, which separate Staten Island from the southern extremity of the South

American Continent. We washed the decks before breakfast, and from then the day was as a Sunday. The captain ordered the steward to give us soft tack for breakfast, a luxury you don't often get at sea, and an eight bell dinner for all hands in honour of the day, with a bottle of rum to each watch.

We heard eight bells strike with more relish than usual, as the captain screwed the sun's meridian altitude on his sextant, and the second mate glanced across and actually smiled from the weather side of the poop. Then forrard one of the men and I went to the galley for the kids, or food tins. Chaff and good humour were the order of the day at the galley door, and I rather think cook was not sorry when it was all over. Then followed the tramp tramp along the deck with the steaming kids, and at last we had the food all served up and sat down to eat it. There was real fresh pork, none ever tasted so sweet, rice soup and potatoes, followed by plum duff, real genuine plum pudding, with some left over for tea. This was a luxury, and we made the most of it and for once at sea we had a meal which made us satisfied with ourselves and things in general. We cleared away and put things tidy. The day passed away very quietly among the men, and after supper, the weather being fine, they all sat round the fore-hatch and spun yarns, real sailors' yarns, not stories of goblins and ghosts, but real stern facts out of their own hard lives. Before they started they tossed up who should begin, and the lot fell to old George the Greek, and thus he began his story, which was the best of all.

GEORGE THE GREEK'S STORY.

"When I was a boy I lived with my parents at Smyrna. My father was a fisherman, and I often used to go with him in his boat. I was passionately fond of the water and all things connected with it, fond of athletics, and could swim, run, jump or wrestle with any boy in Smyrna, and was utterly fearless. All the fishermen of the port knew me and were very good to me.

“My dear old father and mother were good, God-fearing people. Their dearest and most honoured friend was good Padre Nicola. The dear old Padre, how he loved me and watched over my young life. He taught me, with other lessons, to be a brave loving boy, and when I was old enough he taught me to sing in the little church that his loving flock had built for him, it was just outside Smyrna on the road to Ephesus. Often when he came to our house and sat in the little garden that was so full of flowers and sweet-scented herbs, he would pat me on the head and say he hoped and prayed that I would grow up a good man, and a comfort and help to my dear father and mother.

“Oh, Jesu Christi,” he groaned, and for a few minutes he could not speak, but after a while he controlled himself and proceeded:

“When I was fourteen years old, an old friend of my father’s, Captain Petri, came to Smyrna in his brig the ‘Alexanovitch.’ He was a dear old man, he and my father were boys together in Patras, and they had not met for years. He spent all his spare time at my little home and took a great fancy to me. He soon found out that I was fond of the sea, and asked my father to let me go with him, promising he would watch over me and treat me as his own son, and make a sailor of me too. My father and mother were very loth to part with me, but Captain Petri had no son or daughter of his own, and they knew he would do all he had promised for me.

“So they spoke to the Padre about it. The dear old man said how sorry he, too, would be to lose me from the choir of the little church, but it was a good chance for me. He would pray the good God to bless me, and keep me good and true, and so, to my delight, it was settled that I was to go with Captain Petri in the ‘Alexanovitch.’

“My poor mother was heartbroken to lose her boy, for deep down in her heart she had hoped to see me settle at home, and become the village schoolmaster, but it was not to be.

“The following week was both a busy and a happy one for me, the happiest week of my life. The choir of the church in which I had now sung for several years got up a grand supper and the dear old Padre took the chair. What good wishes were given to me, what earnest prayers for my future. They presented me with a beautiful Douay Bible and Missal with my name on the fly leaf, written by the dear Padre himself. Oh, it was a cursed day for me when I left the place and home I loved so well.

“The brig ‘Alexanovitch’ was 300 tons register and carried a crew of eight all told, the captain, mate, cook, four seamen and one boy.

“The following week saw me on board with my kit, I was to receive 20 drachmas per month. I was delighted, I seemed a rich man all at once, my word but I did.

“We sailed at last for Alexandria, and my poor old father accompanied me in his boat as far as Khios. Little he or I thought we should never meet again. We had a pleasant twenty days voyage to Egypt, the ‘Alexanovitch’ was anything but a fast sailor, in fact, the greatest speed we could get out of her was seven knots an hour.

“On our arrival we went direct to the wharf, and discharged the cargo with the crew. We were three weeks at Alexandria and every night Captain Petri would take me with him and show me all the wonderful places in that famous ancient city, that was built by Alexander the Great. We visited the palaces of the Pashas, the Mosques, Arsenal, etc., I could not now remember one half of the places we went to. It would take many months, and much money to explore and see all the sights of Alexandria. It is said that in the year 640 A.D., when the Saracenic General Amer conquered the city, in his report to his royal master, the Caliph, he said he had found four thousand palaces, four thousand baths, forty thousand Jews paying tribute, four hundred royal circuses, and twelve thousand gardeners who supplied the city with herbs and vegetables. To my young mind it was all so wonderful and never having been out of Smyrna, I was a little bewildered with all I

saw.

“By this time our cargo was discharged, and we had loaded again for Constantinople, and on leaving Alexandria we had a succession of gales of wind, in which the old brig got terribly knocked about, and this was the beginning of our troubles. When we were off the Island of Rhodes, our boats were washed away by a heavy sea, and a considerable amount of damage was done about the deck. Then off the Island of Patmos, the mate was washed overboard and drowned, and every man on board was bruised and sore with the buffeting. To make matters still worse, when we were off Cape Sagri, poor old Captain Petri was knocked down by a heavy sea and injured, and all through the Dardanelles the bad weather continued.

“When we arrived at Constantinople our crew was completely worn out, Captain Petri was taken seriously ill, and had to leave the ship. I was very sorry to part from him, but was getting more confidence in myself, and so resolved to stop by the vessel.

“The agent appointed another captain. He was a Turk, a native of Havac on the Bosphorus. He was a tall strong looking young man, with a long pointed moustache, and a villainous look on his face, and as was afterwards proved, his face was a true index to his character.

“We lay four weeks at Constantinople. The men asked me to go on shore with them, and I was unable to refuse, as they said they would show me round, and they did, but may Heaven’s curse fall upon them. They took me into all the dens of infamy, among the lowest of the low in that terrible city of corruption and vice. They taught me to forget all the good my dear old mother had taught me at her knee, and made me laugh at words that the dear old Padre had spoken so reverently.”

Again the old man broke down with the agony of remembrance. "Oh, Jesu Christi," he murmured, "why did I leave the dear home, and the mother who was so proud of me, and who loved me so. Never again have I looked on her sweet face, or heard her voice, never again have I sat in the little church and heard the dear Padre's blessing. For forty long years have I roamed around the world, but never again have I looked on those dear faces that I loved so well. But God is good, and some say that I may see them in that land where all these things are forgotten and forgiven."

For a few minutes he was silent, lost in memories of the past, then he continued:

"We finished loading at last, and then hauled out to the anchorage off Scutari, and that evening while at anchor, at about nine-thirty p.m., a small boat came off from the shore, containing an old Turkish gentleman and a boy. He climbed on board very smartly for his apparent age, and asked for the captain. I called the captain, who at once came, and after a few remarks were passed at the gangway, he asked him into the cabin. They were there about half an hour, when, going in suddenly, I saw the visitor paying over some money to the captain, they came out shortly afterwards, and the gentleman was pulled back to the shore.

"We were bound for Algiers and Morocco, and were to heave up the anchor at daylight. About 2 a.m. a boat pulled off from the 'Golden Horn,' and came alongside, in it was the same old gentleman who had visited us earlier in the evening. He had with him two large portmanteaux and one small handbag. The portmanteaux were handed up, but he would not part with the handbag. As soon as he was on board, orders were given to heave up the anchor, and setting all sail, we stood out of the Bosphorus, and shaped our course for the Sea of Marmora.

“When breakfast time came, the passenger told me to bring his breakfast to his room, I did so, and he never left his room or came on deck for one moment all that day. This caused a lot of talk amongst the crew. Like most small coasters, we all had our food together, and during the meals the talk was generally about the passenger and his luggage. It was suggested by the captain that the passenger had robbed a bank or something else, and that his luggage contained the proceeds of the robbery, and he added, ‘as we are helping him to escape, we ought to have a share of the plunder.’ All hands heartily agreed to this suggestion.

“We had a fresh breeze across the Sea of Marmora, and entered the Dardanelles with a moderate gale after us. The following day we cleared the Dardanelles, and with a brisk gale from the north we stood towards Tenedos Island. That morning, while we were at breakfast, the cook said he had peeped through the keyhole during the night, and had seen the Turkish passenger putting a lot of jewels into a body belt out of his small bag. From that moment he was a marked man, his fate was sealed. When off Tenedos it was blowing hard with a big sea running, and the old brig laboured heavily, the passenger came out of his room, and asked the captain to land him at Mitylene, as he felt very ill. While he was talking to the captain, the brig gave a heavy lurch, pitching him head first against the bulkhead, stunning him for a moment. As soon as he fell the captain sprang into the room, and began looking for the small handbag. Whilst he was searching for it, the passenger revived, and seeing the captain in his room, he drew his revolver and fired at him, wounding him in the leg. The captain closed with him at once, and in a moment, hearing the shot, all hands rushed into the cabin, and seeing the captain and passenger struggling together they sprang to the assistance of the captain, and drove their knives into the passenger’s body.

“It was all done in a moment, and the old man lay dead at the feet of his murderers. They looked at one another for a moment, then, after a consultation, it was decided to throw the body overboard. But before doing so, the mate sent one of the men, who had taken part in the

murder, to relieve the man at the wheel, when this man came into the cabin, the mate told him to stick his knife into the body, so that all should share alike. This the man did without a moment's hesitation. The captain turned to me, his eyes glaring fiercely and said:--'Here, boy, come and do your part.' I drew back and refused, but he seized me by the throat, and threatened to serve me the same as the passenger, if I did not do so. I knew too well he would put his threat into execution if I either hesitated or refused, so I took my sheath knife and drove it into the poor body, but thank God he never felt my blow.

"The body was then thrown overboard, and the blood mopped up off the cabin floor. During this time the old brig had been racing along before a gale of wind under the full topsail and foresail, and yawing about very badly, it was quite impossible to steer her straight. The weather, too, was becoming hazy. The passenger's luggage was then brought on deck and examined. The small bag was nearly full of jewellery, mostly diamonds, the portmanteaux contained some clothing, a lot of gold and silver coins, and several rolls of parchment and notes. Just at this time the brig broached to, and shipped a very heavy sea. All hands now rushed on deck and set to to shorten sail. The weather got worse and worse and the sea was getting dangerous, so the captain decided to run to leeward off Mitylene and shelter.

"After the sail had been reduced and the brig made snug, the crew all gathered together in the little cabin. I was sent to the wheel. The night was pitch dark, and the vessel had no light hung out, the only one on deck was the small light on the binnacle.

"The money and valuables were then spread out on the table in the cabin, and divided amongst them. But for some reason or other they fell out over the division. The captain to quieten them brought out some bottles of spirits, but no sooner had the spirits begun to take effect than they charged the captain with taking part of the diamonds while they were aloft at the sails. This he denied, although at the time he had the body belt full of the diamonds and jewellery on his person, which he had taken off the dead body while they were aloft. In

an instant knives were drawn and the captain was stabbed to death. Then pandemonium reigned supreme.

“The night was dark as Erebus, the brig was rushing along wildly, I could not keep her on her course. I called and called to be relieved, but no one heeded me. They were by this time all mad drunk, gloating over the spoils. The body of the dead captain still lay on the deck. The mate gave it a kick, and in doing so heard something clink. In an instant he was on his knees and found the body belt and the jewels.

“‘Share! Share!’ cried all, but half crazed with drink, the mate refused. Then the others rushed at him with their knives. He sprang on one side, and rushed on deck by the wheel. Here they closed with him and a terrible scuffle took place. In a few minutes the cook and one man got up, leaving the mate and three seamen dead on the deck. I was terrified, and could scarcely hold on to the wheel.

“There were only the two men and myself left on board. They went back into the cabin, taking no notice of me, and just as they left the deck I saw broken water on the bow. I called out to them, but before the words were out of my mouth the ship crashed on to the rocks of Cape Segre, Mitylene Island. As she struck end on, a tremendous sea came over the stern and washed me clean over the side among the rocks. I managed to swim to the back of one large rock, and found myself in smooth water, and was able to climb up out of the water. The old brig had gone to pieces, at once. I never saw a vestige of the two men or heard a single cry. I think they were killed as she struck. They had died in their sins--died drunk, with the awful crime of murder on their souls. Judgment had come swiftly. God’s vengeance had been sharp and sure.

“I lay on the lee side of the large rock where I had landed, until daylight. I had escaped without a scratch. God had taken care of me.

“At daylight I swam to the mainland of Mitylene, and made my way to the

town of Gavatha on the north side of the island, and reported the loss of the vessel. I was at once put into some dry clothes and a good meal put before me, and a party was despatched to the scene of the wreck to see if any more of the crew had escaped. But there were none left to tell the tale but me. I did not mention the passenger, or what had taken place before the wreck. I was too afraid, I did not know what to do, for they might not believe my story. I felt I could never go home again, never look into my dear mother's face again, or hear the dear old Padre's blessing, or feel his hand upon my head. The next day I was very ill, and one of the fishermen put me to bed in his cottage and bade me sleep and rest.

"In a few days I was better, and the good folk asked me where I lived and the name of the lost vessel, and offered to keep me there until my people were communicated with. I agreed to that and thanked them heartily, but made up my mind not to go home.

"I found a vessel loading there for Liverpool, and went on board with the labourers the day before she sailed, and when an opportunity offered I stowed away in the hold. The vessel sailed next day, and a few hours after leaving port I was discovered, but the officers did not touch me, they seemed sorry for me. So I worked my way round to Liverpool, and got a ship there bound for California. The day before we sailed from Liverpool I saw a Greek sailor that I had known in Smyrna, but I hid myself and got clear away.

"For forty-five years I have roamed about the world, but from that day to this I have never heard one word from home or parents."

CHAPTER X

ROUNDING CAPE HORN

JUST as George the Greek had finished his story we heard the mate calling to shorten sail. All hands sprang up in a minute. For us Christmas was over--the wind had increased rapidly and the sky had assumed a very threatening appearance. The sea soon rises off Cape

Horn, and in a very short time it was rolling mountains high, and breaking on board with terrific effect. The barque was at once reduced to lower topsails and foresail. The captain had been steering to pass through the Straits of Le Maire, but the wind chopping into the south-west, made him alter his mind and pass to the eastward of Staten Island.

So far we had been sheltered while to leeward of the island, but as soon as we opened out into the Pacific we got a most terrible dressing down. The sea rolled down like mountains. In no part of the world do you meet with such gigantic rollers as off Cape Horn, and it looked as though every sea that came along must engulf the “Stormy Petrel.” The crew were kept employed re-fastening and re-lashing things about the deck, everything moveable was put into a place of safety and thoroughly secured. The sea was making clean sweeps over her. Then the wind backed into the west-northwest and blew a perfect hurricane. There was no comfort for anyone on board, the sky was clear as a bell, and the immense rollers were a sight to see. The gale continued with unabated fury, the water falling on the deck in huge green seas, sometimes it seemed as if she had settled down, then she rolled and rose gradually; the water washing from side to side like cataracts until about a foot of water was on the deck. Day after day and week after week were we striving to get round that terrible Cape, but like “Vanderdecken,” in the old legend of the flying Dutchman, who swore that no power in heaven or hell should hinder him from entering Table Bay off the Cape of Good Hope, and for this oath was condemned for ever to beat about the entrance, but was never able to enter, so for six long weary weeks we were plodding at it, heartsore and limbsore with not a ray to comfort or cheer us.

One morning, just as we were about to wear ship, a gigantic sea struck her on the side between the fore and main mast, the top of it going clean over the ship and the spray actually going over the upper topsail yard.

On Sunday, the first day of the seventh week since we passed Staten Island, the wind suddenly shifted into the south, and began to blow just as hard as ever. This caused a terrible cross sea, which was very nearly fatal to the “Stormy Petrel” as well as to some of our crew. We had just wore ship, and were about to set the upper topsails, when I saw a terrific sea rolling up on the weather quarter. I sang out for all I was worth to everybody on deck to hold tight--the words were hardly out of my lips when the sea broke over the stern. I just managed to spring into the rigging out of the way. First the sea engulfed the man at the wheel, tearing him from it, and washing him overboard, then it swept the cabin skylight off in pieces, smashed the raised part of the cabin flat on the deck and flooded the deck fore and aft. When the helmsman was killed and washed overboard, the ship’s head swung round to the westward and brought the terrible cross sea abeam, and almost before we realized our position another sea broke on board, just abaft the fore rigging, striking the cookhouse fairly on the side, smashing it up like so much matchwood and crushing to death two men who had taken shelter there. In the meantime the captain had sprung to the wheel, I dropped from the rigging and went to his assistance. By God’s mercy there was a lull for a minute, and the gallant little vessel swung off to her course, but for a few moments it looked doubtful if she could clear herself of the water on her deck, but a great headless sea came rolling along under the weather quarter almost throwing her on her beam ends and emptying the water off her. I looked along the deck and everything forward of the mainmast was swept clean. The cookhouse, the pigstye, the hencoop, a sheep-pen that had been built on the fore-hatch, all were gone, leaving not a stick to show even where they had stood. The forecastle also had been gutted by the sea and most of the sailors’ effects washed overboard.

“Loose the foresail,” sang out the captain at the wheel.

“Aye, aye, sir,” answered George the Greek, and the big Frenchman together, springing up and casting off the lashing. The sail was set,

and the storm-battered “Stormy Petrel” bounded on her way.

“All hands lay aft!” called out the mate.

When the men got aft to the poop the roll was called, and it was found that three of the men were missing. The Manilla man, Antonio Lopez, was washed overboard from the wheel, two of the Turks, Enrico Hermos and Suleman Sulemore were killed and washed overboard with the cookhouse.

We were indeed in a sad plight, but we did not stand long idle, the boats were gone, the cookhouse had gone, and we had lost nearly all our clothes, but we all set to with a will and made the best of it.

The weather moderated a bit, and we turned to unbending the old sails, and getting up the new ones, for a ship, unlike people on shore puts on her best clothes in bad weather, and we were soon on our way before a favourable wind. Captain Glasson had also given us a stock of clothes out of the slop chest onboard.

Next the carpenter put up a temporary cookhouse, and we made some cooking utensils out of some empty paint and oil drums. It is said that necessity is the mother of invention, that was so, for in this case we made some wonderful and useful cooking pots.

We had a good spell of fine weather that carried us up to abreast of Valparaiso, and on the Sunday, there being no work done, all hands turned to and cleared up the forecabin. The wet and soiled clothes were brought out on deck, the chests moved, brooms, buckets of water, swabs, scrubbing brushes and scrapers were carried down and used with a right good will until the floor was once more as white as chalk, and everything neat and in order. The bedding from the berths was spread on deck to dry and air, the deck tub filled with water, and a grand washing began of all the clothes brought out. Shirts, drawers, trousers, jackets, stockings of every shape and colour, wet, dirty, and many of them mouldy from having been left in a wet foul corner

since the storm, all were well scrubbed and washed and then made fast to the rigging to dry. Wet boots and shoes were put in sunny places on deck to dry and the ship looked like a floating laundry. Then we had what sailors call a freshwater wash, which means each one gives a little of his allowance of fresh water, this is all put into buckets and one after the other uses the same water to loosen the grime and dirt off the skin, and finishes off with buckets of salt water being thrown over each other, then, having shaved and combed and put on clean

dry shirts and trousers, we sat down in the clean forecabin, which, with us, looked several degrees lighter for its clean up. We spent the rest of the day reading, talking and sewing at our ease. At sunset all the clothes, boots, bedding, etc., were taken in, and we felt we had got back to the pleasant part of a sailor's life and hoped it would continue. But, alas for these hopes--the very next day we got a nasty set back, the wind suddenly died away, and after a few hours calm, it sprang up from the north-west, and in a couple of hours was blowing a perfect hurricane. The sea rose just as quickly, and the "Stormy Petrel" was soon reaching on the starboard tack, and burying herself in the sea. When midnight came the sea was running mountains high again, threatening all that came in its path with destruction.

Just as the watch was being relieved, the lookout reported a ship on the weather beam, and directly afterwards another on the starboard or weather bow. Both ships seemed to be running before the gale, the one on the bow was under topsails and foresails, the ship abeam had her topgallant sail set and seemed to be coming straight for us. All hands stood watching to see them pass.

When the weather ship, which appeared to be light, got within a couple of miles of us she appeared to haul to the eastward to pass astern of us, but when she came within a mile of us, those on board seemed to change their minds and she shewed us her red light only. The next moment, to the surprise and horror of all on board, the ship broached to and as the enormous pressure of wind and sea was brought to bear on her side, she capsized and sank at once with all on board. There was

not a moment to get a boat out; they were all launched into eternity without a moment's warning. We were powerless to help, having lost our boats, and if we had had the best boats in the world, they could not have lived in such a sea. What caused that terrible accident will never be known, there are so many causes to bring about such a disaster--bad and careless steering, broken steering gear, the helmsman may have been thrown over the wheel and hurt, as so very often happens, but whatever the cause, it was a terrible sight to see, and at the same time to be unable to render any assistance. It cast a gloom over our crew, and brought back to our memory the very narrow escape we had had, when in just such a storm we had lost three of our shipmates off Cape Horn.

The following day the wind veered into the south-west, and again we stood on our course. Soon we had all sail set, and were making a good ten knots per hour. We passed close to the island of Juan Fernandez, made famous by Defoe as the island home of Robinson Crusoe, or, as his real name was, Alexander Selkirk, and his man Friday. The island is so situated as to make a splendid setting to that most interesting story, standing as it does in the South Pacific, about 400 miles from the coast of Chili, and about twenty-five miles long and about four in breadth. The land is very high, rising in rugged peaks. One of them, called Yunque, being 3,500 feet above the level of the sea. The peaks are generally overhung with clouds, and the valleys are very fertile, the grass growing to a height of six and eight feet. The most delicious fruits grow in abundance, and in their season the trees are loaded with figs, peaches, and cherries, the valleys and hillside being crowded with trees. An immense number of goats run wild on the island, and an abundance of fish is taken on every coast, while the water is obtained from the never failing rivulets that trickle down the rugged rocks like threads of silver from the cloud-capped mountains. All things considered, Robinson Crusoe must have had a good time during his stay there.

All hands were now employed getting the cargo gear ready for use; there were strops to make, pennants to overhaul, purchase blocks to examine, and scores of other jobs to do before we reached Callao, but, as most of our deck stores had been washed overboard, and lost off the Horn, we could only wash her down, having no paint to put on her. Many think a ship is in her finest condition when she leaves port for a long voyage, not so, far from that, for unless a ship meets with a bad accident, or comes upon the coast in the dead of winter, when it is impossible to do work upon the rigging or, like us, loses her deck stores, she is generally in her finest order at the end of the voyage, and captains and mates alike stake their reputation for seamanship upon the appearance of their ship when they haul into dock. Everything from the rigging to the forecastle is scraped and scrubbed, painted or varnished, the rust is pounded off the chains, bolts, and fastenings, everything that is useless is thrown overboard, then, add to this all the neat work about the rigging that only a sailor can understand--the knots, flemish-eyes, splices, seizings, coverings, pointings, and graffings--which shew a ship in the best of order, and then that which looked still more like coming into port, the getting the anchor over the bows, bending the cables, rousing the hawsers up from between decks, and overhauling the deep-sea lead line.

Then another thing, the voyage being nearly over, everybody is in the best of spirits, the strictness of discipline is relaxed, for everything is done with a cheery goodwill, the little differences and quarrels that crop up during a voyage are forgotten, everybody seems friendly, even Mr. Ross, the second mate, who had been like a bear with a sore head since we left Liverpool, unbent and smiled at the little jokes that passed round amongst the men. From each and all the strain was lifted as we dropped anchor in the Bay of Callao, after a passage of one hundred and thirty-five days.

CHAPTER XI

CALLAO AND SAN LORENZO

MY first sight of Callao was not one to endear it to my memory, for it is a dirty, unwholesome-looking town, and, as is well known, one of the most immoral places under the sun. Formerly it stood on the open coastline, six miles from the city of Lima, and is the port of call for this, the Peruvian capital. It had then no harbour, but is now a fortified seaport, situated on a river of the same name. In 1871 there was a population of 20,000, mostly seafaring. A railway links the port and capital together, passing at first through the centre of the streets of Callao, the station being merely a house in the street, opposite to which the train stops either to take up or set down passengers. The houses are built of adobe, and other light material, and as there is never any rain in this country, they do not need stone buildings. The valley of the Rimac, in which Lima lies, is not without a certain vegetation, dusty brown and burnt up it is true, and only obtained by constant care and irrigation. The fields, too, are surrounded by walls of adobe, made into blocks and the road following the line lies inches deep in dust.

When we dropped our anchor, we found over one hundred sailing ships here of all nationalities, but principally English and American. They were all anchored in tiers north and south, according to the nature of their cargo. Our anchor was no sooner down, and the sails furled than our deck was swarming with the most villainous looking touts, crimps, and boarding-house masters that ever cheated the gallows. They defied the master and mates, and walked into the forecastle, and hauling out some rot-gut they called whiskey, soon had every sailor on board in a state of stupidity, and actually took them out of the ship by force, even against the men's own free will. Every one of the touts and crimps carried a six chambered revolver and would not have hesitated to use it if interfered with. There was no law to appeal to, might was right for the time being, and so before the anchor had been down an hour every man forrard was cleared out of the ship. The captain went on shore to complain, and to enter the ship, but he got no redress. The shipping master told him he ought to consider himself lucky that the crimps did not steal and shanghai him too. When he returned on board he brought with him an English boy about the same age as myself, Alec Taylor by

name, who had been left ill in the hospital from an English ship, and as he was now quite recovered, the English Consul sent him aboard our ship for which I was glad.

One of the first things I learnt was that earthquakes were frequent here, and that much loss of life was caused by them. In the year 1746 what is known as the great earthquake took place, which demolished three-fourths of the city of Lima, and the town of Callao sank twenty-five fathoms below the sea. Three thousand seven hundred people are said to have perished, and the coast line was entirely changed. On the night of that awful catastrophe, an aged fisherman, San Lorenzo by name, went out in his boat with his nets and lines to follow his usual vocation. Never had he felt so loth to leave his home, a premonition of some coming evil hung over him, and would not be shaken off, so he more earnestly even than usual committed his wife and home to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

For days and days there had been a kind of scum over the blue sky, and the face of the sun was veiled, for all the world as though you were looking through a smoked glass, and frequent internal rumblings had been heard in the mountain districts. He did not want to go out this night, he felt he should like to stay at home, but he was poor, and there was neither food nor money in the home, and he must needs go and catch fish. So out he went to the usual fishing ground--about seven or eight miles south-west of the town. The sea was calm and peaceful, not a breath of wind stirred the mirror-like surface of the ocean, all around was calm and still. He had been out some time, but not a sign of fish was to be seen or felt. The lines lay slack in the water. The old man grew drowsy, and fearful of some impending disaster. In the distance he could see faintly the lights of Callao, and beyond them, in the sky, the reflection of the lights of Lima City, gay, sparkling Lima, the city of gold and silver. He could not understand why, but an awful weight seemed to be pressing him down. His breathing seemed to choke him, what ailed him? Down on his knees he dropped and with hot,

choking, gasping breath he poured forth his “Ave Maria.” An unnatural, unearthly stillness gathered all around him. Was he going mad? What was it? Dear God, what was it? He began frantically to haul in his lines, he would return to port and home.

“Jesu Christi, help me,” he muttered, a terrible fear clutching at his heart. Hark, what was that he heard? Was it the surf on the beach? No, it could not be, there was no swell in the bay, what was that rumbling noise, like distant thunder? He looked above, but now no sign of sky or stars could be seen--all was blackness. A choking, gripping feeling came in his throat. He looked towards the port, but no sign of lights could be seen. All was thick, black, impenetrable darkness. Then he thought of his wife and children, and breathing his “Ave Maria” once more he tugged again at the net and lines, and began to haul them in. Another loud rumbling sounded in his ears like peals of thunder, but nearer than when he last heard it. The sea around him began to bubble like a boiling pot. He sat down choking, then, to his horror, he found the water beginning to rush away from his boat on all sides. Suddenly the boat grounded on some hard substance, the water all vanished from around her, then he found himself and the boat rising up like a flash, higher and still higher, he ascended nine hundred and fifty feet above the level of the ocean, his lines and net still out, but the old fisherman did not mind--his fishing days were ended, his soul had left the regions of strife.

That night Callao, with its three thousand odd inhabitants, with barely a moment’s warning, sank beneath the sea, and that same night a gigantic island arose out of the sea just off the coast, and five miles from the site of the old town of Callao. The island is nine miles long, one mile wide and nine hundred and fifty feet high.

Many years after this terrible calamity, some men were surveying this great island that had been thrown up by the earthquake, and on the top they found an old fishing boat, and the name still decipherable upon her, and in the boat were the nets and lines and the bleached bones of

their owner.

The island was called after the old Spanish fisherman, San Lorenzo, whose end was so sad and lonely, and it now forms the bay and harbour of the present town of Callao, which is built about three miles from the position of the old town.

Callao is a typical Spanish American town, and in the native quarters the houses are, with few exceptions, low and flat-roofed, built of adobe, but in the business portion, European and American enterprise is quite apparent in the large banks and public buildings.

Of all places on the earth, Callao, in 1871, was the most immoral and degraded. It reeked with vice and infamy. As I said before there were about a hundred sailing ships in the bay, with over two thousand seamen on board--all long voyagers, and about two-thirds of these men were on shore every night. The police force was simply a farce, they winked at crime and immorality in the most open fashion. Every third house in the place was a drinking den, and the majority of the men about the town were runners, crimps, and vile cast offs from other lands. All the human derelicts of the Pacific seemed to have joined that gathering of beachcombers who infested the place, and nearly every class of outcast, from an absconding bank official to a runaway sailor, was to be met with in those streets. Robbery and murder were the order of the day, seamen were drugged, stolen from their ships, and shanghaied aboard outward-bound ships, minus clothes and money. So-called blood money was paid to the crimps by the shipmasters to secure them a crew when they were ready to sail. Say, for instance, a shipmaster wanted a crew of twenty men to work the ship from Callao to Liverpool--a four months passage. He would be compelled to engage the services of one of the boarding-house crimps, or runners, to supply him with the men. Also he would have to advance three months' wages to each man. This was paid over to the crimps. The men would be taken from the boarding-house to the Consul's to sign the ship's articles, they being in such a drugged, drunken condition as to be utterly unconscious of what agreement they were signing. The men were put on board the same

night in a dead stupor, often without any clothes but what they had on, and nothing whatever to protect them during the long dreary voyage round the Horn, only to arrive in Liverpool or London penniless, robbed of three month's wages before they left Callao, and the remaining month's money owing to the captain for clothes and tobacco supplied during the voyage. It was also no uncommon thing for some shipmasters to participate in the plunder of the men they engaged as their share of the spoil. I remember one ship that came into Callao while I was there. Her captain always carried a well-filled slop-chest on board, and charged three times the value for all goods to be sold. He paid one shilling and sixpence per pound for tobacco from bond, and sold it to the crew for five shillings per pound. But on this particular voyage all his crew were Scandinavians, and would not buy anything from him, so he decided to get even with them. On arriving at Callao, he got in touch with a noted crimp, and the consequence was that night he gave each man five shillings to spend; in the bum-boat they went ashore, and that was the last that was ever seen of them by their late captain. The crimp was on the look-out for them, and he took them to a free and easy drinking den. They were all drugged, and shanghaied on board a large American ship that sailed at daylight. All their effects were left on board their old ship, the wages due to them were confiscated by their captain, and the amount entered in his slop chest book as goods supplied to them. Then, when he was ready for sea, he took a percentage of the new crew's advance. (This is a positive fact). But thank God, all shipmasters at that time were not like that one, but there were a good many of them. I trust my readers will pardon this digression, but it will give them an idea of what being a sailor meant in those days. I will now return to my story:

We were several days at anchor before we commenced to discharge the cargo and during that time I was employed as boatman in our small dingy, rowing the captain about from the ship to the shore, and to and from various ships in the harbour. Many of these had been on the coast, and at the Chincha and Guanape Islands eight and ten months, and their stores were often pretty well all used up. Now Captain Glasson, being an old trader out to the west coast, and especially to Peruvian ports,

was an ardent trader, or, to give it its proper name, smuggler, and on this voyage he had three hundred pounds worth of trade on board, consisting of cases of spirits, tobacco, clothing, cheap jewellery, coils of rope, rolls of canvas, etc. I was employed mostly at night, sleeping during the heat of the day, and I used to deliver the cases of spirits and other things to the various ships, whose masters had bought them from our captain during the day. Many a stiff chase I had from the harbour guards' boat, but I always managed to evade capture, and enjoyed it. Each time I evaded them with the contrabands in the boat, I became more daring, and this was how we managed it. I had a canvas bag,

with pockets inside and lead at the bottom to weight it. The bottles of brandy, etc., were placed in the pockets, the mouth was securely tied, and about sixteen fathoms of signal halliard line was attached to the bag. The plug in the bottom of the boat had a piece of cord fastened to it, which was left hanging in the water beneath the boat. After leaving the ship with, perhaps, two dozen bottles of brandy in the bag, I would be seen by the guard boat, then the fun began, for they immediately gave chase. Now I always managed to keep a certain amount of water in the bottom of the boat, and when I found the guard boat overtaking me, I ceased rowing, quietly dropped the bag over the side and started bailing the boat out. Up came the *Guardiana*.

"What have you got there?" he would ask, as he shot alongside, looking in the boat.

"Can't you see what I have got?" I would reply saucily. "Water."

"Where are you going?" was the next question.

"For the captain," I would reply.

"_Caramba!_" he would mutter and sheer off.

I would go on bailing for a bit, then, with a boat-hook, I would get the line hanging from the plug, haul up the bag and deliver it to whichever ship it was for.

Now the Customs Guard boat had met me so often pulling about the bay among the shipping at night that they grew suspicious, and set a watch on me. A few days afterwards, the “Sir John Loman,” a large sailing ship came into port from the Guanape Islands, loaded with guano. She had just come in to get her clearance from the Customs House and was bound to Falmouth for orders. Her captain bought three dozen of brandy and a quantity of tobacco from Captain Glasson, but the great difficulty was to get the stuff to the “Sir John Loman” while the Customs were watching us so closely, but the captain offered me five silver sol (£1) if I would manage it, so I undertook to deliver it in spite of the watchers. I was running a great risk, but I was a bit reckless, though cute. I placed the bottles in one bag, and the tobacco in another, both were packed and the mouths secured with fifty fathoms of lead line attached to each. The “Sir John Loman” was anchored about three cables length from us, and a little to the left of a line between our ship and the landing-place. I arranged with our captain that he should take the boat ashore about eight in the evening, and let the second mate row him. I slung the two bags alongside the boat, and got into her, with nothing on but a pair of dungaree pants and my belt. The night was very dark, and the guard boat was lying about a cable’s length ahead of us. When we were ready we shot the boat clear of the ship’s side, and before the watchers spied us we were within two hundred feet of the ship. They then gave chase at once. I hooked the lines on to my belt, slipped the bags and slid into the water and struck out for the ship’s gangway. As soon as I was in the water, our boat pulled away to the right, and the guard, not seeing me chased after it, but, of course, they found nothing in the boat, and the officer could only apologise, while the captain complained loudly of being chased when he was only rowing ashore.

In the meantime I had swum alongside the gangway of the “Sir John Loman,” and climbed up out of the water. After getting my breath, I slipped on deck and got the officer to lend me a hand to haul the bags in. We got them up safely and I delivered the contents to the captain, who gave me half a guinea for my trouble and told the steward to take me into the pantry and give me some coffee and something to eat, for

which I was always ready in those days! About an hour afterwards our own boat called for me and took me back on board.

For nearly a month I carried on this risky business--the captain paid me well for it, and I always got a few dollars from those I supplied. I was a very powerful swimmer, and several times swam off to other ships with the end of a long signalling halliard. Then the contrabands were slung under a cork fender and the line made fast to it, and I would haul it on to the other ship without the aid of a boat and afterwards swim back again.

They say you can trust to luck once too often. I did, and nearly lost my life in the bargain. I had delivered a parcel of tobacco on board a ship and was on my way back, when I heard a terrible noise in the water just ahead of me. It was too dark to see what it was, but I could see broken water, so I turned at once and swam back to the ship's stern. Seizing the rudder chains I pulled myself up out of the water, only just in time to escape a school of porpoises. There were hundreds of them darting hither and thither in their mad rush among the ships at anchor, and if I had been two minutes later, nothing would have saved my life in the midst of that terrible stampede. It had given me such a shock that I had not strength left to swim another yard, so standing with my foot on the shackle at the back of the rudder, I banged the rudder-chains up against the stern. The captain and mate ran to the poop and looked over the stern to see what caused the noise and were very much surprised to see me there. When I told them why I was there they at once sent the boat for me and put me on board my own ship, and I made up my mind that I would do no more smuggling, the game was not worth the candle, and I wanted to see more of the world before entering Davy Jones' locker.

CHAPTER XII

THE CAPITAL OF PERU

I THINK I have already said that I had an uncle in Peru whom I was anxious to find during my stay in Callao. In the little time that the smuggling had left me for my own leisure, I had been fortunate enough to find him, and on the following day, when he came to see me, he told me that he could find me plenty of work in Lima, if I cared to leave the ship. This was just the chance I wanted, as I was always ready for adventure or change, so I did not take long to make up my mind to run away the first opportunity that should come across my path.

The next day being Sunday I rowed the captain ashore in the morning, and he ordered me to come for him at ten that night. He was going to spend the day at the agent's, and in the afternoon they were all going to see a Spanish bull fight, a sight which our captain was very partial to. I returned to the ship, informed the mate of the time the captain wanted the boat, and then went to my berth. As I was generally up half the night, I was allowed to rest and sleep during the afternoon, so I knew no remarks would be passed at my being in my berth. Here I gathered a few things together and made them into a small bundle, got what money I possessed, and then watched my opportunity and placed everything in the boat all ready. At nine o'clock I got into the boat and started to row towards the landing-place without a single regret at leaving the "Stormy Petrel." When I got well away from the ship, I altered my course and pulled over towards the beach just off the Pacific S.S. Company's Engine Works. Here I got out of the boat, threw one oar overboard, and pushing the boat out into the bay let her drift wherever she liked.

Making my way to the railway station I took a ticket for Lima, the capital. Here I ran a great risk of meeting the captain, but my usual good luck favoured me again. When I arrived at Lima I at once made my way to my uncle's house, and kept in hiding for two weeks. Then he took me to some friends of his own, who had a place a few miles out of Lima, there to await the ship's departure.

A few words here about Peru will, I think, not be amiss, although it was some time later before I learnt what an interesting place it was. The name at once brings back to memory the fascinating history of the Inca kings, of the fabulous wealth of cities paved with gold, the gorgeous temples, the tropical forests, and the brave exploits of that great pirate chief Pizarro. It is in itself a remarkable country. Situated on the western side of the Andes mountains, and bounded on the

north by Ecuador, on the east and south by Brazil, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean, the Andes run north and south, dividing the country into high and low Peru. Between the mountains and the coast lies Low Peru, forming an inclined plane from thirty to sixty miles in breadth, which is mostly a sandy barren desert, owing to the total absence of rain, and the climate here is very torrid. Above six thousand feet of altitude vegetation flourishes, and at about ten thousand feet, a mixture of perpetual spring and autumn prevails, and here there are frequent showers of rain. At an altitude of fourteen thousand feet the snow line is reached, and there the snow is to be seen all the year round, although the successive summers' heat do their best to melt both ice and snow. The only animals I ever met with were the llama, guanaco, vicuna, and the alpaca, but in the woods there are the jaguar, puma and several other wild animals. In the woods, up the mountains are found many very beautiful birds, and the rivers swarm with fish and alligators. In the warmer regions, up on the mountains where there is rain there is also an abundance of maize, cotton, indigo, yams, cocoa, tobacco, some very fine fruits, bark, vanilla sarsaparilla, and many other things. The mountainous districts are rich in metals, gold, silver, copper, lead ore, white silver ore, and in places virgin silver in threads, tin, quicksilver, coal and nitrate of soda. Emeralds and other precious stones are also found, also the stone of the Incas, a marcasite, capable of the highest polish. When first discovered by the Spanish, the Peruvians were intellectually far in advance of any other race on the American continent. They knew the arts of architecture, sculpture, mining, the working of precious metals and jewels, they cultivated their land, they were properly clothed, and

had a regular system of government, and both civil and religious laws. It was in the year 1821 that, tired of the tyranny and intolerance of Spain, they revolted, and again achieved their independence.

The glamour of those ancient days lingers around the capital of Lima, but the illusion disappears quickly with a glimpse at the Spanish capital, its narrow streets paved with cobble stones, its numerous churches gaudy with coloured plaster and florid carvings.

The only attraction in Lima is found in the Cathedral Plaza. Here the Gothic cathedral with its façade of innumerable pillars and carved figures of saints, stands raised on a wide platform. The bronze bells hung in either tower send forth mellow and sonorous tollings, but the shadow of decay that lies like a blight over all things in Peru has laid its hand on this imposing looking structure, and it cannot be entered for fear the roof should fall in. But Peru has no money to spare even to repair this, the chief place of worship of the faithful. The cathedral and the archbishop's palace take up the whole of the east side of the Plaza, on the north side are the Viceroy's Palace, Courts of Justice and Public Offices, while on the west side are the Town Hall and City Prison, and on the south side there are large private houses with stone fronts and massive porticoes. A curious feature of their domestic architecture are the "miradors" or carved wooden balconies, projecting over the street from the second story of the houses. From the seclusion of these lattice woodwork structures, seeing, yet not seen, the Spanish ladies watch the life in the streets below. During carnival week Lima is given up to wild revelry for three days and the "miradors" are put to some curious uses, one being to rain down water from a jug or basin on to the heads of the passers by. All this gaiety, however, ends on Shrove Tuesday, and Ash Wednesday sees the churches filled with black-robed women.

In the centre of the Plaza stands a very ornamental and massive band-stand, where the town band plays choice selections every evening from six until ten o'clock. Here all the beauty and talent of the city

gathers, and promenades up and down in the cool piazzas to the strains of the music. Here the young, dark-eyed Castilian beauties, under the protection of a black-hooded duenna stroll demurely through the arcades, the transparency of the lace mantilla heightening the charm of their liquid eyes, as with coquettish airs and graces they peep from behind their beautiful fans, flirting with the young hidalgos as they pass.

I spent three weeks altogether in Lima. The first was given entirely to roaming about the city. It was, of course, all new, strange and interesting to me, and I soon found that it was not nearly so large as it looked, as every transverse street revealed the mountains at their extremity, and the peaked foothills that fill the plain round the city. Flagstuffs and crosses seem to be a kind of natural emblem, the flagstuffs are used for decorating the streets with flags on Sundays and festivals, and the latter satisfy the superstitious inclinations of the people, who imagine that the shadow of a cross protects and blesses the household. Most of the houses are built of wood and adobe, the mud brick of the country; it is used for the houses, the public buildings, and the churches; when these are plastered over with mud plaster, they look like a whitewashed wall left in its natural state, but it is simply a mud wall. The same material is used for the very startling coloured fronts of the churches and the interiors, with their cheap velveteen hangings, glass chandeliers, and gaudy paper flowers are worthy of the exterior.

The Column of Victory with its handsome bas-relief surrounding the base, in memory of the repulsed invasion of the Spaniards in 1866 is worthy of better surroundings than the one storied adobe dwellings amongst which it stands.

I found the native police a constant source of amusement. Each man is armed with a side sword and musket, a chair is placed on his beat for him to sit upon when he is tired, and when on night duty, he sits and sleeps most of the time, while his wife sits on the ground at his side. Gangs of British and American seamen play all manner of tricks

upon them, one being to tie them to the chair without their knowing it, and also if the wife is asleep too they try to fasten her with a rope to the sleeping husband, then they would steal the muskets from them, and decamp, and after a while one of the number would return to find the sleepers awake and trying frantically to get loose and follow the intruders whose part in the escapade was to start running away as soon as the policeman caught sight of them. Needless to say they were never caught.

After a delightful three weeks spent between Lima and some friends who

lived a few miles out, my uncle sent me word that my ship had sailed, and, as I had enjoyed my holiday, and seen all there was to be seen in the capital of Peru, and now felt ready for work, he proposed to introduce me to the officials of the famous Oroya Railway then in course of construction from Monserrat on the outskirts of Lima, over the Andes Mountains, through the valley of the River Rimac, and down the eastern slope to the Indian City of Oroya at the headwaters of the Amazon. I was delighted, and thanked him most heartily. I said good-bye

to the friends I had been staying with, also to the dark-eyed little Peruvian signorita, to whose charms my boyish heart had fallen a victim, and met my uncle at Lima. He at once took me to the superintendent of the Oroya who engaged me to work on the bridges as a rigger of scaffolding, etc., and I was told to be ready to go up the mountain on the following day with a breakdown gang.

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE OROYA RAILWAY

THE Oroya Railway is the greatest engineering feat in the world. It runs from Callao on the Pacific to the goldfields of Cerro de Pasco. From Callao it ascends the narrow valley of the Rimac, rising nearly five thousand feet in the first fifty-six miles. From thence it goes through the intricate gorges of the Sierras until it tunnels the Andes

at an altitude of fifteen thousand six hundred and fifty-five feet. This, I believe, is the highest point in the world where a piston rod is moved by steam, and this elevation is reached in eighty-five miles. The contractor was Henry Meiggs, of California, the concession was granted to him by the Peruvian Government in the days of Peru's prosperity. To serve what purpose the Oroya Railway was built it is hard to understand, passing, as it does, through a mountain district with very little commerce and no population but a few scattered Indian villages. I do not think the line has ever paid one penny of dividend to the shareholders, and apparently was only constructed to benefit the parties concerned. To begin with, a far larger sum than the construction of the line would actually require was demanded from the public. English shareholders contributed largely, and the surplus balance was divided between Mr. Henry Meiggs, the government of that day, and any opposing parties.

There are two remarkable things about this railway. It is the highest in the world; it is the greatest of engineering triumphs, and there are not a few in the world, and it cost five million pounds, the contractor getting forty thousand pounds per mile for the construction of the same. To describe the marvellous feats and freaks of the Oroya Railway is impossible. It is the triumph of the engineer over every obstacle employed by nature to daunt him. A mountain is no barrier, they tunnel clean through it, a valley is made little of--a bridge is thrown across it--a raging, rushing torrent is no hindrance--they span it. It is the only place in the world where you can ride one hundred and seven miles, at any speed you like, without any means of propulsion; you can ride on a trolley from the summit of the Oroya Railway, Monte Meiggs, as it is called, fifteen thousand eight hundred feet above the level of the sea, right down to the water's edge of the Pacific Ocean at Callao, with nothing to drive you but the trolley's own momentum, over bridges, on the edge of precipices two thousand feet deep, around curves that make your hair stand on end--you start from the region of the eternal snows and finish among the humming birds and palms. Such is the Oroya.

The following morning at six o'clock I reported myself to the traffic manager at Monserrat. I had supplied myself with a kit consisting of two brown blankets, some spare underclothing, one extra suit, an extra pair of boots, two good Chilean knives, a Colt's revolver and a box of one hundred cartridges, and I was ready for anything that might come along.

I was ordered to join the gang then about ready to start. There were twenty of us in the gang, engineers, foremen, four carpenters, five blacksmiths, six labourers, and four sailor riggers. A small engine named the "Favorita" with one compartment and three trucks was ready to take us up, one truck containing all the breakdown gang's tools, the second their kits and several coils of rope, and the third containing stores for the bridge builders up the line.

We had only got a few miles outside Lima and were running alongside the Rimac, when, in crossing a culvert, the superintendent noticed something wrong, he stopped the engine to examine it, and found two large iron bolts in one of the crossbeams were broken. The repairing gang were soon engaged making good the damage, and in a little more than an hour we were ready to continue our journey.

We were now travelling over a level patch of ground, dry and stony, with little herbage or green, for in this strange and interesting country it is in the higher latitudes, and within reach of the rainfall from the clouds that, it becomes greener with every ascending valley.

We noticed overhead a large flock of turkey buzzards--a species of vulture that feed on carrion, they are ugly, and bald-headed, with a curved beak, their plumage being of a dirty dull brown. They were hovering about in a very peculiar manner, ascending and descending, spreading out over the field or paddock right abreast of us, and then gathering together again. Our foreman told us to watch them well, for it was a sight not often seen, and ten to one we should never see the like again. In the field over which the buzzards were hovering, there

were two young horses and a mule. They seemed to scent danger, for they

were rushing about like mad things, neighing, snorting and kicking, terrified at something we could not understand, but we were not kept long in suspense or doubt. The animals gathered in one corner of the field as if for mutual protection, with their heads in a corner and their tails towards us, stamping their feet all the time as though in great fear, and making a peculiar neighing noise. The buzzards now began to draw together, then, hovering about fifty feet above the animals, they made the most horrible squawking noise, and about a dozen

of them dropped to the ground about thirty feet from the horses. If the animals attempted to leave the corner, the birds on the ground would hop about and flap their great ugly wings to drive them back, until the poor things were almost paralysed with fear. After keeping the horses in the corner for fully ten minutes, the buzzards overhead drew near, and those on the ground gave a peculiar screech, then, like a flash of lightning, down swooped a number of them and alighted on the heads and necks of the terrified animals, and for a few minutes we could not distinguish the beasts from the buzzards, there was nothing but feathers to be seen. It was a horrible sight.

Then the buzzards arose in the air, but not all of them--there were a number left crushed and dead on the ground. The animals broke away from the corner, screaming with pain, and raced at full speed across the field with heads hanging down. The mule came straight towards us, and the stone wall that bounded the field. He never raised his head, or checked his speed, we all thought he would jump the wall, but not so, he struck the wall with his head and broke his neck. Several of us ran to it, and to our horror we found that the poor beast's eyes had been picked out by the buzzards. We turned to look at the horses, and saw them both drop from pain and exhaustion. Then began a scene I shall

never forget. With screeching and squawking, the whole flock swooped down, and commenced their horrible work, and in half an hour there was nothing in that field but buzzards and bones.

We continued our journey up the line, stopping at intervals to examine the bridges and the culverts and small streams. The first ten miles we went through fairly level country, then we began to ascend through the valley of the Rimac full of the bright green reed of the sugar cane. Strange though it may seem, and notwithstanding the great height to which the railway is carried, it is always more or less in this valley until the summit is reached. Our first stopping place is Estacion de Chosica, two thousand eight hundred feet above the level of the sea, having passed on our way a little place rejoicing in the quaint name of Sauce Redondo, surrounded by willow trees. Here there are a few navvies' huts, these like many of the humble dwellings of the country are built of reeds and mud, with flat-topped roofs. The ground here was bare and rocky and sun-scorched, not a scrap of vegetation anywhere, but highly mineralized.

After leaving Chosica, the railway begins to climb the mountain in real earnest, and soon we saw signs of vegetation, beginning with a few stunted willows and pepper trees, which increased in size and number as we rose higher up the hills. As we were steaming up the track the foreman ordered me to examine and overhaul a number of tackle blocks, chain slings and rope slings I should be using when we got to my destination, which I was told was the Verrugas Bridge, then in the course of construction.

But we were not to get there without two more exciting incidents, to me at least. A few miles above Chosica we entered a deep cutting, I think it was about a mile long, with a space of about twelve feet each side of the rails. As we entered the cutting we saw a flock of sheep on the line about half way along, and higher up still a couple of mules. As the engine was on a stiff incline, the driver did not feel inclined to stop, so he blew his whistle and rang the bell on the engine, hoping the sheep would scamper along the track in front of us, but not they, whoever knew sheep to do what was expected of them. As the engine drew

near, they all went over to the left side of the track, and got well clear of the engine, and there they stood until the engine was nearly

abreast of them, then, for some unaccountable reason, known only to sheep, one of them started to cross over to the other side, right in front of the engine, and, as is usual for a flock of sheep, all the others followed the leader, the consequence was that the engine rushed among them, crushing and mangling about fifty of them, and making the rails so slippery that the engine was brought to a standstill. We had to clear the track of the dead carcasses, and rub the grease off the rails with sand before we could get started again. However, after a lot of trouble, and a lot of strong language from the driver, we started off once more, and had proceeded about half a mile, when we drew near the mules, these we thought would surely clear off the track before we got up to them, but we reckoned without the mules, they were bent on disputing our passage, and to our surprise and astonishment they stood stock still side by side in the middle of the track facing the engine, with their heads up and their tails on end, pawing the ground all the time.

“Ring the bell, and blow the whistle!” cried the foreman, in exasperated tones. This was done with noise enough to wake the dead, but it took as much effect as a whisper on the mules, and by this time we were only about twenty feet from them, when, like a flash, round they turned and began kicking as only mules can do with their hind feet. They kept this up until the engine struck them. The mule on the right was killed at once, and was thrown off the track by the cow-catcher, while the other one had both hind legs broken and was thrown clear of the track.

When the engine got to the head of the cutting, and was on a stretch of level ground, the foreman ordered a stop while a gang went back to clear the dead sheep from off the track. I went with them, and helped to gather up the pieces, which were taken back to the train and cooked for supper that same night.

While the rest of us were getting up the slaughtered carcasses, Brian Flynn, the blacksmith, walked over to one of the dead mules, it was lying on its back, with its legs upwards, and its spine apparently

broken.

“Hello, moke!” cried Brian, as he approached it. “You’ve done your last kick,” at the same time giving it a kick on its hind quarters. But it hadn’t given its last kick for the instant he touched it, whether from some contraction of the muscles, or some other cause, I know not, its legs straightened out, and the hoof caught Brian’s leg, breaking it just below the knee. His cries brought us to his assistance, and we carried him to the engine and at once proceeded to Matacama, where a Chilian doctor set the leg after a fashion.

Up to this point the track had been fairly easy through the valley of the Rimac. From Chosica to Matacama, eight thousand feet above the sea, vegetation shows itself in greater quantities, the railway leaves the bed of the valley and begins to climb the side of the mountain, overcoming every difficulty. About two thousand feet above Matacama brings us to the great Verrugas Bridge, the highest bridge in the world, and one of the greatest achievements of engineering the world has ever seen. Upwards of two thousand lives were lost while constructing this famous bridge, all the labourers suffered from a dangerous fever, in which the body was covered with pustules, often half an inch long and full of blood. It was supposed to be caused by some poison that was inhaled while excavating, or from the water, and came to be known as the Verrugas fever, it seemed to be confined to some ten or twelve miles and only attacked those actually working there.

From the Verrugas Bridge upwards, the mountains are covered with thick

vegetation, owing to the humid and rainy atmosphere, there we see a little green village full of tropical vegetation, of camphor, banyan, sumach, which is much used for dyeing and medicinal purposes. There, too, are some ordinary looking butterflies, also a swallow tailed species, a fine black and yellow, the only species to be found on these western slopes of the Andes. After leaving Verrugas, the track is marked by a number of black looking tunnels. They seem to be pointing in all directions, and you wonder how on earth you are going to get

up there. You enter a tunnel facing one way, and you leave it facing another, often in quite an opposite direction.

I cannot find words to describe the stupendous and almost insuperable difficulties overcome by the engineers who built this masterpiece of railways. There are fifty-seven tunnels in a stretch of a hundred and seven miles, and seven thousand men lost their lives in the construction of this railway. It has only to be seen to be believed, and the wonder is that there were not a greater number lost.

CHAPTER XIV

LIFE ON THE ANDES

THERE were several places on the railway that I became very interested in during the time I was working on it, and one was a little above Turco. Here the mountains form a kind of amphitheatre with the River Rimac running through the centre. On all sides are the peaks covered with snow, rising to about two-thousand feet above your head. Here you see a remarkable feature of the terraced cultivation of the old Incas' days, before Pizarro and his crew robbed them of their glory and power. Up the steep mountain side, from base to summit, is a perfect network of small embankments or terraces, running this way and that way, until the mountain looks like one great chessboard. This, in itself, is a standing testimony to the industry of the ancient Inca Indians, and proves their good common-sense and forethought in choosing the rich warm soil, in some places the bed of an ancient river, with all its rich deposits, for their gardens and habitations. At certain places you see gigantic figures cut into the mountain side, so large are they that you can only see them from the opposite side of the valley. The figure of the llama in particular is often seen, and the lines and dimensions are wonderfully exact. The llama is about the size of a sheep, but much hardier, and away among the upper districts of the Andes it is used as a beast of burden, the weight it carries is a quintal, or about one hundred pounds. At other places you will see, standing out against the sky, the typical road-side cross of Peru, not the ordinary crucifix,

but a cross, draped and adorned with the well-known emblems of the gospel story. The simple-minded Indians, full of superstition, think the outstretched shadows of the cross will not only bring a blessing to then-crops but defend them from the mountain storms.

I saw many an Indian village hidden away, almost out of sight, in the mountain valleys. They are always on the banks of the river, with a church and a graveyard, and green corrals full of lucerne, with flocks of goats and donkeys. Both men and women are of pronounced Indian type, the women with their large, soft, brown eyes and long hair hanging down in two plaits, are very good to, and very fond of their shy brown babies.

I found that the labourers who were working with us were Sambeta Indians, and had been working for many years on the line; several of them could speak broken English, and their old chief, Lu Alpa, with whom I became very friendly, and in whom I was greatly interested, could speak fairly good English. I found that they were sun worshippers, and when our daily work was done, he and I would get together and spend hours asking each other questions. He would want to know about the white man's land, and I about Peru. It was from his lips that I learnt most of the wonderful and ancient history of his people. They had no books, he said, but the history of his unfortunate country was handed down from father to son, a sacred legacy--learnt off by heart. I spoke to him about his creed, and asked him why his people worshipped the sun, did they not know about God? The old man looked up into my face and smiled a strange mystical smile, after a while he said:

"You white men have a God, but you do not worship Him. You tell other men they must worship your God, but you do not worship Him yourself. You white men call on your God if you want anything, but you only worship this," and he held up an old gin bottle. "You send men to tell us about your God, and you send men with this too. This is a very bad god," he said, and shaking his head, he flung the bottle as far away as

he could.

I could not answer him, for I felt that there was a great amount of truth in what he said.

The place where we were stationed was about three miles above the highest point the engine could then go to. Our work was to repair all breakdowns of trucks, trolleys and barrows, and to throw light bridges over the gulleys for the navvies to cross. We were now about seventeen thousand feet above the sea. Far below us were the lower strata of the clouds, the peaks above us were covered with pure glistening snow, while here and there, beautiful cascades of falling water from the snow above could be seen dancing and quivering in the sunlight. Here also the ferns, flowers and mountain shrubs offer a world of interest to the botanist. Great bushes of heliotrope laden with sweet-scented bloom, bunches of calceolaria, and the prickly tree cactus. From where our hut stood, over a dozen tunnels could be seen at various points down the side of the mountain, and the track seemed like a huge snake twisting and twirling up the face of it.

One morning about two o'clock, Tu Alpa, the old Indian chief, who had apparently taken a liking to me, came to our hut and roused me out. He said he wanted to take me to see the sun rise from the top of the eastern peak. I got up at once, for we had about two miles to go to the eastern face of the Cordilleras.

It was a cold, damp, murky morning. The grass lay flat on the ground, the trees and bushes were all drooping, heavy with dew, not a bird, beast, or creeping thing was to be seen, the old chief and I seemed to be the only living creatures about. The valley beneath was shut out by the heavy clouds that covered everything about a thousand feet below us, a light mist was hanging like a veil to the sides of the mountains, but overhead the sky was quite clear. We reached our destination about three o'clock. From the position we were in the vast expanse of the prairie opened out before us, around us the mountains reared their proud heads heavenwards, perfect silence reigned as I stood

spellbound by the grandeur of the scene around me. In silence the old chief touched my arm and pointed to the east. The sun was just nearing the horizon its refraction casting various and curious aspects over the distant scene. What a glorious sight was unfolded before our eyes. No pen, or tongue could describe that splendid sunrising. Far away, over the distant prairie, a long thin streak of bright orange and gold marked the division between the earth and sky. Soon it began to assume all sorts of fantastic shapes. First it looked like a long gun, mounted on a hill, then, in an instant, it was changed into a tall-spired church in the midst of a field of ripe, golden corn; then, like a giant army set in battle array, and many other wonderful forms did it assume before it got clear of the refraction. Then, like a flash, the distant rays were drawn in, and the round glorious sun itself sprang, as it were, into view. It was indeed a splendid sight, one that I have never forgotten.

After the sun had risen a few degrees, I got up to return to our hut, but the old chief said, "wait a bit." Then, about half-past four, when the sun's rays began to be felt on the mountain side, I noticed that the grass and shrubs, which during the night had lain flat and drooping, with their leaves and blades to the west, now began to raise themselves and gradually turn to the east, to the warmth of the risen sun. Insects, and all the creeping things, began to show themselves, all making for the sun's rays on the grass. The birds in the trees began to twitter, and soon burst forth into sweet songs of praise to the brightness and glory, and the power and warmth of the sun. Then the llamas and other beasts stood out of the shadows and basked in the warm rays, receiving new life, power and strength.

The old Indian got up, and looking me full in the face said:

"Now Shorge (George) you see, aye you savee, why we worship de sun him god." I returned his gaze for a moment, and then in a flash saw the old man's meaning. He had brought me there that the sun itself and nature should give me the explanation that he, in his simplicity and ignorance, was unable to find words for. To him the sun, with its

warmth, brightness and power, gave life, strength and health to all, both man and beast, birds and all creeping things, trees and flowers, to everything that had life, therefore, as the greatest power for good, he and all nature, animate and inanimate, worshipped it.

Just below where we were stationed was the romantic Infiernello bridge, or the bridge of hell, though not so lofty as the Verrugas, on which I was at that time working. This bridge, with its unprotected sides and slender construction, is, for situation, the most remarkable bridge on the line, for it simply connects two tunnels in the opposite walls of rock; here the Rimac has pierced a course for itself between two perpendicular peaks, and a trestle bridge has been built across it, the roaring waters rushing madly down hundreds of feet below. The train dashes out of a tunnel on to the bridge, and from the bridge into a tunnel in the opposite rock. How that bridge was put up there on that precipitous mountain side, with no foothold to work on, is a marvel. From this bridge can be seen several sections of the line extending thousands of feet below, while nearer the summit are large silver mines tunnelled upwards of a mile into the very heart of the mountain.

After I had been working with the gangers for a month, I was promoted to be a superintendent, or foreman over a gang of Chinese coolies, of which there were eight thousand at work on the line. These are engaged in North China, they sign an agreement to serve eight years, at eight dollars per month, with board, and at the expiration of their contract to be taken back to China. But I never heard of one going back or even wanting to go back. As a rule they are a well-built, sturdy lot of men, but, at the same time, a very treacherous lot to have anything to do with, and require constant surveillance.

They lived in large compounds provided by the railway contractors, and were allowed very little freedom. They were locked up in their compounds every night and a sentry placed over them, and they were only allowed out when at work. What these compounds were like I will not attempt to describe; they were the most horrible, filthy places I ever

saw or had anything to do with.

The coolies were formed into gangs of fifties, with a European foreman in charge of them. The foremen were well armed, and did not hesitate to shoot on the first sign of insubordination.

The coolies were engaged for cutting the track in the mountain side, and all other navvy work. Very often they would be working on the edge of a precipice, without the slightest protection to save them from falling, or being knocked over, and in many places the fall was two thousand feet to the rushing waters of the Rimac below.

Many an old grudge, smouldering in the breast, was wiped out here, and no one but God and the culprit was any the wiser, and many a man, both European and coolie, went over that precipice without a moment's notice or warning, and his murderer was never even suspected.

Dead men tell no tales, and there was no love lost between these European foremen and the Chinese slaves, for that is really what they were. It was a wild spot to be in, every man carried his life in his own hands. There were no police at the upper part of the track, and the only law recognised was "might is right," and the man who got in the first shot was considered to be on the right side of the argument. The consequence was that many of the coolies committed suicide, and many died from accidents and sickness. Their mode of burying their dead

was very strange, but it shewed that in some things at least they still clung to the manner and custom of their country. When one of them died,

his mates would get a pound of candles, a parcel of rice, and any money that the dead man may have possessed, these were all put with the body, which was then wrapped in a blanket, and buried about three feet below the surface of the ground.

I have known Europeans, to their shame be it said, who, when under the influence of liquor, and after the Chinese were locked up for the night, go to the grave, dig up the body, steal the money that had been buried with it and re-bury the body again.

One Sunday morning, a few of us foremen were sitting outside our huts talking and smoking. Above us towered the lofty peaks of the Cordilleras, covered with a spotless white mantle of snow, and here and there could be seen the sparkling waterfalls, as the melted snow rushed in cascades down the mountain side. Away a thousand feet below, lay a heavy bank of clouds, whilst above us, the sky was a clear soft blue, and the sun shone with a silver radiance on the snow-capped mountain peaks.

For some time we sat in silence, each busy with his own thoughts, all of us glad of the day's relaxation from our work. Presently the silence was broken by this one and that one, each remark shewing where their thoughts lay. The youngest of the group, and the latest addition to our number, with more of the artistic temperament in him than his older companions, drew a breath of absolute pleasure, and whispered almost to himself, as he gazed on the magnificent grandeur of the scene before him, "Could anything on earth be more beautiful?"

Old Jock McKenzie, chuckled to himself and exclaimed:

"Beauty be blowed! I see no beauty in them mountains with the snaw alus on their heids; beauty is aye in tha een that sees it. I ken an auld cottage and a wee bit kirk in Fifeshire that has more beauty to me een than awe the mountain peaks in Peru."

"How long is it since you left home, Jock?" I asked.

"Thirty long years, lad," he answered, "and every year since then I have made up my mind to go back to the hameland and here I am yet. But

I'll see the dear auld place again before another year is out, I'll

warrant yu.”

For a few minutes there was silence, as each man puffed away at his pipe, when suddenly it was broken by old Jack Scrobbie, a rough specimen of humanity, who remarked:

“It’s all very well for some of you youngsters talking about beauty and scenery and such like, but a fellow can’t drink scenery and mountain peaks, and it’s damned dry work sitting here and smoking like a petrified smoke stack. I must have drink, if I go to the divel for it. Who’s for Chicha?”

Old Jock McKenzie, and two others joined him, and going over the gulley to the tool shed, got one of the light hand trolleys out and put it on the rails. Chicha camp and station was about three and a half miles below where we were stationed, and was at that time the highest point to which the engine was able to go. Here there were a number of drinking shanties, with all their attendant evils, and the whole place had a bad character.

Now to reach this place the trolley had to go round a very sharp and dangerous curve. The cutting itself was only about sixteen feet into the face of the mountain, and the outer rail was laid within four feet of the edge of a sheer precipice of two thousand feet. The trolley used was the common four-wheeled flat trolley, without sides, having four holes in the body, one in front of each wheel. Through these holes were put wood handspikes, which were pressed against the wheels to act as brakes when going downhill.

Just as they were about to start, one of the men sitting near me called out:

“Look out for the curve, Jack, or you’ll go to the devil flying.”

“Aye, aye, lad,” he replied in a bantering tone. “We’ll have a chat with your father, it we do.”

We sat and watched them go steadily down the line until they drew near the curve, then from some unaccountable cause, we saw Jack Scrobbie fall backwards off the trolley and roll over the edge of the precipice. The others seemed at once to lose control of the trolley, for it bounded forward. We saw them straining at the brakes, but we sat spellbound for an instant.

“Good God! Look! They’re over!”

And to our horror we saw the trolley jump the rails at the curve, bound into space and disappear into that terrible abyss below. The words so lightly spoken but a few minutes before came to our minds, as each man sprang to his feet and ran towards the path that led down to the foot of the precipice. We searched the neighbourhood all that day, but no traces of men or trolley were ever seen again.

CHAPTER XV

THE COST OF LIQUOR AND MY RETURN TO LIMA

STRANGE though it may seem, and to show the small value which was placed on human life in those rough times, the tragedy narrated in the previous chapter was forgotten in a few days by most of us, until about two weeks afterwards, while a number of us were sitting around the camp

fire smoking our pipes before turning in for the night, big Tom Dixon referred to the affair and remarked that it was a big price to pay for a drink.

“You’re right, Tom,” said Alec McLeod, “and many a hundred lives have

been lost up these mountains from that same cause. I well remember when

we were making the old Sacramenta Railway up in California I saw a similar occurrence. It was this way:

“One evening, after a difficult piece of work had been done, our superintendent sent us a couple of cases of whiskey, ‘to wet the job’ as he called it. Among our party was a young strapping fellow, he had been an athlete in the old country, clean in speech and actions, a man every inch of him, to whom the taste of drink was unknown, but whether through forgetfulness or bravado, this day he was persuaded to take some whiskey. Not being used to it he was soon under its deadly influence, and ere an hour had passed the man had become a changed creature, and was boasting and bragging of his feats in the old country, and offering to run or jump with any man in the camp. We all knew it was the whiskey, and not the man that was talking, and so took no notice of what he was saying. But he would not let the matter drop, and to make matters worse near to our camp there was a great chasm in the mountain about twelve feet wide. The surface for about fifty yards on either side was quite flat. The chasm was fully three hundred feet deep, and he offered to bet anybody ten dollars that he could jump across the chasm, and no man in the camp would dare to follow him.

“‘Don’t be a fool,’ cried some of the men. ‘You’d find yourself in pieces at the bottom of it, if you tried fooling around that place.’

“But the drink was in, and the wit was out.

“‘I’ll bet you ten dollars you can’t,’ said one of the foremen, himself half muddled with drink.

“‘Done!’ he cried, and before we could stop him he darted off. We sat spell-bound gazing after him. He took the leap splendidly and landed quite two feet clear on the other side. A loud shout of praise went up from his mates, but ere it had left their lips it gave place to a cry of horror, for, as he landed, his leg seemed to give way beneath him, and he fell backwards, head first, down that awful chasm of death, a victim to that terrible drink which is always a curse to all who touch it.

“I shall never forget it, never as long as I live, he added, for he was as splendid a specimen of man as I have ever seen.”

“Aye, lads!” said big Tom Dixon, after we had puffed away in silence for a few seconds, “I have been a good many years at this work in various parts of the world, and I’ve seen hundreds of splendid fellows come to sad and terrible deaths through the self same drink that you and I are such fools to indulge in. The sky pilots (parsons) would have an easy job if the devil lost his bosom friend, alcohol. I have seen such things happen through it as would make your hair stand on end if you had been there with me.”

“Did your hair stand up, Tom?” asked one of the men jocularly.

For reply Tom raised his cap. He had been scalped.

“Yes,” he said, “it was lifted.”

“Tell us the story, Tom,” we all cried together, “fire away.”

“All right mates,” Tom answered, “and I hope it’ll be a lesson to some of you.

“Away back in the sixties I was working on a new line up the Rocky Mountains in California. It was as rough a bit of country as could be found, and we had a lot of trouble with the Indians. There was hardly a day passed without some poor fellow being picked off with their arrows.

“We had with us a number of peaceful Indians working on the line, and all things seemed to be going on well. However, one Saturday, after finishing a section of the line, a few of the head bosses came up to see it, and signified their satisfaction by sending a few cases of whisky to be distributed among the white and Indian labourers. There were about forty-five white men and one hundred and sixty Indians. We also received one month’s pay the same day, so that all were well furnished with the wherewithal for a jovial time. The white men,

who were well used to drinking whiskey, soon disposed of their lot, and then some of the unruly ones suggested going over to the Indian camp and buying some more from the Indians, who were in general very temperate in the use of liquor. This was agreed to by most of the men, but some of the wiser ones did their best to dissuade them from doing this, but the majority carried the day and off they went, and I amongst them, worse luck.

“The Indians were having a great corroboree when our chaps arrived, but did not appear to have been drinking much, they were received very coolly and shown very plainly that their room was of more value than their company. However, they sold our chaps a few bottles of whiskey, and told them to go back to their own camp. This angered some of the rougher of our men, and one of them, half muddled with drink, struck one of the Indians full in the face with his hand.

“In an instant the Indian had buried his knife up to the hilt in the man’s throat, killing him instantly, but before he could withdraw it, he was shot dead by another of the white men. Then each man sprang to his feet, and at each other’s throats, knives and revolvers were drawn and a scene ensued that God forbid I should ever witness or take part in again. At the first onset the light was put out and knives and revolvers used indiscriminately. A few minutes after the row had started I received an awful blow on the side of the head, which stunned me at once. On coming to, I found two redskins lying on the top of me, dead, they had both been shot. The fight was still going on at the other side of the big tent. Slowly I crawled from under the two dead men, and in doing so I felt something wet touch my face, and found to my horror it was my own scalp the dead Indian grasped--he had been shot just after scalping me. I cut through the tent, and, covered with blood and fainting from weakness, made my way over to our camp. There was no one there, and I just managed to creep into a corner when I collapsed with the awful pain in my head. When I came to, one of my mates was bathing my head and face. He told me that when the six men that

remained in our camp heard the shots and shouts, two of them ran down to the lower settlement for assistance. The other four, well armed, had hidden themselves to watch and, if possible, succour any of their mates who managed to get back to their own camp. After a while they saw

me creeping along, covered with blood and stumbling every few yards, making for our tent. They waited for me to get a little nearer before they left their hiding place to come to my assistance. Suddenly they espied two other forms creeping after me, and not being sure if they were friends or foes, they lay quite still for a few moments to make sure. All at once the two forms sprang towards me with knives uplifted to slay me, when they were shot dead by my mates, who then carried me to the place where they had been hiding.

“‘How goes the row, Tom?’ they asked, when I opened my eyes.

“‘I think all our chaps are done for, mates,’ I answered, ‘and we must keep away from our tent lads, I am afraid the Indians will rush it after the fight.’

“The shots now began to clear off, and we knew that many a life had paid dear for the drink that night.

“Just after I was carried into safety, we heard a rush of feet from the Indian tent, and about ten or twelve Indians rushed over to our tents, flourishing axes and knives, while some had revolvers. They had just got within ten feet of the entrance when a perfect volley of shots rang out from a spot just to the right of the tent, and every Indian fell riddled with bullets. It was the relief party of whites who had come to our assistance.

“After seeing that this lot of redskins were dead, they made a rush for the Indian quarters, and on getting lights a terrible sight met their view. There was not a single man in the tent with a spark of life in him, and every white man was scalped; and the bodies stripped of arms, money and fearfully mutilated; just near the door there were a heap of

bodies, five of our men and thirteen redskins. Poor Seth Walker, as good a mate as ever worked, was almost slashed to pieces. He had five Indians lying on the top of him. These apparently had been shot by Old Dan Creegan, for his body was close to, and partly on them, with his head split open by a tomahawk. It was just like a slaughter house, and God forbid that I should ever see such another sight. In and around that tent there were thirty-seven dead white men and sixty dead Indians.

“A body of troops was sent in to the district to search for the runaways, but none were ever found. They had made off into the back territories, where they could not be followed.

“Now mates,” he added, “all that terrible loss of life was caused through drink. And now hear me boys, I swear, so help me God, I will never touch another drop of liquor as long as I live.”

“Hear, hear,” said several of the men, and whether it was the effect of the gruesome stories, or the tragedy, I don’t know, but the men of that gang, during the time I was with them, were certainly much more sober than they usually were.

Now about one mile to the south of our station, and on the middle ridge of the Cordilleras there is one of the most interesting relics, belonging to the Incas Indians, and I had not been in that district long before my friend the old chief told me the history of it, and also went with me when I went to see it. It was called, he said, the Ancient Council Chamber, and was used for that purpose in their glorious past, long years before the Spanish robbers came to Peru. The place is a level and circular patch about half a mile across, while the peaks around it are very steep. From the ground to about sixty feet up the side, all around, there are steps, or seats, cut out of the solid rock, like the gallery in a circus. Each seat is about twenty-four inches wide and eighteen inches high, all apparently having been cut by hand.

On the western side is a large seat cut into the shape of an arm-chair, this no doubt, being the seat of honour in that vast council chamber.

Above the seats are the figures of birds, and beasts, cut into the solid rock. These are so gigantic that they can only be seen in all their beauty from the other side of the valley, and then it is both a beautiful and majestic sight, whilst overhead is the canopy of the blue sky. Looking at it, and thinking of the centuries that have passed since the days of Pizarro and his robber crew, it was not difficult, as the old chief sat beside me telling me their legends, to picture them in their pride and glory when Peru was a great nation, and to see once more that chamber filled with proud chiefs, met to do homage to their ruler, sitting so calm and stately in the great chair, as they passed before him to their seats and to assist him by their counsel in the government of their country. Strange though it may seem, they have amongst their legends one of the flood we read of in Bible history. But oppression and cruelty have done much to sap up their strength and pride, and has left them a happy-go-lucky, indolent and harmless race; the men are short in stature, strong and sturdy in limb, but no great lovers of work, this being so, and no doubt a remnant of their old pride makes their women the chief workers, more especially about their homes and in the fields.

The Indians who were with us were employed on the great tunnel at the top of the track, and they were engaged to wheel the debris out of the tunnel, as the Chinese were blasting and cutting. Now all Indians carry weights on their heads, but as a barrow of broken rock was too heavy for that, they were forced to adopt our method of wheeling it, but when empty, nothing would induce them to wheel the barrow back, no, they would turn it upside down and carry it on their heads, much to the amusement of the other workers.

One morning, before turn-to time, I strolled up the valley above our camp to get a nearer view of some of the magnificent waterfalls to be found among the snow-capped peaks. I had climbed up and down for some time, when I became very thirsty, and meeting one of the Gambetta

Indian women carrying a skin of goat's milk, I asked her for a drink. She at once gave me a horn full, which I drank eagerly and found very

refreshing. Then I went back to the camp.

“Where have you been rambling to?” said Mike Hogan, the foreman.

I told him, and added, “I got a good drink of milk from an Indian woman.”

“The devil you did,” he said, “was it boiled?”

“Boiled be hanged,” I replied. “She gave it me out of a skin and I drank it at once.”

“You’re a darned young fool for your pains then, and you had better get down to Lima again as soon as possible. The fever will break out on you in less than twenty-four hours, so you had better get down to Chicla and take a train for Lima at once. Come along to my room, and I will make out your pass, and an order for your money, so that you can draw it when you get down to Monserrat.”

I offered a protest, and said I felt perfectly well. But it was no good--he packed me off. I rode on one of the mules to Chicla and caught the train leaving Chicla at one p.m., but before we left the station I began to feel very tired and weary, with severe pains in the muscles of my arms and legs.

When we stopped at San Bartolome to pick up passengers, three young English boys got on the train to go down to Lima. Their ages, as far as I could judge, were between seventeen and eighteen. The eldest was wrapped in a blanket, and his young mates were taking him to Lima Hospital. He had the Oroya fever and looked ghastly. I got into conversation with the youngest, who told me they had only been three weeks in the country. They were apprentices on a Liverpool barque, and when they arrived in Callao some men there had persuaded them that they could get a pound a day on the Oroya Railway, and, as their food was very bad, and very short, on the vessel, they had run away.

With tears in his eyes the young lad told me that Charlie had taken the fever two days after they had started work. The two lads had nursed him as well as they were able, but he grew worse, and the superintendent at last ordered them to take him to the hospital.

What a bitter experience for three young lads in a strange land.

Turning to his sick friend, the boy tried to cheer him up, saying:

“You will soon forget all this Charlie, when we get out to sea again. We shall be down before dark, and you’ll soon be all right when you get into a nice comfortable bed in the hospital.”

The poor sick lad smiled faintly.

“I am dying, Frank, dying,” he murmured, “far away from home, tell mother I am sorry we left the ship.”

And in a few minutes he died in their arms.

The two poor lads sobbed as though their hearts would break and asked me whatever could they do with Charlie. Poor fellows, it was a bitter lesson they were learning. Their position was indeed a sad one, but there were kind, tender hearts, and willing hands ready to help them in Lima.

As soon as we arrived there, the railway staff placed the body in the carpenter’s shop, and after the doctor had certified the cause of death, a coffin was made for it, then the railway authorities arranged for the burial at the English cemetery. The two others were looked after by the station-master himself until after the funeral and then he got them a berth in a ship bound for Liverpool, and in a few days they left the land that had brought them such bitter sorrow and pain.

CHAPTER XVI

I GO BACK TO THE SEA AGAIN

THE day after my arrival at Lima, I was taken ill with the Oroya fever, which must have been on me before I left the camp. I was taken to the General Hospital and although I was as strong and healthy as a young giant before, it was three months ere I was able to resume work of any description. However, on my discharge, although still as weak as a cat, a friend got me a berth as mess-room steward on the s.s. "Chiloe," one of the Pacific Company's coast boats, and right glad I was to feel myself once more on the water. We made a trip from Callao to Panama, and another to Coquimbo, with its steep streets and big mountains behind. Coquimbo is the centre of a great copper mining industry, and some of the largest fortunes of Chili have been drawn from the copper-smelting works. Full of curiosity, I went ashore and wandered about for a few hours. I saw the Plaza, with its green oasis, fringed with pepper trees. The doors of the cathedral opposite were open, and the sound of music drew me to the open door, and one of the prettiest sights I have ever seen met my eyes. The altars were ablaze with lighted candles, and the church was decorated with the colours of the Blessed Virgin Mother, blue and white, for it was her month, and every evening from the 8th of November to the 8th of December, these services are held. From my post at the door I could see that the floor of the church was crowded with black-robed women, whilst the treble of childish voices chanted a sweet-toned litany, the refrain of the "Ave Maria" echoing again and again, floated out on the still night air, dying away into silence, like the sound of the summer sea on some palm-fringed shore, the beauty and solemnity of it lingered in my heart for many days.

On our return to Callao, the vessel was put under a temporary overhaul previous to going to England for new survey and new boilers. She had been running on the coast of Peru, Bolivia and Chili for the last ten years, and greatly needed a thorough overhauling. The chief engineer, Mr. Jones, was very kind to me, especially when I first joined the ship, so weak had the fever left me that, but for his kindness and care, I must have broken down again.

We left Callao and called at various ports on the coast, staying at Valparaiso a week doing some repairs to the engine. One night I went ashore in the boat to bring the steward on board. It was about eleven p.m., and as I sat waiting in the boat I thought what a close, hot, heavy night it was. Just in front of where the boat lay there were several low class drinking saloons, and the places were crowded with dancers, the musicians playing for all they were worth. All seemed to be enjoying themselves to the utmost in their own fashion. To the right of the boat landing, a road led up the cliffs that fronted the harbour. Right on the top of the cliffs there stood three famous drinking saloons, well known among South American traders as the “Fore,” “Main,” and “Mizzen Tops,” low, rough, disreputable places, the resort of crimps, the vilest of women and thieves, and many a sailor was drugged, then robbed and shanghaied from these dens of evil.

Just as the clock in the Grand Plaza struck eleven, and I was wondering how anybody could dance on that hot night, also how much longer I should have to wait, the boat gave a surge forward, the next moment a low, rumbling noise was heard, and then a sharp shock of earthquake. At once the streets and every open space were filled with the people crying, shouting, and praying, calling on Santa Maria, and all the other Chilian saints, whose names are legion, for mercy and pity.

About three minutes afterwards there was another shock, more severe than the first, which caused a large slice of the cliff to fall down into the waters of the bay, and bringing down with it the three drinking saloons already mentioned. Owing to the first shock most of the dancers and drinkers were out in the streets and open spaces, but a number of decoy girls, and the proprietors of the saloons were buried beneath the ruins.

As there were no more shocks, in about ten minutes the people in the streets and Plaza ceased to call on Santa Maria, rushed back to the remaining saloons, called for the fiddlers, and went on dancing as though nothing had happened, and yet within half a mile of them, fifty

human beings at least had been hurled into eternity without a moment's warning.

We left Valparaiso the next day on our journey to Liverpool, and as the steamer's boilers were in a very dilapidated condition, and not in any way fit to place much confidence in, the captain decided to pass through Smythe's Straits, into the Straits of Magellan, thereby cutting off the stormy region outside the thousands of small islands. Now in the Smythe's Strait the water is very deep right close to the side of the high mountains. There is only one place in this strait where a ship can find anchorage, and that is in a small bay off the strait, so that it is a great risk to take a steamer through. However, we entered the strait in the forenoon, and arrived at the anchorage just before dark. It was a bitter cold day, and the hills around us were covered with snow. The whole place looked a wild and inhospitable spot. Among our passengers was the Chilian Governor and his suite, for the penal settlement of Sandy Point in the Straits of Magellan. He advised the captain to have a strict watch kept, as the native Fuegians were a treacherous lot, as we had reason to remember a few hours later.

Shortly after anchoring, a long canoe came off from the shore, containing a man, woman, and three children. Neither the man nor woman

were more than four feet in height, and had no covering, with the exception of a skin over their shoulders, and a smaller one around their loins; the children were quite naked at the bottom of the canoe, in which there was a little water, but they did not seem to mind this. It is astonishing what the human body can stand if trained to it. Both the man and woman were armed with crude bows and arrows, and each had

a long spear of hard wood, which may have been used for spearing fish, as there were several small ones in the canoe. They were not allowed to come on board, but the captain ordered the steward to give them a bucketful of ship's bread. This was done, and the poor creatures went almost mad over it, eating it ravenously. When they saw that this was all there was to be got, they pulled back to the shore, and shortly

afterwards, it being very dark, we saw a fire lit on one of the hills to the south of the bay. In a few minutes we saw another a little further off, and then successively fire beacons were shewn in varying distances from each other all around the bay which was quite two miles across.

When the Governor of Sandy Point saw this, he told the captain that, in all probability, the natives would try to attack and surprise the ship during the night, and advised him to be prepared. The captain at once ordered steam to be got ready at a moment's notice. All hands were mustered, and arms served out as far as they would go, and the crew told to stand by. About midnight we saw a large canoe put off from the shore; it appeared to be about fifty feet long, and contained quite forty men, and was approaching the steamer from right ahead. When about a hundred yards off it stopped and, while some of us were watching it, word was passed along that there were large canoes all round the ship.

The steamer's whistle sounded, this gave them a scare, for they drew a little further off. Then the boilers started to blow off, causing a terrible noise, and the whole of the canoes disappeared. The officer went around the ship to see that there were no ropes or anything hanging over the side and stationed men all round the ship on the look out to prevent our being surprised, and we wished for daylight.

About four a.m., the canoes were seen approaching the ship again, so the captain ordered the brass gun on the bridge to be fired over their canoes to frighten them, but the quartermaster, quite unknown to the officers, slipped into the mouth of the gun a number of iron nuts. When the gun was fired there was terrific yelling and shouting from some of the canoes in the line of fire, and several of them pulled quickly away for the shore, the others drawing nearer and nearer to the ship. Fearing an attack, the engines were put slow ahead, and the steamer kept slowly steaming around her anchor until the daylight broke, and we could see the channel. The anchor was then lifted and we passed slowly out of the bay. What the tale might have been had we been

caught

napping during the night, it is hard to say. There must have been at least three or four hundred natives in the canoes, all armed with spears and bows and arrows. However, all's well that ends well, and we were very glad to get away from that place all well.

A few days afterwards we called at Sandy Point, in the Straits of Magellan, landed the passengers for that place, took in bunker coals, and proceeded on our voyage to Liverpool, where we arrived safely after the usual ups and downs, and after a ninety days' passage from Valparaiso. I left the ship after we were paid off, intending to take a holiday before deciding upon what part of the world I would next visit, and feeling that a little while on shore would do me good in more ways than one.

CHAPTER XVII

“EASTWARD HO!”

AFTER remaining in Liverpool a few weeks, during which time I was made much of by those at home, who were all undoubtedly glad to see me, and who listened with great interest to all that I had to tell of what I had seen and passed through since I sailed away in the “Stormy Petrel,” I went on a visit to Chester. “Rare old city of Chester”--one of the most interesting places in this England of ours. What happy days I spent rambling through those old streets which take one back to a bygone age, with their covered Rows containing the best of shops, with the houses above them and small shops beneath the larger ones. What hours I spent in the old cathedral of St. Werburgh built in the shape of a cross, the old weatherbeaten tower standing just in the centre compartment of the cross, filled with hallowed memories of bygone days, when the city rang with the shout of arms to arms, and the walls that encircle it, built as only Roman hands could build them, clasping the city in an embrace of stone, defiant alike of time and foe. Like thousands of others who have walked upon those walls, I stood on the top of the Phoenix Tower from which King Charles saw

his army defeated by the Parliamentary forces on September the 27th, 1645, on Marston Moor. This defeat was the beginning of the end, for within three years from that day a great crowd was gathered in front of the palace of Whitehall. A man in a mask severed at one blow the King's head from his body, saying as he held it up in view of the weeping spectators "Behold the head of a traitor." England was not long before she discovered who were the real traitors, history tells us of the brave and gallant defence of that loyal city, and how its brave men and women held out until famine did what the sword could not

do, and the churches and cathedral still bear the traces of the way in which the Parliamentary forces kept their word. Every street and stone in the city and its surroundings were full of interest to me, and of course I spent some hours on the River Dee, went to Ecclestone, and saw Eaton Hall the country home of the Duke of Westminster, through whose

kindness the public are allowed to visit both the hall and grounds during the summer months, on payment of a small fee, this being given to the various Chester charities. Needless to say I availed myself of this opportunity, and enjoyed it immensely: as I left the grounds I walked for a little while about the village, every house being a picture in itself, clothed in woodbine and choice evergreen, and with its small but sweetly smelling gardens, the thought passed through my mind that here at least was one of earth's favoured ones, who saw to the well-being of those living at his gate. This being my last day of holiday, I returned to Liverpool, and the old restless spirit took possession of me once again.

For several days I could not make up my mind in what direction my next voyage should be, of one thing only was I certain, that it would be somewhere quite unknown to me. Finally I decided to go out to Australia, "Eastward Ho!" so again I paid a visit to the Docks. Here I found a large new sailing vessel, the "John Kerr," of Greenock, loading for Melbourne. She was taking a large number of passengers out to the colonies, amongst whom were several gold-diggers, returning from a visit to the old country.

This was just the chance I wanted, so I at once went to the chief officer, and asked if he had engaged all his crew, if not, I would like to ship with him. He gave me a promise to sign on when the ship was ready, which would be in about five days.

Having said good-bye to my friends, as I did not expect or intend to return to England for a few years, having made up my mind to see all there was to be seen in far off Australia before I returned, I signed articles as an able seaman in the “John Kerr,” on a voyage to Melbourne, and other ports, and returning to a final port of discharge in the United Kingdom, term not to exceed three years. Such was the agreement, and yet out of the thirty-five able and ordinary seamen who signed it there was not one who intended to abide by it. Neither did the captain or the officers expect that they would. Those were the good days in Australia, when gold was cheap and fortunes easily made. It was a rare thing indeed for a ship to return with the same crew she took out. The seamen’s wages from England were two pounds five shillings per month; from Australia it was ten pounds--was it any wonder that seamen deserted from their ships when they arrived out in a country where men were treated as men, and not as, in many ships, like mere machines?

The “John Kerr” was a splendid six top-gallant yard ship. The captain was an old veteran in the eastern trade. He had a cast in one eye, and the sailors at once christened him “Cockeyed Scobie,” and never called him by any other name during the voyage, but of course not in his hearing. The captain and second mate were brothers, but whether it is the rule and not the exception, they were always quarrelling with each other. Never having had a brother I am not able to say. The chief officer, Mr. Broadfoot, was a gentleman every inch of him, and a seaman

to his finger tips; he was liked by all on board but the second mate, who, for some reason only known to himself, could not get on with him at all. The third and fourth officers were both young and had not yet gained their certificates.

We had about seventy-five passengers going out to Melbourne. Among the saloon passengers were the five miners already mentioned. These men were great gamblers, and among the crew were several men who at that time were called "Packet rats." They never made a voyage in a ship, but just worked the passage from port to port, gambling with and swindling everybody they could get in touch with. Throughout the passage these men were gambling and card-playing in the fore-castle every minute they could spare either by night or day. Three of these sailors joined the ship without a second suit of clothes to their backs, but before they reached Melbourne they each had a large trunk of good clothes, and about ten pounds in cash, all won, or swindled off the passengers.

About the time we left Liverpool there were several new ships about to sail for Australia, and there was a considerable amount of betting laid as to which ship would make the best passage out. The names of the ships being the "John Kerr," "Cambridgeshire," "Dallam Tower," "Loch Ard," "Rooperal," "Chrisonomy," and the "British Admiral," all carrying passengers.

We had a fairly good run to the Equator, and then met with very strong south-east trades and squally weather. Our ship spread an immense area of canvas. Being a new ship, with sails, ropes, spars, etc., all new, and a thorough seaman in charge, we sped along gaily with every stitch of canvas spread. We soon ran through the trades, then had variable winds for a few days, and sighted the Island of Tristan d'Acunha on the forty-second day out. There were great discussions and betting as to what the ship would do when she got the westerly winds, and started on her long run of six thousand miles.

There is no place in the world that tries the ability, courage, and nerve of a seaman like running the Easting down. Captain Scobie was an old veteran in the trade, and he paced up and down the poop like a wild beast in a cage, while the winds were baffling about. No one dare go near him, he was so irritable, his eyes were never off the western

horizon; he was just hungering for the westerlies, to see what his new ship would do. The light, fitful easterly airs only irritated him. The great sails were flapping themselves against the masts, and then bulging out to every movement of the ship. Men and boys were aloft all the time examining every hook and block, to see if they were well fast and ready for instant use. Spare gaskets were sent up into the tops, and everything got ready for the coming breeze.

At midnight of the forty-seventh day the easterly wind died away, and a long rolling swell came up from the westward, and very soon afterwards a long, low bank of clouds began to rise in the west.

The old captain rubbed his hands with glee when he saw it, and turning to the chief officer he said, "I'll go below now, let me know if you get any change," but before he lay down, he noted the barometer was falling fast, so, calling the steward, he told him to see that everything in his pantry and in the passenger's cabins was well secured.

Two or three gentlemen passengers were still sitting up in the cabin as the captain passed through to his room. One of them said, "where are we now, Captain Scobie?"

With a dry smile he replied, "Just turning the corner of Melbourne Road, gentlemen. It's a grand road, six thousand miles long very straight, but very uneven at present. Wants a sight of levelling down as some of you will find before another forty-eight hours are past. Good-night all."

Towards four a.m., the bank of cloud astern had risen until it was nearly overhead. Then a slight puff of cold air came from the westward. The chief officer on the alert cried out "Stand by the watch." Ere a few seconds had passed every man was at his post ready for the next order. "Square the after yards," shouted the mate. With a roar, a rattle and a shout round went the yards as the big ship payed off with her head to the eastward. "Square away the foreyard," gleefully called out the mate again. Although up to the present there was

hardly a breath of air a big swell was rising from the westward, a sure forerunner of a storm. For over an hour the ship lay rolling gunwales under, until we expected every moment to see the masts roll over the side. It was a fearful time for all on board, but at last a low, murmuring sound was heard coming up astern of us, “stand by, everybody!” called out the mate. The order was no sooner given than with a roar the west wind struck us, the ship staggered for a moment, and every rope and sail fairly cracked again with the pressure; then, with a leap and a plunge, the noble vessel bounded forward on her long run to the eastward, she had entered Melbourne Road in earnest.

The captain came on deck with a broad smile on his face, even his cross eye seemed to twinkle merrily, he was happy now. The breeze freshened rapidly and the sea rose to a fearful height.

The following day it was blowing with the force of a hurricane; the royals were made fast and all the upper fore and aft sails taken in and secured. Everything about the deck was doubly lashed, the booby hatch aft was secured with wire lashing, and all the passengers fastened below. By noon the next day the ship had run three hundred and eighty-two miles in twenty-four hours. The whole surface of the ocean was one mass of white foam, like carded wool, and when a sea broke the spray would fly as high as the topsail yard. It was a grand, yet an awful sight, when the great ship was in the trough of the sea, the mountainous waves seemed on a level with the topsail yard, and it looked utterly impossible for the ship to climb over them; but nobly she rose to her duty, though the decks were constantly swept by the quartering seas, as the ship yawed in spite of her helm.

For ten days did the westerly gales continue, and everybody on board was sore with tumbling about. To cheer us, the captain reported on that day that the ship had made 3,480 miles, an average speed of 14½ knots per hour, a splendid piece of work. And still the gale howled and shrieked, and still the noble ship sped onward through the wild angry seas, which every moment threatened to engulf her. The heart of every seaman on board throbbed with joy and pride at the splendid behaviour

of the ship, as she rode over the mountainous sea, and shook herself free from the intrushing waters. Not a rope had parted, not a sail had split so far. But alas, there was sorrow and trouble in store for us, and that soon. At midnight on the eleventh day, the gale suddenly moderated, and before daylight it had died away, leaving a fearful sea running after her, and at times tremendous seas would break on board. The heavily rigged ship rolled from side to side, having no wind to steady her. No rigging that was ever made could stand such a strain long, and the following night the foremast, with yards and sails went over the side. The chain-plates drew out of the ship's side with the enormous strain on them; the lower mast carried away about one foot below the main deck; and in its fall the immense fore-yard cut the bulwarks down to the deck on each side. We all thought she was gone, but soon we heard the captain's voice roaring above the noise of the sea:

“Stand clear of the deck!”

Every man sprang to shelter, not a moment too soon either, as a tremendous sea broke on board. The ship broached to, it smashed the boats and washed away everything moveable from the decks. The noble ship shuddered and paused like a frightened thing, then, crippled as she was, again shook herself free, but she was in a sad plight.

“All hands clear away the wreck!”

With axes, knives and chisels the rigging was cut to let the broken mast and yards drift clear of the ship. The steerage passengers were battened down in the steerage, and their cries were heartrending. After the wreckage was got clear, the captain ordered the main topmast backstays to be cut away on the lee roll, as there was a danger of the whole mast falling aft on the deck, but before the men could carry out his orders the mast was carried away and came down with a crash on the port side.

The upper masts went clear over the side, but the topsail yards came down on to the deck end on, crashed through the deck, through the steerage amongst the passengers and struck a bale of blankets in the lower hold. The upper part then broke off, leaving about twenty feet of the iron yard standing above the deck, ripping away the main deck each time the ship rolled, the water meanwhile pouring in tons through the torn decks into the steerage amongst the already terrified passengers.

“Get that yard out of that as quick as possible!” roared the captain, who was as cool as a cucumber.

A tackle was made fast to the stump of the mainmast, and hooked on to the yard and the fall stretched right aft, and all hands, male passengers too, laid hold of it, and waited for a steady moment. The chief officer called out “Stand by! Haul!” and with a wild frantic pull the broken yard was hauled out of the deck and lowered over the side.

The deck for about thirty feet had been ripped up, and the seas had poured down the gap. The carpenter reported five feet of water in the hold. After some difficulty the donkey pump was started, and all hands were set to work cutting away the wreckage and spars, and nailing boards and sails over the broken deck. What a time we spent, all day and all night we toiled without ceasing. The captain and mate were here, there and everywhere, helping this one, relieving that one, watching the horizon for a sail, watching the water in the well, cheering this one and that one, giving their orders as coolly as though they were in the dock at home, always the same, no trace of anxiety on their faces it was impossible to judge the real state of their feelings.

The water rose in the holds in spite of the pumps, and our plight was very serious. The cabin was packed full of passengers, the children, poor mites, crying from sheer terror, the women praying, many of them beyond tears, the men shouting to be let out; but beyond a dozen of them who had been seamen in their younger days, and who had been helping, it was felt that the rest were best out of the way.

All day and all night the work went on. When daylight came again our case seemed worse than ever, the real state of the damage became more apparent. Old bronzed sailors, who had spent their whole lives at sea battling with the ocean in all her moods, turned fairly white when they looked around, and heard the despairing cry of the women and children huddled together aft. Strong men, and we had some strong men amongst the crew, flung themselves down on the deck, utterly exhausted, rolling about as the ship laboured in the heavy seas, even the ship herself seemed to give up struggling. One of the spars in falling had struck my right foot breaking three of my toes, but there was no time to see to them or to bind them up. Only the captain and mate seemed unchanged. They never flinched, never seemed tired--true British seamen, staunch to the back-bone.

For five days and nights we battled for our lives, and on the sixth day after the disaster the wind and sea began to abate, and the pumps got the water under. The captain then ordered all hands eight hours complete rest, and they needed it. Every man forrard rolled into his berth just as he stood--oilskins and sea-boots too.

The wind and sea were still moderating, and by the following day the sea was fairly smooth, and the wind had died away to a light easterly air, and promised to be a fine clear day. Just after daylight the mate's voice rang out loud and clear "all hands on deck." The fourth mate was ordered to take several male passengers with him, and lash some planks across the broken bulwark, to prevent anyone from falling over the side. The carpenter also took several passengers and set about patching the broken decks temporarily. The captain and the other officers then set all the sailors to work clearing up the wreck of the rigging, and securing the remaining spars. Three of the boats had been stove in by the falling spars, and a young man amongst the passengers, who was a joiner, was set to work to repair them.

As the foremast was carried away just below the main deck the first job was to get a jury mast up. We had several large spare spars on deck, and five lighter spars on the forward house. As there was twenty feet

of the old foremast left in the hold, it was decided to use this as a step for the jurymast. A spar was cut about eighteen feet long, and dropped inside the stump of the old iron mast, to rest the heel of the jurymast on. Two large spars were with difficulty raised up for shears, and well secured.

The third mate and four of the apprentices were then told off to keep watch at night, and all hands sent below to rest after a hard day's work. The following day, as soon as the first streaks of daylight appeared, "All hands on deck!" was heard reverberating from one end of the ship to the other. The men turned out fairly lively, and were soon hard at work. There was need to make good use of the fine weather, and to get a jury mast up before the breeze and sea sprang up again. One of the spare spars was then fitted up for a jurymast. After some real hard dangerous work, which brought out the true grit of the British seamen, this large spar was hove up on end and secured. The crossjack yard was hove forward, and used on the jurymast for a foreyard. A sail was bent and set and the ship with difficulty put on her course again. The steerage was repaired temporarily, and the passengers put below once more. Many of them were half dead with fright, but the fine weather lasted for ten days, and by that time we had all things well secured about the deck.

Twenty-one days after losing our masts we sighted King's Island, where a few days before, unknown to us, the ship "British Admiral" was wrecked and ninety-seven lives lost, so that bad as our case was, there were others far worse. Three days after sighting King's Island we spoke the sailing vessel "Windsor Castle." Her captain asked if we wanted assistance. Our captain told him he would like to be reported, as he feared she would be unmanageable when she got near the coast. The

captain of the "Windsor Castle" then very generously sailed back to Cape Otway, and reported us disabled. The Government at Melbourne at once despatched the tug "Warhawk" to look for us. Just as her coal was about used up she came near us and told the captain she had not coal enough to take us in tow, but would go into port to coal, and come out

again for us.

That night, however, after the tug had left us, the Government despatch boat, which had been sent out to look for us along the coast; sighted us and at once took us in tow. What joy filled the hearts of all on board when we found ourselves in tow and nearing Melbourne. All our suffering was forgotten in the joy of our safety.

On arrival in dock we heard that the “Rooperal,” “Chrisonomy,” “Dallam Tower,” “Loch Ard,” and “Cambridgeshire” had all arrived crippled like ourselves, but the “British Admiral” as already mentioned, had been lost on King’s Island, and ninety-seven lives with her.

The passengers, you may be sure, lost no time in getting ashore. The bulk of the crew was paid off as the ship would most likely be five or six months there, as the new masts and rigging had to be sent out from England. I was not among those paid off, but of that, and what came of it shall be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII

LOST IN THE BUSH

DURING the five months we lay at Williamstown Wharf, replacing the disabled masts and rigging, I spent what I consider the happiest time of my life. The rigging work was placed in the hands of the well-known firm of Messrs. Johnson Bros., of Melbourne, and well they carried out their contract. I was employed with them all the time, and learnt to be a thorough practical seaman, especially in the handling and splicing of wire, which, in after years, stood me in good service. The working hours for the riggers were from eight in the morning to five in the evening, but the four apprentices and I worked from six in the morning until six in the evening, as we cleaned and washed the decks both before and after the riggers had been working. The master rigger paid me five shillings every Saturday out of his own pocket for working with them; so that I always had a little pocket money to go on with. I

went ashore every evening and had a right good time. It was here that I found what a good thing it was to belong to the Order of Good Templars.

I attached myself to a lodge near the dock, and at once found myself in a circle of friends, who vied with each other in making me welcome in their homes, and at the various lodges. Needless to say that the young sisters in the lodges played sad havoc with my, at that time, susceptible heart, and I was more or less madly in love during my stay there, and scarcely a night passed without a social gathering at one or other of the lodges in Melbourne.

But my happy time was drawing to a close, and the “John Kerr” was again ready for sea, but I had made up my mind she should sail without me, the fascination of the gold fields had laid its hold on me, and I only waited for a favourable opportunity to set out and try my fortune in this direction, having made up my mind to leave her before she left the wharf.

The opportunity offered itself the night before we were to haul out into the bay. A coasting barque, hailing from Newcastle, New South Wales, was lying at the other side of the wharf. It was bound for Newcastle. I had arranged with one of her crew, whom I had become acquainted with, to stow away in her the night before she sailed. I also knew that the officers and the watchman of the “John Kerr” were carefully watching the two apprentices and myself to prevent us deserting, but the old saying, “where there’s a will there’s a way,” was borne out in my case, although I had to use every caution to circumvent them. However, I did manage it. The barque “Woodville” was to sail from the jetty at midnight. About an hour before she cast off, I saw our watchman standing beside the gangway, so, without more ado, I slipped over the side and down a rope, and landed on one of the crossbeams under the jetty. I crawled along the piles until I got to the other side of the jetty and just abreast of the bows of the “Woodville.” Seizing the bow-head lines, I climbed on board and slipped

into the forecandle. The sailors welcomed me with a laugh, and shewed me where to hide, but there was no need for me to do this, as I had barely got on board before the order was given to loose the topsails, and when these were set, the lines were cast off, and the vessel at once got under weigh.

By daylight we had cleared the heads and were running before a strong breeze for Bass Straits. I then went on deck and reported myself to Captain Conely, who did not shew any surprise at my appearance, even if he felt it, but just said:

“All right, just go along to the mate, and no doubt he will find you some work to do.”

I immediately did this, and he at once sent me amongst the crew, and they at once made me one of themselves. I was delighted with the social spirit and friendly feeling that existed between the captain, officers, and the men in this colonial vessel. What a difference between her and the other vessels I had sailed in. For instance, the seamen on the “John Kerr” were paid two pounds ten per month, and got the Board of Trade scale of provisions, their pound and pint, or, as was once said to me by an old Welsh skipper, when I and the rest of the crew were half dead with thirst, and there was plenty on board, “they get their whack, and they’ll get no more.” But the sailors on the “Woodville” were paid seven pounds per month. They did not sign for any scale of provisions, but for full and plenty; they got soft bread, fresh soup and stores every day, and no restriction as to water. No wonder they were contented and cheerful.

We had a fair passage to Newcastle, and there I landed with my few belongings and a heart full of hope at the prospect before me, and the sense of freedom from restraint that had always been a passion with me. I was anxious to see the country, so, after making a few enquiries, I decided to go on the “Wallaby” (or tramp), and on the following morning, having got together five pounds of ship’s bread, and a billy,

or can, to hold two quarts of water, I rolled up my few things in a swag, slung it over my shoulder, and started for my first tramp through the bush, intending to make for Lake McQuarrie.

It was a lovely morning when I started, the sky overhead was bright and clear, my heart was light, and I had no fear for the future, being full of the confidence of ignorance and already used to hardships.

Having been advised to follow the freshest bullock track, I entered the bush at Minmi, a small village about twelve miles from Newcastle. For several hours I tramped on, but not a human creature did I meet, but at present I was too interested to notice this, stopping frequently to look at the great pine trees that were growing in the Ti tree scrub, while here and there the common fern grew luxuriantly, reminding me of the parks one sees surrounding some of the large estates in the old country. So far the track had been of fine white dust that got into my eyes and throat, but I was so delighted with the bush that I pressed on, new beauties unfolding themselves before my eyes at every step; the beautiful tall gum trees and the numerous and wonderful plants and ferns that I met with, the birds, too, many of them singing gaily in the trees.

My feet began to feel tired and, thinking a rest would do me no harm, I sat down and made a meal, and had a good drink of the water I had with me. Now Lake McQuarrie lay due south from Minmi. I had noticed that the sun was on my left side when I started, and having been warned against wandering into the bush away from the track, I had kept the sun on my left side until midday, when I could not say which way it was moving, so I lay down under some tall gum trees, and, looking up through the branches for about half-an-hour I noted the sun's altitude was decreasing, this shewing me that it was now past noon.

After a good rest I started again on my journey, keeping the sun now on my right side. As night drew near my steps lagged a little and I began to feel a bit nervous, which was a new experience for me, and I feared that I had lost my way. So engrossed was I in this thought that

I failed to notice that night had suddenly closed down upon me, without any warning, as it does in these tropics, so I picked out a place where there were a lot of dry leaves and sat down completely tired out, feeling it was useless to try and go any further on my journey until daylight, when I should again have the sun to guide me. I began to wish I had not started alone on my trip. However, I soon fell asleep and slept soundly throughout the night--the sleep of the tired.

How long I slept I cannot say, but I was awakened by the sound of coarse loud laughter close beside me. The night was pitch dark, I could not see ten feet in front of me. Springing to my feet, I drew my sheath knife from my belt, and gripping it tightly in my right hand stood on the defensive. I thought I was surrounded by a lot of native blacks, who had come upon me, and were laughing at the easy capture they would make of me. Although I could not see anything moving I determined to sell my life dearly. My legs were shaking under me, if I could have seen anything it would not have felt so bad, but the intense darkness appalled me. Again the coarse laughter resounded through the bush, just as though there were a lot of men near. After a few minutes my nerve returned, and I gave a loud coo-ee. Immediately there was a loud laugh just above my head, and it slowly dawned upon me that the cause of my fright had been some laughing jackasses in the trees, the relief was great, but it was some time before I felt like sleeping again.

I was just quietly dosing off when I heard the most pitiful wailing of a child. Up I sprang again, and halloed again and again, but got no answer. I dared not leave the tree for fear of losing my bearings. Time after time the pitiful crying went on. Oh, how I prayed for daylight, surely no child was astray in this awful place, or was it being tortured or what. I felt quite unstrung, every cry and moan went to my heart, and to feel so helpless, to stand there whilst that pitiful cry went out into the darkness and loneliness, and not to be able to help; it was with difficulty I restrained myself from rushing to where I thought the cry came from. At last it got fainter and fainter, then ceased altogether, as though it had either given out or wandered

farther away. Then sinking down once more at the foot of the tree I fell asleep from sheer weariness of mind and body.

When I awoke, the sun was high in the heavens, so that for a little while I could not tell which was the south point. I lay on my back, and again looking up through the tall trees, noted that the sun was still increasing his altitude, so I at once faced south and proceeded on my way, looking on every side for signs of the baby I had heard crying. I was greatly refreshed by my night's rest but very uneasy in my mind when I looked into the billy, and found there was very little water in it, and I was almost choking with thirst.

After tramping on for another two hours, I came across the dead body of a man lying in the grass. The undergrowth being so thick, I put my foot on the body before I noticed it. This gave me a bit of a shock for a moment, but not being troubled with nerves I soon got over it. The body was that of a man about thirty years of age, with fair hair and moustache, and was nearly nude. The tongue was protruding and quite blue, and on the breast and forearm there were tattoo marks. There he lay stretched upon the ground, with sightless eyes gazing up to the pitiless sky. A blue flannel shirt was lying near the body, this I picked up and tied to the tree just over the body, so that it could be found later on.

Continuing my tramp, what I had just seen not being in any way likely to raise my spirits or give me much encouragement, I came across a patch of Ti tree scrub that was too thick for me to make my way through, so I kept away to the right for a few miles, until the country was clearer. The sun was almost overhead, and I was suffering agony from thirst; eagerly I looked into the billy to see if by chance I had left a mouthful of water, but no, I had drunk the last drop some hours ago; how my throat ached with the thirst, then I began to think of the dead man, who no doubt had lost his way in the bush and died of thirst, surely that would not be my fate. I must not think of these things, but press on, and look for water.

Suddenly I came across a tiny creek, almost out of sight, with a beautiful clear stream of running water. Oh, how my heart leaped with joy as I hurried towards it. Flinging myself on my knees I filled the billy, and fairly poured it down my parched throat. Then again filling it I plunged my head, face and neck into the sweet cool water, and taking off my shoes and socks let the water wander over my hot and tired and badly blistered feet. Oh, the relief to mind and body that that stream brought, then dropping on my knees I thanked God for leading me to it. There I sat loth to leave--several snakes and lizards were crawling about near the water, but their presence did not mar its sweetness. Then, feeling rested and refreshed, I had another good drink and filling up the billy I set off again on my journey, and after tramping through the dense bush and wondering still about the pitiful cries I had heard, suddenly, without a moment's warning, the precious billy of water was snatched out of my hand. Swinging quickly round, a horrible sight met my eyes. There standing before me was a tall naked man. His eyes were all bloodshot, his whole body scratched and bleeding, his hair matted and covered with furze and grass. He had my billy of water to his mouth and was pouring it down his throat. At his feet lay a small native bear with its stomach cut open. The man's face was a terrible sight, all covered with the blood he had been sucking from the bear. I could see at a glance that the poor fellow was stark mad, and, being a big powerful man, I felt that if he chose to attack me, I should stand a very poor chance. All these thoughts passed through my mind quicker than I can relate them. However, I drew my knife, which was still in my belt, but my precautions were needless for before I could decide on any action, he had drunk all my water, and dropped down in a senseless heap on the ground. I sprang forward and grasped the billy, and, not knowing what to do under the circumstances, went back to the creek as quickly as possible and refilled the billy with water, drinking as much as I could besides. I then retraced my steps towards the lake district. I had lost two good hours over that poor lost creature, and was not sure how soon I might be in the same condition.

Towards sunset the track seemed to have disappeared. I had lost sight of all bullock-dray ruts, and I began to think that I, too, was lost, but hope urged me on. I kept on working south by the sun, and I knew Lake McQuarrie was due south. If I could only hold out I was bound to get there sooner or later.

At sunset I ate my last biscuit and lay down at the foot of a large blue gum tree. Worn out with my tramp I was soon in a sound sleep, from which I did not wake until broad daylight. Still feeling tired and hungry my first thought was when I should again get something to eat. Suddenly the welcome tinkling of bells fell on my ears. I knew that all cattle, when grazing in the colonies, have a small bell attached to them, so that they can be heard in the bush, even when they cannot be seen. My spirits rose like magic, and I sprang to my feet. Just at that moment, I heard the sound of some heavy body crushing its way through the bush, and the next minute two large kangaroos went leaping past, and in a couple of minutes afterwards a young man on horseback dashed up. On seeing me he pulled up his horse at once, his face full of astonishment.

“Jehoshaphat!” he cried, “where the devil did you spring from?”

I told him how I had been sleeping there all night and had tramped from Newcastle.

“Alone?” he asked. “Well, all I can say is you are very lucky to find your way here. You might have been lost in the bush. As it is, there are several men missing. The police have sent in a notice from Maitland saying that several sailors have disappeared between Newcastle and Wallsend coal mines, where they were making for.”

I told him about the dead sailor I had seen, also about the one who had stolen my can of water.

“By jove!” he exclaimed, “we must save that chap if it is possible,” and placing his hands to his mouth in the shape of a funnel he called,

“coo-ee! coo-ee!” with a voice of such penetrating power, that I am sure he could be heard for miles around. The note was clear as a bell and as resonant. Then, for a moment or two, he stood in a listening attitude, and from a long distance away could be heard the answering cry “coo-ee! coo-ee!” twice repeated. My new found friend again gave the same call three times, which was answered by a single call.

“That’s all right,” he said, “they’ll be here in a minute or two.”

In about five minutes we heard the sound of horses galloping, and in another few minutes two horsemen dashed up to us.

“What’s up, Frank?” said they, almost before they had pulled up their horses. Then, catching sight of me, “oh, found one of the lost ones--eh, that’s good.”

Matters were explained to them, and they at once mounted again.

“Jerusalem, Frank, we must try and find that poor chap, and save him if it is possible.”

I gave them the direction I had come, as near as I could. The one named Frank then pointed to a cluster of grey gum trees in the distance, and told me to make my way there, and just to the right of them I should find a bullock track; then to follow this track for about two miles and I would come across a solitary house in the bush. I was to call there and say, Frank sent me, and to tell Harry, who was at the house, that they had gone to look after a poor fellow who was lost in the bush. They then put spurs to their horses and galloped off and were quickly out of sight.

I made my way with a light heart and tired feet to the gum trees. Found the bullock track, and following this for quite three miles I came across the blockhouse just by the side of the track. At the door, but with his back towards me, stood a splendid specimen of manhood. He must have been quite six feet in height, a mass of bone and muscle, with not an ounce of spare flesh on him, and as straight as a reed. As

I approached the house, I trod on some dry twigs, making a noise. The young man heard it, and, without turning his head sprang into the house and out again in an instant with a gun in his hands. Looking round he saw me, and I found that he was about twenty years of age, with an open kindly face that could be trusted at first sight.

“Sold again,” he remarked. “Hello, young man, where do you come from?”

“Newcastle,” I replied.

“Are you by yourself?” he asked.

I told him I was, and also about the dead man and the other that his mates had gone to try and rescue.

“Poor chap,” he said, “but Frank will find him if any man can. There have been a lot of men lost in the bush this last season, owing to the drought drying up all the creeks. And when they are without water their tramping soon ends in madness or death. But come along inside and have something to eat, for you must be nearly starving. Do you like kangaroo steak?”

“I don’t know,” I said, “I have never tasted it.”

“Well, sit down, and I’ll soon fix you a nice one up that will make you smack your lips.”

There were two large hind-quarters of kangaroo hanging up in the outhouse in a large perforated zinc safe that was standing on four legs, and each leg stood in a dish of water to prevent the swarms of ants from getting into the safe. While he was frying the steak I looked round the house. It was a square block-house, divided into two apartments, one being used as a bedroom, in it were two camp beds, and two hammocks slung from the overhead beams. There were two wooden boxes

and a few small stools, no chairs or lounges, no luxury here, spartan simplicity was the order of the day. The other room in which I was sitting contained a miscellaneous assortment of articles dear to the heart of a sportsman--guns, revolvers, axes, picks, and two or three spades, some fishing tackle, saddles and bridles, several pairs of spurs, and a quantity of kangaroo, opossum, squirrel, and native bear skins.

“There you are mate,” said Harry, as he placed about a three pound steak and about two pounds of damper, and a huge billy of tea before me. “Wire away, and make a good square meal.”

I started to thank him, but whether it was from being without food for twenty-four hours and the excitement I had passed through on my tramp through the bush, and my meeting that unfortunate mad fellow, or some other cause I know not, but while he was speaking I collapsed in a dead faint. When I came to I was lying on the ground and he was bathing my head and face with water. I soon felt better again, and was able to eat a good breakfast of the steak and damper, washed down with the tea, and by this time I felt like a new man. After breakfast I thanked him heartily and was about to continue my journey, but Harry would not hear of it:

“Oh, no you don’t,” he said. “You must stay where you are for a few days, and rest yourself, and we will take you on to the lake afterwards, and I have no doubt we can find you employment.”

You may guess how glad I was to hear this, and I renewed my thanks.

“We don’t often get visitors from the Old Country this way,” he said, “so we make the most of those who do come.”

I asked him why when first he heard me approaching he sprang for his gun, before looking to see who it was?

“Oh,” he laughed, “I thought it was a kangaroo, and if I had waited to see him, before getting the gun, he would have been out of range before

I got a shot at him. My mates were after kangaroos this morning.”

The day passed quickly in pleasant chat, and just about sundown the three horsemen returned from their search for the lost man. They had found his body beside the creek where I had filled my billy in the morning. The poor fellow had apparently found the water and in his delirium had thrown himself down beside it, and must then have been bitten by a snake, for when they found him his body was much swollen and going bluish. The three friends had at once dug a hole just below the surface, and buried the body, and had then cut a large cross on one of the gum trees to mark the spot, then, continuing their search for the body of the other poor fellow, had buried it in the same way.

Poor fellows! Theirs was a sad end. Only a few days ago they were on board their ship, no doubt full of health and strength, but a restless roving spirit had led them like myself to desert their vessel, and now they were sleeping their last long sleep in the lone Australian bush, and I had only narrowly escaped a like fate.

I stayed with my new friends for two weeks, and it was a happy restful time. They were employed splitting rails and fence posts, and making trunnels for shipbuilders, and they had more orders than they could execute. They only worked four days a week. I was very surprised at this, and said so.

“My friend,” said Frank, “in this country we work to live, as you will soon find, not live to work, and we find that four days hard work per week will supply us with all we need. Then we have two days to improve ourselves in learning, hunting, fishing, trading, visiting, etc., and on Sunday we lie back and rest, and if we have a visitor like you, we talk about other lands, and the Homeland, which none of us have seen yet, but hope to, as we are all natives of New South Wales.”

During my stay with them, I learnt much that was useful to me afterwards, such as cutting rails and felling large trees. At other

times I would help in splicing ropes and making traces for the bullock teams that took the rails and trunnels to the Lake McQuarrie for shipment to Sidney and Newcastle.

At the end of my pleasant stay, Frank took me over to the house of Mr. Williams, at Belmont, on the banks of the lake, who was in want of a man to look after a sailing yacht and several rowing boats, to teach his children swimming, and to make himself generally useful. He at once engaged me, and I felt that the place would suit me very well until I had become thoroughly acquainted with that part of the country.

CHAPTER XIX

LIFE AT BELMONT--SHARKS AND FLYING FOXES

BELMONT was a well known and prettily situated pleasure resort in those days on one of the beautiful bays in Lake McQuarrie. The homestead of Mr. Williams stood on the top of a hill overlooking the lake and the surrounding country, and was about sixteen miles from Newcastle through the bush in which I was lost, as stated in the preceding chapter. On the hillside there were splendid fruit orchards teeming with all manner of fruits. Here in rich abundance grew oranges, apples, pears, bananas, figs, apricots, grapes, quinces and water melons galore, besides many others, while beyond the orchards there was again the bush with its magnificent red, blue and grey gum trees, some of them towering to the height of two hundred and fifty feet with a girth above the ground of thirty feet--monarchs of the bush, whilst around their feet grew the sweet-scented honeysuckle, sarsaparilla, bush oak, stringy bark, ti tree and various others almost too numerous to mention. The bay formed between the headlands of Belmont and Southlands, where there is a large steam saw mill, had a lovely white sandy beach, and the bay itself was alive with fish, while the shores were thronged with wild duck, curlews, quail, black swans and penguins. On the lake were several rowing boats and a sailing yacht, the house was large with extensive

grounds and was a constant rendezvous for large parties of ladies and gentlemen from Sydney and other places who came for both pleasure and sport. My work lay chiefly in looking after the boats, teaching Mr. Williams' children to swim and also any visitors wishing to learn, and making myself generally useful.

One day while out in the lake with three young lady visitors whom I was giving swimming lessons to, and who had for the first time that morning ventured some thirty yards from the shore, I saw the dorsal fin of a large shark not more than fifty feet outside of us. For the moment I was almost paralysed with fear for my charges, then to my relief I realized that as yet they knew nothing of the danger that threatened them, so I sang out:

“Now ladies, this way, a race, a race for the shore; away, away, see who will win it.”

The young ladies at once took up the challenge and struck out for the beach. I followed them, urging them on with words of encouragement, although my heart was in my mouth until we all stood safely on the shore. I looked out across the waters, but the shark, through God's great mercy had not followed us, and was nowhere to be seen, one of us, to say the least of it, had just escaped a horrible death.

As the young ladies knew nothing about the narrow escape we had just had, I thought it better not to tell them, as they would have been terribly upset, and, as I afterwards learnt, this was the first time a shark had been seen in this part of the lake, but I kept a sharper look out when I had occasion to be in the water either for pleasure or duty.

About a week afterwards a fisherman on the other side of the lake caught a large shark which had one eye torn out and the other seemed to be injured. This, no doubt, was the shark that I saw, and owing to its defective sight we all escaped.

Our providential escape, however, was brought forcibly back to my mind some three months later by a dreadful tragedy that happened in a fisherman's family named Boyd living in a cottage at the entrance of the lake, their cottage standing about thirty feet from the water's edge.

On the day it happened, just about sunset, Mr. Boyd and his wife were sitting at their cottage door facing the lake and watching their two youngest children playing on the sands; presently their eldest daughter Nellie, a girl about eighteen years of age came out of the cottage in a loose wrapper and went down to the water for a bathe. A large Newfoundland dog followed her, and swam about with her. The girl had swum about seventy or eighty feet from the shore when her father whistled to the dog, who immediately started to swim back to his master, and had got about half way to the shore when the girl gave a terrible shriek, and in sight of her parents disappeared beneath the water.

Hearing the shriek the dog turned at once and swam out again towards the place where he had left his young mistress. The poor father sprang into the boat and pushed it off into the stream, while her mother, poor soul, stood wringing her hands, and moaning piteously on the shore. With every nerve strained her husband pulled after the dog, which seemed to be swimming towards the entrance of the lake barking all the time. The poor man knew that his child had been seized by a shark, but still he followed the faithful animal, the mother's frantic cries ringing in his ear, and urging him on. When he got to about one hundred yards from the dog, he could see that between its barks it was trying to snap at something beneath the water. Suddenly it gave a terrified howl, and seemed to be in difficulty. When he reached it, he found one of the poor dog's hind legs had been bitten clean off, and the faithful beast was drowning. There was no sign or trace of his daughter, and after rowing about for some time he was forced to give up the search and return to his grief-stricken wife. It was an awful fate for one so young and full of life to meet her death in sight of the door of her home and loved ones, and they powerless to help or save.

But the lake and those who lived near it had not seen the last of the shark, as I found to my cost a few weeks later. As I have already said I was passionately fond of swimming, and often, when my day's work was done, I would swim across the lake to Southland, rest awhile and swim back. After the tragedy at Boyd's I was very careful to keep a good look out, but on this particular day it had been fearfully hot, the temperature being I should think 90 degrees in the shade. I had been out with a riding party looking after the horses and by the time we returned and I had settled the horses for the night, I felt pretty fagged, the water looked very tempting, so in I went, and struck out for Southland, landed, had a run along the beach, and started to swim back to Belmont.

I had got about half way over when I noticed quite a commotion among the people at Mr. Williams's, who usually at this time of the day were sitting out on the lawn, and in the grounds after dinner, but now I noticed that they were running about and pointing to me, while some were looking through spy-glasses. I thought they were admiring my good

swimming for I was a fairly good swimmer in those days, and a bit proud

of it, too, so, youth-like, I put on a spurt, just to show off a bit.

In doing so I kicked something with my right foot, which hurt my toes considerably, but thinking it was some floating rubbish I swam on, never giving a thought to it, or troubling to ascertain what it was.

The number of people out on the hill was increasing, until I should think everybody belonging to the establishment was watching me, and waving their handkerchiefs. I began to feel quite flattered by the attention they were giving to me, and wondered what there was in my swimming to cause it. Suddenly I saw several men break away from the rest, and rush down to the boatshed on the beach. This rather surprised me, they surely did not think I was drowning. To relieve their fears, as I thought, and give them a change of programme I turned over and commenced to swim along leisurely on my back. In doing so I happened to

cast a glance behind me, and "Oh God in heaven help me!" I cried, for

there, not twenty feet from me was the ugly dorsal fin of a monstrous shark. This was the cause of the commotion on the hillside, not admiration of my swimming, but to warn me of the fate that was closing around me like a net.

I nearly sank with fright, there seemed to be no escape, I trembled from head to foot, I knew now only too well what I had struck with my foot. Quickly I turned over on my breast and struck out with every ounce of strength that was in me. In fancy I could already feel the loathsome brute's teeth tearing my flesh. "Dear God," I prayed, "not that, not a terrible death like that." Thoughts of home and those left behind crowded into my mind and like a flash my whole past life passed before me. Just then to my joy I saw two boats coming to my rescue. Oh, how slowly they seemed to be coming towards me. My heart was thumping

like a sledge hammer in my breast. Then, oh horror, I felt something touch my right leg, and I lacked, splashed, shouted and almost fainted with fright, but still I swam on, and the shark dropped behind for a moment or two. Then, with another prayer to God for help, my nerve seemed to come back to me, and I swam on, but this time it was with the madness of despair. A few seconds afterwards I saw the dark shadow of the shark pass just beneath me and dart ahead and then go rushing past on my right side. I knew then that my time was come and death was hovering over me, the boats were drawing nearer, in despair I shouted "Help, help, for God's sake help me. Shark, a shark!" and I saw them bend to their oars and pull for all they were worth. The man who was steering the first boat sang out "swim to the left, to the left," and I did so with all my might. The first boat dashed past me on my right side, and the second ran up alongside of me, and in an instant I was grasped by the arms and legs, and almost jerked into the boat. And not a moment too soon, for someone in the forward boat called out--"Look out! Look out!" and the next minute the shark darted past our boat, his dorsal fin sending up quite a spray as he tore through the water, swishing his tail in anger and madness at the loss of his prey.

“By Jove, you’ve had a narrow squeak, young fellow,” said one of the gentlemen as he mopped his perspiring face. “I never thought to see you reach land again.” I am glad I was not the one in the water, I should have sunk in sheer fright. It was simply marvellous that the brute did not attack you; we saw him go up to you more than once, and I for one gave you up for lost.

It was not until some hours later that I was able to thank my preservers, for when we reached Belmont I collapsed, and was put to bed by some of our men who were kindness itself. Mr. Williams came and gave me a dose of medicine that sent me off into a deep sleep which lasted some hours. When I awoke it was morning, and I felt quite myself, but the nearness to which I had approached death left its mark upon me. I never attempted to swim across to Southland again, but was content to bathe near the beach and then kept a sharp lookout for my enemy the shark.

I stayed at Belmont twelve months, and they were some of the happiest in my life; it was a happy, healthy, outdoor life, and suited me in every way. Every day brought its work and its pleasure, now it would be yachting, then it would be hunting wild horses, kangaroos and wallabies during the day, and at night we would hunt the opossum in the gum trees. The time seemed to fly.

One day while gathering apricots in the orchard, I noticed a black cloud rising across the lake. I looked and looked at it, but could make nothing of it. I had seen many squalls in my time, and had learnt a good bit about them, but this puzzled me. It kept altering its shape in a strange unaccountable manner, and yet one point seemed to be in advance of all the rest. I was watching it closely and turning it over in my mind as to what it could mean, when I heard the whistle that called us back to the house. When I got there I was told that the black cloud, as I thought it, was in reality thousands and thousands of flying foxes, who were migrating south and if they were not frightened away they would steal every particle of fruit in the orchard.

Now these destructive creatures are one of the scourges of the fruit orchards, and are called by some the fruit bat and by others the flying fox, and are, I think, only found in the warmer regions of the old world. The bats are the only members of the Mammalia which possess the

power of true flight, and the way this is accomplished was pointed out to me afterwards by one of the visitors staying at the house. The wings of the bat have been formed by the modification of the fore limbs, the finger bones having become lengthened to serve as a support to a thin web of very sensitive skin extending outwards from the body, not unlike the covering of an umbrella. The hand of the bat is quite a unique organ. When resting they attach themselves to the boughs of the trees by these fingers and in the dusk might easily be taken for fruit.

I was handed a cumbersome wooden rattle, and told to give it full force all the time they were passing over head, and a terrible noise it made. The master and several men were discharging guns at the same time. So great were the numbers of the flock that they were quite ten minutes in passing over.

Now ten miles from Belmont there was a large fruit farm owned by a Mr. Warner. One large orchard was entirely of quinces for the Sydney market. He estimated that the crop would yield quite eleven tons of fruit. Unfortunately for him he and his family were away at the time, and those left in charge were either careless of their responsibilities, or had not noticed the cloud coming their way, but this was a grand opportunity for the foxes, who live on fruit. Down they swooped and stripped both that orchard and the garden around the house of every particle of fruit that was growing. The whole year's crop vanished in a few minutes, the cloud swept on, and no cheque was left to pay for the fruit.

Another very interesting sight to be seen at that time of the year was the migrating south of immense flocks of black swans. There is no more beautiful sight than to see them flying overhead for then the pure white of their under pinions is exposed and glistens like snow

in the sun, spreading themselves out in the shape of a triangle, with one bird leading in front. At no time do the other birds approach the leader, but each keeps its own place like a regiment of soldiers with an officer leading them on. They fly very high, and seldom, if ever, come within shooting range when migrating.

CHAPTER XX

SNAKE STORIES--TWO BRAVE GIRLS

IN the previous chapter I have spoken of Mr. Warner and his fruit orchard. The old saying that misfortunes, like blessings, never come singly was verified in their case. One day, not long after the previous incident, Miss Warner was in the orchard pruning some young trees. As she moved away from a tree she had finished with, she felt a sharp slap on her right thigh and knew at once she had trodden on a snake, which animals are very numerous in that part of the country. Her bush training had taught her that it is safest in such a case to stand quite still until you know which end of the snake you are treading on. Perchance it may be on its head, and if so you can easily dispatch it; and if, unfortunately, you are on its tail, well, no earthly power can save you from being bitten before you can jump clear. As ill-luck would have it, Miss Warner had trod upon the snake's tail and it had retaliated by digging its poisoned fang into her thigh. It was just about to make another stab, when she struck at it with her pruning knife, cutting it in two and killing it instantly. Then she coolly wiped the point of the knife on her dress, and deliberately made a cross cut into her thigh where the snake had bitten her. Then, while the blood was spurting from the wound, she called out to her father who came running to her, knowing by the sound of her voice that something was the matter. In a few seconds he had torn his handkerchief into strips and tightly bound the leg above and below the wound. Then, saddling his horse and one for the wounded girl, they set off on their twelve mile ride to Newcastle.

You can imagine what that ride was like to Miss Warner, up hill and down dale as fast as the horses could go, the great gash in her leg was very agony of pain. It required endurance, nerve, and pluck--qualities our colonial bush-reared maidens are in no way deficient in. Her father, too, had a very good reason for letting her ride on horseback. Snake poison, as is well known, causes sleepiness, which, if succumbed to, knows no waking. Had Mr. Warner taken her in a trap, he would not have been able to prevent her from falling asleep, so had put her upon her horse, hoping to reach Newcastle before the poison took effect. They had ridden about nine miles when Miss Warner became very faint, and could scarcely keep her seat on her horse. Just then they met a young man riding out to the lake district, and as soon as he heard the state of affairs, he at once turned his horse round and went back to Newcastle to obtain a doctor.

Fortunately the doctor was in, he immediately ordered his carriage, and taking his instrument case and some antidote to counteract the snake poison, he set out and met Mr. and Miss Warner just outside the town. He at once helped her off her horse, then she was taken more dead than alive to the nearest house, and all that medical skill could do and suggest was done for her, but it was fully three months before she was able to return home, and then looked a perfect wreck in comparison to her former robust self. But the brave spirit was in no way quenched by the suffering she had gone through.

The other brave girl was the daughter of an old boat-builder name Parrell, who lived on the banks of Lake McQuarrie, with his wife and his one daughter, Jennie, who was seventeen years of age, and had been born in the bush of Australia. Like most of the girls reared in the bush, she was a fearless horse-woman, a strong swimmer, a first-class shot with a revolver, as cool as a cucumber at all times, and, to crown all, one of the prettiest girls in those parts, at least I thought so, and many a young fellow beside, but Jennie would have none of us, but would laugh and shake her head at our attempts to oust each other in our efforts to win her favour, but it was all to no purpose, Jennie remained heart-whole, and we sighed in vain.

The house they lived in was built of weatherboard, and stood at the mouth of a small creek, where it emptied itself into the lake. All the rooms were on the ground floor, and were divided by a thin partition about six feet high, thus making two bedrooms and a good-sized living room, all furnished very comfortably, the beds used being the ordinary trestle camp beds. One night I had gone over to try and get a chat with Jennie--the night was hot and sultry, there was not a breath of air moving, the day had been one of the hottest we had had, the mosquitoes were terribly vicious. When I got there I found that Mrs. Parrell and Jennie, unable to bear the heat and mosquitoes any longer for that day, had gone to bed under their mosquito curtains, so Mr. Parrell and I sat on a log outside the cottage door. There was some satisfaction in being near the object of my admiration at any rate, and her father always gave me a very hearty welcome, which was something in my favour, at least I thought so. They had been in bed about two hours--while we had been yarning--when Mrs. Parrell heard her daughter quietly calling her.

“What do you want, lassie?” she replied. “Can’t you sleep?”

“No, mother, there is a snake in my bed,” the girl answered. “It is lying on my naked legs. I dare not move or it will bite me. Tell my father quick.”

The terrified mother needed no second bidding, springing out of bed she rushed to the door and told her husband.

“Hush, mother,” he said quietly, laying his hand on her arm, “don’t make a sound, or you will do more harm than good.” Then quietly he crept into his own room and speaking softly, said:

“Where is it now, Jennie? Don’t be afraid, lassie.”

“On my stomach, father, and it is working up to my breast,” she replied in a low tone.

I thought, of course, the father would have rushed into the room, and at one blow would have killed the reptile. Not so, the old man had

learnt by experience a better way than that.

The door of the bedroom was just at the foot of the girl's bed, and any noise, either by opening or shutting it, would have startled the snake, and, perhaps, made it plunge its poisoned fang into Jennie's body, and thus have ended her young happy life, but the father knew just what to do under the circumstances. Going to a cupboard that stood in the corner of his room, he took down an old violin, then crossing, without a sound, over to the end of the room farthest away from the bed, he drew the bow lightly over the strings making a soft plaintive sound. The moment the snake heard the noise, it poised its head up on the girl's breast, and as the soft plaintive notes floated about the room it began to wriggle along towards the foot of the bed in the direction of the sound. The brave girl kept her nerve and presence of mind marvellously. She knew full well her very life depended on it, for the slightest movement on her part, while the snake was on her body, would have been fatal. But as soon as she felt the snake slip off the bed she sprang up and out of the way. The snake, when it heard her move, made a dart for a small knot hole in the planking of the floor, through which it had entered the room, but it had Jennie to reckon with, and before it could reach it she had thrown a pillow upon it, then her father rushed in and dispatched it with a stick, he brought it outside, and we measured it, and found it was three feet nine inches in length, and was about as thick as a broom handle. It was a carpet snake, one of the most deadly enemies to be encountered in bush life. A few minutes afterwards, Jennie and her mother having dressed, came outside, and I could not help telling her how much I admired her nerve and courage, and asked how she knew it was a snake?

"Why because it was so cold and clammy," she replied, making a wry face. "A snake is always cold, no matter how hot the place may be where it gets into."

The next day I had occasion to go to Newcastle on some business for Mr.

Williams and looked forward with some pleasure to the twelve mile ride

through the bush on the back of old Blunderbuss, a horse that had once belonged to that king of bushrangers, Captain Morgan, and after having passed through several people's hands, had become the property of Mr. Williams. We had only gone a few miles on our way, when I began to notice that what little air there was had an acrid smell about it, and every step it seemed to become more close and stifling. Blunderbuss, too, began to twitch his ears and sniff. Then a little farther on the cause of it burst upon me--the bush was on fire--for a second or two I pulled up, and looking round, to my amazement the trees near by began to blaze and crackle, and there I was with fire in the front of me and sweeping along the path over which I had come. There was nothing to be done but try and get through to where it was already burnt, so putting spurs to the horse we began our race for life. Hotter and hotter grew the blast, as I urged the panting beast forward. Kangaroos leaped out from among the burning scrub, and fled onward, a greater enemy than man was upon them. Then a drove of wild horses went madly past, while the birds shrieked and fluttered above our heads, powerless to help themselves. Onward, still onward we went, the flames hissing and crackling over our heads, and still we seemed to be no nearer to the outlet, no track was visible, and all around was the thick hot air. Blunderbuss, too, seemed to be pulling in quite an opposite direction, then it flashed across my mind that perhaps the instinct of the poor beast would lead us into safety, so giving him his head and hoping for the best I let him go his own way. In an instant he wheeled almost round, and sped onward towards what seemed a veritable inferno of flaming trees, with head outstretched and feet scarce touching the hot earth he dashed through the blazing mass, and presently to my joy I saw that he was making for an old bridle path that led around the cliffs to Newcastle, and thankful I was, for had it not been for the instinct of Blunderbuss we might both have perished miserably. As we slackened our speed now that the danger was past, I turned to look at the sight we were leaving behind. Overhead was a dusky canopy of thick black smoke, there stood the black bare trees between us and the still raging fire, farther away the sparks were dropping from the thick smoke like a hailstorm, then again it looked like a moving curtain of crimson smoke, with the falling and blazing twigs and small branches, like

coloured fireworks--all blue, red and yellow, while tongues of flame licked up the dry scrub and grass.

It was a grand sight to look at when you were safely out of it, but we were both in a sorry state, for our hair was singed and our skin blistered where the flames had touched us. The next day Blunderbuss and

I returned to Belmont, needless to say we gave the still burning bush a wide berth, and reached home before nightfall. The fire was burning for the best part of a week, and when some weeks afterwards I passed that way again, I marvelled how we had ever passed through that furnace of flame.

CHAPTER XXI

WIDOW SMITH'S PIG OR "BARKIS IS WILLIN'"

AT Belmont, our next door neighbour, Mrs. Rebecca Smith, lived a quarter of a mile away, but this was thought little of in the Australian bush, where, frequently, your nearest neighbour lives five miles off. Mrs. Smith was a buxom, good-looking widow, and she knew it.

She had a good weatherboard house and a large patch of freehold land, with a nice well-kept vegetable patch, and she kept a good number of pigs, which were noted for their size and quality.

Now there was one pig in particular that she took a great pride in, though, at the same time, it was the plague of her life. It was very fond of roaming, and would not confine itself to the large paddock where the sty was placed, but preferred other people's patches, especially if they happened to be vegetable patches. It would travel miles away from home at times; a gate was no obstacle to it--it would burrow under it in no time--and it was really surprising what a small hole it would squeeze itself through.

Mrs. Smith's garden was alongside the main road leading from Newcastle,

New South Wales, to the Wallsend coal mines. The fence of the garden was a low one, and everyone passing could see how clean and tidy she kept it. A good number of people passed by on horseback and in vehicles, and whenever Mrs. Smith heard anybody coming along, she would

stand at the door facing the road and smilingly bid them good-day. The widow was about forty, strong, healthy, and fair to look on--her fine, fat, round arms were a sight to see--and many a man passed the cottage just to catch a glimpse of the bonny widow standing at the door.

Now, one Saturday evening this torment of a pig got out of the stockyard, burrowed under the fence, and got into the widow's garden patch, where it made terrible havoc of the beds. It turned up a lot of vegetables, took a bite of a dozen water melons, tore the bark off several fig-trees, and bit the stem of a lovely passion-fruit vine right through, killing the plant.

The following morning--Sunday--when Mrs. Smith saw the damage that had

been done, she vowed there and then that the pig should die. But it could not be found anywhere, until about ten o'clock she heard it in the bush at the back of the house. She immediately sent her two young sons and a workman to drive it into the stockyard, and when they had done so, Mrs. Smith told her son to get his rifle and shoot the pig at once. The boy slipped into the house, and returned with the gun in his hands, and made over towards the pig, who was crunching some turnip.

"Shoot him in the head, Willie," cried the widow, as she stood in the gateway to prevent the pig from escaping.

As the boy approached, the pig looked up, and, seeing the shining barrel pointing at his head, scented danger, and turned right-about ready to bolt. Just then the boy fired, and the shot entered the pig at the wrong end. With a piercing squeal and a grunt, it made a dart for the gate, turning the boy head over heels in its mad rush. Mrs. Smith, seeing the pig coming straight for the gate, and having no time

to close it, spread out her legs to block the passage with her skirts. (Mrs. Smith made her own clothes and put good material into them). The pig, nothing daunted by Mrs. Smith's presence, made a dash between her legs, his snout ripped a hole in the skirt, his head went through, and Mrs. Smith was jerked off her feet, the skirt being bridled over the pig's head. The widow fell flat on her face on the pig's back, with her head to its tail. Finding herself being dragged along, she threw her arms around the pig's body and clipped its neck with her legs, and held on like grim death, a second Mazeppa.

On dashed the pig squealing, Mrs. Smith screeching, the boys and the workman yelling as they raced after them. The pig, thinking to escape his pursuers, left the road and struck into the bush, and soon the covering was torn off Mrs. Smith's back by the bushes. But still the pig rushed on, and still Mrs. Smith held on to the pig, and by this time quite a number of people had started to follow.

Now, there was no church or chapel at Belmont, but a sprinkling of people used to gather together and hold a Methodist meeting in a little school-room where a one-legged schoolmaster taught the children of the district reading, writing and arithmetic. On Sunday one of the men read Spurgeon's sermons out of a book, and each in turn, as the spirit moved them, prayed loud and long for forgiveness of their sins which were few, and of their neighbour's, which were many.

On this particular Sunday morning a local preacher had come from Minmi

to hold service in the little schoolroom. He had opened the Good Book, wiped his face, coughed, and given out his text: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He paused for a moment to let the words take effect. Then, in a sterner and more determined tone, he repeated the text: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." There was silence for a moment.

Then an unearthly noise was heard outside. Pig squealing, women screeching, men shouting. Everyone in the meeting was on his feet in

an instant. If this was the kingdom of heaven--well, they all seemed mighty scared to meet it. The preacher especially--for he dropped the Book and made for the door first.

As they all got outside, the pig dashed past with Mrs. Smith on its back, holding on for dear life, and I do not know which was making the most noise--Mrs. Smith, or the pig. Few of the neighbours could recognise the rider as she dashed past, for they were not acquainted with the features presented to view, but they all took up the chase, the preacher taking the lead.

The pig was making a bee-line for the tea-tree scrub about a quarter of a mile from the school-house; but to get to the scrub it had to cross a small creek about ten yards wide and three feet deep. As soon as it took the water the weight of its rider turned it completely over, and so released the skirt from its head. But before it could get away Mrs. Smith had seized its leg and held its head under water until help arrived, when one of the men despatched it, and a trap was sent for to take it home.

And so ended Mrs. Smith's Sunday morning ride on the pig. But there was a sequel to it. The local preacher, who witnessed the famous ride, was apparently struck with the widow's proportions where visible, and became very attentive and solicitous for her welfare. He walked home with her and left his sermon for a future day, sympathising with her in her trouble, and pouring soothing unction on her outraged feelings in a true Methodistic manner. The widow was so pleased with his sympathy and attention that she invited him to stay to dinner, which invitation the preacher was very pleased to accept.

During dinner the preacher made himself so very agreeable that the widow Smith opened her heart to him and told him how very lonely it was for her at times, since her poor husband died.

“But the dear man left me a good home and fifty acres of freehold land, so I must not complain,” she added; “only sometimes I do feel it lonesome.”

And the preacher took it all in with an eye to future events. He had a nice little store at Minmi, but no land, and he thought how nice it would be if the two were joined together as one concern.

He did not stay late that day, as he had twenty-seven miles to ride through the bush to his home at Minmi, but he asked permission to come again, and this was freely granted.

Very frequently afterwards the preacher was seen riding down to Widow Smith’s homestead. It was a case of “Barkis is willing” on both sides.

Although his first view of the widow had been a hasty view, still it had impressed the preacher so much that he soon persuaded her to change her name, and the little store at Minmi knew him no more.

I had now been with Mr. Williams at Belmont about twelve months when the old restless spirit began to take possession of me again. The sea was calling me, with its wild days of stress and storm, or hardships and peril, and would not be denied.

When I told Mr. Williams he did his best to dissuade me, but the call had come, so packing up my belonging’s, which included a good testimonial from Mr. Williams and a beautiful Bible from Miss Williams, I said good-bye, and set out for Newcastle, hoping to get a ship from that port.

CHAPTER XXII

A DANGEROUS ENTERPRISE

I ARRIVED at Newcastle and was fortunate enough on the first day to ship as able seaman on the barque "P.C.E."--Captain Law--bound for Noumea, New Caledonia, with a cargo of coal. My wages were to be seven

pounds a month: I felt that I had "struck oil" at once for I had never heard of seamen getting such fabulous wages. I found out, however, that colonial owners paid good wages, and required good workers for their money, no limejuice methods would suit the coast trade. But I was young, strong and healthy, and I got along famously with both officers and men. Captain Law was as rough and unpolished a specimen of the British seaman as it was possible to meet, but a sailor from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet. The mate was a most illiterate man, coarse in speech and manner, and proud of his manners, or lack of them, but a good seaman, and utterly fearless. It was generally believed on board that he would have gone to sea on a plank if the pay had been good enough.

We had a fine passage of eight days to Noumea, New Caledonia, which is

a penal settlement under the French flag. At Noumea there are a large number of prisoners both political and criminal out on parole--many of them are in business and doing well for themselves, but they cannot, of course, leave the island, and naturally there are always a number of daring and eager spirits ready and willing to run any risk to obtain their freedom, if they can get anyone to assist them. The political prisoners, many of whom are well off, or have friends who are well supplied with money for such a purpose, are always on the qui vive for such a chance.

Whilst unloading our cargo, the captain spent most of his time on shore at one of the saloons. Captain Law was very fond of a glass of grog when on shore, but, to his credit be it said, he never touched liquor at sea. One day while at the saloon Captain Law was approached by a Frenchman named Balliere as to his willingness to assist some prisoners to escape, and a good round sum was offered on account of Henri Rochefort, French Communist, who was then on Ducos Peninsular.

Captain

Law had heard of the famous journalist and was rather in sympathy with him, but the sum of ten thousand francs won his sympathy entirely. This was the sum Henri Rochefort had offered through Balliere. Captain Law accepted the offer, stipulating that no other member of the crew should be told for fear of them informing the officials, by whom a large reward would be paid for such information. Altogether it was a dangerous undertaking, for had he failed, or been caught in the act, the vessel would have been confiscated and all the crew imprisoned, perhaps shot. It was, therefore, arranged that the exiles should board the vessel themselves at their own risk, so that in the event of failure the authorities would not confiscate the vessel. But there was another side to the question which Captain Law, apparently, had overlooked--that he was risking the lives and liberty of his officers and crew without their consent or knowledge, which, in law is a criminal offence.

There was no difficulty for the three exiles at Noumea--Jourde, Balliere and Granthille--to get on board the "P.C.E." They were out on parole and were in business in Noumea, but for Henri Rochefort, Oliver Pain and Pascal Grousett, on the Ducos Peninsular, it was a difficult and dangerous undertaking. But these men were quite accustomed to dangerous undertakings, their very lives had been spent among risks and perils, and they were prepared to do or die. Better far better to die in a struggle for freedom than to live a hopeless, lingering life, desolate and alone in their sun-scorched island prison. All of them had wives and families in their beloved France, and to see their faces again they were prepared to risk all, feeling that they were bound to be the gainers, whichever way things went. If they were caught, they would be shot--well, their misery would be over--if they succeeded they would be free. Free men again--Oh! how their hearts throbbed at the very thought of it! The joy of liberty is seldom appreciated until it is lost.

But to return to the exiles on Ducos. It was not possible to approach the bay in a boat without being seen by the sentry on duty. Now, just

off the peninsula there was a small volcanic rock about one mile from the beach and in a line between Noumea and the Bay of Ducos. On the side facing Ducos was a mass of coral reefs, the other side had a bit of sandy beach, on which the surf breaks heavily at times. The waters around the island were infested with sharks, this, to those in authority, greatly lessening the possibility of prisoners escaping.

Now on the day the barque "P.C.E." finished unloading at Noumea, Balliere had sent word to Henri Rochefort that a boat would be off the rock at 8 p.m., and he and his two friends Oliver Pain and Pascal Grousett were to make their way to the rock. All that day they had been talking about it, and as they talked the great ugly sharks were lazily swimming about in front of them, a sight that was enough to make the stoutest heart quail and quake. Yet, in spite of this, they resolved to swim out to the rock when the time came.

As night drew near the exiles grew anxious lest anything should happen that would defeat their plans, and towards 7 o'clock their hearts sank, for the sky grew dark and threatening, and a fierce tropical storm broke over their heads, the thunder, lightning and rain being truly terrific, while it lasted. But strange though it may seem, although the exiles at the time did not realize it, the storm was a Godsend to them. First it drove the lookout sentries in, and secondly no fish will remain near the surface during thunder and lightning, they always sink to the still calm water below. Thus were the exiles spared a battle with these monsters of the deep. Just before 8 o'clock they stripped and walked down to the beach. But here a fresh difficulty presented itself. The night was so dark they could not see the rock, but there was no time to hesitate, somewhere out there lay the means that was to help them to regain their freedom, so into the water they went. Rochefort, ever a leader, first, and they struck out in the direction they knew the rock to be. After swimming for some time, expecting every moment to find themselves in the jaws of a shark, and seeing no signs of the rock, their hearts began to sink for fear they had missed it, then suddenly they found themselves among the kelp on the reef, so with thankful hearts they landed and crawled around to the

other side.

They had only just got there, when the sound of muffled rowing fell upon their ears. Holding their breath they waited, for perhaps they had already been missed, and the sound they heard might be the guard boat. They did not know if it were friend or foe. Presently a voice called out cautiously.

“Are you there?”

They were afraid to answer for fear they had been followed, and the voice seemed strange to them.

Again out of the darkness came a voice:

“Are you there? It is I, Granthille!”

Thus assured that it was the voice of a friend the three fugitives replied, and were told to swim out to the boat as there was too much swell on the reef to risk taking the boat inside. This they did, and were soon assisted into the boat, and supplied with dry clothes. Few words were spoken, their hearts were too full for words, and there was still dangerous work before them, this was but the first step towards freedom. But a silent clasp of the hand was given, and understood by all.

The boat was at once headed for Noumea. The darkness was intense, but a faint glimmer of the harbour lights could be seen. Do what they would, they could not prevent a long phosphorescent light streaming behind the boat, and as the night was so black, this brilliant light was very conspicuous and might possibly betray them to any observant watcher. Their whole souls were full of doubt and fear and racked with anxiety as to the issue of the attempt, for more than one of them had resolved never to return alive to their late prison.

As the boat drew near to the vessels they had a truly marvellous escape from detection, but thanks to a heavy downpour of rain, which drove all watchers into shelter. Before leaving Noumea with the boat, Balliere had strolled down to the harbour and taken note of the position of the vessels, and the "P.C.E." in particular to enable them to find her in the dark, but during the short storm the wind had changed, and had altered the position of the vessels at anchor, bringing a small French despatch-boat into the position previously occupied by the "P.C.E." The Frenchmen, not being seamen, did not notice the change, and pulled over alongside the French boat. One of the exiles actually had his foot on the ladder to climb on board, when they heard voices above them speaking in French. At once they realized the extreme danger that threatened them: with faces sternly set, but with their hearts in their mouths as it were, for they scarcely dared to breathe, they let the boat drop quietly astern, not knowing whether they had been seen or heard. Lightly they dipped their muffled oars and rowed over to the next vessel, which proved to be the one they were seeking. The side ladder was hanging over the side, quickly and quietly the exiles climbed on board. The steward was on deck aft and stared with astonishment at the six big fellows as they came over the rail. Before any explanation could be asked or given, Captain Law made his appearance, the steward was ordered to his room, and the captain pointed to the after hold, where the fugitives all defended and stowed themselves away among a lot of old ropes, tarpaulins and cargo gear. The hatch was closed, but afterwards re-opened to disarm suspicion, should an official by chance come off. The only persons who knew the escaped prisoners were on board were Captain Law, the steward and myself, as I was keeping anchor watch. The plug of the boat was taken out, and a quantity of stone ballast that had been hoisted on deck during the afternoon, was put into her and she was sunk alongside the ship. It was not safe to let the boat go adrift, suspicion would have been aroused, and a muster of prisoners ordered, and then all hope of getting away would vanish.

At daylight the pilot came off to take the vessel out, but unfortunately the wind had died away and he refused to get the ship

under weigh. The delay in sailing was very serious. Both Captain Law and the fugitives were in a terrible state of anxiety and suspense, expecting every moment a search party would come off to overhaul the vessel. Up to the present the alarm gun on the hill had not been fired, so far we knew that the escape of the prisoners had not been discovered, but at the same time we also knew that the moment the escape was discovered the signal gun would be fired and that no vessel would be able to leave port without being searched.

At noon a breeze sprang up, but it was in the wrong quarter to enable us to get through the usual passage in the reef, however, Captain Law insisted on the pilot taking the vessel out of the harbour, so the anchor was lifted and we stood out towards the entrance. Once outside, the pilot was dismissed and we made all sail, and with a fair wind steered for the Balearic Channel, coasting along the Ducos Peninsular, where the poor exiles had spent so many weary months of imprisonment. As the evening drew on the wind increased, and before dark we had cleared the coast and waters of New Caledonia.

The captain then called the Frenchmen on deck and told them that thus far they were free. Henri Rochefort was the first to come on deck, and a more pitiable looking object it would have been hard to find. He stood quite six feet in height and was as thin as a lath, with a long head and a very prominent forehead. The only clothes he wore were an old pair of pants, a shirt, and a seaman's sou'wester on his conspicuous head, and he was covered from head to foot with coal dust from the vessel's hold, where they had been lying concealed. I doubt if his best friends would have recognised, in the miserable-looking object before them, the most famous French journalist of the day, whose writings and doings had stirred France to the core. They were all more or less suffering from sea-sickness, and were taken into the cabin to have a clean up and make themselves presentable. There was only one who could speak a few words of English, but the warm clasp of the hand and the happy look in their eyes spoke volumes of gratitude for their deliverance.

All through the following day the strong north-east wind kept up, and running before the breeze with every stitch of canvas set, we soon put a good distance between us and the Island. The crew did nothing but work the ship and keep a lookout for overtaking vessels. The only one we were afraid of was the despatch-boat that we left at anchor at Noumea when we sailed.

The second and third day remained hazy with a strong wind. The exiles rarely left the deck, but would pace to and fro for hours, so anxious and fearful were they of recapture. All day long they would scan the horizon, their lips muttering the thoughts that would not be kept back, thoughts of home and loved ones. Surely fate would not be so hard as to let them be captured again, and be taken back to that living death. No, they would never be captured alive, no never again. Then the thought of all their aims and ambitions with the Commune, the strife and bloodshed in their beloved Paris made their hearts cry “enough”; if the great God above them would grant them a safe return to their homes and loved ones, they would live in peace with all men.

On the fourth day the wind veered into the south east, and cleared up fine. Observations gave our position three hundred miles from Newcastle. On the fifth day the wind shifted into the south, reducing our speed to five knots an hour. After consulting with the mate, the captain decided not to continue on a direct course, but to stand in towards the land and take advantage of the current setting towards the southward. The fugitives grew very restless when they found out the alteration of the course, and Captain Law had great difficulty in making them see that it was for their safety that we should get inside the three mile limit in case of eventualities, but nothing occurred to alarm us, and we had a fine run right up to Newcastle, a seven days run from Noumea.

The authorities and citizens of Newcastle gave the fugitives a very hearty welcome, and showered congratulations upon them at their daring escape from exile and prison. They put up at the Great Northern Hotel and soon supplied themselves with clothing, etc., suitable to their

position. Then they telegraphed home the news of their freedom and need of funds. They stayed a few days at Newcastle and then went on to Sydney there to await the remittance that was wired back to them at once.

On its arrival Henri Rochefort at once paid Captain Law the amount that had been agreed upon for their deliverance, what the actual amount was I do not know, but each of the crew received £4 10s. as their share, and with this, I, for one, was very satisfied.

CHAPTER XXIII

A LEAKY OLD TUB AND RETRIBUTION OR VILLAINY REWARDED

AFTER staying on shore in Newcastle for three weeks, during which time

I had a good holiday and spent most of the money I possessed, I joined the barque “Edinburgh” bound for Wellington, New Zealand, with a cargo

of coals. Well, of all the old tubs that ever sailed on salt water, this old craft was the worst. Every two hours we had a twenty minutes’ spell on the pumps, night and day the game went on, in fact we could truly say we carried the leaky old basket on our arms.

There was no time lost in painting these colonial ships. There was plenty of other work to do without that, nearly all the passage was spent in fitting and roping new cargo baskets ready to discharge the coal on our arrival at Wellington. The weather was just splendid all the way across, which was fortunate for us, just a gentle seven knot breeze, with a smooth sea and a perfectly cloudless sky. The sea, when we had time to notice it, was a beautiful ultra-marine, and at night the stars were reflected like diamonds in a sea of glass. The waters were simply alive with fish, and at night, as they moved about in the star-lit waters, they left a phosphorescent trail behind them, like a design drawn upon a blackboard with a silver pencil.

Captain Saunders, or “Black Saunders” as he was called by colonial seamen, was a sturdy, well-built man, with jet black curly hair and beard. He was a thorough seaman, and never so happy as when he was paddling about in salt water. The mate, Archie McLeod, was a Scotchman

and hailed from Glasgow, but had been sailing out of Sydney for a number of years. He was, without a doubt, one of the finest specimens of physical manhood I ever saw, quite six feet in height, trained and proficient in all kinds of athletic sports, and a first rate boxer for sport, but in general a very quiet, amiable sort of shipmate. The second mate was a young native of Sydney, not much of a sailor, but that was from want of experience and not from want of ability. Our crew consisted of eight able seamen--three English and three colonials--and two Swedes. The pay was seven pounds a month, and we signed to work eight hours per day in port, but when unloading coal the crew were given the privilege of working all night and were paid extra, so that we made very good money indeed.

After we had finished unloading our coals at Wellington, news spread around the town that gold had been found on the Thames river near Auckland, and that hundreds of people were flocking there. At once there was a rush, and four of our sailors cleared out and joined the throng _en route_ for the gold fields. To replace them, the captain picked up four men who had just run away from a ship in Wellington, and

who wanted to get over to Australia. They were not long on board before they began to bully the sailors in the forecastle. Evidently they were a set of scoundrels that the ship they had left was well clear of.

We hauled away from the jetty after tea, and anchored in the bay ready to sail in the morning. At daylight the mate called all hands out to heave up the anchor. None of the crew turned out, saying they were sick. The mate quietly told them that he would give them five minutes to get out on deck, if they were not out in that time he would kick them out.

“All right, Mr. Mate,” one of them answered, “try it, we’ll soon take the kick out of you.”

Just then I went into the forecastle to light a lamp for the chain locker.

“Drop that lamp, you son of a b---- sea cook,” snarled one of them, “or I’ll jolly well jump the stuffing out of you.”

“Were you speaking to me?” I asked him.

“Yes, blast you, I was,” he replied.

In an instant my blood was up, and I sprang over to him. Thrusting the lighted lamp into his face, I poured the oil over him, and set fire to his bed, as he tried to get up I beat him back with the lamp until his bed was all in a wild blaze. His three mates came to his assistance and the two Swedes came to mine, and for a few minutes there

was a frightful pandemonium. The mate rushed forward when he heard the row, and called out to us to put the fire out at once. This was soon done, and we were ordered to heave up the anchor immediately.

The

newcomers looked sulky and inclined to refuse, but as there was no boat alongside, and they were likely to get roughly handled, they thought better of it, and turned to, though with a bad grace, and we were soon under weigh with all sail set, heading for Cook’s Straits.

That evening the breeze freshened into a living gale, and we had a dead beat down to Cape Farewell, which headland we passed on the fifth day out. To make matters worse the vessel was leaking like a basket, and the pumps had to be kept going night and day.

After rounding Cape Farewell, the barque was headed south, and was soon

wallowing in a heavy cross sea. We were fagged out with pumping, and as

we drew near to Foveaux Straits, all hands walked aft and begged the captain to put into the Bluff Harbour for shelter until the weather moderated. The captain, however, hoping to run out of the bad weather when he got south of the Straits, refused to put back. We refused to work the pumps any longer, and walked forward in a body.

The captain looked at us and said quietly: "All right, my lads," and calmly went on smoking his pipe under the weather cloth.

The mate wanted to go forward and force us to the pumps, but Captain Saunders said: "Oh, no, let them alone, they will turn to sharp enough directly."

The barque carried two of her boats in the davits on the poop, out of the way of the cargo gear, so the captain told the mate and second mate to see that there was fresh water and food put in one of them ready for use.

We had been in the forecabin about an hour, smoking and grumbling, when a heavy sea broke on board, smashing the lifeboat and cutter, and washing the cook-house clean over the side. Luckily for the cook, he was aft in the cabin at the time. A few of the pots and pans that had been scattered about the deck were picked up. We were now thoroughly terrified at the amount of water in the ship, which was causing her to roll heavily to windward, thus exposing her deck and hatches to the sea, so again we went aft and complained to the captain that the vessel was sinking, and asked him to run back to the Bluff.

"I know she is sinking," he replied coolly, "and I think you had better pump her out."

"We want our tea, and we want some rest, it's nothing else but pumping since we left Wellington," replied the men.

"Aye, you want your tea do you? So do I, but the galley's gone overboard, and as for the rest--well, I promise you good long rest in a few hours, if the water is not pumped out. It is six o'clock now," he

continued, looking at his watch, “and I give her just another two hours to float upright, after that, you will not need any tea, and you will get all the rest you want.”

Just then, as though to verify the captain’s words, the vessel gave a dangerous lurch to the leeward, and in the weather roll the two lower topsails were blown to bits, leaving the fore, main, and mizzen staysail only on the vessel. The men, who were holding on to the mizzen rigging to save themselves from being washed overboard, looked at the captain, and then at each other, and without a word made their way to the pumps. The officers and cook joined them, and they all pumped away for dear life. The barque had a powerful set of pumps, and after working for four hours, at times up to the waist in water, they found the soundings were considerably reduced.

In the meantime, Captain Saunders had got some food ready on the cabin stove, and at midnight they all went into the cabin and had a good meal and a stiff glass of grog each. Afterwards the watch was set and there was no more trouble about the work. The men had found their master, and they worked all the better for the experience.

The following day the gale moderated and the sea went down. The wreck of the lower topsails was sent down, and fresh sails were bent, and with all sail set we had a good run over to the Australian coast.

The day before we made the coast the wind hauled into the north, and was soon blowing a stiff gale, and the leaky old craft had to be reduced to lower topsails again. The short choppy sea met with on the Australian coast caused the old barque to leak at an alarming rate, and the pumps had to be kept continually going to keep her afloat. It seemed as though the vessel was doomed not to reach port. To make matters worse, at midnight the gale backed into the south-west and at the same time the man on the look-out reported breakers on the lee-bow.

“Loose the upper topsail!” cried the captain. “We must force her off or under.”

A few men left the pumps and sprang aloft. As soon as they reached the topsail yard they called out:

“Breakers all along the lee!”

“Shut your mouth, and loose the sails!” replied the captain grimly. “You’ll know all about the breakers when she strikes.”

“Hoist away,” came from aloft, and the pumps were stopped a few minutes while the sails were set.

The old barque staggered along under the increased pressure, and seemed to be heading just along the coast, but fortunately for us the current setting to the S.S.W. just counteracted the leeway the ship was making, and when the welcome daylight appeared she just cleared Port Stevens and squared away for Newcastle.

When the yards were squared and all the danger past, the captain called all hands aft and congratulated them on having been enabled to bring the ship safely across under such terrible conditions, and gave each man a good glass of grog. Then, as we looked at him, to our astonishment we saw that Captain Saunders could never again be called “Black Saunders,” for his hair and beard had turned quite grey during the preceding night, and in his eyes was the look of one who had touched shoulders with death. Those terrible twelve hours of anxiety had left a mark that time would never efface.

We arrived in Newcastle that evening and the barque was moored at Bullock Island Dyke. The following day the crew were paid off. None of us had any inclination to make another trip in the leaky old basket. A few days afterwards she was being overhauled for repairs when a discoloured patch was noticed under the spider band, on the main mast

where the mizzin stay sets up. It was tested with a sheath-knife and found to be completely rotten. How it had stood the strain of that last trip was a mystery, for on the mast being condemned it was found unsafe even to lift it out whole, and it had to be cut in two for safety, and half of it hoisted out at one time, and a fine new pitch pine lower mast was put into its place before the vessel sailed again.

Now Newcastle, New South Wales, in those days was a busy thriving little seaport. The harbour was full of large sailing vessels, loading and waiting to load coal. They were bound, principally, for China, San Francisco, and Pacific coast ports. Very few of these ships had their full complement of seamen on board, for most of the sailors had deserted during the ship's stay in port, and one could not blame them, when we consider that the pay in these ships from the British Isles was two pound ten shillings per month, and the poorest quality of food that it was possible for the ship-owner to buy, and then only just sufficient to keep body and soul together. The pay out of the Australian ports was five pound ten shillings for homeward bound ships, and seven pound per month in the coast and intercolonial trades, with a sufficiency of good, nourishing food. In addition to this, there was plenty of work to be found ashore, for the Queensland, Victorian, and South Australian gold fields were in full swing. The consequence was there was great difficulty in getting men for the ships when they were ready for sea.

Like most seaports in those days of sailing ships, the town was full of sailors' boarding-houses. Their tactics and methods of procuring men were not such as could stand the light of day, but, nevertheless, they did a thriving business.

One of the most noted characters in the town was a boarding-house keeper, named Dan Slagan a thorough scoundrel to the backbone. He was notorious for the number of men he had "shanghaied" out of the port, but, strange to say, he had gained a certain amount of power in the town, and shipmasters requiring men were, under the circumstances,

compelled to deal with him, although at the same time many of them had the utmost contempt for the fellow.

Slagan kept a low-class drinking saloon with a free-and-easy dancing-room attached to it. The boarders lived in the rooms overhead. This was the only dancing saloon in the town, and was thronged with sailors every night. Needless to say that the liquor sold there was vile stuff, but men who have been living for months on “salt horse” and weevily biscuit have very little taste left in their mouths, and, as long as the decoction was hot and came out of a bottle, it passed muster.

Slagan was an adept at drugging liquor, and he always kept materials at hand for that purpose. Just a little tobacco ash dropped in the glass when pouring out the drinks, and the thing was done. When he required a few sailors for a ship ready to sail, he picked out the likeliest men in the room--usually strangers--and when the seamen, hot and thirsty with dancing, ordered drinks through the women, who acted as waitresses, these Delilahs would bring the prepared stuff, and very soon the men would feel muddled and sleepy and would go into the side room and sink down on the benches. Slagan would then slip in among them:

“Halloa, mates! What’s the matter? Feel queer, eh? Ah, it’s the dancing and the hot weather. I’ll send you a good tot that will put you all right.” He would then send one of the girls in with a good glass of hot whisky, drugged, of course, and that would be all the men would know for some time. When they came to their senses they found themselves in a strange ship, out of sight of land, without a stitch of clothes beyond what they stood up in. Of course, there was generally a row, but it invariably ended in their turning to work and making the best of a bad bargain.

One day in February, 18--, it happened that there were three British ships lying at the buoys, loaded and ready to sail, but each in need of a few seamen to make up her complement. Not a man could be got at

the shipping office for love or money--the news of a fresh gold field on the Barrington had reached Newcastle that morning, and all the disengaged had made tracks for that district, so the only possible way to get hands for the vessels ready to sail, was to obtain them from the ships that had lately arrived, and which would have some time to wait for a loading berth.

The captains of the ships at the buoys sent for Slogan, and arranged with him to supply them with four men each that night, as the trio would sail at the turn of the tide. When Slogan got back to shore he sent some of his runners to quietly let the crews of the ships in the harbour know there was to be a free concert and dance at his place, with plenty of whisky into the bargain.

When night came the saloon was packed with seamen, and among them six fine young American sailors from the ship "Jeremiah Crawford," of New Bedford. Now, New Bedford ships are very often "family ships," that is to say, the captain, officers, and seamen are related to each other. Of the six young fellows who went to this dance, two were nephews of the captain, one was a relative of the mate, and the others were related to members of the crew.

Long before the dance was over there were several seamen lying helplessly drugged in the side room. Just before midnight, and while the dance was still going on, Slogan and his fellow crimps removed the helpless men down to a boat, and took them off to the ships at the buoys. Then Slogan pocketed his blood money and before daylight the vessels were at sea under all plain sail.

The following day, when the six American seamen did not turn up on board the "Jeremiah Crawford" enquiries were quietly made, and it was soon found out what had become of them; they had been among the twelve men "shanghaied" aboard the three waiting ships. The men's shipmates, boiling with anger, wanted to go and wreck Slogan and his saloon, but

the captain called all hands aft, and told them from the poop that they must not let it be known that they knew where their shipmates were.

“I know how you feel over it,” he said, “and I know how I feel, too, but I intend to pay that rascal in his own coin. Those Britishers are off to ’Frisco, and we are bound there, too, and you can bet your bottom dollar I mean to make the ship move when we start. And what is more, I intend to take that rascal Slanan with me!”

“All right, captain,” answered the men, “mum’s the word. We will wait events.”

Two days afterwards Captain Monk, of the “Jeremiah Crawford,” told Slanan to get him six men by the time the ship was loaded. He agreed, on condition he was paid three pounds per man. This, Captain Monk agreed to, and when the ship was finished and hauled out to the buoys, Slanan sent word to the captain he would bring the men off about 8 p.m.

Now, that day, a young Irish police constable had been transferred from Sydney to Newcastle, and promoted. He was appointed to this district with a view to watching the goings-on at Slanan’s, rumours of which had reached police headquarters. The constable was married to a fine strapping Irish lass, who was a great help to her husband. She wore her hair short like a man, and was no stranger to the wearing of men’s clothes. In fact, it was partly owing to her that her husband had got his position.

The constable knew he was there to get proof of Slanan’s shady doings, and it was accordingly arranged that his wife should disguise herself as a seaman, as she had done before, and watch the inside, while her husband watched the outside of the saloon. The policeman’s wife was a splendidly built woman, as straight as a reed, muscular as well, and absolutely fearless. So it happened that when Slanan was picking out the men he wanted for his purpose that night, he saw this likely-looking young fellow among them. But he was not taking any liquor--only a bottle of ginger ale. Slanan very obligingly opened a

bottle for him, and it was a simple matter, as the stuff fizzled out, to knock the ash from his cigar into the glass with his little finger, and the mischief was done. Presently one of his spies came in and cautioned the crimp that there was a constable knocking about in the street.

“We must get the beggar out of the way, Mike,” said Slanan. “I’ll soon settle him, you watch him.”

Going outside, he walked up the street past the constable, smoking a splendid cigar. The constable got a whiff and wished he had one like it. In a few minutes the crimp returned, still puffing away at the cigar, as he passed the policeman he quietly dropped his cigar case. The constable, just behind him, saw the case and picked it up, and seeing there were two or three fine cigars in it, succumbed to temptation and put it in his pocket. He could not long resist the mute appeal of those cigars, so slipping into the shadow behind some houses, he lit one, and was soon enjoying a good smoke. It had a wonderfully soothing influence, and he leaned up against the wall, thinking of the sharp bit of work that had brought him promotion. He felt that already he had Slanan in his power and he saw himself in imagination with his sergeant’s stripes. Then all of a sudden he smiled a sickly smile, his head fell forward, his legs gave way beneath him, and he sank in a heap on the ground. A few minutes afterwards the spy, who had been watching him all the time, cautiously approached. He took the cigar case out of the unconscious man’s tunic, removed the remains of the drugged cigar from his mouth, and left him there.

The night was very dark, and about 8 p.m., while the dancing and singing were still in full swing, Slanan and his tools got the selected men off in a boat. The tug was ahead of the ship, all ready to start; when the crimp got alongside with his men the “Jeremiah Crawford” was hanging to a slip rope, and the captain was in his cabin waiting for Slanan and the sailors.

“Hurry up and get those chaps on board,” the mate called out, “I want to get under way.”

“All right, Mister Mate,” answered one of the crimps, “we’ll soon have them on board. Get out of that you brutes!” he added, giving one of the dazed men a savage lack.

Slogan and his men soon got their victims on board, but on getting on deck one of the fellows, a fine-built young Swede, seemed to partly recover his senses.

“I don’t belong to this ship,” he said, and made for the gangway. With an oath Slogan sprang at him. A terrific blow on the side of the head, and the poor fellow dropped senseless on the deck. They then bundled the lot forward.

Finding no light in the forecastle he and his men stepped inside, and were in the act of striking matches, when each of them was knocked senseless with a blow behind the ear from a knuckle duster. They were then dropped into the fore-peak and the hatches fastened down, while the new men were lifted into berths to sleep off the effects of the drugged liquor.

In the meantime the second mate slipped down the gangway, and standing on one side of Slogan’s boat, capsized her. When she filled with water he cast her off and let her drift up river.

The tug boat dropped down, the tow-rope was secured, the buoy cast off, and before midnight the ship was outside the Nobbies and under all sail. At day light the “shanghaied” men were getting over the effects of the drug and the captain called all hands aft and gave them a good stiff glass of grog. The new men were in a terrible state when they came to their senses and found they had been “shanghaied.” One young fellow in particular sat down on the hatch, and placing his head on his hands, seemed to give way to despair. He took no heed of what was going on, and spoke no word to anyone. The young Swede, who had

been so
brutally struck by Sullivan stepped up to the captain:

“Who brought us on board?” he asked.

“Dan Slagan,” replied the mate, “he said you were his boarders. I saw him come alongside, and then I went forward, and have not seen him since.”

“Did you pay him any advance for us, captain?”

“No, I have not seen him,” said the skipper. “He must have gone on shore again. I cannot understand it. I do not know the man,” he added. “I wrote him to get me six men, and told him I would sign them on board. I heard him come alongside with you, but when I came out of the cabin I saw no boat alongside, and we got under weigh at once.”

“Thank you, captain,” said the Swede, “Slagan and I will meet again some day.”

“Halloa, halloa, there! What’s all this row about?” sang out from the forecastle accompanied by a heavy thumping.

The mate started to ran forward, and all hands turned to behold a remarkable sight.

Out of the forecastle bolted three men. Casting their eyes in the direction of the land, they rushed aft, passed the seamen, and were about to mount the poop-ladder, when the mate barred the way.

“Get down out of this, you skunks!” he roared, “who are you fellows, and where do you come from?”

“You know jolly well who I am,” roared the biggest of the three, “and you had better land us as quick as you can, or it will be a bad job for you, so I tell you.”

The mate looked at him in silence for a moment, then the skipper chimed in.

“Who the deuce are you?” demanded Captain Monk, “and what are you doing aboard my ship?”

“What are you trying to get at, captain?” cried the crimp furiously. “You know very well who I am; I’m Dan Slagan. I brought you six men last night, and when we took them into the forecabin----”

There was a shuffle among the men, and the next minute the young Swede had sprung at the crimps throat and the two were tossing about the deck battering each other like wild beasts.

“Stand back everybody!” cried the mate. “Let them have it out.”

Slagan was the bigger and heavier man, but the Swede was a perfect young athlete, and had a cruel wrong to wipe out. The muscles of his arms and neck stood out like strong cords as the two rolled from side to side.

Not a word was uttered by the officers or crew, who stood calmly looking on. Suddenly, by a quick movement, the Swede pinned Slagan against the fife-rail around the mainmast, and with his right hand battered his face unmercifully. Then seizing him by the throat, he flung him into the lee-scuttle, where he lay without movement. The Swede looked at his foe for a moment, then coolly walked over and wiped

his feet on him. Next, turning to the poop where Captain Monk and the officers stood, he touched his cap and said:

“I am second mate of the Swedish ship ‘Oscar Branch,’ and my father is the captain. I went on shore for a walk, and hearing the music I went into the saloon for a drink. I sat down to watch the dancers, and knew no more until I found myself on board this ship. What will my father

think? What will my employers say?" He stopped abruptly, and walked forward with his head bent, overwhelmed with shame and grief.

Within another minute the two remaining crimps were hotly engaged with two of the ship's crew, whose relatives had been "shanghaied" aboard the Britishers. The sailors made short work of the crimps, and fairly wiped the deck with them. Captain Monk then ordered the hapless three to be locked up in separate cabins and fed on bread and water for a few days.

"It will give them time to repent," he said to the mate. "It won't do to put them with the crew yet awhile--there would be murder done. In a few days they can go forward, and the crew will save us dirtying our hands with them, the scoundrels. Our chaps will lead them a dance, and they'll wish to heaven they had never laid hands on my crew." Just then the mate noticed the young fellow sitting on the hatch with his head in his hands. He seemed utterly dejected and oblivious of everything about him. The rest of the men had gone forward, and were excitedly discussing the matter of Slogan and his mates being on board, each of them swearing to have his pound of flesh out of the hated "shanghaiers." The captain and mate walked along to the young fellow on the hatch. Putting his hand kindly on the bowed head, Captain Monk said: "Come, come, young man, you must not give way like this. Sailors should always make the best of everything."

Lifting his head at the kindly touch and words, the young fellow replied:

"Oh, captain, whatever shall I do? I am not a sailor."

"Oh, never mind that, you'll soon learn here, so go forward with the others."

"Oh, captain, take pity on me!" cried the supposed young seaman, tremulously. "For heaven's sake take pity on me, I am a respectable married woman! My husband is Police Constable Hogan of the

Newcastle
Police.”

The captain and mate were astounded, and for a moment could do nothing but stare at her. Then, seeing some of the men forward looking at them, Captain Monk said: “Come aft to the saloon and I will hear your story.”

When they got into the cabin Mrs. Hogan told how the authorities at Sydney had heard something of the doings of Slogan and his crimps, and had sent her husband to the district to get evidence against him. She had assisted her husband before, and on this occasion had dressed up in her present clothes and joined the sailors in the dancing room to watch Slogan and his satellites.

“I called for a bottle of ginger ale,” she added. “I watched him open the bottle and I am sure there was nothing in the glass, for I saw it standing upside down on the counter, but I had not drunk it many minutes before I felt my head getting light, and I remembered no more until I found myself on board this ship. I have abundant evidence against that blackguard now, but it is no good, as he is on board here. What shall I do? I have no clothes but these. I cannot go among those men.”

“Steamer ahead, sir! Coming this way,” rang out the cry.

“Aye, aye!”

Captain Monk took a look at her through the telescope.

“Run up the ‘Urgent’ signal at once!” he shouted. “It’s the Union Company’s boat bound to Melbourne. I will send a letter and this woman on board. Back the mainyard, and get the boat out quick.”

Up went the signal, and the steamer bore down towards the ship. Her decks were crowded with passengers.

“You will go in the boat, Mrs. Hogan,” said the skipper, “and you had better explain things to the captain at once. My letter will tell him also. Mr. Potter, you go with the boat, and take four of our hands with you. As soon as you give the letter to the captain, put this woman on board and return at once.”

“Aye, aye, sir. Ship your oars! Let go forward.”

The boat shot away and was soon alongside the steamer, and the mate and Mrs. Hogan climbed on board. Going along to the bridge, Mr. Potter handed the letter to the captain, who read it and said:

“All right. Tell Captain Monk that I will take the woman to Melbourne. I am glad he has that blackguard on board. Good-bye.”

The mate got back into his boat, the engines were rung ahead, the ensign was dipped three times and before the boat was on board again, the steamer was out of sight.

Then the sails were filled once more and the “Jeremiah Crawford” stood on her course.

Five days afterwards Slogan and his mates were released and sent to live in the forecastle. Slogan was put into the mate’s watch, and the two crimps in the second mate’s watch.

There was another row at once, and again the blackguards got a good thrashing, they were put to the most menial work, were made to wait on the others, and do all the dirty work about the deck, in fact their lives were made a misery to them from morning to night. Hardly a day passed that one or other of the scoundrels did not get a licking. They had a taste of the misery they had caused many another man, and the captain said they had time to repent of their misdeeds.

When the “Jeremiah Crawford” arrived at San Francisco the pilot informed them that two British ships had just gone to anchorage, adding that he noticed they were from Newcastle. This was good news to all but Slanan and his crimps. As they moved up the harbour to their anchorage they passed close to the “Commonwealth.” On board were some of the “Jeremiah Crawford’s” crew, and as they passed one of the sailors called out: “We have Slanan on board.” After the sails were unbent, all the running gear triced up, and the decks washed down the crew were dismissed.

“Pay off to-morrow,” said the mate.

“Aye, aye!” answered the crew.

All hands went on shore, and Slanan was forced, much against his will, to go with them. On the wharf where they landed stood the six American sailors, whom he and his men had “shanghaied” from Newcastle. Let us mercifully draw a veil over the crimps’ punishment.

None of the three blackguards turned up when the crew were paid off, no questions were asked, and no explanations given, but two years afterwards Slanan appeared again in Newcastle, New South Wales--not the unscrupulous bully and braggart, but a broken, decrepit, feeble old man.

CHAPTER XXIV

OFF TO THE PALMER GOLDFIELDS

AFTER my experience on the barque “Edinburgh” I felt that I was entitled to a spell on shore, and, as my landlady’s daughter had responded to the attentions I showered upon her, I had a most enjoyable time as long as my money lasted, then my restless spirit began to assert itself again and to long for pastures new, and the farthest thought in my head was to settle down. I was debating in my mind whether to start up country or join a vessel going to a port that I had

not yet been to, when news reached Newcastle of a rush to the Palmer goldfields. This news put the whole place in a ferment. Hundreds of men in Newcastle alone threw up their employment, and started for the north, whenever there was a chance of getting along the coast. Ships in the harbour were deserted by their crews, even the officers in many instances deserting at the same time. It would have been quite an easy matter to get a berth on a ship, but that I, too, had an attack of gold fever, and determined that I would get to the Palmer and try my luck. But that was easier said than done, for the Palmer goldfields lay somewhere in, as yet, an unexplored country, which it was quite impossible to reach after the commencement of the wet season. Many attempts had been made, all more or less unsuccessful, and all were loud in proclaiming the impossibilities to be met with on the road, such as swollen rivers, marshes, swamps, mountains, blacks, and besides these, provisions had not only to be taken for the journey, but there were none to be obtained on the goldfields, so these had to be carried, or else you would have to starve. Many people went to Sydney, and from thence to Brisbane, and then tramped the rest of the way, many lost their lives in the attempt, some were killed by the blacks, some got drowned in crossing the rushing swollen rivers, many died of hunger and thirst crossing the waterless tracks beneath the terrible fiery sun that shone down so pitilessly from a cloudless sky, for in that arid track there was no shelter, no shadow of a great rock, no trees to give a moment's respite to the travellers in that weary land.

The nearest port to the Palmer was the newly opened port of Cookstown, at the mouth of the Endeavour River, and the spot is identical with a place mentioned in Captain Cook's travels, where he ran his ship, the "Endeavour," ashore to carry out some very necessary repairs to that vessel, hence the names Cookstown and Endeavour River, it was about twelve hundred miles from Newcastle. That there were already thousands of people flocking there from all parts of the world, New Zealand, California, England, India and China, did not deter me in the least, rather the reverse.

There was a great difficulty in getting a berth in a north bound vessel, but several of the shipowners in Newcastle put a vessel on the berth for passengers and stores to Townsville, but would not send their vessels to Cooktown, for the place was not well known, and there was a great risk of losing a ship, and as these vessels were uninsurable, they did not care to take the risk. Townsville was about two hundred and forty miles from Cooktown, and I think about the same distance from

the new diggings, the difficulties of the overland route to Townsville were almost insurmountable, unless provided with a good stock of horses, a good bush cart, and at least six months stock of provisions, and as many of the gold seekers did not carry much extra equipment, they all made for Cooktown.

Several vessels had got away full up with passengers, whom the shipowners charged thirty pounds passage money per man, and the same for each horse, the passengers finding their own provender and the ship finding fresh water. Of course, there were hundreds of persons who wished to go, but could not afford that price, I among the number, so I determined to try and get a berth as seaman on one of these vessels, but was unsuccessful.

However, one day, while talking the matter over with several friends, I suggested that a number of us should form ourselves into a company, each paying down so much, and purchase one of the many Ketches sailing

up and down between the Hunter and Manning Rivers, and which were to be had for an old song almost, for they would scarcely float.

My suggestion was laughed at by most of those present, but one man asked if I would risk my life in one of these ketches all the way to Townsville. I replied that I would willingly work one of them along the coast, but I had only ten pounds to my name. Then the matter dropped for that day.

Three days afterwards one of the coasting captains, named Alec Brown, came to me and asked if I would help him work the "Woolara," a small

schooner of fifty tons, to Cookstown. He offered me twenty pounds for the run, and a share of the profits if I cared to return with him. He was quite candid with me, and said the “Woolara” was not a new vessel, but had been laid up at Waratah on the mud for a couple of years, and would leak like a basket if we got any bad weather, but he thought we might nurse her, and make a good thing out of her if we got to Cookstown all right. I was quite willing, and closed with him at once in consideration of his paying me the twenty pounds in advance to enable me to get a few things I wanted. He agreed to this, and the following day we both went up to Waratah, and got the old craft afloat. We found, as you may think, a few leaky places in her sides, and the captain got three men to caulk her well, and then we gave her three good coats of boiling pitch all over. After a week’s work on her we made her as tight as a bottle, and she looked quite a smart little craft when cleaned up and painted a bit. She had a suit of sails that were like a patchwork quilt, but Captain Brown bought another second-hand suit of sails from one of the schooners that traded to Lake Macquarry for timber. A quantity of stone ballast was laid level in the hold, and, if I remember right, we had fifty casks of water stowed securely on the top of the ballast. After all was shipshape she was advertised to sail for Cookstown, and so great was the craving to get to the goldfields that we had on the first day over fifty applications for passages. The passage money was £35 down, and ship fare only supplied. I think if they had only been offered bread and water we could have filled the vessel with them, to such an extent was the gold fever affecting the place. When the captain found he could get sufficient passengers, the ballast in the hold was boarded over and temporary berths put up. We arranged to take twenty passengers, each man signing articles as seamen at one shilling per month.

We left Newcastle at night, a beautiful cloudless night, singing and making merry, just as though we were on a pleasure trip, for most of the passengers had been seamen at some time or other and were a right down jolly lot of men. They looked after themselves, and also gave us all the help we required. We had a fine passage right up to Brisbane, but here our luck as regards the weather forsook us, for just after

passing Brisbane we got into a black north-easter, and for a few hours it was nearly a case with us, so dangerous was our condition, but we managed to crawl into Hervey Bay until the breeze had blown itself out.

After eight hours detention we again started on our journey and reached Port Denison. Here we encountered a terrific gale that very nearly finished our sailing. The little craft was a splendid sea-boat, and that helped us to nurse her through the angry waters. But we had our work cut out. At times the schooner would be standing almost on one end, and the next moment she would be on the other. Then she would be thrown from side to side like a shuttlecock. Soon she began to leak freely, and no wonder, but we had plenty of willing help, although a number of the men had caved in and were lying helpless in the hold, battened down, the only ventilation they could have being that which passed through the cabin, for though many of them had been sailors, they had sailed in larger vessels, and our little craft was being tossed about so violently in the gale that they were laid low with sea-sickness. But there was no complaint from any of them. The thought of the bright yellow gold that lay in the earth on the Palmer, waiting for them to come and gather it, cheered them up, for each man thought in his heart that he was sure to make his fortune.

After a terrible experience we managed to creep in behind Cape Upstart, about one hundred miles from Townsville. Here we lay twenty-four hours

to put things a bit shipshape again, and recover from our knocking about. The captain offered to put any of the passengers ashore at Townsville, if they chose, but one and all decided to continue the voyage to Cookstown, and each one cheerfully took his turn at the pump, and so saved the captain and me any anxiety on that account.

It had been no pleasure cruise after we passed Brisbane, and became worse every day. There was not a dry place on board, unless it was our throats. Everybody was constantly drenched with the sea, and no one had a good square meal during the last four days; but there was no discontent, everything was taken in good part, and many a tough yarn

was told while they were lashed to the rail to keep themselves from being washed overboard.

After two days sheer battling for our lives, the wind died down, and a steady southerly wind sprang up. This soon brightened our prospects, and added considerably to our comfort. How thankful we were for the peace and quiet after the rough and tumble experience we had just passed through! The sea became as smooth as a mill pond with just a steady south wind blowing, that drove us about five knots an hour through the water. All our effects were brought on deck and dried, and our sails, which had been considerably damaged, were repaired, and on the fourteenth day we arrived at Cookstown. Our passengers were soon landed, and Captain Brown took the little vessel well into the river and moored her there until he decided what he was going to do himself. I landed the following day, and soon found that the Palmer was as far off as ever. The rainy season had set in, and the roads were impassable. Whole districts between Cookstown and the Palmer were under

water, the rivers were swollen and in flood, and no stores of any sort could be bought on the road.

To describe Cookstown as I first saw it would be impossible. It resembled nothing so much as an old English country fair, leaving out the monkeys and merry-go-rounds. Tents were stuck up at all points. Miserable huts, zinc sheds, and any blessed thing that would shelter from the sun's fierce heat and rain, were used as habitations. There were thousands of people living in the tents and sheds, and the place literally swarmed with men of all nationalities. Large plots had been pegged out in the main street, on these were erected either corrugated iron sheds, or large tents, and here all sorts of merchandise was sold, cheap enough to suit all purses, but the wet season was on, and there was no way of getting to Palmer. Parties of men left every day in the rain and slush to try and reach what seemed such a land of promise, but many returned saying that it was no use trying, as the rivers could not be crossed. Hundreds of these men lived out in the scrub with just a couple of blankets thrown over some twigs for

shelter, no fire being needed except for cooking. All the scum of Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane were gathered together here, thieves, pickpockets, cardsharpers and loafers of every description. This class had not come to dig for gold with pick and shovel from mother earth's bosom, but to dig it out of honest men's pockets by robbery and murder, and the robbing of tents in their owners' absence was becoming a daily occurrence, for gathered there were the good, bad, very bad and indifferent.

One day a party of three men returned after having got as far as the Normanby River. They had been caught between two streams, and could neither get backward or forward. The patch on which they were imprisoned was only a few feet above water, and for some time they were not sure if they would not be swept off and drowned, as the island was only about one mile long and a quarter of a mile wide.

Whilst they were searching for means to get over to Normanby they made a gruesome discovery, one by no means uncommon. There at their feet lying together were five dead bodies. They had been starved to death, and under the head of each man was a small leather bag of gold, averaging in weight about six pounds each. What a terrible irony of fate--shut in between the waters and starved to death, with over five thousand pounds between them! The bodies were all shrunken and black, so burying them where they lay, the party took the gold and divided it. A couple of days afterwards they were able to swim their horses over the stream and return to Cookstown.

There were several instances told about this time of miners who had reached the diggings before the wet season had set in, gathered a stock of gold, then finding their stores giving out, were forced to pack up and retrace their steps for a fresh supply. Many, on that terrible return journey, were struck down by the sun's intense heat, and after using their last small stock of food, died a miserable lonely death by starvation, their treasures of gold powerless to buy them an ounce of

food.

It was quite a common occurrence for miners travelling up from Cooktown with plenty of stores and provisions, but no cash, to arrive on the banks of a swollen river, over which there was no means of crossing, and to see on the other side of the river a party of men on their way down to the coast with bags of gold, but with hungry, empty stomachs. There they were, looking across at each other, one holding up a bag of flour, and the other shaking his gold purse, each powerless to help the other. Such was the lot of many of the diggers at that time, but all the horrors, the suffering and death that took place in that mad rush for gold, will never be known. 'Tis better so, I saw men return from the gold fields, with thousands of pounds worth of gold in their possession, but with frames so emaciated and ruined with what they had gone through on their return journey, that their very existence was a burden to them, their horses, dogs, and even their boots had been eaten to keep them alive. It is a fact that they have boiled their blucher boots for a whole day, and then added any weeds they could find to make a broth of, so tenacious of life were they.

There were hundreds of men idle in Cooktown. They had no means of buying an outfit, even if the road to Palmer had been passable, and many of them had no desire to go any further. These could easily be distinguished from those who really wanted work during the waiting time, so many there were that anyone who wanted a man might easily get him for a whole day's work for a good square meal. Men would walk about among the tents and whenever they saw food there they would beg. Many were getting a living by their wits and knavery, and it was not safe to be about alone after dark, unless you were well armed and prepared for these light-fingered gentry. And yet the leading articles in the newspapers at that time were painting in glowing terms the bustle and

activity going on in the rising city of Cooktown, declaring that any man who could use a hammer or tools of any description could earn a pound a day.

Feeling a bit disheartened at the grim realities that I had witnessed, and after knocking about Cooktown for a week, I called on Captain Brown, and asked him if he was going to take the “Woolara” back to Newcastle.

“No,” he replied, “I have sold her, and made a jolly good thing out of her, too, and I’m going to have a try to get to the Palmer. What are you going to do?”

“Well, I am undecided at present, there are so many returning disheartened, and broken down in health, and they give such bad accounts of the road to be travelled over before you reach the Palmer, that I don’t care about tackling it alone.”

“Well, look here,” said the captain, “I have done very well by this venture so far, and I don’t care about returning without having a try for the diggings, even if I have to return. What do you say to us joining forces, and trying our luck together. I will buy three horses from the next squad that returns, and use one for a pack horse.”

I agreed to his plan, and the following day about a dozen horsemen rode into Cooktown. They had been a month on the road, several times they had narrowly escaped drowning, while trying to cross the Normanby river. They had lost nearly the whole of their provisions, and one of their mates had been seized by an alligator before their eyes, while they were powerless to help him. Then they had been obliged to kill two of their horses for food. They willingly sold us three horses at fifteen pounds each, but strongly advised us not to try the road for at least two months, or to wait for the end of the rainy season. But the thought of the gold beyond made us eager to take our chance. Had we

gone back to Newcastle without trying, our friends would have chaffed us unmercifully.

The next day we began our preparations. We bought a tent, two small picks, two small spades and one gun. Captain Brown had a gun and revolver. I had a revolver, and the gun that was bought was for me, and a good supply of ammunition. As we were going where money was of no

value and food invaluable, and everything depended on our being able to carry sufficient provisions, we got a good supply of the best. We had cocoa, extract of beef, preserved meat, tea and sugar, two hundred pounds of flour--this was divided, one hundred pounds to the pack horse, and fifty pounds to each of our horses--two large billy cans, a couple of drinking pots, two knives, two basins, a tinder box and burning glass. When we were all packed and ready to start, we looked like a couple of mountebanks off to a village fair.

It was a fine morning when we started, but before we had got ten miles from Cooktown our horses were sinking in the mire. Road there was none,

it was just a track or belt of morass, into which one sank at times knee deep, and as night came on it rained in torrents, so we picked out a dry piece of ground, and pitched our tent for the night. We then hobbled the horses with about ten fathoms of line to keep them from straying.

We slept well that night, for we were dead tired, and had we been lying on a feather bed in a good hotel instead of on a piece of ground that might soon be under water, we should have slept no better. As it had ceased raining when we awoke we started on our way again after we had breakfasted, and got along very well until noon. Coming to a place where there was good grass for the horses we decided not to go any farther that day, but to let the horses have the benefit of a good feed.

The following morning we started early, and at noon met a party of diggers returning from the Palmer. They had been fortunate enough to

get a fair amount of gold they said, but what a terrible condition they were in, thin and emaciated as skeletons, with barely a rag to cover them. Three of their party had been lost crossing the Laura river, and one had died of sunstroke on the road.

“What is it like further ahead, mates?” asked Brown.

“Well, it is only just passable to the Normanby river from here. I don’t think you will be able to cross it with your packs. We had to swim it, holding on to the horse’s tails, and then we lost some of our little stock of food, it was a narrow squeak for us all, horses and men, but we are here, thank God, safe so far.”

Brown gave them a small tin of beef essence, and a few ship’s biscuits that he had brought with him. The gratitude of the poor hungry fellows was pitiful to see, then they offered us some of their hardly won gold for it, which we promptly refused.

“No, no, mates,” said Brown. “You chaps have earned and suffered enough for that. Keep it, and take care of it, and may you live to enjoy it.”

We camped all together that night, after sitting yarning for some hours, and when we had all eaten a very hearty breakfast we separated, each party going on its way, like ships that pass in the night, never to meet again.

Our track that day was very bad, just slush and mire, the horses at every step sinking up to their knees. We were ready and expected to meet with hardship on the road, but to realize the suffering to man and horse dragging themselves along that quagmire is better felt than described. Every moment we were afraid of them breaking down, and when about two p.m. we got on a stretch of solid ground, we pitched our tent, and gave them a good rest. So far we had not seen a living bird or animal since leaving Cooktown. Had we been depending on our guns supplying our larder with food we should have had to go short, fortunately for us we were not.

The next day it was terribly hot, and, to add to our discomfort, we had several heavy showers, which soon wet us through and through.

When

these stopped and the sun came out again our clothes steamed on us, just as though we were near a fire; this and the steam arising from the ground made us feel faint and feverish. We were also pestered with a common little house fly that swarmed around us and was a perfect nuisance. At sunset we felt we could go no farther, so pitched our tent on a patch of stony ground close to a creek, where there was good grass, so we hobbled the horses and let them graze.

We turned in early, for we were dead tired, and the mosquitoes were buzzing round in myriads, with their incessant cry of "cousin, cousin," when about midnight we were roused by a tremendous row near us, a peculiar indescribable noise was coming down from the creek, which we could not account for. We both sprang up and seized our guns, but the night was pitch dark. What it might be we did not know, we did not go out, but remained in our tent on the defensive. Never had either of us heard anything like it; it was as one often hears, "sufficient to raise the dead." We began to wonder if we were surrounded by a mob of the blacks, who were lurking around us, or was it the spirits of those who had perished on this lone track, and who were trying to make us return to civilization, but whatever it was, it was awful and above all the noise could be heard quite distinctly--a piercing yell of pain, such as no human being or animal we knew could utter. Thinking to frighten the blacks, if it were indeed they, we shouted out to each other in different tones and names, to give them the impression that we were neither alone or unarmed.

When the welcome daylight came we Went in search of the horses. We could only find two, but on the bank of the creek, not far from the tent, was the forepart of our third horse. It was bitten off right under the forelegs, all the rest was gone. There on the ground and in the soft mud were the signs of a struggle, and the marks of some big body having been dragged towards the water. Close to the water were the

tracks of a huge alligator, and where it had come out of and entered the creek, a deep furrow had been turned up by its tail. This explained the noise in the night, it was the struggle and death agony of the poor beast, it must have been drinking at the creek and been seized by the alligator. This was a very serious loss to us, and made us feel quite disheartened.

We remained where we were until noon. Then crossed the creek and went on our way--our horses more heavily weighted than before owing to the loss of the packhorse--and at sundown we pitched our tent. Our fire was barely lighted to boil the billy for tea, when three men crawled up to the tent. We were so surprised, that for the moment we stood still looking at them, for they looked like scarecrows with their clothes hanging in rags upon them.

“For God’s sake mates, give us something to eat, we are starving, we have lost everything crossing the Normanby.”

“Aye, aye, lads,” said Brown. “Come up to the fire, and you shall share our meal. Have you come from the Palmer?”

“No, we could not get there. It is six weeks since we left Cooktown, and we are trying to get back. Our provisions gave out, and we could neither go forward or get back, owing to the district being flooded and impassable. Three days ago the strength of the river eased down a bit, and we managed to cross by strapping our bits of clothes, and the little food we had on the horses’ backs, then we got on their backs and forced them into the water, but the current was so great that they were borne down the stream, so we slipped off, and getting hold of the horses’ tails with one hand, we swam with the other. We managed to cross, but it was a desperate undertaking, and we were so done up that we were too weak to tie up the horses. We just lay where we landed and went to sleep. We never saw the horses again, and have not the slightest idea what has become of them. And now mates, we are stranded here, without a bite of food, and unless you can help us here we must

die; we can go no farther. What is it to be?"

"Well, strangers," said Brown, "my mate here and I were bound for the Palmer. We have had a tough job of it so far, and we have had quite enough of it. Hal a good meal, and rest yourselves well, and we'll all go back together."

The poor fellows could hardly find words to thank him. They ate a hearty meal, and washed it down with a good pot of tea, and very soon after were in a sound sleep.

Brown and I sat talking far into the night. To tell the truth I was not sorry he had decided to return, for with one thing and another, I had begun to ask myself whether the game was worth the candle, and seemed all at once to have sickened of the roaming about, and felt that the ups and downs of sea life were luxury in comparison to hunting for goldfields.

The following day we divided the stores between the two horses, and prepared to tramp back to Cooktown.

CHAPTER XXV

WE RETURN TO COOKTOWN

THE first day of our return journey we travelled as far as the creek where we had lost our horse the day before. The poor fellows we had rescued were completely done up, so Captain Brown determined to go along slowly, and so give them a chance to pick up their strength. Their names, they told us, were James Whitefield, Henry Bagly and Thomas Pain. Whitefield, it seems, had been on almost every goldfield in the colonies, and had three times been in possession of twenty thousand pounds worth of gold. According to his own account, which I afterwards verified, the man had not a friend in the world, or a relative living. He was utterly indifferent to worldly possessions, and after returning from the Victorian goldfields had spent, or squandered,

twelve thousand pounds in Melbourne in three weeks. A woman in Burk Street took his fancy, and he bought and furnished a house for her that cost him five thousand pounds, then, after living with her there for ten days, he grew restless and cleared out to the Charter Tower goldfields. He could neither read nor write distinctly, because, as he said, he had no use for either. The other two men were runaway sailors, who had been working ashore for twelve months at Brisbane before starting for the Palmer.

The following morning we swam the creek after firing our guns and shouting to scare any alligators that might be about. The creek was about two hundred feet across, and for about sixty feet from the south shore the depth was only about four feet, then the bed suddenly dropped and the current rushed very strongly until the north shore was reached, and there the landing was very bad as the scrub came right down to the water. The way we crossed was as follows: A small line was made fast to the after part of the saddles and stretched along each horse's back and a half hitch round its tail. The horses were then driven into the water, and at once began to swim across. Captain Brown and Whitefield hung on to the rope of one horse, and the other two men and I took the other. Before we started Brown told me to keep next the horse and watch it closely, and to keep my sheath-knife handy for fear the current might sweep it away. Brown's horse led, and we stood to watch it land. When about half way across Whitefield let go the rope, and with a swift stroke brought himself alongside the horse on the lower side, then he kept one hand on the saddle and used the other to propel himself. This eased the horse somewhat, and he got over fairly easily.

After they had safely landed, Brown called out to me to ease all weight off the horse. We started, and I swam alongside the horse like Whitefield had done. The other men held on to the rope with one hand and swam with the other, and we got along first class until about fifty feet from the other side, when I felt my feet touch something, and my heart came into my mouth. The next minute the horse seemed to be jerked backward, and terrified he began to plunge, snorting and neighing. Then

I heard Whitefield sing out:

“Cut the rope! Cut the rope!”

I drew my knife, and while holding on to the saddle with my left hand, reached over and cut the rope near the saddle, in my haste cutting a gash in the horse’s back. At the touch of the knife, and with the strain from behind relieved, the horse plunged ahead, and in a minute we landed. I looked round for the other men, but they had gone under.

“Whatever was the matter, Brown?” I asked.

“Well I don’t know,” he replied. “We saw the fellows go under, and saw the horse floundering, and Whitefield called out cut the rope, and if it had not been cut at that moment, the horse would have gone under, and you, too, I expect.”

“But what do you think took them under?” I persisted. “We were going along all right at first. Do you think it was an alligator, Whitefield?”

“Oh, no,” he replied, “if it had been he would have gone for the horse first. I think there must be a dead tree, or a snag down there, and they must have struck it and been drawn down in the eddy. They are dead enough by this time, anyhow.”

“But good heavens, mates, it’s awful,” said Brown, “to think we all had breakfast together, and now two of us are dead. Were they friends of yours, Whitefield, you seem to take it pretty coolly if they were?”

“No,” he replied, “I didn’t know them. We met on the road over the Normanby river, and beyond their names, I know nothing about them, except that they had been sailors. They were jolly good mates--I know that much, anyhow. As to my taking it coolly, well, mates, my fussing about it would not bring them back, it may be our turn next, we are not in Cooktown yet. I expect they suffered less in that last lap of their race in life, than in any other part, and by this time they’ll have

learnt the grand secret.”

“Well, look here,” said Brown, “spread the tent and make some tea, and I’ll go along the bank and see if there is any sign of their bodies washing up.”

Whitefield and I soon had the tent spread, and the tea made. The horses were hobbled, their loads taken off, and they were turned out to graze. There was not much grass in the place, but a small shrub that grew in abundance they ate freely of and seemed to enjoy. Strange to say, although all our stores had been in the water there was not much damaged. The two small bags of flour I thought would have been ruined, but they were not. The water had only formed the flour into a cake on the outside, but the inside was all right.

When the billy was set on to boil I strolled along the bank to meet Brown, whom I saw was coming back. When I was close to him I suddenly espied, about twenty yards from the edge of the river, a bundle tied up with a stick through it, as though it had been carried over a man’s shoulder. I walked towards it, and Brown, seeing it too, walked over towards it. He gave it a kick with his foot, and the next minute was on his knees untying it.

“Some Johnny’s swag,” he said, as he opened the bundle.

The covering was a piece of tent duck, inside it were a pair of socks, and a wool shirt, both filthy dirty, rolled up inside the shirt was a piece of canvas, which had apparently been the sleeve of a canvas jacket. Both ends were tied with a strong grass like flax, and inside was about eleven pounds of fine gold, that looked just like birdseed.

“Halves, Brown,” I said.

“Oh, no, not halves, mate,” he replied.

I drew my revolver and covered him.

“Why not?” I asked, my temper rising to a white heat at the sight of the gold.

Brown smiled:

“Put back that revolver,” he said, “you mad-brained young beggar. What about the other chap shan’t we give him a bit, he needs it just as much as we do.”

“Oh, yes,” I replied, feeling a bit ashamed, “I agree to that.”

So we shared it out, five pounds each for Brown and me and one pound for Whitefield. He thanked us, and said he had no claim to any share, as he was only a stranger, and we were old mates. Who he was, or what had become of the owner of the swag will never be known. It was evident he had come from the diggings and had safely crossed the river. Perhaps he was another of those without food, who became exhausted, went mad, under the broiling sun, and had wandered off, or he may only have lain down to sleep and during the night had been seized by one of the alligators, which were very numerous in the Normanby at the early stages of the gold rush. The truth will never be known.

After we had eaten a good feed of damper and tea, we caught the horses, loaded them up and continued our journey. It was terribly rough the first few miles. The track was just a spongy quagmire, into which we and the horses sank knee deep and could hardly pull our feet out again so great was the suction. And every now and then the poor beasts would look pitifully at us, as they bravely tried to get along. However, just at sunset, we found a pitch of dry ground and rested there for the night.

The following day we got along a little better, but our stores were getting very low, and the sky began to look very threatening, and the next morning we were up and off at daylight, but we had only gone a few

miles when the storm burst over us, and the rain came down in sheets. We spread the tent, but it leaked like a sieve, while the thunder

and lightning was awful. We were soon wet through to the skin, and everything else we had was in the same condition. We were afraid to let the horses stray for fear of losing them altogether. All night the rain came down in torrents, and when daylight came the whole face of the country was a sheet of water;

“Pack up, lads,” said Whitefield, “we must get away from here before the floods come down, and then we shall get bogged and that will be the end of us. I’ve been through that once, and had to shoot as good a horse as a man need wish for, he was slowly sinking in the bog. I could not get him out, and the pitiful look in his eyes as he sank deeper and deeper was more than I could stand, so I just ended his misery by putting a bullet in his brain, so let’s get on while we can.”

We managed to make a pot of tea, for we had very little else by now, and started off again, but what a journey! Every hole and hollow was full of water, and first one animal and then the other would stumble into them, both man and beast, I think, had the roughest time of their life that day, for at the best of it we were nearly up to our knees, and sometimes a good bit above them. At sundown Brown wanted to camp, but Whitefield urged us to push ahead until we reached more solid ground. After a few miles of this quagmire, which seemed to get worse, and when it was near midnight, we came up to some bushes or scrub; we found the ground was a little higher and, though still wet and sloppy, we felt we could go no further, so here we camped for a few hours’ rest.

At daylight we found, to our surprise, that we were near a camp of men making for the Palmer. There were quite twenty of them, and they seemed to be well supplied with stores and horses, in fact, they looked the most likely and best equipped party that I ever saw on the way to the goldfields. They had two light-built carts, made specially for that purpose. These carts were four-wheeled, of light, tough material, the seams were well puttied and painted and over all the outside was a cover of strong painted canvas, with two cane wood runners underneath.

When crossing the rivers, the horses were taken out of the shafts, and the harness was put into the cart with the stores, the horses would then swim over to the other side, taking the end of a long line with them. On landing, the other end of the line was made fast to the cart, and the horses who were on the river bank easily pulled it across, thus keeping the stores dry. It was a capital idea and had been well thought out, and would answer its purpose well. They also had with them

a powerful dog of the Newfoundland breed that had been trained to swim

across the creeks and rivers with a light rope. The party were prepared for any emergency that might offer itself, and their outfit must have cost a good sum of money. When Whitefield saw them he offered to go and assist them for his food, until they arrived at the diggings. Such was the fascination that the goldfields held for this man. The party readily accepted the offer of his services, and he joined them at once.

After watching the party start off, we also continued our journey, and arrived in Cooktown twenty-four hours later. Many were the enquiries made of us as to the state of the roads and prospects of reaching the Palmer. There were still hundreds of men waiting in idleness at Cooktown for the rainy season to pass. The place seemed worse than when

we left it, for wherever you turned there were the loafers hanging round in scores. Brown was able to dispose of his horses and tent for forty pounds, clearing ten pounds by the deal, for horses were scarce and dear, and he might have got more if he had stood out for it. We sold our gold to the bank and received from them cash and notes to the value of two hundred and ten pounds each. Then we put up at a second class restaurant and that day I posted a money order, value one hundred and fifty pounds, to a friend in Sydney, to bank for me until I came back, and in the event of my death it was to be sent to my mother in Liverpool, and Captain Brown posted a draft to his wife at Newcastle, New South Wales. It was not safe by any means to have it known about the town that you had any money on you, especially after dark, as there were plenty of men in Cooktown at that time who would

have cut your throat for half-a-crown, and think themselves well off to get that much.

CHAPTER XXVI

A TRIP TO THE CANNIBAL ISLANDS AND CAPTAIN BROWN'S STORY

WE stayed together in Cooktown for a couple of weeks, and then Captain

Brown was offered the command of a small vessel trading between Cooktown, Townsville, and the Solomon Islands, sometimes calling at Port Moresby, New Guinea. He at once offered me the berth of mate in her, and I gladly accepted, as it was quite a new part of the world to me, and just what I wanted. The "Pelew" was a smart little schooner of a hundred and fifty tons, could sail like a water witch, and was a right staunch little craft. We shipped three deck hands, one a young Danish seaman, who had cleared out from an English ship at Brisbane, and two Kanakas. The Dane was a smart, active young fellow, his only drawback being that he could not speak a word of English, but it was evident he would soon learn. The Kanakas were two splendid types of the

Solomon Islanders, they were sharp, intelligent men and could speak "pigeon" English. In their younger days they had been slaves on a Queensland sugar plantation, but for the last two years they had been on one of the missionary schooners cruising among the Pacific Islands. They took life very merrily, and were always laughing, no matter what had to be done--they got some fun out of it. Work was no trouble to them, and when there was no work going on they would wrestle with each

other, tumbling each other about until the perspiration rolled off them, but they never lost their tempers over it, but would finish up with a hearty laugh. Sometimes they would get the young Danish sailor to wrestle with them, but they could do just what they liked with him, he was muscular and strong, but they were slippery as eels, and twisted and twirled as though there was not a bone in their bodies, and

always slipped out of his fingers before he could get a grip on them. It was great fun to Captain Brown and me to see the Kanakas, Tombaa and Panape, trying to teach Neilson, the Dane, to speak English, and Neilson trying to teach them Danish. That seemed the only thing they could not get any fun out of. At last Panape gave it up, and would not have it at any price.

“That no tam good,” said he, shaking his head. “Good fellow white man--speak Englis’--no that allee samee you. You no takee allee same good fellow captain--good fellow, mate?”

“No,” said Neilson in English.

“You no tam good, then,” said the Kanaka. “All good fellow speak Englis’. Me good fellow--me speak Englis’. Tombaa, he good fellow man, too--he speak allee samee missiony man, he teach us to say prayer to ‘Big Fellow Master’ (God), prayer belong sleep, prayer belong get up. Tombaa you speak white fellow commandments.”

I drew nearer to them, anxious to hear a Kanaka’s version of the ten commandments. Tombaa stood up, and throwing his chest out like a proud turkey cock, he delivered the following version:--

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN KANAKA.

I. Man take one fellow God, no more.

II. Man like him God first time, everything else behind.

III. Man no swear.

IV. Man keep Sunday good fellow day, belong big fellow Master.

V. Man be good fellow longa father, mother belonga him.

VI. Man no kill.

VII. Man no take him mary belonga 'nother fellow man.

VIII. Man no steal.

IX. Man no tell him lie 'bout 'nother fellow man.

X. 'Suppose man see good fellow something belonga 'nother fellow man, he no want him all the time.

I was much amused at their interpretation, what it lacked in length was made up by the clear definition of the meaning of the ten commandments, and these two lived up to it.

We left Cooktown with a general assortment of cargo for Townsville, and a few deck passengers. The wind being fair and the weather fine, we made the passage in fifty-four hours, anchoring inside Magnetic Island. Our cargo and passengers were soon landed, and the schooner loaded for Port Moresby, New Guinea. The cargo consisted of cloth, prints, calicoes, ribbons of all sorts and colours, tobacco (horrid stuff), spirits, axes and various joinery tools, etc., and some agricultural implements. We also had four passengers--German officials--going to the German settlement, north-east New Guinea.

We left the port at sunrise. The weather was fine, one of those lovely tropical days when the sky blends its prismatic hues and the easterly breeze, as it whistles through the shrouds, brings new life and energy into one's veins. The sea all around was covered with silver-crested waves and as the little "Pelew" cut her way through the sparkling waters she sent them like showers of jewels along her painted sides. What a joy it was to me to be once more on the ocean, to feel once more the motion of the vessel beneath my feet, and to quaff the salt breeze that was like the wine of life. We had a delightful passage,

but owing to the numerous reefs and shoals we were kept constantly on the lookout. These seas require the most careful navigation, and I was surprised to find that Captain Brown seemed quite at his ease among the reefs, although, when I mentioned this and asked him about his life in these regions, I could never get any very definite answers from him. However by putting two and two together, from his chance remarks, I came to the conclusion that he had been what is known as a “blackbird catcher,” an “island scourger,” a “dealer in living ebony,” or a “sandlewood thief.”

We made the passage to Port Moresby in five days. As soon as we anchored in the bay three native crafts came off for our cargo, the agent who was in the first boat seemed half a savage himself, and had a most repulsive face. Captain Brown gave orders that no one was to leave the ship on any pretext whatever, except the German passengers, and they did not seem to like the job either, but that was what they had come out for. No natives were allowed to come on board. Their appearance was not very inviting, they were quite naked, with the exception of a strip of pounded bark or cocoanut fibre round their waist, their woolly heads were decked with shells and tufts of grass, while round their necks each had a necklace of shark’s teeth. Though fine, well-built, powerful looking fellows, their features were not what we should call handsome, as their foreheads are low and retreating, the face broad, the cheek-bones prominent, the nose flat and the lips thick. We heard that there was an English missionary living amongst them and doing a good work.

After delivering what goods we had for the store-keeper, we received orders to proceed to Gaurdalcana in the Solomon Islands, and deliver the balance to the store-keeper there.

Captain Brown then told me that the natives of the Solomon Islands were cannibals, “so you had better be careful while we are amongst these islands, and,” he continued, with a sly twinkle in his eyes “you have to be very cautious in dealing with them, for they are very partial to

roast sailor. I had a terrible experience on one of the islands some years ago. I was in a smart little brig, cruising among the Islands. We were out on a blackbird (native) catching expedition. We sailed into the bay at the south-east point of San-Christobal. The brig 'Carl' of blackbird notoriety, had been there a few times, and after getting a number of the natives on board to trade as they thought, they had been invited into the saloon, and their eyes were dazzled by the beads and toys and other things spread on the table. Unsuspecting of any treachery they stayed until the gentle rolling of the vessel caused them to ask with some surprise what it meant, by this time the ship was well under way, and fast leaving San-Christobal behind them. They tried to rush on deck, but found themselves covered with the rifles of some of the ship's crew, they were soon overpowered and made prisoners and put into the hold with others who had been lured to the vessel by the same device--all to be sold as slaves to the North Queensland planters--but we were not aware of this at the time.

"Well, as we drew up towards the head of the bay we suddenly grounded on a reef, and while we were rushing about backing and filling the sails, the natives swam off in hundreds and boarded the vessel on all sides. We let go the ropes and seized whatever we could lay our hands on to defend ourselves, but in a minute three of our men were beaten to death with clubs. The captain was aft by the wheel, and as soon as I saw the natives climbing over the rail I drew my knife and sprang aft near him, and together we fought like demons. But the copper-coloured fiends thronged round us, and one big fellow at last got a blow in with a club that laid the captain senseless on the deck. But his triumph was short, and mine too, for I ripped him open with my knife, and the next minute was knocked senseless on the deck myself. When I came to, I

was on the floor of a hut on shore, trussed like a fowl, with my arms and legs bent behind me and lashed together. I struggled and twisted to get my hands free, but it was no use, I could not do it. I raved and shouted for some one to come and put me out of my misery. At last, as if in answer to my cry, one of the women came and looked in, and

seeing me struggling, she picked up a club, and smashed me on the head with it, and again I became senseless. The next thing I remembered was being rolled over and over and my flesh being pinched by two or three natives. After jabbering among themselves for a few minutes they left me, and directly afterwards I heard the captain's voice shouting not far off, and a lot of jabber among the natives. I could not see what was going on, but I knew that they were taking the poor fellow to kill and roast him. I tore at my bonds, until the lashings cut into the flesh. Suddenly a horrible yell burst on my ears, and I knew it was the captain's death cry. I shook like a leaf, and the perspiration rolled off me like raindrops. I was on the rack with torture, knowing full well what was before me, and that at any minute my turn might come. I swooned away with horror at the thought, to be brought to later by a burning stick being thrust into my face. I saw four of the devils were in the hut, and a whole crowd outside. They put a small spar through my arms, and two of them lifted me up between them, like a Chinaman carrying a load. As they carried me along towards a large fire in the middle of a clearing, near a large hut, like a meeting house, my stomach and face were scraping the ground, and, oh! God, what a terrible sight met my eyes. There just in front of me was the roasting body of the poor skipper. He had been a bad devil in his time and many an islander had suffered at his hands, but they had got their revenge on him for it.

“The head man or chief now spoke to a big powerful savage, and the latter approaching me with a large knife, was about to plunge it into me to rip me open, when the head man, who was jumping about before me, suddenly fell forward on his face and lay still. The others looked on and shouted. Then some of the elder ones, seeing there was something wrong, walked up to the prostrate chief, and touched him. Finding he did not move, they turned him over, but he was dead. I thought they would fall on me at once when they realized this, but they only set up a great wail and beat their breasts with their hands. Then two of the old men spoke up, and all was quiet. After they had done speaking several of the men came to me, and I thought my last moment had come,

but, to my surprise, they gently untied my hands and feet. For a few minutes I was unable to stand, but as soon as I could, one of the old men picked up the spear and club of the dead chief, placed them in my hands, and pointed to the hills. I was not long in taking advantage of my freedom, and made tracks at once. I could hardly believe that I was free, and expected every minute to hear them coming after me.

“Why I had been spared was a mystery to me then, but I afterwards learned that they released me through some superstitious fear, and a belief that the spirit of their dead chief had entered into me, had I been so minded they would have made me chief of the tribe; this they tried to make me understand when the old man placed in my hands the spear and club belonging to the dead chief. It would have made no difference to me had I known, all I wanted was to put as many miles as possible between the cursed place and myself.

“I remained in hiding for a couple of days up among the hills, and, strange to say, I never saw a single native come near to the place where I was. Another thing I noticed in my wanderings was the absence of children. I don’t remember seeing a single youngster. As a rule there are plenty of them knocking about on most of these islands, so I came to the conclusion that this was an island where it is the custom for nearly all the children of both sexes to be killed by their parents, perhaps eaten, too. I lived on bananas, cocoanuts, and other fruit that grew in abundance, but my mind was still racked with fear lest the natives should come after me, and, after all, put me to death in the same horrible manner as my shipmates.

“On the third day, after having been given my freedom I found my way down to the coast. As soon as I got down to the rocks my heart leaped for joy, for there, just rounding the point, was a vessel coming close along the coast. I looked cautiously around and along the shore in both directions, but not a sign could I see of a single native. The schooner by this time was close in to the shore, and those in charge seemed to be scanning the coast closely. I shook with excitement, for fear the vessel should haul out more to the east before I could make

my presence known, but on she came like a seabird floating on the water, with her sails spread to the gentle southerly breeze. Then a new horror presented itself to my gaze, for right opposite to where I stood in the shelter of the rocks, two large sharks were gliding about among the gentle undulations of the sea, their dorsal fins standing up like knives, and cutting a ripple on the surface of the water as they moved along. When the schooner was about two miles off, I rushed out and dashed into the sea, swimming with all my might out to seaward to intercept her. I had only got about fifty feet from the shore when I heard several shots fired from the ship, followed by shouts from the beach. I swam out with all my strength, and my heart was gladdened and my hopes raised as I saw the schooner's head pay off towards me, and after swimming about ten minutes I was picked up and drawn on board, and the schooner was hauled out to the seaward.

“As soon as I had got my breath, I told the captain of the horrors that had befallen our crew; his face set grimly as I related the captain's death and my own narrow escape, and he asked if there were any of my shipmates still alive. I said I thought not, as the captain and myself seemed to be the only two brought on shore by those who had attacked us. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘we will put the ship on her course again, but I always have a look out for castaways near these shores. I know of several crews who have come to grief on that island. We are recruiting among the islands, and if you like I will put you on the articles and you can make this trip, or if we come across anything bound for Sydney way I will transfer you.’

“I decided to make the trip in the vessel. So we cruised about among the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands, and picked up, recruited, borrowed and stole fifty-two natives, who were kept in the hold and never allowed on deck only for a few hours each day during the time we lay off Townsville awaiting inspection by the sugar planters. Then we kept a strict watch over them you may be sure lest any of them should attempt to escape by jumping overboard and swimming ashore. We fed them up, too, and when several planters came on board, they soon engaged

the Kanakas, as they were all big, fine, strapping fellows. We got ten pounds for them, this sum being paid as advance money for their passage.

“I would never have anything to do with blackbird catching again,” he continued. “It is a foul, horrible, hellish trade, and the work done on some of those crafts that trade with the Fiji Islands and New Guinea, in the labour trade, is, to say the best about it, hellish.”

“No,” I remarked, as Captain Brown finished his story, “I should think not. I wonder if you ever ventured near again?”

“Not until now,” he replied, “I left the vessel at Brisbane and got a berth in a Sydney collier as mate, I made several trips in her along the coast, and when the diggings opened in Victoria the skipper left to try his luck, so I was given command. We made several very good trips to New Zealand and back, and I put by a bit of money. Then the Palmer diggings opened, and here we are now bound for the Solomon Islands again, but not blackbird catching, not if I know it. I hope we shall not have any trouble with the natives, however. Look here, Mr. Farrar, I think we had better see what firearms we can muster, and have them ready for use.”

I thought so, too, and on examining our stock found that we had two rifles, six muskets, four revolvers, one brass cannon on deck, and plenty of ammunition.

The weather was lovely as we sailed through the passage between the Bonvouloir Isles and the Island of Aignan. The natives of these islands are cannibals, and both fierce and cruel; this spot is dreaded by sailors, as many vessels have been wrecked, and both the living and the dead eaten, so we kept both a good distance off the shore, in case we got becalmed, and a good look-out for visitors. When we were passing Aignan Island, Tombaa came aft, and told me not to go too close in shore.

“By and bye, wind no more, plenty bad black fellow come off in canoe, and make fight white fellow too muchee, no belong longa time, ship go all the same here, black fellow come plenty--much corroboree--by-en-by white fellow no more. Black fellow eat em white fellow allee samee banana.”

“All right, Tombaa, we’ll keep a bit further out. But I don’t think the wind will die away before sunset.”

“Me watchee allee same you,” said Tombaa, as he walked forward.

We had a spanking breeze, and the little “Pelew” was racing along in fine style. The sky was clear as a bell and the sea nearly smooth with just a gentle ripple on the surface. We were sheltered by the island, as we sailed along under the lee.

At four p.m., Captain Brown came on deck, while Tombaa was at the wheel. Just after the watch was relieved, the wind suddenly fell dead calm, precisely as the Kanaka had foretold. The “Pelew” was then about two miles off the reef that skirts the island. The captain took his glass and examined the coast, and there, away on the starboard bow, could be seen several large canoes outside the reef. Orders were at once given to put a boat out, and tow the schooner further off from the land. I took the Dane and the two Kanakas into the boat, and pulled to the north-east for three hours. About half-past seven, as we opened out the east point, a strong breeze sprang up, so we took the boat in, and were soon clear of the island.

A few hours later the sky became overcast, and then a dense black, the wind moaned and shrieked, and over the darkness came a close network of lightning darting in all directions, like a spider’s web. Soon the sea rose higher and higher, pitching and tossing our little vessel about like a shuttlecock. We were snugged down to a close-reefed fore staysail, and the corposants that hung about the mast heads, had a weird, uncanny appearance. The little craft behaved splendidly, she shipped a lot of spray but no heavy water. All hands were kept standing

by during the night, but towards daylight the storm blew itself out, and the sky grew clear and calm again.

On the fourth day out we sighted Cape Hunter, and before dark we were anchored in the bay. The following morning the agent and the store-keeper came off with several large canoes, and the cargo was transferred to them. No one was allowed on shore and we took in about fifty tons of sweet potatoes, taro, bananas, sago and copra. I was very much surprised to see the splendid canoes built by the Solomon Islanders. They were without doubt well built and finely carved about the head and stern. I saw several leave the bay while we lay there, carrying fifty men, a large parcel of merchandise, and a lot of stores. They carry a large square sail, but in calm weather, as many as forty men can be seen paddling. These men are strong and well built and quite fearless, and I was told that two of these canoes were going to the New Hebrides Isles, quite five hundred miles away, and that they have a method of navigation by the stars that is only known to themselves. I was astonished, but I certainly should not have cared to risk my life in one so many miles from land.

The next orders were to proceed to Bourgainville and finish loading there. We were three days beating along the coast of New Georgia, passing west of Choiseul Island, around the south-east point of Bourgainville, and on our way to our port. We were no sooner at anchor than the trader came off in a canoe and told us we were not to land, nor allow any natives to come on board, as there had been some trouble with a trading vessel that had fired on some of the natives and killed several, and that they were in a great state of excitement and resentment because of this. We loaded some tons of cocoanuts, and some pearl shell, also a quantity of pretty grass matting. The trader came off with each lot, and I certainly think that I would sooner risk my life with the cannibals than with that individual. He was, without a doubt, the most villainous looking man I ever cast my eyes on, and they have not been a few.

We sailed for Brisbane on the second day, and reached it after a splendid run of eight days.

The owners were very pleased with the results of the trip, but were surprised that Captain Brown had not brought a few Kanakas for the sugar plantations telling him they were a good speculation.

“No, thanks,” he replied, “I have had enough ‘blackbird catching’ to last me my lifetime, those can do it as likes, but not me.”

CHAPTER XXVII

HOMEWARD BOUND

CAPTAIN Brown and I left the “Pelew” at Brisbane, he, because he did not care for the Solomon Island trips for the reason stated in the previous chapter, and I, because what I had seen and heard had satisfied any desire I had to visit those regions. We made our way to Newcastle, where Captain Brown had his home. Here I found letters awaiting me from England, which stirred within me a longing to see the old country once more. I had been away about eight years and seven months, and the strange part of this long absence was that I had promised those at home it should not be a long voyage, but circumstances, and my love of roaming had lengthened the months into years. I determined, however, that now I would go back, but before doing this I made up my mind to have a good time in Newcastle, and I did, for if you have money to spend, that is the place to get through it. For six weeks I went the pace, and had the jolliest time of my life, and spent my money like a real British sailor, or a fool, which was nearer the mark. I saw the Browns frequently, and parted from them with regret, for the captain and I had seen some ups and downs together, and he was a good comrade, one of the best. He smiled when I called to bid them good-bye, and told them I was going home to England.

“It’s about time you did, you mad-brained young beggar, at the pace you are going at you’ll soon be played out.”

“No jolly fear,” I replied, “so good-bye, good-bye, and good luck.”

The next day I engaged as second officer on the ship, “Tonquin,” bound for England, via San Francisco. The “Tonquin” was a smart double topgallant yard ship, and a fast sailer. She carried a crew of thirty-three hands all told. Most of these had been picked up in the colonies, as the old crew had deserted, for the gold-field rush was still on. They were a fairly decent lot of men. Captain McLellan was a hardheaded Scotchman, who hailed from Leith, and had been many years

in command, and was great on discipline, proud of his ship and his company, both of which he counted as second to none. The first mate, Mr. Brown, was a Glasgow man, who had for years been doing his best to

drown his brains in whiskey, and since their arrival in the colonies he had rarely been sober. When I reported myself to him on the following morning he was half-witted with drink, and instead of giving me full particulars about the ship and the work in hand, also the work in prospect, he simply said “all right, go and look after the men, and get the ship ready for sea.” I hunted up the third officer, Mr. Smith, and found him working like a nigger, and as black as the ace of spades. He was young and inexperienced, but willing, and not afraid of work, he had also plenty of go in him, and I found he had in him the making of a thorough seaman when he had got a little more experience. He soon showed me where all the sails, stores, etc., were kept.

All hands were set to work bending sails, reaving the running gear, and getting the ship ready for sea. We saw very little of the first mate that day, he kept in his room and was drinking hard. The next morning the captain came to me before going on shore and told me not to bother about him, as he would be all right when we got to sea--that was all right as far as he was concerned--but his work had to be done by Smith and myself.

The crew, under Dan Kelly the boatswain, bent all the sails before dark, and the captain coming on board just as we had finished,

expressed his pleasure and satisfaction at the good day's work we had done, and ordered the steward to give each man a good glass of grog. This was done, and all hands seemed satisfied with themselves and their surroundings. I told them to go and get a good night's rest, as we should haul out from the wharf at daylight, but somehow I felt in my mind that the captain had made a great mistake in giving them the grog while lying at the wharf.

The coal tips were working all night, and at six a.m., the last truck load of black diamonds was tipped into the hold.

"Now turn out you fellows," I heard the boatswain calling, as the steward brought my coffee to my room. "Now where are you, here show yourselves, you're mighty slack at turning out this morning."

Just then there was a knock at my door, and a voice called out, "are you there Mr. Farrer?" it was the boatswain.

"Yes, boatswain, what's the matter."

"Matter, sir, why half the blooming crowd has cleared out."

"The dickens they have," I cried as I ran along to the forecastle, where I found it was all too true. Rushing aft I told the steward to rouse the captain and let him know that most of the sailors had cleared out. Then, jumping ashore, I hurried up Hunter Street to the Police Office, and told the superintendent in charge, and received the information that he could give us no help until we took a warrant out against the men.

"But," I replied, "the ship is going to sail out to-day, and if the captain has to take out a warrant for each man, look at the delay it will cause."

"That's no business of mine," he replied, adding, "perhaps if you paid them better and fed them better they would not run away."

I made no answer to this remark, as I felt it was only too true in many cases, so returned to the ship to find Captain McLellan in a towering passion. Lines were run out to the departure buoys, and the ship hauled off.

“Shackel the starboard cable on to the buoy, Mr. Farrer,” the captain called out.

“Aye, aye, sir,” I replied.

This was done and the captain went ashore to see if he could have the men arrested, and if not, to try and get others to fill their places, so that the ship would not be detained.

About two hours after the captain had left, a large colonial barque came slowly down the river in full sail, outward bound with a fair wind. She was a perfect picture, as she slipped along on a strong ebb tide. Mr. Smith and I were admiring her, when we saw to our surprise five of our runaway sailors leaning over her side and waving their caps at us in derision as they passed.

“The dirty mean skunks,” said Smith, in a towering passion, and before I could say a word he had darted into his room, snatched up a revolver, and rushing along the deck to the nearest point of the receding barque, fired at the men waving their caps. Fortunately for him the shots fell short, and in half an hour she was outside the Nobbies, and bounding away toward New Caledonia.

It was very aggravating, but nothing could be done, so we had to make the best of it.

Shortly afterwards the boat returned with the captain and six sailors, all dead drunk, and lying like sacks at the bottom of the boat. Shangie Brown, as great a scamp as ever encumbered the earth was with them, to receive his share of the seamen’s advance. Two months advance at six pounds per month, each man received, but the boarding house master took

it for them, the money to be paid when the men were safely on board. A bottle of drugged whiskey was given to them in the meantime, and by the time they came to their senses they were well out to sea, and the boarding-house master was back in Newcastle with their two months' advance in his pocket.

"Get a slip rope on the buoy, and unshackle the chain," called out the captain.

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Dan Kelly, and soon had the cable off and shackled on to its anchor, and then all hands went to dinner. During that interesting meal, the sailors, as sailors will, got counting their numbers, and found they were short of four men.

"Look here boys," said Humphreys, a big lump of a fellow, who looked strong enough to do two men's work with ease, "I'm not going out in this hooker short handed, there's plenty of work in her for the lull complement of men, and we ought not to go out without the other four, let's go aft, and see the old man."

At that moment Captain McLellan was on the poop talking to the ship-chandler, whose boat was alongside.

"Well, what do you fellows want," he said, as the men came to a standstill near the break of the poop, "what's wrong now?"

"We're short-handed, sir," said Humphreys, touching his cap, "and we won't go in the ship until you get four more men."

The captain looked at them one by one as they stood there just at the break of the poop.

"Oh, you're not going, aye. Ah, well just step into the cabin every one of you, and I'll read you the ship's articles, and perhaps you will be satisfied then."

As the crowd marched stolidly into the cabin, and the captain whispered to me, as he turned to follow them, "Get the end of the tug's rope on board and tell him to go ahead at once. The pilot will look after her." While the captain detained the men in the cabin, the ship was cast off the buoy, and the tug pulling for all she was worth, soon had her outside the entrance. When the sailors came out of the cabin they realized that they had been tricked, then they showed fight, at least the leaders did, but that was soon taken out of them, and the few that were sober and willing, loosed and set the square sails, and when the ship had a good offing, the tug was cast off, and blowing her syren as a good-bye salute, steamed back to Newcastle, and we stood out on our long run to San Francisco.

Very little work was done except trimming the sails during the first two weeks, the wind and sea were so boisterous, and the men gradually fell into their proper places. Nothing out of the ordinary ship's life occurred on the passage, and after a run of fifty-seven days we arrived in San Francisco.

However, as soon as the anchor was down, a crowd of Yankee boarding house runners and crimps boarded us. Many of them even went aloft and helped the men to furl the sails. Of course each of them had the usual flask of whiskey in his pocket to help their persuasive powers in getting the men to clear out of the ship. It was simply useless we officers ordering them ashore from the vessel, they just laughed at us and tapped the revolver in their hip pocket. My blood boiled, and had it not been that Mr. Brown came along just then, and advised me not to put myself out over the dirty low beasts, I should have tumbled a few of them over the side, regardless of what followed.

"Don't fash yer-self laddie," he said, "they're not fit for a decent man to dirty his hands on, and the men are aye like a lot of silly sheep when they've had a glass o' their poison into them, a'll nay call it by the decent name o' spirits for it isna ony such."

We hauled into the wharf during the day, and the following morning all that was left of the sailors were Jack Anderson, Charlie Partridge, and Charlie Hogg, they had all cleared out.

The stevedores started at once to unload the coal, soon we were up to our eyes in coal dust.

For a fortnight I explored and saw all the sights good, bad, and indifferent that were to be seen in that go-a-head city of the west. I found too that it was very risky work to pry into the dark corners of this revolver-ruled city of palaces, prisons and hells, and many a narrow shave I had in seeking to know Who's Who and What's What.

At last our coal was all out, and the ship cleaned down, and thankful we were to see the last of the coal dust washed off the ship and ourselves. We then received orders to proceed up the river to Vallaya to load wheat for the United Kingdom. Although we were so short-handed

the trip up to Vallaya was a treat. To describe the scenery would require the pen of a poet and an artist, for it is without rival in being the finest in the world.

The cargo was all waiting for us stored up in the great sheds near the wharf, and we were no sooner alongside than the carpenters came aboard and commenced lining the ship fore and aft with boards covered with Gunnie Sheeting. It was contract work, so you may be sure no time was lost over it. The following morning the grain was pouring into the hold from the elevators in a steady stream, and one could almost see the ship sinking lower and lower into the water, as the grain poured steadily in, like water down a spout, and in thirty-six hours from the time of starting, the ship was loaded. None of the officers or apprentices were allowed on shore at Vallaya. We were all kept too busy attending ship under the elevator shoots. I was disappointed at this, but it could not be helped, and on the third day the "Tonquin" was towed down the beautiful river again, and came to anchor in San Francisco Bay.

We found San Francisco en fête, as President Grant had just arrived from his tour round the world.

All the syrens, steam hooters, fog horns, ship's bells, and steam whistles in the district were clashing and clanging for all they were worth to celebrate his safe arrival.

The sky was lit up with rockets and fireworks, pandemonium reigned, and the whole city seemed to have gone mad.

The following day we filled up the vacancies in our crew, and in the company of five other clippers set sail for Liverpool. A good deal of speculation was rife as to who should reach the Channel first, and a good number of bets were laid amongst the various captains and officers.

The "Tonquin" as I said before, was a very smart sailer and Captain McLellan was just the man to get all the speed he could out of her.

The "City of Madrid," "Khersonese," and the "Mallowdale" all left San Francisco within a few hours of the "Tonquin," but during the long run of fourteen thousand miles, we never got a sight of each other after the first day.

We arrived at Falmouth one hundred and seventeen days after leaving San

Francisco, and got orders to proceed to Liverpool, this taking us seven days beating round to accomplish, and I arrived home just nine years from the day on which I sailed on the "John Kerr," so here I part from my readers, as the stone has once more rolled home, not to settle, oh, no, but should this have interested my readers, I have no doubt that the further rollings of this restless stone will be found in another volume.

FINIS

Transcriber's Note:

The publication used as the basis of this eBook contained several alternative and some now obsolete spellings that have been retained.

The spelling of place names has also been retained as published, however, Cookstown is possibly meant to be Cooktown; Tristan d'Acunha,

Tristan da Cunha; Wainmomata, Wainuiomata; Seatown, Seatoun; Haraka

Bay, Karaka Bay; Lower Hut, Lower Hutt; Sea of Marmora, Sea of Marmara;

Mitylene, Mytilene; Monserrat, Montserrat; Eucador, Ecuador; Matacamá,

Mayacama; Infiernello bridge, Infiernillo bridge; Sacremonta Railway, Sacramento Railway; San Bartolome, Bartolomé; Smythe's Straits, Smyth's Strait; Ecclestone, Eccleston; McQuarrie and Macquarry, Macquarie; Sidney, Sydney; Southlands, Southland; Ducos Peninsular, Ducos Peninsula; Foveaux Straits, Foveaux Strait; San-Christobal, San Cristobal; Bourgainville, Bougainville.

Punctuation has been standardized; hyphenation retained as in the original publication.

The following appear to have been typographical errors and have been changed:

Page 11

which there is no excuse _changed to_

which there is no excuse

Page 13

and in the tussel _changed to_

and in the tussle

Page 23

just as the Almighty _changed to_
just as the Almighty Father placed

Page 33

climbing to the futtoch _changed to_
climbing to the futtock-shrouds

Page 43

corpusant lights were seen _changed to_
corposant lights were seen

Page 48

chief named Te Aroa _changed to_
chief named Te Araroa

Page 52

mollyhawks screeched through the rigging _changed to_
mollymawks screeched through the rigging

Page 55

said at the beginning, Scandanavians _changed to_
said at the beginning, Scandinavians

Page 70

of the s.s. "Bogata," of the Pacific Navigation _changed to_
of the s.s. "Bogota," of the Pacific Navigation

Page 93

took my sheath knife an _changed to_
took my sheath knife and

Page 102

some cooking utnesils _changed to_
some cooking utensils

Page 105

One of them, called Yunkque _changed to_

One of them, called Yunque

Page 106

flemish-eyes, splices, seezings _changed to_

flemish-eyes, splices, seizings

Page 123

I ever met with were the lima _changed to_

I ever met with were the llama

Page 124

the stone of the Incas, a marcusite _changed to_

the stone of the Incas, a marcasite

Page 125

“miradores” or carved wooden balconies _changed to_

“miradors” or carved wooden balconies

Page 125

revelry for three days and the “miradores” _changed to_

revelry for three days and the “miradors”

Page 129

contractor was Henry Meiggs, of California _changed to_

contractor was Henry Meiggs, of California

Page 132

horrible squarking noise _changed to_

horrible squawking noise

Page 133

With screeching and squarking _changed to_

With screeching and squawking

Page 160

meeting one of the Gambeta Indian _changed to_
meeting one of the Gambetta Indian

Page 183

then fitted up for a jury mast _changed to_
then fitted up for a jurymast

Page 190

growing in the Titree scrub _changed to_
growing in the Ti tree scrub

Page 193

Titree scrub that was too thick _changed to_
Ti tree scrub that was too thick

Page 203

stringy bark, tie tree and various _changed to_
stringy bark, ti tree and various

Page 210

wild horses, kangaroos and wallabys _changed to_
wild horses, kangaroos and wallabies

Page 211

of the mammalia which possess _changed to_
of the Mammalia which possess

Page 246

roll the two lower topasils _changed to_
roll the two lower topsails

Page 247

contiually going to keep her _changed to_
continually going to keep her

Page 249

pitchpine lower mast was put _changed to_
pitch pine lower mast was put

Page 272

on these were erected either corrurugated _changed to_
on these were erected either corrugated

Page 307

corrobberee--by-en-by white fellow _changed to_
corrobboree--by-en-by white fellow

Page 308

of sweet potatoes, tara, bananas, sago _changed to_
of sweet potatoes, taro, bananas, sago