

Nothing
to Drink.



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SHARKHEAD LIGHTHOUSE.—PAGE 5.

NOTHING TO DRINK.

NOTHING TO DRINK.

A Temperance Sea Story.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "BEST FELLOW IN THE WORLD," "JUG-OR-NOT,"

"HOW COULD HE ESCAPE," &c.



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NOTHING TO DRINK.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHARKSHEAD LIGHT-HOUSE.

“ And a stately house one instant showed,
Through a rift on the vessel's lee;
What manner of creatures may be those
Who build upon the sea ?”

HE light-house stood upon a reef of rocks running out of a northern coast, far into the sea. The place had gotten the name of the Shark's-head, from two long lines of rock which had proved yawning jaws of destruction to many a luckless ship and crew; here huge boulders rose up like jagged teeth, around which the waves were forever lashing into foam. On the extremity of the reef forming the lower jaw, a light-house had long been standing, tall and shapely, built solidly

of granite; it rose clearly against an opal evening sky, its summit crowned with an iron balcony, and the lamp reflectors blazing in the setting sun, so loftily held above water-mark, that this upper part looked like a diadem of filagree, set with glowing gems.

The tide was low and the sea was calm; the rocks showed above the water with broad reaches of firm sand, extending almost to the green line of the coast.

Time and tempest had battled sorely against the Sharkshead Light, and architects, keepers, and State authorities, had begun to doubt its security in periods of violent storms; therefore, opposite it on the upper line of rock, a new tower was rising. The sound of chisel and hammer, of trowel and pickaxe, had long echoed over the waters, and now the builders on the sea had raised the new tower higher than the old.

On the seaward foundation of the old tower hung a fog-bell weighing almost two thousand pounds, while above it was the

weight and machinery, which being wound up, kept it in tireless motion, clanging its note of warning through mist and rain. From the sides of the light-house swung two life-boats from their davits.

On the steps of the lower door, watching the ebbing tide, which slipping out of the shallows at his feet, left little sunset-dried pools in the hollows of the rocks, sat the light-house keeper. His snow-white abundant hair and beard, his keen eyes flashing out under frosty brows, and his immense frame, made him appear as a hoary Viking of the olden days. He was one of the few men who look physically and morally able to wield the hammer of Thor.

Over the face of the old man rested a placid smile, such as might have been beguiled from Thor by the graces of Freya; for out of a window that seemed high up, almost to the stars, bent the treasure of his age, his fourteen year old Margaret, singing. The clear sweet notes of the young voice dropped to the musing old man, as Margaret leaned from the highest

stairway window, her long light hair falling downward like a veil, and as she sang, she watched the workmen leaving their labors on the opposite tower, and a little boat that was now creeping out from the white sand line that held the emerald coast as in a silver ring.

Margaret had known no home but the Sharkshead Light. The fog-bell and the crashing waves had been her cradle music; the rocks with their fantastic grottos and tiny caves, had been her playground; the treasures of shells, crabs, lobster's claws and drift-wood had been her playthings; the sand-peeps and the gulls had been her confreres; as she grew older, a grim high capped old woman who cared for the household, had taught her to knit, sew, and sweep; the two lads now coming homeward in the little boat had given her instructions in fishing and rowing, and the light-house keeper himself had taken her lessons in hand, until the little sea maiden was apt in algebra, and could read her Cæsar glibly; and seated in those deep

narrow windows of the tower, conned with enthusiasm the abundance of books which the old man brought her from the world of men and cities of which she had heard, but had never seen.

A little, peaceful, sweet, pure-minded maiden, who had read of fashions and gay life, as one reads of fairy land, without expecting or desiring to get to it; to whom Valhalla was just as real as any opera house, who put the court on Ida, and theatres, on the same footing, who nightly said her prayers, looking out of her narrow iron-barred window to the great mysterious dome that bent over the sea touching the waters on every hand; and who thought she had gone far into the great world when she went to the village on the coast, to worship in the modest church, each Sabbath when it was possible for the boat to make the trip to land.

The chief desire of the light-house keeper was to cut himself off from men and the tumult and vexation of ordinary life. Tourists and picnic parties came out of the

Sharkshead now and then, and he treated them with a certain dignity and finish of manner, which suggested that he might have lived at some time in a very different estate than that in which he now seemed so firmly settled.

The schoolmaster and the clergyman loved to visit him; and then seated on the rocks, or the granite steps, the three entered into earnest discussion, not of daily trifles, but of abstruse questions of science, religion, or classic lore; and this grim old Norseman of the tower, for the time became the polished and accurate scholar.

These visits were his luxuries; in dress, in plain fare, and in abrupt speech, he was usually the ordinary light-house keeper, sternly holding himself to the customs of his present mode of life.

He had two sons, lads of fifteen and seventeen, who were now coming homeward in their boat: these two he had educated with the aid of those wise men on shore, the parson and the pedagogue; and now as the lads were growing into manhood,

the one weakness of their father seemed to develop itself. He could not face the necessity of sending them out into the world to win their way; he seemed struck with anguish at the thought of permitting them to leave his own protection, and could fix on no business which he was willing that they should follow.

Over this strange hesitancy the two chosen friends from shore had often reasoned. The boys and Margaret would see their parent and his counsellors wandering along the rocks in earnest converse, and the friends would argue and persuade, and evidently set forth the inevitable; and the white haired light-keeper would grow excited and distressed, and when his guests had left him, he would stand on some jutting rock, where the foam curled and dashed, and would say: "Breakers, dragons and monsters everywhere; forever waylaying the unwary and innocent on land and sea."

The lads were growing restless; energy and ambition and curiosity stirred within them; they were not, like Margaret, lapped

in a sweet content with their present home; it was a good home, but they must have a wider range; the narrow walls of that tower, and its gloom and chilliness, oppressed them; they could not depend on their parent always, and grow up to maturity there, three keepers to one light, living on one man's pittance.

Golden haired Margaret sympathized with her brothers' longings, and her father's reluctance. She would plead with the lads to be content in their innocent, loving, and comfortable home; and with the father to give them his blessing and let them go out into the world; while he and she waited patiently at the Sharkshead Light, and measured time by the boys' glad home-comings.

"Margaret," said Gifford, when she thus urged him, "how do you suppose old Jacob felt when Joseph's bloody coat was brought home to him?"

"Well, but father, all the other sons came safe; and Joseph was safe too, after awhile; you know he was not eaten up by a wild beast after all."

“Those were in the older days, when there were fewer dangers abroad. If you knew the world as I do, Margaret, you would shrink as I do from sending the boys into it. I tell you there are dragons more fierce than ever were fought by the old-time knights, now ravening abroad, and counting victims: there are snares and pitfalls at every corner, sirens to sing to destruction by every stream; never a turning, nor a public place, nor a mart of trade, where terrible monsters do not stand ready to devour the young men.”

“And the young women, father?” said Margaret, smiling at the old man’s excitement.

“God help us,” said Gifford in anguish, “I have seen them devour the young women too.”

“They shall not touch me,” said the girl, “for I will stay here with you at the Sharkshead.”

And thus it went on, and daily the lads got more restive, and already the oldest had chosen his business; he was bound to

follow the sea, which had been his friend, playmate, mentor, benefactor, everything, from infancy. Not only this, but he had rowed his boat, and sailed it too, this many years, and had spent some summer months with the fishermen of the coast in their vessels; and thus by nature and by education was become a pretty fair sailor.

Perhaps Gifford would have assented to the purchase of a fishing vessel, and his sons might have followed fishing for a living, but they wanted something better than that; for they had been passably well educated, and Hal, the elder, exhibited the refinement and elevation of mind which seemed to come betimes to his father as a reminiscence of the past: and Nathan had somehow learned that there was a power called money, that to a great extent bears rule among men, and that power he meant to possess; indeed, to such a pass had these lads come, that if the home had been less congenial, and the old Viking less a respected and loving parent, and the mermaid Margaret less a darling, Hal and

Nathan might have run away from home some moonlight night in their painted boat; when the monsters their father feared would almost to a certainty have devoured them.

But Margaret has ended her song and has come down from her tower; the workmen have left the new light-house; the painted boat and its rowers have come into the cove near where the fog-bell swings, and from her stone kitchen old Clara, high capped and austere, has hastened to make inquisition for divers packages of pepper, salt, meal, and dried fruit, for which she sent ashore.

The father and sons light the beacons among the reflectors; the sea breathes tenderly as a child asleep; sunset, and full moonlight contend for the empire of the waves, and the moonlight has gained sway; in its radiance sit keeper Gifford and his children on the rocks beneath the tower. Vessels sped by in the offing; gulls and wild duck had swept toward the cliffs to their nests; in the last red gleam

of sunset they had watched a pair of broad winged gannets, cut in alabaster against a flaming sky. The brothers and Margaret sang their favorite songs, their strong sweet voices ringing far and wide; and now as the shadows deepened, Margaret, who loved the fantastic, told them the legend of the twilight of the gods, of the triple winter, the rainbow bridge, the faded sun, and the new earth arising from another sea.

Life at the Sharkshead Light was now a very seaside idyl; a song sung also in the interludes of storms. One part of the wreck-making tempest the old man Gifford remembered well, and the other now slowly gathered on the horizon of their lives.



CHAPTER II.

GUESTS AT THE LIGHT.

"I pray you what is the nest to me,
My empty nest?
And what is the shore where I stood to see
My boat sail down to the west?
Can I call that home where I anchor yet,
Though my true love has sailed?
Can I call that home where my nest was set,
Now all its hope has failed?"

HAL and Nathan Gifford had found but few young companions in the fishing village near them on the mainland. The schoolmaster was a bachelor, and the minister's children were very young, while the lads of their own age were generally uncultured, and unversed in anything but the lore of fisheries; and Gifford on his lonely rock had managed to grace his children with such refinement of manner and thought as made them aspire to higher companionship. Sometimes in

warm summers, guests came to the village for sea air and bathing; and the acquaintance of these the Gifford lads made with the eagerness of youth; then were boating and fishing parties; swimming matches, and picnics; but truth to tell, the boys half resented the keen scrutiny wherewith their father favored every new comer.

“He looks at every fellow we bring here,” said Nathan to Hal, “as if we were not able to choose even a passing acquaintance, without getting into trouble.”

“Yes,” replied Hal to Nathan, for the two were out crabbing; “or as if every stranger were an enemy in disguise. If we were living in the past instead of now, we might imagine him one of those regicides, who, having acted according to their best light, were obliged to flee for their lives. Our father is very different from the people around here, and I do think he has some history, or connection with the outside world, that he does not like to have forced on him now.”

“But only an honorable one, I know!”

cried Nathan. "To be sure, only a very honorable one to him, for I don't suppose there is a more upright man alive than our father."

And now in this summer the lads had rejoiced to find several visitors at the village, and when they went to the shore for their lessons, they became quite intimate with a young fellow somewhat Hal's senior, who was lodging at the little public house, and whom father Gifford did not appear to value highly, when he was brought to stay over night at the Sharkshead.

"He talks," said the keeper, "far more about singing men and women, and actors whom he has seen, and parties and gay doings, than about his books, or his business—he is a trifling young man."

"He knows nothing about books, and has no business," said Hal rather shortly, for young men do not enjoy having their comrades continually called in question.

"But he is a very jolly chap for all that," said Nathan.

Strangely enough, one evening this jolly

chap, Nelson Levitt, came skulling over to the Light, bearing a letter to Gifford, who perhaps had not received such a document for two years. The letter was carefully studied, and discomposed him a good deal. He finally took Nelson by the elbow, and ostensibly leading him to examine one of the life-boats, had a little private conference; after which he wrote a letter and delivered it to him, and the visitor made ready to return to the village.

“I say, it’s all right, Governor, is it?” said Nelson, with cheerful impertinence, “and we’ll be on hand to-morrow, sharp and early, for our blow-out; and there’ll be no end of lobsters, will there? I mean to make the salad myself, and I’ll warrant you a prime article.”

From these parting words the Gifford lads understood that there was to be a picnic at the reef next day; but they were considerably surprised when their father handed them his purse, saying: “Be up by day-break, and go ashore to bring us the best you can find for our share

of this feast. There are friends coming; the parson, and the master, and one or two more."

The next day was fine; the faintest of breezes made the sunny reef deliciously cool, and curled the surface of the sea into little snowy ruffles, that melted away in the green water, and came out again as by enchantment; the wavelets had just motion enough to sing perpetual songs around the rocks; birds screamed overhead in ecstasy; ducks lay like tiny boats moored near shore; and doomed lobsters were seen lying on the hard sand, and in the shadows of the boulders, far below the surface, whence the exuberant Nelson drew them with a mackerel gaff, and rejoiced in his prospective salad. All went well until Nelson repaired about noon to a little cove, to unpack the provisions from his boat, accompanied by Hal.

Mr. Gifford followed them, intending to assist in carrying the hampers. As he stepped upon a large rock overhanging the tiny harbor, he saw the lads on the

sand beneath, unpacking; and Nelson had just taken from his boat a basket of champagne. This unusual appearance, Hal eyed askance.

"There's a prime article, my hearty," said Nelson, and catching sight of the old man above him, added, "I meant to treat you royally, Governor."

But unwonted wrath flamed in the old Viking's eye; he roared rather than spoke his answer. "Eighteen years I've kept the Sharkshead Light, and never in that time has a drop of liquor, fermented or distilled, landed on these rocks. Take that stuff away, my lad, or I'll fling it into the sea. There are laws for this reef, as for larger kingdoms, and I'll enforce them. Obey me, boy!" he shouted, as Nelson hesitated.

"There's no harm in life in it," muttered Nelson.

"There's the ruin of ten thousand lives in it!" cried the keeper furiously. Then commanding his passion, he said sternly, "Have you any more of that sort of provision in your boat?"

“Not a drop,” said Nelson angrily, “and this is no low-priced stuff from a country tavern; it’s the best going.”

“It is all as bad as poison can be,” said Gifford. “Take your choice, my lad; fling out those bottles as far as you can throw them, or put them in your boat, and row them ashore. Throw them out, I say!”

“But, father, are you not hard on a visitor?” remonstrated Hal. “We will none of us touch it—will not that satisfy you? Nelson could not have known your preferences.”

“Nothing will satisfy me,” said the old man, doggedly, “but prompt obedience to my unalterable orders.”

But here another voice interfered. A handsome middle-aged woman, leading a little boy by the hand, appeared on the rock behind Gifford, and looked down on the young men. She had come with the parson, and something in her manner to the keeper showed that they had met before. She now spoke indignantly:

“Nelson! How dare you?”

"Pshaw, aunt," said the sinner, flushing. "Just a little treat like this, of a prime article—there's no harm."

"But you know my opinions, and you owe respect to them. I gave you a list of what I wanted, and you were bound to adhere to it."

"But this is my contribution, aunt."

"You may throw it out, or row ashore with it."

"Suppose I leave it in the boat until we go?" said Nelson.

"No!" cried the keeper hotly. "Mrs. Wingate, that basket cannot remain here one half-hour."

"I understand you, Mr. Gifford—Nelson, obey me."

"And the salad, aunt—the lobsters are ready."

"I'll make the salad."

Nelson surlily put his basket of wine in the boat and stepped in.

"Shall I go and help you, now?" said Hal.

"Not with that thing aboard!" exclaimed his father.

“Really, father!” cried Hal, half-angrily, “you are too particular.”

Obedient in act, if not in spirit, Hal set himself to carry the parcels left on the sand to the place selected for the feast. Mrs. Wingate went to a sail-cloth shelter which had been set up near the tower, and busied herself in the preparation of the salad, and Gifford followed her, to aid and talk; and as he and this evidently accomplished woman stood under the rude awning, the old light-keeper reverted to the grace of days far past, and presented no unfavorable contrast to his companion.

“Have you never told them, Mr. Gifford?” she asked.

The old man shook his head.

“Was not this tower set up because there had been wrecks here?” she said with apparent irrelevance.

“Certainly,” replied Gifford, but he understood what she meant.

“Would it not be well for you to make your own past experience a light-house, to warn them off the reefs of danger?”

“But, Mrs. Wingate, consider what a bitter story it is.”

“The bitterer, the less likely are they ever to call you, as Hal did just now, over particular. True love does not shrink at any sacrifice for children. The time has come, Mr. Gifford, when you must send these sons out into the world to make their way. This rock is too narrow for such well-grown lads. Nothing will so arm them against the dangers which you dread, as the history of sorrow it is yours to repeat. It is far better for you to tell them this, and send them out strong in the memories of an innocent home, and in the possession of your blessing, than to hold them here, restless and chafing under a rule whose mainspring they cannot understand, and which seems to them over-strict and cautious.”

“I suppose you are right. I wish my sons were girls.”

“It is unworthy of you, Mr. Gifford, to waste your words in idle wishing. Of course, I came here on your account, or

rather on your son's. Our friend, Mr. Lawrence, has told me that Hal wishes to go to sea; and there no one can do more for him than I. Make up your mind to let Hal leave you soon, and keep Nathan a year or so."

Mr. Gifford only shook his head, and leaving the awning, paced up and down the adjacent sands. Hal came to carry the salad to the table, and the old man cried out, "Here comes your nephew, in his boat, Mrs. Wingate. I was afraid the lad would bear malice, and stay away."

"Nelson never bears malice—besides he knows he is wrong," said Mrs. Wingate; and now the shadow lately cast by Nelson's unlucky contribution seemed to have passed by, and the picnic on the reef went on right merrily.

As the sun was setting, the boats were made ready, and when Mr. Gifford handed Mrs. Wingate to her place, he whispered, "I will take your advice—at once, before my courage fails."

Mrs. Wingate beckoned Margaret, who

was standing on the sand, and the girl sprang lightly into the boat beside the lady. The guest clasped her in her arms, looked tenderly in her face, and kissed her several times. Nathan Gifford pulled his father's sleeve. "Look, quickly. Did you ever see such a thing? our Margaret is exactly like Mrs. Wingate. There, catch their faces close together and see the likeness: is it not strange, father?—and Margaret never was like us."

Gifford looked, but said nothing. The evening was warm, the light was already blazing on the tower, and Gifford calling his children about him on a ledge of rock away from old Clara's hearing, if she might chance to be about, said that he had something to tell them. He addressed Hal first. "My son, you thought me over particular to-day. Do you know that a large vessel was once wrecked on the Sharkshead, and thirty lives were lost, because a visitor had brought here a demi-john of rye whisky, and the two keepers became intoxicated? One of the keepers

had been a drunkard; the temptation left in his way revived his old thirst, and he drank deeply; the other, unused to alcohol, found it to him a powerful narcotic, and slept deeply; the fog-bell ran down, the lights burned dimly and expired; and full thirty stout hearts perished on these shoals that night!" Old Gifford's voice trembled.

"I have heard the story, father, and it *is* terrible; but that was before your time; it was whisky, and not champagne that was in fault; and among us there are none who would on any account touch strong drink; you have brought us up better than that; and really, father, I did think you hard on Nelson to-day."

"I can tell you a sadder story, which will justify me, even in your eyes, my son."

The word "justify," and the tone, touched Hal deeply.

"Why, father," he exclaimed, quickly, "you have a right to do as you please, and have no need to justify yourself to your children. We can trust you, sir."

"But my children are reaching maturity,

and an enlightened judgment may be better than a blind trust. I see, what you have long pressed on me, that the time has come for you to go out in the world on your own responsibility—and now I shall tell you a painful story, to make, if possible, temperance a firm, uneradicable principle of your souls; a thing in which you cannot be too solemnly in earnest. What would you think to hear that I, the old keeper of the Shark-head Light, have been Professor in a College?”

The boys started a little, looked at each other, and said nothing; the old man resumed sadly:

“Yes, and before that, when a very young and thoughtless man, I married a beauty and an heiress.”

“And what did she look like, father?” asked the girl, pressing closer to the old man’s side.

“Like you, my Margaret,” he replied.

“And she was not *our* mother?” said Hal, with a tremor in his voice; for he had, as a child, known some of his mother’s

kindred, and understood that the description "a beauty and an heiress," did not apply to her. The thought was painful to the young man.

"No, Hal, not your mother. She was one whom the world would have called in station far above your mother, and unfortunately she had none of your mother's sturdy principle, firm health, sound good sense, and noble, womanly heart. She came to me as lightly as a butterfly seeks a flower; I held her for a very angel; I saw no flaw in her; she loved gayety; she was extravagant, and had money to indulge her whims—she loved wine, and I drank it with her. We had three children, and she took wine, ale and brandy, calling it good for herself and for them; and physicians, whom I do not know that I can ever have grace to forgive, fostered the notion in her. Our eldest child was a son; the other two were girls. The eldest girl died of brain fever; I feel convinced that the disease was produced by too much of alcoholic stimulants. The younger girl, a

babe of two months old, was smothered—my unhappy wife having, when her mind was disturbed by wine, laid the child on its pillow upon its face, and covered it closely. That most unfortunate wife and mother, herself died a maniac in an asylum. My son grew to youth with an inborn passion for his mother's poison; in spite of all I could do, he drank to drunkenness from the time he was fifteen. His vice could not divide my heart from him; I loved him as David loved Absalom; his beauty and his genius were my pride. I followed him to lure him from every evil haunt; and I hoped against hope for the hour of his reform. In all the years that have passed since last I saw him, I have loved him none the less; and to-day if I knew where I might find him, or dared hope I could win him back to virtue, I would leave this peaceful home and go after him to the ends of the earth."

Gifford's voice broke down in sobs. At last Hal spoke.

"And, father, where is our brother?"

“God bless you for the name, Hal,” said the old man, “I cannot tell where he is, or if he is yet alive. At seventeen, in a fit of intoxication, he severely injured a boon companion, and fearing the penalty of the law, he fled from the country, and I lost him entirely. As for me, disgraced before all men, bereaved of my whole family, worn out with anxieties, I only longed to bury myself from men; to fly the places where the demon who had ruined my home and hopes is fostered. I came here to tend the Sharkshead Light. Here, after a year had passed, I married your mother, my boys; and here, while she lived, I spent the first peaceful and contented years of my whole life. There was no taint of the drink demon on her; she was a child of the sea, joyous and brave, and true of spirit; much younger than myself, one who asked no happiness that must be found outside of her own home; and the strangest question of my life has been, why one so good and happy, should die so young.”

“But,” said Margaret, softly, pulling at

the speaker's hand, "did you ever hear any more of your son?"

"Yes, child. He returned to this country, and went to his mother's friends in Maryland. There, in a short time, he inherited a considerable property by his grandfather's death, and immediately married. Of all these changes I knew nothing. It cut me to the very soul, when I heard that for years he hid from me, as from an enemy."

"And how did you hear it?" demanded Nathan.

"His wife was an elder sister of Mrs. Wingate. He soon exhausted his property in dissipation, and reduced his family to misery. His wife would not leave him, but they had a babe whom she wished to save from their troubles. She knew the story of my losses, and my devotion to my son; and her faithful heart bestowed the young child upon me. She entrusted the little one to Mrs. Wingate to bring here. It was on a sweet May evening that she came to me with the history of my long

lost boy; stating that he had gone off to St. Louis, and his wife had followed him. She brought you, my Margaret, a little nameless babe, and I gladly called you after that tender woman, who received you, a helpless infant, into her motherly arms, and cared for you as for her own sons, as long as it pleased God to bless us with her spared life."

The little group sat in silence—darkness was about them and on the waters, save the splendor of the beacon overhead, which fell in the glowing track far out along the sea, and the faint light of the foaming breakers rolling on that dangerous coast. Dash, and moan, and sullen complaint of the vexed waves was all the sound that came to them, save now and then the echo of some bell echoing faintly from the land.

"Do you wonder, my son, that when my whole life has been blighted and embittered by the bane of strong drink, I loathe and fear it unspeakably; that when a wife and a son have been dragged to ruin, and two children have found early death by its

means, I have regarded it as the great object of danger and terror for you; that I have feared to send you into a world where in unchecked license strong drink makes its daily victims? When sixty thousand human souls are each year driven along the labyrinth of crime, to sate the greed of this modern minotaur, must I not have fears for you? When I consider the dangers to which you will be exposed, I feel as if I must continue at every sacrifice to keep you in the safe shelter of this home on the reef. Never was the Sharkshead so dangerous to ships and seamen as the bar-rooms, and wine-shops, and the customs of many grades of society are to young men. One home has been destroyed for me; from the shelter of this home, which has been happier if humbler, than the first, I must soon send you out—and I do so with dread and trembling; for the siren of pleasure stands now where in other days Solomon says Wisdom stood; she is ‘at the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths: she

cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors.' With wine and strong drink thousands of young men are beguiled to their destruction, and thousands of young women as well; and those who have had their hearts wrung as mine has been, fear and wonder, and cry out; and other men are silent, and shrug their shoulders, and saying, 'Every man for himself—let the foul wrong go on.'"

"But, father," said Margaret, "is there so much of this dreadful evil in the world?"

"Why, child, in some single cities there are not less than five thousand liquor saloons. In some places they stand as thickly as eight in every mile's length. In a year the average ruin occasioned by strong drink is one hundred millions of money lost directly and indirectly to the state; ten thousand children sent to the poor-house; thirty thousand deaths, besides one hundred suicides; fifteen thousand imprisonments; one million of money, private loss by fire and robbery; ten thousand widows, and one hundred thousand

orphans. Did ever all the destroying shoals and storms, and seas, work such havoc in a year? yet men build light-houses and signal stations on every coast; and have fog-bells and beacons, and pilots, and storm signals, and life-boats, and wrecker's houses; and cry out of the pitiless sea. So loud is the wail of humanity that has gone up because of the sea, that John, unfolding to all the world the glory of the eternal home, comforts the sad hearted with the promise, 'There shall be no more sea.' And yet this sea of poisonous fire, like nothing else than the surging flames of the pit of destruction, devours souls and bodies daily; and law and religion stand by, alike powerless to save."

"O, father," cried Nathan, "there are laws in many states; I have read of them, and how they come down on the liquor sellers and punish them grandly. And there are Christian people working hard to put an end to the wrong; and the temperance societies, father, these are all setting up light-houses and signal stations

on the dangerous coast. You don't give them their due."

"There must be a power in religion, father," said the soft-voiced Margaret, "or what hope would there be at all? Religion is the only help of man in his extremity."

"I was not speaking of religion as a principle, for that is the Michael of the soul, which can slay dragons; but I was speaking of religion as an organization among men, which seems to exert so much less than its legitimate power. I have doubtless spoken as if I undervalued these many agencies for combating evil; but I do not do so in my heart. But when I look at my own sorrows and ruin, and the tremendous loss of other men every year, I feel as if our wrongs were a mountain, and our helpers were pigmies."

"But there is One for us, stronger than all," said the girl.

"My Margaret," said the old man, "you rebuke the feebleness of my faith. My sons, never feel that intemperance is an evil to be trifled with."

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE LIGHT WENT OUT.

"But if it fell, then this were well,
That I with it should fall;
For my part, I have built my heart
In the courses of its wall.

Ay! I were fain long to remain,
Watch in my tower to keep,
And tend my light in the stormiest night
That ever did move the deep."



HE conversation of Mr. Gifford had made it evident that he was about to yield, however reluctantly, to the desire of his sons to set out for themselves in the world; and over all the near-lying years of labor and disappointment, the buoyant young hearts leaped to seize the end—success. They did not yet know that more than half the record of the world is—failure. And yet the story they had heard, had given them a new sympathy with their old father: they under-

stood a little of what he had suffered, and they felt more than ever loath to cause him one moment's pain. Hal, eager as before to be up and doing, longed to propose to go to New York to look for some employment on a steam-ship, but still delayed to express his wish.

He and Nathan had been fishing one evening, a few days after the picnic, and were spreading their net to dry on the rocks, when their father came to them from the tower. He began to speak hastily.

"Hal, lad, Mrs. Wingate's husband is Captain of the steam-ship Rona, which sails between New York and Havana; and Captain Wingate is willing to give you a berth as purser, if that will suit you."

"Suit me! O, father, isn't that tip-top?"

"And what am I to do?" cried Nathan, anxiously.

"You would not rob the old man of both his sons in a day, would you, Nathan?" said his father, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder: "you can wait a year; and then, who knows but Hal may be able to get

you a place on ship with himself? You need him to steady you, Nathan."

"O now, father," complained the boy, "think how lonely it will be here for me, without Hal."

"And think, how would Margaret and I would get on without either of you. Content yourself, Nathan, you cannot leave me this year; beside, the Rona has now only room for one. I shall see," he added, as Nathan scowled angrily, "how fit you are for the exact obedience of ship life, by the cheerfulness of your submission here."

"And, father," asked Hal, "when am I to go?"

"In a week from now, Mrs. Wingate starts for New York to meet the Rona, and expects to make a trip in her; you will leave at the same time."

"So soon!" Hal's heart sunk a little, as he looked at the white towers glistening in the sun on either reef; as he marked the fleets of fishing vessels in the offing; the clear bright dome of the sky, stooping over that glorious, sparkling, shining sea; and

then he turned to the green line of coast behind him, and gave a sigh for fair maid Margaret, for the white haired sire, even for shrill-voiced, kind hearted Clara, the servant.—“So soon!”

“Ay, ay, the sooner the better, *I* say,” shouted Nathan, who chafed under his disappointment, and had not yet come to the pain of parting. A more truant spirit than Hal, one who needed a sharper discipline of life to strengthen him, was Nathan Gifford; little dreaming now in his restlessness and anger, that days should come, when, in an agony of heart-sickness, he should long after those twin towers that rose above the Sharkshead reef.

Those last days slid quickly by, and the very last evening came, before Hal was to leave his home. At this time the great anxiety and sorrow of their father poured itself forth to his children, in passionate warnings, and pleadings with them to avoid strong drink in every form; to shun the tables where it is placed, the glittering shops where it is sold; the plea of health

that sometimes urges the poison on the resisting; the parties, the card-tables, the theatres, around which the wine cup is passed—of all these the father warned his children.

“Now, father,” said Hal, “I mean to write a pledge, here in our family Record, and we will be a little Temperance Society in ourselves; you, sir, shall be President, and shall have authority to make all the rules; Margaret shall be Secretary, and keep the record of our faithfulness and prosperity; and I’ll copy the pledge on the inside of the cover of each of our pocket Bibles, and we’ll know then what we have set our hands to.” Hal took down the large Bible, and began to write. The father set his name first, after a careful reading of the pledge, and a silent moment that might have passed in prayer. Next, Nathan grasped the pen, crying in a reckless way:

“Here goes, for a flourish!”

“Stop, son!” exclaimed his father, catching his arm. “You have not read what

you are about to sign; and this is no mere flourish of penmanship, but a very solemn pledge, which you should enter upon, if at all, in earnest desire for heavenly help to keep it faithfully."

"Why, I know it's all correct if Hal wrote it, and you signed it," said Nathan, reading it carelessly.

"But the question is, whether you can expect to keep it?"

"O, I can keep that like a brick," said Nathan, writing.

"Now, Clara," said Hal, after Margaret and himself had set down their names.

"A temperance pledge?" said Clara, studying it for some while. "Well—cold water's done me for a steady drink this fifty years, and I reckon I can keep on with it till I die. It's neither Scripture sense, nor common sense to drink whisky—Scripture sense and common sense go together in my experience. Here's my idee—You put a deadness into yourself when you put in alcohol or any stuff that is fermented. Folk may call it stimulin and preservin,

and revivin, and what they like, but I know its *deadness*. I'll tell you how I know it. Things have got to go to decayin before they get to fermentin. If 'twould pizen you to eat spoiled meat, aint you ashamed to eat spoiled grain and apple-juice. All the world can't argy me out of knowin that if you drink that like, you set your body to breakin up an decomposin, you stop your growin and improvin."

"I did not know you were such an acute reasoner, Clara," said Mr. Gifford; while Nathan seemed more impressed by her roughly cast remarks, than by his father's deeper speech.

Mr. Gifford yielded to the entreaties of his boys, and his own desire to soften Nathan's disappointment at being forced to remain in school for another year, and had accorded him permission to go to New York with his brother, and see the Rona sail. The lad was wild with excitement; he examined the Rona from stem to stern, and from the mast-head to the lowest depth of the hold. He declared he would willingly

go out as a common sailor, for the sake of sailing in so gallant a ship. His spirit delighted Captain Wingate, who promised he would have something for him to do the next year. At dinner the steward had made one of his grandest displays, and wine was not wanting. The Captain offered Port to both his young guests, but they declined it; Nathan with a flush of embarrassment, Hal with calm courtesy.

“O, you’re my wife’s sort,” laughed the Captain. “She is bringing up our boy that way too, and very likely it is the best way. I take a little wine myself; but after all, my testimony is, that I have seen many men ruined by their drinking, but never one by his temperance. It is a short argument, and wise heads might pick flaws in it; but it suits a sailor, and if I were not Captain of a ship, I’d marry my practice to my theory. As it is, I have many passengers who like me to take wine with them, and I give the water-drinkers full liberty to do as they please—so it suits all around.”

With what regret Nathan stood on the

quay, and saw the splendid Rona drop down the harbor! To him she was a floating fairy-land—what glorious lookouts from the breezy masthead—how white her sails, how gay her colors; now smoothly her engines moved; how glowed the furnaces, like demons chained; how her hold was odorous of spices and coffee, and foreign fruits, and scented woods; how brilliant were her saloons, and the loaded tables; and what bowers of bliss were those dainty state-rooms, with their white berths and crimson and orange damask curtains.

With sullen discontent in his heart the lad turned homewards. But when his journey was ended, and he saw the sun-burnished towers of the Sharkshead, and maid Margaret, with her pale green gown and long light curls, standing singing on the rocks, and that hoary-headed old Northman bending his strong arms to the oars as he shot the boat ashore to bring off his son, Nathan's heart revived, his face brightened, and all the evening his merry tongue rattled of the splendors of the new world's

Babel, and of the Rona which had so gallantly sailed toward the south.

Life passed quietly on the reef as the summer grew into autumn. Nathan went ashore for his lessons, and aided his father at the Light; and Margaret did her best to cheer the household, that the void of Hal's absence might not be too deeply felt. Hal's letters would have been a source of unmixed delight, had they not seemed to stir in Nathan the imp of the perverse, and make him restless and cross for days after they came.

The last hours of October darkened in clouds and rain. Nathan came over from shore about three in the afternoon, and Margaret from her high window watched his little boat tossing on the roughening waters, and the rain driven in his face by the rising wind.

Before sunset the rain ceased, and a brazen band of light girdled the horizon; the great white-caps rose and fell as far out as eye could see, and along the Sharkshead shoals the breakers rolled and thundered,

and broke into fountains of spray. The wind and wave had driven quantities of driftwood ashore, and Margaret, wrapped in a shawl, ran out to gather some from the beach.

In the lower story of the tower dame Clara prepared the supper; Gifford and Nathan had already lit the beacon and were high up on the tower, examining the light, and discussing the prospect of a long storm.

Margaret flitted along the narrow beach picking up bits of wood; and keeping pace with her agile motions, danced along a pair of her friends, the sand-peeps, white and gray; the slender fair-faced girl, with her light locks tossing on the nipping wind, and the fragile birds that love the sea, ran up and down the wave-trampled sands, the ocean in fierce commotion raging about them, the land lying hushed into a sudden calm, as of terror; and over their head the new world's Pharos shining out afar, to warn the ships which must that night do tremendous battle with the storm. The

yellow along the water line soon faded into gray; the night brought a darkness that might be felt; the rain beat against the tower, and the winds howled like beasts after their prey. The fog-bell rung its ceaseless warning, and so at last day came, without brightness, or sign of cheer.

Hundreds of stormy days had the Gifford family spent alone at the Sharkshead Light. They were at no loss—they had food and fuel in plenty; work was to be done; they had books and papers to read; and often from the summit of the tower they scanned the seaward distance, catching now and again sight of a sailing vessel or steam-ship, driving before the storm; and once they watched three little fishing schooners, which had outlived that unhappy night at sea, come creeping in shore, to bring sweet consolation to nearly despairing hearts.

Still the storm increased, rain, fog and wind by turns prevailing; and louder roared the angry waves, pounding and beating against the sentinel lights. Such seasons

of storm were not unprecedented, and no one thought of coming to the reef from shore, nor did the Giffords feel the least alarm. But that night there was a flood tide, the highest known for twenty years. At six the tide began to rise; driven by the furious winds, and drawn by those mysterious influences which rule the sea, the mighty volume of waters rose and rose along the coast, and blotting out the landmarks of years, the high tide

“Swept with thunderous noises loud:
Shaped like a curling snow white cloud,
Or like a demon in a shroud.”

And now not only was the water high above the foundations of the tower, but waves like mountains sweeping in from sea, lifted themselves against the Shark-head Light, as for a last assault, and broke far up against the top, their foaming crests sweeping high over the beacon itself.

Gifford was the first to anticipate danger: he took a lantern, and leaning from a narrow window, swung out the light in a pause of the tempest. His stout heart failed him

when he saw how high the water came, and he remembered that the strength of the old tower had lately been suspected. For himself, he was ready to keep his Light, warning mariners from this coast of death, even at the peril of his life; but he thought of his two children, and his rugged face blanched at the terrors that surrounded them. To escape to the land was utterly impossible now; again he swung his lantern, and as he did so, he heard two guns fired at the village on the coast. Tears sprang to his eyes; for those two staunch friends, the schoolmaster and parson, knew his danger, and by this signal assured him of their anxiety, and prayerful watch for him and his. The brave old keeper meant to return the sign cheerily; he swung his lantern out as far as he could reach, but a mad gust of wind wrenched it from his grasp and hurled it far off into the blackness; while he himself seemed twisted as in a giant's grasp, and after a breathless instant found himself lying back on the stairway; a terrible pain in his arm racked

him for a moment, but was lost in a great horror, for the sound of a new onset of waters was as a tremendous cannonade, and he felt the whole mighty fabric of the tower shiver and tremble from foundation rock to loftiest height. He rushed to the room where he had left his family. Nathan and Margaret flew to him screaming, "Father! the tower is falling! We are lost!"

The grasp of Nathan on his arm was agony.

"Let me be, boy, my arm is broken:" he groaned, but the fearful situation of his family again mastered the sense of pain. "My childrer, our danger is indeed great. The tower may not stand a dozen more waves, but we are in God's hand, and He may hold our feeble shelter on its rock throughout the storm. My son, my Margaret, God is as near on sea as on shore; and these waves may open for us the gate of heaven, if we have there a Saviour, standing for us at God's right hand. You may live through this night, but indeed we

may be tossed out in these breakers in another hour, let us cast ourselves heartily on the mercy of our God."

He fell on his knees; his children and Clara stifled their sobs and bowed down beside him, and amid the fury of the tempest the gray old man of many sorrows; pleaded with God for the eternal safety of this little household, there in the midst of the waters, ready to perish in the storm. As he prayed, with every succeeding wave sweeping with fierce momentum against the building, it trembled from base to summit, warning the inmates how frail was their hold on life; while the fog-bell outside, keeping up its constant clang, seemed sounding the knell of their doom. Gifford rose from his knees, and laid a hand on the head of either child.

"God bless you, my boy and my girl; if we this night stand before the bar of God, may we be clothed in the righteousness of Christ."

He held out his hand to Clara. "Good-by, true friend, the Lord you follow will

not be far away from you in this hour of trouble. Come, son Nathan, we will go aloft and trim our light; we may save other lives, even if we must lose our own; let death find us doing our duty."

Up they climbed the long winding stair, and Margaret and Clara clambered after them. It seemed to them as if ten thousand furies rode the blast, shrieking and howling about the tower. They returned to the lower rooms, and Gifford throwing wood on the fire, sat down before it with his affrighted family.

"You must try your skill at my arm, Clara," he said, "or I will not be able to do my duty by the light."

"Father," said Margaret, "cannot we get to shore by the life-boats?"

"Dear child, they could do nothing in this sea, besides we could not get them lowered." But even as he spoke there was a fearful crash on the left hand of the tower.

"Father," said Nathan, in an awed voice, "our life-boat 'Hope' has gone—didn't you

hear her break up? she has been crushed like an egg-shell against the wall."

"She was a strong boat, but the 'Courage' will follow her soon," said Clara, shaking her head, as she bound up Mr. Gifford's arm. "Boats first, tower next."

"Let us put all our trust in the mercy of our God, either for life or death," said Gifford.

Before long they renewed their trip to the light. "We must not forget," said the faithful keeper, "that the lives of a thousand men may depend on our care of the beacon. Your brother Hal's safety may now be hanging on the light of some far-off port; and wives and children are weeping and praying for sailors who are battling the storm off the jaws of the Shark-head. Let us warn others, if we cannot save ourselves."

Again they ascended to the beacon, and taking a hand-lantern, Gifford bade Nathan fasten it to a rope and wave it from an upper window. The faint sound of a gun came to them from the shore.

"They are watching us in the belfry I think," said Gifford.

"And praying for us," said Margaret in Clara's ear.

The night crept slowly on, each instant adding to their danger. A second crash had signalled the destruction of the life-boat "Courage," and about two o'clock the fog-bell suddenly ceased tolling.

"It has broken off!" cried Nathan.

"The weight must have run down," said his father.

"Can we wind it?" asked Margaret.

But the attempt would have been hopeless, the rewinding must be done outside of the tower, and who could cling one instant to the machinery, to say nothing of attempting to wind up the huge weight.

"Make us some coffee, Clara," said Gifford, "we must keep up our strength while we have our beacon in charge; besides, a faint stomach makes feeble courage, and we will still be brave, though I doubt not that the last night of our lives has come."

As they drank their coffee they heard a

terrible crashing, as if the north wall of the tower were being torn away, and stood breathless, expecting with the next wave to see a volume of water rushing in upon them. Another half-hour of suspense, and now there was a creaking sound like the rending of the ground in an earthquake, and a strange quivering shook the lighthouse.

"The end has come," said Gifford, bowing his head. But still the heavy moments passed, and the Sharkhead Light held its own upon its ancient rock. As the night advanced Margaret thought there was less fury in the wind, which hurtled about the top of the tower, and after a time the power of the waves seemed less. Gifford looked at his watch.

"It is past the turn of the tide," he said, "and the waters must be abating; the question is now, if the tower can stand the ceaseless motion of the sea; it must have been sorely shattered, and may fall of its own weakness."

Waiting in this terrible uncertainty, they

saw the tardy gray of the stormy morning creeping through the blackness. The wind had nearly died away, and seemed veering to another quarter. A constant quivering and thrilling of the old tower told them that it was hanging on the very verge of doom.

"It seems to me," said Gifford, making what inspection he could, "that the foundations are almost entirely destroyed. I cannot understand how the tower holds itself up. If we had boats we might get ashore, but all the boats are gone."

"Father," said Nathan, "it will be lowest tide in fifteen minutes. At lowest tide the rocks between us and the other tower are nearly bare; can't we get across?"

"Men might—but consider the waves, boy."

"They come in slowly. The distance is very short, and we might run between them. Anyway, father, it is better to die fairly in the sea, taking a chance for our lives, than to be crushed here among these stones. I cannot wait here any longer for the tower

to fall on my head: I feel as if I were crushed all the time."

"But Margaret and Clara, what will they do, my son?" asked Gifford, anxiously eyeing the fast falling tide, the in-sweeping waves, and the firm front of the new tower.

"Clara is strong as a man, and I know well she would choose to try her chance to get out of this."

"But, Margaret? You know, Nathan, one of my arms is almost helpless."

"We can both help Margaret; besides, father, she is as safe in the water as a gull. Do try it. See how boldly that tower stands up, and how safe it is."

Gifford called Margaret and Clara, and put the case before them.

"It would be a hard way to safety for men," he said; "it seems the utmost peril for you; but it may be your only chance of avoiding a yet more fearful death."

"Let us go," said Margaret, "it may be the one way of escape God offers to us."

"It looks a short run. I know those

rocks; I think I could make it between the waves," said Clara.

"Be quick about it then!" cried Nathan; "we must catch the best moment. They must put on our clothes, father; the water would pull them down if they had on so many long petticoats, and they could not run fast; it must be a quick trip, or the next wave will get us."

"Poor souls!" said Gifford, looking compassionately at the blanched faces of the girl and woman.

"We'll carry them some clothes in a bundle, and I'll put a box of matches in the middle of it, so we can get up a fire over there. Come, hurry now; here's our one chance."

The tottering tower warned them more than Nathan's words. Clara and Margaret ran to prepare themselves for this last fight for their lives; and Nathan hastily wrapped up the clothing they threw out to him, in two bundles, to be carried on the heads of his father and himself. He tied each parcel in a little shawl, and in less than ten

minutes the four storm-worn hearts were standing on a rock opposite the new tower, refreshing by mutual warnings their memories of the safest and shallowest way, and waiting for the breaking of the incoming wave, which was now gathering itself to rush up the narrow passage in the reef.

“Clara and I will go first, father,” said Nathan. “Now, Clara, spring when I do; stout heart, strong breath, sure foot, and you’re over there!”

At that instant the wave combed and seethed back in foam, and Nathan dashed boldly along the narrow path, where he knew rocks for a foothold were lying. He had gone there often in fair weather and foul, but never in such an hour as this; and he held his breath and rushed on, for already the next wave was swelling in its might, and hurling itself after them as they fled. The wave lifted its angry crest twenty feet high, broke in spray, and hid Nathan and Clara from Gifford’s eyes, while with a prayer of agony in his heart, the old man stood looking to see their

bodies dragged out to sea in the retreating foam. Instead, he saw them clinging in the doorway of the opposite tower, breathless and dripping, but waving hands in triumph.

“Thank God!” he cried. “Come, child, as this next wave breaks you and I will go; and God be good to us, as to them!”

It was a moment never to be forgotten by Margaret, when, as the destroying wave gathered its strength out at sea, she hurried breathless, knee-deep in the boiling foam of the wave which had just spent itself, the whirling spray drenching her uncovered head, the roar of the surf in her ears, and the haven of that new tower seeming to recede among the waters as she pressed toward it in agony. She scarcely knew when Nathan and Clara seized her by either arm, and dragged her up to the doorway; the first thing she realized was the voice of the old man calling through the uproar of the waves, “They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. Then are they glad

because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness; for his wonderful works to the children of men!" This was their thanksgiving as they entered the tower.

Margaret and Clara resumed their own clothing in one of the living rooms of the new tower, while Nathan gathered a huge pile of the rubbish left by the workmen, and lit a fire in the chimney-place. After this they knelt as in the hour of their extreme peril, and poured out their hearts to God. So safe they felt in this strong new tower, against which the utmost fury of the storm prevailed nothing; only the drip of the water was heard as the sea swelled against its immovable surface. Now that they were safe, they began to experience the demands of hunger; exhausted with their vigils they greatly needed food, and all provisions were in the old tower. The wind had veered to the northeast, and the waves rolled against the towers instead of up the line

of reef between them. The passage was thus easier, and about eight, Nathan and his father dashed across the reef, and reëntered their old home. They speedily loaded themselves with stores, meat, coffee and bread, and prepared for a return. But first they delayed to look at the havoc wrought, and at the dangers which they had escaped. The sound of rending was explained, for the iron ladder and three great iron straps had been twisted out of the solid granite, and carried away. The enormous fog-bell had been dragged from its place for ten feet, and the whole structure was so loosened that the only wonder was how it sustained itself for an instant longer. Two of the chief foundation stones were split entirely in two, and Nathan with a crowbar could have pushed them both into the channel. If these two stones had been dragged as the bell, the tower must have toppled over. Nathan looked on awe-struck.

“Father, how ever has it kept from falling?”

"The hand of the Lord was in it," replied the old keeper. "He is good to them that trust in him, before the sons of men."

Clara made haste to prepare a breakfast, and before they had eaten it a life-boat came out from the shore, with friends to look after their safety. Nathan signalled them to land at the new tower. Help was procured from the village, and the furniture of the Giffords was brought over; the beacon in the new tower was prepared, and the fog-bell was righted, wound up, and left to take its chances, ringing through another night on the forsaken house.

The men who had come from the village to make these changes worked hard until nightfall, not daring to stop to rest or eat, while so much of the safety of the coast in the still continued storm, depended on their exertions.

"I say, Gifford," exclaimed Rob Bow, as they all came down the light-house stairs, when their labors were concluded, 'I wish you had a bit of whisky for us.'

“What good would it do you?” asked the keeper.

“Why, it would build us up, after the wear and tear of such a day; warm us, strengthen us—that’s it.”

“I have something better for warming, cheering and restoring you, than whisky,” said Gifford, opening the door of a room where Clara had spread a table with steaming tea, coffee and soup, and good bread and ham. “Whisky would heat you for a moment, but it would poison your blood, and hinder your digestion. Don’t you eat food to have it assimilated, converted into blood, and thus feed your system, repairing the waste of muscle, bone, and so on?”

“I don’t know as to your big words, but I reckon that’s about it,” said Rob, shrugging his shoulders.

“Let me tell you then, that every drop of liquor you take hinders this process of digestion and nutrition; it keeps your food from nourishing you; you take bread and meat to sustain you, and you pour in liquor,

which prevents the bread and meat from accomplishing that end.”

“But now, Gifford,” said another man, as they were all helped to Clara’s bountiful provision, “let me tell you, we take beer and ale for *nourishment*; there’s advertisements of good table-beer, that says one glass has in it the nutriment of a loaf of bread; now then, it’s cheaper than bread, and easier swallowed, and it must be good sense and economy to use it.”

“Yes, if you believe that humbugging advertisement. Suppose, Nick, you boil down your ale or beer, how much solid will you have left of it?”

“Not much; less than you could squeeze a loaf of bread into,” laughed Nick, seeing the point.

“There’s another thing, Gifford,” said a fourth man, who was no other than the village tavern-keeper. “It is the courage a good glass of grog gives you. Last night, I went up into the belfry with the rest, to take a look over here, and says I to myself, ‘Gifford’s a cold water man, and I can’t

see how he'll pull through this night.' Fact now, sir, I wished more than anything else that you had a good bottle of my Bourbon, it would have encouraged you beyond everything."

"I think," spoke up Nathan, "that if you had been on hand, Mr. Simms, you would have seen no lack of courage in my father. I don't believe all the whisky you could put into a man would have made him go more faithfully and calmly up to trim that light, when the old tower was shaking like a reed from top to bottom. The beauty of father's courage, Mr. Simms, was, that it was bravery in the full face of danger; he was not bold because he was too drunk to know what the danger was; but he had all his senses, and kept on quietly doing his duty. I call that real courage."

Nathan's eager speech for his father was received with cheers by all the company. They stamped their feet, and rapped the table with their horny fists, even Simms bearing his part in the applause as heartily as any.

“My friends,” said Gifford, when quiet was restored, “I wish you to try and realize my position of last night. I had not the least expectation of living until now. I expected every moment to be crushed in the wreck of the old tower. Expecting thus instantly to stand before my God, could I, if I had never so much alcohol by me, have dared to use that deadly narcotic to stupefy me in the last seconds of my life; to subjugate my will, to deaden my feelings, to go half-drunk out of this world to answer to a holy God for the deeds done in the body?”

“Aye, aye, messmate,” said an old sailor, who had done more eating than talking, “you’re about right there, those of us that likes a glass the best, is far from willing to *die drunk*. I agree with you there, my boy, I don’t know as I hold to your water principles exactly, but I don’t go so far as Rob Bow; *I* drink in moderation.”

“And what is moderation in drinking?” asked Gifford.

“My view is,” said the village cobbler,

complacently, "that it is two glasses of ale a day."

Simms laughed. "I know a fellow, a customer of mine, and a good one too, said moderation was a gallon of beer and a pint of rum each day."

"I reckon you'll find it between them two ideas," said the sailor; "*I'm* moderate on three stiff horns of grog a day."

"And that would lay Nick on his beam ends," said Rob Bow; "he's moderate on one glass of gin, or three of porter. And I'll not be drunk, if I have six glasses 'tween light and bed-time."

"Every one of you have a different idea of moderation," said Gifford, "according to the manner in which you have accustomed yourselves to poison. The law of alcohol is the law of other narcotic poisons; the more you use it, the weaker your whole system becomes, and yet the more of the narcotic do you need to produce an effect on you."

"Well, nothing will budge me from the point that it must be a good, because it

makes you feel good, head and body; it stops pain, keeps out the cold, and drives off care," said Simms, mine host at the tavern.

"And what do you think of paralysis, that disease Judd and Green, and some others died of lately?"

"It's an awful disease; but they weren't all drinking men."

"I know that," said Gifford, "that was not what I referred to. But you fear paralysis, and call it awful; and yet drunkenness is a partial paralysis: the whisky stops your pain, and cold and care, because it stupefies your nerves; gets them half-paralyzed or killed; in proportion as you're drunk, you are more or less dead; and in more cases than I can count, the deadness increases until life never returns."

"And yet it isn't fair to call it poison," said Rob Bow; "it's made out of rye, corn, apples, barley, peaches, and lots of other good things. I guess I know."

"I'll tell you some of the good things you don't name," said Gifford. "Over here

in Newton the other day, they seized some whisky and examined it, and what did it have in? Why, ten gallons of kereosene. How do you like that for a steady drink? Three pounds of potash—how will that suit your stomach for food, Rob? And an ounce of strychnine, what do you think of that for physic, my men; would you risk it on your fish, eh?”

“Well, Gifford,” said Simms, pushing back his chair, “I don’t take it kind of you, to run down a man’s business before his face; and when he’s come to help you and yours, to set to accusing him of trafficking in poison.”

“Fair and square, I thank you for your friendly help, Simms, but you knew before you came here, on what points I ever speak my mind. It’s kind of you to help set up a beacon to warn sailors off from danger at sea; I only wish you did not set up a decoy to lure them to ruin on shore. Alcohol in the United States kills one man every ten minutes; the sea was never so ravenous of American sailors as that; and

besides, alcohol occasions one murder for every week-day in the year. Twice as much is yearly spent on whisky as on flour and meal—there's your trade."

The supper was ended; the men had eaten heartily and wholesomely; night was gathering, and they made haste to enter their boats; their arms and hearts were strong, their nerves were steady, and the blaze of the new beacon lighted them on their homeward path. The fog-bell on the old tower rung its lonely dirge, but no flame crowned its summit with a circle of light; the old tower had lived its day; its warning signal had been passed over the reef to its successor; and safe in their new shelter the Giffords slept, after their night and day of peril and of toil.



CHAPTER IV.

THE "RONA" AND ADMIRAL.

"Across the unfurrowed reaches sailing high,
Methought that it would come my way full soon,
Laden with blessings that were all, all mine,
A golden ship, with balm and spices rife."



THE light-house keeper had hoped that the terrible experiences of that night of the storm would have had a permanent influence for good on the heedless Nathan. Instead of this, they seemed only to have quickened his passion for adventure; he had been so near death and had escaped, that he felt as if he bore a charmed life, that all dangers would pass him scatheless; and though he did not remember his Virgil very well, his philosophy was that of ancient Acestes, Egesta's son, that all perils would hereafter prove a happy theme for garrulous old age, The excitement for which he longed could

not be found on the Sharkshead; moreover, on the principle that "bread eaten in secret is pleasant," he chiefly desired the zest of adventures unlawfully obtained. He wrote several times to Hal, eagerly begging for his help to secure a berth on the Rona, but Hal assured him that at present nothing could be done, and advised him to make the best of his time at home, in studying and helping his father. Nathan's head was full of the "Rona;" when from the top of the tower he watched the golden moon in mid-heaven, he thought of the "Rona," sailing through calm southern seas; when he caught the white gleam of sails against the distant blue, he imagined he saw the beloved ship making for some happy port in the tropics; she sailed through his dreams at night, and came between him and all his duties by day; and while he thus longed and rebelled, the winter passed and the beautiful spring began her reign.

And in one balmy spring night, when the sea was quiet, the well-trimmed beacon flung its light far and wide, and Gifford,

and Margaret and Clara slept securely, the lower door of the tower opened; a slender figure showed dark against the moon and flame-lit sea; the little boat, rightly named the "Scallop Shell," was untied, and slid silently toward the shore; and sharply outlined against the south-western sky, that slender figure sped along the level fields sweeping in from shore, and was lost at last before the morning dawned.

They thought at the Sharkshead that the boy had gone off on some fishing or pleasure excursion for the day; though absence without leave had never been permitted by the old man. Yet when evening came and no Nathan, and the "Scallop Shell" was brought from shore by the schoolmaster, who knew nothing of his pupil's whereabouts; and when Clara found that some of Nathan's clothes were gone, and that he had put on an entire suit of new clothing, Gifford suddenly realized that his son had run away. He looked sorrowfully at Margaret, his face twitched and grew white; the girl's eyes met his, caught the

sad certainty of Nathan's flight, and filled with tears.

The old man went to a point of rock, the farthest out on the reef, and turned his face to the wide waste of the sea—that strange expanse that laughs and sparkles and makes answer when we are glad; and grows gray and sobs, and is a terrible reach of gloom and desolation when we are unhappy. How lonely he looked sitting there, bowed and white-haired, and heart-sick. Margaret hurried after him, and put her arms about his neck.

“Don't, don't look so, father! he will come back to us again.”

“But, my girl, I know what it is to have sons go from me; and heavy years pass and they do not come. So your father left me, Margaret.”

“But I believe even he will come back to you. I know you pray, and your prayers will hold them fast.”

“Child—what have they gone from me to meet? Nothing but trouble and sin. Your father is a man—he may be getting

gray, but I think of him only as the boy I saw him last; and this Nathan is a heedless lad, and the blessing of God can rest on neither of them, when they have left their father thus. Why, Margaret, if Nathan stays like my Gilbert, I shall be in my grave long before he comes home."

"Gilbert was my father?" questioned Margaret.

"Yes, child—the worse for us both, since he loved drink."

"But God can bring him back, and Nathan too. Suppose he should send them all home; my father, and mother, and Nathan."

The old man shook his head despondently. The fancy was too bright to be true.

"Any way, father, if He does not do that, he can convert their souls, and bring them into his heaven, and when we get there we can find them all safe."

"Poor child: it seems very long and dark to wait."

"It will seem short when it has gone by.

Our last night in the old tower seemed years; but it looks like a minute now. Keep your heart up, father."

Now, in spite of the old man's despair, he could not help hoping that his truant boy would repent speedily and come home; or that he would find the world so harsh to young strangers, that it would drive him back to the safe shelter he had left. So each boat that left the shore was watched with painful eagerness to see if Nathan was on board; and many times a day did Gifford climb to the top of his tower, and scan all the adjacent country with his telescope, if like the father in Scripture, he might behold his returning prodigal a great way off.

Meantime Hal, unconscious of the wrong and woe at his home, came into New York harbor on the Rona, and was disappointed at getting no letters. There was no time, however, for lamentations; passengers were plenty, trade was brisk; the ship had been delayed on her homeward trip, and now must speedily discharge her cargo, and

take on her accustomed loading of fine flour, and all manner of American manufactures. Trucks with bales and sacks rumbled off the Rona, and trucks with other bales and sacks came rumbling on; barrels were rolled aboard and swung down into the hold; merchants and merchants' clerks came and went; crates of crockery, and heavy packages of hardware encumbered the wharf and the decks; the stout ship trembled and echoed at jar and shout and heavy fall, roll of wheels and creak of ropes—a floating Babel. Then the last half-day came; most of the cargo was on board, and now the passengers and their trunks appeared. Mrs. Wingate and her little son came first; and she had a pleasant greeting for Hal, who had just found time to post a letter to his father. Ladies and gentlemen and children followed, who examined their state-rooms and the accommodations, and discussed them freely; and wondered if they should have a pleasant voyage, and how long it would be; and if they would be sea-sick.

And now it was noon, and the pilot came on board, conscious of his importance. Friends hurried ashore; the gang plank was drawn in; handkerchiefs were waved; a bevy of wharf-rats and loungers shouted in chorus, and the cook and his two youngest assistants ran aft and flung the wharf-rats a feast of the relics of the grand dinner; slowly the "Rona" drew out of her dock, paused a moment in mid-channel as if loath to leave the harbor, and then she got her courage up with her steam, and went boldly down the bay; and coming off Sandy Hook, permitted her lordly pilot to depart, showing the utmost indifference at his loss.

It was a clear starry night, and up from the dim horizon, into that blue ether sea, slid a little golden boat, the crescent moon. Hal Gifford, standing at the stern, now watching the line of foam in the Rona's wake, and now the calm sailing of that gondola of the sky, he repeated aloud these favorite lines from the poet Wordsworth:

“Up goes my boat among the stars,
Through many a breathless field of light,
Through many a long blue field of ether,
Leaving ten thousand stars beneath her,
Up goes my little boat, so bright!

“Then back to earth, the dear green earth,
Whole ages if I here should roam,
The world for my remarks and me,
Would not a whit the better be;
I've left my heart at home.”

“I haven't, Hal; I left mine in the ‘Rona,’ and came to it,” said a voice behind him.

He turned, and there stood Nathan, looking half-ashamed, half-defiant. Hal absolutely started back, with a misty idea of seeing the spectre of his brother; but evidently, this tanned, cloth-clad boy was no ghost. The next impulse was to shake hands heartily, and then came very clearly into Hal's mind the fact that Nathan had smuggled himself aboard the “Rona,” had not the least business to be there, and that his father could by no means be a party to such nefarious proceedings.

“Nathan!” he cried, sharply, “you've run away from home.”

“What if I have?” said Nathan, doggedly.

"I couldn't stay there cooped up, to be made a milksop of."

"I am no milksop," said Hal, "and I stopped at home longer than you have; would have been there yet, rather than go off secretly. Besides, how could you come on here to steal a passage? When did you get on? Where have you been since we left the dock?"

"I don't mean to steal a passage; I'm ready to work for it!" cried Nathan, angrily. "I've been down between decks, among some luggage, and one of the men knew I was there; I tipped him to be still, and he said he liked my grit; that's kinder than you've been, Master Hal Gifford. You ought to be glad that I came on the 'Rona,' because I liked her, and to stay with you. I might have gone North and got on a whaling ship, or on a South American steamer, easy; and I wish I had. It is too late now; I didn't know you'd set up to growl."

Nathan turned his back, and walked to the taffrail; evidently, it was of no use to

be angry; Nathan was now on board the "Rona," and Hal must make the best of it. By being kind he might retain an influence over the rash boy; being cold would not mend matters. He followed Nathan and threw his arm across his shoulder.

"Come, lad, this ship's too small for us to quarrel in. I felt disappointed that your haste had spoiled my plans for getting you on board fair and comfortable. And I can't help thinking of those at home, father and Margaret. Have you written to them, Nathan?"

Nathan shook his head. "It is time enough for that when I have got all settled some way."

"And how are they feeling meantime? I posted a letter just as we sailed, and now they'll make sure you are not with me. O, I wish you hadn't, Nathan!"

Nathan, in several better moments lately, had wished that very thing; but he merely observed, "No use crying for spilt milk," and "Least said, soonest mended."

"Come," said Hal, "we must go find

Captain Wingate, and make your confession to him."

"You go tell him," said Nathan, drawing back; for those who are in a wrong path are usually cowardly.

Hal had seen the captain about half an hour before, sitting by the mainmast, with his wife. Finding that Nathan would not go with him to explain matters, Hal, greatly chagrined, went in search of the autocrat of the "Rona." Mrs. Wingate was yet with her husband, enjoying the beauties of the clear warm night. Hal approached them slowly.

"Captain Wingate," he said.

"Why, that's Gifford, isn't it?" said the Captain. "What's wanted, my lad?"

"You know my brother, Nathan, sir?" said Hal.

"Why, yes; a brisk little lad; nothing wrong with him?"

"Yes, sir; that is, he has done very wrong. He has been so crazy to get on board here, sir, that he has run away from home, and smuggled himself aboard, with

some of the goods, and he came up to me just a minute or two ago, and I don't know what to do with him."

"And that was the first you knew of it, Gifford?"

"Indeed it was, sir."

"Well, well, well," hummed Captain Wingate.

"You'll have to keep him on the ship?" said his wife.

"Evidently, my dear; we cannot chuck him overboard, as he richly deserves; and he isn't worth making a landing for. Gifford, go bring your brother here, and mind now, I shall be very sharp with him."

Hal went off, half-laughing; he knew pretty well what Captain Wingate's "very sharp" meant—a few phrases quickly toned down into a joke. Nothing more.

Hal quickly marshalled the culprit into the august presence of the Captain. Nathan was quite alarmed.

"Come, you rascal, you've been stealing a passage, have you?" said the Captain severely. "Isn't that as bad as stealing

anything else; speak up now, my young man!"

"But, sir, I meant to work for it," said Nathan, trembling.

"O, you did! But suppose there is no work for you to do? We pay for passage in cash, not in labor that is not wanted; passengers have no right to dictate their own terms."

"But," faltered Nathan, at this view of the case, "I wanted so much to go to sea, and especially in the Rona."

"And are your wishes any excuse for wrong-doing? Because you want a watch, is it right for you to take one? because you want to knock a man down, is it right for you to do it? You've no right to want what you ought not to have—let me tell you that, sir."

Nathan began to look very apprehensive.

"Do you know that I have a perfect right to lock you up on bread and water for the whole trip? If I had an empty chicken coop, or pen of any kind that

was big enough, I'd do it, upon my word. As I haven't, I've a mind to put you to work before the mast!"

"O, if you please, sir!" cried Nathan eagerly. "That's just what I want to do; I wouldn't mind working before the mast a bit. I want to be a sailor and learn to handle a ship; and I can work up, and may-be I'll get to be captain, some day myself."

"O ho! looking for my shoes already, are you? And pray, what will you do with little rascals, who sneak aboard your ship, and hide in the luggage till the pilot's gone, eh?"

"Why, sir, I'll set 'em to work," replied Nathan, brightening.

The Captain laughed heartily; and as Hal had expected from the beginning, he ended his severity by saying: "Well, youngster, you've got pluck, and I like it. I'll try you, and if you're the right stuff, I'll befriend you. Go, turn in with your brother to-night, and to-morrow I'll set you to learn seafaring. But you'll

have to take your chance with the rest, I can't discriminate in *your* favor. Hal, give the scapegrace something to eat; I reckon he got hungry in his hiding—unless he tapped a flour-barrel. Mind, I don't think much of your morals, my young man; they're rather scaly, if you can run away from that fine old father of yours, and steal a trip on the Rona. Off with you." And the boys heard the Captain laughing long and loud after they left him.

Early next morning the runaway was summoned before Captain Wingate, who, resuming his illy-sustained severity of tone and countenance, addressed him:

"Now, young man, I'm going to give you sailor's work and fare, and sleeping accommodations, and wages."

Here Nathan's eyes twinkled.

"And you won't find yourself treated as your brother; for *he* came on board the Rona shipshape, waited until he was wanted and sent for, and he eats in the cabin and is treated as a gentleman, eh?"

"I'm quite ready to be a common sailor,

do my work, and learn all I can," said Nathan, stoutly. Hal blushed; he felt hurt and vexed at the difference that must be made between him and his brother.

"I shall put you especially in charge of one of the older men; he will teach you and look after you. There is the Rear-Admiral, eh, Hal; and there is Guy."

"I like the Admiral," said Hal.

"Yes, he is a good sailor; been on ship all his life, and is a practical sailor; but he is rough and ignorant."

"He is a good fellow—a Christian," maintained Hal.

"But there is Guy. I imagine he has not sailed a tenth part as much as the Admiral, but he is educated; he is a scientific sailor, understands navigation—as for good manners, they peep out when he wants to hide them. That man Guy is playing a part."

"Yes, and he drinks," said Hal.

"True, drink has been the ruin of him in some way. He is one of those who can't be moderate; but he don't drink on

this ship—no whisky in the fore-castle for me, eh, Hal? And you prefer the Admiral?”

“Yes, sir,” persisted Hal; “he can teach Nathan nothing worse than incorrect pronunciation and grammar, and I fancy Nate is too old to learn those; but Guy has moods when I wouldn’t wish to be his pupil.”

The captain walked toward a knot of sailors who were busy together, the brothers followed him.

“Admiral!” he cried, and a tall, raw-boned, shambling, weather-beaten fellow came out of the group. “Here’s a green hand to learn seafaring; I put him especially in your care. Guy, you may take him in hand for a bit of instruction in navigation, for a man can never know too much about his business—step here, Guy.”

Guy, a large and handsome man, with hair sprinkled with gray, and face bearing traces of many a deep draught of strong drink, drew slowly near the Captain. “You are above these other fellows, my man;

you have been what people call a gentleman and a scholar. There is but one thing keeps you from being a mate instead of a hand before the mast, eh? whisky, eh? Drop it, man."

The Captain's tones were so kind that Guy could not take offence; instead, he looked at the Captain with a twinkling eye, saying, "*Si te prius idem facientem videro.*"

Hal flashed into Guy's face an answering smile, but Captain Wingate stared stolidly—his classical education having been long forgotten—and then remarked, "I hope so;" whereat Nathan subdued a chuckle.

The Captain walked away, and Hal had also duties. He said to Nathan's tutor: "Admiral, I hope you will find my brother an apt pupil."

"Is he *your* brother Mr. Gifford?" asked Guy, looking at him keenly.

"Yes, Guy," replied Hal, wishing that the man's expression were not so very friendly and interested.

Nathan seemed perfectly contented on the Rona, and became a general favorite.

He seemed so attracted by Guy, probably from the mystery which, as the Captain had suggested, hung about the man, that Hal took the Admiral into his confidence, in the shelter of the foretop. "Admiral, you know the dangers about a boy at sea."

"Reckon, Mr. Gifford. I fell a prey to more of 'em than I can tell you; a drinking, swearing, gambling fellow I was, sir, sure enough; wasn't worth heaving a hen-coop to, if I fell overboard."

"Now there is my brother, Admiral. I want you to give him a leaf or two out of your experience. He is a heedless boy; a temperance boy now, but he might be beguiled into drinking, and father is very anxious for us on that point; he has had trouble, Admiral, and Nathan began badly by running away from home. He seems bewitched by Guy, and Guy has bad points as well as good ones."

"He's not just the sort for such a lad to sail along side of," said the Admiral. "I'll overhaul my log for the benefit of 'em both, Mr. Gifford."

Accordingly, before long, the Admiral, as this sailor was nicknamed, bore down on Nathan and Guy, who were studying a chart which the sailor had drawn with charcoal, and spread out on the capstan. Guy was tracing with his finger certain reefs and shoals; and Nathan was excitedly describing the dreadful last night at the old Tower of the Sharkshead. The Admiral listened approvingly to the boy's story of his father's courage. Then he said, "I know a thing that has wrecked more ships than any reef, or rock or breaker ever was laid down on a map—that's potcheen."

"And what is potcheen?" demanded Nathan.

"Whisky, made out of molasses," said Guy, gruffly.

"Once," said the Admiral, seating himself ready for a talk, "I was a hand on a steamer, carrying coal from Philadelphia to Boston. We took on our load at Port Richmond. At that place almost every Irish family had their own still for potcheen, and they'd make it a barrel at a time. I've

counted one hundred and fifty stills in two miles of straight street."

"You should have gone there as missionary," grumbled Guy.

"In those days, mate, I drank it. On our boat we had a man down between decks, and when they dumped the coal by the car load, he had to shovel fast, to keep the coal rolling into the hold without blocking. He had a lamp, but no air, 'cept what came long with the coal; and you may guess what work it was in hot summers down there, shovelling for life; and if you stopped, the coal would clog and pile over you, and you were lost. The wages were tremendous, and men were allus on hand to take the place. Sober men might have done it; but the potcheen men were the only fellows willing to risk their lives like that, and they'd come with their skins full of whisky to the work; and some hot dog-days we've dug six of 'em out of the coal, dead—in one day; six gone sudden, and gone drunk to judgment."

Nathan shuddered at this horrible story.

Guy said: "And if they hadn't died that way, they'd soon have died of potcheen."

"Yes," said the Admiral, "for those that come out alive, took their pay and went after potcheen immegit."

"Good riddance," said Guy; "I've seen the day when I would not have given a copper to save my life; and the world ought to have been willing to give one, to get clear of me."

"I was on a man-of-war once, under Farragut," continued the Admiral; "one of the firemen had a potcheen still—on the sly, of course; the officers kept wondering where the men got their whisky. The fellows were drunk, and no telling where the stuff came from."

"Some one must have known," said Nathan.

"Yes, the engineers did, of course; but one of them liked the potcheen himself; and the rest wouldn't speak, for they were not on good terms with the other officers, and didn't care to help them. That fireman took home fifteen hundred dollars

in gold, besides what he spent. That money that ought to ha' gone to wives and children, and old mothers, was spent for potcheen; and the men went home without thar money. The fireman spread three weeks in New York, spent his fifteen hundred—and cut his throat. That's a story on *intemperance* for you, my boy. Can you lay such charges against this Temperance, men run down?"

Guy had rolled up his chart, and seated himself on the capstan. "I suppose if Captain Wingate found the hands, or sailors, had a barrel of whisky, he'd be down on us directly—the 'Rona' would be in danger, and there'd be the mischief to pay. But do you notice the wine for dinner, for officers and passengers; and the brandy in the steward's room, and the *pure* whisky for the cook and the doctor, or any other extra calls? I've sailed on this kind of ship before; not a common sailor, but a gentleman in the first cabin, sitting next the Captain at dinner, and I got drunk then, if the Bo'sen daren't; and the Captain had more

than was good for him day after day, and the mate many a time got so tight he could not give an order. If the engineer had tippled as the mate did, there'd have been small chance of our ever making an earthly port—and less chance of the heavenly, I suppose you'll say, Admiral."

"My Bible tells me, judge not," said the Admiral, "and it says to me no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God. I've been a hard fellow in my day, and I bear the scars of it yet. Three times I fell overboard drunk, and each time the water and the danger sobered me so that I could hear in my ears, louder than the waves, 'Nor drunkards shall inherit the kingdom of God;' a scripster my mother had learnt me when I was a little shaver. Each time I went down with that in my ears, and each time I was saved out of the grip of death, and I wondered why. I know now; it was that wicked Ned could repent, and be a miracle of God's grace. I tell you, mates, if such a prodigal as this one gets home to his Father, there's a hope for everybody.

Don't want no further sermon on '*whosoever will,*' but jest to look at me. Talk of eatin' husks with the swine! why, I was one of the swine themselves!"

Nor was the Rear-Admiral, as he was jocosely called, the only one on board the Rona to talk of temperance. That question must needs be agitated wherever Mrs. Wingate went. This lady looked on the subject of temperance as of supreme importance, because it involved, as she said, the temporal and eternal happiness, the spiritual and physical health of all the human race. In the grim train of the demon Drink, follow all other crimes; he is an enemy cunning above all, because ignoring lesser opponents, he lays hold on the Will, and binds it in fetters of iron.

"How can one enter a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? Then shall he spoil his house." So the narcotic poison, alcohol, begins its ravages by binding the strong man of the soul; and then every good and pleasant thing is his prey.

Hal was walking up and down the deck one afternoon with Mrs. Wingate's little boy, when he heard the captain's wife conversing with a gentleman, an old friend, who was among the passengers. The two were seated near the centre of the deck, so that Hal was ever in sound of their voices. The lady was saying:

"I take an old friend's privileges, and venture to find fault with you, Mr. Bower. You are a temperance man on shore; and on shipboard you take your wine every day. I've heard you declare alcoholic stimulants neither food, nutriment, nor a reasonable luxury; how do you now justify their use?"

"O, I'll fall back on custom! Every one here does it."

"Is it a fair excuse for a man of your strength of mind? Besides, each individual helps to make the custom. If the passengers did not take the wine, it would not be furnished at the table; my husband says he uses it as a host, in deference to the preferences of his guests. I wonder if you know how dangerous it is?"

“No, my dear lady, I have not the least idea that any of us sober travellers will go home drinking men.”

“I meant how dangerous to the vessel and our lives.”

“You might say that, if the firemen, engineers, or sailors, were allowed to use liquor; but the Captain, and very rightly, keeps it from them.”

“But what are hands without a head? Suppose there was danger, a storm; and the officers, my husband and the mates, were incapable of giving orders, after their dinner of wine and brandy.”

“Mrs. Wingate! I am amazed at you; your husband has never been drunk in his life!”

“Very true: I would not speak so to a stranger, unaware of the strong affection between Mr. Wingate and myself. But honestly, Mr. Bower, whensoever a man takes alcoholic drinks, you have at no hour a security that he will not be drunk. An unnoticed excess of quantity, or quality, or a deranged physical state, rendering

him less able to resist the influence of alcohol, may make him, unexpectedly—drunk. In such a case, the sin is in taking the liquor, not in becoming drunk. Only a confirmed toper drinks intending to get drunk; other men are surprised into that condition, when they only meant to take what they call a harmless drink. I have many sorrowful hours over this very subject.”

“My good friend, you are nervous!”

“There’s another consideration, which you don’t seem to realize. The cook and the steward have access to the brandy and wines. If they take them, they only follow the example of those whom they name their betters. Did you know that in some people—you cannot tell who they are until circumstances develop the fact—alcohol develops mania?”

“Mania a potu? Yes, of course; that belongs to the doctor.”

“No, I mean other manias—as pyromania, for setting everything on fire—kleptomania, or homicidal mania. Let us

take the first. Suppose liquor suddenly develops in our steward a mania for fire, and he gratifies it in his madness, by firing the ship. What chance have we, hundreds of souls, drifting in mid-ocean in a tower of flames? Or take even a more terrible possibility. Suppose liquor develops in our cook, as it has in other men, a homicidal mania. Suppose, in his alcohol phrensy, he fancies he should enjoy floating over these seas in a ship full of dead bodies, himself the only living soul; suppose he realizes his power, and is impelled to exert it, and he puts poison in our food, and in the ship's coppers; and we drop in our places one by one, and the 'Rona,' an ocean Morgue, goes on toward the tropics with none to bury her dead, but one man who wakes in frantic horror to a realization of his enormous deed."

"Madam! what has possessed your mind with such awful suggestions?" cried Mr. Bower, pale with horror.

"*The knowledge of facts,*" said Mrs. Win-gate, steadily. "I know that more than half

the murders which are committed are done under the influence of alcohol, which dulls the sensibilities, maddens the brain, and causes the will to act in a manner directly opposed to its usual course. How long is it since Dr. Pritchard, of Glasgow, poisoned his wife and her mother, simply because he had been drinking, and alcohol in him developed homicidal mania; and he felt his ability to administer a medicine in such portions that it would become a poison and produce death; and he did it, because whisky stirred up the mad idea, and whisky deprived him of all power to resist the terrible suggestion. I tell you, Mr. Bower, when Luther hurled an ink bottle, most likely with a pen in it—for Luther never did anything by halves—at the devil's head, he flung at him the most potent weapon against evil which the world has ever known. If he had been able to deprive the devil of alcohol, he would have shorn him of the most dangerous arm wherewith he attacks our humanity."

Mr. Bower arose, and walking to the

ship's side, looked down into the water. Presently he returned. "You are right, Mrs. Wingate; I am recreant to my Christian duty, and my home principles. Hereafter I mean to carry my home principles with me, wherever I go."



CHAPTER V.

THE WRECK OF THE "RONA."

"With sloping mast and dripping prow,
As, who pursued by yell and blow,
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head;
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.



WARM May evening—east of Cape Hatteras, but out of sight of land, the Rona lay on the still sea like a painted ship. The westward waters flamed in gold and crimson, reflecting the splendors of the sky, and the sun as it dipped beneath the waves, glowed like a mass of molten ore in a burning brightness that eye could not look upon undimmed. Nathan had climbed upon the bowsprit, finding the furled sail an excellent resting-place. He had been mad for a sea life, and he now declared himself "perfectly jolly;" true, the Rona should

have been speeding toward Florida straits, but he considered that none of his business; she lay almost in perfect rest, and everybody seemed at leisure, Nathan most of all, and he sat watching the distant flight of birds, like an old-time diviner.

“Well, youngster,” said a voice near him, “are you, with your runaway record, or am I, with all my sins, the Jonah of this ship?”

“What’s the matter?” asked Nathan, looking about, and seeing Guy, with his hands in his pockets and a careless air.

“Only that we don’t go, that’s all; and it’s more to the Captain and passengers than to you and I, I fancy. We have lost two days altogether now, by the boilers foaming. Now they’re getting steam up again, I hope it will last this time.”

“Is there any danger from it?” asked Nathan, looking curiously about; all seemed so safe and still.

“There’s only danger that we’ll make a tremendously long trip,” replied Guy.

When Nathan went to sleep that night, the Rona was ploughing steadily along her

way; when he came on deck for his watch, which he shared with the other sailors, the vessel was quiet; but next morning the passengers flocked on deck after breakfast, jubilant, for the ship was going with unusual speed and smoothness, and they were passing south of Cape Fear. Captain Wingate was chatting with Mr. Bower, when the "Rear-Admiral" came near him, and stood with an uncertain anxious expression, as if he wished, yet feared to speak.

"We're getting on finely now, Admiral," said the Captain, thinking the faithful fellow waited simply for a kind word.

"But, sir, if you please, the boilers are foaming again, and we oughtn't to be going on this fast; for all we know, sir, there mayn't be half the water she needs in her boilers. Then you know—." The Admiral had spoken softly; but now he looked about on the groups of passengers and forbore to speak farther.

"Confound it!" cried Captain Wingate, angrily. "How do you know it, Admiral?"

"I've been down in the engine-room, sir; I've sailed in every kind of craft all my life, and I understand ships of pretty nigh every kind. So, when I ain't nowise busy other ways, I go about all over them, feeling sort of anxious about them, from keel to foretop. *I'd* rather be in a good tight sailing vessel nor in one of these pesky steamships anyhow, Captain Wingate."

"But, why don't Mr. Carl stop, if it's necessary, and he knows his business better than you do, Ned."

"Mr. Carl ain't had but four hours' sleep in the last thirty-six, sir, owing to his worrit with them boilers. He's in his room now, sir, and it appeared to me if he didn't get his rest sometime, he mightn't be fit for duty when he was wanted. There's a storm in the air, Cap'n."

"Of all the croakers!" cried the vexed Captain; "what is the assistant engineer, Bellows, doing, Ned?"

"Minding the engine, sir, but he isn't right. He's had a drink somewheres, and it's made him quite keeless like; and the

firemen knows their p's and q's too well to blow on the engineers, sir."

"Been drinking!" shouted the shocked Captain, starting to look for his mate, and visit the engine-room in person. "Where did he get it, Ned?"

"Can't tell you, sir. All I know is he's *had* it; and, moreover, sir, if it's aboard, you hain't no manner of security, sir, who wont get it. Why, sir, I've heard of sailors so wild for grog, sir, that they tapped a hogs-head what they know'd had a dead corpse in it, goin' over seas for burial. Yes, sir, and I've been one of them in my evil days, sir, as broke into the cargo, and stole out bottles of cologne, and drunk 'em—yes, sir!"

Thus the Admiral held discourse as he followed the Captain down into the engine-room.

"Gifford," said Mr. Bower to Hal, "I believe you're a sort of encyclopedia; Captain Wingate says you read everything. What is this foaming of the boilers; why do they foam, and what does the danger consist in?"

“A much better authority than I am,” replied Hal, “might be unable to answer you to your satisfaction. Neither theorists nor practical engineers are fully agreed as to why the boilers foam. Mr. Carl, our first, is a very good engineer, and I was talking to him about it yesterday, while we had the steam down; he says that greasy water, as from some harbors, will make the boilers foam; or a mixing of salt and fresh water will do it, as in entering a river; and why they foam out at sea, the engineers cannot tell. The effect is as boiling water in a pot. There may be little water, yet it will foam and fill the pot. So when the boilers foam, the water rises falsely in the water guage, so that there may be apparently plenty of water, yet in reality so little as to burn the boilers and unfit them for use. The steam becomes overcharged with water, the water bubbling up into the steam; so without care, we might ruin our boilers, and be obliged to go by our sails all the rest of our trip. The remedy is to add water, or to slow

down the fires, cool the boiler, and know how much is really in it. Mr. Carl prefers the latter course, because, he says, then he knows what he is about. He says in twenty years' experience he never had so much of this kind of trouble in any one trip."

"Dear me," said Mr. Bower, "then it would be a very serious matter to keep the fires up, and the ship go at such a rate of speed, when you could have no correct idea of how much or little water there was; we might have met some great disaster."

"Exactly," replied Hal, "and I cannot see how our second engineer, who certainly knows his duty, has permitted it."

"That sailor suggested that he was tipsy," said Mr. Bower.

"In my view that accounts for any amount of folly or crime," said Hal. "I think no one can compute how many less accidents there would be at sea, if no drop of strong drink ever went in any thing that floats."

"It does seem," said the Captain, when

he met Mr. Bower some hours later, "as if the Rona were fated to make this her most unlucky trip. There is nothing serious to be apprehended that I know of, but delay is so trying, and very expensive on the owners too; we are getting on very well now, but I am ready to think no one can tell what two hours will bring about."

"I'm glad the passengers seem so cheerful. I hate to sail with sour faces."

Before evening there was another trouble; the boilers leaked slightly, and mate and Captain were down in the engine-room again, and Hal went with them.

"I should dislike to put back to New York," growled the Captain.

"We might run into Charleston, we're about off Charleston Light now," suggested the mate. "The wind is against us, it is setting in strong from land; but we could keep steam up until we did it."

"There's not the least need," asserted Mr. Carl. "The trouble is with some of the rivets; if we drive them fast, we shall be all right. We will let the fires down,

then draw off the water, and **send a man** inside the boiler, it can be done easily; it will take some time, but we would lose more by putting into a port, and get laughed at for our pains."

"Try it then, by all means, Mr. Carl," said the Captain, greatly relieved. "Passengers make no end of fuss about delays, and getting into the wrong port. They'll be asleep most of them before we start, and will have the less time to worry."

The Captain returned to the cabin, called the steward, and bade him have an unusually fine supper prepared, to sustain the travellers in their disappointment at another delay. While the work at the boiler was urged forward as briskly as possible, the genial Captain devoted himself to promoting cheerfulness in the saloons. Several of the waiters were good performers on flute, bass-viol and violin, and a colored lad had an unusual faculty for trolling the odd plantation songs, that are now slowly dying out of use. This musical talent the Captain called into exer-

cise; and some of the younger passengers got up a dance, while a number of gentlemen formed a card party; to these the Captain furnished several bottles of so called Canary and Madeira.

Indeed, Captain Wingate cared very little how his guests entertained themselves, if they kept within the limits of ordinary decency; there was neither drunkenness nor gambling, and as he passed from one group to another, he congratulated himself on his happy talent for making everything go smoothly. Mrs. Wingate had seconded his efforts in her own way; half a dozen boys and girls were acting charades, very much to their own delight, with Mrs. Wingate's state-room for their dressing-room; and about Mrs. Wingate herself were gathered the most truly choice spirits on board, forming a circle for reading and recitations, and here were some of the rarest gems of our literature heard with a never wearying delight. Mr. Bower and Hal were of this group, and young Gifford wondered how any one could linger far

down in the cabin at the card tables, or how the tireless eight could keep up their dancing to the twang of young Bent's violin, when "The Ancient Mariner," "The Bells of Shandon," "The Death of Mar-mion," "The Legend of Fair Women," "The High Tide," "Winstanley," and many other treasures of the English tongue, were so eloquently read or spoken.

In the latter part of the evening, hearing some confusion and sounds of hailing and loud voices outside, Hal went on deck. A ship, loaded with sponge from the Bahamas, had seen the Rona stationary, had signalled her, and the Captain had sent a boat with one of his engineers and the second mate to offer any aid that might be needed. Nothing was necessary, and the boat remained but a few moments, as the wind was rising. Hal, ever quick in thought, seized the opportunity to write a few lines on a card to his father, stating that Nathan was with him on the Rona, and putting the card in an envelope, he gave it to the mate to be mailed at New York.

The "Syren" with her cargo of sponge was soon out of sight, and the wind was constantly increasing; pending the fastening of the rivets, the Rona could not hold her course, and at the mercy of the wind was forced toward the south-east. When at last before daybreak the leak was stopped, and the machinery was once more in motion, Captain Wingate allowed himself to go to sleep, concluding that it was quite impossible that any further misfortunes could befall the Rona on her way to Havana.

Alas for his expectations; when next morning the few passengers who could brave the rough weather sufficiently to leave their beds and have an appetite, were gathered at the breakfast table, there was an alarm of fire, and confusion reigned. The ship's bell rang; sailors ran shouting to and fro; the officers hurried to the scene of disaster; the fire had broken out around the boilers. The news spread in the ship; cabin and state-room doors flew open, people rushed out

into the saloon half-dressed; and night-capped heads, thrust out from little doors, implored everybody else to declare what was the matter, and if the vessel were sinking. Children screamed, weak people cried, and those who had prided themselves yesterday on self-possession, were now as distracted as many who had been less boastful.

Meantime the Rona was not suffered to perish; her crew worked valiantly; the hose from the donkey engine was brought to bear on the flames; fire yielded to water; and in less than an hour quiet was restored; joy succeeded to fright, congratulation to despair, and people were once more able to realize the roughness of the water, the shrill screaming of the wind, and the frantic plunging of the Rona in the heavy seas. All day the storm continued, growing more and more wild; the ship trembled from stem to stern, everything that could move rolled wildly about; the banging of loosened furniture, and ever and anon the crash of stray pieces of glass and earthenware were

noticed in the din of loud voices, the creak of ropes, the laboring of the engines, and the crash of waves. All the power of steam could not send the assailed ship on her way, and the Rona, instead of making fairly for Florida Straits and passing between Great Bahama and Florida, was being driven north of Little Bahama Bank. A night of furious tempest followed the stormy day, and about three o'clock the shaft broke, leaving the Rona to fight her way without help of steam.

"If she'd been a fair square sailing vessel," said the Rear-Admiral, who had been twelve hours on deck, and had retreated to the engine-room to get warmed, and catch a nap, "I'd have no fears of her getting through this storm right side up; but I'll tell you, Mr. Carl, these yere steamships seems to me likè neither flesh nor fowl. I don't know how she'll sail."

Mr. Carl, dripping with sweat, exhausted with wakefulness and anxiety, and desperate at the misfortunes of his engine, was a lugubrious spectacle; he had sent word

to the sailing master, Mr. Torry, and to Captain Wingate that the shaft was broken, and waited their coming, eyeing mournfully the shining, but now useless machinery, wherein his soul had delighted.

"My part's done," he said hopelessly to the Captain; "shaft's broke, and I'm at the end of my rope."

"Turn in, Carl," said Mr. Torry, "you are off duty now, and you'll see what we can do. We'll keep her before the wind, and a little northerly until daylight, Captain?"

The Captain and sailing-master went on deck, and Mr. Carl flung himself on a narrow cushioned bench, at the end of which the Admiral sat, asleep, in spite of the storm. The sailor woke up as the door closed.

"The storm's rising," he said to Mr. Carl. "Blessed be the Lord, we are in His hands, and not at the mercy of any man or engine, or even of any rigging that ever was on a ship. Are you going to get a nap, sir, you're tired?"

"I'll sleep here. Ned, you'll let me know if I'm wanted, or there's danger?"

The Admiral climbed to the wave-swept deck; the masts bent like trees, the rain fell, the wind raved aloft, and drove the spray sharply into the faces of the toiling seamen; he found Nathan clinging to the foremast.

"You're too young a sailor to stay here, my lad," he said, taking him by the arm and leading him toward the forecabin hatch. They encountered Hal, looking anxiously out for his brother, and Ned thrust the boy down the ladder, saying, "Go, learn seafaring in better weather, my hearty."

In the cabin all was anxiety and dismay; the sound of the hurtling winds and the rushing of waves against the ship was like volleys of heavy artillery; the straining of the vessel seemed more than any human workmanship could resist, and as wave after wave dashed over the deck, the water forced itself down the hatchways, and between the seams, so that beds and floors were

dripping wet. The groups who had been so merry the previous evening, now pale, exhausted and trembling, gathered in the cabin; families clung together; mothers clasped their children and sighed; betimes some earnest voice spoke clearly words of faith and courage which silenced the weepers, and lifted heavy hearts higher than the stars. It seemed as if morning would never come; many of the lamps had been put out by the dripping of the water, and the rest jarred to and fro, burned with a dim uncertain light.

Then above all the other noises came a steady sound from somewhere in the ship; a sound that had not been heard before.

"What is that? What is that?" now demanded several voices.

"I cannot tell," replied Mr. Bower to Mrs. Wingate.

"It is the pumps. The ship must have sprung a leak," said Hal Gifford.

"We are sinking! Save me, we are sinking!" shrieked a young lady, who had

twenty-four hours since been merriest in the dance.

The sound of the pumps continued steadily, and after some time the Captain came in. At once a dozen passengers were clinging to him, imploring him to save them; asking questions, and overwhelming him with their lamentations.

“Do not hinder me,” he cried, loudly. “Yes, we are in very great danger. Be calm, keep your presence of mind, and we shall do all we can for you. Pray let me go; I came to speak one moment to my wife.”

Mrs. Wingate sat with her little son in her lap; the Captain put his arm about her, and they talked softly for some minutes; he then kissed her and went out, taking Hal with him. Several excitable spirits construed this parting as a final leave-taking between the Captain and his wife, and broke into wild shrieks of despair. Mr. Bower entreated them to be calmer, offering to go out and bring an exact report of the state of the *Rona*. As soon as

he returned, people pressed about him for news.

"We are driving rapidly south and east," he said; "it is four o'clock, but seems as dark as ever, though the Captain thinks the wind is chopping to the north, and that it is likely to abate by daylight."

"But the leak, the leak!" screamed the listeners.

"The water gains a little; they will throw some of the heavier part of the cargo overboard."

"Isn't there *any* hope?" asked a despairing voice.

"Yes, hope as long as we float," said Mr. Bower, cheerily. "The storm may go down, the ship, lightened of some freight, will ride easier; we may gain on the leak, and if we cannot get to Abaco, the wind may help us on to Eluthera, or San Salvador."

"So far out of the way as that!" cried several.

"We ought to be thankful to make any harbor at all," said some one.

“And it may be some time before we do it,” exclaimed an elderly gentleman, “in our disabled condition.” As he spoke, there was a tremendous crash, the *Rona* lurched heavily, and there was a wild rush along the decks overhead; the speaker and Mr. Bower darted out of the cabin, but in a few moments were driven back.

“The mainmast has broken off and they are clearing it away from the ship,” they gasped, wiping the water from their hair and faces.

“And the bowsprit and top-gallant mast are gone,” said Mr. Bower.

At this word a number of the passengers gave up all hope, and some of those who had hitherto been the most scoffing and irreligious, fell on their knees and began to pray loudly. Others, as Mrs. Wingate, had all the time preserved a calm silence, seeming engaged in private supplications; or had in earnest, low tones, spoken words of exhortation or encouragement to those nearest them.

Meanwhile, Hal and Nathan had followed

the Captain, and had taken their places at the pumps; here Guy was working as they had never seen man work before, save their father in one or two cases of shipwreck near the Sharkshead. To the Admiral was entrusted the watching of the water in the hold, and his reports of the increase or decrease were eagerly listened for. The business of lightening the ship went on as briskly as was possible in such storm and darkness, with the Rona one moment quivering on the summit of a wave, the next reeling forward, as if she would plunge down into the very depths of the sea.

Slowly the morning dawned over the dismantled ship and her exhausted crew. As the blessed day palely lit the east, the wind came round yet more to the north, and its violence was much lessened; the waves began to subside; still under what little canvas was left her, the Rona pressed south.

By noon the storm was over; the sun shone feebly through the clouds; the rain had ceased, the wind was steady but not

strong, the waves sobbed out their rage, and sullenly heaved in long swells, as if they re-lived in a dream their recent phrensy.

The cook and stewards prepared breakfast, and carried plenty of hot coffee and soup to the weary sailors early in the morning, and the male passengers took their turn at the pumps to relieve the almost worn out crew.

A terrible anxiety brooded over the ship, for the leak gained ominously, and the few sails left the *Rona* carried her but slowly on her way; while the sole hope of the Captain was to gain one of the harbors in the Bahama Islands.

A hope that quickly deserted them; the leak so increased on the ship, that by seven o'clock Captain Wingate ordered the boats to be prepared, as the only hope of saving the lives of those on board.

Every one was now on deck; cook, stewards and waiters rushed here and there, with provisions for the boats; every person carried what he believed most needful to

him; and in the terrible selfishness of their danger, each man seemed to consider his neighbor's safety inimical to his own.

During all the storm Guy had excited Hal's gratitude by his kindness to Nathan, the youngest of the crew.

Captain Wingate, busy for every one, hastily put his wife and child in Mr. Bower's care, and commended them to the Rear-Admiral, who, with an old sailor's wisdom, and a Christian's calm self-possession, was preparing a boat which chanced to be the smallest the Rona possessed.

"Admiral," said the Captain, "my wife and boy will go in your boat; Gifford, are you and your brother going in her?"

The Giffords were working under the Admiral's orders, and Guy was laboring like a giant.

"I'm for this boat, too, Captain," said Guy.

"That's right," said the Captain, who had a secret liking for Guy, and admired his prodigious frame and strength.

"She'll hold ten, Cap'n," said the Admi-

ral, eying his boat, "the little boy won't count; and you'll go with us."

"I'll be the last to leave, Torry and I," said Wingate.

"O, you must come with us!" cried his wife, in agony.

"We'll wait and take you off, Cap'n," said Ned; "come to us when you get them all started."

At this moment a terrible shriek filled the air. The first and largest boat had been made ready, and as they prepared to lower her, twenty-eight persons had crowded into her. At that instant the steward rushed up, and as she swung to the davits he seized a sharp axe and cut the ropes at the bow; the end fell, and just at that time the Rona sunk forward with the roll of a heavy sea, and more than twenty of those in the longboat were flung into the water, uttering yells of despair. The cause of this fearful disaster, the steward, flung his arms over his head, waved his axe in air, whirled it out into the water and followed it with a mad leap.

“May God have mercy on him—on all!” cried the Admiral, looking up, but never pausing in his breathless work of preparation. “The man was drunk, he has been taking brandy all day.”

The large boat was righted and left the ship with twenty-six souls; twenty of whom were rescued by a passing vessel, three days after. Ten of those who fell into the sea were picked up by the second boat, and eleven, including the steward, were drowned. The second boat with twenty on board rowed away from the Rona and was never heard of. Three or four persons wild with terror and exhaustion, leaped overboard. The third boat, with eighteen unfortunates in her, in charge of the first mate, next left the fast sinking Rona.

It was now growing dark, the little boat in charge of the Admiral had been lowered, and her complement of souls was on board, except the Captain, and Mr. Torry the sailing master. Those on this last boat were Mrs. Wingate and her little son; the two Giffords, Mr. Carl, Guy, the Admiral,

Mr. Bower, and Bellows. The cook had also been with them, putting various packages of meat and biscuit, and kegs of water on board, but he had left them, and was supposed to have gone in the third boat.

It was now very unsafe to be near the Rona, which might go down suddenly, the Captain was yet on deck shouting to the disappearing boats, and calling out if by chance in his recent hasty search through the ship he had missed any one yet on board. Hal had taken his ship's books and the money in his care with him, and the Captain was just about to spring into the Admiral's waiting boat, when a howl, as of a demon, was heard behind him, and the cook rushing from his galley, flung the Captain from before him, and leaped into the boat in his stead. Captain Wingate, struck thus unexpectedly, fell heavily into the water and disappeared. Mr. Torry, his devoted friend, boldly sprang after him, but both vanished from the surface, and though Guy and the Admiral shouted and

rowed about until hope was lost, they found in the gathered darkness no trace of these two brave men. Meanwhile the cook was stretched drunk in the bottom of the boat, and Mrs. Wingate, in a blessed insensibility, fell back upon Hal's arm.



CHAPTER VI.

DRIFTING ON THE SEA.

"The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out,
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre bark."



HERE were now in the boat nine persons, besides little Earle Wingate. The Rona was settling rapidly, her dark hull going down deeper and deeper each moment; daylight had disappeared, clouds hid the stars, and it was yet long before moon-rise. The Admiral looked at Guy; they two were now the leading spirits in this forlorn craft, for the two engineers, Bellows and Carl, knew but little of sailing a boat; Mr. Bower was entirely a landsman; the cook was stupid from drink, and was but a dolt outside of his galley at the best, while Hal and

Nathan were having their first experience of the dangers of the sea.

"We'll have to give 'em up," said the Admiral; "they're lost, sure enough. God help her when she comes to, and knows there's no hope. He was as kind a Cap'n as ever I sailed under."

"We've lost two good men for that pig," said Guy, giving the inert cook a thrust with his foot; "and more than that, we're lost, as you'll find out in the morning, it's my opinion. Which way shall we row?"

"All to the oars, and give the Rona a wide berth!" cried the Admiral, and vigorous strokes of the oars sent the boat back from the doomed ship. They heard a moaning and rush of waters, then a huge dark mass lifted dimly before them, a something more solid in its blackness than the night; there was a rush of great waves made by the sinking Rona, a strange trembling of the sea, reaching even to them; then the dark mass vanished, and gray space was where the upraised stern

of the ship had been ; and a bubbling and foaming, as of a mighty caldron, told that the hungry sea had devoured the Rona and her cargo.

The sudden and entire vanishing of the ship filled these few survivors of her doom with a terrible feeling, that they in their frail shallop could never contend with the monster which had swallowed the great vessel, and with bowed heads they awaited their own destruction ; but this feeling in an instant passed out of the hearts of the experienced Admiral, and the courageous Guy.

“Thank God, we are not capsized!” cried Ned.

“Which way?” demanded Guy. But who could tell which way in that starless darkness?

“Has any one a light, matches, a compass?” demanded Guy, loudly.

A dead silence followed his words. The Admiral had matches, but they were wet, and what use was it to strike a light when there was no compass with an infallible

finger to point their way. Guy groaned, and clenched his fists.

"I told you so," he cried. "The Captain and Mr. Torry had compasses, and they've gone down with them."

"If I could see the stars, I'd know my way without 'em," said the Admiral. "We'd best keep pretty easy till daylight: seems to me the waves and wind is quieter."

"And in daylight vessels can see us, and pick us up?"

To this remark of Nathan's the Admiral replied:

"Don't know—vessels a'n't so plenty. Folks talk of the sea bein' white with sails. *I* never see it so, 'cept in harbors. You may sail days without seein' a ship, less you're right on the track where the merchantmen go allus. No, I've been once nineteen days out in an open boat, and never see a sail."

"And what is our hope then?" asked Hal, falteringly.

"Don't discourage them, we may find a ship," said Guy.

“I should say our hope was in getting to some of the Bahamas,” said the Admiral. “They lie scattered all over the water somewhere south of us; and if we get on one of ’em, even if ’taint inhabited, why we’ll be safe, and can pick up a living; and we’ll be in the way of ships going to and fro, and can be taken off; or we can find our own way to some of the bigger islands.”

“But how many of them are there?” asked Nathan; “there are only a few on the map.”

“The maps don’t show everything,” said the Admiral with great contempt; “there’s nigh on five hundred of Bahamy’s, lying about sort of loose like. The maps don’t have half of ’em; but I lean on what I’ve seen; I’ve been this way before, dozens of times like.”

“And how long will it take us to reach an island?” asked Nathan, with a boy’s eagerness.

No one replied.

Hal could not tell when Mrs. Wingate

recovered consciousness of her situation and her loss. He felt her lift herself and reach for the child, whom Nathan held; and then she drew the little one to her arms, and leaned her face against him, and Hal heard sounds of weeping and low murmured words of prayer or lamentation, or of both.

By and by the moon rose, and as she climbed her pathway in the sky, the clouds thinned and slid away, and by the pale light of the stars and that slender crescent, the lost ones beheld the utter and unspeakable loneliness of the deep

The Admiral could now tell which way they had better direct their course; he bade Nathan to take the tiller, as he knew how to steer, and would find it easier than rowing; himself, Guy, Bellows and Mr. Carl took the oars, and Hal was to relieve them by turns. Mr. Bower was so anxious to do his part, that he was allowed Bellow's place; but in a few moments Guy plainly told him that he hindered more than he helped, because he fouled his oars with his

neighbor's continually, and advised him to take care of Mrs. Wingate and Earle, as his contribution to the general good. The night was raw and at daybreak very cold; the boat was wet, and the clothes of all on board were damp, while they were so crowded by their stores, and by each other, that the painfulness of their position was greatly increased; meanwhile the prostrate and drunken cook was in every one's way.

At last the sun rose, and with the bright warm rays, hope and cheerfulness revived in every heart but Mrs. Wingate's; she could not see a gleam of comfort in the desolate life that lay before her.

Morning strengthened the energy of Admiral Ned; he proclaimed a council.

"What I want, is order. We can't hope for luck unless we obey orders, and have a head to give 'em. We'll choose a Cap'n, and all agree to follow out what he says; what say, mates?"

To this proposition all agreed.

"I name Mr. Carl," said Ned, "he ranks first."

“I decline, because I know little about sailing a small boat. This is my first shipwreck. I say, the Admiral is the best sailor, knows these seas, and has had the most experience, let him command us. For my part, I cheerfully agrée to do as he says; he’s honest, staunch and skilful.”

To this all heartily agreed, and the Admiral, with no delay or false modesty, accepted his position, and issued his first order: “Clear up the boat, ship-shape, and take account of stores. We’ll know what we’ve got.”

As a beginning, Guy seized the cook by the neck and dragged him up. He was lying on two blankets, hastily rolled together.

“So much for overhauling,” said the Admiral, tossing them to Mr. Bower; “you make the lady and the little ’un comfortable with those.”

A coil of rope, a couple of axes, a rifle and a revolver, with a bag of ammunition, were under the blankets; the arms all thoroughly wet, and Hal laid them in the

sun, on his folded coat, to dry and oil them presently; the cook had contributed a large bag of biscuit, some cans of preserved meat, and some bread, which had been wet by the washing of the waves into the boat; a jar of butter, half a dozen tin-cans of fruit, two small kegs, and a large jug.

“What are these?” asked the Admiral.

“Water,” said the cook, who had been wetting his head, and feebly recovering himself from his stupor, since Guy had dragged him up. He sat in the bow of the boat, opposite Mrs. Wingate, and every look at him wrung her heart, and every sound of his voice was misery, as she could only regard him as the murderer of her husband.

Hal found near him a large parcel wrapped in a table-cloth; it proved to be a joint of baked mutton. The Admiral piled the provisions and water carefully by themselves. It was a very small supply for ten persons. He looked at it doubtfully.

“We must go on an allowance,” he said; “it is better to have half-rations for a little

while—when, if we are soon picked up, we shall find we have had more than enough of food on hand—than to eat hearty now, and be at sea for days, until we starve to death. Say, shipmates, will we share alike, 'cept the lady and the little 'un, and give Mr. Carl the keepin' of the provisions, and we will all eat as he serves it out?"

To this all assented; but Mrs. Wingate declared that she would take nothing more or better than the others. Mr. Carl and Mr. Bower arranged a more easy seat for her in the bow of the boat, using the coiled rope and the blankets to make a resting place; Mr. Bower sat on one side of her, and Hal on the other; the cook was put farthest off, and Guy interposed his huge frame between this wretch and the unhappy woman who had been by his act bereaved.

"We'll begin by eating the cooked meat," said Mr. Carl; "this will make our meals to-day."

"This bread's all spoiled and wet, we might as well chuck it over," said the rash

Nathan; but the Admiral caught his busy hand with a cry—"Avast there, boy! we may see the hour when every man of us would give his right hand for a good feed of that wet bread. Mr. Gifford, will you see to drying that bread, and put it into a little cupboard like, that is under the bow there, behind Mrs. Wingate. You don't know much about our situation yet, my lad," he added kindly to the abashed Nathan. Mr. Carl had been cutting off ten slices of the mutton, and now asked if each man were willing to take that for his morning's allowance, adding, "If we are picked up before night, boys, we can eat the heartier."

All in the boat cheerfully accepted their share, which Mr. Carl distributed, by sticking his pocket-knife in each piece, and thus passing it to its owner. Mrs. Wingate dropped her portion idly on her lap, too heart-sick to eat; and still gazing with despairing eyes toward those waters where her husband had sunk from her sight.

"Eat a mouthful, if you can, for the sake

of encouraging the others," whispered Mr. Bower, "and put what is left in the little cupboard behind you. We are in such a place that we cannot waste the smallest morsel."

"Mr. Bower," said Mr. Carl, "have you a drinking-cup? We have nothing to serve the water in."

Indeed, there was nothing smaller than a wooden pail which the Admiral had put in for bailing, taking it from the upper deck. At this moment Hal noticed little Earle rolling something in his hands, as he sat at his mother's feet, and saw that it was a cocoanut, which the half-crazy cook had flung in the previous evening with his cans. With some difficulty he got off the thin top of the shell, and having cut out the meat, had the shell for a bowl, and passed it about for what the Admiral thought a reasonable supply of water.

Mr. Carl having offered all of the nut meat to Mrs. Wingate, divided it among the whole company as the conclusion of their breakfast. However, Bellows, the second,

engineer, had an addition to make to the fare, for he took from his pocket a brandy-flask, and generously remarking that all were to share alike, had a swallow from it, and passed it about.

The Admiral looked much displeased. "There'll be an end to order, if that's aboard," he said to Mr. Carl.

"I've known it to be of much use in shipwrecks," said the engineer; "it keeps up strength and warmth."

"I've known it to be the ruin of castaways in our case," said the sailor; "but I never know'd it to do any real good, and I speak from experience. I've been a drink-in' man. If it strengthens, it's only a flash of strength, like fever or craziness gives; and when it's done, you're a powerful sight weaker than you was before you took it. I'd rather be one thing square and fair; not high up and low down."

"Never mind, Ned," said Mr. Carl, soothingly: "the flask's small, and there are Guy, cook, and Bellows, to pull at it; besides any one else that may. There a'n't enough

to hurt 'em, and it will be gone before to-morrow."

The flask passed about; Mr. Bower said he felt no present need of any.

What Nathan would have done, as he sat by Guy, can never be known, for Hal's eye was fixed on him, chaining him in shipwreck to the principles of land safety; and Guy himself, as he passed the brandy on, after a drink, said, "Stick to the old Governor's principles, my boy."

Nathan looked up, surprised at a certain tenderness of his tone; but he had already frequently talked to Guy of the old Viking of the Sharkshead.

The cook imbibed so deeply, that Belows, watchful over his treasure, jerked the bottle out of his mouth with a muttered curse.

Mr. Carl accepted his share, saying, by way of half excuse to the Admiral, "I don't disbelieve in it, and it will be leaving less for the toppers."

By the time the morning meal had been eaten, the boat was reduced to order.

There were three pair of oars on board, but only two sets of oar-locks. The sun was rising, and its beams already promised fervid noon-day heat. Mr. Carl and Mr. Bower took the extra oars, and fastening the blades together, fixed the table-cloth to them, as a shelter for Mrs. Wingate's head, which would also serve as a means of attracting attention to any passing ship. They then split off a piece from one of the seats and raised it above the oars for a flag-staff, from which three handkerchiefs tied together floated as a streamer.

The Admiral bade the cook steer, and Nathan get to sleep. The Admiral's plan was to ply the oars constantly, those who were not rowing having an opportunity to sleep until their turn on duty came. Mr. Bower, with daylight to help him, and having watched the motions of Guy and Ned carefully, was by afternoon able to take his turn at the oars very creditably.

They headed for the south-west. The sea was nearly quiet, but what little wind there was, was against them, the sun was

fiercely hot, and its reflection on the water was blinding. The heat and the rowing made them very thirsty, and Mr. Carl served out water between noon and evening. At this the Admiral shook his head. Mrs. Wingate urged them to wet their clothing, and wrap wet handkerchiefs about their throats, as a means of allaying thirst.

Bellows finished his brandy, and threw down the bottle, empty.

Not a sail was seen that day.

Night came; the sun had set, and before them lay a glowing path of scarlet and purple, flecked with gold; alas, that against its splendors came no white, heaven-sent sail, welcome as the returning wings of Noah's olive-bearing dove. Little Earle lay asleep against his pale, exhausted mother; Nathan's face had changed from its boyish carelessness to a great fear; Mr. Bower looked discouraged, and the cook sullen.

"Our chance is about done until tomorrow," said Guy, to the Admiral; "we wont be seen at night."

“Well, mates,” spoke the Admiral, “you know what Paul wrote down in the heavenly Log-book: ‘A night and a day have I been in the deep,’ and the Lord it was that preserved him. That’s where we’re to look for help in our troubles. Mr. Bower, you’re a Christian, sir; before we meet this night, alone on the sea, wont you make a prayer for us, sir?”

“Yes, do so,” whispered Mrs. Wingate.

Mr. Bower bent his head and made a very earnest prayer; when he had finished, Hal, who had just ceased rowing, took out his pocket Bible, and read in the waning light the one hundred and twenty-first Psalm: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.”

The second day at sea was yet worse than the first. Every man was weary with rowing, with long battling with the storm, and with the cramped position necessary in the little boat.

The heat was great; and to fill the sum

of their troubles, though Bellows had flung his bottle down, empty, the previous evening, it was now in possession of the cook, full, and passed openly about. The cook having not been entirely sober from the beginning of the storm, was by turns sullen and unruly; in the afternoon he boldly revealed the secret of the whisky, by reaching after the large jug and filling his bottle from it.

“You told me that was water!” cried the dismayed Admiral, seeing his stock of that necessary lessened by more than a full day’s supply, and the dangerous poison in its place—poison which was likely to breed anarchy and death.

“It’s better than water,” replied the cook, gruffly.

“We’d be better off if we flung it overboard,” said the Admiral.

“Whoever chucks that out, has got to send me first,” said the cook, looking about defiantly.

“Me, too,” said Bellows, who had been drinking freely.

Mr. Carl looked at the Admiral, and motioned him to be calm.

This day's fare was the bread that had been wet, which was eaten ravenously. The third day brought the unfortunates the added agony of disappointment. Two ships passed, not seeming to notice them. One was less than two miles distant; at noon, and then again at five o'clock, these ships lifted their sails in sight, were watched with frantic longing, with waving of signals, with hopeless shrieks and shouts from parched and tired throats, and slid out of sight into the blue North and East.

At evening Mr. Carl announced that they must reduce the rations of water by half. The others agreed to this, but Bel-lows sullenly, while the cook openly said that "those who couldn't row, had no right to use water that was needed for better folks;" he pointed his remarks by a vicious stare at Mrs. Wingate and her child; but Guy's strong hand grasped him, and he heard a threat of "choking," which reduced him to quiet.

That night was stormy, the wind rose high, the boat seemed momentarily in danger of swamping, was driven out of its course far to the eastward; and the oars were useless, as the waves constantly forced them from the oar-locks. The cook, Bel- lows and Guy, had been drinking freely, and sat by themselves in the stern of the boat, with the beloved jug among them. The Admiral advocated seizing the jug and flinging it overboard. Mr. Carl strongly opposed this, he thought a scuffle would follow the attempt, which would surely upset the boat; besides, in his view, the liquor, if not all used in mere drunk- enness, might be needful to the others in extremity.

The night was a terrible one; every one was drenched by the washing in of waves; it was nearly noon next day before the storm abated; there was no sun, and a strong cold wind was keenly felt after the recent heat. The three drunkards in the stern refused to row, and seemed re- solved to drain their jug, Hal, Carl, Mr.

Bower and the Admiral, took the oars and Nathan steered. He thus was among the three, and Guy urged him to drink; weak and desperate, the unhappy boy yielded. It was his first dram, the potent poison mounting to his brain, overpowered him in his weak state, his hand dropped from the tiller, and he fell forward senseless.

Hal dragged his brother into the centre of the boat, and implored Guy to steer, which he at last agreed to do.

“Mr. Carl,” said the Admiral, in a low tone, “we’re lost. To-morrow wont see one of us. Look at them sharks!”

Mr. Carl turned his head, a number of these monsters were leisurely following the boat, as if certain of their prey. The men in the stern now saw them, and raised a loud cry. Hal loaded a revolver and fired among the creatures, and Bellows madly flung a boat-hook among them, but they came on as calmly as before. The sight of them phrensied the cook; he declared they would never leave the boat’s wake until they had a victim; they followed for

blood, and blood they would have—Earle Wingate was of no use, and had better be thrown to them. Mrs. Wingate's shriek of horror was lost in the loud, angry shouts of all in the boat, who vowed vengeance on the cook. The insane wretch, however, sprang up and endeavored to reach the bow of the boat, declaring he would throw out both mother and child. Mr. Carl and the Admiral caught his legs, and he fell heavily on his face. Unable to rise, he lay laughing in maniac glee, and anon yelling in paroxysms of fright. He rolled over on his back, and poured forth volleys of oaths; then his incessant tongue babbled of strange sights which rose before him; the canopy of the sky was gory and rained reptiles; clouds of horrible, slimy, winged things, gathered about the boat; the sea burned in strange flames, legions of skeletons lifted out of the water, and caught after the boat's load with awful, bony hands. So vivid were his words that all his hearers felt dragged to the verge of insanity; his groans and howls made all



**A DEATHLIKE SILENCE FELL IN THE BOAT.—PAGE 154.
NOTHING TO DRINK.**

hearts tremble. At last, with new strength, he lifted himself up, and rested against the tiller, his eyes glaring in horror toward the track the boat left in the water, amid the bubbles and curling foam of which, the sharks sailed steadily on—the demons of the sea.

The horror that gathered and brooded in this man's face was something terrible beyond speech; to see him, was to have a glimpse into the unutterable misery of lost souls. A deathlike silence fell in the boat, broken only by the dip of the oars. Full quarter of an hour passed in this fearful hush, when suddenly the cook threw out his arms, gave a yell which echoed far and wide, like nothing human, over the sea, sprung on the stern, and plunged headlong into the very midst of the pursuing sharks. He was devoured before his comrade's eyes.

This shocking sight sobered Guy and Bellows. There followed a dead pause, and then Guy asked leave to take Hal's oar; Bellows relieved Mr. Bower, and Hal

sat at the tiller. Clouds had been gathering; there was now the loud roll of thunder; lightning blazed along the sky, and the rain came down heavily for half an hour. The ocean, instead of rising into waves, seemed trampled flat by the storm. The Admiral caught what water he could by wringing the cloth stretched for Mrs. Wingate's screen, and also their wet garments. The drenching of their clothes relieved their thirst. Not a quart of water was in the boat when the rain began. Those who had kept their clothes wet in the sea had suffered little from thirst, but had experienced much pain from the abrasion of the skin, from the saline particles adhering to their garments. Besides the wetting, they caught two quarts of water. The storm passed, and wet and exhausted, the sharks still pursuing them, and no sail in sight, they ended their fifth day in the open boat at sea.

CHAPTER VII.

DAYS OF DESPAIR.

"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea."

"Water, water everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water everywhere,
And not one drop to drink."



THE fact that five days had passed without seeing land was ominous. The Admiral began to fear that the storm of the third night had driven them farther to the east than they had imagined, and out of the longitude of the Bahamas. The third day out they had eaten biscuits and canned meat, of which latter their supply was but small. The fourth day's rations had been the same; the fifth day, fare the same; all but about four ounces of the meat gone

after the second meal, which was served at four o'clock; this remnant of the meat the drunken cook had forcibly seized from Mr. Carl, and devoured, his comrades fearing to strive with him for it, lest the boat might be upset. The company had now two scanty meals a day, at ten and four o'clock. Horrible as was the death of the cook, it relieved them of their chief burden and great danger.

Shocked by the loss of their drinking comrade, Guy and Bellows had put their strength to the oars, and rowed most of the night, as had Mr. Bower. Before day-break, Carl, the Admiral, and Hal, took their turn, and Mrs. Wingate, bidding poor Nathan lie down on her blanket with Earle, took the tiller.

The more desperate had grown their situation, the more had this woman's courage risen to meet it. For the first day or two, thoughts of her husband had overpowered all other feelings; but when the faces of her companions grew wan with watching and famine; when she saw her

only child slowly starving; when her own life was hourly threatened by a drunken monster; when no sails appeared, and their only prospect was to perish of want and exposure, pinched with hunger, and blackened with thirst, in an open boat at sea, Mrs. Wingate put by the sorrow of her irreparable loss, and gave herself to watching for the comfort of her fellow-sufferers. Her gracious voice led their thoughts to "the rest that remaineth;" her bravery shamed them out of complaining; her readiness to share with others her scanty ration, compelled the men to endure hunger in silence; she taught them to allay the fever of thirst by constantly wetting their clothing, and she cheered them with accounts of many whose peril and privation had been greater than their own, but who had been saved at last. She had hitherto feared to leave her place in the bow, where her companions could protect her from the cook, but now that her enemy had gone like Judas to his own place, she resolved to take her share of the labor

of steering, in turn with Nathan. These changes having been made, the ruddy morning looked for the sixth time on the boat of shipwrecked souls. Guy, Bellows, Nathan and Mr. Bower, were lying unconscious, in a half-sleep, half-stupor; they looked rather like corpses than living men, with their thin, ghastly faces turned up to the sky, their shrivelled hands clutching their clothing, and their bloodless lips drawn back from the teeth.

When Mrs. Wingate sat down by the tiller, that fatal jug which had already wrought such disaster was at her feet. It was a very large jug, and bitter had been the Admiral's disappointment that it had contained—not water, but whisky. She shook it, and found from the sound that it must contain at least a quart of liquor. Guy and Bellows were evidently too sound asleep to hear her. "Friends," she said, "now is our time to throw out this jug, which has made so much trouble. Let us do so while these men are asleep."

"Yes, by all means," cried Hal.

“No, no!” exclaimed Mr. Carl; “it is not so dangerous, now the cook has gone.”

“Why, there’s Guy and Bellows; it may play the mischief with them as much as with him,” said the Admiral; “and I’ll tell you, mates, the sharks themselves a’n’t so bad as a drunken man in an open boat. It was only God’s mercy that we weren’t all upset among the sharks yesterday; and I don’t know as we can count on his workin’ such miracles for us again, if we run risks by keepin’ whisky aboard.”

“I’d call it sheer waste and recklessness, throwing away anything that we could drink,” said Mr. Carl, angrily. “We have but three quarts of water to serve nine of us for nobody can tell how long, and when that’s gone, a few drops of that whisky will take its place.”

“Whisky cannot take the place of water, Mr. Carl,” said Hal.

“One’s as much food as the other,” said the engineer.

“We can call neither of them food,” interposed Mrs. Wingate, “but water is the

medium by which food is conveyed into every part of our bodies; by means of water food is made to nourish us, and supply our wants; it carries sustenance through all our frame, and drains away from every vein and fibre useless and decayed matter. This whisky, on the contrary, destroys the stomach, maddens the brain, disturbs the circulation, and leaves us suddenly exhausted and shorn of the strength we previously possessed. If you want to realize that whisky is not food, and has not the blessed mission of water to our bodies, Mr. Carl, look at those sleeping men. Who has died first in this boat-load? Not the puny child, not the woman unused to hardships, not the slender boy, not the Admiral, who has watched the most, rowed the most, and eaten the least—because he divided his shares with Nathan—but that burly cook, who did nothing but drink whisky. See these men. Guy and Bel-lows are framed like giants; look at their bones, remember how strong they seemed; but last night could they row any better,

or hold out any longer than Mr. Bower, who has never been used to labor? Do those two men hold out as well as Hal, a mere boy; as well as you do, Mr. Carl, as well as our good Admiral? Are they not thinner, and weaker, and half-crazy? Have not our water-drinkers shown the most courage, the most stamina?"

Mrs. Wingate reasoned thus, because she knew the engineer was a man capable of listening to reason, and she greatly desired to have the whisky destroyed before the two toppers should wake for their morning dram. She feared nothing so much as the antics of drunken men. As she spoke, she looked out into the water near her. The boat was sailing west and south, and the red sunrise lay a broad bright track on the sea behind them; gliding on in this rich stream of color, was the grim death of the sea, a huge solitary white shark, gleaming out of the blood-hued waves.

"Look, look, Mr. Carl!" she implored; "can we risk having these men become furious, and overturn us in the very jaws

of that monster? Must we feed him to-day?" The engineer shuddered.

"But," he said, "I have often heard of cases where a drink of liquor was the last thing left, and gave men strength and courage for a last row, when else they must have perished in the very sight of land."

"If there were no men among us likely to be drunken, I would not press the point," said Mrs. Wingate. "But mark my words, if such a last emergency comes to us, the men who do not drink, will be the ablest at the oar."

"It is of little consequence either way," said Mr. Carl, "we are lost. The question is between some of us holding out a bit longer in our sufferings, or your having quiet in your last hours. You're a dying woman, Mrs. Wingate; and I, a dying man, won't add to the misery of your last minutes on earth. Chuck that jug out, Admiral."

The rejoicing sailor hastily drew the jug's cork, and quietly dropped the jug into the sea.

It was nine o'clock before the sleepers opened their eyes, then hunger roused them. Mr. Carl, anxious to pass over the loss of their jug quietly, began to distribute rations immediately. Mr. Bower had been in the habit of uttering a short prayer before the morning meal; after he had done so, Mr. Carl distributed ship biscuit and butter. They had had no butter, except on the second day, with the bread.

"Hold on," said Bellows. "I want a swig."

He looked for the big jug, but failed to find it.

"Eat your breakfast," said Mr. Carl, "and I'll serve water."

"No, no, old man, I say I'll have my jug."

"I, too—where's our dram? That's our strength," said Guy.

A little search convinced them that it was gone. The disposition of Bellows led him to vent his rage in curses, in vowing that he would never more lift a hand to help row and steer; and then devouring his biscuit, he demanded water. He struck

the can as Mr. Carl held it, so that he obtained full three times his share. After this he flung himself on his face, dragged Mrs. Wingate's blanket over his head, and returned to his sleep.

Guy was of a different temperament; he sat for some minutes without eating, brooding over his loss, until his rage had waxed like Nebuchadnezzar's seven times heated furnace; then he broke into a paroxysm of fury.

"You've thrown that out!" he roared at the Admiral; "and I'll fling every one of you out to pay for it; or I'll overturn this boat for your cursed impudence, and give you all to that shark. How dare you rob and meddle like that? you Ned, and Carl, and Bower, it was one of you. I'll heave you all out. Speak, who did it? or I'll heave the whole of you over."

Mr. Carl turned white, and with his eyes fixed on the raging man, drew a knife from his breast, to defend himself. Ned rested his oar in the lock, and put himself on his guard; while Hal, stooping behind Mr.

Bower, looked to the loading of his revolver, resolved to protect his companions from the mad inebriate, at all hazards. Mrs. Wingate sat in silent horror, separated from her child by the length of the boat.

But here Nathan interposed, he leaned forward before Guy, exclaiming: "Don't pitch on the wrong man. If you want me, here I am; don't hurt the rest of 'em, Guy."

"You! you!" yelled Guy; "what had you against the jug, that you should toss it overboard?"

The boy had divined how matters stood, and put himself boldly into the place of danger. He replied:

"I had a great deal against the jug. You got me to drink out of it, and break the promise I made to my father."

Guy seized him by the hair; beautiful light curls the boy had, like Margaret's—and Hal aimed the revolver at Guy, resolved to save his brother. Without seeing the weapon, Guy suddenly loosened his hold, saying hoarsely: "No, no; the

end is coming soon enough. *I'll* not rob the old man of his Benjamin—death will take us all presently; and what was that old Jacob said, eh, Admiral? 'If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved—I will go down to the grave to my son mourning.'" He fell back on his seat, and looked steadily out along the cheerless sea; his mind was evidently disordered, and he repeated over and over again, "Bereaved, bereaved—'Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me,'—against me—against me."

At this new mood, and this unexpected acquaintance with Scripture, even the suffering company on the boat were moved to wonder.

Hal presently thought to rouse Guy to interest, and to the need of eating his yet untasted ration. He drew closer to him, took his little leather covered Bible from his pocket, and from under the cover pulled out a photograph of his father. He laid it before the sailor's eyes, saying:

"There, Guy; there; this is the old man, whose son you have spared."

Guy took the picture in his wasted, trembling hand; looked at it long and curiously, then gave it back, and bowing his face on his arms, wept and sobbed like a heart-broken child.

"The poor man is completely unnerved," said Carl to Ned; "I'm sorry we threw his whisky away, it may ruin him."

"It may save him, if there's such a thing as safety for us," replied the Admiral.

That afternoon they thought they saw a ship, and steered toward it, but the airy phantom melted away. At four they had the second meal—biscuit and a portion of butter, with a taste of water. The heat was excessive; Mr. Carl and Hal made an awning of wet blankets for shade and coolness; they rowed still south-east, but feebly. Mrs. Wingate, Earle, and the Admiral, who was taking his turn resting, slept; Bellows had eaten his portion, and laid down again, refusing to row; Nathan fell asleep at the tiller, and the four men at the oars proba-

bly dozed also, for suddenly all started as if from sleep, at the sound of a cry from Mr. Carl. The sea was calm and sparkling, the sky was blue, while yet a faint veil seemed drawn over its dazzling clearness. But they woke in an ecstasy of joy, for they were in the midst of a fleet of vessels of all sizes. North, east, west and south of them, were the glorious white sailed ships, about three quarters of a mile away, masts and spars, and sails and ropes all complete; some going swiftly with full sails, some with canvas flapping against the masts; and nearest of all was a great steam-ship, with mainmast and smoke-stack boldly painted on the sky. O, happy hour! their troubles were over! they cried out, and thanked God, and rowed with new vigor toward the nearest ship; not stopping to wonder why they had not been seen and sent after, not questioning how they had come into this circle of ships, or why so great a fleet had gathered here, they sent the Rona's boat on with long strokes toward the steam-ship, those not

at the oars waving hats and kerchiefs, and raising feeble cries. O horror! the ships grew thin and strange, and some of them went out like candles suddenly snuffed, and the grand steam-ship ceased to tack toward them; her sails became like gossamer; the masts grew thin, her lately solid sides showed like bars against the sky, the sun "peered through them as through a grate."

"They listened and looked sideways up,
Fear at their hearts as at a cup,
The lifeblood seemed to sip."

The steam-ship perished "like a dream when one awaketh." They looked in mute anguish about them, and the ships of every kind were gone, save three that sailed keel upward, a fathom's length above the surface of the sea. They were the victims of the mirage, and they wept like children. This closed the sixth day's record. There was a little rain in the night, which refreshed their feverish frames, but was not sufficient for them to catch any water.

The rations for the next morning were the same as the day before, a biscuit and

a portion of the butter, which was reduced to oil by the heat, and Carl served it, using the bit of shell cut from the top of the cocoanut as a spoon. They got about a quarter of a gill of water each. Bellows took his share and then lay down, evidently his mind wandered. Mrs. Wingate urged them all to continue wetting their clothes in the sea-water. Bellows refused this utterly. Before noon he was quite insane; he lay babbling huskily of his past life; next he described wanderings in the country, a pool where he bathed, a great spring where the herds came to drink; brooks flowing on in deep shadow, a river where boats plied up and down; a feast where every luxury was spread for him. His fancy next turned to Fulton Market, and he hailed the market-men and women, and priced their wares, describing their stalls. After a time he sat up, secretly possessed himself of the nut-shell bowl, and leaning over the boatside, drank about a pint of salt water before he could be hindered; in spite of the efforts and remonstrances of

his comrades, he presently repeated this draught.

“He’s signed his death-warrant,” said the Admiral to Mr. Carl.

And so indeed it was, for his madness increased upon him, and in less than an hour after his second drink he flung himself with a shout into the sea, and went down like lead, never once rising to the surface.

Mr. Carl gave a groan. “So we must all go! Who will be last to die?”

Thus the seventh day out closed; and now there were in the boat, a woman, a child, two lads, and four men—Guy and the Admiral, Mr. Bower and the engineer. The supplies now on hand were one pint of water, six biscuits, and six small cans of fruit, two being tomatoes and four of peaches. The engineer had kept the fruit, to be used as rations when their stock of water was entirely gone.

On the eighth morning Mr. Carl opened a can of peaches for their breakfast. He divided it among the eight souls on board;

the fruit had partially fermented, and would have been thrown out by any one of these people had they been on shore. No water was given out until noon, then only a spoonful to each person.

Guy could no longer work at the oars; he lay back, prating something as Bellows had. He was near Mrs. Wingate, and she sheltered him as well as possible under her awning, and kept bathing his head with her handkerchief. Little Earle lay unconscious, his eyes half open, but the balls rolled out of sight, his teeth locked together, and his darkened skin hanging in wrinkles on his small face and hands.

Neither land nor sail greeted the weary eyes of the watchers; rowing was continued with the energy of despair. Nathan was very drowsy, and slept, leaning on the tiller. Hal kept wetting his brother's clothing, and striving to arouse and encourage him.

About two o'clock Guy woke from his stupor with a scream, looked about on the deceitful waste of beautiful waters, and

flung himself overboard. He sank, but came up again; the shock of the cold water restoring his senses and some of his strength, he began swimming instinctively. Mr. Bower caught one of the oars which held the little awning, and threw it to him. This helped to sustain him, and he was presently by the boat with one hand on the gunwale. Happily, there had been no sharks near them for some hours. The difficulty was to get him on board again, all of them being very weak, and in great fear of capsizing the boat; they succeeded, however, and Mrs. Wingate advocated giving him an extra ration of water, to prevent, if possible, a return of his insanity. To this the rest agreed.

Seeing the beneficial effect of Guy's plunge in the sea, Mrs. Wingate asked the Admiral if he believed he was strong enough to dip little Earle in the water. The sailor agreed to do so, and holding the child firmly by the arms, plunged him three times below the surface. This restored the poor boy to consciousness, but

he at once began wailing feebly, because his flesh was badly abraded by the salt particles which had for days been rubbing upon his skin, as the heat of his body dried the sea-water with which his clothes had been drenched. His tears and his emaciation were a most pitiful sight to his mother, and to relieve him, she stripped off his clothes; she then opened a black leather travelling bag, which her husband had put in the boat for her the night they parted on the Rona; she had looked into this bag before, but could not make use of the clothes with which it was filled. She now took out the contents, hoping to find a fresh linen night-dress which might be comfortable to her wretched child. To her delight she also found at the very bottom of the bag an orange, and a little wooden box of figs. No money could have purchased these treasures at that moment. She hurried the garment for which she had searched, upon Earle, and with eager fingers divided the orange, careful to waste no drop of juice. No one spoke, but

seven pair of hungry eyes watched her hand. She divided the fruit into eight equal parts, with its skin, and gave each person the same share. For herself, she only ate the rind of the portions she had reserved, giving Earle the pulp.

The Admiral held out his hand, giving back what he had received, saying falteringly, "Take it; I cannot."

"Eat it at once, Admiral; we all depend on your strength for our safety," she replied cheerfully. "This fruit is a gift from God for our need this day. I shall now divide the figs—and who knows, before to-morrow we may be on a ship, or on shore."

There were ten figs in the little box, and she divided them fairly, to the last particle.

The ninth day dawned with intense heat. The water was now entirely gone, and Mr. Carl divided another small can of peaches at ten o'clock. Hal tried to read a few words from his Testament aloud, but his enfeebled eyes could no longer trace the

print. Mr. Bower's voice died into an inarticulate moan, as he strove to lead their morning prayer. Guy, since his plunge the day before, had seemed to be restored to his better self; he was quiet, brave, earnest; compassionate to Nathan and Earle. Hope had now almost deserted them; they mechanically did the best that they could, and waited for death.

The Admiral and Mr. Carl untwisted some threads of rope, made a hook out of one of Mrs. Wingate's hair-pins and a common pin, and diligently tried to catch fish, for several hours, but without any success. Indeed, this expedient had been used and failed several times already. The third can of peaches served for their supper. Their strength was now so far gone that but two men rowed at a time, more sleep being needed in their exhaustion.

The tenth day—and still that red, cloudless, scorching sun, rolled up out of a barren waste of waves.

Mr. Carl gave each person a quarter of a biscuit; and becoming quite reckless, as

the water was all gone, he added to each biscuit the eighth of a quart of tomatoes. To allay thirst they kept their clothes soaked. Nathan lay helpless in the stern of the boat, his head on Mrs. Wingate's valise for a pillow, and a large towel hung over the tiller by Hal, as a shelter for his face. Like Bellows and Guy, he became delirious, and talked of streams and feasts; forests, fruits, and of going for berries with Margaret. Guy sat as one listening intently to his ravings, and now and then a tear stole over his worn face, as the boy prattled on. He talked much of the great storm at the Sharkshead, and of the story his father had told them of his unhappy past.

At five o'clock hungry eyes looked at Mr. Carl, and he took up the last can of peaches, to open for their supper. Alas, it was only a mass of rottenness and mould; not a vestige of anything eatable remaining in it. A cry of disappointment broke from them. Mr. Carl looked at his stores. Four biscuits, one can of to-

matoes—that was all, and eight starving people to be fed.


“We must give up our supper,” he said firmly. There was no word of anger or remonstrance spoken, and thus closed the the tenth day of drifting on the sea.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE NAMELESS ISLE.

"It ceased, yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Sings a quiet tune."

HE eleventh day opened with a good omen. When the sun rose there sprung up a steady, refreshing breeze from the north-west. The Admiral took instant advantage of this. His crew were too feeble to make much headway with the oars, and he used the blankets and tablecloth as sails, fastening them to three of the oars, strapping them in the seats. Gradually the wind veered to the north, and drove them directly on toward the south. By eleven o'clock the heat was very great, and as their awnings were now in use for sails,

they were fully exposed to the sun; some of the men were bare-headed, and this increased their danger and suffering. Mrs. Wingate unpacked her valise, and distributed some towels and aprons among the men, which they wet and bound on their heads, like turbans. Earle was once more quite unconscious, as was Nathan. Mr. Carl divided the last can of tomatoes; Mrs. Wingate forcing part of Earle's scanty portion into his mouth; the remainder she gave to Mr. Carl.

By noon, Guy, Carl, and Mr. Bower lay down in the boat, unable to move or speak; the wind was gradually dying away. Hal saw something white floating on the water and steered toward it. It proved to be a gull, evidently but recently dead. The Admiral seized it eagerly, pulled off its feathers, and tore it up; he and Hal devoured their share ravenously, Mrs. Wingate refused what Hal offered her, shrinking from the raw flesh, and feeling that some of the men needed it more than she did. The Admiral roused Mr. Bower,

and offered him part of the bird; it refreshed him so that he was able to sit up, and speak. Two o'clock, and suddenly Hal pointed to a low, black, ant-hill like elevation, between the sky and sea, due south. They watched it with frantic interest for an hour, by which time it had spread out in a waving line, dim, tremulous, hidden now and then behind the small waves, but still maintaining its position.

Half an hour more, the wind freshened and pushed them on briskly; and now the spot on the horizon grew more distinct, and the Admiral cried hoarsely, "Land!" He bent over and yelled "Land!" into Guy's ears, and he and Mr. Carl opened heavy eyes, and the engineer struggled up to a seat and looked south. He too could see the blessed break in the horrible monotony of sea and sky, and said "Land!" feebly, from his swollen throat.

But that sudden gust had been the north wind's last effort; it died away, and in half an hour the rude heavy sails hung down, the boat lay still on the water, and

they were now in sight of an island, but making no progress toward it. Mrs. Wingate begged them to wet their clothes, divide the four biscuits left, and take to the oars.

They did so. Nathan and Earle were allowed to lie undisturbed, the hope for them was in reaching the land. The other six ate the biscuits, and then the Admiral, Hal, Mr. Bower, and Mr. Carl took the oars; Mrs. Wingate sat at the tiller. True to her prediction, Guy, apparently the strongest of all, proved really the feeblest of the men, and lay helpless against the gunwale, unable to lift a hand, but devouring the land with his eyes.

"What is it?" asked Hal.

"A Bahamy," replied the Admiral.

"Crooked Island," suggested Mr. Carl.

"Too far south," said Ned.

"Mariguana?" said Mr. Bower.

"Too small," returned Ned, putting all his strength to his oar.

"One of the Caicos, or Turks?" said Hal.

The Admiral shook his head. "I know

'em all, it a'n't none of 'em. It's one of the uninhabited ones that lie round here. Howsumdever, thank the Lord for sendin' us upon it in our trouble. It's my idee we'll find food and water there, and the Lord'll keep on providin' for us."

The island grew beautifully before their eyes. It was land, and that made it paradise to these voyagers. The coast was low and rough; the centre rose in a cone that looked volcanic, and was the ant-hill which had first rejoiced their sight. There were trees on the southern part, and the northern extremity rose higher, and seemed to run out in a tongue of reefs under the water, which broke in lines of foam, recalling to Hal Gifford the Sharkshead Light. Ah, how in peril and starvation had he and Nathan longed for that peaceful and plentiful home at the old tower!

The Admiral directed his course to the south, and then skirted the island for a mile or two, to find a safe place for a landing. They came at last to a cove, where the waters were calm and deep, and a few

more oar-strokes only were needed to end the dreadful wanderings of the Rona's boat, and bring her unfortunates once more to the safe and pleasant land.

The Admiral and Mr. Carl staggered to the beach and drew the boat firmly upon the sand; Mr. Bower and Hal followed them to the shore. Mrs. Wingate's over-taxed strength and courage had given way, and she lay against the tiller in a faint. Earle, stretched under a little shelter at the bow, appeared to be dead, but Nathan had dragged himself up, and unable to speak through his parched lips, made signs to his brother to help him ashore. Guy, by a great effort rolled himself out of the boat, and then lay panting upon the shingle.

The tide was ebbing and had left some mussels, conches and crayfish, in the hollows of the shore. Hal, gathering these eagerly, began to distribute them to Nathan and Guy; Carl and Mr. Bower helped themselves. The Admiral having hastily swallowed three mussels, took the bucket and went to search for water. He was gone

for some little time, but returned with a full pail of that glorious liquid, the place of which nothing can ever supply. His step was stronger, his eyes bright, his voice less hoarse; he had bathed, and drank deeply of the life-restoring stream, and new vigor filled every vein.

Meantime, Hal, having revived Nathan and Guy with mussels, had dashed water over Mrs. Wingate until her consciousness returned; he then fed her royally with six mussels, and with Mr. Bower's help had placed her on the beach, and laid Earle on her lap. When Ned came up with his bucket, the mother and Hal were rubbing the poor little child's hands and feet, and trying to get part of a mussel into his parched mouth. The Admiral proceeded to give a cocoanut shell full of water to each person. Guy could not wait while Mrs. Wingate was drinking, but knelt down and eagerly lapped the water from the pail. "Ah," he said, after a hearty draught, "nothing ever tasted so good as that. Now I know how to value water!"

Hal hardly stopped to drink, he was so eager about Earle. He and Mrs. Wingate forced the child's mouth open, and slowly poured water down his throat. Hal and Mr. Bower then went with the Admiral, taking the pail and one of the water casks to bring back a bountiful supply. The other men accompanied them to drink and bathe as they would, the water having already restored to them power of motion. The mother now sat alone on the sands, with her boy on her knee; she had by her a shell of water and two mussels. Presently his eyelids quivered, his heart heaved feebly, and he made an effort to swallow. When Hal returned with a pail of water they bathed him, put on a fresh gown from the valise, and laid him on a bed made of a blanket.

Water being now plentiful, the men gave themselves to collecting food. Hal and the Admiral took a rifle and a revolver, and shot several ducks, which had their nests in a low line of cliffs lying north of the cove. Nathan made a fire of drift-

wood, and Mrs. Wingate cooked the birds, using the empty fruit cans for boilers. Guy and the engineer took each an axe, and went to bring branches and brushwood from near the spring, to form a shelter for the night. Mr. Bower's contribution to the general good consisted of shell-fish, and some salt, which he had found lying in hollows of rock, above ordinary tide-mark.

Seated around their fire, on the sand, the lately despairing company prepared joyfully to eat their supper. The six cans and the butter jar afforded a vessel for each person's broth; Earle being fed with soup by his mother from her own can, she using a mussel-shell for a spoon, as did they all.

Mr. Bower's thanksgiving before the meal was very hearty, if very short; and at its close, all were prepared to listen to a longer return of thanks.

Since the beginning of their disasters these men had all shown a wonderful degree of courtesy and kindness to their

Captain's wife and child. The cook and Bellows had been the only unfriendly ones, and they were gone. Mr. Bower and the Giffords were old friends; the Admiral was the very soul of Christian honesty and self-sacrifice. Mr. Carl had been the Captain's warm admirer; and from Guy there shone strange glimpses of culture and manliness, such as had long ago convinced Captain Wingate that the sailor was one who had fallen from a much higher position in the world.

Thus, no sooner was their meal ended, than the Admiral proposed to set about making a shelter for the night for the mother and her boy, and all undertook the work with alacrity. Earle, after his broth, had fallen into a natural slumber, and Mrs. Wingate requested Nathan to lead her to the spring, that exercise might relieve her limbs of the severe cramps and pains occasioned by long sitting in the crowded boat.

Was ever anything so beautiful as this purling stream, those lovely oak and palmetto trees, and this green grass, flower-

set? Every breath of this grove was nectar. Mrs. Wingate bathed her head and feet, combed out her long hair and braided it, and when, at last, Nathan, who had been wandering off on an exploring expedition, returned for her, she felt like another person. Nathan had obtained a quantity of oranges; they were small and sour, but scarcely less welcome for that.

When they returned to the boat they found preparations for the night completed. Three oars had been tied together at the top of the handles, and the blades thrust into the sand; these formed the frame-work of a little tent, and branches and palmetto leaves had been placed against it as a shelter. On the warm sand, beneath this covering, the Admiral had piled Spanish moss and dry leaves for a couch, and one of the blankets was laid on it for a covering. The men were to sleep in the boat, and had removed the seats and filled the bottom of the craft with leaves and moss; they also had a blanket. The precious tablecloth had resisted wind and weather very

fairly, and Mr. Bower had fastened it as the front curtain of the tent. Guy was preparing soup from a small turtle, which he had captured on the reef at ebb of tide, and the Admiral had wandered off.

The soup served for a supper, and Mrs. Wingate rejoiced to find that Earle partook of it with a relish. While they were eating, the Admiral came back with his arms full; he threw down his burden triumphantly.

“There,” he cried, “we won’t starve on this island. All the Bahamys have yams on ’em, and I went to hunt, and there they are. The spring gives water a plenty; the yams is bread, and I reckon we can find shell-fish if we look keeful. Now, mates, don’t let’s forget the Lord’s benefits. Last night we was lost on the sea, perishin’ of thirst, starvin’ for food, not a ray of comfort left us; and here to-night we’re safe ashore; we’ve got water, and that’s a royal drink what beats everything else all hollow; and we’ve got fish, and yams, and there’s a plenty of those ’ere palmetto trees, which

will give us cabbage out of their peth. O, we've got a plenty to be thankful for, and all I hope is, that we'll look to the Lord to keep us from fallin' out among ourselves; but let us all hold together fair and true, till we gets home to the States. Remember that, my mates."

The Admiral's little exhortation was well received; after supper, Hal read the sixty-sixth Psalm, "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands," and Mr. Bower offered a prayer. Mrs. Wingate took Earle in her arms and withdrew to the shelter of her tiny tent.

"Turn in, boys," said the valiant Admiral, "I'll have my watch first. It's better to keep things ship-shape, and watch by turns. I'll take a spell till two o'clock."

"And then I'll watch till morning," said Hal.

"All right; I'll call you," said the Admiral, and his comrades went to their boat.

The sailor began his preparations for the night, by loading one of the rifles. He then replenished his fire with drift-wood,

and put a yam in the ashes to bake slowly, to serve him as a lunch when his watch was ended: he rolled the water casks between the fire and Mrs. Wingate's tent, and then sat down, leaning his back against them, and taking his rifle between his knees. His position was such that he commanded the fire, the boat, the tent, and a long stretch of sandy beach.

The good sailor's mind was for a time lost in a contemplation of the mercy of God, which had delivered him out of all his distresses. He then passed to the dangers and needs of their present position; the prospect of their being relieved and taken home by passing ships, or by boats from adjacent islands; the means of restoring his company to health, and taking them in the boat to any one of the inhabited Bahamas which might be nearest, if succor did not speedily come to them.

But the excellent Admiral had over-rated his strength; he had been nearly starved for days, and had now eaten warm,



THE ADMIRAL WAS FAST ASLEEP.—PAGE 197.

refreshing food, his present position was, for a sailor, very comfortable; the fire light was warm and soothing; there was no sound but the soft lapping of the waves on the sandy shore; the Admiral's head drooped slowly forward; his rifle slipped into the hollow of his shoulder; his bony hands loosened their grasp and fell listlessly over his knees, his chest heaved regularly—the Admiral was fast asleep!

The moon rose fair and full, and smiled down on that tropic sea. The water sparkled and glimmered in the silver beams; the shore was still, restful, and safe as an enclosed garden; the little boat with its freight of sleeping men hardly stirred on the water; the drift-wood fire flickered down into red coals, and then to pale ashes; the little white and green tent cast a long shadow on the beach; beside the water casks, with his harmless rifle mounted sentry above his head, lost to all fears and cares, in a rough pea-jacket and a slouched hat, sat the gaunt, weather-beaten Admiral, keeping his watch in dreams.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEWS THAT REACHED THE LIGHT.

"Away, my soul away!
In vain, in vain, the birds of warning sing—
And hark! I hear the famished brood of prey,
Flap their lank pennons on the groaning wind."



THE time which had seemed ages of want, suffering and terror to the passengers and crew of the Rona, had in reality been but short, and still the serene beauty of spring lingered about the Sharkhead Light and the adjacent coast. But the flight of Nathan had drawn a veil of darkness over the fair face of nature for Margaret and the old father. As days passed and the boy did not return, the keeper's heavy heart followed the lad's unknown way, and saw for him the dangers of temptations new and powerful; of city haunts of vice, out of which the carefully nurtured child could only come sullied and debased.

Margaret tried to cheer the sorrowful sire. Other boys had run away from home; it was very wrong, but did not in every case lead to irretrievable ruin; truants had sometimes returned with characters well established, repentant for the past, strong for the future; with pockets full of money for all their friends.

The old man shook his head at these pictures. These were the fantasies of story-books; he had never known of such results in real life; God did not put such a premium on disobedience and discontent. When the ungrateful child rent filial ties, and trampled on his parent's love and fled, then, as the storm was sent after fugitive Jonah, storms and troubles followed the prodigal. Dishonoring parents is chastised in this life, even as honoring them has a temporal reward.

Besides, as Gifford explained to Margaret, she reasoned in ignorance of the premises; the little mer-maiden knew nothing of the allurements, and dangers, and crimes rife in that great, noisy, cruel world, far

away from the white breakers, the mighty towers and the shining waters of the Sharkshead reef. After these conversations the pair would sit melancholy in the shadow of the tower, until the grey-haired one would climb the lighthouse stair to take another look across the land, in a vain hope for his deserter's return; and she of the golden locks, would find her consolation in asking Heaven to protect all those absent and beloved ones, and send them safe to that nest beside the sea.

For the first week of Nathan's absence there had been a lingering hope that he had gone to meet the Rona, but Hal's letter, posted just as the ship sailed on her fatal voyage, destroyed this expectation. If the wanderer had left any trace, his father would have gone after him; but who could pursue such an amphibious creature as a son of the Sharkshead? There were equal chances for his being on land or ocean.

The schoolmaster, almost as anxious as his old friend, brought the daily papers

to the reef, and while searching these for tidings of their stray, the Giffords found a new element added to their sorrow, in hints of misfortune to the Rona.

First came word that the ship Ocean Belle, with sponge from Bahama, had spoken the Rona; she was lying-to, to mend her boilers, and had been much hindered by their foaming. Then came news that the ship was over due at Havana; then a fortnight of anxiety and conjecture. This was followed by the account of the rescue of the first boat that left the sinking Rona; she had been found after three days, by a ship bound from Brazil to England, and twenty men from her had been carried to Liverpool; some of them had shipped there, and two or three had returned, with news of the Rona's loss, on a mail-ship to New York. The list of these survivors was given, but Hal was not of them. So long time had elapsed since the disaster, that there was little hope that any other boats had been saved; and the broken household at the Light

gave themselves up to mourning for their dead.

In the midst of this unhappiness, Margaret saw one afternoon a little boat putting out from shore, and making swiftly for the reef. As she watched it, she saw that the schoolmaster was in it, and when he noticed her standing on a point of rock, he waved his hat joyfully, like a bearer of good tidings. Margaret ran to call her father and Clara, telling them how jubilant their old friend appeared. The three then went out on the rocks to watch the boat. The good master could not wait to reach the shore, but swung up his hat again, and then held out a letter. Their hearts beat high, one of their lost ones was surely heard from. A few more strokes brought the boat to the reef, and the schoolmaster exclaimed: "Courage! courage! Hal is saved. Here is a letter from him from New York, I know his hand-writing well!" He thrust the letter into Mr. Gifford's hand, and hurriedly made fast his boat.

The envelope was rumpled and soiled

but Hal's fine clear writing was surely upon it. The old man quickly tore it open, trembling with joy and dread. He read it; gave a cry—shook as in an ague, and sat down.

“Father!” screamed Margaret.

“What's wrong?” demanded the school-master.

Clara flung her apron over her head, and began to weep. For a few seconds Mr. Gifford could not speak. He held out the letter to his dismayed friend. Alas, it was the letter Hal had sent by the mate of the *Ocean Belle*, and it told them that poor Nathan was with him in the now wrecked *Rona*. Instead of news of safety, they had heard of a double loss.

It was a long while before the school-master remembered that he had another letter.

This proved to be from the mate of the *Ocean Belle*. He had forgotten the letter entrusted to him by the *Rona's* young purser, until the loss of the ship had been reported, and he had been distressed to

see that the purser was not among the rescued. He had then searched after the letter, and now forwarded it, believing that it would be very precious to mourning friends. After this the mate, in bluff sailor phrase, begged them to keep up heart. More boats might be heard from. Wrecked people often drifted a long while at sea, and were saved at last; some missing sailors had turned up after years of absence; and he hoped purser Gifford would return.

The bereaved father could not lay such consolations to heart; but they were food for the hopes of Margaret and Clara.

The schoolmaster returned home in the twilight, grieving that he had brought fresh grief to his unhappy friend, and made haste to confide the new trouble to the minister.

It has been often noticed that misfortunes are like gregarious birds, they fly in companies; and now that this beautiful month of May was drawing to its close, yet another cloud gathered at the Sharkshead Reef.

Another letter came to the post office for Mr. Gifford; and the schoolmaster, much less elate than heretofore, carried it to the tower. The keeper seemed afraid to read it; it was in an unknown hand, fine and delicate—evidently a lady's. At last with a deep sigh he cut the envelope open, and drew out several sheets of closely written paper. He looked at the first page with a start, turned hastily to the end, and read the signature with a cry.

“Margaret, it is from your mother!”

Then he rose, and walked as one half-stunned to his own room. The schoolmaster fearing more ill news, kept his seat on the door stone; and Margaret running to Clara, clasped her arms about the old servant's neck, and sobbed against her bosom. This poor child had never before known that she had a mother. This was the first news for fourteen years of either Gilbert Gifford, or his hapless wife.

A long time passed before Mr. Gifford came from his room; when again he appeared among them, the story of a new

grief was written in the pallor and contraction of his brave old face. Margaret ran to him eagerly.

“O sir, what about my mother? *Have* I a mother?”

“Yes, child; your mother, God bless her, is living.”

“And what about my father?” demanded the girl.

Gifford put his arm about her, and drew her close to him, as if somehow she had a new and stronger claim on him than ever before. He did not reply to her, but looked toward the schoolmaster, saying, “Friend, this ocean, which I have watched for full twenty years, is revenged on me—I have lost another son at sea—Margaret’s father, my poor Gilbert, has perished in a storm.”

“When, sir? How?” sobbed Margaret.

“Lately. I do not know just when; he shipped when he was not himself, in some sailing vessel, and it has been lost with all hands. And now, ah my son, my son! he is cut off from repentance; we can never

meet again. My poor boy! I thought he would be able yet to repair the wrongs he had done, and seek his earthly and his heavenly Father. My poor prodigal, my eldest, my best beloved son!"

And the stout old man, clasping that golden haired child in his trembling arms, "lifted up his voice and wept."

Presently this weakness of love and woe passed from him, he raised his head, and put Margaret away. "Friend," he said to the schoolmaster, "I have somewhat else to do than to mourn for my dead. I must also comfort the living. The hour that robs me of a son, gives me a daughter. Margaret's mother is destitute in the world, and the sea has been as cruel to her as to me. Mrs. Wingate was her only near relative besides ourselves; and Mrs. Wingate has been lost in the storm with my two boys. It is enough for Margaret that I shall bring her own dear mother here to her. If that mother chooses to tell her the story of her life, it will then be time enough to hear it. Come down to the

rocks with me, friend, for I must tell my troubles to some one."

The two old men walked away to the rocks, now bare by the ebbing of the tide. The young folks had called this spot the "Drawing-room," because the rocks were fantastically arranged like seats and tables. Hither the friends repaired, while Margaret, all in a flutter of wonder and excitement, talked with Clara. What would her mother be like? How would it seem to have a mother? Would she love her? Would she be well and content, or ill, and always weeping after such a troubled life? How soon would she see her?

"Why," said Clara, "as soon as Mr. Gifford can get her here—within a week, like enough. And it's not to be looked for that she would be very hearty and merry after such a life as she's had to live all along of liquor, as I make out from what I've heard tell. It stands to reason that she's a Christian, or she'd have never held out against her troubles like she has; and if she's a sister to Mrs. Wingate, I'll go

her bail, that she's just as rare a lady as ever anybody set their two eyes on."

Meantime, while Clara and Margaret discussed the newly heard of mother, and conjectured of her looks and acts, at the tower, Mr. Gifford and his companion had the real story of her life to read at the rocks. Gilbert Gifford had soon exhausted his own property and his wife's. Coming betimes to a consciousness of his deep disgrace, he resolved to cut himself off from all who had ever known him. His wife had then sent her child to the grandfather, and prepared to follow the desperate fortunes of him she loved, hoping for a reform, or, at least, trusting that if he would not return from his evil ways, her presence could keep him from the lowest sloughs of vice, and from dying like a dog, unhelped and unwarned. If sickness came to him, she would be near, to turn the hours to a good account, and to urge him to make his peace with God. She would save him from the drunkard's last desperate tragedy—suicide. She had gone with him then

year after year. Wherever they tarried her hands had wrought for their support. She was a person of rare address and attractiveness, and the mercy of God had so followed her, that she had never lacked for something to do; copying, teaching, fine sewing and fancy work of all kinds; agencies—all these had been ways for her to earn his bread and her's. She had sung and read, and been usher in museums and simple exhibitions; she had been waiting-woman for dentists, and phrenologists, and instrument makers. Scarcely was there an honest way in which a woman could earn money that had not been tried by her in those fourteen years of desperate strife with the demon of drink, for her husband's soul. Nor had she been without her reward. Gilbert Gifford had betimes roused up to a sense of his wickedness and her devotion. He had more than once gone near the grave, and that terrible look into eternity had sobered him, and he had vowed to reform; but when he had recovered, there always came the time when he

forgot the vows "which his lips had spoken and his mouth had uttered when he was in trouble." Still, these times of repentance and transient reform had kept the chilling embers of hope alive in his wife's heart, and had rescued her from dying of absolute despair. There had been gleams of sunshine. Gilbert had again and again signed the pledge; he had broken it, because it was only a paper pledge, not a solemn covenant with God and his own better self, strengthened by the indwelling power of that good Spirit, that comes to every seeking soul. At these periods of better doing, Gilbert had eschewed strong drink and its attendant train of vices; he had gone to work, and he was a man of wide information and good address. He had taught in schools, he had clerked and kept books, and had travelled with scientific lecturers, to aid them in their experiments. At such times his self-respect had returned; his spirits had risen, and he had promised his wife, that when he had been reformed long enough for money

to be laid up between them, and the marks of his inebriation done away, he would return with her to their friends, get a little home near their dear ones; recover their child, and compensate her for her long suffering and deep devotion.

Unhappily this man was always proud of spirit, and irresolute in action. His last period of reformation had lasted nearly a year, and his wife's hopes had risen high. They were in California, and he had gotten a good position as teacher in a public school. He kept his pledge firmly until about the close of the school year; and poor Mrs. Gifford expected soon to return with him to her sister and her child, triumphant in the reward of these painful years—when Gilbert suddenly broke out into intemperance, and for a month gave himself over to abominable excess. Ashamed then to meet her whose hopes he had for the hundredth time destroyed, frantic at the loss of all his earnings, bitterly mortified at his own weakness, he wrote a note to his wife, bidding her go to her

friends and forget one forever unworthy of her; he shipped on a vessel bound for New York.

Mrs. Gifford, bracing her steadfast soul to endure this new defeat, got a position as nurse to an invalid about to be taken from San Francisco to New York for treatment, by way of the Isthmus, and was in New York long before her husband. She retained her situation and awaited his coming. When his ship arrived she met him at the wharf. Her goodness overcame him. He renewed his pledge. He told her that he believed his chances of reformation were rather better at sea than ashore, and he went on a ship bound for Bermuda; on this he made several voyages, kept his pledge, regained his health and cheerfulness, and his wife worked bravely, having rented two pleasant rooms, that he might have a safe home while in port.

Once more hope grew strong, and spreading bright wings, carried often her waiting soul into a fairy-land of the future. But Gilbert had fallen out with the mate of the

Bermuda ship, and had attached himself to a vessel in the West India trade. He had made three safe voyages, but on the fourth, his day of grace had ended in disaster; the ship was lost at sea. At this terrible affliction the wife's health had failed; she had been ill, and was yet too weak to labor; her funds were low. She had also lost her sister, Mrs. Wingate, whom she had not seen for years; but to whom she had cherished the hope of being restored, when Gilbert had finally redeemed himself from the slavery of strong drink. Now sister and husband were gone; and her bereaved heart turned more than ever toward her only child, and her husband's father. She wanted to come to them; to step into her lawful place as mother and daughter; and trusted that she could add to their happiness, secure her own, and yet labor for her own support. It was a beautiful and a piteous letter; a straightforward record, without a word of self-praise, but each line showing the strength, the self-sacrifice, and the goodness of the writer.

“Annie, I have never seen,” said the light-house keeper, “but she is my own dear child from this hour; and I shall go and bring her home. She shall not make her way here friendless and alone. I will go, pay her bills, provide for her needs, and bring her here in credit and comfort. I would go to-morrow,” he said, “but I must find some one fit to take charge of the light. I may be gone a week. Whom can you recommend?”

“There is Nick Dodd,” suggested the master; “he is strong, honest, kind; knows all about it, and is ashore at present, and could be had.”

“But he used to drink,” said Mr. Gifford.

“He doesn’t now. You know you made a convert of him the first night you spent in the new tower, when the men came over to help you. He signed a pledge at the minister’s next day; and he’s kept it fair and square ever since.”

“But suppose he should fail—only by one little glass of beer or porter; it might so disorder him, that there would be a little

flaw in his duty; and then how could I answer to God or man, if a ship was cast away, or a life lost while I was absent from my post? Ah, I have suffered enough by the sea to make me careful for those who venture themselves in ships."

"Well," said the schoolmaster, "to relieve your mind, I will come here every night. Put Nick in your place, and bind him not to leave the reef while you are gone. I'll come over every day after school, and stay until after breakfast in the morning; I'll do the shore work, and if Nick has so much as a drop of anything stronger than coffee, I'll land him on the shore, and keep the light-house myself."

"God bless you; you couldn't make a fairer or kinder offer," said Gifford, grasping his friend's hand.

The next day was spent in preparation, and Nick was duly brought to the reef and installed as keeper. By dawn, the succeeding morning, Gifford was in his boat, beginning his journey. He left the boat for the master to go in to the reef in the evening;

walked two miles to the stage office, and was thus well on his way to New York. He had promised to write the day of his arrival, giving word when they might expect his return.

The letter came, but it seemed as if every letter at the light was to bring ill tidings. The old man had met with a terrible disappointment. He had gone at once to the place mentioned by his daughter, but she was not there. The landlady told him that Mrs. Gifford had rented rooms by the quarter, and she, the hostess, was not willing to let them for less time. Quarter-day had come about a week previous, (the day after his letter had been sent, Gifford found,) and Mrs. Gifford had neither been able to promise to keep the rooms another three months, nor to pay half the rent in advance. Indeed, she had hardly any money at all, sickness having exhausted her means. The landlady had been glad to get her rooms back, as she could rent them for a higher price to an actor and his wife. Mrs. Gifford had sold

what little furniture she possessed to an auction storekeeper, and had gone away. She had returned, and left a new address with the landlady, begging her to give it to any one who called for her. The landlady was very sorry, but in the bustle of the actor's arrival this valuable slip of paper had been lost, and for the life of her she could not remember where Mrs. Gifford had gone.

Thus the old man lost all trace of his daughter-in-law. He said he hoped she would call again at her late home; and he had left his address at his lodging-house there, and insured the landlady's attention to his business, by promise of pay, as soon as he found Mrs. Gifford. He also advertised for Annie Gifford in three papers, and expected to persist in his search until he found her. He would surely write within three days, to keep them informed.

A week passed—no letter. A second, yet no letter; a third, dead silence still. Now every one feared that the faithful old man had perished. They searched the

papers, but got no hint of him. Hope faded. Nick kept the light faithfully, and had no word of encouragement. The schoolmaster knew his friend too well to believe this silence voluntary on his part, and he made sure of never seeing him on earth again. Clara went about her work with red eyes; the minister advertised for Gifford in one New York and one Philadelphia paper, and wrote, without success, to several parties. Margaret grew wan, and pined every day.

The fourth week passed—no letter still. Sad certainties now grew doubly sure; and all at once Clara and Margaret spent most of the day in whispering together, eagerly and excitedly.

The subject of their plotting came out on the Sabbath, the first day of the fifth week. Clara took the initiative. The woman, Margaret, Nick, and the master, were sitting on the tower steps, for the night was warm. Clara began:

“Margaret and me is going on the morrow to New York, to look for the old

gentleman. We shall never count him dead to the hour we set eyes on his grave, will we?"

Margaret, thus appealed to, responded. "Never, never; nō, never!"

"And we make shame of sitting here idle, when he may be sick and needing us, alone among them heartless city people. So we're going to him, Margaret and me."

"Why, Clara, you're mad!" cried the schoolmaster.

"Never so sensible before," said Clara, obstinately. "Me and Margaret are the kind that must work; we a'n't the half of the world, as knows how to wait."

"But, woman, how can you find him?"

"We'll look after him," said Clara.

"But we wrote to where he lodged, and they could tell us nothing; they said he went out one day, and never came back, and they could hear nothing of him."

"We can't help that," said Clara; "we make sure we can find him, if them as cares nothing for him *does* fail."

“But you really must not go, you two alone; you will get into terrible difficulties. You have never travelled.”

“We’re not too old to learn,” quoth Clara, tossing her head, “and who’s to hinder? Has Margaret got any guardian more than me to say her nay, when I says yes? Has Clara Brown ever come to trouble, that you must flite in her face as how she’ll come to it now? We fisher folk cuts our eye-teeth afore we’re forty, Mister Schoolmaster; and I’m that, if I am a day.”

Indeed, the doughty Clara was fifty, but who could expect her to remember such a small matter as that?

“If you must go, you’d better wait until my term is out, and I’ll go with you,” said the schoolmaster.

“Wait!” cried Margaret, who was usually as meek as a dove. “Wait until my dear father dies alone, and feels in his last hour that we have forgotten him! O, how can you, how dare you be so cruel? We have been wickeder than words can tell, waiting

now. Wait! We would not wait for the Governor, no, nor the President."

"Indeed, that's true," said Clara, taking up the tirade. "Wait!—it's cowardly and unkind as cruel can be. What we want of you is to stop here in charge of the light till me and Margaret brings back him as always kept it so well. There's how you can show your good-will."

"Yes," said the master, doggedly, "and by that means aid and abet you in your mad expedition; which I cannot, and will not do!"

"O, you won't!" flamed Margaret. "Let it be then; father is all the world to Clara and me. We are going to start after him to-morrow at day-dawn, and all things are packed up. Yes, we'll go, even if there isn't a ray of light on the Sharkshead to-morrow night, and all the world gets wrecked on it—so there. You used to be our friend; but now that father has gone, we have no friends. O, O, you cruel!"

The child was sobbing so that she could

not speak more; but the valiant Clara blazed out in turn:

“Yes, that’s the way you show friendship, is it? Asking us to desert him as never deserted us, poor dear. A pretty story it will be that the light he kept so true, goes out. Don’t you value lives more than that, you! Ah, a nice thing it will be for us to bring him home, and find the tower taken away from him, and his good name in everybody’s mouth, for leaving the light to go out. That’s what you’ll do, is it?”

“But what shall I do?” gasped the miserable master, on whose devoted head were poured these vials of wrath.

“What!—hear him. What! I’ll tell you what. Write to them as is in power, to hire and to govern the Sharkshead keepers; and get Nick and yourself put into his place, stating how he is called away by his three sons being dead, and leaving widows—at least one of them—that is—you tell the story straight, for I can’t; I’m that frustrated between all of you, and your

lukewarmedness. Any way—plain—we want you to hold the light against we bring him safe and sound. Will you do *that?*”

“Hold up a minute,” spoke Nick. “I’ve a word. Master, you had best let ’em go,—cause you can’t hinder it. Send ’em off with your blessin’ like—that is, go with ’em to the stage offis, and carry the bag. Then you straighten up things, as Clara says, and we’ll keep the light till they come again, and just as like as not, they’ll have Mr. Gifford along with ’em. I’ve heard of women having inspirations.”

“Inspirations!” cried Clara, rejecting the word with vast contempt. “I’ve heard of their having good sense, the which is a thousand times better.”

“It will have to be,” said the distressed master; “I see you are bent on going, and there is none here can say you nay. I will furnish you with money, child, in welcome.”

“Not a copper,” said the independent Clara; “she and me has a plenty. Some

is my savin's, and some her father left us when he went. We have plenty."

"You are sure of it?" asked the doubtful master.

"Sure of it!" retorted Clara; "ask me if I'm a baby. Yes, we've all we need, and more."

The master did not press the question, for Margaret had repented, with his first concession, of her short-lived rage, and was now hanging on his shoulder; excusing her passion and hard words, and pleading her sorrows and excitement, while she begged forgiveness of her life-long old friend. To soothe and encourage the girl was now the good man's sole thought.

Meanwhile, it is a great pity that Clara, with all the sharp independence and self-security of a genuine Yankee woman, had not taken the master into her confidence. The extent of her simplicity was not even guessed by him. All the funds she had for this expedition were thirty dollars; and the fare for herself and Clara to the city would be ten dollars. Neither of them

had ever been on a railroad or in a steamboat, or twenty miles from home. As for having seen life, the fishing village, with its five hundred inhabitants, had been the great world to Margaret; and Clara, having once visited an immense town of TWO THOUSAND INHABITANTS, having seen a bank, three churches, a Normal school, and a row of brick stores, ever after believed that London itself could not be very much larger or gayer.

The master was an old man; he had lived in cities, and had in his time seen Virginia, and the Mississippi river: he was not able to fully apprehend the Arcadian simplicity of the golden locked Margaret, and the decisive, rough-featured, leal-hearted Clara; and though he had hesitated, and warned, he could by no means rightly measure the dangers and difficulties that lay before them, in their search for the missing man.

The next morning the dwellers in the tower were early astir. Clara put ten dollars in her purse; made fast the re-

maining twenty in the bosom of her dress, put up a little basket of luncheon for Margaret and herself, and accompanied by the master, who carried Margaret's black bag, while Clara sturdily trudged on with her own, the three walked to the stage-office, and our Arcadians were started on their way to Babylon.



CHAPTER X.

PILGRIMS FROM ARCADIA TO BABYLON.

"Yet she, most woful lady, all this while
Forsaken, faithful, solitary maid,
Far from all people's praise, as in exile
In wilderness and wasteful deserts strayed.
Through woods and deserts wide, him daily sought;
Yet wished tidings none, of him unto her brought."

HITHERTO Clara had been able to get all the information which in any emergency she had desired, by merely asking persons whom she met. In her part of the country people are not strangers to each other; and if a person from abroad comes among these fisher folk, they know all about him in a week. Clara had a plan definitely settled in her mind. She meant to get to New York; walk with Margaret to some tidy, private lodging-house, where prices were reasonable, and people would be Christian and friendly. She expected to get a deal

of help from this apocryphal family, who would at once be interested in her and her mission. She intended next to go about the streets, inquire at the post-office, and *the principal stores*, and at the various hotels for Mr. Gifford; and certainly in a day or two she would hear of him. She believed that there was a hospital in the city, and she would investigate its records.

Clara had gone off so suddenly, with so little warning, and with such entire confidence in herself, that she had given the minister no opportunity to instruct or advise her. As for Margaret, her trust in Clara was unlimited and beautiful, and went so far at present, as to keep her own reason in abeyance. With explanations and bright prophecies Clara stayed up the young girl's courage.

The naivetè of the pair stood them in good stead; conductors and travellers were ready to instruct them, and, with the exception of taking a wrong train, and losing a dollar by stopping over night at a way-station, they got on very well.

But what a pair of travellers they were! Clara was tall, gaunt, hard-featured, defiant; in appearance a shrew, and tight-fisted; in very fact, the most devoted, easily beguiled, simple old creature who had ever seen fifty years, without leaving childhood and its mixture of confidence and foolishness behind. Clara had never loved the world or its follies, and she eschewed its fashions; she wore a stout check gingham dress, scant and plain in skirt, reaching to her ankles; her shoes were strong calf-skin; her gloves, well preserved brown cotton; she carried a brown cotton umbrella, a big shawl, and a black enamelled cloth bag, holding half a bushel, and of the fashion of quarter of a century ago. But her bonnet! O ye milliners, her bonnet; what a bonnet! Its crown was the size of a tea-plate, and flat, put on behind squarely, and not on top. Its cape was six inches deep. This bonnet had been worn for a dozen years, and Clara considered it as good as ever. It was of brown silk, shirred, on small canes, came far over her face, was

shaped like a flour scoop, lined with dark blue silk, and had blue strings and two blue bows to match. From this bonnet floated a green veil of worsted barege. Clara also wore a wide white collar, almost like a little cape; a gingham mantilla like her dress, ruffled and nicely ironed. Her pocket was supplied with two red silk handkerchiefs, a root of sweet flag, and a man's leather purse. Thus equipped, the unimpeachable Clara Brown was the self-constituted guardian and chaperon of the loveliest little mermaid that ever abandoned the green waters for the naughty land.

Keeper Gifford was not entirely dependent on his wages; he had money, no one knew how much, in bank; and this Margaret was his idol. Therefore, that while living at the tower she might be like other maids, the staunch old man had engaged the minister's wife to superintend the girl's wardrobe. So, while in her apparel the utmost simplicity was observed, it was all of good quality and in excellent taste.

Thus, in a silver-gray poplin suit, with

gloves and parasol to match ; in the dearest little hat, with a tint of rose color about the face, but with ribbons and necktie of that delicious pale sea-green whereof all proper mermaids make their garments, golden haired and most beautiful Margaret went forth with her Gorgon maid ; and so little of the world did she know, that she could not see the least thing ridiculous or *outré* in her stalwart and faithful attendant.

In such simple fashion did these pilgrims from Arcadia get into Babylon at noon, on the second day of their journey, in the wake of that screaming, puffing, hideous Brownie, our Aiken Drum, who carries us to and fro, increases knowledge, and leads the advance of our civilization year by year. While their eager eyes watched from the car windows, the green fields, the groves, the cheery farm-houses disappeared, and small mean brick tenements set in wastes of dust, mud, ashes and general debris, supervened. Then houses grew closer, stores flaunted dry goods like gay banners ; groceries encroached on the side-walks ;

the butcher hung out his hogs and mutton next the shoe-dealer on one side, and the baker on the other. Clara saw clothes drying on house-tops, goats and chickens and children disporting together in a general state of dirt and unconcern; little hand-carts were trundled along by boys; and girls and women went sauntering about, ragged and slipshod, in a style no honest fisher-woman at home would have ventured on for a moment. Here was the first shock Clara received; she had believed that in the city, people were always dressed as for a gala-day. Now above the rush of the train rose a roar as of distant thunder, constant and increasing—the tumult of the nineteenth century Babylon and its builders. At last the cars dashed into a huge dark depot, and every passenger started up, seized his baggage, and flew pellmell at the doors. The phrensy attacked Clara.

“O, Margaret, my dear, there is surely a fire! get your bag. Come, goodness, we’ll be burnt alive!”

"There's no fire, my good woman," said an old gentleman, looking at Clara, as if he thought her a lunatic.

"Ah! and what are they running for, this away, sir?"

"To get out of the cars, to be sure."

"Do tell!" said Clara, stopping short. "Wait a bit, Margaret, we're in no such hurry. These folks must all be going further. Land, child! I thought everybody stopped at New York. I hope we'll find the father soon, child."

When the crowd thinned a little, Clara and Margaret followed the last passengers to a large gateway, and here a new danger appalled them. He of the hundred heads who kept the infernal gate, was nothing to it. Here were the New York hackmen! A sea of Celtic faces, red, yelling, distorted; oaths, howls; whips flying in air, Cerebus would have been a mild and welcome janitor in comparison.

Clara took a firm hold of her charge and ventured forth. Half a dozen Americans of foreign birth, and truth to say,

of foreign allegiance and proclivities, fell upon them; laid hands on those half-bushel bags, and shouted, "Cab! Hack! Bus!" cabalistic words, which conveyed nothing but wondering terror to Arcadian ears.

"Hands off! Let us be!" cried Clara, but she had much ado to hold her bag from their grasp, and perceived that Margaret's would be instantly wrested away. She therefore took both bags in charge, saying to the girl:

"Now, Margaret, hold fast to my skirts, and don't let loose for your life, while I bring you through this. I never heard tell of such doings!"

And now was the sturdy Miss Brown a spectacle for cabmen; she had a huge bag like a mule's pannier on either side; her stout umbrella stuck out defiantly from under her arm; and clinging with both hands to her protecting skirts, was pretty and terrified Margaret. Again two hackmen made a dash at the pair, and now Clara lifted up her voice in defence.

"Thieves! Thieves! Ah-h-h—Police!"

And by some singular chance a policeman was in hearing of honesty in distress, and came to take them in tow. Piloted by the blue coat and the star, the travellers came out of the throng, and being fairly in the open street, Clara looked about for that tidy house where she was to get lodging, help and friendship. It was nowhere to be seen! Rows of brick houses, dull and forbidding, were on every hand. If there was a legend of "lodgings to let" there was surely a beer cask, a row of bottles, and a foul stench in the lower story.

Thus they wandered about for two hours, and being very hungry, Clara invested some change in rolls, at a stall on a street corner.

"Clara," said Margaret, "why don't you go to the place where father stopped? It must be decent, or he would not have been there—and we must go there any way. Let us try and find it. I have heard it is best to ask our way of policemen." Clara had never thought of this simple course,

but she at once agreed to adopt it. The lodging-house was several miles distant, being in Beekman street, but the healthful air and living of the Sharkshead, had made these two strong, and they trudged on their way cheerily. The afternoon was waning when they reached the small hotel where Mr. Gifford had stopped. Here another disappointment awaited them. No news had come of the old gentleman, and the clerk declined to deliver to them his valise, as they had no means of convincing him that they had a claim on it. He shook his shiny head, and seemed a very obdurate and incredulous clerk indeed. Clara asked about the price of board, and to her consternation, learned that board was two dollars per day. The clerk, however, agreed to let them have a small room, for fifty cents apiece per day without board. This would very soon make an end of that ten dollars which Clara had supposed to be an abundance for their expenses in the city.

Having rested themselves in the dusty,

shabby, ragged little attic room. Margaret and Clara went out to find something for supper. Margaret proposed that they should go to her mother's former home on Whitehall street, to see if any news had reached there of either of the lost ones.

Mrs. Green's house was at last found, a dismal enough place, but better than its surroundings. Mrs. Green was prevailed on to allow Margaret a sight of the rooms her mother had occupied—and condescended to remark that “Mrs. Gifford had kept them that tasty, that they looked like a palace; very different from what they were at present, but,” with 'a mollifying glance at Margaret, “it was quite easy to be seen that Mrs. Gifford was a lady, my dear, and from that day to this I've never set eyes on her, nor heard of her. The old gentleman, he came here four days hand running—twice he came here on the fourth day, and from that blessed time I never set eyes on him neither.”

The fact that frowzy, red, belligerent Mrs. Green had seen and known both the

lost ones, opened to her these simple rustic hearts, and Clara explained to her that board prices in the city were much higher than they could pay, and they asked her advice about more reasonable quarters. But Clara was shrewd enough to keep the exact extent of her finances to herself. Mrs. Green, after a little thought, remarked that she could let them have a room and board at three dollars a week apiece, in advance.

Clara begged to see the room. Indeed, it was very small, close, dirty, distressing in every way. O for those high, clean, breeze-swept, white and cheery rooms in the Lighthouse Tower! Clara in her secret heart guessed that if the room were thus untidy, the meals would be absolutely unendurable.

"It might do for me," said Clara, warily; "but it is not, between you and me, what Margaret has been used to. The old gentleman kept her as nice as lace laid up in lavender. It wouldn't become me to take her back to him, in any way wearied or

spoiled by these muddy city ways. Then as for the board, why it's not best for us two to board where we sleeps, because we can't bind ourselves to be in for meals punctoal. We shall be afoot most of the day until we finds him as we've come to seek. Then we leaves immegit."

"Well, you can have the room for a dollar and a half a week in advance; if you leaves within the week, I don't refund nothing. There's my offer."

"'Spose I considers of it until to-morrow?" suggested Clara.

"You may consider if you likes," responded Mrs. Green, tossing up her chin; "but all the same; I shan't consider as it is promised you, if another party comes along as knows their mind."

After this Clara and Margaret went back to Beekman street, and closed their unprofitable first day in Babylon. Clara's earliest business in her room was to count her money. She laid aside the ten dollars which would take them home, and then had eight dollars and a half remaining.

“Bless us, Margaret!” she cried, “we’ll pay a dollar of this for our lodging here, and there’ll be seven and a half—and a dollar fifty out of that, if we take that room of Mrs. Green for a week, will leave us but six; and we are to get our living out of that, while we look about, no one knows how long. Laws, child, this isn’t what I looked for. Money goes like dew. Why, Margaret, this city is a most dreadful place. Sharks! Sharkshead reef! The land sharks is worse than them in the water, I think; and as for dangers, the reef a’n’t nigh so dangerous as this, I’m sure. Come now, child, don’t go to crying; we’ll turn ourselves round to-morrow, and find the father.”

Driven by the leanness of her purse, Clara, with many misgivings, engaged Mrs. Green’s room. She left Margaret in the landlady’s fussy parlor, and to that good woman’s amazement, devoted an hour to sweeping, dusting, airing, and thoroughly renovating the chamber. Mrs. Green was indignant.

"O ho!" she cried, "things a'n't good enough for you, ma'am!"

"It's my idee," responded Clara, "that that room's my castle while I hire it; and I'll keep it as near as I can like Margaret's been used to. When we go abroad," added Clara, like one accustomed to great tours, "we carry our home-ways along with us, Margaret and me."

"She means no offence, Mrs. Green," said the smooth-voiced Margaret. "Do please be our friend, and advise us how to find father. We don't know how to begin."

"Well, dearie," said the mollified hostess, "just begin at the police-office. Go inquire there first."

"The police-office!" yelled Clara; "do you take him for a thief?"

Mrs. Green turned* her back on her enemy, but addressed the girl.

"That's my advice, and I a'n't nowise afraid to repeat it. Go, I say, to the police; then, if he has been in any manner overtook, as often happens—"

Here Clara again caught fire, and volu-

bly protested that Mr. Gifford "was never in nowise overtook."

Mrs. Green proceeded, ignoring the demurrer: "Or if he has gone crazy like, or had a fit, or got ill, most like there's news of it to be had there. Then there's the Morgue—"

"What's that?" demanded Clara, fiercely.

"If I ever! The Morgue! Why it's where they puts dead folk whose names a'n't known; and there's descriptions of 'em, and you can go and read 'em. Go to the police-office and the Morgue, I say."

With such cheering advice from Mrs. Green, the pair were obliged to put up, and set out on their doleful errand. They spent all day, and every day from Wednesday until Sunday in the search. They visited the police-office, the Morgue, the post-office, a number of hotels and business places, and inquired of many people. Folks stared at them in astonishment; who were these, that asked strangers if they had seen or heard of a man named Gifford?

Then they began to visit the hospitals,

and they entered one where a sign was over the door. That was only for colored people.

Mrs. Green and her neighbors sent them to three hospitals, all of which turned out to be Romish institutions. No Gifford there, and Clara tersely remarked, "They might have knowed it afore they began."

At one of these hospitals, a Sister offered to take M̃argaret in charge while Clara prosecuted her search. The worthy maid replied somewhat gruffly, that "No one was better able than herself to look after Margaret; and moreover, her father had never liked mixin' with them there sort of notions."

This sufficiently ambiguous phrase offended the nun, who said coldly: "Do as you please; but you seem to be a person with very little knowledge of the world, and let me tell you, there are many dangers about such pretty young girls in the city. When people have neither knowledge nor money to defend them, they are likely to fall into trouble sooner or later."

Clara marched Margaret off, openly despising these warnings, but inwardly impressed by them.

Sunday came like a blessed rest, and Clara and Margaret prepared to spend it in church. The girl asked Mrs. Green where her mother had been accustomed to go, and having received directions, went off with her maid. They were glad to spend all day in the house of God; churches were more congenial than Whitehall street, and they attended two Sabbath-schools and three preaching services between breakfast and tea-time, when they came home to eat some stale bread, purchased the preceding day. But the appearance of Margaret had begun to attract attention in the neighborhood. On this day every one was off work, and at liberty to lounge about the doors and sidewalks. As Margaret and Clara came home, a theatre hanger-on cried out, "Beauty and the Beast!" One desperado openly winked at poor terrified Margaret; a rough clown was so bold as to remark that it

was a fine day, and ask her where she had been; and a half-grown boy, who had been drinking, pushed up to her and bid her take his arm, and he'd take her to see the play. Clara gave the audacious lad a punch with her umbrella, and bade every one hold their tongues, and not meddle with her child. Margaret began to cry bitterly, and Mrs. Green coming to her door, loudly and severely threatened any one who should dare to insult her boarders. The theatre actor, who had come into Mrs. Gifford's room, bestirred himself to give the interfering lad a most insufficient kick.

This adventure showed Clara, first, that they must not venture out in the evening; and second, that she was in a very unsuitable neighborhood, and must take her child out of it.

On Monday morning Clara opened her purse; with all her economy two dollars had gone for food, and she had now but four left, besides the reserved ten. She never entertained the thought of giving up their wild-goose chase, and prudently kept from

Margaret a knowledge of their poverty. She told Mrs. Green she would leave the room next afternoon, and that day secured a very tidy attic lodging, well enough furnished, and in a decent part of Mercer street, for two dollars a week.

On Wednesday afternoon poor Clara had her pocket picked, and was left with only the ten dollars they had kept to take them home. She might have returned to the Sharkshead at once, but they had heard of a man who had been sun-struck, and taken to a hospital far up town. The description of this man assured them that he was Mr. Gifford, and they could enter the hospital and make inquiries the next day. So elated were they, that they almost forgot the loss of their money, and willingly broke their ten dollars for a frugal supper and breakfast.

As early as possible they hastened to the hospital, their hearts beating high with hope. Alas, disappointment seemed ever to attend them. The person they sought was dead and buried, and moreover, the

nurse assured them that he had been a man named Neal, whose wife and son had attended his last hours.

Worn out with much grief, many tedious walks, and poor, insufficient fare, Margaret was ill for several days. Poor Clara was lavish of her money, supplying every need of her idol, and when the week closed, and another week's rent was advanced, there was scarcely any money left.

Margaret could not tear herself from the city which she was convinced held her mother and grandfather. Clara was equally resolved on accomplishing her object; and her proud spirit would not yield so far as to write to the schoolmaster for aid. Clara had fifty dollars in the bank at home, but she knew no way of getting it out, other than by going for it. This simple creature had never either written or received a letter in her life.

The good Clara kept up a busy thinking all one evening, and made fresh plans, as the first had failed. She then explained them to Margaret.

“Child! The money’s about gone, and it may take us a month yet to find the father. Here’s my mind. I have allus heard that wages is very high here. Now, I am used to work, and I know how to do everything that is to be done. I mean to find me a place to work in service, and a place where you can board decent and safe. I’ll get wages enough to pay your board, and a bit over, to lay up again our going home. You can search for our folks where I tells you. I will see you every day, and if by the time I’ve saved up enough to take us two back to the Sharks-head we h’a’n’t found ’em, why we will say it is the Lord’s will we fail, and we two will go as we come. What say, Margaret?”

“O, Clara,” cried the girl, “get me a place with you, we will both work together!”

Clara held up her hands in protest. “Me! Let you work! Not while Clara Brown is in her senses. And if I did, what would ever your grandfather and the minister think of me? And who would

do the searching that is our main business. Let me alone to manage things, Margaret."

Accordingly, next morning Clara and Margaret set forth to carry on their search, and to visit intelligence offices. It was an evil day, for the intelligence offices were all full of desperate looking characters, presided over frequently, by a Gorgon who smelt of whisky. The reeking stench of the rooms, the bold defiance of the waiting aspirants for hire, and the ravenous, bird-of-prey aspect of the dame in charge, terrified Margaret, and repelled Clara, who durst not cast in her lot "with such trash." They began to distrust corner stalls since the pocket picking, but every cheap looking restaurant turned out to be a grog-shop. People whom they went to for information, gave them hasty or angry answers, to be rid of them, and indeed these two Arcadians fared very ill in Babylon.

The next day, bid fair to be a repetition of its predecessor, but in a happy hour, Margaret looking up, espied a round

blue sign-board swinging across the walk, and this legend thereon in letters of gold: "Women's Christian Association."

"O, Clara!" she cried, joyously, "here must be something good. Let us go in; here is the door."

Clara read the sign, and examined the door; it seemed to lead to an eating-room.

"Belike it's a hoax," she said suspiciously.

But just as Margaret was about to protest at this view, a buxom dame came out with a pail to scrub the stone steps, and Margaret asked what sort of a place this was, and for what object. She had a winsome way of questioning, and the woman answered pleasantly:

"The front room is an eating-room, clean and cheap, mostly for women and girls, where you can get the full worth of your money, and live as cheap as you like. Back of this is an office, where women get work and places; and ladies get servants."

"And what is the charge?" asked Clara, eagerly.

"Nothing to the women; it is a Christian

association, meant to do good, you see. There are plenty of chances to get work in there, all the time. Are you looking for anything to do, either of you?"

"I am," said Clara; "and for boarding for her."

"You look like an able woman," said the scrubber.

"Indeed I am," said Clara. "Come, go in, Margaret."

It was a neat little office, and there were plenty of pleasant faces in the manager's room. The room beyond was occupied by women waiting to be hired; but the place was clean, orderly, fresh.

The Secretary's eye lit up as it rested on Clara's tidy, sturdy figure. She spread out a large book, and began to take down the information Clara could give.

"What can you do?" she asked.

"Anything and everything,—to make honest wages."

"And what wages do you want?"

"The very highest you can get me, ma'am. You see, I must pay the child's

board in a tidy place, and lay up enough to carry us two back to our home, which it is a pity that ever we left, I'm afraid."

"Then you do not wish to get her a place," said the Secretary, looking at the tall and slender child.

"Indeed, ma'am, that *would* be a way for me to treat Mr. Gifford's Margaret," screamed Clara. "Why she's a lady born; she can read Latin and poetry, that you'd be amazed to hear her. I've cared for her all my life, and I'm able and willing to do it, until I get her back to the home I brought her from?"

"And what are your references and recommendations?"

"Indeed," said Clara, "none nearer than the Sharkshead."

"Why, this is very unfortunate; we do not like to take people who have no recommendations," said the Secretary, hesitating.

"Perhaps it would be better," said Margaret, stepping forward, "that we should tell you all our story."

Her soft, persuasive tone won its way,

the Secretary and one or two ladies came near to listen, while she told her ungarished tale. When she finished, all her audience were on her side.

"You must let them be on the books," said one manager; "we can get the woman a place on the recommendation of her honest face; and the young girl can be boarded at our home."

"And is it a place where I can safely leave the child alone?" demanded Clara.

"Yes, our matron will be like a mother to her. The board will be three dollars a week."

"And what wages can I make?" asked Clara.

"Four dollars at the highest, I think."

"O, Clara, it will take us nearly three months to earn money to get back, at that rate," whispered Margaret.

"Never you mind, child; we want to bide here a bit to look for the father. Ladies, can any of you tell where we can find Mr. Gifford?"

"Gifford! Gifford!" said the Secretary;

“why that name is on my books. I remember, I spelled it wrong, with one f. Let me find it.” She turned over the leaves.

“O, can it be we have found him?” cried Margaret.

“No, no, this was a woman. Ah, here it is—look there—Annie Gifford, widow, American—thirty six years old, seamstress.”

“O, Clara! Clara!” shrieked Margaret, “Annie Gifford!—it is my mother! O, where shall we find her?”



CHAPTER XI.

THE STRANGE WAYS OF BABYLON.

"Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!"



MARGARET'S very eager exclamation drew the ladies about her. Several of them looked over the Secretary's shoulder at the book, as if that could give more definite information. It did to some extent.

"See—she went to Mrs. Burton's, in Nineteenth street," continued the Secretary. "But it seems to me that Mrs. Burton renewed her application for a seamstress here, some time ago. One of the ladies wrote the renewal while I was busy; and what had become of Mrs. Gifford I can't tell."

Margaret turned pale, and her lip began to tremble. Clara burst forth in her impatience:

“There! That’s like the strange ways of this awful old Babylon of a city. People are allus getting lost here away, and never getting found. I’m afraid to turn my eyes off Margaret lest I’ll lose her. Don’t cry, child. Belike Mrs. Buttons can tell as where your mother is, and she’ll have found the old gentleman.”

“Burton,” interposed the very methodical Secretary.

“Burton, then, or aught else as pleases you, so we find the poor child’s mother,” returned Clara.

And now a question or two called forth the story of Margaret’s mother, so far as she and Clara knew it—simply, that she had devoted herself to a straying husband through weary years, and now that he was lost at sea, had been about to return to her kindred.

“What a blessing it would be,” said a mild-faced lady, “if we could unite this

mother and her child. You had better go at once to Mrs. Burton's and find out what she can tell you; then return here, and we will try and get you a place, my good woman," she added to Clara.

Having been carefully directed to Nineteenth street, Margaret and her doughty guardian again set forth in their search. Happily, Mrs. Burton was at home, and seemed to be a kind person. She said she had liked Mrs. Gifford much, but that after a short stay she had been taken ill; the disease threatened to be typhoid fever, and the invalid had been carried to a hospital. She told them that the next visiting day would be on Sabbath, when relations might see the patients, and that it would be useless to go before. It was now Friday, and Margaret and Clara could not rest without knowing whether this were indeed the girl's mother, and whether she were living or dead. Accordingly they at once trudged to the hospital.

They had the satisfaction of learning that the Mrs. Gifford who had been admitted

was now pronounced out of danger; but they were not allowed to see her. Red tape could not be untied for a pair of Arcadians, one of whom was especially severe on the strange ways of Babylon.

The pleading looks of our maid Margaret, however, so far prevailed on the grim individual in charge of the office, that details of information concerning the regulations were entered into; and a small messenger was even sent to ask the nurse of the patient in question, if said patient had relatives at the Sharkshead Light.

After some delay, an answer returned that Mrs. Gifford's father-in-law lived at said Light. At this, Margaret could hardly be restrained from flying along the shadowy corridors, where this messenger had gone and come with such tidings, herself to search for her unknown mother.

"O, come now," said the ogre, "is this what I get for serving you! You're well off, compared to some; why, you find that it is your mother, that she is getting better, that you may see her on Sunday; and yet

you aren't satisfied. I know of people who come here for missing friends, and they've been here, died, and been buried, all unknown to 'em. Then there's others finds 'em dying or dead. Pshaw, your case a'n't a comparison, nor to be called hard."

Would nothing persuade this dreadful ogre to yield, Margaret asked tearfully.

No, nothing in life; not even this lovely little mer-maiden, shining up through her tears, like her sisters through the sparkles of the sea. Besides, this ogre very sensibly remarked, that fever patients got worse on small provocation, and that a message had better be left with him, that the nurse might prepare the invalid for seeing friends on Sabbath. Finding their ogre so very reasonable, and yet so very firm, Clara said: "Well, come, Margaret, we'll wait. We're used to waiting since ever we got to the city. There's mighty strange ways here, that keeps flesh and blood asunder, and parts a mother from her own child."

With this fling, and ignoring the benefits of hospitals, Clara, grimmer than ever,

took her child under her protecting wing, and went back to the Women's Christian Association.

It was four o'clock, and the office was about to be closed for the day. The mild faced lady and the Secretary were yet looking over the files of applications, and were much interested to hear that Margaret had discovered her mother in a hospital, but had not yet seen her.

"You could have gotten an order from one of the physicians, and then you could have seen her to-day. But now it is better to wait until Sabbath; it would perhaps take all day to-morrow to find the doctor, and get the order," said the Secretary.

The mild lady manager noticed that Clara looked tired, and Margaret very faint, and she invited them to take tea, as her guests, in the adjacent dining-room; invited them in such a pleasant way, that they could not feel themselves objects of charity. She then had set before them such a bountiful meal as they had not seen since they left home; and then, much re

freshed and comforted, they returned to their room.

“What a fortunate, happy day!” said Margaret.

“Yes,” said Clara, “it looks as if things had taken a turn. I make no doubt now that we’ll find the old gentleman before long. Then I’ll be glad to be going back to the Sharkshead, and I never want to set foot in a city again. Not I. The tower for me, says I, storm or clear; there’s less danger by far than in this topsy-turvy town; more light, more sweet air, more water, more space to turn yourself—and no whisky. This place is that strong of whisky, that I hate to go abroad. Bottles, jugs, barrels—it do seem as if every other house had it for sale.”

The next morning Clara and Margaret were early at the employment office. The Secretary feeling an incongruity between Margaret and the waiting-room, invited the girl to sit by her table, and copy various papers for her. Meanwhile Clara, with head erect, and determined air, re-

mained among the candidates for situations. Her lack of recommendations was a serious disadvantage, as those who could offer the best places, desired to know something of a servant's antecedents.

At length a man came in, and asked for a cook for a restaurant. Clara seemed to please him, and he asked if she were accustomed to this employment.

Clara, with entire ignorance of the existence of mayonnaise, truffles, patès, cream-puffs, curry, ragout, or croquettes, replied proudly, that "she'd like to see the thing she couldn't cook."

"The wages are six dollars a week," said the man, "have you recommendations from your last place?"

"Indeed, no," replied Clara; "I haven't been used to hawking myself about the country this-a-way."

"It would be impossible for me to take a cook without a reference. But, you might come as dish-wash; I want a hand at that," said he.

"Eh, what's that?" demanded Clara.

“Why,” said one of the managers, “this person keeps a restaurant. He wants, besides the cook, a woman to wash dishes. The wages for that are four dollars.”

“Deary me,” quoth Clara, “it’s not very tasty work that; but I’ll do it for Margaret’s sake.”

“You’ll come, then?” said the presumptive employer.

“Well, yes, sir. It’s a temperance restaurant, a’n’t it?”

“Temperance! Well, it’s quiet and respectable, very.”

“That a’n’t what I asked,” said the sturdy Clara; “is it temperance, fair and strict?”

“Well, no, not exactly.”

“Well, if I ever!” burst out Clara. “I never thought that I’d be found talking to them as deals death to the souls and bodies of men. However have you the face to come to a *Christian Association* for folk to do such mischief work as that?”

“Oh! if that’s your style, you won’t suit me,” said the man. “There’s all sorts of people here; some that aren’t too par-

ticular for their own good. May-be if I'd asked you as cook, at six, you'd have come?"

"No! nor at ten, nor at twenty dollars; not I. An *intemperance* restaurant! Why, then, would *I* lend a hand at a trade that has been, first and last, the ruin of us all? Hasn't intemperance sent the dear child's father—a likely gentleman, I'll be bound—to the bottom of the sea, and broken the heart of her mother; and taken away from his home the finest old soldier of a man that any one ever set eyes on? Yes, it's been the enemy of all of us; and on the top of that"—appealing to the secretary for countenance—" *he* asks *me* to serve in an *intemperance* restaurant! No, indeed; I'll starve first; and so will my child, Margaret!"

"Well, you've got temper enough," said the restaurant man, considerably nettled.

"No, it's not temper, it's feeling," said Clara. "Don't stir me up with intemperance, and I'm like a lamb; ask my child, Margaret."

The man turned away, when one of the managers, a fine, stately, white-haired lady, came to Clara.

“My good woman, if you can serve as plain cook, I’ll hire you on the strength of your temperance principles; I’ve had four drunken cooks in succession.”

“Belike,” said the uncompromising Clara, “they found the whisky in the rules of their cookery books; there a’n’t a drop of it in mine.”

“All the better,” said the lady. “I will try you at four dollars a week. And you can come immediately.”

Thus Clara and Margaret were separated; Clara going to her place, and Margaret to the young women’s lodging-house. Margaret had privately asked the secretary to get her some fine sewing or embroidery.

Sunday came, but Clara could not get out until afternoon; Margaret went to church alone in the morning, and as soon as her self-constituted guardian was at liberty, the two hastened to the hospital.

Margaret was now beginning to develop

her own resources, and to take the lead in planning. She advised Clara to send word to Mrs. Gifford's nurse that a friend from the "Sharkshead" had come to see her; and then Clara was to go up alone, and gradually break to Mrs. Gifford the news of the disappearance of her father-in-law, and the presence of her child. Then Margaret would be called to see her mother. And so it was.

In the joy of having her only daughter restored to her, and finding her a damsel so sweet and so sensible, Mrs. Gifford for the time forgot everything else. One moment she clasped the girl closely in her arms; the next she held her a little distance off, to study her fair face and learn what she was like; then she fondled her long soft curls, and murmured blessings upon her; the love that for years had been buried in her own heart, only known to God and to herself, which had poured itself out in long nights of weeping, could now be lavished on its object. But this child, so carefully nurtured, taught her the nobility

and value of that old man who had been the girl's sole guardian. Mr. Gifford had been so long Margaret's only parent, that he had been to her father, mother, teacher and nurse; and Margaret could not conceal the terrible loss that she had experienced when he left them so strangely. Then it was evident, that with him was taken their home, and means of support.

"My poor child, what is to become of us?" said Mrs. Gifford. "It will be a great while before I am able to work; this hospital is my haven of refuge, and as soon as I am able to be turned adrift, I cannot tell what I am to do. I have even nothing left to sell."

"Never fear," said Clara, heartily, "we'll manage it finely."

"When I went to Mrs. Burton's," said Mrs. Gifford, "I left my new address in Whitehall street, feeling sure that father would write or come for me. Mrs. Burton was very busy, and could not give me any leisure to go out for nearly a fortnight. Then I went at once to Mrs. Green; she

was lying on the lounge so soundly asleep that I could not rouse her. She had been drinking. The lodger now in my room told me that Mrs. Green had lost my address; but that an old gentleman was looking for me, and Mrs. Green knew where he was to be found. We both tried to wake her, to get the information I wanted. It was useless; my time to return to Mrs. Burton's had come, and there were no signs of Mrs. Green's getting her senses. I left, expecting to return that day. But long confinement at sewing, the weakness of my previous illness, the weariness of my walk, and above all, the miserable news that I had missed him who came to rescue me, brought on an illness. I was taken very sick as soon as I reached Mrs. Burton's, and sometime during the unconsciousness of the next few days I was brought here."

"Pears to me," said Clara, wiping her eyes, "that that whisky dogs us like bloodhounds."

One good result of that Sabbath after-

noon visit was, that Margaret saw the doctor, and beguiled from him permission to call on her mother every second day.

Margaret had a little ring, which she meant to sell, without Clara's knowledge, to get money to take fruit and flowers to her mother; that hospital ward looked so dreary, with its bare walls and floors, and its rows of narrow white beds. It was scrupulously clean, but O, so desolate, with its thin pinched faces, and the melancholy eyes of the homeless sick; all strangers to each other and to their attendants.

In the evening Clara went to the lodging-house, to Margaret's little room, and they began to discuss what they had better do.

"We must get my mother away from here, up to the dear old Tower," said Margaret; "that will cure her."

"But how are we three to get the money to travel—full fifteen dollars—that's what I want to know?" said Clara.

"I'd rather write to the schoolmaster

and borrow it, than to stay away from the precious home any longer," replied poor homesick Margaret.

"But don't you see, child," said Clara, "that we three women folk can't keep such a Light as that? If the grandfather don't come back, if he's dead, why child, there'll be another keeper for the Light, and we must go."

"That is true, Clara," said Margaret, weeping. "But our friends and our home are there. Even if we must leave the tower, we can get a wee house in the village, and work for ourselves. The minister and the schoolmaster will help us to find work, I am sure; and we can have all our own furniture from the tower."

"That is so, child; and then, I've a bit of money in the bank, if only once I knew how to get it out. I put it there by Mr. Gifford's advice, but I wish I hadn't. I'd have done far better to have just kept it by me."

"Yes, and get it picked out of your pocket, Clara," said Margaret, resenting

any reflection on her good grandfather's advice.

"Well, child, so I might," said Clara, soothingly. "Anyways your mother wont be able to travel this some while. Suppose you write the minister a letter."

"I will!" cried Margaret. "I'll tell him we've found mother, and ask his advice. And I know grandfather had some money in the bank, and I'll ask him if we ought to have that; and how to get it, and yours. I'm sure the minister will tell us exactly what to do."

This matter of seeing her mother every alternate day, of writing to the minister, and hearing from him, and of planning to get home to the Sharkshead, lent a new impetus to Margaret's life.

Clara had warned the girl of such fearful, unknown, inexplicable dangers in the city, that the poor child walked forth in dread, as among snares and pitfalls; the loneliness of the barren beach, with not a fisher's house in sight, and no sound but the lapping of waves, was nothing so terrible, as

the great loneliness of the city's busy ways, its jostling crowds, its dash and rattle of vehicles, and its discordant cries.

Nevertheless, among her fears, Margaret ventured into business on her own account; she sold her ring for a dollar, and used the proceeds to buy bouquets, and a little pot of blooming roses, and an assortment of fruit for her mother; she visited a number of stores, and succeeded in getting some cheap handkerchiefs to mark with initials in colors; neckties to make, and dolls to dress. These light employments brought her very little; not more than two dollars a week, at the highest, and sometimes not so much; but she persevered in the work and saved every penny.

Her neatness, good manners, dispatch, and her respectable boarding-place, were in her favor, and the thought of going home, kept up her courage in these straits.

The minister answered her letter, offering to send money to bring them all back as soon as they were able to come. He said that they must leave the Light, doubt-

less; but he trusted they could live comfortably in the village, and that when they had come back he would look over her grandfather's papers, inquire into his affairs and settle his estate for them, as far as possible. "It will be seven years before my dear old friend will be dead in the eye of law," he wrote, "but I suppose until then I can secure you the interest of whatever money he has left."

"Dead in the eye of law!—what does that mean?" demanded Clara.

"Why, legally—legally dead," replied Margaret.

"O, in that case," returned Clara, "I shan't believe him dead at all till then. If he a'n't dead to the eye of law, he a'n't dead to me; that's all."

"No, I don't believe he is dead," said Margaret, her eyes filling with tears. "I can't believe it. I never go out in the street without expecting to meet him, and looking for him everywhere."

"Then in my idee," cried Clara, "you do him great wrong. I'd sooner believe him

dead, than not acting right; if he's parading about this strange city, without looking or caring for us, or writing home, he a'n't the man I took him for. No, if he's fallen into strange ways like that, after all his living among honest, sober seafarers"—

"Be sure, Clara," interrupted the girl, "that whatever my grandfather is doing, is right, and he'll be able to explain it so some day. Any way, I shall send home for the money, and have it directed to the Secretary at the Association, for us. Then we'll go back to the Sharkshead and wait for him."

"I declare," flamed Clara, "if Mr. Gifford a'n't legally dead under seven year, they ha'n't no manner of business to get a new keeper at the Light before then; and I'll be bold to tell the Board so, if ever I get sight of them. It's not the thing to take bread out of a man's mouth, after twenty years of honest service."

Clara's present experience of honest service was not exactly to her mind. City ways and privileges she could not abide.

She contemned water that ran out of them "dirty bits of pipe," gas she concluded to be an "unconvenient witch-like light." To dry her clothes in a small brick-paved yard was a great cross. Her bread, pies, roast meats, cooked fish and biscuits, delighted her employers, and her neatness and honesty were above all price. But Clara had no idea of a variety in her cooking; stared in simple wonder at *vol-au-vent*; birds in jelly; velvet cream, lemon butter, puff paste and omelettes; and demands for such dishes made her life a burden; her longing desire was to get back "where sea-air gave folk an honest appetite, and folk were willing to eat honest food."

Margaret, having written to have her money sent to her friend, the Secretary, went to the Association office to tell her about it.

"I was just trying to find somebody to go after you, Margaret," said the busy Secretary. "One of our ladies wants to see you." Here half-a-dozen applications for servants interrupted her, and she amiably

attended to them all, then she returned to Margaret. "One of our managers who heard your story when you first came here, has kept it in mind; and now she has sent me word that she thinks—Ah, Mr. Curtis! I haven't sent you a girl yet, have I? The girls are all so opposed to going into the country. Suppose I take you in the next room, and let us see if you can persuade any of them." Fifteen minutes spent on Mr. Curtis, back came the Secretary. "Yes, Margaret, I will give you this lady's address. She is a great hand to visit hospitals, and she thinks that—O, Mrs. Jermyn, I'm sorry that woman disappointed you! She will not have another place from this office. There, if you like, are the references of three more chambermaids.—Yes, Margaret, here is the address,—I'll attend to you in one minute, Mr. Perry—take it and go to her; she says she thinks—Ann Smith, we cannot give you a place from here again. You drink, Ann; it is a great pity, a great sin!" Then followed a half hour

of attention to Ann and others, while Margaret waited in misery. "O, dear! waiting yet. Go to that address, my child; she thinks she has heard of your grandfather."



CHAPTER XII.

WAIFS IN THE TROPICS.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
And wife, and child, and home; but evermore,
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, ' We shall return no more,
And all at once they sang, our island home
Is far beyond the wave, we will no longer roam."



Far off from our mighty port of commerce, on the tropic seas, lay a little green, unnoticed, almost unknown island; one of the most south-easterly in the Bahama chain. To this island wind and wave had drifted that last boat-load that left the sinking Rona. Foot of man scarcely ever disturbed the stillness of its shores; wild animals of any size or ferocity were there unknown; the Admiral, who had slept in his pretence of watching, might have lain down with his

comrades, for all the need there was of keeping guard.

So weary was our Admiral that he had no consciousness of sleep, and when the bright sunbeams awoke the wanderers on that morning after his dereliction from duty, the good sailor said in all honesty, "I didn't call you, Mr. Gifford, for the night seemed uncommon short somehow; and I reckon I nodded a little."

Mrs. Wingate came out of her tent; Mr. Bower stood in the midst of the little group, and proposed to have their morning worship. To this all readily agreed, for long privation and danger had softened their spirits, and, except Guy and Mr. Carl, there was no one in the party who had not been accustomed to this exercise.

The next duty was to find a breakfast, and each member of the party set himself about this work. Mrs. Wingate took her cans and stone butter-pot to the sea for a general washing. Nathan collected wood and made the fire: Mr. Carl went for water. The Admiral betook himself to the tangled

thicket of palmettos, palms, cacti, and other trees and shrubs, while Guy and Hal kept along the shore. Crabs, three lobsters and a turtle were the reward of those who trusted to the sea for food, while Ned brought back the succulent pith or "cabbage" of a palmetto, and some roots which he declared to be nutritious when roasted. While the breakfast was being cooked, the Admiral was very busy digging a hole in the sand above tide-mark. While they were eating, a lively discussion began as to where they were; what island was this, to what group did it belong? Here Ned and Guy differed entirely, Ned reasoning from his experience, Guy from geographical knowledge. Guy thought that it was one of the Caribbean islands; the stream of water proved this, he believed; the Antilles were full of streams, the Bahamas had few, and water was obtained by digging holes, which presently filled with pure water, which everywhere percolated the soil.

"It does that here," said the Admiral; "that's what I dug a hole for. I don't look

on that stream as just right. It a'n't common to these parts, and the water may be pis'nous from flowing over roots and the like. Yon's our well, and after breakfast I'll dig another, that water'll be sure and be healthy, and its more convenient than to carry it from the stream. It's my idee this is a Bahamy, 'cause it's low and sandy, with a light sile. Now them there Antilles is thrown up by volcanoes; they're torn by earthquakes, and have reefs and boulders like pillars all about 'em; and instead of the shore shelving out gradual as this one does, why they end right straight off, and on the east and west shores you'll get as much as two hundred fathoms of water within a mile of the coast; now you know 'ta'n't that deep off here; we could see bottom where the light fell fair yesterday, within half a mile of shore. No, Guy, this is a Bahamy."

"Well, come now," interrupted Mr. Carl, "I don't care so much where we are, as how we're likely to get off, and get home. That's what I want to know."

"The answer to that," responded Guy,

“depends very much on where we are. Are we in the line of travel? Are we where ships ever come? How far are we from an inhabited island, and which way does such an island lie?”

“We’re on the line of trade, but not on the most travelled one, likely,” said the Admiral, “or we would have been picked up before we got here. It’s likely ships will go by, if we have patience to wait for ’em.”

“Then I’ll put up a signal this very morning,” said Mr. Carl; “I hope to be delivered from staying here.”

“It’s a deal better than starving in an open boat,” exclaimed Nathan. “But suppose no ship comes by?”

“Then,” said the Admiral, “we must overhaul our craft, victual her for a v’yage and make for the next island.”

“And where does that lie?” demanded Nathan.

“We can tell,” said Guy, nodding to Hal. “In what latitude and longitude are the Bahamas?”

"Between twenty-one and twenty-seven," replied Hal.

"And we're in the most southerly; I know that by our drift, and by the fruit," said the Admiral.

"Yes, or in a northern island of the Caribees," said Guy. "We may set ourselves down as between twenty and twenty-three latitude; now what's the longitude?"

"Why Turks Island is between five and ten degrees east from Washington, say about seven; and we are a trifle east of Turks Island perhaps," said Carl.

"Yes," replied the Admiral, positively, "we're east of Turks, I think, because we came due south so long without running foul of any land, and islands a'n't quite so plenty nor east of Turks."

"Then," said Guy, "if we must take to our boat again, we can get our latitude, and then sail due west."

"And we'll likely run on to Turks, or Great Inagua," interrupted the Admiral.

"There's a good long row between those two," said Mr. Carl.

The Admiral now happening to look toward his "well," took his pail, and going thither, filled it with clear water, with a scarcely perceptible brackish taste.

"Why, how queer!" cried Nathan. "We cant get water that way at the Sharkshead. What makes it come so?"

"Capillary attraction," said Guy; "along these low sandy islands you can get it so almost anywhere—for instance, in those islands along the Georgia and Carolina coast."

"The first thing we should do, is to set up signals," said Mr. Carl.

"Then we should find the best places to set them up," returned Guy, while Hal exclaimed,

"And we should look to see if we can find signs of any one having been here before us."

"Be sure, and all look for something to eat," added Ned.

After breakfast, Nathan being left with Mrs. Wingate and Earle, the other five divided, to explore their island. Guy went

toward the north-east; Mr. Bower and the Admiral, to the south-east, while Hal took the coast northward, and Mr. Carl southward.

“Be sure,” said Guy, “that you all leave a sort of trail behind you, so that you don’t get lost; and take care of being caught in tight places by the tide.”

Hal carried his rifle, Mr. Carl and Guy took each a revolver, while the Admiral declared himself to be more at home with a good sharp axe.

Mrs. Wingate and Nathan, left by themselves, at first fell into reminiscences of the Sharkshead, and the dear family there, heart-broken by the Rona’s wreck, and then talked of the genial captain, who had so nearly been saved with them, and so terribly lost.

“But come, Nathan,” said Mrs. Wingate, “we must not give ourselves up to these sad thoughts; it has pleased the Lord to save our lives. We should be doing something for the general good, and try to have a comfortable meal ready for our company

when they get back from their exploring expedition."

"If I had a line," said Nathan, "I think I could row out a little way and catch some fish."

"I have a spool of thread, and there is the rope."

"The thread is too weak, and a strong enough strand of the rope would be too thick," said Nathan.

"O, now I have it; there is plenty of good cord in the ruffles of my dress," said Mrs. Wingate, "and I will pull it out." She drew out a number of yards of cord, and tied them together; Nathan, instead of wax to make the cord stronger, rubbed it with pitch from the seams of the boat; he took one of the hooks the Admiral had made, and some scraps of lobster for bait. Thus equipped, he rowed a few rods from shore, and speedily began to catch fish. In an hour he had secured half a dozen, and returned well pleased.

"You must keep them in the shade, in a pail of salt water, until we can cook

them," said Mrs. Wingate. "We will make a good fire, and let it burn down to coals; then we will wrap the fish in large leaves, and roast them in hot ashes under the embers."

"We will need salt for them—and the leaves," said Nathan, "we can find salt in the hollow of the rock." Earle, having eaten some broth, was asleep under the tent. Mrs. Wingate and Nathan took the little empty fig box and went for salt.

The salt crystals lying in hollows of rock were badly mixed with particles of sand and earth, but after some search they filled the box with clean crystals and returned to the fire. Earle being awake, they took him with them, Nathan carrying him part of the way, and went into the woods to find leaves for wrapping the fish. Palm leaves were excellent for this purpose, and while getting these, Nathan stumbled against a large plant with thick thorn-covered leaves, on the end of which grew purple plums, with a brown hollow at the tip of each.

"That is pear cactus, and the fruit is

good to eat," said Mrs. Wingate; "we could gather a good many if we had anything to carry them in."

"My jacket will do," replied Nathan; and finding the cactus plenty, he laid the jacket under the pears, and let them fall into it as he cut them from the prickly stems with his pocket-knife.

Mrs. Wingate baked part of her fish, and she and Nathan had them and cactus pears for dinner. The exploring party did not return until almost night. Ned was laden with bananas; Guy brought half a dozen curlews; Mr. Carl was empty-handed, but said he had found wild fruit enough for his dinner, and had put up several signals. Hal had not yet come in. They were just wondering where he could be, when he was seen running up the beach, and as he came near enough to be heard he cried breathlessly,

"There have been people here before! I have found a house! A house, close by too!"

Mrs. Wingate left her cooking; Guy

dropped the birds he was dressing; the Admiral fell over a bucket of water, and Mr. Carl and Nathan were already running to meet the discoverer.

“A house,” said Hal, “but it’s empty.”

“Empty! for how long?” cried Mr. Carl, despairingly.

“O, for several months, I should say,” replied Hal.

“In that case,” said Guy, coolly returning to his birds, “we had better get our supper. The house will keep.”

Every one was so hungry and weary that this advice was well received, and supper was the first consideration. Mrs. Wingate baked more fish; Guy made spits with forked sticks and slender rods, and hung his birds before the fire to roast; the Admiral having hammered a fruit-can into a sort of flat dish, sliced some of his half-green bananas into it, and set them under the dripping of the birds to fry—assuring his company that in Mexico he had often eaten cooked bananas, and found them very good.

"And now, Mr. Gifford," said the Admiral, as they were seated in a semi-circle about their fire, eating heartily, "what about this house?"

"I found it as I was coming home," said Hal; "it is not over half a mile from here, across that little cape. The trees come pretty well down to the shore just there, and I went back into them, to see if anything grew there that was eatable; when I found a sort of clearing, the remains of a garden, and this house, or hut, of two rooms; shutters, but no sashes to the windows; earth floor, a broken door, and no chimney but a hole in the roof."

"Is there anything in it?" demanded Mr. Carl.

"Yes, there was a rough bench or so, and a wide shelf like a table; pegs in the wall, where hammocks had been swung may-be; and some pots and a pan in the corner. I think there was a broken spade too."

"Shipwrecked people," suggested Mr. Carl.

"That a'n't nigh so likely as sponge gatherers," said Ned. "These islands that folks don't live on, are visited by companies of men after sponge and coral, salt, and so on. They come in little vessels from the other islands, and stop till they get a load, then they go home and sell out. This is one of their cabins, I'll be bound."

"Then when they come back we can go off in their ship," said Nathan.

"They may not come for months; or perhaps they have given up the island entirely for the present," replied Hal.

"I should suggest," said Mr. Carl, "that if no ship stops for us by the time we get recruited in strength, and are able to lay up a supply of provisions for a trip, that we try to find our way to the nearest large island. We'll make sure of plenty of food and water, and take fair weather. It will be worth trying."

Yes, they all thought it would be worth trying—Mrs. Wingate most of all.

Then they discussed how they would be

able to get a supply of provisions, and water, and how long it would be likely to take for their boat to reach one of the large islands.

The first thought next morning was the newly found house, and after a hasty breakfast the whole party set out under Hal's guidance.

The cabin was roughly built of unhewn logs; the roof sloped a little to the rear, and was made by laying on poles covered with a thatch of palm leaves, over which was nailed a well tarred sail. This small dwelling stood in a clump of woods, and before it had been a clearing, planted as a garden; already the fertile soil was bearing a crop, self-sown by plants of the previous year; there was a tangle of vines burdened with ripe tomatoes; beans were climbing everywhere with yellowing pods; and dozens of melons were scattered over the ground.

Within the house they found two iron pots, several rusty tin cans and a broken tin pan, with the spade.

As the cabin was evidently a better habitation than the open beach, they at once brought round their few possessions in the boat, and Mrs. Wingate and the Gifford boys put the place in order. The inner room was assigned to the Captain's wife and child, and the Admiral set himself to make what he called a "bunk." He enclosed a space about the size of a bed, with palmetto logs, and filled it with moss and dried palm leaves. Meanwhile, Guy had been busy at the door, and Mrs. Wingate found that, unasked, he had fashioned a strong bolt upon her side of the door between the rooms.

"We should none of us touch the door without your leave," he said, turning courteously to Mrs. Wingate, "but you may often feel that this little place belongs more entirely to yourself, if you have the means of fastening it. It is a poor place, and we are poor companions for you, Madam, at the very best."

"On the contrary," said Mrs. Wingate, "I often feel that I have much cause for

thankfulness that it was my lot to come in this boat, where you all have shown me so much kindness."

The boat had spent one Sabbath on the sea; the first Sabbath ashore was passed in quiet, and in religious conversation. Mr. Bower began the day by reading the account of Paul's shipwreck, and by referring to their own experiences—this opened a free discussion. The Giffords gave much geographical information concerning the Mediterranean islands and the course of Paul's ship. Guy, coming to what seemed to be his natural character, explained the varieties of ships used in the first century, the amount of nautical knowledge possessed; navigation, trade by sea, and other matters of the kind. This interested Mr. Carl, who then proposed tracing seafaring through the Bible down from Noah, the first great shipmaster.

The Admiral was inclined to draw practical lessons for daily conduct from what they read; and Mrs. Wingate was, with one accord, made the umpire in vexed ques-

tions. Thus was spent a great portion of the Sabbath, and further time was passed in singing well-known hymns. In the afternoon the party separated, walking off along the shore, or into the woods, as inclination prompted.

Mrs. Wingate and Earle were strolling along the beach, when they came upon Guy, sitting alone. He was looking out on the broad waste of water, with a brooding, melancholy face. Mrs. Wingate paused.

"It is a sad prospect, Guy, but it might be worse, and we must all try and keep up our courage."

"To you, Madam," said Guy, rising, "to all the rest, this seems a doleful imprisonment. To me, it is the first freedom I have ever known. You look forward to leaving this island as your one bright prospect; to me that hour will signal a return into the hands of my enemies. I sometimes think that when you all go, I will stay behind, content to be restored to peace, by being lost to the world. If I were sure that no foot of man would

ever tread this island after you leave it, I would stay."

"Is not that morbid, Guy? I did not suppose that this was your natural disposition," said Mrs. Wingate.

"After what you saw of me in the boat, Madam, you will hardly be inclined to believe what I say. But what I do rejoice in here, is freedom from strong drink; what I dread in civilization is strong drink, and those who tempt me to it. All my life has been a fight and a failure, because of drink, Mrs. Wingate. I had a home, position, money, education. I lost them all by drink. I had friends, and wife and family, and self-respect. I lost these by strong drink. There is nothing now left me but life, and the feeling that by some infinite mercy my soul may yet be saved from perdition—and these I know I shall lose by strong drink, if ever I get back where it exists. Therefore my one hope for eternity would be to stay here free of my enemy; and I would do it gladly, if I did not feel sure that some

vessel with drink and drunkards would come here to destroy me."

"Have you ever tried a pledge, Guy?" asked the lady.

Guy bowed despondently. "It is merely a new rope on Samson."

"Have you ever tried that mightier help, the grace of God?"

"Drink," replied Guy, "has kept that Helper far from me." After a little silence he continued: "After what you have seen you cannot think me sincere; yet God knows I am. In such a time as this, when I am free of the influence of liquor, I would rather die than drink it. But let the temptation be presented to me, and I yield immediately; good resolutions are a mere nothing."

"I do understand it," said Mrs. Wingate. "Alcohol is a narcotic poison, which subjugates the will. This it is that makes it so dangerous. The will is the commandant of the garrison of our heart. Alcohol makes him a traitor; conscience may plead in vain; when alcohol lays siege, the traitor

commandant at once opens the gates and surrenders the citadel. Our only hope then, is to put the garrison in the hands of a new general, who will keep it securely, and will be able to bind the will to his allegiance. There is none can do this but the Holy Spirit; he is willing to come and keep the citadel of every repenting, contrite, tempted soul."

Guy had taken off his hat as she was speaking, and stood with bowed head, listening to her words. He replied:

"To me He might come, here in the safety of this island, where I am set apart from my temptation. Would that He might come, and end this fight between me and my enemy, and that then I might die before I have a new opportunity to fall into the sin I hate and pursue!"

"You limit the Spirit's power," said Mrs. Wingate. "He is not only able to come and take you into his keeping, here or anywhere, but he is able thereafter to keep you from falling, in any temptation, no matter how great."

She then turned away and left him on the beach.

A week having passed on the island without a sail being seen, our party began to make plans for provisioning their boat, and trying to reach some larger island of the Bahama chain, which they expected to find by sailing westward. They were now all recovering their strength; they thought that after another week, if their preparations were complete, and help had not arrived, they would again trust themselves in their open boat to the sea.

Mr. Bower seemed absolutely helpless to project anything outside of his mercantile pursuits; Mr. Carl likewise was a child, where an engine was not concerned. Guy now suddenly rose to the position of a leader, in virtue of his ability.

They must have provisions and water for eight persons, for ten days.

"It is easy enough," said Mr. Carl; "water is plenty here."

"But what have we to carry it in?" asked Hal.

"Nothing," said Nathan, "but two little casks, and a pail."

"Food is plenty, and can be carried anywhere," said Mr. Bower. "Fruit, fish, and birds—enough, I am sure."

"And the question will be how to keep it," said Hal; "fruit will decay, fish and birds will spoil very soon in this hot weather in an open boat."

"Then we can eat the fruit the first two days, and have the fish and birds salted; then they'll keep," said Carl.

"But if they are salted, they will terribly increase thirst, and that sends us back to the water question!" cried Nathan.

The group, seated on the shore before the cabin, looked dismally at each other. What was to be done?

"We will make more vessels to carry water, until we have enough," said Guy, rousing himself. "As for the birds, we will salt them a little, and dry and smoke them a good deal. We can treat the fish in the same way. We will put up the fruit in the cans."

“But,” interrupted Mrs. Wingate, “the tops are spoiled; they will not be air-tight; how can we seal the fruit up?”

“I’ll make the cans air-tight,” said Guy; “to-morrow we will begin. Nathan, let us see what tools we have.”

His tone was inspiring. Every one sprung up, and hastened to take an inventory of stock. Here was the result—ten rusty tin cans without tops; two casks, bucket, a jar, an old tin-pan, a broken spad two axes, a chisel, and some knives; the fire-arms and iron pots.

The next morning work began in earnest. Guy gave orders, and the rest of the company obeyed them. The Admiral was to put the boat in complete repair, and furnish it with mast, sail, and the needful cordage; he was to refit it in any way that would make it most safe and comfortable for the trip, and best suited to carry the provisions. Mr. Carl was the Admiral’s aid, and only regretted that he could not construct an engine and run the boat by steam.

Earle and Nathan were set to scour the rusty cans thoroughly with sand; the old pan was brightened by the same process. Guy explained that he should hammer the edges of the old covers into a sort of groove, to receive the new tops which he should by means of the chisel cut out of the pan; he meant to cement them on with a certain gum, which the boys were to collect for him in the woods. The cans were to be filled with tomatoes. Hal was to procure as many birds as possible, and to catch fish and lobsters. As ammunition was scarce, Hal made traps and snares for his birds. Guy set Mr. Bower to cutting down a thick stemmed palmetto tree, and dividing it into sections; for himself he took an arduous task, that of deepening and shaping a hollow in a rock to a basin.

Guy had suddenly developed a genius for cooking, and he explained his intentions to Mrs. Wingate.

“I am making this hole for a mortar, and I shall make a pestle of a little palmetto stem, shod with a stone, driven in at the

lower end. By this apparatus I will pound the beans to a flour; then if you boil this with salt to a mush, we can bake it by spreading it out in thin layers, as the Norwegian emigrants have their bread. If the Admiral builds us a locker in the boat where our bean-bread can be kept dry, it will furnish the main part of our provisions."

Mrs. Wingate's work was the cooking, and the picking of beans and tomatoes. As the eight people were to be fed for the present, as well as provisioned for the future, and since hard out-door work gave them all an appetite, the beach presented a constant scene of activity.

Guy brought home a species of capsicum from the woods, made vinegar out fruit, and put up a magnificent article of pickled lobster in the butter jar. A cave was dug in a shady place, and there the provisions were stored, as they were made ready. Guy's method with the cans proved a complete success; the baking of bean-bread prospered finely, and the pickled

lobster was of such excellent quality, that more was demanded. Guy had had Mr. Bower dig out the pith from the centre of his sections of the palmetto tree, leaving a thick bottom in each one; thus contriving a kind of small firkin; these he could readily head up by driving in thin sections of a tree somewhat smaller in diameter. When these were prepared, he dried them thoroughly by fire and sun, and then lighting a little blaze in each, reduced the inside wood to charcoal. Here were vessels for water, and the busy Guy even provided them with bunghole and faucet, that the precious contents might not be wasted. The smallest of these palmetto casks were indeed like little tubs, and Guy proposed to fill one with pickled lobster, and the other with certain small fish, preserved in the same fashion. Of these fish Nathan had already caught a number with a scoop-net of Guy's manufacture.

Thus passed a very busy week, and still no vessel had come in sight, but their preparations for a voyage were nearly

completed. The Admiral considered his boat, which he named the New Rona, entirely seaworthy. It was now a Friday evening; the company agreed to give one day more to their preparations, spend the Sabbath in rest, and if the wind were fair, and the provisions in good order, to set sail for the westward on Monday morning.

The evening was beautiful, and every one was busy. The Admiral had gone for yams and bananas for next day; Mr. Bower was busy catching lobsters; Mr. Carl was smoking curlews at a fire on the beach, and Mrs. Wingate was getting supper; while Hal and Guy baked sheets of bean-bread; the preparation of which for the voyage had, after many experiments, that day begun.

Nathan proposed to take the boat, and go a few rods from shore to get fish for breakfast. The mast and sail lay on the beach, where the Admiral had been making some alterations in them. Nathan laid all the oars but one pair beside the mast; threw in the boat a large boiled lobster

for bait, and prepared to get in himself. Then running back he said, "I will take the pail of water; last time I had to come back in the midst of my fishing, I was so thirsty."

As he passed Hal, with the bucket of water in his hand, he asked for a sheet of the newly baked bean-bread, which gave out an appetizing odor; he thought it would be excellent to eat while waiting for fish to bite.

Nathan rowed some little distance from shore, and set himself to fish. After a while a shout called attention to him, and he held up three large fish. Having seen him again cast out his line, they resumed their occupations.

Some time passed, when Mrs. Wingate looked up, crying, "Where's Nathan?" All looked; there lay boat, the oars in the locks, but no Nathan to be seen, and the boat perceptibly driving from the shore; the tide was running out swiftly. Guy and Mr. Carl started to their feet shouting, "Nathan! Nathan!"

"He has fallen overboard!" shrieked Hal.

"But he could swim," cried Mrs. Wingate.

"He's in the boat," said Earle. "I was looking at him, and he stooped over and went down in the boat. I saw him. I thought he was getting something, but he didn't come up any more."

Something was evidently wrong, for Nathan was out of sight, either in the boat or water, and the *New Rona* was going swiftly out to sea, both wind and tide carrying it from the shore.

Not only was the boy, but the boat, and with it their main chance of escape, in peril. Hal, Guy and Mr. Carl began to prepare for a swim after it. It was a forlorn hope, for the distance between them was now considerable. All three plunged in the water in a mad effort to recover the precious boat. Hal having been much heated by his work near the fire, was almost immediately seized with a cramp, and would have sunk, if Mr. Carl had not grasped him, and with much difficulty got him into shallow water, and then carried

him to the beach. This left Guy alone to pursue the boat, which he did bravely for some time. His efforts were useless; the boat had been too far out at first for them to overtake her, when wind and tide favored her escape. Guy at last gave up in despair, and was barely able to reach land.

When the Admiral came back from the woods, and Hal recovered from his unconsciousness, the darkness of a last fatal loss had settled over the castaways. The *New Rona* was but a speck on the far western waters, and Nathan Gifford was gone—how or where, none could tell.

Mr. Carl sat on the sand, his face buried in his arms, in an attitude of absolute despair. Mr. Bower was urging upon the exhausted Guy spoonfuls of soup, which the sailor was hardly able to swallow. Mrs. Wingate had Earle in her arms, and mother and child were crying together. The fires burned low, and no one cared to renew them. This was the end of their preparations for the voyage in the *New Rona*.

CHAPTER XIII.

DESOLATE DAYS.

"To watch the crisping ripples on the beach
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The gods are hard to reconcile,
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars,
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot stars."



THESE people were stunned by their loss. What had they not lost; one of their companions, and their boat,—the boat, sole tie between them and the blessings of home. Who could tell how many dreary moons would go by, and find them still imprisoned in this forlorn hut, on the low sandy isle? If, like folk in romances, they had been shipwrecked with chests full of clothing at hand, and all the appliances of civilization, even to silver tea-sets, cast ashore with them, they might have settled down to be more contented.

These people, however, were more than merely human, they were most of them Christians, and I verily believe they thought more of the desperate fortunes of that one poor little sailor boy, drifting out to sea alone, than of their personal loss.

"You're sure he fell *in* the boat?" said the Admiral.

"Earle is sure of it; we none of us saw him," said Carl.

"But if he had gone overboard you would have seen him come up to the surface, or heard him cry out; or at least you would have seen his hat floating," urged the Admiral.

"He must have fainted—he has been about in the sun all day, and now I remember he looked pale, and did not eat at breakfast or dinner," said Mrs. Wingate.

"Then when he comes to, he'll row for shore. We must light a fire to signal him," said the Admiral; and all but poor Guy, who was entirely overcome, roused themselves to help build two great fires on the beach about a mile apart. They did

not think of sleep, but fed the fires, and wandered about all night, listening intently, and peering out into the sea of darkness before them, hoping to see the boat returning with the rising tide. A vain hope; they were never more to see that little boat, that had carried them starving and despairing over so many leagues of waves; and had floated from them, just when all their fortunes seemed built upon her. The hope died in the morning, when the sun rose clear and golden over the sea, and not a boat or a sail appeared.

“He is dead!” said Mr. Carl.

The Admiral shook his head. “I don’t think it. What had the poor lad with him for his cruise?”

“He had a pail of water,” said Mrs. Wingate.

“I hope,” groaned the Admiral, “that he know’d enough to set it firm in the place I made for it, and covered it up close, and will drink sparingly of it.”

“He had a big lobster just boiled, for bait,” said Earle.

“And he had caught three fish,” said Mr. Bower.

“And he took a sheet of bean-bread,” said Hal.

“I could cruise a week on that,” said the Admiral; “but then I’d know how to take care of it. To keep them there fish in sea water in the bottom of the boat, and the sun off them and the lobster, and save the bread to the last, and drink sparing, and wet my clothes frequent. Now, I argy, that he’ll see this sun rise, and then he’ll get his idee of east and west; and now the question is, if he’ll turn east and try to find us, or if he’ll go west.”

“The fact is,” said Guy, in a feeble voice, lifting himself from the sand, “if he didn’t rouse up from whatever took him, pretty soon, the oars would work out of the locks, and he wouldn’t be able to do anything but drift. Can’t you see that?”

With these words they all gave Nathan up. Hal groaned, “O, my poor father! you have now lost us both!”

At this, Guy turned pale, and rolled him-

self over on his face. He seemed to fall asleep in this position.

As before, Mrs. Wingate was the first to recall her courage. She made haste to prepare the best breakfast possible, and when it was eaten, and the party had thereby become a little more courageous, she suggested that now their sole hope lay in signaling some passing ship, and that therefore their signals should be looked after, made more numerous and prominent; a bonfire should be got ready on the highest point of the shore, and some lofty station should be selected, where one of the party could for the greater part of the time keep watch. Had all parts of their little island been fully explored? Might not something be discovered which would be of use to them? These inquiries were, in truth, made more to rouse up her companions, and give them something to do, than for any other reason. Food was now easy to find; a large amount of it was on hand; there was little to provoke to exertion; the party might sink down in morbid inactivity, and

what madness, disease, anger, or despair might not be bred thereby? For people in their position, work was the only hope, and work Mrs. Wingate desired to plan for them, without seeming to do so.

But already a new care had come among them; sickness, which with all the amenities of civilized life makes a large demand upon us for sympathy and aid, appalled the little company, cut off from help on this desert island. Guy was very ill of some kind of fever; none knew but that it might be of a contagious type, which would make them its victims one by one. Certainly it was a severe form of disease, for Guy, a man of powerful frame and much courage, yielded at once to its power, and seemed brought immediately near to death. Thus their third Sabbath on the island, the first one after the loss of the boat, was spent in care of the sick, and in a doleful searching of each other's faces for symptoms of the same malady. There was not one of this group who did not secretly picture to himself the advance of disease, the death of

one after another of the company, the survivors being unable to bury their dead, until he himself became the last victim of the scourge, perishing alone and helpless amid the corpses, the moaning of the sea, and the solemn watching of the stars. To meet such an emergency as this, how much faith in God, how much Christian resignation is needed, and all these watchers by the sick man, except perhaps the engineer, were pleading for these principles; and Mr. Carl himself was learning the need of a strength beyond the human, to support the soul in the vicissitudes of its earthly sojourn.

And yet, for all the circumstances of these people were so distressing, they had a ludicrous side, as developed by the needs of the sick man. When they began to realize his condition, they held a consultation over him, and, as is usual, those who knew the least were foremost with suggestions. Mr. Carl was sure that a long list of much vaunted patent medicines, and an unlimited supply of Dover's powders, would

restore him. Where his panaceas were to come from, he did not say. Certainly, Dover's powders are not indigenous products of desert isles.

Mr. Bower, on the other hand, had no faith in quackery; he knew several eminent members of the medical faculty of New York and Philadelphia who would prescribe "the exact thing" for Guy—if they could only see him! Mr. Carl and Mr. Bower having with these recommendations left the field, Hal explained that Clara always gave bone-set tea and camphor water, as sovereign remedies for all ailments. He should use both in Guy's case—if he knew where to get them.

"A good strong whisky-sling would be just the thing to strengthen him; he is very weak," said Carl.

"Avast there, Engineer!" cried the Admiral; "Guy has had too much of that last prescription. It has undermined his constitution, and that's why our shipwreck and starvation, and all that, has worked so on him, when naturally he's as strong

as any giant. Now, Mrs. Wingate, I've heard that there's nothing so good as the leaves of that there pear-cactus, roasted and laid on the feet. Let's first try that, ma'am."

"But what kind of sickness is it good for?" she asked.

"Why, I don't know; and as we don't know what's the matter of him, let's try the cactus."

The Admiral had found a smaller sail under the large tarred one on their hut roof, and had used it for the New Rona. Now, as the New Rona was gone, he made a hammock of it, hung low in their outer room, for Guy. The man was lying in a high fever and muttering his crazy visions, while his friends thus consulted what to do for him.

"I propose," said Mr. Bower, "that as women have a natural talent for nursing, and as scientific doctoring is out of the question, that the case shall be put into Mrs. Wingate's hands, and all of us carry out her orders."

"I agree," said Ned; "but I hope she'll try the cactus."

"And what is the effect of the cactus, Admiral?" asked Mrs. Wingate.

"Why, I can't justly say; but I sort of reckon it's like a mustard plaster."

Mrs. Wingate shrunk a little from the responsibility thrust upon her, but finally accepted it, saying, "Well, if I am to prescribe, these are my orders—Earle and I will go for the cactus, and prepare it; and you must meanwhile take off Guy's heavy clothes, and bathe him in warm sea-water, then wrap him in a blanket and put him in the hammock. As we have nothing else to try, I shall take water and cooling drinks for my remedies."

The Admiral experienced great satisfaction in seeing his cactus poultice applied to the patient's feet and the back of his neck; whether it did Guy an equal amount of good, it would be hard to say. Next to the cactus, the Admiral pinned his faith to a drink made of orange juice and cold water, which he administered freely to the

thirsty patient. Mrs. Wingate kept Guy's head wet with renewed applications of seawater, and fed him with small quantities of strong broth made of birds. And thus nursed and prescribed for, Guy lay hovering between life and death, while the fever ran its course.

So once more these lost ones settled down to the life of their tropic island. Mrs. Wingate and Hal were nurses, the Admiral was caterer for the mess; Mr. Carl devoted himself to the signals, and looking for ships, and Mr. Bower became cook, and for a while made very bad work of it, until Mrs. Wingate succeeded in teaching him something of domestic arts.

It is the instinct of all good women to make a sick-room neat and beautiful; and I wish you could have seen the poor outer room of this cabin, where Guy lay half-dead. It was washed as clean as water could make it; beautiful green branches arched the windows and trimmed the walls. Earle brought large bright-hued shells, and bits of coral, and set them forth

on the wide shelf and the window ledges. The cans were not needed, now that there was no voyage before them, unless it were the voyage from this world into the next, and two of the tins were made to hold ever-renewed bouquets of splendid tropic flowers. Even here, in all their misfortunes, there was for them the semblance of a home.

Two weeks thus passed on, Guy's fever was nearing a crisis, and the thoughts of his two nurses, whose constant care for him had aroused a strong interest in him, were chiefly fixed on the patient, when Mr. Carl came to the cabin in frantic haste, declaring that a ship was in sight, and they must come to help him signal her. All but Mrs. Wingate hastened to the shore.

Far off along the western sky, was a little point of white, moving against the blue; a cloud, less than a man's hand, a bird—a sail—yes, it was this last, the sail of a ship going northward. The tablecloth, which had been used so often as canopy, sail and signal, was now fluttering

from a pole fastened to the highest tree. One of the bonfires, and then the other, was lit, and green fuel thrown into the blaze, to send up a tall column of smoke.

The ship grew larger, her sail looked as large now as a pocket-handkerchief, but her course did not seem toward them. How madly they watched her; you would have thought them maniacs anticking in Bedlam, if you had seen them; they threw up their arms, as if those could be seen, when a huge mast was, by reason of the distance, no larger than a walking stick. They shouted to make those sailors hear, when all the sound of cordage, and orders and the multiplied calls of the ship were lost in the great silence of the sky and sea, and the ship gave no more echo than a picture painted against the blue. Carl insisted on their firing the rifles, as if that would make a report which should draw them aid. Still they watched, and prayed, and called and wept, and the ship grew larger and larger, as large now as a great gannet, its snow-white wings sweeping out

along the sky, but it kept on northward, never veering from its course, and the sun set, and the sky behind that terrible snowy mockery was red as blood; the day died, and their hopes died too; and now the ship had grown thin and wan, and faded into an airy nothing, and was gone with the set of the sun! They were unmanned, they had had so many troubles and losses, and they sat down on that forlorn coast of disappointment, and wept like children.

At last they went to the cabin, where they found one stronger to endure than themselves. Mrs. Wingate had divined the disappointment before they came back; it bore as heavily on her as on them, alone with her child among these men, on a dismal island; but she kept her courage up heroically, and as her patient was in a stupor, she left Earle to watch him, and went to work at the supper. It was a warm, abundant meal, ready for them when they came, and after a little heart-sick delay, all prepared to eat but Mr Carl. He sat apart with a look that terrified her,

with thoughts of insanity or suicide. Presently she went to him. "This is a great trial to us, Mr. Carl; and there may be circumstances which make it worse for you than for any of us."

"Circumstances!" said Mr. Carl, bitterly. "Mrs. Wingate, I've got a wife and six little children, and they think me dead!" His voice broke off in a cry of agony.

Tears filled Mrs. Wingate's eyes, but she made answer steadily—"A wife and six children! so much the more joy when once you get safe home!"

"I shall never get safe home!" he exclaimed.

"O yes, you will. And how pleasant it will be to see you, the companion of so many bravely borne dangers, happy with your family. How sad for them, if I had to go and tell them that you broke down, and died of despondency before help came to us."

"Died! They believe me dead, and my wife will die of a broken heart; you don't know how much she cares for me."

"I dare say she does. But mothers of so many little children dare not die of broken hearts. When the father is gone, they must fight for life for the children's sake; and when you get home you will find your wife has done that, like a brave woman."

"Home! and what sort of a home? they will be sure they have lost me, and the family will be broken up. I think of it day and night—all their support gone."

"Did you own the house?" asked Mrs. Wingate.

"Yes, that is ours, but we lived on my wages; now that she thinks those gone, what can my wife do but sell the house? I'll be bound she won't get half a price on it; and it is a pretty place, Mrs. Wingate, and it goes hard to think of getting back and finding it out of our hands, and my family off somewhere."

"It wont happen that way," said Mrs. Wingate, stoutly. "Other boats left the Rona, and doubtless some of them are saved. Your wife will not give up hope

of your return. Others may undertake to prove that you are lost, but she will hold to her expectation of seeing you again. She will never give up looking for you, until you come. Besides, this is not a time of year to sell houses; be sure she'll hold on to the place until next spring, and you will be back before that. She will find some way to get on; even if she is not used to business, this necessity will develop business tact in her, I am sure. Tell me, Mr. Carl, is your wife a Christian?"

"Yes," said the engineer, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand. "She's a good little soul, and has sent up a sight of prayers for me, I'll be bound, and so have the little fellows."

"Take courage, then, from that. Your wife will have strength and wisdom sent her from on high; and as God hears and answers prayer, expect to have the prayers of those at your home answered by your restoration. So, Mr. Carl, instead of sitting down despondent, be brave, and add your prayers to theirs."

Mr. Carl arose, and turned toward the little party eating supper on the shore.

"Your words are very heartening, Mrs. Wingate; and some way, since you've been talking, it does seem that all will come right, and I'll see the youngsters in our own home yet, all the same; I'd have been *surer* about it, if that ship had only stopped for us."

"What's your idea of Guy, Mrs. Wingate?" asked the Admiral.

"I'm afraid he is not going to live many hours, Ned."

"I've about lost my faith in cactus," said Ned, dolefully; "and that a'n't the worst of it, Mrs. Wingate, I'm afeared that Guy a'n't prepared to slip his cable and run into a better port. I tell you now, ma'am, by his own account his log book's a bad sample of voyaging. Says I to him often, 'There's only one way to make things straight, Guy. You get a new clearance and a new captain, and steer direct for that safe harbor where storms never blow.' That's what I advised him as an honest

shipmate. He says to me frequent, 'Admiral, I could do it, only I've got such a cargo of whisky aboard.' That's the ruin of him, poor lad, and I think he often wished he he could do better in that line. Do you think, Mrs. Wingate, that he hears anything—our prayers and our reading by him?"

"He may, more than we imagine," said Mrs. Wingate, as, according to custom, the party entered the cabin to hold evening prayers by Guy's hammock.

This exercise over, Admiral Ned took the hand of his apparently unconscious shipmate in his own, and with the utmost fervor and simplicity offered a prayer for his salvation. When he finished, and each bowed head was raised, Guy lay with his eyes open, and fixed steadfastly on Ned's face.

Mr. Bower inquired, "Friend, do you know us?" but received no answer.

Hal leaned over the hammock, saying, "Guy! Guy! will you put your trust in Jesus, the Saviour?"

Guy's pallid lips slowly formed the words, "Too late!"

"No, it is not yet too late," cried Hal. "Christ is always ready."

Guy closed his eyes wearily.

"The Admiral had some torches of a light resinous wood, and he lit one at the fire, and bringing it near Mrs. Wingate, asked her to read something. She took the Bible, and read of the thief on the cross; of the laborers hired at the eleventh hour; of the forgiveness of Peter; and the Saviour's invitation. Guy opened his eyes and listened eagerly. Mrs. Wingate read then of the lost sheep, the unjust judge, and the prayer of the publican. Hal bent down and repeated this prayer in Guy's ear, and the sick man seemed to whisper it after him.

Mr. Bower offered to watch with the patient during that night, which every one expected would be Guy's last.

Just at daybreak Mrs. Wingate came from her inner room; Guy was asleep, a more peaceful expression in his face, and

there was a slight moisture on his forehead and hands.

"I verily believe he is better," whispered she to her friend. "Poor soul, I hope so; there must be many to care for him; what a noble looking man he is; his face shows refinement, real culture."

"Yes," replied Mr. Bower, "he is evidently another of those wrecks made by strong drink; that demon has dragged him from some high place. What a pity, if after all these experiences he should return to it."

"He never shall, if I have any influence to prevent it," replied Mrs. Wingate, as she went out to prepare broth for her patient.

A day or two of trembling hope followed the turn of Guy's disease, then Mrs. Wingate said to him: "I think, sir, you are going to be restored to us."

"The more's the pity," said Guy, drearily.

"O, don't speak of a great mercy that way!" she exclaimed.

"I felt," said Guy, "that I was dying, and I remembered very many prayers offered for me, and added my own to them. I

felt ready to die. I believed God would save me. If I live, you know my temptations."

"If you were ready to die, you are ready to live," said Mrs. Wingate. "We are only ready to die if we are renewed by God's Spirit; and if the Spirit has renewed you, he can strengthen you to overcome temptations. Like Ned, you can live to be a trophy of the efficiency of grace."

After this, Guy talked freely on religious subjects. He did not seem to gain strength, but thought himself that he was going into a swift decline. "I've ruined a good constitution," he said. "I've burned out its strength with alcohol, until there is nothing left to rally. It's only a case of slow suicide, like thousands more, not set down as such."

His opinion came to be shared by his nurses. One morning he asked Hal to remain with him and Mrs. Wingate, while the rest of the party went to the several duties of their island life. He spoke to them sadly. "I want to tell you some-

thing I couldn't have courage to say, when I expected to live to disgrace you. Hal, did you ever hear your father speak of his eldest son?"

"Yes!" cried Hal. "What! are you—O, Mrs. Wingate, I believe he looks like my father."

"Yes," said Guy; "I am Gilbert Gifford. Your brother, and more is the pity. Well, it's over now. You will get home, and you can tell him you laid his prodigal in the earth here—a repentant prodigal, glad to be out of temptations that were too strong for him."

But Mrs. Wingate was bending over him sobbing, "O, Gilbert, Gilbert, where is my poor sister?"

"She is in New York, and I want you two to find her and try to comfort her. If you can give her any hope about me, do it. May-be her many prayers haven't been thrown away. Is there, do you think, any hope in my end?"

"There is hope," said Mrs. Wingate, firmly, "that you will go home to recom-

pense your wife for all the past. You are not going to die, Gilbert, but you shall go home with us a changed man."

"Yes," said Hal; "I will bring you home to father, who loves you best of us all—and to Margaret—why, then, Margaret is your daughter. The sweetest darling! O, Gilbert, you will not die without having seen Margaret."

And however it was, from that hour Gilbert steadily, if very slowly, improved, and as no one else was taken with the fever, the fears of the lost ones began to subside.

When Guy was thus recovering, Mrs. Wingate proposed that as the crop of melons and beans had been nearly used up, the garden should be carefully remade, and seed planted. This alarmed Carl, who began anxiously to inquire if they were likely to be there to eat a second crop of vegetables.

"We hope not," said Mrs. Wingate; "but let us do this for the benefit of those who may come after us. The sponge-gatherers

may return, or other shipwrecked parties may drift here as we did."

The Admiral and Hal undertook the garden work with zeal, and presently the engineer and Mr. Bower became interested in it. The old spade and the axes were their only implements, but the soil was rich and light; good-will made labor easy, and the garden was laid out and planted in the most approved style.

The Admiral meantime discovered an oyster-bed on the north-east of the island, and in one of the oysters was found a pearl. This interested Mr. Carl, and Mrs. Wingate proposed that he should search for other pearls, to carry home to his wife. The jewels thus found were few and small, but now and then one rewarded his labor, and served to keep his zeal alive. Hal, by accident, found the largest pearl of all, but only exhibited it to Mrs. Wingate; he meant to take it home, to be put into a ring for Margaret. Besides the oysters, the Admiral found turtle's eggs, so that their fare was varied and abundant. After all,

the bananas formed the chief part of their living.

“Nobody can starve where the Lord has planted this tree,” said Ned, laying down a large cluster of the fruit in the cabin. “I’ve heard tell that the banana tree by itself would give a man all that he needs in this world; and folks do say that it is the very tree of knowledge that grew in Eden. It gives crops all the year round; the tops of the little trees are cabbage; you can eat it raw or cooked. I’ve been where it was used for making roofs; I’ve seen tablecloths of it. I’ve made baskets of it; and I’ve heard they can make vases that will hold water out of the leaves.”

“And you have very kindly made me an excellent umbrella of it,” said Mrs. Wingate.

“And they make whisky or wine out of it, as from nearly everything else,” suggested Guy.

“Yes,” said the Admiral. “They make whisky out of corn, apples, all sorts of fruit and grain; out of sugar-canes and aloes;

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it shows how men can turn the best gifts of God into a curse."

Eight weeks since the loss of the boat, had gone by; they had been over ten weeks on the island. Time passed very heavily; our adventurers were a most forlorn and tattered set. Even the most courageous were despairing.

Hal and Mr. Carl had been to the highest part of the shore, to renew that hopeless, forever disappointing watch for a ship. The sky hung over them like a brazen bell, clear, burnished, glowing; the sea was stormless, lifting restlessly up and down, as if asleep and dreaming; everywhere the sky met the water, until the little lonesome island seemed to be the only land in all the world.

They had scanned the distance for hours in vain, and were just turning to go back to the cabin, when Hal said, "I wonder if we shall have rain, there is the first cloud I have seen since we came here." He pointed westward—Mr. Carl looked, shaded his eyes with his hands, and looked again;

ran along the beach and took another view; then he leaped into the air with a wild shout—"It's smoke! smoke! smoke! and from a steamer!" he screamed. Again they watched; the light cloud spread out along the sky, funnel-shaped, and melted away, but grew again, a gray steamer, as before. "It's a boat, and she's making south—and east!" exclaimed Mr. Carl. They watched for more than an hour, and now could see more than the lifted smoke, could see a black dot crawling in to them across the sea. "She sights us; she's making for us!" yelled Mr. Carl, and straightway fell to capering like a madman, while Hal ran to his friends, to call them all to this heavenly sight of coming succor. Hearing the news, they all rushed toward this new mount of vision; Mr. Bower and the Admiral heroically delaying, to drag Guy between them. They perched along this insignificant headland like a row of birds, waiting for the outgoing tide to feed them. They gazed at the nearing ship, as if the very intensity of their eyes would draw her onward.

They could see first the tall mast and the smoke-stack, with its welcome banner, and then the dark hull cleaving the waves, nearer and nearer. Suddenly something crept up along the mast, and waved out to them, more beautiful than any rainbow or sunset which they had ever seen—a flag, all stripes and stars. At this bewitching spectacle they shouted and flung up their hats like a parcel of idiots, so that most of the hats went over into the water, and floated off with the ebb-tide. And now there was a puff of white smoke and a sharp report; and another; and then another—this glorious ship was encouraging them with signals. Now the ship was within half a mile of shore, and had been coming up cautiously; she dropped anchor and swung about, lying with her side to the island. Then a boat was lowered as speedily as possible, and certain black objects went into it over the ship's side. The certainty of escape had set our unfortunates crying and laughing by turns. The Admiral made haste to the beach to direct

the course of the long-boat that was coming to them; Mr. Bower and Carl helped Guy; and Mrs. Wingate, womanlike, having immediately come to a realizing sense of the frayed, faded, and generally miserable garments of herself and child, kept prudently in the background.

Thus they approached the shore, as did the boat, when Mrs. Wingate gave a wild scream, and rushing past every one, went fairly into the water; for there, standing on the bow of the long-boat, were the men whom they had last seen going down, nearly three months before, with the Rona—Captain Wingate and his friend Torry!



CHAPTER XIV.

COMING TO THE SHARKSHEAD LIGHT.

"Till a pillar of spray, rose far away,
And shot up its stately head,
Reared and fell over, and reared again:
'Tis the rock! the rock!' he said.

"If I must die, then let me die
By the rock, and not elsewhere;
If I may live, O let me live
To mount my Light-house stair."



WHILE on the island, anxiety and loss and sickness had not yet been succeeded by rescue and restoration, the scattered members of the family from the light-house were meeting further adventures in the city.

When Margaret had finally obtained from the busy Secretary the address of Mrs. Wheeler, and the information that her grandfather had possibly been discovered, she felt as if she had wings to her feet. Off she went, with but half an idea as to

the right direction, and instead of turning into Third Avenue to get to St. Mark's Place, she went wandering up the Bowery. Then she turned into the Avenue by Fourteenth street, but by some miserable misfortune got into Stuyvesant street, and finally found herself in Astor Place, very tired, and with little hope of ever getting out of this labyrinth of streets. O for a good level beach and a sight of the sea! Margaret was ashamed to be attracting attention by crying in the street, but crying she certainly was. Her tears aroused the interest of a girl of her own age, who was going home with a roll of music in her hand. She stopped, looked benevolent, and asked had she lost anything.

"I've lost my way," said Margaret, "and I'm afraid."

"Afraid!" cried Miss. "The idea of anybody being afraid in New York! Now if it were in the country, where there are all sorts of cows and things, one might talk. But here—well, where are you going?"

Margaret produced her friend's card.

“O, to St. Marks! Why that’s as plain as the sun in the sky. I could find it with my eyes shut. Come on, I’ll show you. Do you live in New York?”

By the time they reached St. Marks the two were quite confidential, and the pretty guide only wished she had time to see Margaret home to her lodging-house. But delays were Margaret’s fate. The lady was not at home. Margaret waited in the hall, and the chambermaid scowled at her until Mrs. Wheeler returned, after six o’clock. Mrs. Wheeler proved to be the most honest and affable of people. She knew Margaret at once.

“Dear me, child! I’ve kept you waiting. Come in to tea with me. I’m late—Jane, another plate, and ring the bell.” So in two minutes Margaret was sitting at Mrs. Wheeler’s supper-table. The good lady understood the girl’s impatience, and began to explain herself as she filled the tea-cups.

“There is an old gentleman here in hospital, whom I really hope is your grandfather. He has been very sick, an accident

and brain fever, but he is getting better. They don't know his name, but the nurse thinks he has kept a light-house, from his talk; the chaplain got quite interested in him while he was ill, because he seemed to imagine himself teaching classes of young men in Latin and Greek. They mentioned his case to me as curious, and then I thought at once of you, and your lost grandfather."

"But don't he give his name?" asked Margaret.

"That is the queer part of it. He lost his memory with his sickness, and as he gets better, it comes slowly back to him. He does not yet remember his name or where he came from; he says often, 'I wish you would write to'—and there he stops. Then he begins again, 'I wish you would send for some money for me to'—and he can go no further. But he says he came here to look for his daughter-in-law, and is afraid she is dead. They have not told him how long he has been sick, and he thinks it is but a few days."

"I'm sure it's grandfather—when can I go and see him?" cried Margaret, growing red and pale with excitement.

"I'll take you there to-morrow morning. By the way, I will call for you at the lodging-house, it is quite in my way, as I drive over to the hospital."

"But will he ever get well? Will he know me? Has he lost his mind—O what is the matter with my poor grandfather?" Margaret spoke rapidly, with great excitement.

"I had the whole story from the doctor," replied Mrs. Wheeler; "they are quite interested in him at the hospital. He was crossing Whitehall street, when he was knocked down by a dray; the drayman was drunk, and came whirling around the corner against the old gentleman, whose back was towards him. His head was hurt; but the doctor thinks he had previously been in trouble of mind, and that this made his brain-fever more severe. There was nothing on him to tell his name or where he came from; and only a small amount of

money in his pocket-book. His talk when he was delirious, was of sons lost at sea, of the dangers of intemperance, of a search for a daughter, and he seemed much troubled about a light-house. When I heard it all, it came into my mind that it must be the old gentleman you were looking for. And it is so strange that you found your mother in a hospital too."

"Yes, ma'am; but you see if they had not been sick they would not have been lost, and would have been home all right, long ago. Is my grandfather getting well?"

"O yes, he is doing quite nicely: the only trouble is his forgetting his name and home. The doctor told me yesterday that if we could find his friends, the sight of them would recall what he had forgotten."

Having received careful directions that she might not miss her way, Margaret returned to her lodging-house, where she found Clara and the matron very anxious on her account. Clara, with her usual warmth, had upbraided the matron for Margaret's prolonged absence, and the

matron from stoutly maintaining that there was not the least cause for fear, had finally become more alarmed than Clara herself, and the two women, after crying together and stirring up each other's fears to the greatest height, were now at the door, prepared to go separate ways to search for their stray. Regardless of city proprieties, Clara, when she spied her idol from far, ran to meet her.

“What has happened to you, my darling? Such a turn as you've given me, and my head nearly off my shoulders anyhow, worrying with that there thing they call a range in my kitchen, which is enough to send any woman to the madhouse; and then you going off like this. It's not what I looked for, after the way you've been brought up; nor it isn't what your grandfather would fancy. I'll be thankful to have your mother able to take care of you, and wash my hands of the charge; it's ever ill luck bringing up other folk's children. I say that, and I'd like to know who could have taken better care of you since you were

a bit of a baby than I have—and the way I've worried for fear somebody had stolen you off, such an innocent pretty baby as you are; are you sick, child; or tired, or frightened any? Tell me, Margaret, dear."

They had got into the matron's private room by this time, and Clara had hugged her lost child without giving her time to reply to any of her expostulations.

"I've found grandfather—or I guess I have—or a lady has. O dear, Clara, I don't know what I'm saying, but I think grandfather is alive and getting well, and we'll all go home together!" sobbed Margaret, crying in sympathy with Clara's excitement.

Clara dropped herself on the floor, threw her stout linen apron over her head, and wept aloud.

"To think of going home to that blessed tower! and your mother, and the dear old gentleman—O dear, O my, whatever will I do to get away from them water pipes, and ranges, and gaslights that can't be blowed out; and all that queer trash folks eat in cities!"

Thus Margaret was forgiven for her escapade, and Clara looked upon her trial of city life as nearly ended. Before she went home that evening, she confided to Margaret that everything had turned out so uncommon queer, that "she wouldn't be surprised when they got home, to find Hal and Nathan keeping the Light."

"And my father," said Margaret, who from intercourse with her mother had grown to feel a personal interest in her other parent.

"Margaret, child," responded Clara, "we must have some troubles in this world, and I've about give your father up."

This, having no interest at all in the missing man, she had found it easy to do.

Never had time seemed so long to Margaret as next morning, while she waited for Mrs. Wheeler; and never had a ride been so long as the ride to the hospital. The first person they met as they reached the gate, was the physician who had the unknown old man in charge; and Mrs. Wheeler told him that she believed her

young companion was the patient's granddaughter.

After a little talk the surgeon returned to the ward. There certainly was our old Viking, thinner and paler than when he bravely kept the Light, and now a very troubled look on his face, as might be expected when a man finds he has forgotten his name and abode.

The doctor tapped him on the shoulder. "Do you know you were rather a troublesome patient? You would not partake of the least particle of food, drink or medicine that had alcohol in it, even when you were at the worst."

"Ah, I've had too much trouble from that cause, to be able to tolerate a drop of it. Sad trouble in my family, doctor; my eldest son fell into bad habits."

"Is it possible? And what was his name?"

"His name was Gilbert—"

"Yes, Gilbert—what?"

The old man shook his head. "Just as I am about to say it, it slips from me. And

I came here to take his wife home with me; but I fear she is dead too."

"How long since you came here, *Mr. Gifford.*"

The patient started as with an electric shock, crying, "Gifford! ah, Gifford! Will I lose it again?"

"I think not; hold fast your name until you get to the *Sharkshead Light* once more," said the doctor.

"The Light—the *Sharkshead Light*! Now I am myself again. Gifford of the *Sharkshead*. That is it."

"And how long since you left home, did you say, Gifford?"

"A few days."

"Because your granddaughter, Margaret, has heard you are sick, and has come to take you home."

"Margaret—Margaret here! O, that's very wrong; the child is too young to be in the city alone," cried the old man, rousing.

"She has friends with her. Clara, your servant, and—did I tell you, Mr. Gifford, I

think you'll be able to leave here in a few days, and if you stop in a pleasant lodging for a few days after that, you will be able to go home with your family. For, perhaps you don't know that Margaret has found her mother, Mrs. Gifford, and they are only waiting now for you to go home."

"Home to the Sharkshead," said the old man, with a deep sigh of relief. "Where is my child Margaret, doctor? I ought to be about looking after her."

So Margaret was brought in, and found her grandfather, and by favor of the doctor remained with him the rest of the day; good Mrs. Wheeler volunteering to drive to the other hospital and tell Mrs. Gifford the good news, and to secure them a quiet boarding-place in the upper part of the city.

The sight of Margaret, her talk of familiar names and places, restored Mr. Gifford's memory. He seemed startled at once into his natural self. Margaret wrote for him to the minister, and to his banker for money; indeed, for an amount

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that seemed to her a fortune. Her grandfather smiled at her. "Yes, child, I have enough for you and your mother. When I had those troubles I told you of, all I cared for was to fly from men, and from the sight of the liquor-demon that had ruined us. It seemed so hard to see men growing rich by it, and palaces built for its sale; and men daily falling victims to it, and laws and licenses for murder by it flaunted everywhere. All I could remember was that it had disgraced my wife, and murdered my little girls, and made my boy an outcast. Then when I had escaped to a place where I could have occupation to divert my mind, in a place where I could banish all that I so abhorred, I married again. I married one who cared nothing for luxury, and expected none of it; I think I made her happy, Margaret. When Hal and Nathan were born, I resolved never to let them have the temptation of what the world calls independence; I would bring them up to simple habits, and to expect to make their own way in life by their labor. Of course, it

was through my request that Hal got the position of purser. It cost him his life, poor lad. Thus it is, Margaret, what was left of the wreck that liquor made, the sea has destroyed."

The old man had fallen into reminiscences which he had not heretofore uttered. Now that Margaret alone was left to him, she came more into his confidence.

As the change of separation, homelessness and poverty had come suddenly upon this family, their return to each other, and to plenty, seemed equally speedy. Mr. Gifford and his daughter-in-law were removed to their boarding-place, where Clara and Margaret joined them.

Clara, free from what she considered the unutterable horrors of a city kitchen, found occupation and happiness in waiting on the invalids. Margaret, being given funds by her grandfather, and entrusted to Mrs. Wheeler for a shopping expedition, indulged in buying some ruffled white aprons and a plain cap or two for her brusque guardian. Clara received them dubiously; they

savored of the ultra refinement of cities, of gas pipes, hydrants and truffles.

"Don't pamper me, Margaret, my dear. I want nothing too fine for the Sharkshead Light."

"We will none of us have anything too fine for the Light, Clara," said Mr. Gifford. "There I have lived, and there I hope to die. What life I have left had better be spent in warning sailors of dangers such as have swallowed up my two boys."

The doctor had warned them not to recall this loss of the sons too frequently to Mr. Gifford, until he were entirely well. They had therefore avoided the subject, but now Mrs. Gifford said: "Father, I never told you that Gilbert was in the Rona."

"What!" cried the old man. And how is it that Hal did not mention him, or Captain Wingate; did they too despise my unhappy son."

"No, father—but, our poor Gilbert was so ashamed of his faults, and of the manner in which he would be betrayed into

drinking, that he went under another name."

Now by this time the third boat which left the Rona had been heard from. Of the eighteen men in her, twelve lived to reach Brazil, having been rescued by an English ship, after sixteen days drifting on the sea in an open boat. The first boat had been reported as saved, the news coming from Liverpool before Mr. Gifford had left home; but that was long ago, and hopes for the others had perished. Of the second boat nothing had been heard, and the item of news about the third never reached the Giffords, so that they had entirely given up any hope of rescue for any of the Rona's people. To be in the Rona, was to be in the long catalogue of those lost at sea.

The light-house keeper was a brave man; not only brave when dangers demanded physical courage, but brave to endure adverse fates, and make the best of life. When he found himself robbed of the sons who were the consolation of his

age, he held sturdily to doing his duty; and gathering the remains of his shattered family, he looked forward to reconstructing a home. Nor did his losses make him morose and selfish; he was a man who possessed in a remarkable degree the faculty of understanding other people and sympathizing with them. He had made his second wife, an orphan girl, happy in her own way, among her early friends; Clara had reigned in his household in a supreme content, now when with his daughter-in-law, a new element, was to enter, he prepared to make the home home-like to her. For this purpose, he quietly purchased and forwarded to the care of his friend the school-master, many articles of furniture both for use and ornament, that the home in the tower might seem in no wise barren and desolate to its new inmate.

In the meantime, when the people at the Sharkshead had, by Margaret's first letter, become fully assured of the old keeper's death, Nick Dodd had applied to the Board for the position, and had been instructed to

remain in charge until the matter should be duly decided. When news of Mr. Gifford's restoration and approaching return was spread abroad near the reef, there was no one rejoiced more than the new aspirant for office. Nick said that, after all, he'd rather by half be in a fishing ship part of the year, and taking it easy the other time, than to live day and night with the care of hundreds of ships and sailors on his mind. More than that, he'd rather shake hands with Mr. Gifford again, than to get his salary ten times over."

The convalescents made haste to get well; the doctors gave them permission to set out for home, and Mr. Gifford sent a suitable present to the two hospitals which had sheltered himself and his daughter-in-law so fortunately.

Clara had a new gingham dress to travel in, but she made it scrupulously in the style of the old one, and it would have been almost a sacrilege in her view to suggest a change in her bonnet. As they left the city, Clara's countenance brightened up,

like some rugged rock when storms have wheeled away and sunshine falls across it fair and clear. Square after square of stores and brown stone palaces, and humbler brick dwellings, and grimy tenements, and acres of mud and dust and refuse were left behind. Green fields and scattered farm-houses appeared instead. Then did Clara breathe freely, as if every inspiration were a luxury; she looked about rejoicing; she had no word of waving corn, of the beauty of orchards, of the poetry to be found in brooks, groves, flocks of lambs, or herds knee-deep in fragrant clover. But instead of this, Clara had her own sources of enjoyment, she turned to the companion of her misfortunes. "Margaret, my dear, I'm done drying clothes in a bit of a brick paved ary like a well or a dungeon. When I get home I'll bleach every stitch and thread that's ever been to the city with you and I. We're well out of it! Yes, we did find friends there, and I'm thankful—all I am sorry for is that your grandfather didn't punish them folks at the Beekman street

hotel, for not letting us have his carpet bag as we told 'em to."

"Why, he says in that they only did their duty, Clara."

"O, duty!" sniffed Clara. "Well, what I say is, that my ideas of duty is very different from what they holds in Babylon, very;" and Clara was contemptuous for many miles. Then she sniffed again, and changed her sniffs to snuffs, and was as a war-horse scenting a battle, for to Clara's rejoicing nose had come the smell of salt water, of which she had never been deprived until the day when she drifted into the myriad fumes of Babylon.

The schoolmaster met them at the stage-office with a light wagon; as they turned out of the village the sea was before them, with waves crisply curling. Then, as if founded only on the mutable seas, rose up the grand new tower, all white and shining, with its great crown of reflectors flaming in the sun. Nearer, and you saw the straggling fishing village on the green shore, the little church, the line of breakers for-

ever boiling over the Sharkshead reef, and the mighty line of rock on whose sure foundations the light-house tower was laid. And now every curling wave, every white wreath of foam, every glad bird flashing over the billows, and every splash and storm of waters, was a new welcome to the Sharkshead Light.



CHAPTER XV.

BRINGING BACK THE LOST.

"The good ship Snowdrop tarried long,
Up at the vane looked he;
'Belike,' he said, for the wind had dropped,
'She lieth becalmed at sea.'
"Down in the deep, with freight and crew,
Past any help she lies;
And never a bale has come to shore
Of all that merchandise."

BY this time it was the first of August; to lovers of sea scenery the Sharkshead Light and its surroundings were beautiful enough to justify the rejoicing of the Giffords at getting home. Clara finding herself once more in her legitimate domain, which had suffered somewhat while Nick and the schoolmaster kept bachelor's hall in it, devoted herself to a vigorous scrubbing and scouring, and might be seen at all hours of the day running down to choice nooks for sand, wherewith to add additional lustre

to her tins, and whiteness to her wooden-ware.

That part of the reef which we have said was called by the young folks the "Drawing-room," was now more than ever the resort of the family. Here Mrs. Gifford told her father-in-law much of the history of her past life; dwelling especially on the hours of reformation and penitence on Gilbert's part, which had served to keep her hope and courage alive, and which had showed that his conscience was not yet entirely hardened. Not a good trait in Gilbert was left unremembered. Perhaps—O, perhaps, he had at the last truly learned repentance unto life. Not much reason had she for such hopes, but they kept her from heart-break.

Here, too, among the rocks, where she and her boy-uncles had their play-house in childhood, did Margaret and the old keeper talk much of those gay lads whose youthful form had made glad the Shark-head reef. Once the old man had watched the boats putting off from shore, thinking

his sons were coming back in them. In the spring he had thus looked for his prodigal Nathan. Now he expected this no longer; but our hopes sometimes spring up and bear blossoms when we think their roots are dead in our hearts. So this father's consolation came when he believed that its season had perished.

The family were sitting on those fantastic rocks in the latter part of an afternoon, busy with work and talk. They did not see when one of those now little-cared-for boats put off from shore; but their attention was called to it by a faint, long-drawn halloo, coming over the waters. Margaret stepped on a higher rock, and shaded her eyes with her hand.

"It is the schoolmaster, father, and—a boy with him; and—why he is waving his hat and handkerchief, and he's clapping his hands, as he did that day, you know, when he brought us the letter about Hal."

"I don't know what bad news there is left for him to bring this time," said Mr. Gifford, rising and looking toward the

shore. "Margaret! what boy is that in the boat?"

"I don't know," said Margaret, wistfully, as the setting sunlight flashed across the "coming boy,"—"he's got a head like our Nathan."

But the schoolmaster's halloo came clearer now, and he added to it the words, "Good news!"

"There's something," said the old man, much excited. "I don't see why he can't row faster. Margaret—that boy!"

"I believe it *is* Nathan, father—but how can it be?"

"Then where's Hal?" cried the old man.

"And where's my Gilbert?" exclaimed his daughter.

On, on, shot the little green and white shallop, and the boy who had been sitting in the stern came to the bow, and waving his arms over his head, cried, "Father! Father! Margaret!"

"What's all that?" shrieked Clara, who had been watching from her kitchen door, and now ran down frantically. That's our

Nathan. Don't any of you know nothin'? To treat our boy like that!"

But what was amiss in the treatment would be hard to say; for the boat came as fast as it could, and even Clara could do nothing but stand with the rest and watch for it. Only the returned prodigal could do anything, and when the boat neared the rocks, he leaped ashore with such wild force, as sent the little shallop and the schoolmaster back to sea. And there he was in the midst of them; wild with the joy of return, and yet boyishly "offish" about being hugged and kissed, and cried over, and otherwise fondled.

"But, my son," said the old man, "where is your brother?"

"I don't know," said Nathan, hanging his head, and a sudden chill coming over him.

"Were you not both on the Rona?"

"Yes, father."

"And were you saved together?"

"Why yes, father, as far as being on the same boat goes; and then I was lost

again, and found, and got home—and it is the queerest story, sir. But, Hal wasn't dead the last time I saw him; and so we may find him yet. Indeed, sir, I'll go look for him if no one else does, and I have to go in a row-boat, and I told 'em so at the office."

At least there was the ring of encouragement in this speech, and Mrs. Gifford said, "But my husband."

"Your brother, Gilbert, was he on the Rona?" said the old man.

"No, father, he wasn't."

"O, but are you sure?" demanded Mrs. Gifford.

"Nathan, this is Margaret's mother, your brother Gilbert's wife; and she thinks Gilbert was on the Rona."

"No, father, I'm sure not, for I knew every person on her. I'm sure I did, so did Hal, and he said nothing of any brother. He would have mentioned it, if he had been aboard, sure."

Here Margaret and her mother renewed their grief, and began crying. But the

schoolmaster had come in, moored his boat, and stood among them; he was in all their confidence, and said, going to the root of this mystery—"If he had taken another name, the boys wouldn't know him, of course. Let us hear who were saved, and how, and where they are."

"And keep the boy starving!" screamed Clara; "I don't believe he's had a bite this age. I know the ways of them cities."

"Yes, I have had plenty, Clara," said Nathan, sitting down by his father on the rocks, the eager little group crowding close to him.

Clara, "on hospitable thoughts intent," ran to her pantry and made ready a collation, which she brought to the shore.

"We will all share it, Clara," said Mr. Gifford; "sit down with us, good old friend, and let us hear our boy's story. He is just telling us how they left the Rona the night she sunk."

"You see," continued Nathan, "Captain Wingate and Mr. Torry were going with us, and they would have made eleven for

our boat. But the Captain and sailing-master were drowned by means of the cook, and he was in the boat with us, and dreadfully drunk, father. Then we had Mrs. Wingate and her little boy, and Hal and I, and two engineers; and Mr. Bower, an oldish gentleman, a passenger; and Guy, a sailor, and the Admiral."

"Who was the Admiral?" demanded Mrs. Gifford.

"O, a sailor—just the oddest, best, soberest, most pious fellow; I believe we should all have been lost but for him. He knows everything about a boat—dear old Admiral! But father, we hadn't half enough to eat, and no water hardly; and we had a jug of whisky, and that made the most frightful trouble, father."

"O, I believe it," said the old man. "You and Hal did not touch it, my lad?"

"Hal didn't," said Nathan, turning scarlet; "but one day I was so thirsty and so weak, and Guy offered me some, and I took it."

The old man sighed, "Poor child!"

“Such trouble as that jug made for us, father, until it was thrown out. The men, three of them, who drank from it, fought like demons, and jumped into the sea. Two of them were drowned; but we hauled the other one in. He was Guy, and a right good fellow, too; he wasn’t like the others; and I was so glad we saved him. And when we made land at last, Guy, the only one in the boat who had been using whisky, was feebler than any one but little Earle and I. Mrs. Wingate kept up until we made shore; steered the boat right along, and then, when all was over, she fainted; but that was no worse than Guy, and he is a great strong fellow, as large as you are, father.”

“O, my poor sister!” said Mrs. Wingate; “and where was this land, Nathan?”

“That’s just what I don’t know,” said Nathan. “We all made up our minds that it was south-east of Turks island. The Admiral said it was one of the Bahamas. Anyway it looked like heaven to us, and we got water there. I never saw anything

so good as that water. We all thought so; and Guy said he never knew how to value it before. I somehow think after that awful time of nearly dying of thirst, Guy will never want to drink whisky again. Why all the talk in the world wouldn't make me hate it, like that horrible thirst for water, just one sip of water; and then to see the end of those men; only to think of one throwing himself almost directly into a shark's jaws!"

"It was a terrible lesson, surely, my boy. This experience proves what Dr. Livingstone tells us, that 'the most severe labors and privations may be undergone without alcoholic stimulants.' The men who used liquor in your boat, not only endangered all your lives, but horribly lost their own; and the poor fellow whom you saved, showed by his great exhaustion and lack of endurance, that the stimulant he had been depending upon for strength, had been, in reality, a poison, quickening circulation at the expense of true vital energy. No, bear in mind, that there is not one particle of

your body that needs alcohol. Not a vein, or nerve, or bone, or muscle, or gland, but is much better off without it. It is true it leaves the system, but it leaves its work behind it, in some part devitalized and disorganized. I hope that poor sailor will lay the lesson to heart."

Nathan then gave an account of the island; what they found upon it, their vain watch for vessels, their preparations for another voyage, and expectations for a speedy departure; until he reached the time when they were about ready to set out.

"I had been pretty sick for a day or so, but I didn't like to say anything. I guess I'd been too much in the sun. I felt sort of dizzy and queer in the boat. It was towards evening. I caught three fish; the last one didn't come off the hook easy, and I stooped to unfasten him. I remember I felt a sharp pain in my head. That was all I knew; I suppose I fell over. When I came to myself I was lying in the boat; the stars were overhead, but a little pale light

was coming up in the east; it was very early in the morning. A fresh wind was blowing from the north-east and ruffling up little waves, and what woke me, was the tips of these waves washing over the side into the boat on my face. I got up and looked about, no land was in sight; my oars were gone, and I was alone, drifting off on the sea."

"O!" screamed out Clara, "my poor boy; then you were lost and ruined, sure enough!"

"But you see, Clara, I'm here at home, alive and well," laughed Nathan, resuming his story. "Well, father, the first feeling was astonishment, and then terror. Next I thought of the folks on the island. They had lost me and the boat. What would they do. By this time I noticed the water dashing into the boat over the bow; and I crawled along to the tiller, and put her head directly before the wind. She began to skim over the water like a bird. I felt very weak and faint, and looked about for something to eat. I saw my lobster, and

ate part of it. By that time I had come to realize my position. I was in for a voyage, and my chance of being saved was in proportion to the time I might manage to hold out. I had not been starving for nine days in an open boat for nothing. I meant to fight for my life; but after all, I didn't believe I should save it, so I made ready to die. I knelt down in the stern by the tiller, and prayed to God to save my soul. I prayed for all of you up here at home, and for poor Hal and the rest, that God would take care of them on that island. And after all, father, God has answered so much of my prayer, and has sent me here to the dear old Sharkshead, and kept you all safely, that I can't help thinking he has heard the rest of my prayer too, and has looked after Hal, and will save those on the island. Indeed, I did half expect to find them here when I got home."

"Don't give up all your hope of their safety," said the schoolmaster, cheerily; "I am getting very strong in it, as I listen to your story."

“Well, one way that my prayer seemed answered was this: I got more calm, and appeared to find more sense to take care of myself. I took a look at my stores when I had finished praying. I had a large wooden pail of fresh water. Admiral had made a hole for the bucket to fit into, which kept it straight and held the water from spilling. I knew everything depended on that water; it was more precious than gold. I found the pail was steady, and then I took two seats from their places, and put them over the pail for a cover to keep the water from evaporating. When the sun got hot I spread my jacket over it too. But I had food as well as drink. I had a piece of bean-bread, a boiled lobster, and the three fish I had caught.”

“But however could you cook 'em?” demanded Clara.

“Indeed, I have seen plenty of days when I was thankful enough to have them raw,” returned Nathan. “The bean-bread would not spoil easily; so I wrapped it in my handkerchief, and put it in a little cupboard

in the bow of the boat, and the lobster along with it. Then I laid the three fish in the water that had washed in the boat, and covered them with the third seat. This was all I could do to take care of my provisions. I kept my cap and my neck wet with sea-water, and steered straight west before the wind; but I kept getting south too, as the wind was a little nor'west. So I ran all day, and when I got too sleepy to keep awake, I fell asleep leaning on the tiller. Sometimes the boat went fast, and sometimes very slow; sometimes the wind was one way and sometimes the other; so I drifted for five days; then the water was gone, and the food too; and I went to sleep very weak, and hoping I would die without waking up to know that I was starving. When I did wake up, I heard a great noise, and shouting, and talking, and there was a ship's cutter alongside of me, with some queer looking men in it, and they were all staring at me and talking, and dragging me into the cutter. They were French, and I couldn't understand

a word they said. Their ship was lying-to a little way off; and they made fast my little boat and went to her. One of the men took out a flask of brandy from his pocket, and held it to my mouth; but the smell of it made me very sick, and I pushed it away. All I wanted was water. On the ship the doctor gave me water the first thing, and put me in a bath, in the captain's cabin. He and the captain were very kind. They fed me and put me to bed, and talked French right straight along. So I thought I would talk French too, and I tried to remember what I had learned at school; but somehow they didn't know what I meant. However, at last we lit on a word we all knew, *Havana*, and we kept saying that; only I was in distress to know whether they were going to, or coming from Havana. I did not make certain of that until we got there, in three days time. I was sick those three days, and for a week after; and the captain made me stay on his ship all the time. Some of the English folks there heard of my

being picked up, and came to see me. They had by that time made sure of the loss of the *Rona*. After I left the French ship I stayed a week at Havana, and then a captain of a trading vessel offered to take me to New York. So I set off for home, about three weeks after I left the island, and more than six weeks after the *Rona* was lost. We made a slow trip coming home, for our ship ran into several ports, so we were nearly ten days getting to New York. I made straight for the *Rona's* owners, to see if any more of our men had been heard from, and they said one boat had been reported by way of Liverpool, a good while ago; and one just lately, which had been picked up; and twelve men lived to get to Brazil. Here's a list of 'em in my pocket."

Nathan pulled out the list, which was eagerly read by Mrs. Gifford and the old father, but it told them nothing of Gilbert.

"But what did they say about those you left on the island?" asked the schoolmaster of Nathan.

“Nothing, I’ll be bound,” snorted Clara; “all they Babylonish folk are that hard-hearted; and our poor Hal is starving on a desert island! Do you hear that, Mr. Gifford? and we all sitting here, and letting him perish!”

“He isn’t starving, for we found plenty to eat there,” said Nathan.

“And my poor sister and her little child left there all this while,” sobbed Mrs. Gifford.

“It’s still better than being drowned entirely,” said Clara; “mayhap we’ll set eyes on all of ’em again.”

“Anyway,” said Nathan, “at the office they were very kind, and gave me ten dollars. They questioned me very closely about the island, and whom I left there; and how they were likely to get on; and then said for me to run up here and see my folks, and I’d hear from them.”

“As if you didn’t mean to see your folks!” cried Clara.

“No,” said Nathan, stoutly, “if there had been a ship to set out in search yesterday,

I should have gone right on it to look for Hal, without coming home until I brought him too."

"I will go immediately and write to the office," said Mr. Gifford, "and see what they are expecting to do; if funds are needed, all I have is ready to be spent in saving Hal and Mrs. Wingate."

The schoolmaster posted the letter at the stage-office that evening.

On the third day, answer came by the telegraph thus:

"Captain Wingate, with Mr. Torry, reached our office just after your son had left. Send the boy on. Captain Wingate is going to look for the island, and the Rona's people, in our new ship, Iran."

Within an hour Nathan was on his way to New York; not this time a fugitive, but taking his father's blessing, and going with high hopes of rescuing his brother.

He wrote immediately upon his reaching the city. The Iran had just made her trial trip successfully; Nathan was ready to declare her the finest ship which had

ever sailed. They would be ready in a few days to set out to find the island; they were taking a small cargo for the Bahamas, and would, after they had found their people, bring home a lading of sponge and mahogany. Nathan had not yet had time to hear the Captain's wonderful adventures, but hoped to do so when the Iran had sailed. He and the Captain made sure of finding the island, and the dear people on it safe and well.

"After all these wonders," said Margaret, "and after the saving of Captain Wingate, whom they thought they saw drowned, I shall believe in another wonder still, the safety of my father."

"And his reformation," said her mother. "I know if he comes back now to us all, to you and to his father, he cannot help reforming thoroughly."



CHAPTER XVI.

THIS, THY BROTHER, IS ALIVE AGAIN.

"And all through the mountains thunder riven,
And up from the rocky steep;
There arose a cry to the gates of Heaven,
'Rejoice, I have found my sheep!'
And the angels echoed around the throne,
'Rejoice! for the Lord brings back his own.'"



AND now as the characters of this chronicle have so singularly divided and scattered themselves between the Sharkshead reef and that unnamed island of the Bahama Bank, it is needful that we betake ourselves once more to the tropics; advancing a little in point of time, to that happy hour, mentioned at the close of the thirteenth chapter, when the Iran dropped her anchor and sent off her boat, and the amazed company of the shipwrecked saw that the rescue had been led by Captain Wingate and his sailing-master; men of whose destruction they

had been more certain by far than of their own safety. When, therefore, in the slender figure which steered the boat, they recognized their lately lost Nathan, the measure of their astonishment was full; so full indeed, that Mr. Carl held back a little in distrust; and if that smoke and the general behavior of the steamship had not been so unmistakable, Mr. Carl would have believed the Iran and her crew phantoms, and have fled to the woods.

As the Captain sprang on shore and clasped in his arms his long lost wife and child, while the other survivors of the Rona pressed about him, a loud cheer went up from the sympathetic sailors who crowded the sides of the Iran.

After a short time spent in questions and congratulations, the cheerful Admiral proposed that as it was now nearly supper-time, their deliverers should take their evening meal with them on the island.

"I want you to see, Captain Wingate," said the Admiral, "how well the Lord has dealt with us, in the long time we have

been on this little island. We have had a plenty of water, and food and shelter; we have had sickness, but no death; no quarrels; we have here led a peaceable, religious life, trusting in the Lord, who in such a wonderful way has sent you to find us."

"All that you say may be true," interrupted Mr. Carl, "and if the Captain and Mr. Torry want to eat supper here in our way, well and good; for my part, I hope the cutter will be allowed to take me to yonder steamer, for I shall never feel myself, nor sure of going home, until I am on board of her. There a'n't a sight on earth, except my wife and the little fellows, would do me so much good as an engine."

"Torry and I will stay and eat supper here," said the Captain. "Nathan, you may go back with Mr. Carl and the men, and come for us at eight. Tell the men that we'll lie here until evening to-morrow, and that they may all have a chance to go ashore."

Mrs. Wingate had already explained to her husband the fact that Guy was in truth Gilbert Gifford, her sister's husband, and Hal's brother. The party now returned to the pleasant strip of beach in the cove near the hut, and preparations for supper were inaugurated. Every one seemed animated by a desire to do honor to the occasion. The fire was built; palm leaves were spread for a table-cloth; turtle soup, well seasoned with the wild pepper of the tropics, began to send forth a savory steam; there was an omelet of turtle's eggs; lobster salad; a sort of sardines of island make; palm cabbage; banana fritters, and plain bananas; bean-bread, fried birds, and baked fish; oysters in the shell, a royal melon, and a pyramid of red tomatoes.

Their cares and troubles past, the dead strangely restored by the sea that had snatched them away; deliverance come to them, and return home near at hand, all the woes of their exile were forgotten, and as they sat on the low sandy beach at their bountiful meal, the island grew again

in their eyes such another paradise as it had seemed when, fair and green, with food and fountains in its gift, it had risen from the sea to rescue them from lingering death. The story of their escape was told; their eleven days drifting on the sea, the horrors wrought by rum, the mania and terrible end of their two comrades, and their own famine and thirst, were related by one and another.

“And now, Captain,” said Mr. Bower, “you are with us as if by a miracle; we saw you sink, and Torry lost in attempting to rescue you. How were you saved? What strange experiences have you to add to the wonderful history of the Rona’s boats? For my part, loss and disaster seem to me so common at sea, that if I ever get home, I shall never leave land again; and yet, those apparently lost at sea are so often and so marvellously rescued, that I never again shall believe any one to be drowned, unless their bodies are known to have floated ashore and been buried.”

The Captain laughed. “Why, all our

experience makes sea-faring dearer than before. We bear charmed lives."

"Say, rather," said his wife, leaning on his shoulder, "that your experience has led you, as never before, to trust to the protecting care of our God."

"That is true," replied the Captain; "the mercies of God lead me to repentance."

"But the story, Captain," said Mr. Torry.

"The story: you can have that in a nutshell," returned the Captain. "You know that I was just about to spring into the boat, when the cook flung me into the water and leaped in my place. Our boat lay near the bows; I fell forward, and rising to the surface, found myself under the bow in the darkness. I heard Torry's voice in the water, and the shouts from the boat. Torry reached me, and we struck, as we thought, for the boat; but in the multitude of noises of shouts and waves, we were misled, and swam to the wrong side of the ship. There we could hear nothing of the small boat in which you were; but we felt that the Rona would

soon sink, and that her neighborhood was dangerous. We therefore made it a first consideration to get away from the ship. While we were still swimming, and nearly exhausted, the Rona went down; almost at that instant a dark body drifted near us, and we seized hold of it. It proved to be an upturned boat. It must have been the second boat which left the Rona, and had probably capsized while the men were endeavoring to get clear of the ship. Our first thought was, of course, that this boat was yours, and had been upset while you were searching for us. This, then, was our condition; we had no hopes of our own safety, and had given you up for lost. In sheer despair we clung to the boat until daybreak, and then found ourselves drifting on the sea, without a single spar in sight. As for me, life held nothing now that seemed desirable; yet it is the instinct of man to preserve himself. Torry and I united to try and right the boat; after long exertion we gave over our efforts, exhausted, and climbing upon

the bottom we floated and rested. Again about noon, we repeated our endeavors; the sea was now calm, and, strangely enough, we succeeded in what seemed an impossibility. The boat went right side up, and we climbed into her. After a moment, as she had shipped a plenty of water as she turned, we went to bailing, using our hands and our shoes; we got the water out pretty well; and there we were, with neither oars, sails, seats, nor rudder; no water, no food; wet to the skin, and tired almost beyond power of moving, alone in mid-ocean. I believe that the first thing we did was to fall asleep; and so we remained until nearly sunset. Twenty-four hours of abstinence from food and drink had sharpened our appetites, and starvation seemed likely to be our fate, when our lives were saved by a wonderful occurrence. A large bird came toward us, flying heavily and low down; the sweep of its wings was some five feet; the white breast, brown bands on the tail, and the blue-black of its bill and toes, marked the

bird as a female osprey, and the moderate height which it kept above the water, indicated that it was in search of food.

“Land is near!” I cried; “look at the fish-hawk!”

“And what good will the nearness do us, when we have neither oars nor rudder?” said Torry.

“The bird came nearer, and we watched it, fascinated. Our boat hardly moved on the calm sea; suddenly the osprey closed its wings, and dropped headlong into the water within ten feet of us, going with the violence of the plunge, completely below the surface. It rose to the air again, and to our amazement we found that the bird had struck a fish too heavy for it to lift from the water. It rose with its booty a few inches, and unable to fly or to extricate its talons, was drawn down. It spread its wings, and beat the water with harsh cries. Torry and I, leaning from the boat, used our arms as oars, and in a moment grasped the struggling bird. We dragged it into the boat with the fish, a fine one,

weighing probably five pounds, fast to its claws. Here was provision for our need. We laid the fish in water at the bottom of the boat, plucked the bird, and, fish-hawk as it was, ate half of it raw for supper. We then discussed this singular accident, and how we got the fish."

"You got it, because it was sent from God," said Earle Wingate, interrupting his father's narrative.

"We recognized that," said the Captain, "and humbly returned thanks for our food. But the bird was of further importance to us. It must have come from the landward; how far had it come? We remembered that the ospray is sometimes driven by storms several hundred miles from land; we had just experienced a severe storm, and the bird might have been its victim, for its strength seemed greatly exhausted, else it would have been able to lift its booty from the water.

"The food thus received kept us alive until we were picked up by a Dutch ship bound for Trinidad. Exposure, and the

fierce heat at 'Trinidad, sent us to a hospital with fever. The first ship that left after we were able to travel, went to Vera Cruz. From there, by kindness of some American merchants, we started for New Orleans; thence it was easy to get to New York, and with a renewed sense of our loss as we trod familiar places, we entered the office of the owners of the Rona, to report our disasters, and of which we believed ourselves to be the only survivors. There we learned that the first boat had long ago been heard from; the third, within a fortnight; but that, strangest of all, a boy calling himself Nathan Gifford, had just been at the office giving a circumstantial account of my death and Torry's; the trip of the fourth boat, its landing on an uninhabited Bahama island, taking to this safety, my wife, child, purser, one passenger, and two sailors, with the boy. The boy's story of his own adventures had seemed quite improbable; and he had started to find his father at the Sharkhead Light. I did not doubt a single instant. I knew at once that

it was the real Nathan Gifford, and that his tale was absolutely true. We therefore sent a telegram for him to return; and the Iran was put at my service to come to your rescue; after which I am to do a little trading for the owners. By all these singular ways, we who sailed from New York on the Rona, last spring, are once more reunited."

As the Captain ceased speaking, they saw the cutter putting off from the Iran to bring them aboard.

"Captain," said the Admiral, rising and removing his ragged cap, "it has been our custom here to have a word of prayer from Mr. Bower, after we got through our supper. If you say so, Captain, we'll have that word of prayer now, before we leave the island."

The Captain rose with alacrity, and the little group gathered around Mr. Bower, who led them in a simple, fervent prayer of thanksgiving to Him who had protected them, and provided for them.

When they reached the Iran, they seemed

to have returned to civilization. The Captain had brought clothing for all. Earle hardly recognized himself, when a magnificent blue, gilt-buttoned suit superseded his assemblage of tatters; having for three months seen his mother only in an increasingly shabby travelling-dress, her appearance in proper garb overwhelmed him with shyness, as if she were another individual.

The next day the sailors explored the island, and brought off fruit, flowers and fish. Earle went to the hut for his best shells and curiosities; each of the long-time lost carried away some memento; and at evening the *Iran* steamed away for Turks Island and Caicos.

It is needless to follow the ship in her short and pleasant trip. She reached New York in safety, discharged her cargo, and was for another month to be in the hands of painters and upholsterers, to complete the elegance of her appearance; as Captain Wingate had hurried her off to the search for his wife, while the arrangements for a passenger ship were yet unfinished.

As the Iran was thus to be some time in port, Captain Wingate, who was to have command of her, was at liberty to go with his family to the Sharkshead, and set out for the tower, accompanied by a large party. Nathan and Hal were burning with impatience to escort their newly discovered elder brother to his wife, child and father. Mrs. Wingate counted every hour long until she could once more meet the beloved sister from whom she had parted in early youth. To Guy a new life seemed to have opened; home, friends, love and hope were his once more.

Ashore, and in the dress of a gentleman, instead of that of a hand before the mast, Guy looked worthy of his family and of his early advantages. Nathan ceased to look at him curiously askance: the "Admiral" easily dropped the familiar address of "mate," and fell into "sir" with the utmost propriety.

But this good Admiral was not to be deserted. The triumphant return to the Sharkshead would be robbed of half its

glory, if not shared by the noble companion of so many dangers. Mr. Carl had been offered the berth of first engineer on the Iran, and had hastened to his little home, to find his fears reprov'd in the safety of his wife and children

Mr. Bower, highly gratified to find himself once more within the four walls of his counting-room, betook himself to his desk, purposing never again to do business away from that happy anchorage.

The Captain, his wife and child; the three brothers Gifford, and the Admiral, reached the Sharkshead reef on a delightful summer evening. As the party passed through the village to the waiting row-boats, the simple fisher-folk came out to gaze at those who had met so many strange adventures, and who had the additional interest of belonging to the family at the Tower. The minister seized his cane and his wide-awake hat, and made haste to join the boys he had loved and mourned, and now welcomed to life again. The school-master laid his pocket-handkerchief on his

bald head, and came hurrying out, endeavoring vainly to stuff his hat in his pocket, while he quoted, "*Multum ille et terris jactatus et alto.*"

From the lighthouse kitchen smoke had been ascending since early dawn. Clara had been preparing sacrifices for her *lares* and *penates*; and now pies and cakes, jellies, custards, fowls, cottage cheeses, pickles and tarts, filled cellar and pantry, for Clara was willing that "her people" should indulge in all the honestly good things of this life, so long as they had no depraved longings after *mayonnaise* and *souffle*, and others of "they city fol-de-rols."

Clara had time to don her gingham dress and ruffled white apron, and now stood behind the family group, as on the outmost ledge of rock they waited for the return of their wanderers.

Better than all their fears, and even than all their hopes, had been their covenant-keeping God, who had led them through all their eventful and often weary days, until even that prodigal son who had been

longest away, was now at home, "come to himself."

We cannot live entirely in the present; in our best and happiest hours we must be providing for the ever nearing future. Only a day or two after the return, plans for the future were discussed. Captain Wingate offered Gilbert Gifford, his brother-in-law, the position of first-mate.

"Captain," replied Guy, "if I am to be mate of your ship, and sit by you at her table she must be a Temperance vessel of the strictest and stanciest sort, for I cannot risk the temptation of strong drink; absolute abstinence from every trace of alcoholic or fermented liquor is my only hope. The best cure I know of for drinking, is having—'Nothing to Drink.'"

"All right," said Captain Wingate. "My wife and you have your way now. The Iran is going as a Teetotal abstinence craft, from the start. And Hal, here, is her purser; Carl, engineer, and Torry sailing-master; and the Admiral, boatswain. Now that I have come out as a Total Abstinence

man, I am going to sail under the strictest principles of my creed, and woe be to the hand before the mast who sips a ration on the sly, the steward who lays in a private bottle of port, or the cook who puts in the sauce a suspicious flavor of curacoa."

"And what am I to be?" asked Nathan, with a woe-begone air.

"O, *you* can try running away from home again, and find out!" said Captain Wingate.

"Not I," said Nathan. "I leave home next time honestly, with father's consent, and a berth ready for me."

"In that case," said the Captain, "your father and I think, after what your school-master says of your proclivities, that you had better serve an apprenticeship under Mr. Carl, for practical engineering."

"What will you do?" asked Mrs. Gifford of her sister.

"Go in the Iran," said Mrs. Wingate, promptly. "I'm not going to give the Captain a chance to get wrecked without me. You can stay here with father Gif-

ford, happy now that Gilbert has been cured by having Nothing to Drink."

And now they are all sailing on the Iran, a temperance ship, and may she have better luck than our Rona.

"Blessings brighten as they take their flight;" water is never more precious than when shipwrecked souls float on the wide sea, without one drop to drink. Wine never looked so bright to its votaries, as does then one cool fresh rill, in whose gift is—life.

Such a long battle with thirst as the Rona's people waged, might serve to cure a generation of drunkards. Enlightened by this experience, when you ask us how you shall cure a man of drinking, we reply ---Eureka! Give him Nothing to Drink!



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