MUNROE KIRK

UNDER THE GREAT BEAR

Kirk Munroe

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Munroe K.

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Содержание

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"Above this far northern sea Ursa
Major sailed so directly overhead
that he seemed like to fall on us."

—From an early voyage to the coast of Labrador.

CHAPTER I.
GRADUATION: BUT WHAT NEXT?

"Heigh-ho! I wonder what comes next?" sighed Cabot Grant as he tumbled wearily into bed.

The day just ended marked the close of a most important era in his life; for on it he had been graduated from the Technical Institute, in which he had studied his chosen profession, and the coveted sheepskin that entitled him to sign M.E. in capital letters after his name had been in his possession but a few hours.

Although Cabot came of an old New England family, and had been given every educational advantage, he had not graduated with honours, having, in fact, barely scraped through his final examination. He had devoted altogether too much time to athletics, and to the congenial task of acquiring popularity, to have much left for study. Therefore, while it had been pleasant to be one of the best-liked fellows in the Institute, captain of its football team, and a leading figure in the festivities of the day just ended, now that it was all over our lad was regretting that he had not made a still better use of his opportunities.

A number of his classmates had already been offered fine positions in the business world now looming so ominously close before him. Little pale-faced Dick Chandler, for instance, was to start at once for South Africa, in the interests of a wealthy corporation. Ned Burnett was to be assistant engineer of a famous copper mine; a world-renowned electrical company had secured the services of Smith Redfield, and so on through a dozen names, no one of which was as well known as his, but all outranking it on the graduate list of that day.

Cabot had often heard that the career of Institute students was closely watched by individuals, firms, and corporations in need of young men for responsible positions, and had more than once resolved to graduate with a rank that should attract the attention of such persons. But there had been so much to do besides study that had seemed more important at the time, that he had allowed day after day to slip by without making the required effort, and now it appeared that no one wanted him.

Yes, there was one person who had made him a proposition that very day. Thorpe Walling, the wealthiest fellow in the class, and one of its few members who had failed to gain a diploma, had said:

"Look here, Grant, what do you say to taking a year's trip around the world with me, while I coach for a degree next June? There is no such educator as travel, you know, and we'll make a point of going to all sorts of places where we can pick up ideas. At the same time it'll be no end of a lark."

"I don't know," Cabot had replied doubtfully, though his face had lighted at the mere idea of taking such a trip. "I'd rather do that than almost anything else I know of, but–"

"If you are thinking of the expense," broke in the other.

"It isn't that," interrupted Cabot, "but it seems somehow as though I ought to be doing something more in the line of business. Anyway, I can't give you an answer until I have seen my guardian, who has sent me word to meet him in New York day after to-morrow. I'll let you know what he says, and if everything is all right, perhaps I'll go with you."

With this the matter had rested, and during the manifold excitements of the day our lad had not given it another thought, until he tumbled into bed, wondering what would happen next. Then for a long time he lay awake, considering Thorpe's proposition, and wishing that it had been made by any other fellow in the class.

Until about the time of entering the Technical Institute, from which he was just graduated, Cabot Grant, who was an only child, had been blessed with as happy a home as ever a boy enjoyed. Then in a breath it was taken from him by a railway accident, that had caused the instant death of his mother, and which the father had only survived long enough to provide for his son's immediate future by making a will. By its terms his slender fortune was placed in the hands of a trust and

investment company, who were constituted the boy's guardians, and enjoined to give their ward a liberal education along such lines as he himself might choose.

The corporation thus empowered had been faithful to its trust, and had carried out to the letter the instructions of their deceased client during the past five years. Now less than a twelvemonth of their guardianship remained and it was to plan for his disposal of this time that Cabot had been summoned to New York.

He had never met the president of the corporation, and it was with no little curiosity concerning him that he awaited, in a sumptuously appointed anteroom, his turn for an audience with the busy man. At length he was shown into a plainly furnished private office occupied by but two persons, one somewhat past middle age, with a shrewd, smooth-shaven face, and the other much younger, who was evidently a private secretary.

Of course Cabot instantly knew the former to be President Hepburn; and also, to his surprise, recognised him as one who had occupied a prominent position on the platform of the Institute hall when he had graduated two days earlier.

"Yes," said Mr. Hepburn, in a crisp, business tone, as he noted the lad's flash of recognition, "I happened to be passing through and dropped in to see our ward graduate. I was, of course, disappointed that you did not take higher rank. At the same time I concluded not to make myself known to you, for fear of interfering with some of your plans for the day. It also seemed to me better that we should talk business here. Now, with your Institute career ended, how do you propose to spend the remainder of your minority? I ask because, as you doubtless know, our instructions are to consult your wishes in all matters, and conform to them as far as possible."

"I appreciate your kindness in that respect," replied Cabot, who was somewhat chilled by this business-like reception, "and have decided, if the funds remaining in your hands are sufficient for the purpose, to spend the coming year in foreign travel; in fact, to take a trip around the world."

"With any definite object in view," inquired Mr. Hepburn, "or merely for pleasure?"

"With the definite object of studying my chosen profession wherever I may find it practised."

"Um! Just so. Do you propose to take this trip alone or in company?"

"I propose to go with Thorpe Walling, one of my classmates."

"Son of the late General Walling, and a man who failed to graduate, is he not?"

"Yes, sir. Do you know him?"

"I knew his father, and wish you had chosen some other companion."

"I did not choose him. He chose me, and invited me to go with him."

"At your own expense, I suppose?"

"Certainly! I could not have considered his proposition otherwise."

"Of course not," agreed Mr. Hepburn, "seeing that you have funds quite sufficient for such a venture, if used with economy. And you have decided that you would rather spend the ensuing year in foreign travel with Thorpe Walling than do anything else?"

"I think I have, sir."

"Very well, my boy. While I cannot say that I consider your decision the best that could be made, I have no valid objections to offer, and am bound to grant as far as possible your reasonable desires. So you have my consent to this scheme, if not my whole approval. When do you plan to start?"

"Thorpe wishes to go at once."

"Then, if you will call here to-morrow morning at about this hour, I will have arranged for your letter of credit, and anything else that may suggest itself for making your trip a pleasant one."

"Thank you, sir," said Cabot, who, believing the interview to be ended, turned to leave the room.

"By the way," continued Mr. Hepburn, "there is another thing I wish to mention. Can you recommend one of your recent classmates for an important mission, to be undertaken at once to an out-of-the-way part of the world? He must be a young man of good morals, able to keep his business affairs to himself, not afraid of hard work, and willing as well as physically able to endure hardships.

His intelligence and mental fitness will, of course, be guaranteed by the Institute's diploma. Our company is in immediate need of such a person, and will engage him at a good salary for a year, with certain prospects of advancement, if he gives satisfaction. Think it over and let me know in the morning if you have hit upon one whom you believe would meet those requirements. In the meantime please do not mention the subject to any one."

Charged with this commission, and relieved that the dreaded interview was ended, Cabot hastened uptown to a small secret society club of which he was a non-resident member. There he wrote a note to Thorpe Walling, accepting his invitation, and expressing a readiness to set forth at once on their proposed journey. This done, he joined a group of fellows who were discussing summer plans in the reading-room.

"What are you going in for, Grant?" asked one. "Is your summer to be devoted to work or play?"

"Both," laughed Cabot. "Thorpe Walling and I are to take an educational trip around the world, during which we hope to have great fun and accomplish much work."

"Ho, ho!" jeered he who had put the question. "That's a good one. The idea of coupling 'Torpid' Walling's name with anything that savors of work. You'll have a good time fast enough. But I'll wager anything you like, that in his company you will circumnavigate the globe without having done any work harder than spending money. No, no, my dear boy, 'Torpid' is not the chap to encourage either mental or physical effort in his associates. Better hunt some other companion, or even go by your lonely, if you really want to accomplish anything."

These words recurred to our lad many times during the day, and when he finally fell asleep that night, after fruitlessly wondering who of his many friends he should recommend to President Hepburn, they were still ringing in his ears.

CHAPTER II.
AN OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

Thorpe Walling had never been one of Cabot Grant's particular friends, nor did the latter now regard with unmixed pleasure the idea of a year's intimate association with him. He had accepted the latter's invitation because nothing else seemed likely to offer, and he could not bear to have the other fellows, especially those whose class standing had secured them positions, imagine that he was not also in demand. Besides, the thought of a trip around the world was certainly very enticing; any opposition to the plan would have rendered him the more desirous of carrying it out. But in his interview with his guardian he had gained his point so easily that the concession immediately lost half its value. Even as he wrote his note to Thorpe he wondered if he really wanted to go with him, and after that conversation in the club reading-room he was almost certain that he did not. If Mr. Hepburn had only offered him employment, how gladly he would have accepted it and declined Thorpe's invitation; but his guardian had merely asked him to recommend some one else.

"Which shows," thought Cabot bitterly, "what he thinks of me, and of my fitness for any position of importance. He is right, too, for if ever a fellow threw away opportunities, I have done so during the past four years. And now I am deliberately going to spend another, squandering my last dollar, in company with a chap who will have no further use for me when it is gone. It really begins to look as though I were about the biggest fool of my acquaintance."

It was in this frame of mind that our young engineer made a second visit to his guardian's office on the following morning. There he was received by Mr. Hepburn with the same business-like abruptness that had marked their interview of the day before.

"Good-morning, Cabot," he said. "I see you are promptly on hand, and, I suppose, anxious to be off. Well, I don't blame you, for a pleasure trip around the world isn't offered to every young fellow, and I wish I were in a position to take such a one myself. I have had prepared a letter of credit for the balance of your property remaining in our hands, and while it probably is not as large a sum as your friend Walling will carry, it is enough to see you through very comfortably, if you exercise a reasonable economy. I have also written letters of introduction to our agents in several foreign cities that may prove useful. Let me hear from you occasionally, and I trust you will have fully as good a time as you anticipate."

"Thank you, sir," said Cabot. "You are very kind."

"Not at all. I am only striving to carry out your father's instructions, and do what he paid to have done. Now, how about the young man you were to recommend? Have you thought of one?"

"No, sir, I haven't. You see, all the fellows who graduated with honours found places waiting for them, and as I knew you would only want one of the best, I can't think of one whom I can recommend for your purpose. I am very sorry, but–"

"I fear I did not make our requirements quite clear," interrupted Mr. Hepburn, "since I did not mean to convey the impression that we would employ none but an honour man. It often happens that he who ranks highest as a student fails of success in the business world; and under certain conditions I would employ the man who graduated lowest in his class rather than him who stood at its head."

Cabot's face expressed his amazement at this statement, and noting it, Mr. Hepburn smiled as he continued:

"The mere fact that a young man has graduated from your Institute, even though it be with low rank, insures his possession of technical knowledge sufficient for our purpose. If, at the same time, he is a gentleman endowed with the faculty of making friends, as well as an athlete willing to meet and able to overcome physical difficulties, I would employ him in preference to a more studious

person who lacked any of these qualifications. If you, for instance, had not already decided upon a plan for spending the ensuing year, I should not hesitate to offer you the position we desire to fill."

Cabot trembled with excitement. "I—Mr. Hepburn!" he exclaimed. "Would you really have offered it to me?"

"Certainly I would. I desired you to meet me here for that very purpose; but when I found you had made other arrangements that might prove equally advantageous, I believed I was meeting your father's wishes by helping you carry them out."

"Is the place still open, and can I have it?" asked Cabot eagerly.

"Not if you are going around the world; for, although the duties of the position will include a certain amount of travel, it will not be in that direction."

"But I don't want to go around the world, and would rather take the position you have to offer than do anything else I know of," declared Cabot.

"Without knowing its requirements, what hardships it may present, nor in what direction it may lead you?" inquired the other.

"Yes, sir. So long as you offer it I would accept it without question, even though it should be a commission to discover the North Pole."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Hepburn, in an entirely different tone from that he had hitherto used, "I trust I may never forfeit nor abuse the confidence implied by these words. Although you did not know it, I have carefully watched every step of your career during the past five years, and while you have done some things, as well as developed some traits, that are to be regretted, I am satisfied that you are at least worthy of a trial in the position we desire to fill. So, if you are willing to relinquish your proposed trip around the world, and enter the employ of this company instead, you may consider yourself engaged for the term of one year from this date. During that time all your legitimate expenses will be met, but no salary will be paid you until the expiration of the year, when its amount will be determined by the value of the services you have rendered. Is that satisfactory?"

"It is, sir," replied Cabot, "and with your permission I will at once telegraph Thorpe Walling that I cannot go with him."

"Write your despatch here and I will have it sent out. At the same time, do not mention that you have entered the employ of this company, as there are reasons why, for the present at least, that should remain a secret."

When Cabot's telegram was ready, Mr. Hepburn, who had been glancing through a number of letters that awaited his signature, handed it to his secretary, to whom he also gave some instructions that Cabot did not catch. As the former left the room, the president turned to our young engineer and said:

"As perhaps you are aware, Cabot, there is at present an unprecedented demand all over the world for both iron and copper, and our company is largely interested in the production of these metals. As existing sources of supply are inadequate it is of importance that new ones should be discovered, and if they can be found on the Atlantic seaboard, so much the better. In looking about for new fields that may be profitably worked, our attention has been directed to the island of Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador. While the former has been partially explored, we desire more definite information as to its available ore beds. There is a small island in Conception Bay, not far from St. Johns, known as Bell Island, said to be a mass of iron ore, that is already being worked by a local company. From it I should like to have a report, as soon as you reach St. Johns, concerning the nature of the ore, the extent of the deposit, the cost of mining it, the present output, the facilities for shipment, and so forth. At the same time I want you to obtain this information without divulging the nature of your business, or allowing your name to become in any way connected with this company.

"Having finished with Bell Island, you will visit such other portions of Newfoundland as are readily accessible from the coast, and seem to promise good results, always keeping to yourself the true nature of your business. Finally, you will proceed to Labrador, where you will make such

explorations as are possible. You will report any discoveries in person, when you return to New York, as I do not care to have them entrusted to the mails. Above all, do not fail to bring back specimens of whatever you may find in the way of minerals. Are these instructions sufficiently clear?"

"They seem so, sir."

"Very well, then. I wish you to start this very day, as I find that a steamer, on which your passage is already engaged, sails from a Brooklyn pier for St. Johns this afternoon. This letter of credit, which only awaits your signature before a notary, will, if deposited with the bank of Nova Scotia in St. Johns, more than defray your year's expenses, and whatever you can save from it will be added to your salary. Therefore, it will pay you to practise economy, though you must not hesitate to incur legitimate expenses or to spend money when by so doing you can further the objects of your journey. You have enough money for your immediate needs, have you not?"

"Yes, sir. I have about fifty dollars."

"That will be ample, since your ticket to St. Johns is already paid for. Here it is."

Thus saying, Mr. Hepburn handed over an envelope containing the steamship ticket that his secretary had been sent out to obtain.

"I would take as little baggage as possible," he continued, "for you can purchase everything necessary in St. Johns, and will discover what you need after you get there. Now, good-bye, my boy. God bless you and bring you back in safety. Remember that the coming year will probably prove the most important of your life, and that your future now depends entirely upon yourself. Mr. Black here will go with you to the banker's, where you can sign your letter of credit."

So our young engineer was launched on the sea of business life. Two hours later he had packed a dress-suit case and sent his trunk down to the company's building for storage. On his way to the steamer he stopped at his club for a bite of lunch, and as he was leaving the building he encountered the friend with whom he had discussed his plans the day before.

"Hello!" exclaimed that individual, "where are you going in such a hurry. Not starting off on your year of travel, are you?"

"Yes," laughed Cabot. "I am to sail within an hour. Good-bye!"

With this he ran down the steps and jumped into a waiting cab.

CHAPTER III.
THE STRANGE FATE OF A STEAMER

So exciting had been the day, and so fully had its every minute been occupied, that not until Cabot stood on the deck of the steamer "Lavinia," curiously watching the bustling preparations for her departure, did he have time to realise the wonderful change in his prospects that had taken place within a few hours. That morning his life had seemed wholly aimless, and he had been filled with envy of those among his recent classmates whose services were in demand. Now he would not change places with any one of them; for was not he, too, entrusted with an important mission that held promise of a brilliant future in case he should carry it to a successful conclusion?

"And I will," he mentally resolved. "No matter what happens, if I live I will succeed."

In spite of this brave resolve our lad could not help feeling rather forlorn as he watched those about him, all of whom seemed to have friends to see them off; while he alone stood friendless and unnoticed.

Especially was his attention attracted to a nearby group of girls gathered about one who was evidently a bride. They were full of gay chatter, and he overheard one of them say:

"If you come within sight of an iceberg, Nelly, make him go close to it so you can get a good photograph. I should like awfully to have one."

"So should I," cried another. "But, oh! wouldn't it be lovely if we could only have a picture of this group, standing just as we are aboard the ship. It would make a splendid beginning for your camera."

The bride, who, as Cabot saw, carried a small brand-new camera similar to one he had recently procured for his own use, promptly expressed her willingness to employ it as suggested, but was greeted by a storm of protests from her companions.

"No, indeed! You must be in it of course!" they cried.

Then it further transpired that all wished to be "in it," and no one wanted to act the part of photographer. At this juncture Cabot stepped forward, and lifting his cap, said:

"I am somewhat of a photographer, and with your permission it would afford me great pleasure to take a picture of so charming a group."

For a moment the girls looked at the presumptuous young stranger in silence. Then the bride, flushing prettily, stepped forward and handed him her camera, saying as she did so:

"Thank you, sir, ever so much for your kind offer, which we are glad to accept."

So Cabot arranged the group amid much laughter, and by the time two plates had been exposed, had made rapid progress towards getting acquainted with its several members.

The episode was barely ended before all who were to remain behind were ordered ashore, and, a few minutes later, as the ship began to move slowly from her dock, our traveller found himself waving his handkerchief and shouting good-byes as vigorously as though all on the wharf were assembled for the express purpose of bidding him farewell.

By the time the "Lavinia" was in the stream and headed up the East River, with her long voyage fairly begun, Cabot had learned that his new acquaintance was a bride of but a few hours, having been married that morning to the captain of that very steamer. She had hardly made this confession when her husband, temporarily relieved of his responsibilities by a pilot, came in search of her and was duly presented to our hero. His name was Phinney, and he so took to Cabot that from that moment the latter no longer found himself lonely or at a loss for occupation.

As he had never before been at sea, the voyage proved full of interest, and his intelligent questions received equally intelligent answers from Captain Phinney, who was a well-informed young man but a few years older than Cabot, and an enthusiast in his calling.

Up Long Island Sound went the "Lavinia," and it was late that night before our lad turned in, so interested was he in watching the many lights that were pointed out by his new acquaintance. The next morning found the ship threading her way amid the shoals of Nantucket Sound, after which came the open sea; and for the first time in his life Cabot lost sight of land. Halifax was reached on the following day, and here the steamer remained twenty-four hours discharging freight.

The capital of Nova Scotia marks the half-way point between New York and St. Johns, Newfoundland, which name Cabot was already learning to pronounce as do its inhabitants—Newfund-*land*—and after leaving it the ship was again headed for the open across the wide mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Thus far the weather had been fine, the sea smooth, and nothing had occurred to break the pleasant monotony of the voyage. Its chief interests lay in sighting distant sails, the tell-tale smoke pennons of far-away steamers, the plume-like spoutings of sluggishly moving whales, the darting of porpoises about the ship's fore-foot, the wide circling overhead of gulls, or the dainty skimming just above the wave crests of Mother Carey's fluffy chickens.

"Who was Mother Carey," asked Cabot, "and why are they her chickens?"

"I have been told that she was the *Mater Cara* of devout Portuguese sailors," replied Captain Phinney, "and that these tiny sea-fowl are supposed to be under her especial protection, since the fiercest of gales have no power to harm them."

"How queerly names become changed and twisted out of their original shape," remarked Cabot meditatively. "The idea of *Mater Cara* becoming Mother Carey!"

"That is an easy change compared with some others I have run across," laughed the captain. "For instance, I once put up at an English seaport tavern called the 'Goat and Compasses,' and found out that its original name, given in Cromwell's time, had been 'God Encompasseth Us.' Almost as curious is the present name of that portion of the Newfoundland coast nearest us at this minute. It is called 'Ferryland,' which is a corruption of 'Verulam,' the name applied by its original owner, Lord Baltimore, in memory of his home estate in England. In fact, this region abounds in queerly twisted names, most of which were originally French. Bai d'espair, for instance, has become Bay Despair. Blanc Sablon and Isle du Bois up on the Labrador coast have been Anglicised as Nancy Belong and Boys' Island. Cape Race, which is almost within sight, was the Capo Razzo of its Portuguese discoverer. Cape Spear was Cappo Sperenza, and Pointe l'Amour is now Lammer's Point."

While taking part in conversations of this kind both Cabot and Mrs. Phinney, who were the only passengers now left on the ship, kept a sharp lookout for icebergs, which, as they had learned, were apt to be met in those waters at that season. Finally, during the afternoon of the last day they expected to spend on shipboard, a distant white speck dead ahead, which was at first taken for a sail, proved to be an iceberg, and from that moment it was watched with the liveliest curiosity. Before their rapid approach it developed lofty pinnacles, and proved of the most dazzling whiteness, save at the water line, where it was banded with vivid blue. It was exquisitely chiselled and carved into dainty forms by the gleaming rivulets that ran down its steep sides and fell into the sea as miniature cascades. So wonderfully beautiful were the icy details as they were successively unfolded, that the bride begged her husband to take his ship just as close as possible, in order that she might obtain a perfect photograph. Anxious to gratify her every wish, Captain Phinney readily consented, and the ship's course was slightly altered, so as to pass within one hundred feet of the glistening monster, which was now sharply outlined against a dark bank of fog rolling heavily in from the eastward.

Both cameras had been kept busy from the time the berg came within range of their finders, but just as the best point of view was reached, and when they were so near that the chill of the ice was distinctly felt, Cabot discovered that he had exhausted his roll of films. Uttering an exclamation of disgust, he ran aft and down to his stateroom, that opened from the lower saloon, to secure another cartridge. As he entered the room, he closed its door to get at his dress-suit case that lay behind it.

Recklessly tossing the contents of the case right and left, he had just laid hands on the desired object and was rising to his feet when, without warning, he was flung violently to the floor by a

shock like that of an earthquake. It was accompanied by a dull roar and an awful sound of crashing and rending. At the same time the ship seemed to be lifted bodily. Then she fell back, apparently striking on her side, and for several minutes rolled with sickening lurches, as though in the trough of a heavy sea.

In the meantime Cabot was struggling furiously to open his stateroom door; but it had so jammed in its casing that his utmost efforts failed to move it. The steel deck beams overhead were twisted like willow wands, the iron side of the ship was crumpled as though it were a sheet of paper, and with every downward lurch a torrent of icy water poured in about the air port, which, though still closed, had been wrenched out of position. With a horrid dread the prisoner realised that unless quickly released he must drown where he was, and, unable to open the door, he began to kick at it with the hope of smashing one of its panels.

With his first effort in this direction there came another muffled roar like that of an explosion, and he felt the ship quiver as though it were being rent in twain. At the same moment his door flew open of its own accord, and he was nearly suffocated by an inrush of steam. Springing forward, and blindly groping his way through this, the bewildered lad finally reached the stairs he had so recently descended. In another minute he had gained the deck, where he stood gasping for breath and vainly trying to discover what terrible thing had happened.

Not a human being was to be seen, and the forward part of the ship was concealed beneath a dense cloud of steam and smoke that hung over it like a pall. Cabot fancied he could distinguish shouting in that direction, and attempted to gain the point from which it seemed to come; but found the way barred by a yawning opening in the deck, from which poured smoke and flame as though it were the crater of a volcano. Then he ran back, and at length found himself on top of the after house, cutting with his pocket knife at the lashings of a life raft; for he realised that the ship was sinking so rapidly that she might plunge to the bottom at any moment.

Five minutes later he lay prone on the buoyant raft, clutching the sides of its wooden platform, while it spun like a storm-driven leaf in the vortex marking the spot where the ill-fated. "Lavinia" had sunk.

CHAPTER IV.
ALONE ON THE LIFE RAFT

Anything less buoyant than a modern life raft, consisting of two steel cylinders stoutly braced and connected by a wooden platform, would have been drawn under by the deadly clutch of that swirling vortex. No open boat could have lived in it for a minute; and even the raft, spinning round and round with dizzy velocity, was sucked downward until it was actually below the level of the surrounding water. But, sturdily resisting the down-dragging force, its wonderful buoyancy finally triumphed, and as its rotary motion became less rapid, Cabot sat up and gazed about him with the air of one who has been stunned.

He was dazed by the awfulness of the catastrophe that had so suddenly overwhelmed the "Lavinia," and could form no idea of its nature. Had there been a collision? If so, it must have been with the iceberg, for nothing else had been in sight when he went below. Yet it was incredible that such a thing could have happened in broad daylight. The afternoon had been clear and bright; of that he was certain, though his surroundings were now shrouded by an impenetrable veil of fog. Through this he could see nothing, and from it came no sound save the moan of winds sweeping across a limitless void of waters.

What had become of his recent companions? Had they gone down with the ship, and was he sole survivor of the tragedy? At this thought the lad sprang to his feet, and shouted, calling his friends by name, and begging them not to leave him; but the only answer came in shape of mocking echoes hurled sharply back from close at hand. Looking in that direction, he dimly discerned a vast outline of darker substance than the enveloping mist. From it came also a sound of falling waters, and against it the sea was beating angrily. At the same time he was conscious of a deadly chill in the air, and came to a sudden comprehension that the iceberg, to which he attributed all his present distress, was still close at hand.

Its mere presence brought a new terror; for he knew that unless the attraction of its great bulk could be overcome, his little raft must speedily be drawn to it and dashed helplessly against its icy cliffs. This thought filled him with a momentary despair, for there seemed no possibility of avoiding the impending fate. Then his eyes fell on a pair of oars lashed, together with their metal rowlocks, to the sides of his raft. In another minute he had shipped these and was pulling with all his might away from that ill-omened neighbourhood.

The progress of his clumsy craft was painfully slow; but it did move, and at the end the dreaded ice monster was beyond both sight and hearing. The exercise of rowing had warmed Cabot as well as temporarily diverted his mind from a contemplation of the terrible scenes through which he had so recently passed. Now, however, as he rested on his oars, a full sense of his wretched plight came back to him, and he grew sick at heart as he realised how forlorn was his situation. He wondered if he could survive the night that was rapidly closing in on him, and, if he did, whether the morrow would find him any better off. He had no idea of the direction in which wind and current were drifting him, whether further out to sea or towards the land. He was again shivering with cold, he was hungry and thirsty, and so filled with terror at the black waters leaping towards him from all sides that he finally flung himself face downward on the wet platform to escape from seeing them.

When he next lifted his head he found himself in utter darkness, through which he fancied he could still hear the sound of waters dashing against frigid cliffs, and with an access of terror he once more sprang to his oars. Now he rowed with the wind, keeping it as directly astern as possible; nor did he pause in his efforts until compelled by exhaustion. Then he again lay down, and this time dropped into a fitful doze.

Waking a little later with chattering teeth, he resumed his oars for the sake of warming exercise, and again rowed as long as he was able. So, with alternating periods of weary work and unrefreshing rest, the slow dragging hours of that interminable night were spent. Finally, after he had given up all hope of ever again seeing a gleam of sunshine, a faint gray began to permeate the fog that still held him in its wet embrace, and Cabot knew that he had lived to see the beginnings of another day.

To make sure that the almost imperceptible light really marked the dawn, he shut his eyes and resolutely kept them closed until he had counted five hundred. Then he opened them, and almost screamed with the joy of being able to trace the outlines of his raft. Again and again he did this until at length the black night shadows had been fairly vanquished and only those of the fog remained.

With the assurance that day had fairly come, and that the dreaded iceberg was at least not close at hand, Cabot again sought forgetfulness of his misery in sleep. When he awoke some hours later, aching in every bone, and painfully hungry, he was also filled with a delicious sense of warmth; for the sun, already near its meridian, was shining as brightly as though no such things as fog or darkness had ever existed.

On standing up and looking about him, the young castaway was relieved to note that the iceberg from which he had suffered so much was no longer in sight. At the same time he was grievously disappointed that he could discover no sail nor other token that any human being save himself was abroad on all that lonely sea.

He experienced a momentary exhilaration when, on turning to the west, he discovered a dark far-reaching line that he believed to be land; but his spirits fell as he measured the distance separating him from it, and realised how slight a chance he had of ever gaining the coast. To be sure, the light breeze then blowing was in that direction, but it might change at any moment; and even with it to aid his rowing he doubted if his clumsy craft could make more than a mile an hour. Thus darkness would again overtake him ere he had covered more than half the required distance, though he should row steadily during the remainder of the day. He knew that his growing weakness would demand intervals of rest with ever-increasing frequency until utter exhaustion should put an end to his efforts; and then what would become of him? Still there was nothing else to be done; and, with a dogged determination to die fighting, if die he must, the poor lad sat down and resumed his hopeless task.

A life raft is not intended to be used as a rowboat, and is unprovided with either seats or foot braces. Being thus compelled to sit on the platform, Cabot could get so little purchase that half his effort was wasted, and the progress made was barely noticeable. During his frequent pauses for rest he stood up to gaze longingly at the goal that still appeared as far away as ever, and grew more unattainable as the day wore on. At length the sun was well down the western sky, across which it appeared to race as never before. As Cabot watched it, and vaguely wished for the power once given to Joshua, the bleakness of despair suddenly enfolded him, and his eyes became blurred with tears. He covered them with his hands to shut out the mocking sunlight, and sat down because he was too weak to stand any longer. He had fought his fight very nearly to a finish, and his strength was almost gone. He had perhaps brought his craft five miles nearer to the land than it was when he set out; but after all what had been the gain? Apparently there was none, and he would not further torture his aching body with useless effort.

In the meantime a small schooner, bringing with her a fair wind, was running rapidly down the coast, not many miles from where our poor lad so despairingly awaited the coming of night. That he had not seen her while standing up, was owing to the fact that her sails, instead of being white, were tanned a dull red, that blended perfectly with the colour of the distant shore line. A bright-faced, resolute chap, somewhat younger than Cabot, but of equally sturdy build, held the tiller, and regarded with evident approval the behaviour of his speeding craft.

"We'll make it, Dave," he cried, cheerily. "The old 'Sea Bee's' got the wings of 'em this time."

"Mebbe so," growled the individual addressed, an elderly man who stood in the companionway, with his head just above the hatch, peering forward under the swelling sails. "Mebbe so," he repeated,

"and mebbe not. Steam's hard to beat on land or water, an' we be a far cry from Pretty Harbour yet. So fur that ef they're started they'll overhaul us before day, and beat us in by a good twelve hour. It's what I'm looking fur."

"Oh, pshaw!" replied the young skipper. "What a gammy old croaker you are. They won't start to-day, anyhow. But here, take her a minute, while I go aloft for one more look before sundown to make sure."

As the man complied with this request, and waddling aft took the tiller, his more active companion sprang into the main rigging and ran rapidly to the masthead, from which point of vantage he gazed back for a full minute over the course they had come.

"Not a sign," he shouted down at length. "But hello," he added to himself, "what's that?" With a glance seaward his keen eye had detected a distant floating object that was momentarily uplifted on the back of a long swell, and flashed white in the rays of the setting sun.

"Luff her, David! Hard down with your hellum, and trim in all," he shouted to the steersman. "There, steady, so."

"Wot's hup?" inquired the man a few minutes later, as the other rejoined him on deck.

"Don't know for sure; but there's something floating off there that looks like a bit of wreckage."

"An' you, with all your hurry, going to stop fur a closer look, and lose time that'll mebbe prove the most wallyable of your life," growled the man disgustedly. "Wal, I'll be jiggered!"

"So would I, if I didn't," replied the lad. "It was one of dad's rules never to pass any kind of a wreck without at least one good look at it, and so it's one of mine as well. There's what I'm after, now. See, just off the starboard bow. It's a raft, and David, there's a man on it, sure as you live. Look, he's standing up and waving at us. Now, he's down again! Poor fellow! In with the jib, David! Spry now, and stand by with a line. I'm going to round up, right alongside."

CHAPTER V.
WHITE BALDWIN AND HIS "SEA BEE."

The hour that preceded the coming of that heaven-sent schooner was the blackest of Cabot Grant's life, and as he sat with bowed head on the wet platform of his tossing raft he was utterly hopeless. He believed that he should never again hear a human voice nor tread the blessed land—yes, everything was ended for him, or very nearly so, and whatever record he had made in life must now stand without addition or correction. His thoughts went back as far as he could remember anything, and every act of his life was clearly recalled. How mean some of them now appeared; how thoughtless, indifferent, or selfish he had been in others. Latterly how he had been filled with a sense of his own importance, how he had worked and schemed for a little popularity, and now who would regret him, or give his memory more than a passing thought?

Thorpe Walling would say: "Served him right for throwing me over, as he did," and others would agree with him. Even Mr. Hepburn, who had doubtless given him a chance merely because he was his guardian, would easily find a better man to put in his place. Some cousins whom he had never seen nor cared to know would rejoice on coming into possession of his little property; and so, on the whole, his disappearance would cause more of satisfaction than regret. Most bitter of all was the thought that he would never have the opportunity of changing, or at least of trying to change, this state of affairs, since he had doubtless looked at the sun for the last time, and the blackness of an endless night was about to enfold him.

Had he really seen his last ray of sunlight and hope? No; it could not be. There must be a gleam left. The sun could not have set yet. He lifted his head. There was no sun to be seen. With a cry of terror he sprang to his feet, and, from the slight elevation thus gained, once more beheld the mighty orb of day, and life, and promise, crowning with a splendour infinitely beyond anything of this earth, the distant shore-line that he had striven so stoutly to gain.

Dazzled by its radiance, Cabot saw nothing else during the minute that it lingered above the horizon. Then, as it disappeared, he uttered another cry, but this time it was one of incredulous and joyful amazement, for close at hand, coming directly towards him from out the western glory, was a ship bearing a new lease of life and freighted with new opportunities.

The poor lad tried to wave his cap at the new-comers; but after a feeble attempt sank to his knees, overcome by weakness and gratitude. It was in that position they found him as the little schooner was rounded sharply into the wind, and, with fluttering sails, lay close alongside the drifting raft.

David flung a line that Cabot found strength to catch and hold to, while the young skipper of the "Sea Bee" sprang over her low rail and alighted beside the castaway just as the latter staggered to his feet with outstretched hand. The stranger grasped it tightly in both of his, and for a moment the two gazed into each other's eyes without a word. Cabot tried to speak, but something choked him so that he could not; and, noting this, the other said gently:

"It is all over now, and you are as safe as though you stood on dry land; so don't try to say anything till we've made you comfortable, for I know you must have had an almighty hard time."

"Yes," whispered Cabot. "I've been hungry, and thirsty, and wet, and cold, and scared; but now I'm only grateful—more grateful than I can ever tell."

A little later the life raft, its mission accomplished, was left to toss and drift at will, while the "Sea Bee," with everything set and drawing finely, was rapidly regaining her course, guided by the far-reaching flash of Cape Race light. In her dingy little cabin, which seemed to our rescued lad the most delightfully snug, warm, and altogether comfortable place he had ever entered, Cabot lay in the skipper's own bunk, regarding with intense interest the movements of that busy youth.

The latter had lighted a swinging lamp, started a fire in a small and very rusty galley stove, set a tea kettle on to boil, and a pan of cold chowder to re-warm. Having thus got supper well under way, he returned to the cabin, where he proceeded to set the table. The worst of Cabot's distress had already been relieved by a cup of cold tea and a ship's biscuit. Now, finding that he was able to talk, his host could no longer restrain his curiosity, but began to ask questions. He had already learned Cabot's name, and told his own, which was Whiteway Baldwin, "called White for short," he had added. Now he said:

"You needn't talk, if you don't feel like it, but I do wish you could tell how you came to be drifting all alone on that raft."

"A steamer that I was on was wrecked yesterday, and so far as I know I am the only survivor," answered Cabot.

"Goodness! You don't say so! What steamer was she, where was she bound, and what part of the coast was she wrecked on?"

"She was the 'Lavinia' from New York for St. Johns, and she wasn't wrecked on any part of the coast, but was lost at sea."

"*Jiminetty*! The 'Lavinia'! It don't seem possible. How did it happen? There hasn't been any gale. Did she blow up, or what?"

"I don't know," replied Cabot, "for I was down-stairs when it took place, and my stateroom door was jammed so that I couldn't get out for a long time. I only know that there was the most awful crash I ever heard, and it seemed as though the ship were being torn to pieces. Then there came an explosion, and when I got on deck the ship was sinking so fast that I had only time to cut loose the raft before she went down."

"What became of the others?" asked White excitedly.

"I am afraid they were drowned, for I heard them shouting just before she sank, but there was such a cloud of steam, smoke, and fog that I couldn't see a thing, and after it was all over I seemed to be the only one left."

"Wasn't there a rock or ship or anything she might have run into?" asked the young skipper, whose tanned face had grown pale as he listened to this tale of sudden disaster.

"There was an iceberg," replied Cabot, "but when I went down-stairs it wasn't very close, and the sun was shining, so that it was in plain sight."

"That must be what she struck, though," declared the other. Then he thrust his head up the companionway and shouted: "Hear the news, Dave. The 'Lavinia's' lost with all on board, except the chap we've just picked up."

"What happened her?" asked the man laconically.

"He says she ran into an iceberg in clear day, bust up, and sank with all hands, inside of a minute."

"Rot!" replied the practical sailor. "The 'Laviny' had collision bulkheads, and couldn't have sunk in no sich time, ef she could at all. 'Sides Cap'n Phinney ain't no man to run down a berg in clear day, nor yet in the night, nor no other time. He's been on this coast and the Labrador run too long fur any sich foolishness. No, son, ef the 'Laviny's' lost, which mind, I don't say she ain't, she's lost some other way 'sides that, an' you can tell your friend so with my compliments."

Cabot did not overhear these remarks, and wondered at the queer look on the young skipper's face when he reëntered the cabin, as he did at the silence with which the latter resumed his preparations for supper. At the same time he was still too weak, and, in spite of his biscuit, too ravenously hungry to care for further conversation just then. So it was only after a most satisfactory meal and several cups of very hot tea that he was ready in his turn to ask questions. But he was not given the chance; for, as soon as White Baldwin was through with eating, he went on dock to relieve the tiller, and the other member of the crew, whose name was David Gidge, came below.

He was a man of remarkable appearance, of very broad shoulders and long arms; but with legs so bowed outward as to materially lower his stature, which would have been short at best, and convert his gait into an absurd waddle. His face was disfigured by a scar across one cheek that so drew that corner of his mouth downward as to produce a peculiarly forbidding expression. He also wore a bristling iron-grey beard that grew in form of a fringe or ruff, and added an air of ferocity to his make up.

As this striking-looking individual entered the cabin and rolled into a seat at the table, he cast one glance, accompanied by a grunt, at Cabot, and then proceeded to attend strictly to the business in hand. He ate in such prodigious haste, and gulped his food in such vast mouthfuls, that he had cleaned the table of its last crumb, and was fiercely stuffing black tobacco into a still blacker pipe, before Cabot, who really wished to talk with him, had decided how to open the conversation. Lighting his pipe and puffing it into a ruddy glow, Mr. Gidge made a waddling exit from the cabin, bestowing on our lad another grunt as he passed him, and leaving an eddying wake of rank tobacco smoke to mark his passage.

For some time after this episode Cabot struggled to keep awake in the hope that White would return and answer some of his questions; but finally weariness overcame him, and he fell into a sleep that lasted without a break until after sunrise of the following morning.

In the meantime the little schooner had held her course, and swept onward past the flashing beacons of Cape Race, Cape Pine, and Cape St. Mary, until, at daylight, she was standing across the broad reach of Placentia Bay towards the bald headland of Cape Chapeau Rouge. She was making a fine run, and in spite of his weariness after a six hours' watch on deck, White Baldwin presented a cheery face to Cabot, as the latter vainly strove to recognise and account for his surroundings.

"Good morning," said the young skipper, "I hope you have slept well, and are feeling all right again."

"Yes, thank you," replied Cabot, suddenly remembering, "I slept splendidly, and am as fit as a fiddle. Have we made a good run?"

"Fine; we have come nearly a hundred miles from the place where we picked you up."

"Then we must be almost to St. Johns," suggested Cabot, tumbling from his bunk as he spoke. "I am glad, for it is important that I should get there as quickly as possible."

"St. Johns!" replied the other blankly. "Didn't you know that we had come from St. Johns, and were going in the opposite direction? Why, we are more than one hundred and fifty miles from there at this minute."

CHAPTER VI.
THE FRENCH SHORE QUESTION

Although Cabot had had no reason to suppose that the "Sea Bee" was on her way to St. Johns, it had not for a moment occurred to him that she could be going anywhere else. Thus the news that they were not only a long way from the place he wished to reach, but steadily increasing their distance from it, so surprised him that for a moment he sat on the edge of his bunk gazing at the speaker as though doubting if he had heard aright. Finally he asked: "Where, then, are we bound?"

"To Pretty Harbour, around on the west coast, where I live," was the answer.

"I'd be willing to give you fifty dollars to turn around and carry me to St. Johns," said Cabot.

"Couldn't do it if you offered me a hundred, much as I need the money, and glad as I would be to oblige you, for I've got to get home in a hurry if I want to find any home to get to. You see, it's this way," continued White, noting Cabot's look of inquiry, "Pretty Harbour being on the French shore–"

"What do you mean by the French shore?" interrupted Cabot. "I thought you lived in Newfoundland, and that it was an English island."

"So it is," explained White; "but, for some reason or other, I don't know why, England made a treaty with France nearly two hundred years ago, by which the French were granted fishing privileges from Cape Bay along the whole west coast to Cape Bauld, and from there down the east coast as far as Cape St. John. By another treaty made some years afterwards France was granted, for her own exclusive use, the islands of Miquelon and St. Pierre, that lie just ahead of us now.

"In the meantime the French have been allowed to do pretty much as they pleased with the west coast, until now they claim exclusive rights to its fisheries, and will hardly allow us natives to catch what we want for our own use. They send warships to enforce their demands, and these compel us to sell bait to French fishermen at such price as they choose to offer. Why, I have seen men forced to sell bait to the French at thirty cents a barrel, when Canadian and American fishing boats wore offering five times that much for it. At the same time the French officers forbid us to sell to any but Frenchmen, declaring that if we do they will not only prevent us from fishing, but will destroy our nets."

"I should think you would call on English warships for protection," said Cabot. "There surely must be some on this station."

"Yes," replied the other, bitterly, "there are, but they always take the part of the French, and do even more than they towards breaking up our business."

"What?" cried Cabot. "British warships take part with the French against their own people! That is one of the strangest things I ever heard of, and I can't understand it. Is not this an English colony?"

"Yes, it is England's oldest colony; but, while I was born in it, and have lived here all my life, I don't understand the situation any better than you."

"It seems to me," continued Cabot, "that the conditions here must be fully as bad as those that led to the American Revolution, and I should think you Newfoundlanders would rebel, and set up a government of your own, or join the United States, or do something of that kind."

"Perhaps we would if we could," replied White; "but our country is only a poor little island, with a population of less than a quarter of a million. If we should rebel, we would have to fight both England and France. We should have to do it without help, too, for the United States, which is the only country we desire to join, does not want us. So you see there is nothing for us to do but accept the situation, and get along as best we can."

"Why don't you emigrate to the States?" suggested Cabot.

"Plenty of people whom I know have done so," replied the young Newfoundlander, "and I might, too, if it were not for my mother and sister; but I don't know how I could make a living for them in the States, or even for myself. You see, everything we have in the world is tied up right here. Besides, it would be hard to leave one's own country and go to live among strangers. Don't you think so?"

"How do you make a living here?" asked Cabot, ignoring the last question.

"We have made it until now by canning lobsters; but it looks as though even that business was to be stopped from this on."

"Why? Is it wrong to can lobsters?"

"On the French shore, it seems to be one of the greatest crimes a person can commit, worse even than smuggling, and the chief duty of British warships on this station is to break it up."

"Well, that beats all!" exclaimed Cabot. "Why is canning lobsters considered so wicked?"

"I don't know that I can explain it very clearly," replied the young skipper of the "Sea Bee," "but, so far as I can make out, it is this way: You see, the west coast of Newfoundland is one of the best places in the world for lobsters. So when the settlers there found they were not allowed to make a living by fishing, they turned their attention to catching and canning them. They thought, of course, that in this they would not be molested, since the French right was only to take and dry fish, which, in this country, means only codfish. They were so successful at the new business that after a while the French also began to establish lobster canneries. As no one interfered with them they finally became so bold as to order the closing of all factories except their own, and to actually destroy the property of such English settlers as were engaged in the business. Then there were riots, and we colonists appealed to Parliament for protection in our rights."

"Of course they granted it," said Cabot, who was greatly interested.

"Of course they did nothing of the kind," responded White, bitterly. "The English authorities only remonstrated gently with the French, who by that time were claiming an exclusive right to all the business of the west coast, and finally it was agreed to submit the whole question to arbitration. It has never yet been arbitrated, though that was some years ago. In the meantime an arrangement was made by which all lobster factories in existence on July 1, 1889, were allowed to continue their business, but no others might be established."

"Was your factory one of those then in existence?" asked Cabot.

"It was completed, and ready to begin work a whole month before that date; but the captain of a French frigate told my father that if he canned a single lobster his factory would be destroyed. Father appealed to the commander of a British warship for protection; but was informed that none could be given, and that if he persisted in the attempt to operate his factory his own countrymen would be compelled to aid the French in its destruction. On that, father went to law, but it was not until the season was ended that the British captain was found to have had no authority for his action. So father sued him for damages, and obtained judgment for five thousand dollars. He never got the money, though, and by the time the next season came round the law regarding factories in existence on the first of the previous July was in force. Then the question came up, whether or no our factory had been in existence at that time. The French claim that it was not, because no work had been done in it, while we claim that, but for illegal interference, work would have been carried on for a full month before the fixed date."

"How was the question settled?" asked Cabot.

"It was not settled until a few days ago, when a final decision was rendered against us, and now the property is liable to be destroyed at any minute. Father fought the case until it worried him to death, and mother has been fighting it ever since. All our property, except the factory itself, this schooner, and a few hundred acres of worthless land, has gone to the lawyers. While they have fought over the case, I have made a sort of a living for the family by running the factory at odd times, when there was no warship at hand to prevent. This season promises to be one of the best for lobsters

ever known, and we had so nearly exhausted our supply of cans that I went to St. Johns for more. While there I got private information that the suit had gone against us, and that the commander of the warship 'Comattus,' then in port, had received orders to destroy our factory during his annual cruise along the French shore. The 'Comattus' was to start as soon as the 'Lavinia' arrived. The minute I heard this I set out in a hurry for home, in the hope of having time to pack the extra cases I have on board this schooner, and get them out of the way before the warship arrives. That is one reason I am in such a hurry, and can't spare the time to take you to St. Johns. I wouldn't even have stopped long enough to investigate your raft if you had been a mile further off our course than you were."

"Then all my yesterday's rowing didn't go for nothing," said Cabot.

"I should say not. It was the one thing that saved you, so far as this schooner is concerned. I'm in a hurry for another reason, too. If the French get word that a decision has been rendered against us, and that the factory is to be destroyed, they will pounce down on it in a jiffy, and carry away everything worth taking, to one of their own factories."

"I don't wonder you are in a hurry," said Cabot. "I know I should be, in your place, and I don't blame you one bit for not wanting to take me back to St. Johns; but I wish you would tell me the next best way of getting there. You see, having lost everything in the way of an outfit it is necessary for me to procure a new one. Besides that and the business I have on hand, it seems to me that, as the only survivor of the 'Lavinia,' I ought to report her loss as soon as possible."

"Yes," agreed White, "of course you ought; though the longer it is unknown the longer the 'Comattus' will wait for her, and the more time I shall have."

"Provided some French ship doesn't get after you," suggested Cabot.

"Yes, I realise that, and as I am going to stop at St. Pierre, to sec whether the frigate 'Isla' is still in that harbour, I might set you ashore there. From St. Pierre you can get a steamer for St. Johns, and even if you have to wait a few days you could telegraph your news as quickly as you please."

"All right," agreed Cabot. "I shall be sorry to leave you; but if that is the best plan you can think of I will accept it, and shall be grateful if you will set me ashore as soon as possible."

Thus it was settled, and a few hours later the "Sea Bee" poked her nose around Gallantry Head, and ran into the picturesque, foreign-looking port of St. Pierre. The French frigate "Isla," that had more than once made trouble for the Baldwins, lay in the little harbour, black and menacing. Hoping not to be recognized, White gave her as wide a berth as possible; but he had hardly dropped anchor when a boat—containing an officer, and manned by six sailors—shot out from her side, and was pulled directly towards the schooner.

CHAPTER VII.
DEFYING A FRIGATE

"I wonder what's up now?" said White Baldwin, in a troubled tone, as he watched the approaching man-of-war's boat.

"Mischief of some kind," growled David Gidge, as he spat fiercely into the water. "I hain't never knowed a Frencher to be good fur nawthin' else but mischief."

"Perhaps it's a health officer," suggested Cabot.

"It's worse than that," replied White.

"A customs officer, then?"

"He comes from the shore."

"Then perhaps it's an invitation for us to go and dine with the French captain?"

"I've no doubt it's an invitation of some kind, and probably one that is meant to be accepted."

At this juncture the French boat dashed alongside, and, without leaving his place, the lieutenant in command said in fair English:

"Is not zat ze boat of Monsieur Baldwin of Pretty Harbour on ze côte Française?"

"It is," replied the young skipper, curtly.

"You haf, of course, ze papaire of health, and ze papaire of clearance for St. Pierre?"

"No; I have no papers except a certificate of registry."

"Ah! Is it possible? In zat case ze commandant of ze frigate 'Isla' will be please to see you on board at your earlies' convenience."

"I thought so," said White, in a low tone. Then aloud, he replied: "All right, lieutenant. I'll sail over there, and hunt up a good place to anchor, just beyond your ship, and as soon as I've made all snug I'll come aboard. Up with your mud hook, Dave."

As Mr. Gidge began to work the windlass, Cabot sprang to help him, and, within a minute, the recently dropped anchor was again broken out. Then, at a sharp order, David hoisted and trimmed the jib, leaving Cabot to cat the anchor. The fore and main sails had not been lowered. Thus within two minutes' time the schooner was again under way, and standing across the harbour towards the big warship.

The rapidity of these movements apparently somewhat bewildered the French officer, who, while narrowly watching them, did not utter a word of remonstrance. Now, as the "Sea Bee" moved away, his boat was started in the same direction.

Without paying any further attention to it, White Baldwin luffed his little craft across the frigate's bow, and the moment he was hidden beyond her, bore broad away, passing close along the opposite side of the warship, from which hundreds of eyes watched his movements with languid curiosity.

The boat, in the meantime, had headed for the stern of the frigate, with a view to gaining her starboard gangway, somewhere near which its officer supposed White to be already anchoring. What was his amazement, therefore, as he drew within the shadow of his ship, to see the schooner shoot clear of its further side, and go flying down the wind, lee rail under. For a moment he looked to see her round to and come to anchor. Then, springing to his feet, he yelled for her to do so; upon which White Baldwin took off his cap, and made a mocking bow.

At this the enraged officer whipped out a revolver, and began to fire wildly in the direction of the vanishing schooner, which, for answer, displayed a British Union Jack at her main peak. Three minutes later the saucy craft had rounded a projecting headland and disappeared, leaving the outwitted officer to get aboard his ship at his leisure, and make such report as seemed to him best.

After the exciting incident was ended, and the little "Sea Bee" had gained the safety of open water, Cabot grasped the young skipper's hand and shook it heartily.

"It was fine!" he cried, "though I don't see how you dared do it. Weren't you afraid they would fire at us?"

"Not a bit," laughed White. "They didn't realise what we were up to until we were well past them, and then they hadn't time to get ready before we were out of range. I don't believe they would dare fire on the British flag, anyway; especially as we hadn't done a thing to them. I almost wish they had, though; for I would be willing to lose this schooner and a good deal besides for the sake of bringing on a war that should drive the French from Newfoundland."

"But what did they want of you, and what would have happened if you had not given them the slip?"

"I expect they wanted to hold me here until they heard how our case had gone, so that I couldn't get back to the factory before they had a chance to run up there and seize it. Like as not they would have kept us on one excuse or another—lack of papers or something of that sort—for a week or two, and by the time they let us go some one else would have owned the Pretty Harbour lobster factory."

"Would they really have dared do such a thing?" asked Cabot, to whom the idea of foreign interference in the local affairs of Newfoundland was entirely new.

"Certainly they would. The French dare do anything they choose on this coast, and no one interferes."

"Well," said Cabot, "it seems a very curious situation, and one that a stranger finds hard to understand. However, so long as the French possess such a power for mischief, I congratulate you more than ever on having escaped them. At the same time I am disappointed at not being able to land at St. Pierre, and should like to know where you are going to take me next."

"I declare! In my hurry to get out of that trap, I forgot all about you wanting to land," exclaimed White, "and now there isn't a place from which you can get to St. Johns short of Port aux Basques, which is about one hundred and fifty miles west of here."

"How may I reach St. Johns from there?"

"By the railway across the island, of which Port aux Basques is the terminus. A steamer from Sidney, on Cape Breton, connects with a train there every other day."

"Very good; Port aux Basques it is," agreed Cabot, "and I shan't be sorry after all for a chance to cross the island by train and see what its interior looks like."

So our young engineer continued his involuntary voyage, and devoted his time to acquiring all sorts of information about the great northern island, as well as to the study of navigation. In this latter line of research he even succeeded in producing a favorable impression upon David Gidge, who finally admitted that it wasn't always safe to judge a man from his appearance, and that this young feller had more in him than showed at first sight.

While thus creating a favorable impression for himself, Cabot grew much interested in the young skipper of the schooner. He was surprised to find one in his position so gentlemanly a chap, as well as so generally well informed, and wondered where he had picked it all up.

"Are there good schools at Pretty Harbour?" he asked, with a view to solving this problem.

"There is one, but it is only fairly good," answered White.

"Did you go to it?"

"Oh, no," laughed the other. "I went to school as well as to college in St. Johns. You see, father was a merchant there until he bought a great tract of land on the west coast. Then he gave up his business in the city and came over here to establish a lobster factory, which at that time promised to pay better than anything else on the island. He left us all in St. Johns, and it was only after his death that we came over here to live and try to save something from the wreck of his property. Now I don't know what is to become of us; for, unless one is allowed to can lobsters, there isn't much chance of making a living on the French shore. If it wasn't for the others, I should take this schooner

and try a trading trip to Labrador, but mother has become so much of an invalid that I hate to leave her with only my sister."

"What is your sister's name?"

"Cola."

"That's an odd name, and one I never heard before, but I think I like it."

"So do I," agreed White; "though I expect I should like any name belonging to her, for she is a dear girl. One reason I am so fond of this schooner is because it is named for her."

"How is that?"

"Why, it is the 'Sea Bee,' and these are her initials."

It was early on the second morning after leaving St. Pierre that the "Sea Bee" drifted slowly into the harbour of Port aux Basques, where the yacht-like steamer "Bruce" lay beside its single wharf. She had just completed her six-hour run across Cabot Strait, from North Sidney, eighty-five miles away, and close at hand stood the narrow-gauge train that was to carry her passengers and mails to St. Johns. It would occupy twenty-eight hours in making the run of 550 miles from coast to coast, and our lad looked forward to the trip with pleasant anticipations.

But he was again doomed to disappointment; for while the schooner was still at some distance from the wharf, the train was seen to be in motion. In vain did Cabot shout and wave his cap. No attention was paid to his signals, and a minute later the train had disappeared. There would not be another for two days, and the young engineer gazed about him with dismay. Port aux Basques appeared to be only a railway terminus, offering no accommodation for travellers, and presenting, with its desolate surroundings, a scene of cheerless inhospitality.

"That's what I call tough luck!" exclaimed White Baldwin, sympathetically.

"Isn't it?" responded Cabot; "and what I am to do with myself in this dreary place after you are gone, I can't imagine."

"Seems to me you'd better stay right where you are, and run up the coast with us to St. George's Bay, where there is another station at which you can take the next train."

"I should like to," replied Cabot, "if you would allow me to pay for my passage; but I don't want to impose upon your hospitality any longer."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed White. "You are already doing your full share of the work aboard here, and even if you weren't of any help, I should be only too happy to have you stay with us until the end of the run, for the pleasure of your company."

"That settles it," laughed Cabot. "I will go with you as far as St. George's, and be glad of the chance. But, while we are here, I think I ought to send in the news about the 'Lavinia.'"

As White agreed that this should be done at once, Cabot was set ashore, and made his way to the railway telegraph office, where he asked the operator to whom in St. Johns he should send the news of a wreck.

"What wreck?" asked the operator.

"Steamer 'Lavinia.'"

"There's no need to send that to anybody, for it's old news, and went through here last night as a press despatch. 'Lavinia' went too close to an iceberg, that capsized, and struck her with long, under-water projection. Lifted steamer from water, broke her back, boiler exploded, and that was the end of 'Lavinia.' Mate's boat reached St. Johns, and 'Comattus' has gone to look for other possible survivors."

As Cabot had nothing to add to this story, he merely sent a short despatch to Mr. Hepburn, announcing his own safety, and then returned to the schooner with his news.

"Good!" exclaimed White, when he heard it. "I hope the 'Comattus' will find those she has gone to look for; and I'm mighty glad she has got something to do that will keep her away from here for a few days longer. Now, Dave, up with the jib."

CHAPTER VIII.
A CLASSMATE TO BE AVOIDED

Cabot had been impressed by the rugged scenery of the Nova Scotia shore line, but it had been tame as compared with the stern grandeur of that unfolded when the "Sea Bee" rounded Cape Ray and was headed up the west coast of Newfoundland. He had caught glimpses of lofty promontories and precipitous cliffs as the schooner skirted the southern end of the island; but most of the time it had kept too far from shore for him to appreciate the marvellous details. Now, however, as they beat up against a head wind, they occasionally ran in so close as to be wet by drifting spray from the roaring breakers that ceaselessly dashed against the mighty wall, rising, grim and sheer, hundreds of feet above them. Everywhere the rock was stained a deep red, indicating the presence of iron, and everywhere it had been rent or shattered into a thousand fantastic forms. At short intervals the massive cliffs were wrenched apart to make room for narrow fiords, of unknown depth, that penetrated for miles into the land, where they formed intricate mazes of placid waterways. Beside them there were nestled tiny fishing villages of whitewashed houses, though quite as often these were perched on apparently inaccessible crags, overlooking sheltered coves of the outer coast.

On the tossing waters fronting them, fleets of fishing boats, with sails tanned a ruddy brown, like those of the "Sea Bee," or blackened by coal tar, darted with the grace and fearlessness of gulls, or rested as easily on the heaving surface, while the fishermen, clad in yellow oilskins, pursued their arduous toil.

To our young American the doings of these hardy seafarers proved so interesting that he never tired of watching them nor of asking questions concerning their perilous occupation. And he had plenty of time in which to acquire information, for so adverse were the winds that only by the utmost exertion did White Baldwin succeed in getting his schooner to the St. George's landing in time for Cabot to run to the railway station just as the train from Port aux Basques was coming in.

The two lads exchanged farewells with sincere regrets, after White had extended a most cordial invitation to the other to finish the cruise with him, and visit his home at Pretty Harbour. Much as Cabot wished to accept this invitation, he had declined it for the present, on the plea that he ought first to go to St. Johns. At the same time he had promised to try and make the proposed visit before leaving the island, to which White had replied:

"Don't delay too long, then, or you may not find us at home, for there is no knowing what may happen when the warships get there."

Even David Gidge shook hands with the departing guest, and said it was a pity he couldn't stay with them a while longer, seeing that he might be made into a very fair sort of a sailor with proper training.

With one regretful backward glance, Cabot left the little schooner on which he had come to feel so much at home, and sprinted towards the station, where was gathered half the population of the village—men, women, children, and dogs. The train was already at the platform as he made his way through this crowd, wondering if he had time to purchase a ticket, and he glanced at it curiously. It was well filled, and heads were thrust from most of the car windows on that side. Through one window Cabot saw a quartette of men too busily engaged over a game of cards to take note of their surroundings. As our lad's gaze fell on these, he suddenly stood still and stared. Then he turned, pushed out from the crowd, and made his way back towards the landing as rapidly as he had come from it a few minutes before.

The "Sea Bee" was under way, but had not got beyond hail, and was put back when her crew discovered who was signalling them so vigorously.

"What is the matter?" inquired her young skipper, as Cabot again clambered aboard. "Did you miss the train after all?"

"No," replied Cabot. "I could have caught it; but made up my mind at the last moment that I might just as well go with you to Pretty Harbour now as to try and visit it later."

"Good!" cried White, heartily. "I am awfully glad you did. We were feeling blue enough without you, weren't we, Dave?"

"Blue warn't no name for it," replied Mr. Gidge. "It were worse than a drop in the price of fish; an' now I feel as if they'd riz a dollar a kental."

"Thank you both," laughed Cabot. "I hadn't any idea how much I should hate to leave the old 'Bee' until I tried to do it. You said there was another station that I could reach from your place, didn't you?" he added, turning to White.

"Yes. There is one at Bay of Islands that can be reached by a drive of a few hours from Pretty Harbour; and I'll carry you over there any time you like," replied the latter.

"That settles it, then; and I'll let St. Johns wait a few days longer."

So the little schooner was again headed seaward, and set forth at a nimble pace for her run around Cape St. George and up the coast past Port au Port to the exquisitely beautiful Bay of Islands, on which Pretty Harbour is located; and, as she bore him away, Cabot hoped he had done the right thing.

When commissioned to undertake this journey that was proving so full of incident, our young engineer had been only too glad of an excuse to break his engagement with Thorpe Walling; for, as has been said, the latter was not a person whom he particularly liked. Walling, on the other hand, had boasted that the most popular fellow in the Institute had chosen above all things to take a trip around the world in his company, and was greatly put out by the receipt of Cabot's telegram announcing his change of plan. The more Thorpe reflected upon this grievance the more angry did he become, until he finally swore enmity against Cabot Grant, and to get even with him if ever he had the chance.

He was provoked that his chosen companion should have dismissed him so curtly, without any intimation of what he proposed to do, and this he determined to discover. So he went to New York and made inquiries at the offices of the company acting as Cabot's guardian; but could only learn that the young man had left the city after two private interviews with President Hepburn. At the club where Cabot had lunched on the day of his departure, Thorpe's appearance created surprise.

"Thought you had started off with Grant on a trip around the world?" said one member in greeting him.

"No," replied Walling; "we are not going."

"But he sailed two days ago. At least, he said that was what he was about to do when he bade me good-bye on his way to the steamer."

"What steamer, and where was she bound?" asked Thorpe.

"Don't know. He only said he was about to sail."

"I'll not be beaten that way," thought Walling, angrily; and, having plenty of money to expend as best suited him, he straightway engaged the services of a private detective. This man was instructed to ascertain for what port a certain Cabot Grant had sailed from New York two days earlier, and that very evening the coveted information was in his possession.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.