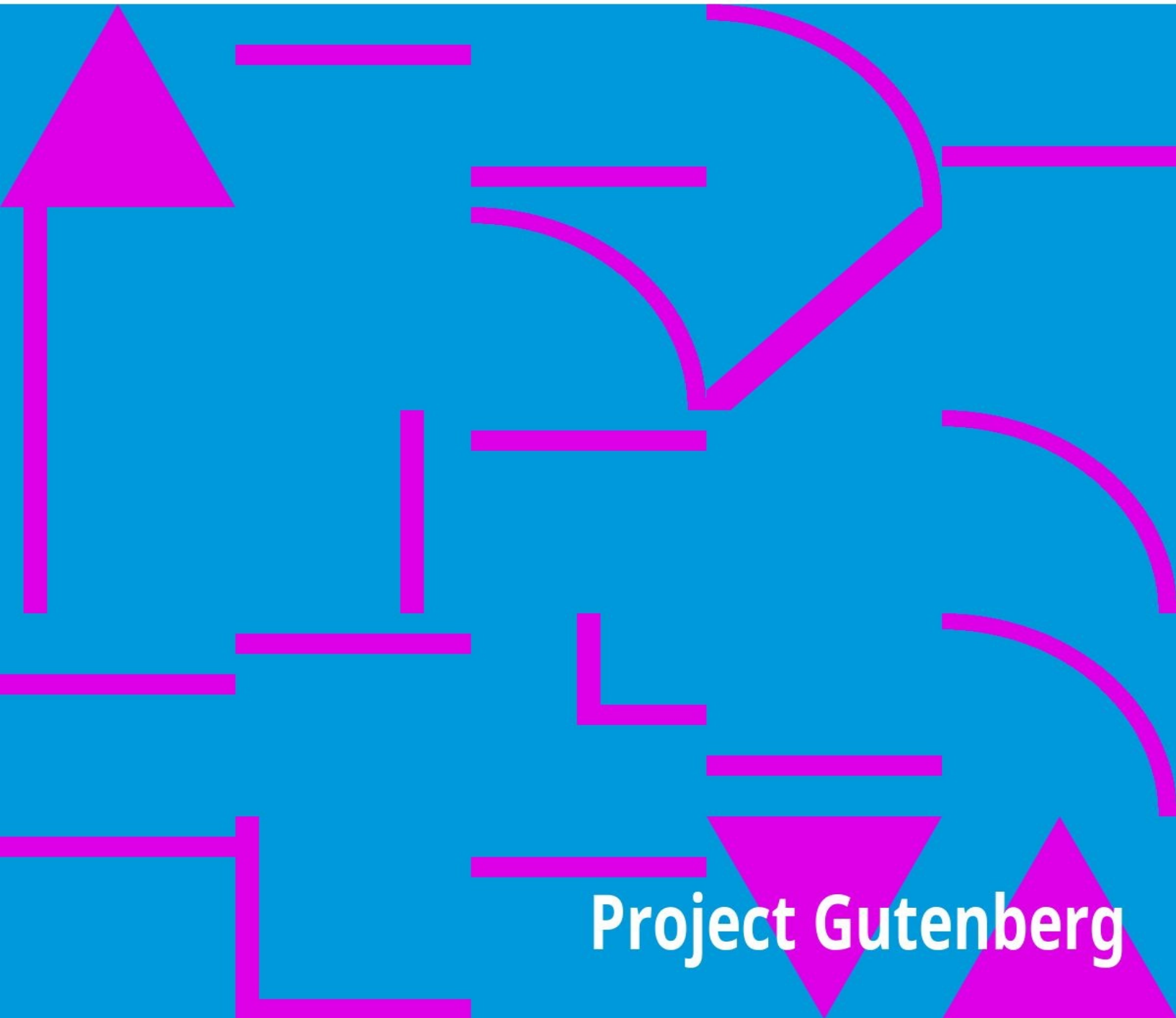
Adrift in the Ice-Fields

Charles Winslow Hall



Title: Adrift in the Ice-Fields

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Release Date: May 25, 2007 [EBook #21607]

Language: English

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ADRIFT IN THE ICE-FIELDS.

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BY

CAPT. CHARLES W. HALL,

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT BONANZA," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

BOSTON:
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.
NEW YORK:
CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM.
1877.

PREFACE.

To open to the youth of America a knowledge of some of the winter sports of our neighbors of the maritime provinces, with their attendant pleasures, perils, successes, and reverses, the following tale has been written.

It does not claim to teach any great moral lesson, or even to be a guide to the young sportsman; but the habits of all birds and animals treated of here have been carefully studied, and, with the mode of their capture, have been truthfully described.

It attempts to chronicle the adventures and misadventures of a party of English gentlemen, during the early spring, while shooting sea-fowl on the sea-ice by day, together with the stories with which they whiled away the long evenings, each of which is intended to illustrate some peculiar dialect or curious feature of the social life of our colonial neighbors.

Later in the season the breaking up of the ice carries four hunters into involuntary wandering, amid the vast ice-pack which in winter fills the great Gulf of St. Lawrence. Their perils, the shifts to which they are driven to procure shelter, food, fire, medicine, and other necessaries, together with their devious drift and final rescue by a sealer, are used to give interest to what is believed to be a reliable description of the ice-fields of the Gulf, the habits of the seal, and life on board of a sealing steamer.

It would seem that the world had been ransacked to provide stories of adventure for the boys of America; but within the region between the Straits of Canso and the shores of Hudson's Bay there still lie hundreds of leagues of land never trodden by the white man's foot; and the folk-lore and idiosyncrasies of the population of the Lower Provinces are almost as unknown to us, their near neighbors.

The descendants of emigrants from Bretagne, Picardy, Normandy, and Poitou, still retaining much of their ancient patois, costume, habits, and superstitions; the hardy Gael, still ignorant of any but the language of Ossian and his burr-tongued Lowland neighbors; the people of each of Ireland's many counties, clinging still to feud, fun, and their ancient Erse tongue, together with representatives from every English shire, and the remnants of Indian tribes and Esquimaux hordes,—

offer an opportunity for study of the differences of race, full of picturesque interest, and scarcely to be met with elsewhere.

The century which has with us almost realized the apostolic announcement, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new," with them has witnessed little more than the birth, existence, and death of so many generations, and the old feuds and prejudices of race and religion, little softened by the lapse of time, still remain with their appropriate developments, in the social life of the scattered peoples of these northern shores.

Regretting that the will to depict those life-pictures has not been better seconded by more skill in word-painting, the author lays down his pen, hoping that the pencil of the artist will atone, in some degree, for his own "many short-comings."

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(map of Prince Edward Island and the Northumberland Straits.)

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OUR COMPANY.

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ive hundred miles away to the north and east lies the snug little Island of St. Jean; a beautiful land in summer, with its red cliffs of red sandstone and ruddy clay, surmounted by green fields, which stretch away inland to small areas of the primeval forest, which once extended unbroken from the shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the waters of the Straits of Northumberland.

Drear and desolate is it in winter, when the straits are filled with ice, which, in the shape of floe, and berg, and pinnacle, pass in ghostly procession to and fro, as the wind wafts them, or they feel the diurnal impetus of the tides they cover, to escape in time from the narrow limits of the pass, and lose themselves in the vast ice-barrier that for five long months shuts out the havens of St. Jean from the open sea.

No ship can enter the deserted ports, over whose icy covering the farmer carries home his year's firing, and the young gallant presses his horse to his greatest speed to beat a rival team, or carry his fair companion to some scene of festivity twenty miles away. Many spend the whole winter in idleness; and to all engaged in aught but professional duties, the time hangs heavily for want of enjoyable out-of-door employment. It is, therefore, a season of rejoicing to the cooped-up sportsman when the middle of March arrives, attended, as is usually the case, by the first lasting thaws, and the advent of a few flocks of wild geese.

Among the wealthier sportsmen great preparations are made for a spring campaign, which often lasts six or eight weeks. Decoys of wood, sheet-iron, and canvas, boats for decoy-shooting and stealthy approach, warm clothes, caps, and mittens of spotless white, powder by the keg, caps and wads by the thousand, and shot by the bag, boots and moccasins water and frost proof, and a vast variety of small stores for the inner man, are among the necessaries provided, sometimes weeks in advance of the coming of the few scattering flocks which

form, as it were, the skirmish line of the migrating hosts of the Canada goose.

It is usual for a small party to board with some farmer, as near as possible to the shooting grounds, or rather ice, for not infrequently the strong-winged foragers, who press so closely on the rearguard of the retreating frost king, find nothing in the shape of open water; but after leaving their comrades, dead and dying, amid the fatal decoys on the frozen channels, sweep hastily southward before cold, fatigue, hunger, and the wiles and weapons of man, can finish the deadly work so thoroughly begun.

Such a party of six, in the spring of 186-, took up their quarters with Captain Lund, a pilot, who held the larger portion of the arable land of the little Island of St. Pierre, which lies three miles south of the mouth of the harbor of C., and ends in two long and dangerous shoals, known as the East and West Bars.

The party was composed of Messrs. Risk, Davies (younger and older), Kennedy, Creamer, and La Salle. Mr. Henry Risk was an English gentleman, of about fifty-five years of age, handsome, portly, and genial, a keen sportsman, and sure shot with the long, single, English ducking-gun, to which he stuck, despite of the jeers and remonstrances of the owners of muzzle and breech-loading double barrels.

Davies the elder, an old friend of the foregoing, had for many years been accustomed to leave his store and landed property to the care of his partners and family, while, in company with Risk, he found in the half-savage life and keen air of the ice-fields a bracing tonic, which prepared them for the enervating cares of the rest of the year. The two had little in common—Risk being a stanch Episcopalian, and Davies an uncompromising Methodist. Risk, rather conservative, and his comrade a ready liberal; but they both possessed the too rare quality of respect for the opinions of others, and their occasional disputations never degenerated into quarrels.

Ben Davies, a nephew of the foregoing, and also a merchant, was an athletic young fellow, of about five feet eight, just entering upon his twenty-second year. A proficient in all manly exercises, and a keen sportsman, he entered into this new sport with all the enthusiasm of youth, and his preparations for the spring campaign were on the most liberal scale of design and expenditure. In these matters he relied chiefly on the skill, experience, and judgment of his right-hand man and shooting companion, Hughie Creamer.

Hughie was of Irish descent, and middle size, but compact, lithe, and muscular,

with a not unkindly face, which, however, showed but too plainly the marks of habitual dissipation. A rigger by occupation, a sailor and pilot at need, a skilful fisherman, and ready shot, with a roving experience, which had given him a smattering of half a score of the more common handicrafts, Hughie was an invaluable comrade on such a quest, and as such had been hired by his young employer. It may be added, that a more plausible liar never mixed the really interesting facts of a changeable life with well-disguised fiction; and it may be doubted if he always knew himself which part of some of his favorite "yarns" were truths, and which were due, as a phrenologist would say, "to language and imaginativeness large, insufficiently balanced by conscientiousness."

Kennedy was a wiry little New Brunswicker, born just across the St. Croix, but a thorough-going Yankee by education, business habits, and naturalization. "A Brahmin among the Brahmins," he believed in the New York Tribune, as the purest source of all uninspired wisdom; and bitterly regretted that the manifold avocations of Horace Greeley had thus far prevented that truly great man from enlightening his fellow-countrymen on the habits and proper modes of capture of the *Anser Canadiensis*. As, despite his attenuated and dry appearance, there was a deal of real humor in his composition, Kennedy was considered quite an addition to our little party.

La Salle was—Well, reader, you must judge for yourself of what he was, by the succeeding chapters of this simple history, for he it is who recalls from the past these faint pen-pictures of scenes and pleasures never to be forgotten, although years have passed since their occurrence, and the grave has already claimed two of the six,—Risk, the robust English gentlemen, and Hughie, the cheery, ingenious adventurer. It is not easy to draw a fair picture of one's self, even with the aid of a mirror, and when one can readily note the ravages of time in thinning locks and increasing wrinkles, it is hard to speak of the robust health of youth without exaggeration. At that time, however, he was about twenty-three, having dark hair and eyes, a medium stature, and splendid health. Like Hughie, in a humbler sphere, he was a dabbler in many things,—lawyer, novelist, poet, trader, inventor, what not?—taking life easily, with no grand aspirations, and no disturbing fears for the future. In the intervals of business he found a keen delight in the half-savage life and wholly natural joys of the angler and sportsman, and ever felt that to wander by river and mere, with rod and gun, would enable him to draw from the breast of dear old Mother Earth that rude but joyous physical strength, with the possession of which it is a constant pleasure even to exist.

It was late at night when, by the light of the winter moon, the boats and decoys were unloaded from the heavy sleds, and placed in position on the various bars and feeding-grounds. The ice that season was of unusual thickness, and gave promise of lasting for many weeks. As under the guidance of Black Bill, they entered the farm-yard of his master, the elder Lund, they found the rest of the family just entering the house, and joining them, attacked, with voracious appetites, a coarse but ample repast of bacon, potatoes, coarse bread, sweet butter, and strong black tea. After this guns were prepared, ammunition and lunch got ready for the coming morning, for, with the earliest gleam of the rising sun, they were to commence the first short day of watching for the northward coming hosts of heaven.

The exact manner in which the ingenious Mrs. Lund managed to accommodate six sportsmen, besides her usual family of four girls, three boys, and a hired man, within the limits of a low cottage of about nine small apartments, has always been an unsolved mystery to all except members of the household. To be sure, Risk and the elder Davies occupied a luxurious couch of robes and blankets in the little parlor, and a huge settle before the kitchen stove opened its alluring recesses to Ben and his man Friday, while one of the elder sons and Black Bill shared with Kennedy and La Salle the largest of the upper rooms. In later years, the question of where the eight others slept, has attained a prominent place among the unsolved mysteries of life; but at that time all were tired enough to be content with knowing that they could sleep soundly, at all events.

Few have ever passed from port to port of the great Gulf, without meeting, or at least hearing, of "Captain Tom Lund," known as the most skilful pilot on the coast.

> "Alike to him was tide or time,
> Moonless midnight or matin's prime."

And when his skill could not make a desired haven, or tide over a threatened danger, the mariners of the Gulf deemed the case hopeless indeed.

Every winter, however, the swift Princess lay in icy bonds, beside the deserted wharves, and the veteran pilot went home to his farm, his little house with its brood of children, his shaggy horses, Highland cows, and long-bodied sheep, and became as earnest a farmer as if he had never turned a vanishing furrow on the scarless bosom of the ocean. Always pleasant, anxious to oblige, careful of the safety of his guests, and with a seaman's love of the wonderful and

marvellous, he played the host to general satisfaction, and in the matter of charges set an example of moderation such as is seldom imitated in this selfish and mercenary world.

After supper, however, on this first evening, an unwanted cloud hung over the brow of the host, which yielded not to the benign influence of four cups of tea, and eatables in proportion; withstood the sedative consolations of a meerschaum of the best "Navy," and scarcely gave way when, with the two eldest of the party, he sat down to a steaming glass of "something hot," whose "controlling spirit" was "materialized" from a bottle labeled "Cabinet Brandy." After a sip or two, he hemmed twice, to attract general attention, and said, solemnly,—

"It is nonsense, of course, to warn you, gents, of danger, when the ice is so thick everywhere that you couldn't get in if you tried; but mark my words, that something out of the common is going to happen this spring, on this here island. I went over to the Pint, just now, after you came into the yard, to look up one of the cows, and saw two men in white walking up the track, just below the bank. I thought it must be some of you coming up from the East Bar, but all of a sudden the men vanished, and I was alone; and when I came into the yard, you were all here! Now something of the kind almost always precedes a death among us, and I shan't feel easy until your trip is safely over, and you are all well and comfortable at home."

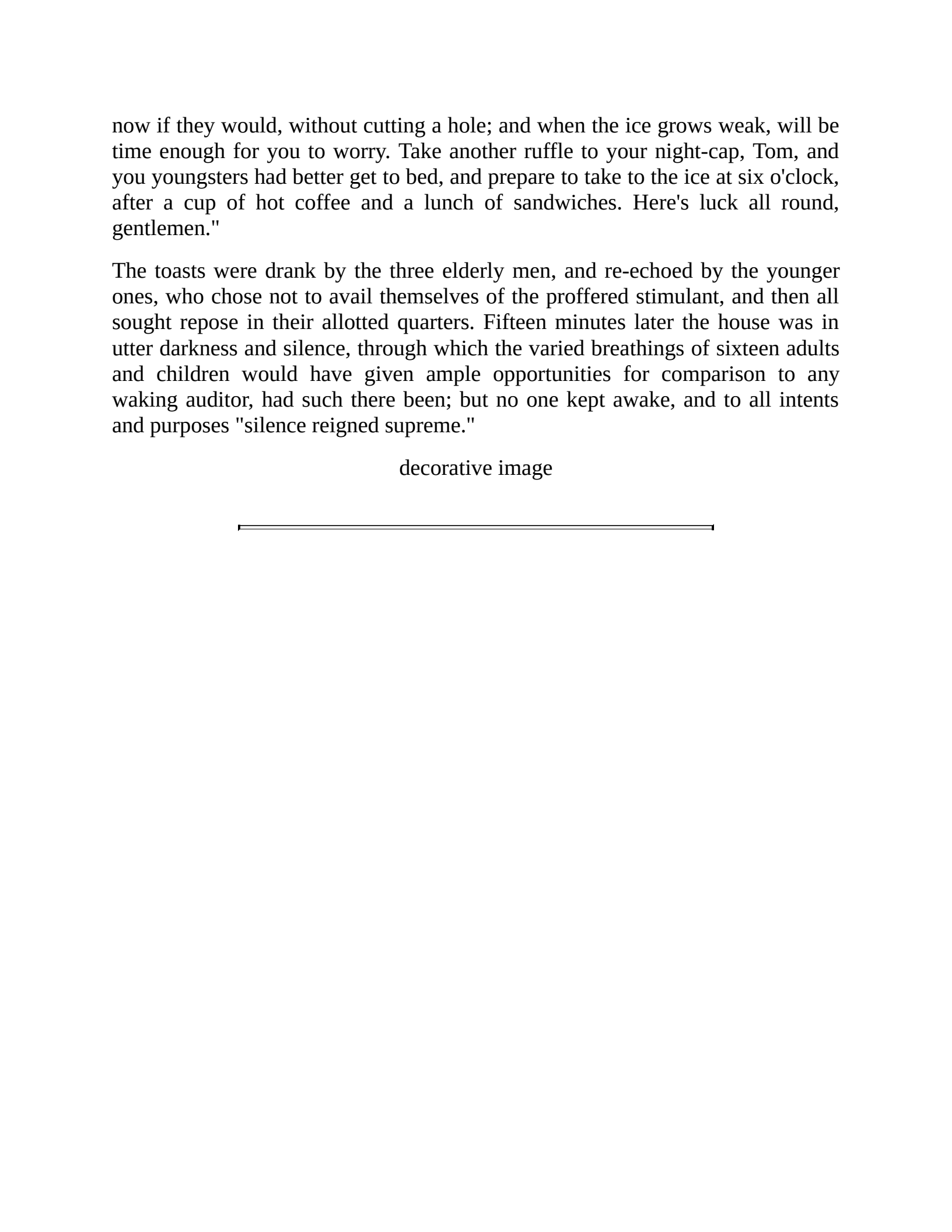
"Now, Lund," said the elder Davies, "you don't believe in any such nonsense, do you?"

"Nonsense!" said Lund, quietly but gravely; "little Johnnie there, my youngest boy, will tell you that he has often seen on the East Bar the warning glare of the Packet Light, which often warns us of the approach of a heavy storm. It is nearly thirty years since it first glowed from the cabin windows of the doomed mail packet, but to all who dwell upon this island its existence is beyond doubt. Few who have sailed the Gulf as I have, but have seen the Fireship which haunts these waters, and more than once I have steered to avoid an approaching light, and after changing my course nearly eight pints, found the spectre light still dead ahead. No, gentlemen, I shan't slight the warning. If you value life, be careful; for if we get through the breaking up of the ice without losing two men, I shall miss my guess."

"Come, Tom," said Risk, quickly, "don't depress the spirits of the youngsters with such old-world superstitions. As you say, they couldn't get through the ice

now if they would, without cutting a hole; and when the ice grows weak, will be time enough for you to worry. Take another ruffle to your night-cap, Tom, and you youngsters had better get to bed, and prepare to take to the ice at six o'clock, after a cup of hot coffee and a lunch of sandwiches. Here's luck all round, gentlemen."

The toasts were drank by the three elderly men, and re-echoed by the younger ones, who chose not to avail themselves of the proffered stimulant, and then all sought repose in their allotted quarters. Fifteen minutes later the house was in utter darkness and silence, through which the varied breathings of sixteen adults and children would have given ample opportunities for comparison to any waking auditor, had such there been; but no one kept awake, and to all intents and purposes "silence reigned supreme."



CHAPTER II.

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BUILDING THE ICE-HOUSES.—MATTHEW COLLINS'S GHOST.

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t daybreak the gunners arose, and without disturbing the members of the family, took some strong, hot coffee, prepared by the indefatigable Creamer, and ate a breakfast, or rather lunch, of cold meats and bread and butter, after which all proceeded to don their shooting costume, which, being unlike that worn in any other sport, is worthy of description here.

In ice-shooting, every color but pure white is totally inadmissible; for the faintest shade of any other color shows black and prominent against the spotless background of glittering ice-field and snow-covered cliffs. Risk and his partner wore over their ordinary clothing long frocks of white flannel, with white "havelocks" over their seal-skin caps, and their gray, homespun pants were covered to the knee by seal-skin Esquimaux boots—the best of all water-proof walking-gear for cold weather. Risk carried the single ducking-piece before mentioned, but Davies had a Blissett breech-loading double-barrel. They had chosen their location to the north of the island, near a channel usually opening early in the season, but now covered with ice that would have borne the weight of an elephant. With much banter as to who should count first blood, the party separated at the door; the younger Davies and Creamer, with Kennedy and La Salle, plunging into the drifted fields to the eastward, and in Indian file, trampling a track to be daily used henceforward, until the snows should disappear forever. The two former relied on over-frocks of strong cotton, and a kind of white night-caps, while La Salle wore a heavy shooting-coat of white mole-skin, seal-skin boots reaching to the knee, and armed with "crampets," or small iron spikes, to prevent slipping, while a white cover slipped over his Astrachan cap, completed his *outre* costume. Kennedy, however, outshone all others in the strangeness of his shooting apparel. Huge "arctics" were strapped on his feet, from which seemed to spring, as from massive roots, his small, thin form, clad in a scanty *robe de chambre* of cotton flannel, surmounted by a broad sou'wester, carefully covered by a voluminous white pocket handkerchief. The

general effect was that of a gigantic mushroom carrying a heavy gun, and wearing a huge pair of blue goggles.

La Salle alone of the four carried a huge single gun of number six gauge, and carrying a quarter of a pound of heavy shot to tremendous distances. The others used heavy muzzle-loading double-barrels. A brisk walk of fifteen minutes brought them to the extremity of the island, and from a low promontory they saw before them the Bay, and the East Bar, the scene of their future labors.

Below them the Bar, marked by a low ridge, rising above the level of the lower shallows,—for the tide was at ebb,—trended away nearly a league into the spacious bay, covered everywhere with ice, level, smooth, and glittering in the rising sun, save where, here and there, a huge white hummock or lofty pinnacle, the fragments of some disintegrated berg, drifted from Greenland or Labrador, rose along the Bar, where the early winter gales had stranded them. Leaping down upon the ice-foot, the party hastened to their respective stands, nearly a mile out on the Bar—Davies being some four hundred yards from that of La Salle.

The "stand" of the former was a water-tight box of pine, painted white, and about six feet square by four deep, which was quickly sunk into the snow-covered ice to about half its depth; the snow and ice removed by the shovel, being afterwards piled against the sides, beaten hard and smooth, and finally cemented by the use of water, which in a few moments froze the whole into the semblance of one of the thousands of hummocks, which marked the presence of crusted snow-drifts on the level ice.

La Salle, however, had provided better for comfort and the vicissitudes of sea-fowl shooting; occupying a broad, flat-bottomed boat, furnished with steel-shod runners, and "half-decked" fore-and-aft, further defended from the sea and spray by weather-boards, which left open a small well, capable of seating four persons. Four movable boards, fastened by metal hooks, raised the sides of the well to a height of nearly three feet, and a fifth board over the top formed a complete housing to the whole fabric. La Salle and Kennedy swung the boat until her bow pointed due east, leaving her broadsides bearing north and south; and then, excavating a deeper furrow in the hollow between two hummocks, the boat was slid into her berth, and the broken masses of icy snow piled against and over her, until nothing but her covering-board was visible.

A huge pile of decoys stood near, of which about two dozen were of wood, such

as the Micmac Indian whittles out with his curved *waghon*, or single-handed draw-knife, in the long winter evenings. He has little cash to spend for paint, and less skill in its use, but scorches the smooth, rounded blocks to the proper shade of grayish brown, and, with a little lampblack and white lead, using his fore-finger in lieu of a brush, manages to imitate the dusky head and neck with its snowy ring, and the white feathers of breast and tail.

These rude imitations, with some more artistic ones, painted in profile on sheet-iron shapes, of life-size, and a few cork-and-canvas "floaters," were quickly placed in a long line heading to the wind, which was north-west, and tailing down around the boat, the southernmost "stools" being scarce half a gun-shot from the stands.

By the time these arrangements were completed it was nearly midday, and the sky, so clear in the morning, had become clouded and threatening. The chilly north-west breeze, which had made the shelter of their boats very desirable, had died away, and a calm, broken only by variable puffs of wind, succeeded.

"We shall have rain or snow to-night," remarked La Salle to Kennedy, who, after a few moments of watching, had curled himself down in the dry straw, and begun to peruse a copy of the Daily Tribune, his inseparable companion.

"Yes, I dare say. Greeley says—"

What Greeley said was never known, for at that moment a distant sound rung like a trumpet-call on the ear of La Salle, and amid the gathering vapors of the leaden eastern sky, his quick eye marked the wedge-like phalanx of the distant geese, whose leader had already marked the long lines of decoys, which promised so much of needed rest and welcome companionship, but concealed in their treacherous array nothing but terror and death.

"There they are, Kennedy! Throw your everlasting paper down, and get your gun ready. Put your ammunition where you can get at it quick; if you want to reload. Ah, here comes the wind in good earnest!"

A gust of wind out of the north-east whistled across the floes, and the next moment a thick snow-squall shut out the distant shores, the lowering icebergs, the decoys of their friends, in fact, everything a hundred yards away.

"Where are the geese?" asked Kennedy, as, with their backs to the wind, the two peered eagerly into the impenetrable *pouderie* to leeward.

"They were about two miles away, in line of that hummock, when the squall set in. I'll try a call, and see if we can get an answer."

"Huk! huk!" There was a long silence, unbroken save by the whistle of the blasts and the metallic rattle of the sleety snow:

"Ah-huk! ah-huk! ah—"

"There they are to windward. Down, close; keep cool, and fire at the head of the flock, when I say fire!" said La Salle, hurriedly, for scarce sixty yards to windward, with outstretched necks and widespread pinions, headed by their huge and wary leader, the weary birds, eager to alight, but apprehensive of unseen danger, swung round to the south-west, and then, setting their wings, with confused cries, "scaled" slowly up against the storm to the hindmost decoy.

"Hŭ-ŭk! hŭ-ŭk!" called La Salle, slowly and more softly.

"Huk! hū-uk!" answered the huge leader, not a score of yards away, and scarce ten feet from the ice.

"Let them come until you see their eyes. Keep cool! aim at the leader! Ready!—fire!"

Bang! bang! roared the heavy double-barrel, as the white snow-cloud was lit up for an instant with the crimson tongues of levin-fire, and the huge leader, with a broken wing, fell on the limp body of his dead mate. Bang! growled the ponderous boat-gun, as it poured a sheet of deadly flame into the very eyes of the startled rearguard.

A mingled and confused clamor followed, as the demoralized flock disappeared in the direction of the next ice-house, from which, a few seconds later, a double volley told that Davies and Creamer had been passed, at close range, by the scattered and frightened birds.

La Salle reloaded, and then leaped upon the ice, and gave chase to the gander, which he soon despatched, and returning, picked up Kennedy's other bird, with three which lay where "the Baby" had hurled her four ounces of "treble B's." Composing the dead bodies in the attitude of rest among the other decoys, he returned to the boat, and for the first time perceived that the geese were not the only bipeds which had suffered in the late bombardment.

Leaning over the side-boards of the boat, the fastenings of which were broken or

unfastened, appeared Kennedy, apparently engaged in deep meditation, for his head was bowed until the broad rim of his preposterous head-covering effectually concealed his face from view.

"Here, Kennedy, both your birds are dead, and noble ones they are."

"I'm glad of it, for I'm nearly dead, too," came in a melancholy snuffle from the successful shot, at whose feet La Salle for the first time perceived a huge pool of blood.

"Good Heavens! are you hurt? Did your gun burst?" asked La Salle, anxiously.

"No, I've nothin' but the nose-bleed and a broken shoulder, I reckon. Braced my back against that board so as to get good aim, and I guess the pesky gun was overloaded; and when she went off it felt like a horse had kicked me in the face, and the wheel had run over my shoulder."

"Didn't you know better than to put your shoulder between the butt of a gun like that and a half ton of ice?" asked La Salle. "Why, you've broken two brass hooks, and knocked down all the ice-blocks on that side. Can't I do anything to stop that bleeding? Lay down, face upward, on the ice. Hold an icicle to the back of your neck."

"No, thank you; I guess it will soon stop of itself. A little while ago I cut some directions for curing nose-bleed out of the Tribune, and I guess they're in my pocket-book. Yes, here they are: 'Stuff the nostrils with pulverized dried beef, or insert a small plug of cotton-wool, moistened with brandy, and rolled in alum.' I'll carry some brandy and alum the next time I go goose-shooting."

"Or provide a lunch of dried beef," laughed La Salle; "but you had better keep your shoulder free after this, and you'll have no trouble. There, the bleeding has stopped, and you'd better load up, while I clean away this blood, and cover the boards with clean ice."

In a short time the marks of the disaster were removed, and the hunters again took shelter from the increasing storm, which had set in harder than ever. The snow, however, inconvenienced the friends but little, and as Kennedy could not read, they talked over the cause of his little accident.

"I had no idea that a gun could kick with such force. I shan't dare to fire her again, if another flock puts in an appearance," said the disabled goose-shooter.

"Had your shoulder been free, you would not have felt the recoil, which, even in a heavy, well-made gun, is equal to the fall of a weight fifty to sixty pounds from a height of one foot, and in overloaded or defective guns, exceeds twice and even three times that. It is a wonder that your shoulder was not broken, and a still greater wonder that you killed your birds."

At this moment a hail came from the direction of the other boat, which was answered by La Salle, and in a few moments, after several halloos and replies, two human forms were seen through the scud, and Ben and Creamer made their appearance, gun in hand. A brace of geese, held by the necks, dangled by the side of the latter, and showed that their shots had not been thrown away.

"This storm will last all night," said Davies, anxiously, "and we're only an hour to sundown. Creamer, here, started a little while ago to find out what you had shot. He lost his way, and was going right out to sea past me, when I called to him, and I thought we had better try to get ashore before it gets any darker."

"Does any one know in just what direction the Point lies?" asked Creamer, with that "dazed" expression peculiar to persons who have been "lost."

"Our boat lies nearly in a direct line east and west, and a line intersecting her stem and stern will fall a few rods inside of the island. We are about three quarters of a mile from the house, and by counting thirteen hundred and twenty paces in that direction, we should find ourselves near the shore, just below the house, if our course was correct," said La Salle.

"Yes," said Creamer, "but no man can keep a straight line in a storm like this, when one hummock looks just like another, and there isn't a star to lay one's course by."

"I once saw in the Tribune," said Kennedy, eagerly, "a way to lay a farm-line by poles stuck in the ground. It also recommended 'blazing' trees in the woods for the same purpose."

"To blazes with yer poles and blazed trees, Mr. Kennedy, saving yer presence; all the newspapers in Boston can't teach me anything in laying a straight line where I can have or make marks that can be seen; but there are no poles here, and we couldn't see them if we had them."

"Creamer, don't get so desperate. Kennedy has furnished the idea, and I think I can get the party ashore without any trouble. Now let all get ready to start, and

I'll lay the course for the others."

In a few moments the decoys were stacked to prevent drifting, and the boat covered so that no snow could penetrate. A pair of small oars were first, however, removed, which were set upright at either extremity of the boat, and in direct line with the keel.

"There is our proper direction," said La Salle. "Now, Creamer, take your birds, gun, and one decoy, and align yourself with these oars when you have counted one hundred paces. When you have done so, face about and turn the beak of the decoy towards the boat. Now, Ben," continued he, when this was done, "walk up within twenty yards of Creamer, and let me align you; Kennedy will go with you, and, counting one hundred paces beyond Creamer, will be aligned by you. You will then be relieved by me, and placing yourself behind Kennedy, will direct Creamer to the right position, when he has paced one hundred yards farther. At every other hundred yards an iron decoy must be placed, pointing towards the boat."

The plan thus conceived was carried out until thirteen hundred paces had been counted, when La Salle, begging all to keep their places, hurried to the front. It was now nearly dark, and nothing but driving snow was anywhere visible. Creamer was at the lead, but disconsolate and terrified, having utterly lost his reckoning.

"We're astray, sir, completely," he said, hopelessly. "Mother of Heaven!" he ejaculated, as a dim radiance shone through the scud a little to their rear, "there's the 'Packet Light,' and we are lost men."

Buffeted by the heavy gusts and sharp sleet which froze on the face as it fell, La Salle felt for a moment a thrill of the superstitious fear which had overcome the usually stout nerves of his companion; but his cooler nature reasserted itself, although he knew that no house stood in the direction of the mysterious light, which seemed at times almost to disappear, and then to shine with renewed radiance.

"There is nothing earthly about that thing, sir. Macquarrie's house is a long piece from the shore, and Lund's is hidden by the woods. See; look there, sir, for the love of Heaven!" and the stout sailor trembled like a child as the light, describing a sharp curve, rose ten or twelve feet higher into the air, where it seemed to oscillate violently for a few seconds, and then to be at rest.

"Let us hail it, any way," said La Salle; "perhaps we have made some house on the opposite shore."

"We haven't gone a mile, sir; and as for hailing *that*, sir, I'd as soon speak the Flying Dutchman, and ask her captain aboard to dinner."

"Well, I'll try it, anyhow.—'Halloo! Light, ahoy!'" he shouted, placing his hands so as to aid the sound against the wind, which blew across the line of direction between them and the mysterious light. Again and again the hail was repeated, but no answer followed.

"You may call until doomsday, but they who have lit that lamp will never answer mortal hail again. They died thirty falls ago, amid frost and falling snow, ay, and foaming breakers, on this very bar, and the men on shore saw the light shiver, and swing, and disappear, as we saw it just now."

"Well, I don't believe in that kind of light, and I, for one, am going to see what it is. Now, don't move from your place, but watch the light, and if you hear the report, or see the flash, of my gun, answer it once with both barrels, counting three between the first and second shots. If I fire a second time, call all hands and come ashore."

"Well, Master Charley, I wouldn't venture it for all on the face of the earth; but we must do something, and the Lord be between ye and harm. See, now," he added, in a lower tone, "you're a heretic, I know, the Virgin pardon ye; but I'll say a Pater and two Aves, and if you never come back—"

"There, there, Hughie, old fellow, don't go mad with your foolish fears. Pray for yourself and us, if you please, for it is a terrible night, and we may well stand in need of prayer; but do your duty like a man. Stand in your place until I summon you, and then come, if a score of ghosts stand in the way."

The next second Hughie stood alone, watching the tremulous radiance of the mysterious beacon, which La Salle rapidly approached, not without fear, it may be, but with a settled determination superior to the weakness which he felt, for the danger, exposure, and settled fears of his companion had almost transmitted their contagion to his own mind. As he drew nearer, however, the apparition resolved itself into a large reflecting lantern, suspended from a pole, in the hands of Captain Lund, who had headed a party to assist their friends to find the shore. The approach of our hero was not at first noticed, as he came up the bank a little to the rear of the party.

"I'm sure, gentlemen, I don't know what to advise; and yet we can't let them perish on the floes. We had better get the guns, and build a bonfire on the cape below; perhaps they may see it; but it wasn't for nothing that I saw those men the other night. Poor La Salle laughed at it, but if he was here now—"

Capt. Lund

CAPT. LUND HEADED A PARTY TO ASSIST THEIR FRIENDS.

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"He is here, captain, thanks to your lantern, although Hughie, who is out on the ice yonder, shivering with fright and fear, vowed that it was the 'Packet Light,' and would scarcely let me come to see what it was. But this is no time to tell long stories; so I'll give the signal at once."

Creamer, fearfully watching the luminous spot, saw suddenly beside a jet of red flame, as the heavy gun roared the welcome signal that all was well; and scarcely a half moment later a still heavier report called the perplexed and wearied party to the shore, where they found themselves but about ten minutes' walk from the house.

Half an hour later, the bustling housewife summoned them to the spacious table, which was crowded with a profusion of smoking-hot viands, among which two huge geese, roasted to a turn, attracted the attention of all. Mr. Risk saw the inquiring looks of the others, and "rose to explain."

"Davies and I claim 'first blood,' as you see, having killed this pair, which, early in the morning, flew in from the westward, and were just lighting among our decoys, when we each dropped our bird. We came in early, seeing the storm brewing, and, being warned by Indian Peter, we escaped much inconvenience, if not danger, and were able to supply a brace of hot geese for supper. We shall expect a similar contribution to the general comfort from each party in rotation, in accordance with the ancient usage of professors of our venerable and honorable mystery.

"Well, Lund," he continued, "the omen is not yet verified, although the party was nearly lost, and would have been altogether, if Hughie here had had his way, when he took your lantern for a ghost."

"Well, it does seem foolish, now that it is all over; but I have seen the 'Packet Light' myself too often not to believe in it, and so I was as simply frightened at the captain's lantern as the people of Loughrea were at Matthew Collins's ghost."

La Salle noted the look of annoyance which clouded the usually placid brow of their host, and hastened to allay the threatened storm. Rising from his seat, he

begged the attention of the company.

"As we are to spend our evenings together for some weeks, it seems to me that it would not be a bad plan to require of each of our company, in rotation, some tale of wonder or personal adventure. Hughie has just referred to what must be an interesting and little known local legend of his mother isle. I move that we adjourn to the kitchen, and pass an hour in listening to it."

The proposition met with general favor, and rising, the company passed into the unplastered kitchen, through whose thin walls and poorly seasoned sashes came occasional little puffs of the furious wind, which whistled and howled like a demon without. The gunners seated themselves around the huge fireplace, in which a pile of dried gnarled roots filled the room with light and warmth, and lighting pipe or cigar, as fancy dictated, gave a respectful attention to the promised story.

As will be gathered from the preceding conversation, Creamer spoke excellent English, but as is often the case when excited, he lapsed at times into a rich brogue. This he did to a considerable degree in relating what he was pleased to call the story of

MATTHEW COLLINS'S GHOST.

"I was only a babe in arms when my father crossed the ocean to settle down on the Fane estate as one of the number of settlers, called for by the terms of the original grant. His father was a *warm* houlder in Errigle-Trough, and had my father been patient and industhrious, he would in a few years have rinted as good an hundhred acres as there was in that section. But the agent tould of land at a shillin' an acre, with wood in plenty, and trees that grew sugar, and game and fish for every one, and my father thought that he was provided for for life, when, with his lease in his pocket and a free passage, he stepped on board the ould ship that bore us to this little island.

"He wasn't far wrong, for he died when I was fifteen, worn out with clearin' woodland, and working all winter in the deep snow at lumbering, to keep us in bread and herrin'. He was a disappointed, worn-out old man at forty, and it was only when he told of the good old times of his youth that I ever seen him smile at all, at all.

"Matthew Collins was a well-to-do farmer of the neighboring parish of Errigle-

Keeran, and had a snug cottage and barn, with a good team of plough-horses, a cow, two goats, and a pig, beside poulthry enough to keep him in egg-milk, and even an occasional fowl or two on a birthday, or holy feast. He married Katty Bane, one of the prettiest girls and greatest coquettes in the whole parish. She, however, made him a good wife and careful manager, until the events of my sthory.

"One day, late in the fall, Matthew harnessed his horses in a hay-riggin', and drove off to the bog, five miles away, to haul in his winter's firin'. He wrought all day, getting the dried turfs into a pile, and had just half loaded his team, when a stranger, decently dressed, came up to him, and asked if his name was Matthew Collins.

"'That, indeed, is the name that's on me,' said Matthew; 'and what might you be wantin' of me?'

"'I've sorrowful news for you, Mat,' said the stranger. 'Your sister Rose, that married my poor cousin Tim Mulloy, beyant the mountains, is dead, and I'm sint to bid ye to the berryin' to-morrow.'

"For a few moments Matthew gave way to a natural feeling of grief at the loss of his sister; but he soon bethought himself that he was five miles from home, and that a circuitous road of at least twenty miles lay between his house and the parish of his sister's husband.

"'I can never do it, that's certain,' said he to the stranger. 'It's five miles home, and there's changin' my clothes, and a twenty-mile drive over a road that it's timptin' Providence to attimpt in the dark.'

"'It's a great bother, intirely," said the stranger, reflectively. 'Musha! I have it. Take my clothes, and take the short cut across the Devil's Nose. In three hours you'll be at the wake, and I'll dhrive the team home and tell the good woman, and be round with a saddle-horse before mornin'.'

"'Faith it's yourself that's the dacent thing, any how; and I'm sorry that I can't be at home to thrate you with a bottle of the rale poteen. Never mind; tell Nancy it's in the thatch above the dure; and you're welcome to it all the same as if I were there myself.'

"'We won't part without a glass, any how,' said the stranger, laughingly. 'I've a pint bottle of the rale stuff, and some boiled eggs, and we'll soon have a couple

of the shells emptied, in the shake of a lamb's tail, and thin we'll change clothes and dhrink to your safe journey.'

"Accordingly the two exchanged clothes, and sat for half an hour, while the stranger described the last illness of the deceased, and the respect shown her memory by the people of her parish.

"'Divil a whole head will be left in the parish, if they dhrink all the whiskey; and there's stacks of pipes, and lashin's of tobacky, with tay and cakes, and the house in a blaze with mould candles. Is the road azy to find?' continued he. 'For I'm goin', mylone, where I never was afore.'

"'It's as plain as a pikestaff to the very door. Only take tent of the bridge at the slough, two miles beyant; for there's a broken balk that may upset ye.'

"'I'll warrant I'll look out for that. Have one more noggin. *Here's a safe journey and a dacint berrin' to us both*.'

"With this rather Irish toast, the two separated, Matthew seeing the stranger safe off the moss, and then commencing his short but fatiguing journey over the narrow mountain path which lay between him and his destination.

"Long before sunset, the careful Katty had had the delph teapot simmering among the hot peat ashes; and the well-browned bacon and mealy potatoes, carefully covered to retain the heat, only awaited the return of 'the master' from the distant bog. They had no children; but Andy, Katty's brother (a *gossoon* of thirteen), eyed the simple supper anxiously, going from time to time to the door to see if he could see the well-known gray horses coming by the old buckthorn, where the little lane joined the main road.

"The sunset, the night, came on, and Katty became hungry and out of temper.

"'Andy, *alannah*,' said she, 'run to the hill beyant, and try can you see aught of the masther; for I'm tired wid the day's spinnin', and hungry, and wake.'

"The boy went, but returned, saying that no team was in sight.

"'Thin, Andy, jewel, we'll have our supper anyhow; for the tay'll be black wid thrawin', and the bacon and praties spilt intirely.'

"Accordingly the two sat down and finished their evening meal, expecting every moment to hear the cheery voice of Matthew as he urged his *garrons* with their

heavy load up the steep lane beside the cottage.

"About nine o'clock, the wife became alarmed, and with Andy went to a neighbor's. Tim O'Connell, the village blacksmith, had just fallen asleep after a hard day's work, and woke in no very amiable frame of mind as Katty rapped at the door.

"'Who's there at all at this time of night?' said he, gruffly.

"'Only meself, Katty Collins, and Andy,' said Katty, rather dolorously, for she was now thoroughly alarmed.

"'Alice, *colleen*, up and unbar the dure. Come in, neighbor, and tell us what is the matther at all.'

"'O, Tim! Matthew's been gone all day to the bog, and isn't home yet. Could ye go wid the lad down the road, and see if anything has happened to himself or the bastes, the craters?'

"It was not like Tim O'Connell to refuse, and, calling his assistant in the forge, young Larry Callaghan, he lighted a tallow candle, which he placed in a battered tin lantern, and hastened out on his neighborly errand, while Katty was easily persuaded by Mrs. O'Connell to 'stay by the fire' until the men returned.

"The party saw nothing of the team or its owner until the dangerous road led into a narrow but deep ravine, at whose bottom an ill-made causeway led across a dangerous slough.

"'Holy Virgin, boys, but he's been upset! There's the cart across the road, and one of the bastes in the wather; but where's the masther at all? Come on, b'ys; we'll thry and save the *garrons* any way.'

"They found the cart upset as described, and one of the horses exhausted with struggling under the pole. The other, saved only from drowning by the fact that its collar had held its head against the bank, had evidently kicked and splashed until the water was thick with the black muck stirred up from the bottom.

"It was only the work of a few moments to free the horse in the road, and then the three proceeded to unloose the other, and draw him to a less steep part of the embankment, where, making a sudden effort, with a mighty plunge, he gained the road, and stood trembling and shaking beside his companion.

"'Well done, our side,' said Tim, exultingly. 'Now for the masther. They've run away I doubt, and he's.—What's the matter with you, Andy, at all? What do you see? Mother of Heaven! it's himself, sure enough!'

"Tossed up from the shallows by the convulsive plunge of the steed, whose heavy hoofs, in his first mad struggles, had beaten the head out of all shape of humanity, in the narrow lane of light cast through the door of the open lantern, lay the dead farmer, with his worn frieze coat torn and blackened, and his black hair knotted with pond weeds, and clotted with gore.

"It was scarce an hour later that the emptied cart, slowly drawn by its exhausted span, bore to the little cottage a dead body, amid the wails of scores of the simple peasants, and the hysterical and passionate grief of the bereaved wife. It was with the greatest difficulty that she was induced to refrain from looking at the dead body; although so terribly was it mangled that the coroner's jury performed their duties with the greatest reluctance, and the obsequies were ordered for the very next day.

"The body was accordingly placed in a coffin, above which deals, supported on trestles, and covered by white sheets, bore candles, plates of cut tobacco, pipes, and whiskey. Although but little of the night remained after the coroner had performed his duties, yet so quickly did the news of the accident spread that hundreds of the neighbors came in before morning 'to the wake of poor Matthew! God rest his sowl.'

"The following evening, an unusually large procession followed the remains to their last resting-place. Nothing could have been more heart-broken than the bearing of the widow. Tears, sobs, and cries proclaimed her anguish incessantly, notwithstanding the attempts of friends to assuage her sorrow.

"As they drew near the graveyard, one Lanty Casey, an old flame of Katty's, tried to comfort her in his rough way.

"'Katty, *avourneen*, don't cry so, *avillish*. There's may be happiness for you yet, and there's them left that will love ye as well as him that's gone—if they'd be let.'

"Lanty was a noted lad at fair and pattern, but he got a box on the ear that made his head ring until the body was safely deposited in the grave.

"'Who are ye that talks love to a broken-hearted woman at the very grave? O, Matthew, Matthew, that I should live to see this day! *Ochone, ochone!* are you

dead? are you dead?'

"On her way home to her solitary hearth, Katty saw ahead of her the hapless Lanty, and hastened to overtake him.

"'Lanty, *avick*," said she, sweetly, 'what were you saying there beyant, a while agone?'

"'What I'm not likely to say again. I'm not fond of such ansthers as ye gev me; an' if ye don't know when you're well off—'

"'There, there, Lanty, dear; I'm sorry for that same, but what wud the people say, an' my husband not berrid? But I mustn't be seen talkin' more wid you. I'll be alone to-night when the *gossoon* is asleep, and ye can dhrap in, and tell me what ye like, av ye plaze.'

"At about ten o'clock that night, the Rev. Patrick Mulcahy, while talking over the funeral, and the sad events which had led to it, was asked for by the young lad, Katty's brother.

"'Well, Andy, lad, what's wanting now? Is your sister feeling better, *avick*?'

"'Yes, sir; and she sint me, your riverence, to see wud ye come down and marry her to Lanty Casey the night.'

"'Are your wits gone *ashaughran*, ye *gomeral*? Or is Katty run mad altogether?'

"'It's just as I say, your riverence; and she says she'll pay you a pound English for that same.'

"'And I say that if I go down there to-night, that I'll take my whip with me to the shameless hussy. The Jezabel, and she nearly dyin' with grief this evening.'

"'An' you won't marry them, sir?'

"A staggering box on the ear with a heavy slipper flung from across the room sent the unfortunate messenger whimpering out of the door; while the priest, honest man, stormed up and down the room until the housekeeper entered with a waiter, on which were arrayed a decanter, some tumblers, a lemon, and a large tumbler full of loaf sugar.

"'Come, Peter,' said he, more calmly, 'reach the kettle from the hob, and we'll let the jade go. Perhaps she's out of her head, poor thing! and will forget all about

what she says to-night by to-morrow morning. What are you grinning at there?'

"'Do you remimber the coult ye won from me whin I bet that ye couldn't light your pipe wid the sun?'

"'Yis, Pether. Ah, I had ye thin, sharp as you count yourself!'

"'Well, now, I'll bet the very moral of him against himself that Katty'll send up again—if she don't come herself.'

"'Done! for twice as much if you will. She doesn't dare—'

"'Good evening, your riverence,' said a woman's voice. And in the doorway stood Lanty Casey and Katty Collins.

"'We've come up, your riverence, to see if you'd plaze to marry us this night. They tould us you wor angry, sur, and, indade, I don't blame you; for you don't know all. The man who lies dead beyant was able to give me a home, and to keep a roof over the heads of my poor father and mother, and I gave up Lanty here for him. Now, sir, if you'll marry us, I'll give you the pig down below—and a finer's not in the parish; and if not—'

"The speaker paused, and, touching the arm of her companion, who evidently feared to speak, retreated into the kitchen to await the decision of Father Patrick, who was almost bursting with chagrin at the loss of his wager, and anger at the boldness of his parishioner.

"Peter laughed, silently enjoying his brother's discomfiture, and then suddenly broke out,—

"'Now, what's the use, sir, of spitin' yourself? You've lost the coult, and the woman is bound to have her way. Sure, an' if you don't tie the knot, all they're to do is to sind over to Father Cahill—'

"'The hedge priest—is it? No, I'll marry them. Let them come in, Mrs. Hartigan, but no blessin' can come on such a rite as this.'

"Without a word of congratulation, the priest performed the service of his church, and in silence the pair proceeded to the cottage of the bride, where they fastened the doors and windows securely, and retired. The rising moon lighted up the surrounding scenery, and the priest and his brother sat later than usual over their 'night-caps' of hot Irish whiskey.

"'Peter,' said Father Mulcahy, 'sind young Costigan down for the pig. Perhaps to-morrow Katty will rue her bargain, and we won't get the crathur.'

"Costigan (a tight little lad of fourteen), roused from the settle-bed by the kitchen fire, soon procured a short cord and a whip, and set off on his rather untimely errand.

"A few moments before, a man dressed in holyday garb tried the doors and windows of the cottage, and, finding them securely fastened, murmured,—

""Tis frighted she is, an' I away, an' tired, too, wid spinnin', I'll be bound. Well, I'll not rise her now. There's clane sthraw in the barn, an' I'll slape there till mornin'.'

"The tired traveller had hardly laid himself down, with his head on a sheaf of oats, when he saw a youth enter the barn, and, deliberately taking a cord from his pocket, proceed to affix it to one of the hind legs of his much-prized pig, which resented the insult with a tremendous squealing.

"Matthew rose quietly, and lowered himself to the floor, catching a bridle rein, and getting between the trespasser and the wall.

"'I don't know what thievish crew claims ye, but I'll lay they'll see the marks of my hand-write under your shirt to-morrow,' said Matthew, savagely; but to his surprise the lad gave a single shriek, and sank down as if in a fit. A dash of water from the stable bucket recovered him somewhat, although his mind seemed to wander.

"'Holy angels be about us!—an' him dead and berrid—his very self—come back again!' And broken sentences of similar import were hurriedly murmured with closed eyes, as if to shut out some hideous sight; and the angry farmer was disarmed completely by the evident terror of the boy, who at last rose, fearfully opened his eyes, and looked around.

"'Yes, ye little thafe of the world, I've come in time—'

"With a meaningless yell, or rather shriek of terror, the boy rushed out of the door, fell on the frosty roadway, tearing his clothes and cutting through the skin of both knees; and heeding nothing but the terror behind, sprang again to his feet, and rushed down the lane and along the moonlit road, until, panting, bleeding, and breathless, he rushed into the priest's dining-room.

"'O, yer riverince, he's come back!' was all that the boy could find breath to say for a moment; and Peter, who was rather irascible, took up the discourse at once.

"'It's yourself that's come back in a fine plight, you graceless, rioting, fighting, thaving young scullion. Whose cottage have ye been skylarkin' round now? And where's the pig ye was sint for, at all, at all?'

"'Peace, Pether, and let me discoorse him. Don't ye know that when I sent ye for the dues of the church, ye was engaged in its sarvice,—in holy ordhers, as it were? And how comes it, then, that you come back without the pig, and looking as frighted as if Matthew Collins himself had come back?'

"'And so he has masther, dear,' said the poor boy. 'O, *wirra*, *wirra*, but afther this night I'll never be out mylone again. I shall always think that I see him forninst me, as I met him beyant, the night.'

"'Met Matthew Collins? The gossoon's crazy,' said the priest.

"'The young devil is lying, more likely. The dead don't come back to frighten honest folk, who want only their own,' said Peter, scornfully.

"'Now, Costigan, go back at wanst, and fetch the pig,' said Father Mulcahy, firmly, but kindly. 'Ye'll be ready enough to ate him this winther.'

"'O, masther, don't send me again! Ate that pig? An' if the pope himself said grace, I'd sooner starve than ate a collop of the crater. Why, either his sperit, or the devil in his shape, kapes watch over it; and all the money in Dublin wouldn't timpt me there agin after dark.'

"'Well, sir,' said Peter, savagely, 'the boy's frikened at somethin', that's certin'; and we shan't get the crather up here the night at all, unless it's done soon. It's only a stip just, and I'll go and get the pig, and find out what frighted the lad—a loose horse or cow, I'll be bound.'

"Accordingly, Peter set off on his errand, accompanied by Costigan, who went only on condition that he should not enter the barn, and only consented to go at all under threat of a tremendous thrashing if he refused.

"Scarcely an hour, therefore, had elapsed before Matthew was again awakened from sleep by the intrusion of a second midnight visitor.

"'Where is the baste, any way?' asked the man, in gruff, angry tones.

"'He's right at the ind of the haggard, in the right hand corner,' tremulously answered a boyish voice from the distance of a few rods.

"'Faith, but the villains is intent on my pig, any how,' muttered the perplexed but angry Matthew, as he saw the struggles of his favorite when the robber attempted to secure a cord to her hind leg, which he seemed to find a difficult task.

"'The curse of Crom'll upon ye for an unaisy brute, any how, Ned! Ned Costigan, I say, come, ye little divil, and help me tie the knot, ye frikened *omadhaun*. There's nothing here to be afraid of, barrin' the gray horses an' the ould cow. Come, I say.—The Vargin and St. Pather presarve me! Are ye come back?'

"'Yes, I've come back, and ye'll go back to whoever sint ye, with my mark on yer shoulthers,' said Matthew, grimly, as, suiting the action to the word, he drew a stout stick from his sleeping-place, and brought it down with emphasis upon the head and shoulders of the priest's brother, who, though ordinarily considered 'as good a man' as there was in the parish, could scarcely persuade himself that he was not the victim of a terrible dream. Although he mechanically grappled and strove with his fearful antagonist, he felt the fierce breath of a demon, as his breast pressed against that of the dead, and the fierce eyes of a fiend, or an avenging ghost, glared into his, as they fought and wrestled, now in the dark shadows, and now in the narrow lane of moonlight, which peered through the open door. It was no wonder that even the instinct of self-preservation failed to nerve him to meet such a foe, and that Matthew found it a surprisingly easy matter to give him a terrible beating.

"Fifteen minutes later, Peter, wan and covered with cuts and bruises, entered the priest's house, and swooned on the threshold. It was nearly daylight before he recovered himself sufficiently to corroborate the story of the lad, that the ghost of Matthew Collins jealously watched over his favorite pig.

"'An' why didn't he watch his wife too, Peter?' asked the priest, archly.

"'Faix! an' I dunno. But the same man set great store by that same baste—bad scran to her! I wish you had been wid us to discoorse the shpirit, and sind him back to *his place*.'

"'Faith, and only that it's daylight now, an' near time for matins, I'd just step over, and show ye the powers that are delegated to the clargy, avick. I'd like to see if Matthew Collins would dare to face me afther I've buried him dacently.'

"'An' married his wife again,' said Peter, with a feeble attempt at pleasantry.

"'I've doubts if I did wisely there, Peter. Sure and if the ungratefulness of those they love is enough to keep the dead from resting quietly, Matthew Collins should be one of the first to come back and haunt his dishonored homestead.'

"'But if all the dead min that lave wifes aisily consoled for their loss, were to come back, there'd be plinty of haunted houses,' said Peter, pithily.

"'Well, we'll watch there the night, and try to find out the mysthery,' said the priest. 'But I'm off to matins. Be sure and see that Mrs. Hartigan has the breakfast ready when I return.'

"The bell calling the peasantry to their morning service awoke Matthew, who hastened to his cottage, which he found as closely barred and bolted as the night before.

"'She's gone to chapel long before this. Well, I'll have a wash at the spring, and away to church.' Saying which, he carefully picked the straw from his coat, cleaned his dusty shoes with a wisp of dry grass, and after a thorough washing of face and hands, he took up the worn felt hat of the stranger, and set off down the lane.

"As he got nearly to the main road, a group of neighbors passed along; but instead of answering his cheerful greeting, they crossed themselves, and hastened on with longer strides, turning from time to time, and looking at him in a most puzzling manner.

"'Sure, the folks are mad,' muttered poor Matthew, 'or else 'tis late we are—that must be it. Well, we can run, any way.' And suiting the action to the word, he began to run after his neighbors, who, terribly frightened, strove with all their might to preserve undiminished the distance between them.

"'Faix, half the people is late—or is it a fire is ragin'? Well, I dunno, but I'll be on hand any how.' And Matthew, taking a long breath, pressed on after the flying crowd, which grew larger each moment, as group after group of staid and devout worshipers recognized the features of their dead neighbor, and joined the panting crowd, which, crossing and blessing themselves, and shrieking and praying with terror, sought the protection of the church, and having, as they deemed, found a refuge from the apparition, sank exhausted into their seats, to thank God for a place of safety.

"But they had reckoned without their host, for the next moment the dead man strode through the arched door, and deliberately glided towards his accustomed seat. In speechless horror the people, with one accord, arose and rushed to the altar for protection, while many rushed out through the rear entrances, to carry the terrible news far and wide.

"Pale, but resolute, attended by two trembling altar boys with bell and censer, Father Mulcahy advanced in front of the astonished cause of this unwonted disturbance.

"'In the name of the Blessed Thrinity, I command you to retire from this blissid an' sacred church to the place from whence you came.'

"'An' why wud I go back, your riverince? Shure, the body's buried, an' I've no call there now.'

"'Why, then, can you find no rest in the grave?'

"This last question 'broke the camel's back.'

"'H—— to my—There, the Lord forgive me for cursin', and in this blessed an' howly place. But are all the people mad—prastes and clarks, payrents and childher? Or am I losin' my sinses, or enchanted by the fairies?'

"'Matthew,' said the priest, solemnly, 'are you alive an' well?'

"'Yis, your riverence, if I know meself I am.'

"'Will you go to the font an' thrink a taste of the holy wather?'

"'Yes, your riverince, an it's plasin' to ye.'

"It was with much doubt that Father Mulcahy awaited the result of his test; but Matthew drank about a pint of the consecrated water, and a short conversation made all plain to the priest, and to poor Matthew, to whom the various events were far from being a matter of mirth.

"Accompanied by the priest, he went home, to the unutterable horror of the newly-married pair, which was little lessened when they found that their unwelcome visitor was not from another world.

"'I am dead to you, Katty,' said he, with a gentle sadness, so different from the burst of passion which the priest had feared, that he knew that his heart was

broken. 'All the happiness I had was in your love, and that was false. Go with your new love where I may see you no more.'

"Matthew died years after, a soured and misanthropic man; but few legends are better known in his native district than the story of Matthew Collins's ghost."

As the story ended, Risk thanked the narrator in behalf of the auditory, adding, "The storm will probably change to a thaw before morning, and if it does we must be on hand bright and early, for it will bring the main body of 'the first flight.'"

As the company rose to retire, Ben approached La Salle. "Will you tell me why you made us leave decoys at every hundred yards?"

"To help us find the way back, should we fail to reach the shore. We could have lived out a night like this in my ice-boat, but we should long since have been sleeping our last sleep beneath the snow-wreaths, had we lost our way upon the floes."

At daybreak La Salle awoke, but turned again to his pillow, as he noted the snow-flakes form in tiny drifts against the lower window panes; and it was nine o'clock before the tired sportsmen completed their hasty toilet, and seated themselves around the breakfast table.

CHAPTER III.

THE SILVER THAW.—A FOX HUNT.—ANTHONY WORRELL'S DOG.

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he snow at nine o'clock had ceased to fall, but had given place to a thick hail, which rattled merrily on roof and window pane, but soon became softer, and mingled with rain as the wind veered more to the east and south.

"We are in for a heavy thaw," said the elder Davies, "and to-morrow we shall have good sport. It is hardly worth while to get wet to the skin, however, for what few birds we shall get to-day."

"Charley," said the younger Davies, "let us go down to the bar and look up our decoys, for if we have a heavy thaw they may all be washed away and lost."

Putting on their water-proof coats, boots, and sou'westers, the young men took their guns and started for the eastern end of the island. The drifts were very heavy along the fences and under the steep banks which overhung the eastern and northern shores of the island, and huge hummocks, white, smooth, and unbroken, showed where the snow had entombed huge bergs and fantastic pinnacles. Facing the storm with some difficulty, they got out as far as the ice-boat of La Salle, which they found completely covered to the depth of two or three feet.

"We should have been smothered if we had taken refuge there last night," said Ben, as he proceeded to search for the buried decoys.

"I think not; for men can breathe below a great depth of snow, and I have heard of sheep being taken alive from a heavy drift after an entombment of twenty or thirty days."

The decoys were soon gathered, and they proceeded to the farther stand, where they took the same precaution against the expected flooding of the floes, piling the decoys into the box until a pyramid of clumsy wooden birds rose several feet above the level of the ice, which was fast becoming soft, and covered with dirty

pools of snow water and nasty "sludge."

A Fox Hunt.

"Here is the track of a fox," cried Davies, "and here is where he has killed a goose this morning;" and La Salle, on hastening to the spot, found a fresh trail leading from the main land, and beside the last decoy a slight depression around which loose feathers and clots of blood told in unmistakable terms that a single bird, and not improbably a wounded one, had alighted amid the decoys, and trusting to the vigilance of his supposed companions, had fallen an easy prey to his soft-footed assailant.

"Here comes one-armed Peter on his track," said La Salle; and in a few moments a tall, finely-built, middle-aged Micmac came noiselessly up, bearing in his only remaining hand, not a gun, but an axe.

"Where's your gun, Peter?" said Ben, carelessly; "you don't expect to kill a fox with an axe—do you?"

The Indian's brow contracted a little, and instantly relaxed, as he answered, "That not fox track at all; that Indian dog, I guess. Martin Mitchell have dog; lun alound like that. No good dog that. Sposum mine, kill um."

"Yes, Peter, I've no doubt you'd like to kill that dog very well. See, he finds his own living for himself. He killed a goose here last night, I see. I s'pose your Indian dogs will eat geese raw, but mine never would. He sat down here a moment after he had killed his bird, and left the marks of a very bushy tail. Here's some of the hair, too. By thunder! 'tis the hair of a black fox."

The Indian laughed silently, with no little admiration of the close observation of the other visible in his countenance. "Yes, that black fox. I see his track last night; trail him two tree mile dis morning. No use try to fool you; fool other white man over back there; you know trail well as Indian. No use carry gun, I think; fox in wet weather get in hollow tlee, or under big loot. I cut down tlee and knock on head with axe. But if fox on island, I lose him; no tlee there at all big enough."

"Well, Peter, his trail is straight for the end of the point, and he must be in the swamp at the other end of the island. We'll go with you and surround the swamp while you enter it. If you fail to tree him, we'll shoot him when he breaks cover,

and we'll divide equally whether one or two help to kill him." And La Salle, resting the butt of his heavy gun on his boot, drew his load of loose shot, and substituted an Eley's cartridge, containing two ounces of large "swan-drops."

A cloud settled upon the smiling face of the Indian, and he broke forth vehemently, "I no want you to help me. I need *all* that money; you got plenty. I been sick, had sick boy, sick old woman,—bery sick. I see that fox two time. No got gun; borrow money on him to pay doctor, and get blead. I borrow gun one day; sit all day, no get nothing; go home, nothing to eat. Next day, man use his own gun, kill plenty. I know fox in wet day find hollow tlee; no like to wet his tail. I say to-day I kill him, get good gun, get cloes, get plenty blead and tee. I *know* I kill that fox."

"Well, Peter, we won't trouble you. We'll go to see you kill him, and watch out to see that he don't get clear," said Davies; and the Indian, rather hesitatingly, assented.

There was little woodcraft in following the "sign," for the tracks were deeply impressed in the soft snow, and the heavy body and long neck of his prey had left numerous impressions where the fox had rested for a moment. In the course of half an hour the party had gained the shore, and, passing through several fields, found themselves in a heavy growth of beech and maple.

The fox, however, had not halted here, but emerging into a small meadow, had crossed into a close copse of young firs and elders, in whose midst a huge stump, whitened and splintered, rose some twenty-five feet into the air.

Peter groaned audibly. "That old fox mean as debbil. Know that place no good. No hollow tlee, only brush and thick branch. Fox get under loot, and eat, watch twenty way at once: well, I try, any way."

Ben and La Salle hastily passed around the woods surrounding the glade, until they reached the opposite side of the motte to that which Peter was now entering. Noticing that only a narrow space of open ground intervened at one point, Davies crept noiselessly down to the very edge of the underbrush, about sixty yards from La Salle.

He had scarcely drawn himself up from his crouching position, when a magnificent black fox crossed the opening almost at his very feet, followed by the light axe of the Indian, which, thrown with astonishing force and precision, passed just above the animal, and was buried almost to the helve in a small tree

not a yard from Davies's head.

Flurried out of his usual good judgment, Ben drew both triggers, with uncertain aim, and the fox, swerving a little, passed him like a shot. La Salle, springing forward through the narrow belt of woods, saw the frightened animal a score of rods off, making across the fields for the Western Bar. A fence bounded the field some six score yards away, under which the fox must pass, and whose top rail, scarce three feet above the level, marked the necessary elevation to allow for the "drop" of the tiny missiles used. La Salle felt that all depended on his aim, and that his nerves were at the utmost tension of excited interest; but he forced himself to act with deliberate promptitude at a moment when the most feverish haste would have seemed interminable dallying. Steadily the ponderous tube was levelled in line of the fleeing beast, until the beaded sight rested on the top rail above him. An instant the heavy weapon seemed absolutely without motion; then the report crashed through the forest, and the snow-crust was dashed into impalpable powder by a hundred riddling pellets.

The shot was fired just as the fox sprang up the slight embankment on which, as is usual, the line of fence was placed. For an instant he seemed to falter, then leaped the top rail, and disappeared beyond the enclosure.

Peter and Davies had seen the shot, and with La Salle rushed forward to note its effect, although neither hoped for more than a wound whose bleeding would ultimately disable him, when patient tracking would secure his much-prized fur. As they ran to the fence they noted the deeply-cut scores in the icy crust which marked the first dropping shot, and Peter became loud in his praises of the weapon.

"I never see gun like that; at hundred yards you kill him, sure; but no gun ever kill so far as you fire. See there, shot strike dis stump. Hah! there spot of blood on bank. Damn! here fox dead, sure enough."

"Hurrah! the Baby forever for a long shot. Charley, old boy, shake hands on it. Peter, don't you wish you hadn't been so sure of killing him without our help?"

The thoughtless triumph of the young Englishman recalled the memory of his obstinate refusal to accept the proffered aid of the sportsmen to the mind of the poor Indian. Such a look of utter disappointment took the place of his joy at the successful shot, that La Salle could scarcely contain his sympathy.

"So it is always. White man win, Indian lose; white man get food, Indian starve;

white man live, Indian die. Once, all this Indian land. No white people were here, and many Indians hunt and find enough. Now, the Indian must buy the wood which he makes into baskets. He cannot spear a salmon in the rivers. The woods are cut down, and the many ships and guns frighten off the game."

He looked a moment at the dead fox, smoothed its glossy fur with a hand that trembled with suppressed emotion, and then, with a curt "good evening," turned to go.

"I wish, Peter, you would come down to the house and skin this beast for me," said La Salle. "If you will do so carefully, and stretch it for drying in good style, I'll give you a pair of boots."

Without a word the Indian seized the dead animal and strode ahead of them, like one who seeks in bodily fatigue a refuge from anguish of spirit.

"What will you give for such a skin, Davies?" asked La Salle.

"I will give you one hundred and fifty dollars for that one. It is the largest, finest, and blackest that I ever saw."

"You have another gun like your own in your store at C.—have you not?"

"Yes, exactly like my own. I can only tell them apart by this curl in the wood of the stock."

"What is she worth?"

"I will sell her to you for fifteen pounds."

"That would be fifty dollars. Well, Ben, I'll tell you what, we must give Peter one half of the fox. I should never forgive myself if we didn't. I know he has been sick all summer, and his disappointment must be very hard to bear. Are you willing to give him half?"

"Do just as you please, Charley," said the warmhearted hunter. "I don't claim any share, for we are all on our own hook, unless by special agreement; but I shall be very glad if you are kind enough to share with him, poor fellow!"

"Well, Ben, you are to take the fox at your own price, giving Peter an order on your partner for the gun, and credit to the amount of twenty-five dollars more. The other seventy-five we divide. You have only to give me credit for my moiety, as I owe you nearly that amount."

"I'm satisfied if you are; so let us hurry up, and see Peter prepare the skin, and send him home happy."

"The finest skin I ever saw," said Risk. "It's worth three hundred dollars in St. Petersburg, if it's worth a cent."

"Who killed him?" said the elder Davies. "If you did, Ben, I'd like to buy the skin."

"I bought it myself of La Salle for one hundred and fifty. He killed it, and sold it to me. I guess I can sell to good advantage."

In the mean time Peter had drawn his *waghon*, or curved Indian knife, from his belt, and, carefully commencing at the rear of the body, skinned the animal without forming another aperture, removing the mask, and ears attached, with great nicety. With equal dexterity he whittled a piece of pine board to the proper shape, and, turning the skin inside out, drew it tightly over the batten, fastening it in place with a few tacks. His task completed, he handed it to La Salle, and rose to go. The latter restrained him, saying,—

"Hold, Peter; you must have your pay first. Here is a pair of rubber boots and some dry stockings. Put them on, and throw away those old moccasons, and take these few things to your wife."

"You very kind, brother," said Peter, simply, taking the small bundle of tea, sugar, bread, cake, and jellies which could be spared from their limited stock of "small stores."

"And, Peter," continued La Salle, "Ben and I have concluded to share with you in the matter of the fox. We have no wives yet, and therefore think about one half the price ought to go to you. This paper will get you that double-barrel of Ben's father to-morrow, if you feel like going over for it; and you will also be allowed to purchase twenty-five dollars' worth more of ammunition, food, and clothing."

The tears came into the poor fellow's eyes.

"Damn! I know you hite men. I know you heretic. I say I no hunt with you. I try cheat you on the trail, and you make Peter cly like squaw. I wish—I wish—you two, tlee, six fathom deep in river. I jump in for you if I die."

And, seizing the bundle and the precious order, he dashed the moisture from his

eyes, and took the road homeward.

"He will never repay your kindness," said Lund. "Them Indians is never grateful for anything."

"I think he will repay it, if it is ever in his power," said Risk. "Peter is one of the most honest and industrious of his tribe, and it is not his fault when his children want food."

"Well, boys," said the elder Davies, "I suppose you have done right, and that you will receive as much gratitude as we give to our heavenly Father; but, as men look at things, you have, indeed, 'cast your bread upon the waters.'"

"If it is so, Mr. Davies," said La Salle, with a solemnity unusual with him, "our reward is sure; for the promise is, 'Thou *shalt* find it after many days.'"

"But," said Lund, with a quiet twinkle in his sharp gray eye, "I'd like to bet five shillin' that, when you are repaid, it won't be in Indian bread."

"Pretty good!" laughed Kennedy, who had taken the day to finish up a large pile of "back numbers" of his favorite daily, "but I think hardly just to the Indians. Horace Greeley has given a great deal of thought to this Indian question, and although he would disapprove of supplying them with arms and ammunition, yet in all other matters would indorse your policy."

"You don't mean to say that Greeley would disapprove of letting poor Peter have a gun to shoot game to help support his family—do you?" asked Ben, in astonishment.

"Certainly I do. With that fifty dollars, he could have procured tools and seed, and started a farm on Indian Island. Instead of that, you give him the means of continuing a savage, instead of encouraging him to become a farmer and a civilized being. Horace Greeley would have tried—"

"To attempt an impossibility," said La Salle, excitedly. "As well may you expect to raise a draught horse from a pair of racers, or keep a flock of eagles as you would a coop of hens. The French have been the only people on this continent with an Indian policy founded in reason, and a just estimate of the character and capabilities of the aborigines."

"And yet they were completely driven from this continent," said Kennedy.

"True, sir; but their Indian policy made their scanty population of two hundred thousand Europeans a dreaded foe to the nearly three million colonists of English descent. They made of their savage allies an arm that struck secretly, swiftly, and with terrible effect, and a defence that kept actual hostilities a long distance from their main settlements. I believe, sir, that the philosophers of the future will condemn alike our policy of extermination, and the impossible attempt to mould hunters, warriors, and absolutely free men, into peaceful, plodding citizens of a republic."

"What else can be done with them?" asked Kennedy, sharply.

"It seems to me that in generations to come, it will be said of us, 'They did not try in those days to yoke the racer to the plough, nor to chain the hound to the kennel, while they urged the mastiff on the track of the deer; yet they failed to see that the Creator, and peculiar conditions unchanged for centuries, had moulded the races of men to different forms of government, modes of life, and varieties of avocation. The Roman conqueror of the world knew better than to put in his heavily-armed legions the flying Parthian, the light-armed horseman of Numidia, or the slinger of the Balearic Isles. The American of the past had at his disposal a race capable of being the skirmish line of his march of civilization to wrest a continent from the wilderness. As trappers, hunters, and guides; as fishermen and slayers of whale and seal; as the light horseman, quick, brave, self-sustaining, and self-reliant, the Indian was capable of valuable services to a people who offered him but two alternatives—extinction, or a dull, plodding, vegetative, unnatural existence.'"

"Well, La Salle, if you two Yankees can let your argument rest a little, we'll go down to the shore, to take a look at the ice, and see what to-morrow has in store for us," said Risk; and, as it was nearly sundown, the party hastened down to a part of the bank clear of trees, from whence they could discern the bay and the surrounding shores.

The rain was falling in gentle and melting showers; the south wind, laden with penetrating warmth, borne from lands hundreds of leagues distant, cut down drift and ice-hill with its fatal kisses; from the rocky cliff a thousand tiny cascades wept and plashed; and over the icy bonds of every brook and river another stream ran swiftly to the sea. Over the icy levels of harbor and bay rippled another sheet of fresh water, which each moment grew deeper and wider as the warm rain fell more heavily, and the withering south wind came in increasing strength.

"If this lasts all night, boys," said Lund, oracularly, "it will open the spring-holes and oyster-beds, and give the geese, which are sure to come with this wind, a certain amount of feeding-grounds which are not likely to be frozen up this winter. Come," continued he, turning away; "the geese will be getting cold, and we want to have time to hear a good yarn before we go to bed."

"It's your turn to-night, Mr. Risk," said Ben; "and we must have a story as different as possible from the last. You know all about the old notables of the country, who used to own thousands of acres, and keep horses and servants as they do on large manors in the old country. Tell us a story about some of that set, as you used to tell father and uncle Dan, down at Morell."

"I won't try to back out, gentlemen," said Risk, laying aside his meerschaum; "for the sooner I tell my story the better, as you will 'have it over with,' and hear a great many good stories before it becomes my turn to bore you again. My story is about

"Old Anthony Worrell and his Newfoundland Dog".

"In my young days, a number of the immediate heirs of the original proprietors were resident here; and among them this Major Worrell, whose estate has since been purchased by the government. He was a little, nervous, black-haired bachelor, who shared his chamber with a favorite black Newfoundland retriever, named Carlo.

"One or two domestics did the housework, and helped the farm-hands in haying, harvest, and potato-digging; and over all presided Mrs. Sims, a tall, stout, and resolute widow, with a heavy hand and a shrewish temper. With a huge bunch of keys at her side, and an eye quick to detect the smallest waste and the slightest irregularity, she kept the household in terror, and her master (poor little man!) in almost abject vassalage. A specimen of one of their daily breakfast dialogues may be worthy of reproduction.

"*She*. 'Good mornin,' sir. 'Ope you're well this morning.'

"*He*. 'Yes—quite well. Breakfast ready, eh?'

"*She*. 'Almost. Heggs just boiling when I came in. That Gillbear (Gilbert, a little, French orphan) sucks heggs, hi'm sure. Hi wonder you keep 'im hon the place.'

"*He*. 'Well, you know, Mrs. Sims, he's an orphan, and—'

"*She*. 'Well, hi like that. Han horphan! hand 'is father lives hup hin has good a farm has there his hin Tracadie.'

"*He*. 'Well, his father Gilbert died, and Lisette, his mother, married François: and then Lisette, his mother, died, and François married his cousin Christine; and then François died, and Christine married Jacques the blacksmith; and so he hasn't any father or mother, and no home, and I let him stay here.'

"*She*. 'Yes, hand you'd 'ave the place heaten hup with lazy, dirty, thieving beggars hif hit wasn't for me. Hi told your brother when 'e sent me hover. Says 'e, "My brother his too heasy, han' needs some un to see that 'e hisn't himposed hupon." Says hi, "Wen hi'm hunable to do my duty, hi've honly to return 'ome to Hingland." Wich hi've just 'ad a letter from my sister; han' hif hi must slave for sich, hi'd rather give warnin' for to-morrow come four weeks.'

"*He* (nervously). 'Why, my dear Mrs. Sims—'

"*She*. 'Yes, sir; hand that dratted dog Carlo, hevery mornin', when hi goes to hair your sheets, gives me ha start with growlin' hat me from hunder the bed-clothes, wich 'e wraps 'isself hup hin hevery mornin', sir, like has hif 'e were a Christian. Now, sir, hi'm ready to slave hand wear myself hout for you, but has for slavin' for a dirty cur and a French brat, hi've no need to, han' hi won't.'

He. 'Well, well, Mrs. Sims, we'll see what can be done—what can be done. I'll get a chain for Gilbert, and send the dog away. No, I mean I'll—No, I'll—Confound it, madam, let's have breakfast.'

"On the same afternoon Mr. Grahame, the nearest magistrate, called on business, and to him Worrell related his domestic troubles.

"'I can't do without her, for she is a splendid cook, and keeps my clothes in first-rate order. I can't bear the thought of the cookery I should have to eat, and the dirt and disorder I should see around me, if she does go away. But she's a regular Tartar, and I've no authority at all in my house.'

"'Well, Worrell, it's a hard case; but I would chain up that dog. As to poor little Gilbert, do what you think is right in spite of her. If she leaves—Ah, I have it. Go into town, and propose to one of the F. sisters. They are all good cooks and amiable women, and you'll be rid of your Tartar.'

"'Wich I'm much hobleeged to you for the name, an' the good advice you give the master, stirrin' hov 'im hup against a lone, friendless widow, wat's slaved an'

worked this six years come St. Michaelmas.'

"Mr. Grahame, of course, with the *mauvais honte* which men too generally display towards angry and unreasonable women, took an awkward leave of the angry widow, and poor Worrell, whom she treated to a lecture of half an hour, ending with a lively fit of tears and hysterics. As the poor little man turned away, leaving her in the hands of a servant, he caught her last broken objurgations.

"'An hungrateful fool, marry an' turn me hoff; ugh, ugh! fix 'im, hany 'ow.'

"The following morning Worrell rose early, and passing through the breakfast-room, received a sulky greeting from his housekeeper, and went out to over-look the labors of his men. Feeling a little unwell, he returned to his room, and finding his dog in his bed, flung him into a spare room, and getting into bed, went to sleep. Now, both dog and master had a very unhealthy habit—that of keeping the head covered with bed-clothes; and so it happened that when Mrs. Sims entered the room, she saw, as she supposed, the black ears and head of the hated Carlo.

"Revenge urged her to undue and overhasty punishment; her overcharged feelings sought relief on some object, and a stout-handled broom was in her grasp. At last vengeance was within her reach; should she relinquish it? No, a thousand times no!

"'You dirty brute!' she yelled, in fury. 'You hold rascal, I'll pay you out! I'll murder you! I'll kill you!'

"Such was the preface of a shower of blows, which suddenly broke the rest of the defenceless Worrell. Half stunned, astounded, almost paralyzed, he heard, as if in a terrible dream, the threats which accompanied the merciless blows of the assailant.

"'I've got you! Sleep again, will you? I'll kill you, you hold fool! I'll murder—Good Lord! hit's my master;' and as a bruised and bloody face, surmounting a meager figure, in remarkably scanty drapery, vanished out of the room, Mrs. Sims drew a long breath, and fainted in real earnest in one corner.

"Worrell never stopped until he reached Grahame's, who rather hastily caught up a shawl, and wrapping him in it, got him to his chamber, and into a suit of his own clothes, only about twice too large, for Grahame was one of the tallest men in the county.

"When he had composed himself sufficiently, a complaint was duly entered against Mrs. Sims for 'assault with intent to kill;' and Mrs. Sims, despite her piteous entreaties, was arrested and brought before the magistrate. Her appeals for mercy were heart-rending.

"'Ho, mercy, your washup; mercy, Mr. Worrell. Wich I thinks hit were that dratted dorg. Don't 'ang me. I never hintended—' But Worrell was inexorable.

"'But you said you would kill me, you would murder me, and you nearly did murder me.'

"'Wich I told your brother—ugh, ugh! an' I've slaved, an', ugh, ugh! an' wich it were all a mistake—ugh, ugh! 'ave mercy, gentlemen.'

"'But you said you would murder me, and you nearly did murder me, and—'

"'Peace, Mr. Worrell,' said Grahame, impressively; 'the hour of your redemption draweth nigh. Prisoner at the bar,' continued he, 'the crime which you have committed has always been held in just aversion and horror by the English nation. Repaying the trust and confidence of your master with unkind persecution and a shrewish tongue, you have finished the measure of your misdeeds by what might have proved a most brutal murder. Your unsupported statement, that you mistook Mr. Worrell for his dog, would have little or no weight on any unprejudiced jury. We, however, incline to mercy; and I therefore bind you over, in the sum of one thousand pounds, to keep the peace for six months.'

"'Wherever can I find so much money?' asked the despairing prisoner.

"'On condition that you will leave for England, I will find bail for you. Understand, however, that they will give you up, should you fail to depart at the earliest opportunity.'

"Poor Mrs. Sims went in the next ship 'bound home;' but the story got abroad at once, and Worrell never married. Great amusement, of course, was created by the recital, and it became a favorite of the members of the bar on circuit, who, however, generally expressed one regret, viz., 'that Worrell escaped alive, as the world thereby lost a most remarkable criminal case.'

"Well, that's all there is of it; and as it's nine o'clock, and we want to be up early, I think I'll conclude by bidding you all 'good night, and pleasant dreams.'"

CHAPTER IV.

THE GRAND FLIGHT.—A GOOD STRATAGEM.—THE PACKET LIGHT.

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t sunrise the next morning, the sportsmen hurried through their frugal meal, and hastened to their various "ice-houses;" for a great change had taken place in the weather, which, although the rain had ceased and the sky had cleared somewhat, was still mild and spring-like. Even as they lit their cigars at the door, they heard far up the cove the calls of the wild geese, and a scattering volley which told that the Indians had been early at their posts. Above the others arose two heavy reports, which Davies declared could come from no other gun than Peter's newly-acquired double-barrel.

With hastened steps the East Bar party took the ice, La Salle drawing behind him a long "taboggin," or Indian sled, consisting merely of a long, wide, half-inch board, turned up at one end, and forming, in fact, a single broad runner, which cannot upset, and will bear a heavy load over the lightest snow without sinking too deeply. On it were placed, besides his own gun and that of Kennedy, a heavy target rifle, a large lunch-box, and an ample bucket containing ammunition.

"You mean to 'lay them out' to-day, I guess, Charley," said Creamer, good-humoredly. "You ain't apt to want ammunition, any way."

"What will you take for to-day's bag, cash down?" asked Ben, laughing.

"Here are our decoys," said La Salle, pointing to several dark objects partially imbedded in the ice, but marking an almost perfect straight line from the boat to the inner shore of the island.

"We had a rather narrow escape," remarked Kennedy, picking up one of the decoys; "and it was well thought of to secure a retreat to our boat, in case we had failed to reach the shore."

Little time, however, was lost in conversation. The "boat" and "box" were to be cleared of the snow which had drifted inside, and concealed by fragments of ice, in place of those which the rain had melted away. The decoys were to be rearranged, heading to windward, and at least half an hour was consumed in making these necessary arrangements. At last all was ready, the guns, ammunition, &c., were placed in the boat, and La Salle had gone to hide the sledge behind a neighboring hummock, when, turning his head, he saw Davies and Creamer running hastily to their box, and Kennedy frantically gesticulating and calling on him to do the same.

With the best speed he could make on such slippery footing, La Salle crossed the intervening space, and threw himself down into the boat, panting and breathless with exertion. After a moment's breathing space, he slowly raised his head so that his eyes could just see over the edge of the shooting-boat. To the east he heard the decoy-calls of Creamer and Davies, and, somewhere between himself and them, the low, questioning calls of the wished-for geese.

"They are near us somewhere, Kennedy," he whispered, "and, I guess, coming in to our decoys. Don't fire until I tell you. Here they come. No, they sheer off. Yes, there's one scaling down; there's another. They're all coming. We've got them now."

The goose is far from being the silly fowl which popular belief supposes him to be, even when tamed and subdued, and, in a state of nature, is one of the most wary of birds. The flock in question, flying in from the narrow, open channels of the Gulf, had seen the decoys, and heard the calls of Ben and Creamer, who had not yet completed their preparations. Swooping around the box at a safe distance, the wary leader decided that all was not right there, and swung over the leading decoys of La Salle, and doubtless wondering at the apathy of the strange geese which refused to answer his calls, gave a signal which caused his flock to describe a circle around the boat, full forty rods away. Still nothing could be seen which could warrant a well-founded suspicion; and one or two of the younger birds, impatient of restraint, and anxious for rest and food, set their broad pinions, and, with outstretched wings, scaled down to the decoys, alighting on the ice not twenty feet from the muzzles of the concealed guns. Their apparent safety decided the rest, and in twenty seconds as many geese, with clamorous cries, were hovering over the heads of La Salle and his companions.

It takes a quick eye, steady hand, and good judgment, to kill a partridge in November, when, with a rush of wings like an embryo whirlwind, he gets up under your feet, and brushes the dew from the underbrush with his whizzing wings. It is not every amateur that can kill woodcock in close cover, or well-grown snipe on a windy day; but there are few, who can do these things, who can kill with both barrels in their first goose-shooting. The size and number of the birds, the wary and cautious manner of their approach, the nice modulations necessary to "call" them successfully, and the reckless sweep with which they seem to throw aside all fear, and rush into the very jaws of death,—all these combine to unsettle the nerves and aim of the novice.

All this Kennedy experienced, as he saw above him twenty outstretched necks,

with jetty heads, whose eyes he felt *must* discern the ambush; twenty snowy bellies, against which as many pairs of black, broad, webbed feet showed with beautiful effect, and forty broad pinions, which seemed to shut out the sky from view, and present a mark which no one could fail to hit. At the word he pointed his heavy gun at the centre of the thickest part of the flock and fired. At the first barrel a dead bird fell almost into the boat; but the second seemed without effect. La Salle "lined" four as they flapped their huge wings hurriedly, striving to flee from the hidden danger, killing three and breaking the wing of a fourth, who fluttered down to the ice, and began to run, or, rather, to waddle rapidly away.

Kennedy seemed about to go after the wounded bird, but La Salle laid his hand on his arm.

"Don't move, Kennedy, and he will get us another bird," said he, reloading his heavy gun with a long-range shot cartridge. "We can get that bird any time; and there is his mate flying round and round in a circle."

"You won't get a shot at her," said Kennedy, as she warily kept out of ordinary range, and finally alighted near the gander, which, weak with pain and loss of blood, had lain down on the ice about one hundred and fifty yards distant.

"I should not despair of killing her with 'the Baby,' charged as she now is, even at a far greater distance; but I have a surer weapon for such a mark in this target-rifle."

As he spoke, he drew from under the half-deck of the boat a heavy sporting-rifle, carrying about sixty balls to the pound, and sighted with "globe" or "peep" sights. Taking a polished gauge which hung at his watch-chain, he set the rear sight, and, cocking the piece, set the hair-trigger. Noiselessly raising the muzzle above the gunwale, he ran his eye along the sights. A whip-like crack echoed across the ice, and the goose, pierced through the lower part of the neck, fell dead by the side of her wounded mate, which, frightened by the report, hastened to increase the distance between him and such a dangerous neighborhood.

"I'll save you a half-mile run, Kennedy," said La Salle, raising "the Baby" to his face.

The wounded bird suddenly paused, drew himself up to his full height, and spread his wings, or rather his uninjured pinion. The huge gun roared. The closely-packed *mitraille* tore the icy crust into powder, fifty yards beyond the doomed bird, which settled, throbbing with a mortal tremor, upon the ice, shot

through the head.

"That was a splendid shot of yours, La Salle," said Kennedy, in amazement.

"You are wrong in that statement, Kennedy," replied he. "The shot any one could have made, but the reach of that gun, with Eley's cartridge, is something tremendous. When I first had her I fired at a flock at about four hundred yards distance. Of course I killed none, but I paced three hundred and twenty-five yards, and found clean-cut scores, four and five inches long, in the crust, at that distance; and I have more than once killed brant geese out of a flock at forty rods."

"Look, Charley! What a sight!" interrupted Kennedy. The sky had cleared, the sun shone brightly, the wind had gone down, and the strange stillness of a calm winter's day was unbroken. From the west high above the reach of the heaviest gun, and almost beyond the carry of the rifle, came the long-expected vanguard of the migrating hosts of heaven. Flock upon flock, each in the wedge-shaped phalanx of two converging lines, which ever characterize the flight of these birds, each headed by a wary, powerful leader, whose clarion call came shrill and clear down through the still ether, came in one common line of flight, hundreds and thousands of geese. All that afternoon their passage was incessant, but no open pool offered rest and food to that weary host, and in that fine, still atmosphere it was useless to attempt to deceive by crude imitations of the calls of these birds. And so, as the leaders of the migratory host saw from their lofty altitude the earth below, for many a league, spread out like a map, from which to choose a halting-place, the marksmen of the icy levels had little but the interest of the unusual spectacle for their afternoon's watching. Now and then, in answer to their repeated calls, a single goose would detach itself from the flock and scale down through the air, as if to alight, but nearly always would repent in time, and with quickened pinions return to its companions. Still, occasionally, one would determine to alight, and setting its wings, circle around one of the stands, and finally be seen, by the occupants of other ice-houses, to sweep close in to the concealed ambush. Then would follow a puff or two of smoke, a few distant reports, and the dead bird, held up in triumph, would convey to his distant friends the sportsman's fortune.

Several birds fell in this way to the lot of our friends of the East Bar, and La Salle and Kennedy got one each; but the sport was too tedious, and La Salle, taking a bullet-bag and powder-flask from his box, proceeded to count out ten bullets, which he laid carefully before him.

"I am going to try to bring down at least one goose from those flocks which pass over us nearly every moment. They are certainly four hundred yards high, and I shall aim at the leader of the flock in every case, giving him about ten feet allowance for headway."

The first ball was without effect, although the leader swerved like a frightened steed as the deadly missile sung past him. The second cut a feather from the tail of the bird aimed at; and the third failed likewise. At the fourth shot the leader swerved as before, and then kept on his way.

"You might as well try to kill them a mile off, as at that distance," said Kennedy, disparagingly.

"I hit a bird in that flock, and I think the leader, at that; for I heard the rap of the ball as it struck. It may have been only through his quill-feathers. No; there's the bird I hit. See, he can't keep up with the flock."

The huge gander last fired at had hardly gone a hundred yards, ere, despite his endeavors, he had lowered several feet below the flock. In the next decade, the distance was increased to sixty feet, and in the third to as many yards. In the last hundred yards of his flight he sank rapidly, although struggling nobly to regain the flock; and when about fifty yards above the ice, he towered up a few feet into the air, and fell over backward, stone dead, with a rifle-shot transfixing his body, in the region of the heart. On weighing him he turned the scale at fifteen pounds.

Of the remaining six shots but one was effective—breaking the wing-tip of a young female, which was secured for a live decoy.

Kennedy now proposed a plan for approaching a large flock, which had alighted about a half mile distant on the sea-ice. Taking the taboggin, which was painted white, from its concealment, he tied to its curved front a thin slab of snowy ice, and laying his gun behind it, approached the flock as near as possible, under cover of the hummocks. About three hundred yards of level ice still intervened, and lying down behind his snow-screen, he slowly moved his ingenious stalking-horse towards the flock. Had he understood the nature of the birds thoroughly, it is probable that his device would have succeeded splendidly; but when he was still about a hundred yards distant, the wary leader became suspicious, and gave a note of alarm. In an instant the whole flock, with outstretched necks, stood prepared for flight. Had he lain still, it is probable that the birds would have relaxed their suspicious watchfulness, and allowed him to get nearer; but thinking that he should lose all if he tried a nearer approach, he fired, killing one

and wounding another, both of which were secured.

Just before dark a slight wind sprang up, and a few flocks, flying low about the harbor, came in among the decoys, and for a time the fire was quite heavy, and the sport most exciting. Taken all round, this day was the best of the season. Ben and Creamer received fifteen, La Salle and Kennedy twelve, and Davies and Risk eighteen birds—in all, forty-five geese. On arriving home they found a hearty supper awaiting their attention, after a due observance had been paid to the rites of the toilet. This observance seemed to demand much more time than ever before, to the great amusement of Lund, who had anticipated as much all day.

"Are all you folks going sparkin', that you are so careful of your complexions? Goodness! why, you've more pomatums, oils, and soaps than any court beauty!"

There was some truth in this latter charge, for Ben and Creamer, after washing and a very gingerly use of the towel, anointed their flaming visages with almond oil. Kennedy, in his turn, approached the only mirror the house afforded, and applied to his blistered nose and excoriated cheeks the major part of a box of Holloway's Ointment; and even La Salle's dark face seemed to have acquired its share of burning from the ice-reflected rays of the sun. Davies and Risk, when called to supper, smelled strongly of rose-scented cold-cream; and Lund was unsparing in sarcastic remarks on the extreme floridness of complexion of the entire party.

"Ben, don't have any powder lying round loose to-morrow, with such a face as that. As for Creamer, he can't have any cotton sheets to-night, for fear of a conflagration. I don't think I ever saw anybody burn as bad as Kennedy has; and this is only the first day, too. A few days more like this would peel him down to an 'atomy. As to La Salle, he's too black to take any more color, but Risk and Davies won't dare to go home for a good two weeks at least."

In truth, the whole party had received a notable tanning, for the winter's sun, weak as it is compared with its summer fervor, has never such an effect upon the exposed skin, as when its rays are reflected from the millions of tiny specula of the glistening ice-field. The free use of soothing and cooling ointments will prevent the blistering and tan, to a great extent; but many on their "first hunt" lose the cuticle from the entire face; and many a seal has been lost on the floes, owing to the rapid decomposition produced by the sun's feeble rays thus intensified.

Notwithstanding their "tanning", however, the party were in splendid spirits, and ate their roast goose, potatoes, and hot bread with a gusto which far more delicate viands at home would fail to provoke. As the meal proceeded, and the merry jest went round, all feelings of fatigue, pain, and discomfort were lost in the revulsion of comfort which a full meal produces in a man of thoroughly healthy physique. How few of us in the crowded cities know, or indeed can appreciate, the pleasures of the hardy sportsman. To bear wet, cold, and discomfort; to exercise patience, skill, and endurance; and to undergo the extreme point of fatigue, was the sum of nearly every day's experience of the members of the party; but when their heavy guns and cumbrous clothing were laid aside, the rough chair and cushionless settle afforded luxurious rest, the craving appetite made their coarse fare a delightsome feast, and when, warm, full-fed, and refreshed, they invoked the dreamy solace of the deity Nicotiana, the sense of animal pleasure and satisfaction was complete.

"Is your pipe filled, Creamer?" asked Lund, carelessly.

"Yes; but you'll not get it until you give us the story you're to tell us this night. Faith, there's not one of us can beat you at the same trade, and it's little of fact that you'll give us, any how."

"For shame, Hughie, to malign the credibility of an old friend in that way, and me the father of a family. I'm almost ready to swear that you shan't have a yarn from me for the whole spring. To accuse me of yarning—me that—"

"That humbugged the whole Associated Press of the United States no longer ago than the war with the southerns. I mind myself how you told them at Shediac, that the Alabama was down among the fishermen in the bay, like a hawk among a flock of pigeons. Faith, you had twenty of them taken and burned before you stopped that time, and the telegraph operator at Point de Chêne was hopping all the evening between the boat and the office, like a pea in a hot skillet," retorted La Salle, laughing. "Ah, Lund! you mustn't plead innocent with us, who have been humbugged by you too many times already. But come, captain, draw on your imagination, and give us a regular stunner—one without a word of truth in it."

"Well, gentlemen," answered Lund, deliberately, "I ain't got anything to say to that young jackanapes, for nobody *that* ever heard *him* tell stories will ever believe anything he says again. But I mean to have my revenge somehow, and so I'll tell you a story that is as true as gospel, and yet you'll hardly believe a word

of it. We who live here on this little island call it the story of

"The Packet Light.

"About thirty years ago, my wife's father, old Mr. Bridges, lived in a snug little log house down in the next field, towards the Point. He was a young man then, and my wife here was a little girl, unable to do more than to drive home the cows, or help mind the younger children. The island is uncivilized enough now, sir, but in those days, besides the old French military road to St. Peter's, and a government mail route to St. Eleanor's, there was nothing but bridle-paths and rough trails through the woods. Men came to market with horses in straw harnesses, dragging carts with block-wheels sawn from the butt of a big pine; and often when twenty or thirty of them were drinking into old Katty Frazer's, the beasts would get hungry, and eat each other loose.

"It was next to an impossibility to get any money in exchange for produce or labor, and everything was paid for in orders on the different dealers for so many shillings' or pounds' worth of goods. In winter a whale-boat on runners carried the mail between the Wood Islands and Pictou, and in summer a small schooner, called the Packet, sailed with the mail, and what few passengers presented themselves, between the capital and the same port.

"It was in the last of November that year that the Packet made her last cruise. The weather was freezing cold, with a thick sky, and heavy squalls from the south of west, when she struck on the East Bar, near the main channel. They put down the helm, thinking to slide off; but she only swung broadside to the waves, and as the tide was at ebb, she was soon hard and fast, with the sea making a clean breach over her.

"Captain Coffin, with the four other men, got into the rigging with a flag of some kind, which they fastened at half mast, as a signal of distress. It was about midday when they ran on the bar, and Bridges saw them, and realized their danger at once; and their cries for help at times rose above the roar of the ravenous seas. With the help of his wife he launched a light boat, but long before he got into the sweep of the heavier breakers, he saw that she could never live on the bar, and it was with great difficulty that he regained the shore. At nightfall, although the hull was badly shattered, no one had perished, and the tide had so far abated that the party could easily have waded ashore; and Captain Coffin and another man, after vainly attempting to induce the other three to accompany

them, started themselves.

"The others charged them with cowardice in leaving the vessel, said that the wind would go down, and they could get the craft off at flood-tide, and so prevailed over the better judgment of the captain and his companion that they returned to the fated vessel, and prepared, as well as possible, for the returning tide.

"As the tide rose, the sea came with little, if any, diminution of fury; and until nearly midnight Bridges watched the signal lantern, which called in vain for the aid which it was not in the power of man to bestow. Intense cold was added to the other horrors of their situation, and the heavy seas came each hour in lessened fury, as the water thickened into 'sludge.' At eleven o'clock the tide was at its height; the seas had ceased to sweep across the hogged and sunken hull, and a sheet of thin ice reached from the shore to the vessel's side. Captain Coffin tried the ice, and, finding that it would bear his weight, decided to try to reach the Blockhouse Light, which shone brightly three miles away.

"He summoned the others; but two of the others, who had persuaded him to remain on board, were already frozen to death; the third decided to make the attempt, but walked feebly and with uncertain steps, and about a mile from the vessel succumbed to the piercing cold, falling into that fatal sleep from which few ever waken, in this life at least. Coffin's companion, a strong, hardy sailor, reached the light-house alive, but swooned away, and could not be resuscitated; and Coffin barely escaped with his life. He was terribly frost-bitten, but was thawed out in a puncheon of cold water, the right foot, however, dropping off at the ankle; but he escaped with life, after terrible suffering.

"The schooner sank, in the spring, at the edge of the channel, when the moving ice forced her into deeper water; and at very low tides her battered hull may still be seen by the passing boatman. But ever since that fatal night, whenever a storm from that quarter is threatened, a ball of fire is seen to emerge from the depths where lies the fated packet, and to sway and swing above the water, as the signal lantern did on the swaying mast of that doomed vessel. Then, if you but watch patiently, the ball is seen to expand into a sheet of crimson light, terribly and weirdly beautiful, until the eye can discern the shadowy outline of a ship, or rather schooner, of fire, with hull and masts, stays and sails; and then the apparition again assumes the shape of a ball, which is lost in the sea.

"At times it appears twice or thrice in the same night, and often the herring-

fisher, after setting his nets along the bar, sees behind his boat, as he nears the shore, the apparition of the 'packet light.' Since that night of wreck and death, no dweller on this island has passed a year without seeing it, and it is so common that its appearance awakens no fear; and among the fishers of Point Prime, and the farmers of the opposite shores, there are few who will not bear witness to the truth of my story."

"It is a little singular," said Risk, "that a ship is the only inanimate object ever seen as an individual apparition. There are not many of these ghostly ships on the seas, however. I do not remember to have heard of more than one—that of the celebrated 'Flying Dutchman,' off the Cape of Good Hope."

"It's no wonder, sir," said Lund, warmly, "that sailors suppose ships to be haunted, and also to be capable of becoming ghosts themselves, when you sit down and think how differently every one views a vessel, as compared with a house, or store, or engine. Why, there are no two ships alike, and two were never built just alike. There are lucky and unlucky ships, and ships that almost steer themselves, while others need a whole watch at the tiller in a dead calm. But I think that you are mistaken as to the 'Flying Dutchman' being the only other 'flyer,' as the sailors call them, for they are often seen in the Pacific, in the 'Trades.'"

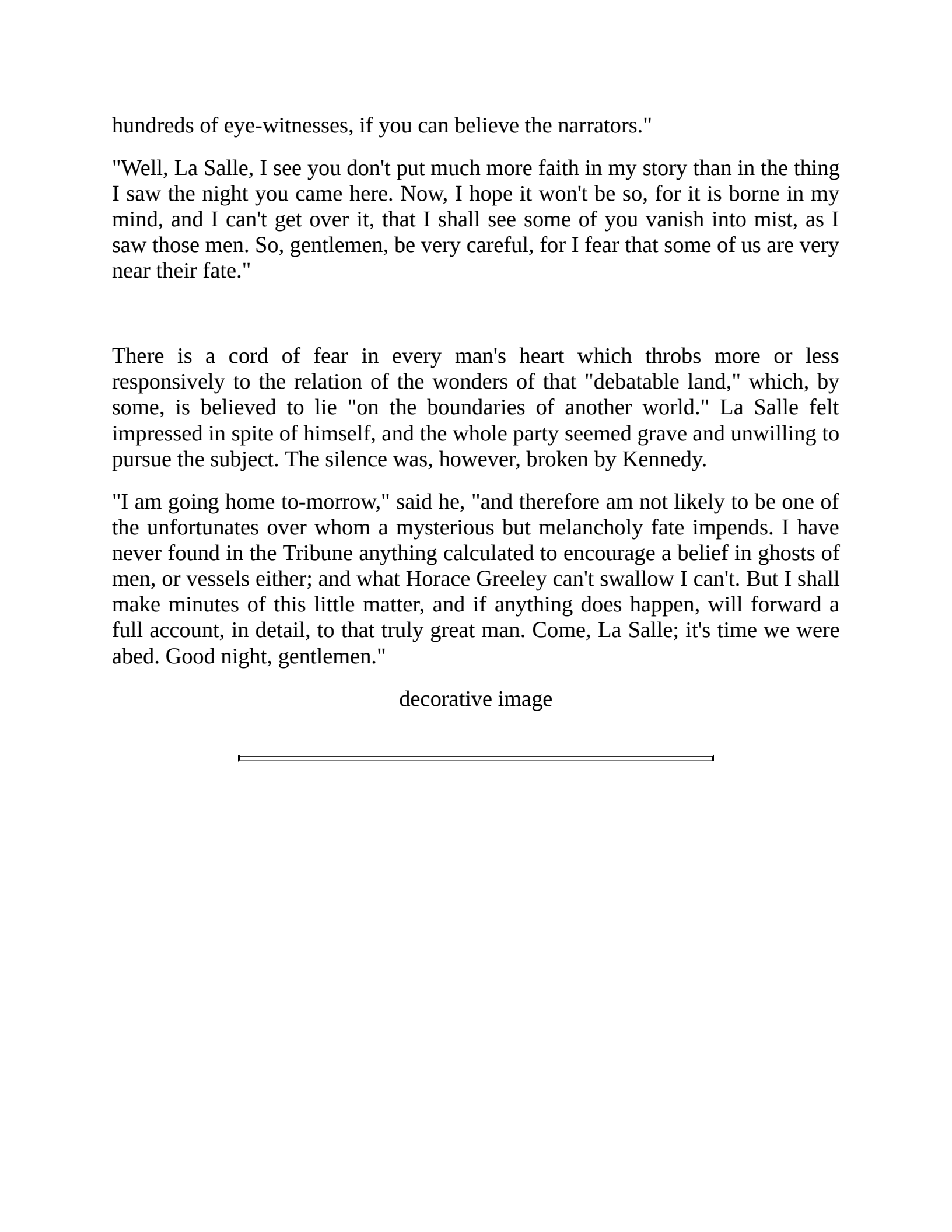
"I can't swear to the truth of Mr. Lund's story, but I can affirm that the 'fire ship' is a myth, universally recognized among the sea-going population of our coast, from the Florida Keys to the mouth of the St. Lawrence. Off the coral reefs, the crime-accursed slaver or pirate haunts the scene of her terrible deeds. Amid the breakers of Block Island, the ship wrecked, a generation ago, by the cruel avarice of men long since dead, still revisits the fatal spot when the storm is again on the eve of breaking forth in resistless fury. The waters of Boston harbor, two centuries ago, presented to the wondering eyes of 'divers sober and godly' persons, apparitions similar to those narrated by our veracious friend, the captain. The lumberers of the St. John tell, with bated breath, of an antique French caravel, which sails up the Carleton Falls, where no mortal vessel or steamer can follow. And the farmers and fishermen of Chester Bay still see the weird, unearthly beacon which marks the spot where the privateer Teaser, chased by an overwhelming English fleet, was hurled heavenward by the desperate act of one of her officers, who had broken his parole. As for the Gulf, the myth exists in a half dozen diverse forms, and all equally well authenticated by

hundreds of eye-witnesses, if you can believe the narrators."

"Well, La Salle, I see you don't put much more faith in my story than in the thing I saw the night you came here. Now, I hope it won't be so, for it is borne in my mind, and I can't get over it, that I shall see some of you vanish into mist, as I saw those men. So, gentlemen, be very careful, for I fear that some of us are very near their fate."

There is a cord of fear in every man's heart which throbs more or less responsively to the relation of the wonders of that "debatable land," which, by some, is believed to lie "on the boundaries of another world." La Salle felt impressed in spite of himself, and the whole party seemed grave and unwilling to pursue the subject. The silence was, however, broken by Kennedy.

"I am going home to-morrow," said he, "and therefore am not likely to be one of the unfortunates over whom a mysterious but melancholy fate impends. I have never found in the Tribune anything calculated to encourage a belief in ghosts of men, or vessels either; and what Horace Greeley can't swallow I can't. But I shall make minutes of this little matter, and if anything does happen, will forward a full account, in detail, to that truly great man. Come, La Salle; it's time we were abed. Good night, gentlemen."



CHAPTER V.

A MAD SPORTSMAN.—SNOW-BLIND.—A NIGHT OF PERIL.

Top

he next morning shone bright and clear, and the gunners were at their posts in expectation of a good day's sport. They looked in vain, however, for any indications of open water, and a hole, sunk with the axe to the depth of eighteen inches, failed to reach salt water, although several layers of sweet, fresh water were struck; and the little hollow furnished them many draughts of an element nowhere more welcome than upon the spring ice. The sun shone brightly, their faces, still sore and feverish with yesterday's exposure, became sorer than ever, and the neck became chafed wherever it rubbed against the coat collar.

Still, these were minor evils amid the excitement of their occupation, for many flocks of wild geese were seen; and the appearance of a flock, however remote, is always the signal for every gunner to get under cover at once. A small flock of seven were completely destroyed that morning, in a manner that deserves recording here.

They were first seen striking in from the Gulf, and swinging well to leeward,—for the wind was westerly,—scaled in to the stand occupied by Davies and Creamer, who were lying down taking their noon lunch, and received no warning of their approach until they saw the flock scaling over their heads. Seizing their guns, both fired as quickly as possible, Ben a little the first. His first barrel missed, but the second, aimed at the same bird, brought it down. Creamer's first barrel went off in the act of cocking, in the hurry and agitation of the surprise; and letting the muzzle of his gun drop, he stood stupidly gazing at the departing flock, until roused by Davies's "Give them t'other barrel, any way." Raising his gun, he fired instantly, and killed a fine gander, which fell dead a hundred and twelve yards from the stand.

As if blinded by the unexpected danger, the remaining five swung just inside of the ice-boat, where La Salle and his companion, who had seen them from the first, picked out a brace at long but practicable range, while the retreating birds

flew up the channel towards Nine Mile Creek, where two more fell to Risk and the elder Davies. For over an hour the remaining bird flew with clamorous cries about the scene of his bereavement, until a stranger, who had erected an ice-house, and placed a few rude decoys a few hundred yards from the bar, called him down, and fired a shot which dropped him on the ice.

Gie me my Guse

"GIE ME MY GUSE, MON, AND DINNA DELAY ME." Page 97.

He seemed to be little hurt, however; for, getting to his feet, he walked rapidly away in the direction of the sea ice, followed by the stranger, who did not attempt to use the long gun which he carried with him even when the bird took wing and flew heavily between the ice-houses on the East Bar, where a long shot from La Salle's gun brought him down dead. La Salle brought in the bird, and while reloading his gun, the stranger came up and claimed it as his.

He was a tall, lean, sharp-featured man, with long, lank hair, a dark complexion, and large lack-luster eyes, imbedded in cavernous hollows. His gun was not loaded, nor did he wear either shot-bag or powder-horn; and his weapon, an ancient Highland Scotch "fusee" changed to percussion, seemed as worn out and dilapidated as the owner.

"Gie me my guse, mon, and dinna delay me, for I hae much to do the day, and I munna be hindered in my mission," was the strange salutation of the original, as he leaned upon his gun at the side of the boat.

"You are welcome to your goose, friend, although I fear that you would have had a long chase, if the Baby there had not put in her word in the matter. Here is your bird, sir;" and La Salle handed the body to the unknown, who, after examining it closely, sighed heavily, and replied,—

"It's a braw bird, but it's nae the king o' the geese."

"The king of the geese, friend? What do you mean?" said Kennedy, sharply.

"O, naething; that is, naething to ye, sirs; but to me, O yes, to me everything. Ah," said he, plaintively, "how mony days hae I sat through storm, and frost, and sleet! how mony nights hae I watched in the still moonlight, amang the reedy creeks! how mony times I hae weized a slug through a bird a'maist amang the

clouds! but I hae had a' my labor in vain, in vain."

"But how do you know that you have not already shot the king of the geese?" said La Salle, anxious to investigate the peculiar monomania of this poor lunatic; for such, indeed, he evidently was.

"Why, mon," said he, evidently surprised at the absurdity of the question, "by his croun, of course. The king has ae braw croun o' white an black fedders, an' I'se reckon ye's never seen a guse like that ava'—hae ye now?" he asked, anxiously.

"I have never seen any such bird," said La Salle; "but why do you care so much about shooting this rare bird?"

"Weel, I'll tell ye, sin ye were kin' till me, an' did na keep the guse fra' me. Ye must promise me that ye will na try to kill it wi' your ain hands, for I must kill it mysel'."

"We promise," said La Salle, encouragingly, while Kennedy gave a half-pitying nod of the head.

"Weel, when I was young I cared for naething but the gun, an' mony a beating I got for wark negleckit, an' schule-days wasted in the woods, or on the ice. As I grew older I cared more an' more for huntin', an' although I killed mair than ony three in the settlement, I was never satisfied. Ance I sat here on a could day in April; the ice had gane off the bar, but the flats were yet covered, and I knew that until the win' changed the ice would not be carried off.

"Sae, as I sat an' saw the breakers roolin' in an' breakin' an' heavin' the outer ice, I saw mony flecks pass under the lee of the Governor's Island, an' then I grew mad like, an' swore an' cursed at my ill luck.

"'Ay, my lad, but you're right;' an' turnin', I saw an ould man wi' dark eyes an' a coat of black furs stannin' beside me.

"'I've seen i' the Bible,' said I, 'that man was gi'en "dominion ower the beasts o' the earth an' the fowls o' the air," but I canna do as I'd wush wi' thae cursed geese ower there.'

"'Verra richt; ye're verra richt, young man,' said he. 'What wud ye gie to be able to kill as mony fowl as ye list, an' never miss ava?'

"It seemed as I were mad at th' thocht. 'I'd gie my saul,' said I.

'"Well, hae your wish, laddie,' said he; 'it's a sma' penny fee for so dear a bargain;' and, turnin', I fand mysel' alone, an' not a saul upon the ice, far or near. Weel, that day I killed birds until I had nae mair pouther an' grit-shot; an' ilka day I went I had the like luck; but my min' was ill at ease, an' I grew sad, an' dared na gae to prayers, or the kirk; for then hell seemed to yawn under me. At last they said I was mad, an' I went awee tae th' 'sylum yonder i' th' town, an' then I gat some sleep; an' ane nicht I saw in a dream a woman a' in white, an' she laid her cool, moist han' on my hot forehead, an' tauld me she would save me yet. 'It was th' auld enemy that ye forgathered wi' on th' ice, an' ye are his until ye can kill th' king o' th' geese; an' then ye ken whaever carries his croun o' black an' white feathers can unnerstand th' language o' all fowl, an', wha' is more, call them to himsel', sae that he canna' fail to hae his wull o' them. Then, laddie, ye wull hae earned yoursel' th' penny-fee for whilk ye hae perilled your saul.

'"But,' said she, 'my ain bairn, when ye hae won the croun, use it na' at all, though a' the fiends fra' hell tempted ye, but carry it to the kirkyard at mirk midnight; an' when ye hae cannily lichted a bit bleeze, burn the king's croun, an' say wha' I shall tell ye. "I gie back more than I hae taken, an' I rest on Christ's smercy;" an' then shall ye be safe an' happy if ye fail na' to be constant in gude warks.'

"Then, sirs, the vision faded, an' I woke calmer an' happier than for many a lang day; an' a few days after, they aye sent me hame, but the folk say I've a bit bee in my bannet yet. But sin' that time, I hae hunted a' I can. I get mony birds, an'," lowering his voice, "yesterday I killed thretty-seven."

A long whistle from the astonished Kennedy broke up the conference, and the offended lunatic walked angrily away.

"He hasn't had a gun until to-day, to my certain knowledge," said Kennedy; "and I saw him yesterday afternoon taking aim at a goose that had lighted among his decoys, along the helve of his axe."

"Well, well! No one believed him, of course; but, for Heaven's sake, when you express incredulity again, wait until the lie is finished, if I am in the party!" grumbled La Salle.

"Well, never mind; he got through with the best part of it; and the great wonder is, how a distempered brain could imagine all that impossible but well-connected delusion."

"Kennedy," said La Salle, with unusual gravity, "how can we decide that it is all a delusion? Few men, indeed, have claimed to see the devil, to whom they sell themselves daily for trifles lighter than the hunter's meed of unrivaled success; and who can say that the story of yonder madman is more or less than the fruit of the idle habits and unbridled temper which burned up happiness, and consumed his reason? There are few who go mad who would have done so had they at the first governed and denied themselves, and been content to enjoy in reason the benefits of the great Giver."

"There is much that is true in what you say, and I've got a piece in this very Tribune which bears on that point. I'll read it to you. Hang me if ever I saw the like! Where's Davies' ice-house? Is there a fog coming up, or am I dizzy?"

"O, that's nothing," said La Salle, laughing. "You're only going blind—snow-blind, I mean. You know that Kane tells about his people using goggles to prevent snow-blindness; and you left yours off yesterday and to-day."

"Well, it's a curious thing. I can barely see you now; and I know I could not find my way home to save my life. But what shall I do? Will it last long?"

"If I had but a handkerchief full of clay, I could cure it in half an hour; but lie down in the straw, and get your head under the half-deck, where you can see neither sun nor snow, and I think you will rest yourself enough to see pretty well by the time we want to go home."

But Kennedy was fated to lie in impatient helplessness during the remainder of the afternoon. Several fine flocks came in to the decoys; and La Salle, using the double-barrel first, and firing the huge duck-gun at long range, killed three, and sometimes four, out of each flock, while Kennedy groaned in anguish of spirit. At last he could bear it no longer.

"Keep close, Kennedy; there's another flock coming, and the finest I've seen this year. There's twenty at the least, and they're coming right in."

"Give me my gun, Charley. I can't see much, but I can a little, and I can fire where I hear them call. This is my last day; for Patrick is coming out to-night with the boys, and I go in with them. Where are the birds now?"

"Right dead to leeward. Ah-h-huk! ah-h-huk! Here they come, low down, and ready to light. Ah-h-huk! ah-h-huk! Now, Kennedy, can you see them?"

"Yes; that is, I see something like flies in a black gauze net. Are those geese?"

"Yes, and close to us; so up and fire."

Bang! bang! crashed the heavy double-barrel, with both reports nearly blended in one, and Kennedy was driven back by the recoil against the rear top board of the boat. Nearly bursting with laughter, La Salle "lined" the flock as they swung off, killing and wounding three.

"Are you hurt, Kennedy?" he inquired, jumping out of the boat to catch the wounded birds.

"Dot buch, but by dose bleeds a little, a'd I've cut by lip. How baddy have I killed, Charley? for I cad see dothing," inquired the victim, anxiously.

"One, two, three, four, FIVE, by jingo! Faith, you've beat the crowd, so far, this spring, and when you were stone-blind, almost, at that. Well, it's pretty dark, and we'd better be getting home now, I think."

The geese were picked up, and, with the others,—about twenty in all,—were loaded upon the "taboggin," which the two hunters with some difficulty drew through the drifts to the house where, on their arrival, they found that Pat had arrived from the city with some small stores, papers, letters, &c., but the boys had not accompanied him.

"They'll be out on skates wid Carlo and his slid on Monday," he said. "Now, Misther Kennedy, whiniver you're ready, ye'll find me to the fore in the kitchen."

"Mr. Kennedy mustn't go until he gives us a story in his turn. Now the moon rises to-night, at about nine o'clock, and it will be much pleasanter and safer on the ice by moonlight. What say you, Pat?"

"Faith, I'm agreeable, and I'd a little rather, to tell the truth; for there's an ugly bit of road across the Pint there."

"Well, Kennedy will have time to eat supper, and then we'll have his story, when it will be time for us to go to bed, and just right for him to start for town."

"Or, in other words," said La Salle, "it will be 'time for honest folk to be abed, and rogues on the road.'"

All sat down to supper, including Pat, to whom a plate of roast goose and two or three cups of strong, hot, black tea were very refreshing after his ten-mile drive; and then, after the little preparations for the next day's shooting, and Kennedy's

little arrangements for his departure, the little group gathered round the blazing hearth, and Kennedy, with some little hesitation, began the story of

"A Night of Peril.

"I am but a short man, and, as my time is short, you must not complain if my story is short, too.

"I am not so imaginative as the captain; I haven't pestered all the old men and women of the island to death for legends and stories, like my friend Charley here, who will surely bore you to death when his turn comes; I am sure I cannot make you laugh as Hughie and Mr. Risk have done with their very interesting narratives, and I can only detail a little adventure which I unexpectedly got into on this coast last summer, and which I as unexpectedly got out of alive."

"You mean your crossing the straits in a sixteen-foot boat?" said Captain Lund. "I want to hear about that myself."

"Well, in the early part of last August, my wife and I decided to visit some friends, who reside a few miles up the River Jean, on the opposite side of the straits, I suppose about twenty miles from here. We could reach no port by steamer that was nearer our destination than Pictou, and there remained a long, tedious stage ride when we got there. I concluded to take a boat, and procured of Frank Stanley a little row-boat, with a spritsail for running before the wind; for I intended to choose my own time for crossing. We set out from C. early one morning, and arrived in the afternoon after a very pleasant passage, and we enjoyed our visit to that section very much.

"After waiting a day or two for a fair wind down the river, we set sail, but, owing to the lightness of the breeze, were nearly all the afternoon in getting down. Still, on reaching the harbor, I determined to proceed, as the lights on both shores could be plainly seen, and I did not like to lose a favorable wind.

"Accordingly I put boldly out, heading for Point Prime Light, although my mind misgave me a little as I got clear of the lee of the land; for the sea rose rapidly, and a tremendous breeze, each moment growing stronger, carried us on with frightful rapidity. When we were about half way across, the wind was blowing a gale, and it was only for a moment, while on the crest of the waves, that I could see the light for which I was steering.

"The spray was breaking over us so that my wife had to bale continually to keep our craft free, and I dared not leave the helm to lessen sail, although I expected that each slat of the canvas, as we took the wind on the crest of a wave, would run us under, or carry away the mast, and leave us at the mercy of the waves.

"On we went before the breeze, darting down into the hollow between two seas, toiling heavily up the next wave, with death apparently close behind on the crests of two or three pursuing breakers, and then, with a puff which made every timber and plank quiver, the gale would almost lift us through a breaking wall of white foam, and, with more or less of the sea aboard, away we would go down the incline, a plaything of a boat, with a frightened little man at the tiller, and a little woman baling incessantly, with nerves that never gave way for a moment in our long struggle for life.

"I felt that if I could get that sprit down we were safe; but my wife dared not attempt it, and she would not trust herself at the tiller. Fortunately the boat steered 'very small,' and seizing my opportunity, I set the tiller amidships, darted forward, cleared the end of the sprit from its becket, and got back just in time to meet her as she began to broach to, on the crest of a wave, which nearly half filled us with water.

"I felt now as if we were safe; for no longer cumbered with a press of sail, we shipped less water, and had a better chance to lay out our course. Keeping Point Prime Light, as I supposed, well to starboard, I headed up the bay, seeking to make the Blockhouse Light, when suddenly I saw the coast dead ahead, and a bar, which must have been the West Bar, which I dared not attempt to cross.

"I therefore bore away until I made a harbor, and running in, got aboard a vessel, from whose captain I learned that we had mistaken the Blockhouse Light for that on Point Prime, and had at last made Crapaud River."

"Leaving the boat to be brought around by the next steamer, we drove up to town the next day, and found, to our surprise, that we had crossed close on the heels of that hurricane, which unroofed so many buildings, and uprooted so many trees. I consider that passage as the most stirring incident in my short life, gentlemen, and in the language of an old story, 'my wife thinks so, too.'"

"And you may well think so, Mr. Kennedy," said Lund. "For all the money in the banks of C. wouldn't tempt me to run the risk, the almost certainty, of death, I

mean, that you two did. Your wife is a brave woman, sir, and there are very few men who would have borne themselves as she did."

"Well, gentlemen, I see Pat is ready, and I must bid you good night. Charley, I'll give the boys the list of things you want them to bring out Monday. I suppose you'll get through in a couple of weeks, and come back to civilized life. Good night."

Followed by a dozen expressions of adieu and goodwill, the travellers entered the sleigh, and drove merrily off on the ice. Charley stood still a moment alone in the moonlight, listening to the last tinkle of the bells as they died away in the distance.

"What nonsense to stand here bareheaded, and getting cold! and yet it seems as if something urged me to go back to the city. Yet, why should I dread anything here? or rather, why should I fear anything with such a prospect as I have before me?"

He turned, and entered the house; a dainty letter from his betrothed, brought that night from the city, lay upon his breast; but honey and gall mingled strangely in its offerings, and many a bitter word bore heavy on his heart. No one of all that merry party was readier for song, or jest, or manly sport, than he; and yet he, too, had his share of that bitter cup which mortals call sorrow.

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CHAPTER VI.

ADDITIONS TO THE PARTY.—AN INDIAN OUTFIT.—A CONTESTED ELECTION.

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he following day was Sunday, and was spent as most Sabbaths are spent by similar parties in such out-of-the-way places. A few members of the household drove off across the ice of the Western Bar to a little country church; but the goose-shooters cared not to display their half savage dress, and tanned and blistered faces, to the over-close inspection of the church-going farmers and their curious "*women folks*."

Accordingly, Risk passed most of the day luxuriously stretched out on the sofa, reading the Church Magazine, while Davies, on the opposite side of the fire, in the recesses of an arm-chair covered with a buffalo robe, devoted the larger portion of his time to the Weekly Wesleyan. Creamer, after a cursory glance at a diminutive prayer-book, spent most of the day in a comparison of sea-going experiences and apocryphal adventures with Captain Lund, in much the same manner as two redoubtable masters of fence employ their leisure in launching at each other's impregnable defence, such blows as would prove mortal against less skilled antagonists.

By the middle of the afternoon Lund had related his sixth story, being the veracious history of how one Louis McGraw, a famous fishing-skipper of Mingan, rode out a tremendous gale on the Orphan Bank, with both cables out, the storm-sail set, her helm lashed amidships, and the crew fastened below as tightly as possible. It is hardly worth while to detail how the crew were bruised and battered by the terrible rolling of the schooner; it may be left to the imagination of the intelligent reader when he learns that, when the storm abated, the skipper found, besides innumerable "kinks" in the cables, and sea-weed in the rigging, *both topmasts broken short off*, indubitable proof, to the nautical mind, that the Rechabite had been rolled over and over again, like an empty barrel, in that terrible sea.

Creamer had just begun, by way of retaliation, his favorite "yarn" of the ingenious diplomacy of one Jem Jarvis, his father's uncle, who, being wrecked "amongst the cannibals of Rarertonger," with a baker's dozen of his shipmates, escaped the fate of his less accomplished comrades by his skill on the jewsharp, and an especial talent for dancing the double-shuffle, so that they gave him a hut to himself, two wives, and all he could eat, until he broke his jewsharp, and got fat and lazy, and then there was nothing to do but to run for it.

How Creamer's paternal relative extricated himself from his precarious position will never be known, as, at this juncture, Ben and La Salle, respectively, weary of playing a limited *repertoire* of psalm-tunes on the concertina, and reading the musty records of a long-forgotten "*Sederunt* of the quarterly Synod," as detailed in an old number of the Presbyterian Witness, interrupted the prolonged passage at arms by an invitation, to all so disposed, "to take a walk around the island."

Lund, who had misgivings as to his ability to give Creamer "a Roland for his Oliver," rose at once, and Creamer acceding more reluctantly, the four set off, through a narrow wood-path, to a cleared field near the western extremity of the island.

At the verge of this field, a cliff of red sandstone, ribbed and seamed by centuries of weather-wear and beat of sea, overlooked the ample bay which opens into the Straits of Northumberland at their widest point. Before them it lay covered with huge level ice-fields, broken only where tide and storm had caused an upheaval of their edges, or a berg, degraded and lessened of its once lordly majesty, it is true, but still grand even in its decay, rose like a Gothic ruin amid a snow-covered and desolate plain.

The sun was declining in the west, but his crimson rays gave warmth to the picture, and the still air had, as it were, a foretaste of the balmy revivifying warmth of spring. In the woods, close at hand, were heard the harsh cawing of the crow, the shrill scream of the blue-jay, and the garrulous chatter of many a little family of warm-furred, pine-cone-eating little red squirrels.

Neither was animal life wanting elsewhere to complete the picture. On the ice could be counted, in different directions, no less than seventeen flocks of Canada geese, some of them apparently on the watch, but the major part lying down, and evidently sleeping after their long and wearisome migration. In a single diminutive water-hole below the cliff, which probably marked the issue of one of the many subterranean springs of the islet, a half-dozen tiny ouac-a-wees, or

Moniac ducks, swam and dove in conscious security.

"I can't see any open water yet," said Creamer, "although it looks to me a little like a water-belt, alongshore, inside Point Prime."

"There's no more water-belt there," said Lund, "than there was music in your great-uncle's jewsharp; but there's a spot off to the sou'-west that looks to me a little like blue water."

"Blue water, indeed!" retorted Creamer; "who ever saw blue water on soundings! I'll lay a plug of navy tobacco there isn't open water enough there away to float La Salle's gunning-float comfortably."

"Well, Hughie," slowly replied the practiced pilot, who was really little disposed to vaunt his knowledge of coast and weather, "the tide will soon decide whether you or I, or both of us, are right. It is just full flood now, and the ice is pressed in so against the land, that I know there can be no openings along the Point, and but very small ones where I think it looks like one. It seems to me that a water-vapor is rising out there, by yonder high pinnacle just in range of the pool below the ice-foot; but the tide will soon let us know if there are any large leads open within a dozen miles."

"There's a sign in your favor," cried La Salle, pointing in the direction of the supposed 'lead.' "There's a flock of Brent geese, and they can't live away from open water. See, Ben, they are heading right in for the East Bar, and if we were only there we might depend upon a shot."

La Salle was right; the flock of birds, identified plainly by their smaller size, their tumultuous order of flying, and especially by their harsh, rolling call, like a pack of hounds in cry, swept in from sea, wheeled around one of the resting flocks of Canada geese, alighted near them, took flight again, and, sweeping in an irregular course over and among the higher points of the icy labyrinth, disappeared behind the eastern promontory, as if in search of the open water, which winter had so securely locked up in icy bonds.

As the sun sank behind the neighboring firs, his reddening light fell on a bright blue streak, which seemed to glow like a stream of quicksilver between two heavy bodies of "piled ice." With the ebb, the narrow, glittering canal began to widen, piercing nearer to the islet, until, heading towards the westward, it lay little more than four miles from the interested spectators. The shadowy pinions of many flocks of water-fowl were seen exploring its course, and the

neighboring geese, one by one, took flight, and, with clamorous calls, winged their way to its borders.

"I give it up," said Creamer.

"Never mind, Hughie," said Ben, "I'll pay the wager; for, with open water so close to us, the first good storm will soon sweep the bay clear to the bar."

"Yes, a sharp north-easter would soon do that for you; but all the heavy winds may be northerly and westerly for three weeks to come yet," said Lund; "I've known the ice to hold here until the first week of May."

"Well," returned La Salle, "I'm sure I hope it won't be so late this year, for the stock of flour on the island is very small, and many of the poor folks can't afford to buy any, and are living on potatoes almost altogether. They say, too, that there is much suffering among the farmers at the North Point."

"Yes," said Ben; "I saw a man from Lot Ten last week, and he said that the French were eating their seed-grain, and feeding their cattle, or such as were left alive, on birch and beech tops."

"That has happened often, since I can remember," said Lund, "and I suppose is likely to after I am gone; but it seems to me that those stupids might learn something by this time."

"It will occur to a greater or less degree, just as long as the island is shut out from the rest of the world for nearly half the year. There are few men who have any just estimate of the amount of provisions and fodder necessary for the sustenance of a family and its cattle for so long a period as a half year, and when accident, or the unwonted backwardness of the season, increases the number of mouths, or the length of the cold term, it is hard for the farmer to decide on sacrificing the life of even a superannuated horse, or weakly yearling, in time to benefit the more valuable survivors."

"You're right, Charley," said Creamer; "that's what my father's uncle said, when he was a mate on board the Semyramsis, in the Ingy Ocean. The ship was lost in a harricane, sir, and only seven was saved in the captain's gig—six able-bodied seamen and one passenger, a fat little army ossifer. So my great-uncle, who were bosin, made an observation, and says he, 'There's just ten days' provision for seven men, and we're twenty days to looard of Silly Bes (Celebes), if we only row ten miles a day. Now, we must row twenty miles a day; an' to do that, we

must have full rations an' somethin' to spare. Besides, the boat ort to be lighter to row well. So, as passengers don't count along of able-bodied seamen, I move we just get rid of the major on economical principles. All in favor say "Ay;" and they all said "ay" except the major, an' he just turned as white as a sheet.' An' then my great-uncle asked him if he'd got anything to say why the resolution o' that meetin' shouldn't be carried out. Well, the major just grinned kind o' uggly, an' said that 'he liked to see things done methodistically, if it were a little irregular, an' he'd give his 'pinion after the rest.' So my uncle went on, an' said, 'All contrary say, "No."' Well, no one said 'no;' an' then my great-uncle said, 'Well, major, nothin' remains but to carry out our resolution; so please to vacate this boat; although, seein' as it's not dinner time for some hours yet, there's no need of hurry, unless you wish to have it over with.'

"'But,' says the major, 'your action is altogether unparlymentary. You haven't heard a word from *my* friends.'

"'Friends! there ain't any one here on your side o' the question.'

"'You're mistaken, my friend,' said the major; an' he drew from his belt a long Indian dagger that had been hid under his coat; 'there's one, any how.'

"'That ain't much account against a boat-hook,' said one of the men, as he took one with a sharp spike from beneath the gunwale.

"'Lay that down, you beggar!' cried the little red-coat; and he pulled out of each side-pocket a four-barreled pistol,—for there were no revolvers in them days,—and the man laid down the boat-hook as quick as a flash. 'Now, men,' said the little ossifer, 'you'll see that we number at least ten, and there's only six of you. Ah, here's to make us a little more ekil;' and he just fired at a noddy that was flying over, and dropped him right into the stern-sheets. 'That'll help out our rations some,' says he; 'and besides, you don't see what I'm sittin' on;' and, sure enough, he had histed into the boat a basket of port an' a whole case of cap'n's biscuit. 'Now,' says he, 'reconsider your vardick.'

"An' they all voted down the first resolution, and he gave them a bottle of port to mix with their water every day, and when they were drinking the last bottle, they made Silly Bes, and got ashore all right; but my uncle always said that his calculations was right, and that it showed great weakness on the part of the men not to carry them out."

"Well, Hughie," said Ben, "you've kept us here a good half hour later than tea

time, and Mrs. Lund will think we've done well to waste her time in listening to your stories."

"Well, we can see enough to assure us that the ice won't break up on the bar to-morrow," said Lund; "but you may get your ice-boats ready at once, for the next thaw, with a north-easter after it, will leave all clear along the ship channel to the harbor's mouth."

There was quite a pleasurable excitement among the stay-at-homes at the tea table, when the incipient breaking up of the ice was declared; for on the proximity of narrow feeding-grounds to the ice-houses depended the hopes of good sport of our adventurers. To be sure they had thus far had nothing to complain of; but the geese killed had been merely "flight" geese, weary with long migration, thin with want of food, and seeking among the treacherous lures only a rest from their long wandering in the safe companionship of their own kind.

Very shortly after supper the whole household retired, but, save the accustomed prayers, which few, either Catholic or Protestant, forget in that still "unsophisticated" land, it is to be feared that the Sabbath was to them little but a literal "day of rest," in its purest physical sense.

Monday morning a glassy look to the snow-crust induced the younger members of the party to use their skates in going to their stands, and as La Salle drew his from his feet to deposit them in his undisturbed stand, his eyes caught, amid the distant ice-spires, the mazy flight of what he took to be a flock of brent, headed in-shore.

Signaling to Davies to get under cover, he sprang into his own stand, and, crouching amid the straw, hastily drew over his black fur cap his linen havelock, and looking well to the priming of his gun, sought the whereabouts of the swift-flying birds.

Unlike the slower Canada geese, these birds seldom fly high above the surface of the water or ice when seeking food; and several times he lost sight of the flock, as it darted around a berg, or swung round the circle of some secluded valley of the ice-field.

"H-r-r-r-r-huk! H-r-r-r-r-huk!" Their barbarous clamor, insufficiently rendered in the foregoing, suddenly sounded close to leeward, and close up against the light north-wester then blowing came the beautiful quarry, their small, black heads

and necks showing as glossy as a raven's wing, in contrast with the asheous hue of their wings, and the pure white of other parts of their plumage. With a wild, tumultuous rush, they circled in head-on over the decoys; and it was so quickly done, that they had swept on fifty yards before La Salle could realize that the leader of the flock was heading for Davies, and had no intention of surging around to his lures again.

"It will never do to let them get the first brent," muttered La Salle. "She has a long-range cartridge in, and I'll try them."

Turning on his knees, he raised the ponderous gun until it "lined" the retreating flock, but elevated at least five feet above the birds, now nearly two hundred yards away. The heavy concussion reverberated across the ice, and the fatal cartridge tore through the distant flight, picking out two of the twelve which composed the flock; and some of the shot, as both Davies and Creamer afterwards averred, rattled smartly in among their decoys nearly four hundred yards away. The remaining birds, hurrying away from the dangers behind them, passed within range of Davies and his companion, and left several of their number dead and dying on the ice; but the first brent of the season had fallen to La Salle's gun.

The day was mild and without wind, and as but few birds were flying, La Salle coiled himself down in the sunny corner of his stand, and drawing from his pocket the letter of which we have spoken in the last chapter, gave it a careful and deliberate perusal. As he closed, a smile, strangely expressing contempt, pity, and admiration, curled his lips, as in low but audible tones, as is often the habit of the solitary hunter or fisherman, he communed with his own heart.

"Ah, Pauline! time has brought no change to thy passionate, impulsive, unreasoning heart; and what thy biting tongue may not say, the pen will utter, though lapse of years and the waves of the Atlantic roll between us. Is it not strange that a woman's letter to her betrothed, beginning with 'My own love,' and ending 'Until death,' can contain eight double-written pages of unreasonable blame, cruel innuendos, and despicable revenge on the innocent? Well, we are betrothed, and should have been married years ago, had not Fate or Providence stood in the way; and I suppose her life at home is far from pleasant, for her step-mother is not one to let a good marriage go by, without reminding poor Paulie of my general worthlessness; but I must say that my better financial and matrimonial prospects offer little hope of added happiness."

His eye lit up a moment, and an expression of keen and almost cruel intent contracted his gaze; then, with a look of disdain, he seemed to throw off some evil influence, and a look of pity softened his face.

"Yes, if I were to resent these affronts—for such they are—with one half the virulence which animates them, her pride would alienate us forever, and I should be free. There are few who would blame me, and many who would scorn to do aught else. In truth I am almost decided to answer this precious *billet-doux* in the same vein in which it was written. Ah, it was not all delusion that made yonder madman think that evil spirits haunt these icy wastes. It was not thus I felt when together we voyaged across that summer sea; and the vows we plighted then may not lightly be broken. I will answer patiently, and as becomes the past. As to the future, it will bring due reward or punishment here or hereafter."

From these somewhat morbid self-communings, which we introduce for a purpose hereafter to be disclosed, La Salle started, seized his glittering skates, and taking his gun, glided with long, powerful strokes across the inner bay towards the ice-houses of the other party, which lay within the embouchure of Trois-Lieue Creek. The ice was almost perfectly level, save where a heavy drift had formed a small mound around which it was better to steer, although the sleety crust had frozen so hard that the broad-runnered Belgian skates would run almost anywhere. At the first ice-house he found Risk and Davies, who had done little or nothing for some days, and talked of going home at the end of the week.

"Indian Peter gets about all the geese that go through here, and there's little show for us," said Davies.

"Where is his ice-house?" asked La Salle.

"Just up the cove—the nearest of those two," answered Risk.

"I guess I'll have a look at his outfit, and then go and meet the boys at the block-house, for they have never been here before, and the track can't be very plain now." So saying, La Salle skated up to the Indian stand, almost half a mile distant.

"One-armed Peter," as he was commonly called among his tribesmen, had neither the means nor the inclination to deviate much from the traditionary usages of his tribe, and was found kneeling, or, rather, "sitting man-fashion," as the vernacular Micmac hath it, although we call it "tailor-fashion," within a circular, fort-like enclosure, some twelve feet in circumference, and with walls

about three feet high.

The latter were composed of thick slabs of ice placed on edge, and cemented together by frozen water, while tiny apertures, cut here and there, enabled the crouching hunters to note every foot of the approach of their wary game. A few of the decoys were of pine wood, rudely carved out and *burnt* to something like the natural coloring of the bird they were intended to represent; but a large proportion of them were "sea-weed" or "spruce" decoys; that is, bunches of the weather-bound sea-wrack, or bundles of evergreen twigs, made about the shape and size of the body of a goose.

These were elevated on blocks of snow-ice, which strikingly imitated, at a little distance, the hue of the under feathers, and a fire-blackened stake set in the ice, at one end, with a collar of white birch bark at its junction, completed the rude but effective imitation. Such are the appliances which a hundred years ago brought the geese in thousands under the arrows of all the many tribes which range between the Straits of Canso and the most northern inhabited regions about Hudson's Bay.

Within the enclosure a few armfuls of fir branches—laid upon the hard ice, and kept carefully clear of snow, formed a soft floor, on which now sat three hunters, Peter, and Jacob, and Louis Snake, much younger men than he of the one arm. Each sat enveloped in the folds of a dingy blanket, and their guns rested against the icy walls—two of them rickety, long-barreled flint-locks; but Peter's new acquisition, a true "stub-twist," Hollis's double, was as good a fowling-piece as any sportsman needs.

True to their customs, the Indians were taciturn enough, although Peter thanked La Salle rather warmly for his new weapon.

"I find 'em good gun; not miss since I got 'em. Give t'other gun my nethew." And he pointed to the worst looking of the two antiquated weapons, as Cleopatra may have surveyed her rather costly drink-offering, with visible misgiving as to such reckless liberality.

"You were very kind, Peter. I suppose he has no family," said La Salle, smiling.

"Yes, me *berry* kind my peeple," suavely responded the chief, a just pride beaming in his eyes. "That young man no family yet—only squaw now."

"It is evident that the average Indian doesn't understand a joke," muttered La

Salle, as he said "Good by" to the motley trio, and darted off to meet a distant group, which he rightly judged to be the expected boys.

Twenty minutes later he had joined the little party, who were proceeding at a slow dog-trot around the shores, instead of taking the direct course across the ice, which, being deemed unsafe by them, had wisely been avoided; for no one can be too cautious on ice of which they know nothing.

George Waring, the only son of La Salle's employer, skated ahead of his companion, who was evidently of other than Caucasian origin, in part at least. The skater was a tall, fresh-complexioned, slender youth, of about seventeen, bold, active, and graceful in his movements, but having the appearance of one whose growth had been a little too rapid for an equal development of health and strength; and indeed it was only on condition that he should submit carefully to the directions of La Salle that his father had consented to the present expedition.

His companion was, perhaps, a year older, but rather short and thick-set, with features in which the high cheek-bones and coppery hue of the American showed very prominently. La Salle had fallen in with him at the Seven Islands, on the Labrador coast, the year before, and employed him as a pilot to the Straits of Belle Isle. He called himself Regnar Orloff, was of tremendous strength for one of his years, and although apparently lazy, and somewhat fleshy, could move quickly enough, and to purpose, in time of need.

Now, however, he rested one knee on the only unoccupied portion of a large, light sled, drawn by the third member of the party, a powerful dog of the Newfoundland species, which he was evidently training into some little excellence as a sledge-dog. It was only an added virtue, even if complete; for noble old Carlo had already excellences enough to canonize a dozen individual canines. He was strong, sagacious, peaceably inclined, but a terrible foe when aroused; could eat anything, carry a man in the water, watch any place, team, or article, hold a horse, beat for snipe or woodcock, lie motionless anywhere you might designate, retrieve anywhere on land, water, or ice, and loved a gun as well as his young master, La Salle.

Well, George

"WELL, GEORGE, YOU'RE HERE AT LAST."—Page 127.

"Well, George, you're here at last," cried La Salle, as he came up. "How is everything in town, and what's the news?"

"O, nothing out of the common. All are well. The governor gave a ball Wednesday, and the House dissolves next week. We've had plenty of geese to eat, but we wanted to kill some; and so here we are."

"How are you, Regnie? Getting tired of civilization, and wanting to get back to the ice?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, master, just so. After I see Paris and Copenhagen, I do very well, keep quite satisfied. But when I shut up in large city like C., I think it too much. I feel lonesome, want to get back to the wild'ness."

"And how does Carlo learn sleighing?"

"O, he does well enough. He can't be taught right, for it would be too bad to use Greenland whip; but I make this little one, and can drive very well;" and as he spoke, he held up a wand of supple whalebone, tipped with a slender "snapper" of plaited leather, and lightly touching the noble animal with the harmless implement, the dog gave a playful bark, and started off on an easy trot.

"We strike off here for those black specks yonder," said La Salle; "but what is coming behind us, George?"

"O, that is Dolland, Venner, and that set; and I guess they'll have 'a high old time,' and no mistake."

"Well, let's take an observation, boys, and then we'll set off."

And, stopping, the party turned to survey a spectacle truly annoying to any true sportsman, whatever may be his views on the temperance question.

Advancing in their rear came a truck-sled, loaded with what, although evidently a miscellaneous freight, was largely composed of liquor; for a goodly ale-keg formed the driver's seat, a bottle-hamper the pinnacle of the load, and a half dozen young men, who were perched wherever a seat presented itself, filled the air with loud, and oft-repeated shouts and roaring songs, whose inspiration could plainly be traced to certain bottles, jugs, and flasks, with which each in turn "took an observation" of the heavens, at about every other hundred yards. An expression of disgust on La Salle's deeply-tanned face gradually gave way to resignation, and then a well-founded hope irradiated his features; a new

movement of the crowd attracted his attention.

"Well, boys," he exclaimed, "you're in luck to have such a gang to come out with, and you may count on having little or no sport to-day and to-morrow; but they'll have to go in, in three days at farthest."

"Why so?" asked the boys, in a breath.

"Because their rum won't last them more than forty-eight hours, especially with the amateur aid they'll get from the driver; and twelve hours after that event takes place, they'll be in town again. But come, they are getting near us, and are loading their guns; so let's leave before the vicinage is dangerous."

"Why, Charley," said Waring, in astonishment, "there's no danger. Those fellows wouldn't shoot at us. I know them."

"And so do I, my dear fellow; and that's just the reason I want to get out of the way. If I didn't know what drunken men will do in the way of 'sporting casualties,' or felt certain that their object was to shoot us, I should feel perfectly easy on the subject;" and setting off at full speed, followed by Waring and the sledge, La Salle led the way to the ice-houses, which they reached about an hour before sunset.

Drawing up by the boat, La Salle examined the load of the day, and from it took a little case made of a candle-box with stout hinges and a padlock. He opened it, and found, as he had ordered, a "Crimean cooking-lantern," with spring candlestick and a pound of candles, a small tin canister of coffee, another of sugar, some pilot bread, and several boxes of sardines. Taking all but two of the latter from the box, he relocked it, and carefully removing the matted straw in the stern of his boat, placed the box under the decking, and replacing the compressed straw, effectually hid it from sight.

"We can now have a lunch, with a hot cup of coffee, whenever we please, and you will find some weather even yet when it will be very welcome. Come, let us go home to-night, and get ready for to-morrow's *charivari*, for noise will not be wanting, although game may;" and adding his brent to the load, La Salle covered his boat, and, joined by Davies and Creamer, who greeted the boys warmly, all went up to their welcome, if somewhat narrow, quarters.

After tea, which boasted of fried bacon and eggs, the usual circle was formed, and Mr. Davies, being called upon to entertain the company, said that he was

"not much of a story-teller, but had learned some facts relating to a terrible political tumult, which took place years ago, but was still spoken of everywhere on the island as the great 'Belfast Riot.' I shall term it, unless some one offers a better name, the most lively specimen we ever had of

"A Contested Election.

"It need hardly be said, in this company, that an election among us is a far more exciting occasion than among our less-favored American neighbors, who ignore the superior advantages of voting *viva voce*, and adopt the less manly and unobtrusive medium of the ballot.

"Why, gentlemen, I venture to say, that our little capital town of C., with its thousand votes, presents more stir, makes more noise, drinks more whiskey, and is the arena of more fistic science and club play, during an ordinary election, than any city in New England, of four times the population, during a presidential struggle. The open polling-booths in the heart of the city surrounded by crowds of intelligent (and highly-excited) voters; the narrow gangways crowded, rain or shine, by those immediately claiming the right of suffrage; the narrow precincts of the sheriff's court, the sublime majesty of that important officer; the ineffable serenity of the city clerk; the various bearings of the candidates or their representatives; the frantic efforts of a few uniformed police to keep order; the evident and good-natured determination of the crowd that the aforesaid officials shall 'have their hands full;' the loud voices and sharp questions of the challengers and their victim; the dainty bits of family history made public property; the overbearing insolence of the old lawyers, and the overweening impudence of the young ones; the open taverns; the rival carriages for the accommodation of doubtful, drunken, and lazy voters, together with the lively little incidents which diversify the picture as the culminating glory of these various provocative elements,—form a picture which it hath not entered into the heart of the average American citizen to conceive of.

"But, however lively the picture, an election in these degenerate later days is but a tame affair compared with those which took place during my first years of labor in political matters. As all know, the island was given away on one day to certain individuals, on conditions of which nothing more may be said here than that one was, that a certain number of settlers were to be placed on each estate within a given number of years. Accordingly, from almost every section of the British Isles, the proprietors sought out such emigrants as could most easily be

procured.

"The result was, that we still have settlements in close proximity to each other, whose peoples use different languages in daily conversation, who vary radically in religious belief, have few natural traits in common, and are almost, if not altogether, 'natural enemies' each to each. Thus we have a settlement of Protestant Highland Scotch close by a large estate peopled with Monaghan or Kilkenny Irish Catholics; and perhaps a little farther on is a hamlet of Low-landers, or a village of thrifty English folk.

"But in those days these distinctions were yet more marked, and the feuds of Orange and Ribbon-man, Scotch and Irish, Englishman and French Acadian, had not then given way before the softening and concealing hand of 'Time, the great leveler;' and so some twenty years ago, during a close contest between the then rising liberal party and the conservatives, a riot took place near the polling-booth in the Highland Scotch settlement of Belfast. All the combined strength of both parties was present; the canvassing had been of the most thorough nature, and all the antipathies of race and religion appealed to for electioneering purposes.

"It is said that the Catholics went there expecting a fight, each armed with a well-balanced, tough *shillelagh*, and that they made a general attack on the Scotch. At all events, it is certain that the larger number of the latter had to betake themselves to the nearest available weapon, and that many were cut and bruised by the skilfully-handled weapons of the active Irish cudgel-players. One Scotchman, however (a fellow of unusual stature), seized a fence-rail, and, by his single arm, stayed the tide of flight in his part of the fray. Almost frantic with apprehension, rage, and the desire for revenge, he wielded his ponderous weapon as if it were an ordinary club, striking such tremendous blows that tradition has it that not one of a half-score of the best and bravest of the Irish leaders survived the effects of those terrible and crushing blows. Profiting by his prowess, the Scotch procured the heavy stakes of their sleds, tough poles, pieces of firewood, and similar ponderous weapons, and, headed by the hero of the day, made a charge, returning with terrible severity the comparatively slight damage inflicted by the light cudgels of the Irish.

"The details of that day of blood—how the fray began, and between whom; the varying records of its progress as victory inclined first to one side, and then to the other; the number of the killed and wounded, and the names of the fallen—have never been generally known, and probably never will be; for many of the principal actors in that savage drama have passed away 'into the dread unknown.'

"But it is still commonly believed, and so reported, that over a score of the Irish were killed on the field, or died of their wounds; that no Scotchman perished; that the field where the deadliest part of the work was done became accursed, and has lain barren to this day; and that the leader of the Scotch became insane with the memory of his own terrible prowess.

"Among those who have reason to remember that dreadful affair, however, may be numbered C." (Here the narrator named an influential and wealthy business man.) "He was travelling in that section, and being ignorant of what had taken place, stopped at a country town to bait his horse, and warm and refresh himself. Entering, he found the reception-room filled with Irish, whose harsh features were inflamed with varied passions, while the persons of many bore marks of recent injury. No one replied to his friendly greeting, and their whole conversation was carried on in Erse, although every intonation and gesture was replete with passion. Suddenly he saw the landlady beckoning him out of the room, and, rising, he approached her as if to give directions about his horse.

"Trembling with agitation, she addressed him:—

"'O, Mr. C., for the love of Heaven, run to your sleigh, and leave at once, or your life isn't worth an hour's purchase!'

"Then, in a few words, she gave him some idea of the day's events, and taking the measure of oats provided, Mr. C. passed on through his enemies to the shed, where, beside a number of rude country sledges, stood his own fleet horse and light cutter. Taking the bells off his horse, he backed him out of the shed, and was ready for flight. On the nearest sledge was bound a long, oblong parcel, covered with a rug. Curiosity proved stronger than fear, and lifting a loose corner of the scanty covering, Mr. C. found himself face to face with a corpse!

"Springing into his sleigh, he put his horse to his utmost speed, and when day dawned was a score of miles from the scene of his unexpected danger and appalling night adventure."

CHAPTER VII.

A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER.—BREAKING UP OF THE ICE.—JIM MOUNTAIN'S FIGHT WITH THE DEVIL.

Top

he boys awoke somewhat disappointed the next morning, for the heavy rain was falling, and the wind blew hard from the south-east, so that no one in his senses would think of facing such discomfort for the sake of sport.

"Don't look blue, George," said La Salle; "we've enough to do to prepare for the open water, which this gale will probably lead up to the outer edge of the bar, at least. There's the float to be painted and fitted, and the floating decoys to be put in order; and while I use the white paint, you and Regnie must rope and repair the decoys."

Accordingly the four sought the barn, whither Ben and Creamer had preceded them on a similar errand. La Salle's boat was a flat-bottomed "sculling-float," twelve feet long by three feet beam, and ten inches deep, with a hole through the stern-board, through which, with a short, crooked oar, a man could silently propel himself within shot of a flock of fowl. Davies's boat aimed at the same end in another way, being a large side-wheel paddle-boat, propelled by cranks, for two persons. Both boats were painted white, so as to be indistinguishable from the floating ice at a little distance. Besides these two, there were a double boat with centre paddle-wheel, and a side-wheel worked by the feet on the velocipede principle, belonging on the island.

The forenoon was spent as proposed, and as the bad weather still held, a target was set up for practice with the rifle, and many excellent shots were made from the great door of the barn. At last, however, the impatience of the party overcame all fears of exposure, and, donning their water-proof clothing, all went down to the East Bar to watch its effect on the ice.

The huge floe had given way at last, and broken into many floating islets of varied size, had become a scene of life and animation, in striking contrast to its

late icy desolation. In every direction geese, singly and in flocks, fed along the edges of the still immovable inner ice-fields; swam placidly among the narrow leads, or in huge bodies blackened the open pools or the projecting points of ice. Among them, too, wheeled many flocks of clamorous brent, while, from time to time, the desolate cry of the Moniac duck, or the shrill, monotonous, strident flight of the "Whistler" warned the sportsmen that new visitants were about to greet their vision.

"You will have to change your location, Risk," said Lund, who had accompanied them; "for you must shoot on the water-line, now the ice has opened."

"Davies and I go home to-morrow," answered he. "I regret to leave with such a prospect before us, but business presses; and besides, there are new dangers now which I care not to face."

"Ay, ay! you're right, Mr. Risk," said Lund; "and although I am glad to have you around me, I shall be glad this year when I see the last of you safely across the Western Bar."

"There, there, Lund," said Risk; "they're young, smart, have good boats, and, what is more, know well how to use them; and if I were less clumsy and old, I would no more fear any danger here than I would at home. Don't frighten the young lads with your nonsense, but let us get home to supper, and, as it is our last night together, have a cosy evening in the kitchen, and a good story from Ben and Charley here."

The proposition was acceded to, and after supper, Ben, with little urging, commenced a legend of the North Shore, even now related by the farmers around the winter's hearth with full faith in its veracity. He termed it by its local name

"Jim Mountain's Fight with the Devil."

"Fifty years ago Jim Mountain, of Goose Creek, was as stout and jovial a young farmer of twenty-five, as there was in his section. No ship-launch frame-raising, logging-bee, or dance, was considered complete without him, and while his strength was almost equal to that of any two of his companions, his merry laugh was so infectious that even envy couldn't resist joining in, when public opinion pronounced him 'the best man in the county.'

"He soon married the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, and then, for the first time, it appeared that his love of 'divershin' and whiskey, had grown by what it fed on, and poor Mary dreaded the approach of market-day, as he seldom returned from the shire town altogether sober, and often not until late into the next day.

"It was in vain that his blooming Mary entreated, coaxed, cried, and threatened; he never lost his temper; often, indeed, promised amendment, but did in the end about the same as usual. At last the merchant with whom he traded, a man of some little medical knowledge, finished their business interview with the following bit of advice:—

"'Jim, it's none of my business, but you are ruining your health and breaking your wife's heart. You are not one of the kind that show how much they do drink; but no man in your district can match you, and when you do get sick, I shan't expect to see you alive.'

"'An' do ye think so, then, Mr. B.?'

"'I am almost sure of it, for Long Tom Cunningham, the big ship carpenter that you've heard your father tell of, was just such a man, and the first touch of "the horrors" carried him off.'

"'Well, sir, I'm much obliged for your good will, any how, and after my cousin Johnny McGrath has his bit of a spree, I'll try and leave it off for a while, any way.'

"Johnny McGrath's 'spree,' a fulling-frolic, came off one Saturday night, about a fortnight after this; and while the web of strong, coarse homespun cloth, which was to furnish Mac and his boys with their year's stock of outer clothing, was being duly lifted, rubbed, banged on a bench, and twisted by the strong hands of about thirty men and women, Jim led the roaring choruses, and manipulated his end of the cloth with a vigor which at once delighted and alarmed the fair weaver thereof.

"In the dancing and whiskey-drinking which followed, Jim was in his element; and it was nearly midnight before the party broke up, and he was left alone with the rest of his relative's household.

"'Well, Johnny,' said he, 'you've done the decent thing this time, and I'm glad my last spree has been at your place, for I'm going to quit grog for a while. Give me

a coal for my pipe, Jane, for it's late, and I've a good five miles' of beach atween me an' home.'

"'Is the man mad?' said Jane, good-naturedly. 'Surely, John, you'll not let him out of the house to-night.'

"'No, no, Jim,' said McGrath, getting between him and the door; 'out of this you don't stir to-night; so sit down, have another drop, and tak' a quiet night's rest.'

"'Come, John, don't anger or hinder me, for I feel strangely to-night, and I must go home.'

"'Faith, that's all the more reason I have to keep you here. Come, sit down, you obstinate fellow, and don't be waking the wife up just before daybreak, only to let in a man that must be out walking all night. Confound it, would you hit me, Jim? Sure, now, you're not angered—are you?'

"'No, I'm not angry; but I'll not be treated like a child, nor lectered, neither. Let me go, I tell you, or there'll be ill blood between us. Home I'll go, I tell you!' shouted the excited man. 'Home I'm going, *although the devil tried to stop me;*' and flinging his cousin aside as if he were a child, he rushed out of the house, and took a narrow path which led down to the moonlit sea-beach.

"About an hour after, a despairing cry at the door awakened McGrath and his wearied household, and, opening it, they found a bruised, bloody, and literally naked man, lying senseless on the threshold. With some difficulty they recognized the features of Mountain, and it was broad daylight before he came to himself. His story was short, but strange.

"'I took the path down to the beach, thinking to wade the narrow run at Eel Pond, and so save a mile or two of road. It was light as day, and I went along well enough, though I felt sad-like, an' as if somethin' were about to happen me.

"'It's an unchancy place there, near the pond, where the great san'-hill blew over the birch grove an' killed the trees; and last night, as I went through them, the tall, white, broken trunks seemed almost alive. Why, man, I'd have sworn that some of them had a dozen faces grinnin' and laughin', and I felt all the while as if I was a fool; for, whenever I stopped an' looked close, there was nought but knots, an' bark, an' gnarly limbs. Still, although I'd been through them a thousan' times, I felt afraid, for it seemed to me as if there was somebody near me *that I couldn't see*.

"'Well, at last I got through the dead grove, an' came to the san'-plain wher' the ribs of the old ship are stannin', an' I got to thinkin' what she might hev' bin, fer none o' us know how many years she lay in the san' before the great gale swept the san' off of her white bones. I looked at her close as I passed, an' although I saw nauthin' but her ribs, she made me think o' a 'natomy; an' I looked all around, but saw no one, an' went down into the water, hevin' first ta'en off my shoes.

"'The cool water did feel nice; an' as I stepped ashore, I whistled up "The Devil's Dream," an' struck out across the beach, when, looking back, I saw, between me an' the stream, a man who made at me with terrible ferceness. I can tell you nauthin' about him, 'cept that his clothes were black an' strange, his face dark an' savage, an' his eyes almost like fire. I had no doubt that he meant me harm, an' as he cam' up, I struck out wi' all my strenth. Ye mind when I hit big Jack Ready, an' thought I should have to flee the country. Well, I hit *him* twicet as hard, an' he never stopped, but came in an' clinched. My God! I'm breathless now wi' the squeezin' I got there. I'm afraid of no man standin' within twenty mile, at ayther Ingin hug, collar an' ilbow, or side-hold, but I was like a child in its grip.

"'Still I fought on, though the san' flew into the air; an' through it, like a fog, I saw the old wrack an' the dead grove, an' the fiery eyes that glared into mine, an' I felt the grasp of a han' that seemed to burn into my hip; an' then I knew I couldn't fight fair wi' *that*. I drew my knife an' opened it, an' three times I thrust it to the hilt into the side o' the black man, or devil, an' he only glared at me fercer, an' took a stronger hold on my hip. Just at this moment I felt the cool water at my feet, an' wi' one tremendous effort, I whirled myself into the stream to fight it out there. A moment I lay on my back in the shallow stream, an' then I rose to my feet. I was alone wi' nauthin' o' what had happened, save the open knife in my han', the trampled beach, an' my torn an' ruined clawthin'.

"'Then I remembered that old McGregor used to say that nauthin' bad could pass runnin' water, an' I thought I'd get back to ye if I could. I remember somethin' of tearin' through the lonely beach an' blasted woods, of seein' more faces in the trees, an' hearin' quick footsteps on my track, but I remember nauthin' more. Look at my hip, will you, wi' the cannle there? It hurts me awfully.'

"The candle fell from Jane's shaking hands, but was caught by her husband before it was extinguished.

"'As God lives, ye have spoken the truth, for there is the mark o' the devil's grip;'

and greatly to the terror of all, there appeared on the hip of the exhausted man the black imprint of a thumb and four fingers.

"My informant told me that, fifty years later, after Mountain had raised a large family of children, and passed a life subsequently innocent of his youthful excesses, the same indelible marks were left to tell of the terrible conflict of that memorable night; and none of his neighbors ever doubted the literal truth of his strange story, save one.

"That man was B., who never undeceived Mountain, or tried to do so; but in detailing the story to my father, closed the recital thus: 'I have always thought that he had an attack of delirium tremens, and that he fancied the assault of the goblin; for I forgot to tell you that next morning they followed his track, finding his shoes and fragments of his attire on the opposite side of the run, which was torn up, with the marks of a terrible struggle and many feet. Probably he tore off his own clothes in the fancied fight, drew his knife, struck at "an air-born fantasy," and was finally partially restored by falling into the water, after which he completed his exhaustion by running back to the house.'

"'Have you seen the marks?' asked my father.

"'Yes; I saw them at the time,' slowly answered Mr. B.

"'Were they as described?'

"'Very like the grip of a hand; one dark impression on the back of the left hip, and four smaller ones in a row on the front,' said B.

"'And how do you account for those?' asked my father.

"Mr. B. hesitated, and then answered candidly, 'I don't know what to think of that myself. I have sometimes thought that a fall among the many roots and fallen trunks of trees, which then strewed that desolate place, may have caused such injuries; but why did they remain apparent long after discolorations of such a nature should have disappeared? Perhaps imagination may have had its effect, and made the impressions indelible. But if there *is* any truth in old-world stories, few places fitter for such horrors can be found than was that drear waste of sand, destitute of all signs of man's proximity, bounded on one side by a blackened forest, on the other by the sailless sea, and containing only the whitened ribs of a long-forgotten wreck. None of the folk around here, sir, join in my doubts as to the reality of Mountain's fight with the devil.'"

As Ben closed, a sound of sleigh-bells came up the road, and Lund opened the door, at which appeared a light sleigh driven by one of Risk's sons.

"You and uncle are wanted in town at once. L. has sent you this letter, and says —" And he whispered a few words in his father's ear.

"I came out to-night, for the ice is getting very bad, and a horse was lost crossing the North River at Duckendorff's to-day. It is freezing to-night, but the moon shows at times through the clouds, and we can get home before one o'clock."

An hour later, Risk and the elder Davies bade a regretful farewell to their young companions. "I am sorry," said the former, "that as yet we have had no story from you, La Salle; but I hope to see you at my house in C., and hear it there when your trip is over. Take care of yourself, and make Lund out a false prophet. Good night, captain, you old croaker;" and the sleigh disappeared in the shadows of the forest-covered lane which led to the beach.

"Well, boys," said La Salle, "the best of our evenings are over, and we must look to boat and gun for our best sport."

"We must have your story, though," said Ben.

"O, of course; but not to-night, for we have much to do to-morrow, to get our boats down for the open-water shooting."

With this no one disagreed; and half an hour later, all were fast asleep.

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CHAPTER VIII.

FLOAT-SHOOTING.—A GENERAL FIELD-DAY.—CHANGES OF THE ICE.

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he next morning, the boats, which were all provided with runners, were drawn to the bar, and Carlo's sled carried, besides the lunch and ammunition of the party, a dozen wooden duck decoys, weighted and roped, for open water.

Davies and Creamer gave up their box and outfit to one-armed Peter, as they were about to try their new paddle-boat. She was duly launched, and Ben placed himself forward, between the paddle-boxes, ready to do the steering and shooting, while Creamer acted as the motive power, transmitted by a belt and pulleys. Although somewhat high out of water, she moved off easily, and made little noise when running slowly; and taking the first of the ebb, the pair moved eastward into the opening ice.

George and Ben Lund, in their new-fashioned centre-wheel, made poorer progress, but hurried out "to get ahead of the skimmin'-dish," as they styled La Salle's light, shallow craft. He let them go, and stationing George and Regnar in the ice-boat, put out his floating decoys in the nearest waters, and, cutting slabs of ice, built a high wall around his own boat, which he drew up on the ice. Carlo incontinently plunged into the straw under the half-deck of the larger boat, and soon all was ready for the expected birds.

Meanwhile, upon the stranded berg which lay immovable off the southern face of the island, gathered the new comers, whose Bacchanal approach has of late been chronicled. Had they had any outfit of decoys, and known how to use them, they could not but have had good sport; and even as it was, so many birds passed and repassed them, that a good shot could not have failed to secure at least a few ducks. But, however unfortunate in securing any trophies, they failed not in the weight or constancy of their fire.

Not a flock passed within a quarter of a mile but received a volley; not a loon

that showed his distant head above water but went down under the fire of a platoon; and not a frightened duck darted overhead but heard the air behind him torn with whistling shot enough to have exterminated his whole tribe.

From time to time a lull in the storm would occur, and then peals of laughter would come across the intervening waters; and looking up, the irritated sportsmen generally beheld a tableau of inverted pocket-flasks, and feats of strength with a rapidly lightening ale-keg. But, although our friends bore the proximity of these city gunners with great patience for a while, an event soon occurred which brought matters to a focus.

A flock of geese were seen approaching from the eastward, and La Salle, cautioning the boys, crouched down in his boat and "called." Peter followed suit, and so did the party on the bergs. The flock swung within a hundred yards of Peter, who held his fire, and then, seeing the floating decoys, swung round to leeward of them, and setting their wings, scaled slowly in, passing within about two hundred and fifty yards of the party on the berg.

Of course they opened fire at once, with shot of all sorts and sizes, doing no execution but sending a bullet from one of their guns straight over the heads of La Salle and his friends. A flock or two of ducks and brent made similar attempts to alight, but every shot was spoiled in the same way.

La Salle was indignant, and the boys were at a white heat, when, without any birds being between them, the report of a heavily charged gun was heard, and a few heavy shot struck the ice near the boats, while the drunken crowd yelled in triumph as the water, by its ripples, showed the great distance attained by the shot.

"I'll shoot, too, the next chance, and so may you, boys. Elevate well, and fire when the birds are between us and the berg," said La Salle.

It was not long before three geese attempted to scale in as the others had done, and were fired at as before, the bullet this time striking the water in line of the boat, and whistling a few feet above it. The birds, somewhat frightened, got within a hundred yards before swinging off, and all three discharged their large shot simultaneously. A single goose fell with a broken wing, and Carlo, springing out of the boat, plunged into the water. Charley watched the effect of his shot on the party on the berg. One stood just then in bold relief against the distant horizon, displaying the broader part of his physique to view while taking an observation with a brandy-bottle. Suddenly a faint yell was heard, the bottle

dropped on the berg, the hands that had held it frantically clutched at the coat-tails of the victim, and an agonized *pas seul* told that the "Baby" had well avenged the wrongs of her owner.

Half an hour later, the party had evacuated their position, bag and baggage, "carrying their wounded," who, from the stern-sheets of their boat, shook his fist in savage pantomime at the innocent La Salle and his amused companions. Some weeks later he learned that a single large shot had, without piercing the cloth, raised a contusion about the size of a pigeon's egg, on muscles whose comfort, for a fortnight after, emphatically tabooed the use of chairs, and made a feather bed an indispensable adjunct to repose.

After a long chase Carlo secured his bird, and swimming to the nearest shore, ran around the edge of the ice, in a way which showed his appreciation of the difference between running, and swimming against a five-knot tide. Securing the bird, he was allowed to shake himself, and was then called into the boat, from which a good lookout was kept, as there now existed some chance for good management and skilful shooting.

The first victims were a flock of black ducks, which with the usual readiness to decoy of these birds, had flown in and lit among the decoys before La Salle could warn his boys, who had their backs turned at the time. They managed, however, to hear him, and poured in a sharp volley, killing four in the water, while La Salle picked a brace out on the wing.

Regnar, who had a breech-loader, got ready in time to kill a brace of Moniac duck out of a flock which swept past uttering their singularly desolate call of "Ouac-a-wee, ouac-a-wee!" and by the time these birds were retrieved, several faint reports to the eastward were heard, and a vast cloud of geese of both kinds rose just above the floating ice, and swept up towards the bar. Most of these settled down among the floes; but one large flock of brent swept over Peter, in answer to his almost perfect calling. The leaders of the flock were in the very act of alighting when he fired, and a dozen, at least, lay dead when the white smoke of his volley cleared away.

"I must have one turn with my float," said La Salle, after the three had taken lunch and had their share of a pint of hot, strong coffee prepared in the Crimean lantern. "The tide will soon turn, and I shall work out into the ice and come up with it. You, boys, must look out for the flying birds, and take in the floating decoys before they are crushed or lost."

Launching the light boat, he fitted his rowlocks, and with a light pair of sculls rowed for an hour out into the Gulf, taking care to keep well to the eastward. At the end of that time he unshipped his sculls, took in his rowlocks, fitted his sculling-oar into its muffled aperture, and getting himself comfortably settled, grasped his oar with his left hand, and with his eyes just peering over the gunwale, let the light boat drift with the returning tide, and its fantastic burden of water-worn congelations.

He had not floated two hundred yards, before a change of the ice revealed a small flock of seven geese, quietly feeding along the border of a low piece of field ice. Cocking his gun and laying it ready to hand, La Salle drifted nearer and nearer, keeping barely enough headway to steer her, bow on. The gander, a noble bird, suddenly raised his head to gaze at the advancing boat. All the rest instantly raised theirs ready for immediate flight. The anxious sportsman lay motionless, ceasing the play of his scull, and the birds, gradually relaxing their necks, turned and swam rapidly away.

Still, La Salle tried not to pursue, and the gander, finding that the boat did not get any nearer, stopped, looked, started, stopped, and went to feeding again, followed in all things, of course, by his companions. Then the delicate oar began its noiseless sweep, and gradually the sharp prow crept nearer, passing, one by one, sluggish floes and fantastic pinnacles, until again the wary leader raised his head as if in perplexity and doubt. There, to be sure, was the bit of ice he had taken fright at before, nearer than ever; but it floated as harmlessly as the cake just beside it, from whose edges he had gleaned rootlets of young and tender eel-grass not half an hour ago. So the poor overmatched bird doubtless argued; and ashamed of his fears, which were but too well founded, and doubtful of his instincts, which he should have trusted, the gander turned again to the little eddy of sea-wrack amid which, with soft guttural love-calls, he summoned his harem to many a dainty morsel.

Triumphantly shone the deadly eye which glittered beneath the snowy cap; noiselessly swung the ashen oar, and as unerringly set as Destiny, and remorseless as Death, the knife-like bow slid through the black waters. One hundred, ninety, eighty, seventy, fifty, forty yards only, divide the doomed birds from the boat, and the white gunwale is hidden from their view by the interposition of the very floe along whose edge they are feeding. Steadily La Salle drives the prow gently against the ice, then drops his oar, and grasps his heavy gun. He hazards a glance: the birds, scarce thirty yards away, are unsuspectingly feeding in a close body; he rises to a sitting posture, raises his

gun, and whistles shrilly and long. Instantly the birds raise their heads, gathering around their leader. Bang! The thunder-roll of the report, reverberating amid the ice, is the death-sentence of the flock. Not one escaped; the distance was too short, the aim too sure, the charge of *mitraille* too close and heavy.

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A flying shot at a flock of eider duck added a male, with snowy crest, and three plump, brown females; and a successful approach to a small flock of brent made up fifteen birds under the half-deck of the little craft. It was almost dark when, with little time to spare, La Salle came flying through the fast-coming ice, and dashed across the narrow lane of water, between the immovable covering of the bar, and the advancing, tide-borne ice-islands.

The boys had just drawn in their decoys, and loaded their sled with the birds taken from the boat, besides three geese and a brent, which they had shot during his absence. The other boats had already landed, and been drawn in far up on the ice. Regnar did not know if the centre-wheel had got anything, but Davies and Creamer had four geese, five brent, and a black duck. Peter had gone home with a sled-load of fowl, and, in short, the day had been generally satisfactory all round.

That night, however, all were tired, wet, and half blind with the ceaseless glare of the each-day-warmer sun; nor did any care to spend in listening to idle tales, the hours which might better be given to sleep. Such, for more than a week longer, was their experience, varied only by a few brief frosts, during which, however, the hot coffee made in their lantern-stove was unanimously voted "just the thing."

"Snow-blindness" set in, and Ben had once or twice to leave the ice; while George Waring experienced several attacks, and had a linen cloth full of pulverized clay—the best application known—kept in the boat for emergencies.

By the middle of the next week, a narrow channel had opened up to the city; and Creamer and Davies, piling their decoys beside their deserted box, and leaving Lund to haul them to the shelter of his woods, took the first flood, and paddled briskly homeward, leaving Indian Peter and La Salle in the latter's stand; while Regnar, who had become a proficient with the small boat, struck out for the broken ice lying to the east.

"Good by, Charley; when shall I tell them to expect you?" said Ben, as he started

his wheels, and the boat, heavily laden with fowl, moved northward.

"O, at the end of the week, at farthest. Much obliged to you for taking those birds. I'll have a load Saturday. Good by."

"Good by," said Hughie and Ben, once more; and then they bent to their task, churning into foam the rippleless surface, which bore them on its swift but unnoticeable tide towards home, leaving behind their comrade, his savage companion, and their boyish associates, to experience adventures without parallel in all the strange hunting-lore of those northern seas.

CHAPTER IX.

ADRIFT.

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bout midday, Captain Lund drove down on the ice to draw up the boat owned by his sons; after which he was to return a second time for the decoys and shooting-box of the homeward-bound sportsmen. The floe was fast wasting under the April sun, and his horses' iron-shod hoofs sank deep into the snow-ice, which the night-frosts had left at morn as hard as flint.

He drove with his habitual caution, sounding more than one suspicious place with the axe, and at last came to a long tide-crack, through which the open water showed clear, and which seemed to divide the floe as far as the eye could reach.

"I come none too soon," said the deliberate pilot; "and I must warn La Salle not to trust his boat here another night."

"Well, captain, what think you of the weather?" asked La Salle, as the shaggy pony and rough sled halted near the boat.

"It looks a little cloudy, but I guess nothing more than a fog may be expected to-night. You had better have your boat ready to get ashore right away; for the ice, though heavy enough, is full of cracks, and will go off with the first northerly gale which comes with the ebb."

"Well, I'll be getting the boat clear of the ice, and you may come for us the last of all."

And Lund, driving down the bar to his own boat, left La Salle busily at work, with axe and shovel, clearing away the well-packed ice which had for the last three weeks concealed the sides of the goose-boat.

By the time that Lund had hooked on to his own boat and driven up again, a large heap of ice and snow had been thrown out; but the runners were evidently frozen down, and the boat was immovable.

"I shan't have her clear until you get through with Davies's outfit; but I guess we shall be ready for you then."

Lund drove on, dragging the heavy boat up to the beach, and then concluded to haul it up the bank, above the reach of the increasing tides, and the danger of being crushed by the ice. As he cast off her rope, he felt a snow-flake on the back of his hand. Before he reached the ice, they were falling thick and noiselessly.

"I must hurry; for there's no time to lose. The tide is just at its turn; and if the wind comes from the north, the boys will be adrift. Come; get up, Lightfoot. G'lang! Whoop! Go it!"

Already the rising wind began to whirl the thick-falling flakes in smothering wreaths, and Lund groaned in spirit as, following the tracks of his last trip, the stanch little horse galloped down the ice.

"I am afraid this is the end of my vision; for the ice won't be long in breaking up now, and those boys are out in that d—n little craft."

And Lund in his perturbation swore and cursed after the manner of "sailor-men" generally; that is, when they most need to pray.

Suddenly the little horse hesitated, relaxed into a trot, snorted, reared, and stopped, wheeling half around, with the sleigh-runners diagonally across the half-effaced track, which came to an unexpected stop. Lund saw at once that another rod would have plunged horse and man into the Gulf; the ice-fields had parted, and the boats and their occupants were floating away at the mercy of the winds and waves.

"Let's see," said Lund; "the wind is nor'-east, and the tide will set them in some, too. So, if the gale does not shift, that'll carry them past McQuarrie's Point, and I'll hail them then, and let them know where they are. God grant that they've got the boat clear; for once away from the lee of the island, their craft would never find land in such a squall as this. "Come, Lightfoot," he added, as he sprang upon the sled, and brought his leathern reins smartly across the animal's back, "there's four lives on our speed; so go your fastest, poor fellow! and God help that we may not be too late."

Meanwhile La Salle and Peter had viewed with no little anxiety the sudden overclouding of the sky, or rather the heavy curtain of vapor which seemed to

descend mysteriously from the zenith, rather than to gather from beyond the horizon.

"I no like snow; wind no good this time; tide too high. Spose Lund come, must get boat across crack yonder any way."

And the one-armed hunter plied the light axe with a haste which showed no small amount of anxiety.

The boat was soon clear, but the snow was falling so fast that they could scarcely see to windward at all, and no part of the land was visible. Again the Indian spoke, and a new cause of anxiety was stated.

"Where sposum boys this time? See boat little hile ago. No see any now. They no see hice. Spose shootum big gun call them hin?"

La Salle took the heavy piece, and was about to discharge it to leeward, when, from the very air above their heads, a voice seemed to call on them by name, "La Salle, Charley, Peter, ahoy!"

La Salle dropped the butt of his gun, and listened. Again the voice sounded apparently nearer than before. "Charley, Peter, ahoy!"

"That voice ole man Lund. I know it; but what for sposum voice there? Then track go that way. Ole man lose way, spose."

"Perhaps he has fallen in, Peter. Come, let's go."

And catching a rope near him, and forgetting to lay down the cumbrous gun, Charley ran towards the incessant and evidently-agonized cries, Peter following with an axe and a light fish-spear.

Scarcely had the runners gone a hundred yards before they stopped in dismay. At their feet the ice-field ended abruptly, and scarce a hundred yards away rose a wall of red sandstone, on whose summit stood Lund, peering down into the whirl of snow-flakes. His quick eye espied them, and he shouted his last advice.

"Launch your boat at once; don't wait. Keep under the lee. Don't try to save anything but your lives. Keep the wind at your backs in rowing, and mind the set of the tide eastward."

"Ay, ay! I understand. We're waiting for the boys!" shouted La Salle.

"I can't hear a word," called out Lund across the rapidly-increasing space.

"Give me that spear, Peter," said La Salle.

And snapping off the tiny barbs, he drew from his pocket a pencil, and wrote as follows on the slender rod of white maple:—

> "We know our danger, but have no oars; for the boys have not returned. Unless they do so soon, shall stick to the ice until the weather clears. Look for us along the coast if the storm lasts.
>
> "Love to all. LA SALLE."

Holding up the rod to be seen by Lund, he placed it in the muzzle of his piece, and motioned to the captain to watch its flight. The pilot stepped behind a tree, and La Salle aimed at the face of a large snow-drift near him. The report echoed amid the broken ledges, the long white arrow sped through the air, and stuck in the snow close to the tree. Lund picked it up, and bent over it a moment; then bowed his head, as if assuring them of his approval of its contents.

Already the floe had moved into rough water, and the short waves raised by the increasing gale began to throw their spray far up on the ice. The snow-squall gathered fury, and La Salle, waving his hand, pointed heavenward, while Peter, knowing but too well the danger of their position, sank on his knees, and began the simple prayers of his faith. Lund saw them fade from view into the sleety veil that hid the waste of waters, and groaning in spirit, turned homeward.

"In half an hour no boat on the island can reach them, even if men could be found to face certain death in a snow-storm out on the open Gulf."

Peter rose to his feet, apparently almost hopeless.

"Good by, Saint Peter's! Good by, Trois Lieues' Creek! Good by, Lund! Poor Peter no more shootum wild goose here."

"Come, Peter, don't give it up so," said La Salle. "We must find the boys and get their oars and boat, and then well try and see what we can do to get ashore."

Peter's eyes brightened a little, and walking around the edge of the floe, they came, in the course of twenty minutes, to the boys, snugly seated under their inverted boat, in a hollow of a large berg, which, until that day, had never floated with the tide.

"Come, boys, this won't do. We're adrift, and getting well out into the Gulf. Turn over your boat, put everything into her, and let's try what we can do with the big boat."

In desperate haste the four took down the light craft, threw in the oars and guns, and dashed across the quarter of a mile which lay between them and the windward side of the ice. In about five minutes they reached the large boat; but all saw at a glance that little less than a miracle was needed to carry them safe ashore.

The snow was falling thick and fast, the wind driving it in eddying clouds, and amid it could be seen at times the white caps of the increasing surges as they broke on the edge of the floe. It was evident that it would be madness to attempt to leave their present position; yet all stood silent a moment, as if unwilling to be the first to confess the painful truth.

At last La Salle broke the silence. "It's no use, boys; we must stay here all night. And first, let's get both boats down to the berg, for this floe may go to pieces any time; but that is all of twenty feet thick, and will stand a good deal yet. Come, pile in the decoys and tools, and let's get under cover as soon as we can."

The decoys of iron and wood, and even those of fir-twigs, of which they had added some three dozen, were piled into the boats, and taking hold at the painter of the largest, they soon trundled the heavy load to the thickest part of the field.

"Sposum we get Davies's box and 'coys too. Then we makum camp, have plenty wood too. Spose field break up, loosem sartin," said Peter.

"You're right. Come, boys. We don't know how long we may be on this ice-field, and we shall need all the shelter we can get, and fuel too."

It was nearly an hour before they found the box and its pile of decoys, but the box had been furnished with rude runners, and being already clear of the ice, there was no delay in what was evidently becoming a dangerous proximity to the sea; for that edge of the ice was already breaking up, as the rollers broke over it, bearing it down with the weight of water. Sunset must have been close at hand when the party arrived, wet, weary, and almost despairing, at the berg.

"Now, boys," said La Salle, "we must build our house at once, for no one can tell how long this storm may last. Luckily we have two shovels and two axes. Peter and I will cut away the ice, and you two will pile up fragments, and clear away

the snow and rubbish."

Choosing a crater-like depression on the summit of the berg, La Salle laid out a parallelogram about eight feet square, and motioning to Peter, proceeded to sink a square shaft into the solid ice, which, at first a little spongy, rapidly became hard and flinty. Aided by the natural shape of the berg, in the course of an hour a cavity had been cleared out to the depth of about six feet. Over this was inverted the box belonging to Davies, and this was kept in place by fragments of ice piled around and over it, after which the interstices were filled with wet snow, and the whole patted into a firm, impermeable mound.

On the leeward side the wall had been purposely left thin, and through this a narrow door, about three feet high, was cut into the excavation. Lighting his lantern, La Salle stepped inside, finding himself in a gloomy but warm room, about nine feet high in the walls, and eight feet square. Taking the dryest of the fir decoys, he cut the cords which bound them together, and laying the icy branches of their outer covering on the bare ice, soon formed a non-conducting carpet of fir-twigs, of which the upper layers were nearly dry.

The whole party then entered, carefully brushing from their clothes and boots as much of the snow as possible, and, seating themselves, for the first time rested from incessant exertion amid the furious peltings of a driving north-east snow-storm.

La Salle motioned to the rest to place their guns in a nook near the door, and taking the boiler of the lantern, filled it with snow, and placed it above the flame. Regnar, noticing this, went out and brought in the rude chest containing the remnants of their little stock of coffee, and the basket with what was left of the day's lunch.

In the former were found a few matches, about a half pound of coffee, perhaps a pound of sugar, a box and a half of sardines, and two or three dozen ship's hard-bread. In the basket were left several slices of bread, a junk of corned beef weighing about two pounds, and some apples and doughnuts.

In a short time the tiny boiler, which held about a pint, was full of boiling water, to which La Salle added some coffee, and soon each had a small but refreshing draught, which helped wonderfully to restore their usual warmth and vigor of circulation. From the lunch-basket, whose contents had remained untouched all day, a slight meal was taken, and then the remainder of the provisions put carefully away, although a second cup of coffee was left preparing in the lantern

for possible contingencies.

La Salle looked at his watch—it was nearly eight o'clock.

"We are now well down off Point Prime, and are probably under the lee of other ice, as we no longer feel the tossing of the sea. The boats are all ready for use, but it is not likely we shall need them to-night, unless, indeed—Let us hold a council of war, and decide at once on our course of action."

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CHAPTER X.

THE COUNCIL.—PASSING THE CAPE.

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rawing his coat tightly around him, La Salle first drew aside the rubber blanket which had been hung up for a door, and crawled out into the storm. The snow still fell heavily, but although the wind blew very hard, few drifts were formed, owing to the wet and heavy nature of the large, soft flakes, although at times a flurry of sharp, stinging hail rattled against the boats and the roof of the ice-chamber.

As nearly as he could judge, the wind was north-east, or perhaps a point or two south of that, for at times there came warmer gusts, as if the wind veered to a milder quarter. The roar of the sea could be plainly heard, but evidently far up to windward, and there was little doubt that they need have no apprehensions from that source at present.

Re-entering he found his friends anxiously awaiting his report on the aspect of things outside, and he plunged at once into the gist of the matter before them.

"I see no reason to expect any change in our situation until the tide turns, which will be in about an hour. I can notice no change in the wind, nor do I think we have shifted our relative position to its course. Should the storm decrease towards morning, we shall probably find ourselves up the straits, in the vicinity of the capes. Only one danger can possibly assail us, and that is being ground to pieces on the New Brunswick shore. We must keep a watch to-night, commencing at about twelve o'clock. Regnar, will you keep the first watch of an hour and a half, and then call me?"

"Yes, sir; all right. I wake any time, and I know what 'nip' means. We must not get caught napping if that happens."

"Can't we get ashore and off of this horrid floe, if we strike on the other shore?" asked Waring, a little dolorously.

"I'm afraid not, my dear George. The straits here, nearly thirty miles wide, converge to about twelve at the capes; and this terrible gale, although we feel it scarcely at all in the heart of this berg, will drive us with the rising ebb, at a velocity little less than ten miles an hour, through that narrow, choked pass, bordered by the ice-cliffs which form, on the shallows every winter, to the height of from ten to twenty feet above the water."

"Should this berg be driven against the verge of these immovable cliffs, our only resource will be to take to our boats and retreat farther off on the floes; for a single mishap in crossing the terrible chasm which borders the irresistible course of this great ice-stream, would consign us all to irremediable destruction. I propose that we thank God for his mercies thus far, and implore his aid in the future. Then we may lie down secure in His protection, and gather new strength for whatever may be before us."

Thus saying, La Salle knelt, and in solemn but unfaltering tones repeated the short but inimitable prayer which embodies the needs of every petitioner. Peter crossed himself at the close, and broke out,—

"I feel 'fraid, all time till now. I hear Lund see ghost. I think we never get back. Now I feel sure all go right, and I worry like woman no more."

"Thank you, Peter. I shall depend on good service from you; and I may say that I have little doubt of landing somewhere to-morrow, if the weather clears so that we can see. Come, Regnie, get the rest of those dry decoys out of the boat, and we'll turn in for two or three hours, when you must take the first watch."

Regnar brought in about twenty bundles more of fir-twigs, which were piled against the wall so as to form a kind of slanting pillow, against which the party might rest their backs and heads in a half-sitting posture, without being chilled by the ice-wall of their narrow dormitory. Waring drew his seal-skin cap over his ears, turned up his wide coat-collar of the same costly fur, and placed himself next to Peter, who, as the worst clad of the party, wrapped himself in his dingy blanket, and seated himself at the back of the hut. Regnar, in his Canadian capote, was next, and La Salle with difficulty found room between himself and the door for his faithful dog, whose natural warmth had already dried his long fur, and made him a very welcome bed-fellow under such circumstances. Thus disposed, it was not long before they all fell asleep; and at twelve o'clock, La Salle, only half awake, gave Regnar his watch, and saw the resolute boy go out into the storm to commence his lonely vigil.

Scarcely feeling that he had more than got fairly to sleep again, he was again awakened by Regnar, who said in a low voice, "'Tis two o'clock, master; but I would not waken you if I did not think that the floe has shifted sides, for we are no longer under a lee. I hear too, at times, cracking and grinding of the ice, and I think we are not far from shore."

La Salle hurriedly went out. The wind blew into his very teeth, as he emerged from the narrow door; but it seemed no warmer or colder, and the snow fell much the same as before. Near them, through the storm, another berg of equal height with their own seemed to appear at times, and the crash of falling and breaking ice arose on all sides. Still, for an hour nothing could be seen, until between three and four the snow gave place to a sleety rain, and the watchers saw that they were passing with frightful rapidity a line of jagged ice-cliffs, not two hundred yards away. La Salle called his companions, and they watched for nearly an hour in constant expectation of having to take to their boat.

The pressure was tremendous, and on every side floes heaped up their debris on each other, and pinnacles forced into collision were ground into common ruin. Now shut out from view in darkness and storm, and now close at hand in the multitudinous shiftings of the ice, the immovable and gigantic buttresses of the ice-pool ground into powder acres of level floe, and bergs containing hundreds of thousands of tons of ice. Along that terrible line of impact rolled and heaved a chaos of mealy sludge and gigantic fragments, while from time to time a mass of many tons would be thrown, like a child's plaything, high up amid the debris already heaped along the inaccessible shore. Half a dozen times the startled voyagers seized their boat to drag her down from the berg, as the shore-ice gnawed into the sides of their narrowing ice-field.

At last a move appeared inevitable. The distance between their refuge and the shore was less than fifty yards, and in the gray of the morning they saw castle after castle crushed off by this fearful attrition, while high above their heads rose the ruin-strewed and inhospitable ice-foot.

"Stand by, lads, to move the boats, when I give the word. Look, Regnar! What is that above the cliff?"

"That a light-house, I think. Guess that on Cape Torment. No light there in winter; not many vessels here then."

"Yes, we are passing the capes, and not a mile distant is the hostelry of Tom Allan. Well, we can't land, that's certain; and as we can't, I hope we shall soon

get into a wider channel. How the trees fly past! Ah, here the pressure lessens; we shall soon be above the narrows, and if the tide only serves—Good Heaven! what is that?"

An eddy seemed to catch the floe as he spoke, and whirling like a top, it brought between it and the shore a fantastically-shaped berg, at least twenty-five feet high. The "nip" was but momentary; but the lofty shaft and its floating base cracked like a mirror, the huge fabric fell into ruins, and one of its pieces, striking the smaller boat, crushed it into utter uselessness.

La Salle viewed the wreck of his little bark ruefully a moment.

"Well, the worst is over, and we are fortunate in losing so little, for it might have struck the larger boat, and that would have been indeed a loss. Come, boys, we have passed Cape Torment; let us pick some of those birds and get breakfast, for we shan't land this day, with an easterly gale hurrying the ice-pack thus to the north-west."

CHAPTER XI.

TAKING AN INVENTORY.—SETTING UP THE STOVE.

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eter was already picking a dead goose, and Regnar and Waring were about to follow his example, when La Salle interposed.

"Let us skin the birds, for it may be that we shall be unable to land for several days, and if so, we shall need all the covering we can get, for this thaw is sure to be followed by a severe frost or two."

"Sposum tide turn, ice lun down to capes, then get ashore," said Peter, confidently.

La Salle drew out his watch.

"It was high tide at four o'clock, and it is now nearly seven. Peter, just climb to the top of the berg, and see how we drift."

Peter dropped his half-picked bird, ascended with eager agility, lined another projection of the floe with some object on the New Brunswick shore, seemed puzzled, looked more carefully, and then slowly descended, apparently sad and disheartened.

"Well, Peter, how is it?" said La Salle, cheerfully.

"No good; ice lun north-west, against tide; no get ashore to-day," was the reluctant answer.

Regnar seemed little surprised, but Waring turned almost white with anxiety and disappointment.

"I thought as much," said La Salle, quietly. "With such a gale as this, the tide, whose rise and fall does not average four feet on this coast, often seems to run in one direction, and even to remain at flood for a day or two; but even if it did fall, this floe carries sail enough with this wind to make from two to three miles an

hour against it. We shall probably have easterly and southerly winds until to-morrow, and must now be well up to Cape Bauld, and about mid-channel, say twelve miles from shore."

"Why not try land, then, with the boat? We four could surely make twelve mile in the course of the day," asked Regnar, somewhat impatiently for him.

"How deep is the snow and slush now, Regnie?" asked the leader of the little party, calmly.

"'Bout knee-deep on level ice," said the boy.

"Come up here, all of you," said La Salle, ascending the lookout.

The three followed, and found themselves scarcely able to stand at times, when a fiercer blast than usual swept up the strait, howling through the tortuous and intricate ravines and valleys of the ice-fields.

"Can we cross such a place as that?" asked La Salle, pointing to where an edge of a large ice-field, suddenly lifted by the wedge-like brink of another, began a majestic and resistless encroachment, with the incalculable power communicated by the vast weight pressing behind it.

A body of ice, at least a yard in thickness, ran up a steep ascent of five or six feet, broke with its own weight, pressed on again up the steeper incline, broke again, and so continued to ascend and break off until a ridge a score of feet high, crested with glittering fragments of broken ice, interrupted the passage between the two floes.

Regnar was silent, and then said, resolutely,—

"We can try, at least."

"Well said, Regnie," cried La Salle; "but look again yonder." He pointed to a small lead of open water bounded with abrupt shores, which were surrounded with rounded balls and water-worn fragments of ice. A berg, losing its balance, fell with a loud splash, sank, and came to the surface with a bound, covering the water with wet snow and the ruins of the shattered pinnacles. "Can we also pass the heavy drags of the drifted snow, the baffling resistance of floating sludge, and such dangers as that?"

Turning, he descended under the lee of the shelter, where he was soon followed

by the rest.

"What spose we do, then?" asked Peter. "We stay this place to die of cold and hunger?"

"Peter, I'm ashamed of you," said La Salle. "Die, do you say, when we have food, shelter, fire, and covering? We must, indeed, stay here until the winds and sea give us a better chance to escape to the shore. Meanwhile let us try to make ourselves comfortable."

Accordingly the birds—six geese and eight brent—were divested of their skins, which furnished patches of warm covering, of from two to four square feet. The sinews of the legs were divided into threads, and, using a small sail-needle which he carried to clean the tube of his gun, La Salle proceeded to show Waring how to make a large robe, placing the larger skins in the middle, and forming a border of the smaller ones.

Meanwhile Regnar had cleared the snow from a space about twelve feet square in front of the door, and, with fragments of ice, cemented with wet snow, formed a walled enclosure which kept off the wind; and Peter, splitting two or three of the wooden decoys, soon built a fire, over which a pair of geese, spitted on sticks, were narrowly watched and sedulously turned, while La Salle made a cup of his carefully-treasured coffee.

As they sat eating their rude meal, Regnar broke the silence; for it may well be believed that no great hilarity pervaded the little party.

"As we not know how long we may be adrift, I think we better take 'count stock. See how much wood, provisions, powder, shot, everyting."

"You are right, Regnie; we will set to work at once. I can tell how much food we have now. We have a little bread, coffee, sugar, and a tin of sardines, which I think we had better reserve for possible emergencies, also six candles, which we must not waste. I have a pound canister of powder untouched, and nearly half a pound more in my flask, with about five pounds of shot, and three dozen shot-cartridges of different sizes, say sixty charges in all. Besides that, my rifle lies in the boat, loaded, with a small bag of bullets, and a quarter-pound flask of rifle powder."

"I," said Waring, "have thirty cartridges for my breech-loader, and a few of the caps for them, in a box in my pocket."

"I have nearly a pound powder, some wads, caps, and 'bout two pounds of shot left," said Regnar.

"Spose I got half pound powder in old horn, box caps mos' full, an' tree poun' goose shot," said Peter.

"We have, then, somewhere between one hundred and fifty and two hundred rounds of ammunition, and provisions for a week, allowing ourselves no addition to the present stock. Count the decoys, Regnie, while I look up our tools, &c."

Regnie reported forty wooden decoys, twelve of sheet iron, eight of cork and canvas, and twelve wooden duck decoys. Besides these, there were still untouched a dozen bunches of fir and spruce twigs, like those used in covering the floor of the ice-hut. In addition to these, La Salle found one large boat, the broken smaller one, a pair of oars, a pair of rowlocks, a short boat-hook, baler, two lead-lines and leads, two shovels, and two axes.

"We are well provided for a week of such weather as this, and have only to fear a sudden change to extreme cold. I therefore think the first thing for us to do, is to finish our feather quilt, enlarge our hut, and get up a stove as soon as possible."

A general expression of incredulity showed itself on the faces of the trio, which La Salle evidently interpreted rightly, and therefore hastened to explain himself.

"Of course we must first make our stove."

"Why, Charley, what on earth can we make our stove of?" said Waring.

"Sheet iron, of course."

"But where is the sheet iron to come from? We haven't any here—have we?"

"Ah, I know twelve decoys sheet-iron, only they painted."

"Yes, Regnie, you have guessed it. Those decoys are about as good sheet iron as is made, and we can burn the paint off, I guess. Five of them will furnish a cylinder, conical stove, fifteen inches diameter, and as many high, and five more will give us about seven feet of two and a half-inch stove-pipe. Bring in the decoys and axes, and we'll get it up at once."

"Come on, boys," said Waring, whose spirits had risen perceptibly since breakfast. "We'll have a hotel here yet, and supply passengers by the mail-boat

with hot dinners."

"Sposum me have knife, I help you. Leave *waghon* home yesterday for *h*ould woman make baskets," said Peter, ruefully.

"I guess we shall manage with the axes, although we need a knife like your Indian draw-knife. Reach me a large decoy, and the heaviest of those cod-leads."

La Salle had already "laid out" with the point of his penknife the shape of one of the sections of his proposed stove upon one of the decoys from which Regnar had already removed the iron leg, which was about six inches long, sharp pointed, and intended to be driven into the ice. Each section was twenty inches long, eight and a half inches wide at the lower end, and two and a half at the upper; and luckily the outline of the goose gave very nearly this shape, with little trimming, which was effected by laying the iron on the lead, applying the edge of the smaller axe as a chisel, and striking on its head with the large. The laps were then "turned" over the edge of an axe with a billet of wood cut from the old cross-bars of Davies's shooting-box, which were young ash saplings. Then the pieces were put together, the laps solidly beaten down, and despite a little irregularity of shape, the job was not a bad one.

Five other decoys furnished as many parallelograms of seventeen by eight and a half, which made good two and three quarter inch pipe, and afforded nearly seven feet in length when affixed to the cylinder.

It was nearly four o'clock when the work was thus far completed.

"If we only had a flat stone to set it on," said Waring.

"I should not despair of that even," said La Salle, "if we dared look around on some of the older floes; but we shall have to do without one for a day or two, I think."

"Peter make glate, three, two minutes, only glate burn up every day or two;" and hastening out, he returned with a very large decoy, which, on account of its portentous size, had been made the leader of the "set" when arranged on the ice.

With the axe he broke off the head, and then taking six of the ten iron legs, he drove them two or three inches deep into the tough spruce log, until the spikes surrounded it like the points of a crown. La Salle had re-riveted the four others at equal distances around the base of the stove, while Regnar had removed a part of the snow on the roof, and, cutting a large aperture through the bottom of the

inverted box, nailed over it the eleventh decoy, through which a roughly-cut hole gave admittance to the chimney.

The fir-branches were then removed to the yard, and covered from the still falling rain with the rubber blanket, while all hands joined in enlarging their quarters. The ice was singularly hard and clear, and contained no cracks or other sources of weakness. By sunset the lower part of the hut was enlarged from eight feet square to twelve feet diameter, a circular shape being given to the excavation, so that a continuous berth, about two feet wide and a yard high, ran completely around the floor of the hut, or rather to within about four feet of the door on either side. The fir-twigs were replaced in the berths and around the floor, leaving a bare space of nearly four feet diameter in the centre. Here a slight hollow was made, to contain the novel grate, and the stove was placed in position over it.

Waring brought in a shovelful of embers from the dying fire outside, under whose ashes a goose, swathed in sea-weed, was preparing for supper, and Peter followed him with some small chunks of wood. The stove "drew" beautifully, and but one drawback could be discovered—it made the atmosphere within too warm for comfort, at the then temperature. "No matter that," said Peter, prophetically; "we glad see plenty fire here to-morrow night."

It was nearly midnight when the four ate supper and gave the fragments to their faithful dog. Before sleeping, La Salle stepped outside the hut. The wind had lessened greatly, but still blew mildly warm from a southerly direction. "We must now be somewhere off Shediac, but I see no open water, and the pack is as close as ever. We shan't get down to the capes with this wind, and to-morrow at this time, if the wind holds, we shall be up to Point Escumenac. I don't care to think what next; but if, as Peter says, we are to have cold, westerly weather, we must move off into the open Gulf and then—Well, we shall endure what it pleases God to send us."

Notwithstanding their fatigue, all were awake at daylight the next morning, and immediately the whole party ascended their lookout. The wind still blew in very nearly the same direction, but with little force, and at noon, as the party sat down to their first meal for the day, no land could be plainly determined, and for an hour the utmost calm prevailed, with an unclouded sun. The pack was still closed, however, with the exception of two or three small openings, in which were seen a seal and several flocks of moniac ducks, known on the Atlantic coast as "South-Southerlies." The former could not be approached, but Peter got

two shots at the ducks as they gyrated over the berg, and killed three at one time and four at another, which were duly skinned, and the bodies consigned to the "meat-safe," a hole in the ice near the door.

This meal tasted a little better than the former ones, the birds being seasoned with salt procured from sea-water by boiling—a slow process, which La Salle promised to make easier when the next frost set in. The bird-skins had been carefully cleaned from fat, and sewed into two blankets about seven feet by five each, and stretched on the ice with the flesh side uppermost, were rubbed with salt and ashes, and then exposed to the sun, receiving considerable benefit thereby.

For supper, a soup of fowls thickened with grated biscuit was eaten with hearty relish by all but Waring, who claimed to have eaten too much at dinnertime, although La Salle fancied that he looked flushed and pale by turns.

"Do you feel sick, George?" said La Salle, anxiously, when the others were temporarily absent from the hut.

"O, no, Charley; don't fuss about me. I'm all right, only I've eaten a little too much of that fat meat, and taken scarcely any exercise," was the reply.

"Well, George, don't fail to let me know at once if you do feel sick, for my stock of medicines is limited, and I must do my doctoring during the first stages of the disease," said La Salle, gravely.

"Yes, I should judge so, doctor," laughed Waring; and, turning to the fire, he placed another stick under the cylinder, as if suffering from a chill.

At an hour before sunset they saw on their left hand, and, as nearly as they could judge, about twelve miles away, the high headland of Escumenac. The pack opened a little, for the wind had now been blowing for about three hours from the west, the air was very perceptibly colder, and the standing pools on the ice began to freeze. Under Le Salle's direction, Regnar cut a hole in the ice, which would hold about four pailsful of salt water, and filled it to overflowing, while Peter cut up a dozen of the decoys into junks three inches square, and piled them near the door.

As they entered the hut, they found Waring shivering over the fire. "I am afraid, Charley," stammered he, "that I am going to be very sick, for I can't keep warm to save my life."

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CHAPTER XII.

DOCTORING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.—AN ANXIOUS NIGHT.—FROZEN UP.

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a Salle examined the condition of his patient, and found his tongue furred, his pulse quick and feverish, his tonsils badly inflamed, and the chills alternating with flushes of fever heat. The mind of the patient, too, was anxious; for at the close of the brief examination he said, "I hope I shan't be sick, for there isn't much show for me out here on the ice."

"And why not, George? Although I hope you will have nothing more than a bad cold, yet I think I could cure a pretty sick man out here."

"But we have no medicines, or beds, or food, or anything, scarcely."

"What nonsense! We are far more comfortably housed than the poor Esquimaux, and even Peter there lives no warmer than we do—do you, Peter?"

"*Womegun* hetter than this; but this place very comforble. *I* no fraid freeze here."

"Well, George, I must turn doctor now, and try to stop this cold; for as yet it is no worse. Peter, make a fire outside, and heat the iron bailer full of salt water. Regnie, reach me my powder-horn and the little tin cup of the lantern."

Pouring four drachms of gunpowder into the cup, he filled it about half full of water, and setting it near the hot coals under the red hot cylinder, soon dissolved the explosive, forming an inky fluid. From the ammunition bucket he drew a small phial, which had been filled with olive oil, and pouring some hot water and a little shot into it, he soon cleaned it for the reception of the fluid, which he filtered through several thicknesses of his woolen gun-cover. About a fluid ounce of a rather dirty-looking solution of saltpeter resulted, to which a little sugar was added.

"Here we have," said the man of drugs, "some three drachms of saltpeter in

solution, of which, by and by, you may take about one sixth, letting it gargle your throat going down. Peter, is the water hot?"

"Yes, broder, water boilin' hover. What do with him now?"

"I want to soak his feet; but what shall we do it in? I can fill my seal-skin boots, but they would be awkward."

"There's the ammunition bucket," suggested Regnie.

"That was made to hold peas and such like, and leaks like a sieve."

"Put the rubber blanket around it," interposed the patient.

"That's the idea," said La Salle. And hanging up one of the bird-skin rugs in its place, the "mackintosh" was drawn and carefully knotted around the rim of the shaky receptacle. Into this the hot water was poured, and being duly tempered to a safe degree of heat, Waring removed his boots and stockings, and, seated on a couple of decoys, bathed his feet and ankles for about fifteen minutes.

In the mean time, the portion of the sleeping-room farthest from the door, was carefully fitted with dry twigs and one of the bird-skin coverlets, and the lad's stockings were thoroughly dried at the stove until they felt warm and comfortable. Taking one of the discarded cotton-flannel shooting-gowns, duly warmed at the fire, La Salle and Regnar carefully and energetically dried and rubbed Waring's extremities, now warmed and suffused with blood drawn from the overtaxed blood-vessels of the head and body, after which his warmed and dried foot-gear were replaced, and he was tucked away in his berth.

"Does your chest pain you at all, George?" asked his attendant, as he drew the thick feather covering over the sick boy.

"No; but my throat does a little. It feels much better, though, than it did."

La Salle thought a moment, then drew from a little cavity in the wall near the door a small junk of bird-fat, which he melted in the tin cup. "I will rub your throat with goose-grease. It is a great favorite of the old women, and will keep the air from your tender skin, if it doesn't relieve the soreness of the inflamed membranes." So saying, he rubbed in the warm, soft fat with his hands, covering the skin above the bronchial tubes and the soft parts of the throat with the penetrating unguent, then fastening a turn of his list gun-cover around his throat, he replaced the covering, and taking his cap, went out into the night air, and

seeking the lookout, glanced eagerly out over the waste of ice.

The night was clear and cold, with only an occasional puff of wind from the westward; but the temperature was falling fast, and the snow-crust broke under the foot with a sound ominous of biting cold. All around was ice, and even if the light-houses along that coast were lighted in winter, it is doubtful if the party were near enough to land to see any except that of Point Escumenac, which at noon bore north-west and about fifteen miles away. Since that time, the drift of the pack, at nightfall evidently making eastward, or rather north-east, had probably increased the distance to nearly forty miles.

La Salle surveyed the wild scene around him—the pillars hewn from vast masses of eternal ice by the shock of fearful collision, the slow action of the sun, the corrosion of the waves, and the melting kisses of the rain, and thus fashioned into fantastic mockeries of fane, monument, tower, and spire, even by daylight were strangely wonderful, but under the mystic night and the weird light of the stars, seemed like icy statues, in whose chill bosoms were incarnated the genii of desolation and death.

"Ay! thus we move, helpless, lost, and beyond the aid of man, convoyed by a fleet of fantasies into a sailless sea, and to an unknown fate. Well I know that by to-morrow, myriads of eyes will watch for signs of our presence from Canseau to Gaspé, and on both shores of St. Jean; but they will look in vain. A week hence they will hear of our disappearance in Baltimore, and Paulie will know her own heart at last. I may not regret this if I escape with life, for well I know we are like to come back as men from the dead."

"Why do you speak of death, La Salle?" said a voice in good and even polished French; and La Salle, turning, found that Regnar stood beside him. An air of education which he had never noticed before seemed to pervade this youth, who spoke English almost execrably, and had shown little more than a passable knowledge of the coast of Labrador, and a keen insight into all the varied craft of hunter and fisherman.

"I was only thinking," said La Salle, evasively, speaking in the same language. "But how is it that you, who know French and German, speak English so badly?"

"You will know some time, but not to-night; although I may tell you this—that I shall receive from you the greatest good that man will ever confer, or at least the realization of some long-cherished desire. God grant that it may end my long search for him, although my life end with it."

"Of whom do you speak?" asked La Salle, impressed with his manner.

"Regnar don't care talk now. Nights getting cold; so come in and look at sick boy. Ha, ha, ha! You've been tinman, tailor, cook, navigator, and now you're doctor. Come on!" And La Salle almost doubted his own sanity as he followed the old Regnie of his Labrador voyage down the side of the mound, where a moment ago an unsuspected, hidden fire had revealed itself.

Just as they were about to enter the little outer enclosure, La Salle laid his hand on the arm of his companion. "Regnie, don't for your life let the others know that I have doubt of our safety; and keep up poor Waring's spirits if you can."

Cheerfully and firmly the answer came back in good Parisian, "I will not fail you. I have no fear now, and the life of the ice is nothing new to me. When the winds have done their work, and we no longer look for the loom of the cliffs, or the hazy purple of the distant forests, I will take my turn in your place." And grasping La Salle's hand, Orloff stepped into the chamber.

"How you do, George? Here's the doctor again," and La Salle, with no little anxiety, approached his patient.

"I have no chills now, but my throat is still quite sore, and I have some fever, I think."

La Salle laid his hand on the boy's forehead. It was parched with fever, but a close search failed to discover any signs of dangerous throat symptoms. He looked at his watch.

"It is now ten o'clock. You may take another dose of the nitre, and gargle your throat well with a little of it. Are you warm enough?"

"Yes, thank you. I guess I can sleep now, and you had better go to bed too. Good night!"

"Good night, George. You'll be better to-morrow."

And placing a few billets in the cylinder, La Salle rolled himself up in his heavy coat, drew off his long moccason boots, and placing his stockinged feet where the heat of the fire would dry the insensible perspiration they had gathered during the day, he prepared for a short nap.

"Regnie, keep up the fire for a couple of hours, and then call me, for it grows

cold, and we must not let George get chilled again, on any account."

About one, La Salle awoke to find Regnie still awake, and keeping up a good fire, although he used the wood but sparingly. The cold had evidently increased, and La Salle drew on his boots, which had improved much in drying. As Regnar turned to his berth, he said,—

"It cold to-night, colder to-morrow, and warm to-morrow night. Then we be in the open Gulf, and the warm winds will come again."

George slept but restlessly; and once more during the night a small dose of the sirup was administered. About three o'clock, Peter awoke, and said,—

"Why no let Peter watch? No doctor, but keep good fire and let you sleep."

"Well, Peter," said La Salle, "I shall be glad to rest; but you must be careful of the wood, and put in as little as will keep up a blaze, for we have not a great deal, and that not of a very good kind."

"Me know no woods here, and Peter will not waste any, you better b'lieve."

Laying his hand on George's head, he felt a slight moisture; and covering him still more closely, he lay down with a hopeful heart, and, wearied in mind and body, slept until nearly nine the next morning.

Regnar was broiling the dismembered body of a goose at the rude grate, and at that moment was arranging on a slender spit alternate portions of the heart, liver, and fat of the bird. After being seasoned with salt, this was rapidly rotated in front of the fire by Peter, who watched with much interest the preparation of three similar sticks.

La Salle sprang to his feet, and first hastened to Waring, who professed himself cured, and wanted to get up.

"No, George; you must lie abed to-day, and accept a cup of *very* weak coffee and some bread. I shall let you eat nothing. You see," he continued, as the boy broke into a fit of coughing, "that the cold has not left you yet, and I have no doubt you feel some pain in your chest now."

"Yes, it has gone into my lungs a little, but will wear off soon, I guess. It always does at home."

"Well, we can't risk anything here; so I'll get your coffee, and after breakfast, if

Peter will get me a little pitch off the branches, I'll make something for your cough."

The birds were well cooked and quite appetizing; and as he rose Peter handed La Salle a small handful of Canada balsam, which in the shape of small tears clung to many of the larger branches on the floor.

"That enough? If not, Peter get more."

"That will do—thank you, Peter."

But the eye of the speaker caught a look directed by Regnar at the roof of the hut, from whence exuded a few drops of a blacker resin.

"Yes, I see Stockholm tar; that will help the cure much."

Placing the two in an iron spoon, rudely made from a fragment of the decoys, they were gently melted, and a small quantity of sugar added, with enough powdered biscuit to enable the mass to be rolled into little balls.

"You must chew these and swallow the tar-water thus formed, and finally the resins themselves, and you will find your cough much loosened by to-morrow."

"Sposum you no want boat-hook, me make draw-knife of him. He steel, I s'pose."

"Yes, Peter. The spike is very fine steel, I believe, as I told the blacksmith I wanted it light and sharp. If you want it you can have it; that is, if you feel sure you can make a knife."

"Mos' all Ingin make own knife. You never see Ingin knife in store. In old time old men say Ingin make work-knife, war-knife, arrow-head, axe, all ting he want when can't buy. Me make best knife in tribe 'fore me lose arm. Some one must strike for me, an' I turn iron now."

Going out, he brought in several fragments of hard wood, and the spike or head of the boat-hook. Making a hot fire, he placed the spike therein, and sinking the edge of an axe in one of the decoys, got Regnar to strike for him.

"Now no strike hard—strike quick and heasy, right that place every time;" and taking the glowing iron from the fire, he laid it on the light anvil.

It was wonderful to see how, like one who uses a trip-hammer, he drew the iron

under the rapidly-plied axe, until the round spike was a narrow, thin blade about six inches in length. Then shifting the angle of the iron a little, he directed Regnar how to beat down one side to an edge, and lastly how to curve the flat of the blade a little at the point, or rather end. Then, producing several small pieces of lime and sandstone, found among the earth kept in the boats, for the use of snow-blind gunners, he proceeded to rub down the edge to something like fitness for use.

After this he carefully tempered the blade, and with a penknife cut out a handle, in which he inserted it, lashing the two firmly together with twine made from one of the cod-lines. Long and patient labor with his few pebbles, and the leather of his cowhide boots, brought the *waghon* at length to a keen, smooth edge; and great was Peter's joy when he again carried at his belt a tool so indispensable to the Indian hunter and workman.

That day, the fourth of their drift, brought little change in their position—the icebergs frozen together, were drifting, if at all, in one vast body. Towards night a north-west wind sprang up, and the thermometer, had the party possessed such an instrument, would probably have registered at least -10°. A watch was kept all night to keep the fire replenished, and all the appliances used to keep out the cold air, and economize heat, scarcely kept the temperature up as high as +32°, the freezing point of water.

Waring was kept carefully covered up, and professed to suffer nothing from cold, having all the extra clothing of the party. It was luckily the last cold snap of the season, and with the sunrise of the next day, Sunday, the fifth day of their voyaging, the wind had given place to a calm, although cold, clear, bracing atmosphere.

After the usual ablutions, which were never neglected by the party, followed by breakfast, the ice being closely frozen together, a walk to a high berg at the distance of a quarter of a mile was proposed, as it was thought that the course of the ice should bring them in sight at least, of the North Cape of St. Jean. This was generally acceded to by all but Waring, who preferred to remain and keep up the fire.

Taking their weapons, an ice-axe, and a light coil of rope, the three soon arrived, without misadventure, at the foot of an irregular mound of ice, at least fifty feet in height.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHAPEL BELL.—THE FIRST SEAL.—THE NORTH CAPE.—A SNOW-SQUALL.

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he way was rough, and not without its dangers, for more than once Peter, who led the file, sprang just in time to save himself, as the treacherous crust above some yawning chasm between two heavy "Pans" crumbled under his feet; and once he fell headlong, clutching at a friendly spur, just in time to escape tumbling among a lot of jagged and flinty shards of young "crushed ice."

The wind was light at times, coming in puffs and squalls; and although the day was bright, a mist here, snowy white, there crimson with sunbeams, again darkening into purplish blue, and elsewhere of a heavy and leaden obscurity, hung over the greater part of the sky, and made it a doubtful task to prognosticate, with any degree of certainty, the state of the weather for even an hour in advance.

As they proceeded, a strangely solemn, though faint and distant, sound broke the oppressive silence. The three halted and listened intently. Again, low as the moan of the dying surges on a distant bar, the sound came thrilling over the icy sea to the southward, and each face flushed with a new hope of speedy release from their wild prison-house.

"Hark!" said Orloff, raising his hand. "I hear the sound of a church bell. We must be near the land."

"It must be from the tower of the Tignish Chapel, then," said La Salle, "for no other land save the North Cape lies in our course."

Again a blast came whistling among the defiles, and again a calm succeeded. All listened in breathless silence, and again the wished-for sound which spoke of the proximity of human society and Christian worship, came pealing across the desolate wastes, deserted of everything having life, and impressing the fancy of

the beholder as does the desolation of long-forgotten cities, or the shattered marbles of the unremembered dead.

"I know that place. That bell Tignish Chapel. Two year ago I camp on Tignish Lun. Make basket, catch trout, shoot flover. Go hevery Sunday to mass,—that same place,—take squaw, papoose, boy, girl, all folks. Know that bell, sure. To-day Sunday, and folks going into chapel."

"He must be right," said La Salle, "but we are now near the berg, and from its top we shall see if we are indeed near the North Cape. Make haste, Peter; perhaps we may get near enough to-day to make our way to the shore."

A broad, level floe was all that intervened between the party and the berg which they sought. Running across it; although with some little difficulty, for the ice was covered with slush concealed by a crust insufficient to bear the weight of a man, they soon reached the berg. It was evidently of Arctic origin, for it was much larger than any of the many "pinnacles" in sight. It was composed of ice, which, wherever the snow had failed to lodge, appeared hard, transparent, and prismatic in the rays of the sun. Its sides were steep and precipitous, and at first the members of the party began to fear that they should be unable to mount the steep escarpment of eight or ten feet high, which formed its base, which was further defended by a moat of mingled sludge and rounded fragments, cemented by young ice.

Had the opposite bank been attainable, any of the party would have readily leaped across, trusting to their speed to save themselves from immersion among the rolling fragments; but no one cared to risk the treacherous footing beneath that inaccessible wall.

"I'm afraid we shall have to go back to our own lookout, and trust to a shift of the ice," said La Salle. "Can you think of any way of climbing that pinnacle, Peter?"

"No way do that, unless cut a way into that hice, and then no safe place to stan' on, sartain, this time," answered the Indian.

"Let me have that rope," said Regnar, quietly.

Taking the light Manilla painter, he proceeded to form a large loop, and grasping it near the running knot, laid half a dozen turns across his hand. Then swinging the coil around his head, he launched the rope at a group of jagged points, which

projected just above the edge of the lowest part of the cliff. Again and again the noose came back unreeved, and again and again the patient boy, with rare strength and skill, flung the ample noose over the slippery spires of ice. At last, however, success rewarded his efforts, and a strong pull, with the united weight of all three, failed to start the closely-drawn bowline. Taking the axe and bearing the most of his weight on the cord, Regnar crossed the bending surface and shifting fragments, and finding a precarious footing on the berg, wound the rope around his left arm, and with the right cut steps into the brittle ice-wall.

In a few moments he ascended the cliff, and the others, leaving their guns behind them, found little difficulty in following him. Leaving the rope still fast, the three ascended the berg, which rose high above the surrounding ice. Their first look was to the southward. For a moment the distance and the ever-present snow deceived them; but the sun came from behind a cloud, and they saw, afar off, the red sandstone face of the snow-covered cliffs of the North Cape.

"They are now about twelve miles distant, and, as I judge, there can be but little open water between us and the shore. Let us hasten back and get the boat ready, for if this wind only holds, and no snow or rain comes on, we shall soon be able to reach the shore."

At that moment something fell with a splash into a small, partially open pool, on the farther side of the berg, and all saw a huge form disappear under the surface. Each started, felt mechanically for his weapons, and in brief monosyllables of Esquimaux, Micmac, and English, ejaculated the name of the animal whose presence none had even suspected.

"*Ussuk!*" whispered Regnar.

"*Nashquan*," murmured Peter.

"A seal," said La Salle.

Orloff slid down the berg, caught the firmly fastened cord, swung himself over the ice-foot, skipped lightly over the yielding fragments, seized his gun, and returned in almost less time than it takes to describe his movements. The seal, a huge male, had come to the surface among the floating fragments at the farther side of the pool, some fifty yards away, and now lay with his round head, protruding eyes, and stiff bristles, strikingly expressing anger, fear, and curiosity —the last predominating. Regnar threw his gun to his shoulder.

"What size shot have you?" said La Salle, laying his hand on his shoulder.

"Two buckshot cartridge,—heavy enough for him. If he were old 'hood' now! Look! I show you something."

The lad took deliberate aim, and then, with the full force of his capacious lungs, gave a sharp, shrill whistle, which almost deafened his companions, and was re-echoed from the icy walls on the farther side of the pool, in piercing reverberations.

Surprised and affrighted by the unusual sound, the huge ussuk rose half his length above the water, and looked around him. The icy cliffs echoed the crashing volley, as both barrels poured forth their deadly hail almost in unison, and the huge animal settled down amid incarnadined waters and ice crimsoned with his life-blood, shot to death through the brain so skilfully that scarce a struggle or a tremor bore witness that the principle of life had departed.

Descending the berg, a small fragment of ice capable of bearing a man was found, and Regnar, taking the end of his line, stepped upon it, and with his gunstock paddled off to the dead seal, and affixing the line to one of its flippers, pulled himself ashore, and joined the others in towing the game to the berg. Landing it on a little shelf, La Salle and Peter began to speculate as to how the huge carcass, which must have weighed five hundred pounds, could be hauled over the berg, and safely landed. Regnar laughed at the idea.

"We want not the meat—only the skin, blubber, and liver. Why not skin here? Save much work for nothin'. Here, Peter, give me knife."

Peter drew the long blade from his belt, and Regnar making a single incision from chin to tail, the body seemed fairly to roll out of the thick, soft blubber coat which adhered to the skin. In less than two minutes Regnar had finished what La Salle had no doubt would take at least a good half hour. With equal deftness the liver was extracted, and a few pounds of meat taken from the flanks.

Fastening the whole to the line, it was drawn to the top of the berg, and thence down the slope to the rude stairs. As the weight was nearly half that of a man, Regnar merely placed the bight of the rope around the object on which it had caught. Its shape excited curiosity, and a few strokes of the axe cleared off its covering of ice.

"This ice from Greenland," said Regnar. "Here is the stone the Inuit uses for pots

—what you call soapstone."

"Well, I hope we shall not need it," said La Salle, "for the North Cape is now only ten miles away, and it is not yet noon. I want the blubber for fuel, or I would not waste time with this skin even."

"We shall have all we want to get back to George. See how the clouds close in. Plenty snow right away now. Come, Peter, get across quick."

La Salle groaned in spirit, as, from the berg which he had reascended, he saw the distant red ledges shut out from view, and marked the first scattering flakes fall silently through the now calm atmosphere. Looking down, he saw that Peter and Regnar had got safely across the chasm, and almost despairing of the fate of his party, he followed down the rude steps, and across the treacherous bridge.

Letting the line slacken a little, Regnar gave a deft whirl, which cast off the bight from the rock, and the party, dragging behind them their prize, retraced their path amid what soon became a blinding snow-squall. Luckily their track had been through deep snow, and therefore not easily covered up; for when they reached their own island of refuge, they could see scarce a rod in any direction.

Regnar dragged his prize to the little enclosure, and, pointing to the snow-flake, said,—

"Soon they grow larger, softer, then turn to rain. Then this skin and our boat must cover us, for the snow-water will spoil our house."

At that moment a flaw from the westward bore on its wings a repetition of the sounds they had heard in the morning, but nearer and more distinct than before. Heavily, measured, and mournfully, came the tones of the great bell, as the storm-vapors shut down closer, and the west wind blew fiercer across the icebound sea.

"They toll for the dead," said Regnar.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PACK OPENS.—MYSTERIOUS MURMURS.—LOVE SCENES AND SOUNDS.

Top

a

ll day long the snow fell heavily, and although the wind blew with no great violence, it was evidently increasing their drift eastward into the open Gulf. At night the temperature was perceptibly higher, and as they gathered around the light of the rude brazier in the centre of their ice-cave, each for the first time opened his heavy outer clothing, and felt the cool zephyrs that, from time to time, found their way through the door curtain, to be a welcome visitant.

The fire had melted a deep hollow in the centre, which was naturally the lowest part of the floor, and Peter quietly arose, and bringing in the axe, cut a narrow but deep gutter out through the doorway. Reverently that night the little group bowed their heads as Waring, with his sweet voice, led the singing of one of the old familiar hymns, dear alike to Churchman and Dissenter, and La Salle prayed that the hand of the Father might be with them in their coming trials.

For already the boat had received her scanty store of food and fuel, their weapons stood close at hand, a pile of cooked meats was cooling near the door, and all knew that a few hours might again find them seeking a new shelter, among perils compared to which those already passed, were "trifles light as air."

Heretofore they had been exposed to no wide sweep of seas, and had never felt the solid ice beneath them rolling and plunging through mountainous surges, or dashed in terrible collision against its companions of the dismembered ice-pack. Now every mile which they drifted increased the sweep of the sea, and in the centre of the wide Gulf, the southerly winds would scarcely fail to open, at least, the outer sections of the floes.

As they concluded their brief Sabbath exercises, La Salle drew from his vest pocket a stump of lead pencil, and seemed at a loss for something on which to write.

"Have any of you a piece of paper?" he asked.

All answered in the negative; but a thought seemed to strike him, and drawing from an inner pocket a much crumpled letter, he opened it, and seemed to consider. The envelope was worn out, but had preserved the closely-written note paper within; and taking a single page, he spread it on his gunstock, and, in broad-lined, coarsely-made letters, drew up the following record of their present position and prospects:—

> ""OFF CAPE NORTH, SUNDAY, April 15, 186—.
>
> "TO WHOEVER MAY FIND THIS: This morning the undersigned, with George Waring, Peter Mitchell, and Regnar Orloff, all well, were twelve miles north-east of Cape North, but a snow storm prevented an attempt to land. Knowing that, with the presently impending southerly storm, we may have to leave our present refuge, I hereby assure those who may find this of our present safety, and desire them to forward this to the office of the Controller of Customs at Halifax, or St. John.
>
> (Signed)
>
> "CHARLES LA SALLE."

"Regnie, please write this in French on the other side—will you?" said the writer, as he finished.

Orloff took the page, and turning it over, did as requested; but as he finished signing his own name, he let the pencil drop from his fingers, and for a moment found himself incapable of movement or expression. Controlling himself with an effort, he folded the note neatly, and returned it, with the pencil, to La Salle.

"Who is your fair correspondent, M. La Salle?" said he, in French.

La Salle, with flushed face and eyes lighted up with due resentment of the other's curiosity, answered,—

"You seem to have read for yourself."

Orloff's manner changed at once.

"A thousand pardons, monsieur, but I have a good reason for asking the lady's name."

"Pauline H. Randall, as you may see for yourself," was the quiet reply.

"One more question, sir. Do you know her middle name?"

"I did, but cannot exactly recall it, as she never uses it in full, and I have forgotten whether it is Hobel or Hubel; that it is one of the two, I am pretty certain."

A glance of mingled expression shot from the eyes of Orloff, but he restrained himself with a visible effort, and he became again the somewhat phlegmatic pilot of the Gulf shore.

"Thank you, M. La Salle. You shall know more at a fitting season."

Taking one of Waring's cartridge cases, La Salle forced the record into its narrow chamber, and selecting a small strip of pine,—a part of the thin side of his crushed float,—he stopped the cartridge with a tightly-fitting wad, and fastened it to the board with a piece of stout cord. On the white board he printed, in large letters, "Read the contents of the case;" and going out, he placed it firmly upright on the summit of the berg.

At twelve that night the rain fell fast, the wind blew steadily from the southward, and the undulations of the ice, from time to time, told that, although safe in the very heart of the pack, yet still the field had already resolved itself into its component parts. Towards midnight all fell asleep, being satisfied that no immediate danger threatened them; but at about half an hour before daybreak, Waring awoke, and placed a few blocks on the smoldering embers. As he waited for them to burst into a flame, he heard the air filled with confused murmurings, unlike any sounds that he had previously experienced. Gradually they appeared to draw nearer, to sound from all sides, to fill the air overhead, and even at last to ascend from the depths below. Strangely sweet, yet sadly plaintive, they at once charmed and terrified the poor boy, weak from his recent illness, and worn with the anxieties of his situation.

At last Regnar awoke, and to him Waring applied for an explanation of the strange sounds. Orloff listened attentively, and answered with paling cheeks,—

"Such are the melodies which my people say that the sad Necker sings by the lonely river, when he bemoans his lot, in that Christ died not for him. Doubtless

the sea has its water spirits, and they now surround our island of ice."

Waring, unskilled in the folk-lore of Dane, Swede, and German, answered,—

"It can't be that. It must be that some vessel is near us, or there is a crew of wrecked sealers around us on the ice. Ah, Peter, are you thinking of getting up. Listen to those sounds, and tell us what they are—will you?"

Peter listened gravely and attentively.

"I not know that noise, brother. I know nearly all the cries of bird and beast, and often I sleep all 'lone in the woods; hear howl, hear fox, hear frog, hear everyting. Sometime I tink I know that noise; then I tink I not know him at all. Get La Salle awake; ask him—he know."

La Salle slept but lightly whenever there was need of vigil, and the last words had fallen on his awakening ears.

"What's the matter, Peter?" said he.

"We hear many strange noise. I not know, George not know, Regnie not know, none of us know. There it come again. What you call that?"

La Salle listened a moment, went to the door, and then beckoned to his companions to follow. The rain fell heavily, but the wind came warm and gently from the balmy south, and no rude blast shrieked and sighed amid the ice-peaks. The strange sounds were sweeter, louder, and apparently nearer than before. Soft and sad as the strains of the disconsolate Necker, plaintive as the mournings of men without hope, wild as the cries of the midnight forest, and the sighings of wind-tossed branches. La Salle laughed a low, glad laugh.

"You may sleep soundly," said he; "the coots and ducks have come northward, and the spring is here at last. To-morrow will bring us sport to repletion, for the sounds you hear are the love-songs of the sea-birds, whose voices, however harsh, grow sweet when the sun brings back again the season of love and flowers."

When the morn came, unheralded by sunbeams, and shrouded by leaden rain-clouds, a veil of mist covered the vast ice-field, of which no two masses retained their former proximity. A network of narrow channels opened and closed continually among the dripping bergs, from whose sides flashed the frequent cascade, and glimmered the shimmering avalanche of dislodged snow. Amid this

ever-shifting panorama, giving it life and beauty, covering pool and channel with merry, restless knots of diving, feeding, coquetting, quarreling swimmers, relieving the colorless ice with groups of jetty velvet and scoter ducks, gray and white-winged coots, crested mergansers in their gorgeous spring plumage, and fat, lazy black ducks, with Lilliputian blue and green winged teal, filling the air with the whirr of swift pinions, and the ceaseless murmur of the mating myriads, rested from their long northward journey, a host such as mortal eye hath seldom beheld, and which it hath fallen to the lot of few sportsmen to witness and enjoy.

"I kill many birds on *h*ice, in *quetan*, among sedge out on the bay, but I never see such sight. I never think so many birds in the world before," said Peter, as he loaded his double-barrel.

"I been up Ivuctoke Inlet, on Greenland coast; down Disco saw great many bird, but nothing like this," muttered Regnar.

"It is almost too bad to kill any of these lovely creatures," said George, whose loving nature drank in the full beauty of the scene; "can't we do without them?"

"We have only six birds, and some seal fat, meat, and liver. If it closes the ice again we shall soon be short of food. So we'll get out our floating decoys to leeward, and see what we can do to replenish our larder."

La Salle's plan was duly carried out. A couple of flocks of floating decoys were anchored to a protruding spur of ice, and for an hour or so the four had their fill of slaughter. Each was limited to three cartridges apiece, and no one would fire except at an unusually large flock. Peter brought down a goose with each barrel, and six brent with his third shot; Regnar killed nine black duck with one barrel, five velvet ducks with another, and six teal with the third. Waring unexpectedly had a shot at a flock of Phalapores, and secured twelve of these curious birds; but his third shot at a solitary goose failed, owing to a defective cap. La Salle, after a single shot which killed a brace of brent, was about to reload, and had just poured in a charge of powder, when he suddenly crouched behind a hummock, and motioned to the others to follow his example; then, pointing to a small lead just opening between two bergs about two hundred yards away, he called the attention of his companions to an enormous seal, even larger than their victim of the day before.

The new-comer was a prodigious "hooded" seal, and the loose skin which

enveloped his head was distended with air, and gave forth a hollow, barrel-like sound, whenever, raising himself above the waves, he came down with a heavy splash upon the surface. His aspect was savage and ferocious, and he seemed looking for some object on which to wreak his rancor; for from time to time he sent forth a savage cry, far hoarser and prolonged than the whining bark which these animals usually utter.

"He's an ole male. He dreadful angry, and I s'pect some other one near here. Yes, there he comes;" and Regnar pointed to another opening between two massive floes, from whence, sounding a valorous defiance to his challenger, emerged a second seal, even larger than the first. With mutual animosity they darted towards each other, and the next moment were engaged in a terrific combat.

So quick were their evolutions as they fought, now above and now below the surface of the water, that the eye could scarcely distinguish which, for the moment, had a temporary advantage, although one was much darker in hue, and more beautifully marked than the other. They sprang into the air, they dived beneath the surface, they threw their heavy bodies against each other, they tore each other with teeth and claws, and the water was covered with bloody foam.

La Salle watched the fray with divided interest. It was a new and interesting lesson in natural history, and he wanted the huge skins and blubber of the combatants, who fought on unconscious of their hidden audience, and the deep interest taken in their movements. Half a dozen times La Salle had raised his huge gun to fire, and lowered it again, unable to get a sure aim, so sudden were the changes of the conflict. At last, wearied but unconquered, both lay almost motionless upon the water, tearing at each other's throats like bull-dogs who have fought to mutual exhaustion.

As his heavy weapon settled into deadly aim, Regnar touched La Salle's shoulder. "No shot heavy enough for those fellows; must have bullet. That hood turn anything but rifle-ball."

By the side of the hummock lay a short piece of pine board, once the movable thwart of the float. La Salle beckoned to Peter. "Make me out of this a stout, sharp-headed arrow, with a heavy shaft." Peter doubtfully drew his *waghon* and split off a piece, which in about a minute was whittled into a short, stout arrow, headed only with a wooden point, the largest diameter of which fitted pretty accurately to the bore of the heavy piece. La Salle, meanwhile, had drawn his shot, and motioning to Peter to load a barrel of his own gun in like manner,

turned to watch the waning conflict, which, notwithstanding the exhaustion of the combatants, had evidently produced little more damage than a few savage flesh wounds.

In another moment Peter had fitted another arrow to his own gun, and awaited the word. Regnar whistled sharp and shrill, the combatants suddenly separated, and each, rising until his flippers showed above the surface, looked on all sides for the source of this sudden interruption. At once both guns roared in unison, a distance of scarce twenty yards intervening between the marksmen and their prey. Peter's mark, the largest and most beautiful of the two, fell dead, with its head transfixed with the arrow, which waved feebly above the crimsoned surface, as the huge body trembled with the throes of dissolution. La Salle's aim was less sure, and the novel missile tore through the neck, just below the ear. A fountain of blood sprang ten feet into the air as the dying animal fell back, spurning the bloody pool with tail and flippers; but the mighty heart sent forth its wasted life-tide, until its current was exhausted and the powerful "old hood" was like his whilom rival—a lifeless mass of inert flesh.

"Well, I never see such ting shoot before. I use duck shot, goose shot, sometime nails, and sometime little stones, and once in woods I kill gleat bear with junk of lead: but I never shoot arrow before." Thus said Peter, wondering at his own achievement.

Waring had noted with great curiosity the effect of the new missile. "Where did you learn that, Charley? To think that a piece of soft wood should kill such huge animals!"

La Salle had hastened to launch the boat, but stopped to answer a question in which all seemed to take an interest. "About three hundred years ago, Captain John Hawkins, a stout skipper of Devon, and one of those old sea-dogs who helped to conquer the great Spanish Armada, had these arrows, which he called 'sprights,' to distinguish them from those still used with the English longbow, made in large quantities, to be used in the muskets of his men. He claimed that they passed through and through the bulwarks of the Spanish ships, and highly commended them to his contemporaries. I should prefer bullets myself, but have no doubt that they attain a great range, and have, before this, driven a piece of soft pine nearly five inches into a hard spruce post. I should feel perfectly safe in meeting a bear or wolf with no other missile in my gun."

Regnar jumped into the boat, and the two pushed off and secured the seals, both

of which were very fat, but covered with blood, and much cut about the head and neck. Securing them with a rope, they returned to the shore, and with some difficulty hauled them out upon the berg, where Peter and Regnar hastened to skin them, and preserve such portions of the meat as they required. The heads were also split to procure the brains, and the large sinews extracted, after which the bodies were consigned to the sea, and at once sank down until they were lost from sight in the depths of the Gulf.

The three skins were then carefully stripped of blubber and membrane, and Peter, taking the brains, mixed them with water into a soft paste, which was spread over the inner side of each skin. Each was then folded once, and then formed into a compact roll, tightly bound with the sinews, after which the three skins were suspended at the top of the hut above the stove, to await the softening action of the brain-paste.

CHAPTER XV.

A SAIL.—THE SEALING GROUNDS.—THE ESQUIMAUX LAMP.—AN INDIAN LEGEND.

Top

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bout a hundred pounds of blubber lay upon the ice, and Carlo was luxuriating on a whole hind quarter, which was given up to his especial use, to make up for the rather short commons he had of late been reduced to. About fifty birds lay behind the hummock, and Peter, who was anxious to secure a bird-skin coverlet for his own use, set himself down to skin the finest ones. Waring joined him in the task.

"There's the big berg where we killed ussuk yesterday. Less go and look around. Perhaps we see land," said Regnar.

"No, Regnie; we are fifty miles from any land now, and I think about one third of the way across to the Magdalen Islands. Still, I should like to take an observation, and see where we are; and we may not have such a calm spell again for two or three days."

Pulling off to the berg, they found the shelf on which lay the dead seal, and climbing the ice-cliff, they saw spread out before them a strange and pleasing spectacle. The fog had lifted, for it was now nearly noon, and although some rain still fell, the eye could see the broken ice-pack seamed with channels, and scarred with pools of varying size, for at least eight miles in any direction. Regnar started, turned to his companion, and

decorative image

seizing his shoulder with convulsive energy, pointed to the east. A long ribbon of black vapor hung over the ice, low down on the horizon, and beneath it towered the topsail of a brigantine, going free before the wind.

"It is a sealing steamer, boring out of the pack," said Regnar.

La Salle's first impulse was to rush to the boat, and rejoin his comrades, to set signals, burn bonfires—anything which might possibly call the attention of those on board. Then he considered the futility of such endeavors, and he turned to his comrade,—

"We can't signal her now, Regnar, and we won't excite in our friends hopes which cannot fail to be disappointed. We shall see her again soon."

Regnar looked around them, cast glances of admiration on the abundance of animal life presented to their view, gave a look of approval to his friend, and

answered in his Esquimaux-English,—

"It is good. I fear not. That steamer sail away to-day, for wind fair. If wind east to-morrow, she sail this way. If wind north, she go south; but she no leave this place till she beats the pack, like a hound. Look there—see that floe. Plenty seal there to load one vessel."

The view was indeed charming, for ice and water were alive with birds, and among them moved in every direction the bullet heads of many seals.

About three miles to the eastward lay a large pan, and around it the water was dark with the older amphibia, while from it came, in the occasional calm intervals, the unceasing whine, which the baby seal never foregos for a moment, except when asleep or feeding.

"We want more skins, master," said the boy. "We could soon fill our boat—we two."

A cold puff came from the westward, and a slight break showed itself in the north-west.

"We shall have clear weather and a westerly breeze after sunset," said La Salle. "We will get ready to-night, and to-morrow we will have a battle among the seals."

Retracing their steps, they entered their boats, and returned to their friends, to whom they imparted the news of the proximity of the sealing-grounds.

"We need about ten large skins, and some smaller ones. So let us get ready to-night, and if the weather is favorable, visit the 'nursery' to-morrow."

So saying, La Salle took one of the large floating decoys made of cork and canvas, and painted black, and drawing a nail from the broken boat, fastened it to the end of a strip from the bottom—in fact, one of the runners. This was planted beside the strip, sustaining the record contained in the copper case, and formed a beacon, easily distinguished against the lighter ice.

Guns were cleaned, knives and axes sharpened, for the soapstone boulder had been brought from the berg, and afforded quite a good whetstone, to patient labor; and Peter, with his knife, finished, in the course of the evening, a number of wooden bolts for himself, La Salle, and Regnar; and even Waring fitted a couple into two of the brass shells of his breech-loader.

Regnar took the remains of the steel boat-hook, and succeeded in straightening the hook, which he drew down into the shape of a rude chisel. Peter tempered it for him, and then, with this rude tool and an axe, he split the boulder of soapstone into halves, making two bowl-shaped pieces, about fifteen inches across, in the line of cleavage. One of these he proceeded to hollow out into an Esquimaux lamp, for the stock of wood had been largely drawn upon during the cold spell just over, and only about twenty decoys remained unburnt. Waring sat next him, unraveling one of the old cotton-flannel over-shirts, and twisting the fibres into large wicks; while La Salle made a cover of the last remaining sheet-iron decoy, with holes for six wicks. As they sat around the fire, Waring suddenly broke the silence.

"Charley," said he, "you have never told your story, although all the rest of the club took their turn. We are not making much noise with our work. Can't you give us your story now, to while away the evening?"

La Salle was at first disposed to comply, but his eye fell on the dark features of Peter, opposite him.

"Peter," said he, "tell us one of the tales your old people tell around the winter fire in the long, cold evenings. Tell us of Teahm or Kit-pus-e-ag-a-now."

"How you know them?" asked the Indian, surprised out of his usual self-possession. "You speak Micmac too?"

"O, no, Peter; but I have heard many of these old tales, and I know the lads would like to hear them too."

"Yes, yes, Peter," added Waring, "let us have one, by all means."

Peter laid aside his pipe, for he still retained a little of his treasured tobacco, and in a slow, sententious tone repeated one of those tribal legends which are all that keep alive the fire of patriotism and national pride, in the breasts of a people who find themselves strangers, outcasts, and without a country in the land of their birth, once theirs alone.

PETER'S STORY.

"The old people were camped long, long ago, near the Oolastook, where now stands St. John. All this lan' Indian then. No 'hite man live here that time, and the hunter always find game plenty—plenty moose, plenty bear, plenty fish, plenty

everyting.

"Then Indians not so wicked as now, and God had not sent 'hite men to punish them for their sins. But even then they fought each other; and between my people and the Quedetchque—that my name; you call 'em Mohawk, I b'lieve—there was war, all time war.

"The Quedetchque come down every fall, follow down banks of river, wait alound village until all my people asleep; make warwhoop, fire arrows, set fire to *womegun*, lun off with prisoner, and plenty scalp. One time all my people away, only squaw and children in town; Quedetchque war-party come, burn an' kill; get plenty scalp of women and boy, and chief take away Coquan, what you call 'Lainbow,' wife of great chief 'Tamegun,' the tomahawk.

"They hurry home fas', but the snow fall thick, an' soon Tamegun an' one other man come home, fin' wigwam burnt, an' dead people all alound. They tighten belts, take bow, knife, an' axe, and follow on track.

"One night they find tracks in snow, and soon come up to the camp. Many warriors in that camp—make long camp, and door at each end, and fire at door. All Quedetchque inside take off moccason and bathe sore feet in big birch-bark tub near door; then wait until Coquan mend moccasons. All this Tamegun see, and he find out where his squaw sit in lodge.

"Then he creep up like wildcat, and peep through bark so close he could almos' touch her; but he only lift edge of bark, and slide in wampum belt. Coquan work war-belt for him, and know who it is at once. Then she go out, an' they talk together, far from the camp.

"Then Coquan go back into camp, and take all the moccasons outside, and set the tubs of dirty water outside each door. Then she see Tamegun an' his friend tie rope across door, jus' above ground, and the Lainbow slip out again. Then Micmacs catch up tubs and throw water on the fires; all out in a minute.

"Both cly the warwhoop many times at the door, an' the woman shoot arrows through the bark. All the Quedetchque jump up, take knife an' axe, think Micmacs got into the tent. All is dark; see nothing; think everybody enemy. They stab with knife, cly war-cly, strike with axe, kill each other. Some lun out doors, tumble over cord. Micmacs kill every one. At last all dead but two boys, and Tamegun tie these to trees.

"Then Tamegun get scalp, skin, beads, knife, spear, everyting he want. Make three taboggin; load all they can carry; then set fire to camp and burn all up. Then, when all ready, Tamegun draw his knife, an' cut prisoners loose.

"'Go back to Quedetchque,' he say. 'They are squaws an' cowards. Tell them come no more into Meegum-Ahgee,—in Micmac land,—for two Micmac men an' a squaw have kill all your people. Go! You are too young to die. Your flesh is soft. Come back when your scalps are fit for a Micmac's belt.'

"So Tamegun got home all light, an' Quedetchque come no more for many years. But my people no more fight. Many die in battle long ago. Many die of small-pox an' fever, and now we are few. So it will be until He comes for whom all Indians wait. The story is ended."

Thus in rude English, Peter related one of the many tales, which still serve to keep alive a people's pride in the glories of bygone days, so unlike their present degradation, that to the general observer the civilized Indian *seems* to know nothing of the past, to be scarcely conscious of his ignoble surroundings and circumstances, and to have no care or hope for a brighter future. La Salle knew well the wild legend of the Deliverer, in whom, in spite of his Catholic faith, the Indian everywhere has an inherent trust, as the slowly but surely-coming protector and restorer, of his ancient happiness.

"Thank you, Peter," said he, kindly. "Your people were a brave race, and true as steel to your *Wenooch* (i.e., French). They fought as long as their allies dared to strive; and it was long after the last French fortress surrendered that the warriors met at Bay Verte, to become true subjects to the king they had fought against for years."

"Yes," said Peter, sadly. "My people once strong and brave; now they waste away like the snow. I know many families almost gone, an' but few pure Indian live this end of island. We see it, if 'hite people think not, but we do not care to let them see our tears."

There was a simple pathos in the broken words of this unlearned man—for he was no savage—which went to the hearts of his hearers; and La Salle felt more strongly than ever, the cruel cowardice of that popular outcry, which denies a whole people all share of innate nobility and virtue, and visits on a deceived and wronged race, both their own sins and the short-comings of those who should be

their natural protectors.

The party finished their various undertakings, carefully removing their litter. La Salle and Regnar went outside to take a last look at the sea and sky. The stars were visible here and there, through the dispersing clouds, and the drip of melting ice was no longer heard, for the temperature had again fallen below the freezing point.

"We are drifting south of east," said Regnar, quietly, "and unless picked up will probably clear the south point of the Magdalen Islands."

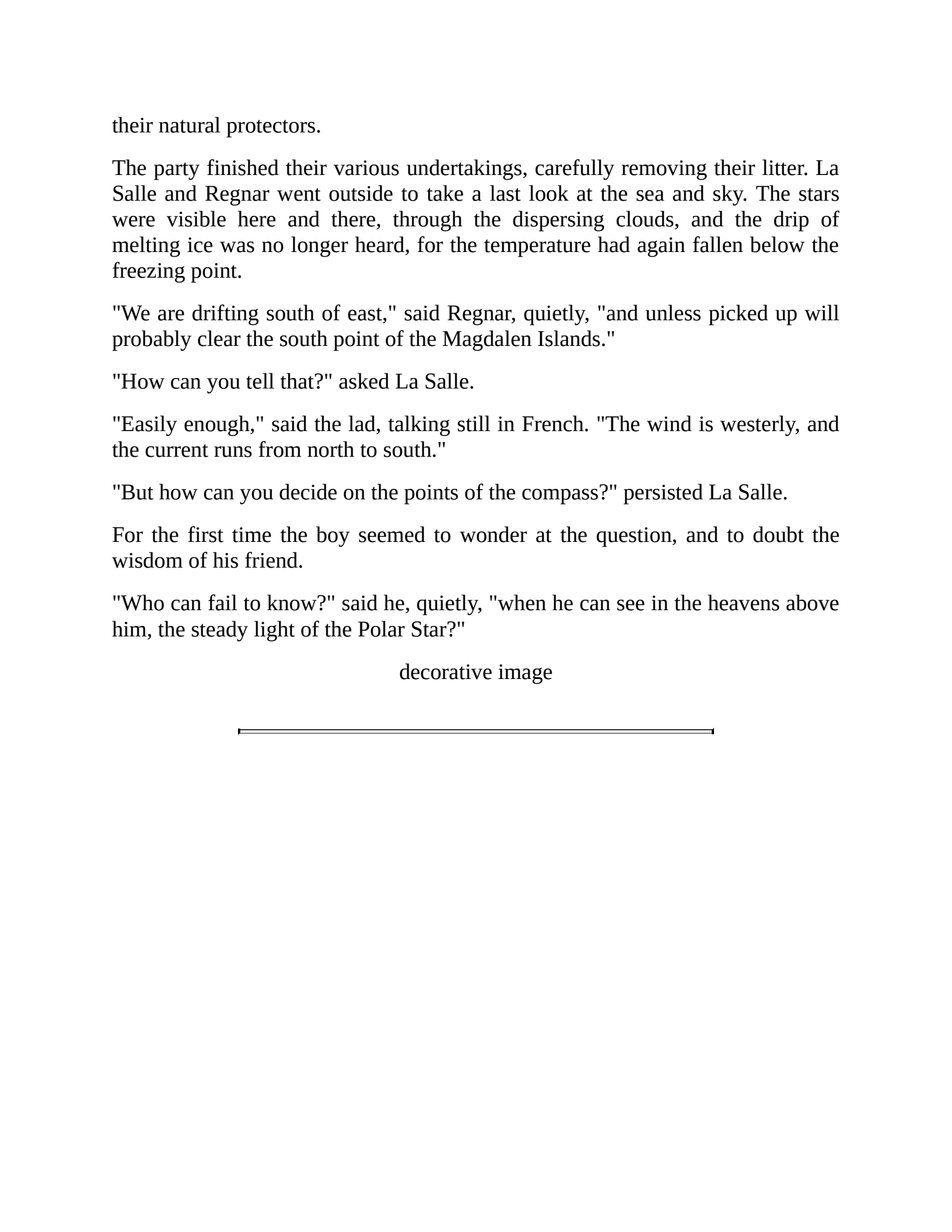
"How can you tell that?" asked La Salle.

"Easily enough," said the lad, talking still in French. "The wind is westerly, and the current runs from north to south."

"But how can you decide on the points of the compass?" persisted La Salle.

For the first time the boy seemed to wonder at the question, and to doubt the wisdom of his friend.

"Who can fail to know?" said he, quietly, "when he can see in the heavens above him, the steady light of the Polar Star?"



CHAPTER XVI.

THE BREEDING-GROUNDS OF THE SEAL.—A CURIOUS SIGHT.—A SHARP ENCOUNTER.—ICE CHANGES.

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arly the next morning the breakfast was hurried over, and a survey of the ice disclosed little change from the conditions of the day before, except that the natural attraction of floating bodies for each other was evidently slowly closing the pools and intervening channels.

Leaving Carlo to guard their dwelling, and tying the black "McIntosh" blanket to the signal-staff, the four stepped into the somewhat narrow quarters of their clumsy boat, and using the oars as paddles, set off through a channel which led, as nearly as they could judge, in the direction of the field of seals seen the day before, and whose constant whining still gave evidence of their close proximity.

Scarcely two miles of tortuous winding through channels of perfectly calm water, led them into a pool in which hundreds of large seals were disporting themselves, but which, on seeing the boat, scattered in all directions, after a moment of stupidly curious exposure to the fire of the intruders.

"How lucky it is that these animals don't know their own power!" said Waring. "If they chose they could soon upset the boat, and tear us in pieces."

"Not without losing at least half a dozen of their leaders, and that is generally sufficient to deter hundreds of men, whose reasoning powers are much superior to these amphibia," said La Salle.

Passing into a narrow channel, in which at every turn they came close upon swimming and sleeping seals, they suddenly swept up to the verge of a vast and heavy field, on which thousands of the young of these animals lay in helpless inability to move. Most of these were what are called "white-coats,"—fat little things, covered with a thick coat of woolly fur,—but a few had attained their third week of existence, and wore their close-laid fur, whose silvery, sword-like

fibres, when wet, lie flat and smooth as glass.

Among the smaller fry were many adult animals, both male and female—the latter being generally engaged in suckling their young.

The landing of the hunters was the signal for a general stampede, and the monotonous whining of the "white-coats" was almost lost in the deep barking of the mothers, and the hoarse roars of the large males.

The floe on which the young seals lay was a thick field of ice, whose clear, greenish sides showed that it was the product of some Greenland glacier. Years ago, when first detached from the ice-river of some tortuous fiord, it had perhaps measured its depth in hundreds of yards; and even now, judging from its height above the surface of the sea,—about eight feet on the average,—it must have drawn nearly eight fathoms of water.

The party had landed on a kind of sloping beach, probably worn by the action of the sun, and what is even more destructive, the wash of the sea-waves, and ascending found that the floe was nearly level for an area of at least half a square mile, forming a kind of ice-meadow, surrounded on three sides by sloping hills twenty feet higher. In the sheltered valley thus formed lay at least a thousand seals, old and young, of several species, and all ages.

There were, here and there, pairs of the small Greenland seal (*Phoca Vitulina*), weighing from forty to sixty pounds, and marked on the back with beautiful mottlings of black, shaded down to the silvery white of its spotless breast. These, when disturbed near the edge of the floe, slid noiselessly into the water, going down tail foremost into the depths. Most plentiful of all were the "springing seals," (*Phoca Hispida*),—known sometimes from its markings as "the harp,"—less beautiful in form, and with hair of a dusky yellow on the under side. These, when near the slope, sprang headlong into the water, and, diving with a splash, came up in shoals, darting forward with a springing motion, and emerging and disappearing much like a shoal of porpoises.

Larger, coarser, and with crested heads, long bristles, and harsher hair, the "bearded seal" (*Phoca Barbata*),—the noblest quarry of the Newfoundland sealer, who always speaks of him as "the old hood sile,"—crawled with uncouth but rapid shuffling motions to the brink, and with splashings that threw the spray high in air, dived at once, only emerging when almost beyond rifle range, where rolling, and splashing like whales, the uncouth monsters would turn to inspect the strange intruder.

"Come, Charley," said Waring, "let us shoot. See, they will all be in the water before we begin."

"No hurry," said Regnar, phlegmatically. "Steamer almos' load here."

"There is no heed of haste," said La Salle, pointing to the upper end of the ice-valley. "We have the seals in a *cul-de-sac*, and can take our pick, as they pass by us to the water. We want ten of the largest hoods at first, and we have about that number of bolts with us. After we get them, each can kill what small seals he needs for boots and clothing. Now for the old hoods. Fire at close range, and don't miss. Come, let us begin the battle, for they are coming down upon us."

By this time the alarm had become general, and finding their retreat cut off, about five hundred seals, leaving behind their helpless young, came in a disordered but solid body down towards the hunters, the smaller Greenland and "harp" seals on the wings, and evidently wishing only to escape; but in the centre a small band of the more savage "bearded seal," their coarse bristles quivering with rage, the loose skin of their heads distended with air, and the white teeth of their yawning jaws threatening wounds and death to the invaders, came on with hoarse roarings, which rose above the weaker cries of the uncouth host like the thunder of artillery over the rattle of musketry in battle.

The usually impassive Indian now seemed in his element. His sullen eyes lit up with a true hunter's love of the chase, when the danger is not all on one side, and only the confidence of greater skill and superior weapons overcomes the sense of personal peril. Leaping forward, he led the attack, running for some forty yards towards the advancing monsters, followed by the others, who came close on his tracks, but quite unable to charge in line.

Raising his gun, he suddenly halted scarce ten paces from the front of the sea-wolves, and, without hesitation, two of the largest shuffled ahead of their comrades, knitting their brows, and roaring with a fury which might well try the nerves of any man exposed to such an attack. One fell a little behind as Peter brought his gun to his shoulder. The first rushed forward, but as he lowered his huge head to attack, the arrow-point, hardened in the fire, shot forth in a sheet of flame, and buried itself to the feather in the brain, passing through the thin walls of the top of the skull.

At the unwonted sound, reverberated again and again from the cliff, even the forlorn hope retreated a little; but not so with the second seal. Throwing back his head until his yawning jaws almost hid the rest of his body, he came straight at

the destroyer of his mate, roaring with redoubled fury. The heavy gun again poured forth its contents, but to the horror of the advancing friends of the Micmac, the huge animal, vomiting torrents of blood, was seen, amid the smoke, to strike down the Indian, who was at once lost to view under the ponderous animal, which instantly rolled over dead.

In a second La Salle and Orloff were on the spot, but their aid was needless. Bruised and sore with the fall and compression, but not otherwise injured, Peter sprang to his feet, and placing his gun between his knees, proceeded to reload.

"*H*old seal die hard. Spose me miss 'em at first. Arrow hit all light. Me plenty wet blood though."

He was, in truth, a fearful spectacle, being covered with gore; but a glance at the dead beast revealed the cause. The arrow had passed into the mouth, transfixing the large arteries and the base of the brain, and the blood was still deluging the ice in a crimson tide, from which the hot vapors and sickening odor rose, maddening the remaining "hoods" to another charge.

Quite a number of the smaller seals on the flanks had got by, and as the pressure lessened, the array of the centre partook more of the "open order" of advance. To a party as well armed as the four friends, this change assured a bloodless victory. Each missile, fired point-blank, did its work, and the huge monsters, unable to seize the agile hunters, as they eluded their ponderous charge, received the fatal shot at such close range that the fur around the wound was often scorched by the burning powder.

Every barrel had been discharged, nine hooded seals had fallen, and the survivors had already reached the open water; but frightened by the unwonted sights and sounds, many of the smaller seals still remained at the upper end of the valley, or with awkward speed were climbing the sloping ice-hills which sheltered it. Drawing an axe from his belt, Regnar started forward in pursuit. Peter and Waring, with clubs of hard wood, followed, and La Salle, reloading his ponderous weapon, brought up the rear.

A massacre of helpless and beautiful animals followed, for the next few moments, for Regnar, with a single tap on the nose, killed two Greenland seals; and following his example, Peter and Waring disposed of as many more. Suddenly a loud cry from the latter broke the silent butchery.

And the next Second

"AND THE NEXT SECOND THE GLITTERING TEETH
WERE ABOUT TO CLOSE UPON HIS HELPLESS VICTIM."
Page 237.

"Look! Stop that old hood! That makes ten. My goodness! I never see such seal! That's right, Peter, head him off. Hit him again, Waring! Take that, you old bladder-nose!"

The seal, a monstrous one, a veteran male, had attempted to scale the higher mounds, but surrounded by his more agile enemies, halted and showed fight. In vain Waring and Peter showered tremendous blows upon his head with their beechen clubs, and even the heavy axe of Orloff fell upon his natural helmet of air-distended skin, with a violence whose only effect was to increase the anger of the enraged amphibia, and fill the scene of the strife with hollow sounds, like the hoarse booming of a big drum.

At last Waring missed his aim, and his club, which was slung at his wrist by a kind of sword knot, was seized in the jaws of the seal, and his succeeding rush jerked the frightened lad from his footing beneath the fore-flippers of the animal. It was only the work of an instant for those terrible jaws to grind the club into splinters, and the next second the glittering teeth were about to close upon his helpless victim. At that juncture a huge rusty tube was thrust past Regnar's head into the very face of the seal; a tremendous concussion threw him upon the ice, stunned and deafened; and the monster, rearing into the air, seemed to be fairly dashed to the ice, shivering with the tremor of death.

"Are you hurt, George?" asked La Salle, breathless with haste and restrained emotion.

"No, Charley; I am safe, thanks to you."

And the lad, still weak with his previous illness, fear, and excitement, rose, threw his arms around his preserver's neck, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Better look, Regnar. Guess blow him head off too," grumbled Peter, with a strange mixture of vexation, pleasure, and humor in his tone, for he loved Regnar, disliked to see men or boys cry, and knew that Regnar's misadventure was more unpleasant than dangerous.

In a moment or so Regnar arose, holding his head with both hands, and an evident feeling of uncertainty as to his whereabouts.

"Well, you call that gun Baby! I don't want her crying anywhere near me, after this. I say, La Salle, you *sure* my head all right on shoulders?"

La Salle hastened to assure him that all was correct, but Regnar gave a grim smile, and continued:—

"It no use; I can't hear, not if it thunder. I've no doubt you say you're sorry, but I no hear your 'pology, and I don't think I ever shall again. Well, never mind. No time then to say, 'By your leave, sir,' and I glad George got clear all right."

Drawing their knives the party commenced the less pleasant and exciting task of flaying and butchering their victims. The ten "hoods" were enormous fellows, averaging eight feet in length, and nearly six in circumference, and weighing from five to six hundred weight each. Only two were eviscerated for the sake of the heart and membranous vessels; but the heads of all were struck off for the sake of the brains, and the large sinews were extracted for "sewing thread." It was noon when the first load was sent off, under the care of Regnar and La Salle, to the home berg, and, two hours later, when they returned to the floe, they found, with pleasure, that the distance between the two points had materially lessened.

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Climbing the highest point of the floe, La Salle looked down upon a strange spectacle. Reaching away a mile or two to windward was a succession of floes, similar to the one on which he stood. Upon them all the seals were gathered in hundreds, and beyond the last of the chain a huge iceberg—a perfect mountain of congealed water—rose nearly a hundred feet into the air. From its sides, resplendent with prismatic colors and reflected light, flashed more than one cascade of pure fresh water, and the light breeze, as it blew against its vertical walls, or perhaps some currents deep down below the surface, was impelling the huge mass, and the line of floes pushed before it, down the lane of open water, which led to the floating home of the wanderers.

"We shall have but a short distance to row this load," said La Salle, as he descended to the party; and indeed at that very moment the discolored mound, surmounted by its dusky banner, appeared in sight, and before long only about a quarter of a mile separated the two. At this point the undetermined cause which

had produced this change ceased, and the party rowed homeward with their last load, just in time as the pack closed in, and the channel through which they had rowed, in the morning, over a glassy expanse of nearly a mile in width, narrowed, until, with a shock which was wholly unexpected, so gradual and gentle seemed the motion, the opposing borders were again united, and the waves of the sea were no longer accessible.

That evening the party supped off fried seal liver and heart, and found them fully up to the standard of excellence expressed by Regnar, who said,—

"Reindeer steak good beef, ptarmigan good beef, brent good beef, seal liver best beef of all."

Before going to bed La Salle cut into the ice-hole, which had been filled some days before with salt water. After much cutting, he came to about two quarts of water, which seemed thick and heavy. Baling this, with a rude spoon, into their only iron utensil, it was placed amid the embers, and left to boil away for the evening, while the adventurers, gathering around their fire took counsel as to what step was to be taken next.

"Let us make a tent," said Waring. "First thing we know this old floe will split in two in a storm, and we shall have no house."

"Spose 'em lose house, we want clo'es. Need good boots too," said Peter, who was indeed but poorly provided in this respect, compared with the rest of the four adventurers.

"If we have a good boat, we have shelter on land or water," said Regnar, sententiously.

"Regnar is right, and we must enlarge the capacity of our boat. She has too little standing room, and we four should have little chance in her in a heavy storm at sea. To-morrow we will make her into a life-boat at once, for this pleasant weather cannot last long."

All agreed with La Salle in this decision, and accordingly the evening was spent in preparing the seal-sinews, and in cutting thongs of seal-hide from one of the largest skins. These, when soaked in water, were capable of considerable extension, but in drying contracted, making a lashing of the hardness and nearly the strength of iron.

The sinews were, many of them, a yard in length, and at least the diameter of a

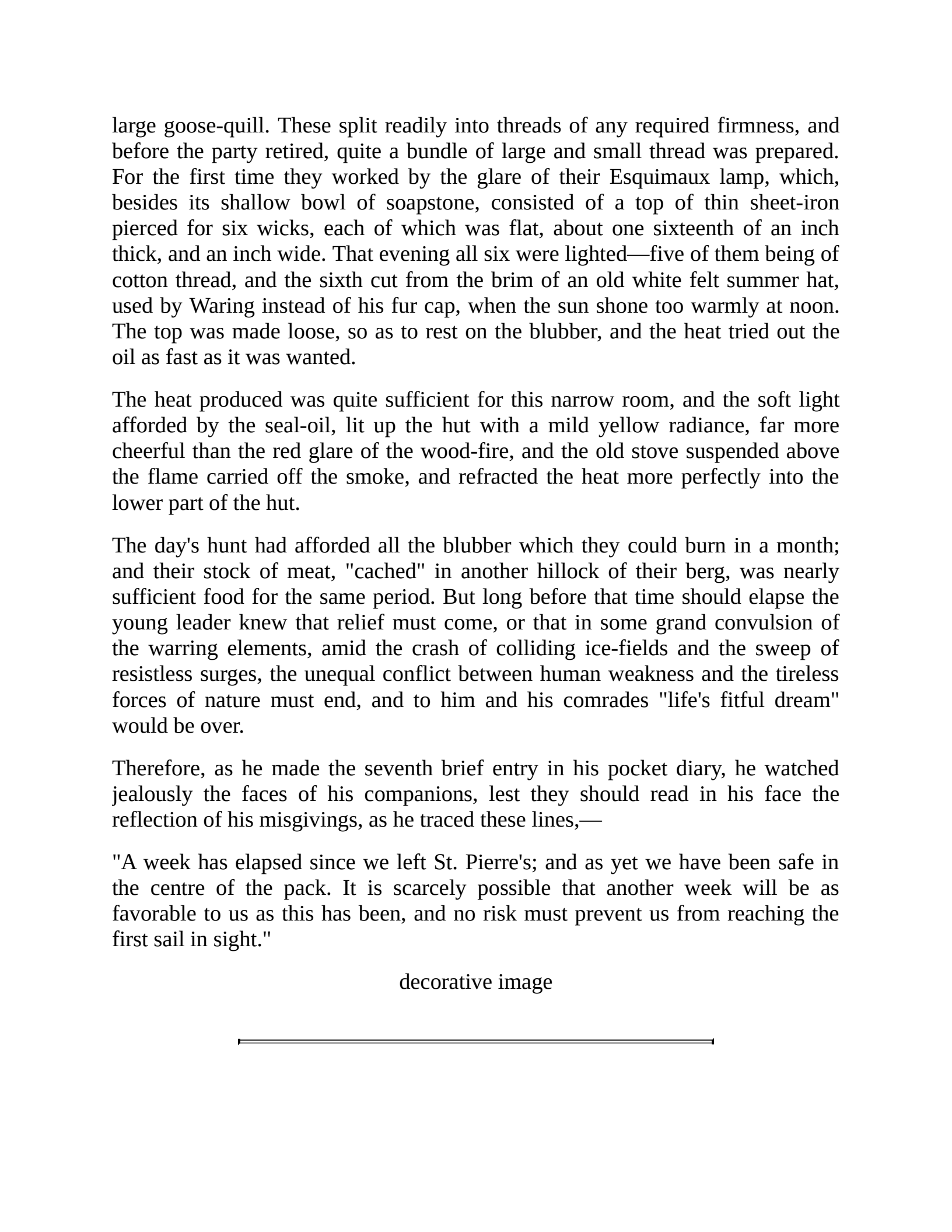
large goose-quill. These split readily into threads of any required firmness, and before the party retired, quite a bundle of large and small thread was prepared. For the first time they worked by the glare of their Esquimaux lamp, which, besides its shallow bowl of soapstone, consisted of a top of thin sheet-iron pierced for six wicks, each of which was flat, about one sixteenth of an inch thick, and an inch wide. That evening all six were lighted—five of them being of cotton thread, and the sixth cut from the brim of an old white felt summer hat, used by Waring instead of his fur cap, when the sun shone too warmly at noon. The top was made loose, so as to rest on the blubber, and the heat tried out the oil as fast as it was wanted.

The heat produced was quite sufficient for this narrow room, and the soft light afforded by the seal-oil, lit up the hut with a mild yellow radiance, far more cheerful than the red glare of the wood-fire, and the old stove suspended above the flame carried off the smoke, and refracted the heat more perfectly into the lower part of the hut.

The day's hunt had afforded all the blubber which they could burn in a month; and their stock of meat, "cached" in another hillock of their berg, was nearly sufficient food for the same period. But long before that time should elapse the young leader knew that relief must come, or that in some grand convulsion of the warring elements, amid the crash of colliding ice-fields and the sweep of resistless surges, the unequal conflict between human weakness and the tireless forces of nature must end, and to him and his comrades "life's fitful dream" would be over.

Therefore, as he made the seventh brief entry in his pocket diary, he watched jealously the faces of his companions, lest they should read in his face the reflection of his misgivings, as he traced these lines,—

"A week has elapsed since we left St. Pierre's; and as yet we have been safe in the centre of the pack. It is scarcely possible that another week will be as favorable to us as this has been, and no risk must prevent us from reaching the first sail in sight."



CHAPTER XVII.

ENLARGING THE BOAT.—WINGED SCAVENGERS.—NOTICE TO QUIT.

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rloff's final observation, at about ten o'clock on the night of the 19th, judging by the position of the North Star, gave the wind as about west-south-west, blowing pretty sharply, and closing the scattered pack well together. The following morning the wind still remained in the same quarter, and it was generally agreed that they must be somewhere in latitude 48°+ and longitude 63°+, or say about forty miles north-west of Amherst Island, the largest of the Magdalen group.

After a breakfast of stewed phalaropes, whose tender, plover-like flesh was a pleasing change from the hitherto almost unvaried roast sea-fowl diet of the last week, the boat was drawn out upon the level platform near the hut, and removing her side and covering boards, the party held a survey of their only resource in case of a breaking up of the ice. After being measured by Peter, who claimed that the upper joint of his thumb was just an inch in length, the following measurements were found to be nearly correct: Length over all, sixteen feet; extreme breadth of beam, four feet; length of well, eight feet; breadth of well, three feet; depth of boat, fifteen inches.

About eight feet, it will be seen, was decked, and a space of only eight feet by three was all that was available for the reception of four men and the working of the boat. It was decided to remove three feet of the rear half-deck, increasing the open space to eleven feet. This was easily done, leaving the strong cross-timbers untouched, and also six inches of weather-board on each side.

The after part of the combing of the old well was removed and set up farther aft, and that of the sides was continued until the whole of the open section of the boat was thus protected from the wash of the sea. The smaller seals had been skinned, as a stocking is turned off of the foot, leaving but one aperture, that of the diameter of the neck. It was a work of some trouble, but was at last accomplished, and these skins, after being deprived of their inner coating of

blubber, were easily formed into air-tight bags, and provided with narrow tube-like nozzles by carefully removing the bones from one of the flippers. These were duly inflated with air, and securely lashed on the inner side of the boat under the weather-boarding. Six of these were thus placed, two on each side, forward and aft, and two cross-ways under the thwarts, thus forming a very fair life-boat.

In addition to these the bows and stern were raised about six inches by strips of the sides of the broken float nailed to the gunwale, and strengthened by cross-pieces of planking from the bottom. These were given considerable shear, so as to be lifted by a sea, instead of cutting into it. Besides these, rue-raddies, or shoulder-belts of hide, with a strap attached to the sides of the boat, were adapted to the height of each man, and each of the party was assigned a position in the craft, from which there was to be no deviation.

Thus La Salle steered while Waring sat next on the port side. Peter, with his single strong arm, took the other starboard berth, and Regnar was bow oar, or, rather, paddle, while Carlo's place was under the half-deck forward.

The three seal-skins first procured were already about half tanned, and were formed into tarpaulins, being split in two lengthwise, sewed together at the ends, and again sewed to the edges of the combings with seal-sinews, forming a cover for the guns, and also by means of a gathering cord of fishing-line looped through their edges, capable of being drawn up and fastened at about the height of the waist of a man when kneeling, thus forming an additional protection against a breaking sea.

The oars, with one exception, were cut down into paddles by Peter, for the paddle, in ice navigation, is incomparably superior to the oar, which requires open water for effectual use. One oar, however, was left of its original length for a support to the McIntosh, which, being about eight feet square, and furnished with brass eyelets, was easily fitted as a sail; and owing to its black hue, was especially suitable for a signal of distress among the ice-islands of the Gulf.

It was nearly six o'clock when these repairs were completed, and the party sat down to dinner, for, except a lunch of cold roast duck, they had eaten nothing since morning. The salt water, concentrated by freezing in the Russian manner, and left to boil down the night before, had produced about two pounds of good salt; and Peter, taking his knife, soon made a neat tub, like a miniature butter firkin, in which to preserve it.

After dinner it was proposed that a short walk over the intervening ice to the sealing-grounds should be undertaken, and headed by Peter, with an axe to try any suspicious ice, the adventurers reached the floe in about fifteen minutes' walk. Climbing the higher shore of the berg, they advanced noiselessly, and without being observed by the seals, gazed down upon the scene of yesterday's battle. None of the seals seemed to have deserted the floe, but the ice was crowded with the young "calves" and the adult parents. Everywhere the mothers might be seen suckling their helpless young, while the males lazily basked in the rays of the setting sun, or occasionally indulged in a battle with some rival, which was not always a bloodless encounter.

Among the living lay the mangled corpses of yesterday's hunt, and over each fought and feasted a host of gannets, sea-gulls, and cormorants. The bodies were hidden from view by the birds, which tore with beak and weak palmated talons, at the greasy, bloody carcasses, and above these wheeled and fluttered a cloud of competitors for a share of the spoils. Occasionally a bird bolder than the rest would swoop at an unprotected baby-seal, whose mother was absent, or had possibly perished the day before; but at once the older amphibia would roar in hideous concert, and charge the birds, who seemed to understand that they must give up the living prey, and confine themselves to their legitimate duties, as scavengers of this grand camping-ground of the genus *Phocæ*.

Returning rather hastily, the party reached their quarters just at dusk, and lighting their lamp, made some weak, but very hot, coffee, the greatest treat which their limited variety of comestibles afforded. Peter busied himself with cleaning and inflating a number of the larger entrails and membranous viscera of the hooded seal. These were for life-preservers, and vessels for the preservation of water and oil in their anticipated boat-voyage. Regnar cut out no less than three pairs of moccason-boots, choosing the thickest skins, and then prepared them with the brain-paste for curing in the mild warmth of the air around the chimney. Waring cleansed the cooking utensils, and made up some bundles of fir-twigs to cover the bottom of the boat, and La Salle wrote up his diary, sharpened an axe, fitted a strip of pine board for a sprit to the blanket sail, and as bedtime drew near, went out to take a last look at the weather.

It was quite cold, and the wind, although light, was from the north-west, as near as could be judged without a compass. As Peter had noted a change of wind about midday, the pack had probably again changed its course of drift from east to south-east, or, perhaps, a point farther south, as the general course of the current in that part of the Gulf ran from south-south-east to south.

Returning to his companions, he communicated these details, closing by saying, —

"As I think, we are now about due west of the Magdalen group; and if this wind holds, we shall probably pass Amherst Island during the next twenty-four hours. If in sight, we must try to push through the ice to land, for the whole shore is inhabited. As many sealers should now be in this part of the Gulf, we should always be upon the watch for them."

"I think," said Waring, "that we ought to keep one man as a lookout on the highest ice in the vicinity."

"Pity the great iceberg so far off," added Regnar.

"Sposum wind hold north-west, and ice keep packed, why not go down to-morrow and look alound?" asked Peter, quietly.

"If these westerly winds hold, there will be no danger in so doing, if, as I guess, the pack extends from here to the shore of the Magdalens. If so, we are not likely to find any sealers to the eastward, unless they have got jammed in the pack; and probably that steamer we saw the other day has passed to the south, and will make to westward before another southerly gale comes to open the ice."

"You right, master," said Regnar. "We go to-morrow to berg; see great ways from there, if we can get up. 'Nother thing we ought to do—move off this floe before next gale, else get house broken, and lose many things."

"Pooh!" said Waring, carelessly; "this berg would last a month yet."

"I risk this *h*ice, more'n twenty, tirty feet tick. Sea no break this up."

Orloff's eyes flashed, and he seemed about to make some angry reply, but with a visible effort to restrain himself, signed to La Salle to follow him, and went out of the hut. La Salle found him on the summit of the lookout, gazing out over the star-lit sea.

"I was angry, and came near forgetting the part I play," said he, bitterly, in French; "but they know nothing of ice-lore, and I should not be angry at them for believing that this heavy bit of ice, although not as large as those around us, is equally as safe."

"And why is it not?" asked La Salle.

"Because," answered the lad, "this floe is of snow-ice, probably pierced by dozens of hidden cavities. I fancied the other night that I heard a ripple of water beneath me, as I have heard it in winter when seeking the hidden streams beneath the glaciers, but I did not hear it again, and may have been mistaken."

"Well, we are safe, I suppose, as long as we lie deep in the pack."

Regnar smiled pityingly.

"Do you see the kind of ice which surrounds us now—those heavy floes, hard, flinty, and widespread, and that berg, gigantic, and almost as hard as glass? Well, if we have a heavy blow from the north-west, we shall be jammed between the ice now resting on the Magdalens and those Greenland monsters yonder, and if there is a weak spot in our berg—"

"Well, what then, Regnie?"

"We shall be ground to powder, or, at least, our berg will; and in such a break-up, we shall have little chance to save anything except our lives."

"What, then, ought we to do?"

"We must be ready to move as soon as we crush in through this thin ice," said Regnar, pointing to the new ice and broken fragments over which they had crossed at dark. "Let us put our guns and food in the boat, and have her already for use; by morning we shall have a heavy nip, or a shift of wind, and in either case we ought to change our quarters."

As they turned to descend the hummock, a crack was heard, and a large part of the berg fell with a terrible crash. Peter and Waring rushed from the hut with cries of terror, and Carlo, whining with fear, bounded up the slope, as if to seek protection from his master. Regnar was the first to recover his coolness.

"Let us see what damage is done now," said he; and descending, he seized an oar and a rope, and went to the verge of the chasm. La Salle rushed into the hut, lighted his lantern, and joined Regnar, who was fastening the rope around his waist. "I don't think there is much danger, but if I get in, haul me out," said he, giving the coil into La Salle's keeping; and seizing the lantern, he leaped down upon the severed portion.

Fearlessly moving along the face of the berg, he surveyed it as thoroughly as possible by the light of his lantern, and at last, approaching the lowest part of the

wall, called to them to pull sharply on the rope, and with its help ascended the berg.

"You are all right just now," said he, "but when a strain does come upon us, the cleavage will be right through our hut. We had better get our tools into the boat, and keep watch during the night, for, with the first nip, or heavy sea, we shall no longer have a house to cover us."

It may well be believed but few of the party slept much that night, and that the first dawn was hailed as a welcome visitant. Regnar alone, who had been the first to give the alarm, was the only one who could sleep soundly through the hours not occupied on the watch, and he alone awoke refreshed and vigorous when the welcome sunrise flooded the east with rosy beams, and cast a magical flood of reflected light over every berg and pinnacle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHANGE OF BASE.—BUILDING A SNOW-HUT.—THE VIEW FROM THE BERG.—A STRANGE MEETING.

Top

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reakfast over, all decided to remove at once to the higher ice of the vast floe occupied by the seals. There were a number of reasons why this place was chosen, but the principal ones were, that it would be likely to be sought by sealers, would supply them for a long time with food and fire, and would stand almost any pressure and a heavy sea, without "breaking up."

The boat was accordingly loaded with the weapons, tools, and bedding, and run over the intervening ice with very little difficulty, although it took a good half hour to ascend the ice-slopes, which were steep and slippery. Returning, the party took each a seal-skin, with the hair side down, and loading them with the remaining decoys, fragments of wood, the Esquimaux lamp and its chimney, and a part of the fir boughs, returned again to their new location.

Some convulsion of the ice, had strewed the shores of this field with piles of young field-ice about a foot thick, and with this material Regnar at once commenced operations. While Peter rapidly split off cakes about a foot wide and two or three long, La Salle and Waring slid them along the ice to Orloff, who, furnished with the other axe and a pail of water, rapidly built them into walls a foot thick and eight feet square. A dash of water soon froze the blocks together, and as the material was near at hand, in the course of the forenoon walls five feet in height, with a single narrow entrance, had been raised. At this height the blocks were ordered to be made two feet square, and of but half the thickness.

These were laid flatways, with their edges not quite plumb with the outside edge of the wall, and being frozen into place, left an uncovered space about five feet six inches square. Returning to the old berg, the party took down the shooting-box from the top of the cave, and filling it with the remaining boughs, and a part of the seal-skins, blubber, &c., regained the floe, and unloading the box, placed it as a roof on the new dwelling. A single layer of "ice-bricks," as Waring termed

them, was placed around its edge, and being thoroughly wetted, formed a strong and weather-proof joining; and shoveling the *débris* from the interior, the lamp was set up and lighted, the twigs spread thickly over the icy floor, and bringing in their few household goods, the party, tired and hungry, sat down to a lunch of hard bread and weak coffee.

A final trip of all hands brought over the remainder of their birds, blubber, and skins, much being drawn back on the bottom of the float, which, although lessened in width nearly a foot, still retained both its runners, and made quite a decent sledge.

The wind still blew from the north-west, and the pack began to show evidences of the pressure of the large body of ice to windward; but La Salle and Orloff, although much fatigued, still thought it best to try to get a survey of the scene from the great berg a little over a mile away. Keeping on the leeward side of the floes, they reached its base without difficulty, and without delay sought a place to ascend. Fortunately a large stream of fresh water from above, had worn a deep gulch in the huge wall, and up this our adventurers managed to climb, although more than once each had to use his axe to cut steps in the glassy ice.

Once on the top of the berg, however, they felt repaid for the additional fatigue of their journey and ascent. Below them to the east, the floes were like those they had traversed, covered with seals, and about twenty miles away the highlands of Amherst Island showed plainly in the crimson light of the declining sun.

On the Top

On the Top of the Berg they felt repaid for the Fatigue of their Journey and Ascent.

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To the north and west all was ice, and in neither direction could either see any signs of the presence of man. To the southward the pack seemed more open, and as they watched, they saw the leads grow wider, and the pools becoming more frequent.

"We are passing the islands fast," said Regnar, "and by to-morrow will be well to the south-east of Deadman's Island. Let us descend, for it grows colder every moment."

Turning, they sought the gulch, only pausing a moment to view the pond which fed the streams, which poured continuously from the sides of this great ice-island. It occupied a large depression in the centre of the berg, and was estimated by Regnar to occupy an area of at least six acres.

As they turned to go, Regnar's eye caught sight of a floe at the foot of the berg.

"Are not those dead seals yonder?" said he. "It seems to me that I see piles of dead bodies, and skins hung on the pinnacles, and then—yes, there is a flag on a pole."

Hastily descending, the two friends ran at full speed to the floe. It proved to be as Regnar had said. There were hundreds of slaughtered seals, and it was evident that, as far as the eye could reach, the work of death had been complete.

Still something had occurred to prevent the hunters from securing their rich booty, for huge piles of skins, with their adhering blubber, were scattered over the ice, and near one was planted firmly in the floe a boat-hook, with a small flag at the top. Regnar drew it from the ice, and looked searchingly at flag and shaft; the pennon was of crimson, without lettering or private signal, but on the pole was scorched in deep, black characters, the legend "Str. Mercedes."

"Here has been a good day's work, probably by that steamer whose smoke we saw the other day," said La Salle; "doubtless she was afraid of being nipped by this ice in the last southerly gale, and made off in time to avoid it. If so, she will be back again after her cargo, when the ice gets south of the islands."

"Is that a seal, Charley?"

The words were simple, but the tone was so unlike the usual voice of the speaker, so tinged with awe and doubt, that La Salle felt a chill traverse his frame as he turned to see what had provoked the question.

Regnar stood on the brink of the only pool of open water in sight, gazing earnestly at a floating object in the centre, which appeared at first sight like a dead seal, but a second glance at the shape and size of the body revealed the corpse of a man clad in a seal-skin coat, and floating on its face.

"It is some poor fellow who has been drowned in passing from one cake to another," said La Salle, gravely. "Let us examine the body; perhaps there are papers or valuables on it, which will identify it, or be of value to its friends. At

all events, we can give it a more Christian sepulture to-morrow."

Regnar gave no answer, but stood motionless as if turned into stone.

"Come, Regnar! wake up, man! Surely you are not afraid of a poor lifeless body. Bear a hand with that boat-hook, or, if you don't care to touch it, hand it to me."

decorative image

Starting as if from a trance, Regnar extended the long boat-hook and gently drew the body to the shore, where La Salle, making a loop of the rope they carried, dropped it over the head and shoulders, and drawing it tightly under the arm-pits, gave one end to Regnar.

"His pockets are turned inside out," said La Salle.

"The man has been murdered," almost whispered the lad. "See what a terrible wound there is in the skull."

"Let us land him, any way, Regnar. We will get him upon the ice, and to-morrow we can come down here and look into the matter. Gently, now; that's right. Great Heavens! Regnie, lad, are you mad?"

As the body was landed, turning slowly over on its back, exposing a face handsome even in death, Regnar started, glanced curiously at the features, and dropping the line, raised the boat-hook, and with every muscle and feature alive with rage and fury, seemed about to transfix the senseless body of the dead. Then a change came over him; he lowered his arm, dropped the useless weapon, and burst into tears.

"Come, Regnie, you are worn out, and it is growing late; let us hasten back to our new hut. To-morrow we can return and look after this poor stranger."

"Stranger! He is no stranger to me. For two years I have sought him in both hemispheres, urged on by the love of my only relative whom he betrayed, and hatred of him which could end but with his life or mine. My fondest hope was to find him, my dearest wish to lay him dead at my feet; and thus we meet at last."

"This, then, is the man you have sought, and for this you have hidden your true character from all men. Is this the gift by which you were to gain, and I to lose?" said La Salle.

"Ask me no more to-night," said the boy, whose powers of self-control, were

only less marvellous than the innate force of his intense nature. "We have none too much light for our homeward way, and to-morrow's sun may help us to learn more of the cause of his death, and our own duty in the premises. We will say nothing to our friends of this dreadful matter, and at early dawn we will set off alone to return here;" and taking the boat-hook and his weapons, Orloff set off with his usual firm step and tireless energy.

It was nearly dusk when they reached the floe, and saw at some hundreds of feet distant the moving lantern that told that Peter and Waring were anxious about the safety of their friends. La Salle hardly dared trust his voice, but Orloff uttered his well-known halloo; and of the four who were gathered in that dwelling of ice, the most cheerful and kindly, was he whose dead enemy lay gazing with stony eyeballs at the wintry skies, amid a golgotha of animal butchery, with the dark impress of a rifle-bullet in the centre of his forehead.

That night the cold north-wester died away, and a gentle breeze began to blow from the south. The tired Indian and the delicately-nurtured merchant's son slept side by side on their leaf-strewn floor, and even La Salle, excited and surprised as he had been, at last fell into a broken slumber. But when all were asleep, and no human eye could pry into his secret sorrows, Regnar seated himself by the flaring lamp, and drawing from his breast a locket, took from it a small folded paper, and a closely-curled ringlet of yellow hair, such as St. Olave, the warrior saint of Norway, laid in the lap of the fair Geyra, princess of Vendland.

With many a kiss, passionate and sorrowful, he greeted the hidden love-treasures, and many a falling tear dimmed the bold eyes, and wet the ruddy cheeks of the youthful watcher, as late into the night he sat gazing into the flaring flame of that element, in which many a sorrowful heart, in its agony, seems to find a parallel of the torture it endures, and to find a saddened pleasure in the contemplation. But at last the watcher turned to his rude couch, and only the radiance of the lamp, diffused through the opaline walls of the hut, gave evidence of the presence of human beings in that desolate, wave-borne, wind-driven, desert of ice.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RING.—THE BURIAL.—A MAUSOLEUM OF ICE.

Top

In the early dawn La Salle started from sleep, as he felt a chill touch upon his forehead, and saw Regnar standing above him, booted and equipped for travel. In one hand he held a cup of hot coffee, and in the other the breast of a roast goose, which he offered to La Salle in silence. Fearful of awaking their companions, nothing was said by either, until, armed and equipped, they issued from the hut, and hastened towards the scene of last night's strange adventure.

It was the nineteenth of the month, and the ninth day of their involuntary voyage, and La Salle, as usual, gave a sweeping glance at ice and sky, to determine as nearly as possible the direction of their drift, and the probable state of the weather for the next twelve hours.

"We shall know all that at sunrise," said Regnar; and avoiding the haunts of the seals, they hurried through the gray light along the devious windings of the ice-foot, until they reached the murdered sealer. The body lay as it had been landed on the edge of a pool, and was that of a singularly handsome man, about forty-five years of age. No beard, save a well-kept mustache, covered the sharply-moulded features; and even the death-wound—the work of a small-sized bullet—had left but a tiny livid discoloration on the marble forehead.

Turning the body over,—a work of some time and difficulty, for the wet clothes had frozen,—an expression of surprise escaped the lips of Regnar, for the rear of the skull, from which the missile had issued, was almost blown into pieces.

"How could a bullet have done this?" asked the youth, gravely.

"There is but one kind of missile which produces such a terrible wound—the percussion rifle-shell, perfected years ago by an army officer in India, and since then introduced into every part of the globe. Into the point of a cylindro-conical slug is inserted a thin copper cartridge, loaded with powder, and primed with

fulminate of mercury. This bullet enters the flesh, but explodes when it strikes a bone, and a huge mass of bone and muscle is usually driven out in front of the issuing projectile. Such a bullet has destroyed this man."

A curious ring on the little finger of the right hand attracted the notice of Regnar, who with a glad cry seized the stiffened hand and tried to remove it, but the swollen flesh baffled his efforts.

"I must have that ring, La Salle," said he, ceasing his futile efforts. "I cannot leave that with his body." And taking up his axe, he severed the finger at the joint, and removed the circlet.

La Salle started back in horror at what he could but consider a senseless and unwarranted profanation; but Orloff, drawing his knife, made a close search of the clothing worn by the deceased, ripping open every seam and fold which seemed capable of concealing the slightest scrap of paper, while his companion, lost in astonishment and disgust, scorned to question, and awaited an explanation of his conduct.

Beyond the ring, however, little was found, for the larger pockets of the deceased were turned inside out, the vest had been opened, and a sharp knife had evidently cut through the heavy under-garments of knitted woolens. No mark of the knife was to be seen on the exposed flesh; and Regnar, breaking the oppressive silence, said,—

"Why was this done, La Salle?"

"Perhaps he had a money-belt around his waist. Many people carry their money and valuables thus," said La Salle, coldly.

Regnar continued the search, finding in a narrow pocket, like that used by carpenters for their rules, but opening on the inside of the right pantaloon pocket, a long, slender dagger, with double cutting edges. The handle was curiously carved, of walrus ivory, and represented an ancient Danish warrior, in his mail-shirt, and armed with battle-axe and sword. The sheath, slender and flexible, was evidently of more modern make, formed of rough shark-skin, with richly chased mountings of silver.

"That is all," said Regnar. "Let us find him a grave."

"We must hide the body surely," said La Salle, "for if the vessel returns to get her load, and it is found, we may be charged with mutilating the body, and perhaps

with murder. Let us consign it to the sea."

"We have nothing with which to sink it, and the waters have already given up their trust. There, if I mistake not, we shall find a tomb worthy of a better man than this."

A ledge of the iceberg, some forty feet above the wave-worn base, had received a tiny branch of the fresh-water stream, at some time long previous, and its course could still be traced by the immense icicle formation, which, in fantastical imagery of a lofty cascade, seemed still to fall from base to summit. Between the ledge and the water were formed huge irregular pillars and buttresses of opaline ice whose semi-transparency seemed to indicate the presence of a cave beneath.

Axe in hand, Regnar led the way to the base of the berg, and carefully examined every nook and cranny, evidently seeking a concealed opening. A narrow aperture was at last found, some twenty feet above the ice-pool; and at the call of his companion, La Salle ascended with the coil of rope, one end of which he fastened firmly to a projection of the berg.

"Come down here; there is no danger," said the lad; and descending, La Salle found himself in a cave of large size and almost fairy-like beauty.

Over their heads the ledge projected some twenty feet above a floor, levelled by the earlier flow of the cascade, which, by some sudden removal of obstructing ice or snow, had been projected beyond the little pool, whose surface had frozen into a level floor of crystal. Over this, as upon the roof and back of the cave, had gathered groups of those beautiful congelations to be found only on newly-formed ice, and in seasons of intense cold. Among them were to be noticed many minute patterns of the most delicate star-crystals, and the surface of the floor was nearly covered with congelations of the purest white, resembling in shape, size, and beauty the leaf of the moss-rose. A fantastic conglomeration of irregular, round, and convoluted pillars, running into each other in indescribable ramifications, formed the outer wall, whose semi-translucent crystal, like opal glass, allowed the rays of the rising sun to shower a mild and silvery radiance upon the hidden wonders of the spacious grotto.

"Here he will sleep, after a life of crime and treachery, in a tomb such as few monarchs can boast of, until in some terrible gale, amid tremendous and overwhelming seas, this vast fabric shall strew the ocean with its ruins, and give his icy form to the monsters of the summer seas."

"Let us then to our task, Regnar," said La Salle, "for our friends may follow on our track, and I fear we shall have need of the closest secrecy concerning the fate of this unhappy man, at least until we are safely landed on civilized shores."

Carefully descending the slippery way which led up to the aperture, they descended to the level ice, and seeking the floe, enveloped the body in one of the many seal-skins surrounding them, swathing it closely, and binding the hairy covering with strong lashings of raw hide, leaving loops at each extremity. Gently drawing it to the ice below the aperture, they ran the cord through the loops, knotting each firmly, so that nearly half the rope projected from each end.

Taking one end, and setting the shrouded form upright against the smooth slope, the companions ascended to the aperture, and with some difficulty managed to haul up their unwonted burden.

"We can find no footing here," said Regnar, who no longer affected his partial ignorance of English. "You, I think, had better descend again, and take a turn of your end around that pinnacle. I will go down into the grotto and guide its descent."

Kneeling beside it

KNEELING BESIDE IT, THE LAD BOWED HIS HEAD AS IF IN SILENT PRAYER.
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By this means the closely-swathed body was gently lowered into its last resting-place, and gathering up the axes and his rifle, La Salle followed to assist in in the final rites of sepulture. Regnar pointed to the centre of the floor.

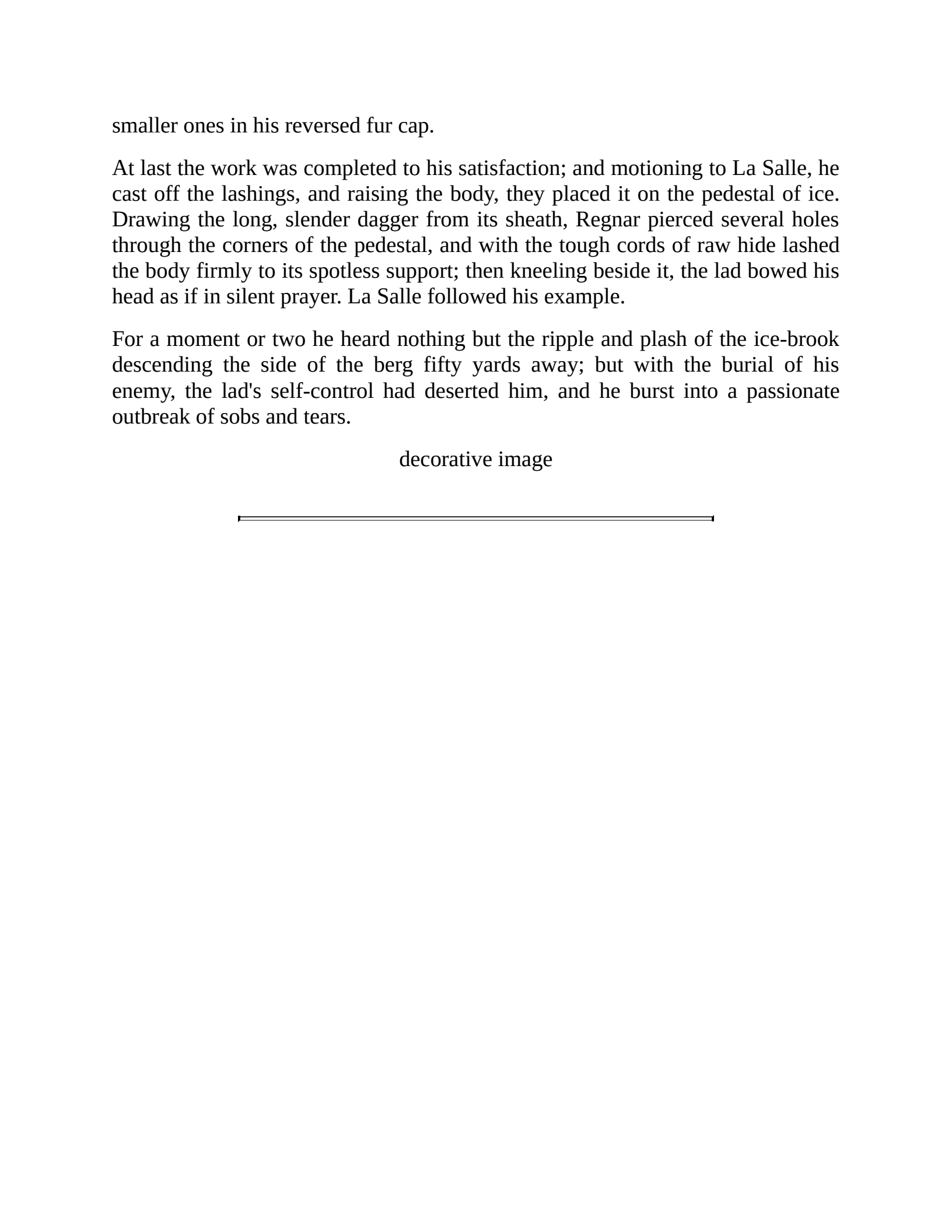
"That will furnish a pedestal which would befit the sarcophagus of a king."

Among the irregular mounds formed by the dripping of water from the roof above, was an ice stalagmite, about five feet high, and seven feet in length, broad at the base, but rapidly narrowing to a sharp point. Attacking this with his axe, Regnar soon split off the point, and commenced hewing the stalagmite down to a uniform height of about two feet. La Salle assisted, and in the course of twenty minutes they had formed a snowy pedestal, whose irregular outline bore no small resemblance to that of the burden it was to sustain. Regnar cleared away the ice-chips, hurling the larger shards to an obscure corner, and carrying the

smaller ones in his reversed fur cap.

At last the work was completed to his satisfaction; and motioning to La Salle, he cast off the lashings, and raising the body, they placed it on the pedestal of ice. Drawing the long, slender dagger from its sheath, Regnar pierced several holes through the corners of the pedestal, and with the tough cords of raw hide lashed the body firmly to its spotless support; then kneeling beside it, the lad bowed his head as if in silent prayer. La Salle followed his example.

For a moment or two he heard nothing but the ripple and plash of the ice-brook descending the side of the berg fifty yards away; but with the burial of his enemy, the lad's self-control had deserted him, and he burst into a passionate outbreak of sobs and tears.



CHAPTER XX.

A STRANGE LIFE-HISTORY.—AMONG THE RED INDIANS.

Top

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a Salle had been, as we have said, displeased and disgusted, as well as puzzled, by much which had occurred; but his heart melted when he realized the sorrow and suffering, which, in spite of unusual self-restraint, was thus laid bare before him. He threw one arm around the boy's neck, and gently pressed his hand.

"Forgive me, Regnar, if I have been unkind. I will be your friend if you desire it. Confide in me, and I will try to assist you, if you need aid or counsel."

"You are kind, very kind, Charley; and perhaps I have been wrong in not trusting more in you heretofore. There is no time, however, like the present, and no more secret and fitting place than this burial-grot of the cause of all my sorrow."

REGNAR'S HISTORY.

"My father was a Danish youth of good parentage, whose strange and roving predilections sent him early in manhood to an outlying station in the north of Greenland, where, between his books and the wild life of that savage coast, he passed several years, until his unpleasant relations with the Danish officials made a change desirable, and he sought the Moravian settlements on the Labrador coast.

"He had plenty of money, and soon became well known along the coast, which he searched thoroughly in his trading schooner, doing a brisk business in furs, seal-oil, and skins, and at the same time making frequent metallurgical discoveries and adventurous exploring expeditions. It was said that no man on the coast knew so much of the topography of Labrador, between Hamilton Inlet and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and a strange adventure opened to him new and startling experiences in the northern central portion of Newfoundland, then, as now, almost a *terra incognita*.

"Twenty years ago he made his last voyage down the coast, attended by the man who lies yonder, an American, named Perry, a native of Baltimore, who, it afterwards transpired, fled from that city, having killed an opponent in a political quarrel.

"Albert Perry was well educated, bold, and politic, and he formed a friendship with my father which ended only with life, and, as I believe, served him but too faithfully through good and ill, until death broke the bond between two men who were not fitted to lead the comparatively calm, eventless life which the laws of society, and the wants of the many prescribe to all; under penalty of social ostracism to the few who scorn to be fettered by a multitude of social conventionalities.

"With this man as mate, and a crew of four Esquimaux, my father found himself, in July, in one of the little harbors, on the Newfoundland shore, of the Straits of Belle Isle. The night was dark, but calm, and at about ten he retired, to be awakened an hour later by Perry.

"'Come on deck, captain; there's something going on up in the mountains yonder that I cannot make out.'

"My father, already half dressed, was soon upon deck, and found the whole crew on the after-deck, gazing eagerly at the hills, which, covered with forest, surrounded the low land at the head of the bay. Near the summit of the highest, a fire of large size had been kindled, and lit up the dark sky above it, and the tops of the surrounding trees, with a deep crimson glow, while from time to time unearthly and savage cries were borne on the night air to the ears of the wondering voyagers.

"'Have you any idea what that means, captain?' asked the American.

"'What do you say, Krasippe?' said my father, addressing a huge-shouldered Esquimaux, grizzled and scarred, who had followed his fortunes from Greenland, and knew all the lore of his wandering brethren of the Labrador coast.

"'Me tink it red Injin. Have dance; deer now come north. Marcus Jungsten, down at Hopedale, tell me he see such ting five year ago.'

"'But the red Indians are all dead, captain,' said Perry, who had spent a year or two on the coast, and heard many stories of the unconquerable ferocity and final

extinction of that strange race—the aborigines of Newfoundland.

"'Such, indeed, is *said* to be the case, but I have met several who have seen and heard similar things, such as we hear and see to-night, and they refer them to the presence of remnants of that savage and solitary race. I shall soon know, however. Krasippe, will you get your rifle, and go with me?

"'I'll go with you, Hubel,' said Perry, eagerly.

"But my father stopped, and said, gravely,—

"'There is too much of danger in this adventure for us both to risk our lives at once. Krasippe belongs to me. I have saved his life half a score of times, but I have no claim on you; and, besides, the vessel must be taken back to Hopedale, and you must stay to do it;' and so saying, he retired to his cabin.

"When he returned, he carried in his hand a light rifle and a number of glittering wands, while a row of bright medals shone against the thick pile of a close-fitting robe of black velvet, and upon his head a cap of the same material, encircled by a strip of ermine, bore a single red feather, with an agraffe of diamonds.

"'I have done wonders with this dress, amid the fire-rocks of the Nasquapees. Krasippe, old fellow, are you ready?'

"Krasippe, grinning from ear to ear, nodded assent, and launching the captain's boat,—a light wherry for two pairs of sculls,—they pushed off from the vessel's side.

"'Watch that spot,' said Hubel, 'and if you see the stars of this Roman candle, launch your boat, and come to the shore at once. Vasa there,' pointing to a huge Danish hound, 'will find me for you, if need be.'

"An hour or two later, Perry saw the stars of green and crimson shooting through the lurid cloud into the midnight sky. A rifle-shot echoed through the valley and across the bay, and the fire was instantly extinguished. Perry, who had prepared everything for such an emergency, pushed off in his boat at once, taking his three men, all well armed, and Vasa, the great hound. Pulling at full speed, they struck in for the shore, and at last found the captain's boat hauled upon the beach. Taking the leash of the hound in his left hand, Perry sprang ashore, ordered his men to secure the boat, and lighting a dark lantern secured to his belt, he gave the word to Vasa, who set off, with an eager whine, at such a pace that it was

hard to keep up with him.

In about half an hour they emerged into a large glade, and the hound stopped with a low howl over a prostrate body. It was that of Krasippe. He was lying on his face, with a deep gash on the shoulder, and a bruise on the top of the skull, but still breathed, although insensible. Perry, who doubted not that Hubel would be found near the body of his faithful follower, let slip the chain from Vasa's collar, and he at once darted off into the darkness, while Perry, drawing the slide of his bull's-eye, and pistol in hand, carefully examined the glade.

"He found the remains of a large fire, some ten feet in circumference, still steaming with the water used to quench it, a few fragments of venison, as well as a hatchet-head of white quartz, broken from its helve, not far from where Krasippe had received his wound; but they looked in vain for their captain.

"Morning had just dawned when Vasa reappeared, and wagging his tail, came up to Perry. Around his neck was looped a piece of birch bark, on opening which Perry found the following note:—

"'AMONG THE INDIANS—

MIDNIGHT.

"'I take my pencil to send you what may be my final directions, for as yet I am doubtful as to what may be my fate. Poor Vasa was about to be killed, as they dare keep no dogs; but I take advantage of his old tricks to send him to you. Take the vessel to Hopedale, and use her as if you were managing her for me, and next year at this time await me here. I have such an opportunity as no other man has had to learn the truth about these savages, and I risk my life willingly on the chance.

(Signed) "'PAUL HUBEL.'

"Perry seized Vasa's collar and knotted the leash, then, turning to his men, ordered them to take up Krasippe and carry him down to the shore, where, launching the boat, they returned to the vessel. The next day they made sail, but it was several days before Krasippe recovered sufficiently to detail his portion of the adventure, which ran somewhat as follows:—

"'Me land with capten. We go up hill trough de hood. We see ten, twelve, Injin almos' naked, eatin', drinkin', dancin', an' yell like debbil. Capten say, "Stay here,

Krasippe; I get hind bush." Capten creep trough bush, light cannle, an' bust out trough circle to middle of fire. I see fifty Injin fright dat way. Dose Injin not frighten much. I see one man jump on capten, trow him down, raise hatchet to kill him. Then one girl catch at his arm, an' I fire my rifle. Then I see no more until I wake up.'"

"'Well, Krasippe, the captain is alive, and we are to meet him here in a year from now. In the mean time we'll try to navigate the Thyri, and make as much money for the skipper as we can;' and well he kept his word."

"A year later the Thyri crept again into the rock-bound haven, and for a week Perry and his crew watched by night and day for his friend. At last, one evening they saw a fire on the shore opposite the vessel, and rowing ashore, a strange figure rushed to meet Perry, saying, 'I am here at last.'"

"It was Hubel, but he was clad in tanned deerskins, ornamented with the dyed quills of the porcupine, and his face and naked breast were painted with a mixture of deer-suet and ocher, while from his hair, long, unshorn, and gathered into a knot, waved a plume of the war-eagle. His story I give in a few words."

"'I advanced cautiously, intending to surprise and awe the Indians, as I have before done with the heathen savages, who still hunt beyond the head waters of the Mistassini, in the Labrador peninsula. As Krasippe told you, I failed; but the strange garb that I wore, and the interposition of a woman, saved my life for the time being, and the wonders of my magic wands added to the first impression, and gave me an importance I could have acquired in no other way. The riches and weapons of the whites have no charms for them, and the memory of their massacred and hunted relatives will never die until the last of the race sleep amid the islands of the great lakes of the interior; but when they saw me shake coals of fire at will from a wand filled with pyrophoric lead, they felt at once that I must be of another race than their persecutors.'"

"'So they took me with them to the south, along the trail of the migrating reindeer; they gave me the best of their simple food and raiment, and the girl who saved my life came to my lodge, and served me with a love that I can never forget. She died in childbirth two months ago, and when I left the tribe to return to my own people, her father wanted to keep the infant, and at last I consented that he should remain with him a year longer. "Give me a token," said I, "and when, a year from now, you follow the deer northward, seek the bay, and if a vessel lies there at anchor, look each day in the glade for the signet of our bond.

When you find it, leave the babe beside it, and I will take him across the ocean, and teach him to be wise and brave; then he shall come back to his tribe, and help them to become again a happy and powerful people.'"

"The Thyri went northward, and Hubel was received as one who returns from the dead; but none save his mate knew the whole story of his wanderings."

"'I have sworn to tell no one,' he said, in reply to all questionings, 'and should I break my oath, it would, in all human probability, cost the lives of the few remaining warriors of that unfortunate race. The people of Newfoundland can never blot out the memory of their past cruelties, and any party who strives to penetrate to their wilderness fastnesses, must either kill or be killed.'"

"Before the next year elapsed, Hubel was summoned back to Denmark, having succeeded to his father's property; but before leaving Hopedale, he had a final interview with his chief officer."

"'I give you, Perry, the Thyri and all her outfit, as well as the goods I have here, on one condition. You must keep the tryst I cannot keep, and bring the child you know of to the settlement at Hopedale. I have spoken to brother Hans, who will see after him until I send or come for him.'"

"'I will do your bidding, Paul; but I shall not stay upon this coast after that job is over. There will be nothing to keep me in this desolate land after you leave it;' and tears glistened in the eyes of that cool, cynical, worldly-minded adventurer, for he really loved my father."

"'When your work is done here, Albert, come to me in Denmark. There is enough for us both, and we have been so long together, that we shall never be happy apart. Will you come?'"

"Perry said nothing, but pressing the hand of his friend with painful energy, he rushed up the beach, and seeking the hill behind the little settlement, watched the ship as she sailed out of the firth and disappeared in the gathering twilight. The next summer he sought the appointed spot, and left this talisman tied to the top of a bush, which stood alone almost in the centre of the glade."

La Salle curiously examined the ring, whose gold circlet of European manufacture held securely an oval bit of jasper, on whose polished surface was cut the rude outline of a beaver wounded with an arrow.

"The next day he went again: the stone had disappeared; but two arrows, headed

with flint, lay beside the bush, one pointed to the interior, the other to the shore. 'I suppose that means "I go, I return," said he; and I shall find the child here to-morrow night.'"

"He was right in his conjectures, for on going to the spot the next night, he found beneath the bush a little boy clad in a strange *mélange* of Indian finery, and the bizarre attire worn by Paul Hubel when he set out on his strange adventure. That child was myself."

La Salle had listened to the strange story with amazement, which increased as it progressed.

"You tell me, Regnie, though, only of good deeds and faithful services rendered by the dead. You say that he loved your father, and served him faithfully as long as he lived."

Regnar took up the word in bitter wrath, strangely mingled with regret.

"As long as he *lived*—yes! But listen only until the end, and you shall judge for yourself of my justice to the memory of the dead.

"On the breast of the babe lay the talisman, and a facsimile, pierced and suspended by a cord round the child's neck, lay beneath its clothing. See, I wear it still, and shall wear it until I meet again with my mother's people.

"I must hasten to end my story. I was taken to Hopedale, where I remained ten years, at the end of which time Perry was sent from Europe to take me to my father, who had taken to his home a daughter born of an earlier marriage, whose mother, unable to understand the caprices of my father, had returned, almost broken-hearted, to her father's house, and died during his voluntary exile in Greenland.

"I spent four years in Europe, studying most of the time at Bonn; and then my father sent for me, and I lived another year on his estate, learning all that I could of the various handicrafts and avocations, especially the best modes of agriculture. At the end of the fifth year, he called me into the library, and spoke to me as follows:—

"'You are now sixteen years of age, and you know that I have given you opportunities such as are seldom lavished on young men of your age. I would like to keep you with me longer, but I have told you of your mother, and the sufferings of her people. It is my wish that you should visit them within two

years, and I have imparted to you much knowledge of their mode of life and government. Spend one year at Hopedale, and learn the lore of the fisherman and the craft of the hunter; and when I shall send you this ancient weapon, you will find within its hilt all that I dare not commit to paper, or the lips of my messenger.'

"The week after, I sailed for Hopedale; but before the year of my stay had elapsed, I learned from a friend's letter of the sudden death of my father. 'I suppose that your father's friend and your sister have joined you in America, and that you will be consoled somewhat for your loss by their affection, and your changed fortunes.'

"Thus ran the letter; but it was not until the arrival of the fall ship that I learned that my father was indeed no longer living, and that fully six months had elapsed since my sister, accompanied by the man who lies yonder, had set out to join her half brother, whom she had never seen, and to share with him the personal fortune of their common father; for the hereditary acres could not, by the laws of Denmark, fall to my lot, but went to the next nearest male relative.

"Since that time I have sought everywhere for tidings of my sister's fate, or news of the whereabouts of that man. I heard of him once as a slaver, and a year ago I learned of his having been seen on this coast. I have but one more explanation to make, and that is of the strange statement I made to you, when we stood alone looking across the moonlit waste of the drifting pack.

"About a month before you hired me at the trading post, I met Krasippe, now a very old man, and claiming some power as a prophet, or 'angekok,' among his people; for, although Christianized, they have not thrown off many of their old superstitions. He took me in his arms and wept over me, and growled a bitter curse on the treachery of his old associate. Then he appeared lost in deep thought, which seemed to absorb every sense, and his countenance became almost terrible in its fixed expression. At last, as if by no volition of his own, he uttered, in low, stern tones, the following rhapsody:—

"'You will meet in the desert of ice the man who will lead you to your heart's dearest wish. He shall lose, and you will gain.'"

La Salle's face was pale, and his lips firmly set, as he listened to the ending of this strange recital; but he took up the broken chain of evidence, with the firm intention of finding the missing links.

"Did you read my letter because you thought that Miss Randall might prove to be your sister?"

"Yes, Charley, I did. Her name was Pauline Hubel. She was named after our father, Paul Hubel. My name is Regnar Orloff Hubel."

"Well, Regnie, all I can tell you now is, that the young lady's English is not the best in the world, and that she is an orphan child. Of the whereabouts of her adopted father she knows nothing, but in a book which I took up there one day, I found written, 'A. P. Randall;' and Mrs. Randall said—"

"What?" asked Regnar, hoarsely.

"That it belonged to her brother. Now, Regnie," said La Salle, kindly, "you know all that I can tell you. Perhaps you may find in the hilt of yonder antique weapon the clew to much more. But we have other duties to perform; and first, how shall we seal up this cave so that no one can possibly suspect our having entered this place. That Peter has the eyes of a lynx, and should he follow us, would not fail to discover all."

"In an hour hence," said Regnar, "no human being can stand where we are now, and you can walk the stanchest hound over the ledge, without his dreaming of what lies beneath. Come up to the top of the berg."

Taking their equipments, they left the grotto, and issued through the narrow entrance. Regnar pointed to a shelving path, like a shallow groove in the face of the cliff.

"Can we climb there?" said he.

"I should think so," answered La Salle; and taking an axe and the end of the rope, he began to ascend the cliff along the shelving pathway. As he ascended, he heard behind him the blows of an axe, and, turning, saw Regnar cut a narrow cleft from the entrance of the cove to the level of the way to the top of the berg. "Are you mad," asked La Salle, "that you scatter your chips about the berg like that, and into the very pathway?"

Regnar gave a finishing stroke to his work, and came lightly up the path.

"I shall finish my work above," said he; and in a moment more they stood upon the summit.

The brink of the pool lay near the edge of the cliff, and without stopping to look around him, Regnar commenced cutting a deep, narrow gutter from the pathway to the huge reservoir. As he struck the blows which shattered the thin wall of ice between the pool and its new outlet, the water poured in a stream a foot deep through the little canal, and down the slanting ledge into the cavern below.

"I understand it now," said La Salle, "and I now know why you lashed the body to its support."

"Yes," answered the boy, coolly, "should any try to break into yonder tomb to-morrow, they would do so at the risk of their lives; but if we have a week of frost, the cove will be full to its outlet of solid ice."

"But, Regnar, let us think of something else. Where are the islands we saw last evening? We ought now to be near the southern shore of the group."

"We have been wedged off to sea by stranded ice, I should judge; for there, about fifteen miles to the northward, lies Amherst Island."

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CHAPTER XXI.

NORTHWARD AGAIN.—THE STEAMER.—TAKING TO THE BOAT.

Top

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es, Regnar, we are now on the outer side of the pack, and the wind has shifted to the southward again. Look to the eastward, Regnie. Has not the pack broken up there?"

"Yes, the tide sets to the eastward, and the wind blows the heavy ice northward as soon as it clears the eastern shoals. See that berg going to pieces on Doyle's Reef!"

As he spoke, the berg, a small one, worn by sun and rain into a multitude of fantastic pinnacles, swung off from its easterly drift, and, wafted by the wind, rapidly floated towards the concealed reef, whose sharp and hidden rocks can only be suspected during the prevalence of the heaviest storms. With a moderate rate of speed, not much exceeding two knots an hour, the massive base of the ice-island suddenly rose, as the shelving rocks received the irresistible impact. Then a few glittering pieces dimpled the surface of the unruffled water. It was the signal of impending dissolution. Crash upon crash, like the roar of artillery, echoed and re-echoed among the floes, and rent from base to pinnacle, the majestic frost-castle fell into utter ruin, torturing the sea into foam, while the billows raised by the rocking of the huge fragments swept up the narrow walls, sweeping right across many of the lower floes, and even raising a slight ripple around the base of the great berg itself.

"We must return, Regnie. The clouds are darkening fast, and fog or a thick scud is sweeping up from the southward. Let us have one more look for the steamers, and then we must away to our friends."

"There is a steamer on the outer edge of the pack, I think. You will see her smoke in line with the East Point yonder."

"Yes, Regnie, that is a steamer, sure enough, and she will make her way to the

centre of the pack. Let us hasten to the floe and take to the boats. We can perhaps reach her by rowing through the narrow leads before the gale rises."

Hastening down the side of the watercourse they descended the berg, and set off along its base, in the direction of the hut. As they passed they gave a last glance at the sealer's tomb. Down the path they had ascended, dashed an overflowing torrent, which disappeared with a whirl and hollow gurgle into the yawning aperture, while the whole front of the wall which they had ascended, dripped with water and glittered with spray.

"The keenest eye among the hunters of the Mistassini could not uncover that trail; and known to God and us alone is the bloody mystery of the Deadman's Berg."

"Don't talk of that again, Regnie. Let the dead rest. Perhaps it may yet transpire that he was penitent at the last, and you may have good reason to rejoice that you knelt beside his last bed, in a tomb so wondrously beautiful."

"We must hasten faster, Charley, for the fog *is* coming, and we may find the floes separated. Remember our friends know nothing of all we have seen and heard, and to them I am still Regnar Orloff, half educated, and a simple pilot of the Labrador."

With increased speed the pair pressed forward, crossing with difficulty the gulf, which had opened between the berg and the first heavy floe. Pole in hand, with one end of the rope attached to his belt, and his gun slung at his back, Orloff led the way, while La Salle followed at the other end, carrying an axe in his belt, and another in his hand. Luckily many large fragments lay floating in the first lead, and prevented from slipping by their sharp "crampets," they leaped from cake to cake, and safely reached the second floe.

The mist clung damp to their faces as they attained the end of the second floe, where a lead of water some twenty yards in width, and clear of ice, intervened between them and the next. The quick eye of Regnar caught sight of a small ice-cake floating by the windward side of their floe, and leaping upon it, with pole and hands they shoved it along the steep walls of ice, and with their united force gave it a final impetus in the desired direction. The fragment whirled and bent beneath them, until the water stood above their ankles; but just as they began to fear a complete submersion, Orloff caught a projection of the field with his boat-hook, and the two landed in safety.

As they hurried across the last floe, the rain fell, and the wind blew heavily, dashing huge cakes against the windward side with a ceaseless crashing of broken ice. Before they could reach the end of the field, they saw their own turn as if on a pivot, and grind slowly past the leeward point of the one across which they pressed at full speed. Their efforts were in vain, for before they could reach the verge their refuge was twenty feet distant; but Regnar was equal to the emergency.

"Cast loose your rope, Charley," said he; and in five seconds he had coiled and whirled it twenty feet across the intervening chasm, to Peter, who seized and retained it. "Now, La Salle, follow me," he cried; and springing upon a floating fragment, he balanced himself with his pole until he reached a more stable support farther from the berg.

The impetus, however, carried him too far away, and La Salle had to choose between committing himself to a fragment without rope or pole, to be tossed about by the rising sea, or to wait until Regnar should reach the floe, and return for him in the boat. He chose the latter, but soon had the pleasure of seeing Regnar safely landed on the floe, from whence, in almost less time than it takes to tell it, the three launched their boat and paddled up to the place where La Salle awaited their arrival, intently watching the performance of their improvised life-boat.

He noted with pleasure that she drew little water, and that the light paddles drove her through the short, toppling sea with considerable speed, while her weather-boards prevented the shipping of any water. Leaping aboard, they soon crossed the narrow lead, and running under the lee of the ice-hills, drew their boat to the hut.

"If you have anything you want to be sure to keep, stow it in the boat," was La Salle's first order, as he saw the sea begin to dash across the windward end of the floe, while, whining with fear, the young seals were shoved and pushed, by the flippers of their dams, farther and farther up on the higher ice, until, tamed by fear, they surrounded the little hollow containing the hut.

Food, weapons, clothes, and ammunition were all deposited in the boat, as well as her mast, sail, and paddles, while her painter, attached to her sharp-pronged grapnel, lay coiled on her half-deck forward. All that afternoon the wind and sea arose, until, amid the drenching rain, they could hear around them the clamor of the terrified seals, the continual crash of breaking ice, and the sough of the heavy

sea, whose spray drove over them in constantly increasing showers.

At last an occasional wave came into the lower part of the little hollow, and all thought that the end was near.

"We must take to the boat," said Regnar.

But La Salle pointed to the ghostly crests of the surrounding seas; and bowing his head upon his breast, Orloff signified to his friend that he acknowledged the hopelessness of that resource. Just then a darker blackness seemed to gather to windward, as a shriller blast whistled by them; and as all awaited the increased fury of the elements which were to end the unequal struggle, the wind seemed to abate, and the waves sullenly retired from the surface of the floe. The rain still swept fiercely upon the drenched wanderers, and on their lee they could still note the crash of ice-islands, amid the sweep of the angry waves.

But above them, huge, unbending, and majestic, towered a lofty pile, shrouded in darkness, through which at times gleamed the weird white outline of some snow-encrusted ledge.

"Are we under the lee of Amherst Island?" asked Regnar, in a voice which all could hear.

La Salle's answer came below his breath, and only Regnar heard, or could comprehend its meaning:—

"The dead are the defence of the living, and we are under the lee of Deadman's Berg."

Safe from the rage of the elements, but cold, wet, and hungry, the adventurers sought the shelter of their hut, which still stood unhurt; but the fir branches of the floor were soaked with water, for a wave or two had risen above the ledge of the door. After much difficulty, with the aid of a candle, the Esquimaux lamp was lighted, and after much sputtering, the six wicks diffused their cheering light and grateful warmth through the hut. Then Peter, with his axe, cut a gutter through the doorway, letting off the standing water, and in the course of an hour the boughs were comparatively dry.

Taking from the boats the dry skins and coverlets, the party lay down to rest, leaving Peter to keep watch lest they should again drift from their haven, and be exposed to the pitiless seas. All took their spell of duty; but the cheerless night passed without further incident, and the day found them still under the shadow of

the great berg. As the day advanced, the storm swept the pack northward, and the party, ascending the berg, saw, one by one, the isolated crags of the island chain of the Magdalens loom at times through the driving scud, as they drove northward. Six or eight miles away they saw the masts of a vessel deep in the heart of the floe.

"When the storm is over and the pack opens, we must take our boat and reach that sealer," said La Salle; and taking the range of her position, the four sought their hut, and building a huge fire of all their remaining wood, prepared all the cooked meat which they could carry, filled the seal-membranes with oil, and awaited the lull of the storm and the opening of the pack.

At sunset the storm had broken, the clouds began to disappear, and through their rifts the stars glimmered, and the new moon shone palely beautiful.

"We shall not pass the North Cape much before morning," said La Salle, "and until then the pack will not open. When it does we are ready; so sleep, and I will watch."

His tired comrades flung themselves down, and were almost instantly asleep. As the dawn approached the wind lessened, and as the day broke, he called Regnar, and again ascended the berg.

On the right hand towered the rock-bound coast of the northern islands and the isolated crags of Bryon. And as they looked northward they saw the pack opening again: as it issued from under the lee, a black cloud of smoke rose from the sealer's funnel, but instead of steering east or west, she was evidently heading for the great berg.

"Shall we await them here, or take our boat and try to reach them, Regnar?" asked La Salle.

"Wait a little longer, and then, when the ice opens, push a little more to the eastward, and work down to meet the vessel," said the lad, who proceeded to examine the dagger so strangely returned to his keeping. The blade unscrewed at the cross-piece of the hilt, which was hollow, and contained many papers closely compressed into a single roll. Regnar ran his eye over the contents, and selecting one, returned the rest to their odd receptacle. "This paper, Charley, contains an inventory of the property confided to Perry, to be equally divided between my half-sister and myself." And he proceeded to translate the items of the inventory. "It is hardly worth while to give this paper in full; suffice it to say that besides

various pictures, books, arrows, weapons, sets of plate, jewels, and other heirlooms, 'stored in care of Nicholas Orloff, my mother's brother,' there appeared a schedule of moneys and bonds amounting to nearly one hundred thousand dollars. 'These funds have been committed,' the paper went on to say, 'to my faithful friend Albert Perry, whom I commend to your good offices and implicit trust.'"

As he ceased reading, the boy's face was turned to the ice-cliff, where the plashing water flowed in a huge sheet, like a falling veil, over the face of the berg, shutting out from sight the twining pillars and narrow entrance of the sealer's tomb.

"I have rendered him the last 'good office,'" said he. "It only remains to seek yonder vessel, and find out who spoiled the spoiler, and, if possible, recover the valuables and papers taken from Perry's body."

"There is the steamer heading this way," said La Salle, "and the leads are fast opening. Let us descend to the floe, and by the time we have breakfasted, we shall find ample room between the fields to let us pass in safety."

Descending, they found their comrades already at breakfast, and by the time the meal was disposed of, their floe lay surrounded by one of the leads of open water, which showed scarce a vestige of the heavy seas of the late gale. For the last time they packed their few valuables into the boat, and stowing Carlo away under deck, took their allotted places, dipped their paddles into the open water, and with rapid strokes threaded the narrow channels, scaring the timid seals from their path, and noting on every hand scenes of life and beauty, for amid the opening pack the varied life of the Bird islands around them met their view. Screaming gannets wheeled in clouds over their heads, and portly murres started up heavily from the frequent pools, into which they broke with flashing paddles, and laughter, such as they had never before indulged in since their first misadventure.

In His Hands

"In His Hands La Salle Waved the Banner."
Page 297.

Guided by the pillar of black smoke, which, winding this way and that, ever

drew nearer and nearer, they came at last to an open pool, nearly a quarter of a mile or more in length. On the opposite side, above a small floe, they saw the prow of the advancing vessel. Evidently she had met with a check, for as they gazed they heard the tinkle of the engine bell, and saw her iron-sheathed bow recede behind the fantastic outlines of the pinnacle.

"Will she leave us?" asked Waring, with trembling lips.

"They only back to run down that floe. See now."

The next moment Regnar's prediction was verified. A blacker cloud of smoke, shot with sparks, poured from the funnel; the huge hull rapidly advanced, her raking prow, with its iron armor, piercing the waves like the blade of the sword-fish. There was a crash, a momentary glimpse of falling ice and splitting walls, and the next moment the noble steamer came at half speed across the open water, just as the little boat shot out of the sheltering lead.

In his hands La Salle waved the banner attached to the boat-hook, which had marked the deserted heaps of seal-skins. But it needed not: the pilot rang his bell, and the sealer became motionless in the centre of the pool. As they came alongside, a stout, full-bearded man, in a Guernsey frock, threw them a rope, and hailed the strange little craft:—

"What, do'ee want, friends, and where do'ee hail from?"

"We are sportsmen, carried off, by the ice, in the straits, eleven days ago. We want food, and a passage home, for which we will pay."

"Well, if ivir I heerd of de like of dat! Come aboord, my men. De captain's sick, but dere's plinty to ate here, and ye won't mind close quarters, after your vige on de ice."

"No, indeed, sir!" said La Salle. "Tumble up, my men. Take your guns and your coats with you. Here, Nep; up that ladder, sir. That's right. Can you take our boat aboard?"

"Come right up, sur; dere's no fear of her. I'll have her aboord in tin minutes. Here comes de mate. What's your name, sur? La Salle? Yis, sur! Mister Blake, sur; Mister La Salle, sur."

"Happy to see you, Mr. La Salle. I've learnt enough about you to know that you have been adrift nearly two weeks, and as dinner's ready we must have you into

the cabin. I am sorry that but one berth is vacant, and your friends will have to take their chance in the forecastle."

"If you please, I had rather have you extend your courtesy to Mr. George Waring, a son of Mr. Albert Waring, of C., who does a large business with your St. John's fishing firms. He has been the only one of us who has been sick, and—"

"There, Mr. Blake," interposed Waring, "don't listen to him; take him with you. Why, I am as strong as an ox now, and you'll find him far better company than I am."

Passing aft through gangways crowded with brawny, hardy-looking sealers, La Salle followed his conductor to the cabin, where he found six or eight men gathered around a table plentifully supplied with the usual provisions found on board ships in the merchant service. After being introduced to all present, who greeted him with a rude civility, Mr. Blake invited him to "fall to and help himself."

It is needless to say that he required no pressing in this direction. "Hard tack" and "salt horse," with potatoes, soft bread, and chicory coffee sweetened with molasses, seemed food fit for the gods, after the greasy meat-diet of the last eleven days; and his companions considerately refrained from questioning him until his hunger was satisfied. At last he drew back his chair, lit a cigar offered him by one of the officers, and turning to the mate said, laughingly,—

"Fire away, gentlemen—I'm ready."

After narrating the principal events of their voyage so far as he deemed prudent, he concluded as follows:—

"Two or three days ago we fell in with large sealing-floes, and among them one where a sealer had killed several hundred seals. A boat-hook, which you will find in our boat, bore this signal. Am I right in supposing that this is the name of your vessel?" and so saying he drew from his pocket the tiny pennon.

"It is ours, and we have been trying for a week to recover our skins, as well as the body of Captain Randall, whom we lost eight days ago."

Not a muscle of La Salle's face betrayed any emotion save that of interest, as he asked,—

"Lost your captain! And how, pray?"

At that moment a noise was heard in the inner cabin, as if several men were struggling; all at once the door flew open, and, with difficulty restrained by the utmost efforts of two powerful men, a pale, unshorn face, surmounting a wild and scantily-dressed figure, appeared to the party, none of whom started save La Salle, who almost fancied that the dead man, sealed up in the caverns of the ice, had come back again to his quarters on board the Mercedes. Crying out, "I couldn't save him! I couldn't save him!" the intruder was dragged, struggling and raving, back to his berth.

"Poor George! he takes the death of his brother sadly to heart. He was mate, and the other day they left the floe together, to ascend a large berg at some distance from our whaling-ground. We saw them on the top, after which they disappeared, going to the opposite side by which they had ascended. Shortly after we heard several rifle shots fired in quick succession, and then George came running towards us, shouting that his brother had fallen between the floes, and was drowning.

"We ran to the spot, and found a place between two floes where the ice was much broken up, as if some one had tried to catch something with a boat-hook; and Randall told us that his brother had fallen through and been carried under the ice before he could get to him. We broke the ice all around, but to no purpose; and then our lookouts discovered that we were in danger of getting nipped on the other side of the Magdalens. So we returned to the ship with George, sadly enough."

"Why were the rifle-shots fired? to call for assistance?" asked La Salle.

"Yes. None of our men have the rifle, although many are supplied with the old sealing-gun. We therefore agreed among the officers that three shots, fired in rapid succession, should call assistance in case of danger, or trouble with the men. Our rifles are all breech-loading carbines, and we can fire with great rapidity."

"Do you find them of service among the seals?"

"Yes, especially with the 'old hoods;' and poor Captain Randall, who spent some years in Europe, had his ammunition fitted so that the bullets explode on striking a bone. They tear a terrible hole in a seal, I assure you."

"Indeed! I never saw one of them, although it seems to me that I have read of the invention. Have you any of the bullets here? for I suppose the rifle was lost at

the same time."

The sailing-master, or rather pilot, a short, thick-set Newfoundlander, took up the conversation.

"Dere's de rifle now, hangin' over your head. De captain was ailin', an' his brother, who fancied de little piece, carried it. Dere's one of de cartridges in it yet."

So saying, he took down a short carbine of the Spencer pattern, and unlocking the slide, took out a cartridge and handed it to La Salle. It displayed at the end of the ball the copper capsule of a rifle-shell.

"Let us go on deck," said Blake, rising; but as they passed again through the narrow passage, they heard the struggles of the delirious captain, and his oft-repeated cry, "I couldn't save him! I couldn't save him!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FORECASTLE OF THE SEALER.—A SEALER'S STORY.—THE LAST HUNT.—ARRIVAL AT ST. JOHN'S.

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n the quarters of the men forward, between the lofty and wedge-like bows, the rest of the party met with a warm reception; and although grease was everywhere a prominent feature of the surroundings, still the sense of comfort, warmth, and security, made it a paradise to men who had passed so many days of discomfort and anxiety.

Huge kids of beef, potatoes, and bread, with hot pannikins of strong black tea, formed their dinner, which most of the men preferred to eat on deck; but the boatswain, or rather captain of the forecastle, with, perhaps, a dozen others, seated themselves at the long hanging shelf which formed the table, and listened intently to the story of their varied wanderings and adventures.

As Regnar concluded, a grizzly-haired sealer from Kitty Vitty seized him by the hand.

A Sealer's Story.

"Ye've ben lucky, sur; de Lord be praised for't, for dere's many a better man nor you dat's died wid hunger an' cold on de ice. I mind once myself dat I sailed out o' Conception in March, an' tree weeks after dat we were up off Hamilton Inlet. Dere was a big fleet of us boys, for dat was in de ould times when dere were no steamers, but only brigantines mostly.

"Well, dere was ould Ned Shea in de Li'n, an' Jim Daygle in de Ringdove, an' Bill 'Hearne in de Swiler's Bride, an ourselves in de Truelove, all in company; an' dat night at dusk we made de Greenland ice. Well, de wind was west-nor'-west, an' we put de studdin'-sils onto her, an' away we went flamin' mad through der slob.

"Well, de ice giv us many a heavy thump dat night, but de ould Truelove was well fastened, an' at daylight next mornin', we heard de watch cry, 'Swiles! Swiles! On deck, below dere!' You may be sure we wasn't long in gettin' on deck wid our guns an' gaffs, an', sure enough, dere dey was, ould an' young, *atin' de shaydn* (sheathing) *off her*.

"Den we launched de boats an' took to de ice; an' when we landed, de capten said, 'Trow your guns in de boats, an' at dem wid de gaff;' an' such a massacree I never saw since. De first I killed was a 'harp;' an' den I killed a 'hood' wid de first lick; an' den a 'jenny' an' tree 'white coats;' but I took my toe to dem, an' all of 'em in a bit of a hollow not bigger den dis fo'c's'le, an' I sculped dem an' put dere sculps on a pinnacle; an' so it was all day an' de next.

"But on de t'ird day we were hard at it a good way from de vessil, an' I tought I saw some swiles under a hummock, an' I ran up swingin' my club; but dey didn't stir, an' den I saw dat dey wasn't swiles. Dey was Huskies, two of 'em, dead an' frozen stiff. Dere lines an' lances lay beside 'em, an' knives of hoop-iron, wid bone hannles, were in dere boots; but dere was no sign of anythin' to ate, an' dey looked wasted to 'natomies.

"I called de odders, an' de capten come up an' looked at dem a minute sorrowful-like, an' den said, 'Poor fellows! dey've been carried off'n de ice, an' starved till dey froze to death;' an' he tould us to bury dem daycently, an' we closed dem up in a pinnacle.

"But it was lucky we was near loaded, for dat put a chill on our min', an' de tought of dose dead Huskies lost us many a fine swile, for de boys wouldn't scatter over de ice as dey used to.

"It wasn't long after dat de capten tould us dat we were full enough, an' away we sailed to de sou'-east."

"Dat was de time de Li'n was lost—wasn't it?" inquired another islesman.

"Yes; on de way down we had an awful gale, an' de Li'n put into de pack an' got 'nipped,' so dat she went down; but her crew was all saved in de boats. We put off to say, an' for two days an' nights I tought we should never say land. Why, we lay to as long as we dared, an' until our deck was full of water, an' de capten said we mus' do somethin' else, or we should founder.

"I stood in de fore-riggin' an' watched de big says as dey come down upon us; an'

I'll tell you one thing you'll do well to remember. Whenever a big wave come dat I knew would sink us, if it broke upon us, *I made de sign of de holy cross, an' de wave broke before it reached us*."

"I've done de same ting often myself, an' nivir knew it to fail," said the younger man, who, it appeared, was the son of the veteran sealer.

"But how did you get clear finally?" asked Regnar.

"De ould capten dat was drownded de oder day was mate den. He was a wild young chap, but smart an' able. He tould de capten to rig one of de pumps, and pump some of de oily water out of de hold. So de brakes was rigged, but he an' de capten had to man dem at first, for all de rest were afeard, an' I was in de fore-riggin' watchin' de says.

"Well, dey pumped a while, an' de oil an' water went overboard, an' as we went driftin' away to leeward, I saw de slick of de ile spreadin' over de waves. We kept a couple of men at de pumps till night, an' dere wasn't another say broke over us."

"Swiles! Swiles! On deck, dere below!" cried some one on deck; and a general rush up the steep ladder leading to the deck took place.

Following the others, our three friends soon found their companion, La Salle, who had pressed through the crowded gangways to his party.

Again they lay below the Deadman's Berg, and around them were the floes, crowded with living seals, as well as the one over which the ravenous sea-birds fluttered, holding high carnival over the multitude of frozen bodies. The crew, armed with guns and clubs, were lowering their light boats, and the party dragging their own boat to the side, awaited the lowering of a boat to use its falls for their own. Blake approached them, and said, kindly,—

"I wouldn't land; you must be tired, and need rest. Just turn in, all of you, in the cabin, for we shall be ashore all day."

"We would rather hunt with you, for we shall never probably have another chance to see how a Newfoundland sealer kills his game. Only, if you please, let us have some sheath-knives, and four of your clubs."

Merely saying, "We shall be very glad of your help, for we have to leave two of our best men with the captain," Blake spoke to an under-officer, who soon produced four sharp sheath-knives, and as many oaken clubs about six feet long, ringed at the top with iron, and furnished with a sharp hook, or gaff; and lowering their little craft, the four paddled stoutly after the fleet of boats, whose wild crews tore the water into foam with their oars, as each strove to reach the floes, and to "win the first blood."

Sixty men, besides La Salle's party, swept across the pool, almost flung their light boats upon the safe ice, and prevented from slipping by their spiked crampets, charged at full speed upon the frightened seals, who filled the air with their clamorous roars and whining. Crick, crack! fell the heavy clubs on every side, and seldom was the stroke repeated; but sometimes an "ould hood" would elevate his inflated helmet, and the heavy club would fall upon it, producing a hollow sound, that boomed high above the noise of the conflict. Then the officer in charge of that gang would step up, present his carbine, and the brave seal, shot through the brain, would fall back dead, as the report rattled among the ice-peaks.

Having disposed of the adults, a regular butchery took place among the young seals, who were easily despatched by a blow on the nose, or a kick with the heavy heel of a sealer's boot on the spinal vertebræ. Then followed the "sculping," or skinning, which was despatched with marvellous rapidity. At its close the men, covered with blood and oil, gathered to their boats, and leaving the floe crimsoned with gore, and horrible with bloody and skinless carcasses, hastened to another field to continue the work of death.

Such for two days were the scenes presented to the eyes of the companions, who received many commendations for their assistance, but who rejoiced beyond measure when the word was passed through the ship that she was "full," and that they were to sail at once for St. John's.

Once more the black funnel poured forth its cloud of smoke, and casting off the lines which attached her to the surrounding ice, the Mercedes pressed boldly into the pack, and soon our adventurers gazed for the last time on the fading outlines of the Deadman's Berg.

Two days later, as the steamer rounded Cape Race, the captain, worn and weak, but evidently in his right mind, appeared at the table. On being introduced to La

Salle, he seemed somewhat agitated, but soon assumed an overbearing and despotic demeanor. To Mr. Blake he was particularly insulting.

"I'll have you know, sir, that I am captain now; ay, and owner, too, sir, for my poor brother left neither chick nor child in the world but me. Damn me, sir! what right have you to invite everybody to my table and cabin? ay, and put a stranger into my brother's very state-room?"

Blake looked confounded, and the other officers sat with bowed heads and lowering brows at this insult to a man they all loved and respected; but La Salle unconcernedly turned to the newly-fledged commander, and said,—

"I regret, captain—really, I forget your name; but let that pass; but when I came on board, I told this gentleman that I would sleep forward with the men. I have not cared to speak about it before, but I can assure you that I have the worst dreams in that state-room that I ever had in my life. I shall try to recompense you for the passage of my companions and myself when we arrive at St. John's;" and rising, he bowed haughtily, and withdrew to the deck.

Ten minutes later he was joined by Blake.

"The captain has apologized to us, and begs that you will come to his room, as he is too weak to leave the cabin."

La Salle attended the good-hearted sailor to the inner cabin, where a mattress lay upon the table, and many appliances, among them a couple of broad bandages of stout canvas, bore witness to the severity of the captain's late illness. The sick man attempted to rise from his chair as he entered, but was evidently very weak, and La Salle interposed,—

"Don't rise, captain, I beg of you. I see you are very weak, and perhaps I was too ready to take offence. We should not always notice—"

"The disagreeable acts of a sick and almost heart-broken man," interposed Randall, with a smooth, deceitful softness of tone, that instantly reawakened La Salle's antipathies. "I beg you, however," he continued, "to excuse me, and to make yourself at home in your old quarters. I should like to talk with you about your strange cruise, but at St. John's we may have a better opportunity over a bottle of wine."

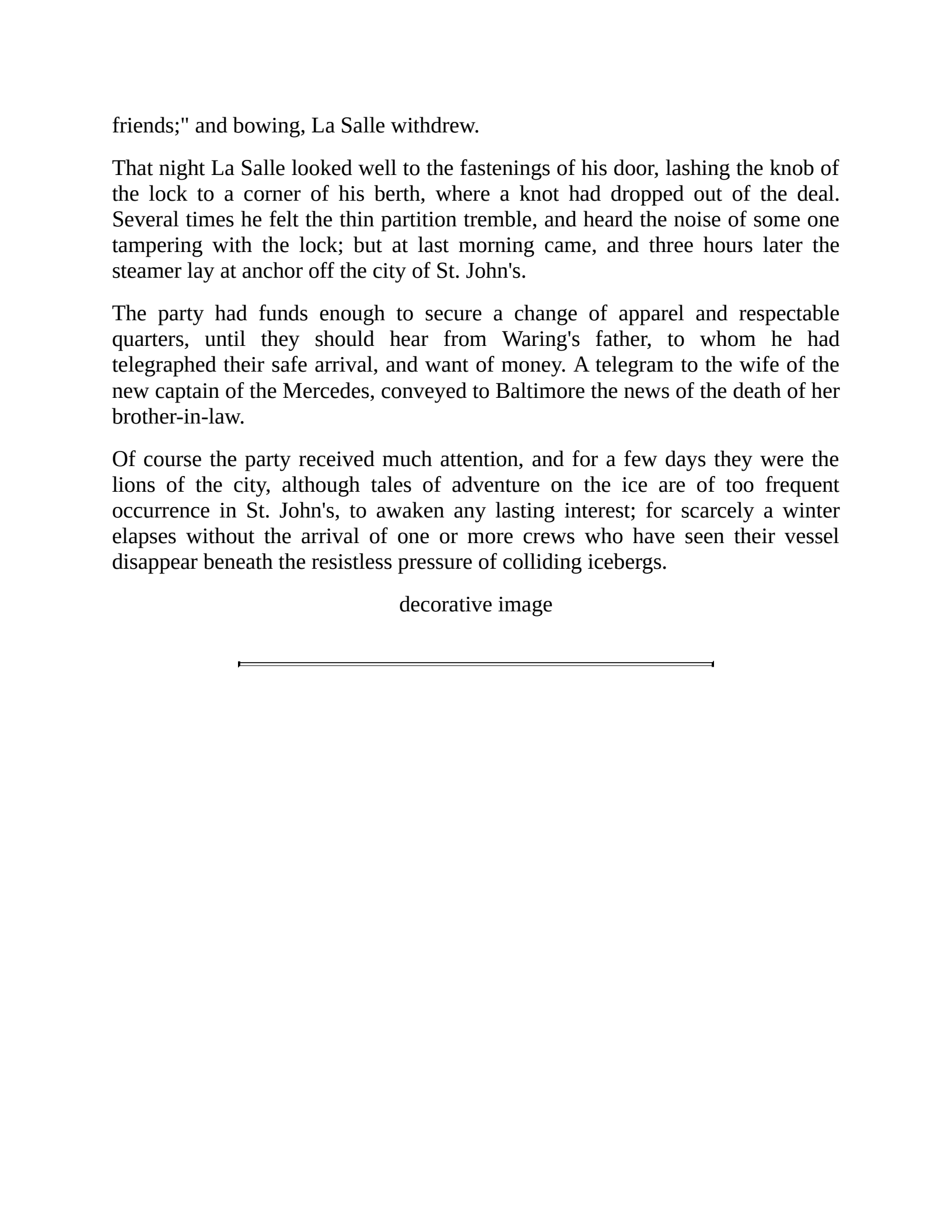
"I shall be glad to meet you with my friends as soon as I can see Smith & Co., and get some notes changed, so that I can buy suitable clothes for myself and

friends;" and bowing, La Salle withdrew.

That night La Salle looked well to the fastenings of his door, lashing the knob of the lock to a corner of his berth, where a knot had dropped out of the deal. Several times he felt the thin partition tremble, and heard the noise of some one tampering with the lock; but at last morning came, and three hours later the steamer lay at anchor off the city of St. John's.

The party had funds enough to secure a change of apparel and respectable quarters, until they should hear from Waring's father, to whom he had telegraphed their safe arrival, and want of money. A telegram to the wife of the new captain of the Mercedes, conveyed to Baltimore the news of the death of her brother-in-law.

Of course the party received much attention, and for a few days they were the lions of the city, although tales of adventure on the ice are of too frequent occurrence in St. John's, to awaken any lasting interest; for scarcely a winter elapses without the arrival of one or more crews who have seen their vessel disappear beneath the resistless pressure of colliding icebergs.



CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S VISIT.—HOMEWARD BOUND.—BROTHER AND SISTER.

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t last the expected draft arrived, and the party were to leave for Halifax the next day in the Cunard steamer. La Salle had invited Captain Randall to spend the evening in a private parlor of the hotel, and at eight o'clock he was ushered in, and found no other guest save his first mate, Mr. Blake, who was still first officer of the Mercedes.

The table was well spread with delicacies, and although some constraint existed, the wine did its work, and soon Blake and Randall were laughing and joking, as if no cause for ill-feeling existed between them. At Randall's request La Salle gave a summary of their adventures, concluding the recital as follows:—

"Thus passed the long days of our anxious drift, until your vessel steamed back to her old sealing-ground, and we left forever behind us our ice-built hut and the Deadman's Berg."

The effect was magical. The smiles faded from the faces of the guests. Randall's lips were drawn and thin, his eyes fixed and glittering, and one hand stole stealthily to his hip. Regnar, too, was pale, but not with fear, and his hand grasped the hilt of the antique dagger.

"Let me help you to some of this, captain," said La Salle; and rising, he uncovered a small dish before him, and taking from thence a pair of Derringers, presented them at the head of his astounded guest. "Up with your hands, murderer," he said, sternly, "or you die on the instant!" At the same time Blake and Regnar seized him by the arms.

"What is the meaning of all this?" asked Waring, trembling and appalled.

"Dis no good, La Salle. No Injin hurt man in his wigwam, or strike when he give 'em food," shouted Peter, angry at what he considered a breach of hospitality; but

both were unheeded.

"Why am I treated thus?" faltered the prisoner, whose trembling knees could scarcely support him.

"Captain Randall, I have here a man with whom you have an account to settle. He has been known among us as Regnar Orloff. His real name is Regnar Orloff Hubel. Where is the money and other valuables which your brother, Albert Randall, stole from two orphans, and was murdered for by you, that you in turn might become the thief?"

"Mr. Blake here knows the story, for we have told him how we found the corpse of his commander, with the skull pierced with one of your murderous shells. We buried him in the berg; if you doubt it, behold the tokens."

Regnar raised his hand: on one finger glittered the golden setting of the native talisman; on the table he laid the sheathed dagger.

"Are you satisfied, George Randall?" said he.

The wretch glared around as if he would have destroyed all who surrounded him; then he seemed to realize the futility of his rage, and catching his breath with a fierce sob, he asked, hoarsely,—

"What will you have me do?"

Regnar stepped forward, and answered for himself.

"Give up the secret money-belt which you took from the person of your victim, with its contents untouched, and secure to me compensation for the sums taken by your brother. Your life I do not want, but if you hesitate I will have both."

"What security have I for your silence?" asked Randall, more boldly; for even his craven fears were unable to repress his naturally cold and grasping disposition.

"Only our oaths, and the remembrance that my half-sister has slept beneath your roof, and has borne your name, although it shall no longer be a reproach to her."

"It is hers no longer. She married last week, after losing her first beau somewhere at sea: but never mind; I must take your offer and your word, I suppose. Let go of my arms. You may take my pistols from my hip, if you are afraid of me." With these words he proceeded to unfasten his vest, and from

beneath it drew a water-proof bag of thin rubber, which was tightly fastened with twine, and enclosed in a money-belt of chamois-skins. "It is all there but ten thousand dollars, and that he had a right to take," said he.

"What do you mean?" asked Regnar, with a softened look and glistening eyes.

"Open and read for yourself," said Randall, moodily.

Unfastening the belt, Hubel untied the inner bag, and poured the contents upon the table. A roll of bank bills fell upon it. There were within twenty bills of the denomination of one thousand pounds each, on the Bank of England, and a folded paper, which, on being opened, proved to be a copy of the last will and testament of Paul Hubel. By its provisions a sum amounting to about ten thousand dollars was given "to my old and tried friend, Albert Perry."

"Al, put that ten thousand into this vessel last year, and I persuaded him to put thirty thousand of your money in, too. We made money last spring, and I kept trying to get him to buy all of her. He took a dislike to your sister, and said he would hold on to the money until he found you. Last summer he secured a passage on a vessel bound to the Labrador, and only that he got sick, I believe he would have seen you then.

"This last winter we had several quarrels about the money, but I never meant to injure him until the day it happened. We were having splendid luck, when he proposed that we should climb the berg, as he feared being caught between the pack and the islands. We had to ascend on the opposite side, and when we got to the top, we saw the storm brewing to windward, and started to return.

"As we came along the ice-foot, I said, 'You're making money this trip fast. Isn't that better than giving up everything to that sullen girl and a half-breed boy?' Then he seemed sad, and said, 'George, you've made a rascal of me; but, thank God, I've made up my mind to be true to my old comrade at last.'

"'What do you mean?' said I.

"'I mean,' said he, turning to me, 'that I've sold out the shares I bought with that thirty thousand, and I've got their money safe here in this belt.'

"'But you don't mean to be such a fool as to give it up—do you?' said I; for I was angry to think that, instead of the four shares I had counted on all along, we should have but one in the division of the profits.

"And then I taunted him with a fatal quarrel long ago, and he—well, he taunted me with a crime that I thought no one knew. Says he,—

"'I'm not afraid of you. If the rope is ready for my neck, you could scarcely live out the time, between the sentence and the gallows, if the people of San Francisco once listened to your trial.'

"So one word brought on another, and at last he shook his gaff at me, and made one step; and my blood was on fire, and I fired the carbine. He never spoke.

"I don't believe I ever should have enjoyed the money, although at times I felt as if I could hug myself when I counted it over; and I laid out to go back to Baltimore, and go into business there. What am I to do with the share in the vessel, and his money in the bank?" he asked, suddenly.

Regnar rose, with his eyes red with weeping; but a sad smile wreathed his lips, as he asked,—

"He was your only brother, and unmarried—was he not?"

Randall answered, hoarsely,—

"It is true, God help me! it is true."

"To all that is his, then, you are sole heir. I lay no claim to interest or forfeit, and I wish that thrice the sum would restore him to life, since even at the last he was not wholly unworthy of my father's confidence and his children's love. Come," said he, turning to those present, and taking from his breast a Bible, "repeat after me the oath of silence and secrecy:—

"'We, who alone know of the circumstances attending the decease of Captain Albert Randall, and the suspicions attaching to the part acted therein by his brother George Randall, do solemnly swear that, except under the seal of confession, or as compelled by the power of the law, we will never divulge our knowledge or suspicions until after the decease of the brother of the dead.'"

The oath was taken with due solemnity, and Randall rose to depart. Blake, filled with anger and desire of vengeance, had preceded him. La Salle coldly did as common politeness required, but Regnar saw that sickness and mental torture had overcome the strong man, whose knees trembled beneath him, as, with the curse of Cain upon him, he turned to depart, without friends, far from home, and weary of life.

"It is not right, La Salle," said the boy. "I was unjust to *him* although it is better for all that no eyes but our own saw him laid in the Deadman's Berg. Let us give this man human sympathy; he is weak and sick; let us see that he does not despair of the mercy and love of God."

La Salle could not but acknowledge the righteousness of this appeal, and, followed by Regnar, hastened into the hall.

"Captain," said he, "forgive us if we have failed to treat you with Christian forbearance, and believe that our hearts will retain your memory, with sympathy for your heavy burden of remorse, if not with the esteem that might have existed between us. The night is dark and cold; let us help you to find a conveyance."

"I thank you," said he, feebly; "you are very kind—far kinder than I deserve. No man can measure the remorse that burns within me, and yet the world would say that you have let me off too easily."

La Salle rang the bell sharply, and a waiter hastened up from the lower landing.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Yes. Call a cab at once. Regnar, get my coat and yours. Mr. Randall, we must see you safely home. Where do you board?"

"At the Albion; but you need not take that trouble. Ah, sir, I know your fears; but my head is clear, and you need not be afraid that I shall do anything rash. I shall not despair of the pardon of God, since I have found some merciful pity in man."

The carriage was announced; the tall form was again erect, and the voice, though husky with emotion, came strangely sweet and clear, as he turned to go.

"I would that we might be friends, but I know it cannot be. My blessing men would shrink from, if they knew what you do; but may God bless you for your kindness to me." And standing motionless in the dusky passage, they heard the footsteps die away in the empty corridors, and the rattle of the wheels of the vehicle which bore him away forever.

The next day they took the steamer for Halifax, and arriving there, the party separated, Peter and Waring going to St. Jean, and La Salle to the home of his father in Baltimore, where Regnar also was bound, in search of his half-sister. The parting was not pleasant, for the mutual trials and dangers of the few days spent amid the ice had done more to cement a strong and lasting friendship

between the four, than years of ordinary companionship would have done.

"Look out, Peter, when you get on board the Princess, for Lund has secured such a story to tell, that he may pitch you two overboard to keep you from spoiling it by your return."

"All light," answered Peter; "Capten Lund good man; see spirit, too, sure enough. He see two men; he look 'gain, no men dere. He see you an' me on *h*ice. Snow fall t'ick, an' he see us no more. What hurt we come back? Much better we come back for all han's; you come back soon, I s'pose, too."

"Yes, Peter," answered La Salle, kindly, "we shall come back soon, and I hope next fall to be spending the moonlight nights with you on Shepherd's Creek, and the duck-haunted reed-ponds of Battery Marsh. Good by;" and going on board, the two friends went rather disconsolately to their state-room.

Regnar still seemed ill at ease, as if he wanted to inquire about something; and at last he said, abruptly,—

"Charley, what shall I say to my sister?"

"Say to her, Regnie? Why, that you are delighted to see her, of course. You may add that you come to make her wealthy; that is not likely to hurt your reception," said La Salle, philosophically.

"Yes, of course I know that; but—but about you, Charley. You know what Randall said about—about her—"

"About her being married, do you mean? Why, my dear boy, say nothing. I am resigned, and, I may say, almost glad that it is so. Neither was it altogether an unexpected announcement, for I felt long ago that my first impressions upon her susceptible heart had faded with lapse of time and a low state of the exchequer. No, no, boy! be kind and loving to her, for she has not your firmness of soul or depth of affection. I carry you to her as my marriage gift. Is it agreed?"

"It is, Charley; and you will not let the caprice of a girl separate me from my friend—will you, La Salle?"

"Regnie," answered the other, not without a touch of tenderness in his tone, "the bonds which connect us are not the ties of passion, or the calm preferences of the selfish world. We met amid a gathering of savage and half-civilized men, and our acquaintance has ripened into friendship amid many dangers and strange

experiences. A doubtful and dangerous quest still lies before you. I hope that you will not undertake it without me to accompany you."

"You, of all men, are the one I should choose, and we will set out this very summer to carry out my father's wishes;" and during the rest of their journey little was talked of but their future expedition into the interior of Newfoundland.

At Baltimore La Salle and his friend went to the home of the former, and were received as men from the dead. Of course the papers were full of sketches of their strange adventure, and wood-cuts of icebergs and seals covered the paper-stands for a week; and then a horrible murder, and a delicious bit of scandal in high life, closed the brief notoriety of the friends.

Two visits were paid during the first week of their return. Both called on the day of their arrival at Mrs. Randall's, and La Salle sent up his card. After waiting a while, that lady, who was not without misgivings as to what might be said about her matchmaking proclivities, sailed into the room very richly dressed, and rather red in the face.

"I am happy to see you, Mr. La Salle, and to know that you were not really lost, after all. Do you make a long stay in the city?"

"Don't waste unnecessary effort to appear cool and freezingly polite, Mrs. Randall," said La Salle, calmly. "I am here on a matter of business. I want Pauline's present address, as it is highly important that I should see her at once."

"Dear Pauline resides at No.—Crescent Avenue, and is now, as you are, of course, aware, the wife of Mr. Reginald Ashley, who is, as you know, closely connected with some of our first families."

"Yes, I know he is first cousin to Green, the rich broker, who sometimes invites him to dinners and parties, and makes it twice as hard for poor Ashley to make his small salary at the custom-house pay his way."

"Well, I dare say Pauline has done as well, and even better than she might have done, had not the poor girl had some one to advise her, who knew the world and —"

"Threw away an heiress worth fifty thousand dollars on a clerk with eighteen hundred dollars a year," interrupted La Salle, with a smile. "I beg leave, Mrs. Randall, to introduce to you Regnar Hubel, her half-brother, who comes to return to her her moiety of the fortune left by her father. I did not come here,"

continued he, more gravely, "to bandy bitter words, for you will ere long hear news from Newfoundland, which, I hope, will teach you that hidden sin is never safe from discovery, and that all injustice meets with its meed of punishment. Adieu, madam."

Later in the day they called at the hotel, where the young couple were passing the honeymoon. Slipping a *douceur* into the hands of the waiter, he introduced them into the suite without the usual presentation of visiting cards. As the young bride swept into the boudoir in her reception dress, La Salle stepped forward; for he knew that she had already heard of his arrival.

"Charley—Mr. La Salle! Why—that is, how do you do? I was glad to hear—"

La Salle interrupted the fair speaker, for the awkwardness and pain of the interview were but too apparent.

"I did not come, Mrs. Ashley, to give you pain, or annoy you by my presence. I come to fulfill a prophecy."

"To fulfill a prophecy? You speak in riddles, and I have never delighted much in anything of that kind since I was a child."

"I may say, then, that I come to offer my congratulations, and to bring you my bridal gift."

"A gift? and from you? Surely you do not mean to offer, and I cannot accept it."

Regnar arose, and addressing the agitated girl, ended the painful interview.

"You were the daughter of Paul Hubel, of Schleswig—were you not?"

"Yes, sir. I was adopted by the brother of Mr. Randall, who was the friend of my father."

"Then, I assure you that my friend speaks truth. He has fulfilled a prediction, and gives you a fortune, and the brother who shares it with you."

The next few moments were spent in mutual explanations, and the young girl, deprived of a mother's love in early life, sent away to learn life's duties of strangers, and yearning during all her brief existence for the affection she had never known, received the brother she had never seen with an outburst of welcome which revealed what she might have been, had her life been spent under happier auspices.

At last La Salle interrupted their mutual joy.

"I have finished my task, and the prophecy of Krasippe is accomplished."

"Yes," said Regnar, "last summer I met with an old Esquimaux who served our father well for many years, and who now claims some power of insight into the future. He heard the story of my futile efforts to find you, but uttered this prophecy which we to-day accomplish. He said, 'You will meet in a desert of ice the man who will lead you to your heart's dearest wish. He will lose, and you will gain.'"

"And yet, Regnie, although the coincidence of events may bring me within the purview of the Esquimaux oracle, I have a misgiving that we have, perhaps, overlooked the claims of one whom we met but once in a desert of ice, and who still voyages, in silence unbroken, **ADRIFT IN THE ICE-FIELDS**."

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