

FICTION

Edward Sylvester Ellis

Among the Esquimaux

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION



"NO USE, LADS! THE BOAT HAS KEEN SWEPT AWAY"
(See page 37)

Among the Esquimaux
OR
Adventures under the Arctic Circle

BY
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AMONG THE ESQUIMAUX

CHAPTER I

TWO PASSENGERS ON THE "NAUTILUS"

The good ship "Nautilus" had completed the greater part of her voyage from London to her far-off destination, deep in the recesses of British America. This was York Factory, one of the chief posts of the Hudson Bay Company.

Among the numerous streams flowing into Hudson Bay, from the frozen regions of the north, is the Nelson River. Near the mouth of this and of the Hayes River was erected, many years ago, Fort York, or York Factory. The post is not a factory in the ordinary meaning of the word, being simply the headquarters of the factors or dealers in furs for that vast monopoly whose agents have scoured the dismal regions to the north of the Saskatchewan, in the land of Assiniboine, along the mighty Yukon and beyond the Arctic Circle, in quest of the fur-bearing animals, that are found only in their perfection in the coldest portions of the globe.

The buildings which form the fort are not attractive, but they are comfortable. They are not specially strong, for, though the structure has stood for a long time in a country which the aborigines make their home, and, though it is far removed from any human assistance, its wooden walls have never been pierced by a hostile bullet, and it is safe to say they never will be. Somehow or other, our brethren across the northern border have learned the art of getting along with the Indians without fighting them.

The voyageurs and trappers, returning from their journeys in canoes or on snow-shoes to the very heart of frozen America, first catch sight of the flag floating from the staff of York Factory, and they know that a warm welcome awaits them, because the peltries gathered amid the recesses of the frigid mountains and in the heart of the land of desolation are sure to find ready purchasers at the post, for the precious furs are eagerly sought for in the marts of the Old and of the New World.

It is a lonely life for the inhabitants of the fort, for it is only once a year that the ship of the company, after breasting the fierce storms and powerful currents of the Atlantic, sails up the great mouth of Baffin Bay, glides through Hudson Strait, and thence steals across the icy expanse of Hudson Bay to the little fort near the mouth of the Nelson.

You can understand how welcome the ship is, for it brings the only letters, papers, and news from home that can be received until another twelvemonth shall roll around. Such, as I have said, is the rule, though now and then what may be termed an extra ship makes that long, tempestuous voyage. Being unexpected, its coming is all the more joyful, for it is like the added week's holiday to the boy who has just made ready for the hard work and study of the school-room.

You know there has been considerable said and written about a railway to Hudson Bay, with the view of connection thence by ship to Europe. Impracticable as is the scheme, because of the ice which locks up navigation for months every year, it has had strong and ingenious advocates, and considerable money has been spent in the way of investigation. The plan has been abandoned, for the reasons I have named, and there is no likelihood that it will ever be attempted.

The "Nautilus" had what may be called a roving commission. It is easy to understand that so long as the ships of the Hudson Bay Company have specific duties to perform, and that the single vessel is simply ordered to take supplies to York Factory and bring back her cargo of peltries, little else can be expected from her. So the staunch "Nautilus" was fitted out, placed under the charge of the veteran navigator, Captain McAlpine, who had commanded more than one Arctic whaler, and sent on her westward voyage.

The ultimate destination of the "Nautilus" was York Factory, though she was to touch at several points, after calling at St. John, Newfoundland, one of which was the southern coast of Greenland, where are located the most famous cryolite mines in the world, belonging, like Greenland itself, to the Danish Government.

There is little to be told the reader about the "Nautilus" itself or the crew composing it, but it so happened that she had on board three parties, in whose experience and adventures I am sure you will come to feel an interest. These three were Jack Cosgrove, a bluff, hearty sailor, about forty years of age; Rob Carrol, seventeen, and Fred Warburton, one year younger.

Rob was a lusty, vigorous young man, honest, courageous, often to rashness, the picture of athletic strength and activity, and one whom you could not help liking at the first glance. His father was a director in the honorable Hudson Bay Company, possessed considerable wealth, and Rob was the eldest of three sons.

Fred Warburton, while displaying many of the mental characteristics of his friend, was quite different physically. He

was of much slighter build, not nearly so strong, was more quiet, inclined to study, but as warmly devoted to the splendid Rob as the latter was to him.

Fred was an orphan, without brother or sister, and in such straitened circumstances that it had become necessary for him to find some means of earning his daily bread. The warm-hearted Rob stated the case to his father, and said that if he didn't make a good opening for his chum he himself would die of a broken heart right on the spot.

"Not so bad as that, Rob," replied the genial gentleman, who was proud of his big, manly son; "I have heard so much from you of young Mr. Warburton that I have kept an eye on him for a year past."

"I may have told you a good deal about him," continued Rob, earnestly, "but not half as much as he deserves."

"He must be a paragon, indeed, but, from what I can learn, my son, he has applied himself so hard to his studies while at school that he ought to have a vacation before settling down to real hard work; what do you think about it, Robert?"

"A good idea, provided I take it with him," added the son, slyly.

"I see you are growing quite pale and are losing your appetite," continued the parent, with a grave face, which caused the youth to laugh outright at the pleasant irony.

"Yes," said the big boy, with the same gravity; "I suffer a great loss of appetite three or four times every day; in fact, I feel as though I couldn't eat another mouthful."

"I have observed that phenomenon, my son, but it never seems to attack you until the table has been well cleared of everything on it. Ah, my boy!" he added, tenderly, laying his hand on his head; "I am thankful that you are blessed with such fine health. Be assured there is nothing in this world that can take its place. With a conscience void of offense toward God and man, and a body that knows no ache nor pain, you can laugh at the so-called miseries of life; they will roll from you like water from a duck's back."

"But, father, have you thought of any way of giving Fred a vacation before he goes to work? You know he is as poor as he can be, and can't afford to do nothing and pay his expenses."

"The plan I have in mind," replied the father, leaning back in his chair and twirling his eyeglasses, "is this: next week the 'Nautilus,' one of the company's ships, will leave London for York Factory, which is a station deep in the heart of British America. She will touch at St. John, Greenland, and several other points on her way, and may stop several weeks or months at York Factory, according to circumstances. If it will suit your young friend to go with her, I will have him registered as one of our clerks, which will entitle him to a salary from the day the 'Nautilus' leaves the dock. The sea voyage will do him good, and when he returns, at the end of a year or less, he can settle down to hard work in our office in London. Of course, if Fred goes, you will have to stay at home."

Rob turned in dismay to his parent, but he observed a twitching at the corners of his mouth, and a sparkle of the fine blue eyes, which showed he was only teasing him.

"Ah, father, I understand you!" exclaimed the big boy, springing forward, throwing an arm about his neck and kissing him. "You wouldn't think of separating us."

"I suppose not. There! get along with you, and tell your friend to make ready to sail next week, his business being to look after you while away from home."

And that is how Rob Carrol and Fred Warburton came to be fellow-passengers on the ship "Nautilus" on the voyage to the far North.

CHAPTER II

A COLOSSAL SOMERSAULT

The voyage of the "Nautilus" was uneventful until she was far to the northward in Baffin Bay. It was long after leaving St. John that our friends saw their first iceberg. They should have seen them before, as Captain McAlpine explained, for, as you well know, those mountains of ice often cross the path of the Atlantic steamers, and more than once have endangered our great ocean greyhounds. No doubt numbers of them were drifting southward, gradually dissolving as they neared the equator, but it so happened that the "Nautilus" steered clear of them until many degrees to the north.

The captain, who was scanning the icy ocean with his glass, apprised the boys that the longed-for curiosity was in sight at last. As he spoke, he pointed with his hand to the north-west, but though they followed the direction with their eyes, they were disappointed.

"I see nothing," said Rob, "that looks like an iceberg."

"And how is it with you, Mr. Warburton?" asked the skipper, lowering his instrument, and turning toward the younger of the boys, who had approached, and now stood at his side.

"We can make out a small white cloud in the horizon, that's all," said Fred.

"It's the cloud I'm referring to, boys; now take a squint at that same thing through the glass."

Fred leveled the instrument and had hardly taken a glance, when he cried:

"Oh! it's an iceberg sure enough! Isn't it beautiful?"

While he was studying it, the captain added: "Turn the glass a little to the left."

"There's another!" added the delighted youth.

"I guess we've struck a school of 'em," remarked Rob, who was using his eyes as best he could; "I thought we'd bring up the average before reaching Greenland."

"It's a sight worth seeing," commented Fred, handing the glass to his friend, whose pleasure was fully as great as his own.

The instrument was passed back and forth, and, in the course of a half-hour, the vast masses of ice could be plainly discerned with the unaided eye.

"That proves they are coming toward us, or we are going toward them," said Rob.

"Both," replied Captain McAlpine; "we shall pass within a mile of the larger one."

"Suppose we run into it?"

The old sea-dog smiled grimly, as he replied:

"I tried it once, when whaling with the 'Mary Jane.' I don't mean to say I did it on purpose, but there was no moon that night, and when the iceberg, half as big as a whole town, loomed up in the darkness, we hadn't time to get out of its path. Well, I guess I've said enough," he remarked, abruptly.

"Why, you've broken off in the most interesting part of the story," said the deeply interested Fred.

"Well, that was the last of the 'Mary Jane.' The mate, Jack Cosgrove, and myself were all that escaped out of a crew of eleven. We managed to climb upon a small shelf of ice, just above the water, where we would have perished with cold had not an Esquimau fisherman, named Docak, seen us. We were nearer the mainland than we dared hope, and he came out in his kayak and took us off. He helped us to make our way to Ivignut, where the cryolite mines are, and thence we got back to England by way of Denmark. No," added Captain McAlpine, "a prudent navigator won't try to butt an iceberg out of his path; it don't pay."

"It must be dangerous in these waters, especially at night."

"There is danger everywhere and at all times in this life," was the truthful remark of the commander; "and you know

that the most constant watchfulness on the part of the great steamers cannot always avert disaster, but I have little fear of anything from icebergs."

You need to be told little about those mountains of ice which sometimes form a procession, vast, towering, and awful, that stream down from the far North and sail in all their sublime grandeur steadily southward until they "go out of commission" forever in the tepid waters of the tropic regions.

It is a strange spectacle to see one of them moving resistlessly against the current, which is sometimes dashed from the corrugated front, as is seen at the bow of a steamboat, but the reason is simple. Nearly seven-eighths of an iceberg is under water, extending so far down that most of the bulk is often within the embrace of the counter current below. This, of course, carries it against the weaker flow, and causes many people to wonder how it can be thus.

While the little group stood forward talking of icebergs, they were gradually drawing near the couple that had first caught their attention. By this time a third had risen to sight, more to the westward, but it was much smaller than the other two, though more unique and beautiful. It looked for all the world like a grand cathedral, whose tapering spire towered fully two hundred feet in air. It was easy to imagine that some gigantic structure had been submerged by a flood, while the steeple still reared its head above the surrounding waters as though defying them to do their worst.

The other two bergs were much more enormous and of irregular contour. The imaginative spectator could fancy all kinds of resemblances, but the "cold fact" remained that they were simply mountains of ice, with no more symmetry of outline than a mass of rock blasted from a quarry.

"I have read," said Fred, "that in the iceberg factories of the north, as they are called, they are sometimes two or three years in forming, before they break loose and sweep off into the ocean."

"That is true," added Captain McAlpine; "an iceberg is simply a chunk off a frozen river, and a pretty good-sized one, it must be admitted. Where the cold is so intense, a river becomes frozen from the surface to the ground. Snow falls, there may be a little rain during the moderate season, then snow comes again, and all the time the water beneath is freezing more and more solid. Gravity and the pressure of the inconceivable weight beyond keeps forcing the bulk of ice and snow nearer the ocean, until it projects into the clear sea. By and by it breaks loose, and off it goes."

"But why does it take so long?"

"It is like the glaciers of the Alps. Being solid as a rock while the pressure is gradual as well as resistless, it may move only a few feet in a month or a year; but all the same the end must come."

The captain had grown fond of the boys, and the fact that the father of one of them was a director of the company which employed him naturally led him to seek to please them so far as he could do so consistent with his duty. He caused the course of the "Nautilus" to be shifted, so that they approached within a third of a mile of the nearest iceberg, which then was due east.

Sail had been slackened and the progress of the mass was so slow as to be almost imperceptible. This gave full time for its appalling grandeur to grow upon the senses of the youths, who stood minute after minute admiring the overwhelming spectacle, speechless and awed as is one who first pauses at the base of Niagara.

Naturally the officers and crew of the "Nautilus" gave the sight some attention, but it could not impress them as it did those who looked upon it for the first time.

The second iceberg was more to the northward, and the ship was heading directly toward it. It was probably two-thirds the size of the first, and, instead of possessing its rugged regularity of outline, had a curious, one-sided look.

"It seems to me," remarked Rob, who had been studying it for some moments, "that the centre of gravity in that fellow must be rather ticklish."

"It may be more stable than the big one," said Fred, "for you don't know what shape they have under water; a good deal must depend on that."

Jack Cosgrove, the sailor, who had joined the little party at the invitation of the captain, ventured to say:

"Sometimes them craft get top-heavy and take a flop; I shouldn't be s'prised if that one done the same."

"It must be a curious sight; I've often wondered how Jumbo, the great elephant, would have looked turning a somersault. An iceberg performing a handspring would be something of the same order, but a hundred thousand times more extensive. I would give a good deal if one of those bergs should take it into his head to fling a handspring, but I don't suppose--"

"Look!" broke in Fred, in sudden excitement.

To the unbounded amazement of captain, crew, and all the spectators, the very thing spoken of by Rob Carrol took

place. The vast bulk of towering ice was seen to plunge downward with a motion, slow at first, but rapidly increasing until it dived beneath the waves like some enormous mass of matter cast off by a planet in its flight through space. As it disappeared, two-fold as much bulk came to view, there was a swirl of water, which was flung high in fountains, and the waves formed by the commotion, as they swept across the intervening space, caused the "Nautilus" to rock like a cradle.

The splash could have been heard miles away, and the iceberg seemed to shiver and shake itself, as though it were some flurried monster of the deep, before it could regain its full equilibrium. Then, as the spectators looked, behold! where was one of those mountains of ice they saw what seemed to be another, for its shape, contour, projections, and depressions were so different that no resemblance could be traced.

"She's all right now," remarked Jack Cosgrove, whose emotions were less stirred than those of any one else; "she's good for two or three thousand miles' voyage, onless she should happen to run aground in shoal water."

"What then would take place, Jack?" asked Fred.

"Wal, there would be the mischief to pay gener'ly. Things would go ripping, tearing, and smashing, and the way that berg would behave would be shameful. If anybody was within reach he'd get hurt."

Rob stepped up to the sailor as if a sudden thought had come to him. Laying his hand on his arm, he said, in an undertone:

"I wonder if the captain won't let us visit that iceberg?"

CHAPTER III

AN ALARMING SITUATION

The boldness of the proposition fairly took away the breath of the honest sailor. He stared at Rob as though doubting whether he had heard aright. He looked at the smiling youth from head to foot, and stared a full minute before he spoke.

"By the horned spoon, you're crazy, younker!"

"What is there so crazy about such an idea?" asked Fred, as eager to go on the excursion as his friend.

Jack removed his tarpaulin and scratched his head in perplexity. He voided a mouthful of tobacco spittle over the taffrail, heaved a prodigious sigh, and then muttered, as if to himself:

"It's crazy clean through, from top to bottom, sideways, cat-a-cornered, and every way; but if the captain says 'yes' I'll take you."

Rob stepped to where the skipper stood, some paces away, and said:

"Captain McAlpine, being as this is the first time Fred and I ever had a good look at an iceberg, we would be much obliged if you will allow Jack to row us out to it. We want to get a better view of it than we can from the deck of the ship. Jack is willing, and we will be much obliged for your permission."

Fred was listening breathlessly for the reply, which, like Rob, he expected would be a curt refusal. Great, therefore, was the surprise of the two when the good-natured commander said:

"The request doesn't strike me as very sensible, but, if your hearts are set on it, I don't see any objection. Yes, Jack has my permission to take you to that mass of ice, provided you don't stay too long."

"He's crazy, too!" was the whispered exclamation of the sailor, who, nevertheless, was pleased to gratify his young friends.

The preparations were quickly made. Fred had heard that polar bears are occasionally found on the icebergs which float southward from the Arctic regions, and he insisted that they ought to take their rifles and ammunition along. Rob laughed, but fortunately he followed his advice, and thus it happened that the couple were as well supplied in that respect as if starting out on a week's hunt in the interior of the country.

When Jack was urged to do the same he resolutely shook his head, and then turned about and accepted a weapon from the captain, who seemed in the mood for humoring every whim of the youths that afternoon.

"Take it along, Jack," he said; "there may be some tigers, leopards, boa-constrictors, and hyenas prowling about on the ice. They may be on skates, and there is nothing like being prepared for whatever comes. Good luck to you!"

Rob placed himself in the bow of the small boat, and Fred in the stern, while the sailor, sitting down near the middle, grasped the oars and rowed with that long, steady stroke which showed his mastery of the art. There was little wind stirring, and the waves were so slight that they were easily ridden. The sea was of a deep green color, and when the spray occasionally dashed over the lads it was as cold as ice itself. By this time the iceberg had drifted somewhat to the southward, but its progress was so slow as to suggest that the two currents which swept against it were nearly of the same strength. Had it been earlier in the day it would probably have remained visible to the "Nautilus" until sunset.

Meanwhile, a fourth mass rose to sight in the rim of the eastern horizon, so that there seemed some truth in Rob's suggestion that they had run into a school of them. They felt no interest, however, in any except the particular specimen before them.

How it grew upon them as they neared it! It seemed to spread right and left, and to tower upward toward the sky, until even the reckless Rob was hushed into awed silence and sat staring aloft, with feelings beyond expression. It was much the same with Fred, who, sitting at the stern, almost held his breath, while the overwhelming grandeur hushed the words trembling on his lip.

The mass of ice was hundreds of feet in width and length, while the highest portion must have been, at the least, three hundred feet above the surface of the sea. What, therefore, was the bulk below. Its colossal proportions were beyond imagination.

The part within their field of vision was too irregular and shapeless to admit of clear description. If the reader can picture a mass of rock and *debris* blown from the side of a mountain, multiplied a million times, he may form some idea of it.

The highest portion was on the opposite side. About half-way from the sea, facing the little party, was a plateau broad enough to allow a company of soldiers to camp upon it. To the left of this the ice showed considerable snow in its composition, while, in other places, it was as clear as crystal itself. In still other portions it was dark or almost steel blue, probably due to some peculiar refraction of light. There were no rippling streams of water along and over its side, for the weather was too cold for the thawing which would be plentiful when it struck a warmer latitude.

But there were caverns, projections, some sharp, but most of them blunt and misshapen, steps, long stretches of vertical wall as smooth as glass, up which the most agile climber could never make his way.

Courageous as Rob Carrol unquestionably was, a feeling akin to terror took possession of him when they were quite near the iceberg. He turned to suggest to Jack that they had come far enough, when he observed that the sailor had turned the bow of the boat to the right, though he was still rowing moderately.

He was the only one that was not impressed by the majesty of the scene. Squinting one eye up the side of the towering mass, he remarked:

"There's enough ice there to make a chap's eternal fortune, if he could only hitch on and tow it into London or New York harbor; but being as we've sot out to take a view of it, why we'll sarcumnavigate the thing, as me cousin remarked when he run around the barn to dodge the dog that was nipping at his heels."

The voice of the sailor served to break the spell that had held the tongues of the boys mute until then, and they spoke more cheerily, but unconsciously modulated their voices, as a person will do when walking through some great gallery of paintings or the aisles of a vast cathedral.

They were so interested, however, in themselves and their novel experience that neither looked toward the "Nautilus," which was rapidly passing from sight, as they were rowed around the iceberg. Had they done so, they would have seen Captain McAlpine making eager signals to them to return, and, perhaps, had they listened, they might have heard his stentorian voice, though the moderate wind, blowing at right angles, was quite unfavorable for hearing.

Unfortunately not one of the three saw or heard the movement or words of the skipper, and the little boat glided around the eastern end of the mountainous mass and began slowly creeping along the further side.

"Hello!" called out Rob, "there's a good place to land, Jack; let's go ashore."

"Go ashore!" repeated the sailor, with a scornful laugh; "what kind of a going ashore do you call that?"

While there was nothing especially desirable in placing foot upon an iceberg, yet, boy-like, the two friends felt that it would be worth something to be able to say on their return home that they had actually stood upon one of them.

Inasmuch as the whole thing was a fool's errand in the eyes of Jack Cosgrove, he thought it was well to neglect nothing, so he shied the boat toward the gently sloping shelf, which came down to the water, and, with a couple of powerful sweeps of the oars, sent the bow far up the glassy surface, the stoppage being so gradual as to cause hardly a perceptible shock.

"Out with you, youngers, for the day will soon be gone," he called, waiting for the two to climb out before following them.

They lost no time in obeying, and he drew the boat so far up that he felt there was no fear of its being washed away during their absence. All took their guns, and, leaving it to the sailor to act as guide, they began picking their way up the incline, which continued for fully a dozen yards from the edge of the water.

"This is easy enough," remarked Rob; "if we only had our skates, we might--confound it!"

His feet shot up in the air, and down he came with a bump that shook off his hat, and would have sent him sliding to the boat had he not done some lively skirmishing to save himself. Fred laughed, as every boy does under similar circumstances, and he took particular heed to his own footsteps.

Jack had no purpose of venturing farther than to the top of the gentle incline, since there was no cause to do so; but, on reaching the point, he observed that it was easy to climb along a rougher portion to the right, and he led the way, the boys being more than willing to follow him.

They continued in this manner until they had gone a considerable distance, and, for the first time, the guide stopped and looked around. As he did so, he uttered an exclamation of amazement:

"Where have been my eyes?" he called out, as if unable to comprehend his oversight.

"What's the matter?" asked the boys, startled at his emotion, for which they saw no cause.

"There's one of the biggest storms ever heard of in these latitudes, bearing right down on us; it'll soon be night, and we shall be caught afore we reach the ship, lads! there isn't a minute to lose; it's all my fault."

He led the way at a reckless pace, the youths following as best they could, stumbling at times, but heeding it not as they scrambled to their feet and hurried after their friend, more frightened, if possible, than he.

He could out-travel them, and was at the bottom of the incline first. Before he reached it, he stopped short and uttered a despairing cry:

"No use, lads! the boat has been swept away!"

Such was the fact.

CHAPTER IV

ADRIFT

Jack Cosgrove, of the "Nautilus," was not often agitated by anything in which he became involved. Few of his perilous callings had gone through more thrilling experiences than he, and in them all he had acquired a reputation for coolness that could not be surpassed.

But one of the few occasions that stirred him to the heart was when hurrying to disembark from the iceberg, in the desperate hope of reaching the ship before the bursting of the gale and the closing of night, he found that the little boat had been swept from its fastenings, and the only means of escape was cut off.

There was more in the incident than occurred to Rob Carrol and Fred Warburton, who hastened after him. He had been in those latitudes before, and the reader will recall the story Captain McAlpine told to the boys of the time Jack was one of three who escaped from the collision of the whaling ship with an iceberg in the gloom of a dark night.

Had it been earlier in the day, and had no storm been impending, he could have afforded to laugh at this mishap, for at the most, it would have resulted in a temporary inconvenience only. The skipper would have discovered their plight sooner or later, and sent another boat to bring them off, but the present case was a hundred-fold more serious in every aspect.

In the first place, the fierce disturbance of the elements would compel Captain McAlpine to give all attention to the care of his ship. That was of more importance than the little party on the iceberg, who must be left to themselves for the time, since any effort to reach them would endanger the vessel, the loss of which meant the loss of everything, including the little company that found itself in sudden and dire peril.

What might take place during the storm and darkness his imagination shuddered to picture. Had the boat been found where he left it a short time before, desperate rowing would have carried them to the "Nautilus" in time to escape the full force of the storm. That was impossible now, and as to the future who could say?

The rowboat, as will be remembered, was simply drawn a short distance up the icy incline, where it ought to have remained until the return of the party. Such would have been the fact under ordinary circumstances, for the mighty bulk of the iceberg prevented it feeling the shock of any disturbance that could take place in its majestic sweep through the Arctic Ocean, except from its base striking the bottom of the sea, or a readjustment of its equilibrium, as they had observed in the case of the smaller berg. It might crush the "Great Eastern" if it lay in its path, but that would have been like a wagon passing over an egg-shell.

In leaving the boat as related, the stern lay in the water. Even then it would have been secure, but for the agitation caused by the coming gale. That began swaying the rear of the craft, whose support was so smooth that it speedily worked down the incline and floating into the open water instantly worked off beyond reach.

The boys knowing so little what all this meant and what was before them, were disposed to make light of their misfortune.

"By the great horned spoon, but that is bad!" exclaimed Jack, pointing out on the water, where the boat was seen bobbing on the rising waves, fully a hundred yards away, with the distance rapidly increasing.

It seems as if in the few minutes intervening, night had fully descended. The wind had risen to a gale, and, even at that short distance the little craft was fast growing indistinct in the gathering gloom.

"It isn't very pleasant," replied Rob, "but it might be worse."

"I should like to know how it could be worse," said the sailor, turning reprovingly toward him; "I wonder if I can do it."

The last words were uttered to himself, and he hastily laid down his gun on the ice by his side. Then he began taking off his outer coat.

"What do you mean to do?" asked the amazed Fred.

"I believe I can swim out to the boat and bring it back," was the reply, as he continued preparations.

"You musn't think of such a thing," protested Rob; "the water is cold enough to freeze you to death. If you can't reach it, you will have to come back to us, with your clothing frozen stiff, and nothing will save you from perishing."

"I'll chance that," said Jack, who, however, continued his preparations more deliberately, and with his eye still on the receding boat.

He was about to take the icy plunge, in the last effort to save himself and friends, when he stopped, and, straightening up, watched the craft for a few seconds.

"No," said he, "it can't be done; the thing is drifting faster than I can swim."

Such was the evident fact. While the vast mass of ice, as has been explained elsewhere, was under the impulse of a mighty under-current, the small craft was swept away by the surface current which flowed in the opposite direction.

Even while the party looked, the boat faded from sight in the gloom.

"I can't see it," said Rob, who, like the others, was peering intently into the darkness.

"Nor I either," added Fred.

"And what's more, you'll never see it again," commented Jack, who began slowly donning his outer garments; "youngsters, I've been in a good many bad scraps in my life, and more than once would have sworn I was booked for Davy Jones' locker, but this is a little the worst of 'em all."

His young friends looked wonderingly at him, unable to understand the cause of such extreme depression on the part of one whom they knew to be among the bravest of men, and in a situation that did not strike them as specially threatening.

"Don't you think this iceberg will hold together until morning?" asked Rob.

"It'll hold together for months," was the answer, "and like enough will travel hundreds of miles through the Gulf Stream before it goes to nothing."

"Then we are sure of a ship to keep us from drowning."

"I aint meaning that," said Jack, who was rapidly recovering his equanimity, though it was plain he was strongly affected by the woful turn the adventure had taken.

"And," added Fred, "Captain McAlpine knows where we are; he will remain in the neighborhood until morning--"

"How do you know he will?" broke in Jack, impatiently.

"What's to hinder him?" asked Fred, in turn, startled by the abrupt question; "he knows how to sail the 'Nautilus,' and has taken it through many gales worse than this."

"How do you know he has?"

"Gracious, Jack, I don't know anything about it; I am only saying what appears to me to be the truth."

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, lads, but I can't help saying you don't know what you're talking about. A couple of young land lubbers like you don't see things as they show themselves to one who was born and has lived all his life on the ocean, as you may say. I don't mean to scare you more than I oughter, but you can just make up your minds, my hearties, that you never was in such a fix as this, and if you live to be a hundred years old you'll never be in another half as bad."

These were alarming words, but, inasmuch as Jack did not accompany them with any explanation, neither Rob nor Fred were as much impressed as they would have been had he explained the grounds for his extreme fear. What they saw was an enforced stay on the iceberg until the following day. Although in a high latitude, the night was not unusually long, and, though it was certain to be as uncomfortable as can well be imagined, they had no doubt they would survive it and live to laugh at their mishap.

CHAPTER V

AN ICY COUCH

By this time the sailor felt that he had forgotten himself in the agitation caused by the loss of the boat. Although he might see the dark future with clearer vision than his young friends, it was his duty to keep their sight veiled as long as he could. Time enough to face the terrors and their direful consequences when the possibility of avoiding them no longer existed.

It will be recalled that when the little party stepped out from the small boat upon the iceberg they did so on the side farthest from the "Nautilus," so that all view of the ship was shut off, and neither Captain McAlpine nor any of his crew could observe the action of Jack and the boys.

The skipper had warrant for supposing that such an experienced sailor as the one in charge of the lads would be quick to notice the threatening change in the weather, and would make all haste to return. Inasmuch as he had failed to do so, the party must be left to themselves for the time, while the commander gave his full attention to the care of the ship--a responsibility that required his utmost skill, with no slight chance of his failure.

The storm or squall, or whatever it might be termed, was one of those sudden changes, sometimes seen in the high latitudes, whose coming is so sudden that there is but the briefest warning ere it bursts in all its fury.

By the time our friends reached the spot where they expected to find their boat it was almost as dark as night. This darkness deepened so rapidly, after losing sight of the craft, that they were unable to see more than fifty feet in any direction. Fortunately, before leaving the "Nautilus," they had donned their heaviest clothing, so that they were quite well protected under the circumstances. Had they neglected this precaution they must have perished of the extreme cold that followed.

Accompanying the oppressive gloom was a marked falling of the temperature, and a fierceness of blast which, so long as they were exposed to it, cut them to the bone. The gale, instead of blowing in their faces, swept along the side of the iceberg. They had but to withdraw, therefore, only a short distance when they were able to take shelter behind some of the numerous projections, and save themselves from its full force.

All at once the air was full of millions of particles of snow, which eddied and whirled in such fantastic fashion that when they crouched down they were so blinded that they could not see each other's forms, although near enough to clasp hands.

This lasted but a few minutes, when it ceased as suddenly as it began. The air was clear, but the gloom was profound. They could see nothing of the raging ocean, nor of a tall spire-like mass of ice, which towered a hundred feet above their heads, within a few yards of them, and which had attracted their admiration on their first visit.

It was blowing great guns. The sound of the waves, as they broke against the solid abutment of ice, and were dashed into spray and spume, was like that of the breakers in a hurricane. Inconceivable as was the bulk of the berg, they plainly felt it yield to the resistless power of the ocean. It acquired a slow sea-saw motion, more alarming than the most violent disturbance they had ever known on the "Nautilus" in a storm. The movement was slight, but too distinct to be mistaken.

For some time the three huddled together, under the protection of the friendly projection, and no one spoke a word. They had laid down their guns, for there was no need of keeping them in their hands. The metal was so intensely cold that it could be noted through the protection of their thick mittens, and they needed every atom of vitality in their shivering bodies. They pressed closer together and found comfort in the mutual warmth thus secured.

The sky was blackness itself. There was no glimpse of moon or friendly star. They were adrift on an iceberg in darkness and gloom in the midst of a trackless ocean. Whither they were going, when the terrifying voyage should end, what was to be the issue, only One knew. They could but pray and trust and hope and await the end.

It is a curious feature of this curious human nature of ours that the most hopeless depression of spirits is frequently followed by a rebound, as the highest spirits are quickly succeeded by the deepest dejection. Our make-up is such that nature reacts, and neither state can continue long without change, unless the conditions are exceptional. Were it otherwise, many a strong mind would break down under its weight of trouble.

The three had remained crouching together silent and motionless for some minutes, no one venturing to express a hope or opinion, when Rob Carrol suddenly spoke, in the cheeriest tones.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, fellows."

"What's that?" asked Fred, quick to seize the relief of hearing each other's voices.

"Let's start a fire."

"A good idee," assented Jack Cosgrove, falling into the odd mood that had taken possession of his companions; "you gather the fuel and I'll kindle it. It happens I haven't such a thing as a match about me, but I'll find a way to start it."

"Rob and I have plenty, but, if we hadn't, we could rub some pieces of ice together till the friction started a flame."

"The Esquimaux have another plan," added Rob. "They will trim a piece of ice in the form of a convex lens and concentrate the sun's rays on the object they want to set on fire. Why not try that?"

"I am afraid there isn't enough sunlight to amount to anything," replied Fred, craning his head forward and peering through the gloom, as if searching for the orb of day.

"That isn't the only way of getting up steam," remarked Jack, who, just like his honest self, was striving to dispose of his body so as to give each of the boys the greatest possible amount of warmth; "I know a better one."

"Let's hear it."

"Race back and forth along the side of the berg till we start the blood circulating; nothing like that."

"Suppose we should slip, Jack?"

"Then you'd flop into the sea; it's a good thing to take a bath when your blood is heated too much."

"If there was only a footpath where we could do that, it would be a good plan," observed Rob, "but, as it is, we shall have to huddle together till morning, when I hope Captain McAlpine will send a boat after us."

The boys noticed that Jack made no reply to this. They expected an encouraging response, but he remained silent, as though he was considering difficulties, dangers, complications, and perils of which they could form no idea.

Meanwhile the gale raged with resistless fury. There was no more fall of snow, but the wind was like a hurricane. The most vivid idea of its awful power was gained when the friends, far removed from the water's edge, and at no small elevation above it, felt drops of spray flung in their faces.

The thunder of the surges, shattered into mist and foam against the adamant side of the iceberg, was so overpowering that, had not the heads of the three been close, they would not have heard each other's voices. The sea-sawing of the colossal mass was more perceptible than ever, and caused them to think, with unspeakable dread, of the possibility of the berg breaking apart, or overturning like the other, in the effort to preserve its equilibrium.

The gale whistled around and among the projections of the ice with a weird, uncanny sound, alike and yet different from that heard when it moans through the network of ropes and rigging of a great ship. The question was whether such a vast volume of wind, impinging against the thousands of square feet of ice, would not affect the course and speed of the mass. If the hurricane drove in the same direction as the controlling current, it ought to be of much help. If opposed, it might check it; if quartering, it might make a radical change in its course.

All these speculations were in vain, however, and, as has been said, there was nothing to be done, but to wait and trust in the only One who could help them, and who had been so merciful in the past that their faith in His goodness and protecting care could not be shaken.

"My lads," said Jack, when the silence which followed their brief conversation had lasted some minutes, "there's only one thing to do, and that's to make ourselves as comfortable as we can where we are."

"Isn't that what we are doing?" asked Rob.

"Of course it is, but I didn't know but what you was trying to conjure up some other plan. If so, give it up, say your prayers, and go to bed."

CHAPTER VI

MISSING

It is at such times that a person realizes his helplessness and utter dependence on the great Father of all. Too much are we prone to forget such dependence, when all goes well, and too often the prayer for help and guidance is put off until too late.

It was a commendable trait in all three of the parties whose experience I have set out to tell that they never forgot their duty in this all-important matter. Rob and Fred were full of animal life and spirits, and the elder especially was inclined, from this very excess of health and strength, to overstep at times the bounds of propriety, but both remembered the lessons learned in infancy at the mother's knee, and never failed to commend themselves to their heavenly parent, not only on waking in the glad morning, but on closing their eyes at night.

Jack Cosgrove had one of those impressionable natures, tinged with innocent superstition, which is often seen in those of his calling. His faith possessed the simplicity of a child, and, though many of his doings might not square with those of a Christian, yet at heart he devoutly believed in the all-protecting care of his Maker, and was never ashamed, no matter what his surroundings, to call upon Him for help and guidance.

And so, as the three pressed closer together, adjusting themselves as best they could to pass the long, dismal hours ere the sun would shine upon them again, they were silent, and all, at the same time, communed with God, as fervently and trustfully as ever a dying Christian did when stretched upon his bed of mortal illness.

Had they possessed a blanket among them they could have spread it upon the ice, lain down upon it, and, wrapping it as best they could, passed the night with a fair degree of comfort. That, however, was out of the question. They, therefore, seated themselves under the lee, as may be said of the mass of ice, which protected them against the gale, their bodies pressed as closely together as well could be, and in this sitting posture prepared to go to sleep, if it should so prove that the blessing could be won.

One can become accustomed to almost anything. An abrupt change from the comfortable cabin of the "Nautilus" to the bleak situation on the iceberg would have filled them with a dread hardly less trying than death itself; but they had already been in the situation long enough to grow used to it. The ponderous swaying of the frozen structure, the thunderous dash and roar of the waves against its base, the screaming of the gale and the darkness of the arctic night; all these were sounds and sensations which in a certain sense grew familiar to them and did not disturb them as the hours passed.

It cannot be said that an icy seat or rest forms the most comfortable support for the body, whose warmth is likely to melt the frozen surface, but the thick clothing of the party did much to avert unpleasant consequences. Had Jack or Rob or Fred been alone, the penetrating cold most likely would have overcome him, but as has been shown, the mutual warmth rendered their situation less trying than would be supposed.

When an hour had passed, with only an occasional word spoken, Jack addressed each of the boys in turn by name. There was no response, and he spoke in a louder tone with the same result.

"They're asleep," he said to himself, "and I'm glad of it, though the sleep that sometimes comes to a chap in these parts at such times is the kind that doesn't know any waking in this world. I've no doubt, howsumever, that they're all right."

With a vague uneasiness, natural under the circumstances, he passed his hands over their faces and pinched their arms, as if to assure himself there was no mistake.

The boys were so muffled up in their thick coats and sealskin caps that were drawn about their ears, behind which the collars of their coats were raised, that only the ends of their noses and a slight portion of their cheeks could be felt. He removed his heavy mitten from one hand, and, reaching under the protecting covering about the cheeks and neck, found a healthy glow which told him all was well, and, for the time at least, he need feel no further anxiety, so far as they were concerned.

"Which being the case," he added, drawing on his mitten again, and making sure their coverings were adjusted, "I'll take a little trip myself into the land of nod."

But this trip was easier thought of than made. His rugged body, with its powerful vitality, would have soon succumbed to drowsiness, could his mind have been free of its distressing fear for the two young friends under his charge. But, though he had said little, he knew far more than he dare tell them. He had shown his alarm on discovering the loss of

the boat, but though some impatient expressions escaped him, he did not explain what was in his mind.

His belief was that before morning should come the "Nautilus" would be driven so far from her course that she would be nowhere in sight, and, towering as was the iceberg in its height and proportions, it would be invisible from the deck of the ship, or, if visible, could not be identified among the others drifting through the icy ocean. Well aware, too, he was of the terrific strength of the gale sweeping across the deep, he trembled for the safety of the "Nautilus" and those on board, hardly less than he did for himself and friends. The hurricane was resistless in its power, and would drive the ship whither it chose like a cockle-shell. Icebergs were moving hither and thither through the darkness, less affected by the wind and waves than the vessel, and a collision was among the possibilities, if not the probabilities.

Inasmuch as the "Nautilus" was likely to go down under the fury of the elements, or, if she rode through it, was certain to be too far removed to be of help to the three, the question to consider was what hope of escape remained to the latter.

Although vessels penetrate Baffin Bay and far into the Arctic Ocean, they are so few in number that days and weeks may pass without any two of them gaining sight of each other. A shipwrecked sailor afloat in the South Sea, on a spar, was as likely to be picked up by some trading ship as were Jack and his companions, by any of the whalers or ships in that high latitude.

And then, supposing they did catch sight of some stray vessel, who of the captain and crew would be looking for living persons on board an iceberg? Why would they give the latter any more attention than the scores of the mountainous masses afloat in their path and which it was their first care to avoid?

If a ship should pass so near to them that they could make their signals seen there would be hope; but the chances of anything of that kind were too remote to be regarded.

Such being the outlook, where was there ground for hope? They were beyond sight of the Greenland coast, and were doubtless drifting farther away every hour. Nothing in the nature of succor was to be hoped for from land, and the brave-hearted Jack was obliged to say to himself that, so far as human eye could see, there was none from any source. Cold, starvation, and death seemed among the certainties near at hand.

And having reached this disheartening belief, he closed his eyes and joined his young friends in the land of dreams.

Having sunk into slumber, the sailor was likely to remain so until morning, unless some unexpected circumstance should break in upon his rest, and it did.

It was Rob Carrol, who, probably because of his cramped position, first regained consciousness. As his senses gradually came back to him, and the thunder of the surges and the shrieking of the gale broke in upon his brain, he stretched his benumbed limbs and yawned in an effort to make his situation more comfortable.

It struck him that there had been a change in their relative positions while asleep. Not wishing to awake his companions, he carefully shifted his limbs and body, so as not to disturb them. While doing so, he extended his hand to touch them.

He groped along one figure, which he knew at once was Jack, but he felt no other. With a vague fear he straightened up, leaned over, and hastily extended his arms about him, as far as he could reach. The next moment he roughly shook the shoulder of the sailor, and called out in a husky voice:

"Jack! Jack! wake up! Fred is gone!"

CHAPTER VII

A POINT OF FLIGHT

Jack Cosgrove was awake on the instant. Not until he had groped around in the darkness and repeated the name of Fred several times in a loud voice would he believe he was not with them.

"Well, by the great horned spoon!" he exclaimed, "that beats everything. How that chap got away, and why he done it, and where he's gone to gets me."

"I wonder if he took his gun," added Rob, stooping over and examining the depression in the ice, where the three laid their weapons before composing themselves for sleep; "yes," he added directly after, "he took his rifle with him."

As may be supposed, the two were in a frenzied state of mind, and for several minutes were at a loss what to do, if, indeed, they could do anything. They knew not where to look for their missing friend, nor could they decide as to what had become of him.

One fearful thought was in the minds of both, but neither gave expression to it; each recoiled with a shudder from doing so. It was that he had wandered off in his sleep and fallen into the sea.

Despite their distress and dismay, they noticed several significant facts. The wind that blew like a hurricane when they closed their eyes, had subsided. When they stood up, so that their heads arose above the projections that had protected them, the breeze was so gentle that it was hard to tell from which direction it came. It would be truth to say there was no wind at all.

Further, there was a marked rise in the temperature. In fact, the weather was milder than any experienced after leaving St. John, and was remarked by Rob.

"You don't often see anything of the kind," replied the sailor; "though I call something of the kind to mind on that voyage in these parts in the 'Mary Jane,' which was smashed by the iceberg."

But their thoughts instantly reverted to the missing boy. Rob had shouted to him again and again in his loudest tones, had whistled until the echo rang in his own ears, and had listened in vain for the response.

The tumultuous waves did not subside as rapidly as they arose. They broke against the walls of the iceberg with decreasing power, but with a boom and crash that it would seem threatened to shatter the vast structure into fragments. There were occasional lulls in the overpowering turmoil, which were used both by Rob and Jack in calling to the missing one, but with no result.

"It's no use," remarked the sailor, after they had tired themselves pretty well out; "wherever he is, he can't hear us."

"I wonder if he will ever be able to hear us," said Rob, in a choking voice, peering around in the gloom, his eyes and ears strained to the highest tension.

"I wish I knew," replied Jack, who, though he was as much distressed as his companion, was too thoughtful to add to the grief by any words of his own. "I hope the lad is asleep somewhere in these parts, but I don't know nothing more about him than you."

"And I know nothing at all."

"Can you find out what time it is?"

That was easily done. Stooping down so as to protect the flame from any chance eddy of wind, Rob ignited a match on his clothing and looked at his watch.

"We slept longer than I imagined, Jack; day-break isn't more than three or four hours off."

"That's good, but them hours will seem the longest that you ever passed, my hearty."

There could be no doubt on that point, as affected both.

"Why, Jack," called out Rob, "the stars are shining."

"Hadn't you observed that before? Yes; there's lots of the twinklers out, and the storm is gone for good."

Every portion of the sky except the northern showed the glittering orbs, and, for the moment, Rob forgot his grief in the surprise over the marked change in the weather.

"This mildness will bring another change afore long," remarked Jack.

"What's that?"

"Fogs. We'll catch it inside of twenty-four hours, and some of them articles in this part of the world will beat them in London town; thick enough for you to lean against without falling."

As the minutes passed, with the couple speculating as to what could have happened to Fred Warburton, their uneasiness became so great that they could not remain idle. They must do something or they would lose command of themselves.

Rob was on the point of proposing a move, with little hope of its amounting to anything, when the sailor caught his arm.

"Do you see that?"

The darkness had so lifted that the friends could distinguish each other's forms quite plainly, and the lad saw that Jack had extended his arm, and was pointing out to sea. The fellow was startled, as he had good cause to be.

Apparently not far off was something resembling a star, low down in the horizon and gliding over the surface of the deep. Now and then it disappeared, but only for a moment. At such times it was evidently shut from sight by the crests of the intervening waves.

It was moving steadily from the right to the left, the friends, of course, being unable to decide what points of the compass these were. Its motion in rising and sinking, vanishing and then coming to view again, advancing steadily all the while, left no doubt as to its nature.

"It's the 'Nautilus!'" exclaimed Rob; "Captain McAlpine is looking for us."

"That's not the 'Nautilus'," said Jack; "for she doesn't show her lights in that fashion. Howsumever, it's a craft of some kind, and if we can only make 'em know we're here they'll lay by and take us off in the morning."

As the only means of reaching the ears of the strangers the two began shouting lustily, varying the cries as fancy suggested. In addition, Jack fired his gun several times.

While thus busied they kept their gaze upon the star-like point of light on which their hopes were fixed.

It maintained the same dancing motion, all the while pushing forward, for several minutes after the emission of the signals.

"She has stopped!" was the joyful exclamation of Rob, who postponed a shout that was trembling on his lips; "they have heard us and will soon be here."

Jack was less hopeful, but thought his friend might be right. The motion of the star from left to right had almost ceased, as if the boat was coming to a halt. Still the sailor knew that the same effect on their vision would be produced if the vessel headed either away from or toward the iceberg; it was one of these changes of direction that he feared had taken place.

Up and down the light bobbed out of sight for a second, then gleaming brightly as if the obscuring clouds had been brushed aside from the face of the star, which shone through the intervening gloom like a beacon to the wanderer.

"Yes, they are coming to us," added Rob, forgetting his lost friend in his excitement; "they will soon be here. I wonder they don't hail us."

"Don't be too sartin, lad," was the answer of the sailor; "if the boat was going straight from us it would seem for a time as though she was coming this way; I b'lieve she has changed her course without a thought of us."

They were cruel words, but, sad to say, they proved true. The time was not long in coming when all doubt was removed. The star dwindled to a smaller point than ever, seemed longer lost to view, until finally it was seen no more.

"Do you suppose they heard us?" asked Rob, when it was no longer possible to hope for relief from that source.

"Of course not; if they had they would have behaved like a Christian, and stood by and done what they could."

"Ships are not numerous in this latitude, and it may be a long time before we see another."

"The chances p'int that way, and yet you know there's a good many settlements along the Greenland coast. It isn't

exactly the place I'd choose for a winter residence--especially back in the country--but there are plenty who like it."

"In what way can that affect us?"

"There are ships passing back and forth between Denmark and Greenland, and a number v'yage to the United States, and I'm hoping we may be run across by some of them--Hark!"

CHAPTER VIII

HOPE DEFERRED

A hoarse, tremulous sound came across the ocean. There was no mistaking its character; it was from the whistle of a steamer, the one whose light led them to hope for a time that their rescue was at hand. It sounded three times, and evidently the blasts were intended as a signal, though, of course, they bore no reference to the two persons listening so intently on the iceberg.

"That was the last thing I expected to hear in this latitude," remarked Rob, turning to his companion.

"I don't know why," replied Jack; "they have such craft plying along the Greenland coast. What's more, I've heard that same whistle before and know the boat; it's the 'Fox'."

"Not the 'Fox' I have read about as having to do with the Franklin expedition?" said the youth, in astonishment.

"The identical craft."

"You amaze me."

Those of my readers who are familiar with the history of Arctic exploration will recall this familiar name. It was the steam tug in which sailed the party that succeeded in finding traces of the ill-fated Franklin expedition of near a half century ago. It afterward came into the possession of the company that owns the cryolite mine at Ivigtut, and is now used to carry laborers and supplies from Copenhagen to that place. While at Ivigtut, it is occasionally employed to tow the Greenland ships in and out of the fiord.

Ah, if its crew had only heard the shouts and signals of the couple on the iceberg, how blessed it would have been! But its lights had vanished long ago, and, if its whistle sounded again, it was so far away that it could not reach the listening ears.

The restlessness of the friends, to which I have referred, now led them to attempt a search, if it may so be called, for the missing Fred. This of necessity was vague and blind, and was accompanied with but a grain of hope. Neither had yet referred to the awful dread that was in their thoughts, but weakly trusted they might find the poor fellow somewhere near asleep or senseless from a fall.

Morning was still several hours distant, but the clearing of the air enabled them to pick their way with safety, so long as they took heed to their footsteps.

"I will go down toward the spot where the boat gave us the slip," said Jack, "and I don't know what you can do, unless you go with me."

"There's no need of that; of course I can't make my way far, while the night lasts, but I remember that we penetrated some way beyond this place before camping for the night; I'll try it."

"Keep a sharp lookout, my hearty, or there'll be another lad lost, and then what will become of Jack Cosgrove?"

"Have no fear of me," replied Rob, setting out on the self-imposed expedition.

He paused a few steps away and turned to watch the sailor, who was carefully descending the incline, at the base of which they had landed.

"I hope he won't find Fred, or rather that he won't find any signs of his having gone that way," said Rob to himself with a shudder.

As the figure of the man slowly receded, it grew more indistinct until it faded from sight in the gloom. Still the youth looked and listened for the words which he dreaded to hear above everything else in the world.

Jack Cosgrove received a good scare while engaged on his perilous task. He was half-way down the incline, making his way with the caution of a timid skater, when, like a flash, his feet flew from under him, and, falling upon his back, he slid rapidly toward the waves at the base of the berg.

But the brave fellow did not lose his coolness or presence of mind. His left hand grasped his rifle, and, throwing out his right, he seized a projection of ice, checking himself within a few feet of the water and near enough for the spray from the fierce waves to be flung over him.

"This isn't the time for a bath," he muttered, carefully climbing to his feet and retreating a few paces; "it would have been a pretty hard swim out there with my heavy clothing, though I think I could manage it."

After all, what could he hope to accomplish by this hunt for Fred Warburton? If he had wandered in that direction and fallen into the sea, he had left no traces that could be discovered in the gloom of the night. He could not have gone thither and stayed there that was certain.

The sailor having withdrawn beyond the reach of the waves, sat down in as disconsolate a mood as can be imagined. A suspicion that Rob might follow caused him to turn his head and look over his shoulder.

"I don't see anything of him, and I guess he'll stay up there; I hope so, for Jack Cosgrove isn't in the mood to see or talk with any one 'cepting that lad which he won't never see nor talk to agin."

Convincing himself that he was safe against a visit from the elder youth, the sailor bowed his head, and, for several minutes, wept like one with an uncontrollable grief.

When his sorrow had partially subsided, he spent a brief while with his head still bowed in communion with his Maker.

"I don't know but what the lad is luckier than me or Rob," he added, reviewing the situation in his mind; "for we've got to foller him sooner or later. It isn't likely that any ship will come as nigh to this thing as the 'Fox' did awhile ago, and I can't see one chance in ten thousand of our being took off. We haven't a mouthful of food, and there's no way of our getting any. After a time we will have to lay down and starve or freeze to death, or both. Poor Fred has been saved all that--"

He checked his musings, for at that moment a peculiar sound broke upon his ear. It resembled that caused by the exhaust of a steamer at low pressure. One less experienced than he would have been deceived into the belief that such was its source, but Jack did not hold any such false hope for a minute even. He understood it too well.

It was made by a whale "blowing." One of those monster animals was disporting himself in the vicinity of the iceberg, and the sailor had heard the same sound too often to mistake it.

Shifting his position so as to bring him nearer the sea, he stooped and peered out in the gloom, in the direction whence came the noise. There was enough starlight for him to trace the outline of the mountainous waves, as they arose against the sky, though they were dimly defined and might have misled another.

While gazing thus, a huge mass took vague form. It was the head of a gigantic leviathan of the deep, which for a moment was projected against the sky and then sank out of sight with the same noise that had attracted Jack's notice in the first place.

The blowing was heard at intervals, for several minutes, until the distance shut it from further notice.

"I wonder if Rob noticed it," the sailor asked himself; "for if he did, he will make the mistake of believing the 'Fox' has come to take us off, and we're done with this old berg."

But nothing was heard from the youth, and the sailor remained seated on the shelf of ice, a prey to his gloomy reflections. He had made up his mind to stay where he was until the coming of day, when the question of what was to be done would be speedily settled.

Meanwhile, he wanted no company but his own thoughts. He had kept up with the elder youth, and carefully withheld his fears and beliefs from him. He felt that he could do so no longer. The farce had been played out, and the truth must be spoken.

It was impossible to note the passage of time. Jack carried no watch, but each of the boys owned an excellent timepiece. He probably fell into a doze, for, when he roused himself once more, he saw that the night was nearly over.

"I wonder what Rob is doing," he said, rising to his feet, stretching his arms, and looking in the direction where he expected to see his friend; "I hope nothing hain't happened to him."

This affliction was spared the sailor, for while he was peering through the increasing light, he caught sight of the figure of Rob making his way toward him.

"Hello, Jack, have you found anything?"

"No; have you?"

"I think I have; come and see."

CHAPTER IX

A STARTLING OCCURRENCE

As may be supposed, Jack Cosgrove was all excitement on the instant. He had not expected any such reply, and he was eager to learn the cause. As he started forward, he instinctively glanced down in quest of evidence that Fred had passed there. There was none so far as he could see, and, if there had been, it is not likely he would have been able to identify it, since all the party had been over the same spot, and some of them more than once.

"What is it?" he asked, as he reached his friend.

"It may mean nothing, but a little distance beyond where we camped the ice is broken and scratched as though some one has been that way."

"So there has, we were there yesterday afternoon."

"I haven't forgotten that, but these marks are at a place where we haven't been, that is unless it was Fred."

"How did you manage to find them in the dark?"

"I didn't; I groped over the ice as far as I could, and then sat down and waited for day. I must have slept awhile, but when it was growing light I happened to look around, and there, within a few feet of me, on my right hand, I noticed the ice scratched and broken, as though some one had found it hard work to get along. I was about to start right after him, when I thought it best to tarry for you. It is now so much lighter that we shall learn something worth knowing."

Even in their excitement they paused a few minutes to gaze out upon the ocean, as it was rapidly illumined by the rising sun. Before long their vision extended for miles, but the looked-for sight was not there. On every hand, as far as the eye could penetrate, was nothing but the heaving expanse of icy water.

Whether they were within a comparatively short distance of Greenland or not, they were not nigh enough to catch the first glimpse of the coast.

Several miles to the eastward towered an iceberg, apparently as large as the one upon which they were drifting. Its pinnacles, domes, arches, plateaus, spires, and varied forms sparkled and scintillated in the growing sunlight, displaying at times all the colors of the spectrum, and making a picture beautiful beyond description.

To the northward and well down in the horizon, was another berg, smaller than the first, and too far off to attract interest. A still smaller one was visible midway between the two, and a peculiar appearance of the sea in the same direction, Jack said, was caused by a great ice field.

Not a ship was to be seen anywhere. Their view to the southward was excluded by the bulk of the iceberg, on which they were floating.

"There's nothing there for us," remarked Rob with a sigh.

"You're right; lead the way and let's see what you found."

It took them but a few minutes to reach the place the lad had in mind, and they had no sooner done so than the sailor was certain an important discovery had been made.

Where there was so much irregularity of shape as on an iceberg, a clear description is impossible; but, doing the best we can, it may be said that the spot was a hundred feet back from where the three huddled together with an expectation of spending the night until morning. It was only a little higher, and was attained by carefully picking one's way over the jagged ice, which afforded secure footing, now that day had come.

Adjoining the place, from which the party diverged to the left, was a lift or shelf on the right, and distant only two or three paces. It was no more than waist high, and, therefore, was readily reached by any one who chose to clamber upon it.

It is no easy matter to trace one over the ice, but the signs of which Rob had spoken were too plain to be mistaken. There were scratches, such as would have been made by a pair of shoes, a piece of the edge was broken off, and marks beyond were visible similar to those which it would be supposed any one would make in clambering over the flinty surface.

Jack stood a minute or two studying these signs as eagerly as an American Indian might scrutinize the faint trail of an enemy through the forest.

"By the great horned spoon!" he finally exclaimed; "but that does look encouraging; I shouldn't wonder if the chap did make his way along there in the night, but why he done it only he can tell. Howsumever, where has he gone?"

That was the question which Rob Carrol had asked himself more than once, and was unable to answer. The ice, for a distance of another hundred feet, looked as if it might be scaled, but, just beyond that, towered a perpendicular wall, like the side of a glass mountain. There could be no progress any farther in that direction, nor, so far as could be judged, could any one advance by turning to the right or left.

There must be numerous depressions and cavities, sufficient to hide a dozen men, and it was in one of these the couple believed they would find the dead or senseless body of their friend.

"Jack," said Rob, "take my gun."

"What for?"

"I'll push on ahead as fast as I can; I can't wait, and the weapon will only hinder me."

"I've an idee of doing something of the kind myself, so we'll leave 'em here. I don't think they'll wash away like the boat," he added, as he carefully placed them on the shelf, up which they proceeded to climb.

But Rob was in advance and maintained his place, gaining all the time upon his slower companion, who allowed him to draw away from him without protest.

"There's no need of a chap tiring himself to death," concluded Jack, as he fell back to a more moderate pace; "he's younger nor me, and it won't hurt him to get a bump or so."

Rob was climbing with considerable skill. In his eagerness he slipped several times, but managed to maintain his footing and to advance with a steadiness which caused considerable admiration on the part of his more sluggish companion.

He used his eyes for all they were worth, and the signs that had roused his hope at first were still seen at intervals, and cheered him with the growing belief that he was on the right track.

"But why don't we hear something of him?" he abruptly asked himself, stopping short with shuddering dread in his heart; "he could not have remained asleep all this time, and, if he has been hurt so as to make him senseless, more than likely he is dead."

The youth was now nearing the ice wall, to which we have referred, and beyond which it looked impossible to go. The furtive glances into the depressions on his right and left showed nothing of his loved friend, and the evidences of his progress were still in front. The solution of the singular mystery must be at hand.

Unconsciously Rob slowed his footsteps, and looked and listened with greater care than before.

"What can it mean? Where can he have gone? I see no way by which he could have pushed farther, and yet he is not in sight--"

He paused, for he discovered his error. The path, if such it may be termed, which he had been following, turned so sharply to the right that it could not be seen until one was upon it. How far it penetrated in that direction remained to be learned.

Rob turned about and looked at Jack, who was several rods to the rear, making his way upward with as much deliberation as though he felt no personal interest in the business.

"I'm going a little farther, Jack, but I think we're close upon him now. Hurry after me!"

"Ay, ay," called the sailor, in return; "when you run afoul of the lad give him my love and tell him I'm coming."

This remark proved that he shared the hope of Rob, who was now acting the part of pioneer, and it did not a little to encourage the boy to push on with the utmost vigor at his command.

The sailor was somewhat winded from his unusual exertions, and, believing there was no immediate need of his help, sat down for a few minutes to regain his breath.

"He'll yell the moment he catches sight of anything, and he can do that so well that he don't need any help from me--by the great horned spoon! what's the meaning of that?"

Rob Carrol, who had been out of sight but a few seconds, now burst to view again, the picture of terror. He was

plunging toward the sailor with such desperate haste that he continually stumbled and bruised himself. But he instantly scrambled up again, glancing in mortal fright over his shoulder, and barely able to gasp as he dashed toward the sailor:

"O Jack! we're lost! we're lost! Heaven help us!"

CHAPTER X

AN UGLY CUSTOMER

Rob Carrol had good cause for his panic. Full of high hope, he hurried along the ice between crags which shut him out of sight, for the time, from Jack Cosgrove, who was resting himself after his hard climb. The youth was thinking of no one and nothing else, except his friend Fred Warburton, who had vanished so mysteriously the night before.

The signs in the icy track he was following convinced him that he was close upon the heels of his chum, who could not have wandered much farther in advance. His hope was tinged with the deepest anxiety, for it was impossible to account for Fred's long absence and silence, except upon the theory that some grievous injury had befallen him.

The searcher's nerves were strung to the highest point, and he was pushing forward with unabated vigor, when his heart almost stood still, as he caught a peculiar sound among the masses of ice.

"That's Fred," he concluded; "he's alive, thank God!" and then he called to his friend:

"Fred! Fred, old fellow, where are you? Speak, I beg of you."

The words were trembling on his lips, when what seemed to be a huge pile of snow just in advance, arose from the ice and began swinging toward him.

Paralyzed for the moment by the amazing sight, and wondering whether his senses were not betraying him, Rob stood motionless, as if rooted to the spot.

But the next minute that same mass of snow assumed more definite shape, and an unmistakable growl issued from somewhere within the interior.

That was enough. Rob knew what it was that was sweeping down upon him like a young avalanche. He had almost stumbled over a huge polar bear, ravenous and fierce with hunger, and with a courage that made him afraid of neither man nor beast.

He must have been half asleep when roused by the approach and the voice of the lad. Opening his great eyes, he saw before him a fine breakfast in the shape of a plump lad, and he proceeded to go for him with a vim and eagerness that would not be denied.

It was about this time that Rob whirled on his heel and started on the back track, with all the desperate hurry at his command. It will be remembered that he had no gun with him, he and Jack having left the weapons on the ice a considerable distance away. Both were without any means of defense, unless the sheath knife which the sailor always carried may be considered a weapon, and the only possible hope for them was to secure their rifles before the monster secured them.

When the lad's frenzied cry broke upon Jack, he sprang from the seat where he had been resting, and stood staring and wondering what it all could mean. He saw the boy's cap fly from his head, and he noted his terrified glances behind him. The next moment the polar bear plunged into sight, and the sailor grasped the situation.

Even then he failed to do the wisest thing. Instead of realizing that but one course could save them, and that was by dashing back to the guns, he hastily drew his knife and awaited the coming of the brute with a view of checking his attack upon the lad.

It was more creditable to Jack's chivalry than to his sagacity that he should do this thing.

Even Rob, despite his extreme fright, saw the mistake his friend was making, and called to him:

"Quick, Jack! Get the guns and shoot him!"

"I shouldn't wonder now if that was a good idea," reflected the sailor, shoving his knife back, and whirling about to do as urged.

The situation was so critical that even his sluggish blood was stirred, and he never moved so fast as he did for the succeeding seconds. Indeed, it was altogether too fast, for he fell headlong with such violence that he was partially stunned, and by the time he regained his feet Rob was upon him.

Meanwhile the polar bear was making matters lively. He was hustling for his breakfast, and he kept things on the jump.

He was at home amid the snow and ice, and, with little effort, got forward faster than the fugitives possibly could; he was overhauling Rob hand over hand.

To continue his flight, even for the brief remaining distance, was to insure his certain death. Rob saw him, and, when the ponderous beast was almost upon him, he made a desperate leap from the icy path, landing on his hands and knees several feet to the left, and instantly scrambling up again.

The manoeuvre was so unexpected by the pursuer that he passed several paces beyond before he could stop. Turning his head, with his huge jaws so far apart that his red tongue and long white teeth showed, he prepared to continue his pursuit of the lad who had escaped him for the moment by such an exceedingly narrow chance.

But it so happened that Jack Cosgrove just then was also climbing to his feet from his thumping fall, and, being but a short way from the brute, he drew his attention to himself.

The bear's appetite was in that rugged state that he was not particular as to whether his meal was made from a boy or full-grown man, and, since the latter was within most convenient reach, he shifted his design to him.

"By the great horned spoon!" muttered the sailor, quick to see how matters had turned; "but it's Jack Cosgrove that is to have all this fun to himself, and he's enjoying it."

The single recourse still presented itself; nothing could be done to check the furious beast until one of the rifles was turned against him, but it did seem for a time as if fate itself was fighting in favor of the brute.

Jack's tumble and flurry had so mixed him up that the rifles were forgotten, until he took several steps on his flight, when he recalled the fatal oversight, and hastily turned to rectify it; but the precious moments wasted made it too late. The bear was actually between him and the weapons, and, to attempt to reach them, except by a roundabout course, was to fling himself into the embrace of those resistless claws.

He was too wise to attempt it. The first thing to do was to get himself out of reach of the terror that was bearing down upon him with the certainty of death.

"If there was only a tree that I could climb," he reflected, leaping, tumbling, and laboring forward as best he could; "he couldn't nab me, but I don't see any tree, and that chap's hungry enough to eat a stewed anchor."

In the fearful hurry and panic some moments passed before Rob Carrol comprehended the abrupt change in the plan of campaign. At the moment he expected to feel the claw of the brute, he looked back and saw he was pressing Jack hard. Furthermore, the latter, instead of hurrying for the guns, was drawing away from them.

That was a bad outlook, but it suggested to the youth that the chance had come for him to do something effective.

He lost no time in seizing the chance. He turned again in his course, and moved around toward the spot where the weapons had been left near at hand. Could he have been sure of a few minutes there would have been no trouble in managing it, but events were going with such a rush that there was not a spare second at command.

The guns being near and lower in elevation than themselves, were in plain sight. Rob saw the barrels and the iron work gleaming in the morning sunlight, so that he could make no mistake in locating them, but his attention was so riveted on the prizes that he paid no heed to his footsteps, or, rather, he paid less heed than was necessary.

He was within fifty feet, and was counting upon the quickness with which he would end the sport of the brute when he discovered that he was on the brink of an irregular depression in the ice. He tried desperately to check himself or turn aside, but it was beyond his ability and over he went.

CHAPTER XI

LIVELY TIMES

Rob's fall was not far, and his heavy clothing saved him from the bruises that otherwise might have disabled him. He stared about him and saw that he had fallen into a rough depression of the ice from six to eight feet in depth, and of about the same diameter.

"Here's a go," he reflected; "I wonder whether the bear will follow me here, but he's giving his full attention to poor Jack, and won't hunt for me until he is through with him."

It was characteristic of the lad that, knowing the imminent peril of his friend, he should feel more anxious about him than himself. All thought of the missing Fred was shut out for the moment.

The first thing for Rob to do was to get out of the hole into which he had fallen. He did not wait, but, throwing off his outer coat, flung it upon the edge of the depression, and then, leaping upward, caught the margin with his mittened hands. As I stated at the beginning, he was a fine athlete, but the task was almost impossible. The purchase was so slight that when he put forth his strength and attempted to draw himself upward, his mittens slipped, as though they were oiled.

Then he snatched off the mittens, threw them upon his coat, and again made the attempt; he failed as before.

"I've got to stay here while the bear kills poor Jack," was his despairing thought; "I can do nothing, when, if I were up there, I could lay hold of one of the guns and save him."

The reflection was so bitter that he could not rest. Walking rapidly around the depression, he jumped upward at every step or two and repeated the effort. Failure followed failure, and he was once more in despair.

Again he made the attempt, and his hand struck a knob-like projection, which afforded just the purchase wanted. Grasping it with all his might, he quickly drew himself upward, and was once more on what might be considered the surface proper of the iceberg.

At the moment of climbing into sight he heard the report of a gun.

"Ah, Jack has managed to reach his rifle, and has given the brute a shot--no, he hasn't, either!"

To his unbounded amazement, he saw the sailor fleeing and dodging for life, with the bear still at his heels. But he had no gun in his hand, and, casting his eye below him, Rob observed both weapons lying where they were placed by the owners a short time before.

Who had fired that gun whose report he just heard?

It was an absorbing question, indeed, but there was no time just then to give it a thought. Rob was much nearer the rifles than either Jack or the bear, and he now hastened thither, taking care that his last mishap was not repeated.

From what has been told it will be understood that Jack Cosgrove found no time for the grass to grow under his feet. He had pulled himself through many a narrow peril, but he was sure he was never quite so hard pressed as now. He tried dodging and sudden turns in the line of his flight, and doubtless saved himself more than once by such means; but the discouraging fact was ever with him that his relentless enemy could travel tenfold faster and better than he over the ice, and sooner or later was certain to run him down unless turned aside by some one else.

Jack naturally wondered what had become of Rob, who was so active only a short time before. His furtive glances showed him nothing of his friend, but he had no chance to speculate, nor did he call upon him for help, as the lad had appealed to him but a short time before.

The sorely pressed fugitive drew his knife to be prepared for the final struggle that was at hand. He had met polar bears before, and he knew what such a conflict meant.

He was wise enough, too, not to postpone the struggle until his own strength was exhausted by running. He whirled about, when the brute was no more than ten feet distant, and grasping his knife by the tip of the blade, drove it with all the vicious fury at his command straight at the head of the bear.

The sailor was an adept at this species of throwing, and had often given exhibitions of his skill on shipboard. It was not

to be expected that he could kill such a gigantic animal by flinging his sheath knife at him, but it sped so true and with such power, that, striking his neck, it inflicted a deep wound, sinking so deep, indeed, that it remained in the wound.

At this juncture the rifle, whose report Rob heard, was fired. The sailor supposed, as a matter of course, that Rob discharged it, for there could be no doubt the bear was the target. The bullet struck him near the junction of the left leg, and there could be no mistake about his being hit hard. He uttered a peculiar whining moan, stopped for the moment, and then resumed his pursuit with such a marked limp that his progress was perceptibly decreased.

Seeing his own advantage, Jack was wise enough to use it. In his desperation he had deprived himself of his only weapon, and he was defenseless. But with a limping bear lumbering after him, and with the short respite he had gained, he fancied he could hold his own in a foot-race. So he wheeled and went at it again.

By this time, and, indeed, a minute before, Rob had reached the spot where the two guns lay, and with both in his grasp he set off in hot haste to overtake the brute. He meant to get so near that when he fired there could be no miss.

To his exasperation, he stumbled and came within a hair of going into the very hole from which he had extricated himself with so much difficulty. But he escaped, and finding neither weapon injured, he resumed his pursuit, cheered by the apparent fact that the bear was no longer able to gain upon the fugitive.

Jack had run as close to the edge of the iceberg as possible, and to venture nearer would be at the imminent risk of going into the icy sea. He perforce turned, and sped in the direction of the lad, who was hastening to his help.

This suited Rob, for there was no call for him to continue his pursuit, since the bear was approaching "head on." The youth stopped as soon as he saw the change, and prepared to close matters.

The opening could not have been better, and, dropping one rifle at his feet, Rob steadied himself and took careful aim at the beast. He pointed the gun not at his head, but at a point just below, hoping to reach his heart.

He saw the snowy coat stained crimson from the wound made by Jack's knife, and he limped heavily.

"Look out you don't hit me!" called the panting sailor, whose grim humor showed itself at the most inopportune times.

"Get out of the way, then!" called Rob, in turn; "you're right in front of me."

Jack dodged to one side, being at the moment about midway between his friend and pursuer, and less than twenty feet from either.

The next instant the lad pulled trigger.

But the bear did not stop, and showed no evidence of having been so much as harmed.

"You missed him, you lubber! Let me have the other gun, and show you how to bring down game."

There was no time for any such proceeding, and, dropping the discharged weapon, Rob instantly stooped and caught up the second.



JUST THEN THE REPORT OF ANOTHER GUN SOUNDED

(See page 106)

Just then another gun sounded from a point higher up the berg, and the huge brute stopped. He seemed dazed, and, half-rearing on his haunches, picked at the wound, as though he fancied a splinter was there, which he could draw from his flesh.

"He's going to attack us with the knife!" called Jack, who saw that the danger was over; "and I shouldn't wonder if he knows how to do it better than you can manage your gun."

"Keep out of the way, Jack, and I'll finish him."

Rob had brought the second weapon to a level, and the opening was, if possible, more favorable than before.

Again he pulled trigger, and this shot did the business. The monster, one of the largest and fiercest of his species, went down in a helpless mass, and expired before their eyes.

"Hello, you chaps would be in a pretty scrape if it wasn't for me!"

Jack and Rob turned toward the point whence the voice came and saw Fred Warburton hastening toward them with his smoking rifle in hand.

CHAPTER XII

FRED'S EXPERIENCE

Both Jack Cosgrove and Rob Carrol could have shouted with joy at the sight of the missing boy, and the sound of his voice. More than once, during the stirring minutes that they were trying to save themselves from the irrestrainable bear, they thought of the shot that was fired by neither of them, and which, therefore, they naturally attributed to their friend.

The second shot left no doubt of its source, and here now was the youth hurrying down from some point near where the brute had come, laughing like his own natural self.

It need not be said that his hand was shaken heartily by the sailor and his companion, and that he was overwhelmed with questions as to his singular action.

The story of Fred was curious, and yet it had been partially discounted by his chum.

It was not to be supposed that he would leave the comparative comfort he enjoyed when huddled close to his friends without good cause, and in that case he would have notified them of his intention, to save them from alarm.

The experience of the day disturbed him, and caused him to dream dreams of the most vivid nature. Several times, during the preceding years, he had walked in his sleep, and his departure from the camp, as they called it, was as unknown to himself as to his friends.

It was evident that he managed the business with great skill, since neither of the others was disturbed. He picked up his gun and went off in the direction followed by Rob, clambering farther up the side of the iceberg than was supposed possible.

"I think," said Fred, "that I can read the cause for what I did while unconscious. You remember we had much to say about the 'Nautilus' being driven out of sight by the gale, and I recall that, before going to sleep, I wondered whether we could not climb to a higher portion of the berg and signal to them.

"I suppose that was what set my mind and muscles to work when unconscious, and impelled me to try what I never would have tried with my full senses about me.

"When I came to myself I was in a cavity in the ice, where the protection against the gale was much better than our camp. It was a regular bowl or hollow, which would have been just the place for us three. But daylight had come, the weather was so moderate that I did not suffer from cold, and there was nothing, therefore, to be feared from that cause.

"As you may suppose, it took me sometime before I could recall myself, but I was not long in suspecting the truth. I was so comfortable in the position involuntarily assumed that I lay still while pondering matters. When ready, I was on the point of rising, when I heard a slight noise on the ice above me.

"That's Jack or Rob,' I thought; 'they are looking for me, and I will give them a scare.'

"I lay still, expecting one of you to pass so close that you would discover me, but though I could follow the movement by sound, and though the object passed close to me it was not quite close enough to be seen, I rose softly to my feet and peered over the edge of the cavity in which I was resting.

"Well, Rob was startled when he stumbled over that polar bear, but he was no more frightened than I, when I discovered that instead of it being one of you, it was that frightful brute which had swung by within a few feet of where I lay.

"You can see the curious shape of matters. The bear had come from some point beyond where I lay, and, making his way down the ice, had now placed himself between me and you. The only means of my reaching you was by passing close to him. That meant a fight to the death.

"I noticed his tremendous size, and from what I have heard they are among the most dangerous beasts in the world--"

"You're right there, my hearty," interrupted Jack; "if there was ever any doubt in my mind, which there wasn't, it was settled by that little scrimmage awhile ago."

"I had my gun, and, at first, was half-disposed to take a shot, but the chance was a poor one, for he was walking straight away, and it was impossible to do more than sound him. That would render him furious and cause him to attack

me. Our rifles were not repeating ones, and before I could get another charge ready, he would be upon me, and it might be that several well-aimed shots would be necessary to finish him."

"You had good sense," said Rob; "he would have made mince-meat of you in a fight."

"You must remember that while I could see the bear from where I peered over the edge of the ice, I could not catch the first sight of you. The brute seemed to be following some sort of a path, while the masses of ice were so piled upon both sides and beyond him that all farther view was shut off.

"While I was watching the enormous white body swinging along, it stopped, and then to my dismay, he turned about and started back.

"'He's coming for me!' was my conclusion, 'and now there will be a row sure.'

"I braced myself to receive him, but, inasmuch as he had not yet seen me, and, inasmuch as he had once passed my shelter, without discovering me, there was hope that he would do the same again. So 'Brer rabbit, he lay low,' and I listened for him to go by. As soon as he was at a safe distance, I intended to climb out and hurry to you. We three ought to be enough for him, and I had no fear but that you might manage him between you without my help."

"That was my opinion at that time," added Fred, with a twinkle of his eye, "but it isn't now. While I was crouching there I heard you calling me. You can understand why I didn't answer. I preferred to remain mum so long as that bear was between me and you and coming toward me."

"We did a lot of shouting last night," said Rob.

"That's the first I knew of it. But the minutes passed without the bear being heard. I listened as intently as I knew how, but no sound reached me.

"'I wonder if he intends to promenade back and forth,' was my thought, as I ventured to peep out once more, with great caution; 'this is getting interesting.'

"Well, I was surprised when I saw him. He was less than a dozen yards off, and lying down, with his head still turned away from me. His action was just as if he had learned that his breakfast was going to come up that path, and he intended to wait until it walked into his arms."

"And that is pretty nearly what I did," said Rob, with a smiling glance at the carcass.

"His head being still away I dared not fire, nor would it have done for me to call to you or answer your signals. It was plain to me that he had no suspicion that the choicest kind of meal was right near him, and it wouldn't have been wise for me to apprise him of the fact; it might have made things unpleasant all around.

"You needn't be told what followed. I watched him a few minutes, during which he was as motionless as the iceberg itself, and then I settled down to await developments.

"While seated, of course I saw nothing of him, and the first notice I received of what was going on was when I heard Rob shouting. I sprang out of my shelter, and, as you will remember, saved you both from being devoured by the monster. Isn't he, or, rather, wasn't he a big fellow?" added Fred, stepping over to the enormous carcass and touching it with his foot.

"He's the biggest I've ever seen," assented Jack, "and I'm thankful that we got off as well as we did. It's no use of denying that your shots helped us through."

"Possibly, but it was Rob after all who wound up the business," Fred hastened to say, lest he might be thought of wishing to take undue credit to himself.

"There's worse eating, too, than bear meat."

It was Jack who made this remark, and the others caught its significance. They were thus provided with the means of living for a long time on the iceberg, and might hope for some means of rescue in the course of a week or two.

Rob was about to make some characteristic reply, when the sailor pointed out to sea.

"Do you observe that?" he asked. "It's just what I was afraid of, and I don't like it at all."

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOG

It will be recalled that when Jack and Rob awoke, during the preceding night, they noticed a marked change in the temperature, and the sailor prophesied an unwelcome change in the weather. Following the direction pointed by him, his friends saw what he meant. The rise had caused one of those fogs that have been fatal so often to ships off the banks of Newfoundland, and which frequently wrap the southern coast of Greenland in a mist as impenetrable as that which overshadows at times the British metropolis.

"You see," added Jack, "it might be that some whaler or other vessel is cruising in these latitudes, and will come close enough for us to observe 'em and they us, provided the sun was shining, but, the way matters are turning out, they might pass within a biscuit's toss 'out either of us knowing it."

"Well," was the philosophical comment of Fred, "we have so much to be thankful for that I can't complain over a small matter like that."

"It may be a bigger matter than you think, but I'm as thankful as you, all the same."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Rob, with a sigh; "I'm hungry."

"There's your supper."

Both boys, however, shook their heads, and Rob replied:

"I'm not hungry enough to eat raw bear's meat."

"It's a thousand times better than starving to death."

As the sailor spoke, he walked to the carcass and withdrew his knife from the wound.

"You'll come to it bime-by; I've seed the time when I was ready to chaw up a pair of leather breeches, but that isn't half as bad as being in an open boat under the equator, with not a drop of water for three days."

"We can never suffer from that cause so long as this iceberg holds out. How is it with you, Fred? Are you ready for bear steak?"

"I would be too glad to dine on it, if there was some means of cooking it, but that is out of the question. I think I'll wait awhile."

"I'll keep you company," remarked Jack, who felt no such repugnance against the primitive meal, but was willing to defer the feast out of regard for them.

The party watched the fog settling over the sea, until, as the sailor had told them it would do, it shut out all vision beyond a hundred feet or less.

"I would give a good deal to know one thing," said Fred, after several minutes' silence, as he seated himself, "and that is just where we are."

"I can tell you," said Rob.

"Where?"

"On an iceberg in the Greenland Sea."

"I am not so sure of that, my hearty," put in Jack; "there's no doubt, of course, that we're on the berg, but I wouldn't bet that we're drifting through the Greenland Sea."

"Why, the 'Nautilus' was so far north when we left it, and this iceberg was moving so slowly that we couldn't have gone as far as all that."

Jack saw that his meaning was not understood.

"What I was getting at is this: Of course, when them bergs slip off into the ocean, most of them start southward for a more congen'l clime, but all of 'em don't do it by any means. There is a current off the western coast of Greenland which

runs toward the North Pole, and we may be in that."

"But this extends so far down that it must strike the other current, which flows in the opposite direction."

"That may and may not be, and it may be, too, that if it does, the upper current is the stronger. I've been calling to mind the bearing of the ship and berg, and I've an idee we're going northward. Bime-by the berg may change its mind and flop about and start for New York or South America, but I don't believe it's doing so now."

This was important information, provided it was true, and there was good reason to believe that Jack Cosgrove knew far better than they what he was talking about.

"Then if we keep on we'll strike the North Pole," remarked Rob, gravely.

"Yes, if we keep on, but we're pretty sure to stop or change our course before we get beyond Davis Strait or Christianshaab or Ivignut. Anyway, this old berg will keep at it till she fetches up in southern waters."

The words of Jack had opened a new and interesting field for discussion. Its ending had not been thought of by the boys in their calculations; and, despite their faith in their more experienced companion, they believed he was mistaken. They had never heard of anything of the kind he had mentioned, and it did not seem reasonable that such a vast mass, after heading southward, should change its direction. Even though it was drifting north when first seen, it must have started still farther north in order to reach the latitude where first observed.

By this time all hope of being rescued by the "Nautilus" had been given up, unless some happy accident should lead it to come upon the iceberg. The party, therefore, began considering other means of escape from their unpleasant quarters.

As is well known, there are a number of Danish settlements scattered along the west coast of Greenland, the bleak, desolate eastern shore being inhabited only by wandering Esquimaux. It might be that the berg would sweep along within sight of land, and the friends would be able to attract the attention of some of the native fishing boats, or possibly larger craft. It was a remote hope, indeed, but it was all they saw before them. At any rate, the polar bear had provided them with the means of postponing starvation to an indefinite period, for there was enough meat in his carcass to afford nourishment for many days to come.

"I wonder whether there are more polar bears on this craft?" remarked Rob, rising to his feet and looking around as if he half expected to discover another of the monsters making for them.

"Little danger of that," replied Jack, "and it's so mighty seldom that any of 'em are fools enough to allow themselves to be carried off like this one did that I never dreamed of anything of the kind. It does happen now and then, but not often, though you may read of such things."

"I suppose he would have stayed here until he starved to death," was the inquiring remark of Fred.

"He might and he might not; when he had got it through his skull that there was nothing to eat on the berg he would have plunged into the sea and started for land, provided it was in sight, and he would have reached it, too. When he landed he would have been hungry enough to attack the first saw-mill he came to, and I wouldn't like to be the first chap he met."

"I don't see how he could have been fiercer than he was."

"He meant business from the first; and, if he had caught sight of you when you lay asleep in that cavity in the ice he would have swallowed you before you could wake."

"Well, he didn't do it," replied Fred, with a half-shudder and laugh, "so what's the good of thinking about it? Rob, it strikes me," he added, with a quizzical look at the boy, "that raw bear's meat might not be so bad after all."

"Of course it isn't!" Jack was quick to say, springing to his feet and stepping forward, knife in hand.

It was evident from the manner in which he conducted the business that he had done it before. He extracted a goodly-sized piece from near the shoulder, and dressed it as well as he could with the only means at command.

Rob had hit upon what might be called a compromise. When one of the three slices, into which the portion was divided, was handed to him, he struck match after match from the rubber safe he carried, and held the tiny flame against different portions of the meat.

Anything like cooking was out of the question, but he succeeded in scorching it slightly, and giving it a partial appearance of having seen the fire.

"There!" he exclaimed, in triumph, holding it aloft; "it's done to a turn, that is the first turn. It's cooked, but it's a little rare, I'll admit."

Meanwhile, Fred imitated him, using almost all the matches he possessed.

CHAPTER XIV

A COLLISION

Jack scorned everything of the kind, and he ate his piece with as much gusto as if it had passed through the hands of a professional cook. The boys managed to dispose of considerable, so that it may be said the little party made a fair meal from the supply so unexpectedly provided them.

The primitive meal finished, the three friends remained seated and discussed the future, which was now the all-important question before them.

"How long is this fog likely to last?" asked Fred.

"No one can answer that," replied Jack; "a brisk wind may drive it away, a rain would soon finish it, or it may go before colder weather, or it may last several days."

"Meanwhile we can do nothing but drift."

"That's about all we can do any way," was the truthful remark of the sailor; "we'll make the bear last as long as we can."

"I think he will last a good while," observed Rob, with a half-disgusted look at the carcass; "it will do when there's nothing else to be had, but I never can fancy it without cooking."

At that moment they received a startling shock. A peculiar shiver or jar passed through the iceberg, as though from a prodigious blow that was felt through every part--an impossible occurrence.

"What can that mean?" asked the lads, in consternation.

"By the great horned spoon!" was the reply of the frightened Jack; "I hope we won't feel it again."

"But what is it?"

"The berg scraped the bottom of the sea just then. There it goes again!"

A shock, fully as violent as before, went through and through the vast mass of ice. It lasted only a second or two, but the sensations of the party were like those of the housekeeper who wakes in the night, to feel his dwelling swaying under the grasp of the earthquake.

None needed to be told of the possible consequences of drifting into shallow water. If the base of the iceberg, extending far down into the depths of the ocean, should strike some projecting mountain peak of the deep, or a plateau, the berg was liable to overturn, with an appalling rush, beyond the power of mind to conceive. In such an event there was no more chance of the party saving themselves than there would be in the crater of a bursting volcano.

Well might they look blankly in each other's faces, for they were helpless within the grasp of a power that was absolutely resistless.

They sat silent and waiting, but, as minute after minute passed, without the shock being repeated, hope returned, and they ventured to speak in undertones, as though fearful that the sound of their voices would precipitate the calamity.

"That satisfies me I was right," said Jack, compressing his lips and shaking his head.

"In what respect?" asked Fred.

"We're drifting toward the North Pole, and we are not far from the Greenland coast."

"But are there not shallow places in the ocean, hundreds of miles from land, where such a great iceberg as this might touch bottom?"

"Yes, but there are not many in this part of the world. The thing may swing out of this current, or get into another which will start it southward, but I don't believe it has done it yet."

"Sailing on an iceberg is worse than I imagined," was the comment of Rob; "I'm more anxious than ever to leave this; it isn't often that a passenger feels like complaining of the bigness of the craft that bears him over the deep, but that's the trouble in this case."

"If the capsizes does come," said Jack, "it will be the end of us; we would be buried hundreds of fathoms under the ice."

"There can be no doubt of that, but I say, Jack, isn't there something off yonder? I can't make it out, but it seems to me that it is more than the fog."

While the three were talking, Fred Warburton was seated so as to face the open sea, the others being turned sideways and giving no heed to that point of the compass.

It will be remembered that at this time they were inclosed in the all-pervading fog, which prevented them seeing as far as the length of the mountain of ice on which they were seated. Turning toward the water and peering outward, they saw the cause of the boy's question. The vapor itself appeared to be assuming shape, vague, indistinct, undefined, and almost invisible, but nevertheless perceptible to all.

The sailor was the first to see what it meant. Leaping to his feet he emitted his favorite exclamation:

"By the great horned spoon! it's another berg!"

With awful slowness and certainty the mass of fog disclosed more and more distinctly the misty contour that had caught the eye of Fred Warburton. At first it was like a pile of denser fog, rolling along the surface of the sea, but the outlines became more distinct each moment, until the form of an iceberg was clearly marked in the wet atmosphere.

The new one was much smaller than that upon which they were afloat, but it was of vast proportions for all that, enough to crush the largest ship that ever floated, as though it were but a toy in its path.

But the fearful fact about its appearance was that the two bergs were approaching each other, under the influence of adverse currents!

A collision was inevitable, and the boys contemplated it with hardly less dismay than they did the overturning of the larger one a short time before.

"This is no place for us!" called out Jack, the moment after his exclamation; "let's get out!"

He started up the path from which the polar bear had come, with his young friends at his heels. They did not stop until they could go no farther, when they turned about and shudderingly awaited the catastrophe that was at hand.

Their withdrawal from the edge of the iceberg to a point some distance away dimmed their vision, but the smaller berg was easily distinguished through the obscurity.

The two continued to approach with a slowness that could hardly have caused a shock in a couple of ships, but where the two masses were so enormous the momentum was beyond calculation.

The frightful crisis was not without its grim humor. The boys braced themselves against the expected crash as if in a railway train with a collision at hand. They lost sight of the fact that no force in nature could produce any such sudden jarring and jolting as they apprehended.

The two bergs seemed to be lying side by side, within a few inches really, but without actually touching.

"Why don't they strike?" asked Rob, in an awed whisper.

"There it comes!" exclaimed Fred; "hold fast!"

The smaller berg was seen to sway and bow, as if that, too, had swept against the bottom of the sea, and it was shaken through every part.

But amazing fact to the lads! they felt only the slightest possible tremor pass through the support upon which they had steadied themselves against the expected shock.

The smaller berg acted like some monster that has received a mortal hurt. It seemed to be striving to disentangle itself from the fatal embrace of its conqueror, but was unable to do so. Nearly conical in shape, a peak rose more than a hundred feet in air, ending in a tapering point almost as delicate as a church spire.

The crash of the immense bodies caused the breaking off of this icy monument a couple of rods from the top, and the mass, weighing many tons toppled over and fell upon the larger berg with a violence that shattered it into thousands of fragments, bits of which were carried to the feet of the awed party. Then, as if the smaller one saw that it was idle to resist longer, it began moving with the larger, which forced it along its own course as a tug pushes a floating chip in front of it.

The danger was over, if, indeed, there had been any danger. It was a minute or two before the boys comprehended it all, but when Rob did, he sprang to his feet and swung his cap over his head.

"Hurrah for our side! We beat 'em hands down!"

"I fancy it is quite safe to count on our keeping the right of way," added Fred, whose mental relief at the outcome was as great as his companion's. "I thought we would be tumbled about when the two came together, as if we were in an overturned wagon, but I can understand now how that could never be."

"But wait till we butt against an iceberg bigger than ours," said Rob, with a shake of his head.

CHAPTER XV

THE SOUND OF A VOICE

For hours the fog showed no signs of lifting. The three remained seated near the carcass of the polar bear, discussing the one question that had already been discussed so long, until there really seemed nothing left to say.

Not long after the collision between the icebergs a singular thing took place. It was evident that the two were acted upon each by a diverse current, but the preponderating bulk of the greater was not disturbed by the smaller. The latter, however, as if anxious to break away from its master, began slowly grinding along the face, until, after awhile, it swung clear and gradually drifted out of sight in the misty vapor.

"She will know better than to tackle one bigger than herself," was the remark of Rob Carrol, "which reminds me that if there should happen to be a bigger iceberg than this floating around loose we sha'n't be in any danger."

"And why not?"

"Because being so big it will be under the influence of the same current as this and going in the same direction, so there won't be much chance of our coming together."

"Unless the big one should overtake us," suggested Fred.

"Even then it would find it hard to run over us, so there isn't much to be feared from that; what I do dread is that we shall strike some shallow place in the sea that will make this thing turn a somersault."

"It would be a terrible thing," said Fred, unable to drive it from his thoughts.

"Is it possible for the berg to strike something like that and stick fast, without shifting its centre of gravity?"

The question was addressed to Jack Cosgrove, but he did not attempt to answer until the last clause was explained to him.

"Oh! yes; that has been seen many times. A berg will ground itself just like a boat, and stay for days and weeks until a storm breaks it up, or it shakes itself loose. I don't believe if we do strike bottom again that there's much danger of capsizing."

"Why didn't you tell us that before?" asked Rob, reprovingly; "we might have been saved all this worry."

"It's only guesswork, any way, so you may as well keep on worrying, for, somehow or other, you seem to enjoy it."

"I think there is a thinning of the fog," remarked Fred, some time later.

"A little, but not much; it's growing colder, too; we'll run into keen weather afore reaching the Pole."

"I shouldn't wonder if it came pretty soon. Hello!" added Rob, looking at his watch; "it is past noon."

"Do you want your dinner?" asked Jack, with a grin.

Both lads gave an expression of disgust, the elder replying:

"I can stand it for twenty-four hours before hankering for another slice of bear steak, and I shouldn't be surprised if Fred feels the same way."

"You are correct, my friend."

"Ah, you chaps can get used to anything!" was the self-complacent remark of the sailor, as he assumed a comfortable attitude on the ice.

While the boys talked thus, Jack was carefully noting the weather. He saw with pleasure that the fog was steadily clearing, and that, before night, the atmosphere was likely to be wholly clear again. That fact might avail them nothing, but it was a thousand-fold better than the mist, in which they might drift within a hundred feet of friends without either party suspecting it.

From what has been told, it will be understood that no one of the three built any hope of a rescue by the "Nautilus." The violent gale had driven her miles away, and a search on her part for this particular iceberg would be like the hunt of

one exploring party for another that had been lost years before.

But it was not to be supposed that Captain McAlpine would quietly dismiss all care concerning the lads from his mind. One of them was a son of a leading director of the Hudson Bay Company, and the other was a favorite of the son and his father. For the skipper to return to London at the end of several months with the report that he had left them on an iceberg in the Greenland Sea would be likely to subject him to unpleasant consequences.

The most natural course of the captain, as it seemed to the sailor, after making the best search he could, was to put into some of the towns along the coast, and organize several parties to go out in search of them.

"He is no fool," thought Jack, as he turned the subject over in his mind without speaking, "and he must have took the bearings of the ship and the berg as I did. He won't be able to keep track of us, but he will know better than to sail exactly in the wrong direction, as most other folks would do. Yes," he remarked to his friends, as he looked off over the sea, "the weather is clearing and the fog will be all gone before night."

This was gratifying information, though neither youth could tell precisely why it should give them special ground for hope.

You will understand one of the trials of the boys when adrift on the iceberg. The latter was moving slowly, and, though in a direction different from the surface current, yet it was barely perceptible. No other objects were in sight than the berg itself, which gave the impression to the passengers that it was motionless on the vasty deep. You know how much harder it is to wait in a train at a station than it is in one in motion. If they could have realized that the berg was actually moving, no matter in what direction, the relief would have been great. As it was, they felt as though they were simply waiting, waiting for they knew not what.

The afternoon was more than two-thirds gone when the last vestige of the fog vanished. The sun shone out, and, looking off to sea, the power of the eye itself was the only limit to the vision.

Without explaining the meaning of his action, Jack Cosgrove made his way down the path to the place where they had spent most of the preceding night, and climbing upon a slight elevation, stood for a full minute looking fixedly off over the sea. He shaded his eyes carefully with his hand, and stood as motionless as a stone statue.

"He either sees or expects to see something," said Rob, who, like his companion, was watching him with much interest.

"He is so accustomed to the ocean that his eyes are better than ours," said Fred.

"I can't make out anything."

Suddenly Jack struck his thigh with his right hand and wheeled about, showing a face aglow with feeling.

"By the great horned spoon, I knowed it."

"What have you discovered, Jack?"

"You chaps just come this way," he said, crooking his stubby forefinger toward them, "and put yourself alongside of me and take the sharpest squint you can right over yonder."

Doing as directed, they finally agreed, after some hard looking, that they saw what seemed to be a long, low, white cloud in the horizon.

"That's Greenland," was the astonishing reply; "I don't know what part, but it's solid airth with snow on it."

This was interesting, indeed, though it was still difficult to understand what special hope the fact held out to them.

It seemed to grow slightly more distinct as the afternoon advanced. Since it was hardly to be supposed that the iceberg was approaching land, this was undoubtedly caused by the contour of the coast.

When night began closing in the party fired their guns repeatedly, thinking possibly the reports might attract notice from some of the natives fishing in the vicinity. The chance, however, was so exceedingly slight that they made preparations for spending the night as before--that is, huddled together against the projecting ice. There was hardly a breath of air stirring, though the temperature continued falling.

"I hear it!" exclaimed Fred, starting to his feet, within five minutes after seating themselves as described.

"What's that?" asked the amazed Rob; "are you crazy?"

"Listen!"

They did so. There was no mistake about it. They caught the sound of a vigorously moved paddle, and, had any doubt remained, it was dissipated by the loud call in a peculiar voice, and with an odd accent:

"Holloa! holloa! holloa!"

CHAPTER XVI

LAND HO!

The boys could hardly credit their senses. Just as they had settled themselves to spend another long, dismal night on the iceberg, the sound of a paddle broke upon their ears, followed, the next moment, by a hail in unmistakable English.

"It's Captain McAlpine or one of the men!" exclaimed Rob, breaking into such a headlong rush down the incline that it threatened to precipitate him into the sea before he could check himself.

Fred was at his heels, and Jack tumbled against him. He knew that that voice was no Caucasian's. Despite the English word, he recognized it as belonging to a native Esquimau.

"We're coming!" called back Jack, in turn; "just hold on a few minutes and we'll be there--by the great horned spoon!"

He bumped flat on his back, and shot down the incline so fast that he knocked the heels from under Fred, and the two, impinging against Rob, prostrated him also, the three shooting forward like so many sleighs going down a toboggan slide.

"Never mind, lads; we'll stop when we strike water," called the sailor, so pleased that he recked little of the consequences. All the same, however, each exerted himself desperately to stop, and, barely succeeded in doing so, on the very edge of the incline.

Then they perceived one of the long, narrow native boats, known as a kayak, drawn up alongside the wharf, as it may be called, with the Esquimau in the act of stepping out.

He contemplated the sight in silent wonderment, for, it is safe to say, he had never been approached in that fashion before.

Jack was the first to recover the perpendicular, and he impulsively reached out his mittened hand to the native, who was clad in furs, with a short jacket and a hood, which covered all his head, excepting the front of his face.

"How do you do, my hearty? I never was so glad to see any one in my life as I am to see you."

"Glad to meet you," replied the Esquimau, somewhat abashed by the effusive greeting; "where you come from?"

"From the iceberg," and then reflecting that this good friend was entitled to a full explanation, the sailor added:

"We visited this berg, yesterday, from the ship "Nautilus;" our boat was carried away before we knew it, and the gale drove the ship so far out of her course that we haven't seen a thing of her since. How came you to know we were here?"

"Heard gun go off--didn't know where it be--hear it again--then know it here--then come to you."

"Were you ashore?"

"Started out to fish--you go ashore with me?"

"You can just bet we will; your kayak is strong enough to take us all, isn't it?"

"If sit still--make no jump," was the reply of the native, who was plainly pleased at the part of the good Samaritan he was playing.

"These are my friends, Rob Carrol and Fred Warburton," said Jack, introducing the lads, each of whom shook the hand of the native, whom they felt like embracing in a transport of pleasure.

Since the native had come out for the purpose of taking them off, there was no delay in embarking. The long boat, which the Esquimau handled with such skill, was taxed to carry the unusual load, and Jack suggested that he should wait till the boys were taken ashore, when the native could return for him, but their friend said that was unnecessary, and, inasmuch as the land was fully three miles distant, the task would have been a severe one. The sea was not ugly, and the Esquimau assured them there would be no trouble in landing them safely, if they "dressed" carefully and guarded against any sudden shifting of position.

All understood the situation too well to make any mistake in this respect, and, in a few minutes, everything was in

readiness. The native sat in the middle of the boat and swayed his long paddle with a dexterity that aroused the admiration of his passengers. It was not the kind of paddling to which Jack Cosgrove was accustomed, though he could have picked it up with readiness, and he was just the one to appreciate work of that kind.

Rob was nearest the prow, and, as the craft whirled about and headed toward land, he caught a shower of spray which was dashed over his clothing and in his face. That, however, meant nothing, and he gave no heed to it. Immediately the craft was skimming over the waves at a speed of fully five knots.

The occasion was hardly one for conversation, and Rob cautiously moved sideways and turned his head, so as to watch the advance. The weather, as will be remembered, was perfectly clear; the stars were shining and he could see for a considerable way over the water.

It was trying to the nerves of so brave a lad as he to observe a huge wave rushing like a courser straight toward them and looking as if nothing could save the boat from swamping; but, under the consummate handling of its owner, it arose to meet the wall of water and rode it easily. Then, as it plunged into the trough on the other side, it seemed as if about to dive into the depths of the sea, but immediately arose again with inimitable grace and readiness.

Then, perhaps, would follow a short distance of comparatively smooth water, quickly succeeded by the plunging and rising as before.

All at once the surface became smooth. Before Rob could guess its meaning something grated against the front of the kayak and slid along the side, followed by another and another. The native slowed his paddling and pushed on with extreme care.

He had entered a field of floating ice, through which it was necessary to force his way with all caution. This was proven by the many turns he made, and it was then that his skill showed in a more striking light than before.

He sat facing the prow and was obliged to look over the head of Rob and along each side of him. His quick eye took in the size and contour of the drift ice, and, hardly checking his own progress, he shot to the right, then to the left, turning so quickly that the bodies of his passengers swayed under the sudden impulse, but all the time he continued his advance, apparently with undiminished speed.

Meanwhile Jack Cosgrove, from his seat at the rear, was looking still farther ahead in the effort to gain sight of the welcome land, which never was so dear to him as when on the iceberg. Once he fancied he caught the twinkle of a light so low down that it was on shore, but it vanished quickly and he believed he was mistaken.

It was not long, however, before his penetrating vision discovered that for which he was yearning. The unmistakable outline of the coast arose to view, rising gradually from the edge of the water until lost in the gloom beyond. It was white with snow, as a matter of course, the depth probably being several feet. The sight of any considerable portion of Greenland free of its snowy mantle would be a sight, indeed.

The floating ice continued all the way to land, and the closer the latter was approached the more difficult became the progress. But the native was equal to the task. He had been through it too often to hesitate more than a few seconds when some larger obstacle than usual interposed across his path. It was very near land that the greatest peril of all was encountered. The kayak glided over a cake of ice, the Esquimau believing it would pass readily underneath the craft and out beyond the stern, but its buoyancy was greater than he supposed, and it swayed the boat with such force that it came within a hair of capsizing.

"All right!" he called, cheerily, righting the craft with several quick, powerful strokes of his paddle. Then he shot between two other enormous cakes, wedged his way through a narrow passage, and the prow crunched into the snow that came down to the water's edge.

"Here we are, and thank the Lord!" called out Rob, leaping with a single bound upon the solid earth; "I feel like giving three cheers, for if ever Providence favored a lot of scamps, we are the ones."

Fred followed as the kayak turned sideways, so as to permit all to step out, but Jack paused, opposite the native, and peered into his face. Something in the Esquimau's voice struck him as familiar.

"What's your name?" he asked, still scrutinizing him as closely as he could in the gloom.

"Docak," was the reply.

CHAPTER XVII

DOCAK AND HIS HOME

"By the great horned spoon, I suspected it! Docak, I'm mighty glad to see you; I'm Jack Cosgrove, and put it there!"

The native was not so demonstrative as his English friend, but he certainly was as delighted and surprised to meet him in this extraordinary manner as was the sailor to meet him.

They shook hands heartily, and Docak indulged in his peculiar laugh, which was accompanied by little, if any noise, but was indicative of genuine pleasure.

The reader will recall that this was the second time Docak had rescued Jack Cosgrove, the other instance having occurred a number of years before, when Captain McAlpine's ship was destroyed by collision with an iceberg.

"You're my guardian angel!" was the exclamation of the happy sailor; "I might have known that if anybody was to save us you was the chap to do it. Come up here, boys, and shake hands with Docak ag'in, for he's one of the best fellows living."

Rob and Fred were only too glad to do as invited, and cordial relations were at once established.

"Is your home where it was when I was here last?" Jack asked.

"Yes, off dere," replied Docak, turning about and pointing inland; "not far--soon get dere."

Jack gave a low whistle expressive of astonishment.

"Now, lads," he said, addressing the youths, "I rather think you'll own that Jack Cosgrove knows a thing or two about icebergs."

"I think Fred and I have also learned something, but what are you driving at?"

"We're well up toward Davis Strait, and there's more than a hundred miles of Greenland coast to the south of us. That old berg has struck a bee line for the North Pole, but it won't reach there, eh, Docak?"

"No; soon turn around--go back."

"Now, isn't that one of the strangest things you ever heard of, lads? The place where the 'Mary Jane' went down, afore that berg, three years ago, was mighty nigh the very spot where Docak found us. I remember he brought us ashore in his kayak--"

"Dis same boat," interrupted the native with a grin, perceptible in the twilight.

"There you are, and, if he keeps on, I'll begin to think that one of you chaps is Captain McAlpine himself, and the other Bill Hardin, who was saved with us."

"It is a most remarkable coincidence," said Fred, and Rob added that he had never read or heard anything like it.

But it occurred to Docak that he was not acting the part of hospitable host, by keeping his friends standing on the edge of the sea, while the reminiscences went on. He stooped and drew his boat far up the bank. The tide was at its height, so there was no fear of its playing the trick our friends had suffered. Then he turned about and started inland, the others following in Indian file.

He was treading a path, a foot or more deep in the snow, and worn as hard as a rock. The ascent was gentle, and a hundred yards from the shore he arrived at the entrance to his home, where a surprise awaited the boys.

When seen for the first time the hut of the Esquimaux suggest the sod houses common on the Western plains of our country, except that the homes of the far North are entered by means of a burrow. Where such frightful cold reigns for months every year the first consideration with the native is to secure protection against it; everything is sacrificed to that.

The walls are of alternate layers of stone and sod, and are about three feet in thickness. The highest clear space within is from four to five feet. The building contains an entry-way, a kitchen, and a living room. The entry is four or five yards in length, two feet or less wide, and no more than a yard in height. It will thus be seen that even a small boy would have

to stoop to pass through it, while the interior of the hut itself will not allow a full-grown Esquimau to stand erect. To this fact may be attributed in some degree the stoop shoulders so common among the men.

Half-way between the beginning of the entry and the main rooms was an opening leading to the kitchen. This was small, shaped like a bee-hive, and with a hole at the apex for the escape of the smoke. The floor was bare ground, the hearth consisting of a number of stones placed close together, on which the iron kettles sat, while the fire of driftwood burned beneath. The height of the kitchen is less than that of the main room, so that only the women can stand erect in the highest portion.

When the weather is very severe the cooking is done in the main room, by means of the big oil-lamp, while the thick walls and the heavy furs of the inmates enable them to laugh at the raging blizzard outside.

It was along such a passage as the one described that Docak led the way, followed by Jack Cosgrove, Rob, and Fred, each trailing his rifle, and happy beyond measure that everything with them had turned out so well.

The main room into which the little party entered was about four yards square. It had a board floor and a ceiling--luxuries not generally found in the native homes except in the settlements. The walls were furred off and ceiled, and the spaces closely stuffed with moss. The wall on the right of the main room had a single window with twelve panes of glass.

The main room was the most interesting part of the structure. Along the front of the window ran a wooden bench, near the end of which, toward the entrance, stood a Danish stove. In the corner beyond the other end of the bench was a table. To the left of that was the lamp-stand, directly opposite to which on the other side of the room was a second and shorter bench.

The whole left-hand side of the room, as you entered, consisted of a platform, about six feet long. It was elevated a foot above the floor, the side next to the wall being a few inches higher. At night it was covered with feather beds, which are rolled back during the day, so that the front may be used for other purposes. The lamp used in the Esquimau houses is simply a large, green stone, with a hollow scooped in the top. This contains seal oil, a piece of moss serving as a wick.

It may be well to tell you something in this place about the dress of the Esquimaux, referring now to those who live near the settlements, most of whom are of mixed blood. In the interior, and, along the east coast of Greenland, are met the wild natives, who are muffled in the thickest furs, and bear little resemblance to the class to which Docak and his acquaintances belonged.

These men wore jackets, trousers, moccasins, and generally undershirts, drawers, and socks. The rule is for them to go bareheaded, though a hat or cap is frequently seen. The clothing, except the moccasins, is made from woolen or cotton stuff, bought off the Danish Governor.

The jacket is of gingham, with sleeves and a hood that can be drawn over the head, and fitted in place by drawing and tying a string that passes under the chin. When venturing out in his kayak, or in severe weather, Docak, like most of his friends, wore a jacket and hood combined. This was of sealskin, with the leather side out. The trousers are constructed of the same material with the hair out. Sometimes they are lined with sealskin, with the hair in.

The moccasins are well-shaped sealskin boots, reaching nearly to the knees. When the socks are not woolen, the hair is turned toward the skin. The mittens are of seal leather, with no hair on either side, and are much inferior to many of our own country, for purposes of warmth and comfort.

The Esquimau women are shorter of stature than the men, and walk with short, mincing steps, showing a stoop similar to their husbands. They have small hands and feet, with faces that any one would pronounce good looking. They comb their hair to an apex, which, if the woman is married, is tied with a blue ribbon; if a widow, with black; and if a maiden, with green.

The females generally wear collars of beads, with lace-work patterns and vivid colors. The waist is generally of woolen stuff, and here the same fondness for bright colors displays itself. It has no buttons, and is donned and doffed by passing over the head, and is fastened at the waist with a belt. Then come a pair of short trousers of sealskin, which are tastefully ornamented. Below these are the long-legged moccasins, also ornamented by the deft handiwork of the native owners. The dress of the children is the same as the parents.

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW EXPEDITION

Docak had no children, the single son born to him ten years before having died in infancy. His wife was about his age, and had noticeably lighter skin and bright brown eyes. It was evident that she had more white blood in her veins than her husband, who was of mixed breed.

Docak did not knock before entering. His wife was trimming the lamp at the moment, and looked around to see whom he had brought with him. She must have felt surprised, but, if so, she concealed all evidence of it. She smiled in her pleasant way, showing her fine white teeth, and said in a low, soft voice, "Con-ji-meet," which is the native word for welcome.

Her first curiosity was concerning the boys, with whom she shook hands, but, when she turned to the grinning Jack, she made no effort to hide her astonishment, for he had addressed her by name.

"Crestana, I guess you haven't forgot Jack Cosgrove?"

"Oh! oh! oh! dat you--much glad! much glad!" she said, laughing more heartily than her husband had done.

She was very vivacious, and, though she could not speak the English tongue as well as he, she made it up by her earnestness.

"So glad--much glad--whale kill vessel ag'in? Docak bring no ice? Where capen? How you be? Crestana glad to see you--yes, heap much glad."

"By the great horned spoon," said Jack, holding the small hand of Crestana in his hearty grasp, and looking around at the others with one of his broadest grins; "the women are the same the world over; they can talk faster than a Greenland harrycane, and when they're glad they're glad all over, and clean through. Docak, you're a purty good chap, but you aint half good enough for such a wife as Crestana, and that reminds me we're as hungry as git out."

The wife evidently thought the sailor was a funny fellow, for she broke into merry laughter again, and, disengaging her hand, hurried into the kitchen, where she had been busying herself with her husband's supper.

The visitors, knowing how heartily welcome they were, seated themselves on the benches, doffed their heavy outer clothing, and made themselves as much at home as if in the cabin of the "Nautilus." They leaned their rifles in the corner near the table, alongside of the long muzzle-loader and several spears belonging to Docak.

A large supply of dry driftwood was piled near the window, and from this the native kept such a glow in the stove that the whole interior was filled with grateful warmth.

In the course of a few moments Crestana bustled in, her pretty teeth showing between her lips as she chatted with Jack and her husband. She drew the table out near the middle of the room, and quickly brought in some fish, "done to a turn." She furnished coffee, too, and the three guests who partook of her hospitality insist to this day that never in the wide world will they ever taste such fragrant coffee and such delicately-flavored fish as they feasted upon that night in Docak's hut. But we must not forget that they had the best sauce ever known--hunger.

The meal was enlivened by lively conversation, in which Jack managed to tell the story of the mishap that had befallen himself and companions. She showed less interest in the boys than in the sailor, though, as may be supposed, Rob and Fred were charmed with her simplicity and good-nature. She placed spoons, knives and forks, cups, saucers, and plates before them, and there was a neatness about herself and the room which added doubly to its attractiveness, and did much to enlighten the youths about these people, whom they supposed to be barely half civilized.

When the meal was finished, and the wife occupied herself in clearing away things, Docak brought out a couple of pipes, filled with tobacco, and offered one each to Rob and Fred. They, declining with thanks, he did the same to Jack, who accepted one, and a minute later the two were puffing away like a couple of veteran devotees of the weed.

The boys felt some curiosity to learn how it was that Docak, whose manner of living proved that he knew the ways of the more civilized people among the settlements, made his home in this lonely place, far removed from all neighbors. They could not learn everything that evening but they ascertained it afterward.

Docak had lived awhile in Invernik, and then took up his residence at Ivigtut, where he lived until four or five years before Rob and Fred met him. It was in the latter place he married Crestana, and it was there that his only child died.

The loss of the little one made him morose for awhile, and he got into a difficulty with one of his people, in which, in the eyes of the law, Docak was wholly to blame. He was punished, and, in resentment, he withdrew to a place on the west coast, about sixty miles north of the famous cryolite mines. There he lived, alone with his wife, as serenely contented as he could be anywhere. He made occasional visits to Ivigtut, to Invernik, Julianshaab, and other settlements, but it was only for the purpose of getting ammunition and other supplies which could be obtained in no other way.

Docak was not only a skilled fisherman, but, what is rare among his class of people, he was a great hunter. He was sometimes absent for days at a time in the interior, traveling many miles on snow-shoes, forcing his way over the icy mountains and braving the Arctic blasts that had driven back many a hardy European from his search for the North Pole.

While he was absent his wife went about her duties with calm contentment, where a more sensitive person would have gone out of her mind from very loneliness and desolation.

Our friends having effected their escape from the iceberg, it was time to decide what next should be done.

The most obvious course was to go to Ivigtut, where they could obtain the means of returning to England, most likely by way of Denmark, and possibly might hear something of the "Nautilus," if she had survived the gale which caused her to part company with Jack and the boys.

The kayak was strong enough to carry them, and Docak could make the voyage in a couple of days. This Rob and Fred supposed would be the plan adopted, but the native put another idea into their heads which caused in a twinkling a radical change of programme, and brought an experience to the two of which neither dreamed.

While Docak and Jack sat beside each other on the longer bench, smoking and talking, the native frequently cast admiring glances at the rifles leaning against the wall in the corner. Finally he rose, and, walking over, examined the three weapons, taking up each in turn and holding it so the light from the lamp fell upon it. He was most struck with Rob's, which had more ornamentation than the others. It was a modern loader, but not a repeater.

"He berry good," he remarked, setting it down again in the corner and resuming his place on the bench beside his friend; "why you not go hunting with me 'fore go to Ivigtut?"

Jack saw the eyes of the boys sparkle at the suggestion. Why not, indeed, go on a hunting excursion into the interior before they returned to the settlement? What was to prevent? It would take but a few days, and there is royal game to be found in Greenland.

Docak explained that this was the time of the year when he was accustomed to indulge in a long hunt. Twelve months before he had brought down some animals rarely ever encountered in that portion of the country, and he was hopeful of doing the same again, when he could have his friends to help.

So the matter needed only to be broached to be settled. The whole party would go on a hunt, and they would start the following morning, returning whenever they deemed best, and then making their way to Ivigtut at a leisurely rate, set about their return home, if that should be deemed the best course.

The warmth and smoke in the room led the boys to decide to step outside a brief while, to inhale the crisp air, and, inviting Fred to follow, Rob sprang up and hurried in a stooping posture through the long entry-way. Fred stopped a minute in the road to peep through the opening into the kitchen, where the thrifty housewife was busy.

She smiled pleasantly at him, and he might have lingered had he not heard the voice of his friend.

"Hurry out, Fred! Here's the most wonderful sight you ever saw. Quick, or you will lose it!"

Fred lost no time in rushing after Rob, whose excitement was fully justified.

CHAPTER XIX

A WONDERFUL EXHIBITION

Unto no one, excepting him who journeys far into the Northland, is given it to view such an amazing picture as was now spread out before the enraptured gaze of Rob Carrol and Fred Warburton. In Northern Siberia, the Scandinavian Peninsula, the upper portion of the American Continent, and the Arctic Sea, the traveler learns in all its wonderful fullness of glory the meaning of the Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights.

The boys had had partial glimpses of the scene on their voyage through the Greenland Sea, and there were flickerings of light which caught their eye on the trip from the iceberg to the mainland, and the short walk to Docak's hut, but it was during their short stay in the rude dwelling that the mysterious scene-shifters of the skies unfolded their magnificent panorama in all its overwhelming grandeur.

Radiating from a huge nucleus, which seemed to be the North Pole itself, shot the streamers of light, so vast in extent that their extremities struck the zenith, withdrawing with lightning-like quickness, and succeeded by others with the same celerity and displaying all the vivid hues of the rainbow.

At times these dartings resembled immense spears, and then they changed to bands of light, turning again into ribbons which shivered and hovered in the sky, with bewildering variation, turning and doubling upon themselves, spreading apart like an immense fan, and then trembling on the very verge of the horizon, as if about to vanish in the darkness of night.

At the moment the spectators held their breath, fearing that the celestial display was ended; the streamers, spears, bands of violet, indigo, blue, orange, red, green, and yellow, with the innumerable shades, combinations, and mingling of colors, shot out and spread over the sky like the myriad rays of the setting sun.

This continued for several minutes, marked by irregular degrees of intensity, so impressive in its splendor that neither lad spoke, for he could make no comment upon the exhibition, the like of which is seen nowhere else in nature.

But once both gave a sigh of amazed delight when a ribbon, combining several vivid colors, quivered, danced, and streamed far beyond the zenith, with a wary appearance that suggested that some giant, standing upon the extreme northern point of the earth, had suddenly unrolled this marvelous ribbon and was waving it in the eyes of an awestruck world.

One of the most striking features of those mysterious electrical phenomena known as the Northern Lights is the absolute silence which accompanies them. The genius of man can never approach in the smallest degree the beauties of the picture without some noise, but here nature performs her most wonderful feat in utter stillness. The panorama may unfold, roll together, spread apart again with dazzling brilliancy and suddenness, but the strained ear catches no sound, unless dissociated altogether from the phenomenon itself, such as the soft sighing of the Arctic wind over the wastes of snow, or through the grove of solemn pines.

There were moments when the effulgence spread over the earth, like the rays of the midnight sun, and the lads, standing in front of the primitive dwelling of the Esquimau, resembled a couple of figures stamped in ink in the radiant field.

For nearly an hour the rapt spectators stood near the entrance to the native dwelling, insensible to the extreme cold, and too profoundly impressed to speak or stir; but the heavens had given too great a wealth of splendor, brilliancy, color, and celestial scene-shifting to continue it long. The subtle exchange of electrical conditions must have reached something like an equipoise, and the overwhelming beauty and grandeur exhausted itself.

The ribbons and streamers that had been darting to and beyond the zenith, shortened their lightning excursions into space, leaping forth at longer intervals and to a decreasing distance, until they ceased altogether, displaying a few flickerings in the horizon, as though eager to bound forth again, but restrained by a superior hand with the command, "Enough for this time."

Fred drew a deep sigh.

"I never dreamed that anywhere in the world one could see such a sight as that."

"It is worth a voyage from home a hundred times over, and I don't regret our stay on the iceberg, for we would have been denied it otherwise."

"If there are any people living near the North Pole, it must be like dwelling in another world. I don't see how they stand it."

"I believe that the Northern Lights have their origin between here and the Pole," said Fred; "though I am not sure of that."

"The magnetic pole, which must be the source of the display, is south of the earth's pole, and I suppose that's the reason for the belief you mention. But it is enough to fill one with awe, when he gazes on the scene and reflects that the world is one great reservoir of electricity, which, if left free for a moment by its Author, would shiver the globe into nothingness, and leave only an empty void where the earth swung before."

"I pity the man who says, 'There is no God,' or who can look unmoved to the very depths of his soul by such displays of infinite power."

"There are no such persons," exclaimed Rob, impatiently; "they may repeat the words, because they think it brave and smart before their companions, but they don't believe themselves. It is impossible."

"Why didn't we think to tell Jack and Docak, that they might have enjoyed the scene with us?"

"The native Esquimaux see it too often to care about it. It is hard to understand how any one can become accustomed to it, but we know it is so. As for Jack, he must have looked upon it many times before, when he was in this latitude. Gracious! but it has become cold," added Rob, with a shiver.

"It isn't any colder than it has been all the evening, but we forgot about it while the exhibition was going on."

The boys turned about, and, ducking their heads, made their way along the long entry, quickly debouching into the warmth and glow of the living room, where Docak and the sailor, having laid away their pipes, were talking like a couple of old friends who had not seen each other for years and were exchanging experiences. Crestana had finished her work in the kitchen and joined them. She was sitting on the shorter bench, and, like a thrifty housewife, was engaged in repairing some of her husband's bulky garments, with big needles and coarse thread.

She looked up with her pleasant smile, as the boys entered, their bodies shivering and their teeth chattering from the extreme cold.

"You chaps must have found it mighty pleasant out-doors," remarked the sailor.

"Ah! Jack, if you had been with us, you would have seen a sight worth a journey around the world."

"What was it? Another polar bear, or two of them?"

"The Northern Lights, and O--"

"The Northern Lights," interrupted their friend, with a sniff of disgust; "is that all?"

The boys looked at him, too horrified to speak.

"I'll own that they are rather purty, and the first two or three times a chap looks onto 'em he is apt to hold his breath, and rub his eyes, but, when you've seed 'em as often as me, it'll get to be an old story. Besides Docak and me had more important bus'ness to talk about."

"What was that?"

"This hunting trip; it's all fixed."

"When do we start?"

"To-morrow morning. There's no saying how long we'll be gone, and I've told him that it doesn't make any difference to us, so we get back some time this year."

"Can we travel without snow-shoes?"

"Luckily we can, for Docak has only two pair. This fog and a little rain we've had have formed a crust on the snow hard enough to bear a reindeer, so that we can travel over it as easy as if it were solid ice. The only thing to be feared is another deep fall of snow afore we can get back. That would make hard traveling, but then a hunter must take some risk and who cares? We may see sights and meet fun that will last us a lifetime."

CHAPTER XX

THE HERD OF MUSK OXEN

One of the most interesting animals found in the frozen regions of the North is the musk ox, his favorite haunt being on the mainland of the Continent in the neighborhood of the Arctic circle, though he is occasionally met in Greenland.

The fact that the animal has no muzzle has led some naturalists to separate him from the ox species and give him the name of *Ovibos*. He is smaller in size than his domestic brother, very low on his legs, and covered with a wealth of wool and dark brown hair, which, during the cold weather, almost touches the ground. A whitish spot on the back is called the saddle, though it is not to be supposed that it is ever intended for that purpose.

One of the most striking features of the musk ox is his horns, which sometimes weigh fifty or sixty pounds. They are flattened at the base, the flat sides turned outward, and form a sort of shield or protection for the face.

At certain seasons he is one of the most odoriferous animals in creation. During the spring the musky odor is so strong that it can be detected on the first knife thrust into his body. At other seasons it is hardly perceptible, and the eating is excellent.

Although his legs are so short he can travel swiftly, and shows a facility in climbing mountains that no one would suspect on looking at the animal the first time. It suggests the chamois in this respect. He feeds on lichens during a part of the year, and on grass and moss during the rest.

Some distance back of the native Esquimau's hut, the land inclined upward, becoming quite rough and mountainous not far from the coast.

It was among these wild hilly regions that a herd of musk oxen, numbering eleven, were browsing one afternoon, with no thought of disturbance from man or beast. Perhaps the last should be excepted, for the oxen are accustomed to herd together for the purpose of mutual protection against the ravening wolves who would make short work of one or two of them, when detached from the main herd. But it is not to be supposed that the thought of bipedal foes entered their thick skulls, for the Esquimau is not a hunter as a rule, and confines his operations to fishing in the waters near his home.

The herd referred to had gradually worked their way upward among the mountains, until they reached a plateau, several acres in extent. There a peculiar swirling gale had, at some time or other, swept most of the space quite clear of snow, and left bare the stubby grass and moss, which, at certain seasons, formed the only sustenance of the animals.

It was a lucky find for the oxen, for in the far North, with its ice and snow, it is an eternal battle between the wild animals and starvation, the victory not infrequently being with the latter. It was rare that the oxen found food so plentiful, and they were certain to remain there, if permitted, until hardly a spear was left for those who might come after them.

The largest ox of the party was grazing along the upper edge of the plateau, some rods removed from the others. He had struck a spot where the grass and moss were more abundant, and he was putting in his best work.

Suddenly he caught a suspicious sound. Throwing up his head, with the food dripping from the motionless jaws, he stared in the direction whence it came, possibly with the fear of wolves.

Instead of seeing one of the latter he descried an object fully as terrifying in the shape of a young man, clad in thick clothing from head to foot, and with a rifle in his hands. The name of this young man was Fred Warburton, and he had reached this advantageous spot after long and careful climbing from the plain below. He was studying the creatures closely, now that he had succeeded in gaining a nearer view, for, on the way thither, Docak had told him much concerning them, and they had become objects of great interest.

Fred was alone, and had spent several minutes in surveying the brutes before he coughed with the purpose of attracting attention for a few seconds. Then, slipping his mitten from his right hand, the lad brought his rifle to his shoulder and sighted at the animal.

He had forgotten to inquire at what part to aim, but it seemed to him that the head was the most vulnerable, and he directed his weapon at a point midway between the eyes and near the centre of the forehead.

At the very instant of pressing the trigger the ox slightly lowered his head, and, instead of boring its way through the skull, the bullet impinged against the horny mass above, and glanced off without causing injury.

Fred was startled when he observed the failure, for his friends were too far away to give him support, and it was necessary to place another cartridge in the chamber of his weapon before it could be used. He proceeded to do so, without stirring a foot, and with a coolness which no veteran hunter ever excelled.

But if Fred stood still the musk ox was very far from doing so.

One glance only at the youth was enough, when, with a snort, he whirled about, galloped a few paces, and then wheeled with marked quickness, and faced the young hunter again. While engaged in this performance his snortings drew the attention of his companions, who, throwing up their heads, galloped to him, and the whole eleven speedily stood side by side, facing the point whence the attack had come.

They were of formidable appearance, indeed, for, with lowered heads, they pawed up the earth and began cautiously advancing upon the boy, who had his cartridge in place and was ready for another shot. But instead of one musk ox he was confronted by eleven!

"My gracious!" he said to himself; "this is a larger contract than I thought of. If they will only come at me one at a time I wouldn't mind. I wonder where the other folks are?"

He glanced right and left, but nothing was to be seen of Rob or Jack or Docak. It looked as if a line of retreat should be provided, and he ventured a glance to the rear.

He saw a mass of rocks within a hundred yards, against which a good deal of snow had been driven, and he concluded that that was the only available refuge, with no certainty that it would prove a refuge at all.

"Being as I shall have to fetch up there to save myself, and being that those beasts can travel faster than I, it wouldn't be a bad idea to begin edging that way now."

He would have been glad to whirl about and dash off, reserving his shot until he reached the rocks, but for his belief that such an attempt would be fatal to himself. Nothing encourages man or animal so much as the sight of a flying foe, and he was sure that he would instantly have the whole herd at his heels, and they would overhaul him too before he could attain his shelter.

It was a test of his nerves, indeed. There were eleven musk oxen, heads lowered, eyes staring, with low, muttering bellows, pawing and flinging the dirt behind them, while they continued advancing upon the motionless lad, who, having but one shot immediately at command, sought to decide where it could be sent so as to do the most good.

The fellow at which he fired was the largest of the herd, and it was plain to see that he was commander-in-chief. Upon receiving the shot on his horns he had summoned his followers about him, and no doubt told them of the outrage and whispered in their ears the single word "Vengeance."

It naturally struck Fred that the single shot should be directed at the leader, for possibly, if he fell, the others would be thrown into a panic and scatter. At any rate, it was the only hope, and, without waiting a tenth part of the time it has taken us to tell it, he brought his rifle to a level and aimed at the big fellow.

The distance was so short that there was no excuse for repeating his blunder, or, rather, accident. He sighted the best he knew how, and, while the fellow was still pawing and advancing, let fly, hitting him fairly between the eyes.

The lad paused just long enough to learn that his shot was effective, when he whirled on his heel, without waiting for more, and ran as he never ran before.

CHAPTER XXI

CLOSE QUARTERS

At this moment, when it would be thought that the incident was at its most thrilling crisis, it assumed a ludicrous phase, at which any spectator must have laughed heartily.

Fred, as I have said, made for the protecting rocks, with all the energy of which he was capable. On the way thither he dropped one mitten, then his gun flew from his grasp, and a chill passed through his frame, at the consciousness that he had lost his only means of defense; but he dared not check himself long enough to pick it up, for in fancy he heard the whole ten thundering after him and almost upon his heels.

The distance to travel was short, but it seemed twice its real extent, and he feared he would never reach it. He was running for life, however, and he got over the ground faster than would be supposed. Panting and half-exhausted, he arrived at last, and darted breathlessly behind the rugged mass of boulders.

His heart almost gave way when he found it what he feared; a simple pile of stones, partly covered with snow, but presenting nothing that could be used for protection. The only portion was the top, but that was too high for him to climb the perpendicular sides.

It was at this moment he cast a terrified glance behind him, and uttered the single exclamation:

"Well, if that doesn't beat all creation!"

What did he see?

The whole ten musk oxen scampering in the opposite direction, apparently in as great a panic as himself.

The truth of it is the musk ox is one of the most cowardly animals in existence. All the pawing of dirt, the bellowing, and threatening advance upon an enemy is simply "bluff." At the first real danger he takes himself off like the veritable booby that he is.

As soon as Fred could recover his wind he broke into laughter at the thought of his causeless scare. He might as well have stood his ground and fired into them at his leisure.

"I'm glad Rob didn't see me," he reflected as he came from behind the rock and set out to regain his lost weapon and mitten; "he would have had it on me bad--"

A shiver ran through him, for he surely heard something like a chuckle that had a familiar sound.

He looked around, but could discover no cause for it.

"No; it wouldn't have done for him or Jack to have had a glimpse of me running away from the oxen that were going just as hard from me--"

"Hello, Fred, where's your gun?"

It was Rob Carrol and no one else, who stepped into sight from the other side of the rocks and came toward him, shaking so much with mirth that he could hardly walk.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Fred, savagely; "you seem to find cause for laughter where no one else can."

"O Fred! if you only could have seen yourself tearing for the rocks, your gun flying one way, your mitten another, your eyes bulging out, and you too scared to look behind at the animals that were going still faster right from you, why you would have tumbled down and called it the funniest sight in the world."

"If I had seen you with your life in danger I wouldn't have stopped to laugh, but would have gone to your help."

"So would I have gone to yours, but the trouble was your neck wasn't in danger, though I guess you thought it was."

"Why didn't you fire into the herd?"

"What for? They were too far off to take the chances of bringing them down, and you had killed the leader."

"Why, then, didn't you yell to me to stop my running?"

"I tried to, but couldn't for laughing; then, too, Fred, it wasn't long before you found it out yourself. If, when we get home, you want to enter the races as a sprinter, I will back you against the field. I tell you, old fellow, you surpassed yourself."

By this time the younger lad had rallied, and saw that his exhibition of ill-temper only made him ridiculous. He turned toward his companion with a smile, and asked, in his quaint way:

"What'll you take, Rob, not to mention this to Jack or any of the rest of our friends?"

"I'll try not to do so, but, if it should happen to drop from me some time, don't get mad and tear your hair."

"Never mind," said Fred, significantly; "this hunt isn't finished yet, and I may get a chance to turn the laugh on you."

"If you do, then I'll make the bargain."

"Perhaps you will, but that will be as I feel about it. But, I say, did you ever know of any such cowardly animals as the musk ox? If they had gone for me, where would I have been?"

"I doubt whether they could have caught you, but they are stupid cowards, who don't know their own strength."

"I wonder whether they always act this way."

"Most of the time, but not always. I heard Docak telling Jack how he once put two bullets into a bull, which kept on for him like a steam engine. He flung himself behind a lot of rocks, just as you did, when the beast was right upon him. He struck the stones with such force that he shattered his horns and was thrown back on the ground like a ball. Before he could rise his wounds overcame him, and he gave it up, but it was a narrow escape for the Esquimau."

"It might have been the same with me," added Fred, who could not recall, without a shudder, those few seconds when he faced the leader with his herd ranged alongside of him; "but all's well that ends well. Where are Jack and Docak?"

As if in answer to the question the reports of the guns broke upon their ears at that moment, and they saw the two hunters standing on the lower edge of the plateau, firing into the terrified animals that were almost upon them. Instead of turning to run, as Fred had done, immediately after firing, they quietly held their places and began coolly reloading their pieces.

There was good ground for their self-confidence. Their shots were so well aimed that two of the oxen tumbled to the ground, while the others, whirling again, came thundering in the direction of the rocks, near which the lads were watching them.

"That sight is enough to scare any one," remarked Fred.

"If you want to turn and run again," said Rob, "I'll pick up your gun and both of your mittens, if you drop them."

"Don't fret yourself; if I can beat you when you had that polar bear at your heels no beast could overtake me."

"The difference between that and this was that the brute was at my heels, while your pursuers were running the other way. However, we'll drop the matter, old fellow, since I have had all the fun I want out of it. It may be upon me next time."

"I hope it will, and, if so, I won't forget it; but, Rob, this begins to look serious."

Although the youths were in plain view, the musk oxen continued their flight straight toward them. Unless they changed very quickly or the lads got out of the way a collision was certain.

"You may stay here if you think it smart," said Fred, a second later, "but I don't."

Despite the exhibition he had made of himself a few minutes before he moved briskly toward the rocks, behind which he whisked like one who had no time to waste.

To show him how causeless was his alarm, Rob raised his gun, and, taking a quick aim at the foremost, let fly.

"That'll settle them!" he called out; "see how quickly they will turn tail."

But they did not adopt this course as promptly as Rob expected. He had struck one of them, but without inflicting much hurt. There is a latent courage in every beast, which, under certain stress, can be aroused to activity, and this shot had done it.

Rob stood his ground for an instant or two. Then he awoke to the fact that his shot was not going to turn a single one of the eight musk oxen from his course. They thundered toward him like so many furies, and were almost upon him before he realized that he had already waited too long.

CHAPTER XXII

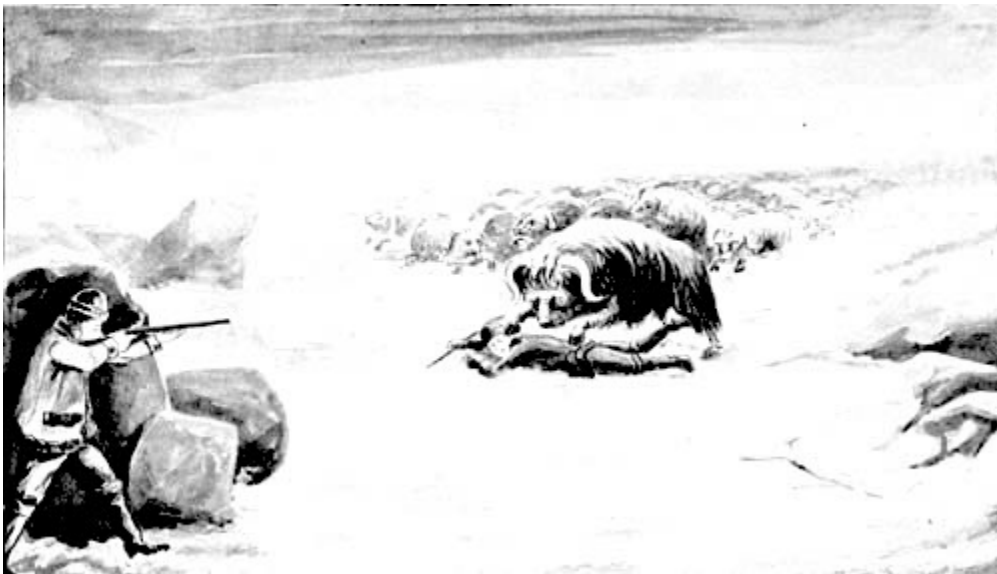
FRED'S TURN

At the moment Rob Carrol wheeled to run the foremost of the musk oxen was upon him.

This animal was the largest of the herd, after the fall of the leader, whose place he had undoubtedly taken by the unanimous wish of the survivors.

Perhaps he was eager to prove to his companions his worthiness to fill the shoes of the late lamented commander, for, although one of the most dreaded of enemies stood directly in his path, and had just emptied his gun at him, he charged upon him like a cyclone.

Meanwhile, Fred Warburton, having darted behind the rocks, lost no time in slipping another cartridge in his gun. He would have assumed any risk before permitting harm to come to his friend, but, somehow or other, he yearned for the chance of saving him from just such a disaster as was now upon him.



THE OX BOUNDED DIRECTLY OVER HIS BODY
(See page 199)

Had Rob started a moment sooner he would have escaped, but in his desperate haste he fell headlong, and the ox bounded directly over his body, fortunately, without touching him.

The other animals were unequal to the draught upon their courage, and diverged sharply, some to the right and the rest to the left, circling back over the plateau on whose margin Jack Cosgrove and Docak were waiting until they came within certain range.

"Fred, fire quick! my gun's unloaded!" called Rob from where he lay on the ground; "don't wait a second or it'll be too late!"

Fred did fire, sending the bullet with such accuracy that it wound up the business. Precisely the same catastrophe, described by the Esquimau to the sailor took place. The ox, coming with such desperate speed, was carried forward by its own terrific momentum. It may be said that he was dead before he could fall; he certainly was unconscious of what he was doing, for he crashed against the rocks, as if driven from an enormous catapult and then collapsed, in a senseless heap, with his flat horns smashed and broken to fragments.

Fred Warburton saw that his "turn" had arrived, and he made the most of it. Rob had been merciless to him, and he was now ready to pay him off in his own coin.

"I wouldn't lie down there, Rob," he said, gravely, "for the ground must be cold."

"It does seem rather chilly--that's a fact," replied his friend, who, knowing what was coming, slowly climbed to his feet; "I didn't think of that when I lay down."

"What made you lie down at all?"

"You see I noticed that the creature didn't mean to turn about and travel the other way as yours did; there was the difference. Then I knew, too, that he must be tired from running so hard, and it struck me as a kind thing to do to serve as a rug or carpet for him."

"You did so, and no mistake. If I'm not in error," continued Fred, with a quizzical expression, "I heard you call out a minute ago something about my hurrying up and firing so as to save your life."

"I say anything like that! What put such an idea in your head? It must have been the echo of your voice, when you were running away from the ox that was running away from you."

And Rob assumed an expression of innocent surprise that would have convinced any one else than Fred of his mistake.

"It is singular, but no doubt I am in error," said he, resignedly. "It must have been some one else that sprawled on the ground, and begged me to shoot quick or he was a goner; it must have been another vaunting young man, who looked up so pityingly, and was too scared to try to get on his feet until I shot the ox for him, just as I did the polar bear, when another minute would have finished him; but I'd like to see that other fellow," added Fred, looking around, as if in quest of him.

"I'll help you search," said Rob, in the same serious manner; "and as soon as I run across him I'll introduce you two. You'll be congenial to each other. Until then suppose we let the matter rest."

"I won't promise that," returned Fred, following up his advantage; "it depends on whether certain other matters are referred to."

Rob now laughed outright and offered his hand, which his friend readily took.

The words were uttered hurriedly, for it was hardly the time or place for conversation. The popping of rifles was renewed from another part of the plateau, and several other musk oxen had tumbled to the ground. A half-dozen survivors managed to get it through their heads that they had enemies on both sides, and, seeing an opening, they plunged through it and were seen no more.

The boys devoted some minutes to inspecting the two animals that had fallen by the rifle of Fred Warburton. They were a couple of the largest specimens of their kind, but the description already given renders anything like a repetition unnecessary.

Although it was the favorable season of the year, the youths detected a slight musky odor exhaling from the bodies, which was anything but pleasant.

Docak and Jack were observed approaching across the plateau. Both were in high spirits over the success that had marked this essay in hunting the musk ox, and the Esquimau assured them that despite the odor to which they objected, he would furnish them with one of the best suppers they had ever eaten. The lads, however, could not feel quite assured on that point.

It may as well be stated in this place that the spot where the animals were shot was about thirty miles inland from the home of Docak, and a great many leagues south of Upernavik, the most northernmost settlement on the Greenland coast. It is beyond this quaint Arctic town, in the neighborhood of Melville Bay, that the musk ox has his true *habitat*. There, although the animals are diminishing in number, he may be found by any one who chooses to hunt for him.

The fact that Docak had met them so far south was extraordinary, and, up to the previous year, he had never known of such a thing, nor did he believe there were any besides this particular herd within hundreds of miles of the spot, nor that they were likely ever to be seen there again.

It took our friends two days and a part of a night to reach this portion of the Arctic highlands. They had looked for foxes, reindeer, ptarmigan, hares, and other game on the way, but failed to run across any game until they came upon the musk oxen. Had not the Esquimau been thoughtful enough to bring a lunch of cold fish, they would have suffered from hunger. As it was, all felt the need of food, and the prospect of a dinner upon the game at their feet was inviting, indeed.

The Esquimau would not have bothered with the cooking had he been alone, but, out of deference to his friends, he prepared to make a meal according to their tastes.

Inasmuch as so much game had been bagged, they could afford to be choice. They cut the tongues from the animals,

together with some slices from the tenderest portion of their bodies, and had sufficient to satisfy all their appetites and leave something over.

No better place for camping was likely to be found than these hills, but a shelter was desirable, and Docak set out to lead the way further among them. His manner showed that he was familiar with the section, for he did not go far before he came upon the very place for which Fred Warburton longed when making his desperate flight from the bull that he supposed was at his heels.

It was a cavern among the rocks, as extensive as his own living room at home, and approached by an entrance, which if not so extended as his own entry, was of still less dimensions, causing them to stoop and creep for part of the way.

"Me be here 'fore," said he; "like de place?"

"I should say we did," replied the pleased Rob, echoing the sentiments of his friends; "but we shall need some fuel to cook the food and keep warm, and wood isn't very abundant in this part of the world."

"We git wood," was the rather vague reply, whose meaning was not understood until they had penetrated into the cavern, which was lightened by a crevice on one side of the entrance. This permitted enough daylight to enter to reveal the interior quite plainly. It took the boys a few minutes to accustom their eyes to the gloom, but when they did so they were no less pleased than surprised at what they saw.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE CAVERN

That which the astonished visitors looked upon was a pile of wood at one side of the cavern big enough to build a roaring fire that would last for hours. This place must have formed the headquarters of Docak when indulging in the occasional hunts that are anything but popular among the coast natives.

The Esquimau did not carry lucifer matches with him, but, on the other hand, he was not forced to use the primitive means common among savages. He possessed a flint and tinder such as our forefathers used and are still popular in some parts of the world.

But Rob and Fred did not exhaust their supply of matches in trying to scorch the bear steak on the iceberg, and when everything was ready to start the blaze they did so with little trouble. The smoke bothered them at first, but it gradually wound its way through the opening, so that breathing became quite comfortable.

Docak cooked the tongues with a skill born of long experience. There was just the faintest trace of musk, but not enough to interfere with the vigorous appetites, which could afford to disregard trifles. The meal proved to be what he had promised--one of the most grateful they had ever eaten.

There was a good deal left after the supper was finished, and this was laid aside for future contingencies, since the experience of their approach to this spot taught them to be prepared for an extended deprivation of food. Indeed, the native Esquimau sometimes goes for days, apparently with no craving in that direction, though it must be there all the same. When he finally secures nourishment, he stuffs prodigiously--so much so indeed that a civilized person would die of gluttony. He calmly waits, however, until able to hold a little more, when he resumes cramming the food down his throat, keeping it up until at last he is satisfied. Then he sleeps, hour after hour, and, on waking, is ready to resume his frightful gormandizing.

By the time the meal was finished the long Arctic night began closing in. Looking through the crevice on the side, and the entrance, they saw that the day was fast fading. The air was as clear as crystal and very cold. The boys had no extra garments to bring with them, but Docak, despite his cumbrous suit, carried the fur of a polar bear that he had shot a couple of years before. This was not only warm, but had the advantages over many pelts of being vermin proof.

When traveling over the snow Docak had a way of using this extra garment, like a shawl, so that his arms were free. It was now spread upon the solid rock, and, though it was not extensive enough to wrap about the forms of the four, it furnished a couch for all, as they lay with their bodies near together, and it was most welcome indeed.

It might seem that our friends ran an imprudent risk in venturing this far from the coast without snow-shoes; for, in the event of a thaw, the work of traveling the thirty miles would tax their endurance to the utmost. The snow was several feet deep on a level, and was drifted in places as high as a house. Who could make his way through instead of over this?

But all misgivings on that score were ended by Docak telling his friends there would be no thaw for days, weeks, and, perhaps, not for months. It was more likely to be the other way.

The surface, as I have intimated, was as easily walked upon as the floor of a house. So long as it remained thus there was no need of snow-shoes or anything like artificial help.

The fire made it so cheerful and the warmth was so pleasant that it was decided to keep it going for an hour or two, and then let it die out after they fell asleep. There would be considerable fuel left for morning, and the blaze was not really necessary, unless the weather should take one of those appalling plunges during which a red-hot stove seems to lose all power.

As was Docak's custom, when staying in an inclosed place like this, he sauntered out doors before lying down to slumber, in order to take a look at the weather and the surroundings. The life of the Esquimaux makes them wonderfully skillful readers of impending changes of temperature. Signs which are invisible to others are as intelligible to them as the pages of a printed book to us.

The native remained absent a considerable while, until his friends began speculating as to the cause.

"Maybe he has caught sight of another of those musk oxen, and wants to bring him down," suggested Rob.

"There is no call to do that when so many of them lie on the frozen ground, where they will keep for months unless the wolves find them."

"They'll be pretty certain to do that," continued Rob; "but then he may have caught sight of a bull, and both may want to try a race by starting in opposite directions and seeing which can travel first around the world."

"That would be a sight worth seeing," Fred hastened to say, "unless he fell down and bawled for some one to come to his help, after firing his gun and missing the game by about a rod."

Jack Cosgrove looked wonderingly at his young friends, puzzled to know what this curious talk meant. To him there was no sense in it. Rob and Fred thought they had ventured as far upon forbidden ground as was prudent, so they veered off.

While they were talking Docak reappeared. His feet were heard on the crust of the snow for several seconds before he was visible, for there was no call to guard against noise.

As he straightened up in the cavern he stood a moment without speaking. Then, stepping to the wood, he threw a number of sticks on the blaze, causing an illumination that made the interior as light as day.

Jack was better acquainted with the native's moods than the boys could be expected to be, and the first sight of the honest fellow's countenance by the added light told him he was troubled over something. Evidently he had made some unpleasant discovery.

"He'll let me know what it is," concluded the sailor, deeming it best not to question him; "I can't imagine what would make him feel so uneasy, but he's got something on his mind--that's sartin."

Docak was on the point of speaking more than once, but some impulse led him to close his lips at the moment the all-important matter was about to become known. He probably would have kept it to himself altogether had not a question of Rob given him an opportunity too inviting to be resisted.

"Which course will we take to-morrow, Docak?"

"Dat way--we trabel fast as can, too."

The astonishment of the three may be understood when they saw him point directly toward his own home--that is, in the direction of the seacoast, and over the course they had just completed.

Their purpose when they set out was to penetrate at least double the distance in the interior, and now he declared for a withdrawal.

Not only that, but the manner of the native proved that he considered the crisis imminent, and that no time was to be lost in carrying out his unexpected decision.

Jack knew him so well that he was right in deciding that his hesitancy of manner was caused by his doubt whether he should insist upon his friends starting at once, or allow them to defer it until morning.

"What's the trouble, Docak?" asked the sailor, now that the subject was broached; "I never saw you look so scared--"

At that moment the dismal cry of a wolf reached their ears, quickly followed by others. The gaunt creatures that seem born ravenously hungry, and always remain so, had scented the rich feast that awaited them on the plateau, and were hurrying thither from all directions. Soon nothing would be left but the bones of the game brought down by the rifles of the hunters.

Rob and Fred naturally concluded the moment these sounds were identified that it was because of them the native was frightened, he having discovered them before the rest; but Jack knew it was from some other reason. He saw nothing alarming in the approach of a pack of wild animals. The four were well armed, they had a fire, were in a cavern, and could stand off all the wolves in Greenland for a time at least.

"No, it isn't that," muttered the sailor; "but if he doesn't choose to tell I sha'n't coax him."

CHAPTER XXIV

UNWELCOME CALLERS

Within the following fifteen minutes it seemed as if a thousand wolves had arrived on the plateau, and were fighting, feasting, snarling, and rending the bodies of the musk oxen to fragments. They were far enough removed from the cavern for the inmates to hear each other readily, while discussing the curious occurrence.

The boys could not contemplate a visit from the ravening beasts with the indifference of their companions. To them it seemed that the brutes would be rendered ten-fold fiercer by their taste of blood, and would not stop until they had devoured them.

"Do you think they will visit us?" asked Rob of Docak.

The latter was standing in the middle of the cavern, in the attitude of listening. He nodded his head, and replied:

"Yes--eat ox--den come here."

"If that is so I think we ought to prepare for them," suggested Fred, who shared the nervousness of his friend.

"How can we prepare more than we're prepared now?" asked Jack; "they've got to come in that opening one at a time, and it will be fun for us to set back here and pick 'em off."

"Provided they don't crowd in so fast that we can't do it."

"With four guns, I reckon we oughter take care of ourselves."

"Dere fire, too," remarked the Esquimau, jerking his head in the direction of the flames.

"Ah, I forgot that," said Rob, with a sigh of relief, recalling the dread which all animals have of fire. Indeed, he felt certain at the moment that the burning wood would prove far more effective than their weapons in keeping off the wolves.

It would be supposed that the bodies on the plateau were enough to keep the brutes occupied for a long time, and to afford them a meal sufficient to satisfy them for the night; but who ever saw a wolf when not ravenously hungry? They howled, and snarled, and fought, and pressed around the carcasses in such numbers that, when only the bones remained, it may be said that their appetites were but fairly whetted, and they were more eager than ever after additional prey.

Fully a score, in their keenness of scent, had been quick to strike the trail of the surviving musk oxen that had fled from the hot fire of the hunters. The scent was the more easily followed since a couple of the animals had been wounded, and there can be little doubt that all fell before the ferocity of their assailants, though the musk ox makes a brave fight ere he succumbs to those cowardly creatures.

Darting hither and yon, with their pointed snouts skimming over the ground, it was not long before several struck the footprints of the party that had taken refuge in the cavern. A dozen or, perhaps, a score would not have dared attack them had they not been inflamed by the taste of food already secured. As it was, they were aroused to that point that they were ready to assail any foe that could help to satisfy their voracity.

"Here they come!" exclaimed Rob Carrol, springing to his feet, with rifle ready.

"Yes--dey come--dat so."

While the native was speaking he stood motionless, but with inimitable dexterity brought his gun to a level, and, apparently without any aim at all, let drive into the pack crowding toward the entrance to the cavern.

No aim was necessary, for the wolves pressed so close that no one person could fail to bring down one at least of them.

Amid the snarling and growling rang out a single sharp yelp, which proved that some member of the pack was "hit hard." Whether struck mortally or not made no difference, for the moment blood appeared upon him his comrades fell upon him with unspeakable ferocity and tore him limb from limb.

The shot had the effect, too, of driving them away from the entrance for a brief while, but they speedily returned,

crowding so far forward that their eyes, lank jaws, and noses showed plainly in the reflection of the firelight.

It was evident that the shot of the Esquimau produced no permanent effect upon them. It may have been, indeed, that they wished for a second that it might afford them the pretext for feasting upon another of their fellow-citizens.

But the fire was burning brightly, and they dreaded that. So long as it was going and the hunters kept close to the flame, they were safe against the fangs of the wolves.

"That's too good a chance to be lost," remarked Rob, discharging his rifle among the animals.

Fred was but a moment behind him, so that two, if not more, of the brutes were slain and afforded an appetizer for the rest. Docak had lost no time in ramming another charge into his gun, while Jack Cosgrove held his fire, as if expecting some emergency, when a quick shot was likely to be necessary.

"It don't strike me as a good thing for all our guns to be empty at the same time," was his sensible remark, "so s'pose we take turns in banging into 'em."

"Dat right--dat good," commented the Esquimau, and the boys promised to follow the suggestion.

The scene at this time was striking. Looking toward the entrance to the cavern, nothing could be observed but the fronts of the fierce animals, all fighting desperately to get at the opening, all eager beyond expression to reach the serene hunters within, but restrained by the glowing fire beyond, to which they dared not go.

Quick to note their dread of this element, the boys became more composed, though both could not help thinking how it would be if there were no fire. The fuel if judiciously used was sufficient to last until daylight, by which time the courage of the brutes would ooze away to that extent that they would be likely to withdraw.

But the party could not spend all their time in the cavern, and, if attacked on the open plain, it would require the hardest kind of fighting to beat off their assailants.

"But what is the use of speculating about the future?" Rob asked himself, as, seeing that it was his turn, he drove another bullet among the brutes, doubling up one like a jack-knife, while his comrades proceeded to "undouble" him in the usual style.

"Suppose," said Fred, "we should keep this up until we killed a hundred, wouldn't the rest have enough to eat by that time?"

"No," replied Jack, who had seen the animals before; "the rest of 'em would be as hungry as ever after eating 'em. You may keep the thing going till there is only two left, and then shoot one of 'em; the other will gulp him down in a dozen mouthfuls, and then lick his chops and whine for more."

Docak looked at his friend and grinned at this graphic illustration of the voracity of the lupus species.

However, it was quite clear that our friends were wasting a good deal of ammunition, which might be needed before their return. So they seated themselves on the floor of the cavern near the fire, that was kept going with moderate vigor, and exchanging a few words now and then as the turmoil permitted, they sent a shot into the pack, when some of the foremost ventured to thrust their snouts too far into the cavern.

"If they only had sense enough to combine into one rush," said Fred, "they could wipe us out in a twinkling."

"That's just what they would do if it wasn't for the fire," was the reply of his friend; "but it does seem to me that they must get tired after awhile."

"I can't detect any signs of it yet. Let me try something."

Catching a brand from the fire, Rob whirled it about his head until it was fanned into a roaring blaze, when he hurled it right among the howling horde.

The scampering that followed was laughable. In a second or two not a wolf was visible, and only the smoking torch lay on the ground where it had fallen just outside the entrance.

It was expected they would soon return, and some of them did sneak back within a short distance, but the smoldering brand was a terror to them so long as it held any life, and they waited until it was utterly extinguished before venturing closer.

Meanwhile, Docak showed such disquiet and concern over something else that Jack Cosgrove, well knowing it must be serious, determined to force him to an explanation, for he had racked his brain in vain to think what grisly dread was looming in front of them.

CHAPTER XXV

THE COMING SHADOW

Docak, the Esquimau, had no wish to affect any mystery as to the cause of his misgiving. He had not mentioned it of his own accord, because he was debating in his mind which of two courses to adopt: to remain longer in the cavern or to set out at once for his home on the coast. It may be said that except for the appearance of the wolves he would have insisted that the start should be made without delay, and pushed with the utmost vigor until their destination was reached.

But this was not to be thought of under the circumstances. To venture outside the cavern was to invite an instant attack by the brutes who were in that state that they possessed a daring foreign to their nature.

Docak explained that an alarming change of weather was at hand. He knew the signs so well that there was no mistake on his part. As he had promised, it was not in the nature of a thaw or rising temperature, but may be explained by that expressive word with which the reader is familiar--blizzard.

Whoever has gone through one of those frightful visitations will never forget it. That one of a few years ago was so general throughout our country that the memory must remain through life with us.

But a blizzard in the Arctic regions is a terror, indeed. It meant in the present instance a snowstorm that might last for days, a hurricane of wind, and a temperature of such fearful cold that would consume almost like fire.

With several feet of snow on the surface of that which now covered the ground, and too fine to bear the weight of the lightest animal, with the air white with billions of particles, eddying, whirling, and flying hither and thither, so that one could not see a step in advance--with the gale careering like a demon across the snowy wastes--the strongest hunter might well shrink from attempting a journey one-tenth of that which lay between them and the coast.

When Jack suggested that Docak might be mistaken, he shook his head so decisively that it sent a chill through the boys, who were watching his dusky countenance and listening to his words. Such a man spoke that whereof he knew. He would hold out hope, if he had justification for doing so, but he saw none.

That the blizzard was at hand, that it was already careering from the far North and must speedily arrive, was as good as demonstrated. The only chance that Docak saw was that it might prove of shorter duration than he feared. If it should last no more than twelve or possibly twenty-four hours, they might struggle through it, without serious consequences, but if beyond that (as he was almost certain it would be), there was little hope.

However, since they must stay where they were until the following morning, preparations were made for spending the night, which, it will be borne in mind, was by no means as long as many which they have at certain seasons in the high latitudes.

It was decided that Rob should sit up until midnight and then awake Fred, who, after standing guard for several hours, would arouse Jack to take charge until daylight. Inasmuch as this was the Esquimau's own proposition, which, as will be perceived, relieved him of duty for any part of the night, the others understood its significance. He was reserving himself for the time when there was likely to be more urgent need of his services.

No comment was made on the fact, and the simple preparations were quickly finished. Docak added a caution to his friends that they should be as sparing as possible in the use of the fuel. They had already consumed a moiety of it, and the approach of the blizzard would render it valuable beyond estimate. Enough only to hold the wolves at a safe distance was to be burned.

Thus it came about that an hour later Rob Carrol was the only one awake in the cavern. The others were huddled together on the bear skin, quietly sleeping, while he kept off drowsiness by pacing slowly back and forth over the brief space within.

"It's getting colder," he said to himself more than once; "I had a hope that Docak might be wrong, but he isn't; we shall catch it within a few hours. This is a bad place to be snowed up."

He glanced continually toward the entrance, for he could not forget the wolves which were the indirect cause of their coming peril. They seemed, in spite of the disgusted remarks of Jack, to have become satisfied that nothing was to be gained by hovering about the refuge. So many of their comrades had fallen, and the fire burned so persistently, that the others must have felt a certain degree of discouragement.

Now and then a howl echoed among the desolate hills, with a strange power, and was immediately answered by scores from as many different points, but there was no such eager crowding as marked the first appearance of the brutes. Rob glanced repeatedly at the opening without seeing one of them.

But the youth was too wise to be caught off his guard. He allowed the fire to smolder until the figures of his friends were only barely visible in the gloom, and his own form became shadowy, as it slowly moved back and forth over the floor of the cavern, with his rifle ready for instant use.

He heard a soft tip tipping on the snow, and there was no mistaking its meaning.

"They're there," he said, peering outward in the gloom and listening intently, "and are as watchful for a chance as ever."

Turning toward the crevice which admitted light, and was too straight to allow the smallest wolf to pass through, he caught the glow of a pair of eyes.

They were motionless, and the wolf evidently was studying the interior with a view of learning the prospect for an excursion within.

The temptation to fire was strong, but the eyes noiselessly vanished before the gun could be brought to a level.

Rob stood intently listening. He heard the stealthy footsteps pass along the side of the cavern toward the front, and he moved in that direction, but placed himself at one side, so as to be out of sight of any one looking directly into the mouth. He had not long to wait, when the same keenness of ear told him that the brute was cautiously entering. The fire was smoldering lower than ever, the brand at the entrance had died out long before, and no one could be seen on guard. The brute must have made up his mind that he had "struck it rich." In his selfishness he did not summon his friends to the feast, but resolved to devour the four persons all by himself, and that, too, after having had his full share of the musk ox and his fallen friends!

There was just enough light in the cavern for Rob to note everything. Being at one side of the entrance, he could not be detected by the sneaking brute, which also was invisible to him. He must come further forward before they could discern each other.

The wolf, one of the largest of his species, stood just outside with his ears pricked, his head raised, and his eyes roaming over the interior. Everything looked promising, but he had learned to be suspicious of those bipeds, whose hands were always against them.

He stood in this attitude for several minutes, as stationary as if carved in stone. Then he lifted one of his fore-feet, held it suspended, as though he were pointing game, and then advanced a couple of steps. This brought him far enough into the cavern for the lad to see the end of his nose, but the beast still failed to detect that shadow at one side of the entrance that was calmly awaiting the critical moment.

But he saw the dimly outlined forms near the smoldering fire, and licked his chops in anticipation. Nothing could be more favorable for the grandest feast of his life.



THE WOLF LICKED HIS CHOPS IN ANTICIPATION
(See page 232)

At that moment a howl rent the air at no great distance. It must have startled this prowler, and told him that, if he delayed his meal any longer, he must share it with an unlimited number.

He started on a silent walk, straight for the forms, heedless of the figure that had pointed the rifle at him, while he was yet out of sight. All was like the tomb until the gun was fired. Then since the muzzle almost touched the brute, why--enough has been said.

CHAPTER XXVI

WALLED IN

By daybreak, when all the party were awake, the blizzard foretold by the native had fully arrived.

It was a terror, indeed. The cold was frightful, and the air outside was white with snow, which was driven horizontally by the hurricane, as though shot from the mouths of myriad pieces of ordnance. It shrieked about the cavern, and drove the white particles so fiercely through the narrow crevice that Docak hastened to shove his bear-skin into it. This only partially filled the opening and the snow spun in around it clean across the flinty floor.

The regular entrance was partly protected by its own projection, but, at times, a blast entered that fairly took away their breath. The fire was necessary to keep from freezing, but the supply of fuel was growing low, and the last stick must soon be reached. What then would be the fate of the party if the blizzard continued?

It was useless to discuss the future and no one did so; the present was with them, and the question was how to live from hour to hour.

On shooting the intruding wolf, Rob had flung his carcass away. The report awakened the others, and, rising to his feet, Docak passed far enough outside to bring it in again. He did not speak, but all understood the meaning of the action; that body might be the means of saving them from starvation.

Enough of the previous night's meal remained to afford a nourishing breakfast, but they partook sparingly, preferring to use that in preference to the new supply. Happily thirst was a torture that need never be apprehended.

Jack Cosgrove braved the blast to that degree that he forced himself through the opening and stood several minutes outside, shading his eyes and striving to pierce the blinding turmoil.

All in vain. The gale almost carried him off his feet, and his vision could no more penetrate the furious swirl of snow than if it were the darkest night that ever covered the earth. The cold was so piercing that he was glad to hasten back among his friends, and shiver and crouch over the fire.

"By the great horned spoon, Docak! s'pose we had started for home last night?"

"Wish had," was the sententious response.

"Why, we wouldn't have been half-way there by this time, and we would have perished all together."

"We trabel fast--mebbe storm not dere yet."

This intimation that the blizzard might be less terrific at so slight a distance was incredible, but the Esquimau was positive that it would have been far better had they set out early in the evening. By rapid traveling they might have covered the greater part of the distance before morning, and could have fought the few remaining miles in the teeth of the gale.

But it was equally useless to discuss what might have been. They were imprisoned in the cavern, thirty miles from succor and with no possibility that any friends would ever take the trouble to search for their bodies. All they could do was to rely upon Heaven and their own exertions.

Without any explanation as to his intentions, and leaving his gun behind him, the native plunged through the opening and disappeared in the blizzard outside.

Born and reared in Greenland, amid Arctic snows and appalling tempests, the hardy Esquimau was far better fitted to undergo such trials of endurance than could be any native of a temperate clime.

"Where do you suppose he has gone?" asked Rob, wonderingly.

"I don't know," replied Jack; "but if he goes far he'll never come back again."

"It doesn't seem to me," said Fred, coming to the question of the present for the first time, "that the outlook is as bad as he would make us believe."

"Why not?"

"We have enough food to last a week or two, or even longer, and the blizzard certainly won't keep it up that long."

"You can't be sartin about that," said Jack; "it may last for several weeks, but s'pose it's only for three or four days, there are two big things that we must face."

"What are they?"

"What to do after it stops; the snow will be several feet deep on top of that which is now on the ground; it will be too fine and soft to bear our weight, and can be traveled over only with snow-shoes which we haven't got. How then are we going to fight our way thirty miles through it?"

"It will be a hard job, but no greater than that which many explorers have undergone. With Docak as our guide, I think we can pull through."

"But what is the other matter you refer to?" asked Rob.

"This wood will soon go, and then how are we going to keep from freezing to death?"

"If we will huddle together as closely as we can with the bear-skin wrapped about us I think we can stand it."

"I like the way you chaps talk," said the sailor, admiringly, "and if we have to go down we'll do so with colors flying. It's the downheartedness of Docak that knocks me askew; if he would show a braver front I would feel better."

"Possibly he is more hopeful than he pretends."

"No, he isn't that sort of chap; he knows better than we just what all this means. Whew!"

The exclamation was caused by a sudden outburst that sent the snow whirling through the opening and the crevice, from which the bear-skin dropped, as if struck a blow from the other side. Jack ran forward, picked it up, and thrust it back, hardly able to breathe from the fury of the gale in his face.

The snow shot through the opening, too, scattering the brands of fire in every direction. Had the shelter been anything else excepting the solid rock that it was, it must have been swept like chaff from its foundations.

The explosion, as it may be called, lasted but a minute or so. The boys hastily gathered up the scattered brands and flinging them together they were fanned by the tempest into a vigorous flame, whose warmth, slight as it was, was grateful beyond measure to the three gathered around it.

"Docak is wrong in regretting that we did not start last night," said Jack Cosgrove; "that style of storm is raging at this moment over hundreds of miles, and it would have made short work of us."

"What about the 'Nautilus,' if she is in it?"

"She can manage it if she has plenty of sea room, but I hope she is far enough off to dodge this blizzard. She ought to be at any rate."

The gale did the party an unexpected favor. It was a substantial one, too, which they appreciated. It drove the snow against the troublesome crevice with such fury that it quickly formed a solid bank, extending far above it. This ended the drifting of the particles inside and protected them from the cutting wind.

At the same time it did something of the same nature with the entrance, where it soon became banked to that extent that little blew within, and the gale hardly disturbed them.

Seeing what had taken place, Jack withdrew the bear-skin from where it had been stuffed into the opening and spread it in the farthest corner of the cavern.

"Come, my hearties," said he, cheerfully, "we've got nothing to do but to make ourselves comfortable. We won't burn any more wood till Docak comes back."

They huddled together, and, though the cold made their teeth chatter and their bodies shiver, they found considerable relief and were willing to hope on.

They could feel no anxiety about the absent native. It was certain he would not go far enough from the cavern to endanger his safety or to imperil his return. Some definite object must have led him forth.

"I wonder if it is for food," suggested Fred.

"No; for there's no possibility that the wolves left anything," replied Rob; "and then, too, we have enough to last a good while."

At that moment there was a flurry at the entrance and the Esquimau, resembling a snow man, stooped and pushed his way in.

Entering, he flung a half-dozen small sticks upon the tiny pile at the side of the cavern. He had gone forth in quest of fuel and was able to secure only that miserable supply, really not worth taking into account.

CHAPTER XXVII

"COME ON!"

The Esquimau's depression continued. After flinging down the few bits of wood he looked across the cavern to where the friends were huddled together, but did not speak. Then he glanced at the crevice, now so completely blocked with snow that they were protected against any more drifting in upon them.

The three respected his silence, and held their peace. He stood a minute or two, looking gloomily into the fire, which he replenished, partly from the scant supply he had brought. While it was gaining strength he drew his knife, deftly cut a number of pieces from the frozen body of the wolf, and proceeded to cook them over the blaze. Had he been alone he would have devoured them raw, but he knew the sentiments of his companions.

"Well, Docak," said Jack, feeling that the silence ought not to continue, "it looks as if we are in for a long stay. We shall have enough to keep us alive a good while, and, when you're ready, you can come and snuggle down beside us."

"Not now," he replied, continuing his culinary work, with what seemed a wasteful disregard of fuel until he was through.

When nothing more remained worth attention he held up a piece, considerably scorched, and, looking at the others, asked:

"Eat now?"

"No; we'll wait till morning," replied Rob, speaking for the rest.

"All right."

But he was not disposed to wait if they were. He made quite a meal, with as much evident enjoyment as if it had been upon the choicest part of the musk ox. He took care, however, to leave a good supply against the "rainy day" that he felt no doubt would come to them all.

The dismal day wore slowly away, and with a feeling of unutterable loneliness they saw the second night of their enforced stay in the cavern close around them. The cold seemed to intensify with the approach of darkness, and the supply of wood had grown so slight that the warmth was barely perceptible.

The blizzard raged with unabated fury. The gale shrieked around the rocks, the blinding snow whirled and eddied until it seemed that it must bury them out of sight, and the outlook was woeful enough to chill the bravest heart. The three in the corner adhered to their resolution not to eat any of the food prepared before the morrow. They might need it then to aid their systems in withstanding the terrific strain, but, as in the case of the bear on the iceberg, it must be the last resort.

The Esquimau declined their invitation to join them in the corner. He was thickly clad, and was so accustomed to the rigors of the Arctic winter that he needed no such help. He seated himself near by, and talked a little, until, at a late hour, troubled sleep settled over all.

A gleam of hope came with the break of day. Docak was the first to awake, and, without disturbing the others, he forced his way through the entrance and took a survey of the weather and his surroundings.

The blizzard was over. The fall of snow had ceased, little wind was stirring, but the cold was terrible. Toughened as he was, he shrank when first exposed to it. The party had been walled in so tightly that the warmth of their bodies was of more help than would be suspected.

Quick to note the change in the weather the native studied the sky with its numerous signs in the effort to learn what was likely to come in the near future.

Great as was his skill at this it was now taxed to the utmost. The sun was not visible, and the difficulty became the greater; but he tarried until he had perfected his theory.

The discouraging feature which the native saw about the matter was that the blizzard had ceased for a time only. He believed it would soon resume its fury, fully as great, if not greater than before, and it might continue for days and possibly weeks. If, when that time should come, it found them in the cavern they were doomed beyond the power of mortal man to save themselves.

But the prospect was equally hopeless, if the lull lasted only a few hours, for, when it should break forth again it would overtake them in the open plain (provided they made the start he had in mind), where no screen against its resistless power could be secured.

It should be understood that Docak's solicitude was on account of his friends. Had he been alone he would not have hesitated to set out for the coast, and with every reason, too, to believe he could make it, even, if the battle of the elements were renewed when but a small part of the way thither.

But he had three others in charge, and it was hard to decide whether to urge them to make the attempt now or wait awhile, in the hope that he could settle with certainty the extent of the cessation of the blizzard.

The additional snow was between two and three feet deep, where it had not been drifted by the gale. With the help of snow-shoes it would have been an easy matter to skim over it, but there were no snow-shoes to be had, as has been shown, the new fall was of such fine character that they would sink its full depth when essaying to walk upon it.

When he turned about and re-entered the cavern his friends were astir. Their appetites had assumed that edge that they eagerly attacked some of the meat prepared the night before. The few embers had been stirred into a sickly blaze, but not another stick remained. The warmth was only perceptible when the chilled hands were held almost against it.

The Esquimau smiled grimly when he saw what they were doing, but with the reticence that had marked his course since refuge was taken in the cavern, he held his peace. Jack greeted him pleasantly, and he nodded in return, and then again passed outside.

The sailor and lads had peeped after him, and discovered that the fall of snow was over, and the wind was not blowing. This gave them considerable hope, inasmuch as they were unable to read its full meaning like the native.

"It's easy enough to see what he has on his mind," remarked Jack.

"What is it?" queried Rob.

"He is considering whether we shall make a start now for the coast or wait awhile longer."

"What's the use of waiting," asked Rob, "when it can't be any better and may grow worse? The snow that has fallen will stay where it is for months, so we can gain nothing there. I'm in favor of starting for home while it is yet morning."

"That's the way it strikes me, but he'll make up his mind, and whatever he says we'll do. He isn't in the mood to take any advice from us; I never seed him so glum before."

"We're quite well protected," added Fred, who was eager to be off if that should be the decision; "we have the thickest kind of clothing, heavy shoes, and warm undergarments. Then we mustn't forget that when we start through the snow the labor will help to warm us. Fact is, I don't understand why Docak hesitates."

The Esquimau used less time than they supposed in reaching his conclusion. But, with a view of giving him a hint of their wishes, Jack and the boys prepared themselves as if it had been settled that they should venture at once upon the perilous attempt. They carefully adjusted their clothing, tying the lower parts of their trousers about their ankles, so as to keep out the snow, buttoned their heavy coats to their chins, pulled up the collars more carefully, and fixed their caps in place, though all this had been done to a certain extent before.

When nothing remained they ranged themselves in a row beside the entrance and awaited the appearance of their guide.

He came in the course of a few minutes. He started slightly when he read the meaning of it all.

"We're ready," said Jack, with a smile.

"All right--we go--foller me--come on!" and he led the way out, and they turned their backs on the cavern forever.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A HOPELESS TASK

A fearful task confronted the little party. Thirty miles of snow, several feet deep, lay between them and their only haven of refuge, and they were without sled or snow-shoe. If they succeeded in their prodigious task, it must be done by sheer strength and the power of continued desperation.

But, with compressed lips and the resolution to do or die, they bent to the work without faltering.

The Esquimau naturally took the lead to break the way so far as he could; Jack Cosgrove came next, then Rob Carrol, while Fred Warburton brought up the rear.

The first move that the native made proved he was a veteran. He plunged in, following the decline down to the plateau, which was the scene of their adventures two days before. He walked like one who had only an ordinary tramp before him. In truth, he could have gone faster and done better, but he accommodated himself to his friends, to whom the labor was new and trying to a degree.

None spoke for a long time. It requires strength to do even so slight a thing as that, and no one had an ounce to spare. The question that was uppermost in the minds of the three was whether they would be able to hold out to the end.

"I don't see why we can't," reflected Fred, who, being at the rear, had an easier task than any of the others; "it would be well enough if we had snow-shoes, but neither Jack nor Rob nor I can use them, and we would flounder around a good deal worse than we are doing now and likely enough wouldn't get ahead at all."

The meditations of Rob Carrol were of a similar strain.

"I've seen better fun than this, but it beats staying in the cavern and freezing to death on wolf steak. I believe I'm strong enough to see the business through; I hope Fred won't give out, for he isn't as strong as Jack and I. I believe Docak enjoys it. Gracious! if I ever live to get out of this outlandish country, I'll never set foot in it again. I haven't lost any North Pole, and those that think they have can do their own hunting for it."

The sun still remained obscured, and the wonder of the three was how their guide kept his bearings, after debouching from the highlands and entering upon the broad, undulating plain which stretched away to Davis Strait and Baffin's Bay. There was no misgiving, however, in that respect. Docak could not go astray, or, at least, if there was any likelihood of his doing so, not one of his friends was able to help him.

As the boys had anticipated, the labor of walking in this difficult fashion soon generated a warmth in their bodies that was a vast comfort, after sitting benumbed and shivering so long in the cavern. Despite the extreme cold they felt no discomfort, for the air was quite dry, and less trying, therefore, than a damp atmosphere would have been, even though twenty-five degrees higher.

But it is in such an Arctic climate that one can have his limbs or a portion of his body hopelessly frozen without suspecting it. All were so effectually protected that only a small portion of their faces, their eyes, and tips of their noses were exposed.

The bear-skin, which has been referred to as belonging to Docak, was carried by him after his usual manner. He would have offered it to his friends in turn, had he not known that it would soon have become a burden which he could carry better than they.

Jack, who trod close on the heels of the Esquimau, was admiring the sturdy manner in which he plowed through the snow, his labor being much greater than any one of those who followed him, when the native turned his head and scanned his face with curious intensity. Pausing for the moment in his labor, he leaned to one side, and did the same to the others. His act was all the more singular since he did not speak. The lads smiled under their head-coverings, but their faces were so wrapped up that the relaxation of the features could not be perceived.

"I wonder why he did that," thought all three.

"The chap has been acting curious ever since this trouble began," continued the sailor, "and I wouldn't be s'prised if he's just a little off."

"Can it be," asked Rob, following up a whimsical idea, "that he fears we aren't ourselves? He has started out to take us to the seacoast, and doesn't mean that anybody else shall rope himself in on him. I guess he's satisfied, though we're

so covered up that our nearest friends wouldn't know us."

For fully an hour the party toiled on, and all, with the exception of the leader, began to feel the effects of the severe exertion. Still, no one protested or asked for rest; each determined to keep it up, if possible, until the leader chose to halt.

But Docak did not forget them. At the end of the time named he turned about, and, with something of his old pleasantry, said:

"Much tired--wait while--den go on."

Each of the boys longed to ask him what he thought of the prospect of getting through, but forebore, recalling his moodiness, which might be still upon him despite his present manner.

"I think we're doing quite well, Docak," said Jack; "it's a little hard, but we can take a breathing spell now and then, and keep at it till we strike your home."

Had the Esquimau made any response to this half-inquiring remark the sailor would have followed it up, but he did not. On the contrary, he was busy studying the sky and the surrounding landscape, doubtless with a view of determining what weather changes impended.

The others did the same, but though Jack had learned a good deal of the science at sea he was now at a loss. The dull, leaden sky, so obscured that it was impossible to tell in what part of the heavens the sun was, told him nothing beyond the fact that more snow was likely to fall before many hours.

As the best thing that could be done, the friends studied the actions of the Esquimau.

The result of his survey was not satisfactory--that was clear. He shook his head and muttered something in his own language, which had anything but a pleasant effect on the others.

The scene was one of utter loneliness and desolation. North, east, south, and west stretched the snowy plain, unrelieved by tree, house, or sign of a living creature. Far up in the sky sounded the honk of some wild fowl, and, looking aloft, a line of black specks could be seen, sailing swiftly southward through space, as if to escape the Arctic cold that would soon smother everything in its icy embrace.

The rest was barely ten minutes, when Docak, looking at his companions, asked:

"Be rested? We go on?"

"Yes; we're ready," replied Jack.

"All right--work hard now--don't get tired."

"I won't, if I can help it; but the only way I know of is to stand still, which don't pay in this kind of business."

The Esquimau bent to his work, as if striving for a wager. He had a way not only of stepping down in the soft snow, but of shoving it partly aside from his path. It would have been the severest kind of labor for anyone else, and it is hard to understand how he managed it so well. It was a great help to the one immediately behind him. Jack would have been glad to lighten the task for the boys, but that was out of his power, and he wasted no strength in the attempt.

The party was becoming accustomed to the work. That the guide was aware of this was proven when he kept at it fully twice as long as before. They were going slowly--very slowly--but there was comfort in the consciousness that every step taken was toward safety, and the task before them was lessened, even to that small extent.

At the moment the boys were beginning to think it about time another halt was called, Docak stopped in his former abrupt way, and, leaning to one side, peered into each face in turn.

Something in Fred's appearance caught his attention, and, with an exclamation, he sprang out of the path, and hurried back to where the lad stood, wondering what was the matter with the fellow.

CHAPTER XXIX

TEN MILES

Docak, when flurried, generally forgot his broken English, and spoke in his own tongue. Before Fred could divine his intention he had slipped off one of his mittens, grasped a handful of snow, and throwing one arm about the boy's neck, began rubbing his nose as though he meant to rub it out of existence.

The watchful native was on the watch for the first sign of freezing in the case of his companions, and, discovering that the youngest member was becoming a victim without himself or friends suspecting it, he resorted to heroic measures, with no unnecessary delay.

Fred understood what it all meant, and, like the sensible boy he was, submitted with good grace, though the vigorous handling to which that organ was subjected made it hard for him to keep from protesting. Not only that, but, when the Esquimau, pausing to inspect his work, said:

"All right," Fred thanked him.

Jack and Rob, who looked grinningly on, while the performance lasted, now asked Docak whether they were in need of a similar manipulation. He took another look at the faces, and gave Rob's a slight rubbing, but said nothing more was needed.

It was a piece of thoughtfulness on the part of the native, for which he deserved to receive gratitude. But for him Fred Warburton, and probably the others, would have suffered injuries from which they never could have recovered.

Having rested but a brief while, Docak moved on, and the dismal procession wound its way slowly through the snow, which clogged their feet and obstructed their path to that extent that more than once the hardy guide had to come to a full halt that he might decide in what way to flank the obstacle.

The blizzard had played fantastic tricks with the snow. In many places it was drifted to a depth of six or eight feet, through which, as may be supposed, it was the severest labor to force a path. In others, again, it had swept the crust entirely clear of the new layer, so that they walked as easily as when making their way from the coast. Unfortunately, these bare places, as they may be called, were not only few and far apart, but of such slight extent that their aid counted for little.

There is nothing more cheering than the certainty that we are approaching our goal, even though the rate of progress is more tardy than we wish. As the afternoon drew to a close Fred was positive they had made fully twenty miles. Rob believed it was more, but, to be on the safe side, fell in with his friend's figures. When Jack was appealed to he declined to hazard a guess, saying he preferred to wait till the halt for the night, when he would leave it to Docak.

"He'll tell you within a quarter of a mile," added the sailor, "and he won't make a mistake. I can let you know one thing, howsomever, my hearties, and that is that you'll find it a good deal less than you think."

"I don't know about that," said Rob; "Fred and I have calculated the matter pretty closely."

"You may think so, but you haven't. We have worked hard enough to tramp a hundred miles, but we haven't been able to use it in the best way."

Another fact, which might mean a good deal or little, was that a marked moderation in the temperature took place in the course of the afternoon. What this portended was left to the Esquimau to determine. Toiling through the snow was not favorable to conversation, and it was dropped.

With only short halts the party pushed onward, until night began settling over the dreary landscape. They would have kept on had not the darkness been impenetrable. The sun had not shown itself during the day, and the obscurity was so dense that not a solitary star twinkled overhead.

"Besides," as the boys concluded, "the rest of the distance is so brief that we can afford to leave it until morning, by which time we will be fully rested. Inasmuch as it is necessary to pass a night on the road, one spot is as good as another."

Camping at such times is simple. They were in the middle of a snowy waste, without tree or rock to shelter. Starting a fire, of course, was out of the question. A slight wind was blowing, and though less rigorous than that of the preceding night, it was necessary to protect themselves from its force while they were idle.

For a few minutes Docak acted like a man seized with convulsions or the St. Vitus' dance. He leaped about, kicked, and swung his arms, the snow flying in a storm from him, until, at the end of a few minutes, he had scooped out a bowl-like space, large enough to hold the party. In doing this he cleared the way down to the lower crust only, which was strong enough to bear their weight. To have dug to the ground would have been too laborious, and no special advantage was to be gained by doing so.

This completed, he carefully spread his bear-skin on the hard surface, and the four seated themselves back to back. They had camped for the night.

The discomforts of this primitive method were less than would be supposed. There is warmth in snow, as you are well aware, cold being a negative existence, and, so long as they were below the surface, they could not be reached by the wind that swept across the dismal waste. Then, too, the change in the temperature was in the right direction as affecting their comfort, so there was little fear of suffering before morning.

When they were adjusted for the night, Rob asked the question of Docak which had been in his mind for hours:

"How far have we got toward home?"

Fred was confident the answer would be twenty miles; while Rob was quite hopeful it would be more. Judge, therefore, their consternation when the reply struck their ears:

"Purty near ten mile--not quite--purty near."

The hopes of the boys sank to zero. Jack, knowing they had placed their estimate too high, still believed it greater than was the fact.

Ten miles! Barely a third of the distance between the cavern and the first place that could offer refuge.

They had used a day in advancing thus far. At that rate two more days, and possibly nights, remained ere the terrible task would be ended. They had eaten the last mouthful before starting, leaving behind some food which they might have brought, but which was not deemed necessary.

It was not the prospect of hunger that appalled them. In such a severe climate they could go a couple of days without food, and not suffer greatly, though the draught upon their strength would be trying to the last degree.

The great question was whether the task they had essayed was a possible one. Recalling the terrific exertions of the day, their exhaustion, and the repeated rests that were necessary, they might well doubt their ability, though it need not be said there was no thought of giving up so long as life and strength held out.

"Ten miles," repeated Fred Warburton; "are the Esquimau miles the same as our English, or aren't they double their length?"

"I don't know about that," said Rob; "they must get their ideas from the Danes, who have a system of measurement different from ours, but it don't matter in this instance."

"Why not?"

"When we set out, and after reaching the hills, Docak told us we were thirty miles from home; he tells us now that we are ten miles less."

"Not quite ten mile--purty near," interrupted the native.

"Well, calling it ten miles, we have come about one-third of the way to the coast. No matter what system of measurement is followed we can't figure out that we have gone further than that."

"And not quite that far," suggested Jack, who was not less disappointed than they, but was quicker to rally.

"It isn't the thing calculated to make a chap feel good to learn a thing like that," he added; "but all we've got to do is to buckle down to it and we'll get there one of these days, with fair sailing and no more squalls."

"It is those squalls or blizzards, Jack, that are the real danger before us."

It was Rob who made this remark, and his friends knew he spoke the truth.

CHAPTER XXX

THE LAST PAUSE

The night slowly settled over the snow waste, and the little party, feeling no discomfort because of the cold, gradually sank into unconsciousness.

Just before slumber weighed down their eye-lids the dismal howl of a wolf echoed faintly across the plain. All heard it, and Jack and the boys believed that one of the brutes had struck the trail of the hunters, and would soon be hot upon it, with an eager pack at his heels. Jack asked the Esquimau whether they ought not to prepare for a fight, but he replied that there were no preparations to make. Each had his loaded gun and a good supply of ammunition; they could fight as well there as in any other place.

Docak showed no trepidation of voice and manner, and his coolness had a good effect upon the others. They were sure that, if there was any cause for alarm, he would feel it.

This confidence proved well placed; for that single cry was all that reached their ears. They slept, and were not molested.

But sometime during the night the fine snow began sifting downward, falling so gently that even the Esquimau was not disturbed. Through the long gloomy hours it silently descended, until when the daylight stole over the desolate plain, fully six inches had been added to the mass that covered the earth long before.

Sitting nearly upright and back to back, the pressure upon the sleepers was so slight and gradual that no discomfort resulted. All were so worn out that their slumber was profound, doubtless lasting as long as it would have done had no such snowfall taken place.

It was Jack Cosgrove who first opened his eyes, and his amazement may be imagined when he saw their laps buried out of sight, only the outlines of their limbs showing, while head and shoulders were weighted down with the feathery mass.

"By the great horned spoon!" he called, shaking himself free and rising to his feet, with such a flurry that the others were aroused; "wake up, for we're all snowed under, and, if we wait a few minutes longer, we'll be buried clean out of sight."

"What's the matter?" called Rob, being the next to climb to his feet; "has the snow tumbled in on us?"

"Yes; and more of it is tumbling every minute."

Docak was astonished that he had not been the first to awake, for his mind was burdened with anxiety for the rest. He forgot that, inasmuch as his labors had been far greater than theirs, his weariness of body was in more need of rest.

"What time be it?" he asked of the boys, who carried watches.

The answer showed that day had dawned more than two hours before. He sighed at the knowledge of the precious time wasted. Harder work than ever was before them, and when night came again they might count themselves fortunate if one-half the remaining distance was accomplished.

Rising to their feet, with their heads above the surface, they found the snow falling so fast that they could not see fifty feet in any direction.

"How can Docak keep his bearings?" asked Rob, in a low voice, of the others, when the native, walking a few feet, paused and looked earnestly about him.

"It doesn't seem to me that it is any harder for him to do so than it was yesterday when there was no snow falling."

"There is a big difference. We couldn't have done any better in the one case than the other, but he could see the sky. He knew where the sun was, though we did not; and there must have been something in the looks of the landscape to help, but there is none of that now."

"I can give you the right answer to Fred's question," said Jack, in the same guarded undertone.

"What is it?"

"When you ask whether Docak can keep the p'int of the compass in his mind, and make sure that he is heading straight for home, the real answer is--he can't."

There could be no denying that the sailor spoke the truth. The native, like the Indians further south, may have possessed a subtle skill in the respect named beyond the comprehension of his more civilized neighbors, but, in all cases, there is a limit to such ability. Where there is nothing to afford guide or clue no living man can walk in a straight line--hour after hour, or hold his way undeviatingly toward a fixed point of the compass.

But, admitting this unquestioned truth, nothing was more self-evident than that it was sure death to stay where they were; the one and only thing left to them was to push on while the opportunity was theirs.

The Esquimau was a man of deeds rather than words. He showed no disposition to discuss the situation, and, beyond a few insignificant words, said nothing to his companions, who were as eager to be on the move as he. He stood a minute or two in study, and then, uttering the words:

"Come on--work hard--neber stop," began pushing through the snow with the vigor shown the day before.

The others followed in the order named, and with a resolution as strong as his to keep it up to the last verge of endurance.

It was necessary. In no other way could they escape the frightful doom that impended. Another condition was equally necessary; their efforts must be rightly directed. The guide must lead them toward the sea-coast. Had he the power to do so? The test was now going on, and the question would soon be settled.

They were terrible words spoken by Jack, but the time had passed when he felt it necessary to mince matters. He had done so at the beginning, but his companions were not children unable to bear the truth, however unpleasant it might be.

But, despite the good reason in what he said, neither Rob nor Fred quite credited its full meaning. While they could not explain how any person could guide himself unerringly, when there was no visible help for the eye, they believed that somehow or other he would "get there just the same."

They proved their own earnestness when Docak, after a long struggle through the clogging snow, stopped, turned about, and said:

"You be tired--then rest awhile."

"No," responded Fred, "I want no rest."

"Push on, then," added Rob, "unless you are tired yourself, Docak."

The idea that the native needed rest caused him a half-smile, as he faced forward and resumed his weary plowing through the snowy mass.

There was no call now to watch the countenances of the youths to protect them against freezing. The weather was so moderate that they would have felt more comfortable with their outer covering removed. If the blizzard had come back, it was in such a mild form that it could lay no claim to the name. It was simply snowing hard, and there was only a breath of air at intervals. Had there been anything approaching the hurricane of two days before, they could not have fought their way for a single rod.

When the guide, after another long interval, proposed a brief rest, it was acquiesced in by all. They had kept at it longer than before, and the pause must have been grateful to Docak himself.

"We are not going fast," remarked Rob, "but I am sure we have covered a good deal of ground since starting, and when we go into camp to-night there ought not to be many miles between us and the sea."

"Remember the mistake we made in our calculations," said Fred, warningly, "and don't count too much."

"How far have we come?" asked Jack, putting the question directly to the Esquimau.

"Dunno," he answered, turning about and resuming his labor.

"That's the last time I will ask him anything," growled the sailor, displeased at the curt treatment.

A sad story awaits our pen. The poor hunters toiled on, on, on, slower and still more slowly, with the snow falling thicker and still more thickly, and the uncertainty growing more intensified as the day wore away. With short intervals of rest they kept at it with heroic courage, until at last the shades of night began closing once more around them. Then, all of a sudden, the Esquimau uttered a despairing cry and threw himself down in the snow.



THE ESQUIMAU UTTERED A DESPAIRING CRY AND THREW HIMSELF IN THE SNOW
(See page 277)

He had made a terrifying discovery. They had come back to the very spot where they spent the previous night. All day long they had journeyed in an irregular circle, as lost persons almost invariably do, and the dreadful labor was utterly thrown away.

The Esquimau had essayed a task beyond his power, and he now threw up his hands and would struggle no more.

CHAPTER XXXI

ANOTHER SOUND

The little party were overwhelmed with dismay. The very man on whom they had relied from the beginning, the one who had conducted them thus far, and the one who, under heaven, could alone guide them to safety, had thrown up his hands and yielded the struggle. He lay on the snow limp, helpless, and despairing.

The new fall of snow had almost obliterated their trail, but enough remained to identify it beyond mistake. The cavity which Docak had scooped out, and in which they slept, was recognized on the first glance. The whole day, from the moment of starting, had been wasted, in laboring to their utmost strength, in getting back to the very point from which they set out, and which itself was twenty miles from the sea-coast.

The tendency that every one shows to travel in a circle, when lost, has been explained in various ways. It is probably due to the fact that one side of every person is more developed than the other. A right-handed individual gradually veers to the left, a left-handed one to the right, while a really ambidextrous one ought to keep straight ahead.

Jack and the boys remained silent for a moment. They looked down on the prostrate figure, and finally Fred asked:

"What's the matter, Docak?"

"Gib up--no use--we die--neber see home 'gin."

The words were uttered with all the dejection that it is possible to conceive, and the native did not move. He acted as if the power to do so had gone from him.

Suddenly, to the astonishment of the others, Jack Cosgrove gave him a thumping kick.

"Get up!" he commanded; "if you're such a lubber as all this, I'll take you by the neck and boot you all the way across Greenland."

And as a guarantee of his good faith he yanked Docak to his feet, and made ready for a still harder kick, when the fellow moved nimbly out of the way.

"If you are too big a calf to go on, I'll take the lead, and when I flop it'll be after all the rest of you've gone down."

The breezy style in which the sailor took hold of matters produced an inspiring effect on the others. Despite the grim solemnity of the moments, both Rob and Fred laughed, as much at the quickness with which Docak responded as anything else.

"Since we are here at the same old spot," said Rob, "and it is growing dark, we might as well go into camp."

"That's the fact, as we won't have to scoop out a new place to sleep in. I suppose, Docak, you're able to sleep, aint you?"

The native made no answer, and the party silently placed themselves in position for another night's rest, Docak not refusing to huddle in among them. But there was little talking done. No one could say anything to comfort the others, and each was busy with his own thoughts.

It need not be said that, despite the fearful gloom and these forebodings, they were ravenously hungry. Their bodies were in need of sustenance, and the probability that they could not get it for an indefinite time to come was enough to deepen the despair that was stealing into every heart.

It was unto Fred Warburton that something in the nature of a revelation came in the darkness of that awful night. His senses remained with him for some time after the others were asleep, as he knew from their deep, regular breathing.

The snowfall had almost ceased, and he sat wondering whether, after all, the end was at hand, and he was asking himself whether, such seeming of a surety to be the fact, it was worth while to rise from their present position and try to press on further. If die they must, why not stay where they were and perish together?

These thoughts were stirring his mind, with many other solemn meditations, which crowd upon every person who, in his right senses, sees himself approaching the Dark River, when it seemed to him that there was sounding, at intervals, an almost inaudible roar, so faint and dull that for awhile he paid no heed to it, deeming it some insignificant aural disturbance, such as causes a buzzing or ringing at times in the head.

But it obtruded so continually that he began to suspect it was a reality and from some point outside of himself.

It was a low, almost inaudible murmur, sometimes so faint that he could not hear it, and again swelling out just enough to make it certain it had an actuality.

Suddenly the heart of the lad almost stood still.

"It's the ocean!" he whispered; "the air has become so still that I can hear it. The plain is open, there has been a big storm, and the distance is not too great for it to reach us. But, no, it is from the wrong direction; it can't be the sea."

The next moment he laughed at himself. Having fixed in his mind the course to the home of Docak, and, hearing the roar from another point of the compass, it did not at once occur to him that he himself might be mistaken.

"If Docak, with all his experience could not keep himself from going astray, what wonder that I should drift from my moorings? Yes, that is the sound of the distant ocean or that part known as Davis' Strait and Baffin's Bay. We can now tell which course to take to get out of this accursed country."

He wished to awake his friends, and in view of their hungry condition, urge that they should set out at once; but they were so wearied that the rest would be grateful, and it was needed. And so, while not exactly clear as to what should be done, he fell asleep and did not open his eyes until morning.

Docak was the first to rouse himself. He found that the snow was falling again, with the prospect worse than ever.

Fred sprang to his feet and quickly told what he had discovered the evening before.

"It was the ocean," he added, with a shake of his head: "I have heard it too often to make a mistake--listen!"

All were silent, but the strained ear could catch no sound like the hollow roar which reached the youth a few hours before.

"I don't care; I was not mistaken," he insisted.

"Why don't we hear it now?" asked Rob, anxious to believe what he said, but unable fully to do so.

"There was no snow falling at the time; the air was clearer then, and what little wind there was must have been in the right direction."

"Where did sound come from?" asked the Esquimau, looking earnestly at Fred and showing deep interest in his words.

"From off yonder," replied the lad, pointing in the proper direction.

"He right--dat so--he hear sea," said Docak, who, to prove the truth of his words, pointed down at the dimly marked trail. It led in the precise course indicated by Fred. In other words, when the Esquimau resumed the journey on the preceding morning, at which time his bearings were correct, he went of a verity directly toward his own home, which was the route now pointed by Fred Warburton.

The others saw the point, and admitted that the declaration of the lad had been proven to be correct beyond question.

And yet, while all this was interesting in its way, and for the time encouraged the others, of what possible import was it? The conditions were precisely the same as twenty-four hours before, except they were less favorable, for the comrades in distress were hungrier and weaker.

But they could not hear the ocean, the snow was falling, and there was no way of guiding themselves.

They could only struggle on as before, hoping that possibly before wandering too far astray they might be able to catch the roar that would be an infallible guide to them in their despairing groping for home.

The three looked at Docak, expecting him to take the lead, as he had done from the start. It may be said that Jack Cosgrove had kicked the Esquimau into his proper place and he was prepared to stay there as long as he could.

But the native, instead of moving off, stood with his head bent and his ears bared in the attitude of intense attention.

They judged that he was striving to catch a sound of the ocean. But he was not.

Truth to tell, Docak had detected another sound of a totally different character, but far more important than the hollow roar of the far-away Arctic Sea.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE WILD MEN OF GREENLAND

A sharp bark broke the stillness, a peculiar cry followed, and then, out from the swirl and flurry of the eddying snow, came a string of Esquimau dogs. There were six couples fastened to a rude sleigh, and at the side of the frisky animals skurried one of the wild men of Greenland on snow-shoes, and with a whip in hand having a short stock and a very long lash.

Directly behind him followed two similar teams, and then a fourth emerged with seven spans of dogs. There was a driver to each, and the sleighs were loaded with pelts intended for the nearest settlement. Not one of the Esquimaux was riding, though it was their custom to do so for a goodly portion of the way.

This singular collection of men and animals were approaching in a line that would have carried them right over the amazed party that were about to start on their hopeless attempt to reach the sea coast, had they not veered to one side.

When the foremost driver discerned the four figures through the snow he emitted a sharp cry, not dissimilar to that of his own dogs, and the obedient animals halted. The others did the same, and in a few minutes the four teams, with their drivers, were ranged about the others.

These individuals were genuine Esquimaux, the real wild men of Greenland. Their homes were far in the interior, and only at rare intervals did they venture forth with their dogs and sleighs to the coast settlements, where they were welcome, for they never failed to bring a good supply of peltries with them, for which they found ready barter among the agents of the Danish government.

There was no mixed blood among these Esquimaux. They were copper-colored, short, of stocky build, and with more muscular development in the lower limbs than is seen among the coast natives. The latter, giving most of their time to fishing and the use of the paddle, have powerful arms and shoulders, but as a rule are weak in the legs.

They were warmly clad in furs, their heads being covered with hoods similar to that worn by Docak, but there was nothing in the nature of the dress ornamentation which he displayed.

None of the party could speak English, but that made no difference, since Docak understood their curious gibberish. An animated conversation began at once between him and the four, who gathered about him while Jack and the boys stood silently listening and looking upon the singular scene.

What the guide said was in the nature of "business." They had talked but a short while when one of the wild men went to his sleigh and brought forth a big piece of cooked reindeer meat, evidently a part of their own liberal supply of provisions, and offered it to Jack. The latter accepted with thanks, shown more plainly by manner than his words.

And didn't those three fellows have a feast, with Docak himself as a participant? You need to be told no more on that point.

The guide, after the brisk interview, explained the meaning of the conversation to his friends.

The Esquimaux were on their way to Ivigtut, some forty miles in a southwest direction. They had come a long way from the interior, having been three days on the road, and it was their intention to push matters so vigorously that they would reach the famous mining town that night.

But, best of all, they agreed to carry the three whites as passengers. They could be stowed in the sleighs among the peltries, as the drivers were accustomed to do at times, though they were capable of keeping pace with the dogs hour after hour without fatigue. They would do so now on their snow-shoes, and the three could ride all the way to Ivigtut.

It meant the rescue and salvation of the party, who were in the uttermost depths of despair but a few minutes before, and tears of thankfulness came to the eyes of all three.

"We haven't much money with us," said Rob, addressing Docak, "but we will pay them as well as we can when we reach Ivigtut."

"Don't want much," replied the grinning guide, "jes' little money--two, t'ree bits."

"We'll give 'em all we've got," added Jack; "but what about you, Docak?"

"Me go home," was the answer, accompanied by one of his pleasing grins.

"Can you find the way?"

"Me all right now--hark! hear de water?"

He spoke the truth, it being a singular fact that the atmospheric conditions had changed to that degree that the dull, hollow moaning for which they had listened so long in vain was now audible to all. It was like a beacon light, which suddenly flames out on the top of a high hill, for the guidance of the belated traveler. There could be no going astray, with that sound always in his ears, and strengthened by his meal of venison, the hardy native would press on until he ducked his head and passed through the entry of his home.

It might well be questioned how the wild men could maintain their bearings, but they had come unerringly across the snowy wastes from their distant homes, and the boom of the ocean was as sure an aid to them as it was to Docak. No fear but that they would go as straight as an arrow to Ivigtut.

There was no call for delay or ceremony. A long journey was before them, and it being the season when the days were not unusually long, they must be improved to the utmost. The wild men beckoned to the three to approach the sleighs, where, with a little dexterous manipulation of the bundles, they made room for each.

Jack found himself seated at the rear of one of the odd vehicles, which consisted mainly of runners, but had a framework at the back that gave grateful rest to the body. The peltries were fastened in front and around him, some being used to cover his limbs, and a part of his body, so that he could hardly have been more comfortable. The runners were made very broad to prevent them sinking in the snow. But for that, it would have been hard work for the nimble dogs to drag them and their loads with any kind of speed. The situation of the boys was similar to the sailor's.

The arrangement left one of the sleighs without an occupant. This was well, since the wild men could take turns in riding, when they felt the need, and the whites need not walk a step of the way to Ivigtut.

While the confab was going on, the dogs were having their own fun. Quick to obey the order to halt they squatted on their haunches facing in all directions, and for a time were quite motionless and well behaved, but it was not long before their natural mischievousness asserted itself, and they began frolicking with each other. They were snapping, barking, snarling, and then half of them were rolling over in the snow, fighting with good nature, the evil of which was that it tangled the simple harness into the worst sort of knots, which undoubtedly was just what the canines wanted to do.

The head driver spoke angrily to them, cracked his long whip, and, bringing the knot down on their bodies, or about their ears, added their yelps of pain to the general turmoil, while the confusion was greater than before.

He was used to the dogs, knowing every one of the half-hundred, and was quick to detect which was the ringleader. This canine belonged to the rear team, and not only started the rumpus, but kept it going with the utmost enthusiasm. He knew the driver would be after him, and he dodged and whisked among the others so dexterously that the well-aimed lash cracked against the side of some innocent spectator more than it touched him.

But the driver was not to be baffled in that fashion. Dropping the whip, he plunged after the criminal, and, seizing him with both hands, gave him several vigorous bites on the nose, which made him howl with pain. When released he was the meekest member of the party, all of whom sat quiet, while the angry Esquimau devoted himself to unraveling matters.

Rob Carrol had not forgotten the admiration which Docak showed more than once for his rifle. When the native came over to the sleigh to shake his hand, as he was bidding all good-bye, the boy said:

"Docak, I meant that you should have this on our return from the hunt. I sha'n't need it any more; accept it as a reminder of this little experience we had together."

The Esquimau was so taken aback that for a moment he could not speak. Before he recovered himself, Jack and Fred added their requests that he would not refuse the present. His gratitude was deep, and found expression only in a few broken words as he turned away.

It had been on the point of the sailor's tongue several times to apologize for the kick of the evening before, but he felt that the result of it all was a sufficient apology of itself. Besides, there are some matters in life which it is best to pass over in silence.

The wild men showed little sentiment in their nature. Seeing that all was ready, they cracked their whips, called out to their dogs, and off they went.

Jack and the boys turned their heads to take a last look at Docak, who had served them so faithfully and well. As they did so, they observed him plowing through the snow again to the westward, his form quickly disappearing among the

myriad snowflakes. They never saw him again.

The first thought that came to each of the passengers, after the start was fairly made, was that the forty miles' journey could not be accomplished before nightfall. The sleighs were so heavily loaded with pelts and themselves that they formed quite a task for the dogs, which of necessity sank deep in the snow. But they tugged and kept at it with a spirit worthy of all admiration.

But one of the remarkable features of the blizzard and snow storm that had come so near destroying our friends quickly made itself apparent, and raised their hopes to the highest point.

The fall of snow decreased until at the end of half an hour not an eddying flake was in the air. The sun, after struggling awhile, managed to show itself, and the glare of the excessively white surface fairly blinded the passengers for a time. They noticed, however, that the depth of the last fall continued to grow less, until to their unbounded amazement and relief it disappeared altogether. They struck the hard surface, which was like a smooth floor, and capable of bearing ten times the weight of the sleighs without yielding.

This proved that the blizzard was of less extent than supposed. The wild men more than likely were beyond its reach, while Docak and his companions were caught in its very centre. Its fury extended southward but a short way, and the party had now crossed the line. The country before them was like that over which Jack and the boys set out to prosecute their hunt for game.

The travelers were like athletes, who, emerging from a struggle with the angry waters, find themselves on solid land, free to run and leap to their heart's content. They had shaken off the incubus, and now sped forward with renewed speed and ease. The small feet of the dogs slipped occasionally, but they readily secured enough grip, and the sleighs, hardly scratching the frozen surface, required but a fractional part of their strength. Several uttered their odd barks of pleasure, at finding their labor so suddenly turned into what might be called a frolic.

But the wild men were a source of never-ending wonder to the whites. They sped forward through the soft snow, with no more apparent effort than the skilled skater puts forth, and when they struck the smooth surface, they became more like skaters than snow-shoe travelers. They cracked their whips about the ears of the dogs, called sharply, and made them yelp from the stinging bites of the whips handled with a dexterity that would have flicked off a fly from the front dog's ears, had there been one there.

(If we were not opposed to all forms of slang, we would be tempted to say just here that there are no flies on the Esquimaux canines.)

The brutes were quick to respond, and galloped swiftly with their drivers skimming by their side, holding them to the task by their continued orders and cracking of whips. They gave no more attention to the passengers than if they were not present.

The latter were delighted, for there was every reason why they should be. Their limbs still ached from the severe exertion through which they had gone, and the sensation of being wrapped about with furs and fixed in a comfortable seat was pleasant of itself. Then to know that they were speeding toward safety--what more could be asked?

The sleigh containing Jack Cosgrove was in the advance; Rob came next, then Fred, while the one loaded only with peltries held its place at the rear.

When the smooth surface was reached, they drew quite near each other, the friends finding themselves almost side by side.

"This is what I call ginooine pleasure," said the sailor, turning his head and addressing the boys.

"Yes, I'm enjoying it," replied Rob.

"So am I," added Fred; "it makes up for what we suffered."

"We'll skim along in this style all day as if we was on the sea in a dead calm; nothing like a capsiz--"

At that very moment, the sailor's sleigh went over.

CHAPTER XXXIII

CONCLUSION

No one can question that many animals have the propensity to fun and frolic. It may be absent in some, but it certainly is not lacking in the canine species.

It didn't take three teams of dogs long to discover that their passengers belonged to the most verdant specimens of their kind, and when the brutes struck the smooth surface, where traveling was but a pastime, they decided to have some sport at their expense.

At the moment Jack Cosgrove was uttering his words to his young friends, he failed to notice a small hillock just ahead and at one side of the course they were following. But the leading dogs saw it, and, veering off, they made straight for it with increased speed, heedless of the shouts and cracking of the driver's whip. Before he could restrain them, the sleigh collided with the obstruction, overturned in a twinkling and Jack found, as he after described it, that his nose was plowing through the snow with the whole plaguey load on top of him.

He was dragged a hundred feet before extricating himself, and before the driver could check the animals, who looked so meek and sorrowful that he visited them with slight punishment. Matters, however, were soon righted and the journey resumed, amid the laughter of the boys in which the sailor heartily joined.

Within the next hour Rob's sleigh went over and he had an almost similar experience. But he was expecting something of the kind, and prepared for it, so that he emerged from underneath before being dragged far.

Fred got it, too, despite the apparent efforts of the drivers to restrain the dogs. By the time matters were once more righted and under way, the suspicion was confirmed among the passengers that the wild men were in the plot and enjoyed the ludicrous turn of affairs as much as did the brutes themselves. But Jack and the lads were the last to complain, and were quite willing that such good allies should have a little sport at their expense. It was noticeable that after all had been capsized, nothing of the kind took place again.

At noon an hour's halt was made. The Esquimaux produced their cooked venison and all ate. The snow, although it seems to add to one's thirst, when first used, served excellently in the place of water.

As well as they could by signs, the passengers offered to walk and allow the Esquimaux to ride. Where the surface was so favorable this would have imposed no hard work, but the natives refused, even declining to ride alternately in the rear sleigh.

The dogs were tired enough to give no trouble during the noon halt. They sat around on their haunches and eagerly devoured the bits of raw meat tossed to them. When one or two showed a disposition to stir up matters, an angry warning and snap of the whip from one of the drivers brought him to his senses, and he deferred the amusement to a more convenient season.

The Esquimaux chatted volubly among themselves, and, although our friends could not catch the meaning of anything said, they were sure they had made good progress toward Ivigtut, which, barring accident, would be reached by nightfall.

The journey was pressed with the same vigor through the afternoon, the men seeming as tireless as the dogs, who trotted along as they might have done over the bare ground without any load impeding their movements.

The sun was still above the horizon when the party reached the crest of the mountains near the coast, and saw before them, nestling at the curve of a fiord, a collection of low, weather-beaten houses, dispersed along the slope of the hills, with a wharf at the water's edge, on which lay a large number of blocks of the peculiar white ore known as cryolite.

"Vee-tut, vee-tut!" exclaimed one of the drivers, addressing the passengers with great animation. This was the nearest he was able to come to pronouncing the name "Ivigtut."

Yes, this was the mining town famous the world over as containing the only cryolite mines so far discovered on the globe.

Ivigtut is in latitude sixty-one degrees and twelve minutes north, its climate being severe at certain seasons, but comparatively moderate during summer. Then there are one hundred and thirty picked men from Copenhagen engaged in the quarries, the number being a little more than one-half as great in winter. Only one or two Esquimaux are to be

found about the place, and the only family that of the superintendent, who has his wife and her maid with him.

The principal work of the employees is in quarrying the cryolite and piling it on the wharf, ready for shipment both to the Old and New World. And now how many of my readers can tell me what cryolite is? Shall I explain?

Do you know that most of the sal-soda, the bicarbonate of soda, the alum, and the caustic soda used in your homes is dug out of a mountain in Greenland?

In 1806, a German named Giesecke, believing that valuable minerals might be found in Greenland, applied to the Danish Government for permission to prospect the mountains. He did so, all the way from Cape Farewell, living with the Danish governors or among the Esquimaux, as circumstances required, until he reached Arsuk Fiord.

At this place he heard of a deposit of ice that never melted and which was on the edge of the fiord. It was powdered, was used by the natives in tanning skins, and acted on a greasy hide like soap. The prospector gathered a number of specimens and started with them for Germany, for the substance was entirely new and required analysis.

On the homeward voyage the Danish ship was captured by a British man-of-war and the specimens of cryolite went to an English institution, where they were analyzed for the first time. It was interesting of itself, but pronounced comparatively worthless.

It remained for a distinguished chemist named Thomson to discover that sal-soda and bicarbonate of soda can be made cheaply from the substance. It is free from all impurities, and steps were taken to develop the quarry. The first attempt was in 1852, but regular work did not begin until six years later, and more years passed before any money was made out of the mine.

Up to 1864 the entire product of the quarry went to Europe. In that year the American firm known as the Pennsylvania Salt Manufacturing Company, of Natrona and Philadelphia, began to import it. The ships used are made as strongly as possible, for they have to force their way through fields of floating ice, crunch into huge blocks, and keep a sharp lookout for icebergs.

Small quantities of cryolite have been found in the Ural Mountains and a trace was discovered at Pike's Peak, in our own country, some years ago, but it did not pan out. A genuine cryolite mine within easy reach would prove a bonanza to the discoverer.

Cryolite in appearance resembles white quartz or ice, with a mixture of snow in it. Although generally white, it is not always so. It is sometimes a light brown or a dark color, due either to vegetable matter that has soaked into it or the presence of iron.

What I have related and considerably more, our friends learned during their stay at Ivigtut.

Finding themselves at the end of their journey, the three climbed out of the sleighs, their limbs considerably cramped from their long-constrained posture. They shook hands with the Esquimaux, who understood that form of salutation, and who grinned the delight they could not form the words to speak.

To one of them Jack presented his gun and Fred gave his to another. This quite overwhelmed them, but the whites divided nearly all the money they had among them between the other two. The wild men were paid triple what they expected for the inestimable service rendered the party, who regretted that they could not do a good deal more for them.

They parted on the edge of the town, and, just as night began settling over Ivigtut, the three came down the slope and showed themselves among the employees, where their appearance attracted considerable curiosity.

Rob's first inquiry was for the superintendent of the mines. He was directed to a one-story house painted blue, near the rear of which rose a staff from which the flag of Denmark floated.

At the eastern end of the settlement was a somewhat similar house painted black, where the comptroller, or representative of the king lived, while near the centre were two other structures, from which puffs of steam rose.

The visitors received the kindest hospitality from the superintendent, whose name was G. E. Schmidt. He listened to their story with deep interest, and insisted that they should make their home with him as long as they could stay in Ivigtut. He brought in his wife and introduced them to her.

They found her a most pleasant lady, and the three soon felt entirely at home.

"By the way," he asked, as the preparations for supper progressed, "what did you say was the name of the ship on which you left London?"

"The 'Nautilus,'" replied Rob; "we fear she foundered in the gale a few days ago which separated us from her."

"I'm not so fearful about that," put in Jack; who felt that such remarks were a slight upon the ship to which he was attached; "she has rid out a good many tough storms, and I don't see why she couldn't pull through that one."

"Let us hope that she did," said the superintendent, kindly, and with a twinkle of his fine eyes which the others did not notice.

"I was hopeful that she had possibly made her way to Ivigtut," added Fred, who continued, turning to the sailor, "we forgot to take a look in the harbor."

"No use of that," replied Jack; "she might have come in at some of the other ports, but not here."

"I suppose, Mr. Schmidt, that we can go home by way of Denmark?"

"There will be no trouble about that; the only inconvenience is that it will extend the trip much longer than is pleasant, but I understand that you contemplated a visit to one of the posts of the Hudson Bay Company."

"Yes, the destination of the 'Nautilus' is York Factory."

"Then your friends at home will feel no alarm, since you will be the first to carry the news there, unless possibly Captain McAlpine turned immediately about and started for England."

It struck Rob Carrol as singular that the superintendent should mention the name of the skipper of the "Nautilus" when no one of the visitors had yet done so. Where could he have learned it? His companions did not notice the odd fact and he was too polite to ask their host to explain.

"We rarely receive a visit from the English vessels," continued Mr. Schmidt, "though now and then one drops down on us, but there is an American line, inasmuch as a good deal of cryolite goes to the United States. How would you like to make a voyage to that part of the country?"

"It would be pleasant, but hardly practicable," replied Rob, who could not forget that the funds of the company were at a frightfully low ebb. "We shall have to defer that treat to some more convenient season."

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am to receive this visit," said the superintendent; "you must stay several weeks with me, and visit the mines and see all there is to be seen. I hardly suppose you would care to make a hunting trip into the interior?" he added, with a smile.

"No, we have had enough of that to last several lifetimes," replied Jack, uttering at the same time the sentiments of his friends.

"I don't wonder; there is too much snow and cold weather for real sport, except at certain seasons. I must see the men who brought you in. The real wild Esquimaux live on the east coast, where the climate is so terrible that the whites rarely, if ever, visit them, and they are beyond the control of all except their own. If these fellows of yours make their homes in the interior, they are very different from all the Esquimaux of which I know anything. I think there is some mistake about it."

"We know nothing, of course, beyond what Docak told us."

"He is an unusually intelligent native, and I know him very well. He is a little morose at times, and I understand has caused some trouble at the other settlements, but he is a worthy fellow for all that. By the way, I have a friend who is expected to supper with me this evening. It will be a pleasure, I am sure, for you to meet him."

"It will be a pleasure to meet any of your friends," Rob hastened to say, for his heart had already warmed to the genial and hospitable gentleman.

"If I am not mistaken, he has arrived," added Mr. Schmidt, rising from his chair and stepping to the door.

The next moment he admitted a stalwart, whiskered, sun-browned man, in middle life, and, shaking his hand, turned to his other guests.

"Permit me, captain, to introduce you to Messrs. Cosgrove, Carrol, and Warburton."

"Wal, by the great horned spoon!" exclaimed the sailor, springing to his feet and striding across the room, "where did you come from, captain?"

It was Captain McAlpine, of the "Nautilus," standing before them, smiling, bewildered, and happy, as he gazed into the faces of his friends whom he had mourned for days under the fear that they were dead.

The laughing Rob and Fred were right behind Jack, and they shook the hands of the good old sailor, and felt like throwing their arms about his neck and hugging him.

"I must apologize for this little joke," said Superintendent Schmidt, who enjoyed it fully, "but really I couldn't help it. Captain McAlpine arrived at Ivigtut yesterday, and came straight to me with news of what had happened. He was driven far away from the iceberg, as you know, and had searched for it in vain. At a loss what to do, he put into Ivigtut to consult with me."

By this time the excitement was about over, and all seated themselves as the servant came in and lighted the lamps. Mr. Schmidt continued:

"The occurrence was so extraordinary that I was at a loss how to advise him, and his purpose in coming here this evening was that we might discuss the question and decide it."

"You see," observed the captain (and he thereby verified the words of Jack Cosgrove, uttered several days before), "I observed that that iceberg wasn't sailing straight for the Equator, and I got the idea that it was to be looked for further up north, though as likely as not it would change its course and head south again. The only thing for me was to try to get another ship or two to jine me in a search for you. I was going to find out whether that could be done, but now there isn't any need of it."

"Thank Heaven, no!" fervently responded Rob Carrol; "we have had a close call, and the only regret we shall feel in leaving Greenland is that it will take us away from our friends."

"It is I who feel that, but it is one of the sure penalties of our existence. Supper, I see, is ready; will you kindly walk out with me?" he asked, rising to his feet, and leading the way.

And perhaps it is as well that we should say good-bye to the party, now that they are seated around the board with keen appetites, cheerful conversation, and happy hearts; for of the visit made to the cryolite mines the next day, the sailing of the "Nautilus" two days later, the voyage through Hudson Bay to York Factory, the visit there, the safe return to England, and the settling down of Rob Carrol and Fred Warburton to the sober business of life--why, all these may be covered in a paragraph, and so we say, "Good-bye."

THE END



The Young Boatman

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

369 Pages Illustrated

Cloth, \$1.25

This is an interesting story of a boy who is obliged to support himself and his mother by rowing passengers across the Kennebec River. To add to his trials, his intemperate stepfather, after serving a term of imprisonment, returns home and endeavors to compel the boy to pay over his small earnings to him. This the boy, who was appropriately nicknamed Grit, refuses to do, and after a struggle the stepfather retires from the conflict and returns to his thieving habits.

Shortly after Grit discovers a conspiracy to rob the bank and promptly communicates his knowledge to the president, who succeeds in frustrating the plans of the robbers and secures their arrest.

Grit's cheerful manner and kindly good nature, coupled with the most sterling honesty, cause him to be held in high esteem by all who know him. His manly courage and self-reliance are often sorely tested, but his indomitable pluck transmutes calamity into success.

The book is full of incident and adventure of just the right sort to hold the attention of any bright boy.

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The Moncasket Mystery

AND

How Tom Hardy Solved It

By SIDNEY MARLOW

375 pages Illustrated

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The tone of this book is earnestly and emphatically moral, and the author understands that nothing makes morality so attractive to youth as to find it coupled with ingenuity, energy, and pluck.

There is no "cant" and no "can't" about Tom Hardy, the decidedly vigorous hero of this story. He is a safe and worthy companion of any boy or girl, and it is predicted that he will not only win a warm place for himself in the hearts of all who make his acquaintance, but that he will gallantly retain it long after the covers shall have closed upon this chronicle of his efforts and adventures. He is an admirable boy, yet the author, in defiance of the usual method in modern juvenile fiction, has refused to sacrifice all of the other characters to the single hero. Even those whose parts are but the slightest have been so attractively presented that the reader feels that if the events had chanced to require it each one of them would have become a hero.

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Chasing a Yacht

By JAMES OTIS

Author of

"The Braganza Diamond," "Toby Tyler," etc.

350 pages Illustrated

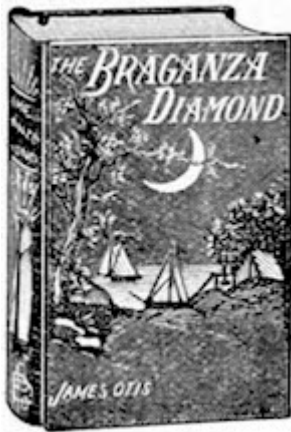
Cloth, \$1.25

Two boys have engaged to run a steam yacht for the double purpose of pleasure and profit, and after carefully fitting her up they launch her, only to find the next morning that she is gone--stolen--as they later discover, by two other boys who had been refused a half-interest in her. The rightful owners start in hot pursuit, and in an attempt to recapture the steamer are themselves made prisoners. It is the intention of the thieves to hold the owners prisoners until the Hudson River is reached and then put them ashore, but their plans miscarry owing to the intervention of two rather rough citizens who find their way aboard the yacht and make themselves generally at home. Fortunately one of the owners manages to effect his escape, and gaining the assistance of the authorities the little vessel is speedily restored to them.

The story is full of adventure, and the heroes are both bright and manly fellows, who make the best of their temporary hardships. The story will be found to enlist the interest at the outset, and to hold it until the last page is turned.

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The Braganza Diamond

BY JAMES OTIS

Author of

"Chasing a Yacht," "Toby Tyler," etc.

383 pages Illustrated

Cloth, \$1.25

Long before the opening events of this story the fragments of this celebrated gem are supposed to have been taken from a wreck by an old sea captain, and secreted by him on a lonely island in Roanoke Sound.

This aged captain, now quite feeble, sends for his niece and her daughter. They invite two bright boys to accompany them, and engaging a steam launch the four, in company with the owner—a trusty sailor—set out for the lonely island. Arriving there they are distressed at finding the captain already dead. To add to their discomfort they also discover that the former owners of the diamond have appeared upon the scene. The little party is forcibly made prisoner, and their captors demand that they forthwith produce the precious stone. This, of course, they are unable to do, but discovering among the old captain's effects a curious cryptogram, they are led to hope that its solution may reveal the secret hiding place of the diamond, and thus restore to them their freedom. This theory eventually proves correct, but not until after the party has endured many hardships, and passed through many exciting experiences.

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The Odds Against Him, or

Carl Crawford's Experience

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

350 pages Illustrated

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The hero of this story had to leave home on account of the ill-treatment he received from his stepmother, who had a son of her own about the same age. Dr. Crawford, a man of considerable wealth, but of weak, vacillating mind, loved his son, but was afraid to show his true feelings in the presence of his wife. After leaving home and meeting with a number of adverse experiences, Carl eventually obtained employment in a factory. He soon gained the confidence of his employer, and after frustrating an attempt of the book-keeper to rob the safe, he was appointed as a traveler, and, visiting

Chicago, he discovered that his stepmother had another husband living. Her success in getting a will made in her own favor, an attempt on the life of her husband, etc., are all defeated, and Carl came out victorious in the end.

The book is full of bright, cheerful, and amusing incidents, showing that a boy of good, honest, sterling, industrious habits can always secure friends, and succeed in earning a good living.

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The Story of the Iliad

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

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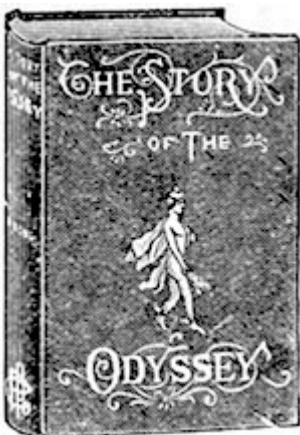
ignorant of them.

The object of the work is two-fold--first, to present to young people an interesting story which will be read with pleasure and at the same time cultivate a taste for good literature; second, to give a popular knowledge of this famous work of Homer and thus afford a sort of stepping-stone to one of the grandest poetical structures of all time.

It is thus a book for the home circle, and should be in every household in the land. It is recommended especially for School Libraries and young folks' Reading Circles, and also to schools as a Supplementary Reader.

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The Odyssey of Homer combines the romance of travel with that of domestic life, and it differs from the Iliad, which is a tale of the camp and battle-field. Although the ancient author concentrates the attention on a single character--Ulysses--he refers to several beautiful women, including some of the goddesses. After the siege of Troy, Ulysses started on a voyage of discovery and adventure in unknown lands, which,

although described with poetic exaggeration, "has been a rich mine of wealth for poets and romancers, painters and sculptors, from the date of the age which we call Homer's down to our own."

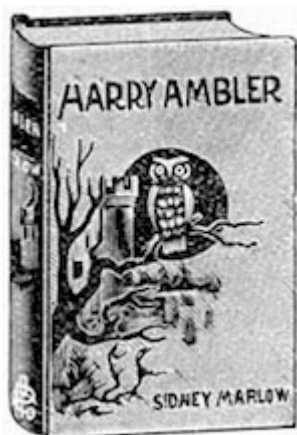
In this wonderful poem lie the germs of thousands of volumes which fill our modern libraries. Without some knowledge of it, readers will miss the point of many things in modern art and literature.

Ulysses was brave and valiant as a soldier, and was distinguished for his wisdom and shrewdness which enabled him

to extricate himself from the difficulties which to others would seem insurmountable.

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Harry Ambler, and How He Saved the Homestead

BY SIDNEY MARLOW

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This is a narrative of a bright, active, and courageous boy, suddenly thrown upon his own resources and subjected to the malicious plots of a powerful enemy. The effectual and yet not unnatural manner in which the hero turns his enemy's weapons to his own defence, constitutes, perhaps, the chief charm of the book.

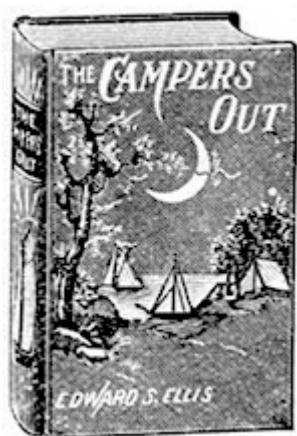
The story abounds in humorous and exciting situations, yet it is in no objectionable way sensational. There is nothing in it that will tend to create or encourage a taste for mere reckless adventure.

The author has given more attention to the delineation of his characters than is usual in juvenile literature, thus making the story pleasant reading, even for those who have passed the outer line of boyhood.

He believes in a "moral," but not in those bits of abstract virtue which are so frequently forced into juvenile stories, only to be "skipped" by the youthful reader. He would create a personal sympathy with the best efforts of fallible boys and girls, rather than an admiration for the mere name of virtue.

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The Campers Out

OR

The Right Path and the Wrong

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS, A.M.

363 pages Illustrated

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This is one of the most interesting works of an author whose productions are widely read and deservedly popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Mr. Ellis has in perfection the faculty of making his stories not only entertaining in the highest degree but instructive and elevating. A leading journal truthfully stated that no mother need hesitate to place any story of which Mr. Ellis is the author in the hands of her boy, for he is sure to be instructed as well as entertained.

"The Campers Out" is bright, breezy, and full of adventure of just the right sort to hold the attention of any young mind. It is clean, pure, and elevating, and the stirring incidents with which it is filled convey one of the most forceful of morals. It traces the "right path" and the "wrong path" of several boys with such striking power that old and young

will be alike impressed by the faithful portrayal of character, and be interested from beginning to end by the succession of exciting incidents.

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