

# PICKED UP AT SEA

BY

JOHN C. HUTCHESON

**Free**editorial 

# **Picked up at Sea**

## **Story 1**

### **Chapter I**

#### **The Gold-Miners of Minturne Creek**

The "Susan Jane."

"Sail-ho on the weather-bow!"

"What do you make it?"

"Looks like a ship's mast, with the yard attached, and a man a-holding on to it and hailing us for help—leastways, that's what it seems to me!"

"Jerusalem! On the weather-bow, you say? Can we forereach him on this tack?"

"I reckon we can jist about do it, boss, if you put the helm up a bit kinder nearer the wind," drawled out the lookout from his post of observation in the main-top, where he had stopped a moment on catching sight of the object floating in the water ahead of the vessel, as he was coming down from aloft after restowing the bunt of the main-topgallantsail that had blown loose from its lashings.

The Susan Jane of and for Boston, Massachusetts, with a cargo from London, had been caught at the outset of her passage across the Atlantic by what her American skipper termed "a pretty considerable gale of wind;" and she now lay tossing about amid the broken waves of the boisterous Bay of Biscay, on the morning after the tempest, the full force of which she had fortunately escaped, trying to make some headway under her jib, close-reefed topsails, and storm staysails, with a bit of her mainsail set to steady her, half brailed up—although the task was difficult, with a nasty chopping cross-sea and an adverse wind.

The vessel had recently passed a lot of wreckage, that betokened they were not far from the spot where some ship, less lucky than themselves, had been overwhelmed by the treacherous waters of the ill-fated bay; and the news that a waif was now in sight, supporting a stray survivor, affected all hearts on board, and roused their sympathies at once.

The captain of the New England barque had already adjusted the telescope, that he carried in true sailor fashion tucked under his left arm, to his “weather-eye,” and was looking eagerly in the direction pointed out by the seaman, before he received the answer from aloft to his second hail. But he could not as yet see what the lookout had discovered, from the fact of the waves being still high and his place of outlook from the deck lower than the other’s.

“Are you certain, Tom, you see some one?” he called out again, after a moment’s pause, during which he narrowly scanned the uneven surface of the sea.

“Yes, sure,” was the confident reply. “As sartain as there’s snakes in Virginny!”

“Still in the same direction?”

“Ay, ay; a point or two to windward.”

“Ha! I see him at last!” exclaimed the skipper, clambering up from the deck, and supporting himself by holding on to the mizzen-rigging as he stood on the taffrail and peered forward along the ship’s side, to where he could now notice the floating object ahead, almost in the wind’s-eye.

“Luff, you beggar, luff!” he added, to the steersman, who, with both hands on the wheel, was exerting all his strength to keep the vessel’s head up.

“She can’t do it, sir,” replied the sailor, hoarsely. “It’s all I can manage to prevent her falling off now.”

“She must do it!” was the captain’s answer. “Watch, ahoy! Brace round those topsail-yards a bit more! Cheerily, men, with a will!”

“Yo-ho-heave-oh-e! Yo-ho-heave!” rang out the chorussed cry of the crew pulling together at the braces, until the topsails lay like boards almost fore and aft the ship. And yet her head could not be induced to veer a fraction towards the desired point, but rather fell off if anything.

“Guess we shall have to put more sail on her,” said Seth Allport, mate of the Susan Jane, singing out from amidship, where he was on duty. “Guess so, Cap’en, if you want to fetch him.”

“It’s risky work, Seth,” rejoined the skipper, “for she’s now got as much on her as she can carry. But I s’pose it must be done if we’re to pick up that poor

fellow. Here, boys," he cried out suddenly to the crew, "we must shake a reef out of the mainsail. Look smart, will ye!"

The effect of this sail was soon apparent. No sooner had the folds of canvas expanded to the wind than the Susan Jane heeled over with a lurch as if she were going to capsize, bringing her bow so much round that her jib shivered, causing several ominous creaks and cracks aloft from the quivering topmasts.

"She'll do it now, sir," said the mate, who had come aft, and with another of the crew lent a hand to assist the steersman, who found the wheel too much for him now unaided, with the additional sail there was on the ship.

"Steady! How's the poor chap bearing now?" asked the skipper, hailing the lookout once more, as he lost sight of the wreckage by the vessel's change of position and the lifting of the bow so much out of the water forward as she rose on the sea.

"Right ahead. Just a trifle to leeward, boss."

"How far off?"

"A couple of cables' lengths, I guess, Cap'en. Better send a hand forrard in the chains to sling him a rope, or we'll pass him by in a minnit."

"Right you are," was the reply of the good-hearted skipper, as he rushed along to the forecandle himself with a coil over his arm, that he might fling it to the man in the water as soon as he floated within reach.

It was a task that had to be deftly performed, for the ship was forging through the sea, and plunging her bowsprit under water as she rose and fell in her progress, one minute describing a half-circle through the air with her forefoot as she yawed to the heavy rolling waves, the next diving deep down into the billows and tossing up tons of water over her forecandle, where the skipper stood, watching his opportunity, as the broken spars, on which he could now plainly see that the figure of a man was lashed, swept nearer and nearer on the crest of a wave that bore them triumphantly on high above the storm-wrack and foam.

While the wreckage was yet out of reach he could notice, too, that the figure was perfectly motionless and still.

What the topman had taken to be an outstretched hand, waving a handkerchief or some fluttering object, was only the ragged end of a piece of the sail that was still attached to the yard and a part of the topmast of some vessel, which had been torn away by the violence of the gale and cast adrift, with the unfortunate seaman who was clinging to it.

“Poor chap!” thought the American captain aloud, “I’m afraid there’s not much life left in him now; but if there is any, I reckon we’ll save him.” And, as he uttered the words, he dexterously threw one end of the coil of rope, which he had already formed into a running bowline knot, over the spars as they were swept past the side of the Susan Jane, while he fastened the other end fast in-board, slackening out the line gradually, so as not to bring it up too tight all at once and so jerk the man off the frail raft.

“Easy there,”—he called out to the men aft. “Let her head off a bit now, and brail up that mainsail again. Easy! Belay!”

“Thank God, we’ve got him!” ejaculated. Mr Rawlings, the solitary passenger on board the Susan Jane.

By this time, the waif from the wreck was towing safely alongside the Susan Jane, in the comparatively smooth water of the ship’s lee; and in a few seconds the rough seamen who went to their captain’s assistance had detached the seemingly lifeless form of the survivor from the spars to which he had been securely lashed, and lifted him, with the gentleness and tender care almost of women, on board the vessel that had come so opportunely in his way.

“Slacken off those lee braces a bit, and haul in these to the weather-side!” said the captain, as soon as he had got back to his proper place on the poop again. “I think the wind is coming round more aft, and we can lay her on her course. Keep her steady. So!”—he added, to the man at the wheel. “But easy her off now and then, if she labours.”

And then he went below to the cabin, down to which the rescued sailor had been carried, and where the mate, Mr Rawlings, and the negro steward, were trying to bring him back to life by rolling him in blankets before the stove.

## Chapter II

### Rescued

“Waal, how’s the man getting on now?” asked the skipper as he entered the cuddy.

“Man?” said Mr Rawlings, looking up on the captain’s entrance. “It isn’t a man at all. Only a lad of sixteen summers at best.”

“Poor chap!” said the other sympathisingly. “Man or boy, I guess he’s had a pretty rough time of it out thaar!”

“Just so,” answered the passenger. “And it’s a wonder he’s still alive.”

“Is he? I was afraid he was gone!” said the captain.

“No, sah. Um berry much alibe, sah, yes sah,” said the steward, who, having seen many half-drowned persons before, had known how to treat the present patient properly. “See, sah, him chest rise and fall now, sah. When jus’ lilly time back um couldn’t hear him heart beat!”

It was as the man said, and a tinge of colour appeared also to steal into the thin, blanched face of the lad, or boy, who seemed even younger than the mate had said, and who looked very delicate and ill—more so, indeed, than his long exposure to the violence of the waves and the terrible peril in which he had been, quite warranted.

“He’ll come round now, I think,” said the skipper, expressing more his hopes than his actual belief; for the boy had not yet opened his eyes, and his breath only came in convulsive sighs, that shook his extended frame “fore and aft,” as a seaman would say.

“Yes, sir, he’ll do. But it was a narrow squeak for such a slim youngster.”

“So it must have been, Seth,” replied the skipper to the mate, who had last spoken. “But his time hadn’t come yet, as it had for many a brave fellow bigger and stronger than him! Look, Seth!—he’s opening his eyes now! I’m blest if they aren’t like a girl’s!”

The boy, whose lids had been previously closed, the long lashes resting on his cheek, had raised them; and the large blue orbs, fixed in a sort of wondering stare on the face of the American captain, bore out his remark in some sense,

as they appeared feminine in character, although wanting in expression and intelligence more strangely.

“Seems dazed to me, Cap’en Blowser,” observed the mate.

“So he does. But no wonder, Seth,” replied the skipper. “Get him a drop of brandy, steward. That may bring him to himself more than he is at present.”

The steward fetched the brandy quickly in a glass, and putting it to the boy’s lips, as he raised his head from the locker on which he had been laid, made him drink a few drops, causing the faint colour to return more strongly to his face. But that was all, however, for he still gazed alternately at the captain and mate, and the steward who had just ministered to him, with the same fixed, expressionless gaze.

“He has seen death, Cap’en Blowser,” said the mate, solemnly. “I’ve noticed that same look on a chap’s face before, when he was dug out of a mine, where he had been banked up with others through its falling in, and never expected to see God’s daylight again! He’d jest that same identical expression in his eyes, though they warn’t as big nor as handsome as this poor lad’s—jest as if he was a lookin’ through you at somethin’ beyant!”

“It kinder skearts me,” said the captain, turning away from the boy with a slight shiver. “Let’s come on deck, Seth. I guess he’ll do now, with a bit of grub, and a good sleep before the stove. Mind you look after him well, steward; and you can turn him into my cot, if you like, and give him a clean rig out.”

“Yes, sah, I hear,” replied the steward, who had been trying to get some more of the spirit down the boy’s throat.

But he started up before the others left the cabin.

“Him wounded, Cap’en Blowser,” said the man in an alarmed voice. “Crikey! I nebber see such a cut!”

“Where?” exclaimed the skipper and mate almost simultaneously, turning round from the door of the cuddy and coming back to the side of the locker, on which the boy still lay stretched.

“Here,” said the steward, lifting, as he spoke, the long clustering curls of hair from the forehead of the rescued lad, and laying bare a great gash that extended right across the frontal bone, and which they must have seen before

but for the encrustation of salt, from the waves washing over him, which had matted the bright brown locks together over the cut and likewise stopped the bleeding.

“Jerusalem! It is a sheer, and no mistake!” ejaculated the skipper.

“You bet,” chimed in the mate; “but for the wash of the water a stopping it, he would have bled to death! Have you got a needle and thread handy, Jasper?”

“Sartain, Massa Allport,” answered the steward.

“Then bring it here sharp, and a piece of sponge, or rag, and some hot water, if you can get it.”

“Sure I can, Massa Allport. De cook must hab him coppers full, sah. Not got Cap’en’s breakfass, you know, sah, yet.”

“I forgot all about breakfast!” laughed the skipper, “I was so taken up with running across this young shaver here. But what are you going to do, Seth, eh? I didn’t know as you had graduated in medicine, I reckon.”

“Why, Cap’en Blowser, I served all through the war after Gettysburgh as sich.”

“Waal, one never knows even one’s best friends, really!” said the captain musingly. “And to think of your being a doctor all this time, and me not to be aware of it, when I’ve often blamed myself for going to sea without a surgeon aboard.”

“That’s just what made me so comfortable under the loss of one!” chuckled the mate.

“Ah! you were ’cute, you were,” replied the skipper. “Kept it all to yourself, like the monkeys who won’t speak for fear they might be made to work! But here’s the steward with your medical fixin’s; so, look to the poor boy’s cut, Seth, and see if you can’t mend it, while I go up and see what they are doing with the ship, which we’ve left to herself all this while.”

Washing away, with gentle dabs of the saturated rag that the steward had brought in the bowl of warm water, the salt and clotted blood that covered over the wound, the mate soon laid it bare, and then proceeded with skilful fingers to sew it up, in a fashion which showed he was no novice in the art.



“Golly, Massa Allport! I didn’t know you was so clebbah!” said the steward admiringly.

“You don’t know everything, you see, Jasper,” said the other good-humouredly. “There, I think that will do now, with a strip or two of plaster which I have here,” producing some diachylon from a pocket-book. “How do you feel now?” he added, addressing himself to the boy, who had kept his eyes fixed on his face in the same meaningless stare as when he had first opened them. “Better?”

But he got no reply.

The boy did not even move his lips, much less utter a sound, although he was now well warmed, and there was life in his rigid limbs and colour in his face, while his faint breathing was regular, and his pulse even.

“He looks very strange,” Mr Rawlings said. “Concussion of the brain, I should say.”

The sailor-surgeon was puzzled.

“I guess he’s dumb, and deaf too,” he said to the passenger who had been acting as his medical assistant, and watching the mate’s operations with much interest. “But no,” he added presently; “a boy with such eyes and such a face could never be so afflicted! I’ve seen scores of deaf-mutes, and you could never mistake their countenances. I know what it is, he has received such a shock to the system that it has paralysed his nerves—that’s it!”

“It’s either that or concussion,” the passenger argued.

And the steward, who did not know what to say, and would indeed now have endorsed any opinion that the mate had propounded after what he had seen of his practical skill, gave a confirmatory nod, expressive of his entire approval of the other’s dictum.

“Yes, Jasper,” replied the other, “it’s only a temporary shock to the system, and rest and attention will work it off in a short time.”

It was a peculiarity with Mr Seth Allport, the first mate of the Susan Jane, that when he spoke on medical topics and subjects, which formed the only real education he had received, his mode of speech was refined and almost polished; whereas, his usual language when engaged in seafaring matters—his

present vocation—was vernacular in the extreme, smacking more of Vermont than it did of Harvard and college training.

“I’m certain my diagnosis is correct,” he said again to Mr Rawlings—after seeing the lad clothed in a flannel shirt and thick pair of trousers of the skipper’s, into whose cot he was then carefully placed, and wrapped up, the little fellow closing his eyes at once and sinking into a sound sleep—“and when he wakes up he’ll be all right, and be able to tell us all about himself.”

“I hope you may be right,” Mr Rawlings said, doubtfully. “Sleep may do much for him; at any rate, I will remain in the cabin to watch him for a while.”

So saying, he took his seat by the boy, while the mate proceeded to go on deck and rejoin the skipper, and the steward went to work to prepare breakfast.

The wind had now got well abeam of the Susan Jane and lessened considerably, although still blowing steady from the southwards and eastwards; and the sea being also somewhat calmer, the good ship was able to spread more sail, shaking the reefs out of her topsails and mainsail, while her courses were dropped, and the flying-jib and foresail set to drive her on her way across the Atlantic.

“I guess picking up that boy brought us luck, Seth!” said the skipper, rubbing his hands gleefully as the mate came to his side and joined in the quick quarter-deck he was taking, varied by an occasional look aloft to see that everything was drawing fair. “I think we might set the topgallants now, eh?”

“You’re not a slow one at piling on the canvas, I reckon!” answered the other with a laugh. “No sooner out of one gale than you want to get into another. Look at those clouds there ahead, Cap’en,” pointing to a dark streak that crossed the horizon low down right in front of the vessel. “I guess we aren’t out of it yet!”

“Waal, if we’ve got to have another blow,” replied the skipper, “we’d better make some use of the wind we have, specially as it looks like chopping round. What is she going now?” he asked of the quartermaster or boatswain, one individual performing both functions in the Yankee craft.

“Close on nine knots, Cap’en,” answered the man, who had just hove the log over the stern, and now stood, minute-glass in hand, calculating the result.

“Nine knots with this breeze? That will never do. Away aloft there, and shake out the topgallant sails! Now, men, stir yourselves in proper man-o’-war’s fashion; and let us see it done in ship-shape style! That’s your sort, men. Johnson shall shell out some grog presently to splice the main brace.”—He continued aloud, as the hands came down the ratlins again without losing time, after lowering the sails,—“Now, hoist away at the halliards. Cheerily, men! cheerily ho! The Boston girls have got hold of our tow-rope; up with the sticks with a will!”

The Susan Jane plunged through the waves with redoubled speed, leaning over until the water foamed over her gunwale and was knee-deep in her scuppers, an occasional billow topping over her foc’s’le, and pouring down into the waist in a cataract of gleaming green sea and sparkling spray, all glittering with prismatic colours, like a jumble of broken rainbows.

“What does she make now, Johnson?” asked the skipper again of the quartermaster.

“Eleven knots, I reckon, sir, good.”

“Ah, that’s more like it! The poor dear thing! she was crippled without her wings, that she was! She’ll do twelve-knots yet, eh, Seth?”

“I don’t doubt that, sir,” replied the mate, who was much more cautious than his captain; “but it ain’t quite safe with those gentlemen there gathering together ahead, like a mass meeting in Faneuil Hall.”

“Oh, never mind the clouds,” rejoined the delighted skipper, whose thoughts were filled with the fond belief that the Susan Jane would make the most rapid run across the herring-pond ever known for a sailing-ship. “Guess we’ll beat the Scotia, if we go on like this.”

“Yes, if we don’t carry away anything!” interposed the mate cautiously.

“Oh, nonsense, Seth! We’ve got a smart crew, and can take in sail when it’s wanted! How’s your patient getting on?” continued the skipper, turning to Mr Rawlings, who had come up, the boy being in a profound sleep.

“Well, I hope,” he answered; “he is resting very tranquilly.”

“That means, I suppose, that he’s all right, and having a good caulk in my cot.”

“Exactly so, Cap’en; and when he wakes by and by, I hope he’ll be himself again.”

“That’s good news! Did he tell you who he was before he dropped to sleep?”

“No,” answered Mr Rawlings, “he did not speak.”

“Not speak!” said the captain. “Why didn’t he?”

“He couldn’t,” replied the other. “Whether from the cut on his forehead, or what, I can’t tell; but he has had such a shock that his nerves seem paralysed. You noticed his eyes, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” said the captain, “but I thought that was from fright or a sort of startled awe, which would soon go off. I’m sorry I didn’t have a look at those spars before we cast them off; we might have learned the name of the ship to which he belonged. Don’t you think, Seth, though, that he will recover his speech and be able to tell us something?”

“Certainly, Cap’en, as Mr Rawlings says, I believe he’ll wake up all right.”

“Well, then, we’d better go below for breakfast now—here’s the steward coming to call us. Davitt can take charge of the deck,”—hailing the second mate as he spoke, and telling him to “keep his weather-eye open, and call him immediately should any change occur, but not to reduce sail on any account.”

“I wouldn’t have given him that order, if I were you, Cap’en,” said the mate, as they went down the companion together.

“Oh, Davitt isn’t a fool,” replied the skipper lightly; and the two entered the cuddy together, where they were welcomed by a hospitably spread table that spoke well for the cook’s culinary skill.

“Josh is a splendid chap for fixing up things,” said the skipper heartily, as he popped a portion of a capital stew into his capacious mouth with much gusto. “I’d back him against one of those French what-do-you-call-’ems any day!” alluding, possibly, to the chef of the hotel in Bordeaux at which he had been staying on the Susan Jane’s previous voyage.

“So would I,” echoed the mate, who was performing equally well with his knife and fork; but, what he would have further observed must remain unrecorded, for at that moment a tremendous crash was heard on deck, and a heavy sea

pooped the ship, flooding the cabin, and washing the two, with the débris of the breakfast table, away to leeward, where they struggled in vain to recover their footing, until the ship righted again—the steward coming to their assistance and being likewise thrown down on the floor, to add to the confusion. Then Seth Allport darted up the companion.

The contretemps was so sudden that the skipper was quite startled; but what startled him more was the sight of the boy who had been saved, and who was supposed to be sound asleep, standing at the open door of his cabin, with his light brown hair almost erect, and his blue eyes starting out of his head with a look of unspeakable terror, and the blood streaming down his face, and dropping with a sort of hissing sound into the water that surged about the cuddy floor and over his feet, from the terrible cut across his forehead.

“Mercy upon us, Rawlings, look there!” exclaimed Captain Blowser, trying to regain his feet, and almost forgetting what might be going on on deck at the sight before him. “Is he gone mad, or what?”

## Chapter III

### Taken Aback

“What is the matter?” exclaimed the passenger, clutching hold of the steward’s leg under the idea that it was the cuddy table, and contriving to get into a sitting position on the cabin floor, as the Susan Jane lurched to and fro, swishing the water backwards and forwards, along with the plates and dishes and broken crockery, amongst them, mixed up with bits of meat and vegetables and bread in the most inharmonious sort of medley,—“What’s the matter, Cap’en?”

“Struck by a squall,” said the skipper, getting on his feet at last, and holding on tightly to a brass rail outside the door of one of the berths, that he might not get floored again. “But, look at your patient, the boy! Is he mad, or what?”

“Golly!” ejaculated the steward, also finding his legs again, Mr Rawlings having released them as soon as he sat up. “Me tink him goin’ hab fit!”

The captain’s professional instincts roused him even more rapidly than did a loaf of soppy bread which at that moment was dashed in his face by the counter swish of the water against the side of the cabin, and he sprang up ready for action as cool and collected as possible, considering the circumstances.

Before Mr Rawlings or the skipper—who both rushed forward at once to where the boy was standing—could reach him, however, or the negro steward, who was directly in his way, but was too dumfounded to prevent him, he made one leap over the table and rushed out of the cabin, with the same set look of terror, or some unearthly expression which they could not absolutely define, on his face, the blood streaming down from under the bandage across his forehead, making his appearance ghastly and uncanny, as the Scotch say, in the extreme. He resembled, more a galvanised corpse than anything else!

The skipper and passenger followed him instanter, Jasper, who had recovered from his first astonishment at the apparition, being not far from their heels; but when the two gained the deck, the confusion that was reigning there, and the perilous position of the ship, made them forget for the while the object that had called them forth.

Captain Blowser’s passion for “carrying on,” in the face of the treacherous weather the Susan Jane had already experienced in the Bay of Biscay, with the

prospect of more to come, as the mate had pointed out from the warning look of clouds along the horizon in front, had brought its own punishment; for the ship had been taken aback through the wind's shifting round, before the second mate Davitt, who had obeyed the skipper's injunctions to the letter, had time to take in sail, even if he had endeavoured to do so without calling him first, as he had been enjoined on his leaving the deck.

The results of this recklessness were most unfortunate for the Susan Jane, as the fore-topmast had soon snapped off sharp at the cap like a carrot, bringing with it, of course, the fore-topgallant mast as well, and the main-topgallant mast, with their respective yards and other spars, and the jib-boom as well. The ship was consequently broached to, and tons of water were poured on to her from the mountainous waves that seemed to assail her on all sides at once, which, but for the fact of the hatches being closely battened down, would have soon filled her hold and caused her to founder.

Fortunately, there were no men aloft at the time the wind chopped so suddenly, or they must have been swept overboard with the wreck of the top-hamper, that was now grinding against the vessel's side to leeward right under her quarter, and bumping with such force against her timbers as to threaten to stove them in. Altogether, with the whistling of the storm, that had risen up again as if imbued with fresh life, and the roaring of the sea, and the horrible creaking and crashing of the broken spars alongside, combined with the shouts of the men, who seemed lost for the moment how to act, and running here and there, purposelessly, without a guiding voice or hand to direct their efforts,—the scene was a regular pandemonium of disorder!

If he had been reckless, however, Captain Blowser was a thorough seaman, and knew how to command, and enforce his directions when the necessity arose, as certainly was the case here.

Snatching a speaking-trumpet from the lanyard by which it was attached to the mizzen mast, he issued an order which called at once the scattered wits of the crew together, and set them about repairing the damages that had arisen, and preventing the further perils that stared them in the face; while the second mate at the same moment sprang to the wheel, which was revolving as it liked, now to starboard now to port as the waves met the rudder below, the poor helmsman who had previously controlled its action lying senseless on the deck, whither he had been thrown by the sudden concussion when the ship was taken aback.

“Down with the helm hard!” shouted the skipper, through the speaking-trumpet, his voice penetrating every part of the ship, fore and aft, above the roar of the elements and the noise on deck. “Clew up the courses,” was the next command; followed by an order to brace round the yards. And the Susan Jane eased a bit, running before the wind with the aid of her main-topmast and topgallant sail, mizzen-staysail and foresail, besides the remnants of her mainsail, that was split into fluttering rags. All the rest of her canvas so recently set being carried away, and floating alongside in a tangled wreck of spars and sails and ropes and rigging, matted together in an inextricable mass, Captain Blowser now gave orders to have cut away, without further delay, as the men could be spared for the duty.

The first mate, one of the most active of men, had, the instant he reached the deck, set to work to relieve the ship, but as he was casting loose the lee braces from the cleats the lurch of the sail caught him, and at the same moment the main-topgallant mast with all its belongings coming down with a run, he was stunned for a second by some portion of the falling gear, and before he could recover his balance or take hold of anything to save himself by, was carried overboard with the wreck.

At nearly the same precise instant the boy darted out of the cabin aft, just ahead of the skipper and Mr Rawlings, as if impelled by some unfathomable instinct, and bounding right to the spot where Seth was being swept away to destruction, clutched hold of the seaman’s collar with one hand, and one end of the topsail-halliards with the other as they hung over the side, and there he remained, swaying to and fro, partly in the water and partly out, holding on with the strength of his single arm in a manner that no one would have thought a man, much less a boy, could do—and neither man nor boy, except one bred to the sea!

Seth saw it all, though no one else noticed the action, even amidst the conflicting emotions which passed rapidly through his mind at the moment of his infinite peril, just as a man falling from a cliff and expecting death every instant has the exact appearance of each foot of his rapid descent photographed on his brain. He saw the distended startled blue eyes of the boy, the light brown hair standing almost erect, the white bandage round his forehead, the blood on his face; but he could not tell nor think where he came from, and supposed, as he said afterwards, that he was an angel come to save him—and he would regard him as such all his life long!



"I'm darned if he warn't," he repeated, when the captain laughed when Seth mentioned his sensations at the time and detailed his thoughts, "fur he came just in the nick of time to grip holt o' me; and if he hadn't ben thaar I guess it 'ud a ben all sockdolagar with Seth, I does! He must have got what ye call a call, that he must! Guess you'd a thought him a angel, if you'd been in this child's shoes!"

And so the crew all agreed when they heard from the steward Jasper his account of how the boy had started out of the captain's cot, where he had him in a sound sleep, and came out of the cabin straight to help Seth—the negro's version of the story losing nothing, it need hardly be mentioned, through his telling it with much pantomimic action, and his frequent affirmation, "Golly, massa, I tell you for true!"

Mr Rawlings considered that the boy had been awakened by the crash of the water pooping the ship and the bleeding bursting out again from his wound, both of which recalled some fleeting thoughts, probably, of the shipwreck in which he had temporarily lost his reason. But the men would not hear of this at all, ascribing Seth's rescue to some supernatural foresight on the part of poor "Sailor Bill," as the boy was unanimously dubbed, and looked on thenceforth with the same respectful, pitying care with which the Indians regard any imbecile person, by everybody on board, from the cook Josh—another negro like Jasper, of whom he was intensely jealous, calling him, on the principle of "the pot and the kettle," a "nigerant puss-proud black fellow"—up to the captain, who, to tell the truth, shared some of the superstitious regard of the men for their protégé!

For the poor boy had, without doubt, lost his senses. He neither spoke, nor laughed, nor cried, nor was any perceptible emotion of pleasure or pain displayed by him under any circumstances.

He did not once arouse from the lethargy that seemed to press down upon his brain again after he had so fortunately and so wonderfully come to the assistance of Seth Allport.

One thing, however, was noticeable in him afterwards, and that was, that from that moment he appeared to attach himself to the seaman, just as a dog attaches himself to some master whom he elects for himself, and was never easy out of Seth's sight, following him everywhere about the ship, except at night, when he slept in the cabin.

Seth Allport, talking it over with the skipper and Mr Rawlings, gave a scientific explanation from his medical lore. He said that Sailor Bill's mental affliction was due to some psychological effect, which would wear away in time, and probably completely disappear if the boy had to undergo a shock precisely similar to that which had caused it. But, as neither he nor any one else knew what that shock was, of course they could not expedite Sailor Bill's cure, nor do anything, save make him the dumb pet of the ship.

In the meantime the damages of the Susan Jane were made good, and in a day or two there were few signs of the mishap which had befallen her.

## Chapter IV

### Derelict

The weather was now fair, and the wind favourable, and they were in high spirits, for they hoped soon to recover the time lost by the accident.

The captain walked up and down the deck with the first mate, rubbing his hands as he watched the full sails, and the water gleaming past her sides.

“We shall do, Seth, we shall do,” he said, “and make a quick voyage of it after all.”

“Mustn’t carry on too much, though, Cap’en!” said the mate with a knowing twinkle of his eye, which the skipper could read plainly enough.

“Stow that, Seth,” said he chuckling. “I s’pose you’ll never let me hear the last of that buster I went t’other day. Don’t you be skeart, old man; you won’t catch this coon napping twice. The breeze is splendid, though, Seth, ain’t it? Guess we’ll make a good run of it after all!”

“So think I, Cap’en,” replied the mate with corresponding heartiness. “It will last, too,” he added, after another glance round the horizon; “and I reckon we’ll not get any more nasty weather; the gale has about blowed itself out!”

“Right you are,” said Captain Blowser, slapping him on the back in his jovial way when he felt especially good-tempered; “an’ we’ll have an extra glass of old Bourbon come dinner-time on the strength of it, old boss! How the beauty does walk, to be sure! I wouldn’t swap a timber of her for the best Philadelphia-built clipper out of the Delaware!”

“Nor I,” acquiesced the mate, whose opinion the skipper valued so highly that this encomium of his as to the transcendent merits of the Susan Jane, which was really a splendid craft in her way, and a capital sea boat, completed the sum of his happiness; and he had just called out to Jasper, the steward, to bring up an Angostura cocktail to cement their feelings of friendship and get up an appetite for dinner, which would not be ready for another hour, when the voice of Tom Cannon was heard hailing the deck from the foretop.

“Darn that chap, he’s allers hailing!” exclaimed the skipper. “What the dickens does he want now?”

“He don’t call out for nothin’,” said the mate. “He’s too cute a seaman for that! When Tom Cannon hails, you may depend on it, Cap’en, it’s time to look out for squalls!”

“Blow your squalls!” said the captain good-humouredly. “You don’t want me to take in sail surely with this wind, you old Mother Carey’s chicken? But let’s listen to what Tom says. He’s a smart man, I reckon, sure enough—the smartest sailor we’ve got in the ship; and I was only jokin’ when I said that about his hailing!”

Tom Cannon’s favourite place of resort when the ship was at sea, and there was nothing for him to do, especially when he was in the watch off duty, was the foretop, whither he would climb up, blow high or blow low, and ensconce himself, sometimes for hours, until his services were required on deck, or else the rattling of pannikins and mess-kits warned him that something was “going on in the grub line below,” when he would descend the rattlins, swiftly or leisurely as the case might be, and take his turn at either grub or duty “like a man!”

On this day the captain had not long taken the sun, and “made it eight bells”—twelve o’clock—so the men had all had their dinner, and Tom gone up to his accustomed post of observation or reflection, for he couldn’t read, and never slept when he was in the top, although he could have done so comfortably enough if he had wanted to.

He was standing erect, looking out ahead, for he was a careful seaman, as both the captain and mate could vouch for, and possessed the keenest eyesight of any man in the ship—a natural gift for which he was very thankful in his way, and of which it must be said he was also very proud.

“Sail-ho!” he shouted, catching sight of something not long after he had taken up his position in the foretop and began to look out mechanically in front of the ship’s course, as was his natural wont.

“Not another ocean waif, like the boy, eh?” asked the skipper in a chaffing sort of way, while he waited for the seaman to give some further information, as to what he had seen, as he thought would be the case presently without his putting the question to him.

“Nary a one,” was Tom’s answer, as he looked down on the face of Sailor Bill, which was upturned to his without a vestige of animation in it, although the

boy's attention had been attracted by the sound of his voice; "couldn't find another like you, I guess."

"What sort o' sail?" hailed the captain again, as he did not hear the response to his question, the seaman having spoken in a low tone as to himself.

"A water-logged hull of some vessel or other, I reckon, boss!"

This time Tom's answer was heard plainly enough below.

"Where away?" rejoined the skipper aloud, adding under his voice to the mate, "Guess I woke him!"

"Right ahead—about three miles off, more or less."

"See anybody on board?"

"Nary a soul! The hull's low down in the water and the decks awash."

"Well, we'll soon come up to her at our rate of going," shouted out the captain in the same pitch of voice, which might have been heard a mile away at the least; for, although there was a strong breeze the wind did not make much noise, and the Atlantic waves were only frisking about in play without any great commotion. "Mind you pilot us right: it would spoil the Susan Jane's figure-head, I reckon, to run aboard a water-logged hull!"

"Ay, ay," responded the seaman from aloft, "I'll steer you safe enough, sir. Keep her steady as she is, full and bye!"

"Steady!" repeated the skipper to the helmsman; whose "Steady it is!" showed his prompt attention to the command.

"Luff a bit!" said Tom after a few minutes, when the Susan Jane had almost traversed the distance which he had previously said lay between her and the submerged vessel, and was close on to her—at least, must have been so.

"Luff!" repeated the skipper; and—"Luff it is!" echoed the man at the wheel mechanically as he put the helm up; and a moment afterwards the ship glided by the derelict hull, her speed lessening as she came up to the wind and her canvas quivering, like a bird suspending its flight in the air with wings outstretched!

There is no more melancholy sight to be met with on the ocean than a deserted ship. Everybody knows how dismal an empty house with closed-up shutters looks on land, especially when the shutters are inside ones, as is usually the case with town dwellings, and the panes have been riddled with stones, while the walls are bedaubed with mud from the missiles of mischievous persons, mostly, it is to be feared, of the class juvenis, and the garden in front overgrown with grass and weeds, luxuriating in the rankest of vegetation, and completing the picture of desolation and decay.

Well, a derelict vessel, such as is to be frequently met with at sea, presents a ten times more miserable appearance, if that be possible, than an empty and deserted house. Instead of being a picture of desolation, it is desolation itself!

The battered hull, scarred with the wounds caused by the pitiless waves, its timbers gaping open here and there, and the rent copper-sheathing showing, as it rolls sluggishly on the waste of waters—where it has been left to linger out the last days of a decrepit existence, with masts and sails and bulwarks and everything washed away, presenting such a contrast to what it was in its pride, when it swam the waters “like a thing of life”—is painful in the extreme to contemplate.

This was what those on board the Susan Jane noticed now, as she passed by the floating remnants of what had once been a gallant ship, as they could tell from her size and length. But Captain Blowser saw something more with his glass—for the Susan Jane could not approach very near to the water-logged hull that was almost level with the surface of the sea, for fear of colliding through the “scud” of the waves—something that made him take in the clipper’s lighter sails, despite his anxiety to take advantage of every breath of the wind and make a rapid passage to Boston, and lay the ship to; while he had a boat lowered, and went to inspect the derelict hulk more closely.

Mr Rawlings, the passenger, accompanied the skipper, so did also Seth Allport; and naturally, as Seth went, Sailor Bill followed his protector, or adopted master, dog-fashion as usual, taking his seat in the boat as a matter of course!

On boarding the abandoned vessel a horrible sight presented itself. Three corpses were stretched on the afterpart of the deck near the wheelhouse—which had been wrenched away, along with the binnacle and bulwarks, and the cabin skylight, while the hull was full of water and kept afloat only by the buoyant nature of the cargo, although they could not discover what that was, as it was completely submerged. But those three corpses told a tale of some

deadly struggle, as there was a knife still tightly clutched in the dead hand of the one, an empty revolver in that of another, while the third had a rope tied round his throat as if he had been strangled by the other two.

The bodies of all, which exhibited signs of emaciation through starvation, being almost skeletons, showed also numerous wounds, while their clothing was rent into tatters from cuts and slashes apart from the wash of the water, which had, of course, swept away most of the blood that had probably flowed from the wounds, although there was a large dark blotch on the deck close to the after hatch, testifying that some gory pool had been there.

"I guess there's been some of the devil's work here!" said the skipper gravely.

"You bet," chimed in Seth Allport, whose keen eye was looking out for some evidence of the nationality of the ship. "She ain't a foreigner, and Britishers don't murder one another like this. S'pose there was a muss on board, or something like a mutiny, eh, Cap?" he added presently.

"Yes," answered Captain Blowser, who was also looking keenly about with the same motive as Seth; and he was quicker too than the shrewd seaman in this instance, for he noticed forward, under the legs of one of the corpses, a loose piece of wood, on which he pounced.

Pulling it out as quick as thought, he turned it over, and the secret of the derelict hull was disclosed; for there, printed in letters of gold, showing that the piece of wood was probably part of the stern of one of the vessel's boats, as its shape also suggested, was the name "Dragon—." Something was apparently wanting, for the wood was broken off just at the end where the name was painted.

"Dragon?" said Seth. "I remember a ship called the Dragon King, that used to sail regularly to the East Indies. I saw her last time I was in Liverpool!"

"Waal," said the skipper, "we can only report what we've seen when we get home; for we can't get down below to examine her papers or anything, and must leave the old hulk to float till she sinks. I wish I had a pound of dynamite on board, and I'd blow her up, I guess; as, tossing about at sea like that, some vessel might run agin her in the night and git stove in. Let's leave her, Hiram; we can do no good stopping any longer."

"Let us first give those chaps there the benefit of a sailor's grave," said the mate, pointing to the corpses; and although the men, from some superstitious

feeling common enough among seamen, did not like to touch them, the skipper and mate had no such scruples, and heaved the remains of those who might have been murderers or the victims of some atrocious crime overboard, with as much solemnity as they could. After which they all returned to the Susan Jane, which pursued her way to her home port.



## Chapter V

### A Mining Project

After passing the derelict ship, the Susan Jane met with nothing more of an eventful character in her voyage; and after making a very fair run across the Atlantic, thereby gladdening the heart of Captain Blowser, sighted Nantucket lights, rounding Cape Cod the next day, and dropped her anchor, finally, in Boston harbour, opposite the mouth of the River Charles; about which Longfellow has written some pretty lines, beginning—

“River! That in silence windest

Through the meadows bright and free,

Till at length thy rest thou findest

In the bosom of the sea!”

Before the American coast was reached, however, an arrangement was come to.

When taking his grog one evening with Seth Allport and Mr Rawlings, the second mate having the watch, the Captain was expressing his regret at the approaching loss of several of those who had sailed with him for many voyages, for he knew that they would ship in other vessels when they found that the Susan Jane was to be laid up for a thorough overhaul.

“Well, Cap,” Seth Allport said, “I shall not be sorry myself for a spell on shore. Since I had them three years over among the mines in Californy I get restless at sea after a spell, and long for a turn among the mountains.”

“Were you at work on the surface all the time, or did you work in any of the deep mines?” asked Mr Rawlings.

“I worked for a few months on the Yuba,” Seth said, “but then I went to sinking. I worked with some mates first, and then I bossed a mine down Grass Valley. It was held in shares. I only had a few, but I was spry and handy, you see, and I worked up till I got to be boss, or what you would call manager. The lode paid well for a while; then it fell off, and I got to longing for the sea again; so I just chucked it up, and made tracks from ‘Frisco.”

“If you would like another spell at mining, Seth, I can put you in the way of it,” said Mr Rawlings. “I am on my way out to Dakota, to prospect a mine there. I

will tell you how it has come about. I had a cousin, a wild young fellow, who left home in the early days of the Californian gold fever, and was not heard of for many years. Eighteen months ago he returned. His father and mother were long since dead, and having not a friend in the world he hunted me up, for we had been great chums in our boyhood. He was a broken man, and I did not think he had long to live. I took him in, and he lingered on for fifteen months, and then died. He told me all his history during the twenty years he had been mining, and a strange, wild story it was—at one time almost starving, at another wealthy enough to have come home and lived in comfort. The most important part, and that which is of most interest at present, is that in a valley in the heart of Dakota he had discovered what he believed to be a most valuable gold mine. Among the hills he had found some lumps of very valuable ore. He had traced down the outcrop of the lode, which on the surface looked poor enough, to a point near the river. Here another lode intersected it, and believing this to be the richest point, he began with four comrades to sink a shaft. For a long time the lode was poor, but at a depth of eighty feet they came upon ore of immense richness. Three days after they had made the discovery a band of Indians fell upon them. Ned's four comrades were killed, but he managed to escape. The Indians burnt the hut and destroyed the surface-workings, and then left. Alone and penniless, Ned could do nothing. He made his way back to the settlement, and then worked on the railway. He was afraid to tell any one his secret, and was in no hurry, as he had no fear of any chance miners discovering the spot, which he said looked by no means a promising one. Then he fell ill, and a yearning for England seized him, and so he came to me. Before he died he told me the story, and gave me the fullest directions for finding the spot where, he said, a great fortune awaited me. I was by profession a civil engineer and knew a little of mining, so I determined to undertake the adventure. I was preparing to start, having made arrangements for a prolonged absence, when in London I met my old friend Captain Blowser, and mentioning to him that I was about to take a passage in a Cunarder for America, he said that he was sailing for Boston in a few days, and would be glad of my company. I accepted his invitation, and here I am. I have sufficient capital to open the mine and carry on operations for a year. I should be glad of an energetic man whom I could trust, and who understands the country and mining. I might travel far before I found one who would so thoroughly suit my views as yourself, Seth; so if you will throw in your lot with me, as working manager of the affair, we shall have no difficulty whatever in coming to terms."

"I'm your man," Seth said, holding out his hand. "Yes, sir, I reckon that this venture is just the thing that will suit me. I'm all there, you bet."

And so the agreement was made, and before arriving at the end of the voyage Seth had selected four of the best and most trustworthy men on board to join the party. It was arranged that each, in addition to his pay, should receive a small share in the undertaking, should it turn out a success; and, with the prospect of an adventure that might render them independent for life, they gladly "signed articles," as they called putting down their names to an agreement which the mate had drawn out, binding those who expressed their willingness to embark in the enterprise to be true to Mr Rawlings to the last, and obey his directions; he on his part promised that the treasure, should they succeed in finding it, would be divided share and share alike amongst their number. And thus the list was filled.

The band consisted so far of Tom Cannon and Black Harry, two of the foremast hands; Jasper the black steward, and Josh the cook, another darkey, as has been already mentioned; besides Seth and Sailor Bill, whom Seth stoutly declared his intention, with Mr Rawlings' consent, of taking with him, declining the skipper's proposal of giving him up to the British Consul when they arrived at Boston, so that he might be sent home to England as a lunatic sailor at the government expense.

"Nary a bit," said Seth; "whar I goes, thaar goes he, poor chap! Under Providence, he saved my life; and under Providence I'll never desart him, Cap, till he chooses to cast off the hawser hisself!"

Mr Rawlings encouraged the seaman in his resolution; for he took great interest in the lad, and looked forward to noting any change in his mental condition, whom he firmly believed would some day be suddenly restored to his senses by some similar mode to that by which he had been deprived of the proper use of his faculties.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Minturne Creek**

When the Susan Jane's anchor was dropped, and the longshore men came on board to unload cargo, the little party of Mr Rawlings' followers went on shore, drew their pay, and took their discharge; and then, after a few days' stay, took rail for Chicago, where Mr Rawlings was to join them, to make the final preparations for their start to the Far West.

They reached Chicago before the "Boss," as they called Mr Rawlings, as that gentleman had several business arrangements to make in New York.

At Chicago, Seth met an old western friend of his, Noah Webster, who had just returned from a mining expedition in Arizona.

After much talk of their Californian days, Seth told him that he was going as lieutenant to an English gentleman who was getting up a mining expedition to Dakota.

"I want eight or ten good miners, afraid neither of work nor Indians."

"What pay?" Noah asked laconically.

"Two dollars a day each, and all grub; double to you, Noah, if you will get a good gang together and come with us."

"It's a bargain," said Noah. "I could put my hand on twenty good men to-morrow; half of 'em were out with me. I will pick you ten of the best. And they ought to be that, for it will be no child's play; the Injins of Dakota are snakes upon miners."

Seth had received full authority from Mr Rawlings to engage a strong party, and the "Boss" was greatly pleased upon his arrival to find that a band of stalwart and experienced miners had already been collected.

Previous to quitting Chicago, Mr Rawlings, acting under the advice of Seth and Noah Webster, purchased a complete outfit of mining tools, and stores of all kinds: picks, drills, pumps, buckets, windlasses, ropes—and, indeed, everything that would be required in carrying out their undertaking properly.

They did not overburden themselves, however, with provisions, or any such things as they would be likely to get cheap in the back settlements at the end

of the point where they would have to leave the railway—not far off the town of Bismark, on the Missouri, the extremest station of the northern branch of the Union Pacific line.

And so, one fine morning, they started, full of hope, for some wonderful accounts were in circulation before they set out from Chicago, as to the enormous finds of the Excelsior mine and other kindred speculations in or near Dakota.

Passing over their railroad journey, during which nothing of interest occurred worthy of notice, and their temporary stay in the last frontier town—to lay in a stock of provisions, and hire teams and waggons for the transport of their mining plant and general belongings; besides engaging a half-breed Indian to guide them to their destination, a copper-coloured gentleman who had lived for years in New Mexico, and spoke a broken Spanish patter which he called “Ingliz,” and was afterwards a faithful member of the expeditionary party—we will come to the period when, after a month’s march across the wilds of north-western Dakota, they had arrived at the place which “Moose,” the Indian half-breed, declared with a multitude of “carramboes!” was the spot which had been indicated on the map which Mr Rawlings had received from his cousin.

“Waal, boys, this is bully!” exclaimed Seth, as soon as the party had come to a halt, gazing round him with the air of a landlord taking possession of his property.

The scene was a beautiful one, and well merited the seaman’s exclamation.

They were in the centre of a vast semicircular valley, surrounded on all sides but one by a chain of mountains, over which one especial peak towered far above the rest, lifting up a crest that was crowned with eternal snow and formed a landmark for miles away.

Into this valley, which appeared to be the general watershed of the district, ran several small streams, that united in the middle of it in one deep gulch, which overflowed in winter with a foaming torrent—although there was now little or no water, and the grass and shrubs around seemed parched and withered for want of moisture. The “location,” however, was a pleasant one, possessing all the proper requisites for a stationary camp such as they contemplated; for, within hand-reach they could have wood, water, and forage for their baggage animals. The teams they had hired were at once unloaded and started back to the settlement, but there remained with them twelve pack-mules, which Mr

Rawlings had purchased in order to have means of sending down for provisions whenever required.

Gold mining, it may be mentioned, is almost if not quite as precarious as that of silver. The former metal is found over a very extensive tract of country in California west of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, while silver is found in Nevada, Utah, and in fact over a vast expanse of country stretching almost down to the south of Mexico. Silver seldom is found in a lode extending with any great regularity. The lode, indeed, may be traced for long distances, but whereas one mine may be fabulously rich, those lying on the lode on either side of it may not find enough gold to pay expenses. It lies, in fact, in great "pockets," as English miners would call them, or in "bonanzas," as they are termed in Nevada. So long as these pockets last a mine will pay enormously; when they are cleared out it becomes worthless, as English shareholders in these mines have often found to their cost. In "Mineral Hill" and the "Emma" hundreds of thousand pounds' worth of ore were taken out in a few months, and then the mines were not worth working.

East of the Rocky Mountains, in Colorado and Dakota, gold is found as well as silver. It is found in quartz veins, and wherever there is quartz, some, although often an almost infinitesimally small amount of gold, is found; while in other places patches of quartz are struck containing immensely rich deposits of the precious metal.

No search was made for the exact spot indicated on the map, so long as the teamsters who had brought up the mining' stores remained. These believed that it was a mere exploring party, and although they wondered at the quantity of mining materials brought up, they had put this down to the folly of the "Britisher" who had organised the party!

When the mining party alone remained, a diligent search was at once begun for the shaft which had been sunk. This they knew was near the river.

Three days were spent and no signs of the shaft were discovered, when Seth came across a short stump of charred wood at the edge of the river bed.

He led Mr Rawlings and Noah Webster to the spot, and they agreed that this was probably the site upon which the dwelling-house had stood.

"The river, you see, has changed its course a bit," Noah said. "These streams come down in big floods in winter, and carry all before them, often changing

their beds. If it came across the mouth of the shaft it would fill it up with boulders and gravel in five minutes. Waal, what we've got to look for is a filled-up hole hereabouts. Mostly, the rock lies just under the surface gravel, so if we get crowbars and thrust down we shall find it sure enough."

A few hours' search, now that the clue was obtained, led to the discovery of the lost shaft. The lode was now traced extending either way, and as it was at once agreed that it would not do to commence another so near the river, a place was fixed upon a hundred yards back from the old shaft, and the whole of the stores and tools were removed to this spot.

Then the whole force set to to get up a large hut of galvanised iron, which they had brought, with its framework, from Chicago.

Timber is sometimes scarce in these regions, and it would not have done to have relied upon it. The hut contained a large general room where all would take their meals together, a store-room, a bed-room for the men, and a smaller one for Mr Rawlings, Seth, Noah, and Sailor Bill. A small "lean-to" as a kitchen was erected against the hut, and layers of coarse turf, eighteen inches thick, were built up against the outer wall all round for additional protection, as the winter would be bitterly cold, and a great thickness of material would be required to resist its inclemency.

There was an equal partition of labour. The black cook took possession of his kitchen, Jasper was to act as general attendant, and Seth assumed the position of manager of the works, with Noah Webster under him as deputy, while the men were divided into three gangs, each of which would work eight hours a day at the work of sinking the shaft.

## **Chapter VII**

### **Fighting the Elements**

The miners at Minturne Creek had a hard time of it, and their life was monotonous enough after they had settled down to work in earnest.

Winter came—the stern hard winter that can only be experienced to the full in the northern regions of the Far West, backed up seemingly by all the powers of nature—to try and cramp the energies of the party, and arrest their labours; but, neither the severity of the weather, nor the languor which the excessive frigidity of the atmosphere produced—although it sent them to sleep of a night after their day's toil, without the necessity of an opiate—were sufficient to deter them from their purpose.

Winter passed by, and still they worked on steadily, notwithstanding that as yet they had met with no substantial success to encourage them, hoping, however, that they had surmounted the gravest part of their undertaking. Spring arrived, and their hopes of an easy season of it were demolished in an instant; for the snow melted on the hills, and the ice melted in the valley, and the iron bands of the river were broken, causing a foaming torrent to dash through the gulch—a torrent that swelled each hour with the fresh accretions of water from the higher rocks, and, spreading wide in the valley, threatened to annihilate the whole party, as well as the results of their handiwork during the past months of bitter toil.

The very elements warred against them; but, under the noble example of their indomitable leader, whom nothing appeared to dishearten, they braved the elements, and were not discouraged.

The torrent grew into a flood, tossing huge rocks about as if they were corks, and swelled and foamed around the dam they laboriously raised when the floods began, to protect the shaft; but they fought the newly created flood with its own weapons, hurling buttresses at it to support their artificial embankment, in return for its rocks, and pointing the very weapons of the enemy against itself.

They had not to contend with water alone.

The winds, let loose apparently by the thawing of the huge glaciers by which they were confined in the cavernous recesses of the mountain peaks, stormed down into the valley, there meeting other and antagonistic currents of air



coming up the canon—and met and fought, relentless giants that they were, on the neutral ground of the miners' camp, tearing off the iron sheets of their house, and sending them flying away on the wings of the storm to goodness knows where. Still, the hardy adventurers would not be beaten; but fought the wind, as they had fought the water.

Spreading buffalo skins over their unroofed cabin to keep out the wet, they piled on them rocks and timber that they had kept in reserve for service in the mine, weighing their ends down with some of the ponderous rocks with which the flood had assailed them—so making a temporary provision against the weather until they should be able to build their log shanty afresh.

By these means the winds were conquered, stopping their onslaught presently and making a truce, which in time was lengthened into a treaty. But it was a mighty battle while it lasted; a fight of the Titans with the gods; man opposed to nature; the material to the immaterial—self-reliant, well-husbanded, carefully-applied strength matched against purposeless force.

Man does not generally win in such contests, but did in this instance. The powers of the water and air were powerless against a systematic resistance, and were compelled to succumb. The miners suffered, certainly—who comes out of a fray scathless? But they were victorious; and being such, could at last laugh at their losses. Beyond, also, the consciousness of having fought a successful fight, they were encouraged by the certainty that they had met and encountered with success the extremity of peril to which they would be subjected; and that thenceforth Nature could only be a passive enemy to them, with no terrors now to daunt them with, albeit she struggled against them still in the bowels of the earth, that refused as yet to give up those hidden riches which they were confident were there. Refuse? Ay, but only for a time; they would, in the end, conquer that refusal, as they had met and overcome nature's more active opposition!

Their house was in ruins; their provisions mostly spoilt by the elements they had battled—fire had only been wanting to complete the sum of their calamities; whilst the staging around their mine-shaft was broken down and tons of water upon tons poured down the embouchure.

They reviewed their position, and grasped its salient points, not a single faint heart among them:—hope, trust, energy, made them think and act as one man.

There was the iron hut and shanty to rebuild, the mine-shaft and its supports to repair, the dam to mend and remake in its weaker places, the mine to pump out.

Thus they thought; and, what is more, they acted upon the thought. Some men think, and others work. They did both; and, through their strenuous efforts, ere the early buds of spring had given a palpable green tinge to the shrubs and trees that clothed the slopes of the hills and dotted the valley of Minturne Creek here and there, or the snow had quite vanished from the topmost mountain peaks, and the river that ran through the gulch subsided down into its proper proportions, all traces of the storm ravages had been cleared away, and the snug little camp of the Boston exploring party looked itself again, “as neat and trim as a new pin, I reckon!” as Seth Allport said.

The miners themselves allowed, however, that the victory might not have been theirs had they not had the assistance of a visitor—and that a most unexpected one, as the spring was not sufficiently advanced to have cleared away all the snow from the back track to the settlements and made the roads passable, so as to allow the diggers to return to their claims on the hills.

Strangers are rare birds amongst the squatters out West, and are generally regarded with much suspicion by travellers on the prairies and in the mountain fastnesses.

The rougher part of the restoration of the camp belongings having been accomplished and not so many hands being now required for the further repairs needed, while the day was especially fine and suggestive of “sport,” the hunters were out on the hills, under the leadership of Mr Rawlings, who had proved himself by this time one of the best shots in camp.

There were other reasons for the hunters’ activity besides the fact of the day being fine and signs of sport apparent.

“The hull crowd, from the Boss down to Sailor Bill, who wouldn’t say nay if he could kinder express himself,” as the ex-mate observed before the setting out of the expedition—“were dog-tired of pork and fixin’s,”—and their stomachs craved after game, or fresh meat of any sort.

Besides their having lived through the whole of the winter on salt pork, it had not been improved in quality by its contact with the flood-water that had submerged their cabin at one time; but, whether damaged or not, it must be

acknowledged that even to the most easy-going and contented palate, a never-varying diet of fried pork and damper cakes—that resembled somewhat the unleavened bread of the Israelites in their passage through the wilderness—will prove somewhat wearying and monotonous in the long run! Thus, their anxiety for some change in their food can only be realised by those who have been compelled to live on salt provisions for any length of time.

Signs of sport, as has been already mentioned, were apparent enough; for traces of deer had been discovered by the Indian half-breed in the early morning, leading from the bank of the river as it entered the canon below the camp from the hills; and thus, therefore, it was with all the eagerness of semi-starving men that the best shots of the party were picked out at once, and despatched to follow up the trail of the game; the others who remained behind going on with the rebuilding with all the greater ardour through the prospect of an unwontedly good dinner before them—that is, should the hunters prove successful.

Along with Mr Rawlings was Noah Webster, who was a better hunter almost than he was a miner; Moose, the half-breed Indian, and Josh the cook—Jasper stopping behind by the express orders of Seth, although he was madly jealous at his brother-darkey being preferred before him.

Upwards and onwards, through the scrub and brushwood and budding branches of trees, struggling over the trunks of fallen monarchs of the forest, that had been rooted up by the wind or struck down by lightning, and lay across their path, over rough volcanic rocks, and through ravines that trickled down tiny streams to swell the river below, they made their way slowly and tediously towards the probable lair of the deer, as the traces of their antlered prey grew fresher and more distinct every step, the slot being sometimes plainly visible in the moist soil, although for all they could otherwise see and hear they might be as far off from the wished-for prize as ever.

Presently, as they were emerging from a thicker growth of brushwood than they had yet passed through, they noticed, to their joy, right in front of them, feeding on a small grassy plateau under the lee of a jutting cliff, a head of what the Indian half-breed immediately declared to be a species of ibex, or mountain-sheep, that are commonly met with amid the peaks of the Rocky Mountains and its chains, far from the haunts of civilisation and men. It was only owing, indeed, to the fact that the hill diggers were away in the settlements, and from the scarcity of forage in their more secluded retreats, that they had approached so near to the miners' camp.

Caution was now the order of the day; and, Mr Rawlings still leading, with the Indian next him, and then the others one after the other in file, Josh proudly bringing up the rear, they stepped forwards with the utmost care, keeping the wind in their faces so that they should not be betrayed by the scent of their clothing reaching the timid animals, to do which, they had to execute a considerable *détour*, and take advantage of every chance of cover.

By degrees, they gradually got within a fair range of about eighty yards—for, although long-distance shooting may be very nice as a test of shooting at the Wimbledon targets, it is quite a different matter when your dinner depends on the success of your shot; for, with that consideration in view, even the surest of marksmen likes to get within easy reach of his game.

Mr Rawlings and Noah Webster, the two best shots of the party, levelled their rifles together—after a brief nod from the Indian half-breed which seemed to say “Now’s your time”—and fired simultaneously, aiming at two of the wild sheep.

At the very moment they did so, the report of a third shot was heard, that seemed like the echo of their own double discharge, pinging through the keen rarefied air; and when the smoke had cleared off, and the reverberations of the sound had died away, rolling in fainter and fainter waves amongst the mountain hollows in the distance, three of the sheep were observed to be stretched lifeless on the plateau where they had been so recently feeding in peace, while the remainder of the flock were bounding away from peak to peak, seeking refuge in their native fortresses in the crags above.

Mr Rawlings did not notice anything unusual at first, as he had not heard the third rifle-shot; but Noah Webster and the half-breed, who were much better accustomed to woodcraft—having had their senses sharpened by dangers which seamen never have to encounter—were alive at once to the perception of something being wrong.

“Injuns, I reckon!” muttered Noah Webster under his breath, to which the half-breed growled a characteristic “Ugh,” and the two sank down closer amid the grass, dragging down Mr Rawlings with them, Noah stopping his expostulations by clapping his hand across his mouth, and looking at him warningly, while he motioned to the rest behind them to follow their example.

All huddled together in the grass and tangled brushwood, hardly breathing for fear their presence might be discovered by some possible foe, they looked out carefully, awaiting the development of the situation.

It was only a minute or two at most, but it appeared hours to one or two, especially to poor Josh, who, in his fright of being scalped by a possible Indian, would have cheerfully given up all his chances of gold in the mine and everything, to have swapped places with the envious Jasper and been safe in camp.

The listeners, however, did not have to wait so very long.

In a little while they heard the sound of twigs being broken near them, as if some one were making his way through the copse. Soon they could distinguish, in addition, the heavy tramp of footsteps—they sounded as heavy as those of elephants to them, with their ears to the ground—trampling down the thick undergrowth and rotten twigs in the thicket before them; and they could also hear a sort of muttering sound, like that caused by somebody speaking to himself in soliloquy.

The situation, if an exciting one, was not of any long duration, for while they were listening the dénouement came.

A nondescript-clad figure came out of the brushwood into the open clearing, walking towards the spot where the mountain-sheep lay stretched on the sward, which was partly covered with the snow that remained unmelted under the lee of the cliff; and a voice, without doubt appertaining to the figure, exclaimed in unmistakable English accents—

“Well, I’m hanged if I ever heard of such a thing before in my life! I know I am a tidy shot, but if I were to mention this at home they would say I was telling a confounded lie! To think of killing three of those queer creatures at one shot! By Jove, who’d believe it?”

The listeners burst into a simultaneous roar of laughter.

“It’s only a Britisher!” said Noah Webster; and they all rose from their covert and sallied out into the open, to the intense astonishment of the new-comer, whose surprise was evidently mixed with a proportionate amount of alarm, for he clutched his gun more tightly at the sight of them, and stood apparently on the defensive.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **An Unexpected Coincidence**

“We are friends,” Mr Rawlings said, “some of us your countrymen, if, as I judge by your accent, you are an Englishman. We are working a mine in this neighbourhood. My name is Rawlings, and I am the proprietor of the mine.”

“My name is Wilton—Ernest Wilton,” the stranger said, taking the hand that Mr Rawlings held out. “I am glad indeed to meet with a party of my countrymen. Some little time since I started from Oregon with a prospecting party that was organised to hunt up various openings for the employment of capital in mining, and other speculative enterprises. With this party I crossed the Rocky Mountains, and went about from place to place, until about three days ago, when, while shooting amongst these hills of yours, either I lost them or they lost me, and here I have been wandering about ever since by myself, and would probably have come to grief if I had not met you. By profession I am a mining engineer, but the mine I had come from England to work turned out badly, and I accepted another engagement, thinking to do a little sporting and exploring on my own account before returning to England—nice sport I’ve found it, too!”

Mr Rawlings gave the stranger an earnest invitation to spend a day or two with them down at the creek.

The visitor readily accepted; and the game being lifted and slung on poles, the party started for the camp, Mr Rawlings strolling on with his new acquaintance, and the others following, talking earnestly together.

Arrived at the house, Mr Rawlings laughingly apologised for its state of dilapidation, but assured the visitor that it was far more comfortable than it looked.

Seth came to the doorway, and the other miners gathered round, to inspect both the welcome supply of fresh food and the stranger.

“This is Seth Allport, my lieutenant and manager,” Mr Rawlings said. “Seth, this is Mr Wilton, an English mining engineer.”

“Jerusalem!” exclaimed Seth. “Now, who would have thought that?”

“You seem surprised at my being an engineer,” said Ernest Wilton, laughing at Seth’s exclamation: for even the hungry miners, who had been previously

clustered in groups around Josh and Jasper, surveying the cooking arrangements of the two darkeys with longing eyes, appeared to forget the claims of their appetites for the moment on the announcement of what evidently was a welcome piece of news, as they incontinently abandoned the grateful sight of the frizzling mutton, that was also sending forth the most savoury odours, and joined the leaders of the party who were interviewing the young Englishman. "I shouldn't have thought one of my profession by any means a strange visitor."

"It isn't the surprise, mister," replied Seth cordially. "No, that ain't it, quite, I reckon. It's the coincidence, as it were, at this particular time, mister. That's what's the matter! Jehosopha! it is queer, streenger!"

"I'm sure I ought to feel greatly honoured at such an imposing reception," said Ernest, still rather perplexed at the ovation, which seemed unaccountable to him. "It is not such a very uncommon thing for an engineer to be travelling through these regions, is it now? especially when you consider that it has been mainly through the exertions of men of my craft, and the railways that they have planned, following in their wake, that the country has been opened up at all. I should have thought engineers almost as common nowadays out west as blackberries in old England."

"You are right there," said Mr Rawlins's, hastening to explain the circumstances that had caused his arrival to be looked upon as such a piece of good fortune, quite apart from the friendly feelings with which they regarded him as a forlorn stranger whom they were glad to welcome to their camp. "But, you see, your coming, as Seth Allport has just remarked, has been almost coincident with a loss, or rather want, which we just begin to feel in our mining operations here. Your arrival has happened just in the nick of time, when we are nearly at a standstill through the want of a competent superintending engineer, like yourself, experienced in mines and mining work. Hands we have in plenty—willing and able hands, too," added Mr Rawlings, with an approving glance round at the assembled miners, who acknowledged the compliment with a hearty cheer for himself and Seth Allport;—"but we want a head to suggest how our efforts can be best directed, and our gear utilised, towards carrying out the object we all have in view. I and Seth have done our best; but, what with the overflow of water in the mine, and the necessity we think there is now for running out side cuttings from the main shaft, so as to strike the lode properly, we were fairly at our wits' end."

"I see," said Ernest Wilton musingly, "I see."

“An’ if yer like to join us in that air capacity,” interposed Seth, thinking that the other was merely keeping back his decision until he heard what terms might be offered him, and that a practical suggestion about money matters would settle the matter, “why, mister, we sha’n’t grumble about the dollars, you bet! As yer knows, the Kernel kinder invited yer jest now, when we had no sort o’ reckonin’ as to who and what yer were. Tharr’ll be no worry about yer share ov the plunder, neow—no, sir.”

“Oh, pray don’t mention that,” exclaimed Ernest Wilton, pained at the interpretation put upon his reticence in accepting the offer of the position made him. “Nothing was further from my thoughts. I am too well acquainted with the open-handedness of the mining fraternity in the Golden State and elsewhere to dream of haggling about terms as to the payment of my poor services.”

“What, then?” said Seth. “We don’t want to bind you down to any fixed sort o’ ’greement, if yu’d rather not.”

“I was only considering,” replied Ernest, vexed at his own hesitancy, “whether I could fairly give up the party with whom I started from Oregon, as I was under a species of engagement, as it were, although there was no absolutely signed and sealed undertaking. It wouldn’t be right, I think, to leave them altogether without notice.”

“Nary mind the half-hearted lot,” said Noah Webster, at this juncture putting his spoke in the wheel. “Didn’t they leave yer out alone in the mountains? I wouldn’t give a red cent for sich pardners, I guess, boss. Raal mean skunks I calls ’em, and no mistake, sirree!”

“But I promised to stay with these fellows till we got over to the settlements on this side,” said Ernest Wilton, smiling at Noah’s characteristic vehemence against those half-hearted companions of his who had held back while he had gone forward by himself, “and I like to keep my word when I can, you know—at all events I ought to send and let them know where I am.”

“We sha’n’t quarrel about that,” said Mr Rawlings kindly, to put the other at his ease, for some of the rough miners did not appear to like the Englishman’s hanging back from jumping at their leader’s offer.—“A man who is so anxious to keep his word, even with people who left him in the lurch, will be all the more likely to act straightforwardly towards us. Don’t, however, let that fret you, for you will be able to communicate as easily with your friends, and more so, by stopping here with us, as by going on to the nearest frontier township.



As soon as the snow has melted, and the roads become passable again, there will be plentiful supply of half-breeds, like Moose there, and other gentry with nothing particular to do, come hanging round us, who will gladly carry any message or letter for you across the hills—for a leetle consideration, of course!” added Mr Rawlings, with his bluff, hearty laugh.

“Ay, that there’ll be,” said Seth Allport. “Don’t you trouble about that, mister; but jine with us a free heart, and run our injine for us, and we’ll be downright glad, I guess!”

“That we will, sure!” chorussed the miners in a body, with a shout. And so, pressed with a rough but hearty cordiality, Ernest Wilton consented to be a member of the mining party in the same frank spirit, and was now saluted as one of the Minturne Creek adventurers in a series of ringing cheers that made the hill-sides echo again, and the cavernous canon sound the refrain afar.

Jasper and Josh, now quite reconciled after some “little bit of unpleasantness” between them, that had resulted in operations tending towards a lowering of the wool crop, as far as each was personally concerned, were unfeignedly glad the rather prolonged conference was over. They had been gazing at the group gathered around the young Englishman with a sort of puzzled wonder, and listening to what scraps of conversation they chanced to overhear, without being able to make out what the matter was about, with feelings of mingled expectancy and impatience at the length of the debate. But, now it was all settled, as they could see from the dispersal of the group, their joy was great, especially that of Master Jasper, who felt his dignity hurt, as a former steward and present butler in ordinary, on account of the neglect paid to his intimation that the viands were ready and “dinner served!”

“Hooray!” shouted out Josh, throwing up his battered straw-hat into the air, and capering round the improvised caboose, in response to the miners’ ringing cheers on Ernest’s consent to join the party and act as engineer of the mine. “Me berry glad Massa Britisher now am one of us, for sure! Golly, we nebbah hab to put up with dat nasty salt pork no more now, yup, yup! Massa Britisher um berry good shot, su-ah! Um shoot tree sheep at one go. Golly, Jasper, you no laugh. I tell you for true!”—And the negro cook grinned himself, to the full extent of his wide mouth and glistening ivory teeth, while administering this rebuke to his darkey brother.

“Shoo! go way wid yer nonsenz, and don’t bodder me,” responded the hungry and aggrieved Jasper, who did not appreciate the joke, the young Englishman’s

humorous mistake as to the result of his rifle-shot not having yet been promulgated for the benefit of those in camp. "Am none ob you gentlemens comin' to dinnah, hey?"—he called out more loudly,—“Massa Rawlins me tellee hab tings ready in brace o’ shakes; and now tings fix up tarnation smart, nobody come. Um berry aggerabating—can’t oberstand it, no how!”

“None o’ your sass,” said Seth gruffly, although the lurking smile on his face took off from the effect of his words, “none o’ your sass, Jasper, or I’ll keelhaul you, and make you fancy yourself aboard ship once more!”

“Me not sassy, Massa Seth. I’s e hab too much respect for myself, sah, for dat! I only tells you as de meat’s done and gettin’ cool, dat’s all, while yous be all jabberin’ way jus like passul monkeys. No imperance in dat, massa, as I sees!”

“Stow that, you ugly cuss,” said Seth good-humouredly, for he was used somewhat to Master Jasper’s “cheek” by this time. “You’re jest about as bad as a Philadelphia lawyer, when you’ve got your jaw tackle aboard! Now, boys,” he added, hailing the miners, who were nothing loth to obey the signal, “the darkey says the vittles are ready, and you as wants to feed had better fall to!”

## Chapter IX

### Concerning Sailor Bill

During this little interlude, Ernest Wilton had been closely engaged in watching the actions of the poor boy, "Sailor Bill."

His face had attracted him from the first moment he caught sight of him; but when he had more leisure to observe him, after the palaver with Mr Rawlings and the miners was over, and he noticed certain peculiarities about the object of his attention which had previously escaped his notice, his interest became greatly heightened.

Sailor Bill had altered very much in appearance since the day he had been picked up in the Bay of Biscay and taken on board the Susan Jane, a thin, delicate-looking boy with a pale face and a wasted frame. The keen healthy air and out-of-doors life out west had worked wonders with him, and he was now rosy and stalwart, his body having filled out and his cheeks grown much fatter, while he was even considerably taller than he had been some six months previously.

His bright golden-brown hair was, of course, the same, and so were the long dark lashes to the blue eyes that had so especially appealed to Captain Blowser's fancy when he had spoken about the boy's resemblance to a girl, for they yet bore the same peculiar far-away look as if they belonged to a person walking in his sleep, without intelligence or notice in them whatever.

As on board ship, Sailor Bill stuck to Seth Allport as his shadow, moving where he moved, stopping where he stopped, with the faithful attachment of a dog, albeit wanting in that expression of sagacity, which even the dullest specimen of the canine race exhibits on all occasions. Seth Allport seemed to be the mainspring of the boy's action, and after a time it became almost painful to watch the two, although the sailor had now grown accustomed to being followed about in so eccentric a fashion—as had, indeed, the rest of the party, who were not so distinctly singled out by the poor boy's regard; but it was all new and strange to Ernest Wilton as he watched and wondered.

"What is the matter with the boy?" asked he presently of Mr Rawlings, who, from the fixed observation of his companion, had been expecting the question. "Poor fellow, he doesn't seem all right in his mind—and a healthy, nice-looking boy, too!"

“Yes,” said Mr Rawlings, tapping his forehead expressively, and speaking feelingly as he looked affectionately at Sailor Bill, whom all had learnt to like as they would have done a pet dog;—“something wrong there, although I hope in time he will get over it in the same way as he came by it, if God so wills it!”

“I suppose he’s got some story attached to him, eh?” said Ernest Wilton.

“No doubt,” answered Mr Rawlings; “but nobody but himself knows it!”

“How strangely you pique my curiosity! Besides, his face seems quite familiar to me, somehow or other. Yes, it’s really quite familiar,” he repeated.

“Does it?” said Mr Rawlings eagerly, hoping that the young engineer might be able to tell something.

“Yes,” replied the other, “and I cannot tell how or where I have seen somebody like him before. But I will recollect presently, I have no doubt, after a little more reflection.”

“We picked up the poor chap at sea, half-drowned, and bleeding from a very terrible cut across the forehead; and such a slender thin shaving of a boy that you would not have known him to be the same as he is now!”

“Indeed!” said Ernest Wilton with greater interest even than he had displayed before; and thereupon Mr Rawlings told the whole story of Sailor Bill’s rescue, and how he afterwards saved the life of Seth Allport, to whom he had thenceforward attached himself; and how the worthy sailor had refused to part with him, and brought him out west.

The young engineer had been carefully noting all the points of the narrative while the other was speaking; and seemed to revolve the whole circumstances of Sailor Bill’s history in his mind with a view to solving the mystery.

“I shouldn’t be surprised,” said he, when Mr Rawlings had completed his yarn, “if he belonged to that deserted ship which you subsequently came across; and that in the mutiny, or whatever else occurred on board, he got wounded and thrown into the sea.”

“That is possible,” said Mr Rawlings, “but not quite probable, considering the time that elapsed after our saving him to meeting with the water-logged vessel, and the distance we traversed in the interval. Besides, the boy was lashed to the spar that supported him in the water, and he couldn’t have done that, with

the wound he had received, by himself; so that gets rid of the theory of his being half-murdered and pitched overboard. Altogether, the story is one of those secrets of the sea that will never be unravelled, unless he comes to his senses at some time or other and tells us all about it!"

"And you don't know his name, or anything?"

"No, only just what I have told you."

"Had he no marks on his clothing, or anything in his pockets, that might serve for identification, should any one claim him by and by?" said Ernest Wilton, pursuing his interrogatories like a cross-examining barrister fussy over his first case.

"He had nothing on but his shirt and trousers, I tell you," said Mr Rawlings, laughing at what he called the badgering of the other, just as if he were in a witness-box, he said, "and boys don't carry many letters or documents about them, especially in their trousers' pockets; at all events, they didn't do so when I was a boy. Stay—" he added, bethinking himself suddenly of one item of the story he had apparently forgotten till then,—“I certainly passed over something."

"What?" said Ernest, still looking at Sailor Bill steadfastly, as if trying in vain to summon up the recollection of his features from the hazy depths of his memory; for the face of the boy seemed more and more familiar to him the longer he looked.

"Well," replied Mr Rawlings, with a little hesitation, "I don't suppose you want to know about the boy merely to satisfy an idle curiosity at seeing the poor, bereaved, young creature to be out of his mind?"

"Certainly not," said Ernest Wilton. "What you have already told me, besides his own innocent, guileless look, has interested me strangely in him; and, in addition to that, I'm sure I know something about him or somebody extremely like him, which I cannot at present recall to my recollection."

"I believe you honestly," replied Mr Rawlings, stretching forth his hand in token of good faith, which the other cordially grasped; "and, that being the case, I can tell you something more, which only Seth Allport and myself know about, and which we have kept to ourselves as a matter of confidence on the poor boy's behalf. Of course, Captain Blowser of the Susan Jane knows about it, too, as he was entitled to by rights, from having picked the little chap up; but he's at sea, and it doesn't matter whether he divulges it or not, as it wouldn't be of

much consequence to the boy; here on land, however, where anybody might track him out from interested or other motives, it is a very different matter; so I must ask you on your word of honour to keep the circumstance to yourself."

"Most decidedly," said Ernest Wilton heartily; "I pledge you my word I will—until, at all events, you think it best, should things so happen, that it ought to be divulged."

"All right," responded Mr Rawlings, trusting implicitly in the other's discretion.

"Now, I'll tell you. When I said that the boy had only his shirt and trousers on in the way of garments, and that there was nothing in his pockets to disclose his identity, I related you only the simple truth, for there was nothing to trace him by; and I remember that Captain Blowser, of the Susan Jane, regretted afterwards that the spar to which we found him lashed had been cut adrift, without any one having examined it carefully to see whether there might not have been the name of the ship painted on the yard, or a portion of the canvas, or something else in the top along with the boy—for there was the topmast and yard, and all the gear of the whole mast complete, as if it had been carried away in a moment. But you recollect what I told you, of the boy's dashing out of the cabin as if he had been taken with a sudden frenzy, and going to rescue Seth Allport when he was swept over the side by the broken topsail-halliards in that squall?"

"Yes, quite well," answered Ernest Wilton.

"Well, after that he fainted away almost dead again for some time; and when I was bending over him trying to rouse him, I noticed a thin silken string round his neck, which I hadn't noticed previously, nor had Jasper the steward, although his shirt had been opened there, and his bosom bared in our efforts to resuscitate him, when he first took him down into the cabin."

"A fine silken string?" repeated the other, as Mr Rawlings paused for a moment in his recital; "a fine silken string round his neck?"

"Yes; and on drawing out the end of it I found a small parchment parcel, carefully sealed up with red sealing-wax, and an official kind of stamp over it which had been before concealed in an inside pocket cunningly secreted in the waist-part of the boy's flannel shirt."

"And this parcel contained?" said the young engineer with breathless attention.

"Ah! that's what I just don't know," said Mr Rawlings with provoking coolness.

## Chapter X

### A Conundrum

Ernest Wilton felt almost inclined to be vexed at first, thinking that the speaker had deliberately led him on with the intention, finally, of “selling” him, or perpetrating an April fool trick at his expense, it just being about that time of year. But after one steadfast glance at Mr Rawlings’ unmoved face, which bore an expression of honest sincerity that could not be doubted, he laughed off his annoyance, for he could perceive that his companion was perfectly guiltless of any attempt at a joke, and had said what he did in serious confidence.

“Did you not open the packet?” said he, when he had stifled his laughter, which increased all the more from Mr Rawlings’ unconsciousness of having done or said anything to provoke it.

“No, I didn’t do it at the time, thinking it might be some little keepsake or love-token which the boy would not have liked any prying eyes to look into if he were in the full possession of his faculties; and afterwards, when I wanted to, thinking that it might disclose his identity, Seth wouldn’t allow it.”

“Hullo!” said that worthy, coming up at the moment, with Sailor Bill in close attendance behind him as usual, “what are you two chaps a conspiring about? I guess,” he continued, with the broad smile that seemed to illumine the whole of his rugged countenance and give it such a pleasant, cheery look, “you’re up to some mischief about me, hey? I kalkerlate I heard my name kinder mentioned.”

“We were talking about the boy, Seth,” said Mr Rawlings, smiling too.

“Speakin’ ’bout my b’y, wer’ yer?” said he, turning half round as he spoke, to pat Sailor Bill’s head kindly. “Poor feller! yer might ha’ sunthin’ a sight worse ter talk about, I reckon! He’s a chap as can’t do harm to none whatsomdever, if he can’t do ’em no good, as he once did to me, I guess.”

“You can’t forget that, Seth?” said Mr Rawlings.

“No, nor won’t as long as this chile draws breath nether,” answered the ex-mate of the Susan Jane, feelingly, with a look of almost parental fondness at the boy.

“Mr Wilton here was wondering, Seth,” continued Mr Rawlings, “why you would not let me open that package round poor Sailor Bill’s neck, to see whether it would give us any clue to who he is.”

The smile faded instantly from Seth Allport’s face, which reassumed its normal grim, firm look, just as if some one had dealt him what he would have called a “back-hander.”

“Mr Wilton may wonder, and you too, Mr Rawlings, but I jest won’t that, siree, not if I know it. Nary a soul shall look upon it, I guess, till that thar b’y opens it hisself. I said that months ago, Rawlings, as you knows well, and I say it now agin.”

“I wish I could recollect whom he resembles, really,” said Ernest Wilton, to give a turn to the conversation, which had got into such an unpleasant hitch. “There is nothing so worrying as to try and puzzle over a face which you seem to remember and which you cannot place.”

“Yes,” said Mr Rawlings; “like a name sometimes seems to hover right on the tip of your tongue, and yet you can’t get it out, try what you may. I suppose you left England only lately?”

“I?” replied the young engineer. “Why, it’s nearly four years since I left Liverpool for America—quite.”

“Perhaps you keep up communication, however, with the tight little island, eh?” said Mr Rawlings. “I daresay some one was sorry to lose you.”

“Not they,” said Ernest Wilton carelessly. “I care for nobody, no, not I, and nobody cares for me,” he hummed in a rich baritone voice, although there was a tone of sadness in it that belied the tenor of the words. “I assure you,” he added presently, in one of those sudden bursts of confidence in which some of us are apt to indulge sometimes when we get a sympathetic listener, “that I haven’t written home or heard from thence for more than three years, and they will have thought me dead by this time! I’ve no doubt there is a large parcel of letters and papers awaiting me now in New York, where I told them to address me when I came to America; for I’ve not been back there either since the day I landed, when I started straight across the continent for California, with a gentleman who had an interest in some mines there, with whom I came over in the same steamer from Liverpool; and I have never been eastwards again, or



turned my face thither till I came through Oregon as far as this place, which is still considerable to the west, I think, eh?"

And he laughed lightly, as if he did not care to talk much of home or its associations.

"I don't think it's quite right, though," suggested Mr Rawlings in his grave, kind way, "altogether to abandon one's relatives and friends in that fashion."

"No?" said the young man inquiringly; and then added more frankly, impressed by the manner of the other, "Well, perhaps it isn't quite the right thing to do; but I have been a rover almost all my life, and a wanderer from home. Besides, my parents are both dead, and there's nobody now who particularly cares about me or my welfare in old England."

"Not anybody?" persisted Mr Rawlings, who thought it strange that such a nice, handsome fellow as the young engineer appeared should be without some tie in the world to hold him to his country.

"I certainly have an uncle and aunt and some cousins," said Ernest Wilton, acknowledging his relatives as if he were confessing some peccadillo; "and my aunt used to be fond of me as a boy, I remember well."

"Then I should write to her," said Mr Rawlings. "When you get as old as I am, you won't like to feel yourself alone amongst strangers, and without some one to connect you with the past of your childhood."

"I will write to my aunt, then, as you have reminded me of my shortcomings," said Ernest Wilton, laughing. "I promise you that at any rate."

"That's a good fellow. I'm sure you won't regret it afterwards," said Mr Rawlings, who was then proceeding to ask the young engineer something about his journey from California to Dakota when Seth, who had listened patiently to their conversation so far, now interrupted them.

"Come, mister," said he, addressing Ernest Wilton, "I suggest—"

"Do call me by my right name, please," interposed the good-humoured young fellow, speaking in such a sort of pleading way that Seth could not take offence.

“Waal, thin, ef yer are so partick’ler,” replied that worthy, with a very bad pretence of being angry, “kim along, Wilton, thaar now! and see to this mine of ourn that you’ve now got to look arter. How does yer like that style anyhow?”

“Decidedly better,” responded the young engineer, with his frank, light-hearted laugh, in which Mr Rawlings joined.

And the four then proceeded in the direction of the shaft, Seth leading the way, with Sailor Bill, as usual behind him.

## **Chapter XI**

### **A Roundabout Route**

“It must have been a rough journey for you, all the way from Oregon in almost the depth of winter,” said Mr Rawlings, as he and Ernest Wilton followed after Seth Allport, seizing the opportunity of proceeding with the conversation which the ex-mate had interrupted.

Mr Rawlings had taken a strong fancy to the young Englishman from the first, and the more he saw of his frank, open nature, the more he liked him.

The feeling, too, was evidently mutual, the younger man being attracted by the bluff, hearty, honest outspokenness of the other, who could not conceal his unaffected delight at once more coming across one from the old country, with whom he could converse on a different footing than he could with the rough miners who composed the majority of his camp party—men who, with the exception of Seth Allport, were totally uneducated and uncultivated. Of course, Mr Rawlings was used to these, and got along with them well enough; but, that was no reason why he should not enjoy a chat with a person more of his own class and status in life, was it?

Rather the reverse, one would think; for, to Mr Rawlings, the conversation of Ernest Wilton, after the usual style of talk to which he had now been habituated for months, came as grateful as water to a thirsty land—or, to use a parallel which those who had been accustomed to living on board ship will readily appreciate, as pleasant to the taste as fresh bread, or “soft tack,” when one has been eating nothing but hard sea biscuits for some time previously.

To Ernest Wilton, also, it was a matter of gratification to be able to speak freely with a fellow-countrymen, after his recent companionship with half-breeds and Indians; and he was nothing loth to accept the other’s overtures towards a friendly chat, to pave the way for future intimacy, such as he saw would probably result between them, should they remain long together, a possibility which recent events clearly prognosticated and which he cordially welcomed.

“Yes, it was a rough journey, with a vengeance,” he replied, in answer to the implied question in Mr Rawlings’ remark, “such a journey as I certainly never anticipated; and my only wonder is, how I accomplished it. But then, you know, over here in the New World—and it is new to me, every inch of it, the more I see of it—they don’t measure distances the same as people do in

Europe. Why, a degree of latitude or longitude is less thought of than a furlong by those at home; and, in some of the backwood settlements, neighbours are as far-away from each other as the capital cities of the continent are separated."

"That is true," said Mr Rawlings. "The space appears so illimitable that one's ideas as to measurement expand in a similar way, and the agriculturists calculate by the square mile instead of the acre in all their estimates of the land. But, about your journey? I'm curious to know what route you took to come from Oregon here."

"You may well ask," replied the young engineer, breaking into a hearty laugh, which was so catching, that Mr Rawlings followed suit, and even Seth thought it incumbent on him to look back over his shoulder and grin, "for it was, I believe, the most roundabout trip ever planned. But, in order to understand it properly, you must learn what sort of a party accompanied me. While in California, I got mixed up with all sorts of persons, engaged in companies started to carry out everything under the sun, and even under the earth: scientific men with hobbies, capitalists with money to spend, and speculators with nothing, who wished to enrich themselves from the pockets of the unwary; and, while at a dinner one day in Sacramento, where a lot of directors and shareholders of the Alba Eldorado were enlarging on the good fortune attending mining schemes in general, and their own especial venture in particular, a proposal was made that, as such fabulous reports had been circulated of the Bonanza mine in Montana, some of the surplus capital of the company should be expended in looking after another lode in the same vicinity. The proposal was eagerly accepted, and as I happened to be present I was asked to join the expedition."

"But that was in California," suggested Mr Rawlings, smiling, "and you needn't have gone through all Oregon to get to Montana, surely—eh?"

"Certainly not," said Ernest Wilton; "and that's exactly what I wish to explain. It was all those scientific men with their hobbies that led us such a dance! You see, it was a party of rich people, whose time was at their own disposal, and they could do pretty nearly as they liked. At the very first start, it was arranged that our first point of destination should be the Warm Springs in the centre of Oregon; and so to the Warm Springs we went. I believe the principal capitalist of the party thought they might be utilised for the purposes of a Universal Bath Company, Limited, to 'ablutionise'—that was his word, I assure you—the whole world."

“Nonsense, you are joking!” said Mr Rawlings, thinking the other was trying to chaff him.

“Not a bit of it—‘that’s a fact,’ as our American friend there would say,” replied the young Englishman, nodding in the direction of Seth Allport to show that he had already noticed his pronunciation and mode of speech.

“All right,” said Mr Rawlings. “I can credit your financier coining the new word ablutionise; but I can’t exactly stomach the ‘Universal Bath Company’ quite! I am an old soldier, however; so proceed, and I promise not to be very much surprised at any of your traveller’s tales!”

“Really, I am not exaggerating at all,” said Ernest Wilton. “That ignorant purse-proud fellow wished to start a company for almost everything we came across in our route. I need not add that he wasn’t an American.”

“No, it’s only Englishmen that make themselves such fools over here,” replied Mr Rawlings, heaving a sigh, as if he thought himself one of the number for having anything to do with the Minturne Creek venture. “If they have any bad points at home, they get them more developed by the passage across the ocean. What is the old Latin adage we used to learn at school—eh?”

“‘Coelum non animus mutant qui trans mare currunt,’” quoted the young engineer. “Those who travel abroad may change their scene of action, but can’t alter their own minds.”

“Yes, that’s it,” replied Mr Rawlings. “But go on with your journey.”

“Well,” continued the other, “when we had done the Warm Springs, one of the scientific gentlemen, who wanted to make soap cheap, I presume, suggested that the exploring party should proceed to the celebrated Alkali Desert in Idaho, which I daresay you’ve heard of?”

“I have,” answered Mr Rawlings. “It’s to the south of the Snake River, just below Boise City and the Salmon River Mountains. My poor cousin Ned was there a year or two prospecting, he told me.”

“Indeed!” said the young engineer. “Then I’ve no doubt you liked the place as little as I did. And as for those Snake Indians, they’re the worst lot I ever came across yet.”

"They are so," said Mr Rawlings. "Born thieves, every one—at least, I have got Ned's word for it."

"I was grateful to them for one thing, however," said Ernest Wilton, laughing again at the recollection. "They so disgusted our great English company-starting capitalist that he would come no further with us; and we were well rid of his bumptious airs and vulgarity for the rest of the journey."

"I suppose you then came in a bee-line through Wyoming?" said Mr Rawlings.

"Oh dear, no," answered the engineer. "We were doomed to execute a series of right-angled triangles all through our erratic course. From the Alkali Desert—or rather, Three Forks Camp, which was our halting-place—we made for the Rocky Mountains, so as to reach the Yellowstone River on this side. And that was where we had such a terrible time of it."

"I expect so," said Mr Rawlings; "the Rocky Mountains are no joke in winter time, for they are not easy by any means even in summer."

"We lost a lot of animals and nearly all our baggage," continued Ernest Wilton; "so when we got to Virginia City, on the Yellowstone, the majority of our party stopped there. I would have stopped too, I must confess, but a very energetic scientific gentleman suggested our pushing on, to explore some oil wells that were reported to be situated to the south of the Big Horn range."

"I know that place well," said Mr Rawlings eagerly. "The petroleum springs are by Poison Spring Creek, as the Indians call it."

"Do they?" said Ernest Wilton. "We couldn't see any creek at all; and even the scientific gentleman got tired out, and went back to Virginia City to join the others, and recruit, before investigating the mining districts of Montana. I was so sick of the lot, however, that I determined to push on to Bismark, and strike the line of the Northern Pacific, waiting till the spring came before I undertook any further exploring work."

"And that's how you came to us?" said Mr Rawlings.

"Yes. Two of us started to cross the Black Hills from Wyoming, along with the Indians who engaged to guide us. According to the map I had with me, our route would have been to strike the north fork of the Cheyenne River, and follow it up till it emptied itself into the Missouri, when we could have pursued

the left bank of the latter due north, until it took us right into the town of Bismark, which is, I believe, the terminus of the railway."

"Bless you! why it runs more than 100 miles farther west already," said Mr Rawlings; "and if you wish still to communicate with your friends, who, I can perceive from your story, there is every reason for you to be pained at your separation from, why, you'll be able to join them in Virginia City itself, in a short trip by the cars from Bismark."

"Thanks," said Ernest Wilton, appreciating the other's sly allusion to those dear companions of his with whom he had so little in keeping. "As I will be within easy reach of them in case of need, I shall be all the better pleased to remain with you, as then I'll have two strings to my bow! But, to finish my narrative:—the weather was so bad after we left the supposed site of the oil wells, that we could make no headway at all; and on our arriving at Fort Phil Kearney, which, to our mortification, was deserted, my solitary white companion, who had accompanied me faithfully so far, turned tail with two of the remaining Indians—of the Crow tribe, of course, rascally fellows, just like the birds from whom they are named!"

"You like those chaps," said Mr Rawlings with a smile, "dearly, eh?"

"I do 'muchly,' as Artemus Ward says," responded Ernest. "I should like to pay them out! But to make a long story short, with the remaining two Indian guides—who only came with me after I promised them a small fortune on my reaching a settlement—I managed to lose my way utterly; and then having lost the guides also, I wandered about hungry and cold until I met your hunters amongst the mountains, when all my troubles were ended."

"Thank goodness they met you!" said Mr Rawlings cordially. "But those Indians must have deserted," he continued musingly. "They are much too knowing to have lost their way."

"Yes, I know it," said Ernest Wilton. "They were afraid of encountering any of the Sioux, who are near you, I think."

"Yes, too close to be pleasant," said Mr Rawlings. "But we have not had any trouble with them yet."

"And I hope you won't at all," responded the other with much heartiness. "Those Crow Indians with me were continually talking about Red Cloud and Spotted Tail. I think those were the names of the chiefs they mentioned."

“Yes,” replied Mr Rawlings, “both have Indian reservations in Dakota.”

“Is that so? I thought that might be only their yarring when they said so; but they mentioned those two chiefs in particular, I remember now, and asserted that they intended ‘digging up the hatchet,’ as they termed it in their euphonious language, as soon as the spring came round! However, I wouldn’t place much credence in their statement, I assure you. Those Crows are such curs that they would say anything rather than venture ‘within measurable distance,’ as the phrase goes, of a possible enemy.” And Ernest Wilton laughed.

“I have heard some similar rumours myself,” said Mr Rawlings more gravely. “The last scout that came here from the township, just before the winter set in regularly, brought word that the Sioux were preparing for the war-path, or something to that effect; and, as the red men themselves say, there is never much smoke without fire. I hope to goodness, though, that it is only rumour! An Indian war is a terrible thing, my boy. I’ve seen the effects of one, years since, and never forgotten it,”—and Mr Rawlings laid his hand on Ernest Wilton’s shoulder, as if to impress his words more strongly. “It wouldn’t be pleasant for us here were another to break out now, and we so far from the settlements.”

“Isn’t there a military station near this of the United States troops?” asked the young engineer.

“About a hundred miles off, or so,” replied Mr Rawlings.

“Oh, that’s pretty close for the backwoods!” said Ernest Wilton lightly, as he quickened his steps to join Seth Allport, who had hailed out to the two stragglers to “hurry up,” for the “lazy lubbers” that they were; the ex-mate of the Susan Jane having awaited with some considerable impatience, for a rather unconscionable length of time, the end of the interview between the two Englishmen, although he was too good-hearted, and had too much good taste, to interrupt them before he saw that their chat was finished.



## Chapter XII

### “Love’s Labour Lost”

“Now, mister,” said Seth Allport, when the young engineer closed-up to his side, “I guess you’ve seed our location, and you’ve seed ourselves:—now, see the mine afore you. What d’ye think of it, hey?”

The “location” looked as favourable a one for mining purposes as it was charming to the eye; but appearances are not everything to those who toil beneath the surface of the earth, and so Ernest Wilton well knew.

“What strata have you passed through?” asked he of Seth.

“I s’pose yer mean the sile, don’t yer?” said Seth Allport.

The young engineer nodded an affirmative reply.

“Black mould—gravel—sand and clay—black sand by itself—and then quartz reef,” replied Seth, laconically, repeating the words as if he were saying a lesson he had learnt from a book.

“And what have you got to now?” continued Ernest Wilton, pursuing his inquiry.

“Water,” said Seth Allport in the same laconic way.

Ernest Wilton’s face fell, albeit he had previously felt inclined to smile at the ex-mate’s queer manner and abrupt speech.

Water! It was the cruellest, most persistent enemy with whom the miner has to deal. Foul air and gas can be got rid of, but water, proceeding from invisible springs, ever welling up, and the more the quantity pumped up the greater the yield from the inexhaustible fountains of the earth, was an opponent that could not be conquered, an enemy of the most potent powers for ill indeed—a very vampire that sucked the blood of energy.

Delving down, day after day, with superhuman exertions, through the various strata, they had met with no sight as yet of that rich vein of gold which they confidently hoped to encounter, although there were occasional traces of an auriferous deposit here and there to encourage them on, their hopes and hearts had never failed them until now. No wonder that Ernest Wilton’s arrival

was hailed as an omen of good luck; and that he was regarded by all as having arrived “just in the nick of time” to extricate them from their difficulty!

“How long is it since you met with water?” asked the young engineer, before he descended the shaft in order to inspect the works personally below.

Mr Rawlings answered this time, while Seth Allport and Noah Webster confirmed his statements by their looks, which were expressive enough!

“That is a question that none of us can reply to satisfactorily.”

Ernest Wilton was surprised. He thought he had made one of the simplest inquiries possible; and he looked his astonishment at the answer given him before he said anything more. The idea of a practical man, as he regarded Mr Rawlings, speaking so!

“How is that?” said he, after a pause. “I should think you would have no trouble in telling me?”—and he looked from Mr Rawlings to Seth Allport with some curiosity.

“Some things that appear simple enough,” said Mr Rawlings somewhat pragmatically, “are more difficult to answer, my dear fellow, than most people would think; and you ought to know that from your engineering experience!”

“Certainly,” replied the other; “but here’s a mine with men working in it from day to day, and digging through each separate stratum in turn, and knowing at the close of each day the result of that day’s labour. Surely, one would think that the day on which they struck water they would not forget it?”

“Granted, my dear fellow,” answered Mr Rawlings, who dearly loved a bit of argument when he could come across a foeman worthy of his steel. “I accede in toto to your premises; but your deduction is somewhat a little too rapid, for there are other circumstances to be considered which I have not yet brought to your notice, and which, I have no doubt, will alter your decision.”

“By Jove!” said Ernest Wilton, with a laugh, “I must treat it as a conundrum, and give it up. I am certain that I cannot solve it.”

“Stop a minute,” said Mr Rawlings, “and you’ll soon see how it is. During the winter we had a hard time of it to keep the roof of our house over our head, let alone preserving the mine in working order! The snow, the ice, the stormy gales, that seem to haunt the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains and their

outlying ranges, each in turn assailed us: and then, on the melting of the snow at the first breath of approaching spring, the floods, which were the most virulent antagonists with whom we had to grapple, almost overwhelmed us! There was 'water, water everywhere,' as Coleridge says in his 'Ancient Mariner.' The whole valley, almost as far as you can see, was one vast foaming torrent, that bore down all our puny protections in the shape of ramparts and stockades. It nearly swept away our rough dwelling bodily; it did more, it demolished the dam we had erected across the gulch just there,"—pointing to the spot as he spoke—"and wrecked the heading of the shaft, filling the mine as a matter of course."

"And up to then, in spite of all your digging, you had met with no water?" asked Ernest Wilton. "Was that so?"

"Not a drop, which I very much wondered at, considering that we are almost in the centre of the tributaries of the Cheyenne and Missouri—any number of tiny streams rising amongst these hills, and gaining additional body as they proceed onward to join the greater rivers from fresh sources that cross their course at different angles."

"And after the floods?"

"Why, we set to work like men, I can tell you:—Seth, there, will bear me out."

"We did so, sirree," said that worthy, with a most emphatic nod.

"Yes," continued Mr Rawlings, "we first renovated the dam, and dug out a channel for the overplus of water on either side of the shaft; and then we started pumping out the mine."

"An' it were a job!" said Seth, taking up the thread of the story. "I've been in a vessel as sprung a leak, and where the hands were pumping day and night, with nary a spell off, so as to kip a plank atween us and the bottom of Davy Jones's looker; but, never, in all my born days, have I seed sich pumpin' as went on in that thaar week!"

"As Seth says," resumed Mr Rawlings, "we were like mariners pumping at the hold of a water-logged ship, as if for life. We pumped, and pumped, and pumped; but, in spite of all our efforts, only succeeded in just keeping the enemy in check, that's all."

"Can't get the mine dry, eh?"

“No, not for any length of time. What we gain in the day, we lose again at night. In concise terms, I may put it, that by keeping the hose constantly at work, which of course interrupts the progress of excavation, we barely manage to hold our own, neither gaining nor losing an inch.”

“That’s a bad lookout!” said Ernest Wilton, shaking his head.

It was. It meant ruin to all their hopes and expectations; the inglorious end of the expedition; the sacrifice of all their toil and perseverance throughout those terribly arduous winter months; their waste of energy in struggling with the powers of nature. It meant all that, and more!

Such a state of things would never do to last.

Difficulties were only made for men to overcome, according to the maxim which had hitherto guided Mr Rawlings and Seth Allport, and which they had preached to the more faint-hearted members of their party; and, Ernest Wilton was a thorough disciple of their creed, for he was not one to be daunted by obstacles, no matter how grievous and apparently insurmountable they were;—no, not he.

The young engineer went down the mine to look for himself, and to form his own opinion as to what was best to be done in the emergency.

He went down looking grave enough, but he returned with a more hopeful expression on his face, which at once cheered up the somewhat despondent spirits of those awaiting him above—for he preferred descending alone.

“Well?” inquired Mr Rawlings, interrogatively.

“It might be worse,” said the young engineer smiling.

“That sounds good,” said Seth Allport, his countenance, which had previously been grimmer than ever, beaming over its whole expanse, as if the sun was trying to shine through overhanging clouds and fog. Seth’s phiz was as expressive as a barometer any clay.

“I think I see a way out of the difficulty,” said Ernest Wilton to ease their anxiety, which he could readily sympathise with after what he had seen.

“I am sure you would not say so unless you had some hopes of its success,” said Mr Rawlings, whom the good news seemed to affect more than all the

previous trials had done, for he looked quite pale, and almost trembled with eagerness as he questioned the bearer of the welcome tidings.

“No,” said Ernest Wilton joyously, for he was very glad to be able to communicate the intelligence to those who had succoured him in his own distress, and now appealed to him for assistance. “There’s a chance for the mine yet; and you need not despair of having spent your toil in vain.”

“Bully for you!” exclaimed Seth Allport. “Didn’t I say now—ask anybody present if I didn’t anyhow—that you’d brought us good luck?”

“I rejoice to hear you say so,” said Mr Rawlings, a little more calmly, although his whole fortune had been at stake, as it were; for if the mine had turned out a failure he would have been ruined, and had to begin the world over again. “It would have been hard that all our labour should have gone for nothing.”

“Well, my dear sir,” said Ernest Wilton cheerfully, “you need not complain now. It is not a case with you of ‘Love’s labour lost,’ as in Shakespeare’s play of that title.”

## **Chapter XIII**

### **Countermining**

“What do you think of doing?” asked Mr Rawlings, drawing a long breath of relief on hearing Ernest Wilton’s cheering words. “We have tried almost everything to stop the flow of water and failed—Seth and I; and although you appear so sanguine, I hardly see what can be done, myself.” And he sighed again, as if he were returning to his previous state of despondency.

“Did you ever hear the old Irish saying that ‘there’s more ways of killing a pig besides hanging him?’” asked Ernest Wilton, instead of answering the other’s question at once.

“Yes,” laughingly replied Mr Rawlings.

“Then,” said the young engineer, “I am going to carry that precept into practice regarding your mine.”

“How?”

“You have tried pumping without avail, have you not?” said Ernest Wilton.

“That’s a fact,” said Seth Allport, with the full power of his down-east nasal intonation. “Yer couldn’t hit nearer the mark than thaat, I guess, sirree.”

“And you could never get the water lower than fifty feet off the bottom of the shaft?” pursued the young engineer, stating his case, “could you?”

“No, not a foot lower,” said Mr Rawlings.

“Then what think you of a countermine?”

“I don’t quite understand you,” said Mr Rawlings.

“Don’t you?” said Ernest Wilton, smiling, “and yet it is easy enough to answer, as you told me just now, when I wondered how you did not know when the water came into the shaft.”

“Pray explain,” replied Mr Rawlings. “I didn’t keep you in suspense, you know, when you confessed your inability to answer the question.”

“No,” said the other, “and I’ll treat you as fairly now. You see, at present there is only an intervening wall, of about one hundred yards in gross thickness,

dividing the shaft from the channel of the gulch outside. The upper part of the stratum is mere gravel, for as you found, in winter the river extends beyond the point where you are sinking. Judging by the eye, I should say that the mouth of the shaft is twenty feet above the level of the water in the river. So far you would naturally find no water. When you began work the water in the river must have been ten feet at least lower than it is at present, consequently it was no higher than the solid rock where you began to work down in the quartz. So long as the river was below that level you naturally would meet with no water whatever, however deep you might sink, but directly it rose so that it was higher than the level of the rock, it would penetrate through the gravel like a sieve, and will fill your shaft as fast as you can pump it out. Gradually the river will sink as the dry season comes on, and in the autumn will be again below the level of the rock. You can't wait for that, and must therefore carry your shaft from the top of the bed rock to the level of the water in the stream, say twelve-feet in all, but of course we will get the levels accurately."

"That sounds right," Seth nodded approvingly. "What's go ter be done?"

"The job is by no means a difficult one," Ernest Wilton answered. "In the first place, we must widen the shaft by a foot down to the level of the rock, that will give six inches all round. Then we must square off and level the top of the rock, which will then be a level shaft six inches wide all round. While you are doing this we must make a drum ready. That is easily made. We must make four circular frameworks, fasten twelve-feet planks, carefully fitted together, and pitched outside them so as to make it perfectly water-tight. We ought to have a layer of hydraulic lime or cement laid on the rock for the drum to rest on; but if we have not got them, some well-puddled clay will do as well. Then when the drum is in position in the shaft of rock, its upper end will be higher than the level of the water in the river, and if the rock is compact and free from fissures we shall be perfectly dry however deep we may sink. How are you off for strong planks? They must be strong to resist the pressure of the water and gravel."

"I fear that we have no planks of that thickness whatever," Mr Rawlings said. "We only brought enough timber for the scaffolding over the mine, and a little for framework if it wanted lining. You see, we did line it down to the rock. I think we have one balk of nine-inch timber left."

"Let us measure it and see how many two-inch planks it will make."

It was thirty-two feet long. Eight feet was therefore useless for planks, but would come in for the framework. Twenty-four feet would make eight planks of a little over two inches thick, nine inches wide, and twelve-feet long.

“This is less than a fifth of what we require,” Ernest Wilton said. “The shaft is eight feet in diameter, so we shall need some thirty-two nine-inch planks. However, there are trees about, not very large and not very high, but big enough to get one or two nine-inch planks twelve-feet long from each. The first thing to do is to get a supply of them.”

“And you feel quite sure that by lining this portion of the mine with a drum, as you describe, we shall get over our difficulty with the water?” Mr Rawlings said.

“Quite sure,” Ernest Wilton replied; “providing always that the rock is solid.”

“Then it’s as good as done,” Seth said emphatically. “You have put us on the right track, Wilton, and we’ll carry it through. I never thought about the river, and kept on wondering why that darned gravel kept letting the water through when it was as dry as bones when we drove through it.”

While the preparations were being made and parties scouring the country for timber the young engineer bent his mind to the task of inventing some better mode of getting rid of the water than by manual labour—the mine being sadly deficient in a lot of necessary gear, besides steam-power, as Ernest Wilton had quickly perceived, although he had refrained from commenting on the fact.

“You see,” said Mr Rawlings, in apology, “I undertook too big an enterprise with the little capital I had: and, consequently, have been unable to work it properly. Indeed,” he continued confidentially, “if we don’t hit upon a good lead soon I shall have to give up, for my funds now will hardly suffice to pay the hands what I promised them; and if we continue working, I should have to get more stores and planks, and lots of things, which I certainly cannot afford unless we strike visible gold.”

“I have a few hundred dollars of my own—” began Ernest; but Mr Rawlings stopped him at once.

“No, no, my dear fellow,” said he impulsively, “your natural kindness of heart shall not lead you into throwing away your hard-earned money on my venture. I shall sink or swim on my own bottom, as the saying goes, although I thank you sincerely all the same. But about the mine,” he continued, veering away from the delicate subject, “I’m sorry we haven’t got a steam-engine; but that



was all Seth's fault. He would believe that a mine could be pumped out as easily as a vessel's bilge."

"That's me," said Seth, not a whit annoyed at the imputation. "I hate them donkey engines. They mostly chokes the pumps, and I'd liefer any day have hand gear an' a decent crew to clear ship with."

"Well, whether you like it better or not," said Ernest Wilton, with good humour and good sense combined, "you haven't one, and we'll have to make the best of a bad bargain."

"That's so!" said Seth, with much satisfaction apparently.

"And that being the case," continued the young engineer, "we'll teach our enemy to beat itself, or in other words, make water fight water."

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Seth admiringly. "How on airth will you get to do that, mister?"

"Look before you," said Ernest Wilton, pointing to the foaming stream that was dashing along the valley. "Look at the waste of energy there! Why, with a good undershot wheel that water-power is worth more than a hundred additional hands at the pumps."

If Seth had looked at the speaker admiringly before, no words could express his pleased astonishment now. He seemed to glow all over with gratification.

"I'm jiggered!" he ejaculated, gazing at Ernest Wilton from the tip of his boots to the top of his head. "You air a screamer, an' no mistake!"

Even Mr Rawlings, generally so sedate of demeanour, in contrast to Seth Allport, who usually went into extremes, became enthusiastic.

"My dear boy," said he, grasping both of Ernest's hands and shaking them with much heartiness, "you'll be the making of us all."

"I shall try to be," said the young engineer; "for I certainly don't intend to be content with merely clearing the mine of water. You don't know half the value of your property yet; why, that quartz there," waving his hand towards a heap of the debris that had been extracted from the shaft and cast aside as waste, "if passed through a crushing mill would yield a handsome premium."

"I know," said Mr Rawlings sadly. "But I couldn't afford the machinery."

“We’ll soon manufacture it, with a little help from the nearest town, where we can get some of the articles we can’t make,” said Ernest Wilton sanguinely; “we’ve got the power to drive the machinery, and that’s the main thing, my dear sir. We’ll soon manage the rest.”

“I’m sure I hope so,” replied Mr Rawlings; but he had received such a chock from the mine already, on account of its turning out so differently to his expectations, that he could not feel sanguine all at once, like the young engineer who had not experienced those weary months of waiting and hope deferred, as he had.

Not so Seth, however. His tone of mind was very opposite to that of Mr Rawlings.

The ex-mate was as confident of their success now as when they had started from Boston, before he or the rest knew the perils and arduous toil they would have to undergo. All those trials vanished as if by magic from his memory, as quickly as the winter snow was now melting away from the landscape around them, and he thought he could see the golden future right in front of his mental gaze, all obstacles being cleared away in a moment by Ernest Wilton’s hopeful words.

“Hooray, Rawlings!” he exclaimed excitedly, twirling his “cheese-cutter” cap round his head, and executing a sort of hop, skip, and jump of delight. “The Britisher’s the boy for us! I guess we’ll strike ile now, and no flies, you bet, sirree!”

## **Chapter XIV**

### **A Happy Hunting-Ground**

Within a few days after Ernest Wilton had joined the miners of Minturne Creek, the winter seemed to vanish away at once, the "chinook wind" coming with its warm breath from the Pacific through the gaps and passes of the Rocky Mountains far-away to the west, and dissolving the last remaining evidences of Jack Frost's handiwork.

The region of the Black Hills, as the young engineer had now the opportunity of observing, as the mountains and valleys shook off their snowy mantle and became clothed anew in the fresh green verdure of spring, is one of the most picturesque in the States, partaking alike of the lofty grandeur and rough magnificence of the sierras of the north, and the spreading landscape features to be met with in the middle of the continent adjacent to the watersheds of the Missouri and Mississippi, where the open country extends like a panorama on either side for miles.

The Black Hills proper partly lie in Dakota, occupying the south-west extremity of that state, and partly in Wyoming, and are almost encircled by the Cheyenne river, the principal fork of that stream extending in a curve right round the northern limit of the region, to where it joins the lesser tributary, which similarly skirts the southern side of the hills. On the north-east, the two branches then unite in one large river, styled by way of contrast "The Big Cheyenne," which ultimately falls into the vast rolling tide of the Missouri, some hundred miles further on due east, at a place called Fort Bennett.

The branches of the Cheyenne are not the only streams of the region, for many others, some of considerable dimensions and volume, and others mere tiny brooklets, wander in every direction through the country. The Black Hills are divided from the adjacent prairie by a series of valleys some two to three miles across; while, away back from the more elevated points, the land rolls off into a series of undulating plains, covered with grasses of every hue, and timbered along the banks of the rivers that transect them with the useful cottonwood tree, the ash and the pine, mingled with occasional thickets of willow and the wild cherry, and briars and brushwood of every description.

The operation of timbering the shaft making satisfactory progress, and Ernest Wilton's water-wheel, that was to do such wonders, having been "got well under weigh," as Seth expressed it, the chief members of the party determined

to have an "outing" into the open land lying beyond their own especial valley, in search of game; for the cry for fresh meat had again arisen in the camp and urged them on to fresh exertions to supply the larder, quite apart from their own inclinations to have another day off the dreary work of the mine, which seemed to fall most upon Mr Rawlings and Seth, as it was at their mutual suggestion that they went a "hunting,"—as a shooting expedition is termed in the New World.

Having so determined, they carried their determination into effect, and started.

"I should think you had plenty of game here?" said Ernest Wilton, when they had left Minturne Creek some distance behind them, and entered upon an extensive prairie, that stretched before them, in waves of grass as far as the eye could reach, to the horizon.

"I should think so," said Mr Rawlings. "Why, it swarms with it."

"What sort?" asked the other. "Any deer?"

"Every variety you can almost mention. Deer, elk, moose—although these are to be found more to the northwards—antelope, mountain-sheep—as you know already—grizzly bears—if you relish such customers—and buffalo as soon as the sweet summer grasses crop up here, and the pasturage to the south loses its flavour for them."

"That's a pretty good catalogue," said Ernest, who was a keen sportsman. "Any birds?"

"The most uncommon slap-up flying game, I guess, in creation," said Seth, "if yer cares to tackle with sich like; though I prefers runnin' game, I does."

"Seth is right," said Mr Rawlings; "you will have a varied choice there likewise: grouse, partridge, prairie-fowl, wild geese, ducks—these two, however, are more to be met with in the winter months, and will be off to the Arctic regions soon—all sorts, in fact. And as to fishing, the salmon and trout—the latter of which you'll find in every stream in the neighbourhood—beat those of England."

"Well," said Ernest, laughing, "if your report be true, as I see no reason to doubt, you must have discovered those happy hunting-grounds to which all good Indians go when they die."

“Don’t talk of Injuns,” said Seth with a shiver and a shake. “That’s the worst part of the hull thing, I reckon. If it warn’t for them, the place would be a kinder paradise—it would so, sirree; but those Injuns spile it all.”

“What he says is true enough,” observed Mr Rawlings. “We are in the very heart of the Indian country, with Blackfeet, Crows, and Sioux, not to mention lesser fry, within striking distance; and if there should be a rising amongst them, as it is threatened this spring or summer, it would be a bad thing for the people in the sparse and scattered settlements in Dakota.”

“But the United States’ army has stations about here, eh?” inquired Ernest.

“Few and far between,” replied Mr Rawlings. “As I told you some little time since, the nearest one to us is at least a hundred miles away. Besides that, the detachments quartered here and there are so attenuated in their numbers that five or six of the so-called companies have to be concentrated together from the different outlying depots in order to muster any respectable contingent that could take the field against the Indians should they rise in force.”

“An’ them Sioux under Spotted Cloud, or whatever else they call their precious chief, ain’t to be despised, I guess, in a free fight,” said Seth.

“Pray don’t talk any more about them,” said the young engineer, laughing, as he took off his wideawake and ran his fingers through his curly brown hair. “I declare my scalp feels quite ticklish already.”

“Them redskins ’ud tickle it a sight worse if they got holt of it,” said Seth grimly, cocking his rifle as he spoke. “But I reckon I heerd somethin’ russlin’ about thaar to the back of yer, mister,” he added suddenly, gazing intently in the direction he had intimated, to the rear of the young engineer, where the prairie-grass had already grown to some height.

“What was it?” said Mr Rawlings, likewise preparing his weapon, and telling Ernest to follow suit. “Did you see it at all?”

And he peered anxiously about to the right and left.

“Yes, jist for a minnit,” responded the ex-mate. “It wer a longish sorter animale; a catamount or a wolf, maybe. Thaar! Thaar! I seed it again! Jerusalem! I have it!”

And he fired as he spoke, quick as lightning, as a dark object bounded from the cover and made a direct plunge at the young engineer, who was taken unawares, and came to the ground, as much from the suddenness of the shock as from the impulse of the animal's spring.

"Stay!" shouted Mr Rawlings, as Seth was rushing forwards with his clubbed rifle to where Ernest Wilton and his assailant appeared struggling together amidst the grass that almost concealed them from view. "I'll settle the beast, if you hold back a minute and let me have a clear aim."

But before he could get a shot, or Seth deal the deadly blow he contemplated with the butt-end of his rifle, Ernest Wilton uttered an exclamation that stopped them both—an exclamation of surprise and agonised entreaty.

"Don't fire!" he cried out in a voice which was half laughing, half crying. "Don't fire, Mr Rawlings. It is only Wolf."

"Wolf! who's Wolf?" said Mr Rawlings and Seth together, as Ernest Wilton rose to his feet; the ex-mate adding under his breath, with a whistle to express astonishment on his part, in his usual way when so affected, "Jerusalem! this beats Bunker's Hill, anyhow!"

"The dearest and most faithful dog, companion, friend, that any one ever had," said Ernest with much emotion, caressing a fine, though half-starved-looking Scotch deer-hound, that appeared in paroxysms of delight at recognising his master, leaping up to his neck with loving barks, and licking his face, to express his happiness and affection in the manner customary to doggydom, almost wild with joy.

"You never told me about him?" said Mr Rawlings.

"I couldn't. The subject was too painful a one," replied the other. "I brought him with me from England, and he never quitted my side day, or even night, I believe, for any appreciable time, until those rascally Crow Indians stole him from me, and made him into their favourite dog soup, as I thought, weeks ago. Poor Wolf, old man!" he added, speaking to the faithful creature, and patting his head, "I never thought I should see you again."

"He's a fine crittur!" said Seth, making advances of friendship towards Wolf, which were cordially reciprocated; "an' I wouldn't like to lose him if I owned him, I guess. I s'pose he broke loose and follered your trail?"

"I expect so," said Ernest Wilton; "but how he managed to track me through all my erratic course amongst these mountains—or hills, as you call them—puzzles me. See," he continued, "they must have tied up the poor fellow, as well as starved him, or he would have probably found me sooner! Here is a piece of hide rope round his neck, which he has gnawed through in order to get free,"—holding up the tattered fragment of the old rope, one end of which hung down to Wolf's feet, while the other was tightly knotted about his throat, like a cravat, so as almost to choke him.

"That must have been the case," said Mr Rawlings. "But hullo! what is Jasper coming after us for?"

"That durned nigger," exclaimed Seth, "is allers shirking his work. I told him he warn't to come with us this mornin', and here he is toting arter us with some slick excuse or other. Hullo, you ugly cuss!" he added, hailing the darkey, who was running after the party and had now got close up, "what the dickens do yer want here?"

"Me see fine dawg, lubly dawg, Massa Seth, sailin' round de camp; and me foller um up, Massa Seth. Um berry good dawg for huntin', sah, and me don't want to lose him; dat's all."

"Oh," said Seth, "that's all, is it? The dorg is here, right enough, with the gentleman theer, who's his master," pointing to Ernest Wilton and Wolf. "And now, you lazy lubber, as you have kinder satisfied yer mind, you can jist go back agin to that job I sot you on."

"Prey let him stop now," said Ernest, pleased with the interest which the negro steward had taken in Wolf's fate, "as he has come so far. If we kill anything, as I hope we shall presently, he'll be of use in helping to take the meat back to the camp."

"That's so," said Seth; and with this tacit consent to his remaining, Jasper joined the party, who now proceeded to look more carefully after game than they had previously done, the young engineer's allusions to "meat" having acted as a spur to their movements, besides, no doubt, whetting their appetites.

It was curious to observe, however, before they separated to hunt up a deer—of which there were but few traces about, when Wolf attached himself, like a proper sporting-dog, closely behind Ernest—how interested the animal seemed

to be in Sailor Bill, who accompanied Seth, of course, on their leaving the camp. As soon as the dog had given, as he thought, ample testimony of his delight at rejoining his own master, he sniffed about the boy as if he also were well-known to him; and he was nearly equally glad to meet him again, only leaving him when Ernest Wilton gave him the signal to “come to heel.”

It was singular; but no one paid much notice to it, excepting that Mr Rawlings regarded it as another instance of how dumb animals, like savages, have some sort of especial sympathy with those afflicted beings who have not the entire possession of their mental faculties, and seem actuated by instinct rather than reason, like themselves.

“Seems, mister, as if he war kinder acquainted with him?” said Seth.

“Yes,” replied Ernest Wilton; “but that’s impossible, as I’ve had Wolf ever since he was a puppy. My aunt gave him to me,” he continued aside to Mr Rawlings in a confidential key, “and I ought to have been more thoughtful in writing to her, as you hauled me over the coals just now for not doing, if only in gratitude for all the comfort that dog has been to me since I left home. I suppose I’m an ungrateful brute—more so than Wolf, eh, old fellow?”—patting the latter’s head again as he looked up into his master’s face with his wistful brown eyes, saying as plainly as he could in doggy language how much he would like to be able to speak, so that he could express his affectionate feelings more explicitly.

“No,” said Mr Rawlings, “not ungrateful, I hope and believe, only unthinking, that’s all.”

“Ah!” replied the other, “‘evil is wrought by want of thought,’” quoting the old distich. “But,” he added, shaking off the momentary feeling of sadness produced by reflection, as if he were ashamed of it, “if we don’t look ‘smart,’ as our friend Seth says, we won’t get a shot all day; and then, woe betide the larder!”



## Chapter XV

### A Chance Shot

"Say, what precious fools we all air!" exclaimed Seth Allport all of a sudden, without any reference to anything they had been speaking about, when the hunting party stopped a moment to rest after a long and weary tramp over the seemingly-endless prairie, during which they had not caught sight of bird or beast worthy of a charge of powder and shot. "What precious fools we all air!" he repeated with the air of a Solon, and shaking his head solemnly with portentous gravity.

"Please speak for yourself," said Ernest Wilton jokingly. "Why this wholesale condemnation of our unfortunate selves? For my part, I should have thought that we were more to be pitied than blamed for our want of success."

"Oh, do you?" replied Seth gruffly—albeit he was as good-humoured as usual. "Then that's all you know about it. Don't you kinder think it raal smart neow for us to be a wearin' out shoe-leather when we've a heap o' mules eatin' their heads off and bustin' theirselves in that shanty o' theirs agin the house for want of work, I reckon?"

"Phew!" whistled Mr Rawlings through his teeth, his face assuming a mingled expression of surprise and amusement. "I declare I forgot all about the animals, I suppose because we have not lately had any occasion for their services. But they are in good condition, I've no doubt, as they have had literally nothing to do since they helped to carry our traps here in the fall, while they've fared better than us during the winter, for though forage has been scarce work has been scarcer, when our rations had sometimes to be limited. Oh, yes, they are certain to be filled out by this time, and been well looked after by our friend Jasper here," nodding kindly towards the negro steward as he spoke, that worthy having charge of the pack-mules amongst his other manifold duties as general factotum.

"Iss, Massa Rawlings," interposed Jasper, glad of the opportunity of joining in the conversation, "dey am prime. Dat obstropolus mule, Pres'dent Hayes, gib me one good kick in tumnick dis marnin' when I'se feedin' him. Um jest as sassy as dat niggah Josh, iss, massa, and so is all de oder mules, sah."

"You'd better let your friend, that thaar mule, hove a shy with his heels at your woolly pate next time," said Seth in his customary grim way. "I don't think

you'd kinder feel a kick thaar! But, I say, giniral," he added, turning to Mr Rawlings, "I don't see why we couldn't go a huntin' on hossback as well as afoot. It would be easier nor walkin', I guess, hey?"

"Certainly it would if we had any horses, which we haven't," said Mr Rawlings with a smile; "and mules—which are the only quadrupeds which we possess—are not exactly fitted for hunting purposes—at least I wouldn't like to try them. Besides, Seth, if I remember rightly, you do not shine quite so well on horseback as you do on a ship's quarter-deck, eh, old man? ha, ha, ha!"

And Mr Rawlings's smile expanded into a laugh at the reminiscence of one of the ex-mate's performances en cavalier soon after they came to Minturne Creek, causing Master Jasper to guffaw in sympathy with a heartiness that Seth did not at all relish, especially after Mr Rawlings's allusion to a matter which was rather a tender subject with him.

"You jest stow that, old ebony face," he said angrily to the negro, in a manner which proved that his equanimity was considerably disturbed. "You jest stow that, and hold your rampagious cacklin', or I'll soon make you rattle your ivories to another toon, I reckon, you ugly cuss!"

However, his passion had spent itself by the time he got out these words, for he said to Mr Rawlings a moment afterwards, allowing a smile to extend over his grim features to show that he was himself again, the usual easy-going Seth, and that his natural good temper had now quite got the better of its temporary attack of spleen,—“But I guess you're jist about right, Rawlings. I arn't quite fit fur to go saddlewise on them outlandish brutes; I ain't bred up to it like as I am hitched to the sea! When I spoke of riding, howsomedeever, I warn't thinkin' o' myself, though, giniral, mind that; I thought as how you and our noo fren' here could kinder ride the deer down better if you wer mounted, that's all, I reckon.”

“Very thoughtful of you,” said Ernest Wilton drily; “but you see, old man, elk and wapiti—which are the only species of deer we are likely to meet with here, I think—can be better stalked than run down, as you suggest. However, the mules may come in handy for you, Mr Seth, to run down the buffalo, when they arrive from the southern plains here, as they'll probably do now in a week or two as the spring progresses. Look, Mr Rawlings,” he added, “that buffalo grass, as it is called, there in front of you, is growing rapidly and will soon be breast high, don't you see?”

“That’s right enough,” said he. “But your remark reminds me of the old proverb about ‘live horse and you’ll get oats.’ I wish we could get something now to go along with until the buffalo do come northwards. I’m sure I am more sick than ever of that monotonous salt pork, after that taste of mountain mutton we had the other day.”

“You bet,” said Seth laconically, with much emphasis.

And then the party resumed their trudge over the billowy surface of the prairie, directing their quest towards a clump of trees they could perceive in the distance, at a place where the ground shelved downwards into a hollow, the certain sign of the near vicinity of some tributary of the Missouri coursing its way eastwards, amidst the recesses of whose wooded banks it was possible that traces of game might be found—that game which they were already well-nigh weary of seeking. To tell the truth, however, their want of success was not at all surprising, as the experience of the hunting party was extremely limited.

The Indian half-breed and Noah Webster, the two who were the most practically versed in the secrets of woodcraft, and thoroughly acquainted with all the various hunting dodges practised out on the prairie, had been left behind in camp, especially at Seth Allport’s request, that amiable worthy wishing to distinguish himself by bringing home a deer “on his own hook,” as he expressed it; although, as regards his shooting powers, he was far more dangerous to his friends than any object he might aim at, being likely rather to hit those behind or on either side of him than the animal at which he pointed his weapon in front; while, as for his skill in the stealthy approach of his prey in the fashion adopted by skilled deer-stalkers, it may be mentioned that he strode through the tall prairie-grass and brushwood as incontinently as if he were marching up and down the poop of the Susan Jane in a gale of wind, alarming every winged and four-footed creature for miles round!

Touching the others, Mr Rawlings and Ernest Wilton were both good shots, although not very familiar with “the noble arte of venerie,” as hunting the deer was styled in the days of Shakespeare, who is reported, by the way, to have been an adept in the pursuit: while, of course, Sailor Bill and Jasper were “out of the hunt” in the literal sense of the phrase.

“I tell you what, boys,” said Mr Rawlings when they had reached the timber they had made for, “we must separate, and each of us try his luck on his own account. I’m sure we’re never likely to come across anything as long as we are all in a body together like this.”

The remark was made just at the right time, for they were in the likeliest spot to harbour deer they had yet tracked over; and if there was any occasion for their exercising caution and skill it was now.

The timber—mostly pine-trees and cottonwood, with low brush growing about their trunks, forming a copse—was on both sides of a small river, which seemed easily fordable, with bright green grass extending from the adjacent prairie down to the water's edge.

“Right you air, boss,” said Seth, wading into the streamlet without any more ado as he spoke; “my motter’s allers to go forrud, so I reckon I’ll take tother side of this air stream ahead, an’ you ken settle yerselves on this.”

“A very good arrangement,” said Mr Rawlings, not at all displeased at Seth’s putting the river between them.

He and Ernest Wilton might possibly have a chance now of getting near a deer for a shot, which they could not have hoped to do as long as Seth remained along with them.

“But pray take care of the boy,” he continued, as he saw Sailor Bill follow in Seth’s footsteps and wade into the stream, which came up beyond his knees; “the river may be deeper than you think.”

“Never fear,” sang out the ex-mate lustily in response. “Thaar ain’t water enough to float a cockboat; and I’m lookin’ out keerful and feelin’ my way afore I plant a fut, you bet.”

“All right,” answered Mr Rawlings.

And his feelings were soon afterwards relieved by seeing Seth and his protégé reach the other side in safety.

A moment later, and they had ascended the opposite river-bank and were lest to sight, their movements being hidden from view by the clustering branches of the young pine-trees and spreading foliage of the brushwood and rank river grass, although their whereabouts was plainly betrayed for some time later by the tramp of Seth’s heavy footstep and the crunching noise he made as he trod on the rotten twigs and dead wood that came across his path, the sound growing fainter and fainter in the distance, and finally dying away.

“Now,” said Mr Rawlings to Ernest Wilton, who, with Jasper and the dog Wolf, still remained by his side, “we are rid of poor Seth and his blundering sportsmanship, and have the coast clear for a shot; which way would you like to go best—up or down this bank of the river?”

“Down,” answered the young engineer promptly. “Seth, ‘I reckon’—as he would say himself—will be certain to startle any game on that side long before he gets near it; and as the deer will probably take to the water and cross here on their back track to the hills, I may possibly get a shot at one as they pass.”

“Very good,” said Mr Rawlings; “please yourself. You go that way, and I’ll go this, and the sooner we separate and each follow his own course, the better chance of sport we’ll have. Only, mind, Wilton, don’t you shoot poor Seth and Sailor Bill at one discharge of your rifle, the same as you did those three mountain-sheep the other day, eh?”

And Mr Rawlings chuckled as he strolled off up stream with the negro.

“And don’t you bring down Jasper under the idea he’s a blackbird,” retorted Ernest Wilton before Mr Rawlings had got out of earshot, as he started down the river-bank with Wolf following closely at his heels, in the manner befitting well-trained dogs of high degree like himself.

Then followed a long silence, only broken, as far as each hunter was concerned, by the rustling of leaves and trampling of twigs as he pursued his way through the thick undergrowth, pausing every moment to examine the ground beneath his feet and the thickets he encountered, in search of deer tracks to and from the water, and giving an occasional glimpse at the prairie beyond when the trees opened a bit and their branches lifted enough to afford a view of the surrounding country, which only happened now and then, as vegetation was vigorous along both banks of the river.

Mr Rawlings, it may be mentioned before going any further, was decidedly unlucky in his quest, not catching sight of a single moving creature, although the fact must be taken into consideration that the direction he took was somewhat over the same ground that the whole party had already traversed, and that whatever game might have been in the vicinity, must have been pretty well nearly scared away before he tried his sportsman’s cunning alone; Ernest Wilton, however, was more successful.

Shortly after parting from Mr Rawlings and Jasper, as he was creeping stealthily through the tall prairie-grass that bordered the grove of fine trees along the bank of the river, with Wolf following closely behind him, he noticed suddenly a movement in the undergrowth amidst the timber, just like the branch of a tree being moved slowly up and down.

Watching the spot carefully, he subsequently thought he could distinguish two little round objects that glared like the eyes of some animal; so aiming steadily between these latter, after a brief pause he fired.

His suspicions proved correct; for, almost at the same instant that the report of his rifle rang out in the clear air, a magnificent wapiti stag, with wide branching antlers, leaped from the covert, and bounded across his line of sight towards the hills on the right; although from the halting motion of the animal he could see that his shot had taken effect.

“At him, Wolf!” cried he to the dog. But Wolf did not require any command or encouragement from his master: he knew well enough what to do.

Quick as lightning, as soon as the wounded stag had jumped out from amidst the brushwood the dog leaped after him, and, in a few strides, was at his quarters. The chase was not of very long duration, for Ernest’s bullet had touched some vital spot; and, within a hundred yards of where he had been struck, the wapiti dropped on his knees, made a faint attempt to stagger again to his feet, and an equally unsuccessful effort to gore Wolf, who wisely kept without his reach; and then, with a convulsive tremor running over all his vast frame, fell over on his side, dead!

“Hurrah!” shouted Ernest, so loudly that Mr Rawlings, who was not very far off, heard his shout as well as Wolf’s deep baying, and was soon on the spot, where mutual congratulations were exchanged at the noble game the young engineer had brought down so unexpectedly.

“Golly, massa!” exclaimed Jasper, his face expanding into one of his customary huge grins that seemed to be “all ivory and eye-balls,” as Seth used to say—“why, um will serb de camp in meat um whole week!”

“You’re not far wrong,” said Mr Rawlings, as he surveyed the heavy carcase of the wapiti, which was as big as an ordinary-sized pony, with a splendid pair of branching antlers; “and you’ll have to go back and fetch the small waggon and

a team of mules, Jasper, to take it home. It's a very fine animal, Wilton," he continued, turning to the latter, "and I almost envy you your shot!"

The young engineer made some chaffing answer, ascribing the credit of taking the game to Wolf, who stood panting guard over his prostrate prey, when the attention of both Mr Rawlings and himself was suddenly distracted from all thoughts of hunting, and everything pertaining to it, by the faint echo of a rifle-shot in the distance, again followed rapidly by another; and then, immediately afterwards, the sound of Seth Allport's voice appealing to them for aid, in ringing accents that rose above the report of the last shot.

"Help! Ahoy, there! help!"

## **Chapter XVI**

### **Sailor Bill Captured**

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Mr Rawlings, as he and Ernest Wilton looked at one another for a second in blank consternation—“I hope nothing serious has happened!” And he was just about to dash into the river and wade across to the other side, in the direction from whence Seth’s shout for succour came, when the young engineer stopped him.

“You’d better wait a minute,” said Ernest. “The prairie is a wide place, and sounds seem to come from one point when in reality they emanate from an entirely different spot; so, in hurrying thus to Seth’s assistance, you may take the longest way to reach him. Let us return to the place where he and the boy crossed the stream; and, as soon as we reach the other bank opposite and find their track I’ll put Wolf on the scent, and we’ll come up with them much more quickly than you could do by crossing here and spending some time perhaps in hunting about in the brushwood over there before you could find any trace of his footsteps.”

“You’re right,” said Mr Rawlings. “Two heads are better than one. But, pray lose no time about it,” he added, as Seth’s call was again heard, sounding more loudly than before—

“Help! ahoy, there! Help!”

The path back to where the entire party had halted on the bank of the river before separating, according to Mr Rawlings’ suggestion, was not difficult to trace. Then, fording the stream at the point where Seth and Sailor Bill had waded across, they searched about for their tracks up and down a short distance until they were likewise found, when their task became comparatively easy, as the dog’s aid was now of use.

“Hi, Wolf!” said Ernest Wilton, drawing his hand over the footmarks of Seth’s heavy boots, where they entered the dense mass of brushwood below the pine-trees. “Good dog! Fetch ’em out! Hi!”

Wolf was all attention in an instant.

Looking up into his master’s face with a low whine of inquiry as if to learn what he exactly meant him to do, and then putting down his nose with a significant sniff, as Ernest Wilton again drew his hand across Seth’s track, he gave a loud



yelp expressive of his intelligent comprehension of the duty that lay before him; bounding on in advance through the thick shrubbery, and going at such a pace that Mr Rawlings and Jasper had hard work to do to keep up with Ernest, who followed close behind the dog at a run almost.

“Steady, boy, steady!” said Ernest Wilton in a low tone, every now and then, as Wolf would turn back his head to see whether his master was near him or no, and then the sagacious animal would give an eager bark in answer, as if to say—

“I’m going on all right, old man. Don’t be alarmed, I’m making no mistake about the scent.”

Presently the trail diverged from underneath the timber and brushwood by the river-bank, and struck off at an angle into the open prairie, as if Seth had got tired of fighting his way amongst the overhanging branches and projecting trunks of the pine-trees.

From this point the footprints gradually led up to a little plateau above the valley through which the streamlet ran; and, arrived at the top of this, Wolf gave vent to a louder and more triumphant bark than previously, and halted in his tracks, as if waiting for Ernest to join him before proceeding any further.

The young engineer was by the dog’s side in a moment, and one rapid glance round enabled him to see that the prairie extended beyond the plateau in a vast plain as far as the eye could reach, being bounded on the extreme verge of the horizon by a low range of hills or wooded heights, most probably marking, he thought, the southward course of the great Missouri river, although, as he reflected the moment after, they were much too far to the westward for that.

His attention, however, was not much given to the scenery and the picture which the spreading vast plain presented. A figure in the foreground, some little distance from the higher level on which he was standing, was gesticulating frantically towards him, and Seth’s voice assured him of his identity, if he had any lingering doubt on the subject, by shouting out as soon as he had come into sight across the sky line—

“Hyar, ahoy, man! Hurry up thaar an’ help a feller, can’t you?”

“Here he is!” shouted out Ernest back to Mr Rawlings and Jasper, who were a few yards behind him, and, without waiting for them to come up, he hastened down the slightly shelving ground towards where the ex-mate seemed to be in

some predicament, as he did not stand up, but was half-sitting, half-lying on the ground, resting his head on one arm as he waved the other to the young engineer.

“Hullo! what’s the matter?” asked Ernest, calling out before he reached him.

“Injuns—been wounded,” said Seth, in his usual curt, laconic way.

“Gracious me!” exclaimed Ernest, quite taken aback by the announcement.

“Indians! And where is Sailor Bill?”

“The durned cusses have carried him off!” said Seth with a sob. “I’d a follered and got him back,” added the ex-mate to Mr Rawlings, who now came up, with Jasper at his heels—the negro almost turning white with terror at the very name of the Indians being mentioned, and shaking in his shoes,—“I’d a follered an’ got him back, yes sir! But them durned cusses have sent an arrowhead through my karkuss, and well-nigh broken my fut as well!”

## Chapter XVII

### On the Trail

"Where are you wounded?" asked Mr Rawlings, bending over Seth, who seemed to suffer considerable pain, although he endeavoured stoically to suppress all expression of it.

"In my side, haar," replied the other, pointing to where the feathered end of an arrow could be seen protruding from his shirt; "and if yer cut off the tail of the cussed thing, I reckon you ken pull it slick through, as the head's comed out ahint me. But it's only a flesh wound, and ain't up to much, for it didn't touch my ribs."

"Well," said Mr Rawlings, "you're a bit of a doctor, Seth, and ought to know if anybody does."

"Yes, it's only a scratch, I'm sartain, or I would ha' felt it more. My fut's the wusset of the two. But, lor' sakes!" added Seth, trying to get on his legs, and quivering with excitement, although the attempt was futile, and he had to sink back again into his half-sitting, half-kneeling posture with a groan—"don't you stop here a consulting about me, Rawlings, when that poor boy's life's in peril. You and Wilton had best skate off at once and foller up them redskins as has Sailor Bill. I ken bide waal enuf till you gits back again, old man, along with Jasper, who can do all I wants."

"We won't neglect the boy," said Mr Rawlings, struck with Seth's unselfishness in ignoring his own wounded condition under the consciousness of his protégé's danger, "but we must think of you all the same first." And kneeling down by the injured man's side, he proceeded, with Ernest Wilton's assistance, to cut away Seth's shirt, and then the end of the arrow, holding it firmly the while so that it should not wriggle about, and hurt him more than they could help, after which the barbed head was drawn out of the wound—which was just between the third and fourth ribs, and not very serious, as the ex-mate had thought—stanching the blood, and binding up the place with a silk handkerchief, which the young engineer had taken from round his neck for the purpose.

Mr Rawlings was immensely relieved to find that Seth was not so dangerously hit as he had at first supposed. When he saw the arrow sticking out of his side, he thought it was all up with his poor comrade; so now that the case appeared

more hopeful, he was better able to consider what course should be adopted for Sailor Bill's rescue.

After a moment's deliberation, during which Seth gazed at him with a look of piteous entreaty on his face, but did not interrupt him with a word, guessing what was passing through his mind, Mr Rawlings' line of action was decided on.

"Here, Jasper," said he to the negro steward.

"Iss, massa."

"You must run back to the camp as hard as you can, and tell Noah Webster to pick out five or six of the men who can use their rifles well, and come back here with them and Moose—he wouldn't forget to bring him—to pursue the Indians. You must also bring a team of mules with the small waggon with you, the same as I told you about just now, although I did not then think to what a sad use we should put it, to take home Mr Seth in; and look sharp now—why, what's the matter?"

Jasper had started up to go at Mr Rawlings' first words; but when that gentleman spoke about the Indians while giving his directions, his alacrity and courage seemed to disappear together in company, as, instead of rushing off, as Mr Rawlings supposed, almost before he could finish speaking, there he stood, twirling his battered straw-hat about in his fingers, and looking the picture of cowardly irresolution.

"What, massa?" he tremblingly said, in answer to Mr Rawlings' interrogation, his teeth chattering with fear, and his countenance wearing a most hang-dog expression. "Me go back 'lone cross de prairie, all dat way to camp? Suppose the Injuns scalp pore niggah same as massa Seth! Golly, Massa Rawlins, um can't do it. I'se afeared!"

"You durned skunk!" exclaimed Seth, his indignation heightened probably by the pain of his wounds. "You jest make tracks at once, as Mister Rawlings says, or else I'll—" and he shook his fist expressively to complete the sentence.

"Perhaps I had better go," said Ernest Wilton at this juncture. "Jasper seems to be so frightened that he might lose his way; and, at all events, he would probably have forgotten half your instructions when he got to the creek, and give only a garbled account of what has happened. I think I would make the

best messenger, unless you would prefer me to remain with you in case the Indians should return in force before we get help."

"Go by all means," answered Mr Rawlings. "I needn't tell you to hurry, my boy, you know the necessity of that, on every account! Jasper shall stop here and help defend us in case the savages assail us before you get back;" and Mr Rawlings could not help smiling as he spoke, in spite of their perilous position, at the comical idea of the cowardly Jasper acting as a protector.

"Bress us and sabe us, Massa Rawlings!" ejaculated the negro in mortal terror, about which there was no pretence or affectation. "Don't say dat, don't now! mebbe it come out for true! I'se rader go 'th Mass' Willerton, an' bring back the waggin for Mass' Seth, iss, sah."

"No you won't," said Mr Rawlings. "You hesitated to go when I told you, and now you shall stop here whether you like it or not!" emphasising his words by laying his hand on the darkey's shoulder, in such an impressive manner that he could not but submit to the command. But long before the question of Jasper's staying behind or going off with the young engineer was settled, Ernest had started off on the back track towards Minturne Creek at a brisk run, and was shortly out of sight behind the top of the plateau they had just descended from.

Prior to leaving, however, Ernest considerately ordered Wolf to remain in his place, as he would be of much service in the event of an Indian attack, telling the sagacious animal to lie at Seth's feet, with a "Hi, watch there; old man!" an order which the dog at once obeyed, while his master was off and away in an instant.

"Well, Seth," said Mr Rawlings, when the young engineer had disappeared from their gaze, "you haven't yet told me how this catastrophe occurred? But let me see your foot now, and I can examine it, and see what I can do to that while you are telling me all about it." And Mr Rawlings proceeded to cut away a portion of Seth's boot with his clasp knife—the same as he had had to do to his shirt before extracting the arrow, as it caused the poor fellow too much pain to pull it off—while the other went on with his yarn.

"Thaar ain't much to tell," began Seth. "I an' Sailor Bill beat up the bush alongside that ther stream, arter partin' with you, and then, when we seed nothin' thaar, made tracks for this yere paraira, as I diskivered, when I got to the top o' that risin' ground yonder, some elk a feedin' down hyar. There was a

herd of seven of 'em or more, an' soon as I gets near enuf I lets drive at 'em; and just then, hullabaloo! I heart a screech like somethin' awful, an' a Injun starts up, just like a deer a walkin' on his hind legs."

"That's an artful dodge they have of putting on the skin of some animal, and approaching unsuspectingly within shooting range without alarming their game."

"Waal, this hyar Injun," continued Seth, without noticing Mr Rawlings' explanatory interruption, "rushed on to me like a mad bull in fly time, and seein' as how he meant bizness; I drawed the trigger again, but missed him, and he flung his tommyhawk, which cotched my fut, and brought me to the ground as slick as greased lightnin', you bet!"

"And gave you a bad wound, too," said Mr Rawlings, who by this time had managed to take off Seth's boot and disclose the extent of the injury, a pretty deep cut right across the instep, which would probably lame the ex-mate for life, as far as he could judge.

"Waal, it do hurt some," said Seth, when Mr Rawlings proceeded to bandage up the foot in the same way as he had done the poor fellow's side previously. "But I dersay I'll git over it soon, ginerel. Ef I seed Sailor Bill agin I wouldn't care a cent about it, I guess!"

"How was it that they carried him off, and you escaped alive? I can't think how they let you off when you were once down and at their mercy?"

"Oh, I made a pretty good fit of it, I reckon, with the butt-end of my rifle, and giv' both them red devils somethin' to remember Seth Allport by!—For there was two on 'em at me, as soon as Sailor Bill rushed in atween me an' the fust Injun."

"Did the boy really help you?" said Mr Rawlings in some surprise; for, as has been previously related, Sailor Bill had never exhibited any trace of emotional feeling from the time of his being picked up at sea, save on that memorable occasion immediately afterwards, when, it may be remembered, he rushed out of the cabin when the ship was taken aback.

"He did so," answered Seth, "an' the curiosest part of it wer he looked jest the same frightened like as when he saved me aboard the Susan Jane, with his har all on end—jes so."

"It's very extraordinary," said Mr Rawlings; "and then they carried him off?"

"Waal, I was making a good fit of it as I told you, an' when Sailor Bill rushes to help me a second Injun started up and collars him; and then I heard that air blessed dawg bark, and I knowed what it wer, an' so did the Injuns too; for as I shouted out to let yer know whar we wer, they made tracks with pore Bill, lugging him off atween them over thaar," said Seth, pointing eastwards, where, however, nothing could now be seen. "And that's all you know about it?" said Mr Rawlings.

"Jes so," replied Seth.

At the same moment the negro Jasper, who had been gazing fixedly in the direction in which Ernest Wilton had gone for aid, uttered an exclamation of frenzied delight, and began to caper about.

"Golly, Massa Rawlings," cried he, "dere dey is! dere dey is!"

The negro was right. As he spoke Mr Rawlings and Seth could see a body of men advancing over the crest of the plateau, accompanied by a waggon drawn by a pair of mules. The young engineer had accomplished his mission well. Instead of publishing his news aloud, and thereby creating a commotion amongst the miners who would have all wished to rush off en masse to the assistance of Mr Rawlings and Seth Allport, both much liked by all, and the rescue of Sailor Bill, whom the men had got also attached to in the same way as the crew of the Susan Jane, Ernest drew Noah Webster on one side, and briefly told him what had occurred and what Mr Rawlings had ordered to be done.

Noah was equally prompt and discreet.

Mustering one of the gangs, who had completed their shift in sinking the new shaft and had had a rest, he told them to get their rifles quietly and accompany him to the prairie, when he mentioned casually, in a way they appeared to understand, the boss and manager had come across some "red game" and wanted their help.

At the same time the backwoodsman ordered Josh, who was nothing loth to have the chance of abandoning his caboose duties for a while, to have a couple of mules hitched to the waggon; while he beckoned Moose, the half-breed, who apparently suspected something was in the wind, to come towards him, when the two conferred, while the miners and Josh were getting ready.

The whole thing, indeed, was so well managed, that within ten minutes of Ernest Wilton's arrival in camp, the rescuing party had started for the spot where Mr Rawlings and Seth and the terror-stricken Jasper were awaiting their approach: a band of strong, well-armed, resolute men, consisting, besides the young engineer himself and Noah Webster, of Moose the half-breed, Black Harry—one of the former crew of the Susan Jane, a muscular giant who would have been a match for three Indians in himself—and five of the miners, old "Californian stagers," used to frontier life and rough and tumble fighting—in addition to Josh, of course, who drove the mule waggon.

As soon as the scene of the fray was reached, Seth was lifted carefully into the waggon and sent back to Minturne Creek, under the care of Jasper—who took the place of Josh as teamster, that darkey displaying considerably more pluck than the former, and evincing as much eagerness to encounter the Indians as Jasper did to avoid them—while the rescuing party followed on the trail of Sailor Bill's abductors.



## **Chapter XVIII**

### **Rising Cloud**

“Silenza!” said the half-breed warningly, hearing Black Harry talking rather loudly and threatening what he would do in case a hair of the poor boy was injured,—“Silenza! Señors must go soft, or Sioux hear mens speak!”

This happened just as they started, and from that moment not a word was further spoken amongst the party, the men preserving a solemn silence and marching one after the other in single file, Moose and Noah Webster leading the way, and tracking the course of the Indians like sleuth-hounds, seeing traces of the passage of those of whom they were in pursuit in places where, as in the rocky bottom of a dry ravine they presently came across, no footprints were perceptible like as they were when the trail led through the prairie-grass, in a manner most unaccountable both to Mr Rawlings and the young engineer.

On and on, mile after mile, went the gallant little band, at one time treading downward towards some bottom or valley, at another their route lying upwards along some ascending plateau, until the afternoon grew dusky and night approached, when they had travelled over a considerable distance of ground from their starting-point.

The prairie still stretched before them, the fringe of trees on the horizon which Ernest Wilton had perceived some hours before still far off, but much nearer than they were then, although, as he saw now, they certainly could not indicate the banks of the Missouri, as he had then thought; while between this distant bank of timber, that stood out here under the shades of evening more strongly against the sky line, were sundry little timbered islands as it were amidst the vast ocean of spreading plain on which they were.

As it got darker, the half-breed, who was unacquainted with Wolf’s sagacity, that equalled his own in following a trail, made them understand that they must give up the pursuit until the morning light, or moon, should it not be obscured, enabled the trail to be deciphered; but Wolf’s master showing him what to do, and a sort of leash being attached to the dog so that he should not go too fast on the scent and be lost sight of in the gathering gloom, the expedition started on again, after a brief halt, as untiringly as ever.

“Ugh!” ejaculated Moose, when they had continued their quest through the darkness with Wolf’s aid for about an hour, more or less—“Hist! Light yonder!

Stay here, I go see!" and he disappeared from amongst them, while the others halted on the spot, from whence they could faintly perceive the glimmer of firelight shining amidst trees in front of them: so they were evidently near one of those little wooded islands they had observed in the distance.

After an absence which seemed unconscionably long to those who remained behind, the half-breed returned, and from what he said Mr Rawlings divided the band into two portions, one of which he ordered to follow Moose, whose object was to take the Indians in the rear, while the main body attacked them in front, thus causing them to surrender probably at the display of their overwhelming numbers, the two parties acting together by a concerted signal, without any recourse to their weapons, which would most likely endanger the life of poor Sailor Bill whom they had come to save.

All proceeded satisfactorily up to a certain point.

The half of the band that accompanied Moose stole forward, skirting round the trees so as to get the Indians in a line between themselves and Mr Rawlings' party; and presently the solitary note of the melancholy whip-poor-will was heard from amidst the trees, to warn the others that Moose and his companions were in position, and they were to close in nearer to the Indian camp before the half-breed should give the second intimation that it was time for the final rush.

Black Harry's indiscretion, however, at this juncture spoilt Moose's plan of surprising the Indians and effecting their object without bloodshed. As they approached nearer the light that glimmered from amid the trees, they could see that three Indians were seated round it, while close adjoining them was poor Sailor Bill lashed tightly to a tree, like a poor lamb that was to be slaughtered in some butcher's shop.

The sight was too much for the unthinking but gallant seaman, so, despite Mr Rawlings' strict injunctions to the contrary, he levelled his rifle and fired point-blank into the group of Indians huddled over the fire.

The savages started up with a yell of alarm; and, seizing their arms hurriedly, one of them darted towards the motionless figure of Sailor Bill with an uplifted hatchet in his hand.

At that moment Mr Rawlings, seeing the imminent jeopardy of the boy, fired, and the Indian's arm fell as if broken by the bullet, the hatchet dropping from

his hand; in another second, however, the savage picked up the weapon again and would have brained Sailor Bill, being in the act of hurling it at him with a malignant aim, when Wolf, who had stolen forward at the first outburst, dashed at the Indian's throat with a low growl of vengeance, and brought him to the ground.

"Don't kill them!" shouted Mr Rawlings, in a voice that made itself heard above the mêlée; and after a brief struggle, the two remaining Indians were secured and firmly bound, although it took all Black Harry's strength to overcome the one he grappled, who turned out to be the chief of the party, while the one Wolf had brought down suffered terribly from the grip of the dog on his throat.

After all had cooled down from the contest, which had lasted some little time, Mr Rawlings directed Moose to ask the Indian chief—who, the half-breed said, was a leading warrior of the Sioux tribe, rejoicing in the sounding title of "Rising Cloud,"—why he had attacked an innocent settler and miner like Seth Allport, and stolen away the boy that was with him?

The Indian, however, did not seem to require the services of an interpreter, for he answered Mr Rawlings as if he thoroughly comprehended the gist of the question Moose was deputed to ask him.

"Paleface lie!" he said angrily, in broken English, which he mastered much better indeed than the half-breed did in his half-Spanish patter. "Rising Cloud was hunting on the lands of his tribe when tall paleface hunter shoot him as if he were a beast of the forest. The red man isn't a dog to be trodden on, so he gave the paleface a lesson, to remind him Rising Cloud could have killed him if he had willed it."

"But why steal the boy?" asked Mr Rawlings, thinking that perhaps the Indian had some right on his side in assailing Seth after he had fired at him first.

"Boy jump at Rising Cloud like grizzly bear. Boy grow up fine warrior. Rising Cloud take him to his wigwam to make him big Sioux chief by-and-by and fight the paleface dogs."

"That's a very pleasant way of appropriation," said Ernest Wilton, under his voice, to Mr Rawlings. "But what's that he says, about fighting the palefaces?"

"I thought there was peace between the red man and the children of the Great Father at Washington?" said Mr Rawlings, alluding to the current legend in

frontier life that all the settlers out west are the progeny of the President of the United States for the time being.

“No peace long,” said the Sioux chief defiantly, a savage smile lighting up his expressive features. “Hatchet dug up already. War soon—in ’nother moon.”

“Well, that’s a pleasant prospect to look forward to!” said Ernest, in a half-serious, half-comic way, as he usually regarded most things. “But what’s to be done with these fellows now? Sailor Bill is none the worse for his temporary captivity, and I suppose Seth will be all right in a few days, after his wounds get better. I suppose we shall have to let them go?”

“Yes,” said Mr Rawlings; “but I must consult Noah Webster first.”

After consultation with that worthy, it was determined that the whole party should take advantage of the Indians’ bivouac and remain there till the morning, when they would have had a good rest; but the Indians must be kept bound, and one taken with them on the back track next day until they had accomplished half their return journey home, when he would be released, and sent back free to unloose his comrades. This, Noah Webster said, was the only course they could adopt in order to avoid any treachery with the redskins, Noah saying that he would not trust them farther than he could see them, and laughing at Mr Rawlings’ idea of releasing them at once on parole.

“Why, if yer did so,” said he, “none of us would ever git back to Minturne Creek to tell the tale!”

Accordingly, Noah’s plan was adopted. The little band that had accomplished Sailor Bill’s rescue so satisfactorily, rested after their labours till the morning, when, leaving two of the Indians bound to trees in a similar way as they had discovered poor Seth’s protégé, they started back for the camp, taking with them the chief, Rising Cloud, whom they did not release until they reached the spot where the original row had occurred, where the chief had his arms unpinioned and was told he might go and free his companions.

The Indian did not take a very affectionate farewell of his escort. As Mr Rawlings and Ernest untied his hands and told him he might go, he pointed first towards the sky, then towards the east from whence they had just come, and then in the direction where Minturne Creek lay.

“Yes, white man master now! Rising Cloud go home to his tribe; but by-and-by he come back again with a thousand warriors at his back, and wipe out the

white men, robbers of the red man's land. Yes, by the Manitou of the palefaces Rising Cloud swears it!"

And the Indian spat on the ground with a savage gesture as he spoke.

## **Chapter XIX**

### **Gold at Last—Eureka!**

When Jasper and the mule waggon appeared at Minturne Creek, some time after the departure of Noah Webster and the rescue party, the miners who had been left at work under the charge of Tom Cannon, as Noah's deputy, greeted the arrival with a cheer, as they had been kept in ignorance of what had really happened, and imagined that the waggon had been sent for, as well as a few additional good shots from their party, in order to bring in an unexpected supply of game which the hunters had come across.

Jasper's conveyance certainly did carry something in the game line, the negro having mentioned to Seth about the wapiti deer that Ernest Wilton had shot, and being directed by him to stop and cart it home with them, as it lay in their road to the camp; but the main cargo of the waggon, their wounded manager, whom Jasper hailed them to come and help him lift out, was a double surprise to the men, and a grief as well, as may be readily understood when it is considered how much Seth was liked by the hands under him.

They vowed vengeance against the Indians; and it required all the exercise of Seth's authority to prevent another party from sallying off to aid the first in the rescue of Sailor Bill. But, after a time, the excitement calmed down, and they waited with as much patience as they possessed the return of the others; although nothing that Seth could say would persuade them to turn in all that weary night, during which time they were in a state of suspense as to the fate of their comrades; and they were equally disinclined to resume work in the mine.

They seemed capable of doing nothing, until they should learn how the matter was settled, one way or other; and—heedless even of the welcome addition of fresh meat to their scanty fare, in the fine wapiti that they possessed through the precision of the young engineer's rifle, which at another time would have roused equally their enthusiasm and their appetites—remained grouped round impromptu log-fires that they had lit to hail the absentees when they came back, looking to their arms and ammunition so as to be ready for anything that might happen, and considering amongst themselves as to what was best to be done in the event of the non-arrival of the rescue party within a reasonable limit; Seth fretting and worrying himself the while as much as any, although he tried to preserve a quiet demeanour in order to reassure the rest, and exclaiming against the "paltry wounds," as he called them—which gave him

much pain in spite of Jasper continually soaking the bandages around them with cold water in pursuance of his directions—that prevented him from taking an active part in his protégé’s recovery, instead of waiting idly there while others went bravely to the fore, as he should have done.

Be the night however weary, and watching long, the morning comes at last:—thus it was now with the miners of Minturne Creek.

Daylight is a wonderful panacea for those gloomy thoughts and anxieties which are nourished and magnified during the dark hours of the night; so, when the sun arose next morning, after the weary watch of Seth and the others, in the expectation that they might receive every moment the news of some disaster to their comrades who had been gone so long, instead of their fears being increased by the knowledge that the rescue party had not yet returned, they felt inclined to take a much more sanguine view of the situation—a view that Seth not only endorsed but was the prime agent in promulgating, possibly through the pain of his wounds having considerably lessened and caused him to look on things in a more hopeful way.

“Tha’are all right b’ys, I reckon,” said he. “No noos is good noos; fur ef anythin’ had kinder happen’d to ’em, we should have heert afore.”

“So thinks I,” said Tom Cannon; “and let’s set to work agin, mates, at the shaft, to let the boss see, when he comes back, that we ha’n’t been idle in his absence; p’raps, too, we’ll have something to show him in the gold line, as I don’t think as how we’re far off the lode now.”

“That’s yer sort,” echoed Seth, from amidst the pile of buffalo rugs alongside one of the fires in the open space before the hut, where he would persist in staying, to be the first to receive the rescue party on their return, and where he said he could nurse his injuries far better than going to bed in the anxious frame of mind he was in. “That’s yer sort, b’ys! Tackle to the job with a will, my hearties; it’ll be a durned sight better nor restin’ on your oars and doin’ nothin’, as I’m forced to do, like the battered old hulk I am!”

These cheery words from Tom Cannon and Seth had the desired effect of restoring a little more activity to the scene around the creek; and the small band of the remaining miners, dividing their attenuated forces into two gangs and taking short shifts turn about at intervals, worked with such praiseworthy diligence, that when Mr Rawlings and the other adventurers arrived in safety near mid-day, escorting the recovered Sailor Bill scatheless in triumph back to

the camp, they had got through a surprising amount of work. The tubbing had been put into position two days before, and had been found to act admirably; the water had been pumped out, and the men at work were driving to the left, as Ernest Wilton thought that they were at present only on the wall of the lode, which was a very strong one, and that it would be found much richer upon the other wall.

As soon as mutual congratulations had been interchanged amongst the leaders, and the joy of the whole party at being once more reunited had somewhat subsided, Tom Cannon, and one of the leading miners who had been last down the new shaft, approached the spot where Mr Rawlings, Ernest Wilton, and Noah Webster were grouped, chatting together, with Seth—behind whom Sailor Bill had taken up his usual place, on his return to camp, with his customary apathetic air, the boy not exhibiting the slightest increase of animation, despite all the excitement and unwonted scenes through which he had recently passed, or any return to that sudden change of demeanour, almost amounting to a fit of frenzy, which he had again displayed for an instant, as Seth asserted, when he interposed to save his life from the onslaught of the savage, on the prairie, as he had done when he came forward in a similar way to rescue him on board the Susan Jane on the ship's being taken aback the previous year.

"I guess thaar's sunthin' up now," said Noah Webster, as the two men came towards him and the others, noticing a slight assumption of mystery on the part of Tom Cannon and his companion, a man who was familiarly styled "Left Bower" amongst the miners, from the fact not only of his surname being Bower, but on account of the singular dexterity he exhibited in the great American card game of euchre.

"Guess so," said Seth, sotto voce. "They've been downright busy since you've been gone, workin' like hosses, that they have! Waal, b'ys," he added aloud for the benefit of the coming deputation, "what's the rumpus neow? Panned out anythin' tall?"

"See!" said Tom Cannon, opening his closed fist and displaying a little tiny heap of gold dust lying in the palm of his hand. "All that came out o' one lump o' quartz taken out of the gravel in the heading we've begun. We can see it everywhere in the rock, and it was getting richer every inch we got in."

"Ay," put in Left Bower, "heaps, I reckon, boss," addressing himself to Mr Rawlings, who turned as pale at the receipt of the news as if he were going to



faint. "We've struck the lode at last, mister, and run slick inter a bonanza if ever they were one; may I never see Frisco again, if we haven't!"

"Hooray!" shouted Seth, attempting to rise and wave his hat as he was wont to do in moments of triumph, but quickly quieting down again as the pain of his foot reminded him of having been wounded. "Didn't I say so—ask any a one in camp if I didn't—that we'd find the gold at last? Hooray!" he repeated aloud at the pitch of his voice, his cheer being taken up instantly by the main body of the miners, who were gossiping in front of Josh's caboose, with a heartiness that resounded through the valley and even made the hills echo again; while Jasper, who had been under a sort of cloud ever since his cowardly conduct on the prairie, joined Josh in an exciting *pas à deux* before the latter's culinary sanctum, and repeating ever and anon his jubilant song, "Golly, massa, um told yer so!"

"And you are not through the vein yet?" asked Ernest Wilton when he was able to speak calmly, he and Mr Rawlings hurrying towards the head of the new workings in company with Noah Webster and the first discoverers of the ore; the rest of the miners following after at a distance; eager to set to work again at once as soon as their leaders should give orders to that effect. Seth, seeing himself thus deserted, and not wishing to be "left out in the cold," therefore requisitioned the aid of the two darkeys, and made them carry him in the rear of the procession, which put a summary stop to their dancing, but delighted them equally as well, for they were thus enabled to learn all that was going on without the annoyance of having their ears perchance boxed for listening without permission: consequently there was a general move all round.

"No sign of the other wall," said Tom Cannon as spokesman, "we're nigh four feet in from the bottom of the shaft. The richest is that near the river."

"That is just what we expected from the statement of Mr Rawlings' original discoverer. He found it rich in the little shaft he sank there, and that is at the point where the two lodes run into each other. I expect we shall find it richer every foot we go in that direction. If so, it will be one of the richest finds we know of."

So saying, Ernest, full of eagerness and expectation, was lowered away into the mine by the men. He did not stop very long below the surface; and on his return his face seemed to glow with the goods news he brought.

“It’s all right,” he gasped out, almost before he got out of the shaft; “you’ve hit on the richest lode I ever saw in my experience. We ought to get tons of gold out of that quartz. We have just struck the centre of a pocket, I think, which must extend to the old workings of your cousin Ned. Mr Rawlings, I congratulate you; your luck has changed at last, and if all turns out as I expect, you’ll be the wealthiest man in Dakota!”

“Hooray, b’ys!” shouted out Seth, almost choking poor Josh and Jasper by gripping their necks with his muscular arms in his excitement, the darkeys supporting him, as if in a chair with their hands clasped beneath him, on which he sat with his arms resting on their shoulders, although he now shifted his hold unwittingly to their necks. “Hooray! I sed the Britisher were the b’y for us; an’ so he air!”

## **Chapter XX**

### **Indian Alarms**

The men now worked with unflagging vigour. The cross-cut was first pushed across the vein, which was found to extend thirteen feet beyond the side of the shaft. It was not unbroken quartz, as here and there the rock came in, but seemed to consist of four separate veins, which sometimes joined together, sometimes were separated by partitions of rock. The richest portion of the vein was two feet from the farthest wall, and here the gold was everywhere thickly scattered through the quartz. Now, they drove right and left along the course of the lode, and found that in both directions the walls were coming closer together.

"It is only a pocket," Ernest Wilton said. "You will see that in about five fathoms either way the quartz will finish in to its usual width, and become poor. However, we must not mind that; if it holds for a few fathoms in depth there will be half a million pounds' worth at least. Twenty tons of quartz like this we see would suffice to make us all rich men, and we know that there is double that at least."

As the young engineer predicted, the lode fell away to its original width, and soon ceased to carry visible gold.

Then they began to sink deeper. Twenty feet lower the walls of the lode again began to approach each other, and there was now a possibility of calculating the amount of quartz in the "pocket."

"I am of opinion," Ernest Wilton said, "that there will be fifty tons of the richest stuff, and nearly two hundred of what I may call second class, but which is still exceedingly rich. But it is time now that we should carry out our plans. We must get up a small mill with five stamps, with a wheel to be worked by water from the mountain stream. It is likely enough that such a set could be got in one of the mining-camps, and I must make a short journey to Bismark and perhaps further west in search of gear. While I am away, the men will have to cut a leet to bring the water along the side of the hill from the torrent, and get all the quartz out of the mine."

All this time, however, even with the confident expectation of untold wealth being now almost within his grasp, not one of the party had forgotten the parting threat of Rising Cloud, and his warning that, ere many months were

over, the camp at Minturne Creek would be assailed by the Sioux tribe in full force.

Indeed, if Mr Rawlings or Seth, or Noah especially, who had had such a long experience of the dangers of backwoods life away from the settlements, and thoroughly appreciated the old adage that “he who is forewarned is forearmed,” were at all inclined to laugh at the Indian’s declaration as an empty boast, many circumstances would have constrained them to alter their opinion, and make them be prepared for anything that might happen.

In the first place, a stage used to run from Bismark to the Black Hills at stray intervals, when they first camped at Minturne Creek—although it did not come within some miles of their own valley—and continued running until the winter set in; but when the spring developed, and the roads got in working order again, no stage was to be met with; and rumour had it that it had been “frightened off the track by the Injuns.”

In the early months of summer this rumour received additional confirmation by the arrival of some scouts from the settlements, with the news that the Sioux had declared war against the United States authorities, and that all the outlying settlers had been warned to withdraw into the townships, where they could join together and resist any attack made on them.

And, later still, a special messenger from one of the military stations on the Missouri, where “Uncle Sam’s” troops were quartered, brought them word that intelligence had been received that Rising Cloud had published his intention of attacking the Minturne Creek miners especially, and that his band of warriors had already started on the war-path—although the commander of the detachment at Fort Warren assured them that he was following up the Indians, and would revenge them should they happen to get “wiped out” before he came up with the redskins!

This, naturally, was no very cheering intelligence; but the miners were not discouraged, although they took every wise precaution so that their wary foe should not catch them napping; and so, whether they were working in the mine or went hunting—as they did more frequently when the buffalo came northwards later on, led from the southern plains, which form their more common habitat throughout the year, by the rich blue grass, and other prairie delicacies which these bovine beasts loved, that flourished among the valleys of the Black Hills; or whether they were digging in the kitchen garden that Josh and Jasper had improvised at the back of the little hut where they all lived—

every man went armed or had his arms handy. In addition to this, sentinels were posted through the day at the entrance of the Creek, to warn them of the approach of any suspicious strangers to the camp; while Seth caused as rigid a watch to be kept at night, taking the first and fourth turns himself, as if he were still a first mate with the responsibilities of a ship on his hands and walking the deck of the Susan Jane.

## **Chapter XXI**

### **The War-Whoop**

Having levelled the line for the watercourse, Ernest Wilton prepared for his journey.

The news of the Indian raids made travelling very dangerous, and Mr Rawlins's urged Ernest to let him go in his stead. But to this Ernest strongly objected, advancing all sorts of reasons but the right one against Mr Rawlings starting for Bismark, stating amongst other arguments that if the worthy leader of the party went, the miners might think he was running away from the Creek for fear of the Indians attacking them.

"No, no, my boy!" laughed Mr Rawlings; "you cannot wheedle me by using such an argument as that, Wilton! It is too absurd, for the miners know me too well for that, and so do you; besides, it is far more perilous to venture out into the open, as you are about to do, than to remain here, where, united together as we are in a phalanx of stout, able-bodied men, in an almost impregnable position, we could resist any formidable attack in force. No, no, my boy; you may tell that to the marines. But do inform me, Wilton, what is your real motive in wishing to go yourself? I consent certainly to your going, as you press the matter; but I should like to know your ulterior object, if only to satisfy my curiosity."

"Well," said Ernest, laughing too, "I didn't like to tell you at first for fear of wounding your sensibilities. To tell you the truth, I think I am more competent to get what I want than you are, as, if I do not see any of the things I require exactly, I may be able to pick up makeshifts that will answer my purpose as well, while you would be trying to procure impossibilities, perhaps, just because I mentioned them in the list of my requirements, and would be satisfied with nothing else."

"Very good, have your way," said Mr Rawlings, satisfied with the reason advanced, and handing the young engineer at the same time a roll of greenbacks that represented all his available capital. "But you must be economical in your purchases, my boy. This is all the money I can spare you for your expenses and everything. I think you had better take a few rich specimens with you, and should your funds run short they may give you credit if you tell them you have fifty tons of it ready for the mill."

"All right," said Ernest cheerfully, pocketing the parcel, and making an inward resolution the while to supply any deficiency in that respect from his own funds—which, indeed, was his true motive for undertaking the commission in person, although he concealed it from Mr Rawlings; for he was aware that the latter had got near the end of his resources, and would have been indignant if he had offered to be his temporary banker in order to buy all that was now needed for the mine, which he had made up his mind to be, whether he liked it or not, without his knowing it; and he chuckled to himself as he told Mr Rawlings that the money would do amply.

"I suppose, Wilton, you'll take the waggon and a team of mules with you to bring back the things, eh?" said Mr Rawlings presently, as the young engineer began making his preparations for starting.

"Yes," said Ernest, "and shall have to hire four or five others; but I need only have them with me as far as Fort Bennett on the Missouri, where, as I pointed out to you just now, I can get a passage in one of the river steamers right up to Bismark, and the same way back with all my purchases. Why, Mr Rawlings, you must have come here by almost as roundabout a route as I did from Oregon! You told me that you took a month getting to Minturne Creek with your mining plant and other goods, dragging them, I suppose, the whole distance from the railway depot across the plains, instead of taking advantage of the waterway as I am going to do now."

"That is very true," answered the other. "But Moose said it was the best way, and I allowed him to shape his own course."

"He'll have to shape mine now!" said Ernest dryly; and the same day he and the half-breed, with the valiant Josh in charge of the waggon and a ten-mule team, started for Fort Bennett, a distance of some hundred and forty miles from the camp, which they accomplished within three days, not meeting with any obstruction in the shape of Indians on the road.

At this station Ernest left Moose with the waggon and mules, while he took passage for himself and Josh in one of the steam-boats which ply along the rolling waters of the Missouri to the large town on its banks above, that may now be called the capital of Dakota.

At Bismark he was fortunate enough to hear of some machinery which would exactly suit him; it had been sent west for a mine, which before it arrived had proved so poor that it was abandoned, and the wheel and stamps were now for

sale. He also laid in some stores, besides a quantity of gunpowder, and lead for bullets, which he thought would come in handy for the Indians should they lay siege to Minturne Creek.

When he knew the weight of the goods, he sent word down the river to Moose at Fort Bennett, and the latter hired five additional waggon and teams, which were all in readiness when he arrived by steamer with the machinery. Everything was soon packed up, and the little party tracked back to the camp, having been but twenty days away altogether.

“You air smart!” said Seth, who was the first to welcome Ernest on his arrival, the ex-mate having now quite recovered from his wounds, and “hopping about on his pins,” as he expressed it, “as merrily as ever,” himself again in every particular. “You air smart, mister! I guess you’re the slickest coon I ever seed for makin’ tracks—Jerusalem, you air!”

“You would have made haste too, friend Seth,” said Ernest, laughing—there never was such a fellow to laugh as he was—“if you had heard what I have about those blessed Indians, and our old acquaintance, Rising Cloud.”

“What is that?” asked Mr Rawlings anxiously, who had just come up in time to catch the last observation of the young engineer—“what have you heard about Rising Cloud?”

“Only,” said Ernest, and he spoke gravely enough now—“that he is spreading murder and havoc all along the banks of the Missouri, and may be soon here upon us with the miscreant gang he leads. I heard terrible tales of him in the steamer I came down the river in. The captain of the little craft told me that the Indians had burnt every outlying settlement in Southern Dakota, massacring all the white inhabitants, and were making their way northwards, so we’d better look out. Why, he said they’d even attacked his boat when it was at one of the landings; and if he hadn’t put on steam he and his vessel would have been settled, with all on board.”

“Ah,” said Mr Rawlings, “that corroborates the warning we got from the commander of the United States troops at Fort Warren when you were away. We certainly must keep a careful look now, for it would not do to repeat all of my poor Cousin Ned’s experiences, and have the result of our toil snatched from our grasp by those relentless fiends of the prairie when it was just within our reach, as it was in his, poor fellow!”



Mr Rawlings then went on to tell Ernest what they had heard, and give an account of what had transpired during his absence at the settlements; after which the whole party proceeded to examine their defences in detail, the young engineer suggesting that they should entrench the camp in a systematic way, and also the machinery which would be erected on the river's bank.

There were but two directions from which they could be attacked; for the precipitous range of the Black Hills, standing behind Minturne Creek with its semicircular rampart, protected their rear and sides, so that they had only their front face to guard, along the course of the stream, following the gulch.

The same safeguards which they had adopted before were redoubled in the face of the second warning they received by the account Ernest Wilton brought back with him of the Indian savages in their neighbourhood, their day and night watch being maintained with the strictest regularity.

The teams were soon unloaded and started on their return journey, and with the exception of the men engaged in clearing out the quartz from the mine, all hands set to to erect the water-wheel and stamps, which operation, as all the pieces of timber were fitted and numbered, was an easy and rapid one.

In three weeks afterwards all was ready for a start. Five hundredweight of quartz was then weighed out and carried down to the stamps, the gear which connected the machinery with the great wheel which was revolving in the river was connected, and the stamps began to rise and fall with a heavy regular rhythm.

The quartz was thrown in beneath the stamps shovelful by shovelful, and in an hour and a half the last fragment was used up. For another half hour the stamps rose and fell, then the water running through them was no longer milk-white, and the stamps were stopped. Then the blankets spread upon the ways by which the mud-charged gold had flowed were taken up and washed, the quicksilver was taken out of the concentrators and passed through wash-leather bags, in which great rolls of amalgam remained. These were placed in large crucibles to drive off the quicksilver, and then removed from the furnace and the gold placed in the scale. To this was added the fine gold from the blankets. Ernest Wilton added the weights, and around him stood Mr Rawlings and all the miners off duty.

"Just a hundred ounces," he said, "five hundred ounces to the ton; speaking roughly, 1800 pounds a ton."

“Hurrah!” shouted Seth Allport, his ringing voice making itself heard above the sound of the rushing water and the echoing chorus of the men’s cheers; but, an instant after, his exclamation of delight was changed to one of dismay, as a flight of arrows and the ping of rifle bullets whistled around the party, while the dread war-whoop of their Indian assailants burst forth in all its shrill discordancy.

“Who—ah—ah—ah—ah—oop!”

## **Chapter XXII**

### **A Fight for Life!**

In the excitement of starting the stamps, the usual precautions which had been previously practised, of posting sentinels and keeping their arms ready, were for the moment forgotten; but after the first startle of surprise at being so unexpectedly attacked passed over, there was a general rush to cover of all the members of the party, behind the breastwork of earth that the young engineer had caused to be thrown up round the spot facing the river all along its right bank, the men catching up their rifles and cartridge-pouches—which lay here and there about as they had dropped them in their expectancy while waiting the result of the weighing—as they ran to shelter themselves and prepared to return the fire of their foes.

All the miners rushed to the breastwork save one, and that was Seth.

At the instant he turned, like his comrades, to seek the protection of the rampart, towards which the others hastened, an arrow struck Sailor Bill slanting-wise across his forehead, and, tossing up his hands, the poor boy, who was standing on the timber which led to the wheel, tumbled over into the foaming water below that was seething like a whirlpool.

Uttering a frenzied ejaculation of anguish and grief, Seth plunged into the flood, and an instant after dragged forth Sailor Bill's body, heedless of the arrows and bullets of the Indians, the former of which darkened the air in their passage around him, while the latter whistled through his garments.

The intrepid fellow seemed to bear a charmed life, for not a shot nor a barbed head of the savages' feathered missiles reached him as he pulled the poor boy's apparently lifeless body from the water, Seth not being content until he had hauled it up beneath the breastwork; when with a shout of vengeance he seized his rifle and set to work to aid the others in dealing death on those who had, as he thought, killed his protégé.

It was a terrific fight whilst it lasted.

Mingled with the war-whoop of the Sioux, which was repeated ever and anon, as if to excite them anew to the carnage, came the fierce exclamations of the miners, and the calm word of command from Mr Rawlings occasionally, to restrain the men from getting too flurried.—He certainly showed himself worthy of the post of leader then!

“Steady, boys! Don’t waste your fire. Aim low; and don’t shoot too quickly!”

“Ping! ping!” flew the bullets through the smoky medium with which they were surrounded, while an occasional “thud” evinced the fact that one of their assailants had fallen:—“ping, ping, ping!” it was a regular fusillade;—and the miners delivered their fire like trained soldiers from behind the breastwork that had so providentially been erected in time!

Presently there was a rush of the redskins, and the besieged party could hear the voice of Rising Cloud encouraging his warriors, and taunting those he attacked.

“Dogs of palefaces!” cried the chief, “your bones shall whiten the prairie, and your blood colour the buffalo grass, for your treatment of Rising Cloud in the morn of the melting of the snow! I said I would come before the scarlet sumach should spring again on the plains; and Rising Cloud and his warriors are here!”

Then came the fearful war-whoop again, with that terrible iteration at its end “Who—ah—ah—ah—ah—oop!” like the howl of a laughing hyaena.

The river alone interposed between the whites and their enemy, and gave them a spell of breathing time, but in spite of this protection, the odds were heavy against them; for what could even sixteen resolute men, as the party now numbered—for one had been mortally wounded by a chance shot, and although Josh the negro cook could fight bravely and did, Jasper was not of much use—do in a hand-to-hand struggle with hundreds of red-skinned human devils thirsting for their blood?

The river, however, was a great help, especially now that it had been converted into a mill-race, and flooded beyond its usual proportions; for, when the Indians rushed into the water to wade across and assault the camp at close quarters, as the shallowness of the stream at that season of the year would previously have easily enabled them to have done, they found, to their astonishment, first that the current, which they did not expect to be more than a foot deep, rose above their waist-belts, then above their armpits, and finally above their heads, as, pushed onwards by their companions behind, they were submerged in the flood; while the miners, still sheltered by Ernest Wilton’s trenched rampart above, rained down a pitiless hail of bullets into the half-drowned mob, whose very strength now proved their principal weakness.

“Give it ’em, b’ys: remember poor Sailor Bill!” shouted Seth, his blood up to fever heat with passion, and the murderous spirit of revenge strong in his heart. “Give ’em goss, an’ let nary a one go back to tell the story!”

“Steady, men, and fire low!” repeated Mr Rawlings.

And the miners mowed the redskins down by the score with regular volleys from their repeating rifles, although twenty fresh Indians seemed to spring up in the place of every one killed.

The fight was too severe to last long, and soon a diversion came.

As Rising Cloud, raising his tomahawk on high, and, leading the van of his warriors, was bringing them on for a decisive charge, several sharp discharges, as if from platoon firing, were heard in the rear of the Indians.

Just then, a bullet from Ernest Wilton’s rifle penetrated the chief’s brain, and he fell dead right across the earth rampart in front of the young engineer. The platoon firing in the rear of the savages was again repeated; the United States troops had evidently arrived to the rescue; and, taken now between two fires, and disheartened by the fall of Rising Cloud, the Sioux broke, and fled in a tumultuous mass towards the gorge by which they had entered the valley of Minturne Creek.

The struggle over, the miners had time to count casualties, and see who amongst their number had fallen in the fray.

Thanks to Ernest Wilton’s breastwork, their losses had not been very heavy.

Noah Webster was slightly wounded, and Black Harry badly; while the only one killed outright was Tom Cannon, the whilom keen-sighted topman of the Susan Jane, who would never sight wreck or sail more, for Sailor Bill was only wounded, and not dead, after all.

Jasper, who had been hiding beneath the embankment beside the boy’s supposed lifeless body, had perceived signs of returning animation in it, to which he immediately called the attention of Seth and also Mr Rawlings, and the three were bending over the figure in a moment. Just almost a year before they were bending over Sailor Bill in precisely the same way in the cabin of the Susan Jane. The Indian’s arrow had ploughed under the skin of the boy’s forehead nearly at the same place that bore the scar of his former wound when he had been picked up at sea, and could not have inflicted any dangerous

injury; it was evidently the shock of falling into the foaming torrent from the tunnel, as it rushed into the river, that had rendered Sailor Bill senseless for the time being.

He was now coming back to himself, for his limbs twitched convulsively, and there was a faint tremor about the eyelids.

Just then Ernest Wilton came up and stood by the side of Mr Rawlings, while Seth was rubbing the boy's bared chest vigorously with his brawny hand to hasten the restoration of the circulation; and at that moment Sailor Bill opened his eyes—eyes that were expressionless no longer, but with the light of reason in their hidden intelligence—and fixed his gaze on the young engineer as if he recognised him at once.

“Ernest!” the boy exclaimed wonderingly, “what brings you here? Why, where am I?”

And he looked from one to the other of the group around him in a half-puzzled way, “Jerusalem!” ejaculated Seth, jumping to his feet and turning to the young engineer. “He knows you, mister. Ken you rec’lect him?”

“By Jove!” said Ernest, “I do believe it’s my cousin, Frank Lester, now I hear his voice. Frank!”

“Yes, Ernest,” answered the boy, heaving a sigh of relief. “Then it is you after all. I thought I was dreaming.”

And he sank back into a calm sleep as if he were in bed.

## Chapter XXIII

### After the Battle

“Now didn’t I say so, Rawlings?” said Seth triumphantly, turning to that gentleman. “I leave it to any one if I didn’t diagnose the boy’s symptoms correctly! I said ef he can meet with a similar shock to that which cost him his reason, he’d get it back again. I told you that from the first on board the Susan Jane.”

“You certainly did,” replied Mr Rawlings. “It’s the most curious case I ever heard or read of! Do you think, Seth, when he wakes up he’ll be still all right here?” tapping his forehead expressively.

“Sartain as thaar’s snakes in Virginny!” said the ex-mate, returning for a moment to his vernacular mode of speech; although, his medical instincts asserting themselves again presently, he spoke more formally and in professional style in continuation of his reply to Mr Rawlings. “He is still in a semi-comatose condition, as that somnolent fit assures us; but he will sleep it off, and rouse up by and by in the proper possession of his faculties, a glimpse of which we observed just now.”

“I’m right glad to hear it,” said Mr Rawlings. “What a difference that look of intelligence in his eyes made in him! I declare I would hardly have known him to be the same boy!”

“You’re right there,” said Seth. “I’ve read in some book of the eyes bein’ called ‘the windows of the soul;’ an’ I believe it’s pretty near the mark.”

“Golly, massa Rawlings,” put in Jasper at this juncture—the darkey had been dying to speak for a long time—“p’raps him turn out to be gran’ fine genelmun, for sure, ’sides bein’ massa Willerton’s cuzzing, hey?”

“P’raps I’ll souse you in the river if you don’t make tracks and bring down somethin’ as we can take poor Sailor Bill up to the hut in,” said Seth, speaking again in his customary way and in a manner that Jasper plainly understood, for he disappeared at once, returning shortly in company with Josh, the two bearing a mattress between them, on which the boy was placed, still asleep, and carried up to the house, where he was softly put down on Mr Rawlings’ bed and left, with Seth watching by his side until he should wake up, as the latter expected, in his proper senses.

The camp was in a state of tremendous excitement, as may be supposed, for no less than three thrilling episodes of interest had occurred all in one day, any one of which would have been sensational enough in itself to have afforded matter for gossip for a month.

The starting of the stamps—the attack and repulse of the long-dreaded Indian band—the fact of Sailor Bill recovering his lost senses—all happening at once, all coming together!

It was too much for even the most apathetic of the miners to contemplate calmly. And when, after the final departure of the American soldiery—whose commander returned, after pursuing the Sioux for some distance amongst the Black Hills, to report that no further attack need be feared from the band, which was now thoroughly dispersed and incapable of assailing the camp a second time, that year at least—Minturne Creek resumed its normal quietude, and seemed duller than ever after such stirring events as had recently been witnessed, the excited gold-diggers gathered together in twos and threes, thinking over and talking about what had happened.

Beyond the stirring events that had happened they had also to mourn the loss of two of their number, as gallant comrades as men ever had—for, ere long, Black Harry had followed the smart foretopman to the silent land, succumbing to the dangerous wound he had received towards the end of the struggle from an Indian tomahawk wielded by a powerful arm, which had almost cleft the poor fellow's skull in twain; and, after so many months of close companionship, the death of the two sailors was keenly felt.

The best way to banish painful thoughts, however, as Mr Rawlings knew from sad experience, was to engage in active employment; so he did not allow the men to remain idle, although he gave them ample time for a rest after the fight was over.

Summoning to his aid Noah Webster, who, like some of the others who had received trivial wounds, made light of the bullet hole through his arm, he mustered the hands late in the afternoon of the eventful day, and delivered a short practical address to them before resuming operations—a speech which, being to the point, had the desired effect of making the men go back to their work with a will.

“Now, lads,” said he, “we must be up and going. Sitting there talking will not bring back the poor fellows that have gone. I mourn our comrades just as



much as you do, for they worked steadfastly, like the honest, true-hearted men they were, through the hard time of toil and trouble we had till recently, and at the last fought and died bravely in the defence of the camp. But, crying over them won't help them now; all we can do is to bury them where they so nobly fell, and then turn our hands to carry on our work to the end that is now so near in view, just as they would have insisted on doing if they had been alive still and with us!"

There was no more lethargy after Mr Rawlings' exhortation: as Solomon says,—  
"A word in season, how good it is!"

The men sprang up with alacrity to set about what he had suggested rather than ordered; and, as soon as graves had been dug in the shelter trench of the rampart that Tom Cannon and Black Harry had held so courageously against the Indians, and their bodies interred with all proper solemnity, Mr Rawlings himself reading the burial service over their remains, the miners grasped their picks and shovels with one hand as they wiped away a tear with the other, and went back to the mine, some of them possibly with the reflection that, all things considered, their slain mates were perhaps after all now better off than themselves!

## Chapter XXIV

### Sailor Bill's Story

After the sad ceremony which he had just performed, Mr Rawlings did not feel much inclined for gold-seeking or any worldly affairs, although he went towards the mine as a matter of duty; and when he reached the stamps he found Ernest Wilton already standing there, but looking pale and perturbed, as if anxious about something.

"What is the matter?" said Mr Rawlings. "You seem out of sorts, beyond what the loss of these poor fellows would have affected you?"

"Yes, I am," replied the other. "I can't help thinking of that cousin of mine, and why I did not recognise him when I first saw him; but then he was quite a little boy at school, and who would have dreamt of your picking him up at sea?"

"Strange things do happen sometimes," said Mr Rawlings. "When was it that you last saw him in England?"

"Four years ago last Christmas, if I recollect aright. He was then a little schoolboy not half his present size. How on earth did he manage to get to sea? my aunt had a perfect horror of a sailor's life, and would never have let him go willingly. But, there, it only serves me right for my selfish neglect! As you told me before, I ought to have kept up my communication with my family, and then I should have known all about it. I can't help now fancying all sorts of queer things that may have occurred. My poor aunt, who used to be so fond of me, may be dead; and my uncle, who was of a roving nature kindred to mine, may—"

"Nonsense!" said Mr Rawlings, good-naturedly, interrupting him. "If you go on like that, you'll imagine you're the man in the moon, or something else! Sailor Bill, or rather your cousin Frank, as we must now call him, will wake up presently and enlighten us as to how he came to be in his present position—or rather in the Bay of Biscay, where we picked him up; for we all know his subsequent history; and then you'll learn what you are now puzzling your brains about, without any bother. I confess I am curious in the matter too, for I wish to know the secret of that mysterious packet round his neck; but we must both wait with patience, and dismiss the subject for the present from our minds. Come along with me now, my boy," he added, as the body of the miners hastened up after paying their last tribute of respect at their comrades' graves.

"I'm just going to have a look at your sluices, and see whether the stuff is coming out as rich as before."

This invitation at once caused the young engineer to brighten up, as the idea of action had aroused the miners from dwelling on what had happened.

The yield upon being examined proved fully as rich as before the first experiment.

"You see, Mr Rawlings," said Ernest, cordially holding out his hand for a friendly grip, "the lead has turned out just as I fancied it would do, and my efforts to open it out proved successful. You are now, as I told you would be the case, the richest man in this State, or in Montana either, for that matter, with all their talk of Bonanza Kings there."

"You bet," chimed in Noah Webster, who felt equally proud and delighted with the young engineer at the result of their joint operations; but Mr Rawlings could say little.

The Indian attack had hitherto prevented his realising this sudden change of fortune, and now that he was fully conscious of it, all he could do was to silently shake Ernest Wilton's hand first, and then Noah Webster's; and after that each of those of the miners who pressed near him for the purpose, full of sympathy with "the good luck of the boss," and forgetting already the fate of their lost comrades in the sight of the glittering metal before them—their natural good spirits being perfectly restored a little later on, when Mr Rawlings assured them, on his recovering his speech, that he fully intended now keeping to the promise he had given when the venture was first undertaken, and would divide half the proceeds of the mine, share and share alike, among the men, in addition to paying them the wages he had engaged to do.

The ringing hurrahs with which the jubilant miners gave vent to their gladness on the reiteration of Mr Rawlings' promise, were so loud that they reached the ears of Seth, who was watching by the sleeping boy, and the latter woke up immediately with a frightened air, as if suffering from the keenest terror.

"It's all right, my b'y, all right," said Seth soothingly; and at the same time Wolf, who had entered the house and crept up by the side of the bed, leapt up on the boy and licked his face.

“Where am I, Sam?” he said to Seth, the dog’s greeting having apparently calmed him down as well as the ex-mate’s kindly manner; “are they after me still, Sam?”

“You are here with us,” saith Seth, puzzled at the boy’s addressing him so familiarly; “but my name arn’t Sam, leastways, not as I knows on.”

The boy looked in his face, and seemed disappointed.

“No, you are not Sam, though you are like him. Oh, now I recollect all?” and he hid his face in his hands and burst into a passionate fit of crying, as if his heart would break.

“There, there,” said Seth, patting him on the back, “it’s all right, I tell you, my b’y; an’ when Seth says so I guess he means it!”

But the boy would not stop weeping; and Seth, thinking that some harm might result to his newly-awakened reason if he went on like that, strode to the door and summoned help, with a stentorian hail that rang through the valley as loudly as the cheer of the miners had done one instant before.

“Ahoy there, all hands on deck!” he shouted, hardly knowing what he was saying, adding a moment afterwards, “Wilton, you’re wanted! Look sharp.”

“Here I am,” cried Wilton, hurrying up, with Mr Rawlings after him. “What is the matter now, Seth?”

“I can’t make him do nothing” said that worthy hopelessly. “He takes me to be some coon or other called Sam, an’ then when I speaks he turns on the water-power and goes on dreadful, that I’m afeard he’ll do himself harm. Can’t you quiet him, Wilton; he kinder knowed you jest now?”

“I’ll try,” said Ernest; and kneeling by the boy’s side, he drew his hands away from his face and gently spoke to him.

“Frank! look at me: don’t you know me?”

“Ye-e-es,” sobbed he, “you—you are Ernest. But how did you come here? you weren’t on board the ship. Oh, father! where are you, and all the rest?”

And the boy burst out crying again, in an agony of grief which was quite painful to witness.

Presently, however, he grew more composed; and, in a broken way, Ernest managed to get his story from him—a terrible tale of mutiny, and robbery, and murder on the high seas.

This was his story, as far as could be gathered from his disconnected details.

Frank Lester, much against his mother's wishes, had persuaded his father to take him with him in the early part of the previous year to the diamond fields in South Africa, whither Mr Lester was going for the purpose of purchasing some of the best stones he could get for a large firm who intrusted him with the commission. The object of the journey had been safely accomplished, and Mr Lester and Frank reached Cape Town, where they took their return passage to England in a vessel called the Dragon King.

Seth nudged Mr Rawlings at this point.

“Didn't I say that was the name of the deserted ship?” he asked in a whisper.

And Mr Rawlings nodded his assent.

The Dragon King—to continue Frank's, or Sailor Bill's story—was commanded by a rough sort of captain, who was continually swearing at the men and ill-treating them; and, in the middle of the voyage a mutiny broke out on board, started originally by some of the hands who wished merely to deprive the captain of his authority, and put the first mate, who was much liked by the men, in his place; but the outbreak was taken advantage of by a parcel of desperadoes and ne'er-do-weels, who were returning home empty handed from the diamond diggings, and were glad of the opportunity of plundering the ship and passengers—whence the mutiny, from being first of an almost peaceful character, degenerated into a scene of bloodshed and violence which it made Frank shudder to speak about.

His father, fearing what was about to happen, and that, as he was known as having been up the country and in the possession of jewels of great value, the desperadoes would attempt to rob him first, placed round Frank's neck, in the original parchment-covered parcel in which he had received them from the bank at the diamond fields, the precious stones he had bought, with all his own available capital as well as his employers' money, thinking that that would be the last place where the thieves would search for them.

“And now they are lost,” added the boy with another stifled sob, “and poor mother will be penniless.”

“Nary a bit,” said Seth; and pulling out the little packet by the silken string attached round his neck—which the poor boy had not thought of feeling for even, he was so confident of his loss—he disclosed it to his gaze. “Is that the consarn, my b’y?” he asked.

“Oh!” exclaimed Frank in delighted surprise. “It is, with the bank seal still unbroken, I declare!”

And opening the parchment cover he showed Ernest and the rest some diamonds of the first water, that must have been worth several thousand pounds.

After his father had given the parcel into his care, Frank went on to say, events transpired exactly as he had anticipated. Most of the passengers were robbed, and those that objected to being despoiled tranquilly, murdered. Amongst these were his father, whom the ruffians killed more out of spite from not finding the valuables they expected on him. He, Frank, escaped through the kindness of one of the sailors, who took a fancy to him, and hid him up aloft in the ship’s foretop when the men who had possession of the ship would have killed him.

“This sailor,” said Frank, “was just like that gentleman there,” pointing to Seth.

“Waal neow, that’s curious,” said Seth. “Was his name Sam?”

“It was,” said the boy.

“This is curious,” said Seth, looking round at the rest; “it is really. I wouldn’t be at all surprised as how that’s my brother Sam I haven’t heerd on for this many a year, or seed, although he’s a seafarin’ man like myself, an’ I oughter to ’ave run across his jib afore now. Depend on it, Rawlings, that the reason the boy stuck to me so when he hadn’t got his wits, and came for to rescue me aboard the Susan Jane, and arterwards, was on account of my likeness to Sam.”

And as nobody could say him nay, it may be mentioned here that that was Seth’s fervent belief ever after.

The last recollection that Frank had of the ship and the mutineers was of an orgie on board the Dragon King in the height of a storm, and of one of the murderous villains finding out his retreat in the foretop, where the sailor who protected him lashed him to the rigging, so that he could not tumble on deck if he should fall asleep. He remembered a man with gleaming eyes and great white teeth swearing at him, and making a cut at him with a drawn sword.

After that, all was a complete blank to him till he had just now opened his eyes and recognised Ernest.

“An’ yer don’t recollect being picked up at sea an’ taken aboard the Susan Jane, and brought here, nor nuthin’?” inquired Seth.

“Nothing whatever,” said Frank, who showed himself to be a remarkably intelligent boy now that he had recovered his senses. “I don’t remember anything that happened in the interval.”

“Waal, that is curious,” observed Seth.

That was all the story that Frank Lester could tell of the mutiny on board the Dragon King, and his wonderful preservation.

All the mutineers, and some of their victims too most probably, met their final doom shortly afterwards in the storm that had dismasted the ship, leaving it to float derelict over the surface of the ocean; all but the three whose corpses the visiting party from the Susan Jane had noticed on the submerged deck. These must have survived the tempest only to perish finally from each other’s murderous passions, after having lingered on in a state of semi-starvation possibly—although Frank said that the desperadoes from the diamond fields, who were the ringleaders on board, were originally the most attenuated, starved-looking mortals he had ever seen in his life.

## **Chapter XXV**

### **Homeward-Bound**

The work at the mine went on steadily. The “pocket” was cleared of the quartz it contained, and the whole, amounting to two hundred and fifty tons, passed through the stamp.

The soldiers, on their return from their victory over the Sioux, had spread the news of the wonderful find of gold at Minturne Creek, and miners had flocked up in hundreds. When the pocket was emptied, a debate arose whether a heading should be driven along the course of the lode to the spot where Mr Rawlings’ cousin had struck gold, and where it was probable that another pocket existed. It was, however, decided to accept the offer of a body of wealthy speculators, who offered 100,000 pounds for the set. This was indeed far less than they would have gleaned from it had the second pocket turned out as rich as the first, for the gold, when all the quartz was crushed, amounted in value to 350,000 pounds. Half of the total amount was divided by Mr Rawlings, according to his promise, among the miners. Seth receiving three shares, Noah Webster two, and the men one each. To Ernest Wilton he gave one-fourth of his own share of the proceeds.

Then, starting from the spot where they had toiled so hard, the little band set out for the haunts of civilisation once more, leaving behind, where they had found a solitary valley, a place dotted with huts and alive with busy men.

At Bismark the men separated, some to proceed back to their beloved California, to starve it among their fellows with their newly acquired wealth, others to dissipate it in riotous living in the nearest frontier towns, while others again, struck with the greed of gold, thought that they had not yet got enough, and proceeded rapidly to gamble away what they had.

Mr Rawlings went eastwards towards Boston, intending to take steamer thence to England, which he resolved never to leave again in the pursuit of adventure now that fortune had so generously befriended him; and with him came Ernest Wilton, taking charge of his recovered cousin; and Seth, who could not bear to lose sight of his former protégé.

Josh and Jasper had been left behind, the two darkeys sinking their mutual jealousy, and determining to start a coloured hotel on the Missouri, for the benefit of travelling gentlemen of their own persuasion; so too had Noah



Webster, who said he liked hunting better than civilisation, and intended to pass the remainder of his days out west in the company of Moose, who was as eager after game as he was himself and as fearless of the Indians, should they again trouble them, after their Minturne Creek experiences.

Wolf, however, was one of the homeward-bound party. He certainly could not be abandoned after all his faithful services, and the wonderful instinct he had displayed, more than his master had done, in recognising Frank, whom he had not seen since puppyhood, when Ernest Wilton's aunt, Frank's mother, gave him to the young engineer.

As luck would have it, on the arrival of Mr Rawlings and his party at Boston whom should they meet accidentally at the railway depot but Captain Blowser, of the Susan Jane, as hearty and jolly as of yore, and delighted to see them! His ship he "guessed" was just going to Europe, and he would be only too glad of their taking passage in her.

Need it be mentioned that the captain's offer was accepted; and that, long before Frank Lester—the "Sailor Bill" whom Seth loved, and the crew of the Susan Jane and the gold-miners of Minturne Creek had regarded with such affection—had arrived in England to gladden his mother's heart by his restoration, as if from the dead, when he had long been given up for lost, together with his father's property which he carried with him, he had learnt every detail, as if he had been in his right senses at the time, of how he had been "Picked up at Sea?"

## Story 2

### Chapter I

#### **Greek Pirates and Turkish Brigands A Tale of Adventure by Sea and Land**

In Beyrout Harbour.

“It’s a thundering shame our sticking here so long; and I’m sick of the beastly old place,” said Tom Aldridge in a grumbling tone, as he leant over the bulwarks listlessly, crumbling bits of biscuit into the sea to attract the fish, which would not be attracted, and gazing in an idle way at the roof of the pacha’s palace, that glittered under the rays of the bright Syrian sun. “I’m sick of the place, Charley!” he repeated, more venomously than before.

“So am I, Tom,” said Charley Onslow, his fellow-midshipman on board the Muscadine, an English barque of some seven or eight hundred tons, that lay, along with several foreign vessels of different rig, in the bay of Beyrout—as pretty a harbour as could be picked out in a score of voyages, and about the busiest port in the whole of the Levant.

“So am I, Tom,” said Charley with the utmost heartiness. “I am as tired of it as I am of the eternal dates and coffee, coffee and dates, on which these blessed Arab beggars live, and which everybody makes a point of offering to one, if a chap goes ashore for a minute; while, on board, we’ve nothing now to do but to check off the freight as it comes alongside before it’s lowered in the hold, and look out at the unchanging picture around us, which is so familiar that I believe I could paint it with my eyes shut if I were an artist. Talk of the beauty of Beyrout, indeed! To my taste, it’s the most monotonous hole I was ever in in my life, and I hate it!”

And yet, in spite of Charley Onslow’s peevish criticism, the scene around him and his companion was charming enough.

The Muscadine was anchored out in the roads, close to the jutting promontory on which the lazaretto buildings were lately erected, that stretched out like an arm into the harbour; and the view from her deck presented a beautiful panorama of the semi-European, semi-Oriental town, nestling on the very edge of the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and surrounded by gently-undulating hills, that were terraced with symmetrical rows of trim olive-trees and vineyards, rising tier upon tier, the one above the other; amidst which, occasionally peeped out slyly the white cupola of some suburban villa belonging

to one of the wealthy merchants of the port, or the minaret of a Moslem mosque, standing out conspicuously against the shrubbery of foliage formed of different tints of green, from the palest emerald shade to the deepest indigo, that culminated finally in the cedar-crowned heights of the mountains of Lebanon in the purple distance.

It was not a quiet scene either, as might have been imagined from the idle ennui of both the young sailors, whom it seemed to have well-nigh bored to death. On the contrary, to an unprejudiced looker-on it was quite the reverse of being inactive.

In the foreground the harbour was lively enough, with boats and caravels, and other Turkish craft of all sizes and shapes, darting here and there like great white-winged dragon-flies, as they were wafted swiftly one moment by some passing whiff of air, or lying still on the surface of the sea as the wind fell and they were temporarily becalmed, until another gust came from the hills to rouse them out of their noontide sluggishness.

Amongst them, too, were ships' boats belonging to the different vessels, anchored, like the Muscadine, out in the roads, being pulled to and from the shore, anon laden with merchandise, anon returning for more; while, of course, the dingy black smoke and steady paddle-beat of the inevitable steamer, that marks the progress of Western civilisation in the East, made themselves seen and heard, to complete the picture and make the contrast the more striking.

"Tom," said Charley presently, after the two had remained silent for some time, still standing in the shade of the awning aft, that protected them from the burning heat of the sun, which was at its most potent point, it being just mid-day.

"Yes," said the other grumpily, as if disinclined even for conversation.

"It has just gone eight bells."

"Can't I hear as well as you, Charley? What's the use of bothering a fellow? Do leave me alone."

"I only wanted to say, Tom, that the skipper said we might go ashore this afternoon if we liked, as soon as the second mate came on board; and there he is coming off in the jolly-boat now."

"I don't care whether Tompkins comes off or not," replied Tom Aldridge in the same peevish tone as he had spoken at first. "What's the good of going ashore?"

"Oh, lots of good," said Charley Onslow more cheerily. "Better than stopping here cooped-up like a fowl and being grilled in the sun."

"Well, I can't see the difference between getting roasted ashore and roasted on board, for my part," retorted Tom. "It's six of one and half-a-dozen of the other."

"You lazy duffer!" said Charley laughing; "you are incorrigible. But do come along with me, Tom. We haven't landed now for two days, and I can't stand theMuscadine any longer."

"I suppose you'll have your way, as you always do," grumbled the other, turning away at last from his listless contemplation of the prospect with which he had owned himself so disgusted. "I don't know how it is, Charley, but you seem to manage me and everybody here just as you like; you can come round the skipper even, when you set your mind to it, and that is what no one else can do!"

"You forget Mr Tompkins."

"I don't count him at all," said Tom Aldridge indignantly. "He's a sneak, and gets his way by wheedling and shoe-scraping! But you, Charley, go to work in quite a different fashion. Why, I'm hanged if you don't cheek a fellow when you want to get something out of him. It's your Irish impudence that does it, my boy, I expect."

"Sure, an' it's a way we have in the ould counthry," said Charley, putting on the brogue so easily that it seemed natural to him—which indeed it was, as he was born not twenty miles from Cork, in the neighbourhood of which is situated the far-famed "Blarney stone," that is supposed to endow those who kiss it with the "gift of the gab;" and Charley must have "osculated it," as a Yankee would say, to some purpose.

"Be jabers, thin, ye spalpeen," laughed Tom—who had got out of his grumpy state quickly enough; for his disposition was almost as light-hearted as that of his friend, and it was only the heat and the confinement on board ship when in harbour that had previously oppressed his spirits—"let us look smart, and be off. Here's that fellow Tompkins just coming up the side, and I don't want any more of his company than I can help! Tell him we're going by the captain's permission, Charley. I don't want to say a word to him after that row this

morning. You are still on speaking terms with him, and I'm not. And while you are settling matters with the old sneak, I'll get the dinghy ready, and fetch up the bottle of brandy I promised that jolly old Turk at the coffee-shop."

"You'd better water it a bit, Tom," said Charley, as the other was diving down the companion-stairs. "It's awfully strong; and you know Mohammedans are not accustomed to it."

"Not a drop of it, my boy," replied he, disappearing for a moment from view, and his voice receding in the distance. "I promised the old infidel that he should have the real stuff, and I'll let him see that a giaour can keep his word."

In a second or two he came up again, the bottle, however, concealed in the pocket of his reefer of light blue serge. And hauling in the painter of the boat, which was floating astern, while Charley was still confabulating with the second officer, who had come on board in the meantime, he sat himself down in her, and waited patiently till his chum had done with the obnoxious Mr Tompkins, who seemed to have a good deal to say, and that of a not very pleasant character. "Bother the chap!" said Charley, when he was at length released, and, shinning down a rope, sat down in the stern-sheets of the dinghy, as Tom Aldridge took up the sculls and shoved off from the ship. "He's got as much to say as Noah's great-grandmother. And the gist of it all, fault-finding, of course."

"What can you expect from a pig, eh?" said Tom, philosophically, when the boat was well clear of the Muscadine, setting to work leisurely and pulling to shore, while Charley reclined at his ease on the cushions which he had taken the trouble to fix up for himself, and—did nothing, as usual.

It was the general sort of "division of labour" amongst them.

However, they were fast friends, and, as Tom didn't complain, nobody else has any right to find fault.

"A grunt, I suppose," replied Charley, in answer to Tom's conundrum. "At least, from a Welsh pig, like Tompkins. An Irish one, bedad! would have better manners."

"Bravo, Charley!" exclaimed Tom, bursting out into a laugh in which his companion as heartily joined. "You stick to your country, at all events, which is more than can be said for our leek-eating friend. He always wishes to deny that he belongs to the land of the Cymri and hails from Swansea, as he does. The

sneak! I'm sure a decent Welshman would be ashamed to own him. But, don't let us worry ourselves any longer about Tompkins; it's bad enough to have him with us on board, without lugging him ashore, too; hang him!"

"Ay, ay, so say I," sang out Charley, in the best accord.

And then, after a few more vigorous strokes from the sculls, propelled by Tom's muscular arms, the bow of the dinghy stranded on the sandy shore, and the two boys landed in the highest glee, without a trace of the ill-humour and despondency in which they had been apparently plunged not an hour or so before.

## **Chapter II**

### **The Coffee-Shop in Beyrout**

Pushing past the crowds of busy and idle people, Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Maronites, Arabs, Frenchmen, and a few English, like themselves, who thronged the narrow streets, which were lined on either side with stores built in the American fashion for the disposal of European goods; narrow Eastern shops, and bazaars and caravanserais, hung with carpets, and displaying grapes and figs, and all sorts of fruit in true Oriental style; they made their way towards a Turkish coffee-house that was situated not far from the waterside, and much patronised by those who, like themselves, had to do with ships and seafaring concerns—although, they did not arrive very quickly at their destination, for the time for the noonday halt having passed by, the usual caravans from Damascus and the interior were coming in, long trains of camels, asses, and mules, laden with coffee, raw silk, rhubarb, untanned leather, figs, aromatic gums, and all the varied merchandise that comes through Arabia and Persia to the ports of the Levant; and, consequently, the main thoroughfares were so blocked with these commercial pilgrims from the desert, that it was as much as Tom and Charley could do to get along.

They did it at length, however, by dint of shoving themselves unceremoniously through the lookers-on who congregated to see the caravans pass, taking no notice of the many invocations to Allah to curse them, as “dogs of Christians,” who profaned the sacred presence of the followers of Islam by breathing the same air as themselves; finally reaching the courtyard of Mohammed’s khan, after much jostling and struggling and good-natured expostulation and repartee, enlivened with many a hearty laugh as some donkey driver came to grief with his load, or when a venerable Arab sheikh on a tall dromedary sputtered with rage at finding the way impassable and his dignity hurt.

The Turk who kept the khan, or coffee-house, was a middle-aged man, who had seen a good deal of all sorts of life in knocking about the world, and was so cosmopolitan in his character that he was almost denationalised. He had a round, good-humoured face, that told as plainly as face could tell that he was no ascetic, or rigid Mussulman bound to the edicts of the Koran, but one who liked good living as well as most folk.

Tom’s description of him hit him off exactly; he was decidedly “a jolly old Turk”—nothing more nor less.

On seeing the boys come in, he at once made places for them beside him on the divan, where he sat on a pile of cushions smoking a long chibouque, with a coffee-cup beside him on a little tray, that also contained sweetmeats, from which he took an occasional sip in the intervals, when he removed the stem of his pipe from his lips and emitted a vast volume of tobacco-smoke in one long puff.

“Aha, my young capitan!” said he to Tom Aldridge, when they had seated themselves, cross-legged, as he was, and accepted the chibouques brought to them immediately by an Arab boy, “you ver long time coming to see me. I tinks I nevere see yous no more!”

He spoke broken English, but with his genial manner and broad smile of welcome made himself readily understood.

“I couldn’t come before,” said Tom. “But I didn’t forget you all the same, for I’ve brought what I promised, the bottle of—”

“Hush-h!” interrupted old Mohammed, with a warning gesture, placing his hand before Tom’s mouth. “De med-i-seen for my leg? Ah, yase, I recollects. I am ver mooch oblige. Tanks. You’ll have some café?”

“No, thank you,” replied Tom. “I and my friend here are sick of coffee; let us have some sherbet instead, although we don’t want anything. We only came to have a chat with you and a smoke, that’s all.”

“That is all raite, my frens. I don’t like mooch coffees myselfs. De med-i-seen is mooch bettaires,” said Mohammed, patting his stomach and grinning again, as he winked knowingly at Tom, in a manner that would have shocked a true believer, while he shouted out an order to the Arab boy. “But, de sheerbeet is goot for de leetle boys, O yase.”

“Cunning old rogue,” said Charley, aside to Tom. “He wants all the brandy for himself, although he wouldn’t like his fellow-religionists to know that he drank it. I suppose if we wished for some, we would have to ask for a drop of the med-i-seen.”

“Oh, he’s not a bad sort,” replied Tom. “He has offered me wine many a time, and he’s a generous old chap, I should think. Well, Mohammed,” he continued, aloud, “and how’s business?”



“Ver bad, ver bad inteet,” said that worthy. “I nevere did no worse in my loife. I shall have to shoot up de shop soon.”

“That’s a good one!” exclaimed Tom. “You can tell that to the marines. I bet you’ve got a snug little pile of piastres stowed away somewhere.”

“P’raps I haive,” said the old Turk, nodding his head as he smiled complacently; “and if you young shentlemens should be vat you call ‘ard oop,’ I could lend you some moneys. But don’t talk so loud,” he added cautiously, casting a glance at a group of Greek sailors who were gabbling away near them, and scanning Tom and Charley curiously, “I don’t like de look of dose fellows dere, and dey might hear us talk if dey leesten, and vill remembers.”

“What of that?” asked Charley; “I don’t suppose they would understand us.”

“Aha, so you tink,” said Mohammed warily. “But dose Grecs are ver knowing and oop to every ting. Dey are bad, ver bad, every one.”

As he spoke two of the Greeks separated themselves from the group, and came over to where they were sitting, as if sent for the purpose.

“I understand,” said one, who acted as spokesman, and addressed them in the most perfect English, “that your captain is in want of hands?”

The question was pertinent enough, as more than half the crew were laid up in the Beyrout hospital, or lazaretto, with a sort of malarial fever, and the Muscadine was only waiting for their recovery, or until enough hands could be shipped, to enable her to pursue her voyage to her next port, Smyrna, where she was to complete her cargo, and then sail for England.

The boys of course knew this well enough, but they did not see it was any business of the Greeks, and after Mohammed’s hint as to their character they resented the inquiry as a piece of impudence.

“How do you know which is our ship?” said Charley, in Irish fashion asking another question, in lieu of answering the one addressed to him; “and if you do, whether she wants hands or not?”

He spoke rather uncivilly, but the man replied to him with studied politeness.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said he, “but the Muscadine is the only English ship in the harbour, and any one who has travelled like myself could easily tell the

nationality of yourself and your friend. I am aware, also, that several of your crew are laid up in hospital."

"And supposing such is the case," said Tom Aldridge, taking up the cudgels, "what then?"

"Only, sir," replied the man, even more obsequiously than before, "I and several others here, who are in want of a ship, would be glad to sign articles with you."

"The others you mention are Greeks like yourself, I suppose?" inquired Tom, still brusquely, as if he did not care whether he offended his interlocutor or not.

"Yes, sir," said the man, "but my countrymen are generally reckoned to make good sailors, and ship in all sorts of vessels to all parts of the world."

"That may be," answered Tom, who hardly knew what to say, "but it is no concern of mine. You had better speak to Captain Harding about the matter; we can't engage you."

"No?" said the man with a half sneer, half smile on his face, and he seemed about to say something nasty; but he altered his mind before he uttered the words, and completed his sentence with another civil inquiry, at which neither Tom nor Charley could take offence. "And, where can I and my friends see the captain, sir?"

"On board, any time before ten in the morning or after sunset in the evening," said Tom curtly.

He didn't like the man, but he was at a loss how he could put him off in any other way.

"Thank you, sir, I'm deeply obliged for your condescension," said the Greek, who then regained his comrades, and the group presently walked out of the khan.

"Bismillah!" ejaculated Mohammed as soon as the Greeks had disappeared. "Can I believe my eyes? That scoundrel has got the impudence of Sheitan, and must be in league with the spirits of Eblis."

"Who is he? do you know him?" eagerly asked Tom and Charley almost in one breath of the Turk, who exhibited all the appearance of stupefied astonishment.

“Mashallah! do I know him?” gasped out Mohammed, his emotion nearly choking him. “Allah is great and Mohammed is his prophet—do I know him?” he repeated, taking a long draw at his chibouque as if to calm his nerves, while he lay back for a moment motionless amid his cushions.

“Well, who on earth is he, Mohammed?” demanded Tom abruptly—“that is, unless the a—medicine—has got into your head.”

While the Greek had been talking to Charley in the first instance, it may be mentioned that Tom had dexterously transferred the bottle of brandy to the keeping of the Turk, who had secreted it behind his back, after turning half aside and pouring out a pretty good dose into his coffee-cup, all with the most rapid legerdemain as if he were a practical conjuror.

“Effendi,” said Mohammed with dignity, “you insult me by such a remark. The sight of that man—that Grec, that villainous piratt, quite overwhelmed me.”

“Pirate!” said Charley, for Tom was too much abashed by the Turk’s rebuke to speak.

“Yes, piratt,” repeated Mohammed firmly. “That would-be simple Grec sailor, as he represented himself to you, was no one else than Demetri Pedrovanto, better known in the Aegean Sea, as ‘The Corsair of Chios.’ There’s a price of ten thousand piastres on his head. Mashallah! How he dares show himself in Beyrout, amongst the enemy he has plundered, I know not. However, kismet! ’tis his fate, I suppose.”

“Are you sure?” asked Charley, who was inclined to think that Mohammed was cramming them.

“Effendi, throw dirt on my beard if I lie. It is Demetri Pedrovanto, sure enough.”

“But I never heard of pirates being about in these waters, with so many French and English cruisers going backwards and forwards in the neighbourhood,” observed Tom.

“Aha, you Inglese and Frenchmans don’t know everyting!” said the Turk laconically, after emitting another volume of smoke, which he had been apparently accumulating all the time he had been speaking previously. “There are alway piratts in dese seas, and always will be, as long as Grecs are Grecs!”

“Ah, you say that because you are a Turk,” said Charley chaffingly.

“No, no, no,” replied Mohammed, shaking his head vehemently. “I’m not one great bigot because I have been born under the crescent. I am cosmopolitaine. You ask your consul, or ze Americans, dey will tell you the same. All dose Grecs are piratts, and dem as isn’t piratts are brigands, tiefs, every one.”

“Well, you’ve got a very good opinion of them at any rate,” said Tom. “I wonder what the beggar spoke to us for, eh? If he is the man you say, I don’t suppose he would have the cheek to go on board the Muscadine.”

“No, I should think not,” agreed Charley; “and if he does, the skipper will soon overhaul his papers, and then find him out.”

“Aha, ah!” grunted out Mohammed. “De Grec is one ver clevere rogue, and would sheet Sheitan himself.”

“Who is he?” asked Charley innocently. “I heard you mention him before.”

“De Debble!” answered the Turk, so gravely that both the young fellows burst out into such paroxysms of laughter that Mohammed thought they were ridiculing him, and they had much difficulty in assuring him to the contrary. Indeed, it was not until late in the evening, after they had dinner of kebabs and coffee and their host had imbibed several cups of his “med-i-seen,” that he grew friendly again; and then, he was so cordial that he wept over them at their departure, and assured them that he loved them as his own children, as his brothers, as his father, nay, even as his great-grandfather, who had borne the standard of the prophet in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca!

When Tom and Charley got on board the Muscadine, they saw only the second officer, Mr Tompkins, who after telling them that they were very late, and that the captain had turned in long since, said they might go below; which of course, as the ship was in harbour and only an anchor watch kept, when their services were not required, they were extremely grateful for, and turned in accordingly, without giving a thought to their rencontre at the khan.

The next morning, however, when they came on deck they saw three or four Greek sailors lounging about the foc’s’le, and Mohammed’s warning recurred to there with startling significance.

“Who are those men?” asked Charley of Mr Tompkins, who was in command of the vessel for the time being, Captain Harding, the skipper, having gone ashore, and the chief mate being invalided with those of the crew who were in the lazaretto.

“Some new hands the captain shipped last night,” answered he; “and if you’ve any more business ashore, Master Onslow, you’d better look sharp about it, as we’re going to sail as soon as we’ve obtained pratique, which will be about four bells, I reckon.”

“But, does Cap’en Harding know about them?” asked Tom, sinking his objection to having any conversation with the second officer in the urgency of the occasion.

“You mind your own business, you young dog,” said Tompkins, glad to have the opportunity of snubbing Tom. “I suppose you would like to command this ship, but you sha’n’t while I’m on board.”

“You cad!” muttered Tom under his breath, as he walked away forward to look at the men more closely. “I wish I had you on land for a quiet half hour, and I’d soon take the starch out of you!”

“None of your jaw,” shouted the second mate as a parting shot. “I hear you, and if you speak another word I’ll have you put in irons for mutiny,” swearing also a fearful oath. So Tom had to put up with the other’s language and nurse his wrath until the skipper came on board.

When Charley joined him presently, they took note of the new additions to the crew, who were altogether eight in number; but to their surprise they did not see the Greek among them whom Mohammed had indicated as being the far-famed corsair; and on their comparing their views they both agreed that the worthy Turk must have been “slinging the hatchet” at their expense, or else mistaken about the supposed pirate.

On Captain Harding coming off, however, they thought it their duty to tell him what they heard; but the skipper, who was a bold bluff English sailor, laughed the Turk’s warning to scorn, and joked the young fellows for taking any notice of it.

“What! Mohammed told you, the keeper of the khan by the Capuchin monastery. My dear boys, he was only humbugging you. I saw the old rascal this very morning hauled up before the cadi, for being drunk and kicking up a row. He must be able to spin a fine yarn when he has a mind to. There are no pirates nowadays in the Mediterranean; and if we do come across any, I believe the Muscadine will be able to give a good account of them. Pirates! bless my soul, what a tremendous liar that old Turk must be! Those Greeks I’ve shipped

are honest sailors enough; for I've examined their papers, and had them before our consul. Besides, I've told them what sort of discipline I keep on board my ship; and they are not likely to try and come the old soldier over me—not if John Harding knows it!"

"But, captain," put in Tom.

The skipper wouldn't hear any more, however. "Now get to your stations, lads," said he, to show that the private interview was at an end. "Mr Aldridge, I must make you acting second officer in Mr Tompkins' place, as I've promoted him to poor Wilson's berth until he can join me at Smyrna, as I'm bound to start at once now that I have filled-up the vacancies amongst my crew. Charley Onslow, remain aft with me. All hands up anchor, and make sail!"

In a short time the men working together with a will, and the new hands specially distinguishing themselves for their activity in so marked a manner as to call forth the approval of the generally grumbling Mr Tompkins—although, perhaps, he praised them because Tom and Charley had suspected them—the *Muscadine* had her anchor at the catheads; and, her topsails having been dropped long before, was sailing gaily out of Beyrout harbour, under the influence of the land-breeze that sprang up towards the afternoon, blowing briskly off shore.

When she had got a good offing, and the mountains of Lebanon began to sink below the horizon in the distance as she bowled along merrily on her north-western course, a long way to the southward of Cyprus, bearing up direct for the Archipelago, a keen observer on board might have noticed something that looked strange, at all events on the face of it.

No sooner had the shades of evening begun to fall than a long low suspicious-looking vessel crept out from the lee of the land, and followed right in the track of the *Muscadine*, as if in chase of the English ship.

It was a swift-sailing lateen-rigged felucca, one of those crafts that are common enough in Eastern waters, especially in the Levant.

She spread a tremendous amount of canvas; and leaping through the sea with the pace of a dolphin, came up with the doomed merchantman hand over hand.

## Chapter III

### Friends in Council

The Muscadine when she left England had a crew of some twenty hands, or with the captain, and first and second mates, and our friends Tom and Charley, twenty-five men altogether—a very fair average, as the proportion of the seamen usually borne in merchant ships is at the rate of about three to every hundred tons of the vessel's burthen.

Through the illness, however, of the first officer, Mr Wilson, an amiable man and a thorough sailor, whom everybody liked—quite the reverse of the odious Tompkins, Tom's and Charley's special *bête-noir*—and a large number of the seamen, whom they were forced to leave behind in hospital at Beyrout, the complement of the ship was much reduced, and her crew now mustered, officers and men, but twenty in number, of which total twelve were Englishmen who had originally belonged to her, and eight the Greeks whom the captain had so suddenly shipped at the last moment.

"It's a good job that Cap'en Harding didn't get any more of those blessed Greeks aboard: they're almost equal to us now, man for man," said Tom to Charley, who on this first night of their being at sea after so long a detention in port was performing an act of not altogether disinterested friendship in sharing the first watch on deck of the newly-promoted "second mate," as he would persist in addressing Tom.

"Yes, sir; I think you are about right, sir," replied Charley, with a mock deference, which made Tom grin in spite of his endeavours to preserve a dignified composure. "Is there anything else, sir, you'd like me to say, sir?"

"Only, that I'll kick you in the lee scuppers if you call me 'sir' again. But, Charley, joking aside, I don't like us having all those Greeks here, and we so short-handed too."

"Don't you see that that is the precise reason why they are here, most sapient of second officers? if we hadn't been short-handed the cap'en wouldn't have shipped them."

"Yes, yes, I know that," replied the other shortly. "You don't seem to follow me, Charley, really. What I meant to point out was, that there are only twelve of us belonging to the ship on whom we could rely—indeed only eleven, for that matter, as I don't count on Tompkins; a bully like him would be sure to show

the white-feather in a scrimmage—while these Greek chaps muster eight strong, all of them pretty biggish men, too, and all armed with them beastly long knives of theirs, which I’ve no doubt they know how to use.”

“Bless you, Tom, Cap’en Harding would be a match for half-a-dozen of them with his revolver; and you and I would be able to master the other two, without calling for aid on any of the foremast hands, or relying on your chum Tompkins. How fond you’re of him, Tom!”

“Hang Tompkins, and you too, Charley! You can’t be serious for a moment!”

“Oh yes I can, Tom; and I will be, now! I tell you what, old chap, your sudden promotion has disagreed with you, and you are trying to manufacture a mountain out of a molehill. Those Greeks are not such fools to attack us unless they gained over the rest of the crew on their side; and you know that’s impossible; for every Englishman forward now in the foc’s’le I’d stake my life on; and so would you, Tom, as they’ve shipped with old Harding every voyage he has sailed since he’s been captain of the craft. You’ve got a fit of the blue-devils or something, Tom, that makes you so unlike yourself; or else that blessed old Turk’s nonsense made a deeper impression on you than it has on me!”

“You’re right, Charley,” said Tom Aldridge, giving himself a shake as if to dispel his strange forebodings. “I don’t know what has come over me to-night. Of course, if those beggars should rise, we could whop them easily enough. To tell you the truth, I shouldn’t mind if they did, if Tompkins only got a knock on the head in the fight!”

“Bravo, Tom! that’s more like yourself! But isn’t your watch nearly over? It must be six bells by now; the moon is getting up.”

“So it is, Charley I wish you would call that beast for me; it’s time he was on deck.”

“All right!” shouted the other with a laugh, scuttling down, and hammering at the first mate’s cabin-door, so loudly that Tom could hear him plainly above, and also Mr Tompkins’ deeply growled oaths in response to the summons, after it was repeated once more with all the strength of the middy’s fists beating a tattoo.

“He’ll be here in a minute,” said Charley, as he hurried up the companion in advance of the gentleman he had called to relieve Tom’s watch; although



Tompkins came pretty close behind him, swearing still, and glaring at the two young fellows in the moonlight as if he could “eat them without salt,” as Charley said.

Before going below, Tom gave the first mate the ship’s course, as was customary, “nor’-west and by north,” reporting also that all was right and nothing in sight, no vessel had passed them during the night; and then he and Charley turned into their bunks, with the expectation of having a better “caulk” than they had had all the time the Muscadine had lain at anchor in Beyrout Roads, for while there, the heat and lassitude produced by their having almost nothing to do had so banished sleep that they hardly cared when the time came for their “watch below.” Now, however, it was all different; as what with the bustle of preparation in storing the last of their cargo, and seeing to those endless little matters which had to be put in ship-shape manner before the anchor was weighed, and the actual departure itself, their time had been fully occupied nearly from dawn to sundown, and their feet and hands busy enough in running about on deck and aloft, directing the crew under the captain’s orders, and lending assistance where wanted. So it was with the comfortable assurance of having earned their four hours’ rest that they went below that first night at sea.

“I guess old Tompkins will have to rap pretty loud to make me budge at eight bells,” said Tom with a portentous yawn, as he peeled off his reefing jacket and turned in “all standing,” as he expressed it, with the exception of his boots. He was too tired to undress; and besides, he thought, in his lazy way, what was the use of his doing so when he would have to turn out again and relieve the first mate at four o’clock in the morning, just as he was beginning to enjoy himself.

“By George, a sailor’s life is a dog’s life!” he muttered out aloud.

“What, eh?” sleepily murmured Charley from the other bunk adjacent, the two occupying one cabin between them; and, presently, the pair were “wrapped in the arms of Morpheus,” and snoring like troopers in concert, the captain playing a nasal obligato from his state-room in the distance, whither he had retired a short time before themselves, after being satisfied that the ship was proceeding well on her course and everything all right.

And all this time the Muscadine was bowling so favourably along at the rate of some eight knots an hour, carrying with her the fair wind with which she had started from port, the felucca that had left the Syrian coast shortly after still

followed in her track, although hull-down on the horizon, and her white lateen sails only just dimly discernible to a sharp eye that was looking out for her, under the rays of the rising moon, which now emerged from the waste of water that surrounded the two vessels with its fathomless expanse. But who on board the merchant ship suspected that they were pursued or looked out for the felucca, dead astern as she was, and only a tiny speck on the ocean?

## Chapter IV

### The Strange Sail

Mr Tompkins, the late second and now first officer of the Muscadine, besides possessing a nasty, grumbling, fault-finding temper for the benefit of those under him, and a mean, sly, sneaking sort of way of ingratiating himself with his superiors, was as obstinate as a mule, and one of those men who would have his way, if he could, no matter what might be the consequences. When he was able, as was the case with the men he was unfortunate enough to command, he bullied those who might differ from him into acquiescence with his views; with those over him in authority he adopted another course, that of wheedling and slavish "shoe-scraping," as Tom Aldridge termed it; but in both instances he generally succeeded in carrying his point, and arranging things in the manner he had previously made up his mind to.

Now, with eight strange hands, and those foreigners, who had lately come on board, any reasonable person would have naturally divided them four and four in each watch, thus mixing them up with the eight English able seamen left of the Muscadine's original crew; but no, Mr Tompkins was of a different opinion, and what was more, carried round Captain Harding to his way of thinking, much to Tom and Charley's surprise. It was not on account of the new first mate having any ulterior designs on the ship or cargo—that idea may be dismissed at once, for he neither had the villainy nor pluck for such a proceeding. His real object was, that these new men were all fresh to the vessel and had not yet any experience of his persuasive ways; unlike the old hands, who knew Mr Tompkins so well that they hated him and shirked work when he was to the fore—and by getting them all into his watch matters would be able to go easy with him, and he would be able to astonish everybody by the way in which he got the duty done when he had charge of the ship, instead of having to call on the assistance of the skipper when his orders were not obeyed, as had frequently been the case before.

He did not tell Captain Harding this, however. His explanation of the proposed plan was, that the men, being all Greeks, would work better together, as they had already shown when making sail; and, as he understood *Lingua Franca*, which all foreign sailors can speak, he could manage them better than "such a boy as young Aldridge," who might get along well enough with the old hands who knew him, but would be powerless to exercise any authority over those foreigners, who wanted a man to drill them.

“Very well, Tompkins,” said Captain Harding, when the first mate had well-nigh deluged him with his reasons. “I suppose you know best; and as you’ve got to see to the working of the ship you can have your own way, though what you can see to prefer those ill-looking beggars to decent British tars I’m sure I can’t understand. I’m glad you’re not afraid of them, at any rate?”

“Afraid, sir!” repeated Tompkins scornfully, with any amount of braggadocio. “These foreigners only want you to let them see you are master, and they’re tame enough. It is only from want of firmness that any trouble ever breaks out when they’re on board an English ship. They need a strict hand over them, that’s all.”

“All right, Tompkins. Only don’t bully them too much, you know!” said the captain good-humouredly, for he was sufficiently acquainted with the first mate’s pleasant way of ordering the men about to be aware that he did not err on the side of leniency in exercising his authority, as he complained that his subordinate officer Tom did.

And thus it happened that when Tom and Charley went below and joined Captain Harding in his slumbers, the deck was left in sole possession of Mr Tompkins and the eight Greek sailors, with the suspicious-looking felucca creeping up rapidly astern, and getting nearer and nearer to the Muscadine each hour.

A stern-chase is proverbially a long one. And so, although the light-winged craft that was following the ship sailed three feet to her two; yet she had such a long start, and the breeze was so fair and dead aft—which was all in favour of a square-rigged vessel and against a fore-and-after, that sails best with the wind abeam—that the felucca was still some five miles off when day broke and the chief mate first discovered her.

He was not alone in his discovery either, for he noticed that a part of the watch were looking over the bulwarks at the approaching vessel, and from their gesticulations and rapid speech in their own language he thought something was up.

Calling one of the Greek sailors, named in the ship’s articles “Pollydorry,” as the captain had put him down, whom he thought he could better make understand that version of “Lingua Franca” which he pretended to know, the mate interrogated him as to what he knew of the felucca, and what was her intention in trying to overhaul them. The man, however, only shrugged his

shoulders, and jabbered something which he could make nothing of; and as the group then ceased speaking together, or paying any attention to the stranger, Mr Tompkins put down their excitable demeanour to their being only foreigners, and their natural way of going on, so unlike the stolid British seafaring man, who hardly notices anything except it specially concerns him, and even then keeps what he thinks to himself.

As it was getting near the time, however, for him to be relieved of his watch and go off duty—although it still wanted half an hour to four bells, when it was Tom Aldridge's turn to come on deck again and call up the other men below—he thought he would give Charley Onslow a hail in the meantime, to come up and keep him company until then. Not that he was a bit alarmed at the approach of the felucca, as he said to himself, or that he was anyway at all frightened at being alone on deck with the Greek sailors when so many more of their comrades might be so close at hand. But it was always best to be on the safe side, and there was nothing like a man in authority, as he was, taking due precaution against any possible danger, no matter how remote.

Thus trying to cheat his own conscience, Mr Tompkins sang out for Charley down the companion, awaking him from the soundest sleep he had had for weeks with the echoes of his melodious voice.

“Just like the braying of a jackass afflicted with bronchitis,” as Charley said afterwards ruefully, to his chum.

Much to the first mate's annoyance, he not only awoke Charley, but Tom also; both the lads coming on deck together.

“I didn't call you, Mr Aldridge,” he said angrily. “My watch is not over yet.”

“I'm quite aware of that,” said Tom. “But no fellow could go to sleep after such a hideous row as you made. And besides”—looking at his watch—“I'm due in another twenty minutes, so I thought I had better come up with Charley, since I was woke up. Hullo! what is that?” he added, glancing astern at the felucca, which was now almost within speaking distance, and coming on as if she were going to sheer alongside. “What the deuce is that piratical-looking craft running us aboard like that for? If I were you, Mr Tompkins, I would signal them to stand off, and call up the captain and the other watch.”

"I will thank you to mind your own business, Mr Aldridge," replied the chief mate, not at all pleased with the suggestion. "If you are so terribly alarmed at the sight of a common Levantine coaster, you had better go below again."

And he turned on his heel, leaving Tom burning with indignation at having his courage questioned and being taunted of being frightened, especially by such a person as Mr Tompkins.

The felucca was barely a cable's length off now, and in another minute she passed underneath the Muscadine's stern so closely that they could have chucked a biscuit on board her.

"Schooner ahoy!" hailed Mr Tompkins. "What's the matter? Do you want anything?"

But no reply was made directly, although the felucca luffed up a bit, and ran for a second or two almost alongside, the ship's main-yard just touching her reed-like masts, and a voice uttered a few words rapidly in Greek, which Charley, although he had a smattering of the language, could not quite understand, although the foreign sailors on board their vessel evidently did, as they replied in the same tongue. And then the dapper little craft's lateen sails filled again as her helm was put down, and she flow away from the Muscadine, sailing on a bowline, and heeling over to the wind so as to display half her keel as she topped the waves, just as if the other vessel had been lying still in the water, although she was going a good eight knots by the log in the same direction.

"Did you see that fellow's face on board the felucca who spoke to our men, Charley?" asked Tom anxiously.

"No," said Charley. "But I heard his voice, and that was enough for me."

"Oh, you recognised him, then?"

"Yes. I could swear, only from his voice, that he was the same man who spoke to us in Mohammed's coffee-shop at Beyrout. He had a most peculiar twang in his speech, which I noticed at the time."

"It was the same chap, Charley; I saw him distinctly. I wouldn't be at all surprised that Mohammed was right, and that he is a 'piratt,' as he called him. But if he is after us, I wonder why he didn't board us then. That felucca was crammed full of men."

“Ah, piracy would be rather risky work in these seas, with lots of men-of-war about; at all events, in broad daylight, as it is now. From the distance the ship has run, we can’t be very far off Cyprus, and the pirate, if pirate he be, knows well enough that an English frigate has been stationed there ever since we occupied the island. I’ve no doubt, however, Tom, that he is after us, for I heard, as well as I could make out, from what I know of the language, two phrases, ‘In a couple of nights’ time,’ and ‘Look out for the signal,’ while the Greek sailors here said, ‘It’s all right on board,’ as if they had arranged everything. I don’t like it at all, Tom. What a murderous lot of fellows they are, and what a fool that Tompkins is to insist on having them all in one watch!”

“We’ll tell the captain what we’ve heard and seen,” replied Tom.

But at that moment the first mate, who had gone down into the waist of the ship to confer with the Greeks, returned, rubbing his hands and with a scornful smile on his face.

“A nice thing it would have been if I had gone below and wakened up the captain to tell him that a fruit-boat from Rosetta was going to run us down!” said he ironically, speaking at Tom, although he did not directly address him.

“Rosetta does not lie astern of us,” said the latter aside, as if to Charley. “And they didn’t answer your hail, at all events!”

“Pray, sir, did you understand what they said?” said the mate angrily, speaking this time straight to Tom. “No,” he replied.

“Well, then, I do, and I will thank you to hold your tongue. The men have told me all about it. Those fellows in the schooner had lost their reckoning and didn’t quite know where they were, and our men, speaking Greek of course, told them.”

“And I wonder how they knew?” said Tom. The first mate was posed for a moment, but he quickly recovered himself.

“I suppose any one without being a sailor could tell them that as we’ve run more than a hundred miles since we left Beyrout yesterday afternoon, and gone in a nor’-westerly course, we must be a little to the southward of Cyprus. But, I’ll thank you to mind your own business, as I told you before, Mr Aldridge.”

“It is my business,” said Tom, “and I’ll take care to tell Captain Harding of it.”

“Tell the cap'en and be—” said Mr Tomkins in a rage. “But I'll save you the trouble, I will tell him myself,” he added a moment afterwards, dashing down into the cabin, and leaving Tom to dismiss his watch and take over the duty without another word.

“That's pretty behaviour!” said Tom to Charley. “I call that relieving a fellow in proper style. No unnecessary ceremony at all.”

“Well, you brought it on yourself, Tom,” said Charley, with a sympathising grin. “You will badger him so. I suppose, now you are second officer, you intend paying him back for old snubs, eh?”

“I don't want to notice the beggar at all,” replied the other. “I wouldn't have spoken to him then if it hadn't been my duty to do so. He is a pig, though. I daresay he hasn't told the captain anything at all, as he hasn't come up.”

“You let him alone for making his story right,” said Charley. “Captain Harding hasn't come on deck because there's nothing to call him; for that mysterious craft is hull-down now and almost out of sight ahead.”

Such was the case; and when the captain did turn out at breakfast time he had heard the first mate's version of the affair, and as the felucca had now quite disappeared below the horizon, altogether pooh-poohed Tom's account of having recognised Mohammed's “corsair,” even although Charley backed him up by his statement of what he had heard say in conversation with the stranger.

“Avast there, my dear boys!” said he, speaking good-humouredly to them, as he always did. “That rascally old Turk so stuffed you up with his lying yarns, that you've got pirates on the brain.”

Captain Harding, however, did one thing that pleased them, especially Tom, to whom it gave the greatest satisfaction.

Despite the first mate's protest, he remodelled the two watches into which the crew were divided, putting four of the Greek sailors with an equal number of English Jack tars in each, so that should any “little unpleasantness,” as he laughingly observed, occur, the foreigners would not have it all their own way.

Mr Tompkins's chagrin when this was effected was delightful to Tom, although he suffered from it, as the first mate, ascribing to his suggestion the credit of



the new arrangement, vented his spite on him accordingly, and tried to make his duties as difficult for him as he could.

Nothing was seen further all that day, or the next night, of the felucca, although Tom never went below for a single watch even when his time for relief came—except for meals, of course—remaining on deck and keeping a sharp lookout towards every point of the compass, not only during his own time of duty but in that of the chief mate as well, despite the latter's broad hints and insulting remarks that his absence would be more agreeable than his company. So, when the following day likewise passed without any reappearance of the suspicious stranger, both the lads began to think that their fear of being attacked by pirates was only a chimera, founded, as the captain had said, on Mohammed's fabulous narrative; for Charley had been quite as nervous in the matter as Tom, and had shared his anxious watch with him all through ever since he had recognised the Greek on board the felucca.

Accordingly, the two, their apprehensions quite allayed, turned in together again on the third night the Muscadine was at sea, without any greater anticipation of something being about to happen, beyond the usual disagreeables of a sailor's life, than they had the first evening after they left port—both quitting the deck about just the same time as then, too, when Tom was relieved by the first mate at six bells.

"Isn't that a sail out there, Charley, right in the wind's-eye?" said Tom as they turned to descend the companion-stairs, pointing to what looked like a white speck, far-away off in the direction he had named.

"A sail be hanged!" exclaimed Charley. "I never saw such a fellow in my life. You are like Don Quixote, who fancied every windmill a giant. I believe that blessed felucca haunts you in your sleep!"

"No, really, Charley, I didn't think it was her. I meant another sort of sail. But I was mistaken, for I can see nothing now."

"That's always the way with you, Tom. It strikes me that all your sails are sells."

At which brilliant piece of wit on Charley's part both lads laughed so loudly that Mr Tomkins thought they were making fun at his expense, and it was gall and wormwood to him as he paced the deck on the windward side; and "the two inseparables," as Captain Harding dubbed them, then turned in without

any further palaver save a brief “good-night,” being soon wafted happily into the land of dreams.

A tolerably fast vessel for her size, and in fair sailing trim, as she was only half-loaded—being unable to complete her cargo at Beyrout, whence her going out of her way, as it were, to Smyrna from thence—the Muscadine, with the good breeze she had at starting, which had subsequently increased into a very favourable wind, strong, but not too strong to prevent her carrying all plain sail, had made such use of her legs, as sailors say, that she had by this time run over 500 miles from her point of departure, and before morning the captain expected they would sight the southernmost point of Rhodes, and be able to enter the channel between that island and Scarpanto.

He had therefore issued strict injunctions about a sharp lookout being kept forward, stationing one of the English crew in each watch there for that purpose—as he said he didn’t believe in any foreigner’s eyesight where a ship was concerned—just when he was leaving the deck, which was shortly before Tom and Charley, giving orders at the same time that he should be called as soon as anything was perceived; and these instructions Tom, as the second officer, passed on, as in duty bound, to Mr Tompkins when he relieved him, the first mate receiving them, as he now invariably did any statement from his junior, with a characteristic grunt!

There is really no other word in the English language to express the meaning of the ejaculative sound he made, which signified, equally, acquiescence, approval, disapproval, or anything.

It was now midnight.

The captain, Tom and Charley, and one of the English hands who acted as steward, were down below asleep aft, and three English sailors and four Greeks were supposed to be in the same somnolent condition in the foc’s’le; and, on deck, were the first mate and four more Englishmen, one of whom was on duty as lookout forward, and another taking his turn at the wheel; while four of the foreigners and the remaining two British seamen lounged about the waist, or stood grouped around the mainmast-bitts amidships, attentive to the orders of the officer of the watch, who, being not in the best of tempers, as usual, did not let them long remain idle for a spell.

That was the situation when the first mate called out, after glancing at his watch, to “make it eight bells;” and almost at the same moment the lookout man forward sang out lustily, in a voice that rang through the ship, “Land ho!”

Whether it was the sound of the ship’s bell that gave the signal, evidently preconcerted beforehand, or the cry that land was in sight, only the Greek sailors knew; but, at all events, it roused them in a second to action, for with a fierce cry the four foreigners who were amidships rushed on the two Englishmen that shared their watch, drawing their knives and stabbing them desperately as they fell upon them.

“Murder! Help!” sang out the poor Jack tars; but, though caught unawares, they made a hard fight for their lives, one, a north-countryman, although stabbed in several places, snatching up a capstan bar and braining the Greek nearest him like a bullock.

At the same time, the four other Greeks who were down below in the fore-castle and supposed to be sleeping, crept up the hatchway forward, slipping on the cover as they got on deck, and went to the assistance of their companions, who, being thus reinforced, made short work of the two Englishmen, who presently sank senseless on the deck which was weltering with their gore, and then rushed aft in a body, brandishing their knives and shouting like demons.

Mr Tompkins showed himself the coward he was, as Tom had anticipated; for, after hammering on the top of the cabin skylight to rouse those below, with a belaying pin he had grasped hold of at the sight of the struggle in the waist, he incontinently scuttled up the mizzen shrouds, displaying an agility of which one would have never thought him capable. The steersman followed his example; while the lookout man forward, hearing the yells and groans of his comrades, and seeing what was up, took refuge in the foretop, thus leaving the seven remaining Greeks, one or two of whom had suffered in the fray, practically masters of the ship, which was yawing about like a drunken man, and backing and filling as she veered this way and that without any guidance or control, nobody being at the helm.

Two of the Greeks placing themselves on either side of the cabin hatch to give a warm reception to the captain and the rest of the Englishmen whom the noise had fully wakened up, for they were heard stirring below, the remainder distributed themselves in the rigging, and started an exciting hunt after the three who had sought safety aloft.

The steersman was the first caught, and the sweep of a knife blade across the rope end by which he had lowered himself from the extreme tip of the mizzen yard-arm, sent him dropping into the sea with a faint despairing scream; but, the first mate and lookout man led them a fine dance, up the shrouds on one side and down on the other, and shifting from the mizzen to the mainmast, and from that to the foretop again by sliding down the stays, or catching hold of the falls and halliards when the pursuit grew too hot—until both parties, the hunters and the hunted alike, paused for a moment to draw breath.

As they did so, the two Englishmen who were now together in the mizzen-top, and the Greeks who were ascending the shrouds on either hand—the former looking down on the quarter-deck below them, and the latter gazing towards the land that had just been sighted—uttered as if in chorus an exclamation of joy, the echo of which from the others seemed to bewilder both the Greeks and Englishmen.

It was a curious coincidence, the opposite causes for the gratulation on either side coming together as it were, but so it was.

At the very moment the mutineers had stopped in their murderous chase of the first mate and the remaining British sailor, Captain Harding, holding a revolver in each hand, came up through the cabin skylight, as if propelled by some hidden machinery below—Tom, Charley, and the steward, all armed to the teeth, jumping up after him.

“Death to the traitorous scoundrels!” exclaimed Captain Harding, levelling the revolver in his right hand at one of the Greeks who remained by the companion, paralysed by the unexpected appearance of those below from a quarter he had never imagined, while he was looking out for them in a different direction.

A flash. Bang! and the man fell dead in his tracks; while Tom gave the other Greek sentry a wipe over the head with a cutlass, which also sent him to the deck.

Just then, however, the felucca, which had been lost sight of so suddenly, and which no one had seen approaching the ship but the desperadoes aloft, and even they only at the end of the struggle—seemed to start up out of the deep in some mysterious fashion close to the Muscadine, and sheered alongside, with a triumphant cheer from the brutal-visaged ruffians who lined her deck that made Tom and Charley’s blood run cold!

## **Chapter V**

### **Conquered, not Beaten!**

The situation had assumed a new phase.

Inspired by the proximity of the pirate craft, with their comrades on board, the Greek sailors in the rigging, abandoning their pursuit of the first mate and the lookout man—a brave fellow named Jack Bower—began to descend the ratlins rapidly, with the view of making an onslaught on the captain and the others that were in possession of the quarter-deck, Jack, however, following closely after them now without a trace of fear, resolving to aid his fellow-countrymen in making a stand, although he had given them leg-bail when he stood alone against them, as the first mate had abandoned him at the wheel the moment the Greeks rushed aft, and even now remained trembling in the mizzen-top, instead of backing up Jack, and taking the mutineers in the rear as they scrambled down the shrouds without looking behind them.

The courage of the latter, however, did not suffice to take them very far.

The foremost man had hardly descended two steps, when “crack!” went Captain Harding’s revolver; and, reeling backwards, his hands cleaving the air vainly for a hold, the Greek sailor toppled over into the sea with a splash, and sank like a stone to the bottom, dead as a herring!

Another would have followed suit, for the captain had recocked his pistol, and was in the act of taking aim, when a stern, commanding voice exclaimed, in accents that rang through the ship—

“Hold!”

Captain Harding, without lowering his weapon, looked hastily forward from whence this unexpected summons appeared to come; and there he saw a sight which might well make even a courageous man quail. The felucca had been run alongside the Muscadine forward, under cover of the mainsail, her bow right under the ship’s counter, and a crowd of fierce, bearded ruffians were pouring on board as fast as they could clamber up the side, led by a tall, athletic fellow, dressed rather better than themselves, with a crimson sash folded round his waist, who was so much in advance of his villainous crew that he was close upon the group on the quarter-deck before they were almost conscious of his presence. It was his voice, the voice and face of the man who had accosted Tom and Charley in the Turk Mohammed’s coffee-house at Beyrout, and whom they

at once now recognised again, that had arrested the action of the captain—although only for an instant, as, undismayed by the numbers now opposed to him, and conscious that his little band and himself must be defeated in the long run, and meet their death in the struggle, he shifted his aim, and pointed his revolver without hesitation at the leader.

“Hold!” repeated the pirate chief again in warning accents, before the captain could fire. “Another shot, and I won’t answer for your lives!”

“And who are you, sir, who dares to attack a peaceful merchant vessel on the high seas in this fashion?” demanded Captain Harding, without faltering, and still keeping his pistol levelled at the head of the other, who faced it with the utmost sangfroid, although he could perceive that the English sailor’s blood was up and his finger trembling on the trigger.

“One who dares anything and everything, and never embarks in any enterprise unless he has weighed the consequences and can carry it through to a successful termination!” replied the desperado, with an assumption of stern dignity that was in harmony with his stalwart form and reckless air. “But, come,” he continued, sinking his tone of bravado, and speaking in the same easy, polite manner which Charley had specially noticed when he addressed Tom and himself in the khan—a manner that showed a very considerably greater amount of breeding than could have been expected from a common seaman,—“you must see that you are powerless to resist us.”

“There are six of us,” interrupted Captain Harding, “and we can at all events make a fight for it!”

“To what purpose?” retorted the other. “You are six, truly; but two of your party are boys, and one a coward who wouldn’t be of much help”—glancing as he spoke from Tom and Charley, who stood beside the captain prepared to aid him to their last breath, upward to the mizzen-top, where the craven-faced Tompkins stood, looking down too much frightened to stir.

“Well, what then?” said the captain, impatiently. “Be quick with your palaver or I’ll fire.”

“You’ll do so at your peril,” retorted the other. “Captain Harding, you are a brave man, or I wouldn’t waste so many words on you or spare your life. You are powerless to resist us, as I said before, for you are but six in number, including your boys and that cur aloft; you have three other men down in the

foc's'le, but they cannot join you. We are fifty. Show yourselves, my lads," he cried to his followers, who instantly ranged themselves, across the Muscadine four deep, exhibiting their full strength, which was even more than he had stated.

"You see!" said the pirate chief, complacently. "Look, and count them."

"I see that we're outnumbered by a gang of cut-throats," said Captain Harding, bitterly.

"Gently, my friend," said the other, suavely. "Some of my men understand English like myself, and might not relish your compliments, although, as a man of the world, I can make excuses for you—ah—want of tact; yes, that's the word, is it not?"

"Cease your humbugging, sir, and come to the point," said the captain, trying to curb his anger, which he could hardly control in the face of the pirate's cynical impertinence. Had it not been for the sake of the boys by his side he would have let drive at the scoundrel at once, and risked his fate.

"That's just what I am about to do," said the other coolly, not one whit put out of his even temper apparently. "You confess you are outnumbered? Good! I, on my part, do not wish for any further bloodshed, if I can effect my purpose without it. Besides which, I have conceived quite an affection for you and those young gentlemen there, whom I first had the pleasure of meeting at Beyrout. Good morning, signors," he interposed, taking off his Greek cap and bowing politely to Tom and Charley. "It is morning, for it's nearly one o'clock now. I hope I see you well? But to resume, captain. As I said, there's no further necessity for our fighting that I can see. You have killed three of my men, whom I considerably placed on board your ship before she left port so as to get possession of her without any bloodshed at all, although the fates willed otherwise; and we, I believe, six of yours; so in losses we may, perhaps, have the advantage of you, although that fellow there"—pointing to the Greek sailor Tom had cut down with his cutlass—"won't be worth much more to me, and that gives you only two more than ourselves in the casualty list. But I won't grumble. I'm satisfied to cry quits, and call a truce to hostilities."

"And, after that?" said the captain.—"I don't suppose you attacked us for nothing!"

“Your remark,” said the pirate, smiling, “does credit to your good sense. I am not in the habit, strange to say, even in these heroic days, of doing anything for nothing. Am I, Calchas?” he added, turning to a ferocious-looking villain at his right hand.

The man evidently did not understand him, as he spoke still in English for the benefit of the captain’s party; but he grinned in sympathy with the smile on the pirate chief’s face—such a cruel, crafty smile as it was!

“You have got possession of the ship,” said Captain Harding; “what more do you want, if you don’t wish to murder us like the rest of my poor crew?”

“My dear sir, you certainly use very strong language; and I can’t say I like it,” said the pirate, playing carelessly with the handle of a long yataghan that was thrust through his crimson sash. “Murder is a nasty word, which should not really be mentioned in the company of gentlemen! Your men fell in fair fighting.”

“Yes, when they were taken unawares by a pack of traitors,” put in the captain hotly. The other’s cool assurance was more than he could stomach.

“Pray don’t interrupt me,” said the pirate. “It is, to say the least of it, rude. But, now to business. I have possession of your ship, you say? That is true without doubt; now, my difficulty is, how to utilise that possession; and here, Captain Harding, I shall have to claim your assistance—”

“You may claim away till doomsday,” said the captain with grim humour; “but as to my giving it, that’s quite a different matter.”

“Allow me to finish my sentence,” continued the other—“claim your assistance in return for the lives of yourself and the remainder of your crew. Else, I shall be extremely sorry, but circumstances will compel my wishing you all a speedy adieu.”

And the cold-blooded desperado drew his hand across his throat and then pointed to the water over the ship’s side, in a very suggestive way.

“What do you want me to do?” asked Captain Harding curtly.

“Nothing very alarming, or calculated to wound your honourable feelings,” replied the pirate. “I simply want you to remain in command of your vessel.”



The bluff, honest sailor stared at the other in amazement; he couldn't make out "what he was driving at," as he said to himself.

"In ostensible command of the ship, that is," said the pirate, correcting his previous expression. "I, of course, shall be virtually master, but you will navigate her under my orders, and answer—likewise under my directions—any curious questions that may be put to us from passing vessels as to our destination and so on."

"Why, you want me, John Harding, to sail under false colours, and help you to make away with the ship as I've sailed in, man and boy, ever since I smelt salt water, not to speak of betraying my owners and their interests. I'll see you—a—a—shot first!"

As he spoke the captain pulled the trigger of his revolver, and would have settled all the pirate's chances of present and future booty if he had not with a rapid movement of his quickly-drawn yataghan struck up the muzzle of the weapon, causing the bullet to expend itself in the air harmlessly, although it went uncommonly close to the head of the trembling Tompkins above, who was waiting for a peaceful arrangement of the situation before he descended.

On the shot being fired, the main body of the pirates rushed forward, and would have annihilated the captain and the two lads, had not their chief stopped them with some harsh word of command, at which they immediately fell back again.

"I bear no malice, Captain Harding," said the pirate chief, with a magnanimous air, "and I'll forgive your attempt on my life, especially as the bullet missed its mark. I will also, as you have such scruples of conscience, excuse you from acting still as the captain of this vessel, and promote your chief officer—I believe the gentleman is up aloft—to that post. I've no doubt he will prove more accommodating, particularly when I place my reasons strongly before him. But I have not done with you yet, captain. I shall want you presently below with reference to the ship's papers and cargo. So now put down your weapons, and order your men to disarm. I will save your lives, I promise."

"Boys, we must submit; we're in their power, and they are too strong for us," said Captain Harding, turning to Tom and Charley. "I don't suppose they'll murder us now in cold blood; we must trust their word for it—the word of a pirate," he added aloud, with bitter scorn.

“And you can trust it,” replied the pirate chief proudly. “The word of Demetri, the Corsair of Chios, is known to be as sacred as his name is feared in the Aegean Sea.”

“By Jingo!” exclaimed the captain, looking from Tom to Charley, and back again to the pirate chief. “Demetri, the corsair! Why, that’s the very man that Mohammed told you about at Beyrout, and whom I would not believe in.”

And the honest old fellow seemed to reproach himself for not paying more heed to the boys’ story.

“The same, at your service,” said the corsair, as he had better be called now. “Now lay down your arms, and I shall treat you as prisoners on parole.”

“And you promise that we shall go free?” said Captain Harding, pleading for terms, although he felt that they were vanquished.

“Yes, when I’ve done with you. Look sharp! Time is pressing, and I cannot answer for my men much longer,” said Demetri.

So Captain Harding, Tom, and Charley, and the steward, laid on the deck the weapons with which they had hastily armed themselves when below as soon as the noise of the outbreak reached them, when they were instantly picked up by one of the Greeks, who stepped forward for the purpose by his leader’s orders.

“We are now at your mercy,” said the captain. “I don’t mind about myself, but, Corsair, or whatever you are, spare the poor boys and my remaining men.”

“Their lives are safe, I tell you,” said the other impatiently. “Have I not given my word? But call your other men down,” he added, pointing to Jack Bower, who was still half-way up the rigging, and Tompkins in the mizzen-top.

Captain Harding summoned them, and Jack Bower at once obeyed his orders; but the first mate refused to budge, saying, that as he was no longer master of the ship, he was not compelled to carry out his directions, especially if doing so jeopardised his life.

“The cowardly rascal!” exclaimed the captain, hardly knowing whether to laugh or to be angry; but Mr Tompkins was really so paralysed with terror that he had not the faintest idea of what he was saying, “I’ll soon make him obey me,” said the corsair, cocking the captain’s revolver, which he had taken from him, and pointing it at the frightened occupant of the top above his head. “If you are

not on deck by the time I count five, you, first officer, or whatever you call yourself, I'll fire, and you'll descend to Davy Jones's locker quicker than it will take you to come down the rigging! One—two—three—”

“Stop, sir, good gentleman, stop, and I'll come down,” faltered out Mr Tompkins, roused from his fright more by the corsair's action than his words, for a pointed pistol has a wonderfully persuasive way of its own; and, with hesitating feet, he slowly descended the ratlins and placed himself beside the captain, who looked at him first contemptuously, and then turned his back, muttering between his teeth—

“If I had had a man in charge of the watch, or even one of these boys, we would never have been put in this position.”

“You are wrong there,” said the corsair, “for we would have attacked you all the same.”

“Never mind,” retorted the captain bravely. “But we would not have been unprepared, and you would have had a tussle to get on board, instead of things being made easy for you.”

“Have your own way in that,” replied the other, shrugging his shoulders, as he gave some unintelligible order to his men, ten of whom slipped forward, placing themselves on either side of the captain and the two lads, and the other Englishmen, with the exception of the chief mate—two Greeks to each of them. “I'm sorry, captain,” continued the corsair, “but I am compelled to put you and your countrymen to some little inconvenience, lest you should be tempted to escape, when it would be the worse for you.”

And, at another word of command, all the hands of the whole party were securely lashed behind their backs.

“As for you,” said the corsair, speaking more harshly than he had yet done, as he turned to Tompkins, “if you dare move without my permission, you are a dead man! Stop there, and if any vessel hails you as we pass into the archipelago, mind you answer correctly as if you were still pursuing your original voyage, for we are going for a time in the same course. I shall hear you, so beware!”

And he waved his sharp yataghan before the first mate's eyes in a way which he did not at all relish, although he took the hint as it was intended.

The corsair now gave the man whom he had sent to the helm after the parley was over, some directions as to the steering of the Muscadine, which was then entering the channel between Rhodes and Scarpanto, nearly about the very time that poor Captain Harding had expected, although under strangely different circumstances; after which, he motioned the captain to precede him down the companion, while he told the others to remain where they were on deck until he returned, enforcing his order by placing a guard over them.

“We’ll now go below, captain, and overhaul the ship’s papers, as I suggested to you just now,” said the corsair in a politely peremptory tone; and the captain, seeing no help for it, and no object to be gained by opposing the wish of his captor, obeyed the veiled order, the two descending to the cabin, where they remained some time, whether in argument or in conference of course those who were on deck could not guess, although both Tom and Charley would have bet their last sixpence that the corsair did not get much voluntary information out of their skipper.

## Chapter VI

### A Sell for the Pirate

Acting apparently under instructions previously given, the felucca, after transferring a large portion of her men to the merchant ship, proceeded some distance ahead of her, as if not to cause any suspicions by her propinquity should any vessel pass by them in their passage through the channel. But she still remained close enough to be signalled by her commander should her nearer presence be needed.

When the pirate chief and Captain Harding returned on deck from their visit below, Tom and Charley could see, from the fierce looks of the one and the stolidly stubborn expression of the other, that their private interview had not been of the most agreeable nature, and they soon learned the reason.

“I have been deceived, duped, despoiled of my just dues,” exclaimed the corsair frantically, as he gained the deck, speaking in English as if for the special benefit of the two lads and their unfortunate fellow-countrymen; “and had it not been for my sacred word which I never break once I have given it, overboard you should go, every one, with your throats cut!”

“But,” said Captain Harding, “we have not deceived you as to the value of the ship and cargo. If anybody is to be blamed, you must look to those agents and spies you employ who have misinformed you.”

“Silence!” shouted out the other, foaming with passion. “You are a miserable set of impostors, you English! How could I tell that a big vessel like this would only be half-loaded with a lot of trumpery stuff that’s not worth the freight; and that her captain had hardly a piastre to bless himself with? And yet you English people boast of your wonderful wealth. I call it a scandalous imposition, wasting my time in this way, and the lives of my men, for nothing.”

And he stamped his feet in his rage as he walked to and fro.

Charley could hardly refrain from laughing at the pirate chief going on in this way about being taken in. As he whispered to Tom, when he had the chance, it reminded him of the pickpocket who had stolen a watch, complaining of being hardly used because the article turned out to be pinchbeck!

“If you like to let us go, I will give you a bond for the estimated value of the ship and cargo,” said Captain Harding, wishing to pacify the man—who now

appeared capable of going any lengths in his fury—for he did not place much credence in his loudly vaunted promise of saving their lives.

His suggestion, however, only seemed to add fuel to the fire.

“Yes, and a nice fool I should be to present it for payment, and have the police upon me. Do you take me for an addle-pated idiot? I tell you what I will do. I will burn your miserable old hulk of a ship, and its rotten cargo; and you and she can roast together!”

“And your pledged word as to our lives?” said the captain.

“I told you I wouldn’t take them, and my word is good, although I spared your life simply because I might want your signature. But if the ship catches fire, and you unfortunately cannot escape from her, of course it will not be my fault—don’t you see?”

And the corsair gave a malignant laugh, that disclosed his real disposition better than words, and convinced the Englishmen of the futility of appealing to him for pity.

It was now broad daylight, and the Muscadine was working up to windward of the cluster of small islands that lie to the northward of Scarpanto, having just weathered the channel that separates it from Rhodes, when the topmasts of a ship could be seen rounding the headland nearest them.

“It’s one of our cruisers, boys,” whispered Captain Harding, whose keen eyes had distinguished a pendant flying from the main-truck of the new-comer.—“We are saved! we’re saved!”

The pirate captain, however, had ears as quick as the captain’s eyes were keen.

“Gag that babbler,” he cried to his men—in Greek of course—“and the two boys as well, and bundle them down into the cabin. Stay! take those men also, and serve them the same,” pointing to the steward and Jack Bower and the other three seamen.

All the Englishmen were hurried below without any unnecessary delay, with the exception of Mr Tompkins, whom the corsair next addressed, presenting the captain’s cocked revolver as he did so, and pressing the cold steel muzzle of the pistol against his right temple.

“You coward!” said he with a thrilling hiss on his tongue like a serpent’s; “your life trembles in the balance. If that vessel now approaching hails us, and you do not answer correctly, as I have already warned you, this bullet goes through your brain. Do you hear?”

“I hear. I—I—I—hear,” faltered out the first mate, while the perspiration stood out in great beads of fright on his forehead.

The vessel in front came nearer and nearer; and presently she rounded-to under the Muscadine’s stern, the old well-known Union Jack of Old England floating up to the masthead the while, and a hearty voice hailing the merchantman through a speaking-trumpet from her quarter-deck, not half a cable’s length away, in true nautical fashion—

“Ship ahoy! What ship is that?”

The corsair was standing by the side of Mr Tompkins, close by the taffrail. Before Captain Harding had been taken below he had removed his uniform cap and monkey-jacket, and put them on himself, so that he might pass for one of the ship’s officers, and he had likewise directed the majority of his men to lie down on the deck, lest their numbers might create suspicion.

As the stranger vessel approached nearer with the intention of speaking, as he could understand, he lowered the revolver which he had held for more than a minute pressed against the first mate’s forehead. But he had it still in his hand, as the trembling Tompkins was aware, ready for action, only that its muzzle was now touching his side instead of his temple.

“Now, answer correctly,” whispered the corsair in the mate’s ear, in a fierce thrilling whisper that penetrated through every fibre of his body, when the hail of the British man-of-war rang out in the air.—“Answer as I told you, or you are a dead man, if fifty English frigates were alongside!”

## Chapter VII

### The Last of the Old Ship

It was not an English frigate, as might have been supposed, from the observation of the pirate chief, but one of those despatch vessels that we usually keep in eastern waters in attendance on our Mediterranean fleet; and being a steamer, of course she could arrest her progress, and remain in proximity to the Muscadine without the necessity of laying-to like a sailing-ship, or any trouble save slackening speed.

“Answer,” repeated the corsair sternly, still in the same melodramatic whisper, enforcing his order with a dig of the revolver barrel in Tompkins’ side.

“The Mus—” began the mate in faltering accents. But another savage dig of the pistol improved his articulation, and he shouted out, as loud almost as if he had a speaking-trumpet like the officer who had hailed them.

“The Muscadine of Bristol,” he cried with all the power of his lungs, “from Beyrout to Smyrna with assorted cargo.”

“Any news from the Levant?” was the next query from the ship-of-war. “Stop, I’ll send a boat aboard.”

This, however, was the last thing which the corsair desired, and he impressed some whispered instructions rapidly on Mr Tompkins, with the assistance again of the pistol barrel; and that worthy spoke equally rapidly, to prevent the other vessel from lowering a boat, which they were on the point of doing, as they could hear the men piped away by the boatswain’s call for the purpose.

“Fever very bad at Beyrout,” sang out the first mate, again, inspired by his tutor. “Had to leave half crew in hospital! Short-handed! Can you lend us a few men? Who shall we report as having met us?”

This answer at once arrested the intention of the commander of the despatch vessel, and prevented his sending a boat to them—as the corsair had surmised it would, from the fear of his bluejackets catching the infection, Syrian fevers being as much dreaded in the Mediterranean as the plague—for the reply shouted back was an apology for non-communication or help.

“Sorry for you, but cannot spare any men! You’ll have to go into quarantine at Smyrna. Report H.M.S. Batrachia, from the Dardanelles to Malta.”



And then, in obedience to the orders of the officer on the bridge, the despatch vessel circled round again on her way; and putting on full steam was soon lost to sight in a cloud of black smoke far-away to leeward.

To the captain and two lads below it was the keenest agony to hear the welcome hail of the English steamer followed by the mate's prevaricating reply, when they were certain that but one single word as to the real truth of the case would have summoned their countrymen to their rescue, and ensured the punishment of their lawless captors.

Of course they knew that Mr Tompkins had acted under intimidation, having been compelled to give the answers he did and prevented from calling for assistance; but both Tom and Charley would have died rather than have sacrificed the chance of their comrades' escape through any morbid fear as to their own personal safety.

They could not speak to each other, being gagged, and having a couple of assassin-looking scoundrels mounting guard over them in addition, as they lay where they were thrown down on the floor of the main cabin; but their eyes said, as plainly as eyes could speak, the thoughts that were uppermost in the mind of each—a feeling of disappointment at the hope of a rescue being so rudely dispelled when it looked so imminent, and a sense of disgust at the disgraceful cowardice of the mate.

It may seem strange that the corsair, who had spared the lives of the captain and the remainder of the crew of the *Muscadine*, and appeared really on such jovial terms with his prisoners up to the moment of his going below with Captain Harding to look at the ship's papers, should all at once change his demeanour and come out in his true colours; but, the matter is easy enough of explanation.

The corsair had been led to think that the merchant ship was freighted with a valuable cargo of silk and tobacco, the bulk of which he could have readily transferred to the felucca, as they were handy of shipment; consequently, when he found out that the vessel was only half-loaded with wine and fruit, which would require considerable storage room, and be then almost valueless in the only markets he could command, his rage knew no bounds. Added to this, Captain Harding, acting under a sense of duty to his owners, had concealed the fact of his possessing a considerable sum of money on board in drafts on bankers at Smyrna; while the pirate chief, supposing that he did have money, looked to find it in specie, and was correspondingly disappointed a second

time. And thus it was that he was sorry at having spared the lives of the Englishmen after the fray had occurred; although he regretted that he had planned the capture of the ship at all, and placed himself and his companions in peril for a prize that was uncommonly like the king of Siam's present of a white elephant to one he meant to ruin; for it was useless to him, and he could not destroy the vessel or abandon it where she was, in the regular waterway of communication between the cities of the East, for fear of her being discovered, and he and his band of desperadoes pursued before they had ensured their safety by flight. He wished now to get rid of the ship, and secure whatever of her cargo he could carry away—for his men must have some booty to repay their trouble and risk; but he must seek some out-of-the-way spot first, where he might unload her, and then, as he told his prisoners, burn her—and them, too, as far as he cared—to destroy all traces of his handiwork and the possibility of detection. Had he not thought it worth his while, he would certainly never have attacked the vessel.

To tell the truth, the corsair was in a quandary; so, when the smoke of the man-of-war steamer had melted into the air, he summoned Captain Harding and the rest on deck again, and having their gags removed, interrogated them once more.

"You say, captain," said he, knitting his brows and looking the skipper straight in the eyes, to see whether he was telling the truth, "that you have no money, beyond the few piastres and two or three English sovereigns I saw in your desk in the after cabin?"

The honest seaman could not tell a lie even to an enemy and a robber as this man was—at least, not unblushingly; so, unlike his usual way, he could not face his questioner, but gazed down on the planking of the deck as he spoke.

"No—that is, yes," replied the captain hesitatingly: it was very different to his round, bluff way of bringing out his sentences with an honest straightforwardness.

"You had better be careful," said the other in a threatening manner. "It is strange that you should be bound to Smyrna for more cargo, and not have the wherewithal to purchase it with! Have you got any more money or not? Reflect, it is the last time I shall ask you the question."

Mr Tompkins stood by unbound, while his fellow-prisoners had their hands bound behind their backs, and their legs likewise tied. He thought it a mark of

the higher consideration in which he was held, whereas the corsair considered he wasn't worth the trouble of binding, being one who would not have the pluck to help himself or his fellows. Unbound he was, however; and, anxious to ingratiate himself further with those in power, the mate up and spoke, heedless of Captain Harding's angry exclamation to hold his tongue, and the boys' cries of "Shame!"

"The captain forgets," Mr Tompkins said, addressing himself to the corsair. "He might not have hard cash, but he has a draft, I know, on a firm at Smyrna."

"Oh-ho!" exclaimed the pirate chief, a gleam of triumphant satisfaction passing over his face for an instant, and then vanishing as he again confronted the captain sternly.

"I thought an Englishman's word was his bond through the world," he said in a scornful tone, which made the captain redden as his conscience accused him of having told an untruth, or at all events, of having been guilty of an evasion.

"It wasn't my money," he said, as if to extenuate his previous denial.

"Then you have got a draft, such as this fellow speaks of?" continued the corsair, pointing contemptuously with his foot at the mate, with a kick.

"Yes," said the captain.

"Where is it?"

"In a note-book in the pocket of that coat of mine you've got on," said Captain Harding, with a gesture at the borrowed monkey-jacket which the other still wore.

"Oh, thanks! Then it is quite handy," said the corsair, clapping his hand in the breast-pocket of the appropriated garment, and producing a thick Russian leather wallet, which he proceeded to open with nervous hands.

"Respect my private papers," said the captain, as the other fumbled amidst a mass of memoranda and other documents. "There is only one draft there, and nothing else valuable, I pledge you my word."

"Honour?" asked the other.

“On my honour there is not,” replied Captain Harding with dignity. “I never said that when you asked me about money in the cabin; so, you may believe me.”

“I do believe you, captain,” said the pirate chief with a light laugh, which might have been caused by the sight of a banker’s draft which he unfolded at the moment, as much as by his words. “I give you the credit of not being able to tell a lie with any spirit, as you tried to do just now. Here are your papers; this will be enough for me.” And he then read out the draft, which ran as follows:—

“From Bracegirdle, Pollyblank, and Company, Ship and Insurance Agents, Birchin Lane, London, to Miguel, Mavrocordato, and Thomasson, Frères, Fruit Merchants and General Shippers, Smyrna, 17th March, 1881. At three days’ sight pay to John Harding, master of the ship Muscadine, or order, the sum of one thousand five hundred and seventy-five pounds sterling. Value received.

“1575 pounds, 0 shillings 0 pence. Bracegirdle, Pollyblank and Co.”

“This is a very nice little sum of money,” said the corsair complacently, restored to all his previous good humour; “a very nice little sum of money!”

“Wait till you get it,” said Captain Harding gruffly, by no means pleased at the other’s satisfaction.

“Oh, I shall get it easily enough,” replied the corsair airily. “You’ve only to put your signature to it, and the thing’s done.”

“When I sign it,” said the captain, pointedly.

“Ah! my dear captain, there will be no bother about that, when I ask you politely,” retorted the pirate chief, with a significant look, which did not have the slightest effect on the brave sailor—indeed it only made him smile.

“We will see,” was all he said in reply, but his determined expression of face added the rest.

“I can wait,” answered the other; “so we will not argue the point, for at present I have got more pressing matters to attend to.”

A signal was then made to the felucca, which had kept the ship in sight all the while, although close in to the land, and apparently proceeding on a coasting-

voyage, and having nothing to do with the other vessel; and then, the course of the Muscadine was altered and she bore up for the Cyclades.

“I have no further dread of meeting any of your floating bull dogs,” said the pirate chief affably, as if in explanation of his motives. “And none of the French cruisers are up here now; they are all too busy in Tunisian waters. So, I may as well shift your cargo, captain, at the back of one of the little islands we are coming to, where we can lie by unseen without any interference.”

During the whole of that day, the ship was steered amongst a parcel of shoals, which made poor Captain Harding tremble for her safety, albeit she was taken out of his control; and, towards nightfall, she was brought to anchor in sixteen fathoms, under the lee of a rocky cliff that projected up into a peak on one of the tiny islets by which they were encircled. Here, the felucca having followed them, the pick of her cargo was removed to the smaller craft—a few bales of silk, some tobacco, and a good portion of wine; the cases of dried fruit being left untouched, as taking them to any of the Greek ports with the idea of finding a market for their contents, as the corsair well knew, would have been like carrying coals to Newcastle.

Then, the Englishmen, who had been well treated all the day in the matter of food and drink—some books even were brought up by the orders of the leader from the cabin, for them to read, his courtesy and attention were so great—were removed to the felucca, being followed by the Greek sailors; Captain Harding and the others subsequently witnessing the melancholy sight of the ill-fated Muscadine sinking at her anchors, for she had been scuttled in several places after the selected goods had been transferred to the pirate’s own vessel, which remained on the spot till the other disappeared beneath the waves.

“I should have liked to have burnt her, as I said I would do,” observed the corsair, as the Muscadine went down bows foremost, “all standing,” with a graceful plunge; “but I was afraid of attracting notice. However, she is safe now at the bottom, at all events; and sunken ships, like dead men, tell no tales!”

Captain Harding made no reply.

His heart was too full at seeing his ship, which he regarded almost like a living thing, so recklessly destroyed before his eyes; it was the ship which he had first gone to sea in as a boy, and which it had been the ambition of his life to command. It was too much, and turning his head away as the tips of her spars

sank from view, he wiped away a tear from his eye with the back of his horny hand.

Nothing that the pirates had done hitherto affected him like this.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Amongst the Brigands**

As soon as the Muscadine had succumbed to her ill fate so tragically, the felucca made sail at once from the place, steering north, as well as Captain Harding could make out; for neither he nor the boys were allowed to look at the compass, and they none of them spoke to Tompkins since his betrayal of the captain's trust, although he could probably have told them, for he "appeared to be hail fellow well met" with his captors, as Charley said.

The night passed, and again another day and night, without anything noteworthy happening, the swift craft sailing at racehorse speed, and always in the same direction, to the best of their belief, as if towards some fixed destination; but the corsair did not enlighten them, and, indeed, did not address them during the interval.

Towards the evening of the second day on which they were on board her, the felucca drew near land, from which she held off and on until the shades of night covered her movements, when she approached close to the shore, and a boat was lowered over her side.

The pirate chief then, for the first time since the Muscadine disappeared under the waters of the Aegean Sea, addressed Captain Harding and his companions, who had found the time of their captivity hang wearily on their hands, although they were virtually free to walk about on board their prison-house, with the exception of speaking to any of the crew or looking at the compass, both of which were interdicted, with significant threats whenever they tried to evade the prohibition.

"Now, captain," said the corsair, with an oily smile, which sat worse upon his countenance than a frown, "I will thank you to sign this order," producing the skipper's bank-draft, and a pen and ink all ready for the purpose. "Just sign it, and I will put you and your brother Englishmen ashore at once."

"Where are we?" asked the captain.

"On the coast of Greece," was the answer, "not far from Salonica, where I am going with the felucca to dispose of my cargo," with a naïve candour which made Charley Onslow laugh outright.

“His cargo, indeed,” he whispered to Tom. “You have often talked of my Irish impudence, but, bedad, that beats Banagher.”

“Be quiet,” replied Tom; “you’ll only get us into a row.”

But the leader of the pirates took no heed of the interruption; he was too busy about the money order.

“Come, sign,” he repeated to the captain.

“And suppose I don’t?” said he.

“Then you and your companions will be imprisoned in the mountains until you do, up to a certain period—until I have time to complete my business at Salonica, that is—and if, on my return from thence, you still continue obdurate, why, then all of you had better say your prayers—” completing his sentence with an emphatic gesture which could not be misunderstood.

The captain was obstinate. He thought that now they were near a well-known port, and in comparatively civilised regions, the pirate chief would not dare to carry out his threat, and after a time, if he only held out, would be satisfied with the share of booty he had already secured, particularly, as from some remarks which he casually let fall when the cargo was being shifted, it had turned out to be more valuable than he had anticipated.

Once he had made up his mind, nothing would make the captain budge an inch from the position he had taken up. He could be as obstinate as a mule when he liked.

“I refuse to sign the draft, and you may whistle for the money,” he said doggedly.

“You better had,” urged the other. “I only advise you for your own good. Those brigand friends of mine in the mountains, who will be your jailers, are a rough lot, and not to be trifled with.”

“I will see you hanged first!” shouted out the captain, out of all patience, and he then closed his lips together tightly to show that he did not intend saying another word.

“Absit omen,” quoted the corsair; “hanging is a ticklish subject. Polydori,” turning to one of the Greeks, “take charge of these Englishmen, with ten others



of your best men. Your lives will answer for theirs until you give them into Mocatto's keeping. You know the rendezvous, where to meet him and his band. Captain, and young gentlemen, adieu! May you be of a more practical mind when I see you again, which will not be long."

And, with these words, the corsair took leave of the captives, who, after being gagged again, and having their hands all tied behind them—including Tompkins this time, much to the boys' satisfaction—were put into the boat that lay alongside, and rowed ashore, under a strong guard, with the Greek Polydori at their head.

It was a change of scene from their cooped-up quarters on board the felucca; but after they had had a toilsome march, uphill all the way, through mountainous defiles and along the roughest of paths, they wished themselves back again in their floating prison.

Arrived at a cross-turning surrounded by a thicket of stunted shrubs, the leader of the guard that accompanied them cried a halt, uttering a shrill and prolonged whistle, which was presently repeated from the hills above.

An approaching footstep was then heard, and a challenge, to which Polydori replied with some password, after which there was a long colloquy between him and the stranger.

They were then ordered to resume their march, although they had been walking two hours since they had quitted the shore, Polydori and the stranger leading the column, with the prisoners in the centre and the other guards in the front and rear. In this manner they proceeded until the unfortunate captives were ready to drop with fatigue, while their board ship shoes were worn into shreds by the stones and prickles of the path they had traversed, and their feet all bleeding and torn.

"I can't go a step farther!" exclaimed Tom, dropping in his footsteps. "Good-bye all."

But the guards prodded him with their knives, and made him rise again. So he tottered along, until the column, marching in a sort of military order, and passing numerous sentinels, who challenged the leaders, and stopped them till they gave the countersign, entered suddenly on a large encampment of men, squatting on the ground amidst a circle of fires. There were no tents nor

waggon to bear out the illusion, but otherwise the scene resembled a bivouac of some expeditionary force.

The brigands, as the English readily guessed these gentry to be, were some forty or more in number, and were principally Greeks and Albanians, clad in their picturesque dress—a short sleeveless jacket, coarse gaiters and shoes, a kilt of some rough texture, and a fez; while across their chests they carried a cartridge belt, and around their waist a sash, in which were stuck pistols and knives, not forgetting the long yataghan, that hung to their sides in the same fashion as they had noticed with the crew of the pirate felucca.

Amongst this band of miscreants, who thought less of murder than they did of killing a fowl, the survivors of the Muscadine suffered a species of moral torture for more than a week, being moved from place to place meanwhile, generally by night, as the brigands' encampment was shifted to evade the pursuit of the Turkish troops, who were wonderfully active in hunting the mountain gentry about—after Mr Suter's and Colonel Synge's release!

During this time, they heard nothing of the pirate chief, although the leader of the brigands—a gigantic Albanian named Mocatto—was continually engaged in pleasantly putting before Captain Harding what he and his countrymen might expect should the bank-draft remain unsigned after the corsair's return—of course acting under that worthy's instructions; pointing the moral of his remarks by practising the most unheard-of cruelties on such captives as the brigands brought in day by day, who were unable or unwilling to send to their friends to ransom them.

At last, one day, after witnessing the horrible exhibition of a poor Turk having his clothing saturated with paraffine oil, and then set fire to, the captain, urged more by considerations for the safety of Tom and Charley and his men, than for his own, gave in, and told Mocatto that he would sign the draft.

“That is good,” said the brigand. “Demetri comes to-night, and you can sign it in the presence of the chief. If you do not, you know the consequences.”

However, as it turned out, Captain Harding was fortunately able to keep his word to the corsair, when he said “he would see him hanged first” before he should attach his name to the money order.

That very same afternoon, a whole battalion of Turkish troops, sent out from Salonica, surrounded one of the mountains in which the brigands' stronghold

was situated; and after desperate fighting, in which many men were killed on either side, compelled the surrender of Mocatto's band.

Demetri, the pirate chief, who was on his way, like Shylock, for his bond or pound of flesh from the captain, got captured amongst other prisoners, and was subsequently hanged along with them on the mountain side, as a warning to all dishonest folk.

Tom and Charley, and the captain, escaped scot free,—through a miracle almost, the brigands being attacked so suddenly that they were unable to murder their captives, as they invariably do when assailed by the troops—and so did the sailors along with them; all but Tompkins, who, as if in punishment for his treachery and cowardice, got shot by a passing bullet.

“It is a long lane that has no turning,” as the proverb runs; and, to paraphrase it, it must be a long story which has no ending: so there must be an end to this.

The Muscadine could not be raised again. But Captain Harding got another ship, of which Tom Aldridge was appointed second officer, and Charley Onslow third, on probation; and the three, captain and youngsters, have had a voyage or two already. But they have not forgotten, nor are they likely to forget, their memorable adventures in their passage from Beyrout, nor Mohammed's old friend, “The Corsair of Chios.”

## Story 3

### Chapter I

#### David and Jonathan; or, Lost at Sea

Caught in a Squall.

“Dave!”

“Hullo!”

“What’s that big black thing out there, tumbling about in the sea astern; is it a whale?”

“A whale, your grandmother!” sang out Davy Armstrong with a laugh, as he sprang on the taffrail, and holding on to the shrouds with one hand while he shaded his eyes with the other, peered about anxiously in the wake of the vessel in search of the object to which his attention had been drawn by his companion, a dark-haired lad who stood on the deck near him, and whose thin face and slender figure betrayed the delicate constitution of one brought up amidst the smoke and din of cities and busy haunts of men. David, on the contrary, was tall and well-built for his age, about sixteen, with blue eyes and curly brown hair, and the ruddy glow of health on his cheek; and being a midddy of some two years’ standing on board the Sea Rover, and full of fun and “larkishness,” to coin a term, assumed a slightly protective air towards Johnny Liston, the son of one of the cabin passengers, between whom and himself one of those stanch friendships common to boyhood had sprung up during the voyage to Australia. “A whale, your grandmother, Jonathan!” repeated Davy Armstrong in a bantering tone, with all—as his companion thought he could detect—the conscious superiority of a sucking sailor over a raw landsman, in his voice. “Why, you’ll be seeing the sea serpent soon if you look smart. Where is this wonderful thing you’ve discovered, Jonathan, my son? I’m blest if I can see it.”

It need hardly be mentioned that, close friends as they had become in a short time, Johnny Liston rather resented David’s patronage and implied superiority, and he hated his calling him “Jonathan,” or addressing him as “my son,” just as if he were as old as his father, instead of being just of an age, as he would indignantly remonstrate, which knowing, David mischievously made a point of so speaking to him on purpose to tease him, although in good part all the same.

“And you call yourself a sailor!” said Johnny Liston mockingly. “Why, there it is, as plain as a pikestaff, on the lift of that wave to the right there! Where are your eyes, stupid?”

“Why don’t you say on the port quarter, you lubber?” answered David good-humouredly; “then a fellow would know what you meant! Oh, I see. I think it’s a ship’s boat floating bottom upwards; but I’ll call the skipper’s attention to it, and he’ll soon tell us what it is. Johnny, my boy, you’ve got good eyesight, and deserve a leather medal for seeing that before I did, so I’ll let you have the credit of it.”

“Thanks, Dave,” said the other ironically. “I’m glad you can allow for once in a way that you are not infallible, and that somebody else can see as well as yourself.”

David meanwhile had crossed over the deck, to where the captain was conversing with a group of passengers, and having pointed out the object which his friend had discovered, a telescope being brought to bear soon proved it to be what his quick eye had already assured him it was, a boat pitching about bottom upwards, probably washed away from some Australian liner like themselves. There was no trace, however, to be seen of any one clinging to the keel, and time was too valuable and the wind too fair for the vessel to be put off her course merely to pick up an empty boat, which would most likely not be worth the trouble of hoisting on board; so they passed on, and it was soon hull-down in the distance.

The Sea Rover had made all her southern latitude, descending to the thirty-sixth parallel. She had passed the Island of Tristan d’Acunha, although at some distance off, a few days before; and now as she was well below the region sacred to the stormy Cape, and had run down the trades, her course was set due east for Melbourne, from which she was yet some thousands of miles away. The wind was fair, almost dead astern, although the sea was high; and as the ship was rather light, she rocked and rolled considerably, the waves washing over her decks, and occasionally running over the poop in an avalanche of water, that swept right forward and made any one hold on that did not wish to be washed off their feet. The sea had a most winterly look. It appeared like a vast hilly country with winding valleys, all covered with sloshy snow just melted, the extreme tops of the waves looking like frozen peaks in between, with the snow as yet not melted. The air, too, was as cold as winter, for it blew from the Antarctic ice; and the gusts came more and more frequent as evening closed in, raising the sea still higher in towering mountains, that

rushed after the ship, which was going from ten to twelve-knots an hour under all plain sail, as if they would overwhelm her, striking our sides every now and then heavy ponderous blows, that made; her stagger from her course and quiver right down to her keelson. One gust of wind came all at once with such startling force that it split the main-topsail up like a piece of tissue-paper, and then the captain thought it was about time to take in sail.

“I guess we’re going to have a rough spell of it, Jonathan,” said Davy, as he moved away from his companion in obedience to the skipper’s order, “All hands shorten sail!” and stationed himself at his post by the mizzen-halliards.

“Will it be serious, Dave?” asked the other, his pale face growing a little paler with apprehension.

“Pooh! no, nothing to speak of, only a squall, Jonathan; so don’t be frightened, my boy.”

A squall it was with a vengeance.

As the wind had been, right aft, the captain had kept the Sea Rover under her royals and topgallantsails, without even taking in a reef, in order to make the most of the twelve-knot breeze that was blowing: it was only at the chief officer’s request that a little time before he had been induced to take in the stunsails; and now the wind seemed to expand so suddenly into a gale, that it was as much as the seamen could do to get the canvas off her before she was struck with the squall, that came up astern at the rate of fifty miles an hour, covering the heavens to windward with great black storm-clouds, and flying wrack like white smoke that drifted before it, and seemed to herald the heavier metal that lay behind that would come into action soon.

Everything was let fly, and only just in time; for, without the slightest warning, the wind shifted and struck her on the starboard quarter, and the vessel was almost taken aback, with the waves slipping in over the bows and on the starboard and port sides as she rolled heavily, borne down into the trough of the sea by the force of the gale, her timbers groaning, the spars creaking, blocks rattling, and the wind shrieking and whistling as it tore through the rigging and flapped the sails heavily against the masts with the noise of thunder, as if it would wrench them out of the ship bodily.

It was a scene of the utmost confusion while it lasted, with the men running about the deck here and there and pulling and hauling at the halliards and

braces, and the captain yelling out stentorian orders through his speaking-trumpet, which nobody apparently understood or attended to; and Davy Armstrong, who had been up aloft to superintend the furling of the mizzen, royal, and topgallantsails, and close reefing of the topsail, was just congratulating himself on getting down on deck alongside of Johnny Liston safe once more, when another squall struck the ship from the opposite quarter, and she heeled over on her side until she buried her topsail-yards in the billows, broadside on, as if she were going to “turn the turtle.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Johnny. “She’s going over!”

“Not a bit of it,” shouted out Dave in his ear, for the wind howled so that he could hardly make his voice heard. “She’ll right in a minute. But that was a stiff blow!”

“Ay, stiffer than the last.”

A heavy sea just at the same moment struck the rudder, which, through the ship’s lying over on her side, had been partly raised out of the water, and whirled round the wheel with such force that the man who was steering was lifted off his feet, and as he grasped the spokes with desperation, was dashed down on the deck with an awful impetus, which knocked him insensible. Dave, followed by Johnny, immediately rushed aft, and took the helmsman’s place, although it required all the strength of the two boys to hold on and save the ship from broaching-to, when her spars would have been swept off like ninepins, and a clean sweep made of her bulwarks, and everything on her decks fore and aft, if possible, she did not founder.

“Well done, my lads!” shouted out the captain. “Keep her to it,” as he ordered a couple of men aft to help them. “Keep her to it, my lads, you’ll be relieved in a jiffy. Hold on for the life of you, my lads; hold on!”

Their strength, however, was unequal to the struggle.

Another sea struck the rudder again almost in the same place, and David and Jonathan were floored in an instant.

Round span the wheel with mad velocity, now uncontrolled, jamming poor Davy’s leg between the rudder beam and the wheel post, while Johnny lay sprawling on the deck, holding on like grim death to a stray end of the mizzen-halliard that had been cast loose from the cleats. Another turn of the spokes of the wheel, as the rudder was banged to and fro by the billows, and Davy’s leg

was released, although sadly crushed, and he was flung against the binnacle; and then a gigantic wave pooped the ship, coming in over the stern, and before the captain, or Johnny, or the men who were hurrying aft as rapidly as the motion of the ship would allow them, could stretch out a hand to save him, poor Davy was swept over the side to leeward, grasping tightly with the energy of despair, as he was carried away, a portion of the roof of the wheelhouse, which had been broken off by the same wave which washed him overboard, as well as part of the bulwarks.

“Oh, Dave, Dave!” exclaimed Johnny Liston, holding on to the mizzen-halliards still, and scrambling to his feet after the water flowed over him and the ship righted again, as he saw David torn away by the remorseless waters, and floating astern on the top of a great mountainous billow, his hands upheld as if imploring help.

“Oh, Dave, Dave!” exclaimed Johnny Liston, apparently panic-stricken for an instant, adding, as he turned half round towards the captain, “Why, his leg is broken, and he can’t swim!”

And then, without another moment’s hesitation, or a single reflection of the hopelessness of his task, or that he was endangering his own life as well, the brave boy, grasping hold of one of the life-buoys that hung close to the taffrail where he was supporting himself, as he watched the wave bearing Dave away, plunged into the sea to his comrade’s rescue.

“Hold on, Dave, I’m coming!” he shouted out at the pitch of his voice, to encourage the sinking David.

And the next minute, ere any one could prevent him, he was over the ship’s side, battling with the powers of the deep.



## **Chapter II**

### **Chapter Two**

A Vain Quest.

“Man overboard!”

That cry, which those who have once heard it will never forget, echoed far and wide through the ship, making itself heard above the dull roar of the sea, the whistling of the wind as it tore through the rigging, the creaking of the timbers, and the trampling of feet up and down the deck, as the crew bustled to and fro, slackening a sheet here, tightening a brace there, and preparing for emergencies, ready for anything that might happen.

“Man overboard!”

And, in an instant, every heart palpitated with one thought, every ear was on the qui vive, every eye turned, intently watching the captain as he gave the necessary orders for bringing the ship up to the wind—as it was far too squally and risky work for her spars and top-hamper to wear her, before she could pay off on the other tack—and retrace her course in her own wake to pick up the two boys, who were now out of sight.

“Stand by the lee braces, and be ready to slacken off on the weather-side! 'Bout ship! Up with the helm! Mainsail haul!” were some of the orders rapidly given and as rapidly attended to.

With a will, the great main-yard swung round to starboard, the Sea Rover paying off handsomely. And, in another moment, under her reefed topsails and topgallantsails, with her courses dropped, and her yards sharply braced up, she was going back on her track at even greater speed than she had been previously travelling towards Australia, the wind having shifted to the southwards and eastwards after the last squall, and being now well on her beam, which was the clipper’s best sailing point.

There was a lookout on the fore-topmast crosstrees; but almost every one was looking out in the direction where some trace of David and Jonathan might be discovered. And the minutes seemed lengthened into hours as they anxiously peered into the mass of slatey-brown water in front and around topped with yeasty foam. But the sky was overcast with storm-clouds and the darkening of

approaching night, and their horizon was now limited so that they could not see very far in advance of the Sea Rover's bows—not more than a mile at most.

Every voice was hushed on board the ship now, and only the humming of the wind and the swish of the water could be heard as she dived every now and then over her catheads into the waves, that fell in a cataract of spray on her forecastle and washed into her waist, while she dashed onward, gathering speed with every yard of progress that she made.

"Lookout, ahoy, there!" shouted out the captain to the man on the fore crosstrees. "Do you see anything of them yet?"

"Not a speck in sight," was the answer; and still the Sea Rover clove through the water on what they guessed to have been their former course, and the sky and the sea grew darker and darker and seemed to mingle together, gradually diminishing their area of vision.

"We must have passed the spot by this time," said the captain presently to the chief officer, when the ship had gone some two miles after coming about. "Send another lookout into the main-top; and you, Dawkins," addressing one of the hands standing near, "sky up here in the mizzen-rigging and see if you can see anything. Look well round to leeward as well as ahead, for we may have overrun them."

"Ay, ay," said the man as he scrambled up the shrouds, and quickly made his way, not merely into mizzen-top, but on the topgallant-yard, where he sat astride and scanned the horizon to his right and left, to windward and leeward of the vessel's wake.

"On deck there!" he hailed in a little time. He had the keenest sight of any man on board.

"Ay, ay!" answered the captain. "Speak out!"

"There is something to windward, two points on the weather-bow."

"How far?"

"About half a mile or more, sir; but it may be less."

"We must get her a couple of points nearer the wind," said the captain to the chief officer. "Clew up the courses, set the flying-jib, and let us get the mainsail

on her, and see what she can do. Come, look smart and brace the yards round. Keep her helm up!" he added to the men at the wheel, lending them a hand as he spoke. "Hard!"

The Sea Rover leaned over, gunwales under, and made deep bows to the sea, pitching the water over her fore-yard, as, her head being brought round a couple of points more, she sailed almost in the wind's-eye, taking all that two men could do to steer her, besides the captain.

"Aloft there!" shouted the captain once more to the lookout men. "How's her head now? Does she bear towards the object, or is it still to windward?"

"Steady!" was the answer. "She's right for it now. Luff a bit, steady, it's right ahead."

"What is it? Can you see them?" cried the captain, eagerly peering into the distance himself.

"Looks like floating timber, sir. I can't see anybody as yet; it seems all awash."

A moment further of breathless suspense, and then those on deck could see for themselves what had attracted the lookout man's notice—a black object, bobbing up and down amidst the waves, one minute raised aloft on a billowy crest, the next hidden from view in a watery valley that descended, as it were, into the depths of the ocean.

It was now clear to windward on the weather-bow; and, every now and then, distinctly visible.

"Put the helm down, slack off the sheet!" cried the captain; and, as the Sea Rover rounded-to, with the floating object under her lee, it could be seen that it was the boat which David and Jonathan had perceived passing them, bottom upwards, just before they were struck by the squall. The vessel, therefore, must have gone much further back on their track than they had imagined, for the boat must have been three or four miles astern of the point at which the boys were washed overboard. She would of course have drifted farther than the floating wreckage, being higher out of water, but could not have made up more than a mile of the intervening distance.

It was a grievous disappointment to all on board, crew and passengers alike. They had made certain that it was the two boys clinging to the wreckage of the bulwarks and wheelhouse that had been carried away along with Davy; and the

disappointment was all the greater because their hopes had been so cruelly raised.

“My boy, my boy!” sobbed Mr Liston, who stood with several of the other cabin passengers grouped around the captain on the quarter-deck watching in breathless suspense. “My boy, my boy! He is lost, he’s lost! I shall never see him again!” and he wrung his hands in agony.

Poor, bereaved father! He had only that moment been made aware that his son was overboard, having been below when the accident happened to Davy, and only attracted on deck by the commotion. Johnny was his only child, his mother having died in giving him birth, and he was the apple of his eye. He would have jumped into the sea, too, when, he learnt what had happened, if he had not been prevented; and his grief was frantic.

“Cheer up, my dear sir!” said Captain Markham, as he gave orders for the ship to back across her course at right angles, and warned the lookout men aloft to renewed watchfulness. “We may pick them up yet. You know Davy Armstrong was holding on to something when he was carried away, and your gallant son took a life-buoy with him when he went to his rescue, so they can keep afloat till we overhaul them. Why, I was picked up myself once after I had been in the water for hours and the ship searching for me all the time, when I had been washed overboard like Davy.”

The captain’s sanguine anticipations, however, even if he really believed in them, were baseless.

The Sea Rover backed, and wore, and tacked again, sailing, within a radius of a few miles, in every possible direction the wind would let her, without finding any traces of the lost ones, or even coming across the pieces of wreckage, which the sombre tint of the sea and sky prevented their seeing; and then night came on, and they had to abandon their quest, although they burnt blue lights and cruised about the same spot for hours afterwards, in vain!

“Alas, dear captain, it is hopeless now!” exclaimed Mr Liston mournfully, with the resignation of despair, drawing away his gaze from the sea, and his head dropping on his breast in despondency.

He was standing almost alone on the deck, the majority of the passengers having gone below—for the wind was cold and boisterous, and the crew having retired forward to the forecabin excepting those on duty aft—a tall, thin, pale

man, whom the calamity seemed to have aged ten years in that brief space of time, and bowed with care.

“Only a miracle could have saved them!” he said, as if speaking to himself; and then, turning to the captain, he added, “I suppose you must give them up now, and proceed with your voyage?”

“Yes, it is useless waiting any longer,” said Captain Markham, sinking his voice in sympathy with the other. “Poor fellows, I’m afraid they’ve told the number of their mess long since! But if they are drowned, poor Davy was lost while doing his duty as a gallant sailor; and your son, my dear sir, lies in a hero’s grave beneath the wave, for he sacrificed his life in trying to save that of his friend. It is some slight consolation, Mr Liston, to recollect that; and I don’t think the recording angel above will have forgotten to log it down, either!”

And, as the hardy sailor pointed upwards with a reverent air to where one tiny twinkling star was peeping out from amidst the mass of fleeting shadowy clouds that still obscured the heavens and shrouded the horizon from view, he wiped away a tear from his eye with the back of his hairy hand, bidding the quartermaster a moment or two afterwards, in a strangely gruff tone quite unlike his usual mode of speech, to set the ship’s course once more due east for Australia.

And the Sea Rover went on her way.

## **Chapter III**

### **A Struggle for Life**

Half-drowned by the avalanche of water which had swept him overboard, and just catching one faint glimpse of the hull of the ship through eyes that were blinded with the spray, as it swept away from him and left him struggling with the waves, although holding on still to the top of the wheelhouse which he had clutched in desperation as he was carried away, Davy thought he was dreaming when he heard the voice of his friend shouting out, as if in the distance, miles and miles away, "Hold on, Dave, I'm coming!"

"Nonsense," he reasoned with himself, amidst the pitiless lash of the billows, and the keenness of the wind that seemed to take the skin off his face and pierce through his wet clothing as he was one minute soused down into the water and then raised aloft again on his temporary raft exposed to the full force of the blast. "Nonsense! I'm drowning, I suppose, and this is one of those pleasant dreams which people say come to one at the last."

It was no dream, however.

After a little while, although it seemed ages to David, the voice sounded nearer.

"Hold on, Dave, old boy. I'm quite close to you now, and will reach you in a minute!"

"I can't be dreaming," thought David again, getting a bit over the feeling of suffocation which had at first oppressed him. "Jonathan's voice sounds too real for that, and I can see that I am adrift on the ocean, and resting on something. Oh, how my leg hurts me! I'll give a hail, and see whether it is Jonathan's voice or not that I hear. It must be him!"

"Ahoy, help, ahoy!" he sang out as loudly as he could; but he was already weak, his voice came only in a faint whisper to Jonathan, who imagined he must be sinking and he would be too late.

"Keep up, Dave, for goodness' sake," screamed out the latter in agony, making desperate exertions to reach him. "Don't give way! Hold on a second longer and you'll be safe!"

Although he was such a slight, delicate-looking little fellow, hardly doing justice in his appearance to his sixteen years, if there was one accomplishment

in which Johnny Liston was a proficient, it was swimming. Living in the neighbourhood of Kensington Gardens, he had made a habit of going into the Serpentine every morning during the summer months, and sticking at it as long as the weather permitted, although he did not go to the lengths of some intrepid bathers, and have the ice broken for him in winter; and by constant practice, and imitating the best swimmers amongst whom he bathed, he had learned so much that he could compete even with professionals for speed and endurance, and made the best amateur time on record for so young a lad.

His practice now stood him in good stead; and he had, besides, an additional advantage, for having learned to swim in fresh water, and indeed never having essayed his powers in the sea, the unaccustomed buoyancy of the waves, which he now experienced for the first time, gave him a confidence and an ease which seemed surprising to him; he felt that he did not require the slightest exertion to keep afloat, even without the life-buoy, as he tested by letting go of it for a short time, and with it he was certain he could almost rival Captain Webb and swim for hours.

Of course it was rough work for a novice, paddling in such broken water; but after a few strokes he got used to it, and, by dint of diving under the swelling bosom of some of the more threatening crests, and floating over the tops of the others whose ridges were yet perfect, he made his way pretty rapidly towards the spot where he had espied David floating off.

The wind and the set of the sea were both against him, but the answering hail of the middy assured him he was proceeding in the right direction, and would be soon by his lost friend's side.

Another stroke or two, and as Johnny Liston rose on the crest of a huge mountain of water, which took him up almost to the sky, he saw below him the broken timbers of the bulwarks rolling about in the trough of the sea, and he thought they formed part of the wreckage on which David had been supporting himself, and that he had seen him on them.

His heart sank within him like lead, for no one was floating on the broken bulwarks now. Poor Dave must have gone.

Just at that moment, however, the middy's faint hail rang again clearly out above the noise of the wind and the sea, to assure him he was still above the surface, and restore his drooping energies.

“Ahoy! Help! Ahoy!”

He did not require to hail again, for, the next moment overtopping another billow, his friend Jonathan shot up alongside of him, and grasped him by the shoulder.

“Oh, Dave,” he exclaimed. “Thank God I’ve got you safe. I thought I would never have found you.”

David had partly clambered up on the top of the wheelhouse, and lay stretched out with his legs in the water.

He raised his head and turned his face as Jonathan got hold of him.

His emotion was too great for many words.

“And you jumped overboard to save me?” was all he said.

But his look was enough.

Johnny Liston had been swimming with one arm only thrust through the life-buoy, as he had been obliged to quit his hold of it each time he dived beneath the crest of a wave.

He now took it off, holding on to the wheelhouse-top, which sank down into the water on one side under the double weight of the two lads, elevating the other end in the air.

“Here, put this on, Dave,” he said. “I brought it for you, and a precious job I have had to reach you with it.”

“But you, Jonathan—I beg your pardon, old chap, I didn’t mean to call you so. I know you don’t like it.”

“Never mind, Dave. If you think of me as Jonathan you may as well call me so. I shan’t mind you doing so any longer I rather like it, old fellow, now, for our friendship will be like that of David and Jonathan that we read of in the Bible; you know it says that ‘the soul of Jonathan was knit unto the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.’ That’s just how I feel.”

“What a chap you are to think of that now,” said David admiringly, “with both of us bobbing about in the middle of the ocean, and the ship out of sight. But I won’t have the life-buoy; what will you do without it?”



“Bless you, I can swim like a fish, Dave, and it was more a nuisance to me than a help; but, we can both hold on to it, you know, if it comes to the worst. How’s your leg, Dave? I thought it was broken when you got it twisted in the wheel that time.”

“Oh, it’s all right,” said David, kicking it out vigorously as he spoke. “The bone isn’t quite broken, but it’s very sore, and I suppose I’d have to lay up for it if I wasn’t here;” and he grinned ruefully.

“Do you think the ship will pick us up?” said the other presently, losing some of his self-possession now that he had come up with David, and the motive for forgetting self and personal danger was wanting.

He was naturally timid unless nerved up by necessity.

“Oh, yes,” said David, whose spirits rose with the occasion, and who in the presence of his friend forgot all the peril. “Captain Markham won’t desert us, never fear; but you can’t pull up a ship like a horse, you know, Jonathan, and it will take some time for the Sea Rover to tack about before she can fetch us. I wish, however, old chap, we had a little better raft than this to support us; the wheelhouse-top is hardly big enough for two, even with the buoy, which, though it can keep us afloat, won’t raise us out of the water as we want.”

“Why, I passed some wreckage a few yards off before I reached you,” said his friend.

“Did you?” said David. “That must have been the gangway and part of the bulwarks that came away with me. I wish we had the lot here.”

“Do you?” said Jonathan, as we must now call him, “then I’ll soon fetch them,” striking out as he spoke.

“Take care,” said David; “and pray take the buoy with you.”

But, the sea saved Jonathan the trouble of leaving his friend, for the very pieces of timber of which he had spoken made their appearance at that moment, floating down towards them from the summit of a wave, in whose valley they were; and Jonathan swam beyond them and pushed them before him till they were alongside the wheelhouse-top.

There was plenty of material to form a substantial raft with the addition of what they already had; and as Jonathan drew up the heavy mass alongside, David gave a shout of joy.

“Why,” he exclaimed, “here is the cleat of the signal halliards come away with a piece of the taffrail, and we’ll have enough rope to form all the lashings we want. Isn’t that lucky?”

The young midgy was handy enough in sailors’ ways through his two years’ experience of the sea; and—Jonathan aiding him under his direction—in a short time the loose timbers were lashed firmly together as a framework, with the roof of the wheelhouse fastened on the top, forming altogether a substantial platform, on which the two boys found themselves elevated a clear foot or more out of the water, and free from the cold wash of the waves, which was beginning to turn them blue.

“There,” exclaimed David, “now we’re comfortable, and can wait in patience till the ship overhauls us; she can’t be long now.”

Watching with eager eyes they saw the Sea Rover coming towards them, after a long, long while, as it seemed to them; but ere she had reached them, in spite of their shouts and hand-wavings, which they fancied must have been seen and heard on board, she went round on the other tack, and disappeared from their view, to their bitter disappointment and grief.

It was David now who was hopeful still. Jonathan seemed to have lost all that courage which had inspired him to leap into the sea to his friend’s rescue, and was trembling with fear and hopeless despair.

The next time the Sea Rover came in sight, she was further off, and appeared to be sailing away from them, although they could see her tack about in the distance several times, as if searching for them still.

Then it gradually got darker, and night came on, enveloping them in a curtain of hazy mist that seemed to rest on the water, through which they could see far off the blue lights that were burnt on board the ship to show their whereabouts, although they were useless to them, as they could not reach her.

Even David began to lose hope now, but he still encouraged his companion.

“They’ll not desert us, old fellow,” he said, with a heartiness which he by no means felt. “The captain will lie-to, and will pick us up in the morning.”

Jonathan was not attending to his words, however. He was shivering and shaking as if he had the ague, and David could hear his teeth chatter together with the cold, although the wind had gone down somewhat, and the sea no longer broke over them.

It was so dark that the two lads could scarcely see each other as they lay on top of the frail structure that separated them from the deep, clasping each other's hands.

Presently, in the fitful phosphorescent light of the water, some dark object seemed to float up alongside; and Jonathan gave vent to a scream of horror, that rang through the silence of the night.

"Oh, what is that?" he exclaimed.

And if David had not clutched him, he would have plunged headlong from the raft into the sea in his fright and agonised terror.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Alone on the Ocean**

For hours the two boys remained in a sort of nameless terror, David feeling almost as frightened as Jonathan, although he concealed his fright in order to reassure his companion, with the terrible object that had excited their fear bobbing up and down alongside them, and occasionally coming with a crash against their frail raft, that threatened to annihilate it and send them both into the water, when it would be all over with them.

The night was pitch dark, for the mist that hung over the surface of the deep appeared to increase in intensity, and they could not see even the faint glimmer of a star to cheer them; while all they could hear was the lapping of the waves as they washed by them, and the ripple and swish of some billow as it overtopped its crest, and spent its strength in eddies of circling foam, as David could imagine—for the darkness rendered everything invisible now, even the platform on which they were supported, and the unknown companion beside them, which might be anything, and their very hands when held before their faces.

Some time after midnight, when David and Jonathan had gone through a purgatory of dread, not knowing what might happen to them any moment, the moon rose gradually from the horizon, shining faintly through a veil of clouds that almost obscured its light, and the morbid terror of the two boys was at once dispelled on their being able to perceive what it really was that had occasioned them such alarm.

“Goodness gracious me, Jonathan!” exclaimed David, with a tone of glad surprise in his voice, which at once aroused his friend, who was lying face downwards on the raft, with his head buried in his crossed arms. “Why, what do you think it is that has frightened us so? I’m blest if it isn’t that very identical boat that you saw in the afternoon passing by the Sea Rover! Isn’t it providential, old chap, that after all these hours we should come across it again? Thank God for it, Jonathan,” he added more earnestly a moment afterwards; “it may save both our lives in case the ship is unable to find us and pick us up!”

Yes, there it was, a long black boat, the cutter of some vessel, that had been washed away from the bows, as it was twenty feet long and more, floating keel uppermost, alongside the raft, although buried somewhat deep in the water.

The night had no longer any terrors for them; and, although they waited anxiously for the sun to rise to see whether the Sea Rover was still in sight—for the moon was frequently obscured by clouds, and its light too intermittent and deceptive for them to scan the ocean by—they did not dream of despairing now, even if their worst suspicions should be realised, and the ship have left them to their fate, as the boat offered them a tangible means of rescue, which the raft did not; albeit it had saved their lives for the while, and served as a “pis-aller.”

Morning came at last, first tinging the horizon to the eastwards with a pale sea-green hue, that deepened into a roseate tinge, and then merged into a vivid crimson flush, that spread and spread until the whole heavens reflected the glory of the orb of day, that rose in all its might from its bed in the waters, and moved with rapid strides towards the zenith, the crimson colour of the sky gradually fading away, as the bright yellow sunlight took its place, and illuminated the utmost verge of the apparently limitless sea; but the Sea Rover was nowhere in sight, nor was the tiniest speck of a distant sail to be seen on the horizon!

“Never mind, Jonathan,” said David, cheering up his companion; “you mustn’t be disappointed: it is only what I expected, although I didn’t tell you so before! Now that we have the boat, you know, we are not half so badly off as we thought ourselves at first. We’ve no reason to despair!”

And then, sailor-like, he immediately began to overhaul their God-sent gift, to see whether it was all a-tanto and seaworthy, without losing any more time in vain repinings, and scanning the ocean fruitlessly for the Sea Rover; Jonathan sitting up, and beginning to be interested, as he regained his courage and self-reliance, through his companion’s words and the warmth of the sun combined, and lost that feeling of hopeless despair that seemed to overwhelm him and weigh him down since they lost sight of the ship for the last time on the previous night.

“It must have been adrift a good while,” said David, clambering on to the keel of the boat, and getting astride on it. “The bottom is quite slimy. Oh, my poor leg, how it hurts! I forgot all about that squeeze I had between the rudder beam and the wheelhouse, for a moment. Never mind,” continued the brave boy, hiding his pain from his companion, who winced in sympathy; “it was only a little wrench I gave it, and it has passed off now. But pray hold on tight to the stern, Jonathan—you can catch hold of it by the rudder-hinge—or else I’ll be parting company, and going off on a cruise by myself.”

Working himself along with his hands and knees on the slippery surface of the boat, he felt the exposed portion all over, and as far under water as his arm could reach down, when he proceeded to give his opinion like a consulting surveyor.

“The timbers are all sound, old chap,” he said, “at least, as well as I can make out; and not a hole anywhere that I can see. I can’t tell for certain, however, till we right her properly, and get the water out of her; and I think we’ll find our work cut out for us to do that, Jonathan, my boy.”

“I’m sure I don’t see how we can manage it,” replied his friend despairingly.

“Oh, don’t you?” answered David cheerfully, his spirits rising with the sense of action and the feeling of having something to do, and as happy and unconcerned as if he were safe on board the Sea Rover. “Oh, don’t you, Master Jonathan? Then allow me to inform you, as Dick Murphy says, that there are more ways of killing a pig besides hanging him; and that I see a way to our righting that boat.”

“How?” inquired the other.

“I’ll soon show you,” said David. “But I guess and calculate it will take a pretty considerable time I reckon, and you’ll have to help us, sirree.”

“Of course I will,” said Jonathan, laughing at David’s apt imitation of an American passenger on board their ship, who had unwittingly been the source of much amusement to the two boys, with his drawling voice, and habit of speaking through his nose in regular “down eastern” fashion.

“Well, bear a hand, old cock,” said David jocularly, pleased at seeing Jonathan laugh again, and getting off the boat’s keel gingerly on to their raft again. “The first thing we have to do, Jonathan, is to try and raise the bow of the craft on top of these timbers here—or rather, sink down the end of the wheelhouse roof so that it may get under the boat. We can do it easy enough by both going to the extreme point of it and bearing it down by our united weight; but mind you don’t slip off, old boy. Hold on tight.”

It was no easy task, as the motion of the waves hindered them, and the raft was lifting and falling as the surges rolled under them; besides which, the boat was heavy, and the suction of the water seemed to keep it down and resist their efforts.

However, they persevered, and, after innumerable attempts and failures, succeeded at length in getting part of the bow of the cutter on to the end of the raft, which it almost submerged, although it was itself lifted clean out of the sea.

“So far, so good,” said David, puffing and blowing like a grampus with his exertions, and Jonathan following suit. “We’d better have a spell off for a bit; the heaviest part of the work is yet to come.”

“Don’t you think,” said Jonathan presently, after a rest, “that it would be a good plan to float her stern round at right angles to the raft? Then the waves would force her on to it, almost without our help.”

“Right you are,” said David. “Two heads are always better than one!”

“You stop where you are,” said Jonathan. “You know your leg is bad; and besides, I’m more at home in the water than you are, although you’re a sailor. I’ll jump in, and soon turn her stern round, while you hold on to the bow, so that it doesn’t slide off and give us all our trouble over again to get it back.”

So saying, he let himself down into the sea, and catching hold of the aftermost end of the boat, which was now much deeper down in the water, owing to the bow being raised, struck vigorously with his free hand, swimming on his side, and soon managed to slew it round so that it pointed athwart-wise to the raft.

“Now, David,” he said, when this was accomplished, “if you’ll come into the water too,—I’m sorry to trouble you, old man, but I can’t do it all by myself—and put your shoulder under the other gunwale of the boat, the same as mine is under this, and hold on to our staging at the same time, we’ll be able by degrees to lift and drag it bodily on to the raft, as the send of the sea, as you call it, will assist us.”

“Why, Jonathan, you ought to be a sailor,” said David admiringly. “It’s the very thing to be done, and just what I was going to suggest.” And he also slid off into the sea, taking particular care of his wounded leg, and went to his companion’s assistance, placing himself in the position he had advised.

The two boys exerted themselves to the utmost, held on tightly to the raft as they “trod the water,” as swimmers say, with their feet, lifting the boat an inch or two at a time with each wave that rolled towards them, until, little by little, they got one end well upon the raft, which it sank quite a foot in the water, when they clambered out of the sea and got on to it, too.

“Now,” said David, “comes the tug of war, to get the boat over, right side uppermost.”

“And then,” rejoined Jonathan, “we’ll have to bale her out. How will you manage that?”

“With our boots, to be sure,” was the prompt answer.

“Oh yes,” said Jonathan, “I quite forgot those. Let us get her over at once; it is cold work standing thus in the water; and we may as well be comfortable as not!”

After a long and weary struggle, during the course of which the boys were in the water, with their weight hanging on to the keel, and endeavouring to turn it over—they succeeded at last, almost when they were half inclined to give up the task as hopeless.

Then when the boat was righted, they pushed it off the raft, and David kept it in proper position, while Jonathan, taking off one of his boots, baled away until he was tired; David relieving him, and he taking his place in keeping the boat steady. It was slow work, but it was done in time; and when it was half emptied of its contents, they both climbed in, and being now able to bale together, they soon had it clear, and floating bravely like a cork.

Much to their joy, it did not leak a bit; and after having satisfied themselves on that point, they went on to examine their craft in detail. It was a smart ship’s cutter, which had evidently, as David had surmised, been washed off the bows or davits of some sea-going vessel through being carelessly fastened, for it was perfectly uninjured, and, to the delight of the boys, it had its proper oars and a mast and sails lashed fore and aft under the thwarts. There was also a locker in the stern-sheets which was locked, and on David prising it open with his clasp knife, it was found to contain some fishing-line and hooks. A small cask, or breaker, was also locked in the bow of the boat, and this was found to contain water, a trifle impregnated by the sea, and slightly brackish, but still quite drinkable. It need hardly be mentioned what a great boon this was to them, as they had begun to be afflicted with thirst as the sun’s heat grew more powerful towards mid-day.

“Oh, David,” exclaimed Jonathan presently, from his seat in the stern of the boat, where he had been giving way to his thoughts while his friend was



bustling about in the bows, stepping the mast, and seeing that the sail and tackle answered properly, "God has been very watchful over us!"

"Yes," replied the other, "we have much to be thankful for, old man, and I am for one, as I've no doubt you are; but still I don't see why we should remain here, as there is no chance of the Sea Rover coming back for us now, and there is a good southwesterly breeze blowing just on purpose for us."

"Why, in what direction would you steer?"

"Nor'-east, to be sure, and we'll fetch the Cape of Good Hope in time, besides the chance of falling in the track of passing vessels."

"Have you any idea of where we are, David?"

"Well, the ship yesterday was in latitude 36 degrees and something, and just nearing the longitude of Greenwich, which is neither east nor west, as you know, so I suppose we're about a thousand miles or so off the Cape."

"Good heavens, David! a thousand miles!"

"It isn't such a tremendous long way, Jonathan. We can run it easily, if the wind lasts from the same quarter, in about eight days; and if we don't quite fetch the Cape, we'll reach some part of South Africa at all events—that is, if we don't come across the track of a ship, and get picked up before then."

"But even eight days, David. What shall we do for food all that time?" said Jonathan, who was by no means of so hopeful a disposition as his friend.

"Don't you recollect, old fellow," rejoined David, "what you said just now, of God watching over us? As He has done so up to now, don't you think He'll look after us still, and provide some means by which we shall not starve?"

"Yes," said the other, feeling the rebuke, "you are quite right, David; and I was wrong to doubt His mercy. But, oh, I do feel so hungry!"

"So do I," replied David. "But we'll have to grin and bear it for a while, old chap, as we are not near old Slush's caboose, on board the Sea Rover, and I don't see any grub anywhere in sight. However, Jonathan, we haven't felt the pangs of real hunger yet, and needn't begin to shout out before we're hurt. Let us do something—make sail on the boat and abandon our old raft, which has served us a good turn—and we'll wear off the edge of our appetites."

David's advice was followed. Taking only the life-buoy with them, they cast loose from the raft almost with feelings of regret, for it had saved their lives, and it seemed like ingratitude to leave it there tossing alone on the surface of the deep now that they had no further service for it; and, hoisting the cutter's "leg-of-mutton" sail, and steering with an oar, as the boat's rudder was missing, they ran before the wind, David directing their course, as nearly as he could possibly guess to the north-east, by the sun, which had now passed the meridian.

"I say, Jonathan," said David, after a time, when they had quite lost sight of the raft, and must have run some miles, "just rummage in the locker again, and see if there is anything else we passed over in our first search?"

"No," said Jonathan, after going down on his knees and looking into every corner of the receptacle with his fingers, so that not a crevice was left unsearched, "nothing but the fishing-lines."

"Well, let us have them out and see if we can catch anything."

"But we've got no bait."

"Oh, we can tie a bit of my red flannel shirt or your white one to the hooks. Fish bite at anything at sea, if they can only see it. Hullo!" added David, "I didn't see that before."

"What?" exclaimed Jonathan.

"Why, the name of the vessel to which this boat belonged. There it is, painted there on the gunwale as large as life, the Eric Strauss. I suppose she was a German ship, but I never heard of her."

The two boys got out the lines presently, attaching small pieces of fluttering cloth to the hooks, and heaved them overboard, dragging them in the wake of the boat some distance astern; but they caught nothing that day, nor did they even see the sign of a fin. A whale travelling by himself, and not accompanied by a "school" as usual, was the only solitary denizen of the deep that they perceived.

It was the same the next day, the boat sailing in a north-east direction as well as David could judge, for the wind remained in the same quarter, from the southward and westward. But he had some difficulty in keeping her on her course at night, owing to the absence of the north star, which is never seen

south of the equator, although he could manage to steer her all right by the sun during the day.

When the third morning broke, the boys were starving with hunger, and could have eaten anything. They even tried to gnaw at bits of leather cut out of their boots, but they were so tough and sodden from their long immersion in the sea that they could make nothing of them.

If it had not been for the breaker of water which they found providentially in the boat, they felt that they must have died.

## **Chapter V**

### **Starvation and Plenty**

“Look, David,” said Jonathan, when the sun had risen well above the horizon on that third morning.

He was sitting down in the bow of the boat, looking out almost hopelessly for the sight of some sail, while David was in the stern-sheets steering.

“There’s a big flock of birds right in front of us. Oh, if we only could catch one! I could eat it raw.”

“Well, I don’t think we’d wait for the cooking,” said his companion philosophically, although he put the helm down a bit so that he might likewise see the birds that Jonathan had spied.

“What can they be so far out at sea?” inquired the latter.

“Molly hawks, to be sure,” said David promptly. “We must be getting into the latitude of the Cape.”

“Why, they’re as big as geese,” said Jonathan, when the boat got nearer them. “But some are quite small; are they the young ones?”

“No,” replied David; “those are the cape pigeons, which generally sail in company with the others, and not far off at any rate. When you see them close, as I’ve seen them scores of times, and as you’ll be able to if we catch one, as I hope we shall, you’ll find they are very like a large pigeon, only that they have webbed feet; and they always seem plump and fat. See, their feathers are white and downy, while their heads are brown and their wings striped with the same colour, giving them the appearance, if you look down on them from a ship, of being large white and brown butterflies, with their large wings outspread. Draw in your line a bit, Jonathan, and let the white stuff on the hook flutter about in the air; perhaps one of them will grab at it thinking it’s something good. It’s our only chance.”

No angler, not even the celebrated Izaak Walton, ever angled more industriously than the two boys did for the next hour, trying to attract one of the birds, which, both molly hawks and cape pigeons, hovered about the boat all the time, making swoops every now and then down into the sea.

They were too knowing, however, to accept David's fictitious bait, as a fish would probably have done.

One look at it was quite sufficient for them; first one and then another wheeling round and coming nearer the surface of the water to inspect the inducement offered them, and flying off again in disgust.

At last, just as a group of three of the cape pigeons, which were the most inquisitive of the lot, stooped down over the strip of red flannel attached to David's hook, he gave it a jerk and it caught somehow or other in the bird's foot or leg, and he pulled it in, squeaking and fluttering all the time, its companions circling round it in alarm, and cawing in concert over its misfortune.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Jonathan, as David hauled in his prize, flapping vigorously, over the gunwale in triumph; and he stretched out his hand to take hold of it.

"Look out, and stand clear a moment," shouted out his friend. "Those cape pigeons have a nasty habit of throwing up everything they have in their stomachs on to you as soon as you catch them. There, you see. I suppose it's a means of protection given them by nature, the same as the savoury perfume of the American skunk."

"He's lucky to have anything to bring up," said Jonathan drily. "It is more than we could do, I'm sure. There's plenty of him to eat, however, old fellow," he added, when the bird had disgorged its last feed, "and I vote we pluck off his feathers at once and begin business."

"All right," said David, giving the bird a rap on the head with the steering oar, which effectually stayed any further proceedings on its part. "Pipe all hands to dinner."

Both the boys said afterwards, when detailing their experiences during that voyage in an open boat across the ocean when they were lost at sea, that they never before or since ever enjoyed such a meal in their lives as that cape pigeon, which they plucked, and divided into two equal portions, eating the raw flesh, share and share alike, with the greatest gusto, even licking up afterwards the blood that dropped from it on to the thwarts.

The repast gave them new life and spirits, and from that hour the tide of their affairs seemed to flow more favourably, as shortly afterwards they caught a molly hawk, which they carefully put away in the boat's locker along with the

water, which David was very particular in allowancing out, giving Jonathan and himself only a small quantity twice a day out of a measure he had made by cutting off the toe part of one of his boots.

Towards the afternoon of the same day the heavens grew dark right ahead, a big black cloud spreading across the horizon like a great curtain, and mounting gradually till it hid the sun from view.

“We’re going to have a squall, Jonathan,” said David. “You must look out sharp to shift the sheet when I tell you, and unstep the mast, if necessary, the very moment I say, mind!”

“Right you are,” answered the other, who had now lost all that nervousness for which David used to chaff him when on board the Sea Rover. “You only give the word, old man, and you’ll find me all there.”

The squall, however, passed away without touching them, having vented its force in some other quarter; but the wind veered round to the eastwards, much to David’s disgust, as he had to let the boat’s head fall off from the course he wished to steer, and, strange to say, the great black cloud they had first seen seemed still to face them and keep right ahead, although their direction had been altered—it looked, really, just as if standing like a sentry to bar their progress.

“I don’t know what it can mean,” said David anxiously. “The wind has shifted, so why can’t it shift too?”

“It doesn’t appear so big as it was,” observed Jonathan. “It is gradually narrowing at the bottom as it spreads out on top. And look, David, the end of it, close to the sea, comes down into a point just like a thread.”

Presently, as the boat ran nearer towards the cloud, which seemed to rest stationary over the water, they could see that the sea was churned up around it in a state of violent commotion, and they could hear a peculiar sucking noise rumbling in the air at the same time.

“I tell you what it is,” said David; “although I’ve never seen one before, it must be a waterspout, and we’ll have to give it a wide berth. Look out, Jonathan, for the sheet; I’m going to put the helm up and bring the boat about on the other tack.”

Almost as soon as the cutter turned off at an angle from the direction of the waterspout, although not absolutely going away from it, as the boys were interested in the sight, David uttered another exclamation.

“Gracious goodness, Jonathan!” he ejaculated. “Look, if there isn’t a whale there! And he is going slap at it, as if he is going to bowl it over.”

It was true enough; but, whether the leviathan of the deep had been caught in the maelstrom of the waterspout, or had gone towards it from choice, they could not tell. There he was, however, at all events, circling round in the eddy of the sea at the foot of the cloud, and sending up columns of spray every now and then with the flukes of his tail, as they came down with a bash on the water, like the sound of a Nasmyth steam-hammer.

Almost as soon as the boy spoke, the whale appeared to raise itself up on end, as they could see nearly the whole length of its body; there was a tremendous concussion; and then, with a report like thunder, the waterspout burst, falling around the boat in the form of heavy rain.

“I say,” said Jonathan, when the unexpected shower had ceased, “it’s an ill wind that blows nobody good. Look, if there are not a number of dead fish which the waterspout must have sucked up. How thankful we ought to be! there is enough to last us ever so long and keep us from starvation.”

“You are light,” said David. “Let us kneel down and thank God for His mercy and care in watching over us!”

And, after they had prayed fervently to Him who had guarded them through all the perils of the deep, and now showered on them a supply of food almost from heaven, they set to work and collected all the fish they could see floating about on the surface of the sea, David saying that they were bonetas and skipjacks, and capital eating, as he stored them in the locker.

“We’ll cut them open and dry them in the sun by and by,” he added. “It’s too much overcast to do it now; and it’s so rough with the spray dashing over us that they would only get wet instead of dry.”

Soon after the waterspout had burst, the boat’s head had been brought round again as near to the northward as the easterly wind would permit; but, towards evening, as the breeze grew stronger and stronger, and the sea rose in mountainous billows, just the same almost as on the day on which they bade

good-bye to the Sea Rover, they were obliged to let her off a point or two and scud before the gale.

It was a day of surprises; for, just as night was closing in, Jonathan—who took the station of lookout man in the fore-sheets, while David steered, being more at home with the rudder oar than his friend—observed something white, standing out in relief against the dark background of the horizon, which was piled up with a wrack of blue-black storm-clouds.

“I say, David!” he shouted out, “what is this white thing in front—is it another waterspout, or a squall, or what?”

“I’ll soon tell you,” said David, standing up in the stern-sheets to get a better view. But he had no sooner looked than he dropped down again in his seat as if he had been shot, and turned as pale as a ghost, as he exclaimed hysterically, half laughing, half crying, “A sail! a sail!”



## Chapter VI

### In Extremity

“What? a ship really?” said Jonathan, sharing the other’s excitement. “Oh, I’m so glad, so glad!”

“Yes,” said David, recovering a bit from his hysterical fit, and speaking in a more collected manner. “But she’s crossing our course, and if she does not see us and take in sail, I’m afraid we won’t be able to catch her up!”

What was a gale to those in the cutter, with a gunwale hardly a foot above the surface of the water, was only just a fair wind to the full-rigged ship which was sailing on a bowline away from them almost hull-down on the horizon, with all her canvas spread that could draw, to take advantage of the breeze.

The boat’s head was pointed right towards the vessel, whose course was nearly at right angles to theirs, and David put the helm up to bring them nearer the wind so that they might intercept her; but the cutter dipped so much in the waves, and shipped such a lot of water, that he had to let fall off again and run free, much to his mortification, as the stranger was steadily ploughing her way ahead; and, proceeding in the direction they did, they would fetch far to leeward of her.

“Oh, it’s cruel,” said Jonathan, “to sail away like that and leave us!”

“We mustn’t accuse them wrongfully,” said David, who, of course, was more versed in nautical matters. “Ships when far at sea don’t keep much of a look-out, as they would have to do in the channel or near land. And, besides, old fellow, you must recollect that although we can see her plainly, we to those on board would appear but the tiniest speck in the distance, if we were seen at all, and would be taken for a wandering albatross, or one of those Molly hawks like that we caught this morning. They don’t see us, evidently, or they would take in sail.”

Jonathan, however, would not give up hope, but continued to wave his shirt—which he had taken off for the purpose—in the bow of the boat, until she lessened as she drew away, and finally, disappeared below the horizon as night came on with hasty footsteps—as it always does in southern latitudes—shutting out everything from their gaze.

The two boys were bitterly disappointed.

Up to the time of their sighting the ship they had been almost contented with their lot, for the fear of starvation, which had threatened them, had passed away when their hunger had been appeased by the cape pigeon that David had captured, and they subsequently secured another bird, besides the half-dozen fish or so that had been brought within their reach by the waterspout; to add to which the weather had not been hot enough to cause them to make such inroads on their stock of water—which David had judiciously apportioned from the first—as to arouse any dread of thirst, which is far worse than want of food to shipwrecked mariners.

It was the fact of the means of escape from their perilous position having been so unexpectedly brought near them, and as suddenly taken away, that deprived them of their courage and hopefulness for a time, and made them forget the Eye that was watching over them, and the hand that had already so miraculously helped them when they seemed to be at death's door! The weather, however, did not allow them to give way to despondency, much as they might have been inclined, for, as night came on, the darker it grew, the wind and sea increasing so that David had an onerous task to steer the boat in such a manner as to prevent her being swamped; while Jonathan was as continually busy in baling out the heavy seas that, partly, lurched in over the gunwale, first on the port side and then to starboard, as the cutter rocked to and fro in her course, tearing madly up and down the hills and valleys formed by the waves, and sometimes leaping clean out of the water from one mountainous ridge to another.

And thus, the weary hours passed till morning, without giving them a moment's rest from their anxious labour, the constant fear of being upset and swallowed up by the tiger-like billows that raced after them banishing the feeling of fatigue, and making them forget for the while their disappointment.

When the sun rose, for the fourth time since they had been left deserted on the deep, the boys were completely worn out.

David's leg, too, had got worse; whether from the exposure or not they could not tell, but it had swollen up enormously, and he could hardly move; so, Jonathan had to take his place at the steering oar, and act under his directions carefully, as the sea was still very high, and it required critical judgment and a quick eye to prevent the boat being taken broadside on by any of the swelling waves that followed fast in their track, raising their towering crests and foaming with impotent fury as far as the eye could reach, astern, and to their right hand and their left, while in front the waters sometimes uplifted

themselves into a solid wall, as if to stop their way. With mid-day, came a change of scene.

The wind gradually died away, and there fell a dead calm, while the sea subsided in unison; although a sullen swell remained, in evidence of old Neptune's past anger, and to show that he had a temper of his own when he liked to use it—a swell that rocked the boat like a baby's cradle, and flapped the loose sail backwards and forwards across their heads, in such a disagreeable manner that David suggested their hauling it down; which they did, the boat not rolling half so much without its perpendicular weight, while it was pleasanter for them.

"I tell you what, Dave," suggested Jonathan after a while to his friend, who was stretched out on the stern-sheets, resting his wounded leg on a seat, "I think if you'd let me bandage your thigh with a strip of my shirt, and keep it soaked with water, the evaporation of the sun would take down the swelling and make it feel better?"

"So it would probably," he assented; "and at the same time, Jonathan, get those fish and the bird out of the locker. I had almost forgotten them;—I suppose, because I don't feel hungry yet! We will skin them and split them in two: and if we expose them spread out on top of the sail, which you can stretch across the thwarts, our old friend can cook them while he is acting as my physician."

Jonathan, who had been tearing a couple of long strips off his shirt, and binding them round David's leg while he was speaking, now soused the bandages with sea water, taking it up in the one uninjured boot which he had kept for baling purposes, and then propped it up in an easy position, so that it should be directly exposed to the rays of the sun, which was now almost vertical, and hotter than they had yet felt it. He then unstepped the mast, and arranged the sail like an awning over the rest of the boat, serving to shelter themselves—with the exception of David's leg, of course—from the heat, which was decidedly more comfortable, and act as a table for their culinary arrangements.

On counting them, which they had not done before, they found they had thirteen bonetas and skipjacks, beside the molly hawk, which they determined to eat while it was fresh; and then would have sufficient food, as the fish would keep perfectly when dried, for quite that number of days—a lucky number as Jonathan said, as it was "a baker's dozen," and certainly not an even one.

"An unlucky one, you mean," said David. "They say that when thirteen people sit down at table together one is sure to die before the year is out."

"That will only apply to the fish," said Jonathan laughing, "and they're dead already, and will be eaten soon. And talking of that, Dave, I think it's about dinner-time; what say you? My clock here," patting his stomach as he spoke, "warns me that it needs winding up."

"All right, I feel peckish myself," answered David, who was skinning and cutting open the fish leisurely with his clasp knife, which he could do easily without removing from his position or shifting his leg, while Jonathan cleaned them and washed them in the sea over the side of the boat preparatory to spreading them out on the top of their awning to dry in the sun. "Just wait till I finish this last beggar, and then I'll tackle Miss Molly Hawk, and we'll begin. Do you know, Jonathan, I don't think birds are half so bad eaten raw? I did enjoy that cape pigeon yesterday."

"So did I," said the other. "It makes me hungrier to think of it. Look alive, old boy, or I'll start on one of these fish just to keep my hand in."

"No, you won't, or your teeth either, you cannibal," said David jocularly. "I'm captain, and purser too, and I'm not so extravagant as to serve out two courses for dinner. Chaffing aside," he added more seriously, "we'll have to be rigidly economical, Jonathan, for we can't tell how long it may be before we fall in with a ship or reach land, and we've already experienced something of what the pangs of starvation are like, though, thank God, we were not put so severely to the test as some have been! I wish, old fellow, we were as well off for water as we are for grub. I don't think there is a pint more in the breaker, now that we've had that last drink, and I'm sure we've not been very prodigal of it, and I've measured it out carefully every day."

"Perhaps it will rain," said Jonathan cheerfully—the sight of the molly hawk, which David had dexterously plucked and cut in two, the same as he had done the cape pigeon on the previous day, making him feel ravenously hungry, and limiting all his considerations to the present, instead of his being impressed with their future needs, as was the case with his more reflective companion, "Perhaps it will rain, David. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' Let us set to work; I'm starving!"

The appetites of the boys being hearty, they finished every scrap of the bird, which, raw as it was, tasted like roast goose to them, although it was not

nearly so large as it had appeared with all its feathers on; and then both lay down in the boat and had a hearty sleep, the first they had had without interruption since they left their bunks for the last time on board the Sea Rover.

Poor fellows! they had need of rest, for the calm lasted a week, during which time their water ran out, and for more than two days they had not a single drop, although they reduced their allowance to such an infinitesimal quantity that their final draught did not amount to more than a minim.

They now endured all the agonies of thirst, their diet of dried fish making them feel it worse; and it was as much as David could do to prevent Jonathan from drinking the sea water and losing his senses, as he would have done—like many others who would not control their inclinations, but insisted on having it, and afterwards went mad and died.

Then, in the very height of their sufferings, a storm of rain came on which half filled the boat with water, giving them plenty to drink, but spoiling the remainder of their fish, so that they had to throw them overboard.

After the rain the wind sprang up again, and the sail was once more hoisted, David trying to keep the boat as nearly in the direction of the coast of South Africa as he could guess, during the day steering by the sun; but at night she went as the breeze willed, and so it continued for days, the boys getting weaker and weaker through starvation, although they had saved plenty of water in their cask to assuage the pangs of thirst, during which time they never saw a bird or a fish to which they could get near.

They sighted several ships, but they were too far off to attract their notice; and when, finally, a sudden squall in the night blew away their mast and sail, and left them tossing helplessly on the ocean, starving and worn out with fatigue, they gave up all hope, and lay down in the bottom of the boat to die—Jonathan being the first to succumb.

“Good-bye, Dave!” said he, raising himself with a feeble effort.

“Good-bye, Jonathan!” said the other, grasping his companion’s hand, as he thought, for the last time.

“I think I am going to die,” continued Jonathan: “my head is spinning round, and I feel faint. I will lie down a bit until the end comes. Good-bye, Dave, once more!”

And he sank down again into a restless sleep, the other following his example a moment or two afterwards; first giving one last haggard glance around the horizon—on which not a single sail appeared in sight—as if bidding it an eternal farewell.

## Chapter VII

### Rescued

“Boat ahoy!”

The two boys might have been asleep for hours only, or insensible for days, they never knew for certain which, and nobody else could inform them; but that shout ringing in their ears awoke them, with a thrill of agony that it might be merely a dream of their disordered imagination.

One look, however, satisfied them to the contrary, when they painfully raised themselves into a sitting posture in the bottom of the boat—which they could hardly do by reason of their weakness—holding on to the gunwales on either side as they dragged up their attenuated bodies, and directing their sunken eyes, which rolled with incipient delirium, to the point from whence the hail came.

They could have screamed for joy, but their voices failed them, and their emotion found relief in tears and stifling sobs.

A large ship lay to about a hundred yards off; and a boat, which had evidently just been lowered from its side, was being pulled rapidly towards them.

As soon as the boat came alongside, the men in her, who appeared to be foreigners, looked at the boys with the deepest pity, and spoke to each other rapidly in some guttural language, which Jonathan had a hazy idea was German, as if expressing sympathy with their emaciated condition.

One of them whom they took to be an officer, from the gold band on his cap and the tone of authority in his voice, stepped into their boat, and appeared to have the intention of lifting them out of it into the other; but all at once he seemed to notice the name of the Eric Strauss, and stopped short, with an expression of surprised astonishment on his face.

“Wunderbar!” he exclaimed, pointing out the name to his companions, who also looked eagerly at it; and then, while he remained with the boys in the cutter, the painter of the latter was attached to the other boat, which towed it alongside the ship; and, after that David and Jonathan remembered no more, as they both fainted as they were being tenderly hoisted on board.

Jonathan was the first to come to himself.

He was in a hammock in the 'tween decks of a ship, which he could feel was in motion. At the slight movement he made in raising his head and peering over the side of the hammock, a man with a grave face came to him, saying something he could not understand.

"Where's David?" inquired Jonathan, a little bit still puzzled in his head.

The man evidently knew that he was asking after his friend, as he pointed to another hammock, suspended a short distance from his own, in which David was calmly sleeping; after which he gave him some soup to drink, and Jonathan dropped off to sleep too.

When he awoke again he felt much better, and motioning to the attendant that he would like to get out of the hammock, the man assisted him on to his feet. He was a little shaky at first, feeling sore all over; but after walking up and down a few steps with the assistance of the attendant's arm, he regained his strength, and proceeded to the side of David's hammock to pay him a visit.

At the sound of Jonathan's voice, the other—who appeared to have been wide awake although he had made no movement—at once jumped up, and without any assistance got out and stood on the deck by Jonathan's side.

"Well, old fellow!" said he.

"Well, Dave!" ejaculated the other; and they clasped each other's hands with a tight grip, as they had never expected to do again on earth. They fully appreciated their rescue, and thanked God for it.

"And how do you feel, Dave?" inquired Jonathan, after they had had a long look at each other.

"First-rate," said he. "And you?"

"Oh, I'm all right. But your leg, Dave, is it better?"

"To tell you the truth," answered he with a hearty laugh, "I forgot all about it. It's quite well now—look! and that black and blue appearance it had has disappeared. I don't feel the slightest pain, so it must be all right."

The attendant, seeing both the lads better and able to move about, here brought them each a mess of something nice to eat, which they polished off in so hearty a manner as to make him smile, and exclaim, "Sehr gut!" with much



satisfaction to himself; and he then handed the boys their clothes, which had been carefully dried and smoothed, and assisted them to dress.

"I wish," said David, as he completed his toilet by pulling on a pair of Hessian boots, that the man brought him in place of the solitary one which he remembered having on in the boat, "I wish we had been picked up by an English ship, although these chaps have been very kind, of course, and beggars mustn't be choosers. They are Germans, I suppose, eh? Do you know the lingo, Jonathan?"

"Yes, it's a German ship, Die Ahnfrau," replied his friend, likewise donning another pair of "loaned" boots, and accepting a cap, which the attendant produced with a bow. "How polite this chap is, Dave! I'm sorry I only know one or two words of the language, or I would thank him, and get out all the information I could about the vessel, and how they picked us up."

"Oh we'll find that out somehow," said David carelessly, "all in good time, old fellow." And the man at that moment tapping him on the arm, and making a motion that he should follow him, he and Jonathan went after him up the companion-stairs, from the cabin in which they were, on to the upper deck.

They were in a large barque, as they could see, under full sail, with royals, staysails, stunsails, and everything that could draw, set; but they had not much time given them for observation.

"Wie heissen Sie?" said a short, stout man in spectacles, speaking in a sharp imperative voice. He had a very broad gold band on his cap, and the boys took him for the captain of the vessel, as indeed he was. He specially seemed to address Jonathan, as the attendant who had escorted them on deck took them up to him, where he was standing by the binnacle with two or three others.

"John Liston," answered that worthy, speaking almost involuntarily, as the phrase the captain used, asking his name, was one of the few German ones with which he was acquainted.

"Ah, ah!" exclaimed the captain, in a very meaning tone, addressing an officer that stood by his side, and whom David fixed as the first mate. "Sie sprechen Deutsch! Ah, ha!"

"Nein,—no," said Jonathan, "I do not. I cannot speak German, I assure you."

“Very vell,” said the little captain, in pretty good English, although with a strong foreign accent. “We will suppose you cannot! Tell me, how did you come in that boat in which we picked you up?”

Thereupon Jonathan told him of their being lost from the Sea Rover, David adding, as Jonathan left out that part of the story, how his friend had bravely plunged overboard to his rescue. The German captain, however, much to David’s disgust, did not believe him. He wasn’t accustomed to heroism in his sphere evidently!

“Oh, it’s all very well,” he said sneeringly, “but will you tell me how it was that you two boys, belonging to the Sea Rover, as you say, came to be in a boat belonging to the Eric Strauss, which boat was taken away from that vessel by some of the crew—amongst whom, we were informed at the Cape by the authorities there, were two lads like yourselves—after a mutiny in which they nearly murdered the master?”

Of course they explained; but the captain only turned a deaf ear to all they said. He insisted that they were the survivors of the mutineers of the Eric Strauss, and told them he intended putting them in irons, and taking them home for trial at Bremerhaven—where Die Ahnfrau was bound from Batavia, having only stopped at the Cape of Good Hope for fresh provisions and water, and having there heard of the mutiny on board the Eric Strauss, in which vessel the captain of the former was deeply interested, being the brother of the master, whom the crew had set upon, as well as partner of the ship.

All remonstrances on the boys’ part were useless; and, after being so miraculously preserved from the perils of the deep, they wound up the history of their adventures when “lost at sea,” as David pathetically remarked, by being “carried off prisoners to Germany by a lot of cabbage-soup-eating, sourkrout Teutons, who were almost bigger fools than they looked!” It was all Jonathan’s little knowledge of the German language that did it, however.

Naturally, the mistake of Die Ahnfrau’s commander was soon discovered on the arrival of the ship at Bremerhaven, when the boys were able to communicate with their friends and the owners of the Sea Rover in London, and they were released immediately. But the insult rankled in their bosoms for some time after, and did not completely disappear, from David’s mind especially, until the Sea Rover—which, they heard from the owners at the same time that they produced proof of the boys’ identity, had already left Melbourne on her return voyage—had got back safely to the port of London, and Johnny Liston’s father

and Captain Markham had greeted their young heroes as if they had been restored from the dead.

Jonathan received the medal of the Royal Humane Society for his bravery in plunging overboard to David's assistance; and the two boys are still the closest and dearest friends in the world, David being third mate, and Jonathan, who took to the sea for the other's sake, fourth officer of the Sea Rover, at the present moment, "which, when found," as Captain Cuttle says, "why, make a note on!"

## Story 4

### Chapter I

#### **“Black Harry”**

“The cap'en p'r'aps was in fault in the first instance; but then, you know, it's no place for a man to argue for the right or wrong of a thing aboard ship. When he signs articles, he's bound to obey orders; and as everybody must be aware, especially those in the seafaring line, the captain is king on board his ship when once at sea—king, prime minister, parliament, judge and jury, and all the rest of it.”

“But,” said I, “he's under orders and under the law, too, as well as any other man, isn't he?”

“Yes, when he's ashore,” said the mate with the shade over his eye. “Then he's got to answer for anything he might have done wrong on the voyage, if the crew likes to haul him up afore the magistrates; but at sea his word is law, and he can do as he pleases with no hindrance, save what providence and the elements may interpose.”

“And providence does interpose sometimes?” said I.

“Yes, in the most wonderful and mysterious ways,” said the mate with the shade over his eye, speaking in a solemn and awe-struck manner. “Look at what happened in our case! But stop, as I don't suppose you've heard the rights of it, I'll tell you all about it.”

“Do,” said I.

He was the mate of a vessel which had been picked up at sea, disabled and almost derelict under most peculiar circumstances, with only one other survivor besides himself on board, and brought into Falmouth by the passing steamer which had rescued her. He was a most extraordinary man to look at. Short, with a dreamy face and lanky, whitish-brown hair, and a patch or shade over one eye, which gave him a very peculiar appearance, as the other eye squinted or turned askew, looking, as sailors say, all the week for Sunday.

“Do,” said I. “There's nothing that I should like better!”

Clearing his throat with a faint sort of apologetic cough, and staring apparently round the corner with his sound, or rather unshaded eye, he began without any further hesitation.

“The cap’en p’raps was in the wrong at first, as I said afore, sir. You see, some men are born to authority, and some isn’t, and Captain Jarvis was one of those that aren’t. I don’t wish to speak ill of a man, when he’s dead and gone to his account, and not here to answer for himself; but I must say, if I speak the truth, that it was all through Cap’en Jarvis’ fault the Gulnare came to grief and all on board murdered each other; and what weren’t murdered were swept off the ship and drowned in the storm that came on afterwards, when everybody was seeking each other’s blood, and so met their doom in that way—all, that is, barrin’ little Peter and me, who only lived through the scrimmage and the gale to tell the story of the others’ fate. The cap’en had a bad temper and didn’t know how to keep it under; that was at the bottom of it all; and yet, a nicer man, when the devil hadn’t got the upper hand of him, and a handsomer chap—he was better looking than me, sir,” said the mate in an earnest way, as if his statement was so incredible that he hardly expected it to be believed—“yes, a nicer and a handsomer chap you never clapped eyes on in a day’s run than Cap’en Jarvis! He stood a trifle taller than me, and had a jolly bearded face with merry blue eyes; but with all that and his good-humoured manner when everything was up to the nines and all plain sailing, he had old Nick’s temper and could show it when he liked! We left Mobile short-handed; and when you leave port to cross the Atlantic short-handed at this time of the year, I guess, mister, you’ve got your work cut out for you, you have! There was only the cap’en; myself, first mate; the second officer, boatswain, and ten hands all told, includin’ idlers, to navigate a ship of over eight hundred tons from Mobile to Liverpool in the very worst time of the year! A bad lookout when you come to consider it fairly as I have; and when you have a cap’en as is continually working the men to death and a-swearin’ and a-drivin’ at them, and they undermanned too, why it stands to reason that harm will come: you’re bound to have a muss, you bet, before the voyage is through!

“We’d hardly cleared the Gulf of Florida when the weather got bad, with a foul wind and a heavy sea; and we were driven past Cape Hatteras before we could make a bit of easting in our longitude. You never saw such a rough time of it as we had. The watch below had no sooner turned in than they had to be called up again to reef topsails or make sail, for there were too few hands to be of much use without both watches worked together, and so the men had to do double tides, as it were, with neither time to eat nor sleep comfortably. To add

to their hardships, they were constantly in wet clothes, as it poured with rain the whole time; besides which, the ship was so heavily laden that we were continually taking in seas over the bows as she laboured, the water washing aft of course, and drenching them who might have escaped the rain to the skin, so that not a soul aboard had a dry rag on. You can imagine, sir, how the men stomachached this, particularly when there was the skipper swearing at 'em all the time, and saying that they were lazy lubbers and not worth their salt, when they were trying hard to do their best, as I must give them the credit of! I spoke to the cap'en, but it was of no use—not a bit; you might just as well have expected a capstan bar to hear reason!

“‘Mr Marling,’ says he, in the still way he always spoke when he was real angry. ‘Mr Marling, I’m captain of my own ship, and always intend to be so as long as I can draw my breath: I’ll thank you to mind your own business!’

“What could I say after that? Nothing; and so I said nothing more, although I could almost foresee what was coming, step by step!

“This dirty weather had been going on for about a fortnight, or thereabouts; the wind heading us every now and then and veering back again to the southward and westwards, accompanied by squalls of hail and rain following each other with lightning rapidly; so that no sooner had one cleared off than another was on to us, and we had to clear up everything and let the ship drive before the gale as she pleased, for it was of no use trying to make a fair wind out of a foul one any longer. As well as we could make out our reckoning, with the aid of some lunar observations Captain Jarvis booked the night before, for we were unable to see the sun long enough for our purpose, we were about some three or four hundred miles to the west of Bermuda, when, just as the clouds were breaking up blue-black against the sky, and the barometer told us in its plain language that it was coming on to blow harder, and that we would have worse weather than we had yet had, all the hands, as if with one accord, struck work—with the exception of the man at the wheel, who stuck to his post! There was no mistake about it: the watch on deck refused point-blank to go aloft when the skipper ordered them, for about the fourth time in the hour, I should think it was, to take in sail; while the watch below, in spite of the boatswain’s hammering away at the fore-hatch and the capen’s swearing, declared that they wouldn’t rouse up, not even if the ship was sinking, and if they were shouted at any more they would sarve him out. It was a mutiny, there’s no denying; a regular crisis, if ever there was one; and just what I expected, seeing as how things were going ever since we left Mobile, not three weeks before.”

“Captain Jarvis,” he resumed after a brief pause, “no sooner heard the men refuse to come on deck than he went below. Not to where they were in the fore-hatch—he knew a thing or two better than that—but to his cabin, and in a minute he comes up again with a revolver in each of his fists.

“Now,” says he in a firm, hard, but quiet voice, not loud—he always spoke particularly quiet when he was angry, as I’ve told you; and he was angry now, if ever a man was! ‘Now, you skulkers,’ he says, addressing first the hands on deck—‘Aloft every man-jack of you! I’ll shoot the last man that’s up the shrouds!’ They were up in the rigging pretty smart, you bet, at that, when he had a revolver levelled dead at their heads. ‘See that you stow that main-topsail in a brace of shakes! And you lubbers below, wake up there!’ he exclaimed over the fore-hatch, firing a shot down below as he spoke. ‘Wake up there and on deck; or, I’ll riddle every mother’s son of you before I count ten. You, Black Harry, I know you’ve set this pretty little scheme going! Up with you, or by the Lord Harry, your namesake, I’ll put a bullet through your carcass!’

“With that the watch below, knowing with whom they had to deal, thought it best to give in; and up they came, Black Harry at their head, as sullen as a lot of schoolboys going up to be flogged, who had just thought they had barred out the master.

“‘It’s no use your grumbling,’ says Cap’en Jarvis, with a queer grin on his face that was more angry-like than a pain, ‘It’s no use your grumbling with me! Aloft with you, and make that fore topsail all snug, and set storm staysails, for we’ve got something rougher coming. I’ll settle with you, Master Harry, by-and-by!’”

“You haven’t told me yet about this man, though I’ve read his name in the papers. Who was Black Harry?” asked I.

“Haven’t I told you about him yet? No; then, I’ll tell you all about him now, for he had more to do with the row aboard the *Gulnare* than anybody else! He was a regular dare-devil of a pocket-a-win, as they are called at Liverpool—a tall, lean, down-east Yankee from Boston, with jet-black hair, and a swarthy face, which made you think he had nigger blood in him and got him his name of ‘Black Harry.’ A powerful man and a good foremast hand; but an all-fired lazy devil about work, and as sulky as a bear when he didn’t get his grub regular. He was no coward though; and no skulker in danger, as some white-livered chaps are who ought to be ashamed to ship as sailors, for he’d venture aloft sometimes when no one else would dare, and was the first man at the weather-

earing when it was 'Reef topsails!' But he had a temper as skittish as the cap'en's, and couldn't stand being swore at. I've heard him many a time mutter after the captain had been going on at him. I know I'd not have liked to have said half to him that Captain Jarvis did, for Black Harry looked like a man who would never forget nor forgive a grudge.

"Well, by-and-by the hands came down from aloft; and amongst them Black Harry, who lagged behind the rest, although he had been the first in the foretop going up.

"'Come here, you lubber!' said the cap'en to him, singing out aloud as he touched the deck—'you, I mean, Black Harry. I've got a little matter to settle, I think, with you. Who incited the hands to mutiny just now? I don't forget, Master Harry—I don't forget!'

"'Neither do I!' grumbled Harry below his voice.

"'What is that, you mutinous dog?' exclaimed the cap'en, flying into a violent passion again, although he had somewhat calmed down from his former rage—'Answer me to my teeth, you scoundrel? Take that!' and he hit a drive full fair in the centre of the forehead, with the butt-end of his revolver, holding it by the barrel, felling Harry to the deck senseless, like a bullock under the poleaxe!

"Some of the crew murmured 'Shame!' But the cap'en kept up his authority. 'Silence there!' he cried out. 'Down with you, watch below, if you want to see your bunks to-night, and take that hulking carcass with you, or I'll throw it overboard!' And then the men went below, and took poor Black Harry, with them; the vessel was made snug under her jib, storm staysails, and close-reefed mainsail; and Captain Jarvis, who hadn't been off the deck, except to fetch his revolver that time, once in the twenty-four hours, returned to his cabin to have a bit of sleep, leaving me on the watch; the second officer and boatswain, who acted also as third mate, having also turned in for a caulk and gone down into the steerage.

"The sun, which we couldn't see, had set long since, before indeed that little misunderstanding had occurred about going aloft; and the moon shone feebly now and then through an occasional opening in the clouds, which had piled up atop of each other so heavy to windward that they were like a pall in the sky.

"There was only myself and the steersman aft, the rest of the watch, which were only five in number altogether, being stowed somewhere under the



bulwarks amidships, trying to get an odd wink if the seas that were shipping in as the ship's bows fell would let them. Not a sound was to be heard save the whistle and screech of the wind through the cordage, and the creak of a block occasionally aloft; and I was looking out at the weather, wondering how soon the next squall would tackle us, when my arms were seized by somebody behind me, who held them down close to my sides, and a gag of a reef-knot or some piece of rope shoved into my mouth, so that I couldn't cry out.

"Mr Marling!" says a voice, which I recognised at once as Black Harry's, whispering in my ear, 'you need not fear nothing, only keep quiet, and no harm will be done to you; but if you tries to make a noise, why, we'll have to quiet you in a way you won't like!'

"With that, you may be sure, I was as tranquil as a mouse, while they tied me down to a ring-bolt close by the cabin skylight, so that I couldn't move; but from my position I could see and hear everything that went on afterwards, although I couldn't get the gag out of my mouth so as to be able to speak.

"Now, men," I heard Black Harry then say aloud; 'now, we'll pay out that devil below! I wonder how he'll like his mutinous dogs at close quarters?' and he laughed a horrible bitter laugh.

"Then I heard them begin to descend the companion ladder into the captain's cabin.

"They didn't go far enough! No sooner had Black Harry placed his foot on the first stair, followed by the other mutineers, than there was a flash and a stunning explosion from below. The captain, who had the quick hearing of a hound, must have caught the sound of their tussling with me on the deck, for he was ready for them with his double-barrelled gun. I saw him distinctly by the flash through the skylight, standing at the foot of the companion, while Gripper, the second officer, was hurrying up behind him through the door leading into the steerage where our berths were. Yes, I saw the captain. He had fired one shot, and stood waiting with the other barrel ready.

"Come on, you dogs!" I heard him exclaim as he discharged the gun. 'There's one dose of slugs, and I've got another handy for you!'

"The men from the sound appeared to shrink back for a second, but the next minute they rushed down in a body; there was a second report of the captain's gun, and I received, unbeknown to him, poor fellow—for he didn't intend it, I know—a slug right in my eye here; and for some time I was in such agony that I didn't know what occurred below, although I heard plenty of shots fired, and the sound of hand-to-hand fighting mingled with oaths, and curses, and cries.

"When I recollected myself again there was Black Harry near me surrounded by only four others, as well as I could see after wiping the blood off my face with

part of my arm, which I was able to do by wriggling at my lashings; the rest must have gone under in the scrimmage.

“Now, you villain,” I heard Black Harry say again in a voice full of spite and anger, “I’ve got you! Lash him up there in the lee rigging!” says he to his fellow-murderers; and in a trice I saw the poor cap’en, quite pale and exhausted, fixed like a spread eagle in the mizzen shrouds to leeward. “Now, you villain!” says Black Harry again, cocking one of the captain’s revolvers which he had ready in his hand, “you said you would riddle us just now if we didn’t go aloft after treating us like dogs ever since we came on board your cursed ship! Well, Jarvis, you dog—Cap’en Jarvis, I beg your pardon!—I intend to riddle you now!” “The cap’en didn’t say a word; he only looked at him; but if looks could kill, his would then!

“You dog!” said Black Harry again, after a stop to see if the captain would speak. “I’ve got three slugs in my stomach, and you’ve swore three times at me to-day like a dog—that makes six in all; I intend to send six shots through your vile carcass without killing you if I can help it. You knocked me down on the deck with the butt-end of your pistol, and ordered my body to be taken below by the hands, or else you said you’d throw it overboard. For that outrage I’ll take my last revenge, after riddling you like a sieve, by smashing in your skull, and pitching your vile carcass to the sharks—Dog!”

“With that the ruffian fired his first shot with the revolver at his powerless victim. The captain winced slightly, and I saw the bullet had carried off part of one of his ears.

“Ha!” said Black Harry, “nervous, are you? Here’s another fillip for you.”

“But at the same moment the storm, which I had seen brewing up to windward, burst over the ship; and a tremendous wave seemed to flatten me down on the deck, the ring-bolt to which I was lashed preventing me from slipping away. When the rush of water had subsided, and I was able to hold up my head once more, my wounded eye smarting worse than ever, I saw that the mizzen and main masts with part of the foremast had been washed clean away with the shrouds, running-gear, and all their hamper, and, of course, the body of the poor captain, Black Harry, and all his companions in crime had been carried off too in the general wreck.

“How long I remained lashed to the deck of the crippled vessel with the waves dashing over me, the sport of the sea and the mark of the weather, I know not. The first thing I recollect after what appeared to be an eternity of torture, was that I found myself on board the *Saracen*, a screw steamer bound from New York to Southampton, which had sighted the *Gulnare* tossing at the mercy of the wind and waves, and sent a boat to see whether there was anybody alive on board. I was on board, alive though senseless for a time, and brought to after

much kindly solicitude; so, too, was little Peter, the cabin-boy, whom the mutineers had tied up in his bunk in the forecastle, and who was also alive, though nearly starved to death. Besides our two selves, there was no other living thing; but the bodies of Gripper, the second officer, Painter, the boatswain, and those of the mutineers who had not been washed overboard, were found floating about in the cabin, all with the marks of bullet and shot wounds and other injuries, to show that they had come by a violent death after a hard struggle.

“When my senses were to the fore again, naturally I informed my salvors of all that had occurred; and as the cargo of the *Gulnare* was a valuable one, her hull not very much damaged, and the weather calm and favourable, the captain of the *Saracen*, which had so providentially come across her—and a right good fellow he has been to me!—made up his mind to salvage my old ship if he could.”

“And so he towed her in here at Falmouth, and you made your depositions along with the cabin-boy, Peter, the only survivors of the catastrophe, about the facts of the case, for the benefit of the underwriters and the clearance of your own character?”

“Just so, mister,” said the man with the shade over his eye, who it strikes me from certain circumstances was of American nationality; “and that’s the whole story about ‘Black Harry,’ I guess!”

The End