

**ROBERT
MICHAEL
BALLANTYNE**

THE RED ERIC

Robert Michael Ballantyne

The Red Eric

«Public Domain»

Ballantyne R.

The Red Eric / R. Ballantyne — «Public Domain»,

© Ballantyne R.
© Public Domain

Содержание

Chapter One.	5
Chapter Two.	7
Chapter Three.	11
Chapter Four.	19
Chapter Five.	22
Chapter Six.	28
Chapter Seven.	34
Chapter Eight.	39
Chapter Nine.	42
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	43

R. M. Ballantyne

The Red Eric

Chapter One.

The Tale Begins with the Engaging of a “Tail”—and the Captain Delivers his Opinions on Various Subjects

Captain Dunning stood with his back to the fireplace in the back-parlour of a temperance coffee-house in a certain town on the eastern seaboard of America.

The name of that town is unimportant, and, for reasons with which the reader has nothing to do, we do not mean to disclose it.

Captain Dunning, besides being the owner and commander of a South Sea whale-ship, was the owner of a large burly body, a pair of broad shoulders, a pair of immense red whiskers that met under his chin, a short, red little nose, a large firm mouth, and a pair of light-blue eyes, which, according to their owner’s mood, could flash like those of a tiger or twinkle sweetly like the eyes of a laughing child. But his eyes seldom flashed; they more frequently twinkled, for the captain was the very soul of kindness and good-humour. Yet he was abrupt and sharp in his manner, so that superficial observers sometimes said he was hasty.

Captain Dunning was, so to speak, a sample of three primary colours—red, blue, and yellow—a walking fragment, as it were, of the rainbow. His hair and face, especially the nose, were red; his eyes, coat, and pantaloons were blue, and his waistcoat was yellow.

At the time we introduce him to the reader he was standing, as we have said, with his back to the fireplace, although there was no fire, the weather being mild, and with his hands in his breeches pockets. Having worked with the said hands for many long years before the mast, until he had at last worked himself *behind* the mast, in other words, on to the quarterdeck and into possession of his own ship, the worthy captain conceived that he had earned the right to give his hands a long rest; accordingly he stowed them away in his pockets and kept them there at all times, save when necessity compelled him to draw them forth.

“Very odd,” remarked Captain Dunning, looking at his black straw hat which lay on the table before him, as if the remark were addressed to it—“very odd if, having swallowed the cow, I should now be compelled to worry at the tail.”

As the black straw hat made no reply, the captain looked up at the ceiling, but not meeting with any response from that quarter, he looked out at the window and encountered the gaze of a seaman flattening his nose on a pane of glass, and looking in.

The captain smiled. “Ah! here’s a tail at last,” he said, as the seaman disappeared, and in another moment reappeared at the door with his hat in his hand.

It may be necessary, perhaps, to explain that Captain Dunning had just succeeded in engaging a first-rate crew for his next whaling voyage (which was the “cow” he professed to have swallowed), with the exception of a cook (which was the “tail,” at which he feared he might be compelled to worry).

“You’re a cook, are you?” he asked, as the man entered and nodded.

“Yes, sir,” answered the “tail,” pulling his forelock.

“And an uncommonly ill-favoured rascally-looking cook you are,” thought the captain; but he did not say so, for he was not utterly regardless of men’s feelings. He merely said, “Ah!” and then followed it up with the abrupt question—

“Do you drink?”

“Yes, sir, and smoke too,” replied the “tail,” in some surprise.

“Very good; then you can go,” said the captain, shortly.

“Eh!” exclaimed the man:

“You can go,” repeated the captain. “You won’t suit. My ship is a temperance ship, and all the hands are teetotalers. I have found from experience that men work better, and speak better, and in every way act better, on tea and coffee than on spirits. I don’t object to their smoking; but I don’t allow drinkin’ aboard my ship; so you won’t do, my man. Good-morning.”

The “tail” gazed at the captain in mute amazement.

“Ah! you may look,” observed the captain, replying to the gaze; “but you may also mark my words, if you will. I’ve not sailed the ocean for thirty years for nothing. I’ve seen men in hot seas and in cold—on grog, and on tea—and *I* know that coffee and tea carry men through the hardest work better than grog. I also know that there’s a set o’ men in this world who look upon teetotalers as very soft chaps—old wives, in fact. Very good,” (here the captain waxed emphatic, and struck his fist on the table.) “Now look here, young man, *I’m* an old wife, and my ship’s manned by similar old ladies; so you won’t suit.”

To this the seaman made no reply, but feeling doubtless, as he regarded the masculine specimen before him, that he would be quite out of his element among such a crew of females, he thrust a quid of tobacco into his cheek, put on his hat, turned on his heel and left the room, shutting the door after him with a bang.

He had scarcely left when a tap at the door announced a second visitor.

“Hum! Another ‘tail,’ I suppose. Come in.”

If the new-comer *was* a “tail,” he was decidedly a long one, being six feet three in his stockings at the very least.

“You wants a cook, I b’lieve?” said the man, pulling off his hat.

“I do. Are you one?”

“Yes, I jist guess I am. Bin a cook for fifteen year.”

“Been to sea as a cook?” inquired the captain.

“I jist have. Once to the South Seas, twice to the North, an’ once round the world. Cook all the time. I’ve roasted, and stewed, and grilled, and fried, and biled, right round the ’arth, I have.”

Being apparently satisfied with the man’s account of himself, Captain Dunning put to him the question—“Do you drink?”

“Ay, like a fish; for I drinks nothin’ but water, I don’t. Bin born and raised in the State of Maine, d’ye see, an’ never tasted a drop all my life.”

“Very good,” said the captain, who plumed himself on being a clever physiognomist, and had already formed a good opinion of the man. “Do you ever swear?”

“Never, but when I can’t help it.”

“And when’s that?”

“When I’m fit to bu’st.”

“Then,” replied the captain, “you must learn to bu’st without swearin’, ’cause I don’t allow it aboard my ship.”

The man evidently regarded his questioner as a very extraordinary and eccentric individual; but he merely replied, “I’ll try;” and after a little further conversation an agreement was come to; the man was sent away with orders to repair on board immediately, as everything was in readiness to “up anchor and away next morning.”

Having thus satisfactorily and effectually disposed of the “tail,” Captain Dunning put on his hat very much on the back of his head, knit his brows, and pursed his lips firmly, as if he had still some important duty to perform; then, quitting the hotel, he traversed the streets of the town with rapid strides.

Chapter Two.

Important Personages are Introduced to the Reader—The Captain makes Insane Resolutions, Fights a Battle, and Conquers

In the centre of the town whose name we have declined to communicate, there stood a house—a small house—so small that it might have been more appropriately, perhaps, styled a cottage. This house had a yellow-painted face, with a green door in the middle, which might have been regarded as its nose, and a window on each side thereof, which might have been considered its eyes. Its nose was, as we have said, painted green, and its eyes had green Venetian eyelids, which were half shut at the moment Captain Dunning walked up to it as if it were calmly contemplating that seaman's general appearance.

There was a small garden in front of the house, surrounded on three sides by a low fence. Captain Dunning pushed open the little gate, walked up to the nose of the house, and hit it several severe blows with his knuckles. The result was that the nose opened, and a servant-girl appeared in the gap.

“Is your mistress at home?” inquired the captain.

“Guess she is—both of 'em!” replied the girl.

“Tell both of 'em I'm here, then,” said the captain, stepping into the little parlour without further ceremony; “and is my little girl in?”

“Yes, she's in.”

“Then send her here too, an' look alive, lass.” So saying, Captain Dunning sat down on the sofa, and began to beat the floor with his right foot somewhat impatiently.

In another second a merry little voice was heard in the passage, the door burst open, a fair-haired girl of about ten years of age sprang into the room, and immediately commenced to strangle her father in a series of violent embraces.

“Why, Ailie, my darling, one would think you had not seen me for fifty years at least,” said the captain, holding his daughter at arm's-length, in order the more satisfactorily to see her.

“It's a whole week, papa, since you last came to see me,” replied the little one, striving to get at her father's neck again, “and I'm sure it seems to me like a hundred years at least.”

As the child said this she threw her little arms round her father, and kissed his large, weather-beaten visage all over—eyes, mouth, nose, chin, whiskers, and, in fact, every attainable spot. She did it so vigorously, too, that an observer would have been justified in expecting that her soft, delicate cheeks would be lacerated by the rough contact; but they were not. The result was a heightening of the colour, nothing more. Having concluded this operation, she laid her cheek on the captain's and endeavoured to clasp her hands at the back of his neck, but this was no easy matter. The captain's neck was a remarkably thick one, and the garments about that region were voluminous; however, by dint of determination, she got the small fingers intertwined, and then gave him a squeeze that ought to have choked him, but it didn't: many a strong man had tried that in his day, and had failed signally.

“You'll stay a long time with me before you go away to sea again, won't you, dear papa?” asked the child earnestly, after she had given up the futile effort to strangle him.

“How like!” murmured the captain, as if to himself, and totally unmindful of the question, while he parted the fair curls and kissed Ailie's forehead.

“Like what, papa?”

“Like your mother—your beloved mother,” replied the captain, in a low, sad voice.

The child became instantly grave, and she looked up in her father's face with an expression of awe, while he dropped his eyes on the floor.

Poor Alice had never known a mother's love. Her mother died when she was a few weeks old, and she had been confided to the care of two maiden aunts—excellent ladies, both of them; good beyond expression; correct almost to a fault; but prim, starched, and extremely self-possessed and judicious, so much so that they were injudicious enough to repress some of the best impulses of their natures, under the impression that a certain amount of dignified formality was essential to good breeding and good morals in every relation of life.

Dear, good, starched Misses Dunning! if they had had their way, boys would have played cricket and football with polite urbanity, and girls would have kissed their playmates with gentle solemnity. They did their best to subdue little Alice, but that was impossible. The child *would* rush about the house at all unexpected and often inopportune seasons, like a furiously insane kitten and she *would* disarrange their collars too violently every evening when she bade them good-night.

Alice was intensely sympathetic. It was quite enough for her to see any one in tears, to cause her to open up the flood-gates of her eyes and weep—she knew not and she cared not why. She threw her arms round her father's neck again, and hugged him, while bright tears trickled like diamonds from her eyes. No diamonds are half so precious or so difficult to obtain as tears of genuine sympathy!

“How would you like to go with me to the whale-fishery?” inquired Captain Dunning, somewhat abruptly as he disengaged the child's arms and set her on his knee.

The tears stopped in an instant, as Alice leaped, with the happy facility of childhood, totally out of one idea and thoroughly into another.

“Oh, I should like it *so* much!”

“And how much is ‘so’ much, Ailie?” inquired the captain.

Ailie pursed her mouth, and looked at her father earnestly, while she seemed to struggle to give utterance to some fleeting idea.

“Think,” she said quickly, “think something good *as much as ever you can*. Have you thought?”

“Yes,” answered the captain, smiling.

“Then,” continued Ailie, “its twenty thousand million times as much as that, and a great deal more!”

The laugh with which Captain Dunning received this curious explanation of how much his little daughter wished to go with him to the whale-fishery, was interrupted by the entrance of his sisters, whose sense of propriety induced them to keep all visitors waiting at least a quarter of an hour before they appeared, lest they should be charged with unbecoming precipitancy.

“Here you are, lassies; how are ye?” cried the captain as he rose and kissed each lady on the cheek heartily.

The sisters did not remonstrate. They knew that their brother was past hope in this respect, and they loved him, so they suffered it meekly.

Having admitted that they were well—as well, at least, as could be expected, considering the cataract of “trials” that perpetually descended upon their devoted heads—they sat down as primly as if their visitor were a perfect stranger, and entered into a somewhat lengthened conversation as to the intended voyage, commencing, of course, with the weather.

“And now,” said the captain, rubbing the crown of his straw hat in a circular manner, as if it were a beaver, “I'm coming to the point.”

Both ladies exclaimed, “What point, George?” simultaneously, and regarded the captain with a look of anxious surprise.

“*The* point,” replied the captain, “about which I've come here to-day. It ain't a point o' the compass; nevertheless, I've been steerin' it in my mind's eye for a considerable time past. The fact is” (here the captain hesitated), “I—I've made up my mind to take my little Alice along with me this voyage.”

The Misses Dunning wore unusually tall caps, and their countenances were by nature uncommonly long, but the length to which they grew on hearing this announcement was something preternaturally awful.

“Take Ailie to sea!” exclaimed Miss Martha Dunning, in horror.

“To fish for whales!” added Miss Jane Dunning, in consternation.

“Brother, you’re mad!” they exclaimed together, after a breathless pause; “and you’ll do nothing of the kind,” they added firmly.

Now, the manner in which the Misses Dunning received this intelligence greatly relieved their eccentric brother. He had fully anticipated, and very much dreaded, that they would at once burst into tears, and being a tender-hearted man he knew that he could not resist that without a hard struggle. A flood of woman’s tears, he was wont to say, was the only sort of salt water storm he hadn’t the heart to face. But abrupt opposition was a species of challenge which the captain always accepted at once—off-hand. No human power could force him to any course of action.

In this latter quality Captain Dunning was neither eccentric nor singular.

“I’m sorry you don’t like my proposal, my dear sisters,” said he; “but I’m resolved.”

“You won’t!” said Martha.

“You shan’t!” cried Jane.

“I *will*!” replied the captain.

There was a pause here of considerable length, during which the captain observed that Martha’s nostrils began to twitch nervously. Jane, observing the fact, became similarly affected. To the captain’s practised eye these symptoms were as good as a barometer. He knew that the storm was coming, and took in all sail at once (mentally) to be ready for it.

It came! Martha and Jane Dunning were for once driven from the shelter of their wonted propriety—they burst simultaneously into tears, and buried their respective faces in their respective pocket-handkerchiefs, which were immaculately clean and had to be hastily unfolded for the purpose.

“Now, now, my dear girls,” cried the captain, starting up and patting their shoulders, while poor little Ailie clasped her hands, sat down on a footstool, looked up in their faces—or, rather, at the backs of the hands which covered their faces—and wept quietly.

“It’s very cruel, George—indeed it is,” sobbed Martha; “you know how we love her.”

“Very true,” remarked the obdurate captain; “but you *don’t* know how *I* love her, and how sad it makes me to see so little of her, and to think that she may be learning to forget me—or, at least,” added the captain, correcting himself as Ailie looked at him reproachfully through her tears—“at least to do without me. I can’t bear the thought. She’s all I have left to me, and—”

“Brother,” interrupted Martha, looking hastily up, “did you ever before hear of such a thing as taking a little girl on a voyage to the whale-fishing?”

“No, never,” replied the captain; “what has that got to do with it?”

Both ladies held up their hands and looked aghast. The idea of any man venturing to do what no one ever thought of doing before was so utterly subversive of all their ideas of propriety—such a desperate piece of profane originality—that they remained speechless.

“George,” said Martha, drying her eyes, and speaking in tones of deep solemnity, “did you ever read *Robinson Crusoe*?”

“Yes, I did, when I was a boy; an’ that wasn’t yesterday.”

“And did you,” continued the lady in the same sepulchral tone, “did you note how that man—that beacon, if I may use the expression, set up as a warning to deter all wilful boys and men from reckless, and wicked, and wandering, and obstreperous courses—did you note, I say, how that man, that beacon, was shipwrecked, and spent a dreary existence on an uninhabited and dreadful island, in company with a low, dissolute, black, unclothed companion called Friday?”

“Yes,” answered the captain, seeing that she paused for a reply.

“And all,” continued Martha, “in consequence of his resolutely and obstinately, and wilfully and wickedly going to sea?”

“Well, it couldn’t have happened if he hadn’t gone to sea, no doubt.”

“Then,” argued Martha, “will you, can you, George, contemplate the possibility of your only daughter coming to the same dreadful end?”

George, not exactly seeing the connection, rubbed his nose with his forefinger, and replied —“Certainly not.”

“Then you are bound,” continued Martha, in triumph, “by all that is upright and honourable, by all the laws of humanity and *propriety*, to give up this wild intention—and you *must!*”

“There!” cried Miss Jane emphatically, as if the argument were unanswerable—as indeed it was, being incomprehensible.

The last words were unfortunate. They merely riveted the captain’s determination.

“You talk a great deal of nonsense, Martha,” he said, rising to depart. “I’ve fixed to take her, so the sooner you make up your minds to it the better.”

The sisters knew their brother’s character too well to waste more time in vain efforts; but Martha took him by the arm, and said earnestly—“Will you promise me, my dear George, that when she comes back from this voyage, you will never take her on another?”

“Yes, dear sister,” replied the captain, somewhat melted, “I promise that.”

Without another word Martha sat down and held out her arms to Ailie, who incontinently rushed into them. Propriety fled for the nonce, discomfited. Miss Martha’s curls were disarranged beyond repair, and Miss Martha’s collar was crushed to such an extent that the very laundress who had washed and starched and ironed it would have utterly failed to recognise it. Miss Jane looked on at these improprieties in perfect indifference—nay, when, after her sister had had enough, the child was handed over to her, she submitted to the same violent treatment without a murmur. For once Nature was allowed to have her way, and all three had a good hearty satisfactory cry; in the midst of which Captain Dunning left them, and, proceeding on board his ship, hastened the preparations for his voyage to the Southern Seas.

Chapter Three.

The Tea-Party—Accidents and Incidents of a Minor Kind—Glynn Proctor gets into Trouble

On the evening of the day in which the foregoing scenes were enacted, the Misses Dunning prepared a repast for their brother and one or two of his officers, who were to spend the last evening in port there, and discuss various important and unimportant matters in a sort of semi-convivio-business way.

An event of this kind was always of the deepest interest and productive of the most intense anxiety to the amiable though starched sisters; first, because it was of rare occurrence; and second, because they were never quite certain that it would pass without some unhappy accident, such as the upsetting of a tea-cup or a kettle, or the scalding of the cat, not to mention visitors' legs. They seemed to regard a tea-party in the light of a firearm—a species of blunderbuss—a thing which, it was to be hoped, would “go off well”; and, certainly, if loading the table until it groaned had anything to do with the manner of its “going off,” there was every prospect of its doing so with pre-eminent success upon that occasion.

But besides the anxieties inseparable from the details of the pending festivities, the Misses Dunning were overwhelmed and weighed down with additional duties consequent upon their brother's sudden and unexpected determination. Little Ailie had to be got ready for sea by the following morning! It was absolute and utter insanity! No one save a madman or a sea-captain could have conceived such a thing, much less have carried it into effect tyrannically.

The Misses Dunning could not attempt any piece of duty or work separately. They always acted together, when possible; and might, in fact, without much inconvenience, have been born Siamese twins. Whatever Martha did, Jane attempted to do or to mend; wherever Jane went, Martha followed. Not, by any means, that one thought she could improve upon the work of the other; their conduct was simply the result of a desire to assist each other mutually. When Martha spoke, Jane echoed or corroborated; and when Jane spoke, Martha repeated her sentences word for word in a scarcely audible whisper—not after the other had finished, but during the course of the remarks.

With such dispositions and propensities, it is not a matter to be wondered at that the good ladies, while arranging the tea-table, should suddenly remember some forgotten article of Ailie's wardrobe, and rush simultaneously into the child's bedroom to rectify the omission; or, when thus engaged, be filled with horror at the thought of having left the buttered toast too near the fire in the parlour.

“It is really quite perplexing,” said Martha, sitting down with a sigh, and regarding the tea-table with a critical gaze; “quite perplexing. I'm sure I don't know how I shall bear it. It is too bad of George—darling Ailie—(dear me, Jane, how crookedly you have placed the urn)—it is really too bad.”

“Too bad, indeed; yes, isn't it?” echoed Jane, in reference to the captain's conduct, while she assisted Martha, who had risen to readjust the urn.

“Oh!” exclaimed Martha, with a look of horror.

“What?” cried Jane, who looked and felt equally horrified, although she knew not yet the cause.

“The eggs!”

“The eggs?”

“Yes, the eggs. You know every one of the last dozen we got was bad, and we've forgot to send for more,” said Martha.

“For more; so we have!” cried Jane; and both ladies rushed into the kitchen, gave simultaneous and hurried orders to the servant-girl, and sent her out of the house impressed with an undefined feeling that life or death depended on the instant procuring of two dozen fresh eggs.

It may be as well to remark here, that the Misses Dunning, although stiff, and starched, and formal, had the power of speeding nimbly from room to room, when alone and when occasion required, without in the least degree losing any of their stiffness or formality, so that we do not use the terms “rush,” “rushed,” or “rushing” inappropriately. Nevertheless, it may also be remarked that they never acted in a rapid or impulsive way in company, however small in numbers or unceremonious in character the company might be—always excepting the servant-girl and the cat, to whose company, from long habit, they had become used, and therefore indifferent.

The sisters were on their knees, stuffing various articles into a large trunk, and Ailie was looking on, by way of helping, with very red and swollen eyes, and the girl was still absent in quest of eggs, when a succession of sounding blows were administered to the green door, and a number of gruff voices were heard conversing without.

“*There!*” cried Martha and Jane, with bitter emphasis, looking in each other’s faces as if to say, “We knew it. Before that girl was sent away for these eggs, we each separately and privately prophesied that they would arrive, and that we should have to open the door. And you see, so it has happened, and we are not ready!”

But there was no time for remark. The case was desperate. Both sisters felt it to be so, and acted accordingly, while Ailie, having been forbidden to open the door, sat down on her trunk, and looked on in surprise. They sprang up, washed their hands simultaneously in the same basin, with the same piece of soap broken in two; dried them with the same towel, darted to the mirror, put on two identically similar clean tall caps, leaped down-stairs, opened the door with slow dignity of demeanour, and received their visitors in the hall with a calmness and urbanity of manner that contrasted rather strangely with their flushed countenances and heaving bosoms.

“Hallo! Ailie!” exclaimed the captain, as his daughter pulled down his head to be kissed. “Why, you take a fellow all aback, like a white squall. Are you ready, my pet? Kit stowed and anchor tripped? Come this way, and let us talk about it. Dear me, Martha, you and Jane—look as if you had been running a race, eh? Here are my messmates come to talk a bit with you. My sisters, Martha and Jane—Dr Hopley.” (Dr Hopley bowed politely.) “My first mate, Mr Millons” (Mr Millons also bowed, somewhat loosely); “and Rokens—Tim Rokens, my chief harpooner.” (Mr Rokens pulled his forelock, and threw back his left leg, apparently to counterbalance the bend in his body.) “He didn’t want to come; said he warn’t accustomed to ladies’ society; but I told him you warn’t ladies—a—I don’t mean that—not ladies o’ the high-flyin’ fashionable sort, that give themselves airs, you know. Come along, Ailie.”

While the captain ran on in this strain, hung up his hat, kissed Ailie, and ran his fingers through his shaggy locks, the Misses Dunning performed a mingled bow and courtsey to each guest as his name was mentioned, and shook hands with him, after which the whole party entered the parlour, where the cat was discovered enjoying a preliminary meal of its own at one of the pats of butter. A united shriek from Martha and Jane, a nautical howl from the guests, and a rolled-up pocket-handkerchief from Rokens sent that animal from the table as if it had received a galvanic shock.

“I ax yer parding, ladies,” said Mr Rokens, whose aim had been so perfect that his handkerchief not only accelerated the flight of the cat, but carried away the violated pat of butter along with it. “I ax yer parding, but them brutes is sich thieves—I could roast ’em alive, so I could.”

The harpooner unrolled his handkerchief, and picking the pat of butter from its folds with his fingers, threw it into the fire. Thereafter he smoothed down his hair, and seated himself on the extreme edge of a chair, as near the door as possible. Not that he had any intention whatever of taking to flight, but he deemed that position to be more suited to his condition than any other.

In a few minutes the servant-girl returned with the eggs. While she is engaged in boiling them, we shall introduce Captain Dunning’s friends and messmates to the reader.

Dr Hopley was a surgeon, and a particular friend of the captain’s. He was an American by birth, but had travelled so much about the world that he had ceased to “guess” and “calculate,” and to speak

through his nose. He was a man about forty, tall, big-boned, and muscular, though not fat; and besides being a gentlemanly man, was a good-natured, quiet creature, and a clever enough fellow besides, but he preferred to laugh at and enjoy the jokes and witticisms of others rather than to perpetrate any himself. Dr Hopley was intensely fond of travelling, and being possessed of a small independence, he indulged his passion to the utmost. He had agreed to go with Captain Dunning as the ship's doctor, simply for the sake of seeing the whale-fishery of the South Seas, having already, in a similar capacity, encountered the dangers of the North.

Dr Hopley had few weaknesses. His chief one was an extravagant belief in phrenology. We would not be understood to imply that phrenology is extravagant; but we assert that the doctor's belief in it was extravagant, assigning, as he did, to every real and ideal faculty of the human mind "a local habitation and a name" in the cranium, with a corresponding depression or elevation of the surface to mark its whereabouts. In other respects he was a commonplace sort of a man.

Mr Millons, the first mate, was a short, hale, thick-set man, without any particularly strong points of character. He was about thirty-five, and possessed a superabundance of fair hair and whiskers, with a large, broad chin, a firm mouth, rather fierce-looking eyes, and a hasty, but by no means a bad temper. He was a trustworthy, matter-of-fact seaman, and a good officer, but not bright intellectually. Like most men of his class, his look implied that he did not under-estimate his own importance, and his tones were those of a man accustomed to command.

Tim Rokens was an old salt; a bluff, strong, cast-iron man, of about forty-five years of age, who had been at sea since he was a little boy, and would not have consented to live on dry land, though he had been "offered command of a seaport town all to himself," as he was wont to affirm emphatically. His visage was scarred and knotty, as if it had been long used to being pelted by storms—as indeed it had. There was a scar over his left eye and down his cheek, which had been caused by a slash from the cutlass of a pirate in the China Seas; but although it added to the rugged effect of his countenance, it did not detract from the frank, kindly expression that invariably rested there. Tim Rokens had never been caught out of temper in his life. Men were wont say he had no temper to lose. Whether this was true or no, we cannot presume to say, but certainly he never lost it. He was the best and boldest harpooner in Captain Dunning's ship, and a sententious deliverer of his private opinion on all occasions whatsoever. When we say that he wore a rough blue pilot-cloth suit, and had a large black beard, with a sprinkling of silver hairs in it, we have completed his portrait.

"What's come of Glynn?" inquired Captain Dunning, as he accepted a large cup of smoking tea with one hand, and with the other handed a plate of buttered toast to Dr Hopley, who sat next him.

"I really cannot imagine," replied Miss Martha.

"No, cannot imagine," whispered Miss Jane.

"He promised to come, and to be punctual," continued Miss Martha ("Punctual," whispered Miss J), "but something seems to have detained him. Perhaps—"

Here Miss Martha was brought to an abrupt pause by observing that Mr Rokens was about to commence to eat his egg with a teaspoon.

"Allow me, Mr Rokens," she said, handing that individual an ivory eggspoon.

"Oh, cer'nly, ma'am. By all means," replied Rokens, taking the spoon and handing it to Miss Jane, under the impression that it was intended for her.

"I beg pardon, it is for yourself, Mr Rokens," said Martha and Jane together.

"Thank'ee, ma'am," replied Rokens, growing red, as he began to perceive he was a little "off his course" somehow. "I've no occasion for *two*, an' this one suits me oncommon."

"Ah! you prefer big spoons to little ones, my man, don't you?" said Captain Dunning, coming to the rescue. "Let him alone, Martha, he's used to take care of himself. Doctor, can you tell me now, which is the easiest of digestion—a hard egg or a soft one?"

Thus appealed to, Dr Hopley paused a moment and frowned at the teapot, as though he were about to tax his brain to the utmost in the solution of an abstruse question in medical science.

“Well now,” he replied, stirring his tea gently, and speaking with much deliberation, “that depends very much upon circumstances. Some digestions can manage a hard egg best, others find a soft one more tractable. And then the state of the stomach at the time of eating has to be taken into account. I should say now, that my little friend Ailie, here, to judge from the rosy colour of her cheeks, could manage hard or soft eggs equally well; couldn’t you, eh?”

Ailie laughed, as she replied, “I’m sure I don’t know, Doctor Hopley; but I *like* soft ones best.”

To this, Captain Dunning said, “Of course you do, my sensible little pet;” although it would be difficult to show wherein lay the sensibility of the preference, and then added—“There’s Rokens, now; wouldn’t you, doctor—judging from his rosy, not to say purple cheeks—conclude that he wasn’t able to manage even two eggs of any kind?”

“Wot, *me!*” exclaimed Mr Rokens, looking up in surprise, as indeed he well might, having just concluded his fourth, and being about to commence his fifth egg, to the no small anxiety of Martha and Jane, into whose limited and innocent minds the possibility of such a feat had never entered. “Wot, *me!* Why, captaining, if they was biled as hard as the head of a marline-spike—”

The expanding grin on the captain’s face, and a sudden laugh from the mate, apprised the bold harpooner at this point of his reply that the captain was jesting, so he felt a little confused, and sought relief by devoting himself assiduously to egg Number 5.

It fared ill with Tim Rokens that evening that he had rashly entered into ladies’ society, for he was a nervous man in refined company, though cool and firm as a grounded iceberg when in the society of his messmates, or when towing with the speed of a steamboat in the wake of a sperm-whale.

Egg Number 5 proved to be a bad one. Worse than that, egg Number 5 happened to belong to that peculiar class of bad eggs which “go off” with a little crack when hit with a spoon, and sputter their unsavoury contents around them. Thus it happened, that when Mr Rokens, feeling confused, and seeking relief in attention to the business then in hand, hit egg Number 5 a smart blow on the top, a large portion of its contents spurted over the fair white tablecloth, a small portion fell on Mr Rokens’ vest, and a minute yellow globule thereof alighted on the fair Martha’s hand, eliciting from that lady a scream, and as a matter of course, an echo from Jane in the shape of a screamllet.

Mr Rokens flushed a deep Indian-red, and his nose assumed a warm blue colour instantly.

“Oh! ma’am, I ax yer parding.”

“Pray don’t mention it—a mere accident. I’m so sorry you have got a bad— Oh!”

The little scream with which Miss Martha interrupted her remark was caused by Mr Rokens (who had just observed the little yellow globule above referred to) seizing her hand, and wiping away the speck with the identical handkerchief that had floored the cat and swept away the pat of butter. Immediately thereafter, feeling heated, he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and unwittingly transferred the spot thereto in the form of a yellow streak, whereat Ailie and the first mate burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Even Miss Martha smiled, although she rather objected to jesting, as being a dangerous amusement, and never laughed at the weaknesses or misfortunes of others, however ludicrous they might be, when she could help it.

“How can you, brother?” she said, reproachfully, shaking her head at the captain, who was winking at the doctor with one eye in a most obstreperous manner. “Do try another egg, Mr Rokens; the others, I am sure, are fresh. I cannot imagine how a bad one came to be amongst them.”

“Ah, try another, my lad,” echoed the captain. “Pass ’em up this way, Mr Millions.”

“By no manner o’ means; I’ll eat this ’un!” replied the harpooner, commencing to eat the bad egg with apparent relish. “I like ’em this way—better than nothin’, anyhow. Bless ye, marm, ye’ve no notion wot sort o’ things I’ve lived on aboard ship—”

Rokens came to an abrupt pause in consequence of the servant-girl, at a sign from her mistresses (for she always received duplicate orders), seizing his plate and carrying it off bodily. It was immediately replaced by a clean one and a fresh egg. While Rokens somewhat nervously tapped

the head of Number 6, Miss Martha, in order to divert attention from him, asked Mr Millons if sea-fare was always salt junk and hard biscuit?

“Oh, no, madam,” answered the first mate. “We’ve sometimes salt pork, and vegetables now and agin; and pea-soup, and plum-duff—”

“Plum-duff, Ailie,” interrupted the captain, in order to explain, “is just a puddin’ with few plums and fewer spices in it. Something like a white-painted cannon-shot, with brown spots on it here and there.”

“Is it good?” inquired Ailie.

“Oh, ain’t it!” remarked Mr Rokens, who had just concluded Number 6, and felt his self-possession somewhat restored. “Yes, miss, it is; but it ain’t equal to whale’s-brain fritters, it ain’t; them’s first-chop.”

“Have whales got brains?” inquired Miss Martha, in surprise.

“Brains!” echoed Miss Jane, in amazement.

“Yes, madam, they ’ave,” answered the first mate, who had hitherto maintained silence, but having finished tea was now ready for any amount of talk; “and what’s more remarkable still, they’ve got several barrels of oil in their skulls besides.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed the sisters.

“Yes, ladies, capital oil it is, too; fetches a ’igher price hin the markit than the other sort.”

“By the bye, Millons, didn’t you once fall into a whale’s skull, and get nearly drowned in oil?” inquired the doctor.

“I did,” answered the first mate, with the air of a man who regarded such an event as a mere trifle, that, upon consideration, might almost be considered as rather a pleasant incident than otherwise in one’s history.

“Nearly drowned in oil!” exclaimed the sisters, while Ailie opened her eyes in amazement, and Mr Rokens became alarmingly purple in the face with suppressed chuckling.

“It’s true,” remarked Rokens, in a hoarse whisper to Miss Martha, putting his hand up to his mouth, the better to convey the sound to her ears; “I seed him tumble in, and helped to haul him out.”

“Let’s have the story, Millons,” cried the captain, pushing forward his cup to be replenished; “It’s so long since I heard it, that I’ve almost forgotten it. Another cup o’ tea, Martha, my dear—not quite so strong as the last, and three times as sweet. I’ll drink ‘Success to the cup that cheers, but don’t inebriate.’ Go ahead, Millons.”

Nothing rejoiced the heart of Mr Millons more than being asked to tell a story. Like most men who are excessively addicted to the habit, his stories were usually very long and very dry; but he had a bluff good-natured way of telling them, that rendered his yarns endurable on shore, and positively desirable at sea. Fortunately for the reader, the story he was now requested to relate was not a long one.

“It ain’t quite a *story*,” he began—and in beginning he cleared his throat with emphasis, thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his vest, and tilted his chair on its hind-legs—“it ain’t quite a story; it’s a hanecdote, a sort of hincident, so to speak, and this is ’ow it ’appened:—

“Many years ago, w’en I was a very young man, or a big boy, I was on a voyage to the South Seas after whales. Tim Rokens was my messmate then, and has bin so almost ever since, off, and on.” (Mr Rokens nodded assent to this statement.) “Well, we came up with a big whale, and fixed an iron cleverly in him at the first throw—”

“An iron?” inquired Miss Martha, to whose mind flat and Italian irons naturally occurred.

“Yes, madam, an iron; we call the ’arpoons irons. Well, away went the fish, like all alive! not down, but straight for’ard, takin’ out the line at a rate that nearly set the boat on fire, and away we went along with it. It *was* a chase, that. For six hours, off and on, we stuck to that whale, and pitched into ’im with ’arpoons and lances; but he seemed to have the lives of a cat—nothin’ would kill ’im. At last the ’arpooner gave him a thrust in the life, an’ up went the blood and water, and the fish went into the flurries, and came nigh capsizin’ the boat with its tail as it lashed the water into foam. At

last it gave in, and we had a four hours' pull after that, to tow the carcass to the ship, for there wasn't a cat's-paw of wind on the water.

"W'en we came alongside, we got out the tackles, and before beginning to flense (that means, ma'am, to strip off the blubber), we cut a hole in the top o' the skull to get out the oil that was there; for you must know that the sperm-whale has got a sort of 'ollow or big cavern in its 'ead, w'ich is full o' the best oil, quite pure, that don't need to be cleared, but is all ready to be baled out and stowed away in casks. Well, w'en the 'ole was cut in its skull I went down on my knees on the edge of it to peep in, when my knees they slipped on the blubber, and in I went 'ead-foremost, souse into the whale's skull, and began to swim for life in the oil.

"Of course I began to roar for 'elp like a bull, and Rokens there, 'oo 'appened to be near, 'e let down the hend of a rope, but my 'ands was so slippery with oil I couldn't ketch 'old of it; so 'e 'auls it up agin, and lets down a rope with a 'ook at the hend, and I got 'old of this and stuck it into the waistband o' my trousers, and gave the word, "Eave away, my 'earties;" and sure enough so they did, and pulled me out in a trice. And that's 'ow it was; and I lost a suit o' clo's, for nothing on 'arth would take the oil out, and I didn't need to use pomatum for six months after."

"No more you did," cried Rokens, who had listened to the narrative with suppressed delight; "no more you did. I never see sich a glazed rat as you wos when you comed out o' that hole, in all my life; an' he wos jist like a eel; it wos all we could do to keep 'old on 'im, marm, he was so slippery."

While the captain was laughing at the incident, and Rokens was narrating some of the minute details in the half-unwilling yet half-willing ears of the sisters, the door opened, and a young man entered hastily and apologised for being late.

"The fact is, Miss Dunning, had I not promised faithfully to come, I should not have made my appearance at all to-night."

"Why, Glynn, what has kept you, lad?" interrupted the captain. "I thought you were a man of your word."

"Ay, that's the question, captin'," said Rokens, who evidently regarded the new arrival with no favourable feelings; "it's always the way with them *gentlemen* sailors till they're got into blue water and brought to their bearin's."

Mr Rokens had wisdom enough to give forth the last part of his speech in a muttered tone, for the youth was evidently a favourite with the captain, as was shown by the hearty manner in which he shook him by the hand.

"Messmates, this is Glynn Proctor, a friend o' mine," said Captain Dunning, in explanation: "he is going with us this voyage *before* the mast, so you'll have to make the most of him as an equal to-night, for I intend to keep him in his proper place when afloat. He chooses to go as an ordinary seaman, against my advice, the scamp; so I'll make him keep his head as low as the rest when aboard. You'll to keep your time better, too, than you have done to-night, lad," continued the captain, giving his young friend a slap on the shoulder. "What has detained you, eh?"

"Necessity, captin'," replied the youth, with a smile, as he sat down to table with an off-hand easy air that savoured of recklessness; "and I am prepared to state, upon oath if need be, that necessity is not 'the mother of invention.' If she had been, she would have enabled me to invent a way of escape from my persecutors in time to keep my promise to Miss Dunning."

"Persecutors, Glynn!" exclaimed Martha; "to whom do you refer?"

"To the police of this good city."

"Police!" echoed the captain, regarding his young friend seriously, while the doctor and the first mate and Tim Rokens listened in some surprise.

"Why, the fact is," said Glynn, "that I have just escaped from the hands of the police, and if it had not been that I was obliged to make a very wide *détour*, in order to reach this house without being observed, I should have been here long ago."

“Boy, boy, your hasty disposition will bring you into serious trouble one of these days,” said the captain, shaking his head. “What mischief have you been about?”

“Ay, there you go—it’s my usual fate,” cried Glynn, laughing. “If I chance to get into a scrape, you never think of inquiring whether it was my fault or my misfortune. This time, however, it *was* my misfortune, and if Miss Dunning will oblige me with a cup of tea, I’ll explain how it happened.

“Little more than two hours ago I left the ship to come here to tea, as I had promised to do. Nikel Sling, the long-legged cook you engaged this morning, went ashore with me. As we walked up the street together, I observed a big porter passing along with a heavy deal plank on his shoulder. The street was somewhat narrow and crowded at that part, and Sling had turned to look in at a shop-window just as the big fellow came up. The man shouted to my shipmate to get out o’ the way, but the noise in the street prevented him from hearing. Before I could turn to touch the cook’s arm, the fellow uttered an oath and ran the end of the plank against his head. Poor Sling was down in an instant. Before I well knew what I was about, I hit the porter between the eyes and down he went with a clatter, and the plank above him. In a moment three policemen had me by the collar. I tried to explain, but they wouldn’t listen. As I was being hurried away to the lock-up, it flashed across me that I should not only lose my tea and your pleasant society this evening, but be prevented from sailing to-morrow, so I gave a sudden twist, tripped up the man on my left, overturned the one on my right, and bolted.”

“They ran well, the rascals, and shouted like maniacs, but I got the start of ’em, dived down one street, up another, into a by-lane, over a back-garden wall, in at the back-door of a house and out at the front, took a round of two or three miles, and came in here from the west; and whatever other objections there may be to the whole proceeding, I cannot say that it has spoiled my appetite.”

“And so, sir,” said Captain Dunning, “you call this your ‘misfortune?’”

“Surely, captain,” said Glynn, putting down his cup and looking up in some surprise—“surely, you cannot blame me for punishing the rascal who behaved so brutally, without the slightest provocation, to my shipmate!”

“Hear, hear!” cried Rokens involuntarily.

“I do blame you, lad,” replied the captain seriously. “In the first place, you had no right to take the law into your own hands. In the second place, your knocking down the man did no good whatever to your shipmate; and in the third place, you’ve got yourself and me and the ship into a very unsatisfactory scrape.”

Rokens’ face, which had hitherto expressed approval of Glynn’s conduct, began to elongate as the captain went on in this strain; and the youth’s recklessness of manner altogether disappeared as inquired, “How so, captain? I have escaped, as you see; and poor Sling, of course, was not to blame, so he’ll be all safe aboard, and well, I hope, by this time.”

“There you’re mistaken, boy. They will have secured Sling and made him tell the name of his ship, and also the name of his pugnacious comrade.”

“And do you think he’d be so mean as to tell?” asked Glynn indignantly.

“You forget that the *first* act in this nice little melodrama was the knocking down of Sling, so that he could not know what happened after, and the police would not be so soft as to tell him *why* they wanted such information until after they had got it.”

Poor Glynn looked aghast, and Rokens was overwhelmed.

“It seems to me, I’d better go and see about this,” said Millons, rising and buttoning his coat with the air of a man who had business to transact and meant to transact it.

“Right, Millons,” answered the captain. “I’m sorry to break up our evening so soon, but we must get this man aboard by hook or crook as speedily as possible. You had better go too, doctor. Rokens and I will take care of this young scamp, who must be made a nigger of in order to be got on board, for his face, once seen by these sharp limbs of justice, is not likely soon to be forgotten.”

Glynn Proctor was indeed a youth whose personal appearance was calculated to make a lasting impression on most people. He was about eighteen years of age, but a strong, well-developed muscular

frame, a firm mouth, a large chin, and an eagle eye, gave him the appearance of being much older. He was above the middle height, but not tall, and the great breadth of his shoulders and depth of his chest made him appear shorter than he really was. His hair was of that beautiful hue called nut-brown, and curled close round his well-shaped head. He was a model of strength and activity.

Glynn Proctor had many faults. He was hasty and reckless. He was unsteady, too, and preferred a roving idle life to a busy one; but he had redeeming qualities. He was bold and generous. Above all, he was unselfish, and therefore speedily became a favourite with all who knew him. Glynn's history is briefly told. He was an Englishman. His father and mother had died when he was a child, and left him in charge of an uncle, who emigrated to America shortly after his brother's death. The uncle was a good man, after a fashion, but he was austere and unlovable. Glynn didn't like him; so when he attained the age of thirteen, he quietly told him that he meant to bid him good-bye, and go seek his fortune in the world. The uncle as quietly told Glynn that he was quite right, and the sooner he went the better. So Glynn went, and never saw his uncle again, for the old man died while he was abroad.

Glynn travelled far and encountered many vicissitudes of fortune in his early wanderings; but he was never long without occupation, because men liked his looks, and took him on trial without much persuasion. To say truth, Glynn never took the trouble to persuade them. When his services were declined, he was wont to turn on his heel and walk away without a word of reply; and not unfrequently he was called back and employed. He could turn his hand to almost anything, but when he tired of it, he threw it up and sought other work elsewhere.

In the course of his peregrinations, he came to reside in the city in which our story finds him. Here he had become a compositor in the office of a daily newspaper, and, happening to be introduced to the Misses Dunning, soon became a favourite with them, and a constant visitor at their house. Thus he became acquainted with their brother. Becoming disgusted with the constant work and late hours of the printing-office, he resolved to join Captain Dunning's ship, and take a voyage to southern seas as an ordinary seaman. Glynn and little Alice Dunning were great friends, and it was a matter of extreme delight to both of them that they were to sail together on this their first voyage.

Having been made a nigger of—that is, having had his face and hands blackened in order to avoid detection—Glynn sallied forth with the captain and Rokens to return to their ship, the *Red Eric*, which lay in the harbour, not ten minutes' walk from the house.

They passed the police on the wharf without creating suspicion, and reached the vessel.

Chapter Four. The Escape

“Well, Millons, what news?” inquired the captain, as he stepped on deck.

“Bad news, sir, I fear” replied the first mate. “I found, on coming aboard, that no one knew anything about Sling, so I went ashore at once and ’urried up to the hospital, w’ere, sure enough, I found ’im lyin’ with his ’ead bandaged, and lookin’ as if ’e were about gone. They asked me if I knew what ship ’e belonged to, as the police wanted to know. So I told ’em I knew well enough, but I wasn’t going to tell if it would get the poor fellow into a scrape.

“Why don’t you ask himself?” says I.

“They told me ’e was past speaking, so I tried to make ’im understand, but ’e only mumbled in reply. W’en I was about to go ’e seemed to mumble very ’ard, so I put down my ear to listen, and ’e w’ispered quite distinct tho’ very low—‘All right, my ’eartie. I’m too cute for ’em by a long way; go aboard an’ say nothin’.’ So I came away, and I’ve scarce been five minutes aboard before you arrived. My own opinion is, that ’e’s crazed, and don’t know what ’e’s sayin’.”

“Oh!” ejaculated Captain Dunning. “He said that, did he? Then *my* opinion is, that he’s not so crazed as you think. Tell the watch, Mr Millons, to keep a sharp look-out.”

So saying, Captain Dunning descended to the cabin, and Rokens to the forecastle (in sea phraseology the “fok-sail”), while Glynn Proctor procured a basin and a piece of soap, and proceeded to rub the coat of charcoal off his face and hands.

Half-an-hour had not elapsed when the watch on deck heard a loud splash near the wharf, as if some one had fallen into the water. Immediately after, a confused sound of voices and rapid footsteps was heard in the street that opened out upon the quay, and in a few seconds the end of the wharf was crowded with men who shouted to each other, and were seen in the dim starlight to move rapidly about as if in search of something.

“Wot can it be?” said Tim Rokens in a low voice, to a seaman who leaned on the ship’s bulwarks close to him.

“Deserter, mayhap,” suggested the man.

While Rokens pondered the suggestion, a light splash was heard close to the ship’s side, and a voice said, in a hoarse whisper, “Heave us a rope, will ye. Look alive, now. Guess I’ll go under in two minits if ye don’t.”

“Oho!” exclaimed Rokens, in a low, impressive voice, as he threw over the end of a rope, and, with the aid of the other members of the watch, hauled Nickel Sling up the side, and landed him dripping and panting on the deck.

“W’y—Sling! what on airth—?” exclaimed one of the men.

“It’s lucky—I am—on airth—” panted the tall cook, seating himself on the breech of one of the main-deck carronades, and wringing the water from his garments. “An’ it’s well I’m not at the bottom o’ this ’ere ’arbour.”

“But where did ye come from, an’ why are they arter ye, lad?” inquired Rokens.

“W’y? ’cause they don’t want to part with me, and I’ve gi’n them the slip, I guess.”

When Nickel Sling had recovered himself so as to talk connectedly, he explained to his wondering shipmates how that, after being floored in the street, he had been carried up to the hospital, and on recovering his senses, found Mr Millons standing by the bedside, conversing with the young surgeons. The first words of their conversation showed him that something was wrong, so, with remarkable self-possession, he resolved to counterfeit partial delirium, by which means he contrived to give the first mate a hint that all was right, and declined, without creating suspicion, to give any intelligible answers as to who he was or where he had come from.

The blow on his head caused him considerable pain, but his mind was relieved by one of the young surgeons, who remarked to another, in going round the wards, that the “skull of that long chap wasn’t fractured after all, and he had no doubt he would be dismissed cured in a day or two.” So the cook lay quiet until it was dark.

When the house-surgeon had paid his last visit, and the nurses had gone their rounds in the accident-ward, and no sound disturbed the quiet of the dimly-lighted apartment save the heavy fitful breathing and occasional moans and restless motions of the sufferers, Nickel Sling raised himself on his elbow, and glanced stealthily round on the rows of pain-worn and haggard countenances around him. It was a solemn sight to look upon, especially at that silent hour of the night. There were men there with almost every species of painful wound and fracture. Some had been long there, wasting away from day to day, and now lay quiet, though suffering, from sheer exhaustion. Others there were who had been carried in that day, and fidgeted impatiently in their unreduced strength, yet nervously in their agony; or, in some cases, where the fear of death was on them, clasped their hands and prayed in whispers for mercy to Him whose name perhaps they had almost never used before except for the purpose of taking it in vain.

But such sights had little or no effect on the cook, who had rubbed hard against the world’s roughest sides too long to be easily affected by the sight of human suffering, especially when exhibited in men. He paused long enough to note that the nurses were out of the way or dozing, and then slipping out of bed, he stalked across the room like a ghost, and made for the outer gateway of the hospital. He knew the way, having once before been a temporary inmate of the place. He reached the gate undiscovered, tripped up the porter’s heels, opened the wicket, and fled towards the harbour, followed by the porter and a knot of chance passers-by. The pursuers swelled into a crowd as he neared the harbour.

Besides being long-limbed, Nickel Sling was nimble. He distanced his pursuers easily, and, as we have seen, swam off and reached his ship almost as soon as they gained the end of the wharf.

The above narration was made much more abruptly and shortly than we have presented it, for oars were soon heard in the water, and it behoved the poor hunted cook to secrete himself in case they should take a fancy to search the vessel. Just as the boat came within a few yards of the ship he hastily went below.

“Boat ahoy!” shouted Tim Rokens; “wot boat’s that?”

The men lay on their oars.

“Have you a madman on board your ship?” inquired the gatekeeper of the hospital, whose wrath at the unceremonious treatment he had received had not yet cooled down.

“No,” answered Rokens, laying his arms on the bulwarks, and looking down at his questioner with a sly leer; “no, we ha’n’t, but you’ve got a madman aboard that boat.”

“Who’s that?” inquired the warder, who did not at first understand the sarcasm.

“Why, yourself, to be sure,” replied Rokens, “an’ the sooner you takes yourself off, an’ comes to an anchor in a loo-natick asylum, the better for all parties consarned.”

“No, but I’m in earnest, my man—”

“As far as that goes,” interrupted the imperturbable Rokens, “so am I.”

“The man,” continued the gatekeeper, “has run out of the hospital with a smashed head, I calc’late, stark starin’ mad, and gone off the end o’ the w’arf into the water—”

“You don’t mean it!” shouted Rokens, starting with affected surprise. “Now you *are* a fine fellow, ain’t you, to be talkin’ here an’ wastin’ time while a poor feller-mortal is bein’ drowned, or has gone and swummed off to sea—p’r’aps without chart, compass, or rudder! Hallo, lads! tumble up there! Man overboard! tumble up, tumble up!”

In less than three minutes half-a-dozen men sprang up the hatchway, hauled up the gig which swung astern, tumbled into it, and began to pull wildly about the harbour in search of the drowning

man. The shouts and commotion roused the crews of the nearest vessels, and ere long quite a fleet of boats joined in the search.

“Wos he a big or a little feller?” inquired Rokens, panting from his exertions, as he swept up to the boat containing the hospital warder, round which several of the other boats began to congregate.

“A big fellow, I guess, with legs like steeples. He was sloping when they floored him. A thief, I expect he must ha’ bin.”

“A thief!” echoed Rokens, in disgust; “why didn’t ye say, so at first? If he’s a thief, he’s born to be hanged, so he’s safe and snug aboard his ship long ago, I’ll be bound. Good-night t’ye, friend, and better luck next time.”

A loud laugh greeted the ears of the discomfited warder as the crews of the boats dipped their oars in the water and pulled towards, their respective ships.

Next morning, about daybreak, little Alice Dunning came on board her father’s ship, accompanied by her two aunts, who, for once, became utterly and publicly regardless of appearances and contemptuous of all propriety, as they sobbed on the child’s neck and positively refused to be comforted.

Just as the sun rose, and edged the horizon with a gleam of liquid fire, the *Red Eric* spread her sails and stood out to sea.

Chapter Five.

Day Dreams and Adventures among the Clouds—A Chase, a Battle, and a Victory

Early morning on the ocean! There is poetry in the idea; there is music in the very sound. As there is nothing new under the sun, probably a song exists with this or a similar title; if not, we now recommend it earnestly to musicians.

Ailie Dunning sat on the bulwarks of the *Red Eric*, holding on tightly by the mizzen-shrouds, and gazing in open-eyed, open-mouthed, inexpressible delight upon the bright calm sea. She was far, far out upon the bosom of the Atlantic now. Sea-sickness—which during the first part of the voyage, had changed the warm pink of her pretty face into every imaginable shade of green—was gone, and the hue of health could not now be banished even by the rudest storm. In short, she had become a thorough sailor, and took special delight in turning her face to windward during the wild storm, and drinking-in the howling blast as she held on by the rigid shrouds, and laughed at the dashing spray—for little Ailie was not easily frightened. Martha and Jane Dunning had made it their first care to implant in the heart of their charge a knowledge of our Saviour's love, and especially of His tenderness towards, and watchful care over, the lambs of His flock. Besides this, little Ailie was naturally of a trustful disposition. She had implicit confidence in the strength and wisdom of her father, and it never entered into her imagination to dream that it was possible for any evil to befall the ship which *he* commanded.

But, although Ailie delighted in the storm, she infinitely preferred the tranquil beauty and rest of a "great calm," especially at the hour just before sunrise, when the freshness, brightness, and lightness of the young day harmonised peculiarly with her elastic spirit. It was at this hour that we find her alone upon the bulwarks of the *Red Eric*.

There was a deep, solemn stillness around, that irresistibly and powerfully conveyed to her mind the idea of rest. The long, gentle undulation of the deep did not in the least detract from this idea. So perfect was the calm, that several masses of clouds in the sky, which shone with the richest saffron light, were mirrored in all their rich details as if in a glass. The faintest possible idea of a line alone indicated, in one direction, where the water terminated and the sky began. A warm golden haze suffused the whole atmosphere, and softened the intensity of the deep-blue vault above.

There was, indeed, little variety of object to gaze upon—only the water and the sky. But what a world of delight did not Ailie find in that vast sky and that pure ocean, that reminded her of the sea of glass before the great white throne, of which she had so often read in Revelation. The towering masses of clouds were so rich and thick, that she almost fancied them to be mountains and valleys, rocks and plains of golden snow. Nay, she looked so long and so ardently at the rolling mountain heights in the sky above, and their magical counterparts in the sky below, that she soon, as it were, *thought herself into* Fairyland, and began a regular journey of adventures therein.

Such a scene at such an hour is a source of gladsome, peaceful delight to the breast of man in every stage of life; but it is a source of unalloyed, bounding, exhilarating, romantic, unspeakable joy only in the years of childhood, when the mind looks hopefully forward, and before it has begun—as, alas! it must begin, sooner or later—to gaze regretfully back.

How long Ailie would have sat in motionless delight it is difficult to say. The man at the wheel having nothing to do, had forsaken his post, and was leaning over the stern, either lost in reverie, or in a vain effort to penetrate with his vision the blue abyss to the bottom. The members of the watch on deck were either similarly engaged or had stowed themselves away to sleep in quiet corners among blocks and cordage. No one seemed inclined to move or speak, and she would probably have sat there immovable for hours to come, had not a hand fallen gently on her shoulder, and by the magic of its

simple contact scattered the bright dreams of Fairyland as the finger-touch destroys the splendour of the soap-bubble.

“Oh! Glynn,” exclaimed Ailie, looking round and heaving a deep sigh; “I’ve been away—far, far away—you can’t believe how far.”

“Away, Ailie! Where have you been?” asked Glynn, patting the child’s head as he leaned over the gunwale beside her.

“In Fairyland. Up in the clouds yonder. Out and in, and up and down. Oh, you’ve no idea. Just look.” She pointed eagerly to an immense towering cloud that rose like a conspicuous landmark in the centre of the landscape of the airy world above. “Do you see that mountain?”

“Yes, Ailie; the one in the middle, you mean, don’t you? Yes, well?”

“Well,” continued the child, eagerly and hurriedly, as if she feared to lose the thread of memory that formed the warp and woof of the delicate fabric she had been engaged in weaving; “well, I began there; I went in behind it, and I met a fairy—not really, you know, but I tried to think I met one, so I began to speak to her, and then I made her speak to me, and her voice was so small and soft and sweet. She had on silver wings, and a star—a bright star in her forehead—and she carried a wand with a star on the top of it too. So I asked her to take me to see her kingdom, and I made her say she would—and, do you know, Glynn, I really felt at last as if she didn’t wait for me to tell her what to say, but just went straight on, answering my questions, and putting questions to me in return. Wasn’t it funny?”

“Well, we went on, and on, and on—the fairy and me—up one beautiful mountain of snow and down another, talking all the time so pleasantly, until we came to a great dark cave; so I made up my mind to make a lion come out of it; but the fairy said, ‘No, let it be a bear;’ and immediately a great bear came out. Wasn’t it strange? It really seemed as if the fairy had become real, and could do things of her own accord.”

The child paused at this point, and looking with an expression of awe into her companion’s face, said— “Do you think, Glynn, that people can *think* so hard that fairies *really* come to them?”

Glynn looked perplexed.

“No, Ailie, I suspect they can’t—not because we can’t think hard enough, but because there are no fairies to come.”

“Oh, I’m *so* sorry!” replied the child sadly.

“Why?” inquired Glynn.

“Because I love them *so* much—of course, I mean the good ones. I don’t like the bad ones—though they’re very useful, because they’re nice to kill, and punish, and make examples of, and all that, when the good ones catch them.”

“So they are,” said the youth, smiling. “I never thought of that before. But go on with your ramble in the clouds.”

“Well,” began Ailie; “but where was I?”

“Just going to be introduced to a bear.”

“Oh yes; well—the bear walked slowly away, and then the fairy called out an elephant, and after that a ’noceros—”

“A ’noceros!” interrupted Glynn; “what’s that?”

“Oh, you know very well. A beast with a thick skin hanging in folds, and a horn on its nose—”

“Ah, a *rhinoceros*—I see. Well, go on, Ailie.”

“Then the fairy told a camel to appear, and after that a monkey, and then a hippopotamus, and they all came out one after another, and some of them went away, and others began to fight. But the strangest thing of all was, that every one of them was *so* like the pictures of wild beasts that are hanging in my room at home! The elephant, too, I noticed, had his trunk broken exactly the same way as my toy elephant’s one was. Wasn’t it odd?”

“It was rather odd,” replied Glynn; “but where did you go after that?”

“Oh, then we went on, and on again, until we came to—”

“It’s your turn at the wheel, lad, ain’t it?” inquired Mr Millons, coming up at that moment, and putting an abrupt termination to the walk in Fairyland.

“It is, sir,” answered Glynn, springing quickly to the wheel, and relieving the man who had been engaged in penetrating the ocean’s depths.

The mate walked forward; the released sailor went below, and Ailie was again left to her solitary meditations;—for she was enough of a sailor now, in heart, to know that she ought not to talk too much to the steersman, even though the weather should be calm and there was no call for his undivided attention to the duties of his post.

While Nature was thus, as it were, asleep, and the watch on deck were more than half in the same condition, there was one individual in the ship whose faculties were in active play, whose “steam,” as he himself would have remarked, “was up.” This was the worthy cook, Nikel Sling, whose duties called him to his post at the galley-fire at an early hour each day.

We have often thought that a cook’s life must be one of constant self-denial and exasperation of spirit. Besides the innumerable anxieties in reference to such important matters as boiling over and over-boiling, being done to a turn, or over-done, or singed or burned, or capsized, he has the diurnal misery of being the first human being in his little circle of life, to turn out of a morning, and must therefore experience the discomfort—the peculiar discomfort—of finding things as *they were left* the night before. Any one who does not know what that discomfort is, has only to rise an hour before the servants of a household, whether at sea or on shore, to find out. Cook, too, has generally, if not always, to light the fire; and that, especially in frosty weather, is not agreeable. Moreover, cook roasts *himself* to such an extent, and at meal-times, in nine cases out of ten, gets into such physical and mental perturbation, that he cannot possibly appreciate the luxuries he has been occupied all the day in concocting. Add to this, that he spends all the morning in preparing breakfast; all the forenoon in preparing dinner; all the afternoon in preparing tea and supper, and all the evening in clearing up, and perhaps all the night in dreaming of the meals of the following day, and mentally preparing breakfast, and we think that we have clearly proved the truth of the proposition with which we started—namely, that a cook’s life must be one of constant self-denial and exasperation of spirit.

But this is by the way, and was merely suggested by the fact that, while all other creatures were enjoying either partial or complete repose, Nikel Sling was washing out pots and pans and kettles, and handling murderous-looking knives and two-pronged tormentors with a demoniacal activity that was quite appalling.

Beside him, on a little stool close to the galley-fire, sat Tim Rokens—not that Mr Rokens was cold—far from it. He was, to judge from appearances, much hotter than was agreeable. But Tim had come there and sat down to light his pipe, and being rather phlegmatic when not actively employed, he preferred to be partially roasted for a few minutes to getting up again.

“We ought,” remarked Tim Rokens, puffing at a little black pipe which seemed inclined to be obstinate, “we ought to be gittin’ among the fish by this time. Many’s the one I’ve seed in them ’ere seas.”

“I rather guess we should,” replied the cook, pausing the midst of his toils and wiping the perspiration from his forehead with an immense bundle of greasy oakum. “But I’ve seed us keep dodgin’ about for weeks, I have, later in the year than this, without clappin’ eyes on a fin. What sort o’ baccy d’ye smoke, Rokens?”

“Dun know. Got it from a Spanish smuggler for an old clasp-knife. Why?”

“Cause it smells like rotten straw, an’ won’t improve the victuals. Guess you’d better take yourself off, old chap.”

“Wot a cross-grained crittur ye are,” said Rokens, as he rose to depart.

At that moment there was heard a cry that sent the blood tingling to the extremities of every one on board the *Red Eric*.

“Thar she blows! thar she blows!” shouted the man in the crow’s-nest.

The crow's-nest is a sort of cask, or nest, fixed at the top of the mainmast of whale-ships, in which a man is stationed all day during the time the ships are on the fishing-ground, to look out for whales; and the cry, "Thar she blows," announced the fact that the look-out had observed a whale rise to the surface and blow a spout of steamy water into the air.

No conceivable event—unless perhaps the blowing-up of the ship itself—could have more effectually and instantaneously dissipated the deep tranquillity to which we have more than once referred. Had an electric shock been communicated through the ship to each individual, the crew could not have been made to leap more vigorously and simultaneously. Many days before, they had begun to expect to see whales. Every one was therefore on the *qui vive*, so that when the well-known signal rang out like a startling peal in the midst of the universal stillness, every heart in the ship leaped in unison.

Had an observant man been seated at the time in the fore-castle, he would have noticed that from out of the ten or fifteen hammocks that swung from the beams, there suddenly darted ten or fifteen pairs of legs which rose to the perpendicular position in order to obtain leverage to "fetch way." Instantly thereafter the said legs descended, and where the feet had been, ten or fifteen heads appeared. Next moment the men were "tumbling up" the fore-hatch to the deck, where the watch had already sprung to the boat-tackles.

"Where away?" sang out Captain Dunning who was among the first on deck.

"Off the weather bow, sir, three points."

"How far?"

"About two miles. Thar she blows!"

"Call all hands," shouted the captain.

"Starboard watch, ahoy!" roared the mate, in that curious hoarse voice peculiar to boatswains of men-of-war. "Tumble up, lads, tumble up! Whale in sight! Bear a hand, my hearties!"

The summons was almost unnecessary. The "starboard watch" was—with the exception of one or two uncommonly heavy sleepers—already on deck pulling on its ducks and buckling its belts.

"Thar she breaches, thar she blows!" again came from the crow's-nest in the voice of a Stentor.

"Well done, Dick Barnes, you're the first to raise the oil," remarked one of the men, implying by the remark that the said Dick was fortunate enough to be the first to sight a whale.

"Where away now?" roared the captain, who was in a state of intense excitement.

"A mile an' a half to leeward, sir."

"Clear away the boats," shouted the captain.

"Masthead, ahoy! D'ye see that whale now?"

"Ay, ay, sir. Thar she blows!"

"Bear a hand, my hearties," cried the captain, as the men sprang to the boats which were swinging at the davits. "Get your tubs in! Clear your falls! Look alive, lads! Stand-by to lower! All ready?"

"All ready, sir."

"Thar she blows!" came again from the masthead with redoubled energy. "Sperm-whales, sir; there's a school of 'em."

"A *school* of them!" whispered Ailie, who had left her post at the mizzen-shrouds, and now stood by her father's side, looking on at the sudden hubbub in unspeakable amazement. "Do whales go to school?" she said, laughing.

"Out of the road, Ailie, my pet," cried her father hastily. "You'll get knocked over. Lower away, lads, lower away!"

Down went the starboard, larboard, and waist-boats as if the falls had been cut, and almost before you could wink the men literally tumbled over the side into them, took their places, and seized their oars.

“Here, Glynn, come with me, and I’ll show you a thing or two,” said the captain. “Jump in, lad; look sharp.”

Glynn instantly followed his commander into the starboard boat, and took the aft oar. Tim Rokens, being the harpooner of that boat, sat at the bow oar with his harpoons and lances beside him, and the whale-line coiled in a tub in the boat’s head. The captain steered.

And now commenced a race that taxed the boats’ crews to the utmost; for it is always a matter keenly contested by the different crews, who shall fix the first harpoon in the whale. The larboard boat was steered by Mr Millons, the first mate; the waist-boat by Mr Markham, the second mate—the latter an active man of about five-and-twenty, whose size and physical strength were herculean, and whose disposition was somewhat morose and gloomy.

“Now, lads, give way! That’s it! that’s the way. Bend your backs, now! *do* bend your backs,” cried the captain, as the three boats sprang from the ship’s side and made towards the nearest whale, with the white foam curling at their bow.

Several more whales appeared in sight spouting in all directions, and the men were wild with excitement.

“That’s it! Go it lads!” shouted Mr Millons, as the waist-boat began to creep ahead. “Lay it on! give way! What d’ye say, boys; shall we beat ’em?”

Captain Dunning stood in the stern-sheets of the starboard boat, almost dancing with excitement as he heard these words of encouragement.

“Give way, boys!” he cried. “They can’t do it! That whale’s ours—so it is. Only bend your backs! A steady pull! Pull like steam-tugs! That’s it! Bend the oars! Double ’em up! Smash ’em in bits, *do*!”

Without quite going the length of the captain’s last piece of advice, the men did their work nobly. They bent their strong backs with a will, and strained their sinewy arms to the utmost. Glynn, in particular, to whom the work was new, and therefore peculiarly exciting and interesting, almost tore the rowlocks out of the boat in his efforts to urge it on, and had the oar not been made of the toughest ash, there is no doubt that he would have obeyed the captain’s orders literally and have smashed it in bits.

On they flew like racehorses. Now one boat gained an inch on the others, then it lost ground again as the crew of another put forth additional energy, and the three danced over the glassy sea as if the inanimate planks had been suddenly endued with life, and inspired with the spirit that stirred the men.

A large sperm-whale lay about a quarter of a mile ahead, rolling lazily in the trough of the sea. Towards this the starboard boat now pulled with incredible speed, leaving the other two gradually astern. A number of whales rose in various directions. They had got into the midst of a shoal, or school of them, as the whale-men term it; and as several of these were nearer the other boats than the first whale was, they diverged towards them.

“There go flukes,” cried Rokens, as the whale raised its huge tail in the air and “sounded”—in other words, dived. For a few minutes the men lay on their oars, uncertain in what direction the whale would come up again; but their doubts were speedily removed by its rising within a few yards of the boat.

“Now, Rokens,” cried the captain; “now for it; give him the iron. Give way, lads; spring, boys. Softly now, softly.”

In another instant the boat’s bow was on the whale’s head, and Rokens buried a harpoon deep in its side.

“Stern all!” thundered the captain.

The men obeyed, and the boat was backed off the whale just in time to escape the blow of its tremendous flukes as it dived into the sea, the blue depths of which were instantly dyed red with the blood that flowed in torrents from the wound.

Down it went, carrying out the line at a rate that caused the chocks through which it passed to smoke. In a few minutes the line ceased to run out, and the whale returned to the surface. It had scarcely showed its nose, when the slack of the line was hauled in, and a second harpoon was fixed in its body.

Infuriated with pain, the mighty fish gave vent to a roar like a bull, rolled half over, and lashed the sea with his flukes, till, all round for many yards, it was churned into red slimy foam. Then he turned round, and dashed off with the speed of a locomotive engine, tearing the boat through the waves behind it, the water curling up like a white wall round the bows.

“She won’t stand that long,” muttered Glynn Proctor, as he rested on his oar, and looked over his shoulder at the straining line.

“That she will, boy,” said the captain; “and more than that, if need be. You’ll not be long of havin’ a chance of greasin’ your fingers, I’ll warrant.”

In a few minutes the speed began to slacken, and after a time they were able to haul in on the line. When the whale again came to the surface, a third harpoon was cleverly struck into it, and a spout of blood from its blow-hole showed that it was mortally wounded. In throwing the harpoon, Tim Rokens slipped his foot, and went down like a stone head-foremost into the sea. He came up again like a cork, and just as the boat flew past fortunately caught hold of Glynn Proctor’s hand. It was well that the grasp was a firm one, for the strain on their two arms was awful. In another minute Tim was in his place, ready with his lance to finish off the whale at its next rise.

Up it came again, foaming, breaching, and plunging from wave to wave, flinging torrents of blood and spray into the air. At one moment he reared his blunt gigantic head high above the sea; the next he buried his vast and quivering carcass deep in the gory brine, carrying down with him a perfect whirlpool of red foam. Then he rose again and made straight for the boat. Had he known his own power, he might have soon terminated the battle, and come off the victor, but fortunately he did not. Tim Rokens received his blunt nose on the point of his lance, and drove him back with mingled fury and terror. Another advance was made, and a successful lance-thrust delivered.

“That’s into his life,” cried the captain.

“So it is,” replied Rokens.

And so it was. A vital part had been struck. For some minutes the huge leviathan lashed and rolled and tossed in the trembling waves in his agony, while he spouted up gallons of blood with every throe; then he rolled over on his back, and lay extended a lifeless mass upon the waters.

“Now, lads; three cheers for our first whale. Hip! hip! hip!—”

The cheer that followed was given with all the energy and gusto inspired by a first victory, and it was repeated again and again, and over again, before the men felt themselves sufficiently relieved to commence the somewhat severe and tedious labour of towing the carcass to the ship.

It was a hard pull, for the whale had led them a long chase, and as the calm continued, those left aboard could not approach to meet the boats. The exhausted men were cheered, however, on getting aboard late that night, to find that the other boats had been equally successful, each of them having captured a sperm-whale.

Chapter Six. Disagreeable Changes—Sagacious Conversations, and a Terrible Accident

A striking and by no means a pleasant change took place in the general appearance of the *Red Eric* immediately after the successful chase detailed in the last chapter.

Before the arrival of the whales the decks had been beautifully clean and white, for Captain Dunning was proud of his ship, and fond of cleanliness and order. A few hours after the said arrival the decks were smeared with grease, oil, and blood, and everything from stem to stern became from that day filthy and dirty.

This was a sad change to poor Ailie, who had not imagined it possible that so sudden and disagreeable an alteration could take place. But there was no help for it; the duties of the fishery in which they were engaged required that the whales should not only be caught, but cut up, boiled down to oil, and stowed away in the hold in casks.

If the scene was changed for the worse a few hours after the cutting-up operations were begun, it became infinitely more so when the *try-works* were set going, and the melting-fires were lighted, and huge volumes of smoke begrimed the masts, and sails, and rigging. It was vain to think of clearing up; had they attempted that, the men would have been over-tasked without any good being accomplished. There was only one course open to those who didn't like it, and that was—to "grin and bear it."

"Cutting out" and "trying in" are the terms used by whale-men to denote the processes of cutting off the flesh or "blubber" from the whale's carcass, and reducing it to oil.

At an early hour on the following morning the first of these operations was commenced.

Ailie went about the decks, looking on with mingled wonder, interest, and disgust. She stepped about gingerly, as if afraid of coming in contact with slimy objects, and with her nose and mouth screwed up after the fashion of those who are obliged to endure bad smells. The expression of her face under the circumstances was amusing.

As for the men, they went about their work with relish, and total indifference as to consequences.

When the largest whale had been hauled alongside, ropes were attached to his head and tail, and the former was secured near the stern of the ship, while the latter was lashed to the bow; the cutting-tackle was then attached. This consisted of an arrangement of pulleys depending from the main-top, with a large blubber-hook at the end thereof. The cutting was commenced at the neck, and the hook attached; then the men hove on the windlass, and while the cutting was continued in a spiral direction round the whale's body, the tackle raised the mass of flesh until it reached the fixed blocks above. This mass, when it could be hauled up no higher, was then cut off, and stowed away under the name of a "blanket-piece." It weighed upwards of a ton. The hook being lowered and again attached, the process was continued until the whole was cut off. Afterwards, the head was severed from the body and hoisted on board, in order that the oil contained in the hollow of it might be baled out.

From the head of the first whale ten barrels of oil were obtained. The blubber yielded about eighty barrels.

When the "cutting out" was completed, and the remnants of bone and flesh were left to the sharks which swarmed round the vessel, revelling in their unusually rich banquet, the process of "trying in" commenced. "Trying in" is the term applied to the melting of the fat and the stowing of it away in barrels in the form of oil; and an uncommonly dirty process it is. The large "blanket-pieces" were cut into smaller portions, and put into the try-pots, which were kept in constant operation. At night the ship had all the appearance of a vessel on fire, and the scene on deck was particularly striking and unearthly.

One night several of the men were grouped on and around the windlass, chatting, singing, and “spinning yarns.” Ailie Dunning stood near them, lost in wonder and admiration; for the ears and eyes of the child were assailed in a manner never before experienced or dreamed of even in the most romantic mood of cloud-wandering.

It was a very dark night, darker than usual, and not a breath of wind ruffled the sea, which was like a sheet of undulating glass—for, be it remembered, there is no such thing at any time as absolute stillness in the ocean. At all times, even in the profoundest calm, the long, slow, gentle swell rises and sinks with unceasing regularity, like the bosom of a man in deep slumber.

Dense clouds of black smoke and occasional lurid sheets of flame rose from the try-works, which were situated between the foremast and the main-hatch. The tops of the masts were lost in the curling smoke, and the black waves of the sea gleamed and flashed in the red light all round the ship. One man stood in front of the melting-pot, pitching in pieces of blubber with a two-pronged pitchfork. Two comrades stood by the pots, stirring up their contents, and throwing their figures into wild uncouth attitudes, while the fire glared in their greasy faces, and converted the front of their entire persons into deep vermilion.

The oil was hissing in the try-pots; the rough weather-beaten faces of the men on the windlass were smeared, and their dirty-white ducks saturated, with oil. The decks were blood-stained; huge masses of flesh and blubber lay scattered about; sparks flew upwards in splendid showers as the men raked up the fires; the decks, bulwarks, railings, try-works, and windlass were covered with oil and slime, and glistening in the red glare. It was a terrible, murderous-looking scene, and filled Ailie’s mind with mingled feelings of wonder, disgust, and awe, as she leaned on a comparatively clean spot near the foremast, listening to the men and gazing at the rolling smoke and flames.

“Ain’t it beautiful?” said a short, fat little seaman named Gurney, who sat swinging his legs on the end of the windlass, and pointed, as he spoke, with the head of his pipe to a more than usually brilliant burst of sparks and flame that issued that moment from the works.

“Beautiful!” exclaimed a long-limbed, shambling fellow named Jim Scroggles, “why, that ain’t the word at all. Now, I calls it splendiferous.”

Scroggles looked round at his comrades, as if to appeal to their judgment as to the fitness of the word, but not receiving any encouragement, he thrust down the glowing tobacco in his pipe with the end of his little finger, and reiterated the word “splendiferous” with marked emphasis.

“Did ye ever see that word in Johnson?” inquired Gurney.

“Who’s Johnson?” said Scroggles, contemptuously.

“Wot, don’t ye know who Johnson is?” cried Gurney, in surprise.

“In course I don’t; how should I?” retorted Scroggles. “There’s ever so many Johnsons in the world; which on ’em all do you mean?”

“Why, I mean Johnson wot wrote the diksh’nary—the great lexikragofer.”

“Oh, it’s *him* you mean, is it? In course I’ve knowed him ever since I wos at school.”

A general laugh interrupted the speaker.

“At school!” cried Nickel Sling, who approached the group at that moment with a carving knife in his hand—he seldom went anywhere without an instrument of office in his hand—“At school! Wal now, that beats creation. If ye wos, I’m sartin ye only larned to forgit all ye orter to have remembered. I’d take a bet now, ye wosn’t at school as long as I’ve been settin’ on this here windlass.”

“Yer about right, Sling, it ’ud be impossible for me to be as *long* as you anywhere, ’cause everybody knows I’m only five fut two, whereas you’re six fut four!”

“Hear, hear!” shouted Dick Barnes—a man with a huge black beard, who the reader may perhaps remember was the first to “raise the oil.” “It’ll be long before you make another joke like that, Gurney. Come, now, give us a song, Gurney, do; there’s the cap’n’s darter standin’ by the foremast, a-waitin’ to hear ye. Give us ‘Long, long ago.’”

“Ah! that’s it, give us a song,” cried the men. “Come, there’s a good fellow.”

“Well, it’s so long ago since I sung that song, shipmates,” replied Gurney, “that I’ve bin and forgot it; but Tim Rokens knows it; where’s Rokens?”

“He’s in the watch below.”

In sea parlance, the men whose turn it is to take rest after their long watch on deck are somewhat facetiously said to belong to the “watch below.”

“Ah! that’s a pity; so we can’t have that ’ere partickler song. But I’ll give ye another, if ye don’t object.”

“No, no. All right; go ahead, Gurney! Is there a chorus to it?”

“Ay, in course there is. Wot’s a song without a chorus? Wot’s plum-duff without the plums? Wot’s a ship without a ’elm? It’s my opinion, shipmates, that a song without a chorus is no better than it should be. It’s wus nor nothin’. It puts them wot listens in the blues an’ the man wot sings into the stews—an’ sarve him right. I wouldn’t, no, I wouldn’t give the fag-end o’ nothin’ mixed in bucket o’ salt water for a song without a chorus—that’s flat; so here goes.”

Having delivered himself of these opinions in an extremely vigorous manner, and announced the fact that he was about to begin, Gurney cleared his throat and drew a number of violent puffs from his pipe in quick succession, in order to kindle that instrument into a glow which would last through the first verse and the commencement of the chorus. This he knew was sufficient, for the men, when once fairly started on the chorus, would infallibly go on to the end with or without his assistance, and would therefore afford him time for a few restorative whiffs.

“It hain’t got no name, lads.”

“Never mind, Gurney—all right—fire away.”

“Oh, I once know’d a man as hadn’t got a nose,
An’ this is how he come to hadn’t—
One cold winter night he went and got it froze—
By the pain he was well-nigh madden’d.
(Chorus.) Well-nigh madden’d,
By the pain he was well-nigh madden’d.

“Next day it swoll up as big as my head,
An’ it turn’d like a piece of putty;
It kivered up his mouth, oh, yes, so it did,
So he could not smoke his cutty.
(Chorus.) Smoke his cutty,
So he could not smoke his cutty.

“Next day it grew black, and the next day blue,
An’ tough as a junk of leather;
(Oh! he yelled, so he did, fit to pierce ye through)—
An’ then it fell off altogether!
(Chorus.) Fell off altogether,
An’ then it fell off altogether!

“But the morial is wot you’ve now got to hear,
An’ it’s good—as sure as a gun;
An’ you’ll never forget it, my messmates dear,
For this song it hain’t got none!
(Chorus.) Hain’t got none,
For this song it hain’t got none!”

The applause that followed this song was most enthusiastic, and evidently gratifying to Gurney, who assumed a modest deprecatory air as he proceeded to light his pipe, which had been allowed to go out at the third verse, the performer having become so engrossed in his subject as to have forgotten the interlude of puffs at that point.

“Well sung, Gurney. Who made it?” inquired Phil Briant, an Irishman, who, besides being a jack-of-all-trades and an able-bodied seaman, was at that time acting-assistant to the cook and steward, the latter—a half Spaniard and half negro, of Californian extraction—being unwell.

“I’m bound not to tell,” replied Gurney, with a conscious air.

“Ah, then, yer right, my boy, for it’s below the average entirely.”

“Come, Phil, none o’ yer chaff,” cried Dick Barnes, “that song desarnes somethin’ arter it. Suppose now, Phil, that you wos to go below and fetch the bread-kid.”

“Couldn’t do it,” replied Phil, looking solemn, “on no account wotiver.”

“Oh, nonsense, why not?”

“Cause its impossible. Why, if I did, sure that surly compound o’ all sorts o’ human blood would pitch into me with the carvin’-knife.”

“Who? Tarquin?” cried Dick Barnes, naming the steward.

“Ay, sure enough that same—Tarquin’s his name, an it’s kuriously befittin’ the haythen, for of all the cross-grained mixtures o’ buffalo, bear, bandicoot, and crackadile I iver seed, he’s out o’ sight—”

“Did I hear any one mention my name?” inquired the steward himself who came aft at that moment. He was a wild Spanish-like fellow, with a handsome-enough figure, and a swart countenance that might have been good-looking but for the thickish lips and nose and the bad temper that marked it. Since getting into the tropics, the sailors had modified their costumes considerably, and as each man had in some particular allowed himself a slight play of fancy, their appearance, when grouped together, was varied and picturesque. Most of them wore no shoes, and the caps of some were, to say the least, peculiar. Tarquin wore a broad-brimmed straw hat, with a conical crown, and a red silk sash tied round his waist.

“Yes, Tarquin,” replied Barnes, “we *wos* engaged in makin’ free-an’-easy remarks on you; and Phil Briant there gave us to understand that you wouldn’t let us have the bread—kid up. Now, it’s my opinion you ain’t goin’ to be so hard on us as that; you will let us have it up to comfort our hearts on this fine night, won’t you?”

The steward, whose green visage showed that he was too ill to enter into a dispute at that time, turned on his heel and walked aft, remarking that they might eat the bottom out o’ the ship, for all he cared.

“There now, you misbemannered Patlander, go and get it, or we’ll throw you overboard,” cried Scroggles, twisting his long limbs awkwardly as he shifted his position on the windlass.

“Now, then, shipmates, don’t go for to ax it,” said Briant, remaining immovable. “Don’t I know wot’s best for ye? Let me spaake to ye now. Did any of ye iver study midsin?”

“No!” cried several with a laugh.

“Sure I thought not,” continued Phil, with a patronising air, “or ye’d niver ask for the bread—kid out o’ saisin. Now I was in the medical way meself wance—ay, ye may laugh, but it’s throe—I wos ’prentice to a ’pothecary, an’ I’ve mixed up more midskins than would pisen the whole popilation of owld Ireland—barrin’ the praists, av coorse. And didn’t I hear the converse o’ all the doctors in the place? And wasn’t the word always—‘Be rigglar with yer mails—don’t ait, avic, more nor three times a day, and not too much, now. Be sparin’.’”

“Hah! ye long-winded grampus,” interrupted Dick Barnes, impatiently. “An’ warn’t the doctors right? Three times a day for sick folk, and six times—or more—for them wot’s well.”

“Hear, hear!” cried the others, while two of them seized Briant by the neck, and thrust him forcibly towards the after-hatch. “Bring up the kid, now; an’ if ye come without it, look out for squalls.”

“Och! worse luck,” sighed the misused assistant, as he disappeared.

In a few minutes Phil returned with the kid, which was a species of tray filled with broken sea-biscuit, which, when afloat, goes by the name of “bread.”

This was eagerly seized, for the appetites of sailors are always sharp, except immediately after meals. A quantity of the broken biscuit was put into a strainer, and fried in whale-oil, and the men sat round the kid to enjoy their luxurious feast, and relate their adventures—all of which were more or less marvellous, and many of them undoubtedly true.

The more one travels in this world of ours, and the more one reads of the adventures of travellers upon whose narratives we can place implicit confidence, the more we find that men do not now require, as they did of old, to draw upon their imaginations for marvellous tales of wild, romantic adventure, in days gone by, travellers were few; foreign lands were almost unknown. Not many books were written; and of the few that were, very few were believed. In the present day men of undoubted truthfulness have roamed far and wide over the whole world, their books are numbered by hundreds, and much that was related by ancient travellers, but not believed, has now been fully corroborated. More than that, it is now known that men have every where received, as true, statements which modern discovery has proved to be false, and on the other hand they have often refused to believe what is now ascertained to be literally true.

We would suggest, in passing, that a lesson might be learned from this fact—namely, that we ought to receive a statement in regard to a foreign land, not according to the probability or the improbability of the statement itself, but according to the credibility of him who makes it. Ailie Dunning had a trustful disposition; she acted on neither of the above principles. She believed all she heard, poor thing, and therefore had a head pretty well stored with mingled fact and nonsense.

While the men were engaged with their meal, Dr Hopley came on deck and found her leaning over the stern, looking down at the waves which shone with sparkling phosphorescent light. An almost imperceptible breeze had sprung up, and the way made by the vessel as she passed through the water was indicated by a stream of what appeared lambent blue flame.

“Looking at the fish, Ailie, as usual?” said the doctor as he came up. “What are they saying to you to-night?”

“I’m not looking at the fish,” answered Ailie; “I’m looking at the fire—no, not the fire; papa said it wasn’t fire, but it’s so like it, I can scarcely call it anything else. What *is* it, doctor?”

“It is called phosphorescence,” replied the doctor, leaning over the bulwarks, and looking down at the fiery serpent that seemed as if it clung to the ship’s rudder. “But I dare say you don’t know what that means. You know what fire-flies and glow-worms are?”

“Oh! yes; I’ve often caught them.”

“Well, there are immense numbers of very small and very thin jelly-like creatures in the sea, so thin and so transparent that they can scarcely be observed in the water. These Medusae, as they are called, possess the power of emitting light similar to that of the fire-fly. In short, Ailie, they are the fire-flies and glow-worms of the ocean.”

The child listened with wonder, and for some minutes remained silent. Before she could again speak, there occurred one of those incidents which are generally spoken of as “most unexpected” and sudden, but which, nevertheless, are the result of natural causes, and might have been prevented by means of a little care.

The wind, as we have said, was light, so light that it did not distend the sails; the boom of the spanker-sail hung over the stern, and the spanker-braces lay slack along the seat on which Ailie and the doctor knelt. A little gust of wind came: it was not strong—a mere puff; but the man at the wheel was not attending to his duty: the puff, light as it was, caused the spanker to jibe—that is to fly over from one side of the ship to the other—the heavy boom passed close over the steersman’s head as he

cried, “Look out!” The braces tautened, and in so doing they hurled Dr Hopley violently to the deck, and tossed Ailie Dunning over the bulwarks into the sea.

It happened at that moment that Glynn Proctor chanced to step on deck.

“Hallo! what’s wrong?” cried the youth, springing forward, catching the doctor by the coat, as he was about to spring overboard, and pulling him violently back, under the impression that he was deranged.

The doctor pointed to the sea, and, with a look of horror, gasped the word “Ailie.”

In an instant Glynn released his hold, plunged over the stern of the ship, and disappeared in the waves.

Chapter Seven.

The Rescue—Preparations for a Storm

It is impossible to convey by means of words an adequate idea of the terrible excitement and uproar that ensued on board the *Red Eric* after the events narrated in the last chapter. From those on deck who witnessed the accident there arose a cry so sharp, that it brought the whole crew from below in an instant. But there was no confusion. The men were well trained. Each individual knew his post, and whale-men are accustomed to a sudden and hasty summons. The peculiarity of the present one, it is true, told every man in an instant that something was wrong, but each mechanically sprang to his post, while one or two shouted to ascertain what had happened, or to explain.

But the moment Captain Dunning's voice was heard there was perfect silence.

"Clear away the starboard-quarter-boat," he cried, in a deep, firm tone.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Stand-by the falls—lower away!"

There was no occasion to urge the sailors; they sprang to the work with the fervid celerity of men who knew that life or death depended on their speed. In less time than it takes to relate, the boat was leaping over the long ocean swell, as it had never yet done in chase of the whale, and, in a few seconds, passed out of the little circle of light caused by the fires and into the gloom that surrounded the ship.

The wind had been gradually increasing during all these proceedings, and although no time had been lost, and the vessel had been immediately brought up into the wind, Ailie and Glynn were left struggling in the dark sea a long way behind ere the quarter-boat could be lowered; and now that it was fairly afloat, there was still the danger of its failing to hit the right direction of the objects of which it was in search.

After leaping over the stern, Glynn Proctor, the moment he rose to the surface, gave a quick glance at the ship, to make sure of her exact position, and then struck out in a straight line astern, for he knew that wherever Ailie fell, there she would remain struggling until she sank. Glynn was a fast and powerful swimmer. He struck out with desperate energy, and in a few minutes the ship was out of sight behind him. Then he paused suddenly, and letting his feet sink until he attained an upright position, trod the water and raised himself breast-high above the surface, at the same time listening intently, for he began to fear that he might have overshot his mark. No sound met his straining ear save the sighing of the breeze and the ripple of the water as it lapped against his chest. It was too dark to see more than a few yards in any direction.

Glynn knew that each moment lost rendered his chance of saving the child terribly slight. He shouted "Ailie!" in a loud, agonising cry, and swam forward again with redoubled energy, continuing the cry from time to time, and raising himself occasionally to look round him. The excitement of his mind, and the intensity with which it was bent on the one great object, rendered him at first almost unobservant of the flight of time. But suddenly the thought burst upon him that fully ten minutes or a quarter of an hour had elapsed since Ailie fell overboard, and that no one who could not swim could exist for half that time in deep water. He shrieked with agony at the thought, and, fancying that he must have passed the child, he turned round and swam desperately towards the point where he supposed the ship lay. Then he thought, "What if I have turned just as I was coming up with her?" So he turned about again, but as the hopelessness of his efforts once more occurred to him, he lost all presence of mind, and began to shout furiously, and to strike out wildly in all directions.

In the midst of his mad struggles his hand struck an object floating near him. Instantly he felt his arm convulsively grasped, and the next moment he was seized round the neck in a gripe so violent that it almost choked him. He sank at once, and the instinct of self-preservation restored his presence of

mind. With a powerful effort he tore Ailie from her grasp, and quickly raised himself to the surface, where he swam gently with his left hand, and held the struggling child at arm's-length with his right.

The joy caused by the knowledge that she had still life to struggle infused new energy into Glynn's well-nigh exhausted frame, and he assumed as calm and cheerful a tone as was possible under the circumstances when he exclaimed—"Ailie, Ailie, don't struggle, dear, I'll save you *if you keep quiet.*"

Ailie was quiet in a moment. She felt in the terror of her young heart an almost irresistible desire to clutch at Glynn's neck; but the well-known voice reassured her, and her natural tendency to place blind, implicit confidence in others, served her in this hour of need, for she obeyed his injunctions at once.

"Now, dear," said Glynn, with nervous rapidity, "don't grasp me, else we shall sink. Trust me. *I'll never let you go.* Will you trust me?"

Ailie gazed wildly at her deliverer through her wet and tangled tresses, and with great difficulty gasped the word "Yes," while she clenched the garments on her labouring bosom with her little hands, as if to show her determination to do as she was bid.

Glynn at once drew her towards him and rested her head on his shoulder. The child gave vent to a deep, broken sigh of relief, and threw her right arm round his neck, but the single word "Ailie," uttered in a remonstrative tone, caused her to draw it quickly back and again grasp her breast.

All this time Glynn had been supporting himself by that process well-known to swimmers as "treading water," and had been so intent upon his purpose of securing the child, that he failed to observe the light of a lantern gleaming in the far distance on the sea, as the boat went ploughing hither and thither, the men almost breaking the oars in their desperate haste, and the captain standing in the stern-sheets, pale as death, holding the light high over his head, and gazing with a look of unutterable agony into the surrounding gloom.

Glynn now saw the distant light, and exerting his voice to the utmost, gave vent to a prolonged cry. Ailie looked up in her companion's face while he listened intently. The moving light became stationary for a moment, and a faint reply floated back to them over the waves. Again Glynn raised his voice to the utmost, and the cheer that came back told him that he had been heard.

But the very feeling of relief at the prospect of immediate deliverance had well-nigh proved fatal to them both; for Glynn experienced a sudden relaxation of his whole system, and he felt as if he could not support himself and his burden a minute longer.

"Ailie," he said faintly but quickly, "we shall be saved if you obey at *once*; if not, we shall be drowned. Lay your two hands on my breast, and let yourself sink *down to the very lips.*"

Glynn turned on his back as he spoke, spread out his arms and legs to their full extent, let his head fall back, until it sank, leaving only his lips, nose, and chin above water, and lay as motionless as if he had been dead. And now came poor Ailie's severest trial. When she allowed herself to sink, and felt the water rising about her ears, and lipping round her mouth, terror again seized upon her; but she felt Glynn's breast heaving under her hands, so she raised her eyes to heaven and prayed silently to Him who is the only true deliverer from dangers. Her self-possession was restored, and soon she observed the boat bearing down on the spot, and heard the men as they shouted to attract attention.

Ailie tried to reply, but her tiny voice was gone, and her soul was filled with horror as she saw the boat about to pass on. In her agony she began to struggle. This roused Glynn, who had rested sufficiently to have recovered a slight degree of strength. He immediately raised his head, and uttered a wild cry as he grasped Ailie again with his arm.

The rowers paused; the light of the lantern gleamed over the sea, and fell upon the spray tossed up by Glynn. Next moment the boat swept up to them—and they were saved.

The scene that followed baffles all description. Captain Dunning fell on his knees beside Ailie, who was too much exhausted to speak, and thanked God, in the name of Jesus Christ, again and again for her deliverance. A few of the men shouted; others laughed hysterically; and some wept freely as

they crowded round their shipmate, who, although able to sit up, could not speak except in disjointed sentences. Glynn, however, recovered quickly, and even tried to warm himself by pulling an oar before they regained the ship, but Ailie remained in a state of partial stupor, and was finally carried on board and down into the cabin, and put between warm blankets by her father and Dr Hopley.

Meanwhile, Glynn was hurried forward, and dragged down into the forecabin by the whole crew, who seemed unable to contain themselves for joy, and expressed their feelings in ways that would have been deemed rather absurd on ordinary occasions.

“Change yer clo’s, avic, at wance,” cried Phil Briant, who was the most officious and violent in his offers of assistance to Glynn. “Och! but it’s wet ye are, darlin’. Give me a howld.”

This last request had reference to the right leg of Glynn’s trousers, which happened to be blue cloth of a rather thin quality, and which therefore clung to his limbs with such tenacity that it was a matter of the utmost difficulty to get them off.

“That’s your sort, Phil—a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together,” cried Dick Barnes, hurrying forward, with a bundle of garments in his arms. “Here’s dry clo’s for him.”

“Have a care, Phil,” shouted Gurney, who stood behind Glynn and held him by the shoulders; “it’ll give way.”

“Niver a taste,” replied the reckless Irishman. But the result proved that Gurney was right, for the words had scarce escaped his lips when the garment parted at the knee, and Phil Briant went crashing back among a heap of tin pannikins, pewter plates, blocks, and cordage. A burst of laughter followed, of course, but the men’s spirits were too much roused to be satisfied with this, so they converted the laugh into a howl, and prolonged it into a cheer; as if their comrade had successfully performed a difficult and praiseworthy deed.

“Hold on, lads,” cried Glynn. “I’m used up, I can’t stand it.”

“Here you are,” shouted Nickel Sling, pushing the men violently aside, and holding a steaming tumbler of hot brandy-and-water under Glynn’s nose. “Down with it; that’s the stuff to get up the steam fit to bust yer biler, I calc’late.”

The men looked on for a moment in silence, while Glynn drank, as if they expected some remarkable chemical change to take place in his constitution.

“Och! ain’t it swate?” inquired Phil Briant, who, having gathered himself up, now stood rubbing his shoulder with the fragment of the riven garment. “Av I wasn’t a taytotaler, it’s meself would like some of that same.”

In a few minutes our hero was divested of his wet garments, rubbed perfectly dry by his kind messmates, and clad in dry costume, after which he felt almost as well as if nothing unusual had happened to him. The men meanwhile cut their jokes at him or at each other as they stood round and watched, assisted, or retarded the process. As for Tim Rokens, who had been in the boat and witnessed the rescue, he stood gazing steadfastly at Glynn without uttering a word, keeping his thumbs the while hooked in the arm-holes of his vest, and his legs very much apart. By degrees—as he thought on what had passed, and the narrow escape poor little Ailie had had, and the captain’s tears, things he had never seen the captain shed before and had not believed the captain to have possessed—as he pondered these things, we say, his knotty visage began to work, and his cast-iron chin began to quiver, and his shaggy brows contracted, and his nose, besides becoming purple, began to twist, as if it were an independent member of his face, and he came, in short, to that climax which is familiarly expressed by the words “bursting into tears.”

But if anybody thinks the act, on the part of Tim Rokens, bore the smallest resemblance to the generally received idea of that sorrowful affection, “anybody,” we take leave to tell him, is very much mistaken. The bold harpooner did it thus—he suddenly unhooked his right hand from the arm-hole of his vest, and gave his right thigh a slap which produced a crack that would have made a small pistol envious; then he uttered a succession of ferocious roars, that might have quite well indicated pain, or grief, or madness, or a drunken cheer, and, un-hooking the left hand, he doubled himself up,

and thrust both knuckles into his eyes. The knuckles were wet when he pulled them out of his eyes, but he dried them on his pantaloons, bolted up the hatchway, and rushing up to the man at the wheel, demanded in a voice of thunder—“How’s ’er head?”

“Sou’-sou’-east-and-by-east,” replied the man, in some surprise.

“Sou’-sou’-east-and-by-east!” repeated Mr Rokens, in a savage growl of authority, as if he were nothing less than the admiral of the Channel Fleet. “That’s two points and a half off yer course, sir. Luff, luff, you—you—”

At this point Tim Rokens turned on his heel, and began to walk up and down the deck as calmly as if nothing whatever had occurred to disturb his equanimity.

“The captain wants Glynn Proctor,” said the second mate, looking down the fore-hatch.

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered Glynn, ascending, and going aft.

“Ailie wants to see you, Glynn, my boy,” said Captain Dunning, as the former entered the cabin; “and I want to speak to you myself—to thank you Glynn. Ah, lad! you can’t know what a father’s heart feels when— Go to her, boy.” He grasped the youth’s hand, and gave it a squeeze that revealed infinitely more of his feelings than could have been done by words.

Glynn returned the squeeze, and opening the door of Ailie’s private cabin, entered and sat down beside her crib.

“Oh, Glynn, I want to speak to you; I want to thank you. I love you so much for jumping into the sea after me,” began the child, eagerly, and raising herself on one elbow while she held out her hand.

“Ailie,” interrupted Glynn, taking her hand, and holding up his finger to impose silence, “you obeyed me *in* the water, and now I insist on your obedience *out* of the water. If you don’t, I’ll leave you. You’re still too weak to toss about and speak loud in this way. Lie down, my pet.”

Glynn kissed her forehead, and forced her gently back on the pillow.

“Well, I’ll be good, but don’t leave me yet, Glynn. I’m much better. Indeed, I feel quite strong. Oh! it was good of you—”

“There you go again.”

“I love you,” said Ailie.

“I’ve no objection to that,” replied Glynn, “but don’t excite yourself. But tell me, Ailie, how was it that you managed to keep afloat so long? The more I think of it the more I am filled with amazement, and, in fact, I’m half inclined to think that God worked a miracle in order to save you.”

“I don’t know,” said Ailie, looking very grave and earnest, as she always did when our Maker’s name happened to be mentioned. “Does God work miracles still?”

“Men say not,” replied Glynn.

“I’m sure I don’t quite understand what a miracle is,” continued Ailie, “although Aunt Martha and Aunt Jane have often tried to explain it to me. Is floating on your back a miracle?”

“No,” said Glynn, laughing; “it isn’t.”

“Well, that’s the way I was saved. You know, ever since I can remember, I have bathed with Aunt Martha and Aunt Jane, and they taught me how to float—and it’s so nice, you can’t think how nice it is—and I can do it so easily now, that I never get frightened. But, oh!—when I was tossed over the side of the ship into the sea I *was* frightened just. I don’t think I *ever* got such a fright. And I splashed about for some time, and swallowed some water, but I got upon my back somehow. I can’t tell how it was, for I was too frightened to try to do anything. But when I found myself floating as I used to do long ago, I felt my fear go away a little, and I shut my eyes and prayed, and then it went away altogether; and I felt quite sure you would come to save me, and you *did* come, Glynn, and I know it was God who sent you. But I became a good deal frightened again when I thought of the sharks, and—”

“Now, Ailie, stop!” said Glynn. “You’re forgetting your promise, and exciting yourself again.”

“So she is, and I must order you out, Master Glynn,” said the doctor, opening the door, and entering at that moment.

Glynn rose, patted the child's head, and nodded cheerfully as he left the little cabin.

The captain caught him as he passed, and began to reiterate his thanks, when their conversation was interrupted by the voice of Mr Millons, who put his head in at the skylight and said—"Squall coming, sir, I think."

"So, so," cried the captain, running upon deck. "I've been looking for it. Call all hands, Mr Millons, and take in sail—every rag, except the storm-trysails."

Glynn hurried forward, and in a few minutes every man was at his post. The sails were furled, and every preparation made for a severe squall; for Captain Dunning knew that that part of the coast of Africa off which the *Red Eric* was then sailing was subject to sudden squalls, which, though usually of short duration, were sometimes terrific in their violence.

"Is everything snug, Mr Millons?"

"All snug, sir."

"Then let the men stand-by till it's over."

The night had grown intensely dark, but away on the starboard-quarter the heavens appeared of an ebony blackness that was quite appalling. This appearance, that rose on the sky like a shroud of crape, quickly spread upwards until it reached the zenith. Then a few gleams of light seemed to illuminate it very faintly, and a distant hissing noise was heard.

A dead calm surrounded the ship, which lay like a log on the water, and the crew, knowing that nothing more could be done in the way of preparation, awaited the bursting of the storm with uneasy feelings. In a few minutes its distant roar was heard,—like muttered thunder. On it came, with a steady continuous roar, as if chaos were about to be restored, and the crashing wreck of elements were being hurled in mad fury against the yet unshattered portions of creation. Another second, and the ship was on her beam-ends, and the sea and sky were white as milk as the wind tore up the waves and beat them flat, and whirled away broad sheets of driving foam.

Chapter Eight.

The Storm, and its Results

Although the *Red Eric* was thrown on her beam-ends, or nearly so, by the excessive violence of the squall, the preparations to meet it had been so well made that she righted again almost immediately, and now flew before the wind under bare poles with a velocity that was absolutely terrific.

Ailie had been nearly thrown out of her berth when the ship lay over, and now when she listened to the water hissing and gurgling past the little port that lighted her cabin, and felt the staggering of the vessel, as burst after burst of the hurricane almost tore the masts out of her, she lay trembling with anxiety and debating with herself whether or not she ought to rise and go on deck.

Captain Dunning well knew that his child would be naturally filled with fear, for this was the first severe squall she had ever experienced, so, as he could not quit the deck himself, he called Glynn Proctor to him and sent him down with a message.

“Well, Ailie,” said Glynn, cheerfully, as he opened the door and peeped in; “how d’ye get on, dear? The captain has sent me to say that the worst o’ this blast is over, and you’ve nothing to fear.”

“I am glad to hear that, Glynn,” replied the child, holding out her hand, while a smile lighted up her face and smoothed out the lines of anxiety from her brow. “Come and sit by me, Glynn, and tell me what like it is. I wish so much that I had been on deck. Was it grand, Glynn?”

“It was uncommonly grand; it was even terrible—but I cannot sit with you more than a minute, else my shipmates will say that I’m skulking.”

“Skulking, Glynn! What is that?”

“Why, it’s—it’s shirking work, you know,” said Glynn, somewhat puzzled.

Ailie laughed. “But you forget that I don’t know what ‘shirking’ means. You must explain that too.”

“How terribly green you are, Ailie.”

“No! am I?” exclaimed the child in some surprise. “What *can* have done it? I’m not sick.”

Glynn laughed outright at this, and then proceeded to explain the meaning of the slang phraseology he had used. “Green, you must know, means ignorant,” he began.

“How funny! I wonder why.”

“Well, I don’t know exactly. Perhaps it’s because when a fellow’s asked to answer questions he don’t understand, he’s apt to turn either blue with rage or yellow with fear—or both; and that, you know, would make him green. I’ve heard it said that it implies a comparison of men to plants—very young ones, you know, that are just up, just born, as it were, and have not had much experience of life, are green of course—but I like my own definition best.”

It may perhaps be scarcely necessary to remark that our hero was by no means singular in this little preference of his own definition to that of any one else!

“Well, and what does skulking mean, and shirking work?” persisted Ailie.

“It means hiding so as to escape duty, my little catechist; but—”

“Hallo! Glynn, Glynn Proctor,” roared the first mate from the deck—“where’s that fellow? Skulking, I’ll be bound. Lay aloft there and shake out the foretopsail. Look alive.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” was the ready response as the men sprang to obey.

“There, you have it now, Ailie, explained and illustrated,” cried Glynn, starting up. “Here I am, at this minute in a snug, dry berth chatting to you, and in half a minute more I’ll be out on the end o’ the foreyard holding on for bare life, with the wind fit to tear off my jacket and blow my ducks into ribbons, and the rain and spray dashing all over me fit to blot me out altogether. There’s a pretty little idea to turn over in your mind, Ailie, while I’m away.”

Glynn closed the door at the last word, and, as he had prophesied, was, within half a minute, in the unenviable position above referred to.

The force of the squall was already broken, and the men were busy setting close-reefed topsails, but the rain that followed the squall bid fair to “blot them out,” as Glynn said, altogether. It came down, not in drops, but in masses, which were caught up by the fierce gale and mingled with the spray, and hurled about and on with such violent confusion, that it seemed as though the whole creation were converted into wind and water, and had engaged in a war of extermination, the central turmoil of which was the *Red Eric*.

But the good ship held on nobly. Although not a fast sailer she was an excellent sea-boat, and danced on the billows like a sea-mew. The squall, however, was not over. Before the topsails had been set many minutes it burst on them again with redoubled fury, and the main-topsail was instantly blown into ribbons. Glynn and his comrades were once more ordered aloft to furl the remaining sails, but before this could be done the foretopmast was carried away, and in falling it tore away the jib-boom also. At the same moment a tremendous sea came rolling on astern; in the uncertain light it looked like a dark moving mountain that was about to fall on them.

“Luff, luff a little—steady!” roared the captain, who saw the summit of the wave toppling over the stern, and who fully appreciated the danger of being “pooped,” which means having a wave launched upon the quarterdeck.

“Steady it is,” replied the steersman.

“Look out!” shouted the captain and several of the men, simultaneously.

Every one seized hold of whatever firm object chanced to be within reach; next moment the black billow fell like an avalanche on the poop, and rushing along the decks, swept the waist-boat and all the loose spars into the sea. The ship staggered under the shock, and it seemed to every one on deck that she must inevitably founder; but in a few seconds she recovered, the water gushed from the scuppers and sides in cataracts, and once more they drove swiftly before the gale.

In about twenty minutes the wind moderated, and while some of the men went aloft to clear away the wreck of the topsails and make all snug, others went below to put on dry garments.

“That was a narrow escape, Mr Millons,” remarked the captain, as he stood by the starboard-rails.

“It was, sir,” replied the mate. “It’s a good job too, sir, that none o’ the ’ands were washed overboard.”

“It is, indeed, Mr Millons; we’ve reason to be thankful for that; but I’m sorry to see that we’ve lost our waist-boat.”

“We’ve lost our spare sticks, sir,” said the mate, with a lugubrious face, while he wrung the brine out of his hair; “and I fear we’ve nothink left fit to make a noo foretopmast or a jib-boom.”

“True, Mr Millons; we shall have to run to the nearest port on the African coast to refit; luckily we are not very far from it. Meanwhile, tell Mr Markham to try the well; it is possible that we may have sprung a leak in all this straining, and see that the wreck of the foretopmast is cleared away. I shall go below and consult the chart; if any change in the weather takes place, call me at once.”

“Yes, sir,” answered the mate, as he placed his hand to windward of his mouth, in order to give full force to the terrific tones in which he proceeded to issue his captain’s commands.

Captain Dunning went below, and looking into Ailie’s berth, nodded his wet head several times, and smiled with his damp visage benignly—which acts, however well meant and kindly they might be, were, under the circumstances, quite unnecessary, seeing that the child was sound asleep. The captain then dried his head and face with a towel about as rough as the mainsail of a seventy-four, and with a violence that would have rubbed the paint off the figurehead of the *Red Eric*. Then he sat down to his chart, and having pondered over it for some minutes, he went to the foot of the companion-ladder and roared up—“Lay the course nor’-nor’-east-and-by-nor’-half-nor’, Mr Millons.”

To which Mr Millons replied in an ordinary tone, “Ay, ay, sir,” and then roared— “Lay her head nor'-nor'-east-and-by-nor'-half-nor’,” in an unnecessarily loud and terribly fierce tone of voice to the steersman, as if that individual were in the habit of neglecting to obey orders, and required to be perpetually threatened in what may be called a tone of implication.

The steersman answered in what, to a landsman, would have sounded as a rather amiable and forgiving tone of voice— “Nor'-nor'-east-and-by-nor'-half-nor’ it is, sir;” and thereupon the direction of the ship’s head was changed, and the *Red Eric*, according to Tim Rokens, “bowled along” with a stiff breeze on the quarter, at the rate of ten knots, for the west coast of Africa.

Chapter Nine.
Rambles on Shore, and Strange Things
and Ceremonies Witnessed There

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.