

"WHEN WE GOT HIM ON DECK, WHAT A FIGHT HE MADE!"

THE CASTAWAYS OF
DISAPPOINTMENT
ISLAND

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR SUFFERINGS

BY

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*From the description supplied to him by Mr. Charles Eyre,
of Dubyich, London, one of the survivors*

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

This is a true story—I want you to remember that. There are lots of splendid stories, but then they are only stories. Even our dear old Robinson Crusoe did not really live, though his adventures are based upon the sufferings of Alexander Selkirk on the island of Juan Fernandez. But this is true all through, and everything is told just as it really happened.

If the readers of this history will take their maps and look down below New Zealand, they will see, providing that the map is a good one, a tiny spot about the size of a pin's point marked "Auckland Isles"; and if they look in a gazetteer they may learn that these islands are uninhabited and volcanic. Those islands are the scene of this story.

On the map they are marked by one tiny dot, but in reality there are nine or ten islands. First there is Auckland Island proper, the largest of the group, about twenty-four miles long, and fifteen across its widest part. Then there are Adams Isle, Enderby Isle, Ewing Isle, and four or five small ones; and, lastly, all by itself, on the western side, there is Disappointment Island. That is its proper

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name, and when you have read this story through, I think you will agree that a better name could not possibly have been found for so dreary and terrible a spot.

Now, with this explanation, I will tell you Mr. Charles Eyre's story just as he told it to me.

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THE CASTAWAYS OF DISAPPOINTMENT ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE "DUNDONALD'S" LAST VOYAGE.

I ALWAYS wanted to be a sailor—perhaps if I had known what being a sailor really means I should not have been so anxious to go to sea. It is not all fun and frolic, as some people seem to think ; it is hard work and hard fare and hard study if you want to get on, and a lot of peril thrown in.

I would strongly advise my boy readers not to go to sea unless they mean to work hard. The loafer, or "stiff," soon gets spotted, both by the officers and the crew, and things are made very unpleasant for him.

Well, as I have said, I wanted to be a sailor, so my father bound me apprentice to the firm of John Stewart & Co., of London, and I started my life on the ocean wave in the barque *Commonwealth* ; and no boy would have wanted a better ship to start in, nor better captain and officers to sail under.

Of my first voyages I am not going to speak. I had to begin at the beginning—learn the A B C of the sailor's craft, find my own feet, and take my own part. I had my experiences of storms and hurricanes, especially when rounding the terrible Cape Horn; but after each voyage I came home smiling, and quite ready to start again after a spell on shore.

It is of my last voyage in the *Commonwealth* I must speak first, for if I had never taken that I should never have shipped in the ill-fated *Dundonald*, and so have never been cast away on Disappointment Island.

I had been on leave for seventeen days, when I received orders to rejoin the ship, which was lying in Rotterdam Harbour, and I crossed with another of the apprentices, Jim Meredith, bidding my friends farewell on Blackwall Jetty, and embarking on the ss. *Batavia III*.

We joined the ship, and found that orders had been received to go to Middlesbrough, and there take in a cargo of pig-iron for Port Adelaide, and two days after we were being towed back through a pretty rough sea—for it was in October, and that is not much of a month in the North Sea. We had lost one of our head sails before we reached port.

But all troubles come to an end at last, and we got safely in, took our cargo aboard, and then, one bitter cold morning, with a fresh breeze blowing, we were towed down the Tees, and our voyage had fairly commenced.

“Loose the fore and main topsails, and overhaul your leachlines and buntlines!” sang

out the mate—he was a fine old fellow named Williamson, and as good a sailor as ever trod a deck—and with an "Ay, ay, sir!"—it must be confessed a rather half-hearted one, for most sailors seem to be a little downhearted at first starting—we prepared to hoist sail to a chanty.

A chanty, I may say, is a song which the sailors sing as they haul on the ropes. There are a lot of them, and often the men make the words up as they go. I was chanty man that day—that is, I sang the words, and the men joined in the chorus. And this is what we sang :

"Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down."

CHORUS.

"Hey, hey, blow the man down."

"Whether he's a white man, a black man, or a brown."

CHORUS.

"Give us some time to blow the man down."

But it soon seemed as if we were the ones who were to be blown down, for no sooner had we got well away, than we got a hard breeze, and on our third night out we lost both our top-gallant sails in a fierce squall.

And then we had real bad times, and the *Commonwealth* was as near going to the bottom as a ship well could be. As I have said, we were laden with pig-iron. Now, a pig of iron is a bar of about five inches wide and deep, two-and-a-half feet long, flat on top, but curved at the bottom where it has been in the mould, and each one weighs, roughly, about two hundred pounds.

In the pitching and tossing of the ship these pigs broke loose, and they proved far more dangerous and troublesome than a cargo of four-footed flesh and blood pigs could ever have done.

We were labouring along in the heavy seas, when we heard them start—Bump! Bang! Crash! Bump! Every time the ship rolled we could hear them in the hold crashing against her sides, and threatening to knock her plates out; and then, to our dismay, the vessel listed over to port, and was soon almost on her beam-ends, with the lee bulwarks under water.

Pitch-dark above, icy cold, and wind almost a full gale, seas breaking over us every minute, and thousands of those iron pigs crashing about in the hold, it wanted cool heads and stout hearts then if we were not to go to the bottom.

Orders were given and obeyed, and after hard work the yards were got round, so that the wind was on our port bow—that is on the side to which the ship was listing—so that the weight of the wind on the sails somewhat counter-balanced the weight of the shifted iron.

And then, all of a sudden, out of the darkness there came a great black mountain of water. For one moment it hung over us, and then down it came with a crash on the starboard beam. It stove in the break of the poop, washed the cabin clear out, smashed up our big lifeboats, and shattered the skids right down to the deck. The skids are a sort of bridge running from one side of the deck to the other, about twenty feet wide, and made of four-inch teak, being supported

by ten solid iron stanchions, and it is on these skids that the lifeboats rest when not in use.

That was the effect of that one wave, but fortunately only one of the hands was hurt—and he was knocked clean through the skylight. That skylight was protected by iron bars two inches apart, but the force of the sea smashed the bars like matchwood and sent the man head first through.

But no sooner had the wave gone, than we saw a great piece of the broken skid, nearly twenty feet long, sweeping backwards and forwards across the wet deck as the vessel rolled, and threatening to carry the bulwarks away.

“Dump that overboard!” shouted the captain.

And the second mate, assisted by a seaman named Stobo and myself, rushed to secure it—no easy thing, for it was very heavy, and came with force as the deck inclined to this side or that. But, however, we succeeded, and ran it to the side to dump it over, when, just as we got it on the edge, smash came another big sea over the starboard rail, smothering us three, and carrying the piece of skid with it, and us hanging on to it, as there was nothing else to hang on to.

Swash! I felt myself carried right overboard; but then the main brace got twisted round my leg and so I was saved; whilst Stobo gripped the mate round the waist and held on for all he was worth; and then the sea had gone, and the skid with it; and, panting and gasping, we managed to get our breath.

For ten or twelve days we were blown about,

expecting to go to the bottom every hour ; but at last we were picked up by a tug and towed into Falmouth, where it took over three months to get things right again ; for every bit of cargo had to be restowed, and any number of repairs had to be done.

But at last everything was right once more, and we set sail for Port Adelaide, which we reached in the middle of April, after a good run. We discharged our cargo, and proceeded in ballast to Newcastle, New South Wales, where we took in coal for Callao—a port on the west coast of South America. Newcastle is a big coaling port, and nearly all the coal goes to South America, where it is wanted for the saltpetre mines of Chili.

Whilst we were at Newcastle my time as apprentice expired—it was on July 6th, 1906—but I signed on again ; and at the beginning of August we set sail, and reached Callao after a somewhat wearisome voyage of sixty-five days.

Now, on the west coast of South America, the crew of a sailing ship have to work out their own cargo ; and working coal by hand is a dirty job—a thirsty, grimy, dusty job, and hard work all the time. But at last it was done, everything was made clean and tidy, and we shifted out into the stream to await orders ; and then came tidings that the old ship—the ship which some of us looked upon as our home—had been sold ! That meant that everyone on board was out of a berth, and could go home as passengers at the owners' expense.

But some of us did not want to go home—I, for one, did not. The captain, officers, carpenter and steward were the only ones who went; two apprentices who were not out of their time were sent aboard another ship belonging to the same company—the *J. T. North*. Some of the crew stopped ashore, but the majority joined a barque called the *Ravenswood*; amongst them being my old chum Stobo.

Now, there were three of us left aboard the *Commonwealth*, who were undecided what to do—namely, Walter Low, A.B., Harry Largerbloom, sailmaker, and myself; and we three noticed a grand, four-masted barque lying out in the stream. She looked a real clipper, and her name was the *Dundonald*.

Little did we think, as we stood admiring her lines, that in a few months she would find a grave in the dark, cold waters that beat in ceaseless anger against the black cliffs of Disappointment Island.

"That's a good ship," I said to Low, and he nodded.

"I wouldn't mind sailing in her," added Largerbloom; whilst I, having made up my mind, went to see the captain, and ask him whether he would try and get me taken on as one of the *Dundonald's* crew, if she wanted any hands.

"Certainly, I will," he answered, for he had always been most kind; and shortly afterwards he called me, and told me that they wanted three able seamen.

"If you like to go, Eyre," he said, "I have arranged that you shall berth aft."

Now, that was a great boon to me, because every night, in my watch below, I studied some book on seamanship, so that I could pass for second mate later ; and no matter how nice one's shipmates may be, a fo'c's'le is not the best place in the world to study in.

So I thanked the Captain, packed up my belongings, and went to tell my companions that I was going.

"They want two more A.B.'s," I said, "so you had better take the chance ; for you won't find a better craft easily."

"Don't believe I shall," said Low ; and Largerbloom seemed to think the same.

So we three, on November 24th, 1906, went to the British Consul to be paid off the *Commonwealth*, and to sign on the *Dundonald*, and Largerbloom signed himself A.B. as well as Low and myself, as they already had a sailmaker aboard the ship.

And that is how I came to be one of the crew of the *Dundonald*, when she started upon her last voyage.

The *Dundonald* was a good ship, but we three fellows were very sorry to leave the old *Commonwealth*, and it seemed to give us a lump in the throat as we took our last look at her, when at last we sailed, and left her there at her moorings.

It was early in December that we sailed, bound for Sydney. The *Ravenwood* had sailed ten days before, as well as another barque named the *Annasona*, they both being bound for Newcastle, N.S.W.

There were twenty-eight of us on board,

including the captain's son—he was a lad of sixteen, and was accompanying his father, as he was rather sickly, and the doctors had ordered him to take a voyage.

The *Dundonald* speedily proved her powers; she seemed to fly through the water. We were running free with a good strong breeze the whole time, only being braced sharp up once, and that only for a few hours; and we congratulated ourselves that, if we had been obliged to leave the old *Commonwealth*, we had got a good ship in exchange. As another of the old chanties has it:

We've a jolly fine ship, and a jolly fine crew,
A jolly fine mate, and a good skipper too,
And we're bound for the Rio Grande,

Only we were not bound for Rio, but for Sydney.

But for all the fine passage, we had one little shake up. For about six days before we reached port we ran into what seamen know as a "southerly buster," and then, as another chanty says, "The ship was rolling."

Roll! It was more like a swing at a fair—we went over an angle of forty-five degrees each way; for the wind being right aft, the yards were square, and so she had nothing to steady her.

Now our port bow would be down, the sea over the bulwarks; then, with a jerk, she would right herself, sending the water tearing over the deck, and down she would go on the other side. Certainly, for excitement, a "southerly" wants a lot of beating.

We had been kept going pretty busily, and I was not sorry when I heard eight bells strike (four o'clock), for that commenced my watch below. But I had scarcely got down and made myself comfortable, before the skipper himself appeared in the doorway.

"Eyre, my lad, will you just go down and give the second mate a hand?" he said. "He is in the storeroom. A lot of things have broken loose, and he is lashing them up again."

"Ay, ay, sir!" I answered, and off I went. When I got below I found things were more lively there than on deck. There was Mr. MacLaghlan, hot and perspiring, and saying things, in the midst of a chaos of barrels and boxes of hams, bags of flour, tins of marmalade, and all sorts of things, which seemed as if they were bent upon throwing themselves at him from all sorts of places.

"Come on, Eyre, lend me a—— Look out!" Bang! A big barrel swept by me, nearly knocking me off my legs, whilst at the same time a ham caught me right in the wind.

Shouting, laughing, working, we sailed in, dodging things into corners, and then making a frantic rush at them. Flour-bags were torn open, oatmeal scattered about, vinegar upset, and we had about a couple of hours of the finest excitement. But at last we were the victors, and we came on deck smothered from head to foot, damp with vinegar, and sticky with marmalade, but leaving everything shipshape below once more.

The "buster" passed, and soon after we

arrived off Sydney Heads, and picked up our tug; and then we learnt that neither the *Ravenswood* nor the *Annosana* had arrived, though they had sailed ten days before us. We were pleased, from the captain down, for we had made a record passage—forty-five days—and it holds the record still, I believe.

The *Ravenswood* turned up a week later; but the *Annosana* never came in—she had run on to Middleton Reef and became a total wreck, though all her crew were saved.

Little did we on the *Dundonald* think, as we talked of that, that ere long our ship would meet a like fate, and we, instead of a few hours adrift in boats like the *Annosana* fellows, would be cast away for months on a terrible uninhabited island, to suffer such hardships as few men are called upon to undergo, and fewer still could survive.

We had our ballast out and our cargo in—we were taking grain—and then we moved out into stream and dropped anchor, awaiting our time of sailing for old England.

We were supposed to start on Saturday, February 16th, but as the captain was unable to get a tug, we lay there in Sydney Harbour and watched a big yacht race, and we hoped that no tugboat would come along until the Monday.

Not that we wanted to stay there, but no sailor likes putting to sea on a Sunday; he thinks it quite as unlucky as starting on a Friday. Of course, it is only superstition, but it makes no difference—sailors think putting to sea on Sunday is very unlucky; and certainly, in our

case, no vessel could have had worse luck from start to finish.

Everything looked bright and promising, and we were all in the best of spirits ; but from the very first night Fortune frowned upon us. The wind shifted, and for the rest of the voyage we had head winds all the time, so that "By the wind" was the course passed along every time we relieved the wheel.

Let me explain that. When the wind is blowing directly from the direction in which the vessel wants to go it is a head wind, and no sailing-ship can possibly keep to her course. You cannot sail against the wind, but you can lay up very close to it.

When the order is "By the wind," it means that the wind is not fair enough to let the ship lay her course ; so the only thing to do is to keep as near to it as you can—that is to say, you keep the weather clew of the royal—or the top-gallant sail, if the royal is furled—doing what a sailor calls "shaking in the wind."

For a whole week we had that sort of thing ever getting farther and farther from our course. And then, on Sunday, February 24th, when we were eight days out, we had a little bit of a change—a calm sea and very little wind ; but it was still a head wind—that never altered once.

On that Sunday some of us were lounging about, and if the truth must be told, grumbling a bit—for this weather was terribly monotonous,—when out of the water there appeared a dark, triangular fin. We didn't need to be told what sort of fish was beneath it—every sailor knows a

shark, and hates him too; and he has good reason for it.

"That's a big one!"

"See him now—there! The brute!"

"Wonder if the old man will have a try for him?"

So we talked, and we took a squint now and again towards the poop, for we could not have a try for him ourselves unless the skipper gave us leave.

We could see him swimming round, eyeing us in a lazy sort of fashion, as if he was wishing that one of us would come over and talk to him there, and we were eyeing him as if we wished that we could have him on deck and talk to him there. And then there was a thrill of excitement, and a clustering closer to the rail, and a sending word down to the watch below to come and see the fun, for Captain Thorburne came along, his shark-hook in his hand, and he sang out to the "doctor," or, in plain English, the cook to fetch along a chunk of salt pork.

"He will give us a bit of sport, mister!" he said to the first mate, as he baited the hook. And then, splash! over the pork went, and the old shark sheered off a bit, until his pilot fish had been to investigate.

It is very strange about those pilot fish. They are little fellows about twelve inches long, and of a bluish colour, with some dark bands on them, and there are always three or four swimming around a shark, who never attempts to harm them, although he would have no objection

to swallowing one of his own brothers if he got the chance.

Well, there came the pilots, nosing round the pork, and perhaps sampling it; and then the old shark came up, eyeing it with his great, glassy eyes, and he turned on his back—for, you know, the mouth of a shark is placed so far back, and his top jaw sticks out so much that he cannot bite at anything unless he turns right on his side. Well, he made a grab at the pork, and missed, and then all the performance had to be gone through again. He did that three or four times. He really was a shocking bad marksman; a stickleback would grab a worm far easier. But at last, whilst we were all standing by, and fairly trembling with excitement—whoop!—the pork disappeared down his throat, and we yelled, and hauled tight. My word, it was a tug of war! for he was a big fellow, and did not mean to give in without a fight.

By the captain's orders, we passed the line outside the weather-jigger rigging down on to the main deck, whence we took it to the capstan, and started heaving him in, whilst he splashed angrily outside.

The line was a good three-inch rope, but it would never have held him by itself; so we got the end of one of the braces, put a running bowline round the line that was holding him, let it slip down over his head till it reached his middle, and then hauled taut, and it was all over with his lordship then.

And then, when we got him on deck, what a fight he made!—leaping high in the air,

thrashing like a flail with his powerful tail, one blow of which would have nigh cut a man in two, and snapping with his horrid jaws, with their triple row of teeth, with which he could have scrunched up a man's leg as though it had been an eggshell.

Standing around him, shouting, jumping, avoiding him, we got in all the blows we could. But it takes a lot to kill a shark in that way.

It was "Look out, Charlie!" "Now go for him, Judge!" "Now then, Pul!" and so on, as we shouted one to the other. And then in the midst of the pother up came one man who didn't mind sharks a bit, and that was Sam Watson, a black, who came from St. Helena, but who was married and had made his home in Bristol.

Sam came up, his eyes gleaming, his mouth one big grin, and his sharp sheath-knife in his hand.

"Go on, Sam, give him his dinner!" someone shouted. And Sam went on. He just darted in and ripped the shark right up, jumping back again out of reach of its tail with remarkable agility.

Now, perhaps some of you may think that very cruel, but the shark is the seaman's most bitter foe, and a merciless, greedy beast he is at the best. The shark never spares the sailor, and the sailor, when he has the chance, never spares the shark.

Well, the shark was dead, and the crew cut him up, some wanting his backbone, some pieces

of his skin, some his fins and slices of his flesh to cook—for shark-flesh is not bad eating for a change ; and as for me, I got hold of his tail—that was what I wanted.

Perhaps you will smile when I tell you what I wanted it for. I have told you that we sailors are superstitious—well, one of our superstitions is that if you nail a shark's tail on to the end of the jibboom you will have a fair wind for the rest of the journey. We had all got sick of bad winds, so I gave the tail to one of the men, and he nailed it on to the end of the jibboom. Alas ! in our case, the superstition was not a true one. Instead of fair winds, it was the other way round, and we had regular rough weather all the time—rain and sleet, mist and heavy seas, and the wind always in the wrong quarter ; and then, to make things worse, the steering compass went “ crook,” as we sailors say—that is, it would not work properly.

It is hard to explain the cause of this, but all sailors know what it means. One minute the vessel would seem to be on her course, and the next she would appear to have turned right round, and be going in the opposite direction. Of course, it was not the vessel, but the compass ; and it gave a lot of trouble.

And so the days passed, and Wednesday, the 6th of March, dawned—the last day in the life of the *Dundonald*.

It was not very bad in the earlier part of the day, but it rained a good deal, and was so overcast that the captain could not get the sun. It was my trick at the wheel from eight until ten

and then I was relieved by an A.B. named Santiago Marino, who took my place and stayed there until 12.30, when our watch—the second mate's starboard watch—was relieved by the mate's port watch.

We were to turn out again at four for a couple of hours. The four hours from four to eight in the evening are called the dog watch. From four to six is the first dog watch, and from six to eight second dog watch.

It was our second dog watch, and during those two hours the weather grew very dirty. Our mainsail and crossjack were already in; and during our watch below the crowd on deck took in the upper top-gallant sails.

The fore and mizzen were already made fast, but there were three fellows working aloft at the main top-gallant sail; and just as we came on deck they sent one of their number—James Cromarty, a lad of sixteen, rated as deck boy—for more help.

The ratings on a sailing-ship are, starting at the bottom: D.B., deck-boy; O.S., ordinary seaman; and A.B., able seaman.

Well, Cromarty came down from aloft, and went up to the second mate.

"Please, sir, we want another gasket up there, for we cannot get the weather-clew of the top-gallant sail in."

Mr. Maclaghlan looked up.

"Who is up there, my lad?" he asked.

"Ellis and Findlow, sir," the answer came.

"Very well. Eyre"—and he turned to me—"just take a gasket up and see what you

can do. You had better take another hand with you, though."

I took the gasket, and called to a young German, Herman Queerfelt, and up we went to relieve the other two fellows, Robert Ellis and Alf Findlow, and a hard job we had of it, what with the new canvas, all soaking wet, and the wind and rain.

It was now blowing great guns, and raining in torrents; and, to make matters worse, a dense mist came up on the wind, so that it was impossible to see a foot before you. And up there we toiled and tugged, and held on for dear life, until the job was done; and then we came down only to be met with another order.

"Clew up fore and mizzen lower top-gallant sails!"

Soaked with the rain and the spray, looming like ghosts in the mist, we obeyed the order; and after we had clewed them, it was away aloft again to make them fast. I remember that I was with Low and another fellow on the fore. Poor Low! He was a good shipmate and sailor. Little did we think, either of us, as we worked away there, of the fate which was to be his ere another day had dawned.

The gaff topsail and the inner and outer jibs had already been taken in during the dog watch, for the wind kept increasing in fury.

Down at last we came for the second time, all dog tired, sick of the weather, and soaked to the skin; and then we started to coil all the running gear and make it fast to the sheer poles to prevent the heavy seas from washing it all

over the place, as they swept across the decks ; and then, just about eleven o'clock, the captain gave the order to check her in a bit.

"Weather cro'jack brace !"

The order was passed along, and we checked her in a couple of points, and had all the ropes coiled just after seven bells (11.30).

I had a little oilstove on board, and in cold weather, in the middle watches, if I had time, I used to make some tea for the second mate and myself, for he was a good fellow, and I was very friendly with him ; and so now, having my hands free for the time, and being soaked through and chilled to the bone, I thought that a pannikin of good hot tea would not be half bad.

"What do you say to a drop ?" I asked the mate ; and he nodded appreciatively.

"Wouldn't come amiss, Eyre," he said ; and off I went.

I had the stove securely lashed up, and I soon had the water boiling, and the tea under way. My word, how good it was ! I carried some out to Mr. Maclaghlan, who was quite as much in want of it as I was, and we stood sipping it side by side, and growling at the weather ; but little did either of us so much as dream that it would be the last tea which we were to taste for many a long, long month.

"Don't show any signs of clearing," he observed, as he stood there screening his pannikin with his hands, for the wind was strong enough to blow the tea clean out of it. "There is one comfort, it can't last for ever."

Whew! screamed the blast through the cordage with a shrill sound.

Smash, splash! the seas came dashing against our sides, sending showers of spray stinging into our faces.

“That puts a little warmth into one!” Mr. Maclaghlan gave a sigh of satisfaction as he handed me back the empty pannikin.

Ding, dong! One bell—a quarter to twelve—gave the watch below notice that they would have to turn out and relieve us in a quarter of an hour’s time; and I can honestly say that I wasn’t a bit sorry to hear the signal given, for in all my voyaging I had never had a more miserable watch on deck.

Day after day we had not had a glimpse of the sun to cheer us up; it was leaden sky above and leaden sea below, and a grey mist around, until the greyness and gloom of it seemed to get right into one’s body and weigh on one’s spirits.

“Won’t I just be glad to get my wet gear off and turn in!” I reflected, as I stood there waiting until the watch below came up. They were only a quarter of an hour after one bell, but that quarter of an hour seemed as long as a whole watch when a fellow felt dog tired and perished with the cold; and all the time the *Dundonald* was forging her way through the waves, and reeling from their great thundering blows.

Ah, at last the watch below tumbled up, and they didn’t seem to move too quickly as if they enjoyed it. They mustered aft, and the mate

coming on duty took the second mate's report, and sent the relief to the forecastle and the wheel.

It did not take me long to change my wet clothes ; but I think that I must have been very unlucky, for though I had plenty of good, warm vests in my chest, I picked up the first that came to hand, and it was an old one—the very oldest indeed that I possessed.

But on it went, and I lit my pipe and turned in, whilst outside the wind howled, and I could hear the wash of the water on the deck.

Now, it was always a habit of mine after turning in during the night watches to read for half an hour some book on seamanship, as I was working up for my second mate's examination, and that night I made no exception, tired out though I was.

There was another fellow berthed with me, a deck boy named George Ivimey. Poor fellow, it was his first voyage, and he was having a rough time of it. Well, I read for half an hour, according to custom, and then I laid aside my book and prepared for a snug three and a half hours' sleep, when all of a sudden came the cry, above the roar of the storm :

“All hands on deck.”

Ivimey looked over at me. I thought that they wanted help to get the topsails in, and we neither of us liked the idea of turning out from our warm bunks. But turn out we did soon after, for I heard a cry again :

“Land on the weather bow, sir !”

Land ! I was out of my bunk like one thing.

I made a grab at the first thing that came to hand, a pair of thin dungaree trousers, a big pair of sea-boots, a coat, an oilskin and sou'-wester, and last of all my knife. That is a thing a sailor never forgets at such times, if he thinks at all. A knife may stand between him and death. A man may make clothes, as we made them, or he may go without clothes, but he can't make a knife or do without one.

Well, I grabbed these things—first come first taken. I did not stop to get them all on, but with an armful I raced out on to the deck to see what all this was about.

And then as I got outside the half-deck door I witnessed a sight such as I have never seen before, and which I pray I may never see again—a sight which has burnt itself into my memory, and will never be forgotten by me whilst I live.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRECK.

“LAND ahead!”

What may not that cry mean to the sailor? It may tell of the end of the voyage and the drawing near to the “desired haven,” or it may be the note of danger, or distress—perhaps of death itself!

Land, where no land was expected!—In such a storm, on such a night, there was something ominous in the cry which had brought me, half-dressed, to the *Dundonald's* deck.

And what a sight was that which greeted my eyes!

There are moments which seem to have a lifetime of experience crowded into them; moments when the memories of years pass through the brain; moments when the eye takes in with one glance scenes, even to minute details, which may afterwards take hours to describe. And so it was upon this occasion. A single glance served to take the scene in, and the next moment I was racing back to warn my companion of the danger. But to tell you of what I saw will be an entirely different business.

Still, I must attempt it to the best of my ability. "Land!" was the cry which I had heard as I lay snug in my bunk, and land was what my startled eyes saw as I rushed on deck. Land, terribly near; but what land? No artist who desired to paint a picture of desolation could have conceived a more terrible scene than that which now met my gaze.

Land! Land so close that the most inexperienced eye could have detected the peril we were in—a land of black, frowning, threatening cliffs, which seemed to tower up to eternity.

If you have been out in a thick fog, you will know how strangely objects spring into view as you walk along. One moment nothing but the veiling mist, then a strange, blurred image, and then, before you know it, you are right up to it—tree, wall, man, animal, or whatever it may be.

So it had been now. Driving through the dense mist, battling with rain-filled winds, staggering beneath the blows of the waves, the brave ship had gone, like some strong man battling patiently against many oppressing obstacles; and then suddenly, out of the mist, that vision of rocky headland that burst upon the astonished eyes of the watch on deck.

Land! We seemed to be running head on, into a narrow bay—no pretty bay with shelving beach and shell-strewn sand, but a bay of upleaping, volcanic rock, black, sheer, forbidding. From two or three points on the port bow, and right round on the starboard side, as far as

the quarter, those cliffs, the sentinels of that lonely land, stood, their summits lost in the overhead mist—the mist that pressed down so low that even our own tops seemed indistinct in its wreathing veil. They rose from deep water, too ; it needed but a glance at the waves to tell that. The seas came running in from the waste beyond—great, unbroken monsters—until they met the rocks at the cliffs' foot, when they broke with a roaring which filled the very air, and sent mighty columns of spray high upwards.

And in the smother of foam below, strange objects like long, writhing, black snakes could be seen—snakes which darted out towards the *Dundonald*, as if welcoming her to the grave which she was so soon to find. Not snakes really, but great masses of seaweed as thick as a man's wrist, and nigh on twenty feet long.

That was the picture. Long as it takes to describe it, a single glance seemed to take it all in, and I rushed back, shouting to George Ivimey to get a move on him, and I hastily finished getting into my clothes.

“Hurry, man ! Hurry up !”

And with my warning to Ivimey there came the mate's call from the deck :

“Weather fore braces !”

I raced out on to the deck again almost as the command was given. The moment that land had been sighted they had braced the yards sharp up, hoping that they might weather the cliffs ; but now, as it became apparent that any

such hope was vain, they were going to try and wear her short round—an almost impossible task in that confined space, and yet the only chance that we had left. It was that, or rushing bow foremost into those terrible cliffs. A desperate chance, but still a chance which, if missed, would never return.

Had we continued our present course, in less than five minutes the *Dundonald* would have struck, her jibboom would have snapped like a carrot, the head-stays would have gone, and down the masts would have crashed, with the result that no one would have lived to tell the tale.

The captain knew it, and he gave the order. It was wonderful to see how calm and collected he was as he stood there. His very calmness seemed to infuse itself into the crew. A chance—a dog's chance only—but he took it, and gave the order to wear her round.

I rushed to the fore-braces with several others—who were working with me, and who were the after ones, I cannot say—and we strained and hauled with all our might to get the heavy yards round. It was a race against time, and who could say which would win? Round the yards came, but nearer and nearer drew the shore. It would be a terribly near thing if the *Dundonald* cleared it.

Crash!

A shivering shock seemed to run through the vessel. It was as though she were a living thing, knowing her danger, and trembling at it. She had struck a sunken reef with terrific force, but

the next moment she was over it, and afloat again, though that rude shock must have sorely damaged her plates.

“There, she feels it!”

The words were shouted into my ear just as the ship struck the reef, and I turned, to see Low beside me.

We did not stop working, though. Our orders were to swing the yards, and swing them we would, so long as they were there to swing, until we were told to belay.

“What is the name of the island, anyhow?” I shouted back. And his answer came:

“Stewart Island.”

Poor Low! He was sadly out of his reckoning there, for Stewart Island is just south of New Zealand; and we, as we afterwards found out, were far south of that.

“Stewart Island,” he said, and then, just as we got the yards round, the mate came rushing along the deck, shouting at the top of his voice: “Let go the topsail halyards!”

Away we rushed, and I never saw Low again. What his subsequent fate was, and how he met that fate in a brave attempt to scale those cliffs, I shall tell you later. He was separated from me in the rush across the deck, and I never saw him again.

But I remember just as the order came that Lee, the carpenter, who was standing close to us, turned and asked us whether we thought we could weather the land, and I answered that I did not think anything of the kind.

I knew that the captain was doing the only thing that could be done ; but I knew, too, and so did many another there, that we would never get out of a hole like that, for there was not room to wear the ship.

Well, with the mate's order, we rushed to the halyards—some to the fore and others to the main and mizzen. In less than a second the falls were cast off the belaying-pins, and down came the three heavy yards with a run ; and then came another order—a terribly significant one :

“ Clear the boats, lads ! ”

Clear the boats ! Desert our brave old ship in her hour of need, and trust our lives to those frail craft ! Alas ! it was not a case of deserting. All that skilled seamanship could do had been done, and the doom of the barque *Dundonald* was fixed.

But the order was given, and life itself might depend upon prompt obedience.

We were away, and upon the skids in half a second, some working at the port lifeboat, and some at the starboard.

Crouching there, the wind driving by, and stinging like a whip lash, almost numbed to the bone with the cold, with clouds of spray drenching us, we worked like madmen ; and yet as calmly as if there were no peril. We moved quickly, but every man knew just what he was doing ; there were no trace of that worst of perils—panic—at least not with the crowd at my boat.

I can see that scene now. I had my sheath

knife, and was cutting the canvas cover away for all I was worth, when I happened to glance over to the other boat, and there I saw Sam Watson—the black who had killed the shark, you know—and I think that the fear of it all had got hold of him. He was standing erect, the whites of his eyes showing strangely, and he had an oar in his hands, which were raised high above his head.

“Too late! Too late!” I heard him scream in an eldritch tone. “Too late!”

It might be too late, but the order was given, and it had to be obeyed. We got the cover and gripes off, and I was dipping the fall round the after tackle, as there was no turn in it, when I become aware of the startling fact that I was alone.

Alone! What had happened? Had my shipmates deserted me, or had some monster wave swept them away, and yet spared me?

Alone! No; I saw a dim form disappear and make aft. And, as I glanced after it, I saw other forms just dimly outlined in the mist. Well, it was no use staying there, for I certainly could not do anything with the lifeboat by myself.

I jumped out of the boat, quick as a flash, and raced along the bridge from the skids to the poop; that, as most people know, is captain's ground, where only the officers are permitted, together with such men as are ordered there for duty. But there was no time for ceremony now; poop and forecastle, stem and stern, the

Dundonald was doomed ; and, from first to last we knew it.

There stood the captain, his son Jimmy by his side—a poor, scared little lad, struggling bravely to hide the fears which were surely no disgrace, as he stood by his father. There were the mates, and around them clustered the hands, waiting for the captain's orders, and still, in spite of their peril, showing that they had confidence in him. And there, too, sticking to his post, was the man at the wheel.

You may talk of this hero, and that ; but, to my mind, I looked at a hero then. He was only a common seaman, a Swede named Andersen, but standing there at the wheel, as though he were out in mid-ocean, with no peril nigh.

The air was full of strange noises now—wind voices, and sea voices, moaning, sobbing voices, as of storm spirits, singing the dirge of the fated ship, which now had swung round, and was running stern first into a small sort of bay. She ran it slowly ; for you must understand that when we hauled the foreyards aback it stopped her headway, and she did not gather sternway very quickly.

How awful those cliffs looked as we got close to them ! How the foam churned and hissed, and that long waving sea-weed seemed to stretch out, as if eager to claim us for its prey.

The captain gave the order that all hands were to get lifebelts on, and the sailmaker went to get them. These lifebelts were kept in the

sail locker, which was next to my berth ; and despite the sea which now swept the decks, he went and got them out, passing them along to the second mate, who in turn handed them up to the rest of us. As quick as lightning, but as calmly and methodically as if nothing were wrong was every thing done ; and the captain, his son by his side, stood there superintending it all, and seeing that every man had one of those precious life-belts, so that he might have a chance in the last fight that was to come.

And then Andersen, never leaving go of the wheel, revealed of what sort he was ; for he called over and asked for orders—and what orders do you think ? He asked whether he should leave the wheel “ when the vessel struck ” stern first on those frowning cliffs ! ”

Think of it ! I have read of the skeleton of the Roman soldier found at Pompeii, and have heard the story of how he stood there on guard forgotten by all in their terror-filled flight, and waiting for death because he had not received permission to desert his post ; but what of Andersen, who asked for permission to leave the wheel “ when the ship struck ? ” Well, I have got my own opinion as to which of those two is the greater hero.

“ Leave it at once, my man,” said the captain. “ You can do no more good there,” and Andersen obeyed ; but scarcely had he relinquished his hold of the spokes, when a tremendous sea caught the rudder, and the wheel went round at an awful pace ; then the

rudder itself must have struck a rock, and the sudden jerk of stopping it sent the wheel into a hundred pieces.

If we had any chance before, that would have killed it ; our ship, unmanageable, drifted in and in ; and we waited for the crash which was to end her, shivered beneath those dark waves.

And as we drew nearer to those terrible cliffs, their dreadful aspect only increased. Many a glance was cast towards them, in the hope of discovering any pathway to their summit, in case we managed to escape the fury of the waves and reach their base ; but they seemed to forbid the faintest hope. Straight as the side of a house they appeared from where we were. A sailor can generally manage to find a foothold ; but not even a sailor can walk up a perpendicular wall ; and that was what those cliffs most resembled to our despairing eyes, as we looked upon them from the deck of the *Dundonald*.

As we looked, we noticed on our port side, just abaft the beam, there was a big tunnel of cave in the cliff face, which ran right through to the other side, and through this a big sea was running with tremendous force. From where I stood this tunnel appeared to be about fourteen feet wide, and its top was about thirty feet above the sea.

I have heard many storm sounds during my voyaging ; but I do not think that I ever heard such a dismal noise as the waves made rushing through that great, yawning tunnel. It was a

weird, hollow sound, which seemed to shiver on the air; and in spite of everything that we could call up of nerve and pluck, it found a way into our hearts.

It was enough to make any man afraid. There was the cave with the waves rushing through; there the tall cliff with the hissing foam and the lashing weed; there were the great, madly leaping waves bearing down upon us, as though they knew that our end had come, and were rejoicing at our plight. The night was as black as ink, and the icy blasts were full of slanting rain and drifting mist. The earlier part of the night had been bad enough, but this was far and away the worst.

And now the poor ship seemed as if she had run aground upon some great shelf of sunken rock; for she got no nearer to the face of the cliffs, but lay heeling over towards the land, whilst the seas broke in relentless fury over her decks.

We knew that she was not on a beach, for we could tell by the run of the waves that deep water was there, so she must be resting upon some out-jutting crag; off which, if she had rolled, she would have sunk in deep water.

The second mate went up to the captain with a life-belt, but Captain Thorburne shook his head.

“Not until you have seen that everyone else has one,” he said.

Oh, how bitterly cold it was! My numbed fingers could not hold the strings to fasten my lifebelt; my teeth chattered in my head, I

felt as though I should never be warm again. And, indeed, judging from the outlook, it seemed as if before very long both my shipmates and myself would be washing to and fro amidst the seaweed and foam.

The officers had not made the same mistake as Low did when he said that we had struck on Stewart Island. The captain, who had not had the sun for two days, and had, therefore, been obliged to go by dead reckoning, had expected to pass the Auckland Islands by midnight, being forty miles to windward. They knew the name of this black, forbidding land; and the fact that, if we could manage to get ashore, we might find a Government depot; but of our search for that I shall have to speak later.

Well, our lifebelts were on, we clustered together on the poop, and then the first mate suggested that we should do better if we went forward—we could not well be in a worse plight and there we might find a little shelter.

“Better get there at once, sir,” he suggested to the captain, “for if this mist settles down, we may not be able to find our way across the deck.”

And there was reason in what he said, for the seas were making clean breaches in her, and wreckage was washing all over the place. It was not an easy task, anyhow, to avoid danger there, and if to other perils was to be added that obscuring mist—mist so thick that one could not see a step ahead—it might mean that any

attempt to get forward would but be walking to meet death.

The captain agreed, and so away we went, Captain Thorburne holding his son's hand, down from the poop, and along the wave-washed deck—that deck which had once been such a picture of neatness.

Clinging to whatever came first, we made our way forward, and took shelter under the fore-castle head. It was not much, but it was something. Scarcely, however, had we got settled there, when she started shipping seas forward—great angry masses of water, which went clean over her, whilst we could feel her poor timbers quiver as they received those giant blows.

We did not quite know what to make of our position—that is, the crew did not ; but I think the captain knew. I looked into his face several times—it was as calm and unmoved as ever, and yet there was something there which I had not seen before. From the moment when the *Dundonald* started going down he had known what was before us, and he was a brave man, who saw death ahead, and prepared to meet it fearlessly. Only when now and again he looked down at his son I saw his lip tremble. Perhaps he was thinking more of those at home, who would watch, and wait, and pray for their safe return, and yet never see them more, until they shall meet before that sea which is like unto a sea of glass, in the kingdom where no night is, nor pain, nor sorrow, parting, nor death.

But if he knew, most of us did not. It seemed impossible that we could be lost, with land so close at hand. Close! Why, it looked as if, had she but drifted in a little nearer, her yards would have touched the cliff itself, and yet she was settling down—the cruel rocks over which she had passed must have torn great holes in her.

So we crouched there, whilst the seas came one after the other leaping over her.

The first mate took out his pipe, and knocked the ashes from it.

“We shan’t be able to stay here for long,” he said, and he produced his pouch and calmly filled the bowl.

It seemed so strange to see him do that at such a moment, and yet I have thought since, that there was a Providence in it. Thought! I feel certain of it. For that simple act was the means of preserving the lives of all those who eventually reached the land—all, that is, excepting himself, as you shall hear later.

Now you may ask how that could possibly come about, and perhaps you might wonder for a long time, and never come to the right answer, so I had better make haste and explain what I mean to you.

There he stood, calmly rubbing the tobacco and pressing it into the bowl of his pipe, and then he felt in his pocket for a match, only to find that he had not got one.

“Any of you fellows got a match?” he asked, turning round to the rest of us.

Mind, there was nothing disrespectful to the captain in that—the first mate would have been the last man going to be guilty of any breach—but we were at such a pitch now, that we knew that if any of us had followed his example, not a word would have been said by way of rebuke.

“Any of you got a match?” he asked, and one man, named John Puhze, produced a new box.

“Here you are sir. They are quite dry,” he said, and the mate took them with a nod, and a “Thank you, my lad!”

Crack; the match struck, and the tiny point of flame glowed red on his face as he bent forward, shielding it with his hand from the wind, and pulling hard at his pipe.

“Ah, thanks!” And he handed the box back to Jack Puhze. “Ah,” he said again, with a sigh almost of satisfaction, and then he remained silent, smoking hard and staring out at the darkness.

And John Puhze took that box of matches and raised his hand to throw them into the sea. What good were they? What need to trouble to undo his jacket to put them away in an inner pocket?

I just caught sight of him as his arm was raised. The box was almost leaving his hand; another moment and it would have been lost; but a sudden idea flashed through my mind, and I grabbed his hand just in time.

“Hold hard, John. Hand them over to

me," I said. "They may come in very handy presently."

John Puhze stared, but made no objection. He handed the box of matches to me, telling me to take them if I wanted them, and I unbuttoned my oilskin and put them in the inside pocket.

What made me stop John I cannot tell. It was just like an inspiration; but I did it, and afterwards I and the others had occasion to thank God for it.

So I put them away, and the second mate laughed and made some joke about it. He was a splendid fellow, and doing all he could to keep up our spirits.

"We shall have to get out of this, mister," said the captain to the first mate, as another big sea came rushing over. And, indeed, it didn't take much to tell us that if we didn't clear we might get caught like rats in a trap and drown without a chance of making a fight for it.

"I think so, sir," the mate answered; and so a general move was made, and we managed to get up on the forecastle head.

And not a bit too soon, for scarcely had we got clear, when she began to ship seas on her main deck, one after another.

We had not got much doubt by this time as to what was before us. From point to point we had been driven by the waves, and if they reached us here, there was nothing left but the rigging, where we might hang until it was all washed away from the poor, dying barque.

And so we all stood waiting, whilst wind and sea sang the *Dundonald's* dirge, and the mist drifted like a winding sheet above us.

And there came a picture of a far-away home in dear old England, and of the loved ones who would never greet me again, and I wondered how they would grieve, when, after long days of waiting, the story of the wreck became known. The father, the mother, and all the dear ones—what were they doing now, and were they thinking about me?

Poor Jimmy Thorburne was crying softly to himself, and no wonder. Poor little fellow, it was a sad ending to the voyage which he had taken to make him well. The captain looked at him, and turned his head away, and I heard him mutter huskily to the mate:

“Take care of him, mister.”

It was the last thing I heard him say. Out of the darkness a monster of a wave sprang. It rose, it came clear over the fore-castle head from the port side. I was facing aft when it came, by the after-rail of the fore-castle head; the captain, the mates, and Jimmy were with me. The sea burst upon us, and we clung on like grim death. Some were on the fore stay, others were on the jibboom, others, like myself, on the deck.

Out parallel we were dragged by the wave, then it was gone, and the ship seemed to have slipped down into a great hollow, with a solid wall of water rising above her on either hand. It was as though she were in a grave; and indeed she was in her own grave. I saw

not a single one of my companions. I was alone—buried with the ship, the water rising higher and higher above me.

Then it seemed to stop. It bent, it curved over on either hand, and then down, down it came, thousands and thousands of tons. That watery grave was filling in—the brave *Dundonald* was buried.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE ISLAND.

DOWN came the sea upon me! What had become of all my shipmates I did not know. I was alone—the only living thing in that realm of death! I clung to the rail with all my might, but I was struck down as if by a giant's hand; my frail grasp was torn away, and the waves closed over me.

How the water thundered in my ears! I seemed to be whirled over and over, like a cork in a whirlpool. My head seemed to be bursting, and a thousand lights danced before my eyes. Down, down, I seemed to go, never to rise again—fighting, struggling, longing for one gasp of air. Ah, that was a fearful sensation!

I struck against something, which I clutched frantically—I think it must have been the foot of the foresail, under water—but I was dragged away; and still in my agony there was that mad battle to force my way up through the water. I was dying! I was going mad! I—Ah, I had been dashed against something; my fingers clutched a rope, and, with a last

despairing effort, I pulled myself upwards, hand over hand, in the direction of the blessed air. Up—up; and then, thank heaven, air—air at last!

I clung there, helpless, gasping, unable to do aught save clutch that precious rope; and then, after a bit, when my wits came back, I saw that I had hold of one of the fore-topmast back-stays, and was quite near the fore-top, whilst below me there was nothing but the heaving water. The last wave had carried the *Dundonald* to her doom, and I had gone down with her; but the lifebelt which I had on had been my salvation, and had brought me to the surface again.

Slowly, painfully, my limbs feeling like lead, my clothes weighing me down, almost finished by my long submersion, I climbed painfully still higher—I was on the port side—and, to my confused senses, it seemed as if someone else was clambering up behind me. Like gigantic skeleton fingers, the ship's masts rose from the waves, and I could see by their slope that the sunken wreck had a list towards the cliffs. I felt a thrill of hope; for from where I was, it seemed to me that the port top-gallant yard arm was actually touching the cliff, in which case I might leave my perilous position and gain the land. So, slowly and painfully, up the rigging I went, and out to the end of the yard, only to find that my eyes had deceived me. Between the yard and the cliff yawned a space of thirty feet or more. For all chance of crossing it, it might have been as many miles.

And then again there came that strange idea that someone was behind me, and I turned sharply. Why, there was someone! I caught sight of a dim form, and at the same time a well-known voice hailed me:

“Is that you, Charlie?”

It was John Judge, an Irishman from Passage West. Thank Heaven there was still one living soul left to speak to! We gripped each other by the hand, and Judge said solemnly:

“Charlie, I think that we two are the only ones left of us all; and God knows how long we shall last, or whether we shall ever get ashore.”

“There is a good thirty feet between the end of the yard and the cliff,” I answered. “It would be madness to try and jump it.”

“True, lad,” he said; “but it is swinging across we might be. We can cut away a few good lines, perhaps, make one end fast to the yard-arm, put a bowline to the other end, and then try and swing for it.”

It was a desperate venture, but the case was desperate; and so I gave Judge my knife—for he had lost his own—and in a few minutes he had brought a good length of line, which I made fast to the yard-arm.

“It is too short,” I said; and he answered that he would soon get some more; but as he was cutting away I heard him utter a cry of dismay.

“What’s wrong, John?” I asked; and he answered ruefully:

“I’ve dropped the knife, Charlie. We are done for entirely now.”

Yes, we were done for—or so it seemed. We could only sit there above the waves, cowering together for warmth, fearing each moment that the mast would go, and wait for the coming of the dawn.

And in those terrible hours we seemed to hear strange cries of distress, as of some fellow clinging to something, and unable longer to hold on; and two or three times there seemed to come from the shore an awful kind of shriek, which we thought must come from the throat of the black, Sam Watson. If it did he must have died in the night, and dropped into the sea, for we never saw him again!

How heavy my clothing seemed to me! Its weight dragged me down, and my sea boots were unbearable. There, up on the crosstrees, I threw them off; but I little thought how, later, I was to regret that action.

And now, far away, the first faint grey streaks of dawn began to creep into the sky; but the rain never ceased, and the cold seemed to get right into our bodies, and rob us of every bit of strength.

“John!”

“What is it, Charlie?”

I had been looking down from the cross trees, and something caught my eye; it was that which made me break the silence.

“I believe there is some poor fellow clinging to the fore-top below us,” I said; and John Judge looked down.

“I believe you are right, Charlie. He seems about done. Let’s go and lend him a hand.”

“Right you are, John. Come on.”

So, though we seemed too perished to move, we got down to the foretop ; but, to our surprise, we found not one, but no less than nine of our shipmates there, and a terrible condition they were in. Hardly one but had received some injury—a gash, or a jagged stab from wreckage or rock ; for some of them had been washed clean from the ship, and back again. The two mates were there, though the first mate seemed like a dying man, he had been so battered and submerged. Still, they were alive, and were as glad to see us as we were to see them ; for though it did not lessen our peril, there was something of comfort and feeling that one’s companions were there. It took away that awful feeling of loneliness which I had at first experienced.

Clearer grew the sickly light of the dawn, only to reveal to us how utterly hopeless our position was. Only thirty feet from the cliff, but between us and it a fierce sea ran, roaring in from the open, roaring out through the tunnel, the waves meeting and leaping, as if mocking our plight and rejoicing in our misery.

“Lads,” said the first mate, as we clung there, gazing helplessly at the cliff, “it’s hard saying it, but I fear this is the end. The poor old ship won’t stand much more, and she will go to pieces under us. We had better prepare for the worst, lads, as many another seaman has had to do in his time.”

Perhaps it was his hurt that made him seem so hopeless, but at any rate there was no

questioning the truth of his words. It seemed as if the poor fellows who had already gone were the most fortunate ; for we had endured the tortures of the night, and would have to share their fate in the end.

“There is one thing we might do,” he went on thoughtfully, “and that is, cut a few lines away. They may come in handy, and if any of us get ashore, they may serve to help the rest.”

Well, there wasn't much chance of getting ashore ; but still, the cutting away of the lines would serve to occupy thought, and the exercise might put a little warmth into my frozen, stiffened limbs ; so I at once offered to carry out the order. My own knife had been lost by John Judge, but the mate handed me his—a big clasp-knife—which I opened and put between my teeth ; and so I started working my way aloft again. I got to the topmast head, and worked away there, and then started to go higher, when—I started ; I could not think but that my senses were leaving me. There, through the grey, misty light I saw a face—a white, haggard face—looking across at me from the cliff. Was I wandering—was it a ghost—or what ? No, it was a real face, it belonged to one of the crew. There, on the cliff, was one of our ordinary seamen—a Russian Finn, Michael Pul by name !

My word, how I yelled to those below ! That sight put new life into me. A sailor can go anywhere with a rope, providing he has someone to fasten the other end for him—and here was someone now.

“Come up. Come up! Pul is on the cliff!” I yelled and all the time I was hard at work cutting away one of our new topsail spilling lines—a good, reliable rope, as it needed to be seeing that over it all of us were to pass to safety.

One end I made fast to the upper top-gallant yard-arm, and then hove the other end to Pul, which he secured to the craggy part of the cliff; and there we had a bridge. Those angry waves might rear and leap now as much as they would. They might pound the shattered timbers of the *Dundonald*. Across that bridge, hand over hand, we were going to swing to the spot where Pul, and, to our surprise, two others, stood waiting to receive us.

And as we gathered, we heard a faint cry of distress from the cliff; and there we saw two more of our companions, perched on a very narrow ledge of rock just above the reach of the waves; though the heavy spray drenched them again and again.

They were in an awful position, for they could not get up or down; and as we then were we could not help them. But we shouted words of encouragement, and commenced our journey—a hard and painful one for men who were cut and bleeding, half frozen, and all suffering from being nearly drowned. We were all so weak that we could hardly crawl; but still the hope of safety acted like a spur; and, one by one, we all got across, though we had to cut a length of line and make a bowline for the first mate to sit in, for he

was so nearly done, that he had no strength left.

However, by the mercy of God we all got across ; and then at once we went to the rescue of the other two, and hove them the line which we had with us—only to find that it was too short.

Well, there was but one way out of that ; we had to strand the rope. It was hard work for our fingers, numbed so that they had lost all feeling, but it was done ; and though the line was not nearly so strong, it was long enough, and at last they managed to get hold of it.

But they were so terribly weak, that they had not the power to swarm up to us ; so we had to haul them up, one at a time, over the rocky face of that awful cliff. Poor fellows, they were terribly punished ; and when at last we had them on top, they were so cut and gashed, that it was a hard job to recognize them.

Well, there we were, a group of shivering, bleeding castaways, standing on the edge of those black cliffs in the grey light of the morning, whilst below us the waves dashed, and the masts of our poor ship stuck up like gravestones marking where she lay. We mustered to see who had gone and who was spared—alas ! spared for what terrible fate ? we asked ourselves as we stood there. Twenty-eight men we had been, all told, and now but sixteen were left ; and many of them little better than dying. Our brave captain was gone, and his son Jimmy ;

and no stone may mark the grave where they sleep, in those far southern seas.

Well, we gathered there in desperate plight, and yet our spirits rose, for it does not take much to make a sailor cheerful. The mates declared that we were on Auckland Island; and they said confidently that there was a Government depôt on the island.

These depôts are huts erected by the Government, and furnished with stores, and frequently boats. They are noted on the charts, so that in the event of mariners being cast away, as we then were, they might get food and clothes, and the chance of existing, until a relief ship came to the station.

Well, the mates were positive that there was a depôt, if not more than one, on Auckland Island; and if it was there, we were the ones who meant to find it.

“We have got to make for the north-east,” the mate declared. “There is a depôt there, and another in the south somewhere.”

And so we started off, and we didn't mind how soon we got there, for we were all desperately hungry, having had nothing to eat since the first dog-watch the day before.

Daylight was fully in now, and we tramped forward with some heart, forgetting our past trials in the hope of speedy succour. But it was a hard road that we had to travel, for we seemed to be on the side of a mountain, which went up and up, in some places almost too steep for climbing. But it had to be taken, for the road north-east led across that mountain, and in the

north-east the depôt would be found. We saw no trees—only great masses of a low bush, something like blackberry. There was a good deal of coarse, scrubby grass, but—and it was for this we looked most eagerly—we saw never a sight of water; and water was the one thing which we most needed now.

Still, there might be plenty the other side of the mountain; and so we toiled on, often having to stop from utter weakness, staggering like so many drunken men, racked with pain in every limb, but ever creeping on and on, towards the north-east.

And as we toiled along we noticed that there was an immense number of a certain species of sea bird, which we call mollyhawks, nesting there. These mollyhawks are a species of the Fulmar Petrel, and are about nineteen inches long when they are full-grown. They stared at us as if not able to make out what sort of creatures we were, but they did not attempt to fly away when we went near them; and, as we said to one another, it seemed quite certain that if the worst came to the worst we could find something to eat for a while, even if mollyhawk flesh is not the nicest thing imaginable.

We had toiled half way up the mountain side, when, suddenly and swiftly, our journey was stayed by the mist, which came thick, silent, sudden, and blotted out the whole of the scene.

We did not dare attempt to move forward through that, for we knew nothing of what perils might be in our pathway—what deep rivers, what yawning precipices. A thousand

dangers might be before us ; so, though we were all eager to continue, the mate called a halt, and we gathered on the bare ground, faint with hunger, and perished with cold ; whilst, to add to our misery, with the mist came the rain—not a gentle rain, but torrents of it, like streams of ice-cold water.

Now, our plight seemed quite as bad as it had been when we were on the wreck. I cannot describe that cold—it was something which is unknown in Britain, even in the worst of winters. We trembled with it, so that we could not keep still ; and, as the rain beat upon us, we felt that we were sinking into a thick mess of muddy slush.

Most of us, too, had very little clothing ; and the majority of us had kicked off our boots, as I had done, to secure a last chance if we had been cast into the sea. Our feet were frozen and wounded ; and altogether our plight was one truly miserable.

And now we were hungry—so hungry that we felt maddened ; and at last some of us thought of the nestling mollyhawks, and set off to catch one—that must have been about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Well, it did not prove a very hard task to get the birds, but there was no way of cooking them ; we could only skin them and eat them raw, tearing their warm flesh with our teeth, like wild beasts.

I know that will sound very terrible to my readers, but then none of them can possibly know what being so hungry as we were means.

I have often thought, since, how often people turn up their noses at good food—as I have done myself—and here I was glad to have a feed of raw mollyhawk, rending the flesh with my teeth—too hungry even to shudder at such a horrible meal.

And still the rain kept steadily on, and still the mist lay thick all around, and we were unable to move; so, clustering together there, we told each other of our adventures; and I heard how the two fellows came to be upon that ledge of rock, and also how Pul and his two comrades managed to get ashore.

When the lifebelts had been served out, and the majority of us had gone forward to the fore-castle with the captain, there were some six or seven men who stayed aft, thinking that, after all, they would stand a better chance there; and, indeed, in that they were right, as afterwards turned out.

These men were my old friend Low, who had sailed with me in the *Commonwealth*; the steward, Mr. Smith, who was a very big man, weighing nearly twenty stone, and hailing from Falmouth; Harry Walters, a Norwegian A.B.; Michael Pul, Robert Ellis, O.S., of Adelaide; John Grattan, an Irishman, better known as Mickey; and Herman Queerfelt, the German. These men stayed aft together, whilst all the rest of the crew sought refuge under the fore-castle-head.

Now, when the *Dundonald* started sinking forward, the steward shook hands with Harry Walters—for they had been shipmates before

in a barque called the *Dunreggan*—and he wished him good-bye ; and then, with a set, white face he walked into the cabin, and shut the door behind him. Different men have different ways in the face of death—some like to cluster together as if for mutual comfort ; but Mr. Smith shut himself away, perhaps to wait alone on his knees until his God called to him.

Be it as it may, he had not been in the cabin very many minutes before there was an explosion inside. The compressed air blew the skylight right out, hurling it full sixteen feet into the air, and almost at the same moment the charthouse on the poop was washed overboard ; whilst every boat was smashed, and the skids broken down by the heavy seas that swept aboard. That was the last that they saw of the steward, for the ship was going down fast, and they had to dash to the rigging for refuge.

Robert Ellis and Mickey managed to swarm up one of the mizzen topmast backstays, and from there to reach the upper topsail-yard, which was close in to the cliff. For you will remember that since the *Dundonald* had run in stern first, the mizzen-mast and the jigger were much nearer to the cliff than the foremast upon which the rest of us had taken refuge.

Well, these two had crawled along the upper top sail-yard, and with great difficulty and danger they managed to get off on to the ledge, where we afterwards found them, only to discover that they had hardly mended their plight by the

exchange. It was true they were no longer on the breaking vessel, but they were in a tight corner ; for below was a sheer drop into the sea, and above, the cliff towered almost straight—indeed, bulging out over them if anything.

They had passed an awful night, being more cramped and frozen than any of us, and they had given up all hope when they were seen by us, and hauled into safety.

Now, there were four men aft when the ship went down—Low, Pul, Walters and Queerfelt ; and these, headed by Low, made a dive for the jigger-rigging, the jigger being the *Dundonald's* fourth mast—the one nearest the stern.

Through the swirl of the seas that closed over the ship they forced their way to this haven of temporary safety, crowding together there and expecting to go down every moment.

But the jigger was right close to the face of the cliff, and Low, swarming up, made his way to the top-mast-head, and examined the situation ; whilst the other three hung on for dear life, waiting to hear from him, whether they had any chance of escape, and knowing nothing of what had befallen us away in the forepart of the ship.

Presently Low came making his way back, and his first words filled them with hope ; for he declared that the jigger-topmast was hard against the cliffs, and that, bad as they looked, they were not impossible to climb.

“ I can put my foot on the cliff,” he said in his quiet, confident manner, “ and I mean to try it. If I can only get ashore with a piece of rope,

I can save all hands—that is, if any are left alive save us four.”

Well, the other three felt a bit cheered, and they followed Low as he made his way back to the cliff. It was a chance, but it was a dog's one, so risky that it seemed only going to death a little the quicker to them as they looked.

There at the top-mast head the cliff rose black as night, glistening with the rain and the spray ; whilst as to path of any sort, there was not one safe enough for a mouse to climb, let alone a man. And it was up that steep cliff they must go if they were to escape the death which awaited them where they were.

With a heart of courage and cheery words, Low led the way, ever one of the first to brave peril and toil ; and the others, taking heart of grace, followed in his footsteps.

Queerfelt was the one next to Low, and he had hardly started on his journey when from above there came a shower of loose stones and gravel, so that he had a very narrow shave of being carried down. But he clung on with finger-nails and toes, and he fancied that through the darkness there came a muffled cry, and that something big and heavy whizzed by him. He thought it a big boulder displaced by Low above. But when at last—breathless, bleeding, bruised—he and the two behind him reached the summit, no Low was to be seen ; nor did we ever see him again.

That shower of stones was occasioned when he slipped, that cry was his last cry, that heavy body whizzing past in the darkness was he falling

into the angry waters that fretted and warred against the foot of the cliff which he had so bravely tried to climb. God rest him for the brave man and the true shipmate that he was to all who sailed with him !

So these three men—Pul, Walters and Queerfelt—got ashore, and that without getting a sea over them ; though, of course, they were drenched with rain. And therefore they were in a better plight than the rest of us who had been nigh drowned, and who were just upon finished when we made the land.

Such were the stories they told us as we camped out there in the open, shivering and wretched, with no shelter from the pitiless rain. The mist showed no signs of lifting, so there was nothing for it but to stay where we were, and pass the night there ; and we were so utterly exhausted that we had not the strength to try and crawl an inch. We just lay down full length on the mud, and let the rain beat upon us, and the wind howl around us ; whilst from below we could hear the angry roar of the sea.

Is it to be wondered at if we thought of our companions who had gone ? They at any rate were at rest, and would feel hunger and cold no more. The mates tried to keep our spirits up, though the first mate was suffering terribly himself. He tried not to show it, but kept telling us that the mist would go in the morning, and that then we should be able to find the *depôt*.

But what a night of suffering that was !

I was huddled up with the Chilian, Santiago Marino. He had his sea boots on, so he did not suffer quite so much; but I had naked feet, and I could have screamed with the agony of the cold in them. It was so bad that at last I tried to dig a hole in the ground with my nails, and, putting my feet into it, covered them with the muddy earth, and so got a little warmth into them. It was a poor sort of blanket that, and I lay groaning beneath my breath, praying for the light.

Presently Santiago suggested that we should be no worse off if we got up, and went to get some more mollyhawks. The warm flesh might put a little life into us, whilst if we stayed as we were we should probably be dead by the morning.

So we went together and had another dreadful feed, and yet it seemed to put new life into us. And then we waited and waited, until at last the day broke, and as the light grew stronger the mist lifted and drifted away, and we were free to continue our journey once more.

Wet, covered with mud, the most pitiable objects that ever were seen, we staggered on, helping each other up when we fell, not making a mile an hour, but never giving up, urged on by the inspiring thought that at the end of the march we should find food and the means of getting a fire.

Now we were travelling over sharp, rocky ground, which cut and wounded our feet until we left a trail of blood behind us; and then we would be going through long, rank grass, sinking up to our ankles in liquid mud. And so we

went on, on, up and up, ever drawing nearer to the summit, crawling at last on hands and knees—on and on, until at last the goal was reached, and we stood casting eager eyes around.

But why do those groans of bitter disappointment escape our lips, and why do we stare so wildly into each other's haggard faces? Oh, the bitter mockery of it! All our hard, wearisome, agonising climb had been for nothing! We were not on Auckland Island at all! That lay far away, with a good six miles of angry, fiercely-running sea between us and it.

We were on a bleak, barren island about three miles long and two wide. No trace of water, no sign of life of any sort could we see! All silence, all mountain, and scrub and loneliness, and all around the waves which, if we had escaped them, would now shut us in to die of starvation. We did not know the name of the island then, yet in our minds we named it aright—it was indeed Disappointment Island!

CHAPTER IV.

WE GET A FIRE GOING.

THERE lay the island upon which we had hoped we were cast, a good six miles away ; and as we stood upon that mountain-top, whichever way we turned our despairing eyes there were abundant signs of the inhospitable nature of the place upon which we had managed to land.

Everywhere the black rock cropped up in great masses, and, look where we would, we could discern no trace of life. Silence and desolation reigned here ; solitude had made this place her habitation.

“What is to be done ?”

Sick, faint, so weak that we could hardly stand, we looked into each other's faces and put that question. The death in the waves would have been quicker and more merciful than a lingering death from thirst and starvation here.

But whilst there was life there was hope, and even in our desperate plight that hope did not entirely desert us.

“It is no use thinking of reaching that island now,” observed the first mate. And I shook my head.

“Not the slightest. It is the Island of Dreams to which we can never get.”

Why I should have called it by that name I cannot say, but the words came to my tongue, and as the Island of Dreams it was known to me until the day when I at last trod upon its shore, and it became a reality—a horrible, torturing reality at first.

“Well, it’s no use standing here, staring over as though we thought we could get across that way,” said one of the crowd. “We have got to find fresh water, or it’s all over with us. And perhaps there may be a depôt on this island. You don’t know.”

Those words put fresh hope into us, and we decided, weak as we were, to split up into parties, and thoroughly explore the island.

There were five parties, and, parting from each other, we agreed to meet at a spot in the centre of the island later on, and to keep a sharp look-out for fresh water.

Weary and faint, we dragged our feet over those desert paths, casting eager glances in every direction in the hopes of seeing some pool or spring.

“There is a pool!”

The cry broke joyfully from the lips of one of my party, and we dashed forward eagerly. Oh, how we longed to throw ourselves down and drink and drink! The desire put new life into us, and urged our weary feet; but when we reached the spot, and bent down to drink, we gave groans of disappointment. The water was salt and bitter—not as salt

as sea-water, truly, but too salt to be good for us.

But it was water, and the madness of thirst had got hold of us. We drank, reckless of what would follow, so long as our thirst was quenched. And then we went on, and the effects of our rashness soon made itself felt. Burning thirst attacked us, and our bodies seemed cramped with pain. I expect that, as the rock was volcanic, this water must have been full of mineral salts, and they were affecting us now.

Nothing to be seen—no sign of life of any sort. We wandered for hours, and at last made our way to the appointed rendezvous, and threw ourselves down, too weary and weak to care what became of us; and then, by twos and threes, the rest came straggling in, and each and all had the same tale to tell. The island was absolutely barren, and no fresh water was to be found.

“There must be fresh water,” the mate declared. “It stands to reason the rain—and there is plenty of that—must collect somewhere. We must persevere, and find it.”

Persevere! We had neither strength nor heart to do it. We felt that we could just lay there and die. And then, all of a sudden, the sun came out and shone brightly—the first time for days.

Oh, how good that seemed! How we lay and basked in its beams! How it seemed to whisper hope to us! It put new life into us,

and we felt that we would not give up whilst one of us had strength to crawl.

Seated there, we consulted upon ways and means, and the general opinion was that we ought to go back to the wreck and see if we could manage to get anything from her.

Of course, she was submerged, all but the masts, but, still, something might have floated to the shore ; and in our present plight things which at other times would have been regarded as useless might be more valuable than the costliest treasures.

“Let us go and see how things are, lads,” said the first mate, trying hard to repress all signs of his suffering. “It will give us something to do ; and anything is better than sitting here idle.”

And so most of us started. Some few remained, for they were too weak and spiritless to move ; but the larger part of us commenced to descend towards the wreck, though what we hoped to find we could not tell.

But it was hard work, and ere we were half-way down most of us had stopped and thrown ourselves on the ground. We were too weak to go farther, too sick and faint from lack of food, and the effects of that salt water. The three men who had got ashore from the jigger had the most go in them, for they had not been half-drowned, as all the rest of us had been.

And now the sun went in again, and the grey clouds came back, and with them a chill, damp wind that seemed to cut us to the bones

—that made us tremble as with ague. Oh, the cold on that bleak mountain-side, and we were too weak to resist it!

From where we were we could see the wreck, and we perceived that the fore-royal mast had gone, and the yard as well. The sea was doing its work, and destroying the wreck piecemeal.

Panting with weakness, the first mate lay there, and the second was by his side, and I heard him mutter to himself:

“If we could only start a fire! We shall all perish without one! Oh, what would I give for a box of matches now!”

A box of matches!

Like a flash the remembrance of that box which I had taken from John Puhze came back. I had put it in my pocket, and forgotten it until now.

“I have got some!” I fairly shrieked. “Don’t you remember the box I took from Puhze? I put them in my pocket, and they are here now.”

We gathered round, a clustering, eager throng, as I took them out. The box was all soaked with water—that was to be expected, seeing that I had been dragged under when the ship sank—but at the bottom there were some that did not seem very wet. They might light, perhaps.

“Thank God!” the words came from the mate’s lips. Those matches might mean a fire, and a fire now was everything. Another night in that cold, and we should all die.

But even with the matches how could we get a fire? You try and start one with nothing but a match and wood, and see how hard it is!

Harry Walters took them from me, for I felt so done that I could not have struck one to save my life—my hands trembled too much. Walters had most go in him then, and, standing there, his keen eye detected some dead bushes down below, where some of the blackberry-like growth had withered away.

“That stuff ought to burn,” he observed thoughtfully. “I will go and have a try.”

And with two or three of the strongest at his heels, he went down to the spot, whilst the rest of us sat huddled up, staring after them with wild, hollow eyes, and hardly daring to hope that they would ever succeed.

But they did! After a long time—so it seemed to us—we saw smoke—a little thin wreath at first, and then denser masses—and we struggled to our feet and staggered down to the spot. They had a fire! How we clustered round it, holding out our perished fingers to the blaze!

“Get more wood—plenty of wood! Tear up whole armfuls! Let us have a fire—a blessed fire to warm us, to dry our clothes, to thaw our frozen blood!”

It seemed to wake us up. It wants such a little to rekindle hope! Why, if we had a fire, we might have everything. And now that we had the fire we would not let it go out again.

“Now, lads,” advised the second mate as we

sat there, "the day is getting on, and if we mean to try and get anything from the wreck we had better see about it at once."

"What can we get?" asked one man. "There is nothing but her sticks standing above water."

"And the sticks have ropes, and spars, and good sails on them," was the answer. "And a sail makes a good tent, and that's better than lying out in the open as we did last night."

There was reason in that, and so most of us started off to the wreck, after having made up a big fire that would burn for a long time. I say most of us, because we were not all there—a lot had scattered all over the place, looking for food or water; but as they saw the smoke rising from the fire they began to make their way back, wondering how ever we had managed to get it going.

We got down close to the wreck, though it was very dangerous work going down, especially for men as weak as we were, whose heads were spinning round from the effects of that salt water, and when we got close to the place where we had come ashore, we could see that the fore-top-gallant yard—that is, the one across which we had got to the cliff—was now almost touching the cliff face, not more than a foot or two from it; so that, though it was not as easy as walking upstairs, we managed to get on to it, and we started right away to unbend the fore-top-gallant sail. After which we started on the gaff-topsail.

It was risky business, for the ship was breaking up beneath the waves, and the masts might go

at any moment. Indeed, we could feel them tremble as the seas struck them.

But it was neck or nothing with us, and we dared that which, under other conditions, we should not have attempted; and, with a lot of hard work—hard, that is, for us in the condition we were in—we managed to get the two sails clear, and, having secured lines to them, we hauled them up on to the top of the cliff, and carried them round to the lee side, where we might hope for some sort of shelter from wind and rain. And it was raining again now as hard as ever, so that our fire hissed as the water fell upon it, and our clothes were once more saturated.

“Now, lads,” directed the second mate, as brave and cheery as ever, “we want to pull up a lot of sods as big as we can and build a wall.”

The first mate lay there, sheltered by the sail, and the rest of us went to work with a will, tearing up great tufts of the coarse grass, and piling them up in a sort of wall about two feet high.

When we thought that the wall was high enough, we took the canvas and stretched it over from the top to the ground. Then we piled more sods—a lot of them—on the canvas to prevent it being blown away, and there we had some sort of lean-to tent—not much of a shelter, truly, but something for which we were very thankful.

And all the time our fire was blazing away merrily, and the flames sounded quite cheerful as they roared in the wind.

“That’s the style!” we cried. “Now we have fire and mansion, and the next thing is to get dinner ready.”

Dinner! That reminded us that we were hungry, for we had had nothing to eat all that day. There was no occasion to inquire what we were to have; the only things were mollyhawks, and we were thankful that there were plenty of them, and that they were so tame.

“Now then, who is coming bird catching?” was the query; and off some of us started to pay our respects to the mollyhawks, which sat on their nests and stared at us, or else opened their great hooked beaks and hissed angrily, as if informing us that they did not like our being there. However, stares and hisses were of no avail; we just grabbed them. Squark, squark! they would go; and then they squarked no more, for we had wrung their necks. It was not very exciting; but, then, we were not out for excitement—we were looking for food.

When we had got enough we gathered up our spoils and bore them back to the camp, where the fellows, who had not been catching them, had to turn in and do their share by cooking them.

The cooking was rather primitive. We just skinned the birds, and stuck them on a pointed stick which lay on the embers, and left them there for about half-an-hour. The birds were rather burnt on the outside, but we were not particular. We did not grumble because we had no sauce or gravy or things of that kind;

nor because they were burnt on the outside, and somewhat underdone on the in. No, we just sat down and busied ourselves with getting as much mollyhawk into our bodies as we could ; and we thought that it was a good deal better than eating them raw, as we had been compelled to do before.

Our precious matches we tried to dry. Some of them were useless, but others were all right, and they were now the most valued of all our scanty possessions.

Our meal finished, we tidied up, which meant that we were going to pitch the birds' skins away ; but one of our crowd prevented us, saying that we might be very glad of those feathers presently. The motto for castaways on desert islands seems to be : " Don't waste anything, for you never know when you may be glad of it." At any rate, we did not throw away the skins ; and presently, when we made rugs of them, we were very glad to have them to use in that way.

Well, our meal over, we got a whole lot of wood and piled it up by the fire, and then, as it was now growing dark, we determined to see about our sleeping arrangements—or rather, about our waking arrangements.

" It will never do for us all to turn in together," said the mate. " Some of us must keep by the fire, and see that it does not go down. A ship might pass in the night, though it is unlikely, and if our signal is seen, we may be rescued ; whereas, if the fire goes out, they may remain in ignorance of our being here and so our chance may be lost."

Well, there was good reason in that, and so we decided that we would take watches, two at a time, whilst the rest slept.

The mate would have taken his place, but we would not listen to that. He was far too ill—so ill that he could not eat the mollyhawk flesh like the rest of us. God help us! We could do nothing for him, but we could let him rest in peace; and so we decided that he was not to take a watch, but get all the rest he could.

So, after making up the fire, we turned in, leaving two of our number on watch. And how grateful we were for that canvas! Even if the rain did find its way through, and the wind howl and tear around it, we were a little better off than we had been in the piercing cold of the previous night.

My turn to watch came last, and I had an Australian, named Bob Ellis, an ordinary seaman, for my companion.

I shall never forget that watch. It was one of the most weird experiences that I ever had in my life.

We sat in the shelter of the tent, our sleeping companions inside, and at once there was a sense of silence and noise. I know that sounds strange, and yet I can only describe it in that way.

Noise there was. The wind moaned and sobbed, and then screamed again all around until it seemed like the cries of some demons in torment; and mingling with the wind came the deeper roar of the sea as it fretted and beat at the foot of the cliff.

Then, again and again, rising above these deeper sounds, there would come the shrill screams of the night birds and seagulls—strange eerie sounds that made one start and shiver as they listened.

And yet with it all there was that oppressive sense of solitude. We were a handful of poor castaways, far from the track of ships, away almost upon the Antarctic circle, with the wild seas stretching far around on all sides. We seemed shut away so far—so very far—from all our kind; and greater than the night winds, the murmuring sea, or the screaming birds, the brooded silence settled down upon us as we sat there, our faces red with the glare of the fire, and listened to the deep breathing, or the restless moaning, of our companions in distress.

“Think we will ever get away, Bob?” I asked as we sat there; and he shook his head.

“God knows, Charles! We are in a desperate plight, that is certain. If we could only make the other island!”

Ah, if! But that seemed impossible. The Island of Dreams mocked us, and the sea forbade our reaching it.

“The mate seems very bad,” I said presently, as a moan came from our tent; and he nodded.

“He’s a dying man, Charlie! He is starving to death! God help him. He can’t tackle the birds, and that water is just poison to him!”

“It is to all of us,” I answered. “If we don’t find fresh water soon it will be a case with all of us!”

Slowly the intense darkness melted, and dawn broke, cold, grey and cheerless ; and then I got up, and went and killed half-a-dozen birds, bringing them to Bob Ellis, who cooked them.

“ I saw a lot of seaweed a bit lower down,” he said. “ I have heard of fellows eating that, and finding it agree with them. Iceland moss is only a sort of seaweed. Suppose we try a bit, Charlie, to give the birds a flavour ? ”

“ Right you are ! ” I agreed ; and off I went and gathered a lot of it. “ There now, we have vegetables with the poultry,” I said. And Bob nodded, intimating that the birds were ready for eating.

Mollyhawk and seaweed is not as bad as it sounds when you are really hungry. The seaweed had a strange, salty, medicine-like taste, but we did not grumble at that ; and when we had finished our meal, the other fellows came crawling out from under the canvas, and wanted to know whether we had got their breakfast ready.

But in this case it was “ first catch your breakfast, and then cook it ” ; and so they started off to get their birds, and make up the fire, which was beginning to go down now.

But the great trouble was our want of water. That salt stuff seemed to send us off our heads and make us half stupid, and it did not really quench our thirst. Water we must find, or things would be very serious with us all.

“ It is my belief that there is none on the island, and, therefore, we have got to leave it,”

said Harry Walters ; and some of us looked as if we thought that he had gone off his head.

“How can we leave it, man ? You tell us a way, and we will clear fast enough.”

“Make a raft,” suggested Walters ; and the rest of us shook our heads.

“A raft means timber. Where are we to get it ? There is not a tree growing on the island, and you cannot make a raft out of this bramble wood which we are burning.”

“There is timber there !” retorted Walters stubbornly ; and he jerked his thumb in the direction of the wreck. “There are good stout spars there, and we are sitting here, and letting the sea smash them up and carry them away, when they might mean everything to us !”

“And how are we going to get them ?” I asked. “It’s no use talking like that, Walters. Suppose that we could manage to unparrel two or three of the yards and get them down—and it’s a question whether we could even do that—how are we going to get them ashore ? There is no beach, and there is a big sea running.”

“It might be done,” he persisted. But the second mate shook his head.

“I am afraid not, lad. There are sixty fathoms of water here if there is a foot. I think Eyre is right. We could never get the spars ashore.”

“We might try it. It is impossible to get them ashore here where the wreck is, I own ; but if we could tow them round the point, we might manage it, for you can get down to the water’s

edge on that side. It is only six miles to the other island, and I reckon that we ought to manage that distance on a raft."

"It is sheer madness to think of it!" I declared; and most of the others were of my opinion.

"Suppose that we managed to get them and make the raft, we couldn't steer it properly, and, as there is sure to be a strong current between the two islands, we should be away to the southward before we were half-way across."

"We have got to die if we stay here," Walters retorted. "I don't see it makes much difference which way the end comes, and, if there is a chance, I am for taking it."

"Shure, then, Walters is right there!" said Ellis. "We can't be worse off."

"That we can. We are on solid ground here, and we have food of a kind; whilst we are certain to find water if we are patient."

"Well, I can't do it by myself," Walters muttered, "and if no one will help me—why, the thing must fall through. But it is a shame to see those spars drifting out to sea, and not make an effort to get any of them."

"Walters is right there," said I. "I don't think much of the raft idea; but if we could get one of the spars, we might be very glad of it by-and-by."

"Well, I am ready to try it," Mr. Maclaghan said. And so we rose and went down to have a look at things. By this time most of the stragglers had come in, but still no one had found fresh water.

We stood there, regarding the wreck critically. As I have said, the fore-royal mast had gone, but after a lot of consultation we decided that it might be possible to send down the fore-upper-top-gallant yard.

We knew that we had a hard and risky job before us. It is not a little matter to send down a big spar at any time ; but now we were all weak, and our food was disagreeing with us, and, moreover, the ship, sunken as it was, was breaking up rapidly, and we did not know how long the mast would stand, or whether it might not go bodily, and carry us all down with it.

"It seems to me that we are taking a lot of trouble for nothing," I said, "We shall never get that spar ashore, even if we manage to send it down."

"Well, it will give us something to do," answered the second mate ; "and if Walters thinks that there is a chance, let us take it."

So we all set to work, and hard work it was, too, not having a marline spike, or anything with which to unshackle the gear. We first of all had to cut away all the lines we could reach ; and, if we did nothing more than secure these, we were getting something well worth our trouble. Then we bent a few lengths on the short end of the yard, and made them fast ashore. So far the work was light, but it would be heavier presently.

Our next step was to unshackle the halliards, lifts, foot-ropes, and all the rest of the gear, so that the yard was clear ; and before this was done, night had come on, so we had to leave our

task, get back to the tent, get plenty of wood for the fire, and a supply of mollyhawks and seaweed for our evening meal.

The poor mate was now in a very weak state, and lay most of his time beneath the canvas, now moaning with pain, and now half delirious and talking of all manner of things. It was the most trying part of all to see him like that, and not be able to help him. We could not even boil some of the mollyhawk flesh, and give him the broth, for we had no vessel to do it in.

We went back to our task in the morning, and once more got to work on the yard, and it was not until the evening was drawing on that we had got everything ready and at last let it go with a run into the sea.

It went down with a tremendous splash, and was swirled round by the waves ; and then we knew how fierce was the surging current which swept round the island, for it was all we could do to hold it, as the water strove to drag it away.

And now commenced what, in one way, was the most difficult part of all our task, for, as I have said, we could not have possibly got it ashore there. But if we could manage to get it round the other side of the point where there was something approaching a bay, and where you could get to the water's edge, we might be able to get it up.

But to get it round was a task which seemed beyond our strength, and, indeed, for men in health it would have been a hard job ; and at last, as we were hauling on the line by which

we held it, and had indeed got it half-way round, the towline broke, and we had the mortification of seeing the spar, which had cost us two days' hard work and perilous labour, drift away to sea.

"I said so," I could help not saying. "We have had all the trouble for nothing." And then we sadly wended our way back to the camp, and all hopes of raft-building were at an end.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEATH OF MR. PETERS, THE CHIEF OFFICER.

“It is no use staying here any longer. Water we must have, and there is none to be found round this spot.”

It was Bob Ellis who spoke, and he looked across at me. We were sitting together, talking over the situation.

“It would be rank madness if we were to go on drinking this stuff, Charlie,” he continued hoarsely, and I nodded.

“I don’t think the others will move,” I said, and he growled out that in that case he would go alone.

“It’s silliness stopping. We don’t know what is on the other side. We have only seen it from the top of the mountain. We know there is nothing here, though.”

“The chief officer will not be able to move,” I said.

“That’s so. But some of us can go. At any rate, I am going.”

“Well,” I answered, after a pause, “I am with you. It’s no catch staying here.”

“Catch! It’s death, boy, and we know it. I am going. You come with me. Let’s tell the others, and if they don’t care to come, they can stay away.”

So we went back to the camp and told the others; and as Ellis had hinted, most of the crowd didn’t seem inclined to move. I think that the suffering had got into their blood, and it made them feel that they didn’t care to try any more.

The first mate would not go—indeed, he could not, he was far too weak; and Mr. Maclaghlan and the third officer, Karl Knudsen, would not leave him.

“If you fellows like to go and search, you do it,” said the second. “I am afraid that it is the same all round. Look here, you can have one of the sails—you can’t be without a shelter—and if anything comes of it, you can let us know.”

Well, four or five of the others decided to throw in their lot with us; for, as Ellis had said, they couldn’t be worse off than they were, and they might be a great deal better in the end.

So we stopped up the gaff-topsail, and left the other one with our mates; and then, early one morning, we started off on our tramp, not knowing what might be before us. We took three or four of our precious matches with us, so that we might be able to make a fire; and off we went upon our long tramp, and I do not think that I shall ever forget it.

That sail hampered us terribly. We had to

carry it in the usual manner, each man taking a bit over his shoulder, and so we toiled up the steep hillside, and waded through the mud and tangled grass; and all the time we had wind and rain beating upon us until we fairly staggered; and with the wind and rain showers of hail and sleet. It was a good job in one way, as the exercise kept us warm, or we might have been frozen to death in the awful biting, southerly wind—a wind blowing right from the eternal ice of the Atlantic, and bearing the Frost King's biting breath in its every blast.

Every hundred yards or so we had to rest, panting and breathless; but we ever shouldered our burden again, and kept doggedly on, forgetting fatigue in our determination to make the other side of the island, or perish in the attempt.

But determination, though it can do much, cannot stand out against exhausted nature; and by late in the afternoon we were all properly done, and could not crawl another yard, so we were compelled to stay where we were, and make our camp for the night.

All through that day we had neither food nor drink; and we had been reduced to such a state, that we had actually plucked at the grass and weeds, and had striven to eat them, in the hopes that they would stay the horrible torments of hunger and thirst, in some measure.

As long as we could, we had staggered on; but at last we had to drop the sail, and cast ourselves down on the earth.

“We must stop here,” we declared, and so with one of our precious matches we started a fire, though we could only find a very small supply of wood to keep it going. Plenty of grass; but grass was no use for a fire.

Not far away from our camp we saw plenty of mollyhawks; and so two or three of us went to catch some for a meal; when all of a sudden there came a yell—something like an awful shriek—from one of them, and then the words:

“Water! Water! Thank God, here is fresh water!”

Water! You cannot imagine how we rushed to the spot. There seemed to be but one desire in the world—to throw ourselves down, and drink and drink, until we could contain no more.

Water! Only water in a little pool, with dead grass and slime floating on it; and yet never, in all my life, have I tasted any drink so absolutely delicious as was that first drink of fresh water, away there on Disappointment Island.

Water! It put new life into us. It cooled our fevered blood, it cleared our muddled heads; we were new men. We could face anything, dare anything, endure anything, now that we had had a drink of fresh water.

Then we killed a couple of mollyhawks each, and having cooked them and had our meal, we banked up our fire, so that it might smoulder all night; and all together we crept beneath the sail, and drew it clean over us; and so, all crowded together for warmth, we managed

to sleep better that night, in spite of the tempest that howled all the mountain over.

Next morning at daybreak we were astir, and had our fire made up; and then, after another drink and some food, we gathered round and held council as to what was best to be done.

“It is no use talking of stopping here,” said Ellis. “You see, boys, in the first place, we must have wood, and there is no more here; and in the next, we are in the right place for getting frozen.”

And that was right, for our camp was right on top of a mountain-like hill, and exposed to south and south-westerly winds; and as I have said, those winds were terribly cold, and hail and snow came up on them; and we most of us were thinly clad.

Of course, we were loath to leave the water, but, as Ellis said, if we had found water here, there was no reason why we should not find it elsewhere also.

“We must make for the northern part,” I said, “where we shall be sheltered from the southerly winds, being to leeward of these high mountains.”

“The northern part it is,” said Bob, “so let’s get on with it.”

So we stopped up our sail, and were about to shoulder it again, when out of the long grass, not far away, we saw a man suddenly rise, and utter a yell of surprise as he beheld us.

“By the powers if it isn’t Mickey!” cried

Ellis, and Mickey, as we called John Gratton, it turned out to be.

“What the dickens are you doing about here, Mickey?” we asked. “Why, we thought that you were going to stay with the other crowd.”

“And so I was, my darlints,” he answered. “But sure, I felt that I’d like a change, or, maybe, it was your handsome face that I was after missing, Charlie. At any rate, I made up my mind to follow you soon after you had gone, but I must have missed you, or else you ran all the way, for not a sign of you could I see all the blessed day. And by that same, it is myself that is remembering that I am hungry, so, if you have got anything to eat, hand it over.”

“There’s better than something to eat, Micky. There is fresh water here; and——”

But before we could finish, Mickey had risen with a whoop, and was burying his head right in the pond, as if he meant to drink every drop of that water up.

“Now, don’t be after trying to disturb me,” he said, in reply to our protests. “Sure, it’s a lot of days I have got to be making up, since I had a drink like this. Don’t hinder me, boys. I have got a lot to do.” And he ducked his head into the pool again.

But even Mickey could not go on drinking for ever, and at last, with a sigh, he had to stop; and he sat looking up at us, his honest Irish face aglow with satisfaction.

“By the powers, boys, that’s the best drink

I've had this many a day!" he said. "Sure, then, you are not going away from this blessed spot, are you?"

"We are; and if you don't want to be frozen, you had better come, too," I said; and Mickey looked piteously at the water.

"Ochone! Why can't I be taking it with me, then?" he said. "It's a thousand pities to leave it behind."

"We shall find more Mickey," he was answered. "And perhaps we shall find other things, as well."

"Well, then, let's be going," he answered; and so up on our shoulders we hoisted the sail again, and once more we started upon the march.

How stiff we felt, to be sure, and how some of us limped!—for we had no coverings to our feet, and we were punished dreadfully as we toiled on; but as Mickey observed, "It was a good job there didn't seem to be either scorpions or serpents on the island."

Indeed, except for the mollyhawks, there did not seem to be any life at all, save the birds which we call night birds, because they only came out at night; and some albatross, which seemed very shy. Later on we caught some of these latter birds, and fastened bits of sail-cloth round their necks, with messages upon them, and cut their wings to distinguish them, in case they came back.

Come back they did, and that without the canvas; but we never heard whether they had been caught by men and had the messages re-

moved, or whether they had managed to pick them off themselves. The latter seemed the most probable, for surely if our messages had been received, someone would have come to rescue us from our terrible plight on that bleak island.

On and on we tramped, until in the afternoon we came to a valley which seemed to promise better things than the mountain had done. In the first place, we were sheltered somewhat, and in the next, there was plenty of wood and fresh water.

"It's about the best place we have seen," so we all declared, and we accordingly determined to make our camp here. We were not very far from the sea ; but as there must be some disadvantage in every position, we had a long way to go for the mollyhawks.

"That won't matter much," was Mickey's comment. "Sure, it will be giving us an appetite, to go after them."

Well, we started to make our camp—got a fire going, and went for a supply of birds ; and then we sat there and had our evening meal, and after that we turned in.

But that night it rained harder, I think, than it had done since we had been on the island—it literally poured down ; and soon the water was streaming through the canvas on top of us. That was a miserable night, indeed ! The ground beneath us was so sodden that our bodies sank into it, and the canvas above, soaked through, was no longer a means of shelter and warmth, but struck an icy

chill to our very marrow, so that we were glad when at last day broke, and we could get up.

The rain never ceased; but we had got so used to being drenched, and our clothes, or such rags as we had left, were so sodden, that we did not take any notice of it.

But the wet, the cold, the exertion and the bad food were working their dreadful work rapidly, and we were all in a terrible state of weakness. It is hardly any use trying to describe how weak we were, to anyone who has never undergone anything like our experiences—so weak that every movement seemed laborious—so weak that we felt as if every bit of strength was gone for ever.

In the Bible, Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, describes a man who is very weak through old age, and he speaks of "The keepers of the house trembling, and the strong men bowing themselves," by which he means a man's arms shaking with weakness, and his legs giving way beneath him. That is just how we were. And then he goes on to say: "The grasshopper shall be a burden."

That is a wonderful description of weakness; even the small weight of a grasshopper being more than a man can bear. Solomon knew what he was talking about. We were as weak as that—the grasshopper would have been a burden to us.

And think of it. We were in that big valley, the mountains around, the monotonous

grey sky above, and the rain pouring down, down without ceasing.

And away through the rain to the eastward we could see that other island, where we knew there was food and huts, and very likely a good boat. Only six miles away from us, such a very little way, and yet those six miles of angry sea might have been the whole width of the ocean—it would not have shut us off from safety more effectually if it had been.

We could only lie there, or stagger a few feet, and stare at it with longing eyes. It was enough to make men go mad; and looking back now, I wonder how it was that we kept our senses during those awful days. Later, when we grew stronger, we found plenty to do to occupy our minds; but it was different at first—ah, terribly, different!

All day and every day the rain kept on, until our fire hissed and spluttered with it, and it was hard work to keep it going. But we did that; for if it had once gone out we should not have managed to get another—and without a fire we should have died outright; and we discussed whether we ought not to go back and tell our companions that we had discovered fresh water.

But discussing was one thing and doing was another. We had the heart, but not the power; for there was not one amongst us who could have walked two hundred yards, let alone that awful distance back to the other fellows. We were so weak then, that

we did not much care whether we died or not.

And then, through the mist and rain, two deplorable-looking objects came staggering into our camp—falling, rising, crawling like children; and one of the two was our hitherto cheery second mate. Oh, how bad he looked; so gaunt, so wan—a mere bag of skin and bone; chilled with the cruel cold and burnt with fever! And these two had managed to crawl right across the island in search of us.

They told us that the other fellows had also found fresh water midway between the wreck and our first camping ground, but that all the men were in a pitiable state of weakness, hardly able to move. They had lost their fire, and had not been able to get another going; so they had broken their camp and had started after us, up that awful mountain. We shuddered as we thought of it; a strong man, well-shod, would have laughed at the journey; but to us—ah, who can tell what it was!

“Mr. Peters has got worse and worse,” they told us. “When we determined to come after you, we hoped that he would be able to walk, if we took easy stages; but he cannot. We managed to get him half way up the hill, but he couldn’t stand it. We don’t know what he would have done if it had not been for Knudsen—he is the strongest of us, and he has stuck to Mr. Peters splendidly. Santiago is next best man; and the

pair of them have done all that they could, but it is of no use"—and the words ended in something like a large sob.

"Where is the chief now?" we asked; and they told us that they had made him a little hut on the side of the hill, and had left him there with one of the other fellows who was also unable to move, and what food they had; and the rest were straggling on towards us, hoping that we might have fire.

Fire! Thank God we had that; and we tended it carefully, and got food ready for our mates as they should come in. The story of their sufferings seemed to put strength into us—we wanted to do what we could to help them.

And then one by one our poor comrades struggled in, to sink fainting beside the fire; and last came Knudsen, our sturdy Norwegian third officer. He had stayed to do what he could for Mr. Peters; and he was better off than the majority of us, for he had a good pair of boots, whilst our feet were all cut and festering.

And there away on the mountain-side, with the howling-winds and the drifting sleet, without fire, without hope, lay our brave first officer, dying; and we—we who would give our lives for him, or for each other—unable to do aught to help him! Knudsen told us that he had completely lost the use of his legs, and it was impossible to bring him farther.

It was no use their staying with him, for

their lives depended upon getting fire and food; but Knudsen, albeit he was weak enough himself, turned out and tramped back all that weary, long way, taking cooked birds with him for the mate and his companion in weakness. Ah, Knudsen was the life of us then; for Mr. Maclaghlan, brave and patient as he was, was properly done—as near dying as a living man can be, without passing over—and, indeed, there were few of us in better hap than he!

And the chief was dying—dying of starvation. The food had almost killed us, and it had been just poison to him from the first; and he had been dreadfully injured on the night of the wreck.

And to think that this was April, and that away in Old England the hedges would be all covered with the tender green of the opening leaf, and the birds would be singing in the trees. To think of all the freshness and sweetness and the beautiful things of the beautiful world which we do not notice just because they are always with us. To think of it all—and the dear ones at home—and we there, with the grey sky, and the grey sea, and the grey faces of the starving men!

Stout of heart, and as enduring as the crags of his own far-away Norseland home, Knudsen returned to us after his journey. Did ever a man so persevere in a hopeless mission; and it was hopeless, he knew that, and so did all the rest of those who had joined us. We who had not seen Mr. Peters since he had

got so terribly weak could only form our opinions from their descriptions.

“We have got to get him over here somehow” he said. “We can’t leave him to die there. The other fellow is getting on a bit, but Mr. Peters can’t last much longer.”

Not last much longer! What a knell the words seemed to strike on our hearts. God help us! How much longer could any of us last? Would we not all perish, until the last of our company, casting despairing eyes on the Island of Dreams, fell upon his comrades’ bodies, there to lie until, perhaps, years after, our bleached bones might be discovered and another mystery of the sea be talked about? Death is a terrible thing, anyhow; but to die away on the hillside alone, with rain and mist for a shroud, and the shrieking night-birds to sing the dirge, what wonder that Knudsen declared stoutly that we could not leave Mr. Peters to such a fate as that?

“What’s the matter with us anyhow?” groaned Mickey, as we sat there by our fire, listening to Knudsen’s report; and we understood what he meant.

We wanted to go and fetch the mate in, but we could not; our limbs gave under us; we reeled like drunken men, and honest-hearted Mickey of Arklow sobbed like a child, because of his weakness.

What was the matter? Starvation was the matter. The birds did not agree with us—our stomachs seemed to be incapable of digesting them—but they, and the weeds, were all the

food we had. Starvation and fever sapping away our strength, and wet and cold all day and every day. It did not take much to answer that question—what was the matter with us?

But Knudsen and Santiago got three of the strongest with them—and the fellows who had boots were the stronger now, for they could walk without having to endure agony—and they took a big supply of birds and started off. They meant to get Mr. Peters to camp somehow, if they had to carry him every step of the way.

Away through the rain and mist they went, leaving us there; but the next day Knudsen came back, tramping it all by himself, for a further supply of food.

“We shall want plenty,” he said. “It will take a long time to get him in.”

“How is he?” we asked, and Knudsen answered:

“Dying!” Then he dashed his rough hand across his eyes, and cried fiercely: “But we will get him in—we will get him in!” And with his load he set off again to rejoin the others, who were ministering to poor Mr. Peters.

And we waited, and the days passed, and still the rain fell—fell all the time. We waited and gazed across to that Dream Island, and longed in vain, and the twelfth of our captivity dawned—the twelfth day of pain and cold and heart-breaking despair; and then Knudsen came back—came back alone, with a set face; and we, when we looked, knew that this had

been labour in vain. The chief mate was dead—he had died during the night—and his pains and sorrows were over. God have mercy on us! Perhaps he was to be envied, for he was at rest, and we—how much more of the torture could we endure?

“We did all we could,” the third mate said, “but it was no use. He was doomed from the first—and now he is dead!”

Dead! What a strange gap that death seemed to make. One gone out of sixteen—the first one! The gloom of that death fell like lead upon our souls. Bad as we were before, we felt ten times worse now.

“What have you done with him, Knudsen?” we asked, and the mate told us. Of course it was utterly impossible to dig a grave. For one thing, no one was strong enough for such exertion; and in the next place, there was nothing to dig it with. So they had wrapped our first mate’s body in a piece of sailcloth, and then they had heaped a great pile of tussocks over him. It was all they could do, and, perhaps when we grew stronger—if ever we did—we might bury him properly.

And so the mate was dead, and by seaman’s law, Mr. Maclaghlan was our chief now; and he, poor fellow, was in such a state, that it seemed that he could not last much longer. Truly, we were in a terrible plight, and each day the weather got worse and worse, with a dreadful, steady persistency.

Try to imagine our plight. Most of us were no better clothed than I was—and I had a

thin pair of trousers, split all to pieces, a thin vest, full of holes, a coat, but neither socks nor boots. A poor sort of protection against cold such as those in England rarely feel; and then, besides, everything we had on was soaking wet all the time, and it was utterly impossible to try to dry them.

Try to imagine that, and then think of the food—the tough, fishy mollyhawk, badly cooked at the best, and the seaweed and grass. Think of our beds on the bare ground, where we sank into the muddy slush, a wet canvas above us, and a pile of half-melted snow on that, and then you will have some faint idea of the sufferings of the *Dundonald's* crew on Disappointment Island, between April and the beginning of June in the year 1907.

But, strange though it seems, after May was nearly done, instead of getting weaker, we seemed to improve. I can only suppose that we were getting used to our food and manner of life, and what had at first nearly killed us was beginning to nourish us now. At any rate, stronger we got, so that we could walk further, and undertake harder tasks, and not suffer from that awful feeling of weakness. And then we were face to face with a fresh difficulty, for if we had got better, the weather got worse, and it became very plain to us that, unless we could remedy our mode of housing, we should all die of cold.

We could not have a fire beneath our canvas, and when we crouched there at night we would lie trembling with cold, and there was not

enough warmth in our frozen bodies to keep our stagnant blood moving in our veins.

We should have to do something, and do it quickly, for the weather grew worse and worse, and the full southern winter was upon us. If anyone wants to understand our plight, I can only say imagine a man in the very North of Scotland, or, better still, the Shetland Isles, with thin, ragged clothing, soaked through and through, and sleeping out in a wet field in the depth of winter. The suffering of those perishing nights was awful, and we gathered round our fire and discussed the situation.

Something would have to be done, but the question was—what was that something to be ?

CHAPTER VI.

HOW WE BUILT OUR HUTS.

A GROUP of weary, despondent men clustering round a big wood fire ; a lean-to tent of sail-cloth, now all sodden and torn ; grey mist, grey sea, grey sky ; and far away—how terribly far it seemed !—the dim outline of that other island—that Island of Dreams—upon which, if we could only have reached it, we should have found shelter, food, clothes and a boat.

That was the picture day after day as we waited on Disappointment Island for the coming of the Southern winter, which, so it seemed, would bring us to our deaths.

Such a gaunt, ragged set we were, with thin fever-wasted faces and long, unkempt hair and beards. Could those whom we had known and loved have seen us then they would not have recognized us, such miserable scarecrows had we become.

Day after day we sat and discussed things, but we could arrive at no conclusion. Our island could furnish us with nothing in the way of timber, and even if it had been overgrown with trees we were all still far too weak to

have undertaken the task of building a serviceable raft, even if we had been possessed of the tools to work with. But we were absolutely without anything of that sort, and the few knives which we had were getting sadly worn and broken—they had to be put to so many uses.

The weather got worse and worse. The hail and snow storms were more frequent; and the bitter bite of the wind seemed intolerable; so that even when we clustered close to our fire we felt half-frozen.

“What can we do?” we asked each other as we sat there, staring hopelessly before us. And not one of us had an answer to that question.

“We have got to do something,” said Knudsen, the third mate, “for we are fixed here for at least a couple of months. Even if we could build a raft, we could not cross with the sea as rough as this. We must wait here until the worst of the winter is over.”

“And by that time we shall all be dead,” muttered one of the men dolefully. And a groan came from Mickey.

“If we could only find a nice big cave now,” he said, “sure, we might be all right then.”

“I don’t believe there is a cave in the whole island, Mickey,” I answered—“unless it is the big one where the ship struck.”

“And it’s not myself that would be after going there,” was Mickey’s answer.

“We shall have to try and build a cabin like they have in the Old Country.” So said John Judge.

As I have told you, he also was an Irishman. He was the man who had been on the yard with me the night when the ship sank. We discussed that point. We knew how the cabins were built, but, rude as they were, they still demanded some materials—wood and peat—and they had not the gales to withstand which our cabin would have.

“Sure, it would have to be a powerful big cabin to hold us all!” sighed Mickey. “And where’s the stuff to build it, Judge?”

“But the idea is good,” Mr. Maclaghlan urged. “That word about a cave has put a thought in my head. We must follow the example of the earth-dwellers of bygone days.”

Knudsen and Bob Ellis nodded; but some of us enquired what the mate meant. And Mr. Maclaghlan went on to explain how the old savages had dug holes in the earth, and covered them over with grass.

“We should want a big hole, and then we shall have to place a long piece of wood across it for a strong back, and cover it in with heaps of tussock.”

“That is all very well,” I interposed. “But where are we going to get that strong back? You won’t find a piece of wood six feet long easily; and we should want a pole as long and strong as a ship’s topmast. If you come to pile tussock up, you will soon have a ton weight, remember.”

“And how are you going to dig down?” asked another man. “We haven’t any tools. And though the earth is soft on top from the

rain it would not be an easy task to dig it up."

"Be aisy," said Mickey. "When it comes to doing a thing or dying it is wonderful what a lot a fellow can do. We have just got to scratch it up with our nails, my boy, as if we were moles or rabbits."

"Wish I had a rabbit now," I murmured.

And Mickey answered:

"Oh, don't, Charlie! Sure, my mouth just waters at the mention of the same."

"Now, lads, we don't want to talk about what we haven't got," interrupted Knudsen. "But we will think of what we have to do. Charlie says that we can't find any wood suitable for a strong back, and I agree with him."

"Then that settles the hut question."

"Not a bit of it! Instead of building one big hut we must make a lot of small ones. I propose that we work in pairs, each pair to make their own hut according to their own fancy. Don't be disheartened. It looks like a big job to dig out six or seven feet of earth with your finger-nails, but it isn't a thing that is going to beat us."

"Why weren't we born worms?" muttered someone. And the words made us laugh, bad as our plight was.

And so we agreed to the third mate's proposal, and we paired off; and I had John Judge for my mate. Nor could I have wanted a better one, for Judge was no "stiff," and he was quite ready to take his full share of work.

But what a job it was! First of all we marked out a space six feet by three feet, roughly speaking. We considered that this would give us all the room we wanted, for our hut was chiefly for sleeping purposes, and had we made it larger it would not have been so warm. The other fellows kept to about the same measurements; and then we started work.

Well, if anyone wants to try what it is like they can easily do so. All they need do is to go to some hard ground and start scratching a hole three feet wide, six feet long, and several feet deep, and they will soon understand the sort of thing that faced us; and it must be remembered that we were all so sick and weak that a very little knocked us up.

But painful as it was it gave us something to do, and the exertion kept us warm, so what with our scratching at the earth and going for wood for the fire, and catching and cooking our mollyhawks, our days were fairly busy ones.

But, oh, what objects we were—covered with mud, and drenched with rain, with our nails all broken and bleeding, and our clothes dropping off us!

“Charlie, my boy,” said my mate to me, as we stood surveying the result of our toil, “we will be through with this by the time we are old men if we go on at this rate.” And, indeed, his words seemed true, for we had barely scratched the surface off the earth, for all our

hard work. "We have got to get on a bit quicker somehow."

"Suppose we got pieces of wood and drove them in, like the fellows in London break up the earth when they are repairing the roads?" I suggested. And Judge applauded the idea.

So when we went for a supply of wood for the fires we looked about and selected some strong, tough pieces, and when we had made some sort of point to these we found that they answered our purpose very well; and soon all the other chaps had followed our example.

It was a bit easier now, and it saved our nails and fingers. We would drive the wood in—not too far, for fear of breaking it—and then work it about until it had cracked the earth, so that we could lift the pieces out. And so we went on working patiently, until we had sunk our foundations low enough.

I must say that when we had finished it looked unpleasantly like a grave, but we did not stop to think of that; it was a race between us and the weather; and it seemed as if the weather was going to win.

The hole finished, we next searched for two good strong pieces of wood which were forked at the end like a clothes-prop, and one of these we stuck up at the head of our future dwelling and the other at the foot, taking care to hammer them well in, for they would have to bear all the weight of the roof.

This done, we started to look for our strong back—that is, the piece of wood to run the length of the hut, and carry the roof. We

only wanted a piece six feet long, but, though we had a good search, we could not find one long enough, so we had to get two good, stout pieces and seize (lash) them together with a piece of our rope. This we hoped would do all right, and we placed it, resting in the forks of the head and foot pieces.

Now our hardest task was over, and the rest was fair sailing. We got a lot of pieces and slanted them from the sides of our hole up to the strong back, to make a sloping roof; and then, this done, we laid a lot of lighter sticks crossways on these, weaving them in and out like basket-work. And there we had something that looked like an open wicker-work roof over the hole.

But that would not have done for us. We had only got the skeleton of the thing, and our next task was to thatch it.

We tore up heaps and heaps of grass and covered our house a foot deep with it; we covered the grass with big tussocks, then we put on a second big layer of grass, and on the outside of that another pile of tussocks, and outside all, a lot of pieces of wood, to prevent the wind blowing our roof away.

It was a funny-looking sort of thing when it was done—something between an ant-hill and a hay-cock—but we felt that it would want a very heavy rain to soak through all that lot; and though it had taken us a whole fortnight to do, we were satisfied with the result.

But our task was only half done. We had finished the outside, but the inside had to be

attended to. For, as it was, the ground was in a terrible state, and we sank right over our ankles in cold, liquid mud, so that, though our bed would have been soft enough, it would not have been very pleasant.

Well, after we had talked things over, we started to line the inside with grass—sides first, bottom afterwards. We cut a lot of bundles of grass before we commenced, and then we set to work. Our method was to stick a peg of wood into the wall, driving it through the wooden framework into the tussocks outside; then we would take a piece of rope yarn and give it a turn round this peg, then take a bundle of grass, take a turn round that, and secure it on the other side with another peg; and and so on until we had the sides covered with bundles of grass, all pegged down, and securely held in place.

The sides done, we turned our attention to the floor. We got out as much of the soft mud as possible. We laid down some sticks and covered them with a foot of ferns, then we put grass, then more ferns, and lastly, grass again, and our house was complete.

A strange house—very dark inside—where you sank down over your feet in the floor. At the top end of it we could just manage to stand upright, but it sloped down towards the door, and we had to crawl in and out on hands and knees. That was a decided advantage, for the smaller the doorway the less cold and wet could get in.

But when it was all done, what a luxury it

was! It repaid us for all the trouble. No cold earth to lie on, no dripping sailcloth to shiver under. We could get in and bury ourselves in our flooring; we felt quite snug and warm, compared with what we had done outside. And, best of all, we were dry. Those were the huts we made; and there, on Disappointment Island, I suppose that they remain to this very hour.

And about the time that our huts were finished two of our number made a discovery which was of the utmost importance to us. They had been out looking for wood, and in their wanderings they had got to the edge of a very steep cliff which overhung the shore, and from their dizzy standing-place they had seen something, they could not tell what it was, moving about on the beach, amongst the rocks and big boulders which had fallen down from the cliffs at some time or other.

They stood and watched it for some time, unable to decide what it was. It was an animal of some kind—of that they were certain; but what sort of animal, how it came there, or what it lived on—that they could not tell. And so abandoning their search for wood, they hastened back to us, and told us of what they had seen.

The younger and less experienced hands hazarded all sort of guesses as to what these creatures could be, but the older hands—men like Knudsen and the second mate—at once came to the conclusion that they must be seals.

Their opinion excited us greatly, for seals would mean a great deal to us. In the first

place, seal meat is wholesome and nutritious—far more so than the mollyhawk flesh which we were eating ; and in the next, sealskin makes good clothes, and we were now nearly naked. So we clustered round our fire, talking of this latest discovery, and considering how we could reach that part of the beach where the seals had been seen, and how we could manage to catch them if they came again.

We had little doubt about that last point, for those who knew the habits of these creatures told us that they kept to one ground for a long time, unless something happened to scare them away.

That night we sat talking somewhat late ; and at last, when we banked up the fires, we determined to pay a visit to the place the next morning and see if there was any way of getting down to the beach.

By this time all our matches were gone, so we had to be careful never to let our fires go out ; and in order to avoid that danger, we always kept five or six going at the same time, banking them at night.

We banked them in this way. Just before dusk we got a great pile of green brushwood—as I have said, it was something like common blackberry—and we would burn this pile right down until it was a heap of glowing ashes. Then we would place two or three big pieces of wood about as thick as a man's arm right in the middle of these ashes, which we would heap high over them ; and then over all we would place great lumps of earth, taking care to stop

up any holes through which the smoke was escaping.

You may think that to do this would have put the fire right out ; but it is something like the method which the charcoal-burners use in their work.

In the morning when the earth was removed there was nothing but a heap of cold grey ash to be seen ; but when this was raked aside, there the big pieces would be red and glowing, and all we had to do was to put a little bit of rope yarn, teased out like oakum, and some dry sticks on top, blow away for all we were worth, and very soon a big fire would be blazing merrily. Night and day we kept our fires, knowing that if once they went out we should have no chance of lighting them again ; and knowledge like that makes men careful, I can assure you.

Well, on that morning after our comrade's discovery of the seals, we all turned out early, and under their guidance we went to the cliff from which they had seen them ; but when we reached the spot our hearts sank.

Our mates had told us that it was a nasty place, but how nasty we had not thought.

We found ourselves on the verge of a huge bluff, which rose sheer from the sea some two hundred feet, the top, as I have said, overhanging the bottom, which had been worn away by the action of the waves.

We surveyed it carefully, but could discover no possible way of reaching the beach, until at last we spied a path, down which a

bold hearted man might perhaps make his way.

But what a path it was!—just a narrow little ledge, like a groove cut in the face of the cliff, which ran diagonally down towards the beach. It was covered in moss, which was very loose and wet, owing to the water dripping from the overhanging cliff above, and it was just about as dangerous a pathway as a man might well want to tread.

“I fear that no man can get down there,” said Bob Ellis gravely; and we shook our heads. We remembered the story which Pul, Walters, and Queerfelt had told us of poor Low’s death, and it is little wonder that we hesitated.

“Look, there is something moving!” said Judge in an excited whisper; and he pointed down to the rock-covered beach.

Yes, he was right—something was moving with awkward, floppy, jumpy jerks, across towards the sea.

Crouching on the cliff-top, we stared down to where we could see the seal, and we longed to be able to get at it.

“It’s a female,” said Ellis. “Look, there is her pup behind her! I tell you, boys, there is good eating there, if we could only manage to get at them.”

“If,” I said. “It is like the island over yonder. It would be all right if we could only manage to get across to it.”

“And we shall do that yet, Charlie, never fear. We have managed so far, and we shall pull through yet.”

Now, whilst we talked, Michael Pul was examining the rocky edge carefully, studying its every twist, noting where it sloped, and where a man must jump or slide if he wished to reach the bottom alive and with unbroken limbs, and at last he announced his intention of making the attempt.

"You can't do it, Pul. It is madness," he was told. But he was not to be frightened.

"I am going to try it. It is not so bad as the place where we got up from the wreck."

And at that the other fellows who had been with him then confirmed his words.

"But remember poor Low," said the second mate; and he shrugged his shoulders.

"A man can only die once. I think that path is easier than it looks. At any rate, I am not going to stand seeing those seals down there waiting for us and not take a fling at them."

"Well, if you go, I go," said Walters.

But Pul would not listen to that.

"Where is the need? One life is enough to risk. If I succeed, others can go afterwards."

"There is sense in that," muttered Judge.

But none of us were quite easy about letting Pul take such awful risks for us.

You see, the task might have been possible for a strong, hearty man, but none of us could answer to that description, though we certainly were a great deal better than we had been during those awful days when the first mate died.

"I think that we ought to draw lots who goes," was suggested. But Michael Pul was

obstinate. And so, armed with one of our precious knives, the Russian Finn commenced his terrible descent, whilst we clustered on the cliff-top and watched him, our hearts in our mouths, what with anxiety for him and hope that he might succeed.

Down he went, so slowly and cautiously, pausing at every step to survey the ground, and determine where to plant his foot next. He seemed to be a great deal cooler than we were, though the danger was his.

“Be jabbers, there’s a lot of them creatures down there!” muttered Mickey. “They are jumping about all over the place!”

“So much the better, Mickey,” I answered. “It will give Pul a chance.”

“And if he kills it, how is he going to get it up at all, at all?” came Mickey’s query. And certainly there were grounds for the question.

I put the question to Knudsen, and he, seeing the difficulty, sent back to the camp for one of our lines. How thankful we had been again and again that we had secured them ere the wreck broke up, for already they had stood us in good stead upon more occasions than one!

Having sent for the line, we again turned our attention to our comrade, who, steadily and surely, was making his way down that perilous pathway which led to the shore.

Now we would lose sight of him as the cliff shut him from view, and then we would catch a glimpse of him as he reappeared clinging like a fly to the rough cliff face; and more than

once we gasped as we saw him slip over the moss and stagger ere he could recover his balance.

“By all the powers he will do it!” muttered Bob Ellis.

And the Chilian, Santiago Marino, added, half to himself:

“He will do it. He is a brave man!”

But now the cliff-path sloped inwards so much that, crane our necks as we would, we could not see our comrade. And so all we could do was to wait, staring down towards the spot where we expected him to make his appearance, if he was successful in his endeavour.

And what a time those minutes seemed! Again and again the question forced itself upon us: Had he met with an accident? Had he slipped? Was he lying crushed and mangled or helpless on the rocks below?

We waited and waited, and then Ellis turned.

“I am going down after him,” he said briefly. “He ought to be down now, and there is no sight of him. He must have met with an accident.”

“Never a bit of an accident,” said Mickey. “Look—there he is foreinst that big rock! Hurrah for ye, Pul, my jewel! And may your shadow never be less!” And Mickey let off a real Irish yell as he spoke, loud enough to scarce every seal for a mile around.

But his words were true. There on the beach we saw Pul, the knife in his hand, and he glanced up and waved his hand as he heard the cheer.

“Whist, then,” cried Judge to his fellow-countryman, “or you will scare the creatures!”

But the creatures had evidently been scared already.

We saw them raise their heads and stare in wonder at Pul, as though they had never seen a man before—which, indeed, is most likely—and then whilst the females and their pups made towards the sea, one or two old dogs barked loudly, and, showing their formidable teeth, seemed disposed not to only defend their territory, but to attack the rash intruder. And let me tell you that, awkward as a seal appears on land, he is by no means a foe to be despised, but can render a good account of himself, and bite as well as a good bulldog.

Michael Pul had met seals before, being a Finn, and he knew what he was about. He avoided the big dogs, and, rushing across the beach, he strove to intercept the retreat of a half-grown pup. He had two objects in view. The battle would be less severe than with a full-grown animal, and it would have been impossible for him to have got a big seal up that pathway down which he had come.

“Hurrah!” yelled Mickey, as he saw his companion gain on his prey. “Now you have got him, Pul!” But then he uttered a warning cry: “Look out, my darlint, or that brute will have you!”

Michael saw the big dog seal and avoided it, contenting himself with snatching up a piece of rock and hurling it at it as he passed, an action

which sent the old seal flip-flop towards the water as fast as it could go.

Meanwhile the Finn's quarry, being headed off from the sea, turned, and with incredible agility strove to gain an oblique path across the beach, all the time giving vent to angry cries, and calling for its dam; whilst from the waves seals' heads popped up, and angry barkings came, as the creatures watched the struggle upon the shore.

Flop, flop went the seal; but Pul knew that as far as the race was concerned, the thing was in his own hands. He was between the seal and the waves, and pulled himself up sharply, but with caution, for had he tripped, or had his enemy charged him and bowled him over—a trick which the creatures seem to understand—it would have been away ere he could have recovered himself, and all his efforts would have been in vain.

And now as he drew near he stooped and picked up a fairly heavy piece of rock, and as the seal turned, barking and showing its teeth, Pul hurled the rock with all his force, striking the creature fairly on the nose—its most vulnerable part.

“Got him!” cried Knudsen, who had stood surveying the conflict in silence. “That settles it!”

Pul lost not a moment; he followed up his stone with his knife, and soon we heard his yell of triumph, and the seal lay dead, whilst we cheered for all we were worth.

“Don't try to bring him up; we have sent

for a line!" we shouted. And he waved his hand, and kneeling down, commenced to flay and clean the animal. The entrails he carefully threw into the sea, to be carried out by the tide, a feast for some hungry shark, in all probability. And this rule we always followed afterwards, for those who knew the seal's habits best told us that did we leave the intestines upon the shore where the seals came it would scare them away from the place, perhaps for months.

The skin Pul carefully placed away, so that it could be got later, and then he cut off the prime parts of the carcass, as much as he could carry, and commenced the return journey. He had not understood our words, and so did not wait for the line, which arrived just as he made his appearance on top, to be greeted with a rush and a cheer, and relieved of his burden.

And now we felt that a load had been lifted from us, for we saw that the seals were plentiful, and since one of our number had been down successfully, the rest of us could follow suit. Besides, we might by our ingenuity find some means of mitigating somewhat the natural perils of the pathway, and increase the facilities for getting the carcasses to the cliff-top.

Then we marched back to our huts.

We made up big, glowing fires, and we thrust sharpened sticks through the slices of seal-meat and set them up to broil, determined that on the morrow we would pay another visit to the seals, and secure the skin of the one upon which we were now going to feed.

I do not suppose that any of my readers would care for seal-meat, especially when cooked in that primitive fashion, and served without sauce or vegetables. It is very fat and oily; but after the tough, fishy mollyhawk, it was delicious to us. Later we had to eat it under very different conditions. But that cannot be told yet. And, by the way, not long after we found a root on the island which answered for vegetables; but at this time our only green food was sea-weed.

And that evening, ere dusk, we sat together, feeling more hopeful than we had done for a long while, and we thanked God for His great mercies to us in the face of so many perils and hardships.

The weather was now almost at its worse, but we had warm and dry huts to sleep in; and with the finding of the seals we saw the prospects of renewing our clothing, even if the dresses which we should make would be something like that which Robinson Crusoe wore on his island. We had no fashions to study, and so long as we were warm we did not care.

"We can get thread from the sailcloth," said Ellis, as we talked the matter over, for we felt as though we had each a plentiful supply of skins already.

But Mickey shook his head.

"That's all very well; but where will we be after getting needles from?"

And Ellis laughed.

"Listen!" he said, and we heard a shrill

screaming arise from the gloom of approaching night. It did not alarm us now, for we knew what occasioned it.

“There is your answer, Mickey. Plenty of needles there,” Bob Ellis said.

And what he meant I must explain to you.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO FINDS.

THAT noise to which Bob Ellis drew our attention was a sound with which we had now grown so familiar that we paid no heed to it, but at first it had somewhat bewildered, if not alarmed us, until we came to know what caused it.

We heard it first a very few nights after we were cast away upon the island, soon after we had managed to secure our two sails. We had turned in beneath their shelter, to sleep as best we could with the howling wind and the thundering of the sea, when we were aroused by a strange shrieking sort of whistle, a clamour of shrill sounds something like the gulls make, only far louder.

We sat up and stared at each other—at least, I suppose we stared, but as it was as dark as pitch we could not see each other's faces—and I heard Mickey say :

“ Phwat's that, anyway, now ? ”

“ Sounds like birds.”

“ Birds be shot ! What, birds at this time of night ? ”

“May be owls.”

“May be donkeys. Owls hoot ; and, besides the place would want to be crowded with owls for them to make that row.”

Then we turned out, but we could not see anything. But presently one of our number gave a cry, and went tumbling over.

“Who hit me like that ?” he demanded. And we all assured him that no one touched him.

“Someone or something knocked me down !” he declared.

And then someone else yelled, and clapped his hands to his eyes.

“Murder ! Something hit me in the eye, and has precious near knocked it out !”

And then a third man got struck ; and all the time the air seemed filled with those shrieks and a strange whirring sound.

We got back to the tent and discussed the situation, and the general opinion was that the noise was caused by birds of some sort.

But what birds ? We could not discover a trace of them anywhere. There seemed to be no birds in the place except the mollyhawks, and certainly that row was not caused by them.

The next night we were not disturbed. I remember that it was moonlight that night. But the next it was overclouded and very dark, and we had it all over again—the shrieking, the whirring, and, if any ventured out, the blows from unseen assailants.

But we soon discovered the cause of all this, and then paid little attention to it, save that

few of us ventured out after dark for fear of getting our eyes knocked out.

There were other birds besides the molly-hawks on the island—lots of them—though I cannot tell you their proper name. We called them “night birds,” for want of anything better.

They were little fellows about the size of a pigeon. They did not build nests, but lived in holes in the earth, where they burrowed precisely as a rabbit would do. They never came out in the daylight; only at night, when there was little or no moon, and they would fly round and round in circles, hundreds and hundreds of them, uttering their shrill cries, and making the most weird noise with their wings. They flew about five feet from the ground, and went so rapidly that they were a very real danger, coming with sufficient force to knock a man right down if he were struck in the face.

You may wonder why we did not use those birds for food. Perhaps we might have done so had we not had the mollyhawks, but, in the first place, they were far more difficult to procure, for it meant searching for their burrows, and, in the next, they were so small that by the time we had skinned them there would have been nothing left. So we kept to the mollyhawks, and let the night birds alone.

Now, what Ellis meant was that if we caught some of these night birds we could make needles from their bones; those of the molly-

hawks being far too big and thick for such a purpose.

Well, soon after we turned in and slept until daybreak, when we got up, replenished our fires, and, finishing our seal meat, we set out to visit the cliff and see what we could do.

Those amongst us who had experience instructed us in the best way of killing seals. A good thick stick was far more efficient than a knife—a strong blow with such an instrument just on the root of the nose being in most cases fatal.

So we armed ourselves with rough cudgels and off we set. And when we arrived at the spot we saw that there were several seals down below, and the sight so fired us that we forgot our fears, and started carefully down that awful ledge. One of the fellows was coming along with a line, but we did not stop to wait for his arrival. So eager were we to get to the beach that we scrambled down, taking risks which perhaps in calmer moments we might have shuddered at.

“Go quietly,” was the word passed along as we were descending. “If we get making a noise, we shall scare them so that they will not come back again.”

Each man as he arrived at the foot of the cliff waited quietly until all those who were going to wage war against the seals had assembled; then, dividing into parties, we made our way quietly and cautiously towards our prey, taking care to alarm them as little as possible.

They seemed to have quite forgotten the

fright they had received the previous day, and regarded us with curious interest. They have wonderfully intelligent eyes—eyes that seemed to question you, as if they were asking what your business was and whether you were friend or foe.

But that they soon knew. Hard as it seems, those seals had skins that we wanted, and flesh that we required, and so at last, when we had managed to get close enough for a rush, we darted upon them, and the battle began.

Not that we had it all our own way. Flip-flop a big fellow would come along growling and showing a remarkably business-like set of teeth, and more than one of our number got a nasty bite; whilst others were ignominiously upset, and sent rolling over on the hard shingly beach.

The females who had young ones tried hard to get them away, and the old males were by no means without courage; but the fight was in our favour, although we had not come off scatheless.

However, no one thought much of a cut or bruise; and at last we had the beach to ourselves, and we had three or four fine seals to show for our labours. Had it not been that we wanted their skins, we might not have killed so many at once; but we knew that, cold as the weather was now, the flesh would keep good for some time.

So we gathered up our spoils and hauled the carcasses up the cliff, and with the skins

and flesh we went back to our camp, more than satisfied with our morning's labours.

We had no means of curing the skins properly; all we could do was to stretch them on rough frames, scrape them as clean as possible, and keep them near by the smoke of our fires, which, after two or three days, dried them sufficiently to answer our purpose.

We were now in the middle of June, and the weather was at its very worst. There was not a day but it poured with rain, whilst the sea was terribly rough—so rough that, although we scanned the horizon for any signs of a ship, we had not the smallest expectation of seeing a sail.

Now that we had some skins to commence with, we captured some of the night birds and made needles out of their bones, which we scraped clean and rubbed down to a point, and then worked eyes through them so that they were almost as serviceable as the needles which are bought at shops. Of course, they were coarser and more clumsy, but that was an advantage, for we had to use threads of sailcloth to sew with, and as our material was thick sealskin an ordinary needle would have been no good for the work.

We made boots and caps and coats, and we sewed together the skins of the slaughtered mollyhawks, of which we had now a large number, and made very warm and comfortable sleeping blankets from them.

We divided our huts into five camps, and each camp had to keep its own fire going.

Two men in each camp used to take turn about in banking the fire and lighting it next morning, and we used to do our own cooking.

We would go out, catch about ten birds each, and tramp home again. Then we would go and get a couple of loads of wood, and then come back and do our own cooking. We had brought as much wood as we could to the camp before the worst of the winter came, so that we could manage for a week or two in the event of our getting snowed up—and that was a thing which might very easily happen.

We were quite busy, and feeling better than we had done yet, and we were decidedly more comfortable, but—ah, we seemed as far as ever from reaching Auckland Island itself, and unless we could do that we might live and die in this dreary spot.

We used to talk of that as we sat working—indeed, we talked of little else now; but for all our talking we were no nearer the accomplishment of our desire.

“There is one thing we have got to remember,” said Bob Ellis one day as we were discussing the subject. “Auckland Island is a big place, and it may be some time before we stumble upon the depôt, providing we manage to cross to it. You have got fire and shelter here, but over there you won’t have either. It’s my belief that we are better off where we are.”

“That’s all very well, Ellis, but we can’t stay here for ever,” I answered, and Judge nodded as I turned back to my task. I may

here say that I wore a pair of sealskin boots which I made on Disappointment Island, and trousers which I sewed together with one of the bird-bone needles, and which were cut out of a bit of old sailcloth with a knife for a pair of scissors. I only tell you that so that you can understand the sort of things we made. I have a picture, too, of the *Dundonald*, taken from one which one of the fellows drew—if you could call it drawing—for he got a little scrap of tin and punched out the picture with a nail and hammer; but that was not until we had reached the depôt on Auckland Isle, some time after.

“Sure, it’s meself that don’t want to stay here for ever!” groaned Mickey. “It’s a blessed island over there, with all sorts of nice things, if we can only get them.”

“We shall have to go from here presently,” Judge put in, “whether we like it or not—for food will give out!”

“Food! Why, there are plenty of birds here, Judge!” I cried, and he nodded.

There was plenty, indeed, seeing that we ate on an average seventy-five a day between us—five each man.

“I expect that we shall find them getting scarcer soon,” he said. “They are getting older, and will leave the island presently, and not return until the next breeding season.”

We looked blank at this. If the mollyhawks went, what were we to do? It is true there were the seals, but they were uncertain, and

we knew that at certain seasons they would go. We had not thought of that before.

"We come back to the old question," said Mr. Maclaghlan: "How can we build either a boat or raft out of the stuff which grows on this wretched island?"

"We can't. Why, there isn't a bit of wood in the place that will float. It sinks like iron," interposed Mickey, and he was right in that—the wood was so heavy that it would not float.

"That would not matter if we could only fashion a boat. Iron is heavier than water, and yet ships are made of iron."

"That's true, anyway," Mickey confessed. "But there, what's the good of talking—we haven't got the wood, and we haven't got the tools; there is an end of it."

"We hadn't got tools to build our huts, but we built them," I said.

"True for you, Charlie; but it's solid earth we had to deal with then, and not salt water. You can't go scratching the waves up with your fingers, you know."

"What Cockney says is true," said Findlow. "We got over that difficulty, and if we only had the wood we might get over being without tools. There is the best tool of all"—and he nodded towards the fire. "We can shape wood with fire, we can make holes for wooden pegs in place of nails with fire, we can hollow out trunks of trees with fire, and——"

"And you can't find the trees to hollow out," interrupted Mickey. "So what's the use of talking about it? There's that island,

and here are we, and unless we can fly like birds, or swim like fish, that's about as near to it as we are likely to get."

"Hallo, what have I got in my pocket!" exclaimed Herman Queerfelt at this moment. He had been making himself a jacket, and had taken off his old waistcoat, all rags now, and in the lining of it he felt something.

"It isn't a boat, is it now?" queried Judge, and Mickey added:

"Nor the timber to build one, eh?"

No, neither boat nor timber—only a very trivial find—just six little wax vestas, which must have got there through a hole in his waistcoat-pocket. They were all bent and broken, but they had the heads on them, and some of us uttered a cry of delight when we saw them.

"Take care of them! Are they very wet?"

Of course they were wet, but that was soon got over. By placing them at a judicious distance from the fire they were safely dried, and then carefully stowed away in a little tin box. Six common vestas! Who would trouble about them here in England? But away there on Disappointment Island they were of far more value to us than a waggon-load of diamonds would have been.

"That is an answer to the question about fire, if we manage to get across," remarked Mr. Maclaghlan. "These must be carefully kept. They may mean all the difference between success and failure, in the event of reaching Auckland Island."

That is how it always was. No matter what we were doing or discussing, sooner or later we found ourselves back at that point—how could we reach Auckland Island? And here we found ourselves hopelessly checked.

“Well, the birds will be getting scarce presently,” I said. “They are getting older now, and will soon be on the wing. The seals, too, are beginning to know, and directly they catch sight of any of us they make for the water like one John Smith, so we have got to get some somehow, or starve.”

“Starve is about the truth of it, unless we can think of some way of getting across to the other island,” said someone, “and it is by no means certain that things will be any better when we get there.”

“They can’t be much worse,” Judge put in.

“No, I suppose not,” I answered, for, in truth, things were pretty black. “But what is the use of talking? How are we to get there?”

“There is only one thing that I can think of,” said Judge thoughtfully. “We have still got a good bit of canvas, though it is cut up for clothes. Why not try and make a canvas boat? If we could only get a dozen pieces of wood shaped as near a triangle as possible we might manage it.”

“A canvas boat!” he was answered, and the speaker cast his eyes over that expanse of troubled sea between us and the Island of Dreams. “A canvas boat! Even if

such a thing could be made, who is going to venture across that six miles of sea in such a frail craft?"

"Nothing venture, nothing have," I replied. "You can see for yourselves that it is death to stay here much longer. Starvation is staring us in the face. It is only death a little sooner, if the worst comes to the worst."

"But where are we to get the wood?" came the next query; and the answer came readily from Judge's lips.

"Reckon we shall have to look for it. If the thing is worth doing it is worth taking a bit of trouble over."

"It's a great idea, Judge," I declared. "It's the best we had had up to yet. We are agreed that it is hopeless to look for timber to build a raft, but we have got the canvas handy. I reckon that we had better explore the island thoroughly, and see if we can't find some wood suitable for the purpose."

But it was not to be wondered at, that, desperate as our plight was, some of the fellows shrank back from the prospect of taking a journey in a craft of that kind.

All day long great seas were rolling in, seas which did not wait to get near the rocks before they broke, but which broke a long distance out, and came rushing in a mass of seething, hissing breakers.

It would not be easy to launch such a boat, and it would be far harder to beach it the other side, even if the voyage was successfully

made, did the shore in any way resemble the beach on Disappointment Island—and we had no reason to expect that we should find it any different.

That afternoon the question was fully discussed round the fire, and while some shook their heads and declared that no such craft could possibly live the passage out, others seemed inclined to view the matter in a more favourable light, and they declared that it was the best idea which had been suggested up to then.

The next day we abandoned our sewing, and started out in parties to explore and see if we could come across anything which would be suitable for the framework of a canvas canoe; but though we wandered all over the place, it was to come back in the evening with the tidings that none of us had seen anything that would in any way be suitable for the purpose. Our canvas boat idea seemed as likely to fall to the ground as all previous suggestions had done.

“If we had only got some planks from the wreck,” sighed Walters. “To think of all that good timber having drifted away!”

“No good wishing for what we haven’t got,” he was answered, “or we might as well wish for the *Dundonald* herself. We couldn’t get the timber. Our try for the spar took two days, and we lost it in the end.”

“That sort of wood would not serve us now,” added Bob Ellis. “We would want the carpenter’s chest to do anything with it.

The only thing is to keep up our courage, and keep our eyes open for anything likely to serve our purpose."

It must not be wondered at that we were prone to despair—our plight was so desperate, and we were so weary of our imprisonment on this barren, storm-swept island. Looking back at it all now, to my mind the wonder is not that we gave way to despair, but that we yielded so little to its influence, and were so ready to seize on anything, no matter how trivial, about which to jest. Accidents were laughed at; and, taking it all round, anything in the nature of ill-temper or quarrelling was very rarely seen amongst us.

So June passed away, and never once did our eyes see sign of sail on the vast expanse of stormy sea, and July set in.

July! Glorious, sunny July away in old England, when the holidays are on, and folk are trooping off to the sea, to sail its waves, to bathe, and lounge about on its sands. It seemed impossible that they and we could be in the same world. July! Bitter cold, with snow and sleet and storms day after day. But we were a little better off. Our sealskin boots comforted our poor, torn feet, and were warm and nice; and our rough-and-ready clothing, though it was awful to look at from a tailor's point of view, was serviceable; and, best of all, we were all much stronger in body, so that we did not feel as if we should drop down if we tried to walk a mile or two.

We had paid several visits to our sealing

station, and upon each occasion we came back with something to reward our labours; but that which was now supreme in our minds we did not succeed in finding—anything in the nature of wood which would be at once pliant enough, and stout enough, to make some sort of a frame for our canvas boat.

But even that came at last. The Chilean was the man who first caught sight of what we wanted.

He had wandered off by himself—we were all of us given to doing that. The fit would come upon a man suddenly, and off he would go from the others, taking a day's supply of food with him, and wandering about aimlessly, though always keeping his eyes open to see if there was anything which would be likely to be of use to us.

Well, the Chilean wandered off—by the way, we had nicknamed him the “Black Prince” on account of his swarthy appearance—and in the course of his wanderings he came to some bushes which were not quite like the stuff we had to use for fuel. It was all twisted this way and that like a lot of writhing serpents, and when he examined a bit, he found it to be both tough and fairly light. Santiago pondered over it for some time, and then he came to the conclusion that it might serve for our purpose. At any rate, it was nearer the mark than anything which we had come across yet. So back he came tramping towards the camp, with a piece of the stuff over his shoulder, and when he drew near he was seen, and the

word was passed along that Santiago had found something.

We didn't know what, but we could see that he had got something, and we knew that he would not trouble to bring it back with him unless he had an idea that it would be of service to us.

"What have you got there?" he was hailed long before he reached us, and he answered by holding up his find, and shouting in his broken English:

"Piece wood!"

Wood! My word, we just crowded round him as eagerly, nay, more eagerly, than if he had said a nugget of gold. I wonder if you can form any idea of it as you sit reading this story? Only a rough branch of dark, thorny wood. The sort of thing you might pick up any day, if you walked in Epping Forest, and then pitch away as being no good to anyone. It was a piece bent in the middle to very near a right angle, making it look something like a rough sort of boomerang; but the whole crowd of us hung over it, and handled it, and expressed our opinions that if there was enough of it, it was just the very thing which we needed. Only a piece of rough wood, but we would rather have had that, and some more like it, than all the wealth of the Bank of England, though no one here would have given a shilling for a cartload of it. Truly the proverb is right which says "Circumstances alter cases."

"Now," said Judge, as he looked at it, "the

question is, can we find a dozen pieces, something of the same shape, all bent like this, and about this size? If we can do that, we are well on the way to getting our boat built."

"Aisy now! It's straight pieces that we shall be after wanting," put in Mickey, and Judge laughed at him.

"There you are wrong, Mickey. What's the use of straight pieces when we would be at the trouble of bending them? For, look you, you see how this piece bends round?"

"I'd not have eyes in my head if I didn't," Mickey confessed.

"Well, my idea is this," Judge went on. "We want to get a dozen pieces like this and clean 'em of all twigs—just give 'em a turn in the fire if need be. Then we must seize the ends of two together, and there you will have one straight piece, turned up at both ends."

"That's all right so far," his listeners agreed. "Go on, Judge."

"Can't you see? If you have six pieces like that, all you will have to do is to seize straight pieces from one to the other, where they are fastened, and you will have the ribs and keel of the boat. Get them seized strongly, see that there is no danger of them falling apart, and it won't take much trouble to weave other pieces in and out, so as to form a frame upon which to stretch the canvas. Buck up, lads! We have got to go and look for pieces like this one. We will get over to the other island yet."

How his words inspired us. We set out, guided by the Chilian, and when we got to the place where he had found the wood, we saw there was a good supply to choose from.

We set to work with good hearts, picking and choosing, and presently we had about twice as many bent pieces as we wanted, and also a good lot of other pieces for the keel.

We got back to camp, and showed the other fellows our treasures, and then, after a good meal of seal flesh and mollyhawk, we turned in, all of one mind to be up as soon as day broke, and to commence the boat which was to carry us to the Island of Dreams.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOAT-BUILDING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

I HAVE been asked a question which I should like to answer before going on with my story. It is, "How big is a mollyhawk?" By the way, the proper name should be "molly-mawk," but we always call them molly-hawks.

Well, a young mollyhawk is about the size of a big duck. When it is older it is as large as a goose. It may make some people open their eyes to be told that we castaways could eat four or five birds of that size per man every day; but you must remember that we had nothing else until we began catching seals. Moreover, in that awful climate, and with the privations which we suffered, it was absolutely needful to eat as much as we could to ward off that dreadful weakness which had so nearly brought us to our deaths. Later, as I shall have occasion to tell you, when food failed us, we were brought to a dreadful state; but at this time that is the average number of birds which we each consumed.

I have also found that the night birds are commonly called mutton birds. They are little fellows with hooked beaks and webbed feet, and the whole of Disappointment Island was honeycombed with their burrows, which extended for yards from the holes where they entered. As one walked the ground could be felt to give beneath the footfall, and sometimes our feet would break right in, so that we sank up to our knees.

It was about this time that we started catching the albatross, and sending them off with the messages round their necks. Catching them was by no means easy work, for an albatross is big and strong and fierce. A blow from their powerful wings will send a man reeling, whilst with their beaks they can almost rip the flesh from one's arm. I have seen our fellows torn, and get some very sharp blows when they have been catching them.

We could only manage it by waiting near their nests when they came to feed their young, which would be about once in two days; then we could make a rush at the old bird, who, instead of taking to flight, would show fight in defence of its nest.

Besides these, we had a lot of whale-birds on the island; but these are only little fellows, and were of no use to us at all.

The seals that we caught were not the furry seals of the Northern Seas, but what are known as hairy seals, and are much larger and fiercer.

The males are called sea-lions, and the females sea-bears, and some of them grow to immense size. Later I saw some called sea-elephants, which were almost as large as their four-footed namesakes.

I must apologise for this interruption, but we sailors like to have our logs shipshape and in order, and now we will up anchor and continue our voyage.

We found the wood we wanted, though we had a long search to get it. Its proper name is *Veronica elliptica*. It is an iron-wood, and from growing in places where it was exposed to the blustering of every wind that blows, it had taken the most fantastic shapes. It curled and twisted and whirled. It was every and any shape, but it was not straight. I do not think that you could have found a straight piece two feet long in the whole island.

Well, we brought our supply back to the camp, and then examined each piece carefully. At the best it was frail stuff, and it behoved us to be careful, for a fault undetected might mean the losing of lives and the failure of all our hopes. We knew that, and such knowledge makes men particular.

It was in the middle of July that we started our first boat, and it took ten days to get her finished.

We got to work testing each piece that we were to use, getting rid of as much roughness as possible by scraping and burning. And we didn't work in a hurry. There was no

need for that, and "slow and sure" was our motto in this business.

And whilst this was done we carefully unstranded some of our precious rope. My word! When I see pieces of rope lying around here in England, and no one thinking them worth the picking up, I wonder if anyone can possibly imagine how precious that rope out there was to us. Old rope, and waste wood, and some old canvas. That was all we had to stand between our lives and lonely graves out on that dreary island.

When we were ready we started lashing the bent pieces two and two. One pair thus lashed formed the bow, and another pair the stern, and the others were the bulwarks between them, and every lashing and knot was tested and tested again, for we were taking no chances in this business, but meant to make sure in so far as we possibly could.

The work could not go on continuously, for food supplies had to be kept up, and both birds and seals took a lot more catching than they had done at first, and also as we used up the firewood near at hand, we had to go on longer tramps to get fresh supplies; and when a fellow had tramped off and torn up a big lot of wood, and brought it back, he didn't want to do very much more work that day.

Our fires, of course, were the most important consideration, and had to be treated carefully, and on more than one occasion those fires took it into their heads to tend themselves by setting

our grass huts on fire. We had some bonfires then, for that grass and tussock blazed like anything, and then we would have to clear away the rubbish, and start building our house all over again.

I remember one occasion which might have ended seriously, but which had in it such a comical element that even to-day I feel that I must smile as I recall it.

I was occupying the same hut as the second mate and Harry Walters, for though we had paired off to do the building we did not always remain with our original mate. We got on the cross sometimes. And then changed round for a bit.

Well, I was with Mr. Maclaghlan and Walters, and we had banked our fire for the night, and built it in a sort of alley-way running down to the entrance to our abode—you will remember that the entrance was so small that a man could only just crawl through it on all fours—and then we turned in, and made ourselves comfortable for the night.

Just how it happened I cannot say, but I expect that some of the hot ashes must have set the grass alight, and the wind, fanning the flame, it ran along until it came to our grass walls and roof, and then it started right away in earnest.

The second mate was sleeping nearest the entrance, and it woke him up; whilst from outside we heard the shouting of some of the other fellows, who had noticed what was going on.

Half-smothered with the smoke, Mr. Mac-laghan aroused me, expecting, I suppose, that I should pass the signal on to Walters, who lay sleeping the sleep of the just at the farther end, and then out he crawled into the fresh air, and seizing a stout branch which lay ready to hand for our fire in the morning, he commenced beating at the roof with all his might to thrash the flames out and preserve our habitation.

It was my turn to clear next, and it did not take me long to get a move on me, for the place was getting unpleasantly hot, and sparks were beginning to fall upon me from above. Aroused thus suddenly from a deep sleep, and half stupefied with the smoke, I gave Walters a call, and managed to get to the door and crawl through, though I got singed a bit in the doing of it.

But once out, the fresh air soon made me recover my wits, and I joined the second mate in his endeavours to beat the fire out, fellows from the other huts coming to lend a hand.

Well, there was Walters left inside, and he woke to the fact that things were not all right; but, instead of creeping out as we had done, he got upon his feet and stood upright—or, at least, he tried to stand upright, with somewhat disastrous consequences to himself and to our home.

For you must remember that only at the extreme end could a man stand erect; and, consequently, when he shot up, his head came

into violent contact with the roof, already weakened by the fire and the blows. The strong back gave way, there was a rolling of burning tussock in all directions, and Walters' head shot clean through—that was what happened from his side. What happened from ours was as follows :

We were beating at the flames for all we were worth, and had not noticed in our excitement that our comrade was still inside, when all of a sudden the strong back gave, and the tussock went rolling ; and up before our astonished eyes there appeared Walters' head, his eyes blinking his mouth opening and shutting, uttering words which were more forcible than polite.

Just for one moment that vision presented itself, and then it suddenly disappeared ; for Mr. Maclaghlan had brought down his stick smash, bang on the unfortunate Walter's head and knocked him clean back into the interior of the burning hut.

For a moment we were staggered, thinking that our comrade must be seriously hurt ; but then a roar from within removed our fears, and through the opening, sending burning tussock all over the shop, Harry Walters charged head first.

He got out, he paused, looking round, whilst we shouted with laughter ; and then with another bellow he charged at Mr. Maclaghlan, who, throwing his stick away, promptly took to his heels, with Walters in close pursuit.

I think that is one of the funniest things that I remember—Walters getting that smack on the head which knocked him back into the hut, and then, wild at what was really a pure accident, racing after the second mate uttering threats of vengeance.

Of course he was soon pacified, but it took quite a time for him to get over it, especially as again and again we would burst into a shout of laughter as we thought of it.

The hut had to be entirely rebuilt, though; nor was it the only one that suffered such a fate during our stay on the island.

When at last we had finished the framework of our boat, I must say that even the boldest of us felt some nervous qualms; it looked such a rough, crazy thing, and it wanted most careful handling; but we had made up our minds and we meant to go through with it.

The frame done, we got our canvas and examined that. It was sadly cut about, and great pieces were missing where we cut it up for clothes—mostly for trousers. However, we had more than enough; and, besides, we had the trousers, and the scraps—for we did not waste anything there—and if the worst came to the worst, we could undo our clothes and sew the pieces together again; and, as a matter of fact, that is what we did do afterwards, as I shall show you.

But for this first boat we had plenty of canvas; and, carefully taking the best parts, we next began the difficult task of sewing it on to our

frame, a by no means easy job, I can assure you, but one demanding both care and patience.

Well, at last it was done, and a poor looking thing it was, that canvas-covered basket. There were no planks inside, no seats or anything of that sort. The fellows who were going in her would have to sit or kneel on that rough, thorny wood, and take great care that they did not knock holes through the bottom. They would have to stay in the places which they first took, for there was no room for shifting about in her.

We took her down to the one spot on Disappointment Island suitable for the purpose—a spot on the extreme left of our little isle, and right opposite the large one, and there on the 28th of July we launched her, and she proved to be all right. She floated, and she did not leak enough to endanger the lives of her crew, though she would want baling all the time.

Now, the boat finished, the next question was how were we going to propel her; for there was nothing growing on the island from which we could fashion oars or paddles, and we certainly could not put to sea without something of the sort.

But seamen learn to contrive many things out of seemingly very unpromising materials, and it was so in our case. We went back to the place from which we had obtained our veronica wood, and we searched until we found some pieces which were forked like a clothes-prop. They were not straight, but we could not help

that ; if we could not get what we wanted, we were prepared to accept the nearest thing to it that could be procured. And so we brought our prizes back to camp, and proceeded to cover the prongs over by stretching a piece of canvas across them ; and these we decided would serve for paddles, with which to take our boat over that six miles of sea to Auckland Island.

But now we had to wait for a couple of days, for the sea was so rough that there was no chance of success, had the voyage been undertaken. You see, when the boat had her crew in her, she was so deep in the water that she only had a few inches freeboard ; and, consequently, it would have been madness to attempt the passage had anything of a sea been running, for she would have been swamped at once.

We passed our time in discussing the voyage, and what was to be done in the event of the voyagers succeeding in their mission and reaching the big island, where we believed that we should find all that we needed in the way of clothes and food.

First we settled that for the journey three hands would be enough. Indeed, the boat would not hold more with any safety at all. It would need two to paddle, and one to bale. Afterwards, as I shall tell you, we went four at a time ; for, besides the men at the paddles, it required one in the stern to steer. But of that we will talk later. On this first trip only three men went.

The next thing was who should go, and this led to a lot of discussion. In the first place there were some who did not want to go at all; they still thought the whole attempt little short of madness, and declared that they would rather take their chance where they were than go to certain death.

Then some who wanted to go were objected to by the rest, on the ground that they were not strong enough. Anyway, it was going to be a hard journey, and there was a lot depending upon its success, so we didn't want any to go who were likely to knock under on the way.

So we talked and discussed, and argued like a lot of sea lawyers for a long time, and at last we decided that Santiago Marino, Bob Ellis and Michael Pul should make the first attempt; and, as they were all eager about it, the thing was left at that.

Then we felt that these three must take Queerfelt's six vestas with them; for, whilst we fellows had fires on Disappointment Island, they would be without any until they found the depôt for which they were going to search. We impressed upon them to be very careful of these precious vestas, and not use a single one more than was absolutely needful; and they, knowing quite as well as we did how important it was, promised to follow out our advice.

The next thing was that as soon as they landed they were to make a big fire, putting on plenty of grass to cause a dense smoke, so

that we might know that they had arrived safely; and we agreed that as soon as we saw the signal we would make an answering one.

Food we considered there was no need to trouble about, more than to give them a little cooked mollyhawk to eat upon their journey, for since the birds were so plentiful here, they would be certain to be still more so there on the larger island, and water would surely be easily found.

So everything was settled, and all we had to do was to wait until the sea was calm enough to give some promise of success to the expedition—a state of things which occurred on the morning of July 31st.

There was no wind that morning. We were up as soon as dawn came, and glanced at the sea with anxious eyes and critical. It was as smooth as a millpond for the time, and as we did not know how soon the weather might change we lost no time in getting ready for the start.

One and all were astir, and we wended our way down to the landing-place, our three comrades in our midst, a hopeful and yet a solemn little company, for we knew that in parting from them we might be parting from men who were going to their death.

Down to the beach, and the canvas boat was run out. Pul got in, and Santiago and Ellis. We handed them our paddles, and we gave them a parting shake of the hand. There was a moment's pause, and then:

“Shove off!”

She was away, that little frail craft—away on the ever-restless sea, and, half kneeling, half crouching, two of her crew worked their clumsy paddles. She was away—the distance between our comrades and ourselves widened. We gave them a hearty cheer, and shouted our best wishes for good luck, and then we stood watching in silence. A Chilian, a Finn, an Australian, but our brothers in distress—our brothers who were going to seek succour for us all.

I have heard the cry that British ships should be manned by British sailors, and perhaps there is much to be said in favour of that; but this much I know, that though the survivors of the *Dundonald* were drawn from many different lands, though some of them could hardly understand what the others said, yet for all that they were loyal and faithful one to the other, and they proved that beyond the brotherhood of country there is a stronger brotherhood still—that of common humanity.

We stood there and watched them until the boat rounded the head and was shut out from view, and then we went up to the top of the cliff and we watched them from there, as they grew less and less distinct, until they were but a speck floating on the waves.

“She seems to float all right,” was the uniform comment; and our hopes rose high. Our brave little boat was doing her duty—

she was carrying our comrades to the Promised Land!

"They ought to make the land about mid-day," I said; and my estimate was agreed to.

About midday! We just mooned about doing nothing; we were too restless, too excited, to think of anything. We hardly took our eyes off that distant land from which we hoped soon to see a column of smoke arise to tell us of the successful ending of the voyage.

But midday came and went, and no signal was seen, and afternoon waned into evening, and still the signal smoke did not rise. And then anxiety got hold of us; and when at length the light died, and darkness came, and we had received no token of our comrades' safety, we sought our grass huts with sad hearts, feeling certain that some dreadful accident had befallen them, and that they must have perished in their attempt.

"They must have gone down," we whispered to each other fearfully. "The boat was not strong enough, and it has foundered."

The next morning as soon as the light came we cast anxious glances across to the place to which our comrades had sailed, but still the land lay there dim against the sky-line, and never a trace of smoke was to be seen. So we were almost positive that the worst had befallen them.

Well, they were gone, and had perished.

The question was, what were we who remained to do ?

Some of us were so far from being daunted that we determined to follow them, and we accordingly went for a supply of wood, and started making two more frames of boats, precisely upon the lines of the first one.

“I will never make the attempt,” said one ; and others backed him up. But we kept on, choosing our wood carefully, and lashing the parts together with the greatest care.

It was no good saying that we would not go. It became more and more evident that we should have to go, for the birds were beginning to get very scarce, and it was quite a difficult job to catch a seal, as they made off the moment they caught a glimpse of us. Ah, there were days when we did not get our two or three birds each—days when we did not even get one—and hunger makes men desperate !

We went on stolidly building, and never a sign did we have of the mates whom now, we supposed, must have perished ; and on the seventh day of August we had both frames just on finished. And then for the first time we saw a great column of smoke rising from the big island towards which Ellis and the others had sailed.

We could not believe our eyes at first. We fancied that it must be some trick of the mist. But we soon saw that it was no mist ; it was smoke—dense smoke, rising in great volumes

and rolling away to leeward. The fellows were alive, after all, and they were sending us the promised signal.

Away went our anxiety and doubt, and we hurried up and made a big fire in answer. We piled up a great heap of wood, and as soon as we had got it well alight we smothered it with grass and damped it, so that in place of flame it sent up a cloud of thick smoke. And then, eagerly discussing the situation, we turned our attention to the boats again.

For suppose that they were safe, and had found the depôt, they might not find a boat. We were very doubtful upon the latter point—indeed, some of the crowd declared that boats were not left at Government depôts. Well, then, the fellows would have to come back in their canvas boat, and we should be any length of time before we all got over, even if the weather kept good enough for the boat to make a number of passages. It would be far better to have more boats, so that a lot of us could go over together. So we decided, and to work we set.

And it was a task when it came to covering them, for the canvas had to be straightened out, and that which we had used for clothes had to be sewn back to where we had taken it from, even if it meant us going with very little clothing ourselves.

What mattered that, or anything? It did not even matter that we were beginning to be more often hungry than not, and that we had to fall back upon our root for our chief food.

I have not yet mentioned that root to you. Its name is *Stilbocarpa polaris*. We didn't know that; we just called it "root." It grew with great leaves, and the root itself was very big and fleshy, sometimes as long as a man's arm, and a good deal thicker. The white briony of England has a root somewhat like it in appearance.

We had come across it when we were very hungry—so hungry that we were quite ready to eat anything, indeed—and some of our fellows had started chewing these leaves. That led to the discovery that it had a big root, and someone started on that, though it was a bit of a job to get it up. However, we found that it did not do us any harm, though it was very hard. It tasted something like a turnip.

Then we went a step further and tried what cooking it would do—our cooking being just to throw it in the fire and leave it there for a good time. When we took it out and scraped all the ash and burnt parts off, the rest was quite soft, and it tasted a good deal more like turnip—boiled turnip. At any rate, we liked the root very much, and found it a good deal more appetizing than seaweed.

Well, we kept our signal fire going for all it was worth, and we worked away at our boats, so that we should have them all ready when the other fellows came back for us. But after that fire on August 7th we had no other sign for three days, and we began to get anxious again, not understanding what could be going

on, though we expected that the party were away from the shore, busily searching for the depôt.

“I wish that we were there wid them,” was Mickey’s comment when we were talking that over; and he was answered that we would soon be there now, for the fellows could not be much longer finding the depôt, and then they would come back to us at once.

We little thought how they would come back to us, and what a tale they would have to tell! And on August 10th once more we saw smoke rising from the other island; and though we did not know why the fellows should be signalling again like that, we took it to be a good omen, and we made another big fire in answer, and then awaited as calmly as we could for what was to follow.

We discussed that second fire, and the general opinion was that the chaps had made it to give us notice that they were on the return voyage.

On the return voyage! How we stared out across the sea, how we strained our eyes, and how we wondered as to what fortune Ellis and his two companions had met with. And then, late in the afternoon—too late, indeed, if one considered the peril of being caught by night—one of the crowd noticed far, far away a tiny black spot rising and falling on the waves.

We rushed up the cliff, and we examined it carefully. Yes, something was there—something moving and coming towards us. It

did not take us long to make up our minds as to its nature. That black spot was our canvas boat, and our three companions were there. They were coming back. But what were the tidings which they would have to tell when they arrived ?

CHAPTER IX.

BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.

WHAT were we going to hear from their lips? Had they discovered any depôt? Why had they been so foolish as to delay their start upon their return journey until so late in the day? Had anything wrong occurred?

Such were the questions which we asked ourselves as we stood there on the cliff, watching that black speck which danced on the waves and drew nearer and nearer, until we could distinguish the outline of the canvas boat which we had constructed with so much care; and as they were questions which we had no means of answering until our comrades arrived, we waited, consumed with anxiety and impatience.

How slowly they seemed to work the paddles; how tardy was the craft's progress! Though they were too far away for us to distinguish their faces, there was something—a sort of dejection marking their movements—which seemed to tell us that all was not right—that these men were not returning elated with success, but crushed by failure.

“They don't seem to hurry themselves.”

“Reckon they are just dog tired.”

“If they are not quick, it will be dark before they make the land; and then they won't have an easy job of it.”

So we murmured one to another as we stood there staring over the waves, whilst dimmer and dimmer grew the outline of the island from which our comrades were returning. It was our Island of Dreams, and as we watched it gradually melting into the mist of the evening it seemed as if our dream was fading away, and a great darkness of despair settling down upon our spirits.

“Those chaps are about properly done,” I thought, as they came still nearer. “They have been having a bad time of it.”

“If they were as anxious to meet us as we were to see them, they would put their backs into it.”

“Let's get down to the landing-place, and be ready to meet them.”

At that last suggestion we all left the cliff-top and wended our way down to the spot from which on that morning ten days before, we had sent them off with encouraging cheers and good wishes, and there we stood waiting until the boat should come round the point.

“They are beaten!”

That was the thought that was pressing itself home upon us. Whatever story we were to hear, it would be one of failure; and we nerved ourselves to bear our disappointment like men.

But when at last our comrades appeared round the headland, making towards us, we uttered a shout of joy, for we saw that they were no longer rowing with the rude, canvas-covered paddles, but with wooden oars; and if they had oars they must have found the depot.

“They have struck it lucky, after all!” cried one of the crowd. “Look what they are rowing with! Hurrah, lads! It’s good news they are bringing!”

“Faith, then, I wish they would hurry up wid it!” murmured Mickey. And his impatience was shared by the rest of us.

But whatever was the matter with them? They looked like dying men; and Bob Ellis seemed to sway as he paddled, as if he had not strength left for another stroke. We gave them three ringing cheers as they drew within hailing distance, and they answered, but with such feeble cries that they seemed to be the ghosts of hurrahs, so hollow and forced did they sound.

But when they were about twenty feet away from the shore, Bob Ellis seemed to try and rouse himself, and put on some air of cheerfulness, for he sang out to us:

“What sort of a harbour is this, at all?”

The canoe grounded, and willing hands were outstretched to help them; ay, and they needed help, for they were so terribly cramped and weak that they could scarcely move, and they groaned with pain as they tried to use their stiffened limbs.

“What news? Did you reach the island? Have you found anything?”

We clustered round them, plying them with questions; and Ellis answered us, his words seeming to kill any vestige of hope that we had left.

“Ay, we reached the island, and you ought to go down on your knees and thank God that you were cast away here, and not over yonder. You can't live there, boys—it's a deadly place. There is valley after valley of thick bush, which no mortal soul can possibly penetrate. For pity's sake don't stop yarn-ing here! Get us back to the camp and give us some water and food, for we are almost done. I never wanted anything so much in all my life as a good chunk of root and a fat molly-hawk.”

Failure!

We turned away and began our tramp back to the camp, our comrades in our midst. They looked awful. Their few clothes were torn to rags—they were soaked and covered with mire—and their hands and faces were torn and cut, giving plain evidence of the truth of their statement about the hardships of the way over there on that other island.

“We thought that we should find birds there, but there isn't one in the place,” they said; and then we understood what an error we had fallen into. We ought to have sent them away well supplied with a good stock of food.

We tramped back up the hill on the other

side of which our camp lay, and we provided for our comrades' wants ; and then gathering round the fire, we listened with grim faces to the recountal of their adventures, hearing the doom knell to our hopes in their words.

Ellis was the spokesman ; for, as I have told you, neither Pul nor Santiago could speak English properly—and this was the story which he told us :

After a hard journey against a strong current, they had at last managed to reach their destination, where they found making a landing a difficult and risky job. But this they accomplished, and got the boat up beyond the reach of the waves, and then started away on their march towards the north-east, in search of the depôt.

It was hard going from the first ; for in the bush there was so much horny brushwood that they were lacerated and bleeding almost from the very start ; whilst, as I have said, their clothes were literally torn to ribbons. But with dogged perseverance they kept on, and at last they got to the top of the valley, and then it started to rain in torrents, and a thick mist came down upon them.

Now, all they had to eat were two legs of a bird—a poor meal after three or four birds each—and they saw no signs of anything wherewith to replenish their larder ; but, for all that, their hearts were glad, for they had reached their destination, and they knew that somewhere there was a hut with food and clothing awaiting them. Ah, they did not know, though, what

tortures and privations the men who were to find that hut in the end would have to go through ere the task was accomplished!

They laid down in the bush that night, to sleep in the open in the rain. They did not attempt to light a fire, for that would have been impossible—everything was soaking wet; and there they stayed, hoping that with the light they would get better weather.

But, alas! the next day brought no better fortune; the rain continued to pour down in torrents, and the mist was so thick that they could not see each other if they separated but a few paces; and, besides this, they had no food, nor any hopes of getting any.

Can you imagine such a plight? Three men hardly able to understand each other, there in that region of thick, inhospitable bush, without any sign of life around them; the awful silence only broken by the splash of the rain and the sighing of the leaves; death before, death behind; and yet they kept their courage and when the mist lifted a little, as it did during the morning, they rose from the sodden ground and pushed resolutely on, upon their hard and agonizing journey.

They kept as near to the north-east as they could judge, and by nightfall they were a good distance from the sea; but they were now sick with hunger, and saw no trace of anything in the shape of a hut—saw nothing but bush, bush, on every hand.

That night they managed to make a fire, but they used two of their precious matches

in the doing of it ; and with the morning they had to abandon it, and make tracks back the way they had come ; for it was plain that if they stayed where they were much longer they would all three perish of starvation.

And when they got some distance back, they heard a noise in the bush ; and from its cover there broke a wild boar, which stood looking at them in mingled surprise and defiance, and showed more disposition to fight than to flee.

Now, such an animal is a formidable customer at any time ; and here were three unarmed men, almost perished with starvation ; but they did not hesitate—the sight of the prospect of food gave them strength and courage—and they flung themselves upon the fierce creature, clinging to it with desperate clutches, and dragging it to the ground. They did not come off scathless, but victory was theirs in the end, and they beat the life out of the creature. It lasted them for food for three days.

Now in the valley they lit another fire, and two more of their matches were used—leaving only two. It was plain to them that this fire must be kept going at all costs ; so they agreed that one of them should stand by that whilst the other two explored for the *depôt*—and now they made the smoke signal which we had seen.

For the next six day they tramped to and fro, suffering horribly, and it was whilst this was going on that Santiago, who was tending to the fire, cut out the two oars with which they rowed

back, cut them from some wreckage of our poor *Dundonald* itself, which they had found washed up upon the beach. The set of the current was away from Disappointment to Auckland Island, and so the wreckage drifted in that direction.

For six days they sought in vain, and then they were starving again, and there were no more pigs to be seen. So on the tenth day of August, the weather being fine, they determined to abandon the search and return to us, considering that they had but jumped from the frying-pan into the fire in coming upon this journey. They made another smoke signal to give us warning, and then took to the canvas boat once more and started, glad to leave such a miserable place, and looking upon our little isle as a very Eden when compared to the spot which they were quitting.

Such was the story which Bill Ellis told, and our hearts sank like lead as we listened. But still, though some only shook their heads, and said they had known from the first how it would be, there were others of us, myself included, who declared that another try must be made.

"The depôt is there, we know," we affirmed, "and we can profit by their experiences, and so may succeed where they have failed."

"You do as you like," growled Ellis. "You will soon be glad enough to come back again. You don't catch me going to that hole any more." And both Pul and the Chilian nodded agreement.

Now we were divided in opinion. There were those who did not want to go, who would not go at any price ; and there were those who felt that the attempt must be made, and who were not going to be discouraged by anything, and we of that opinion set to work to finish our boats, the covering of which was a difficult matter, as I have before said, owing to the best of the sailcloth having already been used.

We took the canvas off the boat which had already made the journey and used it again. But we did not use the frame, for we considered that it had been strained, for one thing, and in the next place the two boats which we were now finishing were bigger, holding four men each instead of three.

We finished them about August 20th, and on that day it was just fair enough to give them a trial. We launched them, and they proved to be all right, so that all we had to do now was to make preparations, and await a day when the sea would be smooth enough for us to venture upon it.

Now we had one of the few difficulties which we had amongst ourselves during our adventures, for Herman Queerfelt had claimed the two remaining vestas as his property, he being possessed with the deadly fear that on some occasion our fires might go out, and that these two matches might then be needed.

We on our part declared that, since we were venturing for the benefit of all, we must have them, seeing that without the means of lighting a fire all our efforts would be in vain. Words

ran high, those who were not keen upon the voyage siding with the German, and the rest of us declaring that we would have the vestas, if we had to take them by force.

But at last matters were arranged, for I thought of a scheme whereby we might take a fire with us in the boat—I will tell you of this soon—and we agreed that if Queerfelt would let us take the vestas we would take great care of them, and only use them in case of dire necessity. So, that point being settled, we waited and waited for some favourable weather, and we waited in vain, for day after day, week after week, it was blowing gales, with a mountainous sea, with heavy rain and sleet.

There was not the slightest hope of making the journey whilst such conditions prevailed, and in the meantime we were standing a very good chance of starving, for most of the birds had gone, and the seals were scarce; and, moreover, the weather was so bad that it was risking death to attempt to get down to catch them.

Now, I may say that Knudsen and myself were the most keen to make this second attempt. Indeed, we were the moving spirits in it, though some of the others—Mickey, Walters and the second mate—backed us up.

Well, on the 23rd of August, in wretched weather, Knudsen and myself, with one or two others, went down to see if our boats were all right, and on our way down the valley we had the good luck to come across a seal, a

very welcome visitor, seeing that we were in such desperate straits.

We soon got the better of him, and, having skinned and cleaned him, we took his entrails down and dumped them, according to our usual custom ; and as we were returning, we noticed the trunk of a tree growing all alone, some little distance away.

Now, that was the only tree which we had seen of Disappointment Island, so it is not strange that we stood looking at it. It had no branches, and looked from where we stood just like a dead old stump.

“That’s queer,” muttered Knudsen, “that one tree in this place—and not a likely place for a tree to grow either.”

“It’s a bit queer that it’s so flat on top,” I added. “There is something strange here. I vote that we go and have a look at it.”

So off we went, and when we got to this object, we found it to be about six feet high, and about as thick as a lamp-post.

“That’s no tree,” was our verdict, and we got hold of it, and after a few wrenches and pulls we brought it out with a run and—the end of it had been roughly pointed with an axe.

“It’s a sign. Someone has put it up here at some time,” I cried, and it is strange how the sight of that rough piece of timber excited us.

It was the first trace of anyone ever having been on this island that we had seen during our long stay on its barren shores.

“What a tale could that tell!” said Knudsen. “Doubtless some poor fellow, cast

away here, put it up and fastened a board of some kind to it. Time and tempest have torn the board off, and most likely his bones have crumbled to dust long ago, for it must have been here many years."

"Perhaps it marks the place where something is buried," I suggested—"a log, or something of that kind."

At that suggestion we got sticks, and started digging down where the post had stood; but, though we worked for some time, and cleared quite a big hole, we did not see a sign of anything; and so at last we took our seal, and went back to the others to tell them of what we had found, and to discuss what was signified by that old pointed post stuck up in this lonely place.

It had been erected by human hands, that we knew. But why? Did it mark a grave? In that case we surely ought to have found some trace of human remains. Was it a record of the wreck of some good ship? What had become of those who had placed it there?

Vain questions, utterly impossible of answering, and yet they served to occupy our thoughts, for in our lonely condition little things, which otherwise would have passed utterly unnoticed, became of vast importance, and served as topics for earnest discussion.

But talk as we might, we arrived at no conclusion, and at last we turned in, thanking God for the seal which we had killed, seeing that it meant the averting of starvation for a

little time, at least, and perhaps the morrow would bring us the calm which we so desired in order to be able to make our second attempt at finding the depôt.

“Charlie,” said the second mate to me that night, “if we don’t do it soon we are as good as dead men.” And I nodded grimly, knowing how terribly true his words were.

But, alas! the next day dawned even worse than the previous one had been, and the sea thundered and roared all round our island, as if daring us to brave its might. A ship’s lifeboat could have scarcely faced such weather, let alone our poor little cockleshells of baskets and old sailcloth.

Strangely treacherous was the weather then. One half hour the wind would be gone, the sea smooth, and the sun out, and the next a gale would be howling, the sea mountains high, and the air thick with mist and rain or snow. God help the boat, which, tempted out, was caught by one of those raging squalls, for earthly help it would have none.

All day we occupied ourselves as best we might, some getting wood for our fires, others looking for birds, now so fearfully scarce, others working with their bone needles at some skin clothing—all of us beginning to feel somewhat hopeless, so that even I found it hard work to keep up my spirits, whilst Mickey’s jokes were few and far between. And so we spent the day of August 24th, and in the early evening I went into my hut and flung myself down, thinking sadly of those dear ones in far-away England,

who long before this would have given me up for dead.

I lay there for some time, and the sun sank down until it was but a dull, fiery ball on the western horizon; and then all of a sudden I was startled by such a chorus of yells as surely never burst from human throats before.

“A ship! A ship! Sail-ho! Sail-ho!”

A ship! A sail! Oh, pitying God, what did that mean?

I rushed out of my hut. All our fellows seemed to have gone clean crazed. Some were rushing up and down, others had fallen on their knees, some were leaping like madmen, others crying and wringing their hands. And there, far away, true, but with her nose pointed to our island, was a barque, her royals furled, sailing steadily on towards us.

You cannot understand. It is impossible that you can; and I cannot tell you how I felt. There are some things which cannot be conveyed in human language, which can only be depicted by thought, and this was one of them. I did not know whether to cheer, to cry, to scream, or to dance. I felt that I must do each and all. It was just madness for the time.

On she came. There was not much wind that evening, and I suppose she had her royals furled because they would not have been much use to her, being close hauled, with a dead noser. But there she was, standing right in for our island.

“Get a fire going—quick! For goodness’ sake hurry there!” I shrieked; and I threw a whole

armful of wood on to our fire, which was now only a glowing mass of embers, ready for banking for the night.

“A fire—a fire!”

“A ship!”

“Sail-ho!”

“Hurrah!”

There, what is the good of trying to make you understand how we felt, and how we carried on? We raced here and there. We came near putting our fire out, we piled the fuel so high. But that danger was averted.

Up, up rolled great columns of smoke, heaven high, rolling away before the wind; and then after it darted the great tongues of roaring flame, casting a ruddy glow all round, and making the rolling smoke turn pink and purple beneath its kiss. And still on and on came the ship, nearer and nearer to us!

And the sun sank slowly, and the dusk fell grey upon the sea, and still brighter and brighter blazed our fire, higher danced the flames, and thicker rolled the smoke—and then——

We rubbed our eyes, we shrieked our prayers to them—prayers which they could not hear; but just as we thought that she was making right for us, we saw her head shift round a bit, and then round went her yards, and she started bearing right away from us, in an opposite direction.

Oh, if I ever knew bitter disappointment I knew it then! There was the ship, a good ship, a brave ship—a ship to take us back to life and our fellow men—there she was,

and going from us—seeming to mock us—leaving us there in our hopelessness and misery.

“Make up the fire! Higher still! Make it blaze more! She must see it—they can’t be off seeing it!”

How it blazed! How it roared in the evening breeze! It cast its ruddy light through the darkness, and made the sea glow blood red. Higher! Fiercer yet—higher!

No use! All in vain. Dimmer, dimmer, in the fading light the vessel grew—she was misty and indistinct—she was a speck—a speck that faded—and we were left there alone.

I have asked myself since what it meant. So far as I can learn, no vessel ever reported having seen our signal fire; and yet if they did not see it they must have been blind, for it must have been visible for miles—at least the glow and reflection must have been, even if the flames themselves could not be seen.

But she took no notice; she sailed off, and we were left there as nearly frantic with despair as ever men could be.

It was such a cruel disappointment; it would have been far better not to have had our spirits raised than to have had our hopes shattered so cruelly.

What wonder if some of us uttered bad words, and cursed those who might have answered our prayers and carried us to safety. We felt stunned with it, and too miserable to speak to each other at first.

But that was not for long; for soon we began

to look at things in a different light. We told ourselves that our signals had been seen, but that in all probability the skipper had been afraid to stand in too close, knowing the danger that lay around the islands from reefs and currents.

“He may come back in a day or two,” we said to each other. “Or if he does not he is certain to report having seen a signal fire on what is known to be an uninhabited island, and then a Government boat will come to investigate and all will be well.”

“They must have seen our fire, lads,” Knudsen declared, “and they are sure to report it, even if they didn’t come back!”

“By the powers, I wish that I had that skipper here wid me,” said Mickey, viciously. “I’d tell him what I think of his behaviour in going away like that!”

“Better go away now, and come back to-morrow, than get wrecked trying to make the island after dark, Mickey,” I said.

“At any rate,” said Ellis, “we have seen a ship, and we may see others. The weather is bound to get better soon——”

“And when it is we will make a start,” I said; but he shook his head at that.

“You fellows may, if you are fools enough. I have had some, and don’t mean to tempt Providence the second time. I shall stay here, and keep my eyes skinned—we shall have a vessel coming soon.”

But, alas! day after day sped by with dreary monotony, and no trace of the ship did

we see. Day after day, when we went for birds and came back empty-handed, or with but one or two ; day after day, when we looked in vain for seals ; days when we had to subsist upon our now precious root, and, when we could not get supplies of that, had to tear up the coarse grass and chew that like cattle, to stay the bite of hunger, though it made us sick and filled us with cramp.

August passed, and September came, and there was no abatement in the weather. Still the waves ran high between us and Auckland Island ; and we could not hide the fact that we were now almost face to face with starvation.

CHAPTER X.

IN DESPERATE STRAITS.

It was on August 24th that we saw that ship heading towards us, but though the sight had filled us with hopes, those hopes grew faint and more faint as the days passed away without anything happening.

It was possible that the ship itself might have encountered bad weather, and so have been prevented from either returning or making our helpless condition known to others, in which case we might still hope for the advent of a rescue party; but in the meantime, whilst we were waiting, we were also in dire peril of perishing from starvation.

We got to the last day of August, and there had not been any single day when the weather was calm enough to give us the least hope of getting across to Auckland Island. There were the boats all ready, and we had made our arrangements as to who should cross in them, but it would have been madness to make the attempt with such seas as were running all the time.

All we could do was to wait ; and it looked as if waiting meant starving.

The birds were very scarce now, and it would not be long before the rest of them were gone. They were quite strong on the wing, and even those which remained proved very difficult to catch ; so that it was no uncommon thing for us to return home empty-handed when we went after them. The seals, too, as I have said, were very, very shy, and, moreover, it was very dangerous to attempt to get at them.

It was only in bright weather that they came out to sun themselves, and then we had some chance of cutting them off before they could get to the water. In cloudy weather they either did not come to land at all, or else they secreted themselves in great holes worn in the boulders, and to get at them was just taking one's life in one's hand.

For the beach where they gathered consisted of huge boulders which had fallen from the cliffs. Not little rocks like one may see on our own coast, but great masses of stone, weighing hundreds of tons. These huge masses of rock lay scattered in all directions, covered with weeds, and between them there were deep gaps and holes often quite hidden by the weed, into which a man might easily fall, and get seriously injured or jammed. Then there were smaller cracks into which a man might thrust his leg and break it, or, getting it fixed, have to wait until the water reached him, and so perish miserably.

Moreover, at high tide, there was not a space of six feet between the water and the cliff, and big waves soon cleared that, making it almost impossible for anyone to stand there without getting washed away.

The seals would get into the holes beneath the rocks, and the only way to come at them was to go in after them head first—no very enviable task, when one remembers that a big seal could crack a man's skull with one scrunch of his powerful teeth.

Our method was to crawl in a little way, armed with a long stick, and keep watch on the seals until they came out; and, remember, that whilst doing this we had to keep one eye on the tide, since two or three waves would have finished us, had we been caught in such a position.

As time passed they became angry and wild, and one would come roaring and barking at his tormentors, showing a set of business-like teeth; and then the intruder had to get out quick, or things would have been lively for him. He would soon come out, the seal after him, and then, once the creature was in the open, it was practically at our mercy, and the battle was soon ended.

I am sure my readers will easily understand that hunting under such conditions was a thing which even a brave man might hesitate to do; but it was what we were compelled to face, unless the sun came out, and that was a thing which did not occur very often away there in our terrible island prison.

I remember well the last time that I went down to the sealing-ground. It was a terrible day, blowing great guns. The road down was bad at the best, as I have already told you, but with a heavy gale and driving snow it was well-nigh madness to attempt it.

And yet we were driven to it by hunger, and hunger is a hard task-master. We were cleared out of food, and we sat dejectedly in our huts, or around the fire, discussing what was to be done. One after another declared that they would not attempt to visit the sealing ground in such weather.

“Better be hungry than get killed,” was the general verdict. “It may be better to-morrow.”

“That’s what we’ve been saying every day,” I answered. “And it seems that we shall go on saying it; and whilst we are waiting for the sun that does not shine, or the ship that does not come, we may starve. I am going to have a try for one.”

“Don’t do it, Charlie,” was the advice I received from some, whilst others declared that if I was such a fool it was my look-out.

“It’s dog’s weather! Even if you get down, you would not find seals, and if you did, you could not get at them. And even if you killed one, you could not get it up the cliff.”

“If I secure one I will soon see about getting it up,” I answered. “I don’t like sitting here doing nothing—it’s not my way. It is just knuckling under to things, and owning up that we are beaten; and we have made too big a

fight to do that now. We have faced a whole lot of things that seemed impossible, but we have managed to do them somehow, and—— Well, if no one says they are coming with me, I go alone.”

“Look here, Charlie,” cried Bob Ellis. “I am not going to stand that. I don’t put much faith in going, but if you are going to risk it, I will come with you. You would not stand much chance alone.”

That was cheery, for Bob was a good mate, ready to take his share of peril, and not standing back whilst other fellows did the work, and I was right glad to have him with me.

“I wouldn’t try it,” advised the others. “Better a feed of root, or no feed at all, than getting killed; and that is what you two will be asking for.”

“Don’t you worry. You keep the fire up ready to do the cooking, and we’ll go and get the seal.”

“Then I am coming along with you,” suddenly announced another man, Jack Stewart by name. “If you are in earnest, I am willing to lend a hand.”

“The more the merrier,” I said; and then a third man volunteered—John Puhze, the Russian. He was the man from whom I had taken that box of matches on the night of the wreck.

Well, no more volunteers seemed forthcoming, so we four set out. We took our line, for we needed that in getting up and down, and we

armed ourselves with sticks, and off we set ; and didn't it blow as we crossed to the sealing-ground ! We were glad of the rough-and-ready clothing which we had made then, for it is certain that unless we had been able to have some sort of better covering than the rags of our old clothes, we should have all perished of cold.

It was an awful job getting down the cliff ; we had to hang on by our eyelids, as the saying is, the path was so slippery, and the wind tore at us and beat us, until it seemed that it would sweep up sheer from the narrow ledge down which we went.

And below, how the waves came thundering in, how they roared, how the spray went flying up in great clouds ! It was a scene of wild desolation, and there was no trace of any seal to be seen.

But that did not trouble us. We knew that in such weather there would probably be several hidden away in their lairs—young ones especially. There was not a trace of the sun, but a dull, melancholy gloom hung over all, as, at last, we safely finished our perilous journey and stood together on the beach.

“ Now we have got to hunt for them,” I said ; and so we went clambering amongst the mighty boulders, slipping on the treacherous weed, falling and bruising ourselves, and ever having to keep a wary eye on the sea, lest we ventured too near the waves and so got swept away.

But the seals seemed very scarce, and we began to think that our comrades were right

when they declared that we were taking all our trouble for nothing.

“Sea too rough. Seals won’t come ashore,” said John Puhze. But I objected to that.

“It’s just the rough weather that will keep them in their holes, John. We have just to go on searching. We are bound to find some soon. And we must have some food somehow. It’s no good giving up.”

“But the tide is rising quickly,” remarked Stewart, with an uneasy glance towards the waves.

“That looks a bit likely,” I said, disregarding Jack’s remark, as I paused before one big rock that had a long, narrow tunnel worn in it. And I stooped down and peered in.

Grow—wow-wough!

A seal’s bark and a pair of glowing eyes—two pairs. Why, fortune had favoured me! There in the dim distance I saw no less than four young seals all glaring at me, and telling me as plainly as they could that they preferred my room to my company.

But I had just the opposite opinion. I preferred their company to their room, and so I got up, and we consulted how we were to set to work.

Puhze and Stewart had gone off to some other rock, and Ellis and I were alone. Right opposite to the hole through which the seal would have to come was another rock, tunnelled through in the same way, and cutting off their retreat to the sea. If we could get them out they would be certain to make for

that hole, and so slip through and make for the water.

So Bob Ellis went round and took up his station on the other side of this hole nearest the sea, and I with my stick—fortunately it was a good long one—lay down and tried to reach the seals in their cave, whilst they growled to inform me that they did not like the game that I was playing, but preferred being left in peace. But we were hungry, and our mates were starving for want of food.

“Hurry up, Charlie, the tide is getting near!” came Bob’s message.

But it was no good telling me to hurry, for the seals would not be hurried. They clustered together right at the end of their hiding-place, roaring out their anger and biting at the stick. But they would not budge for anything.

But the more they refused the harder I struggled, and they began to get very wild. I kept a wary eye on them, for I knew what would come in the end; and, though they were but youngsters, they would be able to inflict very severe bites.

I had a good half an hour of it, and all the time Bob waited round the other side of the rock, ready to knock them over as they came out, for it was plain that I should have all I could do to clear out of their way when the charge came. And come it did at last, for with one mighty roar of rage all four of them came at once towards the entrance, literally throwing themselves at me.

I yelled out to Bob to stand by, and dodged aside, throwing myself out of their track. They did not turn to attack me, but passed on as we had thought they would, straight for the sea through that other hole, and there Bob was ready. Whack, whack went his stick, falling with unerring aim right on the vital spot over the nose. And then we raised a whoop of triumph, for we had three fine young ones before us. The peril of starvation was averted once more for the time, and we had to take the words of Scripture then, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The morrow always had to take care of itself.

Puhze and Stewart now joined us, and we dragged the bodies up close to the cliff, and skinned and flayed them, and put the skins safely aside for future handling. But though we had succeeded so far, it was a perilous and difficult job to get them up the cliff. It was hard work, but we did it, and at last, shouldering our booty, we set off to tramp back to the camp.

Now, the other fellows had not had much hope that we should succeed, and our advent was therefore hailed with a shout of satisfaction.

"They have got three!"

"Bully for you, chaps!"

"More power to you!"

Such were the shouts which greeted us upon our arrival, and we felt elated, I particularly so, for besides having a supply of food, our success had a moral value which was of considerable worth. It showed that it was worth

while having a try for things, and not sitting down and giving up whilst a chance remained.

That evening we had a good feast of seal meat, and we all felt more hopeful. Alas! our hopes were to be dashed to the ground, and the courage of all was to be tried, and the good spirits of even Mickey and myself were to fail ere we escaped the rocky confines of Disappointment Island.

I have to skip over a good deal, for if I were to tell the doings of each day, the hundred disappointments, perils and trials, I should never get through my yarn. And, after all, one day was like another, for there was the same hardship, the same hope, the same disappointment in each of them.

We got through September almost, and not one single day had been fair enough for us to put to sea. Rain and snow, wind and mist, it was one day after another the same story, and things were as bad as bad could be.

Now and again we got a capture of mollyhawk, or a chance seal; but most of the time we were living on seaweed, on root, and on grass itself—on anything that would stay the pangs of hunger and fill us, no matter how ill it made us feel afterwards. We were a gaunt, miserable-looking set, our faces all drawn and yellow, our hair and beards long, tangled masses, but our teeth as white and pearly as could be. That was a very strange thing. Many a lady might have envied us our white teeth, but they looked very strange when we

opened our mouths. I suppose it was something we ate ; but at any rate, men whose teeth had formerly been quite black through smoking tobacco had now a set which might vie with the most dainty maiden's in whiteness, if not in size and regularity.

We had, of course, made all our arrangements for the voyage. It would not have done to leave them until fine weather arrived. First we had made a canvas bag in which to carry a supply of fresh water. Of course, we should lose some through its oozing, but not much ; and though it was not the easiest thing in the world to drink out of, we were sure to be very glad of it.

Then there was the question of a fire. How were we to take a fire over with us. We dared not build one in our boat, for it would soon burn a hole through her, even if it was not swamped. I had thought that out before, and my plan was to get a piece of earth, and dig a little hole in it, line this hole with stones, and carry a little fire in that way, continually supplying it with fresh wood on the voyage. It seemed to work all right when we tried it, and so we had it kept in readiness for the long-looked-for fine day.

Then we had settled upon who should go. Our boats would carry eight. The first boat we were not going to use. That was to stop with the men who remained on the island, and they claimed the wooden oars also. We did not quarrel over that, for, after all, they were more clumsy than our paddles

as there were no rowlocks or thwarts in the boats.

Our two crews were made up as follows : Knudsen, Maclaghan, John Gratton and George Ivemey were in one boat ; and John Judge, Harry Walters, Albert Roberts—the cabin-boy—and myself in the other.

Knudsen was not very pleased with this arrangement, for he considered that his crew were far too weak, as compared with ours. He did not like having Mickey and Ivemey, who were neither of them strong enough, in his opinion, to be of any real service, and he feared that the brunt of the work would fall upon himself and Mr. Maclaghan, who himself was fit for very little hard work.

He had complained of this several times, and he said plainly that he would never have consented to put to sea with such a crew had we not promised to stand by in the second canoe.

“ I would never have gone without you two fellows,” he said to Walters and I. “ Those fellows are not up to it. They will be properly done before we are half-way over, and what will happen then ? ”

In this Knudsen was right. This voyage was one of hardship. Six miles in a good boat is a mere nothing, but six miles in a crazy canvas boat, where there was the danger of smashing the whole thing up unless she was skilfully handled, was a serious business, and there was a big risk hanging on to it. Neither Mickey nor Ivemey were strong enough in my

estimation, and I agreed with Knudsen on that point.

Judge, Walters and myself were all pretty fit, and naturally we did not want to make any changes, unless it was to let Roberts go in place of one of the other crew. And, of course, that would not have satisfied Knudsen a bit, for the cabin-boy was only a strip-ling, and could hardly be expected to hold out very long.

Well, the days went one after another, and still we did not have an opportunity of making our attempt to reach the big island, and things looked as bad as they possibly could. And then one morning at the very end of September there came a lull, and we decided that it was a case of now or never with us.

"You will be sure to repent it," was the cheerful statement of the fellows who had been before. "You won't be there a day before you will want to be back here. You don't know what you are going to. We have had some, and we warn you that it is just waste of time to make the journey."

"May be, may be not. We mean to go, so don't try and put a damper on us," I answered. And Knudsen and I bustled about making our final preparations.

We went down to the landing-place, most of the other fellows coming to see us off; though some of them did not take the trouble to do even that, so certain they were that we were just madmen undertaking an impossible task.

But then, they had thought much the same about that sealing expedition, and yet somehow we had managed to pull it off all right, so we paid little heed to their croaking. This was our deal. If we died, we died; if we got through, then so much the better for all the rest of them.

We had a good look at our boats, and in spite of the bad weather they seemed all right. We pulled off our clumsy coats, and, carrying Knudsen's boat down, we launched it, and he got in and by himself paddled out a little way to see that everything was right, and to wait until our boat was launched.

Now, though I have said that there was a lull in the weather, you must not imagine that the sea was calm. On the contrary, there was a swell which a landsman would call a rough sea, but which was calm in comparison to what we had been having—as calm as we hoped to have it. And we dared not wait any longer, things were so very serious.

Well, Knudsen was paddling there in his boat, and she rode well, and we launched our boat. Judge and Walters got in, and we handed them our things.

First of all the bottle of water and the clod with the fire going good in its centre, then all our skin coats. We had taken them off because we knew we could not paddle in them, and taking them off in the boat would have been too dangerous.

“It's a bit rough,” I remarked, as I

watched the big swell come in. "I wonder how it will be over there?"

It might have been all right if we had possessed any sort of breakwater or a quay; but to launch these frail craft from the beach whilst big swells kept them bumping in a smother of surf was no easy thing. But it had to be done; if we did not take this chance there was no telling when we should get another.

Some of the fellows who had come to see us off had got hold of the boat's painter, which we had fashioned of canvas, and the rest of us were handing in our properties to Walters and Judge. And then, just when everything was stowed, and Roberts and myself were going to get in, an extra big wave came right up the little creek from seaward.

"Look out!"

"Take care there!"

We yelled our warnings to the two in the boat, but it was too late. They had not noticed that swell, and, before they could drop the things they were handling and seize the paddles, it was upon them.

Up like a cork that great wave bore our poor little boat, and sent it smash, crash, on the rocks, so that the canvas ripped in every direction. Then as the water receded, the craft turned completely over and sank before our eyes.

Judge and Walters sprang from the boat as it struck the rocks, and were dragged by the

backwash into deep water, and they had a hard job to get back to shore.

For a few moments there was a scene of indescribable confusion. There were our two companions struggling in the surf, battling towards the land. There were some of us hanging to the painter of the boat, and striving to drag it up so that the canvas might be saved, and others standing by to aid Judge and Walters when they got near enough. And meantime, there were our precious coats floating out to sea!

Knudsen in his boat tried to snatch at them as they floated away, but he was unable to do so, for the craft was unwieldy, and he had to be careful that his boat did not suffer the same unhappy fate as ours had done.

"Come in! Come in!" we yelled to him. For at that moment our coats were our chief thought, our two comrades having got into safety. And he, not without some difficulty, brought his boat to the shore; for it was a difficult task for him to keep his canoe head to the wind, which seemed to be rising all the time.

However, he got it safely to the beach, and I scrambled in and seized a paddle.

"Give way, Knudsen!" I shouted. "We must get those coats back somehow." And we went paddling on, and sending her along in first-class style.

But it was a hunt, for the waves had separated the coats, and one was drifting here

and another there. Fortunately they floated, or we should have lost the lot ; but as it was, after a good deal of hard work, and paddling this way and that, we managed to capture the whole of them, and then turned back towards the wreck and the shore.

Walters and Judge had been pulled safely out, but they were half-drowned before they got to shore. And the rest of them were hauling away at the canvas painter, trying to drag the sunken boat up, and fearing every moment that the canvas would part.

It was not the frame we wanted so much—we could make another of those—it was the canvas, for without that no new boat could be fashioned.

As soon as Knudsen and I had got safely to land, and had, with the aid of some of the others, carried the remaining boat to safety, we turned our attention to the salving of the damaged one ; no easy matter, for the backwash of the waves almost pulled us over.

But at last, with infinite trouble, a good deal of danger, and a lot of patience, we managed to drag the wreck up on to the beach, and then, to our disappointment, we saw that all our trouble had been for nothing.

The frame was smashed—that we had expected—but the canvas was also ruined. It had been none too strong at the best, for it was the piece which we had stitched together again, after having used it for clothes. You can imagine what the task had been, piecing the thing together, and having nothing but birds' bones

for needles. It had taken us a long time, and now as we looked upon it, we saw that it would never be of use again.

It was torn and gashed all over; the rocks had ruined it, and now, after all our trouble, the whole was absolutely useless.

“Well, we still have one boat,” we said, and we looked at Knudsen, not quite sure whether he would still make a start or not. We did not remain in uncertainty for long, for the third mate spoke, and spoke with such determination that there was no mistaking his sincerity.

“I am not going to-day, anyhow,” he said; “and I won’t go at all with the crew that is picked for me. I would not have done it at first if the other fellows had not been coming, and now their canoe is done for I am not going to take the risk.”

“What will you do, then?” he was asked. And he answered:

“Nothing now. We have had quite enough for one day. We have lost one boat, we have ruined the canvas, and a couple of us are pretty nigh drowned. That’s quite enough for one helping, so let us get back to the camp.”

Well, we all felt pretty worn, we had spent so much thought and time upon our preparations, and this was the end of it!

However, it did not do to give way to despair, so as we wended our way back to the camp, I remarked to Gratton:

“Better luck next time!”

Mickey nodded gravely, and pointed to the gathering clouds.

“ True for you, Charlie,” he answered. “ But we have missed this chance, and when will the next one be coming ? ”

And that was a question which none of us could answer.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW WE GOT TO AUCKLAND ISLAND AT LAST.

“WHAT is to be done ?”

“You still mean to make the attempt ?”

“Of course. It is a case of must. It's slow starvation here.”

That is how we talked around our camp fire, after our exciting adventures, as we partook of a very scanty meal.

We were somewhat divided in our opinions. Though one boat was damaged beyond repair, we still had two, so that we could have gone as originally intended, though one boat—the first made—would have been crowded ; but the fellows who were to stay did not agree to us taking this boat, and in one way there was reason in their objection.

They looked upon the adventure as madness, and considered that it must end in failure. If we took both boats they would be left without any means of leaving the island, for there was no more canvas to use. They had no intention of going at present, but they argued they did not know when they might be compelled to go, and they were not unreasonable in objecting

to our having both boats, which meant all the canvas.

On the other hand, Knudsen declared in as many words that he, for one, would not think of undertaking that voyage with the crew that had been assigned to him unless the other boat accompanied him ; and he, too, was not without reason in his demands.

It needed not only men who were strong enough to take the craft across those six miles of water, but who would also be strong enough to brave the hardships of the journey which had undoubtedly to be faced upon the other side.

“ I don't say a word against Mr. Maclaghlan,” he declared ; “ and he knows it. He has proved himself as plucky as any of us, but he has not got the strength in him ; and he knows that too. And Ivemey is no good to me. I don't want to be saddled with a pair of sick men, like we were with poor Mr. Peters.”

“ Well, who do you want with you ? ” demanded the second mate at last. “ Look here, Knudsen, name your own crew, and let us see if we can arrange the thing that way—that is, if you are determined to go.”

“ Of course I am determined to go,” growled Knudsen. “ I should have not voted for building the boats if I didn't mean to have a try for it ! ”

“ That's all right, Knudsen. We didn't mean to hint that you wanted to back out of it. You are skipper of that boat, so name your own crew.”

Of course, Knudsen was not really skipper, for we had long ago started to share alike, no one having any authority unless it was due to his personal strength of character. For instance, both Ellis and Knudsen were strong men; and somehow I always found that my advice was regarded thoughtfully, but I expect that was to a great extent due to my good spirits—I and Mickey kept the fellows lively.

Well, Knudsen was not long in responding to the second mate's invitation to name his own crew, and he called out:

"Well, if I'm going, I choose Walters, Eyre and Mickey to go with me."

That led to some more consultation. George Ivemey did not seem inclined to give up his place; I think that he was just about sick of Disappointment Island—as, indeed, all of us were, except the three fellows who had been on the first trip—and it took a whole week's argument before he was quite willing to vacate his place in favour of Walters. Mr. Maclaghan did not make much trouble about giving way in my favour. And so at last the thing was settled, and Knudsen, Walters, Mickey and myself were selected as the ones who were to make the voyage; and then there was nothing to do but to exist as best as we could until another fine day came along.

All the time Ellis and Santiago and the other fellows kept telling us that we were just a lot of fools, and they prophesied that we should be very, very glad to get back again. Indeed, they seemed quite put out at the fact that we

were not to be shaken out of our resolution, and at last they gave it up as a bad job, and left us severely to ourselves.

And now things were seemingly at their worst, for the birds had entirely gone, and it was only now and again that we managed to secure a seal. We were as near starvation then as it was well possible to be, for the root, though it was nice enough with mollyhawk or seal, did not seem enough to satisfy us by itself. I expect that in those cold latitudes the human body needs flesh, and especially fat, and the starch of the root did not make up for it.

But not until October 7th did a day come which seemed to hold the slightest promise of success for us. We had everything in readiness, and we waited for the chance with such impatience as can be guessed but not described.

On October 7th of that year (1907) we rose at daybreak, and we saw at a glance that things looked promising. The wind had gone down, and the sea was pretty smooth.

I had already prepared a sod for conveying a fire, but profiting by experience, I had taken rather more care over this one than the last. I cut a hole about four inches square in this sod, and lined it with little stones; inside the hole I put fresh ashes from our fire, and then on top of these little pieces of green wood. I covered it over with a flat stone, and put another sod on top to prevent the water getting in, and I was in great hopes of carrying it over successfully.

We had a couple of cooked birds—some of the very last in the place—and these we took for provisions, and then, just as the daylight began to creep across the top of the hill, we wended our way up its sides and down into a steep valley towards the landing-place.

Very few of the other fellows came to see us off—they looked upon the whole thing as folly, and declared that we should never succeed. They were all more or less despondent after what had gone before; and with the lack of food had come a depression of spirits. That's a bad thing at the best. The man who loses heart hasn't a real chance; but the one who keeps his spirits up and his courage high, he is going to get through, if there is any getting through possible. As the old saying has it, "I can't" never achieved anything; "I will try" does much; but "I will" does all things.

We had already arranged a code of signals with those we were leaving. When we arrived we were to light a fire and make plenty of smoke, to denote that we had got through all right; and if we found the depôt we would make two fires, one at a good distance from the other. We would then send two of our party back, and bring two more across, and so on until we were altogether once more.

If we found the depôt!

How much depended upon that! Auckland Island was a big place; our little Disappointment Island was not to be compared to it for size. What searching might not have to be made ere we succeeded in our mission! But

the depôt was there—or, rather, two depôts were there—and by God's help we would discover one of them; and if not, then His will must be done.

Well, with one or two comrades to see us off and wish us "God-speed," we got our little craft afloat once more, and two of our party got into her. There was still a swell, but nothing like so bad as last time.

Then the fire was passed in, together with a canvas bag of water, the two birds, and our coats, and, with a cheer, we pushed off and paddled away, and our voyage had actually commenced!

Mickey was in the bows baling out—that had to be done all the time—Knudsen was next working a paddle, and then Walters also paddling. I was at the stern with a third paddle to help the others and to do the steering.

And now that we were a distance from the island we could see what a grim, horrible place it looked, and yet it had been our home for seven months nearly; and who could tell what we were going to find on the other side?—something far worse, according to our comrades' report.

But we had started, and there was no thought of turning back. On and on we went, fainter grew Disappointment Island, clearer grew Auckland Island, and when we were midway upon our journey, a bit of a breeze sprang up from the south-west, and the sea grew very choppy.

Our little craft, having only about five inches freeboard, started shipping water a good deal faster than was comfortable, and things began to look somewhat serious. It was a good thing for us that the wind was behind us, or we should certainly have been compelled to put back. As it was, the breeze was on our starboard quarter, we were going east, and the wind came from the south-west.

But oh, that journey! How tired we were, how cramped our limbs were! The long crouching on the wooden frame of our craft was a horrible torture, and our arms ached fearfully.

It seemed as if red-hot pains shot through them right up to our shoulders with every sweep of our paddles.

And then when we all felt done Knudsen showed what metal he was made of. I have said that he was in the bow. Now, paddling a canoe is precisely opposite to rowing a boat, for you look in the direction in which you are going; and the bow paddle sets the stroke. How Knudsen kept on, his face set, his lips compressed! He was just working—the man's will was conquering his body. And somehow he kept us at it. Our hands felt raw with the friction of our rough wooden paddles, but we dared not stop. Had we once taken the way off her, our little craft would certainly have capsized.

But tired as we were, and hard as was the labour, we were sitting with our eyes fixed on the shore to which we desired to go, and we

could see it becoming clearer and clearer as we drew near. It inspired us, it egged us on, and following Knudsen's example—and to my mind he deserves the greatest praise for his splendid behaviour then—we worked away until it was, as near as we could guess, midday, and then we were drawing quite near to the other shore.

Now, though the other fellows had been against our going, yet when they saw that we were not to be moved they had told us the best place to land, and for that spot we made, only to discover when we drew near that no matter what they had done, it would be impossible to land there now, for the sea was far too big for a craft like ours.

It was a terrible place for landing—we knew that directly we sighted it—our boat would inevitably be smashed in getting to shore.

The place was a bay; but it was full of sunken rocks and reefs, and there was broken water for quite a quarter of a mile from shore to sea.

So far as we could make out, on the inside of that rocky barrier there was a shingle beach about twelve feet wide, and then beyond that nothing but one dense mass of forest, so thick as to be like a solid wall, the trees being about twenty to thirty feet high. And this forest seemed to grow up the side of a hill for some sixty feet and then suddenly open into a big valley, which ran we knew not whither, but which was also one thick mass of bush.

Still, we had no time to contemplate that now. We paddled slowly between two great reefs,

and tried to make the shore, but found the sea and swell far too big, so had to pull out again.

Now, by this time we were all properly done up, and Mickey and Walters were for pulling in and taking our chances, but to this neither Knudsen nor I would agree, being determined to save the boat if possible.

So we pulled out once more. If we had possessed a wooden boat we would have risked it, but it was a hard job to keep our little craft either head or stern to the sea, owing to the backwash from the rocks and reefs, which were scattered everywhere, and even a landsman can guess what would have happened if she had once got broadside on.

Well, tired out as we were, we paddled right across the bay, looking for a likely spot, but we were disappointed again—rocks and reefs everywhere, big rollers and angry foam. We could have done it had the sea been as smooth as glass—as it was when the other fellows landed here—but it was far otherwise with us, and it became a serious question what we were to do. We could not go back, and we could not keep on paddling, for we were done. We had stuck to it as long as we could, and Nature would endure no more. Moreover, the sea was rising, and the situation was growing more threatening every minute.

It seemed, after all, that we should have to follow Mickey and Walters' advice, and run ashore, though we knew that the boat would be smashed to atoms in the doing of it; and,

besides that, our fire would be endangered. It was still burning away good-oh, for we had brought a supply of little twigs with us, and when these failed we had started whittling away slips from the wood of our boat, and so had kept it going, but it was a question whether we should ever get it ashore now.

“We have got to chance it.”

That was our unanimous opinion after a vain and patient search.

“We can do no more ; and the sea is getting too big for us to risk staying longer.”

So we rested there, just keeping her head on, and watched our chance.

And presently we saw a big roller coming closer and closer, and Knudsen shouted that we must be ready to follow it quick, before another one could catch us. On it came, nearer and nearer, and then as it passed us it broke in a mad churn of foam.

“Now for it !” I yelled. And we paddled—oh, how we paddled !—until it was a wonder that the paddles did not break. We wanted to reach the shore before another roller could come.

I had her nose right for the smoothest part of the beach that I could see on that rock-bound shore, but just as we seemed likely to win in this mad race and reach our goal in safety, we could see another big roller coming rapidly after us.

“Mickey, look alive ! Clear the painter—quick—and stand by to jump as soon as we touch the beach !”

We yelled these instructions to Mickey, and he obeyed—he was in the bow, you will remember. He seized the painter, and stood ready for the spring, for on him would depend to a great extent the safety of us all. The fire we could not pass to him, for it was in the stern with me, and not one of us could drop his paddle, even had there been time to do so.

But there was no time. It happened far quicker than I can write it down. The roller swept on nearer and nearer to us, and before we knew what was happening we were carried along on the crest of it and dashed fiercely upon a sunken reef, which was not far from the shore.

Mickey gave a startled yell, and jumped for it, and how he did it neither he nor we know, but he managed somehow to get ashore, half-smothered with the foam, and somewhat confused.

He still clung to the painter, and turned to haul on it, but the force of the receding water on the frail craft tore it from his hands, nearly skinning them; and the boat, with the three of us in it, was washed out again.

As we were going, both Knudsen and Walters jumped clear, right into the sea; and it is a wonder that they were not hurt by the lashing breakers; but they also managed to reach the land, and there was I left by myself, and the fate of the craft and the fire depended upon me alone now.

“Look out, Charlie! Look out, man!” they

shouted. I don't know whether it was to warn me that the fire was in jeopardy or the craft, but my first thought was the fire. I threw myself at it, meaning to seize it and toss it ashore; but, oh the mockery of it, just as my fingers were upon it it capsized at the bottom of the boat—there was one smothered hiss, and it was out!

Then I stood up and just managed to hurl our coats ashore, when crash came a big sea, hurling the boat on to a rock; the bow broke clean off at the nip, and she filled and sank under me.

I was washed out of her close to the shore, and I managed to grab hold of the painter and hold on for dear life, whilst Knudsen and Walters both bravely rushed to my rescue. The three of us were very nearly carried back into deep water as I clung to the painter.

Then somehow, in a whirl of confusion and smother of foam, we were safely on the beach, and, with Mickey, were gripping the painter and striving to get our boat up from where it had gone down.

For we wanted that canvas—we could not afford to let that go without an effort to save it.

It was hard work. Haul and tug, by sheer force we managed to get the ruined craft half-way on to a rock; and then we had to wade in waist deep, often getting taken clean off our feet by the rollers. It took us half an hour to do it, but we stripped away the canvas, and got it to shore. And after that we managed

to get the broken frame up, though, except for the strands used to seize the pieces together, it did not seem as if that would ever be of any use to us.

Well, there we were. We had set out to reach Auckland Island, and we had succeeded. But at what cost! Boat gone, fire gone, water gone, food gone—everything gone! It looked as if our comrades' words were coming true, and that we should soon regret the step which we had taken against their advice.

“Well,” I said, as I stood there surveying the scene, “we have reached the Island of Dreams at last, and now I am satisfied.”

“I sha'n't be satisfied until we have got a fire going,” said Knudsen. “We have got to give those fellows their signal.”

You see, though we had lost our fire we still had the two vestas, and we did not for a moment doubt that we should be able to get a fire on the go. And after that we must carry one with us in a big sod, as we had done in coming across. It would be easier work, for there would be plenty of wood to replenish it, and no fear of its being swamped by water.

Our first task was to strip and wring the water from our clothes—such as they were—whilst we turned anxious and inquiring eyes from the rock-bound beach to the dense forest growth, wondering what we should find within its depths.

“What's that?”

Walters, who was nearest to the forest, turned quickly, for from within its veil there came the

sound of cracking sticks, as though something was moving; and in our defenceless condition it was a serious matter to know what sort of a creature might be astir.

We had seen no dangerous animals on Disappointment Island, unless we included the seals as such; but we did not know what was here. The scenery was so different—forest instead of bleak mountain—and beasts of prey might lurk there ready to spring upon us.

Again came those sounds, and then as we clustered together we saw appear the head of a fine white seal, and after the head the body.

He made a lovely picture as he emerged from the forest. He must have been sleeping there for a good many days.

The seal stopped when he caught sight of us, and looked at us as if wondering what sort of creatures we could be, and then he opened his mouth and yawned, as though he found the speculation rather boring, and not worth troubling about.

Then he started to waddle down toward us, in a perfectly harmless fashion, as if he would not have said a word; only we decided that we had some particularly pressing business with him.

We had not time to put on our clothes—we just started for him at once; and he, when he saw that we meant to attack him, uttered a tremendous roar, and came with a dash at Walters.

But, after our experience on the small island, we had become quite expert at killing seals, and we soon put an end to him.

Then we donned our clothes once more, and started to work. Walters and Mickey took the job of skinning the seal—and let me tell you that it was no light task.

For, as I have said, a big seal is far larger than a sheep, and the only knife—indeed, the only weapon—that we possessed was one small pocket-knife with one blade which had come out of the handle, and had to be fastened on with a little piece of rope yarn.

That was absolutely all that we had, so you may think that it was no little job to skin and cut up a big seal with a primitive implement of that kind.

And whilst our two comrades were busy on this, Knudsen and myself started taking every bit of the rope yarns off the frame of the boat. You see, those little pieces of frayed, tarry rope were very precious to us, and we wanted to dry them and keep them from rotting, in case, when we found the *depôt*, we had to build another boat to go back to Disappointment Island again.

When we found the *depôt*! You see, we never doubted that we should find the *depôt*; we had succeeded so far, and we should succeed in that also.

We had finished our job, and the yarn all tied up, and the canvas in a neat roll by the time Walters and Mickey were through with

their task, and then we discussed what to do next.

First, we were not going to light a fire there—that would have been to waste a match for little purpose. We decided that we would tramp as far as we could inland, and then make a fire in the evening.

“And what shall we do about the seal?” asked Mickey. And we decided to cover it up and leave it on the beach, so that we could get it the next day. We had each of us the leg of a bird in the pockets of our coats, and we decided that we would put up with that for the time. For the truth is, we were all so tired that we almost felt too weary to eat, and we were not equal to the task of dismembering the seal, and carrying the flesh along with us.

“We can take the skin with us, though,” we decided; “for we may be glad of it and the canvas at night.”

“Let us go as far as we can before we camp,” Knudsen said. “For it stands to reason that we shall not do any good by remaining on the coast here. The depôt is in the north-east, and we have got to get there somehow, so we had better start that way from the beginning.”

Well, there was good reason in that, and though we were all tired out, we were so eager to get to that depôt that we forgot the fatigue, and, shouldering the canvas and sealskin, we turned our faces to the forest, and started upon our voyage of discovery. You see, we wanted to get to the big valley which ran

like some great crack across in a north-easterly direction.

But the valley was sixty feet above us, on the forest-covered hill, and we soon found that, thick as the forest had appeared from the water, it was a good deal thicker when we came close upon it. I do not think that my readers can form any idea of the way in which these forest trees grew—so close together, and so interlaced with creepers of different sorts, that it was absolutely impossible to find a way through. And, moreover, there were cruel thorns—awful things which tore and lacerated the flesh, as the claws of a wild beast would have done.

We had a try at it, but we soon came to the conclusion that if the way to the depôt lay through this, then we should never get there; we should have been torn to pieces ere we had got half the distance.

So we forced our way back, and, after a survey of the scene and some discussion, we started on another track. There was at one spot a cliff which to a great extent was bare of bush, and which ran from where we stood up towards the foot of the big valley. We decided that it would be far easier to scale the cliff, and carry the canvas with us, than to force our way through the forest.

And yet it was hard work, for we were nearly fagged out now. We had been on the go since daybreak, and we had not stopped for rest or food; it is not to be wondered at that we were beginning to feel quite done up.

Climbing up slowly and painfully, we passed the canvas and sealskin from one to the other, pushing and hauling it up, and pausing again and again to get our breath.

And the first thing which forced itself upon us was the sense of silence. I think that I have mentioned to you that we felt it at first upon Disappointment Island, but that was nothing to what it was here. It was a horrible silence, that pressed down upon one like a heavy weight. I have heard people talk of a silence that can be felt, and I can understand that now. You could almost feel it. It was everywhere. Even the sound of the sea was lost here, and not a stir came from the trees as we pushed our way up and up that cliff's face, making towards the entrance to the valley, along which we hoped presently to travel.

"If we can manage it we will make the place where the others camped before they started back," we decided. There was a hut there, we knew, and that would provide us with a shelter without our being put to the trouble of building one.

This was our goal, and towards it we bravely struggled, until at last we reached the top of the cliff, and found ourselves at the foot of the valley.

And a strange place it was—a weird place indeed! It was about five miles wide, and its sides and head were a terrible height from where we were standing. And everywhere—sides, head, all was alike covered, with the thick brush, whilst waterfalls made their way down from

above, and streams could be seen flowing here and there. Whatever happened, we need not want for water.

For some minutes we stood silently surveying the scene, and then Knudson, pointing along the edge of the cliff, said :

“ There is our road, boys ! Forward ! ”

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST MATCH.

“FORWARD!” said Knudsen, and we started our tramp along the edge of the cliff; but we found the track far harder than ever we had expected it to be, and before we had got any distance we were cut and torn all over from those terrible thorns. It was not as though we could keep walking; frequently we had to crawl upon our hands and knees, tearing our way through the bush; and then we would suddenly come upon a wide stream, which we had to cross as best we could—those who could not swim being helped by those who could.

I do not think I shall ever forget the horrors of that march; but just as we felt we were all done up, we arrived at the spot where the other three fellows had camped before they had decided to return to Disappointment Island.

Here we found a hut which they had built, but the roof was blown off. However, we soon got some grass and put that to rights. We found that whatever the advantages of this

island might be, you certainly could not build a house half so well as you could upon the other one, owing to the lack of sods--the only thing we had to make a roof of was grass, and grass is not waterproof.

However, we soon got it fixed up all right, and then we decided to make a fire inside, out of the wind. We did this because we did not want to risk our precious matches, and we thought that if we could once get it going, we could then make a big, blazing fire outside, and keep it roaring all night.

Walters had picked up, on the beach, when we landed, a small piece of pitch-pine wood, which was very dry; and from this we cut a lot of shavings, with which to start the fire. We carried these shavings into the house, piled them carefully in a little heap, and then, all clustering round so as to prevent any stray breath of wind putting the match out, we took out our little tin box.

But when we opened that box!

I do not think I shall ever forget the look that came into every face. The head of one vesta was half off, and the other appeared all sodden and damp. For a minute or more there was absolute silence; we felt that we could not speak. And then, at last, Mickey tried to force a laugh and said:

“Well, it is no good trying to strike those matches as they are; we have got to get them dry somehow, first.”

“How can we get them dry?” asked Walters.
“With no fire and no sun, how is that

possible?" and that was a question which none of us could answer. Perhaps on a warm day the task would have been possible, but with these mists and fogs it seemed a thing utterly hopeless to look for.

We sat and talked for a little while, and at last we decided to turn in and make the best of a bad matter; but we knew we were in a very tight corner. No fire, boat smashed up, canvas cut through and through, and only enough food for one scanty meal before we turned in!

I shall never, never forget that night. Try to imagine it. Four weary, weak, despairing men alone on that big island. Far away we could see our old home, but it appeared very small in the distance, and, as we looked at it, we felt that our comrades' prophecy was coming true, and we would have given anything to have been back there again.

At last we crawled into our miserable hut; we were camped on the edge of a small creek or waterfall, surrounded by trees and shrubs; but we did not get very much sleep that night, for we spent most of the hours consulting as to what was the best thing to be done with the matches.

At last we decided we would try to get a piece of hard wood and rub that upon a piece of soft, until the friction made both pretty hot, and then try to strike a match upon the hot wood, in hopes that the heat might induce it to take fire.

The next morning we went down to the

beach to have a look round, and to get the seal which we had killed the day before. We found we could get to the beach by a very much shorter road than the way we had come; and when we arrived we saw heaps of our poor *Dundonald* wreckage, washed up all over the place—topgallant mast, royal-yards, wooden fenders, etc.

On our tramp we managed to gather some limpets from the rocks; and these, with leaves from the trees, and grass, formed our morning meal. We reached our seal, and cut him into four pieces, and then started back to the camp, each man carrying a quarter slung across his back.

Soon after we got back the sun came out a bit, and we immediately got out our tin box, and, opening it, rested the matches in the lid, placing them in the rays of the sun, one man sitting by the box the whole time, so as to close it directly the sun clouded and the mists came along.

“I am afraid that we shall never manage them this way,” I said, as I looked at the matches after one of their brief exposures to the sun’s rays; and, indeed, the truth of my words seemed all too plain for contradiction. The feeble heat of the passing sunshine seemed to have no effect on those little lumps of damp, red phosphorus.

“Then God help us,” was Knudsen’s solemn reply; “for it seems to me, Charlie, that unless we can obtain a fire with the aid of these matches there is nothing but death before us.”

“Faith,” said Mickey, “I wish we could get a bit of that fire across here. Look at the smother those fellows are making,” and he pointed across to Disappointment Island, where we could see a huge column of smoke rising in the air; our comrades were signalling to us; and we, alas, had no means of answering them!

“Well,” said Walters, “it is no good remaining idle here; and if we can do nothing else, we had better see if we can’t build another hut, so that we may be a little more comfortable.”

There was a good deal of reason in his words, for the one in which we had slept the previous night was not only far from weather-proof, but it was too small to hold the four of us comfortably.

Well, we started looking for a better place, and we decided upon a spot a little further up the creek. We cleared a space large enough for our purpose, but we could not do more than that before night came on; and so we had to go back to the old one. And now we found another pressing need facing us. We were hungry—very hungry—for, with the exception of one bird’s leg each, we had had no food since we started from the other island.

“What’s to be done now?” said Mickey: “I’m that hungry I could eat the soles off my boots—if I had got any.”

“Plenty of food there,” said Knudsen, grimly, pointing to the seal.

We knew what he meant—we should have

to eat it raw! The raw mollyhawks, which we had devoured when first we went to Disappointment Island, had seemed horrible enough; but the seal's carcase looked far worse.

However, there was no help for it; food we must have, so we cut thin slices of the raw meat, wrapped them in leaves and grass, and from that unpalatable provender we made our meal that night. We had a good look at the matches before we turned in, but we could see that they were not fit to strike yet, so the only thing before us was to brave the cold and discomfort for the time being.

The next day passed as the previous one had done—wet, mist and an occasional gleam of sunshine, and, for our food, raw seal flesh; and on the third night we turned in cold and disheartened, clustering close together for warmth, and talking through the long, silent hours of the desperate condition in which we found ourselves.

That night we had a scare; for just before daylight we heard a sound outside our hut—a long, shrill, clear whistle, just such as a man would give, signalling to a comrade at a distance. Of course, we all rushed out of the hut, and stared around in bewildered surprise, but there was nothing to see. Only the bush, the shadows, the solitude, and the ever-brooding silence. Again we heard that same cry! It made our hearts stand still; our hair seemed to rise on end. It seemed as though the spirit of some unhappy castaway,

who had perished on those lonely forests, must be uttering those warning cries, as if to tell us of the fate which would surely befall us.

“What can it be?” muttered Knudsen, between his teeth, and we could only stand and stare, unable to answer that question, until Walters uttered a short harsh laugh, and, pointing to a tree standing by itself, said:

“There it is—there is the little beggar that has scared us!” And there in the faint dawnlight we saw on a twig a little bird—an exceedingly pretty little thing of a deep green colour, about the size of a common sparrow—and, as we watched it, we saw it raise its head and again utter that clear, shrill whistle, the sound of which had so scared us. I may say that I learnt later that this little bird was called a bell-bird.

That day we set to work and managed to complete our new hut, but the effects of the privations we were undergoing were beginning to tell upon us, and we found ourselves drifting back to the condition of weakness which we had all experienced on Disappointment Island about the time of the mate's death.

Here were three days practically wasted; we had not moved a step forward in the direction we must tramp if we were to find the depôt! And yet we felt that we dare not go forward, for, with the exception of the seal, which we had killed on our arrival, we had not seen a sign of anything which would serve us for food.

Weak, sodden, chilled to the bone, we felt that if we attempted to face the unknown perils of that journey, without even the prospects of making a fire, we should all fall by the way, and perish miserably. Indeed, so desperate was our condition, that we almost felt numbed. We did not know what to do for the best ; and while one advised one thing, another would advance quite an opposite theory. It was a horrible day—from early morn the mists pressed thick over the island, and with the mist a thin, chilling rain. But towards the end of the afternoon the clouds lifted, and for a little while the sun shone out ; and directly those cheering beams appeared we rushed for our tin box, and once more exposed the matches to the rays.

“Do you think it is any good trying one of them to-night ?” queried Walters, but I shook my head. To me it seemed a little short of an impossibility for either of those matches ever to be struck. One had its head hanging on by three threads, and the other was bent and broken, and the head of it was so soft that it came off on the fingers like paint.

“Well, we have got to risk it,” was Knudsen’s grim remark ; “we can’t possibly go on like this. I don’t think if we kept them like this for a year, it would make very much difference. We should be no better off at the end of the time than we are now.”

“Do as you think best, Knudsen,” I answered resignedly ; “they won’t strike, and that is all about it. So we may as well know it at first as at last.”

“Well, we will give them every chance,” Walters said; “we will do as we decided at first: get a couple of pieces of wood, rub them until the friction makes them fairly hot, and then see if the heat will ignite the match.”

But the task of getting those pieces of wood, simple as it may appear, was by no means an easy one. Wood there certainly was in plenty, but not of the kind we wanted. All the green stuff, which we broke from the trees, was so full of sap, that even the most vigorous rubbing hardly raised the temperature at all.

But, however, patience and perseverance will accomplish great things, and at last we managed to get two pieces which we thought would answer our purpose. We waited until the evening drew on, and then we got a little heap of shavings ready, thanking our stars that these at least were dry. We piled these inside our hut, out of the wind, and then, taking our two pieces of wood, we started rubbing them together.

And my word, how we did rub! We made our arms ache, and that wretched wood hardly seemed to grow warm beneath our efforts.

“We must keep it going,” said Knudsen; “it is no good getting impatient; at any rate, we have got it fairly dry, and now it will get hot more rapidly.”

And then Mickey looked up, and he put a question which made us all pause. It seemed a very simple one, which need not occupy a

moment's thought in answering, and yet we couldn't answer it. It was this :

“ And who is to strike the match ? ”

Who was to strike the match ? Why should we make any trouble about answering that ? But there was so much depending upon it. I have read of men being in certain circumstances where life itself depended upon a cool head, a clear eye and a steady hand—and it was something like that now. The hand must be steady, for if that frail little piece of waxen thread and phosphorus was to be clumsily handled, and so damaged, it meant that our chances of life were reduced by one half.

I frankly own that I did not want the job. I felt that if I attempted it, I should have the lives of my three companions—to say nothing of my own—depending upon my success. That was a sort of responsibility which almost unnerved one to think of, and we asked once again, “ Who is to strike the match ? ”

At last, after a good deal of arguing, Harry Walters said that if we wished it he would strike the match ; and as we did wish it—every one—that matter was got over without any further trouble.

I wish I could bring that picture before you. We four men, kneeling on the ground in that little hut, where the shadows were rapidly thickening, clustered round one little piece of wood, which one of our number kept vigorously rubbing with another piece.

There was Walters, the match between his fingers, and his face as set and white as though

he were a soldier going into action. Again and again we faltered and hesitated. I can tell you I was trembling from fingers to toes—not with cold, but with excitement.

At last we could bear the suspense no longer, and Walters, with a gasp, muttered, "Here goes!" Then gently, very gently he struck the match on the hot wood. We knelt, staring intently, holding our breath with the excitement of it; and then from four pairs of trembling lips there escaped a heart-rending groan of despair.

The top of that match came off like paint, leaving a red streak upon the wood! It was worthless. Our chances were diminished by just one half!

"Let me have the other one!" said Walters, in a hoarse voice; but I checked him.

"For heaven's sake no, man!" I said. "The condition of that is no better than this one was. Give it another twenty-four hours; we can endure for that space."

"Better get through with it now," he said desperately; but Knudsen sided with me. If there was a chance, we would not lose it through foolhardiness and impatience:

That failure had cast a gloom on all our spirits. I think then we felt more despondent than we had ever done since we were first cast upon Disappointment Island. Not even the death of Mr. Peters had overshadowed us more. We had worked so long and patiently for success, and only utter failure had been our reward. There we were, not knowing which

way to turn, with nothing but that raw seal flesh to eat, and not knowing where another meal would come from when that was consumed. There, on the beach, shattered and useless, lay the frame for our boat. The canvas was so torn that it was impossible to mend it. We had neither means of going back, nor of going forward, and we had only death to hope for, staying where we were.

Well, we decided that we would wait for the morrow before we touched the last match, and we turned in with but one prayer on our lips: "God grant that match may give us a light to-morrow." And that night, how it rained again! It came down in one unceasing, monotonous pour. The poor roof of our hut was utterly inadequate to keep it out, and soon it was dropping all over us as we lay cowering there, clustering together for warmth. Bob Ellis and Santiago had told us what to expect, but we had never looked for anything as bad as this. Indeed, they had been better off, for those vestas were dry when they had them, and, whatever their privations, they had managed to keep a good fire going.

Just before daylight, the rain cleared off, and shortly after the sun arose, bringing with it, for once, the promise of a fairly fine day, and so we immediately got our match out to dry.

One match! One little vesta! Can you imagine that? You, with whom matches are so common that you would throw away a box of them, and think nothing of it. Just one

solitary little vesta ; and yet it was all that stood between us and, in all probability, death. If we could secure a fire, we might have hope, for, as I explained, we could carry it with us.

Perhaps some of my readers may think that the question of food was more important than that of warmth ; but they can hardly understand how that awful numbing cold sapped away all our strength. We could struggle on, subsisting on grass and roots, but we could not endure, for any lengthened period, being continually numbed to the bone with a cold, which, in England, is never experienced. Our blood all seemed frozen ; our joints seemed too stiff to move ; our limbs felt as if they would give under us when we tried to walk.

So there we sat watching our match, but, alas ! for our hopes, within an hour the sun had gone, and the mists had come down on us again.

“ It is no good, boys ! ” said Mickey, with a groan. “ We might stop and watch that match until we were old men, and it would never be dry enough to use ! ”

“ Well, for heaven’s sake, don’t let us stay here any longer, ” I cried. “ Let us go back to the beach, if we can’t do anything else, and see if we can find anything there ! ”

“ What can we find there ? ” asked Walters. “ What do you hope for ? ”

“ Don’t know—let’s go and see, ” I answered. “ We have only been in one direction—let’s try the other. If we cannot do anything else,

we may find some shell-fish ; and there is seaweed down there. We have eaten it before, and we can eat it again."

"Charlie is right ; sitting here moping is about the worst thing we can do," said Knudsen. "We have been in some tight corners before, and we have got out ; and, by God's help, we will get out again."

"That is the sort of talk !" I answered. "It's no good giving way ; so come on, and the best man gets there first."

Well, we tramped back to the beach, and we went about a quarter of a mile in the opposite direction to that we had taken before. Then we came to a long stretch of fine, jet-black sand, with pools of fresh water in it, and here we saw a number of birds, about the size of a chicken, which we sailors call skewer gulls. We had seen some of these on Disappointment Island, but they were not like the mollyhawks—they were always on the wing ; and without guns or nets it was impossible to catch them.

And yet it was very tantalizing to see them there ; it was like having one's dinner before one, and yet having it just without our reach. However, as it was utterly impossible to capture any of them, we turned our thoughts to other fare, making our meal of limpets and seaweed, and then we tramped back to the camp to try our last match.

Our last match ! Those words will ring in the ears of four sailors, and that scene will live in the memory of four sailors, as long as they live.

Our last match, and on the striking of that, life itself might depend.

Well, we got into the hut, and then we started the same debate as we had had before. Who was to strike it? Walters wouldn't. Mickey couldn't—at least, so he said. So it lay between Knudsen and myself. And, after some arguing, our sturdy little Norwegian mate agreed to make the attempt. If we had been preparing for a most solemn business, we could not have taken more pains. And indeed, it was a solemn business, about as solemn as anything could well be. It was as though he held a dice-box in his hands, and was going to make a cast—the issue of which was life or death.

We cleared a space, and once again we cut a little pile of shavings from the pitch-pine which Walters had found, and then we started rubbing the wood, as we had done on the previous occasion. But we did not suffer impatience to influence us now; we were all too well aware of the importance attaching to success or failure to do anything to mar the one, or increase the likelihood of the other. One after another we took our turn at the rubbing with steady pertinacity, until, beneath our efforts, the wood became quite hot.

“Mickey, lad,” said Walters, “get a piece of the canvas, and go and stand over by the door. If you are not good for anything else, you will serve to keep the draught out.”

Mickey complied, and fulfilled instructions so literally, that he not only excluded every

chance breath of wind, but every ray of feeble light, leaving us in total darkness. And then three men howled at him, for with the darkness came the fear that some accident might happen to our match.

“Great Scott, boy, not so much! Let us have a little light in at the top. How can we see if you don't?”

Mickey obeyed, as cheerful as ever; indeed, it was wonderful how cheerful he could be, even when everything seemed contrary. He lowered the canvas a few inches, so that the light came in the aperture above, and, dim and indistinct, we three fellows clustered round the wood—I holding it, Walters rubbing it, and Knudsen ready with the match.

“It is hot enough now!” cried Walters. “Go on, Knudsen—strike!”

“Go on, Knudsen!” I repeated.

“Go on, Knudsen!” cried Mickey from the doorway.

Knudsen bent forward and struck our last match.

Crack!—a blue spark—nothing more.

“Try again, Knudsen!”

Crack-fizz—and—it was alight!

It was alight! A little flame shot up; for one-eighth of a second it shone clear, and then—it faded away!

That was the end of it; and, with the gloom which settled in the hut, a greater gloom, like the shadow of death, fell upon the souls of us castaways.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW WE FOUND THE DEPÔT.

“WHAT is to be done now?” That was the question which passed from lip to lip, as we four men sat in the gathering gloom of our hut.

“Now it is my opinion,” said Mickey, “that this is not such a bad thing after all; for we have got to go on now, whether we like to or not.”

“Got to go on,” growled Walters—“yes, got to go on to our graves! If we have got to die, we may just as well stop here and meet death comfortably, and not weary ourselves any further with this tramping through such horrible country.”

“Shut up, Walters!” I said. “Don’t take such a dreary view of things. After all, I am not sure that Mickey isn’t right. Here we have been messing about for three days, jolly nearly starved to death, when, if we had only had pluck to face things, we might have been at the depôt by now.”

Walters growled, but returned no answer; and then Knudsen spoke in his quiet, steady voice.

“Well, there is no doubt about it ; on we have got to go. We cannot go back ; even if we made another frame, that canvas would never stand the voyage. It’s going on, boys, and that is all about it ; so let’s turn in, and, wet or fine, we start at daybreak.”

During that night it rained worse than ever it had done, and soon the water was pouring through the roof of our hut in torrents. We pulled off our sealskin shoes and our coats, and then we laid down, pulling the boat canvas right over us, in the hope that it would keep the wet out ; but it was not long before it was coming through, and we were drenched to the skin ; so that we did not have much rest that night.

However, with the daybreak the rain ceased, and the morning came clear and fine. In our desperate plight very little served to cheer us up, and even the sight of the sun glinting down, and a little blue sky showing where there had been nothing but grey clouds, seemed like a whisper of hope—a promise that success should be ours, after all.

We got up and swung our numbed arms about, to get some animation into them, and then we lashed on our clothes—I really mean lashed on—for by this time all our buttons were gone, and everything we wore had to be tied on.

“Now for breakfast,” said Knudsen ; and we sat down, cup up slices of our seal meat, mixed them with leaves, and had our morning meal. This finished, we prepared to start.

We rolled up the canvas—old as it was, it was all we had to shelter us—then we strapped it up, and we agreed to take spells at carrying it as we went along—no light job, for that sodden sail was pretty heavy, I can tell you. Knudsen took the first turn, the rest of us sharing the sealskin and a supply of seal's flesh; and so we started along the beach, first towards the north-east side of the valley, and thus commenced our ascent.

We chose the north-east side, because there did not seem to be so many trees there; whereas the south, and the head of the valley, were literally covered with thick forest and bush.

“What are those tracks there?” said Walters, pointing to some marks which seemed to run in all directions.

“Wild animals—goats, most likely,” I answered.

“Goats be bothered,” said Mickey; “them's pig's tracks. Haven't I lived long enough in the old country to know the size of the dear creatures? Them's pigs' tracks; and pigs mean pork, if we catch them.”

That was all very well, but though we saw the tracks we did not see the pigs—therefore we did not get the pork.

Well, after a terrible drag and two or three spells of rest, we at last reached the head of the valley, and then, my word, it did take it out of us! You can't imagine what that tramp was. Now we would be crossing thick swamps, sinking right up to our knees in the slimy mud, sometimes one getting out of his depth, standing in

danger of being smothered, and having to be hauled bodily out by the rest of us. And then, after the swamp, we would come to a strip of that awful bush, through which we had to push somehow, although in the doing of it our flesh was torn in great strips from our limbs. There is no exaggeration in that ; it was not only being scratched—some of those thorns were so pliant that when they got in the flesh, they absolutely tore pieces out.

We were bruised, smothered with mud, torn and bleeding, and before we got to the top of that valley we staggered and limped like drunken men. All through this terrible tramp Knudsen had carried his heavy burden ; but his face was all green and drawn, and it was plain to see that he was nearly done up.

“What is it, Knudsen ?” I asked. “Are you getting played out ?”

“I feel nearly dead, Charlie,” he answered ; “I am all cramped inside. I think some of those leaves I have been chewing must have been poisonous, and they are making me feel very bad.”

“Well, give me over the sail,” I said ; “I’ll take a spell now. I haven’t had much to carry, and I feel pretty fit.” And Knudsen handed me his burden with a sigh of relief ; though I believe, had I not spoken, he would have carried it until he had dropped.

When we reached the top of the valley we had a rest for a little while. Mickey threw himself down on the ground, and in spite of his good spirits groaned in weariness and pain ;

and, as for Harry Walters, if he did not groan, he said things about that island which it would not be seemly for me to repeat to you.

Well, after a halt for a little while we started on again right across the top of that mountain, holding in a north-easterly direction. The mountain in this part was flat and rocky, and we could see for an enormous distance. We seemed to be miles and miles above our other little island, which we could plainly discern resting on the sea away to westward.

It was only to westward we had a view of the ocean. To south, to east, to north—whichever way we turned—we could only behold range upon range of hills, covered with the same impenetrable forest.

We tramped on as quickly as ever we could, but the difficulties of the way seemed only to increase. The ground was so very swampy that it was absolutely dangerous to try to cross it. But cross it we had to; there was nothing else for it. Had the swamps been twice as deep, had the streams been twice as fierce, if they had run with fire instead of water, we should have still had to go on. It was either that or turning back to perish, and, in perishing, ruin what little hopes our companions had of ever being succoured.

When we got over the swampy ground into the bush again, we heard a grunting and squealing, and hope rose high in our hearts. We were drawing near to one of the herds of wild pigs whose tracks we had seen. We did draw near, we saw them—some fifteen or twenty

bristly, fat monsters. But that was all we did do ; for as soon as they saw us they set up a chorus of squeals and grunts, and they were off like one John Smith.

So far throughout our march the weather had been fine, and now the sun, which had long since passed the zenith, was beginning to decline in the westward, and as its slanting beams fell across the tree-tops we arrived at the verge of another big valley, which seemed to lead down to a long sort of bay.

Tired as we were, the sight cheered us up—we had absolutely crossed the island ! But although we could see the water, we were a long way from it yet—over a mile ; and though a mile may be nothing to a healthy man in England, a mile to us then was a terribly long distance, so weak we were, so terrible the country through which we had to tramp.

It was an awful forest that we now came to. The trees were nearly twenty feet high, and you will understand that they sloped down from the spot where we were towards the sea. And now I fear that some of my readers may not believe me, but I assure you that I am telling the truth. That forest was so thick that we could not walk through it—we absolutely walked on top of the trees ! So thick, so dense, and so interwoven were the branches and creepers, that although they gave beneath the feet like a spring mattress, we could walk—or more often roll—over them without falling through.

Not but what we did not fall through again and again, for when rolling down we would

come to a break in the bush—either gaps or places where the foliage was not so thick—then, with a crash, a rending of branches, and tearing of clothes, down we would go slipping to the ground beneath, and have to clamber up again, helping one another as best we could. By the time we came to the end of the valley our clothes were literally torn off our bodies.

By the time we came to the end of the valley! That was all very well, but we were not out of the forest yet; that stretched on and on right towards the water, and the nearer it came to the sea the thicker and more difficult it appeared.

We had to go along tearing a way for ourselves with our hands. I have read of travellers in sub-tropical forests, and in Africa's interior, who have had to cut ways for themselves, but we had neither knife, axe nor pruning-hook. Our hands were our only weapons, and the task was one so full of difficulties, that had it not been that our hearts were kept up by the knowledge of our desperate condition, I do not think we ever could have succeeded.

We came across four dead pigs here, two black and two white, but we let them lay. We knew that if we reached the *depôt* food would be there, and so we forced our way onward, regardless of all else.

A little further along we came to a small clearing, in which grew one big tree by itself, and as we drew near to it we noticed that it seemed as if one of its big branches had been

cut away at some time or another. That heartened us considerably, for if that tree had been cut, human hands must have cut it. We went close up to it, examined it carefully, and saw that we were correct; there still remained the marks of the axe on two or three branches. Mind you, they were very old; they must have been made years and years ago; but still in that forest no man would cut marks just for the mere sake of doing it—they were cut with an object; they were signs—if they meant anything at all; they were meant to direct people onwards. It was our first clue, and feeble though it was, it filled our hearts with joy. So we pushed on and on, forgetting our weariness and fatigue, and at last we came out of the forest and found ourselves at the water's edge, in a sort of little bay.

It was a strange, mystic scene, that upon which our eyes rested, and over everything a silence brooding like that of the tomb, broken only by the rippling fresh water as it trickled over the rocks and found its way into the sea.

Away to our right was a long, low spit of land running out for about nine miles from where we stood, which was covered right to its extremity with the same forest growth.

Right in front of us, some miles out to sea, we could see a small island; and on our left, separated from us by a fresh-water creek, and covered with the same never-ending forest, was another headland, running out into the sea, and curving round to the northward.

I want you to try and picture that if you can. We were close to the sea—on our right the one headland, and our left the other, and between us and the one on the left the fresh-water creek.

It was now getting quite late, and we felt that the wisest thing we could do was to look for some place where we could camp for the night, since it would be no joke to be caught in the forest depths, where, for aught we knew to the contrary, wild beasts and serpents might abound.

We had not had anything between our lips since we started our march at daybreak, with the exception of leaves which we had plucked as we went along, and chewed to stave off both hunger and thirst, so it will not be hard for you to imagine the condition we were in just then. There we sat on that little beach, staring out at the sea over which the shades of evening were fast gathering—worn, weary, and wounded by those terrible thorns, and to right, to left, to the rear, mile after mile of forest of “Rata,” as I have since learned that it is called.

“Well, we have got to make the best of it here!” said Knudsen, rising wearily. “Perhaps to-morrow luck may come our way.”

“I wish we had a match,” sighed Mickey, and I am afraid that I answered him rather crossly.

“What is the good of wishing. You might just as well wish for a seven-course dinner to be served up before you!”

And yet it was hard. We had got somewhat

warm with our exertions and toil, but now as we sat there, a bitter, biting wind seemed to penetrate to our very bones and make us shiver again. And there was wood; wood enough to make ten thousand fires if we could have had only one match to start it. It put me in mind of those lines of poetry, I think they are taken from the "Ancient Mariner":

"Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink."

Well, we had just picked upon a spot to camp, when Mickey, standing on the edge of the fresh-water creek I have mentioned, staring hard across at the opposite shore, muttered more to himself than to the rest of us:

"Now, phwat's that thing foreninst there?"

"What's what, Mickey?" I said.

"That thing over there. Bedad, it looks like a white post! There, can't you see it all by itself, on the shore on the opposite side?"

"My word, you are right, Mickey!" I cried eagerly, for there, faint and dim in the waning light, on the opposite side of the creek, was something which looked like a white-painted post, and a white-painted post was the last thing we expected to find in that place.

Knudsen and Walters now joined us, and we all four stood staring across the water, trying to make out the significance of this strange object, until Mickey observed:

"By the powers, this wants looking into, and it is myself that is going to do it."

Now, Mickey was always the boy to take the shortest cut, and he did so in this instance.

That may be no credit to him, because I very much doubt whether we could have come to that post by any other path than that which he took, since there was no telling how far back that creek ran into the forest. It was going round it, or crossing it, and as going round was out of the question, Mickey went across.

It must have been a precious cold walk for him—we were cold as it was, but the water was worse, and that water was above Mickey's shoulders, right up to his neck, before he got to the opposite bank. We saw him clamber out, shake himself like a great dog, and then, walking up to the sign-post, stood staring at it.

“What is it, Mickey?” we shouted across, and his answer came ringing back, waking strange echoes in that solitude:

“By the powers it is a sign-post!”

A sign-post! A sign-post in that place! I felt a lump rise in my throat as I heard those words. Could it be possible that we were arriving near to our destination? Yes, it was possible, for in response to our query shouted across, “What does it say, Mickey?” the answer came back, a joyous message that seemed too good to be true, for Mickey shouted:

“Four miles to the Provision Dépôt!” It is impossible to describe the effect of those words upon us. It was electrical. We shook each other's hands, we laughed, we cheered, we behaved in the most foolish fashion just for a

few seconds, and then, with a whoop and a rush, we had picked up our traps and we were in that cold water wading over to Mickey. "Four miles to the Provision Depôt!" The darkness was fast falling around us, but still there was light enough for us to decipher that joyful message.

"Four miles to the Provision Depôt!" God bless the man who wrote those words to cheer us up! There we stood in front of that post, ragged, torn, soaked to the skin.

Ten minutes before we had felt so utterly exhausted that it had seemed impossible for us to take another step. Had our lives depended upon it we should have said that we could not have continued our tramp, but now all our toils, our weakness, our weariness and our pain were forgotten—they had fled like the mists before the rising of the sun. We felt we were now men full of vigour and resolve, and before very long we were all of us pushing along as hard as we could go, in the direction indicated.

My word! It was wonderful to see how we did go! You should have seen us jumping over rocks, taking running leaps over streams, cutting off corners by wading right out into the sea up to our necks, scrambling with a splash and a scurry through the fresh-water creeks, and all the time keeping up a cheerful laughter and conversation.

Why, we looked more like beanfeasters out enjoying themselves than the four almost dead men that had been such a short time before, so

wonderful was the effect of those few words we had read on that white board.

We kept to the beach as far as possible ; it might mean that we were going a longer distance but it would also mean that we were not half so likely to miss our way. You see, we knew the *depôt* would be on the shore somewhere, or close to it ; they would not build *depôts* far inland, where fellows who were shipwrecked might never stand the chance of finding them.

But we could not keep the beach all the way, for we found at places it was like the shore at Disappointment Island—deep water sheer up to the face of the cliff. And then we had to penetrate into the bush, still keeping as close to the sea as possible, and force our way as best we could in a north-easterly direction.

But, although we were so cheerful, this portion of our march was perhaps the most dangerous and difficult, because it was now dark, with a darkness such as is rarely experienced in more favoured climes. There wasn't a glimpse of light in the sky, not even the faintest ray from a star. Overhead was nothing but one inky pall of blackness ; so that in the forest, where it is gloomy enough even on a bright day, the darkness was something to remember.

You literally could not see a foot before you. You might walk right up to a tree until you ran your nose against it, and that would be the first indication that it was there at all. And you must remember that it wasn't one tree, but thousands of trees, growing so close together

that it was a matter of impossibility to avoid them; and between the trees, twisting and twining like some great fishing-net or vegetable-spider's web, those horrible creepers and thorns.

Well, we pushed on, and eventually came out on the shore again, and there, opposite, we came upon another white post upon which was painted, "Two miles to the Provision Depôt."

Two miles! Half our journey done—only two more miles of toil and privation! What was that to us who had come so many weary miles from Disappointment Island? Why, it was a mere nothing; as Mickey expressed it to me:

"Faith, I could do it on my head!"

But we had to go more than two miles before we had finished, for a very little way past the signpost we found that the sea shut off our road, so once more we had to turn and plunge into the bush.

But this time we were all so eager that we forgot to be cautious, and so, instead of keeping close together as we had done in the past, rendering aid to each other when we were in difficulties, we got separated, each man pressing forward on his own, and only shouting to each other through the darkness just to keep within touch.

After progressing for some distance like this, we discovered the rather startling fact that Mickey was missing. He did not answer when we shouted to him. As soon as that was discovered I called a halt, and, guided by our

whistlings and "coo-ees," we three fellows drew close together and held a consultation. We shouted and we "coo-eed," and although we got plenty of answers, they were only the echoes of the vast forest—not the voice of our merry Irish companion.

"What's to be done now?" queried Walters.

But, as a matter of fact, it seemed as though nothing could be done. Searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack would have been a child's task compared with looking for our companion in that dense forest, unless we were guided by his voice.

"What on earth can have become of him?" said Knudsen. "He must be seriously injured, or else he would surely answer our cries."

Somehow or other, I didn't quite agree with them. I had a very firm faith in Mickey's capacity for turning up all right, and I expressed it as my opinion that our comrade had got ahead of us—perhaps out of range of our voices—and that if we pushed on our way we should surely find him safe at the end.

"You can trust Mickey for getting there, when it comes to anything to eat or drink," I said. "He knows the way we have got to go as well as we do, and I don't think we need have any anxiety about him."

Well, whether there was any need for anxiety or not, it was absolutely certain it was no good stopping where we were. We had spent half an hour in shouting without any results,

and the only thing to do now was to get on, in the hopes that our companion was all right, and if we did not find him at the depôt, or if he did not come in shortly after we got there, then turn out and search for him again.

And so we pushed on. The signpost told us we had only two miles to go, but after we had been tramping for some time we began to think they were the longest two miles that ever mortal feet had walked.

“We are on the wrong tack,” I said.

“We are right,” said Knudsen.

“Don’t believe we are,” I retorted.

“Drop talking, and let’s go on and see,” put in Walters. And, after all, his advice was the most sensible, for whether we were right or whether we were wrong could only be determined by subsequent events.

Well, we pushed on, and presently we got another glimpse of the sea, and then we came on another post.

“Seems to me I know this place,” I said.

“It has a sort of familiar look about it.”

Knudsen grunted, Walters growled. It was no good contradicting my words, the unpleasant truth burst upon us, when we had stopped to look for Mickey we had lost our bearings and we had got properly bushed. We had been tramping round in that abominable forest, only to find ourselves back at the two-mile post, and as far off from the depôt as ever.

But now over to seaward we saw a silver gleam in the sky, and then, bright and clear, the moon arose. How thankful we were for

that! By the aid of her beams, the perils of our journey would be considerably mitigated.

We started off once more, determined not to lose our way again, and keeping as close to the coast as we possibly could.

“Walters!”

“Hallo!” Walters turned round to me—it was I who had hailed him. “Well, Charlie, what do you want with me?”

“I don’t want to be unreasonable,” I said, “but don’t you think a little exercise would do you good?”

Walters looked at me, not quite understanding what I meant, and then gently, kindly, but firmly, I placed that sailcloth on his shoulder. I had been carrying it all day, ever since I relieved Knudsen, and by this time I had had enough of it.

“You look very nice like that,” I said quietly. “Now let’s get on again.”

Walters gave one of his grunts—they were wonderfully expressive—but he accepted the burden I had imposed upon him.

It was a wonderful walk that, in the quiet silver moonlight. As I have told you, the brooding silence was one of the things which struck us most, and in the moonlight it seemed something too grand for description.

As we followed the winding shore, behind us was the dense blackness of the forest, and in front, the waves breaking in rhythmic regularity upon the beach. In and out we followed the indentations of the shore, until at last we raised a joyful shout, for there, rising above the dense

bush of the forest, towering between thirty and forty feet in the air, we saw a ship's mast, which had once been white, but which weather and time had now reduced to a nondescript grey.

It was in the bush a little way from the beach, and it was not very long before we three fellows were close up to it. There was a board nailed to the mast, on which was a notice to the effect that one of H.M.S.—I cannot remember the name—had been there on a visit of inspection, had repainted the beacons and depôt, and had replenished the stores in March, 1896.

The mast was canting towards the beach. Originally it had been fixed up with wire stays of some sort, but these had long since disappeared, rusted through and through.

On we pushed, and just as we were turning into another little bay on the opposite shore we saw two white roofs, appearing over the mass of forest timber. We were all properly done up now, but the sight of those roofs urged us on. We knew we had come to our journey's end, and the thought which was in all our minds was expressed by Walters as he said :

“Thank God, boys, we have got here safely, but I wish poor old Mickey was here with us !”

We made our way through the bush, having crossed the creek, and as we drew near to the depôt we heard strange, rustling sounds. And Knudsen said :

“Go steady, boys ! There is something knocking around there, and goodness only knows what it is !”

“Wild animals of some sort,” said Walters.

And I capped it by adding :

“ Perhaps it is a savage ! ”

But wild animal or savage, we were bound to go on. We had risked too much to reach the depôt, and it would be a big thing that would turn us back now.

So we pushed on, and came out into a little clearing, in which were two sturdy buildings. Cautiously we drew near, for we could still hear the rustling. Then we burst into a hearty laugh, and rushed forward. There, coming towards us, a smile all over his face, a big ship's biscuit in either hand, and his mouth so full that he couldn't utter a sound, was our lost comrade—Mickey himself !

CHAPTER XIV.

WE FIND OURSELVES IN CLOVER.

“HURRAH! Hurrah!”

We cheered again and again; but I am afraid those cries, although they were hearty enough, were very weak. We were all just about as done up as men could be. But, still, that did not matter much; we had got to the depôt, and everything would be all right now.

“How did you manage it, Mickey?” we asked. “We missed your way back by the two-mile post, and we made sure that some accident had happened to you. We shouted to you for over half an hour, and then we gave it up as a bad job.”

“Now, faith, me darlints, is it an accident that could be happening to me, when there is this illigant depôt to come to? Faith, I just behaved as Mother Maloney’s pig did when it was lost. Bridget, she just filled up its trough with wash, and said: ‘Let it alone; it will come back safe enough!’ And by the same token that pig came running back, and never stopped until it had its nose in the food. It was just like that with me. I suppose I smelt

these biscuits, and me nose led me in a straight line until I came up wid them."

We all burst into a laugh at that, for we all felt jolly now. Anyhow, we managed to collar one of Mickey's biscuits, and we divided it amongst us, and started munching as hard as he was doing.

"Aisy, now!" protested he. "There's plenty more inside. Sure, it's meself that found a lot of them."

We found that the *dépôt* consisted of three sheds, all painted white. One of them was rigged up inside with bunks for sleeping purposes, one was the provision store, and the third—we could hardly contain ourselves for our delight—contained a wooden boat; and that was a treasure indeed, for it removed all difficulties in the way of our going back to our comrades.

"Let us get a good fire going!" I said; and Mickey shook his head philosophically.

"Go aisy, boys!" he said. "You can't get your fire without matches, and not a ghost of one have I been able to find."

Well, we all turned in and searched for them. We felt absolutely certain some would be there among the stores; but the difficulty was that everything was done up in packets and boxes, and it was too dark for us to be able to distinguish what the contents of each was. So at last, after we had searched in vain for over half an hour, we decided that we would give it up, turn in, and wait until daylight. So, taking a couple of biscuits each, we went into the sleeping shed.

Strange though it may appear, though we had encountered hardships enough before, and although we had now succeeded in our quest, and had come to the depôt, that first night there was about the most miserable that I had spent since we were cast away, and I think it was the same with all the rest.

After all, that was very natural. In the first place, we were all of us dog tired—so tired that it hurt us even to move our limbs; then we were all pretty well cut and bruised, and soaked through and through, and the boards of that hut were most uncommonly hard. We lay there with the canvas pulled over us, and we shivered, and shivered all through the night hours, but we could not go to sleep. I have heard of being too tired to sleep, and that is just as it was with us that night; and we were very glad when daybreak came, and we were able to get up and overhaul our supplies.

We went into the store, and found everything in there very neat and in splendid condition. All the different stores were rolled up in zinc, perfectly airtight, and then put into boxes.

“Hollo, here is a notice!” I cried, pointing to one of the biscuit-boxes. “Here is something tacked on to it.”

My comrades gathered round, and I took the paper from the lid of the box, where it had been nailed, and on it we read:

“N.Z.G.S. Tutanekia, Port Ross,
1-2-'07.

“The ss. Tutanekia called here on a visit of inspection, and found stores in depôt in good

order. No sign of human life or wreckage. The vessel leaves here for Carnley Harbour and Campbell Island. Another Government vessel will call here in about six months from date.

“T. A. DYKES (Chief Officer).”

I have got that paper in my possession at the present time.

Well, that led to a good bit of discussion. This ship had visited the island on February 1st, one month before we ran ashore. The notice said that another Government vessel would call in six months from that date.

“Don't see any record of her having been here,” said Knudsen; “and I should think that they would have left some notice if they had been.”

“They must have been here,” said Walters; “they could not be three or four months behind time.”

“Now, don't let's be worrying about that at all,” put in Mickey; “we have had trouble enough to get here, and sure it is not ourselves that will be wanting to lave it so quickly.”

Whether the ship had been, or whether it had not there was no sense in worrying about it; the only thing was to make the best of the blessings we had, and to see, as quickly as possible, of what the stores consisted. We started our overhauling, and I do not think I ever had a more pleasurable occupation in my life. We had not been at work very long before we came across a little wooden box,

and, when we opened it, to our great delight we found two dozen boxes of Bryant & May's vestas!

"Hurrah for the darlints!" cried Mickey. "Don't they look illigant with their little red heads; and good luck to the fellows that made them!"

"Now, Mickey!" I said, "you take some of the matches and go and get a fire going; we have not had a good square meal for I don't know when, but we will have one now, and you shall be cook."

"I will do that same," said Mickey, "and if I don't cook you an illigant dinner, faith you may boil me and cook me instead!" And with that off Mickey went, while we three other fellows stopped to finish our overhauling.

In the way of food we found six two-pound tins of meat—we wished there had been more, but we were not going to grumble. The only other food was biscuits, and there seemed plenty of those to go on with. Then we came across two big cases marked respectively "blankets" and "clothes"; we soon had them open.

There were a dozen blankets—good thick ones—there were a dozen suits of clothes, one dozen shirts, six pairs of underpants, and a dozen pairs of boots.

Well, then we came to another box, and we found two knives, a good fishing-line, palm, needle, twine, a pair of scissors, and of all things—two big bars of soap! In another box we found an old-pattern gun, fifty rounds of ammu-

dition, two or three axes, a couple of augers, and a hammer and nails.

All this time Mickey had been busy in the hut where the bunks were, for that was the one with the fireplace in. Not such a fireplace as we have in England. It was a sort of platform, built of bricks, about four feet long, three feet wide, and about two feet high, and it had a sort of chimney made to carry off the smoke ; and about two feet above the fireplace was an iron bar fixed, with two chains attached and pots hanging from it.

Mickey had got a good fire going, and was making a big feed of tinned meats and biscuits, all boiled up together like soup, the smell of which was so delicious that our mouths fairly watered for it. However, Mickey said it was not ready yet, so we turned to and cleaned the place out, and rigged up our bunks ; then we went down and washed ourselves solemnly ; we cut each other's hair and beards—decidedly not in the West End style, but more after the fashion prevalent in His Majesty's prisons ; and then we donned our new clothes and boots, and I give you my word that when we had finished we did not know ourselves, much less each other.

We were a happy party as we sat down and ate Mickey's soup of biscuits and meat—we voted that he made a splendid cook—and then we started right away to overhaul the boat, feeling that our first duty was to go and fetch our companions, to share these good things with us.

We had all turned out at daylight, and by the time we had our morning meal and got cleared away, it was about eight o'clock ; so we had a whole day in which to make a sail and get a mast rigged for the boat.

It had only been six miles to cross in the canvas canoe ; but now we were on the opposite side of Auckland Island, and it meant that we should have to pull right round its northern extremity—over thirty miles. That was too far to row when there was a chance of sailing.

She was not the right build of boat to make such a journey in the latitude where we were. She was more of the pleasure boat type, and good for pulling. We found a spar in the boat-shed, which served for a mast, and we cut a piece of timber from the forest to make a gaff for the mainsail. The boat had a pretty long painter of three-inch rope, and this we unlaidd, and then laid up in six yarn nettles, which we used for the stays and halyards.

It took us all day to get things ready, and it was close on evening when we ran her down to the water, and shoved her off for a trial trip.

The water was very smooth in the bay, but the boat seemed a bit cranky, so we put some rocks in her for ballast, and then she was pretty steady. We sailed her round for half an hour or so, and found she behaved herself very well, and then we returned.

We had had a hard day's work, and as we were going to start away at daylight the next morning, we decided that we would turn in and get a good night's rest ; but before we did that, and

and while we were having our evening meal, we sat and discussed our prospective journey.

"I reckon three of us are enough to take her over," said Knudsen.

"I am sure of it," I said.

"I do not know why we should not all go," said Walters. And Knudsen explained his idea.

We had got to bring all the other fellows over, and, therefore, if three were enough to take the boat over, it meant that one more could come on the first trip. Of course, that meant "Who was to stay?" But we had not much difficulty in coming to our decision.

Mickey was the least robust of the lot of us, and Mickey we decided we would leave behind. Of course, he looked very solemn, and raised some objection to being left alone on a great, big, desolate island; but there was a merry twinkle in his eyes, and we all understood that Master Mickey knew he was in for the softest part of the bargain.

However, we had our revenge in one way, for we routed him out before we went in the morning, and we made him light the fire and get us our breakfast.

The day had only fairly broken when we wended our way down to the beach and got into the boat, taking with us a supply of biscuits and a tin of meat for our companions.

"Don't be after leaving me alone long," said Mickey. "Sure, it is meself that will stand on this blessed spot and wait till I see you coming back."

“You get,” we laughed. “We shan’t be back until late to-morrow, and mind you have got some grub ready for us when we do come.”

Well, off we went. We had landed on the island just by that mountain right opposite Disappointment Island: then we had crossed over by Megs Hills, till we came out by the bay opposite the depôt. Now we had to return past Enderby Island, and so round back to the other side.

Still, we went away at a fair speed, for the wind was fair. We were trying to make a passage between the main island and Rose Island, but when we got near the bar we saw that we should never do it, for the water was absolutely boiling over it—far too rough for our little craft.

Well, we came round. We thought we would try and make a passage between Rose Island and Enderby Island; although it meant a good many more miles. But when we got there we found that we were no better off. The bar between those two islands was far too rough for us to attempt to cross, and it was broken water right up to the island.

“I will tell you what we shall have to do,” said Knudsen. “We have got to go right round the outside of that island, and it is no good talking about it. It may take a little longer, but it will be safer in the long run.”

So we tacked and came about, seeking to run right round the outside of Enderby Island, close in by North East Cape. You can see that marked on the map for yourselves. We were

travelling at a fair pace, and we sailed in as close to the outer island as we could.

“What in the name of goodness is that moving about there?” I cried. “Look there—right down on the beach!”

My companions, attracted by my exclamation, followed the direction I indicated, and there on the beach, they saw that which had attracted my attention.

“It is not a seal,” said Walters, and at that we all laughed.

That was self-evident. It was something on four legs.

“Can’t be a pig,” said Knudsen. “Stands too high for that.”

And then I uttered a shout of surprise.

“By jingo, boys, it is a bull! Why, look! You can see its horns now!”

My word! How we congratulated ourselves upon that. There was not the slightest doubt about it, the creature at which we were gazing was an ox of some kind. An island with cows upon it within easy reach. What wonder that we congratulated ourselves. That cow could not be a solitary specimen. That was almost impossible; and if there were a few more of the same kind knocking around it would not signify very much if we had not got a very large supply of tinned meat.

On both these small islands we noticed white sheds, and we came to the conclusion that they would contain boats to enable any castaway to get from them to the main island and the depôts. We afterwards found that

this was correct. There were boats on several of the islands round there. It was only on Disappointment Island that no one believed that any soul could ever reach its inhospitable ground alive.

By the time we were off the outermost point of the island the sea looked pretty black. We were now about twenty miles from the depôt. But we were not going to be dismayed by that, and we went on. But then, just as we got round the point, the wind shifted dead ahead, and we knew we were in for a pretty tough job.

It was no good trying to sail or to pull against that head-wind and sea in the direction to which we were bound. We had only got one of two things to do—either to go right away back, or to land on one of the small islands, and after some discussion we chose the former course.

We unshipped the mast, and we started on our way back to the depôt. We were a good bit outside the outer island—that is Enderby Island—and there was a wretched head-wind and head sea. We were in for it now all right. Of all the miserable pulls that I ever had in all my life that one was the hardest and most miserable. The more we pulled, the further off she seemed to get. We absolutely could not make any headway at all, and to add to our other inconveniences, she was shipping seas all the time.

Knudsen was steering and baling—she needed baling out. We all started pulling as

hard as we could, and at last we got her to go very slow ahead. But it was a terribly stiff job. Moreover, it had come on to rain, and we were all soaked to the skin again.

Well, at last we got abreast of our island, and that meant, of course, that the sea got very much better, but the wind was still ahead. We had been at that abominable job all day long, and it was just about dark when we bumped the nose of our boat upon the beach by the depôt.

“Mickey! Mickey, oh!” we shouted.

But there was no Mickey. He had not waited on the beach for our return.

Muttering all manner of unpleasant things, we tramped up to the depôt and went in, and there he was, his lazy old back against the wall as close to the fire as he could get without getting into it, an empty dish by his side, his arms folded on his breast, and his head sunk forward, snoring blissfully.

I am afraid that Master Mickey was somewhat rudely aroused from his slumbers, and he certainly was very much surprised to see us back again. He could not help poking sly jokes at us, saying he was afraid we had spoilt our new clothes, and that we were very careless.

However, he bustled about and soon had a comfortable meal for us, and he uttered whoops of delight and executed an Irish jig in the middle of the room when we told him that we had discovered cattle on Enderby Island.

“Well, we shall have to try it again tomorrow, lads,” said Knudsen.

“Of course you will,” said Mickey; “you could not leave those poor fellows away there on that place, while we are enjoying ourselves here.”

“Look here, Mickey,” I said, “I will tell you one thing, my boy. If we go to-morrow, you come with us; it is not good for a fellow to be idle too long, and you may just as well have a spell at pulling those oars with the rest of us.” And both Walters and Knudsen agreed with me, which left Mickey no hopes of my being in a minority.

We were up the next morning an hour or so before daybreak, for we wanted to get away as soon as ever we had light enough. Anyway, the journey was going to take a good time, and had we started later, and been overtaken by darkness, we might have experienced a good deal of peril.

We had something to eat, then we put a tin of biscuits into the boat, then shut the doors of the depôt safely, and in the half light we started upon our voyage, in this second attempt to reach our companions on the other island.

We had a good deal of discussion as to the route we should follow. Walters was inclined to take the passage right outside the island, the same way we had been on the previous day; but on the other hand, Knudsen and I said that now we had Mickey with us, there was no need to go such a distance out of the way, as with a fourth man to help us we might as well run the gauntlet across the bar—that meant saving a good number of miles, as you can see for yourselves if you refer to the map.

After a discussion our plan was agreed upon, and accordingly we steered a passage for the channel between Rose Island and the mainland. We reached the bar just about daylight, and we found that altogether it was not as bad as it was on the previous day; it was quite rough enough—too rough, indeed, for our liking.

“I don’t think we shall ever cross that,” said Walters emphatically, while Mickey whistled expressively. Knudsen and myself were not prepared to renew the argument; we were getting close up to the bar, and we were not going to tack about and go on the other course now. We therefore sailed ahead right for it, and soon we were in broken water, and then the boat commenced to drift to leeward.

“This won’t do,” said Knudsen, and his words admitted of no questioning. There was a reef out in that direction, and if once our boat had come against that, it would have been all over with her and with us. We put an oar out to leeward to keep her to windward as much as possible, which made things a bit better; but for all that we had a very narrow squeak; we did not stop her drifting, but only checked it slightly, and she kept getting nearer and nearer to the rocks, so that it became a question with us whether we should get her clean over that bar before the current smashed her on the land.

I remember that as we were crossing—indeed, we were about half-way across—a great seal stood out of the water fully five feet, right

ahead of us. He seemed awfully surprised to see us there ; he cocked his head on one side and had a good look at us, and then down he went like a flash ; but even had he reappeared, we were experiencing far too anxious a time to have been able to give any attention to him.

After a hard tussle we got across all right, and no sooner were we over, than our craft was relieved from the current which had been dragging us over to leeward, and as soon as she got out of its clutches she started forward like a racehorse : and away we went, for it was all clear sailing.

We had a splendid run up as far as the northernmost point of the big island, sailing wing and wing, having the jib sheet made fast to the loom of an oar, and the oar being run out over the gunwale, the mainsail being out on the opposite side. When we rounded the point the wind was ahead of us, but still we hoped to lay close enough to get near to our little island, which we could now see.

Time was getting on—it was near mid-day—and as we had entered our little craft before daylight we were all getting considerably stiff. Of course, it was nothing like so bad as it had been in the canvas boat—that was simply abominable—but it was quite bad enough.

Our little craft was such a cockleshell that you could not move about in her at all ; and besides that, we had to keep to wind'ard all the time. To make things exciting, every now and again she would jib, and then we had to

look smart, or we should have been over. For the benefit of those of my readers who do not understand what I mean by jibbing, let me explain myself more clearly. I mean that all of a sudden the wind would shift from one quarter to another; therefore, the jib and the mainsail would swing over from one side to the other of our little craft. Now, you see, this canvas was not boat canvas at all; it was the strong, heavy stuff that sailing vessels carry, and you can well understand that when these sails swung over suddenly and violently, their weight would cause the boat to heel over with them; and at those times we had to shift to the opposite side and hang over the gunwale to prevent her going right over.

We kept her shaking close to the wind until we got abreast of the island, and then we stopped to have a biscuit each, and to unship the mast, and pull the rest of the way, as it would be quicker for us than to keep tacking to our landing-place. Of course, we were not near the island yet, and had still a good way to go.

So we started to unship the mast, and as we did so we noticed a great column of smoke arising from our old camp, and Mickey laughed.

“Sure, the boys have seen us; they are not slow to make a signal.”

“They have seen the boat,” said Knudsen, “but I rather fancy that they do not think it is us. Where would be the need of making great smoke signals like that for fellows who knew the way back all right?”

"I reckon," I said, "they think we are some small sealer, or something of that sort; won't they just be surprised when they find out who it really is!"

"Don't think they will believe it is us," said Mickey; "we look such respectable, illigant fellows now, that they won't be after knowing us."

So we worked, laughing and chaffing with each other, feeling happy ourselves as we thought of our poor comrades' delight when they should hear our story.

We were on the opposite side of the island to our landing place, so that meant that we were going to have a big pull round. We got the mast down, and then we jettisoned our ballast, and taking the oars, we started to pull long and strong towards the island.

As we drew closer, we could see little tiny black specks running along by the edge of the cliff, and waving diminutive hands; and we chuckled again at that. The fellows were signalling us as to the direction in which we were to go.

"All right, darlints, take it aisy," muttered Mickey; "we are coming, and by the powers you won't be more glad to see us than we shall be to get there, for it is tired I am for one, with sitting in this boat so long."

We drew closer and closer, until we were able to distinguish our comrades plainly; but whilst we could recognize them, they had not the least idea who we were; for they never expected us to come back in a sailing craft, or

properly clad ; indeed, they had given up all hopes of our coming back at all.

When we got close in, one fellow yelled fit to burst his lungs : “ There is a landing-place on the other side ! ” at the same time pointing in the direction indicated.

We raised our hands in reply, but did not shout, because we wanted to surprise them ; and we pulled towards the landing place, noticing, as we did so, our comrades running across towards the spot where we should have to come in.

How well we remembered the place, the only spot in the whole island where a landing could be made ! But how different were our feelings as we now approached to what they had been when we had started upon our desperate venture ! Then we had death staring us in the face ; now we were coming back happy and light-hearted, crowned with success.

We were now close in, and our comrades were right down at the water's edge, ready to assist us, and then all of a sudden it dawned upon them who we were ; and then didn't they cheer—such a cheer as made the rocks ring, and startled the sea birds that were wheeling overhead.

CHAPTER XV.

OUR LIFE ON AUCKLAND ISLAND.

It would be almost impossible to describe the delight with which our companions greeted us when we once again landed at Disappointment Island, and it would have been equally impossible for us to have answered the numerous questions with which we were plied as we walked back with our comrades to the camp, with Joe Ellis, the Australian, dancing ahead of us, and giving utterance to Maori war whoops.

They had quite given us up for lost, and when they sighted our boat, they imagined that we were either a small sealer, or another party from some shipwreck.

Things had gone on as usual on Disappointment Island, but the day after we had sailed they had sighted a four-masted barque to northward, and they had made signals. I expect that was the smoke which we had seen rising.

We four had already planned how best to take all hands across. We quite understood that now we had a proper boat, no one would be

willing to risk crossing in the canvas canoe, which they still had. We decided, therefore, that those who were the strongest should first cross in the boat to the spot where we had landed, there they should be put ashore, and the boat pulled back for the rest.

The first company were to tramp across the island, following the road we had taken, whilst the boat, with its second crew, was to pull right round, and to make the entire journey by water. We estimated that we should all arrive at the *dépôt* at about the same time. But I may mention that, although we gave those who were going to tramp it ample directions, we did not enter into too full a description of the difficulties of the way. Ignorance being bliss, we thought we would let them be happy as long as they could. We knew they would be miserable enough when they encountered them.

It wanted a lot of argument to discover who were the strongest and most fitted for the tramp; at any rate, we four fellows who had once undertaken it were unanimous in our declaration that we did not feel fit for it a second time.

We turned in early, but we were all of us too excited to sleep much, and soon after midnight Knudsen, Walters, Santiago, and half the others left for the big island. The above-named three were to bring back the boat for the rest of us.

Our comrades had a few birds, and these we

told them to take across with them, as there were only a couple of tins of meat left in the depôt.

Knudsen and his two companions got back to us soon after daylight. They had encountered a good many hail and snow storms, and they had a hard job to land on the other shore. All the fellows had been compelled to jump into the water, as it was too dangerous to try and beach the boat.

We did not wait long after they had got back; we all of us crowded into our craft, and Disappointment Island, upon which we had spent so many trying months, was once again uninhabited.

Our party consisted of Mr. Maclaghlan, Judge, A.B., Finlow, A.B., and Santiago Marino, A.B., and with them Knudsen, Walters, Mickey, and myself, making eight in all, which left seven to do the tramp.

It was no easy task getting back, for the boat was overloaded, and about half the journey through we lost the wind, which, as it had been pretty well ahead of us all the time, did not matter very much. We unshipped the mast and took to the oars, and after a long and hard pull we managed to reach the bar. At first sight we did not think we should be able to cross it, the water was absolutely boiling; but we put our backs to it and pulled like madmen. It was a hard task, but, anyway, we managed to get through all right, and about four o'clock we arrived safe and sound at the depôt, only to discover that there was no sign

of any of the other fellows who were tramping across the island.

Now, as there was not enough blankets and clothes to go round, it was a case of first come first served ; so the fellows who were with us immediately started to rig themselves out and fix up their bunks, and after they had been working about an hour, Michael Pul turned up alone, in no very good temper. He said things concerning us for not telling him the kind of tramp that lay before him. Shortly after him Jack Stewart came in, and it is absolutely impossible for me to put into writing what he said about things in general, and the tramp in particular. We who had experienced that journey could quite understand that their tempers must have been sorely tried.

Well, events proved that we were not far out in our estimate, as within about two hours everyone of the party turned up, with the exception of George Ivimey.

We had made preparations for our comrades, and had a good feast of tinned meat and biscuits ready, and very soon the depôt shed rang with mirth. It was wonderful to see what a difference there was in everybody. Ten days before, everything had seemed lost, and death was staring us in the face ; now we felt as jolly as though we were only at a picnic, and we knew that sooner or later a Government vessel was sure to call for us.

Well, we had our dinner—if you can call our evening meal dinner—and we put by a good feed for George, who had not turned up yet.

Some of us, beginning to get very anxious, went out to look for him, giving shrill whistles and coo-ees as we went along; but after a long search we had to go back and report to our comrades that we had seen no traces of the missing man.

But at last, just as it was getting dark, we saw a pitiful-looking object staggering towards the depôt; it was George, and he did look a sight! Almost every rag of his clothes had been torn off him, and his face was so cut, that one could hardly recognize his features, whilst one of his eyes was blackened and almost closed. He just managed to stagger into the depôt, and then he sank down on a box as one dead—he was properly done up.

When he had had his food and had rested, he was somewhat recovered, and he was able to tell us his adventures. It appears that he got bushed, had fallen into several creeks, nearly been smothered in the morass, and had got generally cut up. He had heard the cries of the search party, and, nerving himself, he had staggered on, following the sound, but he had been too exhausted to make himself heard.

Well, we gathered round the fire and discussed our position. All our tinned meat was gone, but we found by calculation that there were enough biscuits to last us fifteen men for three months, allowing three biscuits per man each day. However, we were not content to live on biscuits alone, and so we four fellows, who had spotted the bull on the other island, told

the rest what we had seen, and we unanimously decided that if there was beef to be got, we were the fellows to get it.

The next morning we got out that old gun and overhauled it, and then we found it would not work. Judge had been a Royal Naval Reserve man, and Santiago had been a few years in the Chilian Navy, and these two, after examining the useless weapon, decided that between them they would be able to fix that gun up somehow. They said that they would not be able to get it done that day, so six of the fellows decided to go over to the other island to make sure that the cattle were really there.

Our men returned late in the evening, and to our surprise we found they had got a lot of gear in the boat. There were some old tins, a couple of axes, two or three rusty tin plates, some old knives, and, best of all, they had got half a tin of tea and a bit of sugar, which they had discovered in the boat-house on the island.

They had also found a chart of the islands inside an old tin, and it was from this chart that we learnt that the island we had recently vacated was called Disappointment Island. I have that chart in my possession still. We could see from it where we were, and the shape of the island. We also saw that there were three depôts—namely, the one where we were, one midway in Norman's Inlet, and one right to the southward. We also saw marked on every island that there were boats; in fact, on Ewing

Island there were two boats, as we found out later.

That night we tasted tea for the first time for months, and as we drank it, Mr. Maclaghlan looked across at me. I think both of us were thinking the same thing. We thought of that tea which I had made on that stormy night during the dog-watch the March before—the evening before the poor *Dundonald* went down.

Well, the next day the gun was ready, and Judge tried it. It kicked like anything, but was not bad, considering; so Knudsen, the German, the Russian Finn, Chilian and myself, all started for Enderby Island, Michael Pul having the gun, and the rest of us being armed with axes; for our comrades had discovered more axes on Enderby Island.

There was only one landing-place on Enderby Island, and we had to be very careful in landing, for fear of getting the boat smashed. We had to jump out, three of us on either side, into the water and run the boat up. There were an awful lot of seals on the beach. I remember on that occasion I counted no less than fifty-three of all sorts and sizes, some as big as horses.

We found a complete set of sails in Enderby Island boat-house. We brought these back with us, and from them we made canvas trousers for hunting purposes, so that our other clothes might not be spoiled. We had these trousers lashed with rope-yarn, and used to wind them round from the ankle to the knee, like

gaiters, so as to prevent them catching in the bush. We used to wear sealskin shoes for hunting, as they were lighter than the leather boots we had found at the depôt. We would leave our coats behind us, and clad in these shoes, canvas trousers and our shirts, we would proceed on our expedition.

Enderby Island is very flat. There are not a great number of hills on it, but there are a large number of creeks, and some very deep trenches. A thick forest grows near the coast, and almost encircles the island; but when this is penetrated, there are two or three miles in the centre, forming a sort of clearing.

Now to go back to our first excursion. The seals on the beach did not at all like our intruding in their domain, and they behaved in a most inhospitable fashion to us, compelling us to bombard them with rocks and stones, until we eventually drove them, barking and growling, into the water.

Then we started out after big game, and we had a hard job getting through the outer line of forest; not so much on account of the thickness of the growth, but because of the state of the ground. It was so swampy, that in some cases it was impossible to cross it.

We soon picked up the trail of a few bulls, and we followed it carefully, taking great care to keep to leeward of the animals; because, had we got to windward of them they would have smelt us and gone off. An hour's tramp brought us to the inner edge of the forest, and there, far away out in the open plain, were four or five

bulls and cows. It would have hardly been possible to get near them from where we were ; but they moved away down into a deep trench out of our sight, and we, being fortunately to their leeward, followed cautiously after them. Pul bent low down, and crept up to the top of the trench to get a good shot at them, we waiting below. We were ranged in the bush, to meet them with the axe if they got past Pul.

All of a sudden we heard a shot, and the next moment Pul started to his feet and fired again, and then Knudsen whistled a shrill warning to us to stand clear. Santiago yelled to me, "Look out, Charlie ; look out, man !" And I passed the word to the Russian, who was close behind me, but I had not time to do anything more except get out of the way as quicky as possible, for there, close upon me, making for the bush, their heads down at the charge I saw three monstrous bulls.

They came on, crash right into the forest, and the trees went down before them like matchwood. John—the Russian—and myself just had time to fling ourselves to the ground as they passed, the hind legs of one creature catching John and giving him a pinch, which made him utter a yell of pain.

Well, they were gone, and it was no good going after them, as Michael Pul was on the track of another herd. We followed it up, and came across three grazing together. They were on the bank of a deep trench, we being on the opposite bank. As soon as the brutes saw us, they started running along the bank, we on

the opposite bank doing the same, trying to keep up with them. Then the Finn took a shot, and hit one of them, but it did not fall. Instead of that, he seemed to get kind of mad at being stung in that way. Pul had a second shot, and hit another. You must understand that all this time we were running along at an awful pace, which it would have been impossible for us to have maintained for any length of time.

The three brutes now reached the bush, the one that had not been shot getting away quick ; but both of the others turned round short and made for Santiago. He was a very little man, standing only about five feet high, but he stood his ground, and as they came John gave one of them a cut on the hind-quarters with his axe ; and, really, although we were seeking that bull's life, I felt a thrill of pity for him, he looked so surprised and staggered.

But we gave him no time to think. Before he could lower his head to attack us, we were all round him raining blows with our axes, and at last the poor creature sank down on its knees and rolled over on its side. His companion had cleared the moment he had seen that first blow given.

Well, the next thing we had to do was to skin and cut up that bull ; and let me tell you that a bull is not a light weight to handle. The Russian, who had been brought up on a farm, knew something about it, so we proceeded under his directions, and we got him cut up into six pieces, each man carrying a piece. We did not

look very pleasant objects by the time we had done, what with the grease and the blood.

When we got to the boat, we found that we could not put the meat in before we launched it, or else we should never have run her down to the water ; for a whole bull, even if it is cut into six pieces, is a pretty heavy arrangement for a small boat.

Two of the fellows had to take her off to keep her from grounding, and the rest of us, with the meat on our backs, ran into the water up to our shoulders, dumped it into the boat and then ran back for another load ; and we had to be very smart, for the rollers broke a good way out, and nearly swamped the boat. When the last load of bull was on board, all hands jumped in, and we pulled off. And we had to bale out as soon as we were clear of the surf, for by this time the boat was just on sinking, she had shipped so much water.

However, we managed it all right, and we shipped the mast, hoisted the sail, and away we went, getting back to the depôt in the evening. One cow used to last us, on an average, for a week, and the description which I have given may be applied to every hunting expedition we had.

Now, about six miles from the depôt there was a small island which is called Ocean Island, and one day a few of us determined to go and explore this. It was a little bit of a place, not more than a mile in circumference, and entirely covered with bush, and we found nothing to reward us for our trouble, except the discovery

of goats on the island. The Finn managed to catch a brown billy, and the rest of us captured a white one. We brought these back to the depôt, although they decidedly disliked the passage, and we determined that we would keep them alive for the time, so we built a sort of fenced enclosure for them, and we used to feed them with grass and leaves, and they soon began to know us quite well.

We had many tramping expeditions in all directions. I remember on one occasion that Roberts, the cabin-boy, and myself went for a long tramp towards the north, keeping to the beach as much as possible, and in this tramp we came across a couple of brick monuments or pedestals. They were about four feet high, and appeared to be solid, and at the foot of one of them was a stone like a paving-stone, and on it there were these words, cut with a chisel :

“German Expedition, 1870.”

But I think the most touching and solemn discovery which we made during our whole stay on the island was that of a little cemetery not far from the depôt, in which were sleeping the bodies of unfortunate mariners who, from time to time, had been cast ashore there.

It was a sad and solemn thing to stand there in that silent and deserted spot, and contemplate the last resting-place of those for whom friends and relatives had waited and mourned in far-off lands.

One stone I remember very particularly bore only a very few words ; it was the grave of a little baby, only a few months old, who had been

buried there in the year 1850. But what problems, what untold tales of terror and agony did not the grave of that little child bring before us!

Above another grave, tied to the tree which was growing at the head of it, was a rough piece of slate, upon which was carved but one word:

“Unknown.”

Unknown! Just the body of some poor lonely mariner, found lying in that lonely land, by some expedition—no name—nothing to mark his nationality—nothing to tell from what ship he had come—nothing to tell of his sufferings, his hopes, his fears, and his prayers. They could only bury him, and put that simple word over his head; and there he shall sleep “unknown” until in that great day all shall know as they are known.

Over the next grave to this there was a tombstone constructed of rough pieces of wood nailed together, and on it there was painted in black letters, which was evidently the work of some sailor, the following inscription, which I reproduce almost exactly as it was on the board:

“Erected by the Crew of the
s.s. *Southland* over the remains of a man who
had apparently died from starvation and
was buried by the crew of the *Flying Scud*.
3rd Sept., 1865.”

The last grave had an ordinary gravestone but I cannot remember the exact wording which it bore. It referred to one John Mahoney,

master mariner, second mate of the ship *Invercauld*, and he had died from starvation. I think the date of this one was 1857. I may say that afterwards I learnt that John Mahoney had been found dead in the forest, with only a few limpets' shells beside him, and also a small piece of slate, upon which he had scratched the name of the ship to which he had belonged. I think he was the only one who had got ashore when she was lost.

A man must be insensible to all better feelings if he can stand in a modern cemetery without feeling some emotion. You may judge, then, what feelings were likely to be called up in the breasts of us castaways, as we stood there in the midst of a great rata forest, and gazed down on those last resting-places of those who had been there before us.

It is not to be wondered at that the sight made us mournful—that sad thoughts would come into our minds. Already in the solitude of Disappointment Island one of our number was sleeping his last eternal sleep, and who could say how many more of us might be called to pass over into the great unknown ere any ship should appear in the offing, and the glad cry of the survivors ring out—"A sail! A sail!"

But grave thoughts could not be ours for long. It would not have been well if they could; indeed, it would have been very bad. Melancholy would have been the very worst enemy that we could have had to face. Even with the best will in the world, it was impossible to prevent one's thoughts from getting into

dismal ruts. Memories of home would come—visions of dear ones who long ago must have mourned us as lost. And at times like that there would come a longing, almost too strong for endurance, as though body and soul, mind, heart and spirit went out in one great cry to see their dear faces again.

It did not do to think of that kind of thing too much, and so we decided that while we were waiting for a ship, we had to keep ourselves busy. There is an old saying that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." It seems to me that he, also, is quite ready to stuff all manner of miserable thoughts into unoccupied minds.

My argument was that you couldn't have two things in the same place at the same time. If you had busy thoughts, there would be no room for miserable ones, and so we set to work and invented tasks for ourselves. Some of them were very hard ones. There was no absolute need to do them—they were not much good to us when they were done—but they gave us something to do; they prevented us from getting into the dismals, and, more important still, they prevented us from quarrelling.

And when work was done, as soon as it became dark, we would all gather together in our hut, and after our meal we would have a drinking bout and a concert—a regular smoking concert, without the tobacco. None of my readers need be alarmed when I mention we had a drinking bout—our drink was certainly non-intoxicant. It was coffee.

Coffee! Home-made coffee—not home-grown. It was made by taking a biscuit, breaking it into very small pieces, and burning it. We then ground it up, and that was the coffee we used. It was just about as much make believe as the wine which Charles Dickens' little Marchioness used to make out of orange-peel and water.

Still, there it was. It was our one and only luxury; indeed it was only now and again that we felt that we could be so extravagant as to use a biscuit in such a manner as that.

And there, with a blazing fire, we would gather together to drink our "coffee" and sing our songs. We did try smoking, but it was attended with difficulties. The pipes were easy enough to fashion—we cut the bowls from wood, and used birds' bones for stems; but the tobacco!

I should very much like to see any gentleman who enjoys his expensive mixtures try a pipeful of our special brand. I would give you a dozen guesses, and you would not be able to think what it was composed of.

Leaves, you say—or grass? No; quite wrong. No, nor yet seaweed, nor anything which grows on a stalk out of the bosom of Mother Earth.

Our tobacco was rope-yarn! We would get a piece of rope and tease it into oakum and smoke that; but as it was full of tar, a very few whiffs were enough to satisfy us, and convince us that it was not the sort of tobacco

suites to our constitutions, so we gave it up entirely.

Well, that is how we spent our time—hard work all day, turn in for our meal in the evening and afterwards our coffee and songs. And so day by day dragged by, and the month of November was half way through, and still we saw no sign of that relief ship which ought to have visited the depôt.

It was hard waiting there, and the question would force itself upon us, spite of all our resolutions to preserve our good spirits: Is a ship ever going to come, or has this lonely island been forgotten, and is it to be our fate to linger here until all have perished, leaving no man to tell the tale of the ill-fated *Dundonald's* last voyage?

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR RESCUE.

I HAVE already told you that during our stay on Auckland Island we invented tasks rather than remain idle. One of those tasks was to rig up a mast, which we placed in the fore part of the depôt. The wood for it we cut from the forest, and, when it was complete, we made a flag out of a piece of old sail that our fellows had found in Enderby Island boathouse. We had also got a little piece of old blue cloth, and out of this we cut letters to form the word "Welcome," and a couple of anchors. We sewed the letters and the anchors on the flag, and when we had hoisted it and saw it fluttering gaily in the wind, we all raised three hearty cheers.

I am afraid it was rather a rough-looking affair, compared with flagstuffs which are erected in our own country, but, considering the tools that we had available, it was a very creditable piece of work, and for aught I know to the contrary, it stands on Auckland Island still.

When the mast was finished we turned our attention to building a sort of jetty. This was

a great idea, but it was also precious hard work. We could not possibly have done this unless the entrance to the depôt had been in a secluded little bay, where, as there was never much weather, and no big seas running, there was no danger of it getting knocked to pieces. If we had attempted its erection in such a place as we had landed when we first came with the canvas boat it would have been utterly beyond us—the whole contrivance would have been smashed up as easily as the sand castles which the children build at the seaside.

We got a lot of good, straight pieces of wood, and we drove them into the beach, placing them so that the tops of every two crossed. We made two parallel rows like this and then placed other pieces across, exactly on the same principle as we built the strong backs for our huts on Disappointment Island. Of course, as we got farther and farther out we could only work at low tide, and then we had to wade far out into the water. We got quite excited over building this, although I must own it was of no earthly use to us. But when at last we were rescued, those on board the ship which came to take us off were greatly surprised, and praised it as a very nice piece of work, and also took several photographs of it.

And so we passed our time away, working at tasks like these, exploring the mainland, and visiting the various islands, not omitting the one from whence we got our beef supplies. On Rose Island we found some more cows. I have since learnt that these oxen were placed there

by design, on purpose to provide food for castaways. They have bred there, and have become wild, and some of the old bulls are quite as fierce as the bison of the American plains, or the buffalo of the African forests.

We also discovered rabbits on Rose Island, plenty of them, but the little beggars were very difficult to catch; if it was not so dangerous, it was a lot harder than catching the oxen; but we did manage to knock over four or five with a stick.

And so the days went on, until, by our reckoning, Friday, November 15th, arrived. I remember on that day the mate and myself took a tramp up into the hills, yarning and talking of different ships on which we had served, and wishing most devoutly that some vessel or another would come to take us off. We spent the day alone, and then returned to the camp; had our singing, and retired to rest.

All through the night we slept, nothing occurring to interfere with our rest; and, shortly after daybreak, Knudsen and one of the other fellows went down to the beach to get the boat ready, as we were going hunting that day; while the rest of us turned round in our bunks, and prepared to enjoy another half hour.

Then, all of a sudden, rising clear on the still air we heard a shrill whistle.

“That is Knudsen’s call,” I said, sitting bolt upright in my bunk. “What on earth is the matter with him?”

“Hold your whist!” said Mickey. “What is that they’re shouting?”

What ?

We started out of our bunks like mad—we did not even stop to put on our clothes ; we rushed out through the door, and tore down to the beach just as we were ; for the cry which had come to our ears was :

“ Steamboat ! Steamboat in the offing ! ”

And it was no false alarm either, for as we neared the shore we saw, still far out, but heading straight for the depôt, a small steamer, a beautiful looking little thing, her lines plainly showing she had been built for a yacht.

We could not believe our eyes at first—it seemed too good to be true ; and there she was standing in towards us all the time. We shouted and cheered, we rushed back to the depôt and got into our clothes and made ourselves look as respectable as possible, and then back again we rushed towards the beach. You may take it from me that we did not stop for eating and drinking that morning. We were all of us trembling, and great lumps seemed to be rising in my throat, and would not be swallowed back again. I seemed to be looking through a mist of white fog. There was a ship—a real, bonny steamship—and as she got in we could see her deck was swarming with people, who were leaning over the bulwarks and pointing towards the depôt, where the flag was fluttering away gaily at the top of the mast.

“ Thank God, boys ! ” said Maclaghlan. “ It is no mistake this time ; she has seen us right enough. Look at them now ! There goes the anchor, and here comes a boat ! ”

And we could see the boat lowered away ; we could see the davit tackles cast off. And then the oars were raised and dipped into the water, and she came towards us in grand style.

My word ! We cheered as loud as we could yell ; we rushed right away down to the jetty, we tossed our caps in the air, we waved our hands—we just behaved like so many madmen ; and for every cheer we gave an answering cheer came back from the boat.

The boat was soon alongside the jetty, and we could see the sailors who manned it staring with surprise at us and our work ; and then one, an officer, whom we took to be either the mate or the captain, stepped ashore, and we all made a rush to him and surrounded him. Well, he was an officer of a ship, and we were most of us common seamen, but I didn't see a trace in his face to show that he was indignant. He just gave us a pitying glance, and it seemed as though his whole countenance lit up with satisfaction at the idea of saving us.

He asked what ship we were from, and how long we had been on the island ; and he was quite surprised to hear that we had been on Disappointment Island for so many months—in fact, he was surprised to hear that we had been there at all. When he had heard our story, he told us his ship was the *Hinimoa*, and he said he had on board a Sub-Antarctic expedition, which was going to explore the islands round about.

“I suppose you are all pretty well sick of being here, my men,” he said, “but you will have to

put up with it for a little longer. You see, I am bound to take this expedition round these islands, and it will be a fortnight or three weeks before I have done my work. Then I will call back here for you, and carry you to New Zealand. I cannot take you now—there is not room enough to berth you in the ship.”

Well, we did not like that much ; now we had got a chance of leaving we were just keen to get away, and we told the captain we were not at all particular ; we didn't mind where we were berthed—that we would sleep on the deck, we would sleep at the masthead even, so long as we got away quick. However, he said he could not possibly take us then, but he would give us provisions for a fortnight.

Well, some of us went to our boat, and in that we pulled back to his ship. There were five of us who went—the second mate, of course, because he was the only certified officer amongst us ; then Knudsen, with Walters, Stewart and myself.

The ship was crowded with people ; the captain had not told us any false story when he said that he had not got room for us ; we could see them all leaning over the rails watching us as we neared her, and when we got on board, those well-dressed gentlemen were just about as nice and kind as it was possible for anyone to be. They did not seem to tire of giving us good things, and they questioned us again and again concerning our experiences ; and even the sailors of the *Hinimoa*, as they filled our boat with

stores, put in their own tobacco, in addition to that which the captain ordered them to give to us.

When the boat was loaded up, there was nothing to do but go back, though I must admit we did not like it; but just as I was thinking of getting down into the boat with the others, one of the gentlemen came up to me—I do not know why he should have chosen me, I can only put it down to my good luck. He told me that part of the expedition was going to be left on Campbell Island, and that they wanted someone to act as cook for them, and if I liked to go I could.

Well, that was rather a staggerer. I told them that I would be very glad to go, but that I was very doubtful concerning my capacities as a cook; but Mr. Maclaghlan, when he heard the offer, declared that I was quite qualified to take that position—of course, that was only his good nature.

However, stay on I did, and I felt myself to be most fortunate; and my comrades cast envious glances at me as they got into the boat and pulled back to the depôt; though, mind you, there were two sides to it. They had got plenty of provisions now, and they had got nothing to do but laze about and wait for the return of the ship. I, on the contrary, although I was in a pretty nice berth, had got a lot of solid hard work before me.

However, I was going to fresh scenes and pastures new, and that has always been the delight of my life; a roamer I have been, and

a roamer I shall be, I suppose, to the end of the chapter.

Well, the boat was gone, and we were soon under way bound for Carnley Harbour—that is in the southern part of the Auckland Island. They were going to leave most of the expedition there, and then continue their course to the Campbell, Bounties and Antipodes Islands.

I was now separated from my comrades, and I can tell you that I felt very strange and funny, with nothing but new faces around me; and it seemed so strange to hear the speech of well-educated men, after hearing sailor's jargon and broken English for so long. But they were all very good to me, and they told me not to hesitate to ask for anything that I wanted; and, soon after we got away, they carried me down to breakfast with them in the saloon—it was a very fine saloon, the vessel having originally been built for a yacht.

But oh, how out of place I felt! Of course, in the old days at home I had been used to all the decencies of civilized life, but after all those months on the island, living in that rough and ready fashion, I seemed to have forgotten all about them, so that a knife and fork seemed as something new to me, and a white tablecloth a thing to be terribly frightened of.

However, everybody was very nice to me, and talked so kindly, taking no notice of any little awkwardness on my part, so that I soon forgot my bashfulness. I mean that! Bashfulness is not one of my virtues; or vices, as the case may be; but at first, when I was among

those new faces and people, I felt as though I wished the deck would open and I could sink out of sight.

In the afternoon of that same day we arrived at Carnley Harbour, where we had to stay for a few hours, as there was a lot of stuff to be taken ashore—provisions, tents, scientific instruments, cooking utensils, and things of that sort. The party that were left there had a whale-boat put ashore, so that they could explore the bays and creeks. The boat was manned by a crew of Maorimen: and when this part of the expedition were ashore, there were fifteen left to continue the voyage to Campbell Island.

It was daylight when we left and headed for the Campbells, which lay to the south-east of the Aucklands; the weather was very fine, but there was a heavy swell, and the *Hinimoa* being very sharp forward, was diving into it good-ho! I called her a proper submarine right away, for she'd keep right under for a long time and then reappear.

It was Sunday morning when we arrived at the Campbells. I must here say that the day when we were discovered was Saturday, November 16th, and we on the island, by our reckoning, made it Saturday, November 15th,—that is we were only one day out, which was nothing like what we expected to be. We owed this to Robert Ellis, who really was the only one who had been able to carry account of the days in his head.

We had a lonely life on our island, but I think

that for true loneliness, that of the inhabitants of Campbell Island beats anything that I ever heard of. There are only two people on it—two men on that lonely island, right away in the Southern Ocean, and those are shepherds, who live there looking after a number of sheep that belong to a man in New Zealand.

We had on board four men who had come to help those two shear the sheep. There were so many of them that working as hard as they could, it would take them three-and-a-half months to get through with it, at the end of which time the owner in New Zealand would send a steamer along to bring back the wool and the four men, whilst the two shepherds would once more be left to their loneliness and their flocks. That is not the sort of life I should enjoy, anyway; and I often asked myself what would have happened if the two had fallen out, and become ill-friends.

Well, we arrived in a long bay, and the captain and two or three of the scientists went ashore to look for a suitable place to camp, as it was rather open round there, with not many trees for shelter. They eventually picked on a spot, and then we started getting the gear ashore, a rather difficult task as there is not much beach. At last everything was put on the beach, and the boats returned to the ship, which was going to sail that night for the Bounties if the weather moderated.

There were eleven of the scientists ashore, making with myself a dozen, and as some of them were quite used to camping, it did not

take so very long to rig up the tents. We had four ordinary round soldiers' tents for sleeping purposes, and three square ones, one of which was used for dining, the second was the store tent, and the third was for my use; and they also had a little tent, in which they kept their scientific instruments.

When the tents were up, we had a lively time carrying the stores from the beach, but we all worked with a will, toiling up the steep mound from the beach with the big, heavy boxes; and then, when this was done, I had to take my first duty—I was told off to make tea.

Now I had to dig for water, and I soon discovered it was not very good when I had got it. It was of a brown colour; indeed, it looked like pretty strong tea. So I started digging a bit higher up, with the same result. Well, the party were singing out for their tea, so I could not afford to do any more digging, and as there was not any better water I had to take what there was. It is a good job that there were two doctors among that party, for they all thought that they were poisoned.

I must own that the taste was pretty strong; it had a peculiar one all of its own. But as for me, I had been so long without tea at all, that I did not mind it a bit; I just sailed in and enjoyed it. Mind you, the water would not hurt anyone; it was only the taste of it, and that taste required getting used to.

Tea over, I started right away cutting down wood—we were not far from the forest—and carrying it to the fireplace which I had made.

I had a lot of things to cook at once. Take, for instance, breakfast. The party wanted tea and cocoa, porridge, eggs and bacon, and potatoes, all hot, and all at the same time. Now, anybody can cook all these things at once on an ordinary stove, but I should just like to see a London chef try it in the open, over a wood fire. But having had nearly nine months' practice with wood fires, I managed all right. I just stuck up two big forked sticks, put another stick across them, and then fastened some wire hooks, so that I could hang a lot of pots on at once.

I used to sleep in one of the military tents with three gentlemen—Messrs. Kidson, Opie and Skey. They were all very nice men, of about my own age, and they soon made me feel quite at home.

They had come to explore, and explore they did. They would get up first thing in the morning, and off they would go, often stopping away all day, to return late in the evening, soaked through with the mist and the rain, having been right on the tops of the mountains.

I remember one afternoon they got the loan of a boat belonging to the homestead. That was the name we gave to the place where the two shepherds lived. They were going to pull across to the opposite side of the bay, as it would be far quicker than walking, and they offered to take me with them as boatman to steer the boat with a long oar, sculling at the same time over the stern.

They took some instruments with them, and pulled away, and soon after we ran into a small bay, and all got ashore in safety.

Over a big hill which separated us from the next bay some of the party had seen, the previous day, a huge sea elephant. This is an enormous kind of seal, with its nose growing out a little way, like the elephant's trunk. They had managed to secure a photograph of this, and some of our party were anxious to get another one, so they crossed the hill, I going with them. At first we could see nothing below, but presently Mr. Opie stopped, and pointed to something moving in the grass.

Well, I had seen a good many seals before, but this fellow capped the lot ; and we proceeded to descend the side of the hill to get near enough to him to photograph him. Mr. Opie had a snapshot camera, and Mr. Kidson had one of the other sort with a tripod ; and Mr. Mainhead, master of Girton Grammar School, Dunedin, was also with us.

The first thing which caught our eye when we reached the bay was a small seal of a sort that I had never seen before. Its eyes were about the size of a five-shilling piece, and something awful to look at. He was a good way from the water ; and having very short flappers he had a very hard job to move ; but he growled at us for a long time whilst we took a photograph, and then he started to make for the sea in the most extraordinary fashion. He did not flap along as most of his species do, but he started turning a lot of giddy somer-

saults. He would turn his tail skywards until he overbalanced towards the water, and then he would do it again, and so on.

We let him go, and then, a little way farther on in the grass, we came upon another of the sea elephants. He was a size—he was far bigger than a horse! He was having a good sleep, and so did not notice us; so Messrs. Opie and Kidson got in front of him with their camera, whilst the rest of us went behind to rouse him up. I gave him a couple of good prods with a sharp stick, and that made him lively all right. He opened his mouth wide and roared in rage; but at that moment the camera went click, and then we cleared, whilst he seemed divided between a desire to come after us and the impulse to take to the water. Eventually he chose the latter course, so we were saved any further trouble.

Before we had left him long we came to another one even larger, and he was considerably more difficult to manage. It had been a pretty tough job sometimes with the seals of Disappointment Island, but that was child's play to these fellows; and I could not help thinking that had those which we had killed been of this size, a very different tale might have been told.

After a good long tramp, the party I was with returned to the boat, where some others had been taking observations, and then we all embarked and pulled back to the camp, where Mr. Crossley Smith, of Invergassill, New Zealand, had a good fire going and most of the

pots boiling. He had kindly offered to watch the fires, etc., while I went with the others, so that it did not take me long to get tea ready, and a good meal prepared.

When the meal was over I went with Messrs. Kidson and Opie and another gentleman to take the boat back to the homestead; and after we left her there of course we had got to walk back to the camp. We stayed at the homestead for a little while chatting with the shepherds, so that by the time we started to return it was pretty late and very dark.

We started off all right, and Mr. Kidson had a lamp with him, but the thing seemed to be made for nothing better than going out, so that at last we gave it up as a bad job and plodded on; and then somehow or other we managed to miss each other in the dark. It was certainly exciting. We were coo-eeing to each other, but no sooner did you hear a coo-ee in one direction than someone else would answer from another.

However, after some exciting adventures, tumbling into ditches and splashing into streams, we all met and got back in safety. That night it came on to rain and blow very hard, and early in the morning we in our tent heard a noise of hammering, and Mr. Kidson and Mr. Opie, judging by their smiles, seemed to think that it was a good joke. Of course we understood what it meant—one of the tents had come down with a run upon the heads of its unfortunate occupants.

I remember next afternoon, just after I had

finished getting dinner cleared away, and had got plenty of wood for the fires ready for tea, I saw the sheep-shearers driving a huge flock of sheep down the sides of one of the hills in the direction of the homestead where the shearing took place, and being clear for the time I went to meet them, and followed up the flock. Not far from the homestead I noticed the remains of a wall, about five feet high and all overgrown with grass, and that puzzled me a great deal. I could not make out how it came to be there. Judging by the shape of the ruins, it looked as though at some time or another a little hut had been built there, but it must have been a very tiny one ; and as I gazed about I saw that there had been a path made, which led from this ruin down to the beach.

That puzzled me more and more, for even if there had been someone living here at some remote period, I could not for the life of me understand why they should have been at such pains to make that pathway. It must have taken an enormous time to do, for it was composed entirely of little crystal pebbles and very small water-worn stones, and they had been laid and pressed into the earth very much in the same way that a cobble-stone roadway used to be laid in the streets.

Well, I stood and looked at it for a long time, and the more I looked the more puzzled I was. I asked myself who could possibly have done it, and what was the use of it when it was done. It brought to my memory the jetty which we had built near to Port Ross, only,

while that was comparatively light work, this was one which must have taken a very considerable time to accomplish.

I went on as far as the homestead, and had a chat with the shepherds, but they could tell me nothing about it; and on my return I met one of the expedition party—Mr. Laing—and I told him of what I had seen.

“So you have seen that, have you, Eyre?” he said, with a smile. “I suppose you are not the only one who has been puzzled by it.”

“Do you know anything about its history, sir?” I asked.

“Yes,” he answered. “There is a strange story attached to it, and in some respects it is a sad one. There are two or three versions, varying in detail, but agreeing in the main points.”

I told him I should esteem it a favour if he would tell me the history of this place.

“With pleasure!” he answered. And as we walked back to the camp he told me the legend connected with that lonely spot.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME AGAIN.

“You must understand,” said Mr. Laing, as we walked back together, “that, although I have said there are different versions of the story, one thing is very certain—that hut was occupied for many years by a poor lady, who was banished to this island to live here alone until her death.

“Sir James Ross, in his account of the Antarctic expedition of 1840, is the first to mention it. He says that she was accidentally drowned, and that her grave is situated in a cove to the north of where the *Erebus* was anchored. Carrick, the author of ‘New Zealand Lone Lands,’ refers to her; and in his account he tells us that though she was a Frenchwoman by birth, she was of Scotch extraction. According to him, she was the daughter of one, Meg Wilkinshaw, who was a great friend of Bonnie Prince Charlie, of ‘45 celebrity. It is known that Meg Wilkinshaw was in the court of that ill-fated prince during the memorable festivities which took place at Holyrood, both before and after Preston Pans;

and when the prince fled for refuge to France, Meg Wilkinshaw was among those who followed his fortunes.

“It appears that the remnant of the Jacobite party were jealous of this lady’s influence over the prince, and declared that she was in communication with the English Government, and acting as a spy on their movements. The prince, however, would lend no ear to their reports, and Meg Wilkinshaw remained his firm friend until her death, after which her daughter, who was a very beautiful girl, succeeded to the place in the prince’s friendship which her mother had previously occupied.

“The suspicions which attached to the mother now fell upon the daughter, and the Jacobites entered into a plot to carry her out of the country. In order to attain this they entered in a compact with a seaman named Stewart—he is best known as the discoverer of the fact that Stewart Island—named after him—was separate and distinct, and not an integral part of the South Island of New Zealand. Stewart used to boast that he had been on familiar terms with both the prince and his immediate followers. The story goes that she was carried on board Stewart’s vessel, and he, sailing with her, marooned her upon Campbell Island, where she was left for years to drag out a miserable existence.

“There is also another version of the story,” continued Mr. Laing, “but I do not think much credit can be attached to it. This version says that the unhappy lady was of Scotch

extraction, though born in France, and that she lived only about seventy years ago. She unwisely laid claim to the throne of England, her claims being so strong that it was considered best to get her out of the way. She was smuggled on board a Dundee whaler with an attendant, and banished to some unknown island, being heard of no more by the world.

“It is not certain which of these two yarns is true, but I hardly think it likely that such a barbarous act could have been committed by the English in such recent years. One fact is absolutely certain—she lived in this place for many years.”

“I certainly hope,” I replied, “that the latter story is not true. It would be rather an uncomfortable thing for an Englishman to think that no matter how great the expediency was, his fellow-countrymen could possibly have been accomplices in the marooning of a lonely woman in such a spot as this.”

That was the story which Mr. Laing told to me, and it seemed to invest that desolate ruin with a melancholy interest. As I have said, all that remained of it were the crumbling walls and the remains of what appeared to have been a fireplace. The walls appeared to have been made of sods, after the same style as our first buildings on Disappointment Island, and a sort of drain had been cut round them, whilst from the hut to the beach was the winding path which I have spoken of.

Mr. Laing told me it must have taken many years to collect so many pebbles and flint-

stones. He showed me the place where the pebbles were found. They were washed out of the limestone by the action of the waves; and work as hard as one might, it was impossible to gather more than a hatful in the course of a day; so you may judge how long this lonely woman had taken to complete the task which she had set for herself.

In wandering round I made another discovery. Near the remains of the hut, which were surrounded by thick, wiry scrub, was a partly open space, the nature of which admitted of no question; it was a grave. And on the top of that, growing in a dense mass, was any amount of Scotch heather.

I could scarcely believe my eyes as I looked at that. Rich, blooming heather, the bonnie flower of the Highlands, growing in that desolate region! I plucked a little piece of it and carried it away with me, and I still have it now, as a relic of my adventures in those lonely Southern islands.

Captain Bollons, of the *Hinimoa*, said he would probably be back for us on Friday, the 22nd inst., so none of us went for very long trips that day. It was very bad weather, howling gales and rain-storms all the time.

The *Hinimoa* did not turn up that day, and we occupied our time in packing up all our specimens and belongings. Saturday came and went, and still we had no sign of the vessel. Sunday passed with no better result. We now began to feel rather anxious. We felt sure she must have been having a rough time

of it during her run to the Bounties and the Antipodes.

On Monday, November 25th, a small party started away about four in the morning for a journey to the North-East harbour, but they returned in about an hour's time, and said that they had heard the vessel's syren from one of the hills; and not long after that we saw her threading her way up the long, narrow bay.

All the packing was done, and the captain came ashore and told us he would be leaving about four or five o'clock in the evening, so we struck our tents, and by mid-day everything had been carried down the hills to the beach, ready to put into the *Hinimoa's* surf-boat.

The boat came alongside, and by two o'clock we were all aboard, and soon afterwards the vessel weighed anchor and headed for the Auckland Isles, to pick up the rest of the party, and then to go on for the *Dundonald* crew.

We arrived at Carnley Harbour next morning, the weather being pretty thick, and as the party there had not finished packing, the captain arranged to pick them up later in the day, and steamed off to view the remains of a sailing vessel called the *Grafton*, which had been wrecked on January 3rd, 1864, while homeward-bound from Sydney.

Also, as it had been reported that there was a submerged reef in one of the small bays, Captain Bollons took careful soundings, so as to be able to mark it on the chart. After this

was done, we went on to a place called Norman's Inlet, where we stayed all night. First thing the next morning they painted the depôt—for one of the three depôts was here—and then, with all the expedition on board, we proceeded towards Port Ross to take my comrades off.

We did not run right up to the depôt, but we anchored off Enderby Island, where one or two of the party went ashore to capture some specimens of the various seals, others crossing to the other side to view the relics of the *Derry Castle*, which had been wrecked on May 12th, 1887, homeward bound from Geelong, Victoria.

It was late in the day when we all returned to the ship, and steamed to our old depôt, and the captain went ashore to see how the fellows were getting on. We stayed there all night, and at daybreak started for Disappointment Island, our object being to fetch the mate's body back to Port Ross, and give it decent burial.

When we arrived at the old landing place, the first thing to attract attention was the frame of our old canvas boat, and the explorers gazed at the frail framework and said that it seemed impossible that such a craft could ever have reached the main island. They said it ought to be taken back and put in one of the museums, so we gave it to them right away, and in the Christchurch Museum, New Zealand, it is shown to this day.

We took them to view our old huts, of which they took a number of photographs, and we

gave them all our old things as curios ; and after a look round, we went back to the boats and got aboard ship, leaving the mate of the *Hinimoa* to wait for the men who had gone to fetch Mr. Peters' body, which was right on the other side of the island.

While they were gone we steamed to the south of Auckland Island, where we saw the cove where the *General Grant*, bound from Melbourne home, with a good bit of gold on board, was lost on May 10th, 1866. She had eighty-three all told on board, and sixty-eight were lost at the time of the wreck ; one was starved to death, four were afterwards drowned, and the remaining ten were rescued on November 21st, 1867, so that these poor fellows had a longer time on that terrible island than we did.

By the time we returned, the other party were ready, and our poor chief's body was reverently taken aboard. It was a most remarkable thing, due, as the scientists said, to some peculiarity in the climate of the island, but no signs of decay were visible on the body ; it looked almost the same as when it received its rough burial.

That same evening the *Hinimoa* was back at Port Ross ; the grave was dug, and the body was encased in a chest made by the ship's carpenter. When all was prepared, all hands gathered on shore with the exception of the officers who were in charge of the ship. We were about sixty all told who stood round the grave, and everybody will remember that

solemn service conducted by Captain Bollons in the midst of the silent rata forest, with the mists driving overhead. George Ivemy had made a cross to be put over the grave, bearing a suitable inscription, and there to this day it stands, and there also sleeps Mr. Peters, the kindly-hearted first mate of the *Dundonald*.

The chest was lowered to its resting place by the second mate and Knudsen, and after the service we all returned to the ship feeling solemnized by that in which we had been engaged.

The next day, Friday, November 29th, we left the depôt for New Zealand, and after a fine passage we arrived at the Bluff about four o'clock on Saturday afternoon.

It would be impossible for me to tell you of the great kindness with which both I and my comrades were received by everyone who came into contact with us, both upon the ship and upon our arrival at the Bluff. While I was aboard, I had mentioned that I had a great desire to cable to my people as soon as possible, and the party for whom I had cooked on Campbell Island immediately found the money, and as soon as the *Hinimoa* was alongside the wharf, one of them went up with me to the post-office, and we sent this message :

“Eyre, Elsie Road, East Dulwich. Rescued—Charlie.”

And Mr. Inman, who is writing these words, can remember the emotion with which that was received.

The story of our rescue created an immense sensation, and ere long the quay was packed with people who came to stare at us, and at the framework of our canvas boat. Mr. Hutton, from the Sailors' Mission, also came aboard, and we were put under his care and by him taken to the best hotel at the Bluff.

That same day I was sent for by the members of the scientific party, and, to my great surprise, although I had received such favours at their hands, they actually insisted upon paying me for my services as cook.

The next morning the whole place was *en fête* for us, and they ran special trains from Invercargel, bringing a crowd of people to see us, as though we were some celebrities. They also had the town band playing for our benefit.

Nothing seemed too much for them to do for us. One gentleman, named Macky, gave me a perfect new suit of clothes and boots, and everything else that I needed to make me look respectable. Mr. Hutton took the whole of us to a clothier's, where he fitted us all out. It really seemed to us that if we had chosen to stay there, we could have had everything free gratis for the rest of our natural lives.

In a few days, however, the Board of Trade officials asked me whether I wished to go home passenger to London, and upon my replying in the affirmative, they told me to come up the next morning for my ticket. I was not, however, destined to go home in luxurious idleness, for on Saturday, December 7th, as I was going to

the Bluff station, the chief officer of a steamer named the *Whakatane* came up to me and asked me if I would like to sign on, as he wanted another hand. He had already asked me this before, and I had refused; but as I heard that some of my old comrades had joined her, I hesitated. George Ivemey, Mickey Gratton, and Herman Queerfelt had signed on.

I don't know what possessed me. Anyone might have said that I had surely had enough of seafaring for a time, but I told myself that as the vessel was going to London, I might as well work my passage home as go as passenger, and so I became one of her crew, and after spending some time calling at different ports round the coast, we left a place called Lyttleton on Sunday, December 29th, homeward bound for London.

Homeward bound for London! What a thrill that gave, when heard! What music that was in the ears! Homeward bound, to see the dear old scenes, and to look into the loved faces after such a long absence, such arduous time, and such bitter privations.

We had a fair passage to Cape Horn, and we could see the cape all white with snow, and also Desolation Island—and I rather guess that Desolation is a very good name for it. We passed a few wind-jammers outward bound round the Horn, and in due course we arrived at Montevideo, where we took in coal, and left the New Zealand mail. From there we steamed to St. Vincent, where we took in

more coal, and from thence to Teneriffe, again to fill our bunkers, and take a deckload of fruit; then it was hey and away, a straight run to London!

A sailor may love to roam; he may find delight in the many strange and wondrous places that he visits; but there is something about that little island, so small and yet so powerful, whose flag is carried the world round, wherever the seas roll—there is something about it which acts like a magnet, ever drawing him home, so that when first through the dim haze its bluffs and cliffs rise misty and indistinct, a lump rises in his throat, and his heart swells with pride as he thinks to himself, “This is England, my native land, and the home of the free born.”

It was like looking at the face of some dear old friend as we came into the Channel. One after the other we picked up the different lights—there were the Scilly Isles, there the Lizard, beyond that again Start Point, and then beyond that Portland Bill. Though we were too far out to see clearly, yet we knew every well-remembered spot. Yonder the Isle of Wight would be, and Portsmouth, with its dockyard from whence Nelson sailed, and then Selsey Bill, and Shoreham, and Eastbourne, and Beachy Head; Hastings, where Norman William landed, and then Dungeness, where on February 18th, about twelve-thirty in the morning, we picked up our pilot.

When the pilot was on the bridge, and his tug had disappeared, it was on to the straits of Dover,

past the Foreland, by Deal and Ramsgate, and jolly Margate, and then round into the noisy, blustering Nore, with Southend's long pier on the one hand and the River Medway on the other, where, massive and forbidding, yet safety-ensuring, the long grey battleships lay—the watch-dogs of England's coasts.

Oh, the dear old Thames—the dirty, muddy, evil-smelling Thames! There was the old Nore Lightship, why, it was like meeting some old comrade to see its red hulk once more. There was not a spot we did not seem to know.

Every blyth seemed like an acquaintance nodding recognition. We could see the Mucking Light, Canvey Island, and all the craft passing in and out—big ships and little hoppers and barges—how familiar each and every one seemed! How different from the sights upon which our eyes had rested only eight or ten short weeks ago!

But as we got into the Thames itself our progress was impeded; it was getting late in the afternoon, and our pilot was anxious that we should get to the lock gates on that tide.

Why, the very whiff that came off from Barking Reach was like old memories. We knew those smells, we knew the breath that comes from Erith and Plumstead; and though we might have turned up our noses at it time and oft, we did not do so now; it had got something of the old country in it.

Home! How I longed to be there. I felt as though I could have howled my wrath at

every lumbering craft that got in our way; and the signal "Go slow! Stop her!" of the pilot, was about the most annoying command that I had ever heard given.

But all things come to an end at last, even the longest voyage and the longest story; and in due course we arrived at the Royal Albert entrance, and were towed into Victoria Dock. It took us a very long time to get into our berth.

I do not know why it is, but bargemen, although they have such little craft to navigate, always want to have all the river to themselves—they won't shift for anybody; the only thing to do is to give them a gentle bump, and help them out of the way. Of course, they remonstrate in language peculiarly their own, and not to be found in any dictionary; but that does not matter so long as the pathway is clear, for hard words never broke any bones.

When at last we were finally moored it was pretty late, so I decided it was not the slightest good trying to get home that night. When everything was finished, and all shipshape on deck, we went down into the fo'c's'le to have a smoke and a farewell yarn before we separated, each to go to his own way; and my comrades from the *Dundonald* and myself were once more the centre of attraction. Again and again we had to tell them of our doings and our sufferings away in the Auckland Isles.

Well, after we had been down there for some little while, and were all very comfortable,

the second officer looked down the companion-way and called out :

“Eyre! Eyre!”

“Ay, ay, sir!” I answered, looking up.

“Come up on deck,” he said; “you are wanted.”

I did not know what I was wanted for.

“Something got to be done,” I muttered to myself. “Upon my word, it is always my luck.”

However, it was no good growling because a bit of work came my way, so up I went just as I was. I was in my working gear, with my sea-boots on, and as it had been raining all day long—sort of welcome home to England, so that we should not find the contrast from Auckland Island too striking—I was pretty well soaked through. However, up on the deck I went, and the officer told me that my father had come on board, and was waiting to see me.

My father had come on board! It staggered me a bit. I felt taken back, like a vessel when she misses stays. I did not expect him to come that night, you see, although I had previously sent him warning that I was coming in this vessel.

Well, I just went aft double quick, and there he stood—my father; and with him my brother, and my two sisters, and my brother-in-law. And I am not going to say anything about that meeting which took place. I only say, if you can't imagine how a fellow would feel coming back to see his father, whom he

never expected to see again—well, it would be no good me trying to tell you, if I tried for a year. I know that after the greetings were over, I dashed down to wash and dress myself, and to smarten up generally. It would not have done to have gone home in that condition; and before very long I was with them at Custom House Station. Good old Custom House Station!—how I remembered it; and then in a train bound for Fenchurch Street.

And there we got into cabs. We were not going to stop waiting about for other trains. I and my brother and sister in one, and the rest in another, and then it was hey and away.

I love horses—I do not think anyone can accuse me of being unkind to animals—but I just felt that I would have liked to have mounted that box and tickled that old horse up a bit. I reckon I would have made him move a bit quicker. But there, if he had possessed wings and flown, he would not have kept up with my impatience.

Over London Bridge, with its rattle and roar—the Tower on the left of it—down into the dirty, muddy Borough—ah, how I remember it! Why, the mud, and the cabs, and the 'busses, and the crowd, and the gas glaring in the shops, it was all part of a beautiful picture, I felt it was sweeter and better scenery than anything I had ever seen in all my wanderings the world over.

And so on to the Elephant—good old Elephant!—with the people darting in and out

among the traffic, and the great electric cars, and the smelly motor 'busses—on along Walworth Road, with more than a suspicion of fried fish and 'taters coming from the side streets. Who minds that? Who will turn up their noses at that? Is it not a good old London smell—the smell of civilization? If you do not like it, you take a nine month's spell on a desert island, and then see if you won't run to greet it when you meet it once more.

And so on we go, with a rattle and a rumble, past Camberwell Gate into Camberwell. Past Camberwell Green, right up Denmark Hill, with hardly a thing altered, save for the fact that they are running the electric cars there now.

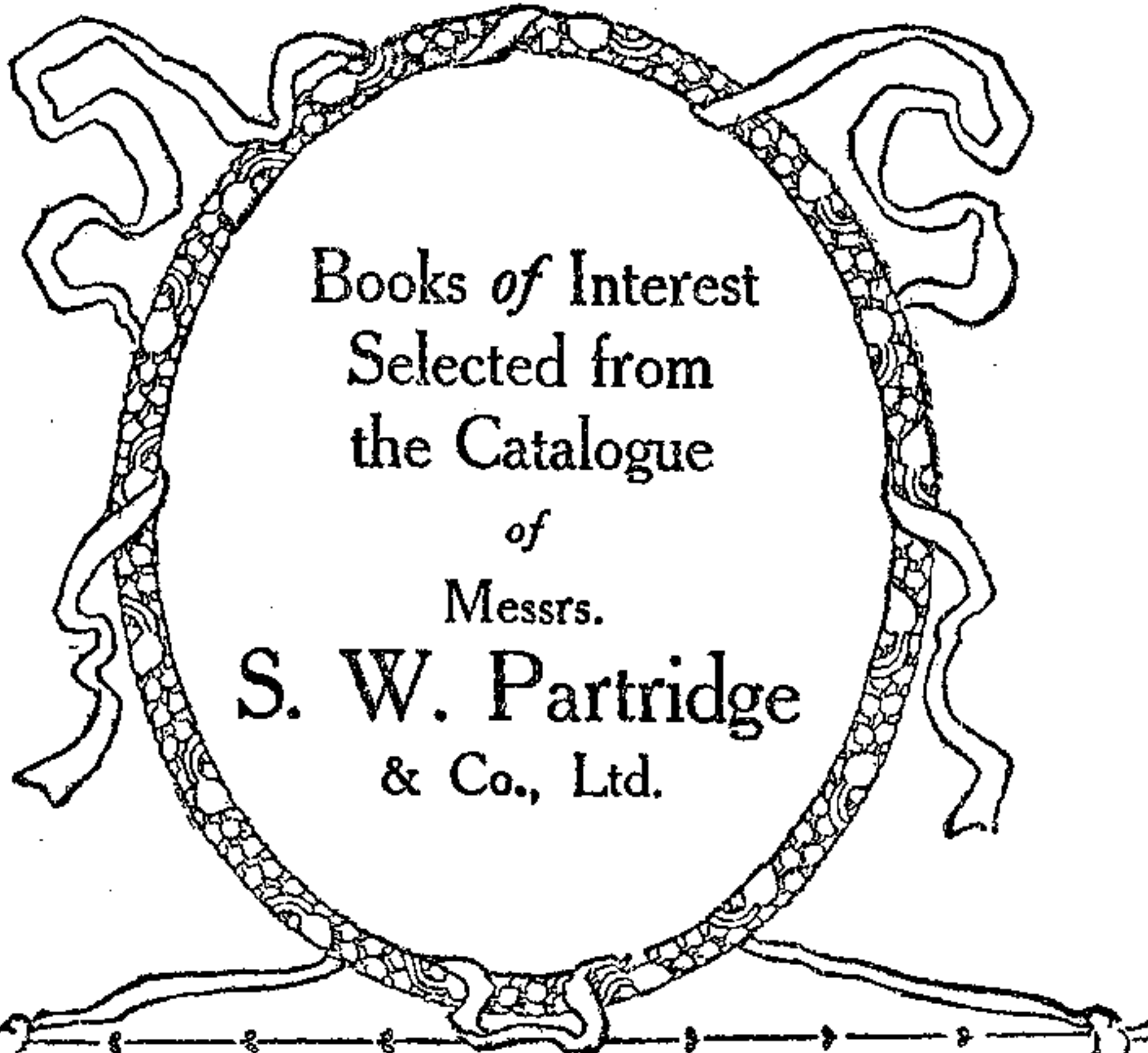
On we went; and it seemed to me that I must be dreaming, and that by-and-by I should wake up and find myself and my companions among the rata forests and the swamps. It seemed such a little while ago—and it was only a little while ago; for what, after all, are two months? Two months ago, face to face with death—a lonely, terrible death. And now back here amidst the old scenes of boyhood. It seemed impossible that two such places as Dulwich and Disappointment Island could exist in the same world.

Now round by Denmark Hill Station, and then down the slope to East Dulwich. There, away on the right, is the dim outline of the Crystal Palace, and there in front of us the signal light over East Dulwich Station burns

red. Now round to the right into the old road.

“Pull up cabby, this is the house!” And with a rush, and a heart too hot for words, back at the old home—earth’s best haven—to be clasped to the breast of home’s best glory—mother!

THE END.



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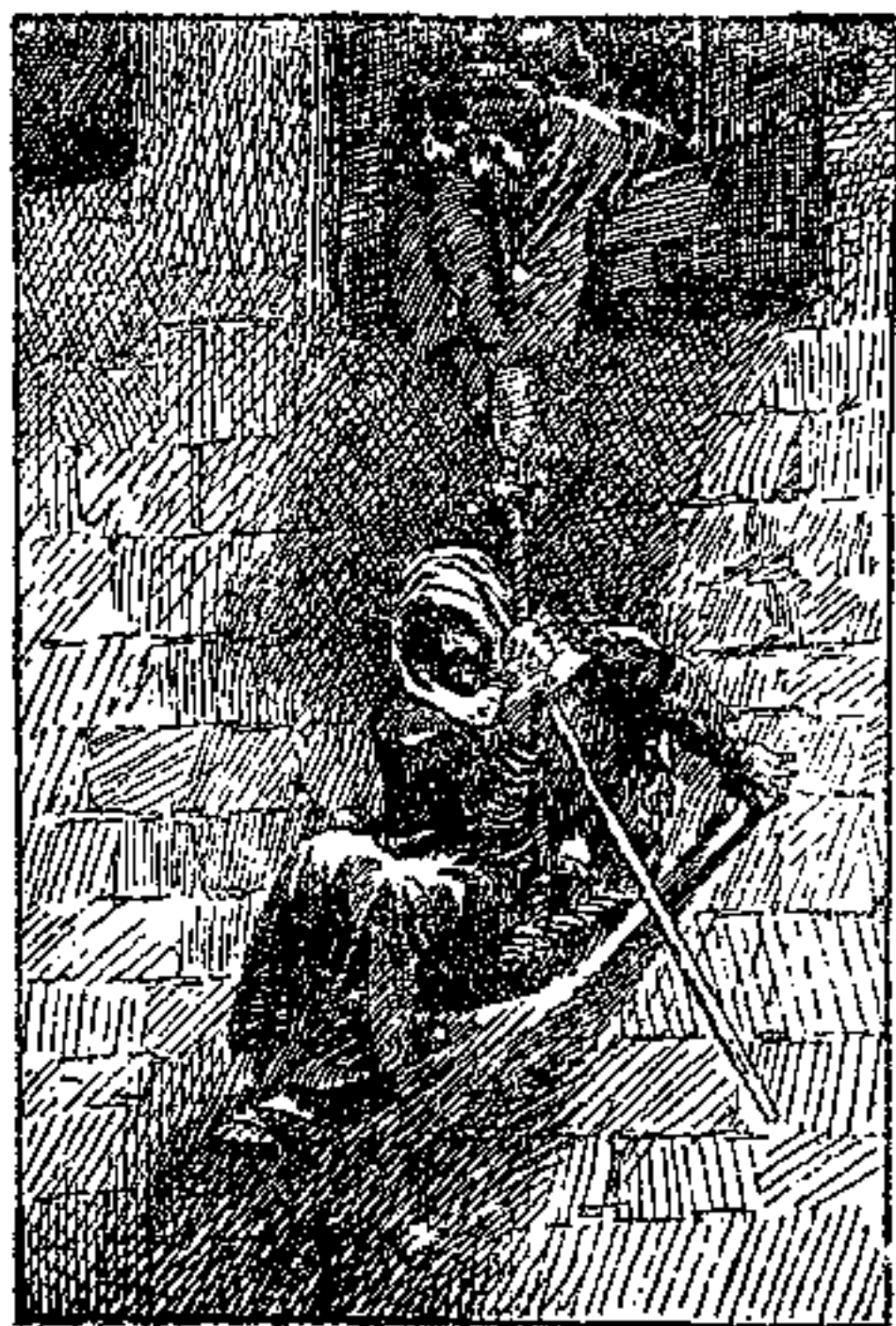
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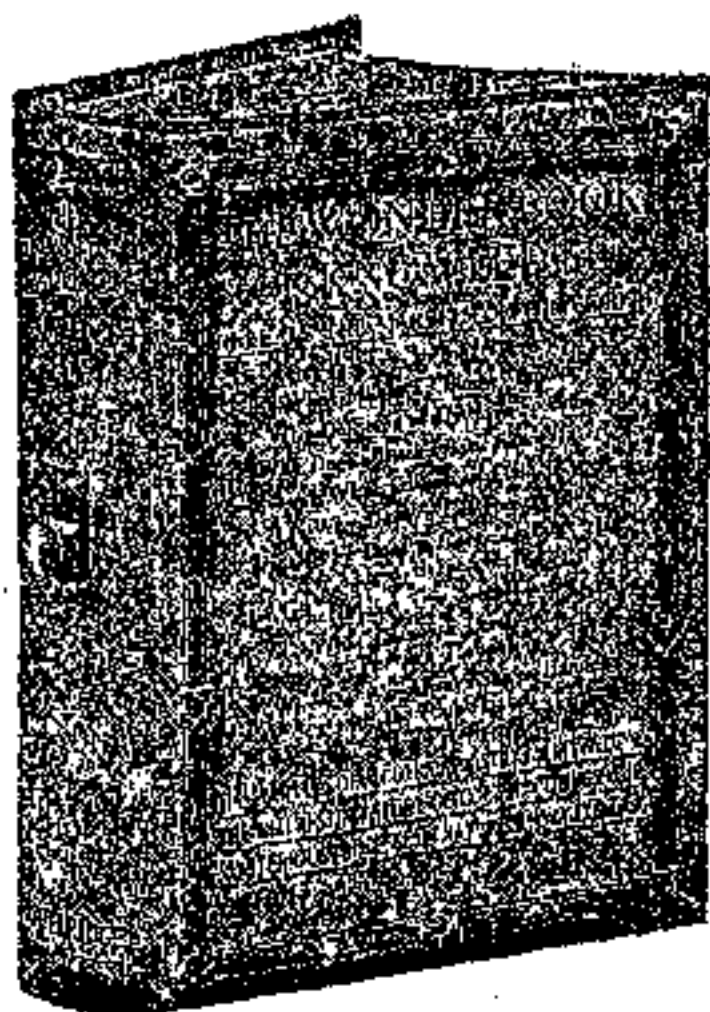
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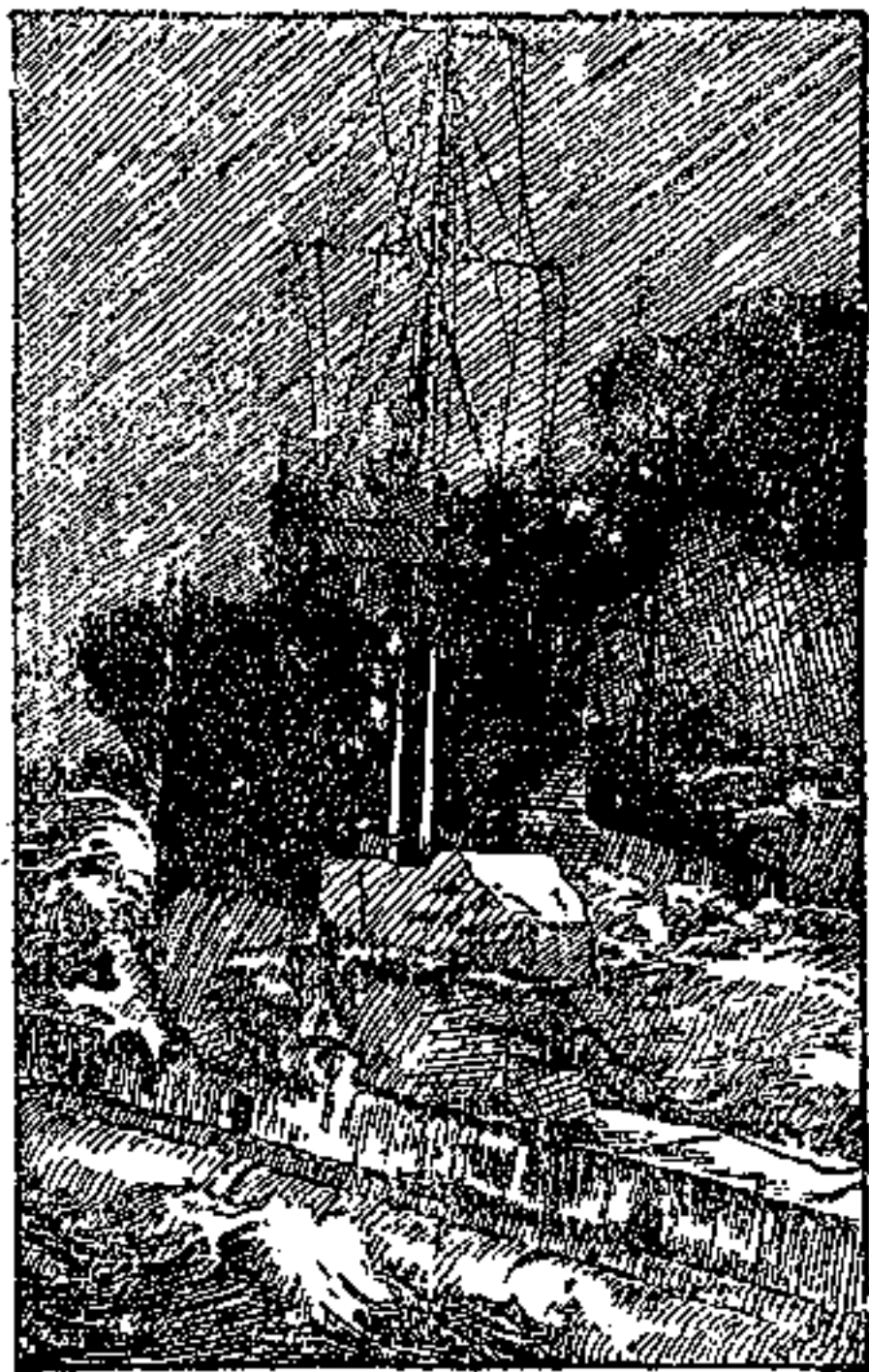
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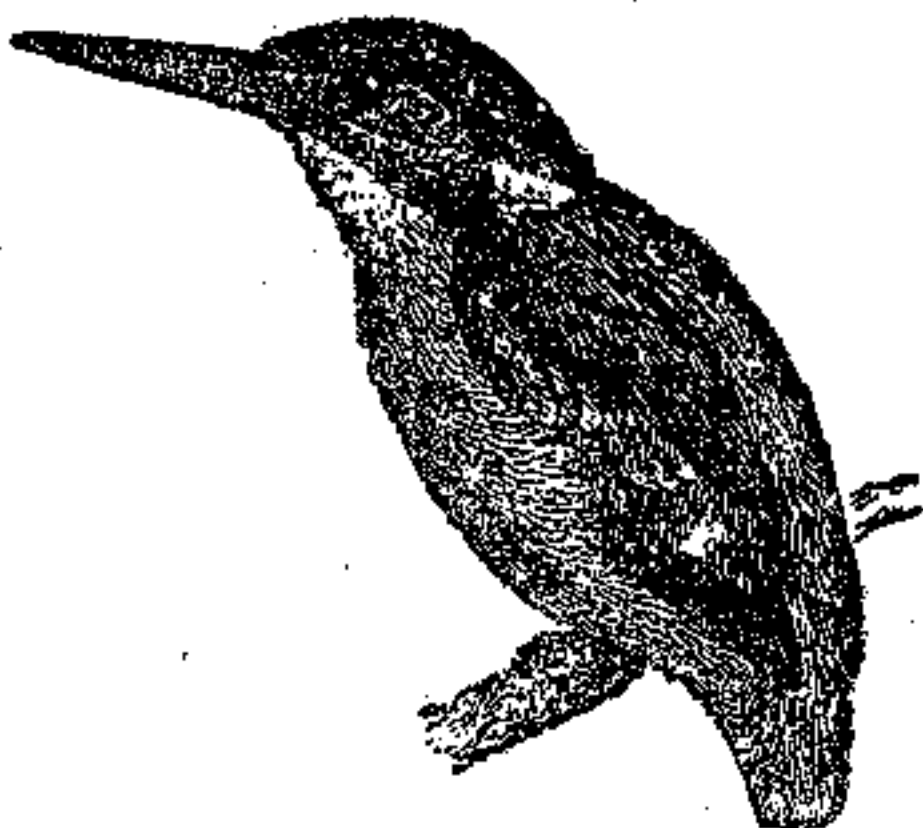
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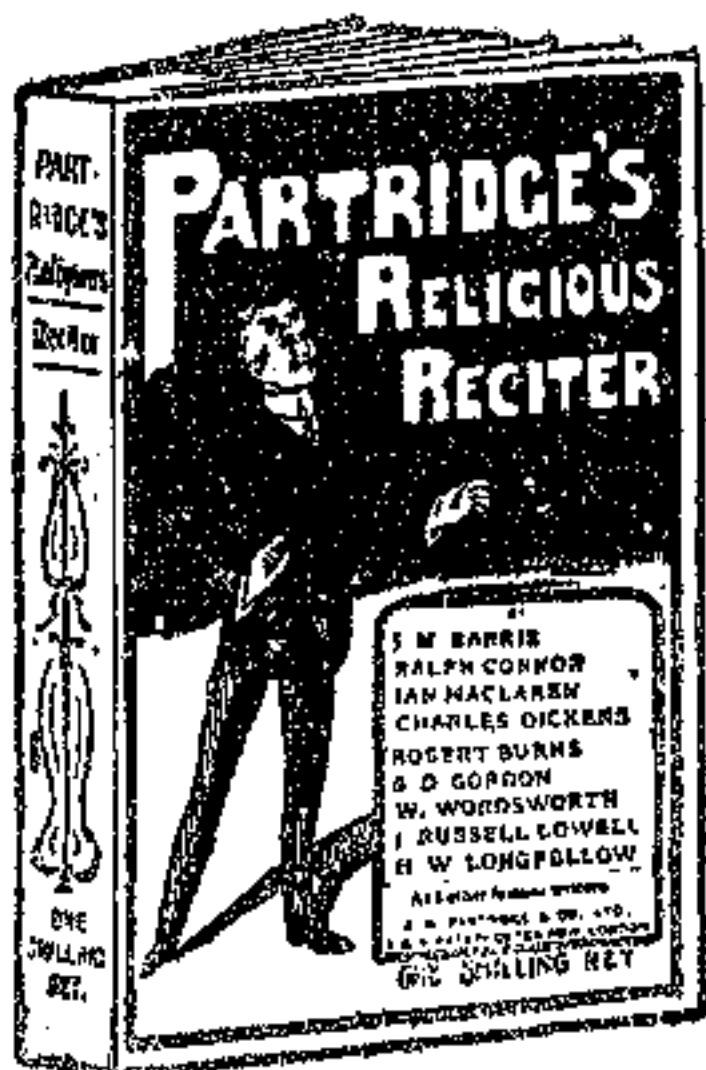
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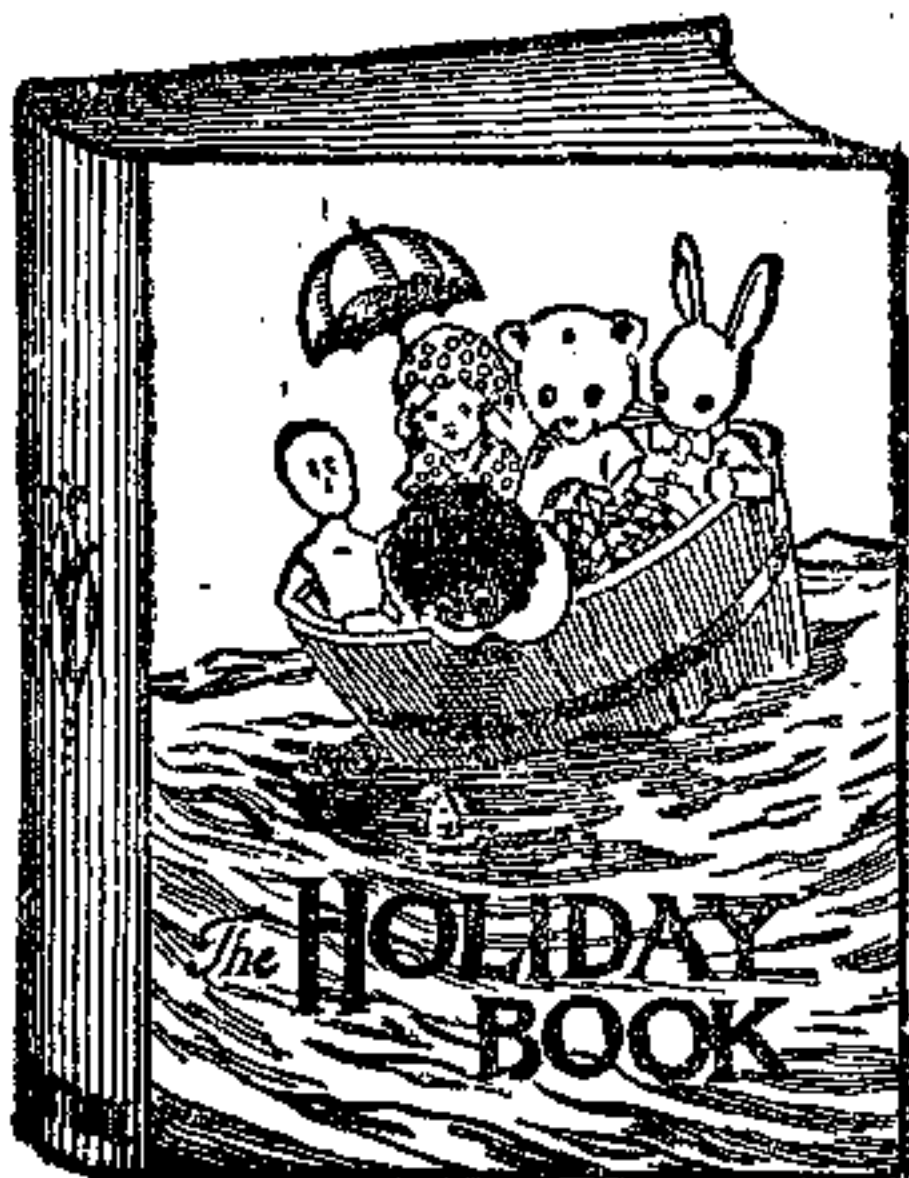


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