

FICTION

Dillon Wallace

Bobby of the Labrador

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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BOBBY OF THE LABRADOR



It was plain that retreat was hopelessly cut off

Bobby of the Labrador

BY DILLON WALLACE

AUTHOR OF "THE FUR TRAIL ADVENTURERS," "THE LURE OF THE LABRADOR WILD," "THE WILDERNESS CASTAWAYS,"
ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK E. SCHOONOVER

DEDICATED
TO
L.G.H.
WHO KNOWS WHY

If I may call you friend, I wish you this--

No gentle destiny throughout the years;
No soft content, or ease, or unearned bliss
Bereft of heart-ache where no sorrow nears,
But rather rugged trouble for a mate
To mold your soul against the coming blight,
To train you for the ruthless whip of fate
And build your heart up for the bitter fight.
If I may call you friend, I wish you more--
A rare philosophy no man may fake,
To put the game itself beyond the score
And take the tide of life as it may break;
To know the struggle that a man should know
Before he comes through with the winning hit,
And, though you slip before the charging foe,
To love the game too well to ever quit.

GRANTLAND RICE.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

It was plain that retreat was hopelessly cut off
"Hurry, Jimmy. I can't hang here much longer. I'm getting all numb"
Quick as a flash Bobby raised his gun to his shoulder
They ran by the side of the *komatik* to keep warm
"I was hunting," explained Bobby. "The ice broke loose and cut Jimmy, and me off from Skipper Ed"

Bobby of the Labrador

CHAPTER I

THE BOAT THAT CAME DOWN FROM THE SEA

Abel Zachariah was jigging cod. Cod were plentiful, and Abel Zachariah was happy. It still lacked two hours of mid-day, and already he had caught a skiffload of fish and had landed them on Itigailit Island, where his tent was pitched.

Now, as he jigged a little off shore, he could see Mrs. Abel Zachariah, the yellow sunshine spread all about her, splitting his morning catch on a rude table at the foot of the sloping rocks. Above her stood the little tent that was their summer home, and here and there the big sledge dogs, now idle and lazy and fat, sprawled blissfully upon the rocks enjoying the August morning, for this was their season of rest and plenty.

With a feeling of deep content Abel drew in his line, unhooked a flapping cod, returned the jigger to the water, and, as he resumed the monotonous tightening and slackening of line, turned his eyes again to the peaceful scene ashore.

Mrs. Abel in this brief interval had left the splitting table and had ascended the sloping rock a little way, where she now stood, shading her eyes with her right hand and gazing intently seaward. Suddenly she began gesticulating wildly, and shouting, and over the water to Abel came the words:

"*Umiak! Umiak!*" (A boat! A boat!)

Abel arose deliberately in his skiff, and looking in the direction in which Mrs. Abel pointed discovered, coming out of the horizon, a boat, rising and falling upon the swell. It carried no sail, and after careful scrutiny Abel's sharp eyes could discern no man at the oars. This, then, was the cause of Mrs. Abel's excitement. The boat was unmanned--a derelict upon the broad Atlantic.

A drifting boat is fair booty on the Labrador coast. It is the recognized property of the man who sees it and boards it first. And should it be a trap boat he is indeed a fortunate man, for the value of a trap boat is often greater than a whole season's catch of fish.

So Abel lost no time in hauling in and coiling his jigger line, in adjusting his oars, and in pulling away toward the derelict with all the strength his strong arms and sinewy body could muster.

Abel had wished for a good sea boat all his life. When the fishing schooners now and again of a foggy night anchored behind Itigailit Island he never failed to examine the fine big trap boats which they carried. Sometimes he had ventured to inquire how much salt fish they would accept in exchange for one. But he had never had enough fish, and his desire to possess a boat seemed little less likely of fulfilment than that of a boy with a dime in his pocket, covetously contemplating a gold watch in the shop window.

But here, at last, drifting directly toward him, as though Old Ocean meant it as a gift, propelled by a gentle breeze and an incoming tide, came a boat that would cost him nothing but the getting. Fortune was smiling upon Abel Zachariah this fine August morning.

Now and again as he approached the derelict, Abel rested upon his oars, that he might turn about for a moment and feast his eyes upon his prospective prize, and revel in the pleasure of anticipation about to be realized.

And so, presently, he discovered that the boat was not a trap boat after all, but a much finer craft than any trap boat he had ever seen. Its lines were much more graceful, it had recently been painted, and, as it rose and fell with the swell, a varnished gunwale glistened in the sunlight. It was fully four fathoms and a half in length, and was undoubtedly a ship's boat; and, being a ship's boat, was probably built of hard wood, and therefore vastly superior to the spruce boats of the fishermen.

Abel had fully satisfied himself upon these points before, keenly expectant, he at length rowed alongside the derelict. Grasping its gunwale to steady himself, he was about to step aboard when, with an exclamation of astonishment and horror, he released his hold upon the gunwale and resumed his seat in the skiff.

Stretched in the boat lay the body of a man. In the man's side was a great gaping wound, and his clothing and the boat were spattered and smeared with blood. The man was dead. In the fixed, cold stare of his wide-open eyes was a look of hopeless appeal, and the ghastly terror of one who had beheld some awful vision.

CHAPTER II

THE MYSTERY AND BOBBY

Abel had often seen death before. He had seen men drowned, men who had frozen to death, men accidentally shot to death, and men who had died naturally and comfortably in their beds. It was, therefore, not the sight of death that startled him, but the horror and tragic appeal in the dead man's staring eyes. It was uncanny and supernatural.

This, at least, was Abel's first intuitive impression. Though he could not have defined this impression or put his thoughts into words, he felt much as one would feel who had heard a dead man speak.

He pushed his skiff a few yards away and, resting upon his oars, viewed the derelict from a respectful distance. His impulse was to row back to Itigailit Island at once and leave the boat and its ghastly, silent skipper to the mercies of the sea. But the mystery fascinated him. The beseeching gaze that had met his had roused his imagination. And so for a long time he sat in silent contemplation of the boat, wondering from whence it and the thing it contained had come, and how the man had met his death.

Abel Zachariah was a Christian, but he was also an Eskimo, and he had inherited the superstitions of untold generations of heathen ancestors--superstitions that to him were truths above contradiction. He held it as a fact beyond dispute that all unnatural or accidental deaths were brought about by the evil spirits with which his forefathers had peopled the sea and the desolate land in which he lived. It was his firm belief that evil spirits remained to haunt the place where a victim had been lured to violent death, as in the present instance had plainly been the case. He had no doubt that the boat was haunted, and therefore he kept his distance, for unless by some subtle and certain charm the spirits could be driven off, none but a foolhardy man would ever venture to board the derelict, and Abel was not a foolhardy man.

These superstitions seem very foolish to us, no doubt; but, after all, were they one whit more foolish or groundless than the countless superstitions to which many educated and seemingly intelligent Christian people of civilization are bound? As, for instance, the superstition that where thirteen sit together at table one will die within the year.

And so Abel Zachariah, being a man of caution, held aloof from the boat which he had so eagerly set out to salvage; and sitting engrossed in contemplation, he in his skiff and the dead man in the derelict drifted for a while side by side toward Itigailit Island. And thus he was sitting silent and inactive when suddenly he was startled by the cry of a child in distress.

Abel for a moment was not at all certain that this was not some wicked plot of the spirits, intended to lure him within their reach, and he seized his oars, determined to increase the distance between himself and possible danger. But when the cry was repeated, and presently became a frightened wail, Abel hesitated. If it was a spirit that emitted the succeeding wails it was surely a very corporeal spirit, with well developed lungs and also a very much frightened spirit; and a frightened spirit could not be dangerous.

Abel had never heard of a spirit that cried like this one, or of a spirit that was frightened, and he rose to his feet that he might look over the gunwale and into the derelict. From this vantage he beheld the head of a little child, and he could see, also, that this very real child, and not the much feared spirits, was the source of the loud and piteous wails.

The spirit of evil, then, had not tarried after striking down the man. Doubtless God had interposed to save the child, else it, too, would have been destroyed, and no spirit of evil could remain where God exerted His power. Here was a subtle and potent charm in which Abel Zachariah had unwavering faith, for, after all, his faith in God was greater than his faith in the religion of his fathers. And so, vastly relieved and no longer afraid, he rowed his skiff alongside the boat, made his painter fast and stepped aboard.

Standing in the forward part of the boat was a little boy, perhaps three years of age. He was fair haired and fair skinned and handsome, but as a result of privations he had suffered he was evidently ill and his cheeks were flushed with fever.

Abel's great, generous heart went out to the child in boundless sympathy. He forgot the dead man aft. He forgot even the boat. The coveted prize of his ambition an hour before, had small importance to Abel now. His one thought was for this distressed little one that God had so unexpectedly sent down to him upon the bosom of the sea.

The child ceased crying, and with big blue tear-wet eyes looked with wonder upon his dusky faced deliverer.

"*Oksunae*" (be strong), said Abel with a reassuring smile, as he stooped and took the little one's hand into his big

rough palm.

The child did not understand the word of greeting, but he did understand, with the intuition and instinct of little children and dumb creatures, that Abel was his friend.

Beneath the deck, forward, were blankets, in which the boy had doubtless been sleeping when Abel first looked into the boat and discovered the dead man. Beneath the deck Abel also found among other things, a jug partly filled with tepid water, a tin cup, and a bag containing a few broken fragments of sea biscuits. He gave the child a sip of the water and selected for it one of the larger fragments of biscuit. Then, patting it affectionately upon the cheek he tenderly tucked it among the blankets, beneath the deck, that it might be sheltered from the breeze. And the little one, content with the ministrations and attentions of his new guardian, quietly acquiesced.

Abel was greatly excited by his wonderful discovery, and he was eager to surprise Mrs. Abel Zachariah and to present to her the fair-skinned boy, and therefore he lost no time in further exploration of the boat. Unafraid now of evil spirits, and disregarding the dead man lying aft, he undid the painter of his skiff and secured it astern, where the skiff would tow easily. And so, with the mysterious child under the deck at his back, and the mysterious dead man lying in the boat at his feet, and his own skiff trailing behind, Abel, with a strong arm and a stout heart and a head filled with perplexing questions, rowed the mysterious boat to the low ledge of rocks that served as a landing place on Itigailit Island.

Of course Mrs. Abel Zachariah, keenly interested in his quest of the prize, was there to meet him, and looking into the boat she saw the ghastly passenger and was duly shocked.

"The man has been killed!" she exclaimed, stepping backward as though afraid the thing would injure her. "It is a boat of evil! Come away from it! Why did you bring it in from the sea?"

For answer Abel reached beneath the deck, lifted out the child, and stepping ashore placed it in Mrs. Abel's arms.

"A boy," said he. "God sent him to us and he is ours."

Mrs. Abel was taken completely by surprise. For a long moment she looked into the child's flushed and feverish face, and it looked into her round and eager face, and smiled its confidence, and from that instant she took it to her heart as her own. She pressed it to her bosom with all the mother love of a good woman, for Mrs. Abel Zachariah, primitive Eskimo though she was, was a good woman, and her heart was soft and affectionate.

The child was ill and neglected. It was evidently suffering from exposure and lack of nourishment. Mrs. Abel's instincts told her this at a glance and forgetful of all else, she hurried away with it to the tent. It drank eagerly from the cup of clear cold water which she held to its lips, and ate as much fresh-caught cod, boiled in sea water, and of her own coarse bread, as she thought well for it.

All the time she fondled the boy and talked to him soothingly in strange Eskimo words which he had never heard before, but which nevertheless he understood, for she spoke in the universal accent of the mother to her little one. And when he had eaten he nestled snugly in her arms, as he would have nestled in his own mother's arms, and with his head upon her bosom closed his eyes and sighed in deep content.

Abel when his wife had gone with the child into the tent, anchored the boat of tragedy a little way from shore, that the big wolf dogs prowling about might not interfere with the peaceful repose of its silent occupant. Then rowing ashore in his skiff, he selected a secluded spot upon the island, and dug a grave.

In the rocky soil the grave was necessarily a shallow one, and he had finished his task when Mrs. Abel reappeared from the tent to announce that the boy was sleeping and seemed much better after eating. Then while they sat upon the rocks and ate their own belated dinner of boiled cod and tea, Abel told the story of his discovery.

"What do you suppose killed the man?" Mrs. Abel asked.

"I do not know," said Abel. "It looks like a gunshot wound but I have not searched for a gun yet. It is a fine boat, and did not belong to a schooner. I never saw a boat like it and I never saw so fine a boat before. The man was not a fisherman, either."

"The boy's clothing is finer than any I ever saw," declared Mrs. Abel. "It is not like any I ever saw and is finer and prettier than the missionaries' children wear and on one of his fingers there is a beautiful ring."

"I cannot get it through my head where the boat came from," said Abel.

"It was God's messenger, and His way of sending us the boy," asserted Mrs. Abel. "He sent the boat with the boy out of the farthest mists of the sea, from the place where storms are born, and He sent the boat on a clear day, when we

could see it, and He kept you near the boat when you would have gone away, until the boy cried. God meant that we should have a child."

"Yes," agreed Abel. "It was God's way of giving us a child for our own. But why did He send a man with the boy and a dead man, at that?"

"I do not know," said Mrs. Abel, "but there was some reason, I suppose. The child has a skin so white and its clothes are so fine, I am sure it must have come from Heaven. We know it came from the Far Beyond, for you say the man was not a fisherman, and the boat is not a fisherman's boat."

This was an awe-inspiring solution of the mystery, and Abel and his wife accepted it with due solemnity. A suggestion of the miraculous appealed to them, for they did not in the least believe that the days of miracles were past, as indeed they are not. They had already, with big, hospitable hearts, accepted the child as their own. Now, believing that it was a gift from Heaven, sent directly to them by God, as a token of particular favor, they would not have parted from it for all the riches in the world.

The afternoon was far spent when, at last, Abel, in his skiff, rowed out to the anchored derelict and brought it in again to the landing place. Here a search of the boat discovered, in addition to the blankets which had formed the boy's bed, the water jug, the tin cup, and biscuit bag, a quantity of loaded shotgun shells and a double-barreled shotgun. The shotgun, which had been hidden in the bottom of the boat by the folds of a sail, called forth an exclamation of delight from Abel. It was a marvel of workmanship, and its stock and lock were beautifully engraved. And with the sail, which would prove useful, was a tarpaulin and a quantity of rope.

In the pockets of the dead man were a jackknife, a small notebook, a piece of pencil, and an empty wallet. Nothing which seemed important, but all of which Abel preserved carefully as a future heritage for the boy.

There were no boards from which to fashion a coffin, so they wrapped the unknown in an old sail, and that evening, when the western sky was aglow with color buried him in the grave Abel had made. And over the grave Abel read in Eskimo a chapter from the Testament, and said a prayer, and to the doleful accompaniment of lapping waves upon the shore he and Mrs. Abel sang, in Eskimo, one of the old hymns for, as Christians, they must needs give the stranger a Christian burial, the only service they could render him.

Abel and his wife looked upon the advent of the little boy as a Divine blessing. They firmly believed that God had sent him to them to increase their happiness, and they lavished upon him all the love and affection of their simple hospitable natures. They were deeply solicitous for his health, and responding to gentle care the fever quickly left him, for he was, naturally, a strong and well-developed child.

They understood few words of English, but they soon discovered that the boy called himself "Bobby," and Bobby was accepted as his name. Bobby, on his part, spoke English indifferently, and of all other tongues and especially the Eskimo tongue, he was wholly ignorant. At that period of his life it was quite immaterial to him, indeed, what language he spoke so long as the language served to make his wants known; and he began to acquire an Eskimo vocabulary sufficient for his immediate needs, and his efforts in this direction afforded his foster parents a vast deal of pleasure.

Mrs. Abel Zachariah, considering the clothing Bobby wore quite too fine for ordinary use, and unsuited to the climate and the conditions of his new surroundings and life, fashioned for him a suit of coarse but warmer fabric. When this was finished to her liking she dressed him in it, and washed and folded and laid away in a chest the things he had worn, as a precious souvenir of his coming.

From the skins of Arctic hares, which Abel killed with the wonderful shotgun, she made him a warm little jacket with a hood; for his feet she made sealskin moccasins, with legs that reached to his knees, and sewed them with sinew to render them waterproof, that his feet might be kept quite dry when the rocks were wet with rains, or when the first moist snows of autumn fell, as they did with the coming of September. And when the great flocks of wild ducks and geese came flying out of the North, the feathers of all that Abel shot were carefully hoarded in bags for Bobby's winter bed.

And so the weeks passed until early October. The land was now white with snow, and steadily increasing cold warned them that winter was at hand and that presently the bays and sea would be frozen. It was time now for Abel to set his fox traps, and time for them to move to their winter cabin on the mainland.

This cabin was situated at the head of a deep bay which the Eskimos call "Tissiuhaksoak," but which English-speaking folk called "Abel's Bay," because Abel was the first to build a cabin there; and we, being English-speaking people, shall also call it Abel's Bay.

The bloody record of the tragedy had long since been washed from the boat. From two of the six long oars with which the boat was fitted, Abel improvised two masts. The tarpaulin was remodeled into a second sail, and, one blustery

morning, with their tent and all their belongings stowed into the boat, and the dogs in the skiff, which was in tow, they set sail for Abel's Bay, and left Itigailit Island and the lonely grave to the Arctic blasts that would presently sweep down upon it from the icy seas; and late on the following afternoon they reached the cabin which for many years was to be Bobby's home.

Thus it was that Bobby, amid adventure and mystery, made his advent upon The Labrador and found a home among strange people. And in such a land it was quite plain that as the years passed he should have other adventures.

CHAPTER III

SKIPPER ED AND HIS PARTNER

On that part of the Labrador coast where Abel Zachariah lived the cabins, with small variation, are fashioned upon one general model. The model is well adapted to the needs of the people and the exigencies of the climate. At one end of the cabin is an enclosed porch which serves as a woodshed and general storage room. Here the dog harness, traps, and other tools and equipment necessary to the hunter's life are kept.

A door opens from the enclosed porch into the cabin proper, which usually consists of a single room which serves as living room, dining room, kitchen and bedroom. This room commonly has two windows, one on either side.

The floor of the cabin is of uncovered planks. In the center stands a stove shaped like a large box. In the lower half of this stove is the fire space, adapted to receive huge blocks of wood. The upper half is an oven.

Against the wall, and not far from the stove, the table stands, and built against the wall at one side of the door, the kitchen closet. In the farther end of the room are the family beds, usually built into the cabin after the fashion of ships' bunks. In Abel's cabin there was but one bed, and this of ample breadth to accommodate two. Now there was to be another for Bobby.

Home-made chests, which answer the double purpose of storage places for clothing and whatnot and seats, take the place of chairs, though sometimes there are rude home-made chairs and Abel's cabin contained two. Guns always loaded and within reach for instant use, rest upon low overhead beams, or upon pegs against the wall. On a shelf, at some convenient place, and specially built for their accommodation, the Bible and hymnal are kept. Abel's Bible and hymnal, as in all Christianized Eskimo houses, were printed in the Eskimo language.

This, then, was the kind of home that Bobby entered, and which, as the years passed, he was to love, for it was a haven of affection.

The cabin was cold and damp and stuffy now, and filled with unpleasant odors, for it had been unoccupied since early in July. But soon Abel had a roaring fire in the stove, and the things in from the boat, and Mrs. Abel had the room aired, and before the candle was lighted the room had taken on the cozy comfort of occupancy.

Then there was supper of stewed duck and hot dough-bread and tea. When Bobby had eaten heartily and his eyes grew heavy with sleep he was undressed and tucked away into bed, with Mrs. Abel lying by his side for a little, crooning an Eskimo lullaby before she washed her dishes. And at length, when the dishes were washed, and all was made snug for the night, Abel took down, as was his custom, the Bible, and read by the flickering light, and he and Mrs. Abel sang a hymn, and knelt in family devotion, before they joined the sleeping Bobby in their bed.

Abel Zachariah's nearest neighbor was Edward Norman, commonly known as Skipper Ed, a sailor-man who had come to the coast many years before in a fishing vessel, and when his vessel sailed away Skipper Ed had remained behind to cast his lot with the Eskimos. At the head of Abel's bay and a mile from Abel's home, he took up the life of hunter and fisherman, and in due time learned to speak the Eskimo language. Here Skipper Ed lived with his little partner, as he called him--Jimmy Sanderson, a husky lad of seven years.

Jimmy was an orphan. His mother died when he was so young that he could scarcely remember her at all. His father, a Newfoundland sailor and fisherman, was one of the crew of a fishing schooner that sailed regularly each summer to this part of the Labrador coast, and because there was no one at home to care for him after his mother's death, Jimmy always accompanied his father on these voyages. And thus it came about that when Seaman Sanderson fell overboard while reefing the jib, one stormy day, Jimmy was left alone in the world.

It so happened that on the day Jimmy's father was lost, the schooner, with the forlorn little boy on board, took refuge under the lee of the island upon which Skipper Ed had his fishing camp. Skipper Ed, after the manner of the Coast, rowed his boat alongside and climbed aboard, to hear such scraps of news from the outside world as the sailors might bring, and to enjoy their company for an hour. Here he met Jimmy, heartbroken and weeping at the loss of his father. Skipper Ed's sympathies went out to the wretched little boy, and placing his big hand on Jimmy's small shoulder, he comforted him.

"There, there, now, lad, don't cry," said he. "You're a wee bit of a lad to be left alone in the world I know, but by the mercy of God you'll forget your trouble, for Time's a wonderful healer. And there's better luck coming, lad, better luck coming."

Thereupon he sought out the Captain of the schooner and inquired into Jimmy's worldly prospects.

"There's none to care for him," said the Captain, "and the best prospects he have be the poor house."

"Will you leave him with me, then?" asked Skipper Ed. "I'll give the lad a good home, and teach him a bit, and he'll be fine company for me."

"O' course I'll leave he with you, Skipper, and wonderful glad I'll be too that the lad's found a good home," said the Captain.

Then Skipper Ed returned to Jimmy.

"Lad," said he, "I'm looking for a partner, and it strikes me *you'll* do. How'd you like to be *my* partner? Look me over now, and see what you think of *me*. How'd you like *me* for a partner?"

Jimmy looked him over critically, through tear-stained eyes, but said nothing.

"Come now," urged Skipper Ed, getting down on his haunches that Jimmy might look straight into his face, "here we are, you and I, both alone in the world and both wanting partners. Can't we splice up a partnership? Share and share alike, you know--you have as much as I, and I have as much as you, and we'll take the fair winds and the contrary winds together, and make port together, and sell our cargoes together, and use the same slop chest. What do you say, lad? Shall we sign on as partners?"

"Yes, sir," agreed Jimmy.

"Good! Good!" exclaimed Skipper Ed. "Here, shake hands on it, partner. Now we're friends to each other, whatever falls, good voyages and poor ones, and there's better luck coming for us both, lad, better luck."

And so Skipper Ed and Jimmy Sanderson formed their partnership, and Jimmy, with his own and his father's kits, went ashore with Skipper Ed in Skipper Ed's boat, which he insisted was half Jimmy's, under their partnership agreement, and the next day the schooner sailed away and left them. And with the passing weeks, Time, as Skipper Ed had predicted, and as he always does, healed Jimmy's sorrow, and he came to look upon Skipper Ed as the finest man and the finest partner in the world, and they two loved each other very much.

Abel and his wife and Skipper Ed and his partner lived upon terms of intimacy and good comradeship, as neighbors should. And because they had no nearer neighbors than Abraham Moses, an Eskimo ten miles to the southward, and the people of the Moravian Mission and Eskimo settlement at Nain, twenty miles to the northward, the two families were dependent upon one another for human companionship, and therefore the bond of friendship that drew them together was the stronger.

And so it happened that early on the morning following the return of Abel and Mrs. Abel with Bobby, Skipper Ed and Jimmy walked over to welcome their neighbors home, and to discuss with them the fishing season just closed, and the seal hunting and the trapping seasons which were at hand.

Abel was engaged in cutting and shaping the sticks from which he was to build Bobby's little bunk, when he heard Skipper Ed's cheery:

"*Oksunae!*" [A]

"*Oksutingal!*" [A] exclaimed Abel, delightedly, grasping Skipper Ed's hand and then Jimmy's hand and laughing with pleasure. "*Oksutingai!* I am glad to see you, and how have you been?"

Abel spoke his native language, for his tongue was awkward with the few English words he had learned. He and Skipper Ed, indeed, always conversed in Eskimo, and Jimmy, though he usually spoke his native English at home when he and Skipper Ed were alone, also understood the Eskimo tongue perfectly.

"We're very well," said Skipper Ed, "and glad to know you are back. We were lonely without you. How is Mrs. Abel?"

"Well. Vêry well. And we have something to surprise you," and Abel, laughing heartily, could hardly contain himself.

"I know what it is!" broke in Jimmy. "You've got a new boat. I saw it as we came up! It's a fine big boat, too!"

"It's a greater surprise than that," laughed Abel. "It's in the house. Come in and see him."

"A baby!" guessed the delighted Jimmy. "It's a baby!"

"Come in and see for yourselves," Abel invited, and pushing the door open he led them into the cabin, where Mrs.

Abel overwhelmed them with greeting, and brought Bobby forth for introduction.

"A boy, and a white one!" exclaimed Skipper Ed in English. "Now wherever did they get him?" He took Bobby by the hand, and asked: "Can you talk, little lad?"

"Yeth, thir," Bobby admitted, respectfully, "I like to talk."

"I'll wager you do, now! Where did you live before you came here?"

"With Papa and Mamma."

"What, now, may your name be?"

"Bobby, thir."

"What is your papa's name?"

"What is my papa's name?"

"Yes, what is your papa's name?"

"Why, 'Papa,'" in great surprise that all the world did not know that.

Further solicitation brought from the child the statement that "Uncle Robert took me for a nice ride in a boat, but Uncle Robert got hurted, and I came here."

And this was the sum total of the information concerning Bobby's past that Skipper Ed succeeded in drawing from the child, though he questioned and cross-questioned him at length, after Abel and Mrs. Abel had told how they found him that August morning. But Abel and Mrs. Abel, considering these things of small importance, did not mention to or show Skipper Ed the packet containing the notebook found in the dead man's pocket, and which they had carefully put away.

Skipper Ed did not altogether accept the theory of Abel and Mrs. Abel that God had in a miraculous manner sent Bobby to them from heaven, directing his course from the Far Beyond, through the place where mists and storms were born. Skipper Ed in his own mind could not dismiss the subject in this casual manner. He scented some dark mystery, though he doubted if the mystery would ever be cleared.

Abel must needs exhibit to Skipper Ed and Jimmy the boat, and when Skipper Ed saw it his practiced eye told him that the finish and workmanship were far too fine and expensive for any ordinary ship's boat, and that it was the long boat of a luxuriously appointed private yacht. Of this he was well assured when he read, in gold letters on either side of its prow, the name *Wanderer*.

And then they must each try their hand with the beautifully engraved shotgun. Such a gun, Abel declared, had never before been seen on the coast, and was in itself a fortune. And Skipper Ed examined it critically, and agreed with Abel that it was a gun of marvelous workmanship, and had cost much money.

"None but God could have fashioned it," said Abel, reverently. "It is His gift to the boy, and it will always be the boy's. He sent it with the boy from the Great Beyond, from the place where mists and storms are born. Do you think He would mind if I used it sometimes?"

"No," answered Skipper Ed, "I think He meant you to use it to hunt food for the boy, so that the boy should never be in want. God never forgets. He always provides. Destiny is the Almighty's will, and He provides."

"The lad has come from rich people," said Skipper Ed, as he and Jimmy walked home that evening. "He's not been used to this sort of life. But Time's a great healer. He's young enough to forget the fine things he's been used to, and he'll grow up a hunter and a fisherman like the rest of us. There's better luck coming for him. Better luck. He'll be happy and contented, for people are always happy with simple living, so long as they don't know about any other kind of living."

"I thinks Abel lives fine now, and we lives fine," ventured Jimmy. "Abel's house is fine and warm, and so is ours."

"Aye," said Skipper Ed, "'tis that. 'Tis that; and enough's a-plenty. Enough's a-plenty."

They walked along in silence for a little while.

"We must always talk to the little chap in English," said Skipper Ed, presently. "We must not let him forget to speak the tongue his mother taught him."

"Yes, sir," agreed Jimmy.

"And we must teach him to read and write in English, the way I teach you," continued Skipper Ed. "Somewhere in the world his mother and father are grieving their life out for the loss of him. It's very like they'll never see him again, but we must teach him as much as we know how of what they would have taught him."

"Yes, sir."

"Destiny is just the working out of the Almighty's will. And it was a part of the lad's destiny to be cast upon this bleak coast and to find a home with the Eskimos."

And so, walking home along the rocky shore, they talked to the accompaniment of lapping waves upon the shore and sighing spruce trees in the forest.

Skipper Ed, giving voice to thoughts with which he was deeply engrossed, told of the kindlier, sunnier land from which Bobby had been sent adrift--from a home of luxury, perhaps--to live upon bounty, and in the crude, primitive cabin of an Eskimo. And he thrilled his little partner with vivid descriptions of great cities where people were so numerous they jostled one another, and did not know each other's names; of rushing, shrieking locomotives; of beautiful houses which seemed to Jimmy no less than fairy palaces; of great green fields; and yellow fields of waving grain from which the flour was made which they ate; of glorious flowers; and forests of strange trees.

They reached their cabin at last, which stood in the shelter of the trees at the edge of the great wilderness, and looked out over the bay; and at the porch door Skipper Ed paused, and, gazing for a moment at the stretch of heaving water, stretched his arms before him and said:

"It's out there, Partner--the land I've told you about--out there beyond the sea--the land I came from and the land Bobby came from--and the land you came from, too, for that matter. Some time you may sail away to see it."

In outward appearance Skipper Ed's cabin was almost the counterpart of Abel's, but within it was fitted much more completely and tastefully. On the well-scrubbed floor were rugs of dog and wolf skins, and there were three big armchairs--one for Skipper Ed, one for his partner, and one for Abel when he came to see them--and a rocker for Mrs. Abel when she called; all home-made and upholstered in buckskin. And there were four straight-backed dining chairs, and against the wall some shelves well filled with books, as well as many other conveniences and comforts and refinements not usual in the cabins of the coast. There was lacking, also, the heavy, fishy odor of seal oil, never absent from the Eskimo home, for Skipper Ed had provided a log outhouse, a little apart from his cabin, as a storehouse for seal oil and fish and pelts.

Dusk was settling. Skipper Ed lighted candles and kindled a fire in the stove, and he and Jimmy together set about preparing supper. The wind was rising and soon snow began to beat against the window pane, and when supper was eaten and the table cleared, and the two drew their armchairs up before the fire, it was very cozy sitting there and listening to the howling storm outside and the roaring fire in the stove. Jimmy, snugly curled in his chair, was so still that Skipper Ed, silently smoking his pipe, believed his little partner asleep, when he was startled out of his musings by the request:

"Partner, tell me a story."

"A story, Partner? What kind of a story? One about the sea?"

"A story about people that live out there in the country Bobby came from, and you came from."

"Oh, out there! Yes, to be sure!" Skipper Ed sat silent for a few moments, gazing at the flickering light through a crack in the stove door, while Jimmy sat expectant, gazing into Skipper Ed's face. At last he began:

"Once there were two boys who lived in a fine big house, for their father was rich. The house was in a town, and it had a great many rooms. In front of it was a beautiful green lawn, over which were scattered trees and bushes that bore flowers, and behind the house was a large garden where delicious fruits and vegetables grew, and where there were beautiful beds of bright flowers. Under the shady trees of this garden was a favorite playground of the boys."

"What were the names of the boys?" interrupted Jimmy.

"We'll call them Tom and Bill, though these may not have been their real names," explained Skipper Ed. "Tom and Bill are easy names to remember, though, don't you think so?"

"Yes, Partner, they're fine names, and easy to remember."

"Tom was two years older than Bill, and they were great chums. They not only played together but they got into mischief together, and went to school together, until Tom went to college. When they got into mischief together Tom,

somehow, usually managed to escape punishment, for he was a much keener lad than Bill, and Bill, on his part, seldom failed to receive his full share of punishment."

"That weren't fair!" broke in Jimmy. "'Tweren't honest for Tom to let Bill get all the punishment!"

"He didn't mean to be dishonest, I'm sure," said Skipper Ed.

"But 'tweren't honest," insisted Jimmy.

"As I was saying," continued Skipper Ed, "Tom went to college and made new friends, and when Bill followed him to college two years later the lads saw little of each other. Tom was a brilliant fellow, and everyone liked him. He had a host of friends among the students. Bill, on the other hand, was not in the least brilliant, and he had to work hard to get his lessons, and they went with different crowds of fellows.

"Their father, as I told you, was rich, and he was also indulgent. He gave the boys a larger allowance of spending money than was good for them. There was never a month, however, that Tom did not go to Bill and borrow some of his, and even then Tom was always in debt. Bill knew it was the gay company Tom kept, and warned him against it, but Tom would laugh it off and say that a fellow in the upper classes had to keep up his end, as Bill would learn later.

"What Bill did learn later was that Tom had become an inveterate gambler, and had lost his money at cards, and went away from college leaving many debts unpaid.

"The father of the boys was a manufacturer, and was also president of the bank in the little city where they lived. A bank is a place where other people's money is kept for them, and whenever the people who keep money there need any, they come and get what they need. When Tom left college he was taken into the bank, and before Bill's graduation had been advanced to the position of cashier, and had married a very fine young woman. The cashier is the man that has charge of the money in the bank.

"It was thought best also for Bill to enter the bank, which he did a few months after his return from college, as assistant to his brother.

"Things went on very well until, one day, a man came to examine the bank and to see if all the money was safely there, and the examiner, as the man was called, discovered a shortage. That is, there was not as much money in the bank as there should have been. The shortage lay between the two brothers. Tom, in terrible distress, admitted to Bill that he had 'just borrowed' the money to invest in stocks--which is a way people speak of one kind of gambling--but that the investment had failed, and he had lost it.

"You do not know, Partner, what stocks are, but I'll tell you some other time.

"When this happened Tom had a little baby boy at home, about two months old. Bill loved his brother, and he loved his brother's baby very much.

"'Tom,' said Bill, 'I've always stood by you since we were little boys and played in the garden together, and I'm going to stand by you now. If the loss is laid to you it will ruin not only your life but the lives of your wife and your baby. I'll say that I took the money and you must not say I did not.'

"'No,' said Tom, 'I can't let you do that! It's too much! It's too big a sacrifice!'

"'Yes, you will,' said Bill. 'It will likely ruin my life, I know, but I'm only one. If it's laid on you, three lives will be ruined. Just promise me you'll live straight after this, and never gamble again.'

"Tom promised, and Bill was sure he meant it, and when their father, who had been sent for by the examiner, arrived at the bank, Bill, as agreed, told his father he had taken the money.

"Of course there was a terrible scene. Bill was not arrested for his father did not wish the family disgraced, but he was driven from home, with very little money in his pocket, and told never to return again. His mother and little sister--I forgot to tell you the boys had a little sister, who was ten years old at that time--nearly broke their hearts at his going. But his father was very harsh, and told him if he ever came back he would have him arrested and put into prison. It was not the loss of the money which angered him. That was a comparatively small amount, which he paid back to the bank and did not miss very much. It was the thought that one of his boys had taken it."

"What was the little sister's name?" asked Jimmy.

"Well, let me see," said Skipper Ed. "We'll call her Mary."

"Did Bill ever go back?"

"No, he never went back."

"Where did he go?"

"Why, he went to a seaport town and shipped as a sailor, and after knocking about the seas for a time he settled in a country much like this where we live. He liked the wild country, where he could hunt and fish, and where the people he met were true and honest, and helped each other, instead of always trying to take advantage of one another."

"I'm glad he did that," declared Jimmy. "I wish he lived near us. I don't think I'd like to live in a place like he came from, and I'm glad Bobby came away from it."

"And the fishing and hunting are better here than where he came from, too, Partner."

"I don't want to live where the fishin' and huntin' isn't fine, and it's fine here."

"Aye, 'tis fine here, and many things are fine here. Destiny is the Lord's will, and our destiny, Partner, is to live here and be as happy as we can; and now Bobby has come, it seems to be his destiny too."

And so Jimmy had his story, and bedtime had arrived, and the two partners went to bed to be lulled to sleep by the storm raging about their cabin.



CHAPTER IV

OVER A CLIFF

The storm that lulled Skipper Ed and his little partner to sleep also lulled Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel and Bobby to sleep. Bobby's new bed was finished. It was half the width of Abel's and Mrs. Abel's bed, but it was quite as long, for Bobby was to grow tall, and to become a big and brave hunter. And, too, for present needs it must be of ample length to permit Mrs. Abel to lie down by Bobby's side of nights while she crooned him to sleep with her quaint Eskimo lullabies.

Abel had expended great care in his handiwork, and derived a vast deal of satisfaction from the result. And when Mrs. Abel fitted the bunk with a fine feather bed which she made from the duck and goose feathers which she had saved, and spread it with warm blankets and tucked Bobby away in it, he, too, seemed to find it entirely to his liking, for he went to sleep at once, and slept as soundly as he could have slept in a bed of carved mahogany, spread with counterpanes of silk and down.

Indeed, Bobby was in a fair way of being spoiled. His indulgent foster parents could deny him nothing. They gratified his every wish and whim, even to the extent of tearing from its mother a little puppy dog, to the great distress of the dumb mother, and taking it into the house for him to play with.

Since Bobby's arrival Abel, devoting his spare moments to the task, had carved from walrus tusks six little ivory dogs, an ivory sledge, and a little ivory Eskimo man, to represent the driver of the miniature team, for no dog team could be complete without a driver. Now, during the two days' enforced leisure from out-of-door activities afforded him by the blizzard, he put the finishing touches upon his work. With infinite patience he fashioned miniature harness for the ivory dogs, and, harnessing them to the ivory sledge, with due ceremony presented them to Bobby. And Bobby, who was already learning to prattle Eskimo words, received the gift with unfeigned delight. Then he must learn the name of each, which Abel patiently taught him to pronounce with proper accent and intonation: *inuit--man*; *tingmik--dog*; *komatik--sledge*.

This was the first of many toys that Abel made for Bobby in the weeks that followed: a small dog whip, a fathom long, an exact counterpart of Abel's own long whip, which was a full five fathoms long; a small sledge, on which he could coast, and on which pups could haul him about over the ice; bow and arrow--nearly everything, indeed, that Abel believed his childish desires could crave.

When the storm had passed Skipper Ed and Jimmy came over on snowshoes, and Jimmy stopped for a week in Abel's cabin, with Mrs. Abel and Bobby, while Abel and Skipper Ed went away to hunt for seals. This was a glorious week for both lads, and with it began a comradeship and friendship that was to last throughout their life and carry them in later years side by side through many adventures.

The seal hunt was a success, and Abel and Skipper Ed returned with the big boat loaded with seals. Then followed a season of activity. The seals were skinned and dressed, the blubber placed in barrels in the porch, and the meat elevated to a stage outside where it was well out of reach of the dogs, and was at hand to be used as dog food--and human food also during the winter.

The seal skins were turned over to Mrs. Abel, to soak and scrape and prepare for boots and other garments, which Abel and Skipper Ed and Jimmy, as well as she herself, and Bobby, would require.

Bobby developed a vast liking for the choice morsels of the seal flippers and meat, which were always reserved for him, and it was not long before he demanded his due share of the fresh blubber, too.

He loved, when Mrs. Abel was at work sewing the boots with sinew, to help her by chewing the edges of the oily leather, to soften and render it pliable for the needle. Indeed, Bobby quickly developed into an Eskimo child in all save the color of his skin, and texture and color of his hair, which persisted in remaining silky and yellow.

And thus the weeks passed. With the rapidly shortening days of November, cold increased with grim earnestness. Already the snow was gathering depth in the forest, and on the open spaces it lay frozen and hard, and the sun now had no strength to soften it. A coating of ice crusted the beach where the tide rose and fell, and this crackled and snapped as the waves broke upon it. A strange, smoky vapor lay over the sea, shifting in the east wind. The sea was "smoking," and was only waiting now, Abel said, for a calm, to freeze.

Then suddenly one night a great uncanny silence fell upon the world, and in the morning a gray level plain reached

away, where the day before had been the heaving billows of the bay. The sea was frozen at last, and for many long months there would be no breaking of waves upon the rocks or lapping of tides upon the sandy beach. The Frost King, grim and inexorable, had ascended his throne, and the world, subdued into utter silence, lay prostrate and submissive at his feet.

Toward noon Jimmy came over, hauling behind him a sled, and upon it his sleeping bag of caribou skin, to say that Skipper Ed had gone that morning to his traps and would not return until the following evening, and Jimmy was to stay at Abel's over night. This was the custom when Skipper Ed was away, and of course Jimmy was more than welcome with both Abel and Mrs. Abel, and Bobby was delighted.

When dinner was over Abel, with a long stick, went down to inspect the ice. He prodded it with the stick, and finding it to his satisfaction stepped out upon it, and still prodding ahead of him made a wide circuit. The ice bent as he walked, but sea ice is tough, and may be perfectly safe though it bends. And so Abel found it, for when he came back he said "*Piovok*" (it is good).

Bobby was wrapped well, and out he went with Jimmy for his first winter frolic. A wonderful time they had, coasting down the steep bank and shooting far out upon the ice, or running over the ice, with Bobby on the sled and Jimmy hauling him, until at last, quite weary with the fun, they returned to the cabin to play with the ivory dogs and sledge until supper time.

After this Jimmy came often with his sled, and he and Bobby coasted the steep bank or rolled and tumbled in the snow, or built miniature snow *igloos*, while Bobby grew as tough and hardy as any little Eskimo boy could have been, which was very much to the satisfaction, not only of Mr. and Mrs. Abel, but of Skipper Ed, as well.

It was not long after the ice came that the missionary from Nain visited them, and met Bobby for the first time. He was a tall, jolly man, and made much of Bobby, asking many questions about the manner of Bobby's coming.

"It is very strange," said he. "Shall I not take him, Abel, to the Mission, and care for him there? You do not want a white child."

But there was such a protest from both Abel and his wife, who insisted that Bobby was their own child, sent them by God, that the missionary never again suggested taking him from them. When the mail left the coast, however, the following summer, he wrote to England a full description of the occurrence, and the fact of Bobby's rescue and whereabouts was published far and wide in British papers, but no inquiries ever came of it, and no one came to claim Bobby.

But we must not linger over this period of Bobby's life. When he was five years of age Skipper Ed began his lessons, coming over to Abel Zachariah's cabin as often as possible, for the purpose, and now and again he would take Bobby to his own cabin to stop a day or two with him and Jimmy.

He supplied Bobby with the books he needed, and Bobby studied hard and learned quickly, and was fascinated with the work, for Skipper Ed had the rare faculty of making study appear a pleasant game, and it was a game which Bobby loved to play.

There was little else, indeed, to occupy his attention during long winter evenings--no streets to play in, no parties, no theaters--and he made more rapid progress than he probably would have made had he attended school in civilization, for Skipper Ed was a good tutor and Jimmy, who was already quite a scholar, was also of great help to Bobby in preparing lessons.

And as Bobby grew and developed, Abel, on his part, taught him to be keenly alert, patient, self-reliant and resourceful--qualities that every successful hunter and wilderness dweller must possess.

He learned first with the miniature whip that Abel made him, and later with Abel's own long dog whip, to wield the long lash with precision. He and Jimmy would practice for hours at a time clipping a small bit of ice no larger than an egg from a hummock thirty feet away.

He played with the young puppies and trained them to haul him on his small sledge, and he would shout to them proudly, as large as life--and just as Abel did when he drove the big team--"*Hu-it!*" when he wanted them to start; "*Ah!*" when he wanted them to stop; "*Ouk! Ouk! Ouk!*" when he wanted them to turn to the right; "*Ra! Ra! Ra!*" for a turn to the left; "*Ok-su-it!*" when he wished them to hurry; and with his whip he enforced his commands.

He learned to shoot his bow and arrow, and to wield the harpoon and spear. Abel once fashioned for him, from a block of wood, a very good imitation of a small seal, and Bobby and Jimmy had unending sport casting their harpoons at it, and presently they became so expert that seldom did they fail to make a "killing" strike.

When he was old enough Bobby learned to make his hunting implements himself. Here, indeed, was required patience, perseverance, and resourcefulness, for his only tools were his knife and his ax, and his only material such as the wilderness produced; and to gain Abel's praise, which was his high ambition, he must needs do his work with care and niceness. And thus Bobby was learning to be a man and a hunter.

Bobby was still a very young lad when Abel began to teach him the signs of the wilderness and the ways of the wild things that lived in the woods. He learned to know the tracks of all the animals of the region, and even how long it had been since the animals that made the tracks had passed by. And he learned to make snares and traps, and how to handle his gun--the wonderful gun which Abel told him God had sent with him from the Far Beyond--and shoot it quickly and accurately, for the man who exists upon the wilderness must know how to do these things, and his sense of observation must be keenly trained; and he must train himself to be alert.

One other accomplishment he acquired from Skipper Ed. He learned to swim. Even in midsummer these northern waters are icy cold. From the breaking up of the ice in summer until the sea freezes again in winter, the natives spend their time upon the water or near it, yet it is rare, indeed, that one of them can swim. And so it was with Abel. He had never in his life voluntarily gone into the sea. But Skipper Ed was a mighty swimmer, and under his instruction Jimmy had learned the art, and in the fourth summer after Bobby's arrival nothing would do but he, too, must learn. Much perseverance was necessary before Abel and Mrs. Abel gave their consent, but finally it was obtained, and in a little while Bobby was as keen for a dip and a dive and a swim as were Skipper Ed and his partner, Jimmy.

And so the years passed in toil, in pleasure, and in attainment--active years that were filled with glorious doing, and with never a heavy moment or idle wasting of time or vain dawdling.

"Never waste time," said Skipper Ed, one stormy winter's day when Bobby was over there, and he and Bobby and Jimmy were luxuriating in their big chairs before the fire. "If you can't be busy with your hands, be busy with your brain. You were put into the world for some purpose, and your destiny is the will of the Almighty. But we may spoil His will by refusing to do the very best we can. The Almighty plans some fine thing for each of us, but He leaves it with us to decide whether we will have the fine things or not. What we're to be or to do comes to us gradually, just as the sun rises gradually. We never know ahead what He has planned for us. That's His big surprise.

"He may have put us into the world to do some great thing, and to become a great and useful man, or we may be intended just to help other people to be noble and honest and true, by doing our duty always, and setting an example of honesty and nobility."

"Do you think you or Jimmy or I will ever be great men?" Bobby asked in some awe.

"Partner is a great man *now*" declared Jimmy. "He knows most everything!"

"No, not everything," laughed Skipper Ed. "Not everything, Partner. But," and he spoke gravely again, "I've always tried to do my duty as God has pointed it out to me. Perhaps the Great Thing that I was intended to do was to teach you two chaps what I could, and perhaps your Great Thing is to teach others, and perhaps working all together in this way we may guide someone else to a great destiny.

"We are just hunters and fishermen. Aside from our own two families, we don't see many people, except the missionary down at Nain, and the Eskimos at the settlement there, and now and again in summer the fishermen on passing schooners. But that doesn't matter. Here Destiny placed us, and here is our work, and we must do it the best we can.

"We should work hard when we have work to do; we should play hard when we are at play; we should think hard when we are neither working nor playing. We should not waste time idling. We should do our level best to fit ourselves for our destiny, whatever it may be."

This was one of many conversations of the sort that Skipper Ed had with the boys. He was their comrade, their teacher, their adviser, and their inspiration. And, be it said, with the constant inspiration, also, of the great wilderness and sea, with no other youthful companions or playmates, and with little of the joy of sports with which boys in civilization are blessed, it was but natural that they should feel more deeply the responsibility of life, and should ponder and take to heart more seriously Skipper Ed's philosophy, than they would had their lot been cast in a city or a town.

It is not to be supposed, however, that they never got into mischief. They were too full of life and energy to avoid that. But they were seldom or never instructed *not* to do this or that, and their mischief was usually the result of indiscretion and error of judgment natural to youth, rather than disobedience. Eskimos do not whip or punish their children. They treat them rather, as comrades, and the boy's effort is to do as nearly as he can the things his elders do and in the manner in which they do them.

And this was the case with Abel and Mrs. Abel and Bobby. They never punished Bobby. It was the case also with

Skipper Ed and Jimmy. Skipper Ed, from the first, called Jimmy his partner, and talked to him and treated him very much as he would have done had Jimmy been a grown-up.

From the very beginning Bobby had his escapades, which usually included adventures. During the first summer after his arrival he fell into the water with due regularity, but always, fortunately, within reach of Abel's or Mrs. Abel's strong arms. Once he climbed into the big boat, undid the painter, and the tide had carried him well out to sea before his plight was discovered and he was rescued by Abel in the skiff. And once he was lost for a day in the forest, with Abel, Mrs. Abel, Skipper Ed, and Jimmy searching frantically for him. They found him, quite tired out with his wanderings, peacefully sleeping on the forest moss.

With these escapades and a thousand others, Bobby kept his foster parents pretty constantly varying between a state of suspense and a state of joy, for they were vastly delighted when he emerged from an adventure, usually not much the worse for his experience.

Bobby's age was, of course, a matter of conjecture. Abel and Mrs. Abel must needs have a definite date set down as his birthday, in order that it might be duly and appropriately celebrated each year, and as a convenient date they chose December 1 of the year in which he came to them as his fourth birthday. This was a date when the autumn seal hunt would be finished, and the sea ice would be formed, when Abel might go to Nain with the dogs and bring back some sweets or other surprise.

Upon this reckoning Bobby was eight and Jimmy was twelve years of age when the two lads had their first real adventure together. It was in the spring. A westerly wind had cleared the bay of ice, and Abel and Skipper Ed had gone north in the big boat two days before for the spring seal hunt, and were not expected back for a fortnight. Jimmy, during Skipper Ed's absence, was stopping with Bobby and Mrs. Abel as usual, and the two boys were out bright and early to haul a trout net which was set in the mouth of a river which flowed into the bay not far away.

It was one of those ideal days which come now and again to that northern country in spring, as though to emphasize by contrast the fact that the long bleak winter is over. The sun shone brilliantly and the rippling waves of the nearly placid bay sparkled and glistened alluringly, spicy odors of the forest perfumed the air, and birds twittered gleefully.

"Let's go egging, Bobby," Jimmy suggested, as the boys, pulling leisurely back from the river, turned Abel's old skiff to the beach landing place below the cabin.

"All right," agreed Bobby, "let's do, as soon as we take care of the trout. Mother said last night she'd like some eggs. We haven't had any yet this year." Bobby always called Abel "Father," and Mrs. Abel "Mother."

"I'm sure there must be lots of ducks and gull and tern eggs out on the islands, and puffin and auk eggs on the cliffs along the shore. It's lots of fun!" said Jimmy enthusiastically.

So they hurried in with the trout, which they dressed, washed, and finally salted down in a barrel. This required but a few minutes, and while they worked Mrs. Abel prepared a simple luncheon of bread, sufficient tea for a brewing, and a bottle of molasses for sweetening, and these, with their tea pail and cups and hunting bags, they carried down to the skiff, followed by Mrs. Abel's wishes for a pleasant day, and her "*Oksutingae*."

And so they set off down the bay to the islands, each pulling at a pair of oars and chatting gaily as they rowed, in fine spirits at the prospect, and enjoying their outing as only youth with enthusiasm can enjoy itself.

At the end of a three hours' row they turned the skiff to the sloping rock of an island shore, and landing, tied the painter to a big boulder.

"This is a fine egg island," said Jimmy, as they set out with their bags. "Partner brought me out here last year."

Squawking birds rose in every direction as they approached, and clouds of gulls circled around crying the alarm. Down in rock crevasses along the shore they saw many sea pigeon eggs, and Bobby wanted to get them, but they were generally well out of reach.

"They're too small to bother with anyway," said Jimmy. "Come on."

"There! There!" shouted Bobby. "There goes an eider duck! And another! And another! *Their* eggs are fine and big! Let's find the nests!"

Presently they discovered, under a low, scrubby bush, a down-lined nest containing eight greenish-drab eggs.

"There's one!" shouted Jimmy. "This is an eider's nest."

And so, hunting among the bushes and rocks, they soon had their bags filled with eider duck, tern, gull, and booby

eggs, while the birds in hundreds flew hither and thither, violently protesting, with discordant notes, the invasion and the looting. But the eggs were good to eat, and the boys smacked their lips over the feasts in store--and Mrs. Abel wanted them; that was the chief consideration, after all.

"Now," said Jimmy, "let's go over to the mainland and boil the kettle. It's away past dinner time and I'm as hungry as a bear."

"All right," agreed Bobby. "I'm so hungry I've just got to eat. Where'll we go?"

"I know a dandy place over here, and there's a brook coming in close to it where we can get good water. It's just a few minutes' pull--just below the ledges."

Ten minutes' strong rowing landed them on a gravelly beach near the mouth of a brook, which rushed down to the bay through a deep gulch. To the eastward the gulch banks rose into high cliffs which overhung the sea. Kittiwakes, tube-nosed swimmers, ivory gulls, cormorants, little auks and other birds were flying up and down and along the cliff's face, or perching upon ledges on the rock, and, like the birds on the island, making a great deal of discordant noise.

"It seems as though there were no end of birds," said Bobby, as they secured their boat. "I'd like to see what kind of nests those make up there, and after we eat I'm going to look at some of them."

"You can't get up there," said Jimmy. "I've tried it lots of times. They take good care to leave their eggs where nobody can get at them."

"Well, I'm going to try, anyhow," Bobby declared, as he turned to the brook for a kettle of water.

"I wish we had something to boil eggs in," said he, as he set the kettle of water down by Jimmy, who was whittling shavings for the fire.

"What's the matter with the old tin bucket we use for bailing the skiff?" Jimmy suggested. "I don't believe it leaks enough to hurt."

"That's so!" said Bobby. "We can boil 'em in that."

With the ax--in this country men never venture from home without an ax, for in wilderness traveling it is often a life saver--Jimmy split some sticks, and then with his jackknife whittled shavings from the dry heart. He stopped his knife just short of the end of the stick, until six or eight long, thin shavings were made, then, with a twist of the blade, he broke off the stub with the shavings attached to it. Thus the shavings were held in a bunch.

Several of these bunches he made, working patiently, for patience and care are as necessary in building a fire as in doing anything else, and Skipper Ed had taught him that whatever he did should be done with all the care possible. And so in making a fire he gave as much care to the cutting of shavings and placing of sticks as though it had been something of the highest importance, and doing it in this way he seldom failed to light his fire, rain or shine, with a single match. Fire making in the open is a fine art.

When Jimmy had collected enough shavings for his purpose, he placed two of his split sticks upon the ground at right angles to each other, an end of one close up to the end of the other. Then, holding a bunch of shavings by the thick, or stub, end, he struck a match and lighted the thin end, and when it was blazing well placed the unlighted end upon the two sticks where they met. Other bunches of shavings he laid on this, the thin ends in the blaze, the thick ends elevated upon the sticks. Then came small splits, and bigger splits, and in a moment he had a crackling fire.

He now secured a pole six or seven feet in length, and fixed one end firmly in the ground, with the other end sloped over the fire. On this he hung first, by its bale, the old bailing kettle, filled with water, and then the tea pail, in such a way as to bring them directly over the blaze, and though the fire was a small one, it was not many minutes before the kettles boiled. Then while Bobby dropped half a dozen eggs into the bailing kettle, Jimmy lifted the tea pail off, put some tea into it, and set it by the fire to brew.

"Now," said Jimmy, presently, "let's go for it."

And they ate, as only hungry boys can, and with the keen relish of youths who live in the open.

"Let's see if we can't get some of the eggs off the cliff now," suggested Bobby, when they were through. "I know I can climb down there."

"I've tried it plenty of times," said Jimmy, "and I don't believe it can be done. You can't get in from this end, and the top hangs over so you can't get in from the top."

"Let's go up on top and try to get down, anyhow," insisted Bobby. "I know what! There's a harpoon line in the skiff. Father always keeps it stuffed in under the seat aft. We can tie an end of it under my arms and you can let me down, and then pull me back."

And so without loss of time the young adventurers secured the harpoon line, and climbing out of the gully followed the top of the cliff to a place where birds were numerous.

Jimmy tied a bowline knot at the proper distance from one end of the line, passed the line around Bobby's body under the arms, ran the end of the line through the loop, and secured it. With this arrangement the line could not tighten and pinch, and still was tight enough to hold Bobby securely.

"Now," said Jimmy, indicating a high bowlder, "I'll bring the line around this rock, so I'll have a purchase on it and it can't slip away from me, and let it out as you climb down. You holler when you want to stop and holler when you want to come up."

The plan worked admirably for a while. Very slowly Bobby descended, calling out now and again for Jimmy to "hold" while he picked eggs from nests on shelving rocks.

At last his bag was full, and he was ready to ascend.

"All right, Jimmy. Pull up now," he called.

Jimmy pulled, but pull as he would he could not budge Bobby one inch. He did not dare release the line where it made its turn around the bowlder, for without the leverage he feared the line would get away from him, in which case Bobby would crash to the bottom of the cliff. So Jimmy pulled desperately. But it was of no avail, and presently he took another turn of the line around the bowlder, and secured it so that it could not slip, and ran forward.

Bobby was shouting to be drawn up, and Jimmy, throwing himself upon his face and peering down over the edge of the cliff, saw Bobby dangling in mid air some forty feet below him and thirty feet above the deep black water. He also saw that, supported only by the line, Bobby was in a strained and perilous as well as most uncomfortable position.

His first impulse was to lower Bobby to the base of the cliff, and let him wait there until he could get the boat, bring it around and take him off. But he saw at a glance that at its foot the rocky cliff rose out of the deep water in a perpendicular wall, so smooth that there was not even a hand hold to be had, and this was its condition for a considerable distance on either side. Neither was there hope that, in the strong outgoing tide, and encumbered by clothing, Bobby could swim in the icy waters to a point where a footing could be had.

"Hurry, Jimmy; I can't stand this much longer! I can't stand it much longer!" Bobby shouted, as he caught a glimpse of Jimmy's head.

Jimmy in return shouted reassurance to Bobby, and ran back for another effort to pull him out. But again he pulled and pulled in vain. With all the strength he had he could not pull Bobby up a single inch. With a sickening dread at his heart, he refastened the line.



CHAPTER V

THE RESCUE

Jimmy realized that there was no help to be had from outside. There was no one at home but Mrs. Abel, and rowing the skiff alone against the tide fully four hours would be consumed in reaching there and another three hours in coming back. Then it would be well past dark. An easterly breeze was springing up, and a chop was rising on the bay. This easterly wind was likely to bring with it a cold storm, and Bobby, suspended thirty feet above the water, and not warmly dressed, might perish.

"Yes," said Jimmy, "he might perish! He might perish! And it would be my fault!"

The thought brought a cold perspiration to Jimmy's forehead, and a cold, unnatural feeling to his spine, and in desperation he tried the line again. But it was useless effort. He could not pull it up. And again he ran to the cliff, crawled out and peered over at the dangling and by no means silent Bobby.

"Hey there, Jimmy! Pull me up! Hurry!" shouted Bobby.

"I can't! I can't budge you! Oh, Bobby, what are we going to do?"

"If you can't pull me up, let me down!" Bobby was growing impatient. "I can't stand this much longer. The line is cutting me in two."

"Try to climb up the line," suggested Jimmy, the idea striking him as a bright one. "Just climb up, and when you get up here where I can reach you I'll pull you over."

Bobby tried the experiment, but the line was oily, and in spite of his best efforts he could climb only a little way, when he would slide back again.

"I can't do it," he shouted up to Jimmy, after several vain efforts. "The line is too greasy. I can't get a good hold."

"I don't know what to do!" said the distressed Jimmy. "I don't know what to do!"

"If you can't pull me up, let me down," directed Bobby.



"Hurry, Jimmy. I can't hang here much longer. I'm getting all numb"

"That won't do any good," said Jimmy. "You'll only go into the water and drown, for there's no place for you to stand."

"Well," Bobby insisted, "let me down nearer the water. I feel all the time as though the line was going to break, and I'm so high up from it that it makes me dizzy swinging around this way."

"Holler when you want me to stop," shouted Jimmy, rising and running back.

But Jimmy found that after all he could let Bobby down only a very little way when he came to the end of the line. So he fastened it again.

"That's as far as it will go!" he called, lying down on his face again to look over the cliff at Bobby, who was now about twenty feet above the water.

"Then go and get the boat and fetch it down," shouted Bobby. "Hurry, Jimmy. I can't hang here much longer. I'm getting all numb."

That was a solution of the difficulty that had not occurred to Jimmy, and without delay he ran away along the cliff top and down to the skiff, which was lying a half mile above, and, undoing the painter, rowed with all his might toward Bobby, until presently he drew up directly beneath the swinging lad.

"Can you unfasten the line and drop into the boat, Bobby?" he asked, gazing up.

"No," decided Bobby, glancing at the skiff, which rose and fell on the swell, and which Jimmy was holding dangerously near the breaking waves on the cliff base. "I might hit the boat but I'd break my neck, and maybe tip you over. Stand her off a little, and I'll show you."

He felt in his pocket for his jackknife, drew it out and opened it. Then with his left hand he succeeded, after several attempts, in lifting himself sufficiently to relieve the strain of his body, and with the jackknife in his right hand cut the line where it circled his body below the arms.

Hanging now by his left hand he deliberately and coolly closed the knife by pushing the back of the blade against his leg, and restored it to his pocket. This done he grasped the line with his right hand just above the bowline knot, where he had a firm hold, slipped his other hand down to it, and began swinging in toward the cliff and out over the waves, and then on an outward swing, let go. Down he went, well away from the rocks, feet first into the deep water, and, a moment later, appearing on the surface, swam to the skiff, grasped it astern, and climbed aboard, shivering from his icy bath.

"Oh, Bobby, you're a wonder!" exclaimed Jimmy. "I never would have thought of that way of your getting off that line!"

"'Twasn't anything," declared Bobby, deprecatingly, as he seated himself and picked up his oars. "Now let's pull back where we can put on a fire. I'm freezing cold."

"I was scared when I found I couldn't pull you up," said Jimmy, as they rowed back to the gully. "Wasn't you?"

"No, I wasn't scared," boasted Bobby. "I was just getting cold and numb. The worst of it is I had to drop my bag with all the eggs I picked off the cliff. I had some dandies, too! Two of them were the prettiest eggs I ever saw--real small at one end and big at the other, and all colored and marked and spotted up. They were different from any eggs I ever saw, too."

"Did you find 'em together, or separate?"

"Found 'em separate, on different ledges."

"I know what *they* were! They were murre eggs. Murre eggs are different from any other kind. They've got more colors and marks on 'em. Partner found some last year."

"There were some murre eggs down on the water, but I never thought they'd go up to lay their eggs in places like that. The eggs were right on the bare rock, and weren't in a nest at all, and if it wasn't for their shape they'd have rolled off."

"It's a strange place for any bird to leave eggs, but that's where the kittiwakes, auks and swimmers and some of the gulls and lots of birds make nests and lay eggs. I suppose it's so as to make it hard to find them when folks go eggging. Partner tells me lots, and I ask lots of questions, because he says the more I know about the way birds and animals live and the things they do, the better I'll be able to hunt and take care of myself."

In spite of his exertion at the oars, Bobby's teeth were chattering when they landed at the place where they had cooked their dinner. But it was not long before Jimmy had a roaring fire and the kettle over for some hot tea, and then, leaving Bobby to dry his clothes, Jimmy climbed up again over the cliff to recover Abel's harpoon line, which was much too valuable to be left behind.

At this season of the year the days are long in Labrador, and though it was nearly eleven o'clock at night when the boys reached home, it was still twilight. Mrs. Abel was on the lookout for them, and had a fine pan of fried trout and steaming pot of tea waiting on the table, for she knew they would be hungry, as boys who live in the open always are. And she praised them for the fine lot of eggs they brought her, and laughed very heartily over Bobby's adventure, for in that land adventure is a part of life, and all in a day's work.

CHAPTER VI

WITH PASSING YEARS

Bobby's adventure on the cliff was, after all, but typical of the adventures that he was regularly getting into, and drawing Jimmy into, but somehow coming out of unscathed, during these years of his career. Though he was nearly four years Jimmy's junior, he was invariably the instigator of their escapades.

Jimmy was inclined to cautiousness, while Bobby had a reckless turn, or rather failed to see danger. Bobby was naturally a leader, and in spite of his youth Jimmy instinctively recognized him as such. He could always overcome Jimmy's scruples and cautions, and with ease and celerity lead Jimmy from one scrape into another.

But Bobby invariably kept a cool head. He had a steady brain and nerve and the faculty of quick thought and prompt decision, with a practical turn of mind. If he got Jimmy and himself into a scrape, he usually got them out of it again not much the worse for their experience.

Jimmy was imaginative and emotional, and when they were in peril he could see only the peril, and picture the possible dire results. Bobby, on the other hand, concentrated his attention upon some practical method by which they might extricate themselves, losing sight, seemingly, of what the result might be should they fail to do so.

Bobby had doubtless inherited from his unknown ancestors the peculiar mental qualities that made him a leader. From Abel he had absorbed the Eskimo's apparent contempt of danger. Abel, like all Eskimos, was a fatalist. If he was caught in a perilous position he believed that if the worst came it would be because it was to be. If he escaped unharmed, so it was to be. Therefore why be excited? Bobby had as completely accepted this creed as though he, too, were an Eskimo, for his life and training with Abel was the life and training of an Eskimo boy.

And so the years passed, and Bobby grew into a tall, square-shouldered, alert, handsome, self-reliant youth. He was in nearly every respect, save the color of his skin and the shade of his hair, an Eskimo. He spoke the language like an Eskimo born, his tastes and his life were Eskimo, his ambition to be a great hunter--the greatest ambition of his life--was the ambition of an Eskimo, and he bore the hardships, which to him were no hardships at all, like an Eskimo. He was much more an Eskimo, indeed, than the native half-breeds of the coast farther south.

In one respect, however, Bobby was highly civilized. He was a great reader and an exceptional student. Skipper Ed had seen to this with singleness of purpose.

To him and Jimmy study was recreation. Mathematical problems were interesting to them, just as the solution of puzzles interests the boy in civilization. Just as the boy in civilization will work for hours upon the solution of a mechanical puzzle, they worked upon problems in arithmetic and geometry, and with the same gusto. They studied grammatical construction much as they studied the tracks and the habits of wild animals. They read the books in Skipper Ed's library with the feelings and sensations of explorers. In the first reading they were going through an unknown forest, and with each successive reading they were retracing their steps and exploring the trail in minute detail and becoming thoroughly acquainted with the surrounding country.

This may seem very improbable and unnatural to the boy whose studies are enforced and, because they are compulsory, appeal to him as tedious duties which he must perform. But nevertheless it was very natural. Human nature is obstinate and contrary. Tom Sawyer's friends derived much pleasure from whitewashing the fence, and even paid for the privilege. Had their parents set them to whitewashing fences they would have found it irksome work, and anything but play.

Bobby, indeed, had developed two distinct personalities. In his every-day living he was decidedly an Eskimo; but of long winter evenings, reading or studying Skipper Ed's books, at home in Abel's cabin, or in one of the easy chairs in Skipper Ed's cabin, when Skipper Ed explained to him and Jimmy the things they read, Bobby was as far removed from his Eskimo personality as could be.

Abel and Mrs. Abel never wavered in their belief that God had sent Bobby to them from the Far Beyond, through the place where mists and storms were born. They believed he had been sent to them direct from heaven.

But Bobby was very human, indeed. No one other than Abel and Mrs. Abel would ever have ascribed to him angelic origin, and as he developed it must have caused a long stretch of even their imagination to continue the fiction. There was nothing ethereal about Bobby. His big, husky frame, his abounding and never-failing appetite, and his high spirits, were very substantial indeed.

And as Bobby grew, and more and more took part in the bigger things of life, his adventures grew from the smaller adventures of the boy to the greater ones of the man.

In this wild land no one knows when he will be called upon to meet adventure. The sea winds breathe it, it stalks boldly over the bleak wastes of the barrens, and in the dark and mysterious fastnesses of the forest it crouches, always ready for its chance to spring forward and meet you unawares. Adventure, ay, and grave danger too, are wont to show themselves unexpectedly. And so, one winter's evening, they came to Skipper Ed and Bobby and Jimmy.

CHAPTER VII

THE WOLF PACK

In seasons when caribou were plentiful along the coast, wolves were also plentiful, for it is the habit of wolves in this land to follow the trail of the caribou herds and prey upon the stragglers. And so it was that sometimes of a winter's night the silence of the hills was startled by the distant howl of wolves. And always Skipper Ed's dogs and Abel's dogs would answer the wild, weird cries of their untamed kin of the hills with equally weird cries, their muzzles in the air and the long-drawn notes rising and falling in woful and dismal cadence.

Perhaps the dogs were possessed of an uninterpreted longing to join their brothers of the wilderness in their care-free wanderings, and be forever free themselves from the yoke of sledge and whip and the toil and drudgery of the trail. But so like men were the beasts that they never had the courage to cast themselves free from the shackles of their master, though it required but a resolution and a plunge into the hills.

"So it is with many a man," said Skipper Ed one evening when Bobby was stopping for the night with him and Jimmy, and a wolf howl was followed by the answering howl of dogs. "Many and many a man that has the power and strength within him, and the brains too, if he but knew it, to go out into the broad world of endeavor and do great things, simmers his life away in the little narrow world into which he has grown, expending his energies as a servant when he might be a master. He keeps his eyes to the ground and never looks out or up, and so he never knows how big the world is or how much it holds for him.

"It takes courage sometimes to break loose from old things. But it's the man that dares to break loose, and hit a new trail, and try his hand at new things, that wins. The man that never takes a chance, never gets anywhere, and then he says that luck has been against him. I speak of luck sometimes, but I don't mean it in that way. There is no such thing as luck. What we call luck is the Almighty's reward when we've done the best we can."

"Did you ever try new things?" asked Bobby.

"Yes, yes, lad! Long ago," and a shadow fell upon Skipper Ed's face, to pass in a moment, however, as he added, "I think I did what the Lord Almighty intended me to do."

"What was it?" asked Bobby, ever curious.

"To come here, and be Jimmy's partner, and to be a friend to both of you young scalawags, I think," and Skipper Ed smiled.

"Didn't you ever ask the Lord to let you do some big, *big* things?" insisted Bobby.

"Partner does big things all the time," protested Jimmy. "He's a fine shot, and there isn't a better hunter on The Labrador."

"Yes," said Skipper Ed, "I've asked the Lord, and I think the big thing He's given me to do is to teach you chaps the best I can, and maybe my teaching will help one of you to do the big, *big* thing."

And then a wolf howled again, not far away this time, and out in front of the cabin Skipper Ed's dogs howled an answer, and down from Abel's cabin came the long, weird cry of woe from Abel's dogs; and the three sat silent for a little, and listened.

"The wolves are growing bold," remarked Skipper Ed presently. "That last fellow that howled was just above here in the gulch."

"I'd like to see one running loose," said Bobby, "but they don't like to show themselves to me, and I never saw but one in my life."

Skipper Ed arose, and donning his *adikey* went out of doors, soon to return followed by a breath of the keen, frosty air of the winter night.

"It's bright moonlight," said he, rubbing his hands briskly to warm them, for he had worn no mittens. "The wind is nor' nor'west, and if you chaps feel like an adventure we'll take a walk around and up the s'uth'ard side of the gulch, where he won't get a smell of us, and maybe we'll have a look at that old rounder that's howling, and who knows but we might get a shot at him and his mates. What do you say?"

"Fine!" agreed the boys in unison, springing eagerly up from their chairs.

"Well, hustle into your *adikeys*, then, and we'll try to get to leeward of the old fellow," directed Skipper Ed.

"I hope there'll be a chance for a shot!" Bobby exclaimed excitedly, as they shouldered their rifles and slung cartridge pouches over their shoulders.

"So do I!" agreed Jimmy.

"Just a bare chance," said Skipper Ed, as they passed out into the porch shed and took their snowshoes from the pegs. "It depends upon which way they're traveling."

"Do you think there's more than one?" asked Bobby in an excited undertone, as they swung away on snowshoes.

"Yes, but we'd better not talk now. They're keen, and shy old devils, and they might hear us," warned Skipper Ed.

Cautiously but swiftly they stole out and into the moonlit forest and up into the gulch and along the southern banks of a frozen brook. Now and again Skipper Ed halted, stooping to peer about and along the open space that marked the bed of the stream. Presently he held up his hand as a sign of caution, and crouched behind a clump of brush, motioning the boys to follow his example.

"They're just above us," he whispered. "I saw them moving among the trees, above the bend. They're coming down this way, and they'll come out in that open just ahead of us. Don't shoot till I tell you, but be ready for them, lads."

"How many are there?" Bobby whispered excitedly.

"I can't tell yet. But I saw them move, and there's more than one," answered Skipper Ed.

A moment later the blood-curdling howl of a wolf broke the forest stillness. It was answered by the distant howl of the dogs, and then near at hand the night was startled by the defiant howl of many wolves, long, loud and terrible in unexpected suddenness, and so close that the boys involuntarily rose from their crouch.

"A pack!" whispered Skipper Ed, "and a big pack! See them coming there! Too many for us to tackle, lads! Keep quiet, now, lads, and don't lose your heads and don't shoot! We must keep to leeward of them so they won't get our scent, and we must get back to the cabin. They're too many for us to tackle."

As he spoke the leaders of the pack--great, fearsome creatures looming big on the glistening white of the moonlit snow--straggled leisurely around the bend of the frozen stream--one--two--three--Skipper Ed counted until more than twenty had appeared, and still others were coming. It was a pack large enough to be fearless of any enemy and to attack boldly any prey that crossed its path.

Leading the way, and keeping under cover of trees, with Bobby and Jimmy close at his heels, Skipper Ed turned and ran down the gulch toward the cabin, which was not above a mile distant. The gulch ended in an open space, which was a marsh in summer but was now a white expanse of hard-beaten snow. Between this open space and the bay shore a hedge of thick brush grew. On its northern and southern sides the open was flanked by the forest, extending from the gulch mouth to the shore of the bay, and on the northern side it continued to Skipper Ed's cabin and beyond.

Skipper Ed led the way into the forest to the southward of the open, that they might keep well to leeward of the pack, and thus avoid so far as possible danger of the wolves getting their scent. He hoped that this maneuver might permit them to circuit back to the cabin under the protecting cover of the brush fringe along the shore and the forest to the northward. To have crossed the open would have been to invite discovery, for it was evident the wolves would follow the bed of the stream through the gulch and into the open.

Whether they would answer the call of the dogs and turn northward, or whether they would range southward in quest of prey, was uncertain. If to the southward they would be very sure to catch the wind of Skipper Ed and the boys almost immediately, and be upon them before they could reach safety. If they answered the dogs, there would still be danger, but the three in that case would be enabled to keep on the lee side of the pack with the probability of detection considerably lessened. Therefore Skipper Ed hoped and trusted that the wolves would answer the challenge of the dogs.

Even then there was still the danger that the trail made by them on their way up the gulch would be discovered, and unless the dogs proved a greater attraction Skipper Ed knew that the moment the wolves came upon the trail they would take up the fresh scent, and might overtake them before they could gain the shelter of the cabin.

As it came about, they were behind the brush hedge, running up the shore, when the wolves wound out of the gulch and into the open. Through a break in the brush Skipper Ed saw them dimly, in the distance. The leaders stopped and

sniffed. Suddenly came the howl of pursuit--the awful, terrifying cry of the wolf pack fresh upon the heels of quarry. The wolves had turned on the trail and were off up the gulch.

"Run!" commanded Skipper Ed, half under his breath, but still in a tone so loud and tense that the boys heard. "Run! We must run now for our lives!"

And they did run, but had scarcely gained the cover of the woods on the northern side of the open when wolf cries left no doubt that the animals had discovered the return trail and were hot upon it. It seemed now that nothing but an intercession of Providence could save them. The wolf pack would surely overtake them before they could attain the protection of the cabin.



CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE

Now they could hear the pack yelping down through the forest! Already it had reached the brush hedge by the shore! It had made its turn northward, the yelps increasing in volume as it approached! Now the leaders were in sight!

"Go on! Go on!" yelled Skipper Ed, himself lagging in order that he might fall in the rear of the boys and take a position between them and the wolves, and as he did so he turned quickly and fired a random shot at the leader of the pack.

The cabin had just loomed into view dimly through the trees, and the wolves, almost upon their expected prey, were sounding the wild, fierce cry of triumph, when another pack, like phantoms in the forest shadows, coming from the direction of the cabin, swept down past Skipper Ed and the boys, suddenly breaking forth as they ran into a fierce howl of defiance.^[B]

"Thank God!" exclaimed Skipper Ed. "The dogs! The dogs will help us! Run, lads, and get to the door! I'll stop and help hold them with my rifle till you get in!"

But Bobby and Jimmy would not have it so. They, too, turned, and in the dim light of the shadowed forest the three fired into the face of the pack until their rifles were empty. Whether or not any of the animals fell they could not see, but the pack paused for a moment in surprise. Then the dogs charged them, and as the three reached the cabin door yelps and snarls told of the clash as the dogs met their wild kin of the hills in battle.

"Thank God!" again breathed Skipper Ed when the three, panting for breath, were safe in the cabin, a moment later, with the good stout door between them and the ravenous pack, which presently came snapping and snarling around the cabin. "I never saw such a pack of wolves before. I never knew that they gathered in such numbers in these days. There must be at least thirty of them."^[C]

"The dogs! Partner, what will become of our dogs?" exclaimed Jimmy. "They'll kill our fine dogs!"

"I'm afraid they will," agreed Skipper Ed, who had lighted a lamp and was loading the magazine of his rifle. "Load up, partner. Load up, Bobby. We'll see what we can do from cover."

"We must have killed some of them!" Bobby exclaimed excitedly. "I know I did! I saw three fall when we shot!"

"Yes, of course we did," agreed Skipper Ed, "but there are enough of them we didn't kill. Here, you chaps," he added, raising a window three or four inches. "You should get some good shots from here. I'll try my luck from the shed door."

They had turned the lamp low, that they might see the better what was going on out of doors. The wolves, baffled by the sudden disappearance of their quarry, were ranged a little distance from the porch door, save two or three of the bolder ones, which were sniffing at the door itself. The dogs were nowhere to be seen.

"Look out!" called Bobby to Skipper Ed, who was about to open the porch door. "Some of them are right at the door!"

Then he and Jimmy began shooting. The wolves at the door fell, and Skipper Ed, opening the door a little way, joined in a fusillade at the main pack. The rapid reports of the rifles at close range, together with the flashes of fire from an unseen source, struck panic to the heart of the pack. A slightly wounded one turned and ran. That was a signal for panic, as is the way of men and beasts, and the whole pack followed in a mad, wild rush to the cover of the woods.

An instant and the last of the pack had faded into the shadows among the trees--all save those left sprawling and limp upon the snow, which would never roam the hills again, and one or two of the wounded, which were whining, like whipped dogs, and the clearing about the cabin was as deserted as ever it was.

"I'll go out," said Skipper Ed, "and end the suffering of those wounded brutes. Build up the fire, partner, and put the kettle on, and we'll have some tea. Then if there's no sign of what's left of the pack returning, we'll haul the carcasses into the shed, where we can skin them tomorrow."

There was a roaring, cheerful fire in the stove when Skipper Ed returned a few minutes later to report that twelve wolves lay dead outside.

"There must be some more down where we shot them at first," said he, as he drew off his *adikey*, "and some of those that got away were wounded, no doubt. At any rate we've cut the pack down so far in numbers that it won't be a menace any longer."

"What'll they do now?" asked Bobby, as the three settled into their easy chairs to wait for the kettle to boil.

"Go and look for caribou, and attend to their business, I suppose, and leave us quiet, peaceable folk alone," he laughed, adding: "I never saw such a pack before, though I've heard some of the old Eskimos say that years ago it used to happen now and again that packs like this appeared. Wolves are cowardly beasts, but numbers give them courage. When six or eight get together, you have to look out for them, and when the pack grows to a dozen they'll attack openly, and aren't afraid of anything--not even man."

"Well, anyway we had the adventure we started out to get," laughed Bobby, "and a little more of it than we expected."

"Yes, and a nice haul of wolf pelts to boot," added Skipper Ed.

"We were lucky they didn't get us," said Jimmy.

"Yes," agreed Skipper Ed, "lucky--the kind of luck we were talking about tonight. That is, the luck of the Almighty's bounty and protection. We did the best we could, according to our lights, to protect and help ourselves, and so He helped, and brought us safely back, none the worse, and perhaps a little the stronger and better and richer in experience than we were an hour ago."

"It was a corking good adventure, anyhow!" broke in Bobby. "That sort of thing just makes me tingle all over! Somehow when I get out of a mess like that I feel a lot bigger and stronger and more grown up. It was great fun--now that it's over."

"You're a natural-born adventurer," laughed Skipper Ed. "You should have lived in the old days, when men had to fight for their life, or went out to find and conquer new lands."

"Well, I'm glad it's over," Jimmy shuddered--"the run from the wolves--and that they've gone. I didn't have time to feel much scared out there, but I'm scared now of what might have happened. I don't like to get into such fixes."

"Well, it's over, and all is well, and we're none the worse for it. Now drink your hot tea, lads," counseled Skipper Ed. "We've work to do before we sleep."

They ate their hardtack biscuit, and sipped the hot tea silently for a little, listening the while to the snug and cheerful crackle of wood and roar of flames in the big box stove.

"Now," said Skipper Ed finally, "we'll haul the wolves into the porch, and make them safe, for the dogs are like to tear at them, and injure the pelts."

The following morning the carcasses of five additional wolves were discovered at the place where they had first fired upon the pack. Two of the dogs, mangled and torn by wolf fangs, were dead, and three others were so badly injured that for a long time they were unfitted for driving. But the others had discreetly decided that it was better "to run away and live to fight another day," and were none the worse for their scrimmage.

Bobby, of course, ran over to Abel's cabin to tell the great news of the battle, and Abel and Mrs. Abel must needs return with him to assist in removing the pelts from the animals, and to spend the day with Skipper Ed and his partner. And a merry day it was for all of them, for wolf pelts could be traded at the mission store for necessaries. And none of them gave heed or thought to the danger the pelts had cost, save to give thanks to God for His deliverance; for dangers in that land are an incident of the game of life, and there the game of life is truly a man's game.



CHAPTER IX

THE FISHING PLACES

Like every other healthy lad of his years Bobby loved fun and adventure, though he had early learned to carry upon his broad shoulders a full portion of the responsibilities of the household. In the bleak land where he lived there is no shifting of these responsibilities. Everyman, and every boy, too, must do his share to wrest a living from the sea and rocks, and Bobby had no thought but to do his part. If a boy cannot do one thing in Labrador, he can do another. He can cut wood, hunt small game, attend the fish nets, jig cod--there are a thousand things that he can do, and make sport of as he does them, too, as Bobby did, until he grows to man's estate.

Each summer Abel and Mrs. Abel returned to their old fishing place on Itigailit Island, and of course Bobby went with them, and did his share in jigging cod; and each summer Skipper Ed and Jimmy went to Skipper Ed's old fishing place--the place where he had found his forlorn little partner that stormy autumn day, when they had sealed their bargain with a handshake.

The days of preparation for departure to the fishing were days of keen and pleasurable anticipation for the boys. It was a break from the routine of the long winter, and brought with it the novelty of change. These promised weeks upon the open sea were always weeks of delight, and above all else was the pleasure of seeing and sometimes visiting the fishing schooners which occasionally chanced their way.

The schooners had a wonderful fascination for the lads, for they came from the far-away and mysterious land of civilization of which Skipper Ed had told them so often and so much, and of which they had read so eagerly on long winter evenings.

It was more than a novelty to listen to the sailormen on the schooners talk of the strange happenings in that wonderful land, and to hear them sing their quaint old sea songs and chanteys, or relate marvelous stories of adventure.

Sometimes a skipper would drop them a newspaper, many weeks old to be sure, but as fresh and interesting to them as though it had come directly from the press. Or perchance--and this was a treasure indeed--an illustrated magazine fell to their lot. And no line of paper or magazine, even to the last advertisement, but was read many and many times over. And no illustration in the magazines but held their attention for hours upon hours.

These old newspapers and magazines were preserved, and carried home to take their place as a valued source of entertainment on stormy winter days and long winter evenings. And finally the illustrations and more interesting articles were clipped and pasted upon the walls until the interiors of Abel's and Skipper Ed's cabins became veritable picture galleries and libraries of reference.

But the eve of parting for their separate fishing places was always tinged with sadness and regret, for during these weeks they were denied one another's companionship.

"If our fishing places were only close to each other, so we could fish together, wouldn't it be fine!" suggested Bobby, one spring day as he and Jimmy sat on a rock below Abel's cabin, looking expectantly out over the bay, while Abel, with Skipper Ed's assistance, put the finishing touches upon the big boat in preparation for departure to their fishing places the next morning.

"Yes, wouldn't it!" exclaimed Jimmy. "If we weren't so busy, Partner and I would be dreadfully lonesome without you."

"And if it wasn't for being busy I'd be dreadfully lonesome without you, too," admitted Bobby. "I always am, anyhow."

"Yes," said Jimmy, "so are we on days when the sea's so rough we can't fish."

"But it's fine out there, and it's always fine to get back, isn't it, Jimmy?"

"Aye, 'tis that!" declared Jimmy.

"But it makes me feel lonesome already," said Bobby, returning to the original proposition, "to think that I won't see you and Skipper Ed for so long."

"What's this I hear? Lonesome for Partner and me?" asked Skipper Ed, who had finished with the boat and, coming up behind the boys, overheard Bobby's remark.

"Yes," said Bobby, "at the fishing."

"Well, well, now, isn't that strange!" ejaculated Skipper Ed. "I was thinking the same way, and Abel was thinking that way, too, and we've been talking it over!"

"Jimmy and I think 'twould be fine if we could all fish together," continued Bobby.

"So were we! So were we! A strange coincidence!" declared Skipper Ed. "And Abel thinks it might be arranged."

"Oh, can it? Can it?" and the boys jumped to their feet.

"I don't know," and Skipper Ed's face assumed a long and gloomy expression as he seated himself upon the rock. "There's one thing in the way and I couldn't consent."

"Why can't we?" asked Jimmy, in deep disappointment.

"Because," said Skipper Ed seriously, "I'm not free to consent."

"Why not? Yes, you are!" coaxed Bobby. "Please do."

"I'd like to," said Skipper Ed. "Yes, I'd *like* to; but you see I've got a partner, and one partner can't go ahead and do things unless the other partner agrees. At any rate he shouldn't. Do you agree, Partner?"

The boys gave a whoop of joy.

"Then you consent, Partner?" and Skipper Ed's eyes twinkled humorously.

"Of course I do, Partner!" exclaimed Jimmy. "It's what I've wanted to do right along."

"Then everything is arranged," said Skipper Ed. "Abel says there are plenty of fish for all of us around Itigailit Island. Perhaps, then, we'd better go home, Partner, and put things in shipshape for an early start in the morning."

And so they parted in high glee, Bobby to the cabin to break the good news to Mrs. Abel, and Skipper Ed down the trail toward his own cabin, with Jimmy at his heels.



CHAPTER X

A FOOLHARDY SHOT

Though the days were long now, for this was July, when dawn comes in this land before two o'clock in the morning, it was scarce daylight when Skipper Ed and Jimmy in their big trap boat, and with a skiff in tow in which were stowed his seven sledge dogs, hoisted sail and bore down the bay before a westerly breeze.

And as they passed beyond the point which separated the cove in which Abel's cabin stood from the cove where their own cabin stood, they discovered Abel's boat almost abreast of them, and within hailing distance. Bobby and Jimmy exchanged vociferous greetings, and Skipper Ed and Abel converged their courses until the boats were so close as to permit of conversation.

It was a glorious morning. The air was crisp and fragrant with whiffs of forest perfumes borne down to them from the near-by shore. Banks of brilliant red and orange in the eastern sky foretold the coming of the sun. The sea sparkled. Gulls and other wild fowl soared overhead or rode lightly upon the swell. A school of shining caplin shimmered on the surface of the water. Here and there a seal lifted its curious head for a moment, and then disappeared. At intervals a grampus, with a startling, roaring blow, raised its great black back above the surface, and then sank again from view.

On barren hillsides patches of snow, remnants of mighty drifts, lay against the dark moist rocks like great white sheets, and here and there miniature ice pans rose and fell upon the swell, reminders of the long cold winter, for winter in this far northern clime is ever reluctant to relinquish its grasp upon the earth.

The glow in the east disappeared at length, and then the sun rose to caress them with his warmth. Presently mirages appeared. Islands seemed to sit upon the tops of other islands, or to hang suspended in the air, and every distant shore became distorted in the brilliant July sunlight.

"That's the way a good many of us look at things in this life," said Skipper Ed. "We see the mirage, and not the thing itself. Hopes loom up and look real, when they're just false. It's a great thing to be able to tell the differences between what is real and what is just a mirage."

The wind fell away to a dead calm before noon, and though Abel and Skipper Ed worked at their heavy sculling oars, and Bobby and Jimmy and Mrs. Abel at the other oars, the boats, laden as they were, and retarded by the skiffs in tow, made such slow progress that at length they stopped at a convenient island to boil the kettle and cook their dinner and wait for a returning breeze.

Dinner was a jolly feast, simple as it was, for in this land folk live upon simple food and are satisfied with little variety, for their appetites and desires are not glutted, as ours so often are. And many things that you and I deem necessary they do not miss, because they have never had them, and more often than not have never so much as heard of them. And perhaps it is just as well, and their happiness is just as complete.

A cod which Bobby caught with his jigger, was boiled in sea water, because sea water salted it to just the right flavor. This was the first cod of the season, and the first cod is always a delicacy, and so they deemed it, together with some of Mrs. Abel's bread, and a pot of tea sweetened with a drop of molasses.

Then Skipper Ed and Abel shaved tobacco from black plugs, and Skipper Ed and Abel and Mrs. Abel talked while they waited for the wind to rise that was to carry them on their journey.

It was a rocky, irregular island upon which they had halted, with rocks sloping up from the water's edge, and on the top some struggling bunches of brush. It was not a large island, but nevertheless Bobby and Jimmy deemed it worthy of exploration, and so, bent upon discovery, they left their elders to talk, while they wandered about.

"There's a dotar on the shore," exclaimed Bobby, stopping suddenly and indicating the dark body of a harbor seal sunning itself comfortably upon the surface of the smooth, flat rocks near water. "Wait here, Jimmy, till I get my gun and try a shot at him."

And away he ran, presently to return with his gun--the same that Abel had found in the boat at the time he discovered Bobby. It was double-barreled, and a shotgun, but now both barrels were loaded with round ball. And loaded with ball it was effective enough at fifty yards or so, but far from certain in accuracy at a greater distance.

"Let's work down through the brush as far as we can," suggested Bobby, "and then I'll crawl down on him, if he'll let

me, for a good close shot."

Slowly they crawled, and cautiously, looking at nothing and paying attention to nothing but the seal, which, presently becoming conscious of danger perhaps, grew restless; and though Bobby was not as near his game as he should have wished, he threw up his gun and fired. The bullet, after the manner of bullets fired from shotguns at long range, went wide of its mark, and the seal, after the manner of seals, slipped gently into the water and was gone.

"There he goes!" exclaimed Bobby in disgust, springing to his feet. "If I had only had a rifle!"

"Yes," said Jimmy, "you'd have--"

Jimmy's sentence was cut short by the sound of a heavy tread behind them, and wheeling about our young hunters discovered a big polar bear, in the edge of the brush and not twenty yards away. It had apparently been aroused from an afternoon sleep, and not being partial to human society was now bent upon an expeditious departure from the vicinity. Quick as a flash Bobby raised his gun to his shoulder.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" warned Jimmy.

But Bobby did not heed the warning. The bullet from the undischarged barrel went crashing into the animal's shoulder. The bear stumbled, bit furiously at the wound, and then in a rage charged upon his now defenseless enemies.

Polar bears, unless very hungry, or unless placed in a position where they must defend themselves, will rarely attack man. But when wounded they are more likely than not to become furious, and their fury knows no bounds. Bent upon revenge they will attack viciously and are dangerous enemies. The hunter who wounds a polar bear without first taking the precaution to prepare for defense or retreat, tries an exceedingly dangerous experiment.



Quick as a flash Bobby raised his gun to his shoulder

This was exactly what Bobby had done. The instant he fired the shot he realized that he had not reached a vital spot. In his eagerness to secure the bear he took the chance of his single bullet disabling it. A reckless game it was, but he played it and lost.

Jimmy was unarmed and Bobby had no time to reload, for he knew the bear would charge immediately.

"Run, Jimmy! Run for your life!" he shouted.

But Jimmy needed no warning. He was already putting into action all the speed he could muster, and away went Bobby, also.

Jimmy chose the open space nearer the shore, Bobby a more direct, though more obstructed, course across the island, but both took the general direction of camp. As the two diverged the bear, probably because he was more plainly in view, chose to follow Jimmy, and followed him so strenuously and with such singleness of purpose that he was presently at Jimmy's very heels--so close at his heels, indeed, that had Jimmy stopped or hesitated or lessened his speed for an instant, the infuriated beast would have been upon him.

Bobby was quick to discover that the bear had left his own trail, and he was also quick to discover Jimmy's imminent danger. There was no other help at hand. If Jimmy was to be saved, he must save him. The thought crossed his mind like a flash of lightning. He did not lose his head--Bobby never lost his head in an emergency. He thought of everything. He feared there was not time to reload, but it was the only thing to do. As he ran he drew two shells, loaded

with ball, from his pocket. For the fraction of a minute he halted, "broke" his gun, dropped the shells into place, snapped the gun back and threw it to his shoulder, but in the brief interval that had elapsed the bear and Jimmy had so far gained upon him that the distance between him and the bear loomed up before him now as almost hopelessly long. If he only had a rifle, instead of his shotgun! But it was the last hope, and whispering a prayer to God to send the bullet straight, with nerves as tense as steel, he pulled the trigger.

His heart leaped with joy as he saw the bear stop, bite again at the wound, this time near its hind quarters, and then with a roar of rage turn from Jimmy toward himself.

He would not risk another shot at that distance. He would wait now for his enemy to come to close quarters, and with nimble fingers he slipped a loaded shell into the empty barrel, that when the time came to shoot he might have two bullets at his disposal instead of one. He had never felt so perfectly cool and steady in his life, nor so absolutely unafraid, as now, while he stood erect and waited.

The bear was not twenty feet away when he fired his first shot. It staggered, shook its head for a moment, and then rushed on. Bobby drew a careful bead and fired again. The bear fell forward, pawed the rocks, regained its feet, and lunged at Bobby.



CHAPTER XI

WHEN THE ICEBERG TURNED

But the bear had spent its vitality, and as Bobby sprang nimbly aside it fell at the very spot upon which the young hunter had stood when he delivered his last shot, struggled a little, gave a gasp or two, and died. And when Jimmy came running up a moment later Bobby with great pride was standing by the side of his prostrate victim.

"We got him, Jimmy! We got him!" said he in high glee, touching the carcass with his toe.

"But, Bobby, what a chance you took!" Jimmy exclaimed. "Supposing you hadn't stopped him!"

"No chance of that at all," declared Bobby in his usual positive tone. "All I wanted was time to load, and I knew I'd get him."

"Well, I'm thankful you got him, instead of he getting you, and I was afraid for a minute he was going to get us both," and Jimmy breathed relief, as he placed his foot against the dead bear. "My, but he's a big one! I don't think I ever saw a bigger one!"

"He *is* a ripper!" admitted Bobby proudly. "Won't the folks be glad!"

And Bobby was justified in his pride. He had fired upon the beast in the first instance, not through the lust of killing but because he was prompted to do so by the instinct of the hunter who lives upon the product of his weapons. In this far northern land it is the instinct of self-preservation to kill, for here if man would live he must kill.

In Labrador they butcher wild animals for food just as we butcher steers and sheep and hogs for food, and the only difference is that the wild creature, matching its instincts and fleetness and strength against the hunter's skill, has a reasonable chance of escape, while our domestic animals, deprived of liberty, are driven helpless to the slaughter.

In our kindlier clime the rich soil, too, produces vegetables and fruits upon which we might do very well, if necessary, without ever eating meat; but in the bleak land where Bobby and Jimmy lived the summer is short and the soil is barren, and there are no vegetables, and no fruits save scattered berries on the inland hillsides. And so it is that here men must depend upon flesh and fish for their existence and they must kill if they would live.

Every lad on The Labrador, therefore, is taught from earliest youth to take pride in his profession of hunter and trapper and fisherman--for on The Labrador every man is a professional hunter and trapper and fisherman--and to strive for skill and the praise of his elders, and Bobby was no exception to the rule.

And so it came about that Bobby at the age of thirteen proved himself a bold and brave hunter, and standing now over the carcass of his victim he felt a vast and consistent pride in his success; for it was no small achievement for a lad of his years to have killed, single-handed and poorly armed, a full grown polar bear. It was an accomplishment, indeed, in which a grown man and a more experienced hunter than Bobby might have taken pride; and a grown man could scarcely have employed better tactics, or shown greater skill and courage, after the first foolhardy shot had been fired.

But this was Bobby's way. It was an exhibition of his old trait of getting himself and Jimmy into a scrape and then by quick action and practical methods getting them safely out of it again.

Skipper Ed and Abel had heard the reports of Bobby's gun, and they knew that something unusual was on foot. The first shot did not disturb them. That, they knew, was for the seal for which Bobby had taken the gun. But no self-respecting seal will remain as a target to be fired at repeatedly, and the shots that followed told their practiced ears that more important game than a seal was the object of the fusillade. And so, without parley, each seized his rifle, and together they set out across the island, and thus it happened that presently they came upon Bobby and Jimmy admiring the prize.

"Jimmy and I got a bear! A ripping big one, too!" said Bobby as the two men came up to them, giving Jimmy equal credit, for if he was positive, Bobby was also generous, and wished his friend to share in the glory of his triumphs and achievements.

"Bobby got him alone," corrected Jimmy. "I legged it, and if it hadn't been for Bobby he'd have caught me."

"Oh, you know better than that," protested Bobby. "You got in his way, so he'd take after you, and that gave me time to load, and shoot him."

"*Peauke! Peauke!*" exclaimed Abel. "A fine fat bear."

"Good for you, Bobby!" commented Skipper Ed, looking the carcass over. "I never killed as big a bear as that myself. Good work!"

"And we'll have some meat now, and won't have to eat just fish all summer," said Bobby, who had the respect of most healthy boys for his stomach.

"We'll feast like kings," agreed Skipper Ed. "Flesh as well as fish. Great luck! Great luck! And I'll be bound not another lad of your age could have got a bear like that with just a shotgun. Why, neither Abel nor I would have tackled him with just a shotgun. No, sir, we wouldn't!"

And Skipper Ed put it to Abel, who declared he never would have risked a shotgun unless he had a spear, also, to protect himself.

Deftly and quickly they skinned and dressed the carcass, wasting no part of the flesh, save the liver, which they fed to the dogs, for, as every one knows, the liver of the polar bear is poisonous and unfit for human consumption.

"I could eat a steak right now," suggested Bobby, when the meat was stowed.

But there was no time now to cook bear steaks, for a breeze had sprung up and they must needs take advantage of it, and Skipper Ed and Jimmy had already hoisted sail.

"Never mind," said Abel, "I'll show you! I'll show you!" and with an air of mystery, and chuckling to himself, Abel hurriedly gathered some flat stones which he piled into the boat.

"Now," suggested Abel, when they were at last moving, "you take the tiller, Bobby, and we'll see about the bear steaks."

With much care he proceeded to arrange the stones in the bottom of the boat until presently a very excellent fireplace was built, and so arranged that the boat itself was well protected. No wood save driftwood was to be found on Itigailit Island or on the near-by shores, and therefore both Abel's boat and Skipper Ed's boat had been provided with sufficient firewood to meet the needs of their camp for several days. And so, with fuel at hand, Abel quickly had a cozy fire blazing in his fireplace and Mrs. Abel, laughing and enjoying the novel experience of cooking in a boat, had some tea brewing and some bear's steaks sizzling in the pan in a jiffy.

Skipper Ed's trap boat, though a fine sea craft, was not so fast a sailer in a light breeze as Abel's, and though Skipper Ed and Jimmy had left the island some little time in advance the boats were now so close that Abel could make himself heard, and standing in the bow he bawled:

"*Pujolik! Pujolik!*" (A steamer! A steamer!)

A steamship in these waters was uncommon. No steamer had ever come into the bay, indeed--for they were still in the bay--at least within the memory of man, and eager to see what manner of ship it might be Skipper Ed and Jimmy were on their feet in an instant, eagerly searching the eastern horizon.

Abel was immediately convulsed with laughter, and Mrs. Abel laughed, and Bobby laughed, and when Skipper Ed and Jimmy, failing to discover the steamer, or any signs of it, turned inquiringly back toward Abel, still standing in the bow, Abel pointed to the smoke rising from the fire, and repeated:

"*Pujolik! Pujolik!*"

Then Skipper Ed and Jimmy understood, and they laughed too. It was a great joke, Abel thought, and for an hour afterward he indulged at intervals in quiet chuckles, and even after the two boats had drawn alongside, and tea and fried bear's steaks had been passed to Skipper Ed and Jimmy, that they too might share in the feast, Abel laughed.

It was noon the following day when the boats drew up to the old landing place on Itigailit Island, and an hour later the two tents were pitched on Abel Zachariah's old camping ground, and everything was as snug and settled, and they were all as perfectly at home, as though they had been living there for months.

Then the dogs in the skiffs were brought ashore and released from their two days' confinement, and Abel's train and Skipper Ed's train, after the manner of Eskimo dogs, immediately engaged in a pitched battle. They began by snarling and snapping at one another with ugly, bared fangs, and then followed a rush toward each other and they became a rolling, tumbling mass of fearsome, fighting creatures, and had to be beaten asunder with stout sticks before they could be induced to settle into their quiet and uneventful summer existence.

When all was arranged Bobby, after his custom, walked quietly back to the cairn which he had built in previous summers to mark the grave of the mysterious man that Abel and Mrs. Abel had buried so many years before, and Jimmy went with him.

"I often wonder," said Bobby, as he replaced some stones that winter storms had loosed, "who the man was and how he came by his death. I remember I called him Uncle Robert, but I can't remember much else about him, and that is like a dream."

"I wonder if he really was your uncle?" suggested Jimmy.

"I don't know," said Bobby. "I try to remember, until my head is spinning with it, and sometimes it seems as though I am going to remember what happened away back there. It's just as though I had lived before, and I think of bright lights, and beautiful things, and wonderful people. I wonder if Father and Mother are right, and what I remember is heaven? Do you think so, Jimmy?"

"I--I wonder, now!" Jimmy's voice was filled with awe. "Maybe you did come from heaven, Bobby!"

"I don't believe so," and Bobby was practical again. "I don't feel as though I'd ever been an angel, and I don't look it, do I?"

And he squared his shoulders and laughed his good-natured, infectious laugh, in which Jimmy joined, and the two returned to camp.

There was no floe ice on the coast now, but the sea was dotted with many icebergs, children of the great northern glaciers, drifting southward on the Arctic current. Some of them were small and insignificant. Others towered in massive majesty and grandeur high above the sea, miniature mountains of ice. Some were of solid white, but the greater part of them reflected marvelous blues and greens and were a riot of beautiful color.

One of the smaller icebergs lying a half mile or so from Itigailit Island attracted Bobby's attention as he and Jimmy walked back from the cairn.

"See that berg, Jimmy?" he asked.

"The little one close in?"

"Yes. Do you know, I've got an idea. That bear meat won't keep long unless we pack it in ice or salt it, and I'd rather have it fresh than salted, wouldn't you?"

"Of course I would!" said Jimmy.

"Then let's take your skiff--it's bigger than ours--and go for a load of ice."

"It's dangerous to go digging on icebergs. They're like to turn over," suggested Jimmy.

"Oh, don't be afraid, now. Come on. There isn't any danger," said Bobby, with impelling enthusiasm. "We can get enough ice to keep the meat fresh until it's all used up. Come on."

And Jimmy, as was his custom when Bobby urged, agreed. Skipper Ed's skiff lay at the landing, and arming themselves with an ax the two pulled away unobserved.

It was a small iceberg, perhaps sixty feet in diameter, and rising not more than twenty feet above the water. Its surface was irregular, and there were several places where excellent footing could be had. The boat was directed toward one of these.

"You stay in the boat," said Bobby, seizing the ax, "and I'll go aboard her and cut the ice."

"Be careful," cautioned Jimmy.

"Oh, there's no danger," said Bobby, climbing to the iceberg.

Bobby began chopping off as large pieces as he thought he could conveniently handle. The ice was exceedingly hard and brittle. It had frozen centuries before, under the extremely low temperatures of the Arctic regions. It had its beginning, perhaps, in snow deposited in some far-off Greenland valley. Other snows had come upon it, and still other snows, until a tremendous weight of snow pressed it, as it froze, into a glass-like hardness.

And all the while the great mass was moving, inch by inch, and slowly, down the long valley toward the sea. Perhaps a century passed, perhaps two or three, or even more, centuries, before this particular portion of the glacier, as these

masses of ice between the hills are called, reached the sea and was at last thrust out beyond the land.

And then, one day, with a report like the report of a cannon, it separated from the mother glacier, slid out into the current, and began its southward voyage. Months had passed since then--perhaps a year, or even two or three years--and all the time it had been wasting away in the water until Bobby and Jimmy found it this July day, off Itigailit Island.

But neither Bobby as he chopped at the ice, nor Jimmy as he sat in the boat, gave that a thought, if indeed they knew it. They were intent only upon gathering enough of the aged ice to preserve the meat of a polar bear.

Neither did they realize that with each stroke of the ax Bobby was disturbing the center of gravitation of the iceberg, already delicately balanced in the water, until presently Jimmy noticed that the side next him was rising--very slowly and deliberately at first.

"Bobby! Look out--the berg's turning!" he shouted in a terrified voice.

Up and up went the side of the iceberg. Bobby was lost to view. Then came a rush of water, a great deluging wave swamped the skiff, and Jimmy went down with a crash and roar of water and crumbling ice in his ears.



CHAPTER XII

ADRIFT ON THE OPEN SEA

As the iceberg turned, great masses of ice, some of them weighing tons, loosened from the main body, and with loud rumbling and roar crashed into the sea. Bobby, when he realized what was happening, began with all his energy to scramble up the wall of ice as it rose from the water.

Fortunately it was a small iceberg, and fortunately, also, it turned slowly and with deliberation and but a short distance, when it again reached its equilibrium, and was still.

Bobby's life had been one of pretty constant peril and adventure, and after the manner of wilderness dwellers he had learned resourcefulness and self-possession. It is indeed a part of the daily training of every lad of the wilderness, that he acquire these attributes, until at last they become second nature to him, and instinctively he does the thing he should do when he comes suddenly face to face with unexpected dangers. And so it was with both Bobby and Jimmy, and thus it came about that Bobby did not lose his head when the iceberg began to turn, and when it was again at rest he found himself upon a high pinnacle, with the seething waters all around him. To be sure, his heart beat faster, and it was but natural that he should be excited, but his nerves were nevertheless under control, and his wits, too.

From his perch upon the iceberg Bobby looked eagerly for Jimmy and the skiff. He feared that some of the ponderous blocks of ice had fallen upon them and crushed them, and the thought made him heart-sick for an instant.

But presently he saw the skiff, filled with water and smothering in the swell, and a moment later he discovered Jimmy, also smothering in the swell, but swimming vigorously toward the iceberg. This brought him vast relief. Jimmy was alive and apparently uninjured, and the whole adventure became to Bobby at once an ordinary occurrence of their every-day life, for which he was mightily thankful. To be sure it was an unpleasant and annoying adventure, but they would escape from it, he had no doubt, none the worse for their experience. And in this frame of mind he clambered down the slippery sides of the ice hill to a level spot at the water's edge, shouting in the most matter-of-fact way, as he did so:

"This way, Jimmy! This way! You can climb aboard here!"

In a few strokes Jimmy came alongside, and Bobby, taking his hand, helped him to scramble, shivering, to the ice.

"My, Bobby, but I was glad to see you here!" Jimmy exclaimed through his chattering teeth. "I was afraid you were done for! I was afraid it carried you under when it turned."

"I was afraid you were done for, too!" and there was thanksgiving in Bobby's voice. "How did it happen you got into the water? Did the ice hit the skiff?"

"I don't know how it happened," said Jimmy. "I don't think the ice hit the skiff, but it all came so suddenly I don't know."

"Well, here we are, and out there's the boat, and we've got to get it," declared Bobby. "I'm going for it."

"No, let me go. I'm wet anyhow, and I'm all right for it," Jimmy protested. "I might have brought it in with me, but I didn't see it."

"I'm going," declared Bobby, with an accent that left no doubt he was, as he pulled off his clothes, and his sealskin boots. "You've had your dip, and I'm going to have one now--the first of the year."

"It's pretty cold," Jimmy cautioned. "I've been in, and I'm used to it, and don't mind it."

But Bobby was in, and swimming for the skiff. It was, fortunately, not above fifty or sixty feet away, for the whole occurrence had taken place within a very few minutes' time, and the boat had not yet had time to drift beyond reach.

A few strokes carried Bobby to the submerged skiff. He secured the painter, which was attached to the bow, and with some hard tugging reached the iceberg, and climbed up with Jimmy's assistance.

"You'd better take off your things and wring 'em out, while I dress," Bobby suggested, as he drew his clothes on.

"I guess I had," Jimmy agreed.

"Now," said Bobby, when he and Jimmy were dressed, after Jimmy had wrung as much of the water as possible from his clothes, "we're going to have a hard time of it getting the water out of her. How'll we do it?"

"Can't we get her alongside and turn her over?" Jimmy suggested. "We can pull her up empty."

With some mighty pulling and hauling, and many futile efforts, they at length succeeded, and presently the skiff was in the water again and floating as easily as though nothing had happened and it had never once been under the waves. And then a new problem confronted them.

"The oars! The oars are gone!" exclaimed Jimmy in consternation.

And so they were. Nowhere could they discover the oars, though they clambered up the iceberg again and scanned the surrounding sea.

"Well," said Bobby, "that's hard luck! I wonder if we can't make father or some one hear. Let's get up on top and yell."

From the top of the iceberg they shouted and shouted, but Mrs. Abel was in one tent, busied with her household affairs, and Skipper Ed and Abel were in the other tent, making ready their fishing gear, and the breeze blew from the land, and altogether no one heard the shouting.

"No use," said Bobby at last, descending to the skiff. "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll knock one of the seats out, split it, and make two paddles. They'll be short, but they'll do us to get ashore. It isn't far."

"It looks as though it's the only thing to do, unless we want to stay here for three or four hours," agreed Jimmy, taking the ax and knocking out the seat. "I'm shivering cold from my wetting."

"It's lucky I hung to the ax," said Bobby, as he watched Jimmy fashioning the paddles.

"There," said Jimmy at length, "they're pretty short paddles, but we'll have to make 'em do. Let's get off of this."

But the tide was running out, and a very strong tide it proved, and the breeze from the land was stiff enough, too, had there been no opposing tide, to have made pulling against it with a good pair of oars no easy task. All this they did not realize until they had paddled beyond the shelter of the iceberg, for they had drawn the boat up upon its lee side.

They put all the energy they could muster into their effort, but the paddles were very short and very narrow, and work as they would they presently discovered that tide and wind were mastering them, and instead of progressing toward Itigailit Island they were drifting seaward.

"We can't make it!" said Jimmy at last.

"No," agreed Bobby. "We'll have to go back to the berg and wait for them to come for us."

But even that they could not accomplish. Work as they would, the paddles proved hopelessly inefficient, and after an hour's desperate effort they realized that they were nearly as far to seaward from the iceberg as the iceberg was from Itigailit Island.

"Well," said Bobby, at length, "we're in for it, and a fine fix it is."

"What are we going to do?" asked Jimmy. "We've *got* to do something."

"I wish that I had some of that bear meat. I'm as hungry as the old bear ever was," said Bobby, irrelevantly.

"Well, so am I, but we'll be hungrier than the bear ever was, I'm thinking, if we don't do something to get to land," broke in Jimmy with some irritation. "Why, Bobby, don't you realize what it means? We've got no water and nothing to eat! We'll perish of thirst and hunger if we don't get to land! Unless a sea rises and swamps us, and then we'll drown!"

"It does look as though we were drifting to the place I came from, but it won't do any good to worry," said Bobby. "Maybe when the tide turns we can do something. The wind goes down with the sun every evening, and then with the tide in our favor maybe we can make it."

"It'll be a good hour yet before the tide turns, and two or three hours before sundown, and where'll we be then?" argued Jimmy, dejectedly. "I wish I could be like you, Bobby, and not worry over things the way I do."

"Well, just remember that we did the best we could to get out of the mess after we got into it, and if we keep on doing our best that is all we can do, and worrying won't help us any. I just feel like being thankful that you weren't killed and we're both here safe and sound, with an even chance that we'll get back home all right."

And so, paddling, drifting, sometimes silent for a long while, sometimes talking, the time passed. The land faded upon

the horizon and was lost. Icebergs lay about them. Once they were startled by the thunderous roar of a monster berg in the distance as it toppled and turned upon its side, and later they felt its swell. Not far away a whale spouted.

Finally the sun set, and the wind died, and for a little while the heavens and icebergs and sea were marvelously and gloriously painted with crimson and purple and orange.

Then came the long gray twilight of the North, and at last the stars, and night, and darkness, with the icebergs, white, spectral, and coldly majestic, rising in silhouette against the distant sky, and the throbbing, restless sea, somber and black, around them.



CHAPTER XIII

HOW THE "GOOD AND SURE" BROUGHT TROUBLE

The two or three hours of the midsummer Labrador night were long hours for Bobby and Jimmy--the longest hours they had ever experienced. At intervals, guiding their course by the stars, they paddled, and this drove away the deadening chill that threatened to overcome them.

But at last dawn came, and with the growing light the sense of helplessness which had enveloped them during the period of darkness fell away, and to some extent Bobby's confidence, hopefulness, and buoyancy of spirits returned, and he rallied Jimmy, also, into a better frame of mind.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bobby, at length. "See there, Jimmy!"

And Jimmy, looking, saw upon the western horizon a long, gray line.

"Why, there's the land!" he exclaimed.

"Isn't it great to see it again!" said Bobby.

"Let's paddle hard, and see if we can't make it. The tide's been drifting us in, and the paddling we've done in the night has been helping."

"It didn't seem to, but it must have," agreed Jimmy, working as hard as he could with his short paddle. "The exercise kept me warm, and that's about the only good I thought it was doing, but it did help, didn't it?"

"It certainly did," agreed Bobby. "My, but I'm hungry!"

"So am I," said Jimmy. "Won't the sun feel good when it rises?"

"I wonder which way we lie from home?"

"South, of course, for that's the drift of the current. All the bergs drift south."

"Yes, but how far?"

"Oh, I don't know, but we must be some bit south of the island."

And so they calculated and chatted, while the glow grew in the eastern sky, and until the sun rose, at last, to comfort them and warm stiffened fingers and chilled bodies. But with the sun a westerly breeze also set in to retard them, and their progress was tedious and slow.

The shore still lay a long way off, though a little nearer than when they first discovered it in the morning light, and Bobby had just remarked that they had gained a little, when Jimmy suddenly ceased paddling, and rising to his feet gazed eagerly to the southward.

"What is it?" asked Bobby. "What do you see?"

"A sail! A sail!" Jimmy almost shouted a moment later. "I wasn't sure at first, but now I'm certain!"

Bobby was on his feet in an instant, and the two, balancing themselves dexterously while the skiff rose and fell upon the swell, watched excitedly as the sail increased in size.

"It's a schooner!" said Jimmy.

"And it'll pick us up!" said Bobby.

"If it doesn't pass too far to windward to see us," suggested Jimmy.

"They'll be sure to see us," insisted the optimistic Bobby. "They can't pass between us and the land without seeing us."

And so it came to pass. Nearer and nearer the schooner drew, until at length her whole black hull was visible, and then Bobby and Jimmy took off their jackets and waved them and waved them, until presently men crowded at the rail of the schooner and waved in answer, and in due time, when the schooner came abreast of them, a boat was lowered, and

pointed directly toward them.

"Now we'll be all right," said Bobby, with immense relief, as they watched the four long oars, pulled by four husky men, rise and fall and glint in the sunshine, while a fifth man sculled astern. "They'll either drop us in at Itigailit Island or lend us oars for the skiff!"

"Yes, and it's great luck for us that they saw us," remarked Jimmy. "I don't believe we ever could have made land with these short paddles."

"The first thing I want is something to eat and drink," declared Bobby. "I'm getting hungrier every minute."

But the boat was upon them already, and they were soon to have a plenty to eat, and the adventure after all had amounted to nothing but a little inconvenience. It was all in a day's work, and already they had forgotten the dismal night, or if they had not in fact forgotten it they had at least put it behind them as an experience of small importance.

"Look sharp now, lads!" shouted the man at the sculling oar, as the boat and the skiff, rising and falling upon the swell, approached each other. "Look sharp! Now, heave her, b'y!"

And Jimmy, in the bow of the skiff, with coiled painter ready, tossed it to one of the men. The boats were straightened out, the skiff drawn alongside, and in a moment Jimmy and Bobby were aboard, with Skipper Ed's skiff trailing behind.

"Why, it's Skipper Ed's partner an' Abel Zachariah's lad! My eyes! My eyes now! And whatever brings you driftin' around the sea at this time of the mornin', and with nary an oar?" exclaimed the man astern, who proved to be Captain Higgles of the Newfoundland fishing schooner *Good and Sure*, who for as long as the lads could remember had anchored for at least one night each summer on his outward voyage down north, or on his homeward voyage south, in the shelter of the island upon which Skipper Ed had always fished, or behind Itigailit Island. And so it happened that Captain Higgles recognized Bobby and Jimmy, and they recognized him.

"Oh," explained Bobby, "we were getting ice off a berg yesterday, when she shifted and turned us over and we lost our oars."

"Yesterday, was it? And so you young scallawags ha' been cruisin' about since yesterday, eh, with nary an oar. Now listen t' that, b'ys! Cruisin' around with nary an oar! My eyes! Oh, my eyes!" and the captain roared with laughter, as though it were a great joke, and the four seamen laughed with him.

"And neither of you'd be eatin' a biscuit, an' drinkin' a mug o' tea, now, if you had un!" he continued. "I'll be bound both o' you young daredevils'd turn up your nose at a mug o' tea and a biscuit, now. Wouldn't ye?"

"No, sir," said Jimmy, "we wouldn't turn up our nose at anything good to eat."

"I could eat the oarlocks this minute!" broke in Bobby.

At which Captain Higgles exclaimed, "My eyes! Oh, my eyes!" and indulged in another burst of hearty guffaws.

"Well, b'ys," said the captain, "I know how you feels, an' I knows where you'll get th' tea and th' biscuit. An' th' cook aboard th' *Good an' Sure*ll show you."

"Thank you," said Bobby.

"'Twere lucky I sees you," continued the captain. "There's a sick lad with a rash aboard, an' it's a wonderful troublesome rash, and makes he sick. I were just turnin' in t' see Skipper Ed, thinkin' he might know what t' do for the little lad t' relieve he, when we sights you."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Jimmy, "are we as far south as that?"

"Aye," said the captain, "we're just t' th' s'uth'ard o' Skipper Ed's fishin' place. An' weren't you comin' from there when you goes adrift?"

"No, sir," explained Jimmy. "Partner and I are down at Itigailit Island with Abel Zachariah this year, and we went adrift from there."

"An' there we goes, then!" said the captain. "Another hour's sail, but time saved. Lucky for you that we sights you, an' lucky for th' sick lad, an' lucky for me--lucky all around. My eyes! 'Tis like t' be a lucky day."

And so it came about that Bobby and Jimmy were presently aboard the *Good and Sure*, satisfying an accumulated and vast appetite upon Captain Higgles' good hardtack and tea, while the schooner laid her course for Itigailit Island.

An hour later, as the captain had predicted, the *Good and Sure* came to off Abel Zachariah's fishing place, and almost before the anchor chains had ceased rattling Skipper Ed and Abel pulled alongside in a boat and were expressing their relief upon the safe return of the two lads, whose sudden and unexplained disappearance had puzzled them and caused them a deal of worry.

"I finds th' young scallawags driftin' around th' sea, and bearin' no course whatever," explained Captain Higgles, "an' I picks un up as salvage. But I don't want un. My eyes! I don't want un. I don't want any such two scallawags as they about the *Good an' Sure*. They'd be causin' me no end o' trouble, and you can have un free o' charge if you'll but take a look at a sick lad I has below, sir, an' tell us what t' do for un. 'Tis Hen. Blink's lad, sir. He has a wonderful rash all over he--my eyes, 'tis a wonderful rash, and it makes th' lad sick."

Skipper Ed followed the captain to the cluttered little cabin, and Abel and Jimmy and Bobby, curious to see the wonderful rash, also followed.

The lad, a boy of ten years or thereabouts, was stretched upon a bunk, and he was indeed afflicted with a wonderful rash. The moment Skipper Ed set eyes upon him his face assumed a very grave expression. He asked several questions, which the child's mother answered, and then he asked the boy:

"How you feeling, little lad?"

"Terrible sick," answered the boy, "but I'd be fine if I could go above deck, sir."

"'Twill never do for you to go above deck with this rash," said Skipper Ed, "but there'll be better luck by and by, lad; better luck, lad."

And then he directed the mother to give the child no cold drink, to keep him below decks, and not on any account to permit him to become chilled until the rash had disappeared and he felt quite well and normal again. To this he added some simple directions as to food.

"Is I goin' t' die?" asked the boy anxiously.

"No, no, lad, not if you do as your mother tells you, now. You'll be all right, but it'll be some time. Can't weigh your anchor and hoist your sails for a little while. Better luck by and by, though."

"What's th' matter with un, Skipper?" asked Captain Higgles when they were again on deck.

"Measles," answered Skipper Ed.

"Measles! Measles!" exclaimed the Captain in instant consternation. "My eyes! Oh--my--eyes! And we're all like to cotch measles! And measles kills folks! Oh--my--eyes! 'Tis like t' ruin th' v'yage!"

"'Tis too bad, but it can't be helped," Skipper Ed sympathized. "The lad has the measles, and if any of you haven't had measles you're likely to get 'em now. The only thing for you to do if any one breaks out with the rash, is to treat him just as I said to treat the boy. Don't let 'em go out or get chilled till the rash is well."

"My eyes!" said Captain Higgles. "Measles! 'Tis a wonderful dangerous complaint. I minds when th' folks cotched un one summer in Black Run Harbor, and most every one that cotched un died! Oh, my eyes!"

"Aye, 'tis like t' be a dangerous complaint down here on The Labrador, where we folk have poor means for caring for our sick," agreed Skipper Ed, dropping into the dialect of the people, as he often did when conversing with them. "But you have a schooner, and you're not so badly off as we are in our tents."

"My eyes!" repeated Captain Higgles. "Measles! 'Tis like t' ruin th' v'yage!"

The *Good and Sure* spread her canvas and sailed away that morning, and quite as though nothing had occurred to disturb the even tenor of their every-day existence Abel Zachariah and Skipper Ed and Bobby and Jimmy turned their attention to jiggng cod, and Mrs. Abel to splitting the fish and spreading them to dry, and all worked from morning until night each day, that none of the harvest might be lost, for that year there was a plentiful run of fish.

But Skipper Ed had something on his mind. After the departure of the *Good and Sure* his face looked troubled, and more than once he murmured, "Better luck, I hope. Better luck." And as the days passed his anxiety increased, and Bobby and Jimmy frequently surprised him looking intently at them.

Then came a morning when Bobby complained of feeling ill, and Skipper Ed directed that he must not go with the others of them to jig, but must remain in the tent, and he prepared a hot drink for Bobby, and wrapped the lad warmly in blankets. That very day Jimmy, too, fell ill, and Abel fell ill, and a day later Mrs. Abel also complained. "Measles," said

Skipper Ed.

And measles it was, and a serious condition of affairs confronted Skipper Ed. He gave up his fishing and devoted his whole attention to his four patients, and he thanked the Lord that he himself had passed through the ordeal as a child, and was immune.

Because the people on the Labrador can seldom be brought to understand that a patient with this ailment must be kept warm and free from exposure or chill until the period of rash is passed, it is too often a fatal disease there--and an epidemic is sure to result in many deaths. In tent life, in time of gales and driving storms, it is frequently difficult, and sometimes indeed impossible, to properly care for the patients, for the tents of the people are seldom stormproof or rainproof.

And so it was that Skipper Ed, who was not only nurse but cook, was more than occupied. There were times when confinement grew irksome to his patients, and at those times he was compelled to resort even to force to prevent one or another from going out into the chilling sea breeze. And one morning Bobby did evade him and go out, and became chilled, and the following day lay, as Skipper Ed verily believed, at the door of death.



CHAPTER XIV

VISIONS IN DELIRIUM

There came a terrible day and night when Bobby's life hung in the balance. A burning fever was upon him. His reason wandered, and he talked of strange things.

"Mamma! Mamma!" he called, and time and again he plead: "Uncle Robert, give me a drink of water! Uncle Robert, I'm so thirsty! Oh, I'm so thirsty!"

And then it would be Abel Zachariah or Mrs. Abel, or Jimmy, or Skipper Ed himself, who was addressed. Every subject under the sun was running through Bobby's poor, delirious mind. Sometimes he spoke in Eskimo, sometimes in English. "Father!" he would cry, "see this cod. He's a fine one! We'll have a fine catch this season." And so he would ramble along about the fishing for a time, and then perhaps grow silent, only to resume, upon some other thought.

After each brief silence there was something new. Perhaps he was warning Jimmy to run, or declaring that he knew he could get the bear if he only had time to load. Or perhaps he was telling Mrs. Abel that he was tired, oh, so tired, and begging her to sing a lullaby to him as she used to do when he was little.

Skipper Ed, foreseeing this state of affairs, had removed his other patients, who were now convalescing, to his own tent, where he gave them strict instructions as to their conduct, and such casual attention as he could. But for the most part he remained with Bobby. Indeed, during the day and night of Bobby's delirium he scarcely left Bobby's side for an instant. And more than once during this period of vigil and fear and foreboding Skipper Ed fell upon his knees and poured out his soul to the Great Master in an appeal for his young friend's life.

It was near sunrise on the second morning of his delirium that Bobby suddenly ceased to speak and lay very quiet--so quiet that an awful dread came into Skipper Ed's heart. He leaned over the still form and with fearful apprehension listened for breathing that he could not hear, and felt for heart beats that were too faint for his discovery.

And then again he fell upon his knees, for he was a God-fearing man and he had the love of God in his heart, and he prayed that if it were not too late God in His goodness would again place the breath of life into Bobby and return him to them. He prayed aloud, and as he prayed the tears ran down his weather-beaten cheeks.

At last he rose. Bobby's face had assumed an unnatural, peaceful repose. The color had left the cheeks that had been fever flushed for so long. The lips were partly open, and there was no movement or sign of life.

Skipper Ed staggered to the tent front, and thrusting the flaps aside staggered out. The world lay quiet and serene, as though it held no grief. The waves lapped gently against the rocks. The sky was afire with radiant beauty.

For a long while Skipper Ed stood there, his face drawn and haggard, his tall form bent, uncertain which way to turn or what to do. Presently the fire faded from the sky, a breeze sent a ripple over the calm waters, and the big sun rose out of the sea, as though to ask him why he mourned. And then he whispered, "Thy will be done. If it is Thy will to take him from us, oh God, give us the strength and courage to accept our bereavement like men."

Then it was that a new, strange peace came upon Skipper Ed, and he reentered the tent, to stoop again over Bobby's couch, and as he did so his heart gave a bound of joy, and a lump came into his throat. Bobby was breathing--ever so softly--but breathing.

With the passing minutes the steady, regular breathing became more apparent, the pulse asserted itself and grew stronger, and at the end of an hour, when Bobby at last opened his eyes Skipper Ed saw that reason had returned to them.

"I've--been--asleep--dreaming--queer--dreams," Bobby murmured faintly.

"Yes," said Skipper Ed, "you've been asleep."

"I--feel--very--weak."

"Yes, you're very weak, for you've been very sick, lad," and Skipper Ed, choking back his emotion, added cheerily: "But there's better luck for you now, lad. Better luck."

"May--I--have--a--drink?"

Skipper Ed poured some water into a tin cup, and supporting Bobby's head, held the cup to his parched lips.

"Father--and mother--and Jimmy--where--are--they?" Bobby feebly asked, for even in sickness his eye was quick to note their absence.

"They're in my tent. Nearly well, but not well enough to go out and get chilled, though they're ready enough for it, and tired enough of staying in," said Skipper Ed.

And then, wearied with the exertion, Bobby fell into deep and strength-restoring slumber, and Skipper Ed joined the others to cheer their hearts with the good news that Bobby's illness had passed its climax, and to rejoice with them over a meager breakfast.

With the passing days Bobby grew rapidly stronger, and the others were able to be out and at their duties again. And in due time Bobby, too, was out on the rocks enjoying the sunlight, with his old vigor daily asserting itself.

But hours of sunshine were few now, and more often than not the sky was leaden and somber, and the wind blew raw and cold, and already the clouds were spitting snow. The fishing season had passed almost before they realized it. The weeks of idleness had been costly ones, and when the time came for them to return to the cabins at the head of Abel's Bay, and make ready for winter, they had garnered little of the harvest that had promised so well.

"Every season can't be a good one for us," remarked Skipper Ed as they struck their camp. "Better luck next year; better luck. And we should be mighty thankful we're all alive and all well. That's good luck--good luck, after all."

But they were to be denied many things that winter that the fish they had not caught would have brought them. The little luxuries in which they had always indulged occasionally were not to be thought of; and pork, which is almost a necessity, was to become a rarity and a luxury to them, and there were to be times when even the flour barrel would be empty.

But this was a part of the ups and downs of their life, and one and all they accepted the condition cheerfully, for who, they said, does not have to endure privations now and again? And they had always done very well in other years, and the needs of life are small; and so they had no complaint to make. Comfort and privation are, after all, measured largely by contrast, and what to them would have been comfortable and luxurious living would have seemed to you and me little less than unendurable hardship.

Bobby and Jimmy were as glad, now, to return to the snug cabins as they had been to set out for Itigailit Island in the summer, and as they looked back over the few short weeks, the July day when they had their adventure with the bear seemed to them a long, long while ago.

And when the boats were loaded Bobby ran up to say good-bye for a season to the cairn and the dead man mouldering beneath it, and to the wide open sea, and the misty horizon out of which he had drifted, and then they hoisted sail and were off.

Another long winter with its bitter cold and drifting snow, its joys and its hardships and adventures, was at hand.

CHAPTER XV

MAROONED IN AN ARCTIC BLIZZARD

That was indeed a winter of bitter cold and of almost unexampled severity. It came suddenly, too, and with scant warning, as we shall see, and a full fortnight in advance of the time when it should have come.

Abel and Skipper Ed took Jimmy with them that year upon their autumn seal hunt. It was deemed wise to leave Bobby behind with Mrs. Abel, despite his protest. Though he was willing enough to remain when Mrs. Abel declared that because of her recent illness she wished some one to stay at home and assist her, for she did not feel equal to the task, unassisted, of making things snug for the winter. And of course there was none but Bobby to stay.

And so it came about that Bobby, with many longings and regrets, though cheerful enough withal, stood down on the beach one frosty September morning and watched Abel Zachariah and Skipper Ed and Jimmy sail away for the hunt, while he comforted himself with the thought that another year he, too, would go.

Indeed, he had already taken part in the spring hunt, and though he gave no hint that he had guessed what was in their minds, he knew well enough that the plea that he was needed at home to assist Mrs. Abel at the work was a subterfuge of his foster parents, instigated, he had no doubt, by Skipper Ed. He was also satisfied that the real reason why he was left at home was because they deemed him not yet strong enough, as a result of his own recent illness, to withstand the unavoidable exposure and hardships to which the seal hunters would be subjected on the open and unprotected coast. And he had to confess to himself that he had not indeed recovered the full measure of his activity and hardihood, and that there was reason and justice in their course.

A raw wind was blowing, but a fair wind, and in a little while the boat, bowling before the breeze with all sail set, was lost to view. Then, disconsolately, Bobby turned back to the cabin, but Mrs. Abel took good care that he was kept so busy that he soon forgot his disappointment in work.

And that day he and Mrs. Abel had a jolly dinner of boiled goose, and tea, and that evening they sat a full hour beyond their bedtime while she recounted to him in her own quaint way the story of his coming from the place where mists and storms are born, and told him how he was sent by God to be their son, and how little he was, and how ill he was when Abel first placed him in her arms, and how she had hugged him to her, and had nursed away his fever, and how glad she and Abel had always been that God had sent them a son.

The days passed thus until they lengthened into a week. Though Bobby was content enough, it was but natural that he should be a bit lonesome now and again, and eagerly wish the fortnight gone that yet must pass before the return of the seal hunters.

The wild geese and ducks were still in flight, coming in great flocks from the lakes of the vast unknown interior and from the farther north, on their way to milder southern climes. There were several marshes near Abel's Bay where the migrating flocks tarried for a time to rest and feed, and of mornings they would pass with a great roar of wings and loud honking from the bay to these marshes, and at night they would return.

It was Bobby's custom morning and night to lie in wait for them with his shotgun, and he always returned to the cabin with as many birds as he could carry. These were hung in the entrance shed of the cabin, where they would freeze and remain fresh and good until needed for the table. And thus he too was doing his part in providing for the long winter which was at hand.

The goose-hunting season was always one of great sport for Bobby, but this year he found it lonesome enough without Jimmy's company. It was this loneliness, no doubt, that prompted him, one morning in the beginning of the second week after the departure of the seal hunters, to take Abel Zachariah's old skiff and pull far down the bay in the hope that he might kill a seal on his own account. It was a gray day, with leaden clouds hanging low. Patches of snow lay upon the ground. The bay, throbbing with a gentle swell, was somber and dark.

Bobby rowed the old skiff down the bay and past the bird islands near which he and Jimmy had their adventure on the cliff, but no seals were to be seen, and presently he turned his attention to the numerous sea pigeons which were swimming here and there. The young birds were quite full-grown now, and it was great fun shooting at them and watching them dive and rise again unharmed, though sometimes one would be just a fraction of a second too slow and the shot would find it, and then its downy body would float upon the water, and Bobby would pick it up and drop it into the boat and turn his attention to another, which might escape, or might be added to Bobby's bag.

This was exciting sport--so exciting that Bobby could not bring himself to give it up until a full two hours past noonday, and even then he would not have done so had not a rising northeast wind created a chop which made shooting from the skiff so difficult and inaccurate that it lost its interest.

Then Bobby discovered that he was possessed of a great hunger, and he ran the skiff ashore on a wooded point, and in a snug hollow in the lee of a knoll and surrounded by a grove of thick spruce trees, where he was well sheltered from the keen northeast wind, he lighted a fire, plucked and dressed one of the fifteen sea pigeons he had secured, and impaling it upon a stick proceeded to grill it for his dinner.

He was thus busily engaged when snow began to fall. Thicker and thicker it came, but Bobby was well protected and he finished his cooking and his meal without a thought of danger or concern for his safety. And, when he had eaten, reluctant to leave his cozy fire, he tarried still another half hour.

"Well," said he, rising at length, "the snow's getting thick and I'd better be pulling back. My! I didn't know it was so late! It's getting dusk, already, and it'll be good and dark before I get home!"

Then, to his amazement, he discovered when he emerged from his sheltered nook that the wind had risen tremendously, that the cold had visibly increased, and that the chop had developed into a considerable sea, and that the snow, too, driving before the wind, was blinding thick.

Bobby was not, however, alarmed, though he realized there was no time to be lost if he would reach home before the full force of the rising blizzard was upon him, and he chided himself for his delay. But the old skiff was a good sea boat, and Bobby was a good sea-man, and he pulled fearlessly out upon the wind-swept waters. And here the driving snow soon swallowed up the land, but Bobby was not afraid, and pulling with all his might turned down before the storm.

For a little while all went well, and Bobby was congratulating himself that after all he would reach home before it became too dark to see. Then suddenly a big sea broke over his stern, and left the skiff half filled with water. This was serious. He could not relinquish the oars to bail out the water. Another such deluge would smother him.

Then he realized that the seas had grown too big for him to weather, and his one hope was to make a landing. He searched his mind for a section of the shore within his reach, sufficiently free from jagged rocks and sufficiently sheltered to offer him a safe landing, and all at once he bethought himself of the bird island where he and Jimmy had gone eggng, and which he had visited many times since.

He was, fortunately, very near the island and when he heard the surf beating upon its rocky shores he determined quickly to make an effort to run upon its lee shore. Here, he argued, he could bail the water from the skiff, and then could pull across to the mainland, where he could haul up the skiff and walk home. It would be a disagreeable tramp in the storm, but it was his safest and his only course.

But even in the lee of the island the seas were running high and dashing upon the rocks with such force that for the instant he held off, hesitating. There was no other course, however. The half-submerged skiff would never live to reach the mainland. With every passing minute conditions were growing worse.

And so, watching for an opportune moment, Bobby drove for the shore. A roller carried the skiff on its crest, dropped it with a crash upon the rocks, and receded. Bobby sprang out, seized the painter, and running forward secured it to a boulder, that the next sea might not carry it away.

Then, watching his opportunity, little by little and with much tugging and effort, he drew the skiff to a safe position beyond the waves, and as he did so he discovered that the water which it held ran freely out of it, and that one of its planks had been smashed, and in the bottom of the skiff was a great hole.

And there he was, wet to the skin, stranded upon a wind-swept, treeless island, with a useless skiff and with never a tool--not even an ax--with which to make repairs. And there he was, too, without shelter, and the first terrible blizzard of a Labrador winter rising, in its fury and awful cold, about him. And whether or not there was any wood about that could be gathered with bare hands he did not know. But more important than wood was cover from the storm, for without protection from the blizzard Bobby was well aware he could never survive the night.

CHAPTER XVI

A SNUG REFUGE

The weather had suddenly become intensely cold, and Bobby's wet clothing was already stiff with ice. The northeast wind, laden with Arctic frost, swept the island with withering blasts, and cut to the bone.

The wind was rising, too, and there was no doubt that with darkness it would attain the velocity of a gale, and the storm the proportions of a sub-Arctic blizzard. Snow was already falling heavily, and presently it would be driving and swirling in dense, suffocating clouds. Winter had fallen like a thunderbolt from heaven.

But Bobby never permitted himself to worry needlessly. He was not one of those who with the least difficulty plunge into unnecessary discouragement and lose their capacity for action. It was not in his nature to waste his time and opportunities and energies worrying about what might happen, but what in the end rarely did happen. He conserved his mental and physical powers, and turned his mind and muscles into vigorous and practical action. And like every fortunate possessor of this valuable faculty, Bobby more often than not raised success out of failure.

And so it came to pass that when Bobby found himself cast away upon the naked rocks of a small and treeless sub-Arctic island, with no shelter from the awful cold of a driving blizzard, and with no other tools than his hands, he did not give up and say, "This is the end," and then sit down to wait for the pitiless cold to end his sufferings. What he did say was:

"Well, here I am in another mess, and I've got to find some way out of it."

He examined the skiff carefully and the examination satisfied him that it was too badly injured to be repaired with the means at his command, and so with all his energy he set himself at once to making himself as comfortable as the conditions and the surroundings would permit.

First he scoured the island for wood, for he knew that presently the storm and blizzard would rise to such proportions as to render any efforts to find wood impossible, and any attempt to move about perilous, and therefore no time must be lost.

In a little while he succeeded in collecting a considerable amount of driftwood, and when he turned his attention to other things he had the consolation of knowing that the gale would sweep the snow from the rocks and into the sea, and that any wood that he had overlooked in his search, or had no time now to gather, would be left uncovered, where he could find it when the blizzard was past and he could go abroad again.

He piled his fuel by the side of a big, high, smooth-faced boulder which he had purposely chosen because of its location, not far from the place where he had been driven ashore, and on the lee side of the island. The smooth face of this boulder looked toward the water, and with its back toward the wind it offered a fairly good wind-break, and a considerable drift had already formed against its face, or sheltered, side, where the snow lodged as it was driven in swirling gusts around its ends or swept over its top.

When his wood was gathered, Bobby with much effort dragged the boat to the rock, and then working hard and fast cleared away the snow as best he could with the aid of sticks and feet from the smooth rock bed in front of the boulder, and on which the boulder rested. He now carried from the innumerable stones lying about upon the wind-swept rocks, sufficient to build at right angles to the boulder two rough walls about two feet high and as long as the width of the boat. These walls were perhaps eight feet apart, and when they were finished he raised the boat, bottom up, upon them, the after part of the boat resting upon one, the prow extending over the other, and the side of the boat shoved back flush against the boulder face.

Thus he made for himself a covered shelter, and the front of this he enclosed with other stones, save for a space three feet wide in the center, which he reserved for a door. From low spruce bushes--for there were no trees on the island--he now gathered a quantity of brush and arranged it under the boat for a bed.

Dusk was settling before these arrangements had been completed. When all was at length as snug as his ingenuity could make it in the short time at his disposal, he stored as much of the wood, under the boat as the limited space would allow and still permit him room to stretch with some comfort; and as quickly as possible he built a small fire just outside the door. Already snow had drifted around the ends and on top of the boat and his little fire reflecting heat within soon made his covered nook comfortable enough.

Fourteen sea pigeons would make fourteen meals, though scant ones for a husky fellow like Bobby. Now he was hungry enough, as indeed he always was at meal hour and it did not take him long to pluck and dress one of the birds, and in short order it was grilling merrily on the end of a stick. There was no bread to keep the grilled sea pigeon company, but Bobby did not mind in the least. Indeed, this lack of variety was no hardship. He often dined upon meat alone, and now he was thankful enough to have the sea pigeons, or indeed anything.

But almost before his supper was cooked the little fire, deluged with clouds of snow, dried out and refused to burn, and it became evident to Bobby that he must face the night without fire, and resort to other means to protect himself in his narrow quarters from freezing. He was already ashiver and his hands and feet were numb.

He had no blanket, and no other covering than the wet clothes he wore, and he closed the door of his shelter as best he could with the sticks of driftwood which were stored under the boat. There was nothing else to be done.

The cold had become intense. The storm demon had broken loose in all its fury and was lashing sea and land in wild frenzy. The shrieking wind, the dull, thunderous pounding of the waves upon the rocks and the hiss of driving snow, filled the air with a tumult that was little less than terrifying.

No man unsheltered could have survived an hour upon the exposed rocks of the blizzard-swept island, and cold and shivering as he was, Bobby gave thanks for his narrow little cover under the boat, which in contrast to the world outside appealed to him now as an exceedingly snug retreat. It was safe for a little while, at least, and here he hoped he might have the strength to weather the storm in safety.

And while he lay and listened to the roar and tumult of the storm, presently he became aware that he was growing warmer. His shivering ceased. The bitter chill of the first half hour after his fire went out passed away, and in a little while to his astonishment he discovered that he was not after all so uncomfortable.

"The snow must have covered me all up," he exclaimed with sudden enlightenment, "and I'll be at the bottom of a big drift pretty soon, and that's what's making me warm."

It was dark, and he struck a match to investigate, and sure enough, every chink and crevice, even his door, was packed with snow, and not a breath of air stirred within. Gradually the sound of the shrieking wind and pounding sea seemed farther and farther away, and he heard it as one hears something in the distance.

"Mother's going to be scared for me," he mused, as he rearranged his bed of boughs. "She'll think I'm lost, and I'm sorry. She'll be all right when I get home, though. It is a fine mess to get into."

Then his thoughts turned to Abel Zachariah and Skipper Ed and Jimmy, somewhere out on the coast and weathering the same storm. But they had a tent and a stove, and they would be comfortable enough, he had no doubt.

But there was the seal hunt. Winter had come to cut off the seal hunt two weeks too soon, and they could scarcely have made a beginning. That was a serious matter. The failure of the fishing season, now coupled with an undoubted failure of the autumn seal hunt, would pinch them harder than they had ever been pinched before. Without the seals they would not be able to keep all of their dogs, and the dogs were a necessity of their life.

All of these thoughts passed through Bobby's mind as he lay in the dense darkness of his den. But he was young and he was optimistic, and disturbing thoughts presently gave way to a picture of the snug little cabin at the head of Abel's Bay and of its roaring fire in the big box stove, and with the picture the sound of the storm drew farther and farther away until it became at last one of Mrs. Abel's quaint Eskimo lullabies, that she crooned to him when he was little, and Bobby slept.

And there under the snow drift he slept as peacefully as he could have slept in his bed at home in the cabin at Abel's Bay, and just as peacefully as he could ever have slept in a much finer bed in that misty and forgotten past before he drifted down from the sea to be a part of the life of the stern and desolate Labrador.

And so God prepares and tempers us, to our lot, and shows us how to be happy and content, if we are willing, in whatever land He places us, and with whatever He provides for us. And thus He was tempering Bobby and directing him to his destiny.

CHAPTER XVII

PRISONER ON A BARREN ISLAND

Because his bed of boughs was snug and comfortable, and because there was nothing else to do and nowhere to go, and it was the best way, anyhow, to spend the hours of imprisonment that would last until the blizzard spent itself, Bobby gave himself the luxury of a long sleep. But even then it was still dark when he awoke, and at first he was puzzled, for he was sure he had slept away hours enough for daylight to have come. He could hear the raging storm and pounding seas in a muffled roar, as though far away, while he lay for a little while wondering at the darkness.

The air had grown close and stifling, and presently he arose and struck a match. It glowed for a moment but refused to burn. He struck another and then another, with like result. The matches were perfectly dry, for he carried them in a small, closely corked bottle. He could not understand it in the least. He struck another. It flashed, but like the others went out.

Then he suddenly remembered that Skipper Ed had once said fire would not burn in air from which the oxygen had been taken, for then the air would be "dead," and that a person would exhaust all the air in a close room in a short time, and therefore rooms should be well ventilated. And with this he realized what had happened. His air had been cut off and all that remained was dead.

The drift had covered his den to a great depth while he slept, and the wind had packed the snow so hard that the air could no longer circulate through it.

It was necessary that an opening be made quickly or he would smother, and this he set about to do with all his might. He removed some of the sticks with which he had closed the doorway, and using one of them as a tool dug away the snow, until light at last began to filter through, and he knew it was day, and presently he broke the outer crust of the drift. A flood of pure but bitterly cold air poured in upon him, and he breathed deeply and felt refreshed.

He had dug his opening straight out from the place which he had arranged for a door, and he now made it large enough to permit the passage of his body as he crawled upon hands and knees.

The storm had in no degree abated. The velocity of the wind was so terrific that had Bobby not stood in the shelter of the drift-covered boulder he could not have kept upon his feet. The air was so filled with driving snow as to be suffocating. A tremendous sea was running and great waves were pounding and breaking upon the rocks with terrific roar, though no glimpse of them could he get through the snow clouds that enveloped him.

There was nothing to be done but to return to his burrow and make himself as comfortable as circumstances would permit. His first care was to clear away the snow which he had thrown back under the boat as he dug his way out, and which partially filled his cave. And when this was done he selected a sharp stick and with it made three or four air holes in the roof of the drift above his door, to furnish ventilation, for it was not long before the entrance of the passageway was again closed.

Bobby was very hungry, as every healthy boy the world over is sure to be when he rises in the morning, and when he had completed the ventilation of his cave to his satisfaction he proceeded to make a small fire over which to grill one of his birds, never doubting the smoke would pass out of the ventilating holes that he had made through the top of the drift. But to his chagrin the smoke did not rise and was presently so thick as to blind and choke him, and he found it necessary to put the fire out. And so it came about that in the end he had to content himself with eating his sea pigeon uncooked, which after all was no great hardship.

All that day and all the next day the storm continued and Bobby was held prisoner in his cave, and he was thankful enough that he had the cave to shelter him.

When he awoke, however, on the morning of the third day of his captivity, and forced his way out of doors, he was met by sunshine and his heart bounded with joy. It was only behind boulders and the clumps of bushes scattered here and there, and in sheltered corners where drifts had formed, that snow remained upon the island. Elsewhere the wind had swept the rocks clean.

The gale that had racked the world had passed, but a brisk breeze was blowing down from the north, sharp with winter cold. The sea, too, had subsided, though even yet big rollers were driving and pounding upon the rocky shore.

"Now," said Bobby, "with the first calm night, when the water quiets down, the bay will freeze, and then I can walk in on the ice. But they'll have to hurry in from the seal hunt or they'll be caught out there and won't be able to bring the

boat in this winter. I can stand it a little while, and I hope the freeze-up won't come till they get back home."

But Bobby lost no time in needless calculation. What was of highest immediate importance was the satisfaction of his appetite, which as usual was protesting against delay.

He had been eating raw sea pigeon quite long enough, and he proposed now to enjoy the great treat of a grilled bird. And so without troubling himself with vain regrets of what he might have done or might not have done, he proceeded to fetch wood from his cave and to build a fire, and a good one it was to be, too, in the lee of his boulder. And when the wood was crackling merrily he made a comfortable seat of boughs upon which to sit while he cooked and ate the one sea pigeon which he allowed himself.

Bobby had never eaten a sea pigeon that seemed quite so small as that one, and it required a large degree of self-denial and self-restraint to observe the rule of economy which he had imposed upon himself on the evening he was wrecked. He had decided then that two sea pigeons a day, one in the morning and one in the evening, were all he could afford. For who could tell how long it might be before he would make his escape? And there were no birds or other game to be had on the island at this season, and when those he had were gone there would be hungry days to face. Though he declared to himself when picking the last bone of his breakfast that he could never possibly be any hungrier than at that very moment.

Nor could he afford a large fire in future. He calculated that he had already collected enough wood to last him, with small and carefully constructed fires, one day, and a survey of the island and its possibilities revealed the fact that all the additional fuel he could garner from the rocks would scarcely last him, even with rigid economy, another week.

While confined to his cave during the period of the blizzard he had satisfied his thirst with bits of ice. Now his fire was built close to a little hollow in the rock, and, placing snow near the fire, it melted, and the water running into the hollow settled there, and gave him drink.

And so, making the best of his resources, Bobby prepared for his siege, which he felt quite sure would end only when the bay froze and he could make his escape over the ice. A great part of the daylight hours were spent in collecting bits of wood. This kept him exercising, and kept his blood warm.

Already the sea was smoking. The freeze-up was close at hand. With each hour the merciless winter cold increased in strength. That evening when he entered his cave he closed the entrance with snow, that it might be kept warm, but nevertheless he spent an uncomfortable night, and he was glad enough to crawl out in the morning and light his fire.

That was a cheerless day. The sun shone through a gray veil, and offered little warmth. There was no more wood to gather, and to save his little stock he ran up and down upon the rocks that he might drive away the cold with exercise.

The sun was low when he lighted his evening fire, and as he prepared his sea pigeon for supper he remembered with regret that he had but one bird remaining.

"And I've been hungry ever since I've been here," he remarked to himself. "I'm half starved this minute."

He was thinking a great deal now of what he should have to eat when he reached home, and planning for this and that. And, oh, for some good hot tea!

And so, thinking, and dreading to go to his cheerless cave, he sat while his fire burned low and the sun sank from sight and the long and gloomy twilight gathered.

"I'll spare another stick or two," he said, replenishing the fire. "I can't go into that hole yet."

The fire blazed up, and the twilight grew thicker, and the fire had nearly burned out again while Bobby, dreaming of home and Mrs. Abel, and wondering where Abel Zachariah and Skipper Ed and Jimmy were, fell into a doze. Then it was that something unlooked for startled him into sudden wakefulness.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WINTER OF FAMINE

Faintly over the waters, but quite loud enough for Bobby to hear, came a hail, and Bobby was on his feet in an instant, shouting with all the power of his lusty young lungs. Then he ran to his cave and got his gun, and fired three shots at intervals of a few seconds, and with the last shot listened tense with eagerness and excitement.

This was a signal that he and Jimmy had agreed upon. It meant, "Come! I want you," and when at home if Jimmy wished Bobby to come over to Skipper Ed's cabin, or Bobby wished Jimmy to come to Abel Zachariah's cabin, it was the way they called one another. And when the signal was heard, two shots were fired in quick succession to say, "I hear, and I will come," or two shots with an interval between, to say, "I hear you, but I can't come." Then it was the duty of the one who had fired the three shots in the beginning, whether or not his invitation had been accepted, to fire a single shot to say: "I hear you and understand."

And so it was that Bobby listened eagerly. If the hail had come from the boat returning from the seal hunt, Jimmy would surely answer.

He had but a moment to wait when two quickly fired shots rang out over the water. His excitement could scarcely contain itself as he fired one answering shot. Everything was working splendidly, after all! They were getting in from the seal hunt ahead of the freeze-up, and he was to reach home none the worse for his adventure.

Bobby was lavish now with his wood. Darkness was settling and he piled the wood upon the fire until its flames leaped up into a great blaze as a beacon, to guide the boat to a safe landing among the rocks.

And so it came to pass that Bobby was found and rescued, and he and Abel and Skipper Ed and Jimmy were glad enough to see one another again and to relate to one another their various experiences. And Mrs. Abel, mourning in the cabin, was given great joy, for she had believed that Bobby had been lost without doubt in the storm.

The seal hunt was, as Bobby had feared it would be, almost a failure. But four small seals had been killed when the storm came upon the hunters, and they were forced to retreat, that they might reach home before the sea froze. These four seals, together with what remained of the meat from the spring hunt, were the only provisions they had for the dogs until February, when they could go to the ice edge, or *sena*, for the winter hunt, for then the seals would be on the ice.

Even with scant rations this would be little more than half enough to keep the animals in serviceable condition, for there were a good many dogs to feed. Abel's two teams, together with an extra dog or two to fill the place of any that might be injured, numbered eighteen, while Skipper Ed kept seven. This made a total of twenty-five dogs to be provided for, and twenty-five big wolf dogs will consume a vast amount of food during a winter.

So they held a consultation, and Skipper Ed decided that he could do very well without dogs if Abel would permit him the use of a team now and again.

"Partner and I have kept dogs only these last two years, anyhow," said Skipper Ed. "Our hunting and trapping is chiefly inland, and we haven't much use for them. I don't want to see any of the dogs suffer for the want of something to eat, and if Partner is willing we'll kill them, and let you have the carcasses to feed to your teams. What do you say, Partner?"

"We'll kill them." Jimmy agreed, regretfully.

Abel also decided that it would be wise to reduce the number of his own dogs to fifteen, and thus the problem was solved.

Winter settled with almost unexampled cold, and with a succession of fearful storms. It was a winter, too, of awful hardship and privation to the people of the Coast. The Eskimos to the northward depended chiefly upon seals for their own living as well as for dog food, and with them, as with Abel Zachariah and Skipper Ed, the seal hunt was cut off by the early blizzard, and few seals were killed.

Abel and Skipper Ed, however, relied more largely upon the cod fishing, and it had been their custom for many years to barter away the fish they caught to trading schooners which visited them for that purpose at their fishing places before they returned to winter quarters. In this way they usually purchased sufficient flour and pork, tea and molasses to do them until the following spring, and when open water came again they would sail to the mission station and purchase

with the furs their traps had yielded them, fresh supplies.

The attack of measles this year, however, had so interfered with their fishing that their small catch had purchased from the traders scarcely enough flour and pork and tea to last them until the new year. And so one day late in December Abel and Skipper Ed drove the two dog teams over to the Nain Mission, expecting to obtain there the supplies they needed.

"I'm sorry," said the missionary, "but I can spare you very little--almost nothing. The seal hunt was a failure with the people all down north, and they are starving, and I must take care of them. This year there are so many needy ones our stock will go only a little way. I'll divide it the best way I know how, but, God help the poor folk, it won't go far, and I'm praying God to send caribou or send seals."

"We'll get on somehow," said Skipper Ed. "The timber is back of us and we'll get rabbits and partridges, and make out. Give the Eskimos what you have. They're on barren ground and don't have the chance we have. There'll be better luck for us all by and by. Better luck."

And with only a half barrel of flour and some tea they returned to Abel's Bay to face the winter and make their fight against nature without complaint. For no truly brave man will complain when things go wrong in the game of life. And up there on The Labrador the game of life is a man's game and every man who wins must play it like a man, with faith and courage.

The weeks that followed were trying and tedious ones. Sometimes there was not much to eat, when the hunting was poor, but they thanked God there was always something.

But when February came at last there was not food enough to render it possible for them to make the long journey to the ice edge with safety. Living now was from hand to mouth. Each day they must hunt for what they would eat that day. Grouse and rabbits were the game upon which they usually relied, but Fate had cast this as one of those years when the rabbits disappear from the land as it is said they do every nine years. Be that as it may, not one was killed that winter and not a track was seen. For them to go to the ice without food was too great a risk. If they went and failed to find seals and were overtaken by a storm they would perish.

This was the condition of affairs when Bobby and Jimmy set out one cold, clear morning to hunt for ptarmigans, the white grouse of the North. Not far away was a barren hill whose top was kept clean swept of snow by the winds, and up this hill they climbed, for sometimes ptarmigans are found in places like this, feeding upon the frozen moss berries which cling to the rocks.

Bobby was in advance, and from the summit of the hill he scanned the great expanse of snow reaching away over the endless rolling country to the westward. And looking, he discovered in the distance a dark, moving mass slowly drawing down another hillside. For a moment he was speechless with joy, but it was for only a moment, and then he shouted:

"*Tuktu! Tuktu! Tuktu!*" (Caribou, or reindeer.)

Bobby's excited cry brought Jimmy up on a run, and when he looked and saw, he, too, shouted, and was no less excited than Bobby.

"Caribou! The caribou are coming!"

That was enough to send them back on a run for Abel and Skipper Ed and their rifles and all the ammunition they could muster, and then all four turned back to meet the caribou.

On and on came the great herd, in a far-reaching, endless mass, thousands upon thousands of them, and they were heading directly for the hill where the four eager hunters waited.

At length the mass reached them, and what followed was not a hunt but a slaughter, and when they were through more than a hundred caribou lay stretched upon the snow, and still the caribou came.

The period of starvation was at an end. Comfort and plenty had appeared at their very door.

The dogs were harnessed, and as many of the carcasses as they could use for man and dog food were hauled down, some to Abel Zachariah's cabin and some to Skipper Ed's. And bright and early the following morning Abel set out to the mission station and Skipper Ed to Abraham Moses' cabin, to bid the starving people come and help themselves and feast, and in the end not a caribou of all those that were killed was wasted.

And so it was that the Almighty looked after these children of His, and so He cares for His children even in the wild

wastes of Labrador.

"Good luck! Good luck at last!" said Skipper Ed.

CHAPTER XIX

OFF TO THE "SENA"

And so it was that the famine ended. There was small variety for the table, to be sure, but there was always plenty of good venison, varied with ptarmigans, and now and again a porcupine. And after all they were able to go to the ice edge on the winter seal hunt, and a profitable hunt it proved.

Thus the years passed, and thus they were filled with ups and downs and many adventures and hard work, and withal plenty of good fun, too, to flavor them, as years are bound to be in that land of stern and active existence.

But there was always time for study, and when Bobby was in his sixteenth year he and Jimmy could boast of having read Caesar and Cicero and Xenophon, and they were delving into Virgil and the Iliad. Under Skipper Ed's tutorship Bobby had advanced as far in his studies as most boys of his age in civilization, who have all the advantages of the best schools. And Skipper Ed was proud of his progress, and proud of Jimmy's progress too, as indeed he had reason to be, for neither of them was a waster of time. There was no inducement to be laggards.

Their hearts were clean and their vision was clear. Their view was not cut off or circumscribed by the frivolous and oftentimes vicious amusements that stand as a wall around life's outlook in the town. Their view and their hope were as wide as the wilderness and the sea, rugged and stern but mighty and majestic and limitless--God's unspoiled works--and God was a living God to them.

Bobby at this age had developed into a big, husky lad. He could drive the dog team as well as Abel. He had already killed many seals, and he was an excellent hunter for his years. To Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel he was a dutiful, affectionate son. They, too, were proud of him, and looked upon him as the finest lad in the whole land, and Abel boasted that when he grew to be a man he would be the finest hunter on the coast.

It happened that early in February following Bobby's fifteenth birthday Abel wrenched an ankle so badly that he could not go about his duties, or even hobble outside the cabin door. The responsibility of providing for the little household, therefore, fell upon Bobby. And Bobby, though keenly sympathetic, was nevertheless glad of an opportunity to show his prowess.

He squared his shoulders, and regardless of cold and storm set about the work, determined to prove that he was a man in the things he could accomplish, if not in years; and he succeeded so well that he won high praise from Abel. Certainly Abel himself could not have done better with the fox trapping, which at this season was the chief employment. Bobby kept the house, too, so well supplied with rabbits and ptarmigans, through his incessant hunting, that presently there were enough hanging frozen in the porch to last till the coming of warm weather.

One evening near the end of February Bobby announced, as he entered the cabin after giving the dogs their daily feed:

"There's only enough seal meat left to last the dogs a week. I'll have to go to the *sena* and kill some more."

"You do not know how to do that kind of hunting," objected Abel. "It is not like hunting seals from a boat, or like spearing them through their breathing holes in the ice. Feed the dogs only once every two days, and perhaps before the meat is gone my foot will be strong enough for me to go to the *sena*."

"I was there with you last year," Bobby insisted. "Jimmy will go with me. He has been to the *sena* with you twice, and he knows how. We will be careful."

And at last Abel surrendered, for he could not long deny Bobby any reasonable thing that the lad set his heart upon, and after all Bobby had proved himself a good and careful hunter; and they needed seals.

Skipper Ed had not kept dogs since the slaughter of his team in the year of famine. He hunted and trapped more after the manner of the Indian than the Eskimo, going long journeys inland on snowshoes, and now Jimmy accompanied him. And living quite alone, as he had during his earlier years on the coast, there was no one who could have fed or cared for dogs when Skipper Ed was absent upon these trapping expeditions. It was therefore only during the two or three years preceding the year of famine, when Jimmy was old enough to care for them, and wished them, that he had a team.

Abel, on the other hand, after the manner of Eskimos, set his traps nearer the shore, that he might, so far as possible, make the rounds of them with dogs.

Abel, therefore, had constant need of dogs, and he now had sixteen fine big fellows, which so nearly resembled the great wolves of the barrens that were dogs and wolves to intermingle only the practiced eye could distinguish the one from the other. These dogs never barked, but howled with the weird, dismal howl of the wolf. And when they were hungry they were such dangerous, savage brutes that it was unsafe for a stranger, unless armed with a cudgel, to wander among them.

With sixteen dogs Abel could muster two ordinary teams of eight dogs each, or one powerful team of ten or twelve, or even the entire number.

Skipper Ed and Jimmy, when they required the services of dogs, could always borrow a team from Abel, and to repay this courtesy it was their custom to join in the autumn and spring seal hunts, and to contribute the carcasses of the seals they killed to Abel, retaining only the skins, which Mrs. Abel dressed and made up for them into boots and winter garments and sleeping bags, as needs demanded.

It was a Saturday evening when Bobby finally received Abel's consent for him to go to the *sena* seal hunting. He was preparing to go over, as was his custom on Saturdays, to spend the evening with Skipper Ed and Jimmy in reading and study, and when he had eaten his supper he donned his snowshoes and *netsek*^[D] and hurried eagerly away to Skipper Ed's cabin to invite Jimmy to join him in the adventure.

"Yes, to be sure, Partner, you must go with Bobby," said Skipper Ed. "But it's going to be bleak and cold out there. It's a man's work at this season, hunting at the *sena*, and a strong man's work, too. Perhaps I had better go along. Then we can take two teams of dogs."

"That will be dandy!" exclaimed Bobby, "We'll have a fine time!"

"Yes, Partner, come!" urged Jimmy. "You can leave your traps for a week."

"I think I can--yes, I'll go," Skipper Ed decided. "I was never hunting at the *sena* but twice, though, and I've never forgotten my first experience. It was a good many years ago, before you came, Partner. I went with Abel. We had a hard time of it that year, for stormy weather came up and we nearly perished in a blizzard."

"We'll build a snow *igloo*" said Bobby, "and be pretty comfortable. We'll take Father's snow knives and two of his old stone lamps. We'll have plenty of seal oil to burn. You know there's no wood out there, and it isn't worth while hauling any."

"Yes," agreed Skipper Ed, "we'll need the lamps, though I don't like them. I never could get used to them, and I never liked to go too far from wood."

And so it came to pass that in the bright moonlight of Monday morning they lashed upon the two *komatiks* a good supply of hardtack and boiled salt pork--the only provisions that would not freeze too hard to eat--with tea, and sleeping bags, and numerous articles of equipment for their own use and comfort, and a day's supply of seal meat for the dogs.

Then the dogs were caught and harnessed, and in great excitement began to strain at the traces and howl their eagerness to be off. *Oksunaes* were shouted to Abel and Mrs. Abel, and Bobby, grasping the front of one *komatik*, and Skipper Ed the front of the other, they pulled them sharply to one side to break them loose, shouting to the teams as they did so: "*Hu-it! Hu-it!*" Then they flung themselves upon the *komatiks*, and away they dashed, down the steep and slippery incline, and off through the shore hummocks at a wild, mad gallop.

They were away to the *sena*, and the Great Adventure, at last.

CHAPTER XX

JIMMY'S SACRIFICE

For a little way the dogs traveled at a gallop, and Bobby and Skipper Ed had lively work while this lasted, guiding the *komatiks* between the ice hummocks. But it was not long before the first excitement of going upon a journey wore off, and after their manner the animals, with tails curled over their backs, settled down to a steady pulling. Now and again they came upon a ridge of ice piled up by the tide, and then it was necessary to lift at the *komatiks* and help the dogs.

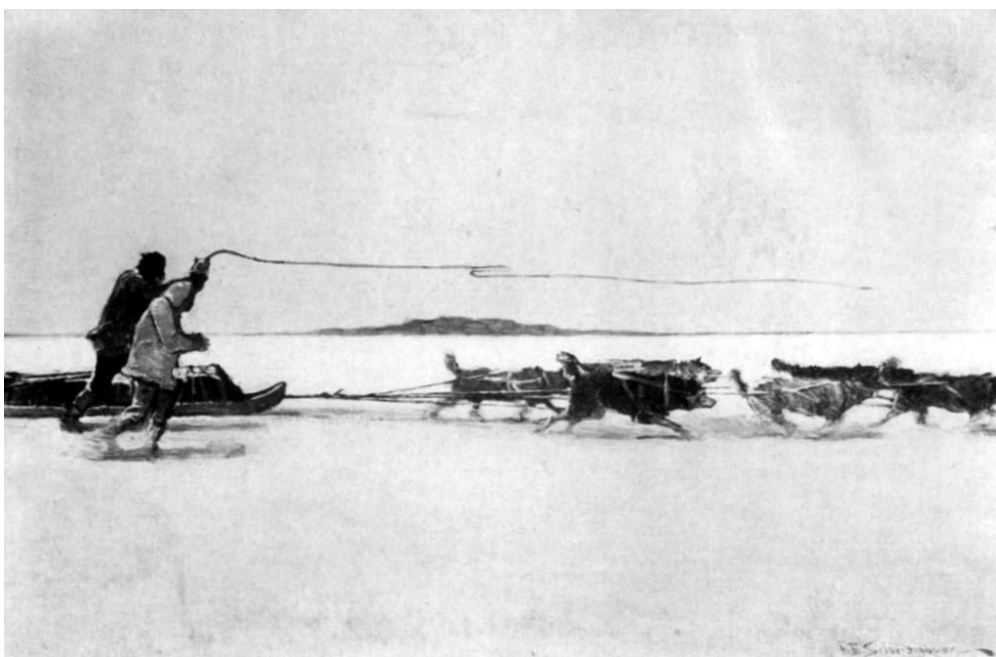
Presently the ice hummocks were left behind and the smooth, white surface of the frozen bay stretched out before them. The snow which covered the ice had been beaten down and hard packed by the wind, and the sledge runners slid over its surface so easily that the dogs increased their pace to a steady, rapid trot.

The weather was fearfully cold. The runners of the sledge squeaked and creaked. Frost flakes on the hard packed snow glistened and scintillated in the moonlight and soon the *netseks* of the travelers were covered with white hoar frost, ice formed upon their eyelashes and Skipper Ed's breath froze upon his beard until presently his face was almost hidden by a mass of ice.

They ran by the side of the *komatiks* to keep warm, only now and again riding for a little way to rest, and as they ran or walked they chatted gaily, contemptuous of the cold, and keenly enjoying in anticipation the sport and adventure in store for them.

And so they traveled for three full hours before the first hint of daylight came stealing up over the white horizon in the southeast, and at length, very slowly, as though reluctant to show his face, and uncertain of his welcome, the sun peeked timidly over the ice field. Then, reassured, he boldly lifted his round, glowing face full into view, giving cheer and promise to the frozen world.

To the sledge traveler the dreariest hour of the day, and the hour of bitterest cold, is that immediately preceding sunrise. As though by consent our three friends during this period fell into silence, and none spoke until the sun looked out over the ice, and the frost-covered snow—each frost flake a miniature prism—was set a-sparkling and aglinting as though the snow was thick sown with diamonds.



They ran by the side of the *komatiks* to keep warm

"Glorious! Isn't it glorious!" exclaimed Bobby, dropping by Jimmy's side upon the *komatik*, and removing a hand from its mitten for a moment to pick small particles of ice from his eyelashes.

Jimmy for answer drew his right hand from its mitten, and clapping it over Bobby's nose began to rub the member vigorously.

"There, now it's all right," said he, donning his mitten again after a minute or two of rubbing. "Your nose was going dead.[E] The end of it was white."

"I never felt it," laughed Bobby. "Just look at the Skipper back there. He's a perfect image of Santa Claus!"

"Exactly!" exclaimed Jimmy, looking back at Skipper Ed. "He's exactly like the picture of Santa Claus in that old magazine you and I used to look at so much, only a good deal more real."

"If he was driving reindeers, now, instead of dogs," laughed Bobby, "and I met him with all that ice on his beard, and his *netsek* white and glistening with the frost that way, I'd think he had stepped right out of the old picture book."

"Good old Partner!" said Jimmy. "I think I'll drop back with him a while and keep him company."

And, dropping lightly from the moving *komatik*, he waited to run along for a while with Skipper Ed, while Bobby ran alone with his own sledge.

Once a lonely raven coming from somewhere out of the blank spaces alighted on the ice a quarter of a mile in advance of Bobby's team and directly in its track. The dogs saw it immediately, and in an instant they were after it at a mad gallop. Bobby threw himself upon the sledge, in high glee at the wild pace, and Skipper Ed's team, quite sure they were missing something very much worth while, set out in hot pursuit.

In seeming disregard for his safety, the raven, cocking his head first on one side, then on the other, surveyed the approaching dogs with interest, and to Bobby it seemed that the dogs would surely catch him. Old Tucktu, the leader, was apparently of the same mind and very sure of a tasty morsel, and they were almost upon him before the raven, too dignified to hurry, rose leisurely on his wings, tantalizingly near to Tucktu's nose, and flapped away another quarter of a mile to repeat, with evident enjoyment, the episode, and then, unscathed, he disappeared again into the blank spaces.

When the raven had gone and the excitement was at an end, Bobby and Skipper Ed shouted "*Ah!*" at their teams, and ran ahead with their long whips as the dogs stopped, to compel the panting animals to lie down and remain quiet while they straightened out the tangled traces and made merry over the rapid ride they had enjoyed. Then, extracting somehardtack biscuits from their bags, they sat on the sledges and ate their dry luncheon while the dogs jogged leisurely on again.

The sun was setting when Bobby, now well in the lead, halted his team at Abel Zachariah's old fishing place on Itigailit Island to await Skipper Ed and Jimmy. The sea, far out in the direction in which Abel had found Bobby in the drifting boat that August morning, was frozen, and a little way out from Itigailit Island the smooth ice gave place to mountainous ridges and hummocks where, earlier in the season, rough seas had piled massive blocks one upon another and left them there to freeze and catch the drifting snow. Far out beyond the pressure ridges Bobby could see a dark line which marked the edge of the sea ice and the place where open water began. That was the *sena* for which they were bound.

"Don't you think we'd better build our *igloo* here?" Bobby suggested as the others came up. "It's getting late and we can't do any hunting tonight, anyway, and perhaps there won't be any good drifts out there."

"Yes, by all means," agreed Skipper Ed. "We'll have plenty of time in the morning to go out, and if the hunting proves good, and we prefer to stay there, we can build an *igloo* at our leisure. If we get plenty of seals we will want to haul them in here to land to cache them, and then if the ice breaks up before we get them all hauled home, we can take them in the boat. And while we are hauling them in here from the *sena* we'll have a snug *igloo* at each end of the trail, where we can make hot tea, if we wish, and drink it in comfort."

They found an excellent drift in a spot well sheltered from the wind, and because he was taller and stronger than Bobby and a better builder than Jimmy, Skipper Ed, with a snow knife which looked very much like a sword but had a wider blade, which was straight instead of curved, marked a circle about ten feet in diameter upon the drift.

Then he cut a wedge out of the snow in the center, and with this as a beginning he carved from each side of the hole blocks of the hard-packed snow, each block about two feet long and a foot and a half wide and ten inches thick. These he placed on edge around the circle, fitting their ends close together by trimming them as he found necessary, with the knife.

Bobby and Jimmy, each with a knife, now began also to cut other slabs from a drift outside the circle, and passed them to Skipper Ed when he had exhausted his supply within the circle. They were very heavy, these blocks, and as much as the boys could manage.

When Skipper Ed had built a row of blocks completely around the circle, he trimmed the first blocks which he had placed to a wedge, that he might build his circle of blocks up in a spiral.

Each block of snow was so placed that it was braced against the one next it, and its top leaned a little inward, so that as the walls of the *igloo* rose each was smaller than the one preceding it, until at last a key block in the top completed the dome-shaped structure. As the house grew Bobby plastered the joints between the blocks full of snow, making its outside smooth like the surface of a snowdrift.

When Skipper Ed had finished the building, he cut a circular place through the side, close down to the bottom, and just large enough to permit him to crawl out. Now with a snowshoe he shoveled the loose snow out of the opening, and leveled the floor within.

Bobby and Jimmy in the meantime busied themselves unlashng the loads upon the sledges and unharnessing the dogs. When this was done Bobby with an ax chopped frozen seal meat into pieces for the dogs' supper, while Jimmy with the long whip kept the hungry dogs at a distance, for with the unharnessing, and preparation of their supper, they collected into bunches, and sitting on their haunches, growled and snapped at one another, each fearful that his neighbor should gain an advantage, and all the time emitted dismal, whistling whines of impatience.

Presently Bobby stepped aside, Jimmy withdrew the menace of the whip, and in an instant the hungry beasts were upon their food, gulping it down as fast as they could pick it up, a snarling, snapping, yelping mass, and there was a fight or two that the boys were called upon to mediate by beating the animals apart.

By the time the feeding was over Skipper Ed had carried the harness into the *igloo* and spread it evenly on the floor--for the dogs would have eaten their own harness if it had been left to them--and over the harness he laid caribou skins, and then carried in the sleeping bags and provisions. Nothing, indeed, was left outside, for nothing would have been safe from the ravenous beasts. And when the dogs were fed and all was made snug and safe the three crawled within, and closed the entrance to the *igloo* with a big block of snow previously provided for the purpose.

They had brought with them two of Abel's old stone lamps. These were simply blocks of stone cut in the shape of a half moon, and hollowed out, to hold seal oil.

The lamps were now placed upon snow shelves, one on either side of the *igloo*, and the oil from a piece of blubber squeezed into them. Pieces of rags carefully placed along the straight side of the lamps served as wicks. These were lighted and burned with a smoky, yellow flame.

When the wicks were burning well a snow knife was stuck into the wall of the snow house over each lamp, and upon these knives kettles were suspended and filled with snow taken from the wall of the *igloo*. One of the kettles was removed when the snow was melted, and set aside for drinking water. The other was permitted to boil, tea was made, and then the fire was put out, for already the temperature inside the *igloo* had become so warm that presently there would be danger of the snow dripping moisture.

"Now," said Skipper Ed, lighting a candle, for it was growing dark, "we're ready for supper. You chaps must be hungry."

"I could eat my boots!" declared Bobby.

"So could I!" exclaimed Jimmy, as he poured hot tea into Skipper Ed's and Bobby's cups and then helped himself. "I was glad enough when we decided to stop here."

"Isn't it fine and cozy," said Bobby, between mouthfuls of frozen boiled pork and hardtack. "I always find a snow *igloo* cozy."

"It makes a pretty good shelter," Skipper Ed admitted, "but I never did care for an *igloo*. I'm too much of an Indian, I suppose, for I prefer a tent and a good wood fire, with its sweet smoke odor, and the companionship and shelter of the forest."

"Oh, I think an *igloo* is nicer," insisted Bobby. "A tent gets cold at night when the fire goes out, and an *igloo* keeps fine and warm. I could live in an *igloo* all winter."

"You're a regular husky!" laughed Skipper Ed. "Partner and I are Indians, aren't we, Partner?"

"Yes, Partner, I like a tent better," agreed Jimmy, "but," he added, "I like our house better than a tent."

"It all depends upon what we're used to, after all," remarked Skipper Ed, "and comfort is a matter of comparison. I've no doubt that Bobby, had he never been sent adrift, and had he never found his way here, would now be living in a fine mansion somewhere, and if he had been brought here directly from the luxuries of that mansion would have found this *igloo* unbearable, and instead of praising its comforts, as he is, would be denouncing it as unendurable, and the good supper we have just eaten as unfit to eat. And in that case it would have been a terrible hardship for him to spend even a single night here."

"I'm glad, then, that I came away from the mansion and its finery," declared Bobby. "But I've often wondered who the dead man was that Father found in the boat with me. I've often felt strange about that, and every summer when we're here I go over and look at his grave."

"I remember you spoke of him as 'Uncle Robert,'" said Skipper Ed. "Perhaps he was your uncle."

"I wonder--and I wonder--" said Bobby. "I wonder if my real mother and father are living, and whether they have stopped feeling bad about me, and forgotten me. I--think--sometimes I'd give most anything to see them and tell them I'm happy."

Then they were silent, and presently Skipper Ed knew that the boys were sleeping. But for a long time he lay awake and thought of other lands, and the friends of his youth and the days when he lived in luxury; and he wondered if, after all, he had been one whit happier in those days, with all the fine things he had, than were Bobby and Jimmy here in this rugged land, with no luxuries whatever. "We do not need much," he soliloquized, "to make us happy if we are willing to be happy. Health and love, and enough plain food to eat and clothes to cover us, and a shelter--even a snow house--and we have enough."

Before day broke they were astir; and the sun had not yet risen when they repacked their sledges and harnessed the dogs, and drove down over the ice toward the *sená*. For a mile the ice was smooth. Then they came among the pressure ridges, and had to pick their course in and out for another two miles before they came at last to the open sea.

Seals were numerous on the ice edge, and on floating pans of ice, and the dogs began to strain and howl in eagerness to attack the game, and would have dashed to the very water's edge but for big hoops of walrus hide thrown over the front of the *komatik*, which dragged into the snow under the runners and stopped them, and when they were stopped only the menace of the long whips could induce the animals to lie quietly down.

"We're going to have a dandy hunt!" exclaimed Bobby. "Shall we go right at it, and build an *igloo* later?"

"Don't you think we had better build the *igloo* first?" suggested Skipper Ed, laughing at Bobby's eagerness. "Then when we're tired we won't have it to do, or to think about, and we'll have a shelter all ready. Let us make things ship-shape."

"I suppose you're right," and Bobby grinned.

One of the two lamps and a share of the provisions had been left in the *igloo* on Itigailit Island, which was to be their land base and their cache. But they had brought with them the other lamp and necessaries to make their hunting *igloo* comfortable. A good bank of snow was found, not too far from the ice edge, and in an hour an *igloo* was ready and everything stowed safely away from possible foraging by the dogs. Then the two teams, still fast in their traces, were picketed behind the ice hummocks near the *igloo*, for had they been set at liberty each dog would have gone hunting on his own account, and the seals would have been driven from the ice and beyond range of the guns.

Now, each armed with a rifle, and Bobby with a harpoon, they stole down toward the seals, crawling toward them, Bobby now and again emitting a "*Hough! Hough!*" in imitation of the coughing bark of the seals, until they approached quite near. Then, almost simultaneously, they fired, and, springing up, ran forward. Two seals had been shot clear through the head, and lay dead on the ice, but the other, though wounded, had slipped into the water. Bobby drew his harpoon, and holding it poised waited, until presently a dozen feet away the wounded seal came struggling to the surface. In a flash the harpoon flew from the young hunter's hand and struck its mark, and with the assistance of Skipper Ed and Jimmy he drew it to the ice.

These seals were of a species which they called "harps," because of the peculiar, harp-shaped markings on their back; and of the hair variety, for none of the valuable fur seals inhabits north Atlantic waters. The skins, however, when dressed into leather by Mrs. Abel, would prove of splendid quality for boot tops, or, when dressed without removing the hair, would supply them with many articles of clothing for their comfort.

The day was terribly cold--Skipper Ed judged that the temperature must have stood at least at fifty degrees below zero, and that even the temperature of the sea water, where it was unfrozen, was well below the freezing point. Once or twice, indeed, in spite of their enthusiasm, the hunters retired to the *igloo*, where a lamp was kept burning, to warm themselves.

Late that afternoon Jimmy wounded a seal on an ice pan, and it went into the water. He seized a harpoon, but when the seal rose to the surface it was so far away that the line could not reach it.

"Here!" shouted Bobby, laying down his gun and grabbing a paddle which he had brought from Itigailit Island for such an emergency, "jump on this pan. I'll paddle you out where you can get him."

They sprang upon a small pan, and, utilizing it as a raft, Bobby paddled a few yards.

"There! There!" shouted Bobby. "There he is. He's most dead. You can get him!"

Jimmy jumped to the side of the pan upon which Bobby was kneeling with his paddle, and poising the harpoon was about to cast it when the pan, too heavily weighted on that side, began slowly to turn. Bobby did not see this, but Jimmy did.

"Don't move!" shouted Jimmy. "Stay where you are!"

And, without hesitation, Jimmy slipped from the pan and into the icy sea, though he knew there was small chance for him to swim, and, overcome by the shock of the terrible cold, he sank beneath the waves.

The pan righted itself immediately it was relieved of Jimmy's weight, and Bobby, realizing what Jimmy had done, and that his friend had sacrificed himself for his sake, stood bewildered and stunned, gazing blankly at the spot where Jimmy had sunk.



CHAPTER XXI

WHO WAS THE HERO?

Bobby did not lose his head. After his manner in emergencies, he thought quickly, and acted instantly, and now his bewilderment was for only a moment.

Seizing the harpoon which Jimmy had dropped upon the ice, he gave a yell that brought Skipper Ed to the water's edge in a hurry, and when Skipper Ed came running down Bobby had already thrown off his *netsek* and his mittens and was knotting the loose end of the harpoon line around his waist. Grasping the harpoon, he cast it upon the main ice, with the command:

"Grab it, and hold it!"

"My God!" gasped Skipper Ed. "What has happened? Where is Jimmy? Where is Partner?"

"In there! Stand by and help!" directed Bobby, who had not taken his eyes off the dark water where Jimmy had disappeared, save for the fleeting instant when he cast his harpoon to Skipper Ed.

Presently Jimmy, hampered by his *netsek*, weakly struggled to the surface, already apparently overcome by the awful cold of the plunge. Bobby saw him and instantly sprang after him, seized him about the waist and held him with the desperation of one who fights with death. A moment's struggle followed and then both lads went down.

Skipper Ed now comprehended Bobby's suddenly formulated plan of rescue, and he pulled with all his strength upon the line, and as he pulled Bobby, still grasping Jimmy about the body, rose again to the surface, and Skipper Ed giving impetus to the line, drew them to him, seized them and quite easily drew them upon the ice.

Jimmy had already lost consciousness and Bobby was so overcome by the shock that he could scarcely speak, and Skipper Ed, lifting Jimmy into his arms, ran with him to the *igloo*, calling to Bobby as he did so:

"Come! Run! Run, or you'll freeze!"

Bobby tried to run--tried very hard--but he fell. The water in an instant formed a coat of mail upon his body. He rose, but his legs refused to respond, and again he fell, and when Skipper Ed, who came running back when he had dragged Jimmy into the *igloo*, reached him he found Bobby on his hands and knees and nearly helpless.

"Come!" he shouted into Bobby's ear, at the same time passing his arm around Bobby's body and lifting him to his feet. "Come, lad! Don't give up!" he encouraged, half dragging the boy forward and pushing him into the *igloo*.

"Undress, Bobby! Get into your sleeping bag!" he commanded.

"Jimmy--Jimmy--" said Bobby, in a voice which he hardly recognized as his own.

"I'll take care of Jimmy," broke in Skipper Ed. "Get into your sleeping bag! Quick!"

And Bobby in a dazed manner obeyed.

Fortunately the stone lamp was burning. Skipper Ed closed the door of the *igloo* with a block of snow, and working rapidly he stripped the frozen clothing from Jimmy, wrapped him in a caribou skin, turned him upon his face, and resorted to artificial respiration to restore him to consciousness.

Jimmy responded quickly to the treatment, for he was suffering rather from shock than from the amount of water that had entered his lungs, and in a little while Skipper Ed was gratified to observe that he was breathing naturally and making an effort to speak.

"Where's--Bobby?" he asked faintly.

"Bobby's safe," said Skipper Ed with a strange choking in his voice. "Bobby pulled you out, Partner. My brave partner!"

Without delay Skipper Ed now tucked Jimmy into his sleeping bag, and wrapping an additional caribou skin around each of the boys, set himself at once to brewing some hot strong tea, which he forced them to drink, and until they had drunk it and were thoroughly warmed he commanded them to do no talking, though in spite of the injunction Bobby asked:

"Is Jimmy all right?"

"He's all right," reassured Skipper Ed, "as snug as can be, in his bag. Now don't say another word until I give you permission. Go to sleep."

"Where's my *netsek*? Did you find it? And my mittens? I'll need 'em again," persisted the practically disposed Bobby, who was already thinking of the future.

"You young rascal! Go to sleep, I say, and don't let me hear another word," insisted Skipper Ed. "I'll go find 'em. Keep quiet now and go to sleep."

Skipper Ed found the *netsek* and mittens, as he had promised he would. The tide had driven the piece of ice upon which Bobby had left them back again to the main ice. Then he fed the dogs, and when he returned to the *igloo* both lads were sleeping soundly.

He filled his pipe, and sat for two hours, and until darkness settled, smoking and ruminating. He did not know yet the full history of the accident. He only knew that Jimmy had in some manner got into the water, was overcome by the icy bath and was perishing when Bobby called, and that Bobby by quick thought and quick action had saved his young partner.

"They're both as tough as nuts or they never would have come out of that dip so well," he said to himself. "Bobby's a hero, and as unselfish as the day is long.

"I wonder what he'd have been if he'd never gone adrift and had never come to this rugged land. I wonder if his rich parents, or the luxuries and frivolities of civilization, would have spoiled him, and made him grow up into a selfish, cowardly, and perhaps dissipated, weakling? I wonder if it's the rugged country and the rugged, hard life he lives, that have given him a rugged, noble heart, or whether he'd have had it anyway?

"It's God's mystery. God holds our destiny in His hands, and our destiny is His will. Perhaps He sent the lad here to mould his character upon the plan of the great wide wilderness and boundless sea, and to fit him for some noble part that he is to play some time in life."

Skipper Ed knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Perhaps after all," he mused, "my life here has not been wasted. Perhaps my part in life was to teach these boys and help to broaden their life. Perhaps that was the reason I drifted here and remained here. Every misfortune and every sorrow is just a stepping stone to something higher and better."

"Skipper!" Bobby was awake and Skipper Ed's musings were at an end.

"Yes, son." He called Bobby "son" sometimes, as a special mark of affection.

"Did you find the *netsek* and mittens?"

"Yes, you practical young scamp."

"That's good," said Bobby, "for I couldn't hunt tomorrow without them."

"Hunt tomorrow!" exclaimed Skipper Ed. "Is that the first thing you think of when you wake up? I'm not sure I'll let you hunt tomorrow. I may keep you in your sleeping bag."

"I'm all right, Skipper," declared Bobby, "I'm going to get out of my bag right now. I'm so hungry I'll be eating it if I don't."

"Stay where you are!" commanded Skipper Ed. "I'll feed you right there. I have some fresh seal meat all cooked, and I'll make tea."

"Is Jimmy asleep, and is he all right?"

"Yes, he's sleeping, and I've no doubt he'll be all right in a day or two."

"Skipper," said Bobby, as Skipper Ed threw a handful of tea into the simmering teakettle, "do you know what Jimmy did?"

"Why, yes. He fell into the sea, and would have perished if you hadn't been so prompt in making a human fishhook of yourself."

"What I did wasn't anything any one wouldn't have done," declared Bobby deprecatingly.

"But we were on that cake of ice and it began to turn over, and Jimmy jumped into the water to save me. If we'd both gone in we'd both have drowned, for we couldn't have got out with our *netseks* on in that paralyzing cold, and Jimmy knew it, so he just jumped in to save me, and I'm sure he never expected to get out himself. That's the greatest thing anybody could have done."

"Jumped in to save you? My partner a hero, too! I knew it was in him, though. You're a pair of the bravest chaps I ever knew, and I'm proud of you both," and Skipper Ed's voice sounded strange and choky.

"Oh, it was nothing for me to do! I was safe on the end of the line! I was sure of getting out--but Jimmy!"

"Here," said Skipper Ed, "is some fine tender seal meat and a hard biscuit. Drink down this hot tea. It's good for you. And stop talking. I know what you did, you young husky."

Bobby laughed, and sipped the steaming tea.

Jimmy always insisted that he would have gone into the water anyhow when the ice turned over, and therefore had no choice, and deserved no credit for what he did, but that Bobby did a very brave act. And Bobby insisted that Jimmy had risked his life to save his, and was the bravest chap in the world. And Skipper Ed insisted that both lads were wonderful heroes. So it comes about that you and I will have to decide for ourselves which was right, and who was the hero.



CHAPTER XXII

A STORM AND A CATASTROPHE

True to his promise, Bobby was up the next morning bright and early, and awoke Skipper Ed as he moved about, lighting the lamp and hanging the kettle of snow to melt for tea, and the kettle containing cooked seal meat, to thaw, for it had frozen hard in the night. Then, while he waited for these to heat, he crawled back into his sleeping bag.

"How are you feeling after your Arctic dip?" inquired Skipper Ed.

"As fine as could be!" answered Bobby. "My fingers were nipped a little, and they're a bit numb. That's the only way I'd know, from the way I feel, that I'd been in the water."

"You're a regular tough young husky!" declared Skipper Ed. "But it was a narrow escape, and we can thank God for the deliverance of you two chaps. You mustn't take those risks again. It's tempting Providence."

"Why, I didn't think we were careless," said Bobby. "It was the sort of thing that is always likely to happen."

Jimmy lifted his head.

"Hello!" drowsily. "Is it time to get up? I've been sleeping like a stone."

"It isn't time for you to get up," cautioned Skipper Ed. "You stay right where you are today."

"I'm all right, Partner!" Jimmy declared.

"Well, you've got to demonstrate it. We don't want any pneumonia cases on our hands. Just draw some long breaths, and punch yourself, and see how you feel."

"I feel fine," insisted Jimmy, after some deep breaths and several self-inflicted punches. "It doesn't hurt a bit to breathe, and I don't feel lame anywhere. The only place I feel bad is in my stomach, and that's just shouting for grub."

"Very well," laughed Skipper Ed, "that kind of an ache we can cure with boiled seal and hardtack."

And so, indeed, it proved. Their hardihood, brought about by a life of exposure to the elements, and their constitutions, made strong as iron by life and experience in the open, withstood the shock, and, none the worse for their experience, and passing it by as an incident of the day's work, they resumed the hunt with Skipper Ed.

All of that day and the next, which was Thursday, they hunted with great success, and when Thursday night came more than half a hundred fat seals, among which were three great bearded seals--"square flippers," they called them--lay upon the ice as their reward. They were well pleased. Indeed, they could scarcely have done better had Abel Zachariah been with them.

"Tomorrow will be Friday, and we had better haul our seals to Itigailit Island to the cache," Skipper Ed suggested that evening as they sat snug in the *igloo*, eating their supper. "We have all we can care for."

"I hate to leave with all these seals about, but I suppose we'll have to go some time," said Bobby regretfully.

"Yes, and I'm wondering what I'll find in my traps when we get home," said Jimmy.

"You may have a silver fox, Partner," laughed Skipper Ed.

"I've been looking for one every round I've made this winter," Jimmy grinned.

"That's the way with every hunter," said Skipper Ed. "He's always looking for a silver, and it makes him the keener for the work, and drives away monotony. He's always expecting a silver, though year in and year out he gets nothing but reds and whites, with now and again a cross, to make him think that his silver is prowling around somewhere close by."

"I'd feel rich if I ever caught a silver!" broke in Bobby. "And wouldn't I get some things for Father and Mother, though! A new rifle and shotgun and traps, and--loads of things!"

"So you're looking for a silver, too," said Skipper Ed, all of them laughing heartily. "That's the way it goes--everyone is looking for a silver fox, and that keeps everyone always hopeful and gives vim for labor. When they don't have silvers or don't hunt and trap, they're looking for something else that takes the place of a silver--some great success. It's ambition to catch silvers, and the hope of catching them, that makes the world go round."

"Well, I never got one yet," said Bobby, "and there's one due me by this time. Every one gets a silver some time in his life."

"Not every one," corrected Skipper Ed. "Well, shall we haul the seals over in the morning, and then go home to see if we've got any silvers in the traps?"

"I suppose so," agreed Bobby, regretfully. "It's hard to leave this fine hunting, but I suppose there'll be good hunting till the ice goes out, and anyway we've got all we can use."

So with break of day on Friday they loaded their sledges, and all that day hauled seals to their cache, and when night came and they returned in the dark to the *sena igloo*, some seals still remained to be hauled on Saturday.

But the sun did not show himself on Saturday morning, for the sky was heavily overcast, and before they reached Itigailit Island with the first load of seals snow was falling and the wind was rising. They hurried with all their might, for it was evident a storm was about to break with the fury of the North, and out on the open ice field, where the wind rides unobstructed and unbridled, these storms reach terrible proportions.

So they pushed the dogs back to the *sena* at the fastest gait to which they could urge them. Skipper Ed and Jimmy were in advance and had Skipper Ed's *komatik* loaded with the larger proportion of the remaining seals, and were lashing the load into place, when Bobby arrived.

"I've got a heavier load than yours will be, so I'll go on with it," Skipper Ed shouted as Bobby drove up. "There are only two small ones left for you, and the cooking outfit and your snow knives in the *igloo*. Don't forget them. You and Jimmy will likely overtake me. Hurry along."

"All right," answered Bobby. "We'll catch you before you reach smooth ice."

So Skipper Ed drove away with never a thought of catastrophe, and was quickly swallowed up by the thickening snow, while Bobby and Jimmy loaded the seals and the things from the *igloo* upon the sledge, and, spurred by the rising wind and snow, hurried with all their might.

Already great seas were booming and breaking with a roar upon the ice, and as the boys turned the dogs back upon the trail they observed a waving motion of the ice beneath them, which was rapidly becoming more apparent. At one moment the dogs would be hauling the sledge up an incline, and at the next moment the sledge would be coasting down another incline close upon the heels of the team, as the heaving ice assumed the motion of the seas which rolled beneath.

As they receded from the ice edge, however, this motion diminished, until finally it was hardly perceptible at all, and there seemed no further cause for alarm or great speed, and the dogs, which were weary with the two days' heavy hauling, were permitted to proceed at their own leisurely gait.

At length through the snow they saw Skipper Ed waiting for them, but when he was assured they were following he proceeded.

"Ah!" Bobby shouted to his dogs a moment later, bringing them suddenly to a stop. "I've dropped my whip somewhere. Jimmy, watch the team while I run back after it."

Twenty minutes elapsed before he returned with the whip, and they drove on.

Skipper Ed, satisfied that Bobby and Jimmy were close at his heels, did not halt again until well out over the smooth ice and near to Itigailit Island, when he heard behind him a strange rumbling and crackling. He halted and listened, and strained his eyes through the drifting snow for a glimpse of the boys. They were not visible, and, springing from his *komatik*, he ran back in the direction from which he had come and as fast as he could run, and presently, with a sickening sensation at his heart, was brought to a halt by a broad black space of open water.

The great ice pack upon which they had been hunting had broken loose from the shore ice, and tide and wind were driving it seaward. Already the chasm between him and the floe had widened to over thirty feet, and it was rapidly growing wider. The minutes dragged and when at last Bobby and Jimmy came into view on the opposite side of the chasm it was a full two hundred feet in breadth. They shouted to the dogs and rushed to the edge of the open water, but there was no hope of their escape. They had delayed too long. They were adrift on the ice floe, which was steadily taking them seaward.

CHAPTER XXIII

IT WAS GOD'S WILL

Skipper Ed was appalled and stunned. A sense of great weakness came upon him, and he swayed, and with an effort prevented his knees from doubling under him. His vision became clouded, like the vision of one in a dream. His brain became paralyzed, inert, and he was hardly able to comprehend the terrible tragedy that he believed inevitable.

Had there been any means at his command whereby he could at least have attempted a rescue, it would have served as a safety valve. But he was utterly and absolutely helpless to so much as lift a finger to relieve the two boys whom he loved so well and who had become so much a part of his life.

And there was Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel. Vaguely he remembered them and the great sorrow that this thing would bring upon them. He knew well that they would place none of the responsibility upon himself, but, nevertheless, he could but feel that had he remained with the boys they would now have been safe.

Home? His cabin would never be home to him again, without his partner. He could never go over to Abel Zachariah's again of evenings, with no Bobby there. Only two days ago he had thanked God for sparing the lives of the boys, and how proud he had been of their heroic action, and their pluck, too, after he had got them safe into the *igloo*!

He could see them now--barely see them through the snow. He watched their faint outlines, and then the swirling snow hid them, and the ice floe and only black waters remained.

Then it was that Skipper Ed fell to his knees, and, kneeling there in the driving Arctic storm and bitter cold, prayed God, as he had never prayed before, to work a miracle, and spare his loved ones to him. Nothing, he remembered, was beyond God's power, and God was good.

When, presently, he arose from his knees, Skipper Ed felt strangely relieved. A part, at least, of the load was lifted from his heart. He could not account for the sensation, but, nevertheless, he felt stronger, and a degree of his old courage had returned.

He stood for a little longer gazing seaward, but nothing was to be seen but black, turbulent, surly waters and swirling snow, and at length he turned reluctantly back to his sledge.

The dogs were lying down, and already nearly covered by the drift. He called to them to go forward, and, arriving at the *igloo*, listlessly unharnessed and fed them, and retreated to the shelter of the *igloo* to think.

He could eat nothing that night, but he brewed some strong tea over the stone lamp. Then he lighted his pipe and sat silent, for a long while, forgetting to smoke.

With every hour the wind increased in force, and before midnight one of those awful blizzards, so characteristic of Labrador at this season, was at its height. Once Skipper Ed removed the snow block at the entrance of the *igloo*, and partly crawled out with a view to looking about, but he was nearly smothered by drift, and quickly drew back again into the *igloo* and replaced the snow block.

"The poor lads!" said he. "God help and pity them, and" he added reverently, "if it be Thy will, O God, preserve their lives."

Skipper Ed finally slipped into his sleeping bag and fell into a troubled sleep, to awake, as morning approached, with a great weight upon his heart, and with his waking moment came the realization of its cause. He arose upon his elbow and listened. The tempest had passed.

He sprang up, and drawing on his *netsek* and moccasins, for these were the only garments he had removed upon lying down, he went out and looked about him. The stars were shining brilliantly, and an occasional gust of wind was the only reminder of the storm. Mounds of snow marked the place where the dogs were sleeping, covered by the drift. The morning was bitterly cold.

He ran down to the ice edge, and gazed eagerly seaward, but nowhere could he see the ice pack. It had vanished utterly.

A sense of awful loneliness fell upon Skipper Ed. Reluctantly he returned to the *igloo* and prepared his breakfast, which he ate sparingly. Then until day broke he sat pondering the situation. There was nothing he could do, and he

decided at length to return at once to Abel Zachariah's, and report the calamity.

When he emerged again from the *igloo* the last breath of the storm had ceased to blow and a dead calm prevailed. He loaded the *komatik*, and calling the dogs from beneath their coverlets of snow, harnessed them, and without delay set out for the head of Abel's Bay.

It was long after dark when the dogs, straining at their traces and yelping, rushed in through the ice hummocks below Abel's cabin. The cabin was dark, but a light flashed in the window as the sledge ascended the incline. Abel and Mrs. Abel had heard the approach, and when the sledge came to a stop before the door they were there to give welcome and greetings.

"Where is Bobby? And where is Jimmy?" asked Abel. "Are they coming?"

"They will never come," answered Skipper Ed.

Abel and Mrs. Abel understood, for tragedies, in that stern land, are common, and always the people seem steeled to meet them. And so in silence they led the way into the cabin, and in silence they sat, uttering no word, while Skipper Ed related what had happened. And though still there was no crying and no wailing from the stricken couple, Skipper Ed knew that they felt no less keenly their loss, and he knew that they had lost what was dearer to them than their own life.

"And now," said Skipper Ed, when he was through, "I will unharness the dogs and take care of the things on the *komatik*."

"Yes," said Abel, "we will look after the dogs. You will stop with us tonight, for your *igloosuk* (cabin) is cold."

And when they had cared for the dogs and had eaten the supper which Mrs. Abel prepared, Abel Zachariah took his Eskimo Bible from the shelf and read from it, and then they sang a hymn, and when the three knelt in evening devotion he thanked God for the son He had sent them out of the mists from the Far Beyond where storms are born, and had seen fit to call back again into the mists, for the son had been a good son and had made brighter and happier many years of their life. It was God's will, and God's will was law, and it was not for them to question the righteousness of His acts.

And that night when Mrs. Abel turned down the blankets on Bobby's bed for Skipper Ed, she thought of the time when Bobby was little, and she lay by his side of evenings to croon him to sleep with her quaint Eskimo lullabies.

CHAPTER XXIV

UNDER THE DRIFTING SNOW

Bobby and Jimmy heard the ominous booming that accompanied the parting of the floe from the land ice, and they whipped the dogs to the utmost exertion of which the animals were capable, but they had dallied too long, and when they reached the rapidly widening chasm it was plain that retreat was hopelessly cut off.

"We can swim it! We can swim!" shouted Jimmy, and but for the restraining hand of Bobby he would have plunged into the water and made the mad attempt, so soon forgetful was he of his recent experience.

"You'd freeze! You'd freeze! We couldn't swim in this cold!" Bobby protested.

"I think we could have made it!" declared Jimmy, when Bobby let go his arm.

"You know how the water treated us the other day, Jimmy," said Bobby quietly. "We never could swim it. The cold would paralyze us before we got half way across."

"But now we're sure to perish!" Jimmy exclaimed. "We'll be carried to sea, and the ice will break up, and there'll be no chance for us at all. We'd have had at least a chance if we'd tried! Now our last chance is gone!"

"There wouldn't have been a chance if we'd tried to swim," Bobby protested. "Here there is some sort of a chance. The ice may not break up, and it may drift back so that we can get ashore, and if it holds together long enough some vessel may pick us up. Anyhow we're here, and we've got to make the best of it."

"There's Partner!" broke in Jimmy. "Poor old Partner! See him out there? I wonder what he'll do."

And then they shouted to Skipper Ed, and again and again they shouted, but the wind blew their shouts back into their teeth and Skipper Ed did not hear them, and at last he faded away, and the land ice faded away in the cloud of drifting snow.

"There's going to be a hard blow, and we'll have to find a place to build our *igloo*," Bobby at length suggested.

"Yes," agreed Jimmy. "I'm glad we've got the snow knives and the lamp. If it comes to blow hard we'd perish in the open."

"And I'm glad we've got these seals, and some tea and biscuits," added Bobby. "I'm famishing. We'll have to get back among the hummocks to find a drift for the *igloo*. Our old *igloo*, I suppose, has been washed away before this. Anyway, it's too near the surf to be safe."

"I'm afraid there's no drift, except among the big hummocks on the other side, that's big enough for an *igloo*" suggested Jimmy disconsolately, "and I think you're right about it being too near open water out there to be safe, for if the ice breaks it'll break there first."

"Yes, but we may find something toward the center," agreed Bobby, as he took up the whip and turned the dogs about. "We've got to make some kind of shelter."

And so they made their way back among the pressure hummocks, and, compelling the dogs to lie down, each with a snow knife began his search for a suitable snow drift upon which to build an *igloo*.

The fury of the storm increased with every moment. It drifted past and around them in dense and stifling clouds and at times nearly choked them. The wind shrieked and moaned among the hummocks. In the distance they could hear the boom of the seas hammering upon the floe and threatening it with destruction, and now with growing frequency rising above the sound of shrieking wind and booming seas they were startled by the cannon-like report of smashing ice.

At last the flying snow become so dense there was danger they would lose the *komatik* and lose each other, and they came together again, groping their way blindly to the *komatik*, which was nearly hidden under the drift, and the sleeping dogs, which by this time were wholly invisible.

"The snow is too soft," Bobby announced. "I've tried it everywhere, and every block that I cut falls to pieces."

"I couldn't find any, either," said Jimmy, "but we've got to do something. We'll perish without shelter."

"I'm afraid there's no use trying to build an *igloo*," acknowledged Bobby, "though we needn't perish if we can't make

one. But I don't want to give up yet. Let's try just a little longer, but we must keep as close to the *komatik* as we can, or we'll get separated."

"We can't live through the night without an *igloo*!" Jimmy again declared, adding wistfully: "I wonder if our old *igloo* isn't all right yet, after all? It sat a little back, you know, from the water."

"It wouldn't be safe," Bobby protested. "If it hasn't gone already, it will soon in this blow, for the sea is eating away the ice floe on all sides. Don't worry, Jimmy. We'll make out, *igloo* or no *igloo*. Look at the dogs. They don't have *igloos* ever. But I'm weak with hunger. I've got to eat a biscuit before I do another thing."

Together they dug away the snow and found the food bag, and from it extracted some sea biscuits, and each cut for himself a thick piece of the boiled fat pork, frozen as hard as pork will freeze, but nevertheless very palatable to the famished young castaways. And crouching close together under the lee of the *komatik* they munched in silence.

"If it wasn't for these big hummocks we'd be blown clear off the ice," said Bobby, finally. "We've no idea how strong the wind is and how it sweeps over the level ice out there. The dogs are wise to get under the drift so soon."

They again fell into silence for a little while, when Jimmy remarked, sadly:

"We'll never see home again, I suppose! There's no hope that I can see of getting off this floe. I wonder what it will be like to die."

"I'm not thinking about dying," said Bobby, "and I'm not going to die till I have to. It's the last thing I expect to do. I'm thinking about getting a shelter made before it gets dark, and then keeping alive on here, and as comfortable as we can, until we get ashore."

"I don't see how we're ever going to get ashore," Jimmy solemnly insisted. "Not that I feel scared, though I'd rather live than die. But it's an awful thing to feel that our bodies will be lost in the sea, and no one will know how we die."

"If we have to die the sea is as good a place as any to die in, and what difference does it make about our bodies? But," added Bobby, "we won't die if I can help it, and I don't believe we're going to. If we do, why that's the way the Almighty planned it for us, and we shouldn't mind, for what the Almighty plans is right. He knows what is best for us."

"I can't believe just that," said Jimmy. "If we'd hurried we wouldn't have been caught in this trap. It was our fault. I'm not blaming you, Bobby. I'm older than you and should have thought further and told you to hurry, so I'm most to blame. And I can't help worrying about Partner and Abel and Mrs. Zachariah, and how they'll feel and what they'll do."

"What's the use of worry? You always get worrying and stewing, Jimmy, and you know it doesn't help things any and makes you miserable, and there's never been a time yet when it didn't turn out in the end that there never was anything to really worry about, after all. If you keep on you'll get yourself scared. Now quit it. I was more at fault for getting us into the scrape than you were, and you know that too, and if you keep up this sort of talk I'll feel you're trying to rub it in."

"Well, perhaps you're right," Jimmy admitted, and after a moment's silence suggested, as they rose to continue their efforts to make a shelter: "Bobby--let's ask God to take care of us."

"Yes," agreed Bobby enthusiastically, "let's do; and then let's do our best to take care of ourselves, and help Him."

They sank on their knees in the snow, and each in silence offered his own fervent prayer, while the wind drove the thick snow about them and shrieked and moaned weirdly through the hummocks, and the distant booming of the seas, and thunderous smashing of the ice on the outer edge of the floe, fell upon their ears with solemn, ominous foreboding.

"Now I'm going to look again for hard snow," said Bobby, when they rose presently. "You better keep close to the *komatik*, Jimmy, so we won't lose it. I won't go far, and if I find snow that will cut I'll holler, and if I lose the direction I'll holler, and then you answer."

And taking his snow knife Bobby was swallowed up by the swirling snow, and Jimmy waited and waited, in dreadful loneliness and suspense, while the minutes stretched out, and at last dusk began to steal upon his stormswept world.

Many times Jimmy shouted, but no answering shout from Bobby came to him, and now he shouted and listened, and shouted and listened, but only the shrieking and moaning of the wind, and booming and thundering of breaking seas and pounding ice gave answer.

A sickening dread came into Jimmy's heart as vainly he peered through the gathering darkness into ever thickening snow clouds, and called and shouted until he was hoarse.

He could not see the dogs now--he could hardly see the length of the *komatik*. The dogs lay quiet under their blanket of snow somewhere ahead in the gloom. Jimmy, though he had wrapped a caribou skin around his shoulders, was becoming numb with cold.

Growing desperate at last, he set out to search for Bobby, but did not go far when he realized that it would be a hopeless search, and that it was after all his duty to remain with the sledge. Then he turned back to find the sledge and stumbled and groped around in the snow for a long while before he fell upon it by sheer accident.

With darkness the velocity of the storm increased, constantly gathering force. The bitter cold cut through Jimmy's sealskin clothing and through the caribou skin which he had again wrapped around him, and his flesh felt numb, and a heavy drowsiness was stealing upon him which it was hard to resist. He knew that to surrender to this in his exposed position would be fatal, and he rose to his feet and jumped up and down to restore circulation.

Any further attempt to find Bobby, he realized, would be foolhardy if not suicidal. His previous effort had proved this, and now he felt quite helpless. He was also very certain that Bobby could not by any possibility, if he still survived, find his way back to the *komatik* until the storm abated. He would have lost the *komatik* himself now had he wandered even a dozen feet from it.

And then he comforted himself with the thought that Bobby had learned many things from Abel concerning the manner in which the Eskimos on the open barrens and ice fields protect themselves when suddenly overtaken by storms such as the one that now raged. In these matters, indeed, he looked upon Bobby as an Eskimo, and had great confidence in Bobby's ability to overcome conditions that to himself would seem unconquerable.

He knew, too, that Bobby, when hunting with Abel upon the barrens, had weathered some terrific storms. These were experiences which he himself had never encountered, for he and Skipper Ed during their winter months on the trapping trails clung more closely to the forests, where they were protected from sweeping gales and could always find firewood in abundance, and could build a temporary shelter.

And pondering these things as he sat huddled upon the sledge, his hope that Bobby might after all be safe grew, and he felt a sense of vast relief steal over him. He was not so cold now, his brain was heavy with sleep and he began to doze.

Suddenly he again realized his own danger were he to submit to the sleep which the cold was urging upon him, and he sprang to his feet and jumped and jumped and shouted and swung his arms, until he could feel the blood tingling through his veins, and his brain awake.

"I must do something!" said he. "I must do something! Bobby is lost out there and I can't help him, and I can't stand this much longer. I must do something for myself or I'll perish before morning."

Then he remembered the dogs, lying deep and snug under the drifts, and what Bobby had said about them, and with feverish haste he drew his snow knife and cut away the drift which now all but covered the *komatik*. Then he took his sleeping bag from the load, and, digging deeper down and down into the drift, stretched the bag into the hole he had made, and slid into it, and in a little while the snow covered him, and he like the dogs lay buried beneath the drift.



CHAPTER XXV

A LONELY JOURNEY

Weary as Jimmy was, he lay awake for a long time, torn by emotions and filled with misgivings and wild imaginings. Would he ever see good old Partner again? Would he ever see the cozy cabin that had been his home through all these happy years? Would he ever again sit, snug in his big arm chair before the big box stove with its roaring fire, while Skipper Ed helped him with his studies or told him stories of the far-off fairy land of civilization?

Then for a time he fell to thinking about Bobby, and, in his old way, to worrying, and to wondering if, after all, he could not or should not make one more attempt to rescue his comrade.

"I never should have let him go that last time," he moaned. "If he perishes it will be my fault! I'm older and I should have thought further! I should have kept him back! But I'm so in the habit of letting him go ahead! Oh, I should have held him back! I should have held him back!"

And in this soliloquy Jimmy unconsciously admitted, though he did not know it, that Bobby was his leader still, as he always had been, and that Bobby's will and judgment dominated. Bobby had decided to go upon that last attempt to find snow suitable for an *igloo*, and Bobby went, and Jimmy could no more successfully have interposed his judgment against Bobby's than he could have stopped the blowing of the wind.

"No," he admitted to himself at last, "I could not have done anything more to find Bobby. In this terrible storm I would have perished, for it is physically impossible to move about."

And so presently Jimmy, easing his conscience, permitted his better judgment to prevail, though once he had been upon the point of digging out of his retreat and throwing himself again into the maelstrom of suffocating snow and darkness. And then he prayed the good Lord to preserve Bobby's life and his own, and to guide them back to safety, as only He could, for they were in His care.

Even under the snowdrift that had quickly covered him Jimmy could hear the shrieking wind and thunderous pounding of ice and seas, and there was little wonder that at last he fancied the floe rising and falling beneath him, and he lay in momentary expectation of being cast into the water and crushed beneath mighty ice pans.

But Jimmy was young, and nature's demands were strong upon him, and presently, snug under his accumulating blanket of snow, a drowsy warmth stole over him, and he slept.

How long he had been sleeping Jimmy did not know, when he awoke from a dream that he and Skipper Ed and Bobby were in a snow *igloo* and the top had fallen in and was suffocating him with its weight. For a moment, until he marshaled his wandering wits, he believed it no dream at all, but a reality, and then as the happenings of the previous afternoon and night were remembered, he realized his position, and Bobby's going, and he began wildly digging away the snow with his hands.

It was a hard task, but at last he made an opening through the drift, and was astonished as he forced his way out to find that it was broad day and the sun shone brightly and a dead calm prevailed.

But a wild terror came upon him as he looked about. Less than fifty feet from the place where he had lain waves were breaking over the edge of the ice. On the opposite side and very close to him lay the land, and the ice upon which he stood was jammed against the land ice, offering him a clear road to safety.

But safety now meant nothing to Jimmy. The main ice pack from which his little section had broken, lay glimmering in the sunlight a full two miles to the southeast and well out to sea, and Bobby was either on that pack or had been lost in the sea. The discovery made Jimmy numb with fear and consternation.

He recognized the land near him as the farthest point of Cape Harrigan. The pack in its southward drift had come in contact with Cape Harrigan's long projection of land, the wind had severed the pack, and, while the comparatively small section of floe upon which he stood had remained jammed against the land, the main floe, reaching far out beyond the obstruction of the cape, had been swept on and on, and was now floating steadily southward.

In frantic frenzy Jimmy ran about and shouted, and searched every nook and turn of his little corner of the original floe for Bobby, but there was no trace of his missing comrade. Again and again he searched, but without reward. Bobby was gone and Jimmy no longer had any doubt that he had perished.

With heavy heart he at last set about with his snow knife, digging the *komatik* from under the drift and getting his load in order, and then he roused the dogs from their drifts and drove them to the land. The great floe was now but a speck upon the far horizon.

There was nothing more he could do. He felt very much as Skipper Ed had felt the day before, and was feeling that very morning, and he remembered, and repeated over and over again, what Skipper Ed had so often said: "Our destiny is in God's hands, and our destiny is His will."

Jimmy's travels had carried him south nearly to Cape Harrigan on two or three occasions when he had been with Skipper Ed in their trap boat in summer, and he knew that he could not be above two days' journey from the head of Abel's Bay, for now it was March and the days were growing long. And between Cape Harrigan and Abel's Bay was a Hudson's Bay trading post where he and Skipper Ed sometimes traded furs and salt trout for flour and pork and tea, and beyond this point he knew the sledge route well.

So, as there was nothing else to be done, he turned the dog team northward, in the hope that he might find the trading post and the old familiar trail.

The weather was keen, the air was filled with floating rime, which shimmered and sparkled in the sunshine, and Jimmy's garments were covered with it, but, plodding disconsolately on and on, his heart heavy with the tragedy and his thoughts filled with Bobby and the happy years of comradeship that were ended, he did not feel or heed the cold or dazzling glitter of the snow, until in mid-afternoon his eyes began to trouble him, and he realized that snow-blindness was threatening.

Presently, however, the long, wolf-like howl of dogs came down to him over the ice, and rounding a point of land he discovered, directly ahead of him, and nestling at the foot of a great barren hill, the white buildings of the fort. His dogs immediately broke into a run, and a few moments later he was safe at the post.

The factor and the people were very hospitable and kind to Jimmy, after the manner of the Coast. They agreed that he had left nothing undone that he could have done. The tragedy was, after all, an incident of life, and all in a day's work, and to some extent they reconciled him with himself, but they could not ease his sorrow.

They would not permit Jimmy to proceed further that night, though at first he protested that he must, that he might so much the sooner ease Skipper Ed's anxiety, so far as his own safety was concerned. But the preceding twenty-four hours had tried his physical powers, and when he entered the heated post kitchen his eyes became so inflamed that he consented to stay.

The dogs, which had not received their daily portion the previous evening, were ravenous, and when they were fed Jimmy stretched his sleeping bag upon the floor in the kitchen and slipped into it, and almost immediately fell into deep slumber.

A mild attack of snow blindness held Jimmy prisoner all the next day. This was exceedingly disappointing. Bright and early the following morning, however, wearing a pair of smoked goggles to protect his eyes from the daily increasing sun glare, he set out for home, and only halted for a little at the cabin of Abraham Moses, the nearest neighbor of Skipper Ed and Abel Zachariah, where he must needs stop for tea and bread, else Abraham would feel offended.

It was near sunset when he arrived again at Abel Zachariah's. They met him as they had met Skipper Ed, and welcomed him warmly, and when they heard his story of Bobby's disappearance they had no blame for him and no complaint, but said again that God had sent them Bobby, and God had called him back again, and God knew best, for He was good. And then Jimmy left them and hurried eagerly on to the cabin home that so recently had seemed lost to him forever. How good it looked that cold winter evening, and when he quietly pushed the door open and silently entered, and surprised Skipper Ed with his coming, and when Skipper Ed clasped him in his arms and thanked God over and over again for sparing his partner, Jimmy sank down in his chair and cried.

CHAPTER XXVI

CAST AWAY ON THE ICE

It was one of Bobby's characteristics never to acknowledge himself defeated in anything he undertook to do, so long as there seemed a possibility of accomplishing the thing in hand. He had set out to find a suitable drift and to build a snow house. He was confident such a drift was to be found not far from the *komatik* where he had left Jimmy, for in passing to Itigailit Island and back with loads of seals earlier in the day he had observed some good hard drifts which he believed to be in this locality, though he was aware that in the blinding snow he may have stopped the dogs a little on one side or the other of them. So he felt assured that he and Jimmy had overlooked them in their previous search, and this time he was determined to find them.

This it was, then--this dislike to feel himself beaten--rather than dire necessity, that had sent him on the final search. And, too, the man who lives constantly in the wilderness never endures unnecessary hardships. He makes himself as comfortable as the conditions under which he lives will permit, and provides himself as many conveniences and comforts as possible under the circumstances in which he finds himself, without burdening himself with needless luxuries.

Bobby had hinted to Jimmy that they might protect themselves under the snow, after the manner of the dogs. He had done this once during the winter, when he and Abel Zachariah were hunting together and were suddenly overtaken by a storm. But at best this was an uncomfortable method of passing a night, and a last resort, and Bobby was therefore quite willing to endure preliminary discomfort in order to secure an *igloo*.

Engrossed in his search he wandered much farther afield than he had intended, and much farther than he knew, which was a reckless thing to do. And so it came about that presently, when his search was rewarded by a solid drift of hard-packed snow, and he shouted to Jimmy to come on with the dogs, no answer came from Jimmy, and Bobby, endeavoring to locate himself, became quite confused and uncertain as to the direction in which Jimmy and the *komatik* lay, for his course had been a winding course, in and out among the hummocks, and in the blinding, swirling snow he could never see a dozen feet from where he stood.

Then he shouted again and listened intently, and again and again, but only the roar and boom of sea and pounding ice and the shrieking and weird moaning of the wind gave answer.

"Well, I've lost Jimmy, sure enough," he acknowledged to himself at last, after much futile shouting, "and I'm lost myself, too! I don't know north from south, and I couldn't hit in ten guesses in which direction the *komatik* is! This is a pretty mess!"

Dusk was not far off, and there was no time to be lost, and without further parley or useless waste of breath and strength Bobby set bravely to work with his snow knife, as any wilderness dweller in similar case would have done, and in a little while had prepared for himself a grave-shaped cavern in the drift, with a stout roof of snow blocks, and when it was finished he crawled in and closed the entrance with a huge block.

This emergency shelter was, of course, not to be compared with a properly built *igloo*, but an *igloo* he could scarcely have built in the face of the storm without assistance. It was, however, much more comfortable than a burrow in the drift, such as Jimmy had made, for it gave him an opportunity to turn over and stretch his limbs, and it afforded him, also, a considerable breathing space.

"'Twould be fine, now, if I only had my sleeping bag," he soliloquized, when he had at last composed himself in his improvised shelter. "I hope Jimmy's just as snug. I told him about getting in the snow like the dogs do, and he'll do it and be all right, and he's got his sleeping bag, too."

Bobby was not given to vain regrets and needless worry, as we have seen, but nevertheless he could not keep his mind from the possible fate of himself and Jimmy, and think as he would he could conceive of no possible means of their escape, save in the possibility of the floe coming again in contact with land. Then his thoughts ran to Abel and Mrs. Abel, and before he was aware of it he was crying bitterly.

"If I'd only hurried on, as Skipper Ed told me to!" he moaned. "I'm always doing something! And there's Jimmy in the-- in the fix too! And it was all my fault!"

And then he remembered the evening devotions that Abel and Mrs. Abel were doubtless then holding in the cabin. He could see Abel taking the old worn Eskimo Bible and hymnal from the shelf, and Abel reading and the two good folks

singing a hymn, and then kneeling in praise and thanks to God for his mercies. And joining them in spirit he sang the Eskimo version of "Nearer My God to Thee," and then he knelt and prayed, and felt the better for it.

For a long while he lay, after his devotions were ended, recalling the kindness of his beloved foster parents. But at last he, too, like Jimmy, fell asleep to the tune of the booming ice and howling wind, and, exhausted with his day's work, he slept long and heavily.

When Bobby awoke at last he perceived that it was twilight in his snow cavern, and, listening for the wind, discovered to his satisfaction that it had ceased to blow.

"Now I'll find Jimmy," said he, seizing his snow knife, "and see how he spent the night in the storm."

He removed the snow block from the entrance and cut away the accumulated drift, and crawling out at once looked about him with astonished eyes. On one side very near where he had been sleeping waves were breaking upon the ice, and far away beyond the waters lay the bleak and naked headland of Cape Harrigan. In the east the sun was just rising, and the snow of the ice pack sparkled and glittered with wondrous beauty.

But Bobby saw only the open water, and the distant land, and nowhere Jimmy or the dogs. A sickening dread came into his heart. The water had eaten away the ice as he slept! That was the side upon which Jimmy must have been! Jimmy was gone! He had no doubt Jimmy's body was now floating somewhere in that stretch of black water!

Then he ran out over the ice and among the hummocks, shouting: "Jimmy! Jimmy! Answer me, Jimmy, and tell me you're alive! Oh, Jimmy! Tell me you're alive!"

But no Jimmy answered, and, overcome with grief, Bobby sat down upon the snow and threw his arms over his knees, and, pillowing his head in the crook of his elbow, wept.

"It's all my fault! It's all my fault!" he moaned. "I the same as killed him! I led him into it! Oh, if I hadn't gone back for the whip! Oh, if I'd only hurried when Skipper Ed told me to!"

But Bobby was young and healthy and active, and had an appetite, and the air was excessively cold. The appetite began to call for food and drink, and the cold drove him to exercise. And so, rising at last and drying his eyes, he very wisely resolved:

"There's no good to come from crying or mourning about Jimmy, I suppose, or what's past. I've got to do something for myself now. There's a chance the ice may drive back with a shift of wind, and I've got to try to keep alive as long as I can."

He had nothing to eat, no cup into which to melt ice for water, and no lamp or seal oil with which to make a fire over which to melt the ice had he possessed a cup, but he set out at a rapid pace to explore the ice field, clinging as he walked to his snow knife, the only weapon he possessed, for his rifle had been left upon the *komatik*, and in a little while he discovered that the pack was not so large as he had supposed it to be, for the heavy seas of the night before had eaten away its edges. It had broken away, indeed, to a point far within the boundaries of their old *igloo* and the place where they had hunted.

"The first little blow will break the whole floe up," he said dejectedly. "Anyhow I suppose it won't matter, for I'll soon starve to death without a gun."

But out to the southward lay a great field of ice, and it seemed not so far away. An hour's observation assured Bobby that his small floe was traveling much more rapidly than this larger field, and was gradually approaching it. Late in the afternoon he caught the glint of miniature bergs, as the sunlight touched them, rising above the great floe ahead, and as he watched them a burst of understanding came upon him.

"It's the great North pack!" he exclaimed. "It's the Arctic pack! If I can get on that I'll be safe from drowning, anyhow, for a few days! It's stronger than this, and it'll stand some good blows."

To quench his thirst he clipped particles of ice with his snow knife and sucked them, while he ran up and down to keep warm. And, as night approached, he built a new night shelter from snow blocks, near the center of his floe, and, very hungry and despondent, crawled into it to lie long and think of Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel, and the lost happiness in the cabin which was his home; and of Skipper Ed and Jimmy, and of the old days that were now gone forever, when he and Jimmy had played together with never a thought of the terrible fate that awaited them; and of the adventure on the cliff, and the hundred other scrapes into which they had got and from which they had somehow always escaped unharmed; and even of the lonely grave on Itigailit Island, and the cairn of stones he had built upon it.

"A tragedy brought me into the country," he said to himself, "and a tragedy has taken me out of it, and the end of my

life will be a tragedy."

And then, after long thought:

"Skipper Ed says our destiny is God's will. But God always has a purpose in His will. I wonder if I've fulfilled my destiny, and what the purpose of it was. Maybe it was just to be a son to Father and Mother."

He mused upon this for a long time, and then his thoughts ran to Skipper Ed and Jimmy:

"I wonder what there is in Skipper Ed's life that he's never told us," he pondered. "He's always said he was a wandering sailorman, who stopped on the coast because he liked it. He never was a common sailor, I'm sure. I never thought of that before! Sailors aren't educated, and he is! And whenever Jimmy or I asked him to tell about his own life before he came here he always put us off with something else."

And then he fell asleep to dream that he and Skipper Ed were walking under strange trees, with flowers, the like of which he had never seen, blooming all about them and making the air sweet with their perfume.

CHAPTER XXVII

A STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

It was fortunate that Bobby had selected the center of the floe for his night shelter, for when he awoke in the morning and crawled out of his snow cavern he discovered that the unstable shore ice of which the floe was composed had been gradually breaking up during the night into separate pans, and that he was now upon a comparatively small floe, little more indeed than a large pan, which had originally been the center of the great floe upon which he went adrift.

Surrounding him was a mass of loose pans, rising and falling on the swell, and grinding and crunching against one another with a voice of ominous warning. With quick appreciation he was aware that his position was now indeed a perilous one, for it was obvious that his small remnant of floe was rapidly going to pieces.

But another and more sinister danger threatened him, should he escape drowning. Bobby was ravenously hungry. He had eaten nothing since the hasty luncheon of sea biscuit and pork on the night he and Jimmy parted. He had been terribly hungry the day before, but now he was ravenous and he felt gaunt and weak. As though to tantalize him, numerous seals lay sunning themselves upon the ice pans, for it was now past sunrise, but his only weapon was his snow knife, and he was well aware that the seals would slip into the water and beyond his reach before he could approach and despatch them.

Looking away over the mass of moving ice he discovered to his delight that the loose pans surrounding the little floe upon which he stood reached out in a continuous field to the great Arctic pack which he had watched so anxiously the previous day. And, what was particularly to his satisfaction, the pans were so closely massed together that by jumping from pan to pan he was quite certain he could make the passage safely, and for a time at least be secure from the threatening sea.

Running over loose ice pans in this manner was not wholly new to Bobby. Every hunter in the Eskimo country learns to do it, and Bobby had often practiced it in Abel's Bay when the water was calm and the ice pans to a great extent stationary. But he had never attempted it on the open sea where the pans were never free from motion. It was, therefore, though not an unusual feat for the experienced seal hunter, a hazardous undertaking.

The situation, however, demanded prompt action. Should wind arise the ice pans would quickly be scattered, and all possibility of retreat to the big ice field cut off.

Bobby, after his manner, not only decided quickly what to do, but acted immediately upon his decision. The distance to be traversed was probably not much above a mile, and, selecting a course where the pans appeared closely in contact with one another, he seized his snow knife, which he had no doubt he would still find useful in preparing shelters, and leaping from pan to pan set out without hesitation upon his uncertain journey.

It was a feat that required a steady nerve, a quick eye, and alert action, for the ice was constantly rising and falling upon the swell. Now and again there were gaps of several yards, where the ice had been ground into pieces so small that none would have borne his weight. He ran rapidly over these gaps, touching the ice as lightly as possible and not remaining upon any piece long enough to permit it to sink.

And so it came about that presently with a vast sense of relief Bobby clambered from the last unstable ice pan to the big ice pack, and for a time, at least, felt that he had escaped the sea.

For a moment he stood and looked back over the hazardous path that he had traversed. Then climbing upon a high hummock, which attained the proportions of a small berg, he scanned his surroundings.

To the northward lay the loose ice; to the eastward and southward as far as he could see stretched the unbroken ice of the great field; to the westward and two miles distant was the black water of the open sea, dotted here and there by vagrant pans of ice which glistened white in the bright sunlight as they rose and fell upon the tide.

Suddenly his attention was attracted to something which made him stare in astonishment and wonder. Near the water's edge, and extending back from the water for a considerable distance, there appeared innumerable dark objects, some lying quiet upon the ice, others moving slowly about.

"Seals!" exclaimed Bobby. "Seals! Hundreds--thousands of them! I can get one now before they take to the water! They're too far back to get to the water before I can get at them!"

And scrambling down from the hummock he set out as fast as he could go, highly excited at the prospect of food that

had so suddenly come to him.

"Oh, if I can get one!" he said as he ran, "if I can only get one! God help me to get one!"

With this prayer on his lips, and keen anxiety in his breast, he neared the seals. Then, all of his hunter's instincts alert, his advance became slow and cautious. Crouching among hummocks, he watched his prey, and studied the intervening ice, and its possible sheltering hummocks. Carefully he stalked, now standing still as a statue, now darting forward, and at last proceeding on all fours until finally he was quite certain that those farthest from the water could not escape him. Then springing to his feet he ran at them.

Bobby had until now kept his nerves under control, but with the attack a wild desperation took possession of him, and looking neither to one side nor the other he slaughtered the seals, one after another, as he overtook them, until, the first frenzy of success past, he realized that he had already killed more than he could probably use. Then he stopped, trembling with excitement, and looked about him. Five victims of the two species known to him as harp and jar seals had fallen under his knife.

Now he could eat. This thought brought relaxation from the great physical strain and mental anxiety that had spurred him to activity and keyed his nerves to a high pitch since leaving his snow cavern early in the morning, and with the relaxation he was overcome by emotion. Tears sprang to his eyes, and suddenly he felt very weak.

"The Lord surely has been taking care of me. Maybe it is my destiny to live, after all, and if I get out of this I'll never forget 'twas the Lord took me through."

Bobby's undivided attention until this time had been centered upon the seals which he had attacked, which were among those farthest from the open water. Now as he dried his eyes and, still trembling from effort and excitement, drew his sheath knife to dress the animals, he looked about him, and what he saw brought forth an exclamation:

"Puppies! That's what all the seals are here for!"

And, sure enough, lying about on the ice were a great number of little white balls, so small and white they had escaped his notice at a distance, and each white ball was a new-born seal. That, then, was why old seals were so numerous and so fearless.

But Bobby had no time to think about this. Hunger was crying to be satisfied, and now that food was at hand he was hungrier than ever. As quickly as he could he dressed one of the seals, and as he had no means of cooking the meat made a satisfactory meal upon the raw flesh and blubber, after the manner of Eskimos.

This done he looked about him for a suitable place to build a shelter, and finding a good drift not far away set about his building with greater care than on the night before, and before noon time had a small but well-fashioned *igloo* erected with a tunnel leading to the entrance that he might better be protected from the wind.

He now skinned and dressed the remaining seals, and spreading the skins for a bed on his *igloo* floor felt himself very comfortably situated under the circumstances.

"Now," said he, surveying his work, "if I only had a lamp and a kettle I could get on all right till the ice drives ashore or I'm picked up or the pack goes to pieces and I won't need to get along any more."

But this last thought he quickly put from him with the exclamation: "That's silly! I won't worry now till I have to. I'll just do my best for myself, and if the Lord wants me to live He'll show me how to save myself, or He'll save me."

Then Bobby sat down to think. The pieces of ice which he melted in his mouth in lieu of water he was convinced had a weakening effect upon him, and his mouth was becoming tender and sore from sucking them, and he preferred his meat cooked. He had plenty of matches in his pocket, for the man who lives always in the wilderness is never without a good supply, but since he had gone adrift they had been of no use to him, without means or method of making a fire.

"I've got it!" said he at last, springing up. "I'm sure it will work!"

Opening the jackknife he cut from one of the skins a large circular piece, and at regular intervals near the edge of this made small slits. Then from the edge of a skin he cut a long, narrow thong, and proceeded to thread it through the slits. This done he tightened the thong, puckering the edge of the circular piece of skin until it assumed the form of a shallow bowl perhaps fifteen inches wide. This he set into a snow block in order that it might set firm and retain its shape. This was to be his Eskimo lamp.

Now he tore a strip from his shirt, folded it to proper size, filled his lamp with oil from the blubber, drove the point of his snow knife into the side of his *igloo* in such manner that the side rested in a flat position on the top of the bowl, and

saturating the cloth with the oil he arranged it upon the knife, taking care that it did not touch either side of the bowl. This he lighted, and to his great delight found that his lamp was a success.

It was easy to grill small pieces of seal meat over this, but the problem of melting ice for water was a puzzling one. Finally this, too, was solved, by improvising another bowl from sealskin and suspending over it a piece of ice. This bowl he held as near as possible to the flame without putting it in danger of scorching the skin. The ice, suspended by a thong directly above the bowl and a little on one side of the flame, began at once to drip water into the bowl. The water resulting was very oily and unclean, but Bobby in his position had neither a discriminating taste nor a discriminating appetite.

"Well," said Bobby that evening when he had settled himself comfortably after a good meal of grilled meat, "this isn't as comfortable as home, but it's away ahead of raw meat and ice, and no *igloo* at all. And it's safe for a while, anyhow."

And so our young adventurer took up his lonely life upon the shifting ice, and day after day he watched the baby seals grow, and wondered at it, for each morning they were visibly larger than they had been the previous night. And he wondered, too, that each mother should know her own little one, by merely sniffing about, for the babies, or "white coats" as he called them, were as like as peas.

Thus he had lived ten lonely days, and sometimes he believed God had forgotten him, when one morning a black streak appeared in the sky and then another and another, and something wonderful happened, for God had not forgotten Bobby and was guiding his destiny.



CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SHIPS THAT CAME DOWN TO THE ICE

Closer and closer came the three black streaks, and presently the masts, then the funnels, and finally the hulls of three ships appeared, first one, then another, then the third. Bobby watched them with awe and wonder. He even forgot for a time that a way was opening for his escape.

The three ships were streaming directly toward the ice, and in the course of an hour after he had first sighted them the advance ship came to, half a mile or so from the floe, and not above a mile to the southward of him. Boats were lowered before the steamer had fully stopped, and immediately men swarmed over her sides and into them, and in a moment the boats put off for the ice, the men climbed out upon it and presently were running everywhere, beating to the right and to the left with clubs.

Then the boats returned to the ship to fetch more men, and still more, until there were more men upon the ice than Bobby had ever seen before, and all beating about them with their clubs. So it was with the other ships as they came up; they, too, sent scores upon scores of men to the ice in boats.

Bobby was astonished beyond measure at what he saw, and at first he was afraid, and watched from a distance. But at last he recalled that he had heard of this thing before. These were the seal hunters from Newfoundland, and with bats they were slaying the young white-coat seals, and such of the old seals, also, as did not slip away from them into the water.

Finally some of the sealers from the first ship were making their way up over the ice in the direction of Bobby's *igloo*, and presently he knew they would be upon the very seals that he had watched with so much interest growing from day to day. Among these were two men with guns, instead of clubs, and these two devoted their attention to the old seals, which now and again they shot.

Overcome with awe and wonder, and timid in the presence of so many strangers, Bobby kept himself from view while he watched, though he knew that presently he would be called upon to present himself, in order that he might escape from the floe, for in all probability no other opportunity would come to him.

So, uncertain, expectant, and trembling with excitement, he remained concealed behind an ice hummock until the seal hunters in advance had nearly reached him, and further concealment was impossible. Then he stepped boldly out.

The effect of Bobby's appearance was instantaneous and wonderful. A man in the advance, looking up, saw the strangely clad figure apparently rise out of the ice itself. The man turned about and wildly broke for the boats. Then another and another took one terrified glance at the supposed apparition, and tarrying not, turned about to compete with the first in a mad race for the boats. Shouts of "Ghost! Ghost!" filled the air, and then the stampede and panic became general, though after the manner of panic-stricken crowds, perhaps none but the first two or three had the slightest idea why or from what they were running.

The two men with guns were still some little distance from Bobby when the stampede began. One of these men was perhaps twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, the other many years his senior. They were dressed after the manner of sportsmen, and were evidently not members of the sealing crew. They did not join in the stampede as the men rushed past them in wild flight and confusion, but in utter astonishment looked for its cause in the direction from which the men had come, and discovered nothing more terrifying than Bobby, standing alone and no less astonished at what had occurred than themselves, and more than half inclined to run as fast in the opposite direction as the sealers had run toward their boats.

"Uncle, there's an Eskimo!" exclaimed the younger of the two, observing Bobby's seal-skin garments, but at that distance unable to note that his features were wholly unlike those of an Eskimo.

"Sure enough!" said the older man. "That explains it! The men weren't expecting to see any one, and they've taken him for a ghost! Come on, Edward. Let us interview him."

"How could an Eskimo get out here on the floe?" asked Edward, as they set out toward Bobby. "We're a long way from land."

"I don't know," said his companion. "We'll soon learn. But Eskimo hunters go a long way after seals, and he's probably on a hunting expedition."

"Why, he hasn't the features of an Eskimo, though he's dressed like one; and he's a handsome looking chap!" said Edward, in an undertone, as they drew near Bobby, who had overcome his inclination to run and had not moved.

"Good-morning!" greeted the older man a moment later, when they were within speaking distance.

"Good-morning, sir," said Bobby, timidly.

"We thought you were an Eskimo, and" laughing, "the men apparently thought you were a ghost. You gave them a fine fright."

"I didn't mean to frighten them," said Bobby apologetically. "I only wanted them to take me off the ice."



I was hunting," explained Bobby. "The ice broke loose and cut Jimmy and me off from Skipper Ed

"Take you off the ice? Why, how did you get on it? We thought perhaps you were hunting."

"I was hunting," explained Bobby, "but now I'm adrift. I'm Bobby Zachariah, from Abel's Bay. The ice broke loose and cut Jimmy and me off from Skipper Ed, and Jimmy's drowned--"

Tears came into Bobby's eyes and he choked at the recollection.

"I'm Frederick Winslow," said the man kindly and sympathetically, taking Bobby's hand, "and this is my nephew Edward Norman. We do not know where Abel's Bay is, nor who Skipper Ed and Jimmy are, but we're glad we found

you, and you're to go with us to the ship, and then you can tell us about it, and there'll be a way to send you home to Abel's Bay."

"Edward Norman!" exclaimed Bobby. "Why, that's Skipper Ed's name!"

"Who is Skipper Ed?" inquired Mr. Winslow. "But never mind. Don't explain now. You must be nearly starved if you've been adrift long. Come with us."

"I've been over a week--nearly two weeks, I think," said Bobby, "but I'm not hungry. I've had plenty of seals. Let me get my snow knife, sir. It's in the *igloo*."

Then they went with Bobby and marveled at his *igloo*, and his crude lamp, which they must have as a souvenir, and that Bobby had not perished. And praised him for a brave lad, as they led him off. And Bobby, who saw nothing wonderful or strange in his *igloo* or lamp, or anything he had done, said little, but followed timidly. And when the men he had frightened so badly learned that Bobby was a castaway and a very real person and not a ghost at all, they vied with one another in showering kindnesses upon him, for these men of the fleets, though a bit rough, and a bit superstitious at times, have big brave hearts, filled with sympathy for their kind.

And so it came about that Bobby, who had come to the Coast a drifting waif of the sea, was carried from it by the sea. And now he was to see the land of strange trees and flowers and green fields of which Skipper Ed had so often told when they sat in the big chairs before the fire on winter evenings. And many other wonderful things were in store for Bobby.



CHAPTER XXIX

IN STRANGE LANDS

Mr. Winslow and his nephew Edward Norman were sportsmen who, as many other sportsmen had done before them and have done since, had gone as passengers with the sealing fleet that they might see the big ice and secure for themselves trophies of the seal hunt of their own killing. And so it came about that they met Bobby, and took him under their care. Indeed, Mr. Winslow felt an unusual interest in the lad from the moment he met him, for Bobby had an open, frank countenance and a pleasing manner.

But they would not permit him to talk or tell them much of his story until they had him on shipboard, and Bobby had eaten and bathed and changed his ill-smelling skin clothing for a suit that Edward Norman pressed upon him. And though the clothes were a trifle large, and the trousers two or three inches longer than was necessary, they set Bobby off to good advantage and wrought a wonderful change in his appearance.

"You're to stay in the cabin as our guest," said Mr. Winslow when Bobby was dressed, and would have gone forward to the sailors' quarters. "I have arranged it with the Captain. I am very much interested in what you said about Skipper Ed. His name, you said, is Edward Norman. Who is he?"

"Skipper Ed's our nearest neighbor," Bobby explained simply.

"Do you call him 'Skipper' because he is a sea captain? Has he always lived on the Labrador coast? You see," added Mr. Winslow, "I'm greatly interested because his name is the same as my nephew's. It is a strange coincidence, and we should like to learn all about him."

"We've always called him 'Skipper,'" answered Bobby. "He was a sailor once, but that was long before I came. He's lived at Abel's Bay, I heard him say, over twenty years. He's told Jimmy and me a lot about Harvard College, and when he was a boy he lived in a place called Carrington--"

"What! Carrington?" exclaimed Mr. Winslow. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir," said Bobby. "He's often told Jimmy and me about his home there when he was a boy."

The two men looked at each other and they were plainly excited, and in an intensely expectant voice Mr. Winslow asked:

"Did he ever speak of his family?"

"Yes, sir--of his father and mother and brother and sister," said Bobby.

"Anything else?"

"Why, yes, sir; about the trees and flowers and garden and--"

"I mean about himself," interrupted Mr. Winslow. "Did he ever tell you about a bank, or why he left home?"

"No, sir," said Bobby. "I remember, though, a story he used to tell us about two boys whose father had a bank. One borrowed some money from the bank and lost it gambling, and because he had a wife and little child the other brother told their father that he did it, though he didn't know anything about it until after it was done. The brother that took the money tried to stop him. The father of the boys sent the one who said he took the money away, and he went and settled in a land like The Labrador, and never saw his old home or any of his people again."

The two men were leaning eagerly forward during this recital. When Bobby had finished they sat back and looked into each other's eyes, and after a moment Mr. Winslow spoke:

"There is no doubt, Edward, that Skipper Ed is your uncle--your father's brother who disappeared so long ago, when you were a baby."

"Yes," agreed Edward, "and we must go to him and take him home again."

"You--don't--mean--you're Skipper Ed's people?" stammered the astonished Bobby.

"Yes," said Mr. Winslow, "Edward's father and Skipper Ed were, I believe from what you have told us, brothers, and in that case Mrs. Winslow is Skipper Ed's sister. She was a little girl when he went away. We must look into the matter, and

we shall all be very glad if it proves to be true."

And then they talked for a long while, and drew from Bobby the story of their life at Abel's Bay--of how Skipper Ed had taught him and Jimmy, and the evenings spent in talking and studying in the easy chairs before the big box stove in Skipper Ed's cabin, and about Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel--so much, in fact, about their daily lives and hopes and disappointments that presently his two hearers felt that they had known Bobby and his friends all their life.

And Bobby told them the story of his own coming to the Coast, as he had heard it from Abel and Mrs. Abel many a time, of how he had been found drifting in a boat with a dead man, of the grave Abel had made on Itigailit Island for his dead companion, and the cairn he himself had built.

"We have the boat yet," said Bobby, "for it was a good boat. Father has always taken great care of it. He and Mother always say it's the boat God sent me in out of the mists from the far beyond, where storms are born."

"What a romantic life you've led!" said Edward. "Your very advent upon the Coast was romantic--and tragic. And the way we found you today is no less so."

"Have you no clue that would help you identify yourself? No clue as to where you came from? Was there nothing to identify the dead man?" asked Mr. Winslow.

"No," answered Bobby, "and I've never thought about it very much. Mother has the clothes I wore, wrapped in a bundle and stowed into a chest. I've often seen the bundle, but I never undid it or meddled with it for she prizes it so."

"It was probably a boat from a whaling or fishing ship that was wrecked," Mr. Winslow suggested. "Perhaps you were the captain's son. You should look into the bundle; it may help to identify you, and you may have relatives living, perhaps in Newfoundland, who would be glad to know of you."

For two weeks the *Fearless*, which was the ship upon which Mr. Winslow and his nephew were passengers, remained near the ice, her crew of nearly two hundred men engaged in killing seals and in loading them aboard, and then at last, with a cargo of nearly forty thousand carcasses, she set sail to the southward.

The days were lengthening rapidly now, and with every mile the atmosphere grew milder. The Labrador coast was still ice-bound, and it would be many weeks before the harbors were cleared and vessels could enter them, but Mr. Winslow promised Bobby that as early as conditions would permit they would sail northward to Abel's Bay, and perhaps charter a vessel for the journey. Indeed, he and Edward were nearly if not quite as anxious for this as Bobby.

It was during the first week in April that the *Fearless* steamed into St. John's harbor, and Bobby for the first time in his life saw a city, and great buildings, and railway trains, and horses--horses were his great mark of admiration--and very shy he was, for he had been transported to a world that was new to him.

And then, in a swirl of ever-growing wonders, they were away on a railway train, and for a night on a steamer, and again on a train, moving at a gait that made Bobby's head whirl, and at last budding trees were seen, and green fields--all the marvelous things of which Skipper Ed had so often told him.

At last they left the train one evening at Carrington, which, as everyone knows, is a suburb of Boston. Bobby was hurried with Mr. Winslow and Edward Norman into an automobile, which whirled away with them to a great old house, where they were greeted at the door by Mrs. Winslow, whom Bobby thought nice and motherly, and whom he loved at once; and by a white-haired old gentleman and old lady who Bobby learned were Edward's grandparents.

Bobby was made quite dizzy by much talking and by innumerable questions that he was called upon to answer, and when Mrs. Winslow and the white-haired old lady cried at the story of Skipper Ed, and the old gentleman repeated over and over again: "Is it possible! Is it possible! My poor Edward! My long lost boy!" he almost cried himself, though he could see nothing to cry about, really, except Jimmy's supposed death.

And then came wonderful days while Bobby watched the marvelous blossoming of the trees in the garden, and as they were transformed into masses of pink and white, and flower beds became spots of glowing color, he believed a miracle had been performed before his very eyes--as, indeed, one had. And there were times when he believed he must be dreaming, and not living in the world at all, and then he would pinch himself to make certain he was really alive and awake, and that he had not perished on the ice after all and awakened in Paradise.

But in his room of nights when the lights were out and he was alone and all was still, he had many sleepless and homesick hours. Then it was he longed for the old times again in the cozy cabins, and for Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel, and Skipper Ed and Jimmy, and felt that he would give all the world to have them back.

And so the weeks passed until the lengthening days of June were well advanced, and Mr. Winslow announced that he

had chartered a small auxiliary schooner and that she was ready for the northern voyage, and then for two nights before their departure for St. John's, where the schooner was in waiting, Bobby could scarcely sleep at all, so eager was he to return home to Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel, that they might know he still lived, for he often thought of them there in the cabin, very lonely without him.

One day late in June Mr. and Mrs. Winslow, with Edward Norman and Bobby, went down to Boston, where they boarded their steamer, and immediately the lines were thrown off and the steamer had turned her prow seaward, Bobby nearly shouted with joy, and every throb of the steamer's engine, and every turn of the propeller, brought fresh delight to his heart, for they were beating away the miles that separated him from home.

In Halifax there was a day's vexatious delay while they awaited the St. John's steamer, but at last it came, and at last they were on board the schooner *Gull* in St. John's harbor, and at last the *Gull* was plowing northward past stately icebergs glimmering in the sunshine, and vagrant pans of ice rising and falling on the swell, and home was drawing near.



CHAPTER XXX

THE MYSTERY CLEARED

How slowly those last days dragged away! Bobby could scarcely restrain his impatience. But one day in the middle of July Itigailit Island was sighted, and that evening the *Gull* anchored in its lee. Abel Zachariah had not come out to his fishing yet, and the island was bare and deserted. Bobby's emotion nearly got the better of him when he remembered that stormy winter's day when he had last been here, with Skipper Ed and Jimmy.

They launched a motor boat with which they had provided themselves, and went ashore for a half hour, while Bobby pointed out Abel's landing place, and the place where they always pitched their tent, and where the snow *igloo* had stood. The seals were gone, so Bobby knew Skipper Ed and Abel had hauled them home before the ice broke up.

And then Bobby took his friends to see the grave, and the cairn he had built over it, and for a little they stood, in silence and in pity for the nameless man who lay there.

Day comes early in this latitude at this season, and at two o'clock, in the morning twilight, anchor was weighed, sails hoisted before a good fair breeze, and the *Gull* was plowing her way into Abel's Bay, with Bobby as pilot, for he knew its waters as you and I know our city streets. And what old friends the distant mountains and headlands seemed, as he pointed them out to his companions!

It was mid-afternoon when the *Gull* at last approached the head of Abel's Bay, and in the distance the two cabins gradually came into view. Skipper Ed's cabin was the nearer, and their course was laid toward it, and presently two figures were discerned at the boat landing.

"That's the Skipper on the left!" exclaimed Bobby. "I know him because he's so tall! The other must be Father, but he doesn't look like Father, either!"

And then, standing intently gazing at the men, he suddenly shouted:

"It's Jimmy! Oh, it's Jimmy! He was saved! He was saved! He was saved! Oh, thank God, he was saved!"

And in spite of himself tears of joy sprang to Bobby's eyes, and he leaned over the rail and shouted and shouted, and waved his hat, and at last Skipper Ed and Jimmy heard, and they knew his voice, and they too shouted and waved their hats, in no less excitement and joy than Bobby.

Presently the *Gull's* sails were run down, her chains rattled, and she was at anchor. As quickly as might be the launch, which was in tow, was drawn alongside, and Bobby, with Mr. and Mrs. Winslow and Edward Norman, were chugging toward the landing, where the two eager men stood to greet them.

It would be quite impossible to describe the joy of the greeting, and the explanations and the reunion that followed. As quickly as he could do so Bobby, with Jimmy to accompany him, ran away to make glad the hearts of Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel, who greeted him as he knew they would, and who believed they had never been so happy in their life. And embracing Bobby, Mrs. Abel cried over him, and they both declared that God was better to them than they deserved.

Skipper Ed was indeed the long lost Edward Norman. His brother, young Edward's father, had confessed shortly after Edward's disappearance all that had taken place. He was forgiven and made restitution, and had never again gambled. Several years later he and his wife were lost at sea, with Mr. and Mrs. Winslow's little son.

It had happened many years before. Robert Norman, Skipper Ed's brother, was invited, with his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Winslow, to cruise in a friend's yacht. Mrs. Winslow falling ill was unable to go, and therefore Mr. Winslow also declined the invitation. Robert and his wife urged, however, that the Winslows' little son, who was a namesake of Robert and of whom they were exceedingly fond, be permitted to accompany them. The child had been in poor health, and upon the recommendation of their physician consent was finally given. Edward, who was attending school at the time, was not of the party.

The yacht had voyaged northward, stopping for several days at various ports from which letters were received. Finally a letter from Sydney, Nova Scotia, stated that the party had decided upon a still more northerly cruise, and for a little while might not be in touch with the mails. That was the last that was ever heard of the yacht or any one on board.

And so for a full three hours they talked of home, and sorrowed over long-ago partings and the dead, and rejoiced over

their reunion and the living, until Skipper Ed suggested that they all pay their respects to Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel, and complained that he had hardly seen Bobby at all, and that they had not become properly acquainted with his partner, who had run off to Abel's with Bobby, which was quite to be expected under the circumstances, for the two boys were like brothers.

Because it was easier for Mrs. Winslow than the rough and wet path, they chugged over in the motor boat, and were met at the landing by Abel and Mrs. Abel, who saw them coming and ran down to meet them, with much good-natured laughter, and ushered them into the cabin where, after the hospitable fashion of the country, they were called upon to drink tea.

"Bobby," suggested Mr. Winslow, when they had risen from the table, "I'm immensely interested in what you told me about yourself. May we not see the package of which you spoke? It might throw some light upon your parentage."

And when Bobby told Mrs. Abel that the visitors had requested to see the little clothes he wore when they found him, she and Abel were greatly pleased, for they were proud of Bobby, and without delay she opened the chest in which she kept her treasures and brought forth a neatly wrapped package, which she delivered to Mr. Winslow.

For many years the package had not been opened. It was covered with cloth, and tied with a buckskin thong. Mr. Winslow placed it on the table, and as he undid it the others grouped themselves around him.

On the top of the package lay the little dress. He lifted it and shook it out and held it up for inspection, and then a strange thing happened. Mrs. Winslow, mildly curious, had been standing by Skipper Ed. Her face suddenly went white, she reached for the garment, examined it for a moment, and then exclaimed:

"Oh, my little Bobby! Oh, my little boy! That was his dress! It was his!"

There was excitement at once. Mrs. Winslow became so dizzy and faint that Skipper Ed sat her in a chair. Mr. Winslow's hand trembled as he examined the other articles of clothing. Then he opened the wallet in which Mrs. Abel had placed Bobby's little ring, for he had long since outgrown it.

"The ring Robert gave him on his third birthday, just before they left us!" said Mrs. Winslow, bursting into tears. "His name is in it--'Bobby.' Let me see it."

She was right. The identification was perfect. But none seemed yet to remember that the tall, handsome lad standing with them was the same Bobby. The parents were lost in the sorrowful yesterday and forgetful of the happy today, until Skipper Ed asked:

"What was the name of the yacht in which they were lost?"

"The *Wanderer*," said Mr. Winslow.

"The boat Bobby was found in was a yacht's boat, and it bore the name *Wanderer*. There's no doubt, I think, of the identification. Bobby, you scamp, why aren't you kissing your mother? Quick, now. And there's your own father, too; and don't forget I'm your old uncle."

Suddenly this brought the father and mother to a realization that this Bobby was their Bobby--their lost child--the boy they had so long mourned as dead--and they drew him to them and the mother wept over him, and fondled him and caressed him, and for a time there was so much confusion, with every one talking and nobody listening, that they quite forgot the notebook. But at last, when some order had been restored, Mr. Winslow opened it, and read. It contained some odds and ends of items, with a closing entry which cleared up much of the mystery of the *Wanderer*:

"At sea, in an open boat," it was dated.

"Two weeks ago the yacht *Wanderer*, when somewhere S.W. from the Greenland coast, collided in a dense fog with an iceberg. Her bow was stove in and she began to sink at once. The boats were immediately lowered and my wife and myself with our little nephew, Robert Winslow, and a sailor named Magee, succeeded in getting away in one of them, while the remainder of our party and crew were divided among three other boats. But in the dense fog we somehow became separated from them.

"Magee as he entered the boat seized my shotgun and a pouch of loaded shells, the only things within reach, and we saved nothing else. Fortunately the boats had been used on shore expeditions and ours was provisioned with a bag of sea biscuits and a quantity of water, and contained some blankets.

"On the day following the wreck my wife was taken ill, developing, I believe, pneumonia. On the fifth day she died. I would have kept her remains with us in the boat, but Magee insisted that she be buried at sea, claiming that the

presence of her body would have a constantly depressing effect upon us. I offered a prayer and said an improvised burial service over her, we wrapped her in a blanket, and weighting her body with an anchor buried her. My heart went into the sea with her, and but for my young son at home and my little nephew, I would have wished to follow her.

"Yesterday Magee went mad. He began to talk wildly, and to brandish the loaded gun. I feared he would do injury with it, and endeavored to take it from him. In some manner it was discharged, and I was injured, I am well aware, fatally. I lost consciousness, and when I awoke today Magee was gone. In his frenzy he must have plunged overboard.

"My strength is nearly gone, and it is hard to hold a pencil. Should our boat by chance be discovered, let the finder communicate with Mr. Henry Winslow, Carrington, Massachusetts, and care for the little boy, who is his son. I commend the child to God's care, and as I die I pray God that my son Edward may grow to noble and Christian manhood--that he may possess as true and noble and Christian a character as my long-lost brother for whom he was named, the brother who sacrificed so much for me and him, and whom I wronged so deeply. God has forgiven me and I die in peace.

"Robert Norman."

It was difficult to read the final lines, for the pencil had wavered sadly, and it was evident that the entry had been finished with intense effort.

When Mr. Winslow at last laid aside the yellow old notebook there were no dry eyes, and for a little while all were silent. Then Edward took Skipper Ed's hand in a strong grasp.

"With God's help," said he, "I will live as my father wished, and always endeavor to be worthy his ideal."

But our story must end. I might relate how Bobby and Jimmy went to college, for Skipper Ed would not part from his partner. How the three always spent their summers with Abel Zachariah and Mrs. Abel, and provided for their comfort until in the fullness of years they went to their final rest; and how Edward erected a stone on Itigailit Island to his father's memory. But already our story has grown too long.

We may be sure in the busy years that followed, Bobby and Jimmy never forgot the cabins at Abel's Bay, nor the cozy hours in the easy chairs before the big box stove. Nor Skipper Ed's teaching: "Destiny is God's will."

THE END

[Footnote A: "*Oksunae*" is the Eskimo greeting when one is addressed, and, literally translated, means "You be strong." "*Oksutingai*" is addressed to two--"You two be strong." "*Okiusee*" to more than two--"You all be strong.]

[Footnote B: A few years ago Job Edmunds, a native acquaintance of the author, was saved from a pack of wolves in just this manner by his dogs.]

[Footnote C: Not many years ago a pack of upwards of thirty of these great northern wolves appeared a few miles to the southward of this point. One of my friends was driven to the shelter of his cabin to escape] them--Author.

[Footnote D: An Eskimo garment of seal skin, which is drawn on over the head like a shirt, and has a hood to protect the head. When this garment is made of caribou skin it is called a *kulutuk*, and when made of cloth, an *adikey*.]

[Footnote E: Freezing.]

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