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THE

"B. O. W. C."

A BOOK FOR BOYS.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE DODGE CLUB," &c

ILLUSTRATED.

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO

WILLIE.

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THE "B. O. W. C."

I.

The "B. O. W. C.," with their History, Mystery, and Wonderful Doings; and how an aged African became elevated to the Dignity of "Grand Panjandrum."



fter the long winter session, the approach of the spring vacation had been eagerly welcomed at the Grand Pré School. It was only a short recess, and the majority of the boys would not be able to go home; but such as it was, its advent created the greatest delight. On a pleasant evening in May the examinations were over; little knots of boys were gathered jubilantly in various places, bonfires were blazing, squibs fizzing, crackers snapping, and everything and everybody were as noisy and as jolly as possible.

In the midst of all this, and immediately after tea, the "B. O. W. C." had called a meeting in the Rawdons' rooms. Who or what the "B. O. W. C." is, or was, will be explained on a future occasion; let it suffice for the present that the "B. O. W. C." called a meeting, and the Rawdons' rooms had the honor of receiving that august assemblage. Not that it was very numerous. Only four or five could be counted; but then what they lacked in number, they made up in quality and in style. The utmost had been done to bring the rooms up to the level of so great an occasion. The table had been turned upside down, and transformed into a dais; the book-case had been covered over with the table-cloth; the couch had been placed on one end in the corner; and in the middle of the room was a flour barrel covered with red flannel, on which was placed a phrenological bust. Added to this, the room was darkened—a smoky lamp shedding a feeble and fitful ray over the scene, and dimly disclosing four figures at one end.

These four figures were all dressed in white. The costume was a simple, but a highly effective one. It consisted apparently of a sheet thrown over the head and falling to the feet, with two holes for the eyes. In this attire the four figures bore not a little resemblance to some of those orders of monks which exist in Europe. The table, which lay on the floor, legs upward, with the addition of the ottoman, served as a dais, on which stood a figure with an immense militia captain's sword in his hand. On each side was also a figure holding a huge wooden battle-axe, while the fourth stood between the dais and the bust.

Soon the silence was disturbed by a knock at the door communicating with the bed-room. The boy near the bust gave it three smart raps, upon which the door opened, and a figure entered clothed like the others in the room. On entering he made a low bow, and then stood erect.

The four figures in the room raised their hands to their faces with a peculiar gesture.

"Blood!" said they in solemn tones.

"Thunder!" said the boy at the door, making the same gesture.

"Is the Grand Panjandrum with you, Venerable Warden?" said the figure on the dais.

"He is, Most Venerable Patriarch."

"Let him enter."

At this the Venerable Warden left the room, and in a few moments reappeared, ushering in the personage alluded to as the Grand Panjandrum.

The Grand Panjandrum was an aged gentleman of color, whose wrinkled face was enlivened by an irrepressible comicality of expression, which not even the solemnity of this occasion could quell. He was arrayed in a college cap and gown, with a Master's red hood and long bands. His face was a study. He was evidently doing his best to exhibit the deepest solemnity of expression, but his droll, keen, twinkling eyes darted furtively about, with an intense relish of the scene before him, and his efforts at gravity were sadly disturbed by the broad grin which, from time to time, would flash out irrepressibly over the dark background of his face. After a few furtive glances he bowed; and then, with an audible

chuckle, he awaited further proceedings.

"Grand Panjandrum," said the figure on the dais, in an impressive voice.

"Yes, sah."

"Yes, what?" said the other, in a tone of rebuke.

"Yes, sah,—yes, mos' wossifle," he added, correcting himself. A grin broke out over his face, which, however, was instantly checked by a demure cough.

"Grand Panjandrum, you have heard our mandates."

"Mandates?" said the other, in a puzzled tone.

"Yes,—orders."

"Yes, sah, mos' wossifle."

"Have you carried out the instructions of the Venerable Brethren?"

"Yes, sah, mos' wospiful."

"Did you get the turkeys?"

"Yes, sah."

"How many? Six?"

"No, sah."

"What! not six?"

"No, sah."

"How many, then?"

"Ten," said the other, with a chuckle and a grin of triumph.

"O—h!" said the first speaker; while a titter ran round among the others. "H'm! Very well, and what else?"

"Spring chickens."

"How many?"

"Twenty."

"Ah! Very well. And how?"

"Broiled, sah."

"Any tongue?"

"Yes, sah, three."

"And the ham?"

"Yes, sah."

"Nuts?"

"Yes, sah."

"Raisins?"

"Yes, sah."

"Crackers? Cheese? Figs? Cake?"

"Yes, sah, mos' wossifle."

"And what about the drink? Have you prepared the lemonade?"

"No, sah."

"No! Why not?"

"No lemons, sah."

"That's bad. And there is no drink, then?"

"Yes, sah. Ginger beer."

"Ginger beer. H'm! that will do," said the Venerable Patriarch, solemnly. "How much have you?"

"Ten gallons, mos' wossifle."

"What else have you?"

"Ten mince pies, twelve apple pies, a basket of tarts, a tin dipper, an iron pot, an iron spoon," said the Grand Panjandrum, rapidly enumerating the various items. "Fact," he continued, carried away by the ardor of the moment, "I've got most nigh eberyting. Gracious sakes! you'll open your blessed eyes, mind I tell you! But what are you gwine to do about de bread and butter? Tell you what, boys! you've clean forgot de most 'portant of all."

"Silence!" cried the Venerable Patriarch, in an indignant voice, rapping his sword against the leg of the table.

"The sakes now! how you *do* go on!" said the Grand Panjandrum, with a broad grin.

"No levity," said the Venerable Patriarch, in a stern voice.

"Yes, sah," said the other, assuming an expression of awful solemnity.

"Venerable Warden!"

"Yes, Most Venerable Patriarch."

"The audience is over. Escort the Grand Panjandrum to the outer world."

The Venerable Warden bowed, and led the way out, followed by his sable companion.

Scarcely had the door closed behind them than the scene underwent a sudden change. With a shout, the four figures flung off their white draperies, and kicked them into a corner of the room. Then they drew back the curtains, replaced the table and couch, while the light that now came into the room showed the laughing faces of four boys, which had nothing in common with the sepulchral figures that had taken part in the late scene.

Two of these boys were big, brawny, broad-shouldered fellows, with Roman features, and dark, curling hair. They very closely resembled one another. These were the two Rawdons, to whom the rooms belonged. The elder was named Bruce, and the younger Arthur. Of the others, one was tall and slight, Tom Crawford by name; and the other was small and slight, and was called Phil Kennedy.

"Hurrah, boys!" said Phil. "Isn't old Solomon a perfect brick of an old darkey? Do you fairly realize the fact that we are to have ten turkeys,—ten, my boys, instead of six?"

"And the spring chickens!" said Tom Crawford.

"And the mince pies!" said Bruce.

"And the ginger beer!" cried Arthur.

"The encampment, of the 'B. O. W. C.' is going to be a grand success," said Bruce. "It will be memorable forever in the history of the school."

"We ought to have a grand bonfire, and burn our Latin Grammars, before starting," said Tom Crawford.

"Yes," said Phil Kennedy, "and our Arithmetics, too. I'd like to burn all the Arithmetics in the world."

"No, no," said Arthur, "don't let us have a bonfire. Let us have a burial, with a solemn procession, and a real burial service."

"Well, what'll we bury?"

"The Latin Grammar."

"No, Cæsar."

"No, the Arithmetic."

"Let's bury them all; that is the best plan," said Phil.

"Yes," cried all; and a confused medley of proposals arose, in which all were talking together. In the midst of the uproar the door opened, and the Venerable Warden made his appearance. Throwing off his white robe, he disclosed the fair, round face of a fresh, handsome boy, with merry, mischievous eyes, and curling golden hair. That busy brain of his had been prolific in all sorts of plans dear to boys, while his generous nature and frank, pleasant manner made Bart Damer the favorite of Grand Pré School.

"O, Bart," said Tom Crawford, "what about that powder?"

Bart left the room for a moment, and returned with a package under his arm.

"The powder?" said he. "It's all right. I've got it in my room."

"And the rods?"

"Yes, I've got the rods too."

"Any matches?"

"Matches? Of course not."

"Why, what'll we do for lights and fires?"

"I hope you don't mean to say that you would dream of taking *matches*," said Bart, in a voice of solemn rebuke.

"Why not?"

"Why not? Who ever heard of matches in an Encampment of Knights? No, boys, flint and steel is the thing for us. That's what I've got; and I've made some first-rate tinder, and a lot of sulphur lights. Besides, I've got something to surprise you."

"What's that?"

"The dresses."

"Dresses?"

"Yes; come to my room, and I'll show you what I've got. It wouldn't do for us to go out and be brigands in ordinary jackets and trousers, I hope. Why," he concluded, in a tone of rebuke, "it would be infamous."

"And have you got any dresses in your room?" said Bruce.

"Yes; come along and take a look at them."

Off went the five with a shout, and going up a flight of stairs, they soon entered Bart Damer's room. Here Bart brought out a bundle from the bed-room, and opening it, he proudly displayed its contents. There were five red shirts, each of which had a huge white cross on the back; five belts; and five felt hats, each of which was decorated with a feather. As he displayed these articles one by one, the boys were struck dumb with admiration, while Bart's eyes glowed with delight.

"Don't say anything," said he, "but try them on."

Bart locked the door carefully, and then they all arrayed themselves in the new costume. Soon five figures stood there with their red shirts and plumed hats, looking like so many juvenile Garibaldians.

"You see, these belts will do first rate for pistols, and daggers, and that sort of thing," said Bart.

The other boys said nothing. Astonishment and delight deprived them of words; but each stood looking, first at himself, and then at his companions, in mute admiration.

"But how in the world did you manage it, Bart? Where did you get them all?" asked Tom Crawford.

"O, I found the shirts down in Brown's," said Bart, "and picked out the smallest ones. I had them altered, and got Maggie Lunt to sew on the crosses. I begged some old ostrich feathers from Mrs. Porter, and of course the hats could be got anywhere. They're rather large, but we can put bite of paper inside the lining, you know, and make them fit well enough. They'll do for the woods."

"Do for the woods!" cried Bruce Rawdon. "I should think they would, and for other places, too. Boys, don't let's hide our light under a bushel. I move that we have a grand procession at once."

"Yes, yes," cried all. "Let's go down now. The fellows are all out on the grounds."

"How they'll stare!" cried Phil.

"The 'B. O. W. C.' will become more famous than ever," said Tom Crawford.

"Come, then," said Arthur, "let us go down now."

"No," said Bart. "That would spoil all."

"Why, don't you want the 'B. O. W. C.' to show themselves?"

"Of course, but not now. I'll tell you what to do. Let's wait till to-morrow, and then we'll get Jiggins's cart, and make Solomon drive, dressed as Venerable Warden, up to the woods. We'll follow as brigands."

"Hurrah! That's splendid!" said Bruce Rawdon.

"And I'll show you something else," said Bart, taking up the parcel which he had under his arm in the Rawdons' room. "I've got something else." And he proceeded to open the parcel, while the others looked on with eager expectation. He opened it, and drew out a folded cloth. Unfolding this, he shook it out, and spread it on the table. It was a black flag. Upon this was stitched something round, which close examination showed to be a desperate effort to represent a skull. To the ordinary observer, however, it looked exactly like an elderly gentleman's face, quite bald, and with a benevolent grin. Beneath it were the mysterious initials "B. O. W. C." At sight of this, the long-repressed feelings of the boys burst forth without restraint. With wild shouts they waved their hats in the air, and at last gave three cheers for Bart. It was long before their wild excitement could be quelled. Until late that night they sat in their wonderful dresses, admiring their wonderful flag, and waiting, with eager impatience, for the next day.

But who or what was the "B. O. W. C."? That I must now proceed to answer.

The "B. O. W. C." arose from the genius of Bart Damer, who, in some respects, was the most remarkable boy at Grand Pré School. His career there had been a highly eventful one. His father was a merchant of the town of St. John, and Bart had gathered, from the atmosphere of his native place, a passionate desire to go to sea. With the idea of curing him of this fancy, his father had taken him to Grand Pré School. Bart had gone very good naturedly, and had been formally entered as a scholar. The first acquaintances which Bart made were the Rawdon boys; and on the very first evening after

his arrival he confided to them his determination to quit the school immediately. This determination Bart was not very long in putting into execution. Two days after his father had left, Bart was among the missing. Inquiries were made everywhere, but in vain. At length the worthy head master, Dr. Porter, conjectured that he might have gone home; so he sent in the direction in which he supposed it most likely that the fugitive would go. The conjecture proved to be well founded. Bart was found, on the following day, at an inn about forty miles away. He made no objection to returning, confessed that he was on his way home, and made light of the whole affair. Dr. Porter extorted from him a promise that he would make no further attempts to go home, and Bart began his school life.

His restless disposition soon caused a new interruption. At the end of three weeks it was found that Bart was again missing. Dr. Porter was deeply hurt, for he feared that Bart had broken his word. Search was made everywhere, but in vain. A week passed away, but no discovery had been made. At the end of that time, Old Solomon, the cook of the boarding school, affected perhaps by Dr. Porter's deep anxiety, came to him and disclosed the hiding-place of the fugitive. It appeared that Bart had struck up an eternal friendship with Solomon, and had gained his assistance in a new scheme of flight. This time he did not seek to go home, for he had promised Dr. Porter not to do so. His plan was to escape to the woods, and build a hut, while Solomon was to bring him provision and news from the outer world. The Rawdons had been taken into the secret, and Bart had been enjoying the life of a hermit, and thoughtlessly amusing himself with baffling the search that was going on for him. Dr. Porter at once made Solomon accompany him to the hiding-place; and finding Bart there, he sent Solomon back, and had a long conversation with the youthful hermit. What he said or did no one else knew; but his mode of treatment was so effectual, that Bart from that time forward gave up his wandering ways. A long composition was allotted him as a punishment, and Bart bore the penalty of his misdeeds like a man.

After this he diverted his active powers into a more legitimate channel, and rapidly became one of the best scholars in his class. His restlessness of temper and liveliness of disposition showed themselves in the invention of new games and sports for the amusement of his companions. He became a curious compound of intense earnestness and wild levity. In school no one was so utterly absorbed in study as he; and outside, on the play-ground, no one abandoned himself so completely to fun and merriment. He took prizes and threw balls with equal facility. He invented new modes of making balls, of shaping bats, and of fastening skates. He introduced new variations in the venerable game of marbles. He made beautiful little schooners. He even constructed a steamboat out of an old clock. He organized a military company, including all the boys in the school, with lath guns and wooden swords, and a band which played Jew's-harps and tin pails.

But the greatest of all his achievements was the organization of the "B. O. W. C."

It arose on this wise.

From the very outset he had formed a close connection with four other boys, and the attachment to one another grew stronger among them every day. After organizing his militia company, and adding to it its famous "Tin Band," Bart looked around him for more worlds to conquer; in other words, for new ideas to put into practice. In a moment of inspiration he conceived the plan of a secret society, which was to include himself and his friends. No sooner was this suggested to the others, than they seized upon it with the greatest eagerness. The name was the first thing. At first they thought of calling it the "Pentagon." Then they thought of the "Quintette." Other names suggested themselves; but finally they decided upon the "B. O. W. C." The use of letters gave a charming mystery. No one but a member of the society could ever penetrate the tremendous secret. But the time has at length come for divulging it. It shall be a secret no longer. Those mysterious letters, then, were intended to represent "*The Brethren of the Order of the White Cross.*"

As to the rest, the most charming ingenuity was shown in arranging the details. The officers had names of solemn import. They were,—

1. *The Most Venerable Patriarch.*
2. *The Venerable Scribe.*
3. *The Right Worshipful Commander.*
4. *The Grand Scholastic.*
5. *The Venerable Warden.*

Afterward another dignity was added.

It was arranged that each office should be held only for one month. This was calculated to satisfy the aspirations of all, since in this way each member had a chance of filling every office in due time.


The initiation ceremonies were tremendous; the only trouble about these being that they never had any persons on whom to exercise them. They remained, therefore, like so many beautiful dreams. The costumes have already been described. The most important thing among their furniture was the phrenological bust. This was the pride and delight of the "B. O. W. C." It had been obtained from a young man who was studying medicine in the village, and who levied a heavy tax upon the purses of the society for so precious an article. They had the bust, however, and did not complain.

I have said that another dignity was added to the original five. This was in the person of the venerable Solomon. In consideration of his age, his color, his occupation as cook, and his eminent previous services to all of them individually, it was unanimously resolved that he should be admitted to the society. With very great delicacy they excused him the terrific initiation ceremony. Perhaps the idea that he might object to some of the details influenced them in this. Be this as it may, Old Solomon became a member, and a new dignity was created especially for him. In a full meeting of the society, it was unanimously voted that he be created

Perpetual Grand Panjandrum.

II.

Grand Pré and Minas Basin.—An astonishing Procession.—Encampment of Brigands.—Break-up of Encampment and Flight of the Inmates.

 he Grand Pré Academy, under the presiding care of Dr. Porter, was a highly popular and very efficient boarding school. In choosing such a place for the Academy, Dr. Porter had shown that ardent love of nature which always distinguished him. It was situated in a place which yields to no other in the world for varied charms of land, sea, and sky, and which can never be forgotten after it has once been seen. Standing upon the slope of a hill, the Academy, with its broad portico and lofty cupola, looked down upon a scene whose loveliness has been described in Longfellow's exquisite verse:—

"In the Acadian land, on the shores of the Basin of Minas,
Distant secluded still, the little village of Grand Pré
Lay in the fruitful valley. Vast meadows stretched to the eastward,
Giving the village its name, and pasture to flocks without number.
Dikes that the hands of the farmers had reared with labor incessant,
Shut out the turbulent tides; but at stated seasons the flood-gates
Opened, and welcomed the sea to wander at will o'er the meadows.
West and south there were fields of flax, and orchards and cornfields
Spreading afar and unfenced o'er the plain; and away to the northward
Blomidon rose, and the forests old; and aloft on the mountains
Sea-fogs pitched their tents, and mists from the mighty Atlantic
Looked on the happy valley, but ne'er from their station descended."

Looking from the portico of the Academy, the eye rested upon a broad expanse of dike land immediately in front, which extended far away for many miles on either hand. These the old Acadian farmers had first reclaimed from the sea, and afterward their successors had reared new dikes and reclaimed wider districts. The broad meadows immediately in front were bounded by the Cornwallis River, a stream which at high tide can float the largest ship, but which at low tide is so nearly empty that but a slight rivulet runs through its channel. It runs into the Basin of Minas, where are the highest tides in the world. Here the sea carries in its salt waves up to where the dikes rise against them, and afterward retreating, they go back for miles, leaving vast tracts of mud flats exposed to the view. For many miles all around there

are rivers that run into this bay, all of which are subject to the same tides, and experience the same great vicissitudes, changing twice in the twenty-four hours from shallow rivulets at the bottom of valleys of mud, to vast rivers which flow with swift and full streams. Twice on each day the stream, which can scarce float a canoe, will grow to a mighty volume of water, where navies might pass. Twice each day may be seen the startling spectacle, once used as a formula for the impossible, of rivers running from the sea up their channels; and twice on each day the scene on Minas shores changes from a wide expanse of red mud to a vast sheet of deep-blue sea.

All that is wonderful and all that is sublime in nature may be found here, side by side with all that is most sweet and beautiful. Behind the hill on whose slope the school stands lies the valley of the Gaspereaux, an Eden-like retreat, shut in by high hills and watered by a winding river, sequestered from the world, full of that strange charm of repose that may so seldom be met with in this busy age. Before the hill there spreads away for many a mile the broad vale of Cornwallis, through which there flow five rivers, whose waters are all chained up at their mouths, so that their beds may serve for verdurous dike lands to the farmers of the valley. Far away on the other side extends a long range of hills, which push themselves forward into Minas Basin till they end in a precipitous cliff, whose towering form is the centre of attraction for many and many a mile. This is the famous Cape Blomidon, whose position is so peculiar, and whose shape is so striking, that it forms the central object to spectators all around the shores of the bay. Here is a channel opening into the Bay of Fundy outside, and this channel is the gateway through which the disturbed and impetuous waters of the two seas forever rush backward and forward.

In that outer bay there are fierce tides, and swift currents, and iron-bound shores, and lonely rocky isles; there are dense fogs, sharp squalls, and sudden storms. The mists that prevail there are kept away by that lofty wall which terminates in Blomidon, and cannot penetrate into the well-protected country within. The mists and the fogs seem like baffled enemies, long beleaguering, but never victorious. From the sunny plains of Cornwallis and Grand Pré they may be seen crowded and piled up on the top of Blomidon, frowning darkly and menacingly upon the scene beneath, as though eager to descend. But Old Blomidon guards well the land which he protects, and the mist and the fog that cross his crest are broken and dissipated into thin air.

From all this there arise wondrous atmospheric effects. Here, when the fog is piled up in gloomy masses over Blomidon, and the sun is setting behind them, may be seen a spectacle so gorgeous that, if it could be portrayed on canvas, few would believe it to be a copy of nature. It would be deemed the fantastic vision of some artist mad from love of deep gloom and vivid color; for the colors here at sunset are sometimes as numerous, as varied, and as vivid as those of a rainbow. The whole west glows with indescribable glory, when out of black clouds and voluminous folds of whirling fog-wreaths there beams a gorgeous red, forth from which shoot up innumerable rays far into the zenith, formed of every hue and shade, which shift and change like the rays of the Aurora Borealis, and cast upon all the sky and upon all the earth something of their own splendid radiance.

Early on the morning which followed the meeting of the "B. O. W. C.," a singular scene was presented in front of the Academy. A crowd had gathered there surrounding a very remarkable group. There was a cart containing a number of baskets and some pots, in which was harnessed a quadruped which charity might consent to name a horse, but which looked more like a skeleton of one of the extinct species. Seated high and dry in an old arm-chair was the venerable figure of Solomon in his robes of office, that is to say, his office of Perpetual Grand Panjandrum. He had an old college cap and gown, and a master's hood, while the spectacles that bestrided his nose, and the altitude of his shirt collar, were of themselves sufficient to strike awe into the beholder. Behind the cart were the "B. O. W. C.," robed in the red shirts and plumed hats which Bart had found for them. Bart had a pistol in his belt. Each one had something, if it were nothing better than a case-knife. But the centre of all eyes was the flag. This Bart had generously handed over to Bruce Rawdon, who was the Most Venerable Patriarch for the month of May. As the wind caught it and unfolded it before the astonished eyes of the other boys, the skeleton head grinned benignantly at them from his airy home, and a loud shout of admiration burst forth from all.

Solomon cracked his whip. The procession started. The noise, the laughter, and the joking were wonderful. Heads appeared at all the windows of the house where the teachers lived. There were the laughing faces of Dr. Porter and his family; there was the wondering gaze of Mr. Simmons, the mathematical teacher; and there, at another window, the long, solemn physiognomy of Mr. Long, of the English department. Thus the procession went on, followed by all the boys, and the centre of admiring interest. It was a proud moment for the "B. O. W. C."

In this fashion they went up the hill behind the Academy, and at length reached the woods. They passed several cavities

in the ground which had once been cellars of the old Acadian houses. They passed through an orchard where the old, neglected apple trees still spoke of the Acadian farmer who had planted them and cleared the forest around. The road entered the woods, and they went along for some distance. At last, in the midst of the woods they turned aside to the left, and after a hundred yards or so they stopped, and the cart was unloaded.

At this place there was a steep descent on the right through the thick woods. Down this the "B. O. W. C." carried the articles which they had brought. On reaching the bottom, they emerged into a space clear of trees, where a brook ran babbling on. About twenty yards up, a dam had been built, and a pond of water formed, at one end of which was a large camp made of spruce and fir. Shut in among the woods, with the little pond in front of it, and the brook babbling behind it, it formed as secluded a place as could be desired. This spot was once the hiding-place of Bart during his second flight, and had ever since been a favorite resort of his. There were many camps and pleasant arbors through the woods, but the newly-made pond had given to this place the undoubted pre-eminence. It had all been done very secretly within a week, and all the other boys now saw it for the first time, and gave utterance to their feelings in low murmurs of surprise and admiration. But the "B. O. W. C." had much to attend to. First of all, they had to carry down their provisions. Then they had to arrange them, and finally they had the most important duty of all to attend to, which was no less momentous a thing than hoisting their flag. Soon the moment came. A pole had been already prepared. The ropes were attached, the pole was nailed to a corner post of the camp, and the flag was hauled up to its place with loud cheers, in which all the other boys joined with the greatest vigor.

After this the "B. O. W. C." flung themselves down and rested for a time. The other boys inspected the place closely, and questioned the owners of the camp as to their intention.

"Are you going to sleep here?"

"O, yes."

"What'll you sleep on?"

"Brush, of course."

"And will you cook?"

"O, yes."

"Have you a fireplace?"

"No, but we're going to make one to-day."

"What'll you do if it rains?"

"Grin and bear it."

"Pooh! You don't mean to say that you'd stay here if you got wet through."

"Wouldn't we, though? You see."

"Dr. Porter wouldn't let you."

"O, yes, he would. He always says it don't hurt boys to get wet."

"O, he means by day. He wouldn't let you sleep here in a storm."

"Why not? The camp is good enough."

"Good enough? It can't keep the rain off."

"O, yes, it can."

"You haven't enough to eat here—have you?" asked others.

"Plenty."

"Nonsense! It will all be gone before two days."

"Well, can't we easily get things? I've got a pistol, and mean to shoot hares and things."

Bart proudly displayed his pistol, and the sight of this formidable arm silenced all controversy.

"Besides," said Bart, proudly, "we've got a gun."

"A gun!" repeated the others, in low tones.

"Yes; we expect to be attacked."

"Attacked? Who'd attack you?"

"O, the Gaspereaugians."

("The Gaspereaugians" was a name given by the boys to the inhabitants of Gaspereaux.)

"Do you think they will?"

"Of course; but if they try it, they'll find us ready for them," said Bart, fiercely. "We've hoisted our flag, and I'd like to see the Gaspereaugian that would dare to pull it down."

"Well, if it comes to that, you've got us, you know. We'll be on hand."

"Of course," said Bart, gravely. "I'll tell you what we're going to do: we'll send out scouts, and if we see any signs of an attack, we'll let you know. I've got a trumpet here, and when I blow three times, you'll be along to help. See."

And Bart stepped back to a bundle, out of which he pulled a long tin horn, of the kind known among 'longshoremen as "fog-horns."

"But we won't blow it till we're hard up, you know," he continued. "We'll only blow it if they come in a great crowd, you know."

"O, yes; of course."

The boys now broke up into little knots, and proposed all sorts of plans. A mania for camping out set in strong among them all. The example of the "B. O. W. C." in damming the stream was to be imitated at once. Each little knot of boys had places peculiar to themselves along the same stream, some of which were the work of predecessors, and had something like a history. After a time most of the boys went back for spades, pickaxes, shovels, axes, and whatever else might be needed for the great work of camp-building. The "B. O. W. C." then turned their attention toward the completion of their own camp. A fireplace had still to be built, and brush cut for beds. To this they devoted themselves very vigorously, and worked till about ten o'clock, when their labors were suddenly interrupted by the appearance of Dr. Porter and Mr. Simmons. They stood for some time looking with a smile at the busy scene, before they were noticed. As soon as the boys recognized their visitors, they came up laughing, eager to describe the beauties of their camp. Dr. Porter was much amused, particularly with the flag, which floated from the mast.

"Boys," said he at length, after he had asked about everything, "I have come up to make you an offer."

"An offer? What is it, sir?" cried they all.

"How would you like to give up, for the present, your bandit camp, take away all your provision, haul down your flag, and go away?"

"What, sir!" cried the boys in consternation, and a cloud of gloom passed over their faces.

"How would you like me to charter a little schooner, fill it with provisions, turn the hold into a sleeping-place, and start off for a week's cruise around the Basin of Minas, going ashore at the Five Islands, at Parrsboro', at Blomidon, and at any other place where we might wish? What do you say to that? Ah, ha!" cried the doctor, as he watched the changing faces of the boys, where the gloom had vanished instantly, and given place to the wildest delight. "Ah, ha! that suits you—does it! Well, that's what I've come to propose."

"O, Dr. Porter! Are you really in earnest? Do you mean it?—a schooner—a schooner?—a cruise round Minas Basin? O, good! good! good! Hurrah! Three cheers!"

A hundred incoherent shouts and words like these burst from the boys as they dashed about in wild and frantic delight, overwhelmed with joy at this proposal to all of them. It seemed a thing so glorious that nothing of which the mind could conceive was to be compared with it. A cruise round Minas Basin! What did not that involve? Adventures of a hundred kinds; drifting about in wild tides; getting lost in dense fogs; running ashore on wide mud flats, or on precipitous cliffs, or on the edge of perilous breakers; landing on lonely headlands, or on solitary islands; penetrating far forests; camping out in wildernesses; living pirate fashion in their own schooner, where all would be given up to them; shooting, fishing; hunting for gulls' nests;—it meant not sham adventures, but real ones—with real dangers environing them instead of fancied ones. They could cease playing at Robbers, and play what to them seemed the nobler part of Pirates; the skull-and-cross-bones flag could adorn the schooner, and the fog-trumpet could sound forth amid the echoing cliffs of Blomidon. It meant anything and everything, and far more than even their vivid fancies could very well portray. To most boys the sea always promises more adventure than the land; there is always something of the joy of discovery in every new voyage, and so all these boys felt now; but to Bart, most of all, was the prospect most delightful; for he had already known to the full that longing for the sea which many boys have, and that which his father had prevented him from realizing, now seemed to come to him. In some respects this seemed to be better than the voyage which he had formerly dreamed of; for though it would not be long, yet it would be varied and eventful, and not free from danger. Best of all, it would be made in company with the other boys.

It was some time before the boys were able, in their excitement, to get any clear idea of what Dr. Porter was telling them. At length they learned that Mr. Simmons and Mr. Long wished to visit Blomidon and the Five Islands in search after minerals, with which the cliffs are filled. They had concluded to get a schooner, and take the larger boys with them. They expected to spend about a week, and take provisions sufficient for that time. Dr. Porter would not be able to go himself, but would intrust the boys to the care and the jurisdiction of Messrs. Simmons and Long. Such was the plan.

Moreover, the schooner was already engaged. It was the *Antelope*, Captain Corbet; and it was proposed to leave, if possible, that very afternoon, so as to be on the other side of the bay, or at least near Blomidon, by sundown. As it was then ten o'clock, there was no time to lose, but everything should be prepared at once, and taken on board the schooner. One thing only was insisted on by Dr. Porter; and that was, that they should take no fire-arms. Bart pleaded so hard for his little pistol, however, that the doctor let him keep it, and satisfied himself by making them leave the gun behind.

III.

Another extraordinary Procession.—An eccentric Crew.—A flighty Skipper.—Wonderful Attachment of Captain Corbet to his Offspring.—Stealing a Stone Fence, and raising the Black Flag.

Soon the woods were deserted. Twelve or fifteen boys were selected as worthy of the adventurous voyage, and these all made their preparations, while the smaller boys looked on with longing eyes. As for the "B. O. W. C.," they had no preparations to make. They needed only to transfer their provisions and other things from the camp to the schooner. The teachers were to see about the bedding, &c. These boys therefore enlisted Old Solomon in their service, and packed their things once more in the same cart which had taken them to the camp; after which they waited to accompany the others to the schooner. All possible haste was made; and soon there started for the schooner a procession even more extraordinary than the one which had gone into the woods.

First of all went a huge hay-cart crammed with bedding; then followed a wagon filled with provisions; and after this the cart of the "B. O. W. C.," driven by Solomon. Then followed the voyageurs in procession; and after these came the small boys, green with envy. Messrs. Simmons and Long walked modestly on the sidewalk, not caring to identify themselves with so odd a crowd.

In fact it was an odd crowd. First there was Solomon in full canonicals, then the "B. O. W. C." in their red shirts and plumed caps, with axes and knives in their belts; and then followed their companions in the voyage, dressed more grotesquely still. All the old clothes that could be found were pressed into service for this occasion. Old pea-jackets,

old "sou'-wester" hats, old coats denuded of skirts, jackets in a state of dilapidation, battered caps, shocking bad hats, which had not been on a human head for ever so long,—all were now brought into requisition, and formed an assemblage which was sufficient to drive an "Old Clo'" man wild with covetousness.

Now, as Homer, at the outset of his poem, enumerates the ships and chieftains, so will I complete the enumeration of the voyageurs in this adventurous expedition.

First, then, there came a little Irishman, who had accidentally dropped into the Academy, and had remained. His name was Michael Murphy, and consequently he was always called Pat, except when the boys called him Patsie,—for short, as they said. He wore an old sky-blue dress-coat, with three brass buttons still remaining, fastened around the waist with a red woollen comforter. A battered silk hat, with the top of the crown off, completed his costume.

With him came Peter Fraser, commonly known as Johnnie Blue, a thick-set, bullet-headed boy, full of obstinate, persevering courage, and dressed in a sailor's pea-jacket, made to fit himself by the simple plan of cutting off the sleeves. He wore a sou'-wester, and carried a sailor's knife. In fact, his get-up was very remarkably nautical.

Then came David Digg, a tall, solemn, pale boy, very studious, with a taste for geology. He wore an old overcoat minus the tails, and a knitted yarn night-cap. David Digg was always called Bogud by the boys, from the fact that in one of the rules of the Latin Grammar they had learned that "David and Bogud are common."

Then came George McLeod, whose name was facetiously contracted into Muckle. By some extraordinary means he had obtained possession of a soldier's red coat, and produced an immense sensation.

Then came Jacob Wiggins, whose name was easily contracted into Jiggins, by which name alone he was known. He wore a red bandana handkerchief around his head, and was arrayed in a big gray homespun coat, which he had borrowed from a friendly farmer.

After these marched William MacNamara, known as Billymack, wearing a tail coat, long top boots, and a felt hat.

And last, there was George Henderson, who had gained the singular name of Sammy Ram Ram, which occurs in one of Dr. Bird's novels, from some amusing incident in his school life. A very old jacket, a very ragged pair of trousers, and a hat on the extreme verge of decrepitude, formed his attire.

The chief harbor of Grand Pré now goes by the name of Mud Creek, and is one of the many examples which go to prove that the Anglo-Saxon, though superior to the Frenchman in colonizing a new country, is very far his inferior in giving names to the places which he may have colonized. At this place the party soon arrived, and looked for the vessel. To their surprise, they found her quite deserted, lying aground at a wharf. On going aboard, they found that no preparations whatever had been made.

"This is too bad!" cried Mr. Long, in tones of deep vexation. "Corbet promised to be here early, and have everything ready. I wonder what can have become of him."

Saying this, he started off to try and find Captain Corbet. After about half an hour he returned.

"I'll tell you what it is," he said; "we can't afford to wait. We must begin right away and make our arrangements."

"There's no ballast on board," said Mr. Simmons, who had been carefully inspecting the vessel, "and no floor in the hold."

"What!" cried Mr. Long; and hurrying on board, he soon saw that such was indeed the case. He then stood for a time vexed and perplexed.

"Well, boys," said he at length, "we must all get to work, so that we may be ready when Corbet does come. There's a pile of stones over there which will do very well for ballast;" and he pointed to a stone wall which surrounded a garden close by the wharf. "Now come, boys," he continued, "form a line from the stones to the schooner, and pass them all along from hand to hand."

"But it's Mr. Brown's fence," objected Mr. Simmons, who did not relish this infringement on the rights of another.

"O, Mr. Brown won't mind!" was the reply. "He knows me. Come, boys;" and Mr. Long, who was always rapid and

energetic, soon formed the boys in line, and the stones were speedily transferred from hand to hand.

"Mr. Simmons," said Mr. Long, after a time, "I think I'll go and get some boards." And saying this, he hurried away, leaving the others hard at work, and expecting the absent Corbet. The boys worked with a will; and even the smaller ones, who were to have no part in the voyage, formed another line, and passed on the smaller stones. At the end of two hours the vessel was considered by Mr. Simmons to have sufficient ballast, the garden wall hail vanished, and the boys stood waiting, with blistered hands, for Captain Corbet.

While they were waiting, Mr. Long once more appeared.

"What! hasn't Corbet come yet?" he cried.

"No."

Mr. Long looked around in despair.

"I've had to go three miles for the boards," said he. "They'll be here in a few minutes. Everything is against us to-day. We've got to work hard yet, or we won't get off. Mr. Simmons, would you be kind enough to go and see if you can find Corbet in the village? and I'll go down into the hold to lay the flooring."

Off went Mr. Simmons, and down went Mr. Long into the hold. The wagon soon arrived with the boards, which were passed down to him, and speedily laid over the ballast. Thanks to his skill and energy, the floor was soon made. Then the boys set to work throwing down the bedding, and arranging the trunks and baskets. There was not much time, however, for any arrangements. The things lay in a confused heap, with a busy crowd laboring to reduce them to order.

At the end of about half an hour Mr. Simmons returned, shaking his head. He had not found Captain Corbet. Things began to look desperate. It was now high tide, and high time for leaving. Time and tide, which wait for no man, were not going to wait for Captain Corbet.



CAPTAIN CORBET'S BABY. Page 47.

There was the Antelope all ready. She was not much of a vessel, it is true. She resembled a wash-tub in many important points. She looked leaky. She smelled strong of potatoes; and rightly so, for that important vegetable formed her invariable cargo. The name Antelope was a delightful jest. Her chains were deeply eaten with rust; her cordage and rigging had a time-worn appearance. A venerable air of decay rested about her. Yet still, in spite of all, there she was, and a dozen eager young hearts were burning to embark in her, and be away before the tide should fall.

At last Mr. Long started off, in company with Mr. Simmons, to hunt up Captain Corbet, or some other man who might go in his place. The boys stood about the wharf waiting impatiently for their return.

Mr. Long and his companion hurried to the village inn, and found out that Captain Corbet lived three miles away. So they borrowed a horse and wagon, and drove off as fast as possible to the house. Arriving there, they entered, and beheld a

scene which so overpowered Mr. Long that for a time he could not speak.

For there in his kitchen, in a high-backed chair, in front of his own hearth-stone,—there sat the identical Captain Corbet for whom so many had been waiting so long. He held an infant in his manly arms, he was gently tilting his chair to and fro, and tenderly feeding his prattling innocent with a spoon. So intent was he upon his tender task, that he did not hear the entrance of his excited pursuers.

"Captain Corbet!"

The tone in which Mr. Long spoke cannot possibly be represented in print; or at any rate to do so would require more notes of admiration than are usually found in any common printing office. The tone will have to be imagined. Suffice it to say, that Captain Corbet dropped the spoon,—almost dropped the baby also,—and started to his feet as though he had been stirred up by a galvanic shock administered full on the ganglionic centres.

"Captain Corbet!" cried Mr. Long, furiously. "Didn't you say you'd be on the wharf in good time, and that the Antelope would leave at this tide?"

"Why! it's Mr. Long!" said Captain Corbet. "Why, Mr. Long! Glad to see you. Sit down. Why, you railly frightened me. Why, I'm railly pleased to see you. I am, railly."

"What do you mean," cried Mr. Long, in a great passion, "by this mockery? Here have we been waiting for you ever since morning, and we've had to put the ballast on board with our own hands; and I come here and find you quite indifferent. What do you mean, sir? Are you going, or not?"

"Good gracious!" said Captain Corbet. "The ballast! Why, railly now! Did you go and put it on board? Why, I do declare!"

Mr. Long gave a dark frown, and with a violent effort smothered his indignation.

"Are you coming, or not?" said he, sternly.

"Coming? Why—not jest now. You see there's the babby."

And he put his brown finger under the chin of his offspring, and actually forgot himself so far as to whistle to it; after which he cast a furtive glance at his visitors, as though half expecting that they would admire the child.

"Where's Mrs. Corbet? It's *her* place to mind the child—your place is on board the vessel."

"Why, I can't put the babby on the floor, as I see; nor I can't take him on board."

"Where's Mrs. Corbet?"

"Why, you see, she started off airly to hunt up some parygolic. The babby's troubled with wind, and—"

"When will she be back?" interrupted Mr. Long.

Captain Corbet shook his head solemnly.

"It would take a man with a head as long as a horse to tell that," said he, sententiously.

"Where is she then? I'll drive off and get her."

"She! law bless you, I don't know no more'n a onhatched chick."

"Don't know! You surely know which way she went."

"Wal, she kind o' tho't she'd go to the village, and then she kind o' hinted she'd visit her married sister that lives on Billy Jackson's farm. They're down with the measles, and—"

"Bother the measles! Do you mean to say that you let her go off, and quietly sat down here to nurse your baby, when you ought to have been at work?"

"I didn't let her go. She walked off herself. 'Benjamin,' says she, 'take care of the babby.' He's dreadful fond of me. Won't be fed by nobody else. I ginrally feed him at nights when he wakes. An' a dreadful high-sperited creetur is that child's mother. An' they shan't abuse him. No-o-o-o," he added, abruptly, turning his conversation toward the "babby" himself, who began to make faces and utter sounds premonitory of a howl.

Mr. Long turned abruptly away.

"The man's an idiot!" said he to Mr. Simmons. "We'll have to get some one else to go with us."

"See here," said he, turning to Captain Corbet, who was stirring up some pap to feed his "babby;" "I've engaged your schooner, and I mean to start in her. All our things are on board, and we can't lose a whole day. You've broken your engagement; so I'll go without you. I'll find somebody that can sail her. I'll go to Captain Pearson, or old McNeil, or somebody."

"There ain't a skipper in the place. You won't find anybody. I'm the on'y schooner here. Everybody is got off to Bosting with taters. I'd been off, too, on'y for the babby."

"Well, when can you go?"

Captain Corbet shook his head.

"O, it'll be all right. I'll be along—some time. I dare say Mrs. Corbet'll be home soon. Don't be alarmed about me. I'll put you through."

"See here, Captain Corbet; I'll go off now and find somebody to take me. You've deceived me, and disappointed me."

Saying this, Mr. Long strode out of the house, followed by his companion, and drove away rapidly in search of some one to navigate the schooner.

All his efforts were vain. It was as Captain Corbet said. There wasn't any one in the place. Every seafaring man had gone off in some kind of potato craft to Boston, allured by the high prices of potatoes. Fortunes were being made, and nothing but the desperate imbecility of Corbet prevented him from having his share in the golden harvest. Time passed. The tide fell rapidly, and the vessel was again left aground by the retreating waters. It would be necessary to postpone their departure until the following day, for they did not care about starting in the night.

There was no help for it. They would have to wait. Mr. Long went up again to see Captain Corbet, and extorted from him a promise to leave at nine o'clock on the following morning. Before he left he had the satisfaction of seeing Mrs. Corbet arrive home, and got her to promise that her husband should go. As this was the only thing that could be done, he went back to make known the state of the case to the boys.

As to the boys, though disappointed, they were not at all cast down. They had possession of the vessel, with beds and provisions, and on the vessel they were bound to remain. Mr. Long found that they had eaten an excellent dinner, and were preparing their evening repast in the schooner's hold, which they now considered their home. They did not want to go to the Academy to eat or to sleep. They were navigators, and their life was on the ocean wave, their home on the rolling deep.

So they passed the night on board, and found the first experience of wild life very pleasant. Songs and laughter arose until late, and it was midnight before the merry voices ceased to rise into the still air.

Early the next morning Mr. Long was down, and found that the boys had already finished breakfast, and were eagerly awaiting the next turn in the proceedings of the day. He communicated to them his anxieties about Corbet, and gave them to understand that they might not get off at all, unless they could secure the dawdling skipper. He urged them all to accompany him to Corbet's house, so as to bring a moral power to bear which he would not be able to withstand.

This proposal the boys received with three stunning cheers.

Off, then, started all the boys, headed by Mr. Long, who, in his excitement, no longer cared about the ragged regiment at his heels. For three good miles they footed it bravely, and at length stood in front of Captain Corbet's door. Mr. Long entered, and found the navigator seated in his kitchen by the fireplace, dandling the babby. The wife of his bosom was setting the breakfast table.

"Good morning," said Mr. Long.

"Why, it's Mr. Long! Raily now," said Captain Corbet. "An' it shall see Mr. Long, too,—so it shall," he continued, holding up the babby, who fastened its large blue eyes upon the visitor.

Mr. Long turned away, and spoke aside with Mrs. Corbet. Rightly considering that she was the true head of the house, he begged her not to let them be disappointed again. He was successful. Mrs. Corbet assured him that the moment breakfast was over she would send him off.

"And we will wait," said Mr. Long.

So they waited patiently; and at last Captain Corbet tore himself away from his house, his wife, and his babby, and went to the schooner, accompanied by the ragged regiment of boys.

It was about ten o'clock, and the schooner was afloat. All tumbled on board. The hawsers were unloosed. Captain Corbet had to go ashore to get a man whom he called his "mate;" but as Mr. Long went with him but little time was lost.

At last the sails were hoisted. The wind filled them, and the Antelope moved slowly from the wharf. A loud, ringing cheer arose as the schooner started. Before the last notes died away, however, a man was seen running down toward the wharf. He was short and fat, and panted heavily. Reaching the wharf, he cast one look of consternation at the place where the garden wall had been, and another at the schooner.

"They've done it, by jingo!" he exclaimed. "Hallo there!" he screamed. "Did you go and take my fence for ballast, Corbet?"

"No, I didn't!" yelled Corbet.

"You did, you scoundrel! Harris saw those young reprobates passing the stones on board. Bring them back at once, every one of them, or I'll make you sup sorrow!"

Here Mr. Long stepped forward.

"It's all right," said he. "It's no matter—"

"What!" cried the owner of the fence. "I say it is *not* all right; and it *is* matter. Bring me back my fence!"

"I'll bring it back."

"I'll have the law of you!"

"All right. We'll replace it."

"Bring it back!"

"All right."

"Bring—back—my—fence—!"

Further and further away the schooner moved, and fainter and fainter grew the voice that called after them, till at last but a low and scarcely audible tone could be heard.

As the vessel moved away, Bart stood at the mainmast. He had worked hard the day before, running some lanyards through the truck, and now the moment had come for his reward. Bruce Rawdon fired his pistol, and as the report died away, up to the mast head went the black flag of the "B. O. W. C."

And all the boys greeted it with a cheer.

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IV.

Blomidon.—Tides and Fogs.—Songs and Seasickness.—The Five Islands, and a Race up a Precipice.

Winding on through the tortuous channel of the creek, they reached its mouth without accident, and passed out into the bay. The morning was bright and beautiful, the wind blew fair, and all gave themselves up to the joy of the occasion. The Antelope, it is true, was of ancient build and model; she was short, and broad, and round, but the wind was of such a kind as to bring out whatever capacity for sailing she might have. The sun shone brightly, and all around them sparkled the blue waves of the bay. Behind them was the long level of Grand Pré, beyond which the hills arose, whose slopes were dotted with white houses. Before them was the wide bay bounded by the Parrsboro' shore, while conspicuous, as usual, arose the grand form of Blomidon.

"Is Blomidon a French name?" asked Bart of Mr. Simmons.

"No. It is said to be a corruption of the words *Blow me down*, and it is spelled that way on old maps. A good many old coasting skippers pronounce it in that way. The winds that prevail out there off the cape are a sufficient cause for such a name."

"Are there more winds off Blomidon than in other parts of the bay?"

"O, yes. It is seldom calm there. It seems as if all the winds of the Bay of Fundy and of the Basin of Minas struggled together there. It is a sort of funnel through which they all pour backward or forward. Then the sea out there is often quite heavy. The meeting of different currents and different winds causes this. Seldom will you find a place where such fierce currents rush to and fro."

"Shall we land at Blomidon first?"

"I do not think we can with this wind. It will be better, I think, to wait till we come back. We will go across the Basin to the Five Islands first."

"Where are the highest tides of this Basin?"

"Do you see away there," said Mr. Simmons, pointing far away toward the right, "where the land seems to sink down?"

"Yes."

"Well, there the water runs up till it ends in the Shubenacadie River. It is there that the tide runs highest, and I suppose there is no part of the world where the rise is so great."

"Do you believe it rises ninety feet?"

"I have heard so,—at spring tides,—but I rather think it is an exaggeration. It is difficult to get a fair and accurate measurement. I do not think that it rises much over seventy feet."

"That is high enough to surpass all other tides, I should think. But see—hallo! what's that?"

And Bart darted to the side of the vessel, attracted by a shout. A large schooner was approaching, on board of which all were staring with grinning faces at the Antelope.

"Is that Captain Kidd's craft?" shouted one of the sailors.

"Yes," screamed Bart. "We're going to dig up a little buried treasure."

A yell of derision and laughter was the answer, to which the boys of the Antelope responded by wild, unearthly shouts; and so the vessels passed each other.

In commemoration of this little incident, one of the boys commenced to sing a doleful ditty, known in literature as "The Dying Confession of Captain Kidd," of which the following lines will give a good idea:—

"O, my name is Captain Kidd,

As I sailed, as I sailed;
O, my name is Captain Kidd,
As I sailed.
O, my name is Captain Kidd,
And much wickedness I did,
And a heap of gold I hid,
As I sailed."

One song started another, and one by one their favorite school songs came out. One of these was the following:—

1ST VERSE. (Brisk.)

"Three blue-bottles,
Three blue-bottles,
Three blue-bottles sat
On a milestone."

RECITATIVE.

"One flew away."

2D VERSE. (Slow.)

"Two blue-bottles,
Two blue-bottles,
Two blue-bottles sat
On a milestone."

RECITATIVE.

"Another flew away."

3D VERSE. (Slower.)

"One blue-bottle,
One blue-bottle,
One blue-bottle sat
On a milestone."

RECITATIVE.

"That one flew away."

4TH VERSE. (Very slow, very sad, and very solemn.)

"No blue-bottles,
No blue-bottles,
No blue-bottles sat
On a milestone."

RECITATIVE.

"One came back."

5TH VERSE. (Less sad.)

"One blue-bottle,

One blue-bottle,
One blue-bottle sat
On a milestone."

Gradually the blue-bottles of the song come back, till finally, on the return of the three, the song comes to a triumphant conclusion.

Standing at the helm, Captain Corbet gave directions from time to time to the "mate" about sailing the vessel, and listened to the songs of the boys with a patriarchal smile. He had already shown himself so accessible, that all the boys had chatted with him; and at last they insisted that he should sing. Captain Corbet did not need very much solicitation. Standing at the helm with his eyes half closed, he began in a thin, shrill, piping, nasal voice, full of queer tremolos and grace notes, to drone out several melodies of a varied character. The first one was an ancient ballad, called "The Farmier's Boy," which began as follows:—

"O, the sky was black, the day was cold,
And the winds did loud-ly roar,
When cold and sad there comed a lad
Into a farmier's door.

"Can you tell me,' says he, 'if any there be
Who want to give emplo-o-o-o-o-y
For to plough and to sow, and to reap and to mow,
And to be a farmier's bo-o-o-o-o-o-y—
To—be—a—farmier's bo-o-o-o-o-o-o-y?"

Another song referred to the charms of domestic life, and was evidently directed with a fell, satirical purpose against Messrs. Simmons and Long, who were both hardened bachelors, and who, in Captain Corbet's estimation, had shown a degree of callousness and indifference to the sweet attractions of domestic happiness which could not be too strongly rebuked.

Meantime the Antelope was drawing nearer to Blomidon, and while listening to Captain Corbet's dulcet strains, they were gazing with admiration at the dark promontory. None noticed that they were approaching a place where the water, agitated by the wind, and driven by conflicting currents, was tossing itself up into foaming waves; but all stood carelessly about, and the song and the laugh went on. Suddenly the vessel seemed to give a jump, and then a plunge downward. At that instant a wave came dashing over the bows, saturating to the skin a little crowd that had gathered there. Then, with a rush, and a crack, and a wild singing among the rigging, a squall struck the vessel. Over she went on one side, while fresh waves dashed over her gunwale. In an instant all was confusion. Every boy grasped some rope, and held on for his life. The boys who had been drenched at the bows looked forlornly at their companions. Then—poof! came another blast, and away, away went five dark objects careering through the air to leeward. A cry from the "B. O. W. C." followed this last mishap. They had lost their hats, their beautiful plumed felt hats, their pride, their joy—lost them ingloriously and beyond all hope of recovery. With doleful faces they looked at one another, wondering what they could do. There were no more hats on board. They thought of handkerchiefs, and so one after another bound his handkerchief around his head. But now there was not much chance for lamentation over wet jackets or lost hats. A more dismal fate was lowering over them. Each one knew it, saw it, felt it in his inmost soul. For the sea was rough, and the little schooner pitched and tossed every way, rolling, and leaping, and jumping, more than flesh and blood could bear. At any rate, their flesh and blood could not bear it. A feeling of wretchedness came to every heart; every face grew pale, and assumed an expression of woe. Suddenly Messrs. Long and Simmons disappeared into the cabin. This was the signal for others. Many followed. A few, however, preferred the deck, with its fresh air, to the close air and the sickening smell of bilge-water and potatoes, that predominated below. But the scene had changed for them as for all, and the grandeur of Blomidon, and the magnificence of an iron-bound coast, were forgotten. Hushed was the merry laugh, silent the melodious song. Gone were the joyous young faces that but a short time before had looked out from the vessel upon the sea and sky. Faded were the bright eyes, scattered the bright visions of enjoyment. Alas, how changed!

And now, as they went on farther, the wind grew fresher, and the waves grew rougher, and the little schooner danced about like a mad thing; and the booms creaked against the masts, and the sails flapped furiously, and the blast went singing through the rigging. The wretched voyageurs paid no attention to it. Their thoughts were all turned inward. Little

did they think now of that which they had recently been celebrating so joyously:—

"A life on the ocean wave, A home on the rolling deep, Where the scattered waters rave,
And the winds—and the wi-i-i-i-inds—and the w-i-i-i-i-i-i-inds
their re-e-e-e-e-vels keep!"

Time passed, and still the Antelope went tossing, and rolling, and pitching onward. How long a time no one knew. Not one of the voyageurs kept any account of that. Whether minutes or hours, they could not tell. It seemed to them all one long duration, involving days or months. But at last the motion of the vessel ceased, and she went on more smoothly. Most of the boys below mustered up their courage, and began to think of going on deck once more. Soon the joyous voice of Bart Damer summoned them up.

"Come along, boys. We're going to anchor. We're at Five Islands. Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

A loud cry arose. Up went the boys scrambling to the deck, and there the scene before them was sufficient to drive away all suffering. The water was smooth, the wind was quieter. Before them lay the outlines of Five Islands, rising beautifully out of the water between them and the main land, the nearest one being not more than a mile away. These islands were of different and peculiar shapes. The two more distant were rounded and well wooded; the third, which was midway among the group, had lofty, precipitous sides, and the summit was dome-shaped; the fourth was like a table, rising, with perpendicular sides, to the height of two hundred feet, with a flat, level surface above, which was all overgrown with forest trees. The last, and nearest of the group, was by far the most singular. It was a bare rock, which rose irregularly from the sea, terminating at one end in a peak, which rose about two hundred feet into the air. As they approached it, this rock had a very peculiar appearance. It resembled, more than anything else, a vast cathedral rising out of the sea, the chief mass of the rock corresponding with the main part of the cathedral, while the tower and spire were there in all their majesty. For this cause the rock has received the name of Pinnacle Island. This lonely and desolate rock, that thus rose out before them, grew more distinctly revealed as they drew nearer. At the base they saw the white foam of breaking surf; while far on high, around its lofty, tempest-beaten summit, they saw myriads of sea-gulls. Gathering in great white clouds about this place, they sported and chased one another; they screamed and uttered their shrill yells, which sounded afar over the sea.

Nearer and nearer they came, till at last they reached a smooth place on the lee of the second island. This one was so close by Pinnacle Island, that it seemed as though they might be joined at low water. Before them, within a moderate distance, lay a gravelled beach, which extended as far as they could see at the verge of the island, above which the dark cliffs towered precipitously.

"There!" said Mr. Simmons, pointing, with sparkling eyes, to the dark and sombre rocks,— "there, boys, is the place for minerals! I have found on those rocks the most beautiful specimens, that have ever been seen, of crystals, of jasper, and of chalcedony. I have found onyx, spar, and hundreds of other stones; all kinds of agates, fragments of copper ore, barytes, beautiful petrifications, and footprints of birds among masses of sandstone. From those cliffs came the famous amethyst that was once among the crown jewels of Louis XV. Come, boys, be diligent; use your eyes, and you will find something worth remembering. David Digg, don't forget your hammers."

His enthusiastic speech was interrupted by a loud shout from Captain Corbet.

"Let go!" he cried.

Down came the sails; and shortly after, rattle—rattle—rattle—rattle, and with a plunge and a splash, the anchor rushed to the sea bottom.

"And now for the boats," said Mr. Long.

The boat was brought up alongside. It was short, wide, and round, and appeared to have been constructed after the identical tub which had evidently served as a model for the Antelope. There was but one oar, which was used to propel the boat by sculling. Not more than five or six could get into her with safety.

"We can't all go ashore in that," said Mr. Simmons.

"Why not?" asked Captain Corbet.

"Why, she won't hold us."

"Yes, she will."

"O, no."

"Excuse *me*, sir," persisted Captain Corbet. "Of course you don't all mean to go at once."

"O, I see," said Mr. Simmons, whose mathematical mind began to grasp the solution of the difficult problem. "You'll make two or three trips with her."

"Of course."

"O, that quite alters the case."

"Bless your heart, of course it does."

"Will we want any provisions?" asked Bart.

"Provisions! What for?"

"Are we going to camp out?"

"O, no. We'll return to the vessel. But provisions! O, yes, we'll want a lunch ashore, of course."

And now began the process of disembarkation. Messrs. Simmons and Long, with two boys, went first. A number of baskets of provisions were thrown in, and the mate sculled them ashore.

On his return five more boys were ready. The "B. O. W. C." generously waited till the last. The loss of their hats had been a sore grievance, but the handkerchiefs were not a bad substitute. Bart had his pistol in his belt, and a sailor's knife. Bruce Rawdon had a beautiful little hatchet. The others had knives. When the boat returned, they were quite worn out with impatience, and were almost ready to jump overboard and swim ashore. But their time of waiting ended at last, and the boat landed them on the gravelly beach.


It was about two o'clock when the party landed on the island. They had started at ten, three hours before high tide. The tide was therefore already beginning to turn, and would of course continue to run out till seven or eight. On this account, the schooner could not come any nearer for fear of being stranded. As they did not intend to pass the night on the island, it was necessary, at all hazards, to keep the vessel afloat. Captain Corbet had selected a place where he knew the vessel could ride at all times of tide; and though it was inconveniently distant, yet it was the only place for her under the circumstances. Mr. Simmons had told Captain Corbet that he would leave the island in three hours, after which the schooner was to sail to a port a few miles off on the main land, and anchor for the night. He had also taken care to let all the boys understand these arrangements perfectly, and had warned them not to be too far away when the hour for leaving might come.

As the last of the passengers landed, they walked about the beach, looking up at the gigantic cliffs, picking up the stones and shells, and exulting in the novelty of their situation. The island was about half a mile long, and about half that width. The beach was narrow; and the boys began to look, with longing eyes, to the summit of the island. In their wanderings they came across their companions. Mr. Simmons, followed by Bogud, was busy at the rocks in one place. Mr. Long, with Billymack, was working away near him. The baskets lay open, and all could help themselves to lunch. After satisfying their hunger, the "B. O. W. C." quickly determined to explore the island thoroughly, with the hope of finding a way to the top. With this intention they started off, and at length found a place which seemed to promise what they desired. It was at the end nearest to Pinnacle Island. A torrent had made a rough pathway for itself in that place, and though the stones were somewhat insecure, yet it seemed safe enough for active lads.

Up this place, then, they tried to climb. The footing was very insecure, the loose stones constantly rolling down, and making it dangerous for one to go behind another. It was so steep that they had to climb with hands as well as feet. They clutched the roots of trees, the long, tough grasses, and the thick ferns. Thus pulling, pushing, clutching, dodging stones, and forcing a way up through all difficulties, they managed to scramble to the summit.

V.

Exploring a desert Island.—Tumbling over a Cliff.—Peril of Bruce.—A mad Row over the Waves.—Adrift in the Fog.

 n reaching the summit, the triumphant climbers gave vent to their feelings in loud shouts. Looking out from their lofty perch, a magnificent scene unfolded itself before their eyes. There was the broad expanse of water. In the distance, a kind of haze rested over the hills, which, to experienced eyes, would have been significant of an approaching fog, but it gave no such warning to them. There rose Blomidon, always the supreme monarch of the scene. Around them were clustered the other islands; and here, directly opposite them, and beneath them, was Pinnacle Island, with its cloud of screaming gulls. Yet it was not to these, or to any one of these, that the eyes of the boys were most attracted. There, beneath them, lay another object, which had for them a greater charm. It was the Antelope. There she swung at her anchor, while ever and anon the passing breeze, as it came by, swept out the folds of the black flag, from which that benevolent face, which it bore, seemed to look up at them with a grin of welcome, encouragement, and sympathy.

It was another proud moment for the "B. O. W. C."

After feasting their eyes on this fascinating flag, they all started off to explore the island. There was not much to explore; but what there was, proved difficult. The trees grew densely, interlacing their branches, while beneath them was a thick growth of underbrush and ferns. Fallen trunks, some fresh fallen, others half rotted, intercepted them at every step; and they had to climb over them or crawl under. Progress was extremely difficult, and a good half hour was occupied in going from one end of the island to the other. Here they rested for a while, looking from the edge of the cliff down the precipice into the sea. Then they began to return, keeping along the edge of the island, where the trees and the underbrush were not so dense. Beneath they could see Messrs. Simmons and Long diligently hammering away. Scattered along the beach were the other boys. In the air, abreast of them, the sea-gulls darted about with hoarse screams. One huge fellow flew straight toward them, without seeing them, carrying a fish in his claws. The sight of them so frightened him, that he dropped the fish, and flew off with a harsh shriek. On picking up the fish, they found it yet possessed of much vigor. Bruce took it and hurled it far out, and watched it to see where it would fall. It struck its own native element, into which it sank; and the boys generously hoped that it was able to resume its life, which had been interrupted by so wonderful a transition into the world of air.

So they wandered along, finding their way here much easier, and from time to time stopping to examine some object of interest, to dart into the woods after something that attracted their attention, or to lean over the cliff, and let stones fall, and watch them as they fell straight down, far down, till they struck the beach below.

By and by they became scattered. Phil Kennedy and Tom Crawford had gone across the island. Arthur and Bart were walking on, and Bruce lingered behind to try and find a gull's nest, which seemed to be somewhere over the edge of the cliff. He lay down, and bent far over, and at length saw what he suspected. The gull that was on the nest flew away in affright, as she saw the face peering at her, and Bruce determined to seize the eggs. But how could he? The nest was out of his reach. He scrutinized the place narrowly, and at last concluded that it could be done. About three feet beneath him was a projecting rock. On this he could stand; and holding on to the root of a tree at the edge of the cliff with one hand, he could extend his other hand far enough to touch the nest. All this he saw, and at once began to make the attempt. The edge of the cliff was rocky, and hung over a foot beyond the precipice; the projecting rock below did not come out so far. About five feet back, a tree grew, one of the roots of which had projected itself forward, and crooked itself along the edge, and the earth having been blown away, it was now exposed. This root Bruce grasped; and lowering himself over the edge, he let himself down till his feet touched the shelf; then lowering himself still more, he prepared to reach out his hand.

But at that instant a thrill of horror shot through every nerve. The shelf on which he was standing seemed slowly to sink

beneath him. Well for him was it at that moment that he had not lowered himself farther, and that there had not yet been time to extend his arm to the nest. The thrill of horror transfixed him. He sprang up, and grasped the root with both hands. The next instant the shelf crumbled away, and his feet hung idly in the empty air. A wild shriek sounded out—a shriek of mortal terror, that sent an icy chill to the heart of Bart and Arthur, and brought them back in mad anxiety and fear.

Far below, Mr. Simmons had been busily hammering at the cliffs. His basket was filled with unusually fine specimens, and he had just turned to send off Bogud with this basket to the landing-place. He was just in the midst of some directions about a peculiar hammer which he wanted, when suddenly an immense mass of rock came thundering down, and buried itself in the gravel, not ten feet in front of him. Mr. Simmons started back, and rushed far out from the treacherous precipice. Looking up with a white face, he sought to see the place from which the rock had fallen.

He looked up. A deeper, deadlier pallor came to his face; big drops started from his forehead; a shriek escaped him.

"O, God! Who is it?" he groaned.

For there on the edge, grasping the tree-root with both hands, hung the figure of a boy writhing as he sought to find some place for a foothold against the rock. Two figures were bending over. By the red shirts which all wore, he knew that the one in danger must be one of those five that had dressed themselves in this way. But which of them it was, he could not tell.

His shriek roused others. Mr. Long came hurrying there, and the other boys, all looking up with eyes of horror and ashen lips. The moments of that suspense were agony.

There was nothing that they could do. Mr. Long alone tried to do something. Starting off at full speed, he ran on, trying to find a place to scale the cliff. Gradually a few others followed. But the rest thought it was of no use, and awaited the end in voiceless horror.

Meanwhile Bruce Rawdon had clung to the root, shrieking for help, and trying to find some resting-place for his feet. In vain he tried. The precipice retreated inward, and the shelf that had fallen left a deeper hollow behind. Almost senseless with the horror of his situation, he was conscious of nothing but the fact that friends were near; and for those he shouted, clinging desperately to the root of the tree. Another boy might have fallen; but Bruce's muscles had been toughened by all kinds of manly exercise, and he had in him the germ and the promise of mighty strength and stature.

The shriek that roused Arthur and Bart was followed by others, which led them speedily to the place.

With a groan Arthur flung himself down, and grasped his brother by the wrist. Bart took a swift glance around. A small tree was growing near the edge. Twining his sinewy legs around this, he bent his body over the precipice, and caught Bruce by the waistband. Then, clutching the tree with his legs, he made a mighty effort to raise Bruce. The latter, in the mean while, had seized Arthur, who was also trying to raise him. But Arthur had not a fair chance to exert his full strength, and so they prevailed but little against the dead weight which they were trying to lift.

"Arthur!" cried Bart.

"Well."

"Can you catch hold of this tree where my legs are? Hold it with one hand, and then you can pull better with your other. Can you do it?"

"Yes. I've got hold."

"Now then."

With a tremendous effort, both boys pulled together. The slender tree bent beneath their efforts. But the weight was raised! Yes! O, thank God! higher—higher! There was Bruce's head at the edge, and now his shoulders. And now he himself, by a last, despairing, convulsive effort, had flung himself forward, and was on the rock. They dragged him forward. He was saved.

Arthur burst into tears, and held Bruce in his arms. Bart rushed off for water. Returning in a few minutes with his leathern cup,—which he always carried,—full of cold water, he gave it to Bruce. The fainting boy drank it, and then drew a long breath.

"God bless you, boys!" he said at last, wringing the hand of each. He would have said more, but he could not.

"I'll be all right presently," said he, taking a long breath. "My heart feels painful;" and he pressed his hand against his breast. "Don't bother any more, Bart. I'm coming round fast. Just let's sit here, and be quiet for a little while."

They sat there in silence for some time; and gradually the color began to come back to Bruce's face.

Suddenly the crackling of brush-wood was heard, and Mr. Long came running up to them, his face as pale as death, and his eyes round with the horror of a frightful suspense. The moment he saw the little group, he flung himself on his knees by Bruce, and, catching him in his arms, he kissed him again and again.

"Thank God! O, thank God!" he moaned, and burst into tears.

Hitherto Mr. Long had the reputation, among the boys, of being a hard, unfeeling man; but from that moment this opinion was changed.

Mr. Long said nothing more at that time, partly because he did not wish to distress Bruce by any questions just then, and partly because he was so faint, from the tremendous rush up the cliff, that he could not speak. In fact, for a time he seemed as much broken as Bruce. So they sat quietly together waiting.

Mr. Long's effort was a desperate one, but the only thing to be done. It is possible that Bart and Arthur, if they could not have drawn up Bruce, might have held him there for a long time, and in that case Mr. Long would have been there to save him.

After about an hour, Bruce said he was all right, and they walked toward the place of descent. It seemed, indeed, as though he had got over his accident. He said his arms ached a little, and there was a slight pain in his breast, but that it was passing away. The descent was toilsome, but Bruce accomplished it as well as any of them. By the time he reached the shore, he declared himself perfectly well.

Mr. Simmons was there to meet him. He wrung his hand very earnestly, with tearful eyes, but did not trust himself to speak. Then Bruce told all about it, and the excitement of this adventure put an end to all further search for minerals.

At length five o'clock came, and they prepared to go back to the schooner. The tide had fallen considerably, and a strong current was running past them. The water was not so placid as it had been, but was getting broken up, and somewhat rough. The wind had changed, and was blowing more freshly than before. There were also gathering fog banks, which were drawing nearer every moment, and threatening soon to be around them. All things showed, therefore, that it was high time to retire. Signals were made, and before long they saw the boat leave the schooner, and come to the shore.

On landing, the mate wanted to know if any of them could scull a boat. Bruce said that he could, and so did Arthur and Bart. The mate said that he wanted to stay aboard to get the sails ready; and to save time, it would be necessary for some one of them to bring the last boat aboard. Each one of these three offered to scull her; but it was at last decided that Arthur should go in the second boat and bring her back, while Bruce should take the last load. Bart readily gave up his claim to the others; and so it was arranged.

"But are you sure you're strong enough for that?" said Mr. Long.

"Strong? Of course." said Bruce. "I'm stronger than ever, sir."

So the first boat started with the same load which it had when landing before, with the addition of one boy more. The next boat took Arthur and four more boys, leaving Bruce, and Tom, and Phil, and Bart.

About an hour had passed between the time when the boat left to take them from the island and the time when Arthur brought it back for the last trip. In that hour many changes had taken place. The tide had fallen farther. Between the beach, where they stood, and Pinnacle Island, the rocks were laid bare, and could be traversed on foot. Between the schooner and the shore, a swift current was running, which grew stronger every moment. By six o'clock the current was very powerful. The mate, on his second trip, had considerable difficulty in getting to the schooner; and he had given very careful directions to Arthur as to the course which he should go in returning.

"You must head the boat farther up," said he, "so as to strike the schooner fair. I didn't cal'late right about that there tide. You've got to head your boat well off that side, and then the tide'll help you instead of henderin'."

"All right," said Arthur.

In going ashore, he found the current very strong; but the beach was long, and, of course, it was very easy to land somewhere. As it happened, he was carried down some fifty feet below the place which he wished to reach; but that didn't make any practical difference. It served to open his eyes to the peculiar danger before them, and made him see that the very greatest care would have to be exercised in returning, or else the swift tide would sweep them away from the place to which they wished to go.

As Arthur looked round, after the other boys had got in, an exclamation burst from him.

"Whew!"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, the fog. How suddenly it has come up! Why, it's getting as thick as night. Look here, Bruce; we've got to be pretty careful this time. See here; you must head out that way, for the current is running like a race-horse, and this fog isn't helping matters."

He then proceeded to explain to Bruce the best course to take, and Bruce said he would do exactly as he told him.

"You're sure you can do it. You're sure you're not used up at all," said Arthur.

"Not a bit of it!" said Bruce, with a laugh. "If I feel used up, I'll hand over the oar to you or Bart."

Saying this, he worked away with vigorous pushes, and the boat moved in the direction indicated by Arthur.

Bruce soon found that Arthur had not exaggerated the force of the current. It seemed to drag the boat sidewise with fearful power. But a strong hand was at the scull, and the boat's course was true, and every moment brought them nearer.

As they went, the fog grew thicker at every foot. The wind blew more strongly, and the water grew rougher, making the progress of the clumsy boat more difficult. Soon the shore grew indistinct; but this they did not regard, since their eyes were fixed on the schooner, to which they drew steadily nearer. There, on board, stood the other boys; and Mr. Simmons was talking to Captain Corbet, and Mr. Long was watching them with some anxiety. The mate stood near the bow with a rope, ready to throw as soon as they should come within reach.

But though near enough to see all this, they could not hope to get there yet without a severe effort. For now the farther out they went, the stronger grew the current; and Bruce felt a heavier drag against the boat, and gathered up his strength for sterner exertions. He took a hasty look at the schooner, so as to get her bearings, and then headed the boat at a sharper angle against the current. This was admirably calculated; and now the boat fell off less, and seemed to work itself steadily toward the schooner.

Arthur was in the bows, anxiously watching the boat's course. The other boys sat in silence, conscious of the hazard before them, but facing it bravely. On board the schooner not a word was spoken. Mr. Long's face seemed to grow more anxious. His hands clutched one another with a rigid grasp, and his eyes seemed fastened on Bruce. The mate stood with his rope, not venturing to make any suggestion, for he saw that Bruce was doing all that could be done. His forehead was contracted into a painful frown, and he was whistling softly to himself (from a habit that he had acquired), and which, in him, was a sign of grave perplexity of soul.

Nearer and nearer came the boat; but the anxious watchers began to see that the current was swerving them off more rapidly than they had expected, and that the angle of the boat's drift would lie not so near as they hoped. Bruce saw this, and summoned up a new force out of his strong muscles. A few mighty strokes, and something was gained even against the pressure of that tremendous current. There was the schooner. On—on; nearer—nearer.

They had hoped to touch her bow; but now they saw it would be well if they could get near her stern. Back ran the mate with his rope. Not a word was spoken. No one ventured to call for greater exertions from that brave, strong boy, who was plying his oar so mightily. And now the moment had come. Forward sprang the mate, and the rope sped through the air. Arthur's hands were extended to seize it. Bruce did not abate one stroke, but worked with desperate energy. The boat was borne past the schooner's quarter. The rope touched Arthur's right hand,—his fingers closed around it.

Alas! it was but the extreme end of the rope that he held; and before his other hand could seize it, it had slipped through

his fingers, and fell into the water.

"Row, row, Bruce! I've dropped the rope!"

A groan burst from Bruce. He gave three tremendous strokes. They were the last efforts of despairing energy. As he moved his arms to make the fourth, he staggered back. The oar fell from his nerveless grasp. He sank down, with a groan, at the bottom of the boat.

"Boys, I—I'm dying!"

Gasping out these words, Bruce closed his eyes, and lay motionless.

A cry of dismay and terror burst from the schooner. Pallid faces, and eyes of horror, were turned toward the boat, which now, hurled on by the swift current, was borne farther and farther away, until at last it vanished from view in the fog.

VI.

Up Anchor and after them.—Blast of the Fog-Horn.—A long Search amid Mists, and Darkness, and Storms.

As the boat drifted away from the schooner, horror for a time seemed to have struck dumbness into all on board. From this stupor Mr. Long was the first to rouse himself.

"Captain," he cried, "we must up sail and after them."

"Which way shall we go?"

"After them any way. Follow the poor lads before they get any farther. Come, boys, up with the anchor! Corbet, up with your sails!"

The way that anchor was walked up was a wonder. In an incredibly short space of time the schooner was dashing through the water, swept on by wind and tide.

"Which way does this current take us?" asked Mr. Long.

"Well, right round the island, and down to Blomidon, and then out into the Bay of Fundy."

"I can't see the island."

"No; the fog's too thick; but it's right off there," said Captain Corbet, waving his left hand.

"I suppose the poor lads couldn't work ashore."

"Not with their bare hands. Their oar's gone—that's the mischief of it."

Mr. Long looked gloomily around.

"The only thing, then, is for us to follow on where they may be drifting."

"You've hit the nail on the head, sir. There's nothin' else for us—not a hooter."

"How far is the main land from here?"

"Several miles."

"Does the current strike near it anywhere?"

"No, *sir*! It goes straight in a bee line for Blomidon."

"After leaving this island, then, Blomidon is the nearest land for them."

"Yes, or Parrsboro'."

"How long will it take them to drift there?"

"About three hours."

"How far will they be likely to drift?"

"Let me see. It's seven o'clock now. It's nearly dead low tide. It'll be on the flood soon, and by the time them there lads get to Blomidon, there'll be a flood tide."

"And how will that be for them?"

"It'll drift 'em back."

"In which direction?"

"Wal, sir, it would take a man with a head as long as a hoss, tail and all, to answer that there pint. Lor' bless you, in this here bay there's no knowin' where the tide'll drift a man."

"If it weren't for the fog, there'd be no danger," said Mr. Long, musingly.

"That there's an ondeniable fact, at any rate."

"Do you think the fog will continue?"

Captain Corbet screwed his head round in the direction of the wind, and drew up his face into a most extraordinary grimace.

"Well, I rayther think," said he, slowly, "that you've got me there."

"You don't know, then, anything about it," said Mr. Long, impatiently.

"Not a hooter."

Mr. Long walked away, and looked mournfully out over the dim sea.

Deep sadness and sore anxiety now reigned over the little vessel. Mr. Simmons said not a word, but sat staring fixedly at the fog. The boys stood in silent groups. Not a word was spoken.

Mr. Long walked forward to the bows, and looked out. The wind was increasing, and the sea was growing rougher. Evening was passing away, night would come—and then, what! To think of those poor lads in the boat was anguish. He walked back again to Captain Corbet.

"Where are we now?"

"Wal, we're just roundin' the island."

"I can't see it."

"No, I have to give her a wide berth. It's low tide, and the ledges are dangerous."

"Do you think the boat may be drifting out here, or nearer in shore?"

"Wal, accordin' to my cal'lation, they'd oughter be out here somewhere. Jedgin' by the direction the boat took, I should say I was followin' pooty close in their track, though there's no knowin' for sartin."

"Oughtn't we to be up to them by this time?"

"Wal, I don't know. You saw the pace they went off at. Geeracious! Talk of race-hosses! Why, that boat went off at a rate

to beat all creation holler!"

"But we're going faster. We have the same current, and we've got sails up."

"Never a truer word; but then it took some time for us to get a start, and in that time, gracious ony knows where they've got to. The ony thing that we've got to do, as I can see, is to keep follerin' our noses right straight on, and keep in the current."

Suddenly a thought struck Mr. Long. Rushing down into the cabin, he returned with a fog-horn, and raising it to his lips, blew a long, piercing blast.

"That'll fetch 'em, if anything does," said Captain Corbet.

"Silence!" cried Mr. Long, listening intently, while all others on board stood listening for the return cry.

But no sound came back.

"They've got a pistol, and if they hear us, they would fire. Have you a gun, captain?"

"Nary gun."

"This horn, then, is the best thing. Shouting is of no use," said Mr. Long; and he blew another blast.

Again they listened, and again there was no response. To their waiting ears, as they listened in an anguish of expectation, there came no answering cry, no shout, no pistol shot—nothing but the plash of waves near by, the singing of the wind through the rigging, and the boom of the surf on some distant beach which the fog hid from view.

On went the schooner, and Mr. Long blew unweariedly, clinging to this horn as something by which he still might gain access to the lost boys, and finding in this occupation something of that antidote to pain which action of any kind yields to the energetic nature. But time passed on, and only the winds heard these shrill blasts, and only the winds responded to the signal.

So darkness came upon them, and night; and the darkness of this night was intensified by the thick fog, so that it became a darkness which might be felt.

"Ef we want to save the boys," said Captain Corbet at last to Mr. Long, who stood dejectedly near him, "my opinion is, that we'd better keep afloat ourselves; but at the rate we're goin', it's my opinion that before long we'll be high and dry. And we may thank our blessed stars if we light on a mud flat, and don't get dashed to small bits on Blomidon. Them's my sentiments."

"Why, don't you know where you are?"

"No more idee where I am than the man in the moon."

"I thought you knew the coast."

"So I do—like a book."

"What do you mean, then?"

"Why, if it was only the fog, I wouldn't mind; but, mind you, there's the tides. The flood tide'll be coming along soon, and then where'll we go to? We may get twisted up into an eddy, and find ourselves on Cape Split; or we may glide up to Windsor, or get thrown on the rocks, goodness ony knows where. There's no knowin' where these tides may take it into their blessed hearts to drift us to. So the long and the short of it is, I move we anchor."

"But isn't it a common thing for schooners to drift about here?"

"Not in the Basin of Minas, thank you. No, sir. Not if they can help it. Out in Fundy it's different. Fundy hain't got no bottom to anchor on, except near the shores. Fundy ain't one universal mud bank, nuther. Out in Fundy every skipper cal'lates on driftin', jest as a sea captain cal'lates on navigatin' by scientific observation. Driftin' in Fundy is a science by itself, and vessels make v'y'ges back'ard and for'ard by a new patent driftin' process. But in here nobody drifts. It's no

go."

Mr. Long gave a heavy sigh.

"At any rate, let's drift a little longer. I cling to hope of coming up with the boys."

"Comin' *up* with them! Law bless my heart alive, we've comed up with 'em and passed 'em long ago. We've got on different tracks somehow. Ef they'd been afloat, they'd never missed hearin' that everlastin' trumpet you've been a-blowin' on so like all possessed."

Now all this time since they had left the anchorage the wind had been blowing strongly. As the darkness increased, Captain Corbet had taken in his foresail. The water grew rougher, the little schooner labored heavily, and pitched, and tossed, and rolled about, while the waves dashed over her bow. Mr. Simmons had retired to his berth with the bodily pangs of seasickness superadded to his mental anxiety. One by one the boys had disappeared below, and for an hour or more none were left on deck but Mr. Long, Captain Corbet, and the mate. A light had been hoisted, and Mr. Long still blew the fog-trumpet.

But he no longer blew it with any hope. Captain Corbet had presented full before him a palpable fact, and that was, that they must be far away from any place where the boat could possibly be. They had sailed on and passed beyond them. They could not have been near the boat at any time. Some other current must have carried it away in another direction. Had it not been so, they must assuredly have heard those shrill yells, and in that case they would have responded. Either they had been caught in another current, or else that had happened to them on which he dared not think. But then, even so, if they had got into another current, could it avail them? For that boat to drift out into this sea would be sure destruction.

"Captain," said he, "are there more currents than one about those islands?"

"As many currents as there is hairs on a hoss's tail."

"Then it's quite likely they got into another one."

"It's sartin."

"Can you conjecture how they may have gone?"

"Wal, you see the current we came by was a kind of inside one that took us round the nighest island. Now, outside of that there was another current that kind o' goes round the next island, which is a bigger one than the one we were at. I've been turnin' it over in my head, and I cal'late that that there boat, jedgin' by the course she took as she shot by us, got swept into the outer current, and was driven away around the outer island."

"We couldn't have been near her at all, then."

"It seems not."

"Where could they have been when we began to blow?"

"As near as I can cal'late, jedgin' by the natur' of the currents, and the course they took, they might have been off the farthest end of the other island."

"How far away from the place where we were?"

"Over two miles—yes, more'n three miles."

"How far can you hear one of these fog-horns?"

"About a mile."

"So they couldn't have heard us?"

"Couldn't have heard a note. No, sir. And that accounts for their silence."

"Where does the current go to, after going round that island you speak of?"

"Wal, there's a good many, but there's two main currents: one goes round the island, and returns and jines the one that we come down by."

"And if the boat came by that, it would be behind us."

"Jes so."

"About how far?"

"O, ten miles or more by this time."

"If so, every moment now takes us farther from them."

"That's about it, anyway you take it. But the flood tide's catching us now, and where it's takin' us to's more'n I know."

"It will take the boat too."

"Yes; of course."

"You spoke of another current."

"Yes, the other current sweeps around farther up, nigh unto the main land, and takes a turn and comes down, till it jines the gen'ral current along with the others."

"So, if they had drifted into that, they would still be behind us."

"Of course."

"Where do you think we are now?"

"Can't tell. Somewhere near Blomidon, though perhaps I'm jest as near Horton Bluff."

"How far would the boat drift till the tide turns?"

"Wal, they would have time to drift nearly to Blomidon."

"And when the tide turns, you can't tell where they'd go?"

"No, *sir*—nor nobody else."

"What chance would there be of the boat keeping afloat?"

Captain Corbet shook his head.

"It's rough—precious rough. Ef it had been any other boys than them there partic'ler boys, I'd have my doubts. They'd all be swamped, sure as a gun. But them there boys is uncommon lively creeturs. An' they've got a great idea of a row-boat, though they don't know nothin' of sailin'. They'd manage to keep afloat as long as anybody I know of. They'd make a precious hard fight of it afore they'd knock under, mind, I tell you. They're boys that are up to snuff. They mind me of my babby. My babby is the cutest little creetur that ever I see in all my born days. Why, that there infant last week—jest a week ago to-morrow—that there infant—hallo—O—ah—hur—why, I declare—Mr. Long—why, he's gone, an' hasn't heard about the infant."

It was a fact. Mr. Long had gone, and had lost the story of the infant. A moment afterward the shrill blast of the horn sounded out over the deep.

"Captain," said he, as he came back again, "I won't object any more to your anchoring. Do as you choose. God alone knows what is best to do. He alone can save those dear boys. I must try to trust them to him."

A few moments after, the vessel was swinging at her anchor in twenty fathoms water.

Captain Corbet and the mate calmly retired to sleep, leaving the schooner to take care of herself. But there was one who slept not all through that night. Mr. Long could not leave the deck. The air below was stifling to one so full of anxiety and suspense as he was. All night long he paced the deck with unwearied footsteps,—all night long,—stopping at times to

sound his trumpet; stopping again to peer through the thick darkness that hung around like a funeral pall over the grave of the departed. There, too, over and over again in the darkness and the gloom of that night, he knelt down on that deck, and poured forth all the anguish of his soul, calling forth out of his despair unto Him who alone is able to save. After each prayer his soul would grow calmer, and the storm of his agitated heart would cease for a time, till, gradually reassuming its strength, his grief would once more return, to be once more dispelled by prayer. So, amid vigil, and fasting, and prayer, and grief, passed the night away; and when the dawn came, there stood this man looking out over the sea, with a face pale from suffering, and eyes dimmed with unfamiliar tears.

The dawn of day brought at least one comfort.

The wind had changed during the night, and the fog had gone. The wide sea once more unfolded itself, and as the light grew stronger, Mr. Long eagerly scanned it in all directions in search after the lost ones. At last, rousing Captain Corbet and the mate, he urged them to set sail once more.

Captain Corbet came on deck, and looked round in great curiosity to see where he was. He had gone to sleep in beautiful ignorance of his whereabouts, and it had been an interesting problem as he dozed off to sleep.

The moment he looked around, he uttered a cry.

"Good gracious!"

Mr. Long looked inquiringly at him.

"Ef I ain't back at my own door! Don't you see it, Mr. Long? Why, darn me, ef we haven't drifted clean back to Grand Pré!"

Mr. Long looked in wonder to where Captain Corbet pointed, and there, to his surprise, he recognized the familiar shore. A cloud came over his brow. The thought of the lost ones came to him more vividly as he saw the place which might possibly be doomed to know them no more forever.

"Ef it warn't dead low tide," said Captain Corbet, "darn it ef I wouldn't have a good mind to tie up the old Anty to the nighest stump, and take a run up to see the babby."

Mr. Long turned upon him with so terrible a frown that Captain Corbet was awed.

"O—I didn't mean it, I—I ony made the remark. Of course I didn't mean it—it's ony a leetil outbust of parental affection."

"Come, make haste!" said Mr. Long, sternly. "There's no time to lose. We must scour the bay till we find the boys."

The anchor went up, and up went the sails, and the Antelope once more spread her wings to the blast, and went over the waters.

But where could they go?

That was the question which it was difficult to answer. Where, or in what direction, east, west, north, or south?

Through all that day they sailed about. First, they went down the straits past Blomidon; then, turning back, they stretched away far over to the farthest extremity of the bay. They spoke what vessels they met. They watched every floating object, and it was with a feeling of relief that each one resolved itself into a chip, or a shingle, or a log, and never into a hat or the seat of a boat.

So passed the day.

Searching in such a way, without any clew, it was difficult for them to feel that they were doing anything. While they were searching in the east, the traces of the object of their search might all be in the west; and while they were examining the north, the boat might be drifting in the south; or, while they were in the Basin of Minas, the boat might be helplessly carried about by the currents of the Bay of Fundy.

One thing there was to comfort them; and that was, the departure of the fog, the clear atmosphere, the pleasant breeze, the bright sunshine. Several vessels had been met with, and all had promised to keep a lookout and engage other vessels in

the same service. On such a sea, and under such a sky, there could be no danger, if the boat had survived the night.

But *had* the boat survived the night?

Alas! and alas! who could answer that!

Mr. Long, at any rate, would not give up. As though in defiance of fate, he would not haul down that flag which Bart had hoisted, but kept it flying, in the fond hope that it would once more greet their eyes.

VII.

*Lost in the Fog.—At the Mercy of the Tide.—The last Rock.—Wanderings on a lonely Shore.—A great Discovery.
—A new Mode of Cooking.*

Meanwhile, what had become of the boys? Was the "B. O. W. C." thus overwhelmed beneath the dark wave? Were all the grief, and the watching, and the tireless search of the noble-hearted Mr. Long to be unavailing?

We shall see.

As the boat sped away, dragged on by the swift current, the boys sat in astonishment and consternation. Bart supported Bruce's head, and Arthur hurried to the stern to assist. They wet his pale brow in silence; while Bruce, in a faint voice, told them that he had been seized with a sudden spasm. He soon felt better, though unable to exert himself.

By that time the fog had closed in around them, and both the schooner and the shore had been shut out from their view. They were drifting swiftly on, they could not tell where. For a long time they sat watching and waiting—how long they did not know. In seasons of suspense, moments are prolonged to hours; and so it was here. On they went, and still on. Each one well knew all the possibilities of the danger that lay before them. There was a wide and a wild sea, overspread with fog-clouds, where the waves were rising and the night was coming down. Into the midst of all this they were being borne by swift currents. This they all knew, yet not a sound of dismay escaped any one of them. Whatever each one may have felt of fear, he sat in silence and gave no sign. There were stout hearts that beat in those slender, boyish breasts, that awaited, undismayed, the terrors of the deep.

Bart was the first to rouse himself.

"Boys," said he, drawing forth a tin pail from under the seat, "we must fight for our lives, and make up our minds to pass the night here. We'll have to use this concern, I think."

"Here's something, too, that may be of use," said Arthur, drawing out a narrow plank from the bottom of the boat. "Phil, there's another one; just draw it out."

Phil reached down for it, but Tom Crawford dragged it out first.

"I'm stronger than you, Phil," said he. "If there's to be any paddling, I'll do it."

Meanwhile Arthur drew his knife, and began cutting at the plank so as to fashion it into an oar. Tom did the same.

Soon they were interrupted by a shout from Bart.

"Hurrah, boys! Land! land!" he cried. "Look! look!" and he pointed to the left.

True enough, there was the dim outline of black cliffs rising high not far away. Past these they were drifting. In an instant Arthur and Tom put out their planks, and began to use them as paddles, in the Indian fashion, heading the boat toward the shore, and putting forth all their strength. Bart, too, tried to use his dipper for a paddle.

The boat drifted on; but the current swept them in nearer and nearer. Some progress was also made by the paddles, rude though they were.

Borne on by the tide, the boat every moment drew nearer to the shore; yet every moment it was swiftly drifting by, and it now became a question whether it would be at all possible for them to reach the land. Already they could see the end of the island, a precipitous cliff, not far away, toward which they were drifting. A few minutes more, and they would be there.

The cliff was high. At its base there was a ledge of rocks, which ran down into the water. At this low tide the ledge extended for a long distance, and terminated in a projecting mass, which was covered with an immense growth of seaweed. Around this point the current passed, and it was to this that the boat was speeding.

And now all their exertions were put forth to extricate the boat from the central grasp of the current. Already, thanks to their former exertions, they had forced it from the centre to the edge of the tide, and a few more vigorous efforts might bring them to the shore.

But so swift was the tide, that it seemed about to snatch them away from that shore when it was just within reach. It seemed as though they could almost have waded ashore if they had jumped overboard. But that, of course, could not be done, for the power of the current would have swept any one away who should try it.

To every stroke of the rude paddles the tide brought a counteracting influence; and for every six inches of forward motion, there were two feet of sidelong drift. The boat's head was toward the shore, but her motion was broadside; and so the shore seemed ever near, yet inaccessible, and most unattainable when most within reach.

And so on past the whole length of the island, until the cliff at the farthest extremity was reached and passed. They were but ten feet from the shore. The rocky ledge, covered with sea-weed, still extended before them. It was to this that they now tried to force the boat.

Ten feet! Only ten feet! And the ten feet lessened to nine, and the nine to eight, and the eight to seven, and the seven to six.

But six feet between them and the shore! But six feet! Would they—could they—fail at last?

Six feet only! But the tide was wild and strong, and now, at this last crisis of their fate, seemed like some living monster, fearful that his prey was escaping from his power. It was as though his grasp was fastened on them with a fiercer clutch and a more desperate tenacity,—as though, at this supreme hour, he had risen in his might, and, even at the very gate of his domain, had seized them, and was trying to draw them to destruction.

But six feet! Yet between them and the rock of their hope, even in those few feet of watery distance, what risks and dangers lay—what chances of loss—what baffled hopes—what despair!

The suspense was anguish.

On they went with the fury of the torrent. "O, why haven't I a paddle!" groaned little Phil Kennedy. Bruce raised himself, and looked around, with his pale face and staring eyes. Arthur, and Tom, and Bart put forth their last energies.

Four feet!

Not a word was spoken. The tightly compressed lips, the resolute eyes, the frowning brows of the struggling boys, spoke of their resolution; their panting, heaving breasts told how heavily they labored with their clumsy, unwieldy oars.

A roar sounded in their ears to the right. It was the rush of the current as it swept past the extreme verge of the ledge. There was the open sea. There lay their last chance; beyond it—destruction.

They knew it—they felt it. That sound struck on their ears like the knell of doom. One last effort—one superhuman struggle. Nearer came the boat; although even then trembling on the extreme verge, yielding to the current, it turned slightly, bringing its head closer to the rock.

It was done.

In an instant, arms were outstretched, and Bart's hands were clinging to the sea-weed. For a moment the boat was checked.

Tom Crawford and Phil Kennedy grasped the sea-weed also; and at that instant, Arthur, seizing the boat's rope, sprang ashore. His leap jerked the boat, which, caught by the tide, was swept off, leaving masses of sea-weed, torn from the rocks, in the hands of the boys.

A cry of despair arose.

But Arthur held the rope wound about his hands. As the boat moved, he steadied his feet for the struggle. The swift tide bore it off. As the rope tightened out, the fury of the current, driving against the boat, contended with the strength of that one boy. For a moment it was the boy who lost. At the first jerk, his feet slipped on the treacherous sea-weed. He fell. He was dragged toward the water.

No sound escaped from those in the boat,—not a word either of fear for themselves or of encouragement or warning to Arthur. Well they knew that Arthur would die on the rocks, or be drowned in the sea, rather than lose his hold of that rope, which, in his desperate purpose, he had twisted round his hands.

For a few moments Arthur could not recover himself. On that slippery sea-weed there was no foothold. He was drawn nearer and nearer to the water. He looked around hastily. At last he saw the round top of a boulder a little on one side. To this he managed to work himself, letting the boat yield to the tide still more as he did so. A few steps, and he was there. He plunged into the water, he pressed his feet against that stone, and then, drawing himself back, he pulled with all his strength.

The boat yielded. The power was now in his hands. Grasping the rope nearer, he drew the boat in more closely, and at last it touched the shore.

They were saved at last!

Out leaped Bart into the water, and, holding the boat, he added his strength to that of Arthur. The others followed as quickly as possible. Bruce had begun to regain his strength once more, and was able to get out without help. The unparalleled exertions which he had undergone on the cliff had given a severe strain, which, in his final struggle to reach the schooner, had resulted in a spasm of his heart. From this he was now rallying once more. Joy at reaching the land did much to restore him, and he was soon able to start wherever the others wished to go.

Their first movement was to go away from the ledge farther up to the beach. The rocks were flat, and not very difficult to walk over. They towed the boat as they went, which was a difficult task, but successfully accomplished. After severe exertions, they at length brought the boat about a quarter of a mile up to a place where there was an indentation in the line of shore, and scarcely any current. Here they hauled it up some distance, and fastened it securely. After this they went up to the gravelly beach at the foot of the cliff, and sat down to rest for a while, and to consider the situation.

The fog was as thick as ever, and they could see but a little distance along the beach, or out on the water. The side of the island on which they found themselves was sheltered from the chill wind. As to the boat, it was impossible to draw it up any farther. It would be necessary to wait until the tide rose higher, before they could bring it into a place of safety. But little could be done, except watch it from time to time.

It was now late, and darkness was coming on rapidly. Soon they would be surrounded by the impenetrable shades of night. Bart and Arthur offered to go along the shore and find some place where they could pass the night, leaving the others to watch the boat, and see if there were any signs of the schooner.

But then the important question arose, what should they do for their suppers? For a time this puzzled all of them.

"I'll tell you what it is, boys," said Bart at last; "I think I know how to get something. We passed a place down on the shore where there were lots of mussels. Tom, you come along with me, and Phil can go with Arthur. Bruce may watch here."

This plan was eagerly adopted; and as there was no time to lose, the boys set out. Fortunately, the place spoken of by Bart was not far away, and fortunately, too, the rocks were covered with shell-fish of different kinds, and the hollows of the rocks filled with them. Tom and Bart heaped them into their handkerchiefs.

"Hallo!" cried Bart, suddenly, in a joyous tone. "See here, Tom."

"What?"

"Come here."

Tom went, and found Bart plunging his hands most vigorously into a pool of water, which the retreating tide had left in a rocky hollow.

"What have you got there?"

"I call them shrimps," said Bart, holding one up in his hands. "They're rather small, though. Go about and hunt up another hole."

Tom went off, and in a short time called to Bart in a loud voice.

Bart started up.

Tom was walking toward him with a large, dark object in his hand.

"A lobster!" cried Bart. "A lobster! Hurrah! and hurrah again! Tom, you've saved us all from starvation. Good on your head. We needn't wait here any longer, for it's getting dark, and we'll have to join the other fellows."

On returning to Bruce, they displayed their treasures, to the great delight of all. Arthur and Phil had also been successful. Walking farther up the beach, they had come to the end of the cliff, and reached a steep, well-wooded bank. It was not far away, and there were fir trees, from which they could easily cut enough brush to make very comfortable beds. There was also plenty of drift-wood, with which they could make a fire.

Without any more delay, the boys all started off, first marking the place so as to know where to go for the boat. Reaching the bank, they gathered drift-wood, and logs, and fir-brush, with which they built a fire on the beach at the foot of the cliff, where it adjoined the bank. They had plenty of matches in their pockets, and soon the fire was lighted; the flames rushed fiercely through the inflammable brush-wood, and the boys kept gathering fresh fuel from all sides and heaping it on.

"And now to cook our tea," said Bart. "Let's get a lot of stones, and put them in the fire till they get red hot. Then we can draw them out, and roast all our shell-fish splendidly."

This suggestion was at once acted on, and the boys gathered stones and threw them in.

After this they all went to work collecting driftwood from all sides, till a large pile was heaped up, sufficient to last them through the night.

Then, in turn, each one took the hatchet and went up the bank, and cut as much fir-brush as he considered necessary for a bed. The darkness had increased, and the fog intensified it; but the towering flames, as they leaped up, illumined the scene, affording them sufficient light to cut the brush, and throwing a strong glare along the beach as far as the place where their boat lay.

And next, they pulled out the stones from the fire, and arranging some of them in the sand, they laid the lobster on the top, and piled other stones around them, till the lobster lay buried in an oven as good and as serviceable as that of the best kitchen range. A number of shell-fish were thrown on other stones, and the shrimps were easily cooked by being laid on the top of a hot stone for a few minutes. While waiting for the lobster, they appeased their hunger by cooking and eating these smaller fry.

"I never ate baked lobster," said Bruce; "but I've heard that it's the best thing there is."

"We'll soon judge for ourselves," said Bart. "Only before we fairly sit down to dine, let's go off and draw the boat up farther."

Four of them started off. They found that already the tide had risen so far that it was level with the bows. A long and vigorous exertion enabled them to draw it up farther, and then they went back to the fire.

By that time it was decided that the lobster had been baking long enough, and it was accordingly uncovered.

A cry of delight escaped them.

There lay the lobster, brilliantly red, as though red hot from the oven, and showing clearly the excellence of Bart's contrivance.

"That's the way the Micmacs manage," said Bart. "And they wouldn't look at a lobster that came out of a pot."

Ranging themselves around the lobster, in front of the fire, the boys now began their repast. One and all pronounced it glorious. It was salt enough and juicy enough to satisfy the most delicate palate; and the severe exercise and long fast of the boys had given them appetites which would have made a worse dish acceptable.

"Well, boys," said Bart, "here we are on a desert island, without a penny in our pockets; but it isn't a bad place, after all."

"I wonder if they will hunt after us."

"Of course they will."

"They ought to see this fire, at any rate."

"I thought of that, and expected to see some signs of them before this."

"Perhaps it's too foggy."

"O, if they were within a mile of us, they'd see that light."

"I should think, if they came after us, they would have been within that distance."

"O, we can't tell. They may have got into another direction altogether."

"Well, I suppose they'll find us some time."

"I'm sure I don't care."

"Nor do I."

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

"We'll have to prepare for life on a desert island. To-morrow we'll explore it, and build our camp. It's lucky we have a hatchet and a pistol."

"It's lucky we have lobsters."

"O, we'll find lots of other things. There are sea-gulls' eggs, I'll bet."

"And clams."

"And perhaps oysters."

"We'll have to organize a government, and build a town. Wigwams will make the best houses."

"No—spruce camps."

"O, wigwams are the only things that will keep the rain off."

"I wonder if we can find any birch bark."

"We must explore to-morrow."

"There's one thing more to do to-night," said Arthur. "For my part, I don't want to have to run down to that miserable boat

every ten minutes till high tide. I've had enough of her for one day. We must get her up now. There's a lot of round sticks in that pile, and we can use them as rollers; so let's go and get the boat up now."

This proposition was at once acted on. Four good round sticks were found, and some others to serve as levers. With these the boys started off to move the boat.

They found it hard work, but practicable. The progress was slow, and it took a good hour; but at last they had the satisfaction of seeing the boat above high-water mark, and fastened to a piece of projecting rock.

Then they selected sleeping places, and spread their beds. After this they heaped up fresh fuel, and sat around the fire, making a hundred plans for their desert life. Arthur was the only one who did anything. He had found a piece of tough spruce, and with hatchet and knife was busily shaping it into an oar.

At last they all retired to their beds, and slept.

VIII.

Blue Sky.—Building a House.—The Signal Staff.—A fatal Disgust.—Mournful Forebodings.

Early the next morning the boys were all up, quite refreshed, in spite of their unaccustomed beds. They gathered the embers of the fire together, and heaping on fresh fuel, started it into a blaze. Then they proceeded to secure a breakfast. This could not be immediately attended to, however, for the tide was not at its lowest ebb, and it was necessary to wait for two or three hours. Enough shell-fish remained to stay their appetites till something better could be procured.

To their great joy, they saw that the fog had all gone. A warm, fresh breeze was blowing, the sky was clear and cloudless, and the sun rose brilliantly, casting his dazzling rays in a radiant flood of lustre across the sea. If there had been any feeling of discontent, it would have been dispelled by the grandeur of the scene.

Some eight or ten miles away they saw the main land. Far away, on the other side of the bay, they saw a line of hills, terminating in the familiar form of Blomidon, while, looking along the beach, they saw lying beyond this island the one on which they had landed the day before. They now knew that they had drifted past that, and had gone ashore on the adjoining one, and they could understand the whole of that course which they had made blindly through the fog. It was with much eagerness that they looked around for the schooner. But they saw no traces of her whatever. The place where she had anchored was plainly discernible, but she had gone. It was not difficult to know the reason of this, since it was the very thing which they expected would happen. But where was the schooner now? Which way had she gone? When would she return? How could those on board possibly find them out? All these were questions which it was not easy to answer.

While waiting for the tide to fall, they wandered up the banks in order to select some place suitable for a camp. It was not long before they settled on a spot which seemed very suitable. Near where they had built the fire, the cliff ended, and the side of the island became a wooded slope. About fifty feet above the fire, there was a broad, open platform, free from trees and covered with moss. Walking on beyond this, they ascended to the edge of the cliff, where it stood up two hundred feet above the shore. Here grew a solitary tree about fifty feet high, and very conspicuous from its situation. Around it the rock was uncovered in places.

The discovery of these places filled them with delight. They had already decided to build a camp, and the platform first mentioned seemed to all to be very suitable.

"But we must find a spring somewhere," said Bruce, who, after his night's rest, declared himself as well as ever.

"So we must," said Bart. "Boys, let some of us hunt up a spring."

Off they went in different directions, and soon every one was shouting out a discovery of water. In fact, in that damp and well-watered country, springs can easily be found on every hill-side. The nearest one was the best, and by breaking away some of the earth and digging a hole with a stone in the clay of the bank, a well was rudely formed, which was suitable for all immediate needs.

By the time they had finished these explorations, the tide was sufficiently low to admit of a search for their breakfast. All the boys went off, since all were equally interested. The search was perfectly successful, resulting in the capture of thirteen lobsters and a great quantity of shrimps. Bringing back their prey in triumph, they heated a large number of stones and cooked all the lobsters together, partly for the sake of keeping them better, and partly that they might have a good supply of ready-cooked provisions on hand.

"Do you know, boys," said Phil Kennedy, as they sat at breakfast, "I've got an idea?"

"Good for you. What is it?"

"Why, we ought to have a signal."

"That's true."

"Well, my plan is to have a signal up there," said Phil, pointing to the solitary tree on the top of the cliff.

"How can you manage it?"

"Why, turn that tree into a flag-staff by cutting off the branches. I can climb it, and if I can have the hatchet for a little while, I'll promise to get every branch off."

"Well, now, Phil," said Bruce, "I call that a first-rate idea. But where will you get a flag?"

"I'll fasten my red shirt on."

"Hurrah!" cried all, clapping Phil on the back. "Phil, you're a genius."

"Talking about signals," said Tom Crawford, "a flag won't be enough. We want something for nights and for foggy days. We ought to build a heap of dry brush and kindling, and be ready to light it at a moment's notice. Perhaps it would be too much trouble to keep it going all night."

"Yes; it would," said Bruce. "The best thing would be to have a pile ready to light. But the first thing to do is to build our camp, and we'll have lots of brush ready for the pile. Phil can have the hatchet to trim the tree after we have cut the poles and things for the camp."

"What kind of a camp shall we have?"

"A wigwam."

"Where'll we get the birch bark?"

"Explore the island."

"That'll take too much time. We want a camp to-day, and a camp we must have. The best way will be to build an ordinary one of poles and spruce brush, and after that is built, we can look about for birch bark."

"And then I've got my oar to finish," said Arthur, who had been working on it at intervals all the morning.

"Well," said Bart, "suppose we go to work at the camp first. We'll want something to fasten it with. If you like, I'll go and hunt after some roots that I know of. They'll do first rate for ropes."

"All right; and we'll go and cut the poles."

Off they went, four of them after poles and brush, and Bart after roots for ropes. The hatchet served to cut the poles, and the knives to trim them. Four industrious boys, working diligently at this, soon laid low a large number of straight, slender maple trees and an immense quantity of fir branches. These they all dragged to that platform which they had selected as the site of their house, and then looked about to find the best situation for the temporary camp. As they

expected to build a better one, they chose a place which would not interfere with any future operations. It was at the rear of the platform. Four trees grew there, at nearly equal distances, in the form of a square. They determined to adopt these trees as part of the frame of the camp, and use them as corner posts. Bart had succeeded in finding an immense quantity of long, flexible roots, some of which were sassafras roots, others the long roots of willow trees, and all very tough and strong. First of all, they laid four of their strongest poles from tree to tree, the rear pole being about eight feet high, and the front one five feet. The side poles sloped up from front to rear. There they stuck a large number of poles into the ground in front, on the sides and in the rear, about a foot apart, leaving space for a door and a window. Then they laid poles over the top crosswise, so as to form a good foundation for a roof. All these were firmly fastened, so that at last, when the frame was completed, it was as secure as though it had been nailed together; in fact, much more so.

So far, all had been well and successfully accomplished; but the next task was a more difficult one. This consisted in interweaving fir brush between the poles, so that they should be firm and strong. Beginning at the bottom, each bush was carefully inserted and pressed as closely down as possible. It was a tedious process; but the five industrious boys worked unweariedly, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing the rear and the right side completed. Then they concluded to rest for a while and dine.

Cold lobster and cold water were all the fare that they could command; but they ate with a good appetite, and greatly enjoyed the brief respite from their hard work. After this was over, they returned to their task, and at length completed the front and the left side.

Now the roof remained. This was the most difficult task of all. Three boys went on the roof, and two below handed up brush as fast as it was required. They began at the lower side in front, and inserted the brush so as to lie along the slope of the roof like thatch. The butt-end of each bush was inserted, and the brush ends projected. The flat branches of fir trees are of such a nature that they will lie very close to any surface on which they may be placed. These brushes were all placed in double layers; each upper row over-lapped the lower one; and thus a roof was formed thick and close enough to turn any ordinary fall of rain, though, of course, it could not be expected to keep out the water in case of a prolonged storm. After the roof was all covered, the last brush at the upper edge was intertwined with others which were placed across them, and these again were all securely fastened to the poles below.

Then their spruce camp was finished, and was almost an exact counterpart of the one which they had built in the woods. They had done it well and quickly, for long practice in this work in their own woods had given them great skill in the construction of such buildings as these.

The last thing to attend to was the beds. All the brush that remained was brought inside, and laid lengthwise at the rear of the camp. Then they went into the woods, and gathered an immense quantity of dry, soft moss, which they spread over the spruce brush. In this way they formed a bed large enough for the whole party, as soft as a hair mattress, and as good as anything can be for the repose of a weary frame.

This completed their work, and it was not yet sundown. They had worked nobly; and when they stood out on the platform, and regarded their handiwork, their delight burst forth in ringing cheers.

And now Phil claimed the hatchet, so as to carry out his cherished purpose of forming a signal staff. The others all went up to watch him at his work. Phil climbed up without any difficulty, and began at the upper branches, cutting away on a level with his waist, and using the lower ones to stand on. Phil was skilful with his hatchet; the branches were not large, and came tumbling down, beneath his strokes, with great rapidity. These the boys below gathered together, and heaped up in a pile, at a sufficient distance off to burn without injury to the signal staff, and yet in such a situation that any flame would be conspicuous to those on the sea. The work was soon accomplished; the last branch, fell, and Phil descended to the ground. Where the tree had lately been there now arose a tall staff, naked, and ready to bear at its summit a red shirt, a pair of trousers, or anything else which the fancy of Phil might suggest as suitable to the place and the occasion.

Meanwhile Arthur had gone to the beach, and returned with an armful of shavings and choppings from the wood which he had been trying to fashion into an oar. They were dry and fine, and were intended to serve as kindling whenever the time might come for kindling the signal fire.

And now one thing more remained to be done. They had decided to have their fire on the platform in front of the camp—a place which was greatly superior to the beach for such a purpose, and which also would give them the advantage of a warm fire on a cool evening, and a light close by their dwelling-place. So they went out to collect drift-wood, and

carried up a large quantity to the place. Good stones were also selected for cooking purposes, and the cold lobsters were carefully brought from the beach, and deposited in the camp. But the labor of carrying the drift-wood up the steep bank showed them that it would be as well not to be too lavish with their fuel. In order to have the cheerfulness of brilliant light along with the gratefulness of warmth, they cut a quantity of brush, which they intended to throw on the fire from time to time. Thus, with a comfortable camp, and soft beds of moss, and plenty of fuel, and a pleasant fire, with food and drink, with fine weather and a charming view, the "B. O. W. C." might be considered as tolerably happy.

And so they would have been, if it had not been for one thing—a thing which revealed itself to them during their evening repast, and soon threw a gloom over their prospects.

It was dark; the fire was lighted, and threw out a cheerful glow; the cold lobster was brought out, and the boys began to partake. For some time nothing was said. At last the silence was broken by Bart. He had been twisting a leg of the lobster fastidiously in his fingers, and nibbling little morsels of it, in a way which did not look very much like the fashion of a hungry boy who had done a good day's work, when suddenly he flung the lobster's leg into the fire.

"I can't stand the abominable stuff any longer," he cried.

"Neither can I," said Bruce.

"Nor I"—Nor I"—Nor I"—said all the others; and the fragments of the lobster were all contemptuously thrown away.

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Tom Crawford, mournfully.

"I wouldn't care if there was even a raw potato," said Bart, "or a mouldy ship-biscuit, or an old dried turnip, or a bit of pork, or anything else to eat with it so as to take off the edge of it; but to eat nothing else but this everlasting lobster, lobster, lobster, is more than I can stand."

"Tea last night," said Tom Crawford, dolefully, "lobster. Breakfast this morning, lobster. During the morning I felt hollow—lobster. At dinner, lobster. For my part, I've had enough of it."

"What can we do?"

"I'm tired of shrimps."

"Bother shrimps."

"O for a good slice of bread and butter!"

"Or a good mealy potato!"

"Or a beefsteak!"

"Or crackers and cheese!"

"What are we going to do? We'll have to eat lobster, or starve."

"I feel," said Phil, "that I'm growing to be a lobster myself; my skin is turning quite hard."

"I'm beginning to lose faith in desert islands," said Arthur.

"Yes,—they're a failure."

"But how do we know?" said Bart. "We haven't explored yet. We don't know half of what may be on the island."

"We know pretty well what there is," said Bruce. "Spruce trees, maple trees, moss, and rocks,—that's about all."

"Unfortunately, it isn't a South Sea island, and so we can't expect to pull cocoa-nuts from the trees, or have bread-fruit for our breakfasts. There are no mangoes, no bananas, no oranges, no grapes, no nothing, unless we choose to eat bark and fir cones."

"The next time we try a desert island, boys, I move that we make tracks for the Pacific Ocean," said Arthur.

"I second that motion," cried Phil.

"It's rather odd," said Bart, "that all of us should get tired of lobster at the same time."

"It would be odder yet," said Tom, "if any of us had been able to stand it any longer."

"That's about the thing," said Bruce.

"And so the question remains yet," said Arthur, "What are we going to do?"

No one answered. They all sat looking at the fire. Phil seized some brush and flung it on; the flames caught it, and crackled through it, and dashed up fiercely and brightly, lighting up five very hungry, very tired, and very discontented faces.

"Hurrah!" cried Bart at last, starting to his feet. "Hurrah! I have it!"

"What's that?"

"Gulls' eggs!" said Bart.

"Not bad," said Bruce. "At any rate we can try it. Perhaps we may find some young gulls. They eat young rooks in England; why shouldn't young gulls be good?"


"We'll try it to-morrow," said Tom.

"At any rate," said Bart, "it all comes to this. We must explore the island. I've got my pistol. Who knows what may turn up. We may come across lots of rabbits, or, at any rate, wild fowl. Come, now, things are not so bad after all. To-morrow will show us what the chances are for our dinner table."

This was now the only consolation they had. The lobsters had grown abhorrent, and they could not think of touching them any more. Hungry as they were after all their hard work, they threw aside the only food that they could get. They were compelled to go supperless to bed, and there dream of more agreeable food. Fortunately, though they could not eat, they could sleep; and soon all were wandering far away in the land of Nod

IX.

Exploring.—A wild Walk.—On the Lookout for Prey.—What is it?—Is it a wild Goose?—Tremendous Sensation, the Explorers being as much astounded as Robinson Crusoe was when he discovered the human Footprints in the Sand.

 In the following morning, all were up by day-break, and Bruce could think of nothing but gulls' eggs. In the desperate extremity of hunger to which they were reduced through their dislike to lobsters, they determined to make a search along the cliffs for nests. They walked along, and at length came to a place where some nests had been built. They found a large number of eggs here, and appropriated them all. On cooking them, they found them of a peculiar flavor, yet eatable, and they congratulated themselves on their good luck.

They now determined to put into execution their cherished plan of exploring the island. One was to stay behind to attend to the signal, and lots were drawn to see who it would be. It fell on Phil, who at once accepted his task with great cheerfulness, and informed them that he would make an omelet on a hot stone. In this pleasing occupation they left him, and went into the woods.

They found the woods here precisely like those of the other island. Fir, and spruce, and maple grew densely together,

and beneath all there was a thick underbrush, with fallen trees, and ferns, and moss. Progress, under such circumstances, was exceedingly difficult; but they knew that the island was quite small, and so they kept on their way. The grounds continually ascended for a long distance, and this, of course, added somewhat to the difficulty of the journey; but at last the ascent ceased, and they knew that they were on the summit of the island. Nothing could be seen, however. So thick was the forest, that it shut out all the view; nor was it of any use to climb a tree, for all were of nearly equal size, and if they were to climb up as far as they could, they would only find the view obstructed by the tops of trees growing around. So they kept on their way, and found the ground descending continuously in an easy slope. The wood was as dense as ever, and no living thing appeared. They had started with vague ideas of meeting with hares or wild fowl, but thus far nothing had been visible except the gulls overhead. They began to think that there was nothing but gulls on the island. Bart, however, assured them that they could not judge as yet, and expressed his unshaken confidence that he would start a rabbit before the day was done. He had his pistol in his belt, and he was determined to use it before going home, even if he had to shoot a gull. So they kept on down the descent, expecting every moment to come in sight of the bay.

At last the woods grew thinner, and before them they saw the sky through the trees. Moving farther forward, the trees grew more scattered, and in a short time they found themselves at the top of a long, open ground, which sloped to the bay, and was overgrown with moss and low brush-wood. At the farther end of the open, a small eminence arose, with some bushes on the summit. Before them the waters of the bay spread out, with the distant horizon skirted by a range of hills.

"Here's the place for rabbits," said Bart, "if there are any."

"If there are any! Of course," said Bruce; "that's the point."

They walked on through the brush-wood, and at length, reaching a mossy knoll, they sat down to rest. After a time, Bart started off alone to pursue his investigations. He had not gone far before he stopped, and shrunk back. Then he looked around with a triumphant expression. Then he moved forward in a stealthy manner.

"I wonder what's up now," said Bruce.

"Bart's found something at last," said Arthur.

"A hare, perhaps," said Tom.

The three boys started after Bart. Scarcely had they moved a half dozen paces, when Bart took aim and fired. A loud cry was heard, a large white bird was seen jumping in the air, and falling to the ground, and then Bart ran forward and secured his prize.

The other boys hurried up to him. As they came, he turned to meet them, with a face flushed with triumph, and holding the large white bird by the legs.

"What is it?" they cried.

"A wild goose," said Bart.

"A wild goose!" cried Bruce, who had reached him by that time. "A tame one you mean."

"No it isn't, either. How can it be a tame one? It's a wild one."

"No, Bart," said Arthur, "it's a tame goose—as tame as I am."

"You're a tame goose yourself," said Bart. "Do you call that a tame goose? Why, it's a wild one, of course. Look at its wings."

"What about its wings? They're tame enough. No, Bart, it's the real original domestic goose of the civilized farm-yard."

"Nonsense! as though I don't know a tame goose when I see one."

"Well, you see one now."

"No, I don't."

"This is one."

"No."

"Yes."

"No."

"It is."

"Pooh!"

"Bart," said Bruce, "did you ever see a live wild goose?"

"No, I never did."

"Aha! How do you know anything about them, then?"

"Why, I've seen pictures,—lots of them,—and they look just like this."

"But I've seen wild geese living and flying,—and dead, too, lots of times,—and this isn't one."

"O, this is a kind that you are not acquainted with. Why, there are ever so many kinds of wild geese."

But at this moment the boys were rudely interrupted.

"Aha! ye thafes of the wurruld, ye!" cried a loud voice close beside them. "Ye villains, ye. What are ye doin',—a murdherin' and slaughterin' a poor man's property. Ye blackgyards, ye! What d'ye mane by comin' here and shootin' my geese?"

Thunderstruck at this unexpected interruption, the boys turned, and found themselves face to face with an old, grizzled, red-faced little Irishman, whose furious gestures and angry eyes were directed menacingly toward them.

"Which af ye's shot my goose?" he roared.

"I did," said Bart, quietly.

"Ye young villain! I'll make ye pay for it,—and dear, too,—as sure as me name's Denny O'Rafferty. What'r ye's doin' here, any how? What d'ye mane by shootin' my goose? D'ye think I'm goin' to be robbed be a gang of blackgyards? Be the powers! if ye think that same, ye'll find ye're mistaken, bad scran till ye!"

"Mr. O'Rafferty," said Bart, "you're quite mistaken. We're honest boys, and came here by accident."

"What did ye shoot the goose for, then, ye imp of mischief?"

"It was a mistake," said Bart, coolly. "Of course I didn't know it was yours,—in fact, I wasn't aware that anybody was living here. I will be happy to pay you whatever you think it's worth, and am sorry for the mistake."

At this speech O'Rafferty's face and manner underwent a complete change.

"Ach, be the powers! if that's all," said he, good humoredly, "then we won't say any more about it. But how did ye's get here? I didn't see any boat. Where did ye land, then?"

"Why, the fact is, we were brought here," said Bart, who went on to tell him all about their adventure.

Dennis O'Rafferty listened to every word with intense interest, his face undergoing a perpetual change of expression, that spoke of conflicting emotions.

"Be the powers, then," he exclaimed, as Bart ceased, "it was a narrow scratch that ye had of it. An' ye've been ashore here two nights. Be jabbers, it's meself that's ashamed of what I said till ye about the goose. Have ye's had anything till ate thin, at all?"

"Nothing but lobster."

"Lobster! Well, thin, let me inforrum ye's that ye'll find that a moighty onwholesome diet. An' you've been here all that time wid nothin' at all to ate. Be jabbers, I'm the boy for ye's. Come along, boys. Ye'll find old O'Rafferty can give ye a breakfast, at any rate. Come along. Ye're starvin', so ye are. Me old woman'll be deloighted to set eyes on ye's. Never mind the goose; I'll give ye's a dozen for nothin'. Lave it lie there; the old woman'll come an' pick it for ye. Come along, boys."

And the old fellow led the way; while the boys, delighted at the turn which things had taken, followed gayly after.

"And so ye'r Docthor Porther's boys, are ye's?" continued Dennis. "Faith it's himself'll be throubled. It's a long time I've knowed the docthor. An' there isn't his shuparior in the counthry. Arrah, be me sowl, but it's meself that's glad to see ye's. The sight of yer young, fresh faces does good till me old bones. Come along, boys. And is the docthor with ye's in the schooner? Come along; ye haven't fur to go. I've got a bit of a house around beyant. Ye'll see it as soon as iver we turrn the hill."

On rounding the hill, they saw a clearing of about thirty acres, with a boat drawn up on the shore, while close by them was a small house and a barn. An old woman at the door looked up at them in speechless amazement.

"It's the owld woman," said O'Rafferty. "It's herself that's dead bate at the sight of ye's."

"Lard save us, Dinny, what in the wurruld have ye got there, thin?" cried the old woman, as the party reached the house.

"It's some of Docthor Porther's boys, that's been gettin' themselves shipwrecked on the other side," said O'Rafferty, "and haven't had a bite to ate for two days, savin' an' exceptin' a bit of cowl'd lobster, which isn't aisy aitin'. An' however they got ashore on there, widout oars, bates me intirely,—widout countin' that thim same has been workin' like slaves a day or more, on impty stomachs, buildin' a camp and carryin' firewood, which is hard enough work to kill a man, let alone boys like these. And so stir yer stumps, Molly avick, and bring out praties an' bacon, the best ye have, and a drawin' of tay, an' chayse, an' bread and butter. It's starvin' they all are intoirely, or me name's not Dinny O'Rafferty."

"Ah, thin," cried the old woman, "the saints stand betune us and harrum. What's that ye'r sayin', Dinny O'Rafferty? Is it shipwrecked ye wer', thin, ye darlin's of the wurruld? Sure it's not much an owld woman like me can do for the likes of ye; but I'll give ye the best I've got, so I will. Sure an' it's starvin' ye must be, if ye've had nothin' to ate for so long."

Nothing could exceed the kindness and warmth of welcome which O'Rafferty and his wife gave the boys. The old woman bustled about, and kindled a fire, and put on the pot and kettle, and laid the table, occasionally stopping to look at the boys, one after the other, with a peculiar fondness of expression and a low, crooning noise, such as nurses make over children.

"Sure it's like a breath of fresh air to a captive in a dungeon to look at your swate faces," she cried. "Niver a boy's face have I seen since the dark day when my own boy took his swate face from me eyes foriver. An' that was fifteen year ago. An' we came here, an' lived here ever since."

The old woman gave a long sigh, and sitting down, she held her head in her hands, rocking herself to and fro.

"Ah, well," she said, getting up and going out to the barn, "it's not much longer to live we have thin."

"Fifteen years," said O'Rafferty, as his wife went out. "It's fifteen years since we lost the boy. We lived in Parrsboro, an' had as nice a house and farm as the likes of us could ever wish for. But whin we lost him, we lost all heart for the place. The old woman wud have died if she had staid; an' so I bought this bit of a place, an' what with farmin' an' fishin' we manage to grub along, though it's seldom or niver that we see anybody but our own two selves. Well, well; wud ye like to look at the place?" he continued, rising. "It isn't much of a place; but it's not long we have to live, and it'll do for us."

They followed the old man about. The place extended over thirty acres, with a nice beach in front for the boat. It was an easy declivity, with pasture lands behind the house. The boat was a large whaler, and nets were spread on the grass to dry. O'Rafferty said that during the summer he had visits sometimes from old friends, and at other times people landed to see about the chances for sporting or getting minerals; but never, since he had been there, had a boy been on shore, and his wife had not seen a boy since she lost her son. He took them all over the place, and finally led them to a little enclosure not far from the house. Inside was a grave mound, and at the head a white wooden slab, with these words painted upon it:—

In Memoriam.

*Michael O'Rafferty,
beloved son of
Dennis and Mary O'Rafferty,
born Aug. 2, 1830,
died June 5, 1845.*

Requiescat in Pace.

The old man stood in silence, bareheaded, looking at the inscription. The boys removed their hats, and looked in solemn sympathy at the bereaved father, whose love and yearning for his lost boy were still so manifest, that the sight of a boy's face could renew his grief after fifteen vanished years. Standing thus in silence, and reverencing that grief, they waited till the old man turned away, and then followed him, without a word, back across the field, and into the house.

As they entered, the savory smell of broiled bacon came gratefully to their nostrils. The table was spread with delicious mealy potatoes, brown crusty bread, butter as yellow as gold, and clean, spotless plates. If they had the power of wishing and gaining, they would have desired nothing better than this.

"Mr. O'Rafferty," said Bart, suddenly, "I forgot to mention that we left one of our number on the beach. I will take a run across the island, with your permission, and bring him here, for he is as hungry as we are, if not more so."

"Another one!" cried O'Rafferty. "An' waitin' on the beach! Why didn't ye tell me before?"

"Well, you see we were tired with our scramble, and I wanted to get rested before starting back. But I'll go now, if you've no objection."

"Deed, thin, an' I have an objection," cried O'Rafferty. "D'ye think I'd let ye go starvin' back agin before ye'd got a bite to ate? or, for that matter, d'ye think I'd let ye go at all? No; I'll go meself."

"You? O, no. I won't allow that," began Bart.

"It's meself 'll go, an' nobody else," cried O'Rafferty, positively. "Ye'r all too hungry an' tired. Besides, ye don't know a step of the way. Ye came through the woods, an' a mighty tough job ye found it; but I know an aiser way—it's a path of me own. Ye said it was at the other end of the island, on the other side."

"Yes; at a rock with a tree on the edge."

"I know the place well. My path comes out close by there. I wonder ye didn't come across it."

"It is a wonder. We certainly would have noticed anything like a path, if we had found one."

"Well, it's all the same now. Ye'll jist stay here, an' sit down an' ate yer breakfasts like Christians, an' I'll go an' bring the boy. Not one of ye shall stir a step—not one step."

"Well, Mr. O'Rafferty, I'm sure you are putting yourself to too much trouble—"

"Throuble! D'ye call it throuble? Sure an' isn't it the brightest day I've knowed for iver so long?"

"Deed it is," chimed in his wife. "Be off wid ye, Dinny dear, and hurry back with the poor boy. Sure I'll keep the tay hot for him, an' the praties, an' the bacon."

Any further remonstrance or objection was out of the question; so the boys took their seats at the table. The old man started off, and promised to be back in a "jiffy."

He ascended the slope behind the house, and entered the woods by a pathway which, though but little trodden, was yet easy to traverse. Far different was this from the rough way by which the boys had crossed the island; and in far less time than they had taken, Denny approached the other shore. The pathway led down to the beach, about a hundred yards below the place where they had built their first fire.

As he descended, a singular sight met his eyes.

X.

New Attempts at Cookery.—Phil on the Lookout.—A Sail! A Sail!—The Signal of the red Shirt.—The Home of the O'Raffertys.

The left Phil behind, on the beach.

After the others had departed, Phil occupied himself with making arrangements to while away the time. First of all, he set to work to try and make an omelet. After a long search on the beach, he found some clam shells, which he took up to the platform; and then, selecting some flat stones, he threw them into the fire. Then he mixed some eggs in one of the shells, and tried to beat them with his jackknife. His success was not exactly dazzling; but he was satisfied to a certain extent, and intensely interested. At length, drawing forth one of the stones, which, by this time, was red hot, he poured the mixture on its surface. There was a fizzle, a steam, a hiss, and then a horrible smell of burnt egg. Phil made an awful face, and giving the stone a kick, sent it flying down to the beach, omelet and all.

Not at all discouraged, he began again *ab ovo*. Drawing out another stone, he determined to give it time to cool. So he mixed up some more eggs in the shell; and after waiting patiently for a long time for the stone, he at length thought it was cool enough, and poured the mixture upon it. It certainly had grown cool this time; in fact, somewhat too cool, as Phil gradually learned, when, after waiting patiently, he found that there was no appearance of any progress whatever in the cookery. So this, too, was a failure, and Phil disdainfully hurled it after its predecessor.

But he was not discouraged even yet. Once more he took his shell and made another mixture, and then drew forth the stone, and carefully watched it, trying it from time to time with the tip of his finger, to see if it was of the proper temperature. Having singed the tips of all his fingers, he concluded that it was time to stop that mode of testing, and run the risk of an actual trial. So he once more poured the mixture on the stone. Aha! this time there was no mistake. A pleasant steam came up, which was grateful to a famished boy. The only trouble was, the lower part was done before the upper was in the least affected; and worse still, it began to burn while the upper part was raw. Phil was not yet disheartened, however; and drawing his knife, he made desperate efforts to insert it under the omelet, so as to turn it over. But these efforts were not successful. He only succeeded in intermixing all together in a mess, and mangling it into a general mush. In trying to taste some of it, he found in his mouth nothing but a very unpleasant mixture of raw and burnt egg. With a sigh he relinquished his experiments, and sent this stone after the others.

He now contented himself with roasting two of them; and having partaken of them, he sauntered up the hill to the signal station. Here he lay down, and looked lazily out at the water.

Scarcely had he done so, than he gave a start. An object was before his eyes which he had not been able to see from the platform. The other end of the island could not be seen from there, because a projecting bank shut it out from view; but from here there was a fair view of the other islands. And there, just coming out from behind Pinnacle Island, was a schooner of the size and rig of the Antelope, and he did not doubt for a moment but that it was their schooner. She was now sailing along, and was not far from that very anchorage where he had seen her last.

With a shout and a wild beating of his heart, he sprang to his feet, and stared, with eager eyes, upon the schooner.

She was coming on very well, with a good breeze, and was coming in his direction. Would she continue on her course? If so, she would soon be there. Would she turn aside, and pass through the channel that separated the islands, or sail away to the main land opposite? The thought was intolerable. He had grown weary of desert life; he longed to leave the island,—or, rather, he longed to get something to eat.

So he rushed away to the pile of brush, and lighting his matches,—a whole card at a time,—he touched up the kindling

wood, and in a few moments the blaze was spreading through the mass of dry brush. Soon the flames rose high into the air, bearing with them vast volumes of black smoke.

Would they see that signal? They could not help seeing it. Would they understand it? Ah! that was another question. Still it came on in the same direction, without showing any signs of turning either to the right hand or the left. And now it had passed the channel between the islands, and was coming along in a line with the beach below, and not more than half a mile out.

The brush fire was burning briskly, and could last for half an hour without replenishing; but something more was needed. What could he do? At first he thought of running down to the beach and shouting. But then he feared that he might not be seen on the beach, and that his voice might not be heard. So that plan was rejected. One only remained, and that was, to climb the signal-staff. In an instant all this had passed through his mind, and in another instant it was acted upon. He tore off his red shirt, tied the sleeves together loosely, and hung it around his neck, and then, with wonderful agility, climbed the tree till he reached the top. The stumps of the branches, which remained on the trunk of the tree, formed a good foothold, and he was able to stand securely, clasping the tree with one arm, while with the other he took his shirt from around his neck, and waved it to and fro in the air. Below, and about thirty feet on one side, the fire blazed; and there, fifty feet in the air, on that solitary tree, stood the boy, waving, wildly and incessantly, the brilliant scarlet cloth. He felt that he had done the best, and if this would not attract attention, nothing would.

All this time the schooner came on, and at length came nearly opposite. Phil saw the crowd on board. He saw them staring and gesticulating. He was recognized—he was safe! Yes, there was Mr. Long,—he knew that tall figure in black,—and he was going to the stern. What for? Aha! wasn't that glorious? He had gone and had seized the ropes, and lowered and hoisted the flag again a score of times. Ha, ha, ha! What flag? What flag? Why, their own flag,—the flag of the "B. O. W. C.,"—which had evidently been waving there ever since their departure, and now saluted them as it brought them safety.

Phil's merry laughter rang out loud and clear, as he saw all this, in his excitement and his joy. He saw the schooner head in straight toward the shore, then sweep round; and then down rattled her anchor, her sails fell, and she lay waiting.

Phil gave a final wave and a loud shout; and then, descending the tree, he scampered down the slope and along the beach, as fast as his little legs would carry him, until at last he reached the verge of the shore opposite the schooner. Here he gave a loud hurrah. His shrill voice reached the schooner, which was only a short distance off, and was responded to by a loud cheer from all on board.

"Where are the other boys?" cried Mr. Long.

"In the woods; they'll be here soon."

"Where's the boat?"

"Up there," said Phil, pointing to where it lay.

"We can't get ashore. We've got no boat."

"When the tide gets up, and the boys come back, we can get the boat out," said Phil.

"How are you all?" cried Mr. Long.

"Very well, but nearly starved."

Instantly Mr. Long disappeared into the cabin. Returning shortly, he had a bundle in his hand, around which a string was tied. Then taking one end of the string, and whirling it violently around, sling fashion, he hurled it through the air toward the shore. The parcel fell about twenty feet beyond Phil. He ran to it, and, on opening it, found a quantity of sandwiches.

The ravenous way in which he devoured the sandwiches showed to those on board, far more powerfully than words, how famished poor Phil must have been.

"Will the others be back soon?" asked Mr. Long.

"O, yes. They've gone across the island to explore."

"Were you able to sleep?"

"Sleep? O, yes, first rate."

"How?"

"In the camp up there," said Phil, with his mouth full of sandwich, waving his hand in the direction of the platform. "We'd have enjoyed it if we'd only had some sandwiches," he added after a time, as he made a fresh onslaught on the parcel.

It was now about eleven o'clock, and not quite half tide. The tide was rising, however, and in due time would be up to the boat; and then, if the boys did not come, they might get in near enough to throw Phil a line, and from the schooner pull the boat into the water. For the present it was necessary to wait; so Phil ate his sandwiches, and talked with those on board. And this was the scene which met the eyes of Dennis O'Rafferty as he descended to the beach.

Dennis soon understood it all. He saw that the schooner had been searching for the boys, and had come here in their absence, and had found this boy. He hurried, without delay, to the beach, and at once told Phil where his friends were, and explained to those on board the schooner what they were doing, and why he had come.

"An' is the docthor on board?"

"No; he didn't come."

"Ah, thin it's mesilf that's sorry for that same," said Dennis.

On understanding the difficulty about the boat, he at once set himself to work remedying it. He found the rollers which the boys had used, and the poles; and then, with Phil's assistance, he began to push her down toward the water. It was far easier pushing her down than it had been pulling her up, and the boat soon reached the water's edge.

"We lost our oar, and we were making another. I don't know whether you can use it or not," said Phil. "Wait here, and I'll go and get it."

On bringing it, Dennis found it quite rough, of course, but still capable of working the boat along. So he launched the boat, and Phil jumped in, and Dennis followed; and in a short time the boat touched the vessel's side. The current just here was not strong, for it was half tide, and the vessel was very close to the shore. Phil was dragged on board by a dozen hands, and nearly suffocated by their rapturous greetings.

Mr. O'Rafferty then explained again where the other boys were, and invited all on board to come to his house and meet them. His invitation was eagerly complied with. Another oar was found on board, and soon Messrs. Simmons and Long, with all the boys, were on the beach.

Then they started. Phil insisted on showing the camp and the signal station, and told them all about their experience in shell-fish and lobsters.

Then they followed O'Rafferty across the island to his house.

On the way, Mr. Long told Phil all about the dismal voyage of the schooner after them. After cruising all about the Basin of Minas on the previous day, they had decided to come back to the Five Islands, and search along the shores, with the hope of finding them, or at least some traces of them. They had been watching the shore of this island so closely, that they had seen the first flash of the fire on the signal station. When they saw the red shirt by it, and then the figure climbing the tree, they knew that their search was at last successful. He made Phil tell him, over and over again, all about his own eventful escape, and shuddered to think how extreme their peril had been.

The walk over O'Rafferty's path was a most delightful one to all. The fearful cloud, that had so long hung over them, was at last dispelled, and in their reaction from sorrow, they all felt the wildest extreme of joy. So the boys went on with shouts, and songs, and laughter, till they reached their destination.

There the others had finished their repast, and were waiting for Phil. Great was their amazement to see the crowd. At once all was explained. With a wild cry of delight, they rushed to meet their friends, and their hands were nearly shaken off by their excited comrades.

Mr. O'Rafferty then left them, and Mrs. O'Rafferty prepared a repast for the company. But first she set before Phil the good things that she had been saving for him; and, though that young gentleman had disposed of an immense quantity of sandwiches, he yet was able—thanks to his excellent appetite and vigorous constitution—to do full justice to Mrs. O'Rafferty's tea and cream, and brown crusty bread and golden butter, and rich bacon, and mealy potatoes. Then the table was once more spread for the other guests; and they found the repast an agreeable change from the ship stores on which they had been feeding. To tell the truth, there were many among the company who were as famished, and had eaten quite as little, during the last twenty or thirty hours, as the castaways themselves.

They then strolled about the fields and along the beach, till suddenly a shout from one of the boys attracted the attention of all.

There, coming round the point, was the familiar form of the Antelope, her boat towed behind her once more; Captain Corbet, the mate, and O'Rafferty on board, and the black flag of the "B. O. W. C." floating gloriously aloft.

"It's been there all the time," said Billymack. "Wasn't it odd? Mr. Long wouldn't let any one pull it down."

"And all the schooners laughed at us," said Bogud. "It was such nonsense."

"Nonsense?" said Bart. "Far from it, Bogud. There's good luck in that emblem. So long as it floats on the breeze, we'll turn out all right."

"If you call this good luck; I should like to know what bad luck is."

Here the anchor rattled, and all the boys ran to the beach.

When the time came for them to leave, O'Rafferty was in despair. He wanted them to stay at least one night. But Mr. Long could not. They had already lost much time, and must make amends for it. They had to go that evening to Pratt's Cove. So O'Rafferty consoled himself by extorting a promise that the next time they came to the Five Islands they would anchor off his beach, and stop at least two days with him.

Meanwhile the boys had a long debate as to what they could give to O'Rafferty. To offer money would be an insult. They had to select from among their possessions something that would be appropriate for a parting gift. Bart proposed his pistol, but it was considered as not adapted to be of use to O'Rafferty. At last it was decided to give him the hatchet. A hatchet would always be useful; and it was so pretty a little tool, that it would be in itself a graceful keepsake. So Bart, with his jackknife, cut into the handle, very neatly, the initials of the different members of the "B. O. W. C.," and handed the gift to the old man.

"You won't refuse it," said Bart, "will you, Mr. O'Rafferty?" And he explained the initial letters to him.

Tears started to the old man's eyes.

"It's fairly heart-broken I am to part wid ye; but I'll take the hatchet to remember yer sweet faces by, and wid the hope that you won't forget owld O'Rafferty. And many's the drame I'll be drammin' about yes, till me owld eyes gets a look at yes again."

"An' may the blessin's av Heaven go wid yes all, ye darlin's av the worruld," ejaculated the old woman. "It's meself that'll pray for yes, that the Lard'll stan' betune yes and harrum. I'll be lookin' out for yes all another year, jewels; an' I'll have such crame, chayse, an' such maily taters, as ye never saw the like of before."


The old couple wrung the hands of all of them, and watched them embark. Soon all were on board. Then the anchor went up, and up went the sails. The schooner started, and moved slowly away.

And as she moved away, the boys saw the old couple standing on the beach waving farewells. There they stood till the vessel rounded a promontory which shut them from sight.

They were on their way to Pratt's Cove.

XI.

Pratt's Cove.—A Dinner Party.—The faithless Cook and Steward.—Songs.—Sudden and startling Interruption.—Stealing a Wood-pile.—Overwhelming Piece of Intelligence.

 he wind and tide were both rather unfavorable, and it was late before they reached Pratt's Cove. This place is formed by the bed of a creek which runs up from the bay, and, like all the streams of these waters, is subject to very great variations, being fordable at low tide, but at high tide deep enough to float a ship. It was half tide when they arrived, and the schooner was able to run a little way up the stream, where she anchored. It was quite dark, but they could see that the nearest land was a projecting point, clear of trees, and promising a pleasanter camping-ground than the hold of the schooner. It was therefore unanimously decided to go ashore, kindle a fire, and pass as festive an evening as possible. The shore was close by, and in a very short time they were all out of the vessel. Plenty of fuel lay there in the shape of a long pile of dry birch wood which lay heaped up along the shore. To this they helped themselves, kindled an enormous fire, and were soon seated around it, waiting for their evening repast.

At the outset of the trip, Johnny Blue and Sammy Ram Ram had been appointed steward and cook, owing to their personal application for those very honorable offices. Their duties had been very light; in fact, partly on account of rough weather, and partly owing to the anxiety of the previous day, there had been little or no occasion for their services. It was therefore expected that on the present occasion they would surpass themselves and astonish everybody by the brilliancy of their performance. As the party sat round the fire waiting for their repast, they all anticipated something of extraordinary excellence, and were impatient for the banquet to begin. Sammy and Johnny Blue, however, made no very great haste. In fact, it seemed to some that they were astonishingly slow, if not reluctant. Slowly they turned over the things, slowly they opened and shut the boxes and baskets, and very slowly indeed they took out the dishes.

"See here, you fellows," cried Bruce, suddenly. "You don't appear to be aware of the fact that we're all starving."

"Hurry up your cakes!" cried another.

"Come, be quick about it, Sammy Ram Ram! What's the use of being so particular?"

"Tumble out the things any way! We don't want a regular set table."

Sammy and Johnny quickened their motions a little, and said they would be ready "in a minute."

Meanwhile Messrs. Simmons and Long, assisted by the devoted Bogud, had been sorting their minerals in a general way, and wrapping each specimen in paper. Two good-sized baskets were filled, and many of them were very fine indeed. There were some fern prints, and some tracks of birds on sandstone, which Mr. Long had found, and which he regarded with the tenderest admiration. There was a very excellent amethyst, found by Mr. Simmons, some mica, some barytes, and, above all, a piece of quartz, in which faint flecks of gold were visible. It was taken from a vein which ran up the cliff, and was a foot or more in thickness. It seemed to promise a rich gold harvest to any one who might choose to try gold-crushing in so remote a place.

The tender interest excited by all these treasures, and the occupation of putting them into separate baskets, had so fully engrossed their thoughts, that they had not noticed any particular delay. At last, however, the work was done; and then it was that Mr. Long thought about the claims of appetite.

He started to his feet.

"What!" he cried, as he looked around; "not ready yet? Why, what's the matter?"

"In a minute," said Sammy Ram Ram.

"Yes, yes—in a minute," chimed in Johnny Blue.

"A minute? Well, that's longer than I can wait. So come along, all of us!" said Mr. Long, advancing to the place where a cloth had been spread.

The rest all followed.

There was a very meagre repast—in fact, but the beginning of a repast—before them.

"Come, hurry up!" said Mr. Long, as he and Mr. Simmons, followed by the rest, threw themselves on the grass around the table-cloth. "Fetch along some of the turkey and chickens quick!"

There was no response. Sammy and Johnny both stood looking excessively guilty.

"Come, hurry up! We can't eat ham and biscuit. Why, what's the matter?"

"Why—there—there isn't any," stammered Sammy.

"What's that?" cried Mr. Long.

"The turkey—it's all gone, sir."

"Gone!" cried Mr. Long, in amazement. "What do you mean?"

And twelve astonished faces confronted the cook and steward.

"Why, sir," said the cook, "you see we ate a good many before we started."

"Yes, sir. There were eight turkeys eaten that evening and next morning."

"And fifteen chickens, sir."

"And ten mince pies," added the steward, gathering courage at the sound of his own voice.

"And all the cheese," responded the cook.

"And most of the tarts."

"And a good deal of the cake."

"And a good many of the ham sandwiches, and half of the eggs, and—"

"And ever so much ginger beer."

"The boys were eating, sir, steadily through the night."

"And through the next day, till they got sick, and couldn't eat any more."

To this all present listened in the utmost astonishment, and without saying a single word.

"So we ate most of the things before we left—did we?" asked Mr. Long, with a sour smile.

"Yes, sir."

"How many turkeys did we leave with?"

"Seven, sir."

"And how many chickens?"

"Four, sir."

"And how many mince pies?"

"Eight, sir."

"Have we eaten all these since?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well," said Jiggins, "all day yesterday I only ate one ham sandwich, and to-day only a turkey drumstick, except at O'Rafferty's."

"I ate a mince pie yesterday," said Billymack, "and another one to-day—that's all."

"Well, well, I'm not inquiring into what you ate, boys," said Mr. Long, good-humoredly. "I was only amazed to find that our stores had gone so fast. We'll have to live on clams, or go home, unless we can buy some provisions here. Well, well," he concluded, with a sigh, "we'll have to attack this ham bone. Here, cook; isn't there any more ham left?"

"One more, sir."

"Any pie?"

"A half of a mince pie, sir."

"Hm—well—we'll have to wait till to-morrow—that's all. It's my own fault, I suppose. I didn't make allowance for the appetites of growing boys."

"Especially of the cook and steward," growled Bogud.

They had to bear with their disappointment as best they could. The cook and steward looked very meek and subdued, for though nothing was said, yet they felt that they were under a ban. The repast consisted of nothing but bread and butter, and ham, and cold water. But still, as they all had excellent appetites, they ate with a relish what was before them, and had no trouble, except about provisioning the ship for the future. It was tacitly understood, however, that Sammy Ram Ram and Johnny Blue should be henceforth relieved from these onerous and responsible duties.

The repast was at length finished, and Messrs. Simmons and Long went aside to take another look at their beloved specimens, and speculate upon the probabilities of gold-mining at the Five Islands. The others sat round the fire. Captain Corbet sat, with a patriarchal smile, surveying the young faces around him. The mate sat among a crowd of noisy lads, who were trying to draw him out.

"Yes," he said, in continuation of some statement which he was making, "it's true. I'm tellin'—"

"And that's your name—is it?" asked Billymack.

"My name's Wade," said the mate, "an' my old 'oman's name's Gipson; and ye'll not find many of that name in this counthry. No, sir."

"But how can your name be Wade, and your old 'oman's name be Gipson?"

"How? because my name *is* Wade, and me old 'oman's name *is* Gipson."

"But she's your wife—ain't she?"

"My own wife—married be me brother the praste."

"Then she must be Mrs. Wade."

"I tell ye her name's Gipson."

"If she's your wife, she must be named Wade."

"I tell ye *me* name's Wade, and me old 'oman's name's Gipson; an' ye'll not find many o' that name in this counthry."

And so the mate prosed on, unable to see that his wife's name was the same as his own.

And now fresh wood was heaped upon the fire. Some went off and gathered brush, and the bright, flaring flame burst forth, rising far into the sky, and throwing a vivid light. Then they all sat round it, watching the flames as they shot up and illuminated the scene, throwing a gleam of radiance across the water, and lighting up the old schooner as she lay afloat.

Then a song was proposed. Captain Corbet opened the proceedings by one of his own peculiar harmonies, which was received with loud laughter and cheers. Others then sang; and finally they called on Bart for "Bingo," a favorite song

with all. So Bart sang Bingo, and they all joined in the chorus.

"A farmer's dog sat on the floor,
And his name was little Bingo;
A farmer's dog sat on the floor,
And his name was little Bingo.

Bart. B!

Bruce. I!!

Arthur. N!!!

Tom. G!!!!

Omnes. O!O!O!O!O!

And his name was little Bingo!

"This farmer he brewéd right good ale,
And called it rare old Stingo;
This farmer he brewéd right good ale,
And called it rare old Stingo.

Bart. S!

Bruce. T!!

Arthur. I!!!

Tom. N!!!!

Phil. G!!!!

Omnes. O!O!O!O!O!

And called it rare old Stingo!

Bart. "Now, don't you call this a merry tale?

Omnes. We think it is, by jingo!

Bart. O, don't you call this a merry tale?

Omnes. We think it is, by jingo!

Bart. J!

Bruce. I!!

Arthur. N!!!

Tom. G!!!!

Omnes. O!O!O!O!O!

We think it is, by jingo!"

As the last chorus, roared out in tremendous tones, burst into the air and ceased, it was followed by a sudden roar of thundering laughter coming from some strange voice from the direction of the wood-pile. In an instant every one had started to his feet, and looked in amazement for the cause of the noise.

There, on the top of the wood-pile, stood a stout, burly, red-faced man, laughing, and stamping, and clapping his hands. It was a long time before he could gain breath, to speak. At length he conquered his laughter, and shaking his fist, he bawled out,—

"See here, you young rascals! What do you mean by coming here and burning up my wood? Hey!"

At this Mr. Long came forward, and Captain Corbet followed. Mr. Long introduced himself, explained the situation, apologized, and offered to pay.

This the stranger laughingly listened to.

"Pooh, pooh! Mr. Long. I'm delighted to see you, sir," he said. "Don't apologize for the wood. You're welcome to all of

it. I'm Captain Pratt, and I want you to come up to my house, and put up there as long as you like. As for the wood, I'll give you free liberty to burn it, on condition that the boys sing that song again."

Captain Pratt now advanced among them, and his bluff manner, hearty laughter, and stentorian voice at once made him a great favorite. He informed them that he was the owner of the cove and all the region round about; that he had a saw-mill up the stream; that he had a schooner which was away; and finally he insisted that they all should go at once to his house, and take up their quarters there for as long a time as they liked.

This invitation was unanimously accepted, with thanks from the teachers and cheers from the boys. So, leaving Captain Corbet and the mate to extinguish the fire, to prevent danger to the wood-pile, they followed Captain Pratt through the darkness to his house.

It was a small-sized farm-house, where Captain Pratt and his wife lived by themselves. He had three beds, into one of which he proposed to put Messrs. Simmons and Long, leaving the other beds and a huge kitchen sofa for the twelve boys. Captain Corbet and the mate could sleep on the vessel. The boys succeeded in packing themselves away in some extraordinary fashion or other; and though they would have had far more real comfort on board of the schooner, yet they preferred this for the novelty of the thing.

On the following day, the first care was to secure a supply of provisions. Captain Pratt had a rude sort of shop, in which he kept supplies for the mill, but unfortunately the stock was low; but the schooner was expected every day with fresh stores. All that the shop contained at present, was some meal and molasses, with a box of tobacco and a barrel of pork. Out of these they had to select the ship stores; and as they had only Hobson's choice, they laid in some meal, molasses, and pork. Captain Corbet tried hard to induce them to lay in some tobacco also, but Mr. Long declined.

Strolling about the cove, they found it a very pretty place, encircled by hills which were covered with hard-wood trees. A stream ran from among the hills into the creek, supplying it with a little fresh water, which at low tide was the only water in its bed. Going up the stream a short distance, they came to a very romantic spot, where the stream ran through a narrow gorge, and tumbled over a small precipice, forming a miniature cascade of a very charming kind. Here the boys spent a greater part of the day in fishing, and succeeded, after six hours' laborious effort and patient waiting on the part of ten of them, in catching five very small trout.

After getting the supplies for the schooner, Messrs. Simmons and Long went along the shore to a place which Captain Corbet told them of, where they expected to secure some petrifications. Captain Corbet went with them as guide. The mate took possession of the barn, and slept all the time.

As for the boys, two of them, Bogud and Billymack, went with the teachers by special invitation, for the others preferred remaining. Six hours were consumed in fishing, and the remainder of the time in dawdling. They *did* Pratt's Cove so thoroughly that there was not a nook unexplored.

On the following night, the "B. O. W. C." decided to quit Captain Pratt's house and sleep in the schooner. So they went down about dusk, and were put on board by Jiggins, who brought back the boat to the shore.

Messrs. Simmons and Long did not return that night, nor yet on the following morning. About ten o'clock they got back. They were met by Captain Pratt and the five boys who had slept at his house. They had very serious faces.

It seems that Captain Pratt had been down at eight o'clock to call the boys to breakfast. He found the schooner gone, and on the mud flats, left dry by the tide, lay the fluke of the anchor broken off short. This was the message that he brought, explaining, at the same time, that the boys had slept on board, and must have drifted away with the schooner.

XII.

On the Track again.—Fishing for a Duck.—Asking for Bread, and getting Stones.—Pat shines as Cook.



neither of them said one word.

"At any rate, the mate's on board," said Mr. Long at last.

"The mate! That's the worst of it. He got his breakfast only a half an hour go. He slept in my barn."

"And where has the vessel gone?" cried Mr. Long, in great distress.

"I can't tell. I rowed out for a mile, but didn't see any signs of her."

"We must go after them at once," said Mr. Long. "Can't we get a sail-boat somewhere?"

"I suppose I can rig up a sail in my boat; but she's only a punt, and I don't think we could manage her at all among the currents out there."

"I wonder if they know anything about sailing?"

"No doubt they do," said Captain Pratt.

"O, they're all right," said Captain Corbet, confidently. "I said, when they went adrift before, that they'd turn up right side up—and up they turned. Besides, the weather's fine, and there's no danger in life."

"Still we must do something," said Mr. Long, anxiously. "Even if they do understand sailing, they can never get back here again."

"It's jest what I've been expectin'," said Captain Corbet, after a profound silence, and with a tone of deep conviction.

"What?"

"Why, that there anchor."

"What did you expect?"

"Why, that it would break off short. You see there's been a crack in it for nigh two years, an' every time I used it, I said, says I, it's bound to go this time."

"But why in Heaven's name did you let it go so long, if it was cracked?"

"Wal, to tell the truth, I never gave it a thought, 'cept when I had occasion to anchor,—and then, of course, I couldn't get it mended."

"And so you've been trusting your own life, and the lives of other people, to that old, cracked anchor," cried Mr. Long, indignantly.

"Wal, it held on well down thar at Five Islands, and off on the mud-flats. You know that. It did jest as well as a bran new one, and didn't break fair this time, nuther."

"Didn't break fair! What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean the schooner has kind o' sot on it when she was aground, and broke it that way."

Mr. Long turned away.

"Captain Pratt," said he, "I won't conceal from you that I'm very anxious. Those boys may understand sailing, but I'm not sure that they do. I must do something. Can't you suggest anything?"

"Well, I was just going to take my glass," said Captain Pratt, "and go down to that there pint," pointing to a headland a few miles off. "That pint commands a view of pooty nigh the whole bay, and I shouldn't wonder if we'd see the schooner. I was just going there when you came. Besides, we can get a boat down there,—a good deal better than mine."

"We'll start off at once, then," said Mr. Long. "These boys can wait here till we come back. I hope we won't need to trouble your good nature long, Captain Pratt."

"Trouble! Why, sir, it's the greatest pleasure I have to see a strange face here occasionally."

After a few words of warning and good advice to the boys who were to remain, Mr. Long, together with Mr. Simmons, went with Captain Pratt, while Captain Corbet, with Bogud and Billymack, followed after them. The party of six set out in the direction of the headland mentioned by Captain Pratt, while the five boys who remained sauntered down slowly to the shore, where were the boxes and baskets which had been landed there on the evening of the arrival at the cove.

The boys felt the hours hang heavily upon their hands. The absence of their companions made them all feel dull; the fare at Captain Pratt's had grown distasteful, for pork and Indian meal and molasses are things that are sometimes not wonderfully attractive to the youthful taste. So these things palled; and when, at twelve o'clock, they were summoned to dinner by amiable Mrs. Pratt, she found that they had lost their appetites—a thing which she attributed to their grief about their lost companions; and so she set to work to condole with them and comfort them. After escaping from this kind-hearted old lady, they went down to the point again, and watched the water as it flowed in. Captain Pratt and his companions had not come back, and they were prepared for a long absence on his part. The thought made them more disconsolate.

"What can we do?" said Sammy.

"We'll starve," said Johnny Blue.

"We'll have to do something," said Jiggins, who was a very grave, earnest boy, and always spoke in a very grave, earnest manner.

"Well, what?"

"For my part," said Jiggins, "I'll go fishing. Who'll come with me?"

"I will," said Muckle.

"And I," said Johnny Blue.

"I don't think there's any chance," said Pat; "so I'll stay here and fish for ails in the mud."

Pat could never get rid of "a taste of the brogue," which clung to him, and proclaimed his nationality.

Sammy showed no inclination to move; so the three went fishing, leaving him and Pat behind.

Pat then went into the woods and cut a long fishing-pole, after which he went fishing for "ails." He had no success, but kept at it bravely for more than an hour, unwilling to give up. At last his patience was worn out, and he returned to the point. On his arrival there, Sammy was not to be seen.

Pat seated himself disconsolately on the shore, and watched the tide, which was now running out, for some time. Then his roving eyes were attracted by the baskets and trunks. To these he directed his steps, in the hope that something might be found there with which he could satisfy the cravings of his appetite.

He found most of the trunks empty. Some of the baskets were filled with plates, others with cups and saucers, others with knives, forks, and spoons. All these excited his disgust to an unmeasured degree. In one of them he found a ham-bone, the remainder of their last repast on the shore. This had nothing on it whatever—a fact which excited such indignation in Pat that he flung it into the water.

At last he came to the baskets containing the minerals. Opening these, he found a huge number of parcels inside. Hoping that these would afford something eatable, he opened one or two of them, but found, to his unspeakable disgust, that they contained nothing but stones.

Pat was a very original character, who had drifted, by some extraordinary chance, into the school. With a very strong desire to get an "education," he had come there and begged Dr. Porter to admit him, offering to pay his way by working. Dr. Porter found that the Irish boy had already learned a good deal, and that he had an exceedingly strong desire to be taught more. He could read and write well; and so earnest were his entreaties, that the kind-hearted doctor consented to admit him. His industry and application soon gained the good will of the teachers; while his flow of good spirits, his oddities and whims, made him popular among the boys. In many respects he was intensely ignorant, and had not been

long enough at the school to acquire anything like the general information which the rest of the boys possessed. At first they had wondered or laughed at his blunders; but afterward Pat had been more cautious about expressing his opinions on anything, and thus, by exhibiting his ignorance, less, was supposed to have surmounted it. Taking him all together, he was a very remarkable boy, and promised, in time, to surpass many of his companions.

At present, however, he was far inferior to them all. He had been asked to go on the trip of the Antelope from a very kindly desire to give him all the advantages possible. He had not the remotest idea what the real purpose of the trip was, but supposed it to be a kind of pleasure party. It is true he saw Messrs. Simmons and Long hammering rocks; but with his usual caution about committing himself and exposing his ignorance, he had not asked anything about it, nor had he looked at their work. While they were hammering rocks, he was climbing them, or running about the beach. He had not noticed the baskets, but supposed them to be full of provisions; nor had he seen Messrs. Simmons and Long in their tender care of their specimens after landing on this place. The stones, then, which Pat discovered, wrapped in paper, were utterly unintelligible to him, and the sight of them only seemed to cap the climax of the indignation which was growing in his breast.

"Well! well! well!" he exclaimed, as he looked at each stone on taking it from the paper. "What's this? A stone—a muddy stone! By the powers, but isn't this like a boy askin' for bread, and gettin' a stone."

In fact it was no better than a dirty stone in Pat's eyes. Two very beautiful specimens of moss agate they were; but it would need grinding and polishing to bring out these peculiar beauties. As yet they were concealed.

Another and another paper was opened. One contained a white stone, like quartz, enclosing some amethysts; another a piece of sandstone, with peculiar marks on it, very highly prized by Mr. Simmons. These Pat threw on the ground with great indignation. Then he took the rest out without opening them, knowing by the touch and the weight of them what they were. He had a strong hope that something eatable might yet be in the bottom of the basket; but at last all was empty, and there was nothing to eat.

His indignation could no longer be repressed. He had a vague idea that some one had done this so as to play a trick on him, and this thought only heightened his passion. So, without thinking of anything but his own wrongs, he seized the unoffending stones by handfuls, and angrily threw them over the bank into the water. Then he sat down gloomily, and tried to conjecture which of the boys it had been who had wrapped all those stones in paper for the sake of tricking him. At first his impulse was to go around among them fiercely and inquire; but at length, from fear of being laughed at, he decided to say nothing about it, but wait and see what would turn up.

He was roused from his reverie by a touch on the shoulder.

He started hastily, and saw Johnny Blue, looking very mysterious, with something under his jacket.

"Hallo! Where, are the others?" said Pat. "Couldn't you catch anything?"

"The others are up the brook, fishing. I caught *something*," said Johnny, with a more mysterious look than ever.

"What is it? What have you got under your arm?"

"See," said Johnny, triumphantly; and lifting his jacket, he displayed, to Pat's astonished gaze, the form of a duck.

"A duck!" cried Pat, with a shout. "Where did you get it?"

"H-s-s-s-h!" said Johnny, warningly. "I caught it."

"Caught it?"

"Yes, with a fish-hook. I trailed the hook, baited with a bit of bread, and the duck bit—and here he is."

"We'll cook him!" cried Pat.

"That's it; but we'd better get away where they won't see us."

"Sure nobody'll see us here, at all, at all."

"Won't they?"

"Surely no. There's lots of wood here, an' I'll start the fire in a jiffy. Come along. Hurroo, boys!"

So Pat and Johnny got the fire going, and then they picked the duck,—which was previously killed, of course,—and they had him all ready to lay on the coals, when suddenly their attention was arrested by a low, muffled, piteous squeak close by them behind the wood-pile.

"H-s-s-s-h!" said Johnnie.

"Botheration!" said Pat, hiding the duck under a log of wood.

"What is it?" said Johnnie.

"Sure it's a pig—that's what it is," said Pat.

A rustle was heard now in the bushes, and then Sammy walked out from behind the wood-pile. His face had a bright expression of satisfaction, and he, too, had something under his arm.

"It's another duck!" said Pat, with a wild laugh. "Sammy's been out fishin', too," and he went off into a peal of laughter.

"Stop your noise," said Sammy. "I thought you were somebody else, and that's why I had to come through the trees, and behind the wood-pile."

"Is it a duck ye've got, thin?" asked Pat. "Sure, haven't we one oursilves?"

Sammy said nothing, but drawing his jacket aside, showed the little white head and twinkling eyes of a pig of very small size—a roaster, in fact, in excellent condition.

"It's a pig ye've got. Didn't I know the squal of it? Didn't I say it was? It's me that knows the voice of a pig. Hurroo, boys! we're goin' to have a banquet, so we are. Where did ye get it, thin, Sammy, jewel?"

"Don't talk so loud," said Sammy, looking cautiously all around. "They'll hear you."

"It's mum I'll be, thin. But where did ye get it, darlin'?" said Pat, in a soft, coaxing whisper.

"Up there."

"Where? Pratt's?"

"No."

"Where thin?"

"O, never mind. It wasn't near any house. It was in a field. There were a dozen of them; and I was so hungry I couldn't help it."

"Faith, thin we may as well have the young roaster as the old pork," said Pat. "Ye're well here. We're in luck this day. See here."

And he pulled out the duck and showed it to Sammy.

"How nicely you've picked it and fixed it!" said he. "I wish we could manage the pig. I don't know what to do with it."

"Many's the pig I've kilt," said Pat, loftily.

"Have you then? And will you do this one?"

"Will I do it? Faith, it's me that will," said Pat.

"But won't he squeal?"

"Squale is it? Not a squale you'll hear."

On this Sammy handed the pig to Pat, who disappeared with it among the bushes. No sound was heard; but after a short

absence Pat returned in triumph, having accomplished his object.

"And now we'll have two roasts, instead of one."

Driving two forked sticks into the ground, he made another with a sharp point, and ran it through the duck and the pig; then he laid the stick with its burden upon the two forked sticks, and knelt down by the fire.

"The coals are just right," said Pat. "I'll sit here an' give it a turrin till I'm tired, an' thin ye'll relave me." So he kept on turning the spit, and soon a rich aromatic fragrance filled the air.

"Isn't there any salt?" asked Pat, after a time.

"Of course," said Johnny; "and there's pepper too. I'll get the castors."

"Do, thin, and quick too," said Pat.

The castors were soon forthcoming, and Pat sprinkled a little salt and pepper over the roaster and the duck.

"That's the way," said he, "to bring out the full fleavour."

At length they were done, and taken off the fire. The plates, knives and forks, upon which Pat had looked so contemptuously shortly before, were now brought forth. A pleasant place was found in a secluded spot, and here they sat down to dine.

They had scarcely begun when footsteps were heard. Pat went out to reconnoitre.

It was Jiggins and Muckle.

"Have ye caught any fish?" was his first address to them.

"No," said they in a discontented tone; "and we're starving."

"Is it starvin' ye are? Thin will ye just step in here, for we've got the most illegant dinner ye ever sot eyes on." And saying this he led them to the little secluded nook, where the table was spread on the grass.

At six o'clock they went up to tea, and Mrs. Pratt sympathized deeply with the poor boys, who had lost their appetites from anxiety.

XIII.

Adrift.—Skilful Navigators.—Breakers ahead.—A narrow Scratch.—Stuck in the Mud.

Let us now return to the unfortunate "B. O. W. C." who had met so unexpectedly with another adventure.

On going on board of the schooner, they found the water low; and the tide had just begun to float her in rising. As they had slept but little the preceding night, they retired almost immediately, and soon were buried in a profound slumber. The next morning Phil was awake first. He went up on deck, and the next instant gave a loud cry.

"Hallo, boys!" he cried. "Get up! We're adrift. Hurry up—quick!"

Awaking instantly at this startling news, they tumbled up on deck without a moment's delay; and there, true enough, they found themselves far out in the bay, adrift, apparently, as Phil had said.

"This is queer," said Bruce. "Here's her anchor down, as usual."

The others walked to the bows where Bruce was, and saw the chain hanging down, just as though she were anchored.

"We are anchored, sure enough," said Arthur.

"No, we're not; we're drifting," said Bart. "Look at the land."

A look at the land satisfied all that the vessel was actually moving through the water.

"Let's try the anchor. It must be dragging," said Bart.

So they all went to work at the windlass, and in course of time found the anchor raised. As they worked, they found it lighter than they expected; and when at length they had ended, they ran to the bows. All was explained. The anchor was broken off short at the fluke.

"That's how it happened," said Bart. "And so we're in for another adventure."

"What shall we do now?"

"Sail the vessel, of course," said Bruce.

"Where to?"

"Back to Pratt's Cove."

"And where is that?"

No one could answer that. Each one looked around carefully, in order to see if he could find any place which looked like Pratt's Cove. But there were two difficulties in the way of any such discovery. In the first place, they had approached Pratt's Cove in the dark, and did not know how it looked; and in the second place, they could not see any spot that looked like a cove at all.

All around them was the bay. Before them was the Parrsboro' shore. Behind them was Blomidon. On one side, and a little in front, were the Five Islands, about six miles distant; beyond which the waters of the bay extended, till they faded away into a low, indistinct line of coast. They could understand, in a general way, that Pratt's Cove lay somewhere in front of them, but they could not guess within twenty miles of the place.

"Let's up sail," said Tom, "and run up there. It looks like a cove;" and he pointed to a hollow in the line of hills.

"O, the hills around Pratt's Cove are higher than that," said Bruce.

"Suppose we sail over and ask O'Rafferty."

"Very well. I agree to that," said Bart. "Bruce, you can steer."

"No. You may as well steer," said Bruce.

"I don't particularly care about it," said Bart. "Don't any of you fellows want to?"

"O, no. We don't care. You steer, Bart. We'll hoist the sails."

So Bart turned away with rather a blank expression on his face, and walked slowly to the rudder. The wind was moderate, and the water only a little ruffled. The other boys, with immense confusion and shouting, toiled away at the sails one after the other, and at last managed to get them set.

"Perhaps we'd better not have the foresail up," suggested Bart.

"O, yes. Why not?" said Bruce. "Come, boys—up she rises!"

And shouting out a sailor's song which he had once heard, he completed his work.

The vessel moved gently through the water, and Bart pointed her head towards the island which he considered to be O'Rafferty's. The wind was fair, and the vessel came around very easily, and then headed away for the island.

Now, it happened that, as Bart belonged to a seaport town, and as his father was a merchant, and as Bart himself had once experienced a sea fever, and had been almost on the point of running away to sea,—he had, very naturally, been always regarded among his companions as a great authority on all matters connected with seamanship. And so, to a certain extent, he was. He knew all about the rigging of a ship, and understood, in a general way, the principles on which she sailed. He was also a good oarsman; but in point of fact, he had never handled a sail-boat in his life. This was owing to his father's prudence, who allowed him to go out rowing whenever he pleased, but never permitted him to have a sail-boat. And so it happened that Bart knew no more about sailing than any one on board.

However, there was no help for it; and he had to take the tiller and assume the responsibility of the situation. After a time he began to gain confidence. The wind was moderate, the schooner was going in a straight course, and O'Rafferty's Island was full before him.

They went on for a long time, when at length Bruce exclaimed,—

"Well, I don't see how it is. We've been going to O'Rafferty's for full half an hour, and we are no nearer. And here we are, with Pinnacle Island coming between us."

"It's the currents," said Bart, coolly. "Nobody can sail in this bay, unless he understands all about them. I'm sure I don't."

"Hadn't we better bring her about, and stand off on the other tack? We could then steer so as to make allowance for the current, which seems to be setting off there."

"Here, Bruce, you steer," said Bart. "I'm tired."

"O, well, let's bring her around first. Port your helm, Bart."

Bart tried to obey; but as he turned the helm in exactly the opposite way, some confusion was the result.

"Port! I said port!" cried Bruce.

"O!" said Bart; and seeing that he had made a mistake, he proceeded to rectify it by turning it starboard. The vessel had turned partly; but as Bruce had expected it to turn in the opposite direction, he had checked Bart's mistake. But Bruce himself knew as little about sailing as Bart, and so he had swung the sails the wrong way. The vessel caught the wind as she came round; and Bart, who had tried to obey Bruce's correction, finding that the vessel was all right, and was doing very well, checked himself, and let her go. Bart now saw that Bruce had made a mistake, and Bruce suspected that Bart had. But they said nothing, and the other boys thought that both Bruce and Bart were first-rate navigators.

The schooner now held on straight ahead on what Bart supposed to be the other tack. Bruce and the others were very well satisfied with the proceedings.

"I think we'd better come round again, Bart," said Bruce.

"Very well," said Bart, who had been looking forward to this.

"Port your helm, then," said Bruce.

Bart turned the helm a-starboard, as he had done before, while Bruce and Arthur swung the booms to assist the vessel. She came round that time all right.

"Why, Bart! why didn't you port the helm?"

"Because I had to put the helm starboard to bring her round. It's all right."

Bruce looked grave. He felt that he had committed a blunder. After all, which was port and which was starboard he hardly knew. He concluded after this to intrust the care of the vessel to one who knew, like Bart, and felt quite grateful to Bart for his delicacy in not exposing his ignorance.

Away went the schooner—faster this time, for the wind had sprung up fresher. This was what Bart dreaded. But there was no help for it; so he kept on, with a vague expectation of some disaster. He now headed, as before, for O'Rafferty's Island, and watched very anxiously to see how they were progressing.

"You'd better head her a little to the north'ard, Bart," said Arthur—"hadn't you? so as to allow for that current."

"Very well," said Bart; and he put the vessel a little closer in the direction indicated.

But in doing so, the vessel began to stagger, and the sails began to flap and rattle, and Bart was filled with consternation. Hastily he restored the helm to its former position, but without any result. Then he tried his old manœuvre, by means of which he had already turned her twice. It was of no use. The sails flapped, and the vessel danced, and Bart was about confessing his complete ignorance of everything, when suddenly her sails filled again, and to Bart's amazement and delight she sailed off away from the island and back on the other tack.

Bart's heart was full of thankfulness, but he said not a word. He looked ahead as coolly as possible, and held the tiller as before.

"Well, Bart, what are you up to now? Why don't you head for O'Rafferty's?"

"Can't," said Bart, laconically.

"Why not?"

"Why, there are tides and currents about those islands enough to sweep away a line-of-battle ship. I don't understand them. Didn't you see what a scrape I got into just now? I won't try O'Rafferty's again in a hurry; but if any of you fellows choose to try it, I don't care."

"O, no," said Bruce, "we can't do it if you can't, Bart. But where are you going now?"

"Well, I don't know. We must make up our minds. I'm keeping my eye on the coast; and if I can find any place that looks like Pratt's Cove, I'll run in. The fact is, we must do something, or they'll be frightened out of their wits about us."

"Pratt's Cove? But how can we ever find the place?"

"Perhaps, when we get in a little closer to the land, we may see it."

"I'm confident," said Bart, "that it's somewhere along this coast; for it seems to me, as near as I can remember, that this is the coast we sailed to. Look at the Five Islands. There's O'Rafferty's; and there are the others. You see we came out from this side of O'Rafferty's, and then sailed up somewhere along there. I think, when we get nearer, we'll see an opening; and perhaps we'll hit the cove itself."

The others seemed impressed by Bart's words; and as none of them had anything better to suggest, they said nothing.

And now the wind blew still more freshly, and Bart looked around with dismay. On went the schooner; but the long line of coast showed no opening whatever, and he had no idea what to do to extricate himself from the position in which he was. What made it worse was the confidence which all now felt in him. He felt that the end would come—the moment when he would stand revealed in his true colors, and lose his prestige forever.

More freshly still blew the wind, and the sea around rose higher, tossing up now into white-capped waves, which every little while dashed over the bows and scattered their spray about the decks. Yielding to the wind, the vessel lay over; and on she scudded, dashing through the water in a style which excited all on board, and intoxicated them with delight.

"Hurrah!" cried Bruce. "Boys, isn't this glorious?"

"Glorious!" cried the boys; and some of them swung by their hands from the rigging, and others danced about the deck, shouting as each wave came splashing over the bows, and roaring with laughter when any one got a ducking.

Hurrah! and Hurrah again!—and yet again! Their wild mirth only added new anguish to the dismay of poor Bart, who found himself now face to face with an inextricable problem.

In their last stretch across from the Five Islands, they had drawn near to the main land, and were now moving nearer and nearer every moment. What was to be done? It was already time to turn; but where could he turn, or where would he go when he did turn? or, for that matter, how could he venture to turn at all? His last experience in turning the schooner had filled him with despair. What was the meaning of those kickings, and flappings, and jumpings? What was the reason that she didn't mind her rudder at all? And now the wind was stronger, and the sea was rougher. Could he venture to turn the

vessel with such a wind and such a sea? He felt that he could not. Anything would be better. So he thought while taking counsel with his own soul.

And while taking counsel with his own soul, he saw before him the coast extending invitingly. There was a long line of sand, or of mud,—which was just as good,—into which he longed to run the vessel. Which would be best—to run the vessel ashore, or to make the desperate attempt to turn her again, and set her kicking and plunging? He preferred the former. Yes, to run her ashore would solve the whole difficulty. He might be disgraced by it, but he could not help it. He felt that he was doomed to disgrace, in any event; and it would be better to incur disgrace on a mud bank, and in safety, than when tossing and drifting he didn't know where. His mind, then, was made up; and he kept the schooner's head straight towards the shore.

But as he approached it, he was aware of one very startling fact, and that was, that the schooner, while going forward, was also drifting rapidly to leeward. In the course of that sidelong motion, she was losing way so rapidly, that, instead of striking the mud flats, she might run upon a very different kind of place; for there, on the lee bow, was a headland of dark, stern rock, at the base of which the waves were breaking into foam. In his fixed attention to the mud flats, he had not noticed this till just now, when it was full before him, and not very far away. Below this headland the mud flats appeared again.

What could he do?

All seemed lost; for the headland, and the foaming waves, and the frowning, jagged rocks were full before him. With a bitter feeling of despair, and a pang of anguish for the coming fate of the friends who had given him their trust, and who even now were singing and shouting in their uproarious glee, he stood for a moment paralyzed, looking with white lips at his fate.

Suddenly, and just as all seemed lost, he jerked the helm a-port. The schooner swung half round. The wind took her astern, and drove her forward. Her sails flapped and banged about. Then a current seemed to seize her and carry her on for a score of yards. Suddenly there was a thump, a grinding noise, and another thump dull and heavy.

In an instant all was confusion.

"The rocks! the rocks!" cried all. "She's struck!"

Then the schooner was once more swept on, and a wave, striking her stern, dashed the tiller out of Bart's hands, and he fell. Springing up, he seized it again, not knowing how he moved it, or when. At that moment the sails filled again, the schooner bounded forward, and in a few minutes it was beyond the headland, and moving on toward the lower mud flat; and before they knew that they were saved, she drove hard and fast into the mud, with a shock that knocked them all down.

Picking themselves up, they looked around at the shore in bewilderment. Then they looked at Bart.

"What's all this?" they asked.

"O, nothing," said Bart, "I found we couldn't do anything, and so I ran her ashore."

"By Jove!" cried Bruce, "that was a pretty narrow scratch we had of it on those rocks. After this, Bart, I'll always brag on you. You've saved our lives, Bart. I thought we were gone for it. I never saw anything done so splendidly."

For a moment Bart was silent. Here was a chance for fame. He might avail himself of the lucky accident, and turn it to his own glory. But the thought was only a passing one. It was at once dismissed.

"No, boys," said he; "the only thing I did was nearly to destroy your lives. In fact, I don't know any more about sailing a vessel than any of you. It's been a very narrow escape. I was a fool to try it; and I can only make amends by confessing it. I don't believe in being a humbug, and I won't be one any longer."

At first the boys wouldn't believe him, but after awhile he explained all about it. After this confession, Bart was as much esteemed by his friends as ever.

XIV.

In Mud and Water.—A Sea Monster.—A terrific Fight.—Wonderful Pluck of the "B. O. W. C."—Swallowing a Sculpin.—The Trophy.—Waiting for Deliverance.

Finding themselves thus fixed in the mud, they looked around to see the place at which they had thus unexpectedly arrived. In front of them was a bank about sixty feet high, which extended for some miles away, commencing with the rocky headland, and covered with trees on the top; while beyond this, the country rose into hills. As far as they could see, there was no opening in the shore to indicate the presence of a cove or a harbor. From the appearance of the water, it seemed as though the mud flat extended for miles along the shore. The water was comparatively smooth, and the headland kept off the wind, so that after they had lowered the sails, the schooner remained quite still.

It was now about noon, and they knew that the tide was rising. A wide space of the mud flat lay still uncovered by the water. Their position was a safe one as yet, though not at all pleasant on many accounts.

"The tide's rising," said Phil; "isn't it, Bart?"

"Yes."

"When will it be high tide?"

"About three."

"I wonder if they'll come after us."

"Of course they will."

"There doesn't seem to be much chance of our getting ashore."

"Well, it doesn't make much difference, for we couldn't do anything if we did get there."

"I say, boys," said Arthur, "the schooner's beginning to float again."

All stood waiting in silence, and in a few moments they felt a slight motion.

"Yes," said Bruce, "the tide has risen since we struck, and is floating us in. At high tide we shall be close up under the bank."

"And then what shall we do? We must either choose to fasten the vessel ashore if we can, or float out again and sail for it, or drift."

"I don't think we'll care about sailing again, particularly as the tide will be going out, and the night coming on."

"My idea is," said Bruce, "to fasten her to the shore if we can, and then go along the beach or the bank till we find some people and get help."

"That's about all we can do," said Bart. "We can't think of going adrift, and none of us can sail the vessel; so, if they don't come after us, we had better land, and leave the vessel; or some of us can go for help, and others stay on board."

"I wonder if the vessel is safe here."

"O, safe enough—if a gale don't spring up. In that case she might get knocked on the bank."

"We don't seem to have been hurt by our knocking up there," said Arthur. "There's no water in the hold."

"O, she's all right," said Bruce; "and she's a gallant, gallant ship, as the song says."

The vessel was steadily floated nearer and nearer to the shore as the tide rose, and the boys watched her progress with close attention. At about three o'clock they could expect to be up to the bank, and then they would have to find some way

to fasten her.

Suddenly Bart, who had been looking down the shore, pointed to something, and said,—

"Look, look! Do you see that?"

"What?"

"Don't you see a line—running along about a mile away?"

"What, a thin, dark line? Yes. What of it?"

"Why, it's a weir for fish. It shows that people must be living not far from here. It shows, too, that we can get something to eat at low tide, even if there are no people. So, hurrah, boys! we're all right yet."

"The fact is," said Bruce, solemnly, "I must confess that I'm starving. I've felt the pangs of hunger for the last two hours, and I can't stand it any longer. I'm going to have a regular rummage down below, for I'm bound to find something."

All the rest followed Bruce as he went below, and they began to overhaul the whole vessel. For some time they found nothing but a beggarly array of empty boxes, and loud were their murmurs and complaints.

"If it hadn't been for that miserable Sammy Ram Ram, we'd have a few turkeys and chickens here," said Bruce. "How that fellow and Johnny Blue managed to get through with them all, I can't understand."

"Pooh! those two fellows did nothing else but stuff from the time they came on board till they got to Pratt's Cove. Captain Corbet and the mate helped them, and so did Pat, too, no doubt. I haven't any hard feeling against any of them, but I must say I wouldn't be sorry if their food didn't agree with them."

"Hallo! What's this? Hurrah!" cried Tom, suddenly.

"What, Tom,—what is it?"

"See here," cried Tom, triumphantly. "Arn't we in luck? Don't ever fret again, boys. Here's a half loaf of bread that I found in the corner. It's rather stale, a little too dry, and too hard,—but I think it's about the nicest morsel I ever saw. We've got our dinner provided for us, and we needn't hanker after raw fish from the weirs any more."

Tom's joy was fully shared by all; and the half loaf of hard, stale, dried-up bread was quickly divided into five pieces, and eagerly devoured by the famished boys.

"And now," said Bruce, "I feel like a giant refreshed. I'll go on deck and have another look at the situation. My private opinion is, however, that if they're coming after us, they'd better come. The tide's getting higher every minute; and if they get here after we've fastened her to the shore, and got her high and dry, they'll have to wait for twelve good hours before they can get her to float off again,—not to speak of spring tides. Do you know, Bart, if this is spring tide?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Bart.

"Well, then, we'll have to trust to luck, I suppose. At the same time I've a great mind to go ashore and reconnoitre."

"I'll go too," said Bart.

"And so will I," said Arthur.

"And I," said Phil.

"I'll go too," said Tom. "But oughtn't some of us to stay on board?"

"Stay on board? What for?"

"O, to watch the vessel."

"Why, what good will that do?"

"She may drift off."

"Well, why should any of us want to drift off in her?"

"I don't believe there's any chance of her drifting off while the tide is rising," said Bruce; "and if she does drift off, I think we're all better out of her than in her. So if one of us goes ashore, we'd all better go. It's not more than three feet deep at the bows, and there's a sand-spit over there within easy distance."

"I wonder if there are any quicksands."

"O, we'll have to run the risk. There are a couple of boat-hooks there, and two of us can go ahead and try the ground with them. It's not far to the spit."

"We'll have to strip and carry our clothes with us," said Phil.

"Yes. It would be a great joke if we left our clothes behind, and the vessel drifted off with them."

The boys now proceeded to undress themselves, and prepare to go ashore. Each one tied up his clothes in a compact bundle. Bruce and Bart took each a boat-hook, which lay in the schooner; Arthur took a handspike, and Tom and Phil found a stout stick each. Thus equipped, they prepared for the journey.

It was about one o'clock, and the tide would not be high for two hours yet. In front of them, and between them and the bank, lay a broad expanse of mud flats, separating them from the bank by at least a quarter of a mile of distance. On their right, however, was a place which gave them a chance of a much better foothold than that which was offered by the slippery and treacherous mud. This was a long sand-spit, which stretched out from the bank, and ran down across the mud flat and into the water. It approached to within a hundred yards of the schooner, and afforded not only a good walking-place, but a much nearer chance of dry land than was possible anywhere else. Running down over the flat, it rose above it to a height of from twelve to twenty inches, and was covered with sand, gravel, and round cobble-stones. It was to this place that they intended to go.

Bruce led the way. Descending carefully over the bows, he dropped into the water, which he found up to his armpits. The others followed, and found it deeper for their shorter stature. It was over the shoulders of Bart and Phil. Bart, however, took his place by Bruce's side, and prepared to walk ahead with his pole. Their first object was to get into shallower water, and so they walked in the direction of the shore until the water was not above their waists. Then they turned to the right, toward the sand-spit.

If it had not been for the bundles, they could have varied their progress by swimming; but as it was, they had to wade, and feel the way cautiously, for fear of air-holes and quicksands. The surface mud beneath their feet was very soft; but they did not sink very deeply, and with every step they acquired fresh confidence. As they neared the sand-spit, the bottom grew sensibly harder, and shoaled rapidly, till it was not much above their knees. At length it became a sandy bottom, and they walked along more rapidly, no longer feeling their way.

Suddenly they were startled by a wild shout from Arthur. He had been walking behind with Phil, and was some distance from the others, when rapidly, between him and them, darted the form of a large fish, which, in that shoal water, was as visible as if it were on land. At the cry which he gave, Bruce and the others turned, and saw Arthur with his handspike in the air, and the fish floundering and splashing close beside. For a moment the blood of all of them froze with horror; the next instant Arthur sprang forward, and dealt a tremendous blow with his heavy handspike full on the head of the fish.

The monster splashed and struggled, and moved back into deeper water for a few feet.

"Run, Run!" cried Arthur. "It's a shark! Run for your lives!"

The boys all set off as fast as they could toward the sand-spit, which now was close by them.

But the fish was not to be easily escaped. In a few minutes its dark form was beside them, and soon it crossed immediately in front of Bruce and



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Bart. Mechanically, and in utter horror, both the boys swung up their boat-hooks, and dashed them wildly against the dark figure. Both struck home. There was a fearful splashing and writhing. Bart's boat-hook was wrenched from his hand, and the fish darted forward into shoaler water.

"Run, boys, run!" shouted Bruce, holding his boat-hook toward the fish, and slowly retreating, so as to keep the monster in sight. Away they went, Phil and Tom first, then Arthur. Bart moved forward, and then, seeing his pole floating a few feet on one side, made a rush for it and secured it. Then he kept by Bruce's side, ready to help him in guarding the retreat of the others.

The fish continued to splash and writhe about, either because he was bewildered by the shoal water, or else because he was suffering from the wounds which had been inflicted. As he did not pursue, Bruce and Bart took fresh courage.

"Let's finish him, Bruce!" cried Bart.

"Pitch in, then!" cried Bruce; and rushing at the fish, he drove his boat-hook point deep into his side, while, at the same time, Bart, raising his into the air, struck down, so that the hooked part penetrated and held.

"Hook him, Bruce!" shouted Bart. "Let's drag him ashore." Bruce raised his pole to do so; but at that instant the struggling, writhing fish turned towards them with furious energy, and moving over on its side, it tried to twist Bart's hook out of its flesh. The water was so shallow that it could not have full exercise of its strength, and Bart held on. The fish, in its struggles, opened its gasping mouth, showing wide rows of sharp, triangular teeth. At that instant Bruce lowered his pole, and drove it straight into the open mouth; forcing it deep into the throat. The monster, in its agony, closed its jaws, and held it with a death-like tenacity.

A cry of triumph burst from Bruce and Bart.

"Hurrah, boys! We've got him!" they cried. "Pull, Bruce, nearer the shore—into shoaler water."

The water was already too shoal for the fish, which had so carelessly thrown himself into it, and his resistance could not prevent the united energies of Bruce and Bart from dragging him forward a few paces. But that was all. Rousing himself, the monster tossed, and writhed, and struggled, and lashed the water into foam. Bruce and Bart could no longer drag him. It was a struggle between them; but the boys had now got their blood up, and they would have been dragged back to the schooner rather than loose their hold.

The fish, in its fury or its agony, still kept its teeth closed on Bruce's pole, and strove to wrench it out of his grasp. His tremendous efforts were prevailing against their united strength, and were dragging them farther out. Bart's hook had already been thrown off, and he was plunging the pointed iron again and again into the fish's side.

At this instant Arthur came dashing through the foam. Raising his heavy handspike in the air, he poised it for a moment so

as to take sure aim, and then, with tremendous force, the weapon descended full on the monster's head. It was a crushing blow. The struggles and writhings ceased, and changed to feeble motions and occasional convulsive vibrations. It resisted no longer. It was powerless.

They dragged it upon the dry ground of the sand-spit, and examined their conquest.

The fish was about five feet long, very broad at the head and shoulders, with a very wide mouth, armed with several rows of saw-like teeth. The nose was rounded, and the jaw was underneath. Its back was a dark slate color, and its belly white.

"It's what we call a Shovel-mouth Shark," said Bruce, as he looked at it, and admired its proportions.

"They call it a Dog Fish with us," said Bart.

"It certainly is a kind of shark," said Arthur; "and as that sounds better, we'll call it by that name. Boys, we've fought and killed a shovel-mouth shark! Let the 'B. O. W. C.' remember that!"

"We must keep his jaws as a trophy," said Bruce. "Let's cut him up and get his jaws. Who's got a knife?"

"Here," said Arthur.

Thereupon, with the aid of the knife, the fish was dissected. In the stomach they found a fish quite as remarkable as the one which had swallowed it. It was a sculpin, a fish whose bony covering, and spiny back, and horny head, and wonderful voracity, make it seem like those primeval fish that swam in the waters of the world in an age when all the inhabitants thereof were formed on a similarly monstrous model.

"What a fish," cried Bart, "to swallow a sculpin! He must be a real shark, after all, for a shark could not beat that. I thought that it might have been by accident only that he met us, but it seems now as though he was ravenous enough to mean mischief. 'Pon my word, if I'd known about that sculpin, I think I would have run away instead of staying to fight."

After examining the fish, the jaws were removed, and, carrying them, they walked up the sand-spit to the shore. Then dressing themselves, they sat down and rested for a time. Then Bruce and Bart climbed to the top of the bank, and went in different directions to explore. On coming back, each had the same story. They had met with nothing but fir trees and alder bushes, and had not seen a sign of any house whatever. On this they all decided to go to the top of the bank, and wait patiently until the tide was high, then fasten the schooner as well as they could, leave a message on board to indicate their course, and set off along the coast in search of inhabitants. With this decision, they climbed the bank to a conspicuous position, and there waited.

The tide rose higher and higher. Each increase in the depth of the water allowed the schooner to approach nearer to the shore, though there was a sidelong drift, which, from time to time, changed her position, sometimes presenting her bows to the beach, at other times her side.

The water was rising higher and still higher. The mud flats extended close up to the beach below, but the beach itself was formed of sand and gravel, and rose, by a steep slope, from the mud flat to the base of the bank. By two o'clock the water had reached the edge of the gravel.

"It will take an hour more," said Bruce, "before it gets to high-water mark. One hour more, boys, and then off we must go to explore the country."

XV.

Scratching for Clams.—How not to eat them.—Fearful Consequences of Folly.—A formidable Medicine Chest.—Prevention better than Cure.

Meanwhile the people at Pratt's Cove waited for the return of the captain and his company. The boys had excited the deepest sympathy of Mrs. Pratt by their loss of appetite, and she was anxious about the lost vessel. They had not eaten anything for tea; and after the meal was over, they walked down to their old place. It was about half past six o'clock, and a large part of the cove was already uncovered by the receding tide.

"I wonder if there's any duck left," said Jiggins, with a sigh.

"Or roaster," said Muckle, with another sigh.

"No," said Pat, mournfully. "Sammy and Johnny have disposed av thim."

Sammy and Johnny both looked innocently down, and by their silence acknowledged the soft impeachment.

"I've a presentiment," said Jiggins, "that I'm going to be very hungry before bed time."

"I shouldn't wonder if some of the rest of us were like you," said Muckle.

"And now," said Jiggins, in a grave and solemn tone, "what ought we to do?"

"We haven't much time left," said Muckle, suggestively.

"Something must be done," said Jiggins, emphatically.

"And soon, too," added Muckle.

"Deed, thin, an' why don't ye go aff an' do somethin'?" said Pat, energetically. "Come, now, whatever ye do, I'm yer man. Is it another duck ye mane?"

Jiggins shook his head.

"It would hardly do—"

"Do—it jist wud, thin."

Jiggins shook his head.

"The fact is, I have my doubts about it. I don't think it's altogether right."

"Thin what made ye ate it for?" said Pat. "There wor others that thought it was all right—they did."

"I felt badly while eating it. I felt it was—not—right."

"Do ye mane it wasn't done right?"

Jiggins shook his head.

"Well," said Pat, "if ye didn't like the duck, how did ye like the pig? Ye'll not be findin' fault with that, I think."

Jiggins shook his head.

"I have my doubts."

"O, botheration take your doubts. Why didn't ye doubt before ye sat down?"

Jiggins shook his head.

"I tell you what," said Muckle; "I've got an idea."

"What?" cried all.

"Clams!" said Muckle.

"Clams?" said Jiggins.

"Look," said Muckle, waving his hand over toward the flats; "do you see that?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's full of clams."

"Why, of course—of course," said Jiggins. "Why, so it is. What do you say, boys?"

"I say yis," cried Pat. "Hurroo, boys! if we can't have a duck, or a roaster, again, we'll have clams."

"Hand along a basket then, Sammy," said Jiggins.

As Sammy gave him one, he said,—

"Now, you two, are you coming?"

"Well—no—we don't care about it," said Sammy.

"Well, you wait here and kindle the fire, and get a pot ready. We'll cook them the moment we get back."

"All right," said the two boys.

Upon this Jiggins, and Muckle, and Pat started off after the clams. Before leaving the shore, they got some sticks to use for scraping up the sand, and then directed their steps toward the creek. The creek ran through the middle of the cove, and on each side of it the wide flats extended up to the shore. These, toward the lower part of the cove, were formed of soft mud, but at the upper part they consisted of sand, in which appeared a multitude of little holes, which are generally called breathing-holes, about these parts, under the impression that they serve this purpose for the clams. By digging where these little holes are seen, the clams may be found buried in the sand and mud.

Toward the upper place they walked rapidly and eagerly, and looked anxiously around for the "breathing-holes."

"Here," said Muckle. "There are lots here."

Both went toward where he stood.

"See," said he, pointing to the sand, which was dotted with little holes all around the place where they were standing.

"That," said Muckle, "is a sure sign."

"So it is," said Jiggins.

"Well, let's go in."

"An' is there oysters here, too?" asked Pat.

"No; only clams."

"It's sorry I am for that same, thin. Oysters are a dale betther."

"O, clams ain't bad," said Muckle, "when you can't get oysters. So pitch in, Jiggins."

And Muckle, taking his stick, began to scoop up the sand.

Jiggins began to do the same; and for some time both worked diligently.

"Pooh!" said Jiggins, at last. "That stick's no good."

"No good? Why not?"

"It won't hold the sand."

"Mine does very well."

"Well, I might as well have nothing. It's like trying to eat rice with a chopstick, Chinese fashion. I'm going to try another plan."

"What's that?"

"Why, like the hens. I'm going to scratch for my food," said Jiggins. "What were fingers made for?"

And saying this, he began scratching up the sand.

"Bedad! an' if you're the hen, I'll be the chicken, an' ate what you scratch up."

"Will you?" asked Jiggins.

"I will thin."

"Whatever I scratch up?"

"Yes—if they're clams."

"But you'll have to eat them raw."

"Well, sure it's raw I mane."

"Why, man alive, it'll make you sick."

"I'll risk it. Sick is it? Not a bit of it."

"Did you ever eat any raw clams, Pat?"

"Av coorse. Why not? and raw oysters, too."

"Well, you won't blame me?"

"Is it blame? Not a bit of it. Niver fare."

"O, well, I'll scratch for you then."

"Go ahead, thin."

So Jiggins began, and scratched for some time.

"Here's your first clam," said he, throwing out one to Pat.

Pat opened it, and swallowed it with extraordinary celerity.

"Doesn't that look as if I knowed how?" said he, biting off the black tip of the clam, and throwing it down. "Scratch them along, my boy."

"All right; here's another."

"An' here's to your very good health, an' long life to ye," said Pat, as he swallowed it.

"Here's another—and here—and here—and here, too—and here's three."

"Faith, thin, the more the merrier, and it's meself that's glad to see thim same," said Pat, as he seized and opened them, one by one, and sent them flying after the others.

"How do you feel now?" asked Jiggins, after he had scratched for some time.

"Sure I feel better than iver; an' why not?"

"All right. Here are some more. Go it, Pat."

"Go it it is," said Pat, seizing the clams with undiminished avidity, and devouring them.

"Here's more, Pat. Don't blame me if you see the ghost of your grandmother in your dreams to-night. And here's more. Don't blame me if you have the gripes, and have to stand on your head all night."

"Niver you fare for me; but you go on wid yer scratchin', an' let me ate in pace."

The clams now came forth fast and furious. Muckle had found a place filled with them, and had heaped up his basket. Jiggins had a large pile on the sand, in front of which Pat had taken his station, and was vainly trying to keep up with Jiggins. But it was impossible, for Jiggins had found large numbers closely packed together.

"What's the matter over there?" said Muckle. "Have you filled your basket, Jiggins?"

"Not yet. I'm busy filling Pat," said Jiggins. "Hallo, Pat, you're slow about it."

"Niver fare. Slow is it? Thin I'll be up wid ye before long. On'y give me time, as the school-master said when they wor examinin' him on the alphabet."

"All right. But while I'm waiting, I'll put these in the basket," said Jiggins; and he began to fill his basket from the pile.

"How can I ate them when you're putting them in the basket?" said Pat.

"I'll dig up plenty more—enough to keep you going."

But Jiggins was tired; and after digging up some more he found the sand tinged red. To his amazement he saw that his nails were worn away, and were now bleeding. His fingers' ends began to smart with acute pain, and he was compelled to desist.

"I think I'll be off," said he. "Pat, you may eat from the basket."

"From the basket, is it? Not a bit of it," said Pat; "I'll only eat from your scratching."

"I've scratched the bucket full for you, and that's enough. In fact it's too much," he added, as he felt fresh stings on his finger tips. "Besides, I've my doubts about it."

"Yer doubts, is it? and again? An' what for this time?"

"Well, you see, I'm afraid it's not altogether fair to you."

"You're a quare bird, wid yer doubts, an' that's all about it," said Pat.

They then went back to the bank, where a bright fire was burning, and the pot was all ready, with sea-water boiling in it. Into this they threw the clams; and sitting down around the fire, they waited.

Pat sat in silence. There was a peculiar expression on his face. He grew moody and pre-occupied. Frequent sighs escaped him.

"What's the matter, Pat?" asked Jiggins.

"O, nothin'."

Pat struggled against his secret grief most valiantly, but soon he could struggle no longer.

A deep groan burst from him, and he fell back doubled up and writhing. His face was deadly pale, and big drops of perspiration stood on his brow. In his pain he rolled over and over, and moans and low cries escaped him.

"It's the clams!" cried Jiggins. "O, I knew it. I had my doubts about it all the time."

"What can we do?" cried Johnny.

"We'll have to get him up to Captain Pratt's," said Muckle.

But for a long time they could do nothing. He writhed and struggled so that he could not be moved. At last Johnny Blue ran up for Mrs. Pratt. The good lady came down with a basket full of infallible remedies, and tended poor Pat for some time. At last he was easier, and they managed to get him up to the house, and put him in bed.

Jiggins went back with the others, and finished the clams. All were silent except Jiggins, who, every little while, would solemnly shake his head, and slowly ejaculate,—

"It was *not* right. No, boys, it was *not* right. I felt so, for I had my doubts about it all the time."

One thing surprised Mrs. Pratt when she was administering to Pat's woes on the bank; and that was, the very savory smell of that clam stew which was simmering in a pot behind the bushes. She could not understand it, but concluded that it must be some great delicacy among the vessel's stores lying on the bank, which had so very fragrant an odor.

Afterward, when her mind was less pre-occupied,—when Pat had been well rubbed, and poulticed, and blistered, and plied with herb tea, and all those other medicaments which the "medicine women" of the rural districts love so well; after all this had been attended to, then she began to think once more about that fragrant odor. And gradually, as she thought about it, there arose in her mind a conjecture as to what that odor might have arisen from; and the conjecture gathered itself inseparably around the idea of—"clams."

To Mrs. Pratt that thought was a momentous one.

For what did that involve?

It meant that there was danger abroad,—danger which impended over the young charges committed to her, and which she must counteract. It meant that some of them had been eating clams in the month of May—an act which, in her estimation, might produce consequences which could only be called terrible.

In the face of this great possible danger, Mrs. Pratt gathered herself up, and prepared to meet it boldly. Already all her doctoring instincts had been roused into full play by the case of Pat, and having begun a good work, it was not easy to stop abruptly. She had got her hand in, as the saying is, and she wanted to finish her work. It did not take long for her to come to the stern conclusion that the work must be fully completed.

So she first of all brought forth her little store of medicaments of all kinds, and ranged them on the kitchen table. They presented a formidable show. There were,—

1	bottle	Mint tea.
1	"	Essence of peppermint.
1	"	Ginger extract.
1	"	Cayenne pepper extract.
1	"	Paregoric.
1	"	Rum and onions.
1	"	Sulphur and molasses.
1	"	Sour cream.
1	"	Eye wash.
1	"	Pratt's pain killer.
1	"	Hemlock water.
1	"	Tar water.
1	"	Poppy juice.
1	"	Essence of smoke.
1	"	Brandy and salt.
1	"	Castor oil.
1	"	Camomile water.
1	"	Mineral water.
1	"	Pratt's antidote.
1	"	Hair wash.
1	"	Ear wash.
1	"	Toothache drops.
1	"	Creosote.
1	"	Rowland's Macassar oil.
1	"	Cocoaine.

1	"	Salt and treacle.
1	"	Antibilious mixture.
1	"	Arnica.
1	"	Opodeldoc.
1	"	Hartshorn.
1	"	Aromatic vinegar.
1	"	Sweet oil.
1	"	Benzine.
1	"	Grease eradicator.
1	"	Lye.
1	"	Tobacco water.
1	"	Wild honey.
1	"	Lime juice.
1	"	Alcohol.
1	"	Cod liver oil.
1	"	Neats foot oil.

In addition to these, she had,—

1	parcel	Wormwood.
1	"	Camomile flowers.
1	"	Cardamum seeds.
1	"	Birch bark.
1	"	Spruce gum.
1	"	Rosin.
1	"	Dandelion.
1	"	Elm bark.
1	"	Elder berries.
1	"	Hops.
1	"	Gum arabic.
1	"	Catnip.
1	"	Spearmint.
1	"	Peppermint.
1	"	Beeswax.
1	"	Root ginger.
1	"	Cloves.
1	"	Alum.
1	"	Magnesia.
1	"	Balm of Gilead.
1	"	Horseradish.
1	"	Flagroot.
1	"	Sarsaparilla.
1	"	Sassafras.
1	"	Soap.
1	pot	Pomatum.
1	box	Lard.

1	bundle	Lint.
1	parcel	Senna.
1	pot	Mucilage.
1	parcel	Salts.
1	"	Cotton wool.
1	"	Diachylon.
1	pot	Mustard.
1	parcel	Calomel.
1	box	Blue pills.
1	"	Cantharides.
1	"	Garlic.
1	"	White lead.

And a great many other things, which had accumulated in her closet, and which she now brought forth for the especial benefit of the four boys. Having selected some from among these, she sat calmly awaiting their return.

When the boys came back from the bank,—where they had been enjoying their clam stew,—this was the sight that greeted their eyes on entering the kitchen: a table filled with bottles and vials, another table filled with parcels and bundles, and on the floor jugs, boxes, kegs, firkins, and bags, in the midst of all of which sat Mrs. Pratt, with her eyes gleaming, from behind her spectacles, upon them, and an expression of benevolent yet unshakable resolution upon her face.

The boys entered one by one, and took their seats, looking suspiciously around. There was something in the general appearance of things which did not altogether satisfy them.

"Ehem—ehe-e-em!" said Jiggins, at last, to whom the suspense was becoming intolerable.

A long silence followed.

"Ehem!" he remarked again; but Mrs. Pratt made no answer.

"Ehe-e-em!" he remarked a third time. "Is—ah—is Pat—ah—any better?"

"Considerable," said Mrs. Pratt. "Yes, considerable."

"That's right—that's good. I feel very much relieved. I've blamed myself very much for letting him do as he did."

Mrs. Pratt gave a long sigh.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "You all had clams, as well as he. You had a clam stew. Why should he suffer more'n you'ns?"

The boys started, and looked at one another. How in the world had Mrs. Pratt found out about the clams? They felt uneasy at first, but soon recollected that, after all, cooking clams was no harm. So they regained their courage.

"Why, you see," said Jiggins, at last, "it was different with Pat. We had them cooked, but he ate them raw."

"And you think that makes any difference," said Mrs. Pratt, grimly.

"Why, certainly—of course," said Jiggins, looking at Mrs. Pratt anxiously; while all the other boys stared at her in dire anticipation of some fearful disclosure.

"Not a mite," said Mrs. Pratt. "There isn't a mite of difference between you,—*all* of you, mind, and him,—only he was kind o' took bad at onst, an' you're a waitin'. Let me see. How long is it since you finished eatin'?"

"O, only a few minutes," said Jiggins, nervously.

"Well, I supposed so. Ve-ry well," repeated Mrs. Pratt, in the tone of a cool physician, who feels gratified when a disease takes the form he suspected, even when it is attended with pain and danger to the patient. "Yes, that's it; and now can you remember how long a time it was after Pat had done eating the raw clams to the fust pain he felt?"

The boys looked in fearful anxiety at one another, and then all eyes turned to Jiggins. He turned pale, and all the expression of his face changed to one dismal blank.

"Can't any of you remember?" repeated Mrs. Pratt. "How long was it?"

"Well—as near as I can remember," said Jiggins, in a faltering voice, "it's—about—I should think—somewhere near—perhaps—the neighborhood of half an hour—that is, more or less."

"About half an hour. I thought so," said Mrs. Pratt, remorselessly.

"Somewhere about that," said Jiggins.

"Till he felt his fust pains?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Mrs. Pratt, with a benevolent smile, "somewhere about half an hour from this you'll feel the same."

She paused, and watched the effect of this fearful announcement.

The effect was powerful. Four pale faces looked, with awful eyes, at her, and at one another. Not a word was spoken in reply.

"Yes, every one of you. You've all eaten, I s'pose."

Jiggins nodded mournfully.

"And plenty, too."

Another nod.

"Very well. You'll have it hot and heavy, mind I tell you. Pat will be beginning to feel quite comfortable just as you begin to get took."

"But—but," said Jiggins, rousing himself despairingly, "I thought—that is, I always heard—that clams were good stewed—and I never heard that even raw clams were bad, except when you took too many of them."

"Shows how your parients neglected your edication," said Mrs. Pratt, loftily. "They didn't understand the natur' of the clam, certain. It isn't the cooking, or the not cooking, of the clam that makes it so dangerous; it's the clam itself—or rather, the clam at this season of the year. That's what makes it dangerous."

"This season of the year? Why, what's that got to do with it?"

"Haven't you ever heard of that? Dear! dear! dear! An' yet you go to the Academy, and don't know about clams. Dear! dear! dear!"

"They don't teach about clams there," said Jiggins, morosely.

"So you don't know the danger there is in eating them now."

"No."

"Well, I'll tell you—they're *pison*!"

"Poison!" ejaculated the others, in horror at the thrilling whisper in which Mrs. Pratt hurled this word at them.

"Yes, *pison*! Hain't you ever heerd the old lines,—

'In the months without the "R,"

Clams a deadly pison are'?

That means May, June, July, and August. Another verse says,—

'In August, May, July, and June,
All shell fishes lead to ruin.'

That means, you see, that in the summer months these things are as bad as pison."

"What shall we do?" cried Jiggins, after a long, despairing silence, in which these fearful words sank deep into the hearts of all. "What shall we do?"

"Well," said Mrs. Pratt, with a benevolent smile, "you'd ort ter be thankful that you've got me. I am jest the person to treat your case. I've got the medicine all ready. If you take it in time, you may avoid trouble. As there's only been a few minutes sence you ate the pison clams, p'raps you may get off without much pain. I've jest got some herb tea, some drinks of different kinds, some mustard poultices, and two or three more mixtures for you. I won't bleed any of you if I can help it. Only jest give yourselves up to me, and trust to me. But there must be no delay. I have the mixtures all ready."


Saying this, Mrs. Pratt rose like an ogress, and advanced upon the unhappy boys. Filled with fears of poison, looking upon her as their only safety, they made no resistance, but swallowed, one by one, the nauseous mixtures which were given. And still she stood over them, talking about the danger before them, and forcing upon them more medicaments.

Then came the mustard plasters.

But enough. Let us draw a curtain over the sufferings of the unhappy four.

XVI.

New Hopes and Plans.—A Sail!—A bitter Disappointment.—A hazardous Adventure, and a Fright.—Quilts for Togas.—Another tremendous Casualty.

 here, on the top of the bank, sat the five boys of the "B. O. W. C.," waiting patiently.

"Only an hour more, boys," repeated Bruce.

"Well, if they don't come, we'll survive it," said Bart.

"I suppose we shall start off at once, if they don't come."

"Yes, as soon as the tide begins to fall."

"I wonder if it will carry the schooner with it."

"I think that it will."

"Perhaps it will leave it aground."

"All right. That will be so much the better for us. It would be a pity to lose the schooner so soon."

"O, she won't be lost."

"Yes, she will. What'll prevent her? She'll be carried ashore on some rocks and broken to pieces, or she'll drift out into the Bay of Fundy."

"O, she has other chances in her favor. She may drift on some mud-flat like this, or she may be picked up on the basin, or, if she does get out into the Bay of Fundy, she may get picked up there."

"That may be; but, after all, it'll be hard on Corbet; and he's rather poor."

"It'll serve him right," exclaimed Tom Crawford. "He must have known that his anchor was broken."

"Well, it certainly does serve him right, if he knew that; but he's a careless fellow, and I dare say he didn't know anything about it."

"I wonder where this coast goes?" asked Phil Kennedy.

"Well, it goes in two directions," said Bart. "Which way do you mean?"

"The right."

"O, that goes to Parrsboro' Village; the left leads up to Pratt's Cove."

"How do you know?"

"I can't tell just where Pratt's Cove is, but I know the direction in which it must lie from here," said Bart. "You can tell that by seeing the way the Five Islands lie toward us. If they come for us, they'll have to come from behind that headland."

"I wonder if they'll come by land or water."

"I don't see how they can come by land."

"There's a road, I suppose."

"O, ever so far back. How could any one find anything about us on the road? No; they'll come by water, so as to find us either afloat or ashore."

"There isn't any boat at all in Pratt's Cove."

"O, there must be other coves near, where they can get other boats."

"It will be hard for us, if they don't happen to have a boat."

"O, they'll get one."

"And meanwhile we must act for ourselves; for I don't believe they'll get one to-day, at any rate."

"Yes, we may as well prepare for an expedition along the coast."

"Shall we separate, or go together?"

"O, together, by all means. But, hallo! what's that?"

At this exclamation from Bart, all looked where his eyes were turned.

"A schooner!" they cried; "a schooner! There they come! Hurrah, boys! we're all right."

Instantly every one sprang to his feet.

"Come, boys, take off your shirts," said Bruce, as he pulled off his own. "Let's get ready a supply of red bunting to make signals to them."

Instantly all of them tore off their shirts, and waved them wildly from the top of the bank.

Yes, it was a schooner. It had come thus suddenly upon them as they were talking; and even though they had been on the constant lookout, yet its appearance had startled them all. It was twice as large as the Antelope, of a bright green color; its masts were yellow, and its sails beautifully neat. Spreading its snow-white wings to the breeze, it came bounding

over the waves from behind the headland, and directed its course in toward the shore.

"She's not heading for us at all," said Bruce. "If she keeps on in that direction, she'll be a mile down beyond us before we know it."

"She don't see us," said Bart.

"Wave your signals, then! Ah, what a pity we hadn't a good signal-post!"

"I'll climb a tree," said Phil, looking around.

"There isn't any tree fit for the purpose. The highest ones are hidden by the smaller ones in front. This is as conspicuous a place as we can find."

Meanwhile the schooner kept on at an angle with them, and pursued her way without taking any notice of them, heading toward a point far down to the right of the place where they were standing.

With a face of stern determination, and the air of a captain of a battery, Bart drew his pistol.

"I'll fire," said he, solemnly.

The next instant, bang! or, rather, pop! went the pistol.

But the schooner took not the smallest notice even of that overpowering demonstration. On the contrary, it kept straight on without altering its course.

"They're blind, and deaf, too; and that's all about it," cried Phil Kennedy, in deep disgust.

"I wonder what's the matter with them," said Bruce. "They don't keep a very good lookout, or they'd surely see us. There's red flannel enough here to be seen five miles off."

"I wonder who is steering."

"I wonder who those two chaps are in the bow. Can it be Bogud and the mate?"

"I wonder who that old boy in a pea-jacket can be? It surely can't be Mr. Simmons?"

"It's Captain Corbet."

"Nonsense! Captain Corbet is steering."

"No, that's the mate."

"It isn't, either. Don't you see the mate on the bow?"

"That the mate! That's Mr. Long."

"Bah! Mr. Long don't generally go in his shirt-sleeves."

"Why shouldn't he? I s'pose he is helping the others. He'd just as soon take off his coat as not, if he had anything to do."

"It isn't Mr. Long, any way."

But these wonders and conjectures were now interrupted by a movement on the part of the schooner. She had already gone beyond the spot where the boys were standing, and had come to within half a mile of the beach. She now wore round. Flap went the sails! there was a quick movement on board, and then away she went on another tack, with her head turned toward the opposite shore.

"She's leaving us!" cried Bruce, aghast.

For a few moments all stood in silent dismay. This was a thing which they were not prepared for. If no schooner had come at all, they could easily have borne up; but now, since one had come, they had not for a moment doubted their speedy deliverance. There was not hope, but certainty, in her appearance. But now this was dashed to the ground, and

the reaction was extreme.

Bart was the first to break the silence.

"I tell you what, boys," he cried, "I don't believe it was them at all."

"O, yes, it was," said Arthur. "I recognized Captain Corbet."

"No; you may depend upon it, you were utterly mistaken. Why, do you suppose, if they were after us, they would have come and gone so coolly? There wasn't the slightest sign of any anxiety or curiosity about them. If it had been our friends, they'd have seen our signals soon enough."

"Yes, and the Antelope down there nearly ashore."

"Well, I don't know. But I certainly thought I recognized Captain Corbet."

"I thought I saw Bogud."

"Not a bit of it. They were strangers, and that accounts for everything."

"And now," said Tom, "all that we've got to do is to wait for a few minutes more, and then start."

"I say, boys," said Bart, after a fit of musing, "what a pity it is that we can't fasten the vessel somehow, and keep her here! There's an old tree at the bottom of the bank big enough to moor a ship at. If we could only get a line around it from the schooner, we could keep the vessel here till they did come."

"Yes, that would be the best plan," said Bruce; "for I've been thinking that we may find some people here who would sail the schooner back to the cove. It would be a great pity to let her drift."

"It's a pity that we can't get at her," said Arthur.

"And why can't we?" asked Bart.

Why! The question at once made every one stare and think. Each one could answer in his own mind why such a thing could not be done, but no one stated such a reason. All were silent.

"It's not very far," said Bart.

"No."

"Not so far as it was to wade when we landed."

"That's a fact."

"And I move that we try it."

"Ah, that's all very well!" said Phil. "But who *will* try it?"

"Well, then, *I* will," said Bart.

"O, then, if it comes to that, I'll go too," said Bruce.

"So will I," said Arthur.

"And I," said Phil.

"And I'll be with you, boys," said Tom.

"Of course you will," said Bart. "But what's the use of all of us going. Two of us will be enough. Bruce and I can take our poles and do it. It's not much any way."

"And I'll go with my handspike," said Arthur.

"In fact, I don't think we need even boat-hooks," said Bruce. "The bottom is hard sand just there, all the way out to the

vessel. It's as safe as a floor."

"Yes, except for one thing," said Arthur, holding up the jaw of the fish.

"Hm!" said Bruce. "For my part, I don't believe there's any danger just here. It's too near the bank. I never heard of them coming in so near high-water mark; but, at the same time, I dare say it will be better to take the boat-hooks."

"O, yes. We'll feel safer," said Bart, "and that's something. One advantage will be, that we won't be bothered with our bundles."

"How do you propose to do?" asked Bruce.

"Well, to board her and get a line."

"Will any of the lines be strong enough?"

"Well, my idea is, to let down the chain, fasten the rope to the anchor stump, and all of us can then drag it ashore. We can then wait till the tide brings the vessel near enough for us to pass the line, or the chain, around the tree."

"That ought to hold it," said Arthur.

"Of course it will."

"Very well then. Let's start. And first of all, let's strip."

"I'll take the pistol, Bart," said Phil, as Bart laid it down before taking off his belt; "and if anything happens, I'll fire."

"All right, my son," said Bart.

They all went down then to the beach below, where they stripped, and the adventurous five went into the water, although only three were going on board; for Tom and Phil felt bound in honor to share the possible peril of the others.

The water had risen a little up the steep declivity of the pebbled beach, and the vessel was some distance nearer than she had been when they first climbed the bank. It was a favorable time for starting, but not so much so as it would be in the course of half an hour. But they were too impatient to delay, and so they started. As it was, they had not more than fifty yards to go.

The bottom was not muddy just here, but composed of hard sand, like the sand-spit on which they had landed. The water was quite smooth, only disturbed by a gentle ripple, which, farther out, rose into small waves. The descent, like that farther out, was but very gradual, and it was only by almost imperceptible degrees that the water deepened.

Bruce and Bart went first, with their poles held in their hands in such a way that they were able to splash the water before them, so that if there should chance to be any more "shovel-mouth sharks" near by, they might take notice and govern themselves accordingly. For they firmly believed that all fish are frightened by any splashing, and deterred, just as wild animals are frightened and deterred, by the flashing of flames.

Tom and Phil followed more slowly, the former armed with a boat-hook, and the latter with the pistol. The distance was quickly traversed. The water grew deeper and deeper, until it was up to Bruce's armpits and Bart's shoulders. By that time they touched the schooner's bows.

At that instant a splash was heard close by them, and the movement of some body was felt amid the waters.

"Up! Quick!" cried Bruce.

"You go first," said Bart.

"I won't," cried Bruce.

"Nor will I," said Bart.

Bruce said no more. He stooped down, and clasping Bart in his brawny arms, he jerked him up out of the water. Bart clambered on board, and held out his hand to Bruce. Another instant and the latter stood by his side. Arthur followed at

the same time.

"Did you see that?" asked Arthur.

"Yes. Did you?"

"Yes. What was it?"

"Another shovel-mouth shark—wasn't it?"

"I don't think so. It wasn't the same color. It was white."

"Perhaps it turned over to bite."

Arthur shook his head.

"No. It came between us. It was not so large as that other fellow. It dashed off at once."

"Perhaps it was only a codfish," said Bart.

"Well, it was a large one, then. It might have been a porpoise. I wonder if porpoises come so near the shore."

"Sometimes, but not often."

"I shouldn't wonder if it was a sturgeon," said Arthur. "After all, it may only have been a codfish. At the same time I'd much rather be here than down there."

"Boys!" shouted Bruce to Tom and Phil. "Boys, you may as well go ashore and dress. We'll stay here a little while. It'll take some time to get things ready."

At this Tom and Phil went back and dressed.

The fish which they had last seen had produced a very solemnizing effect on their minds. There came over them a horror of that treacherous water. They felt an aversion toward venturing in again, and were sorry that they had come. But there was no help for it. There they were now, though each one felt that he could not venture back again into the wafer very readily. It might have been a sturgeon, or a porpoise, or even a codfish; but the horror of its presence was still there, whatever it was. It was some time before they could rally from the panic which had filled them as they tumbled on board. And though each said but little about it, and alluded to it very lightly, yet each one understood pretty truly the feelings of the others.

"Come, boys, hurry up!"

This was the cry that Phil and Tom sent them from the beach. They had dressed, and were watching them with impatience.

"We're going to wait till she gets nearer," cried Bruce. "At high tide she will be close to the beach, and we won't have to drag the chain so far."

"You'd better come now," said Phil.

"No," said Bart; "the chain won't reach so far."

"All right," said Tom. "We'll go up the bank again till you're ready."

Saying this, the two boys clambered up the bank, when they rambled a little into the woods. Arthur and Bart then found a line, one end of which they fastened to the anchor. It was their intention to take the line ashore, and let go the whole chain, which they hoped could be pulled to the beach as far as the tree. Before that could be done, however, it would be necessary for the schooner to be much nearer. The water was already rising, and there yet remained many feet to be covered before the tide would reach what they considered as high-water mark.

"I don't believe it will be high tide for an hour yet. It will be an hour later than we calculated," said Bruce. "Hang it, it's too cold here. I wish we had our clothes."

"Well, I'm not going to freeze any longer," said Bart, jumping down into the hold. He was absent for a few minutes, and soon returned with a quilt gracefully wrapped around him like a Roman toga. With a laugh, Arthur and Bruce jumped down, and imitated his example. Then coming on deck again, they joined Bart, and the boys professed to be very comfortable, considering all things.

They now took their seats at the stern, and looked out to sea, watching for any signs of relief. This occupied them for a longer time than they thought.

"I wonder what's become of Tom and Phil," said Arthur, suddenly jumping up and looking toward the shore.

The others did the same.

Scarcely had they done so, when a cry of dismay burst from them.

The shore was at least five hundred yards away. Phil and Tom were scrambling down the bank, gesticulating wildly.

"What's all this?" cried Arthur.

For a moment no one answered; but at last Bart said, in a voice tremulous with agitation,—

"We've mistaken the high-water mark altogether, boys. It must have been high tide when we came on board. We've been drifting off ever since."

"Couldn't we wade ashore?" said Arthur.

Bruce seized a boat-hook, and plunged it over the vessel's side into the water.

"Couldn't do it," he said, slowly. "There are eight or nine feet of water."

"Can't we swim?"

"Will you try it?"

Each one looked at the other, but there was no assent to this. It was not the mere distance, but the other perils of the deep that deterred them, and more than all, the remembrance of their last panic.

XVII.

On the briny Deep, and on the muddy Shore.—The Fisherman's Boat.—Reappearance of old Friends.— Remonstrances, Explanations, and Confessions.

Meanwhile,—even while they were speaking,—every moment drew them farther away from the shore. They saw Tom and Phil standing on the beach, which they had reached by this time, and waving their hands with frantic gesticulations. They heard them, shout, "Come back! You're adrift!" and other words not intelligible. They shouted back again to encourage them, though they themselves had but little hope.

"We haven't any anchor, boys," said Bart; "but let's put down what we have. It may hold, or, at least, prevent our drifting so fast."

"Well, there's nothing else to be done," said Bruce; "so I suppose we may as well try it. Come along, boys. We must do what we can."

Saying this, he led the way to the windlass, and the remnant of the anchor was let go.

They waited a little while to see what effect this would have, but in a few moments saw that very little was produced.

"No go," said Bruce. "Suppose we give her the whole chain."

"Yes," said Bart. "It may hold her if it is all out."

"At any rate," said Arthur, "it will prevent her drifting somewhat."

"Down she goes, then," said Bruce, as the chain ran out. Soon it was out at its fullest extent, and they again watched to see what effect would be produced. By this time they had gone very much farther from the shore, and Tom and Phil were just discernible.

"It checks her a little," said Bart, "yet very little. As to holding her, that is out of the question."

"And yet there can't be much of a current here."

"I don't know as to that. It is difficult to tell anything about it. There are currents in all sorts of places around the bay."

"Perhaps, if we let it drag for a while," said Bruce, "it may catch somewhere and hold. I've heard of such things."

"There's very little chance, I'm afraid," said Bart, in a despondent tone. "If we only had half a fluke I wouldn't care; but as it is, we have no fluke at all, and that's why we can't do anything."

Waiting thus, and wondering what they could do next, the three boys looked sadly toward the receding shore. The quilts which they had thrown around them had been fastened at the waist with rope-yarns, and these, in the exercise of letting go the anchor, had fallen from their shoulders, leaving them exposed from their waists upward. They looked ruefully at one another as they thought of this, burst out laughing, and then drew the quilts, toga, fashion, over their shoulders again.

"It was bad enough this morning," said Arthur, at last, "but it was a joke to this. What can we do for something to eat?"

"There's not a morsel on board."

"The last mouthful of bread we ate before we waded ashore."

"If we only had a fish-hook we might hope to catch something."

"Fish-hook! Why, man, we haven't any kind of bait."

"Well, all we've got to do is to hope for some one to pick us up."

"Is that all? No," said Bart. "I, for one, am not going to sit down and float away, goodness knows where. I move that we up sail and go somewhere."

"Up sail!"

"Of course. Why not?"

"But can we—can you—?"

"O, we can scrape along. I'd rather have a small accident than drift off in this style, doing nothing. You all understand my knowledge of sailing, for you've had a fair specimen of it, and if you're willing to risk my steering again, I'm ready to take hold; if not, then you or Bruce take hold, and I'll keep at the sails. It don't make any difference, though, which of us is captain, for I suppose one knows just as much as another. But, at any rate, I'm bound to have the sails up."

"So am I," cried Bruce, "whatever happens."

"And I too!" cried Arthur.

"Bart, you be captain, old fellow. We won't take your office from you. You've had more experience than we have had, at any rate, for you've steered her already. But we must get up the piece of an anchor first."

"Of course we must, and the sooner the better."

Upon this they all went to work at the windlass. It was hard work, but after some time it was successfully accomplished.

By this time they had drifted out several miles, and the beach still lay before them, but it was faint in the distance. The headland was then somewhat toward the right, and this served as an excellent guide. The vessel's head was still turned toward the shore, in the way in which she had drifted out.

"My idea," said Bart, "is, that we sail straight back again."

"It's a pity we hadn't the other fellows on board," said Bruce, "for we might try some place where there might be houses."

"Well, in that case, I'd give you the helm," said Bart. "As long as I'm here, I will only go where I know my ground. I don't care to try the Five Islands again, nor would I like to turn the schooner. It's lucky for us that she's heading in shore. So come, boys, let's hurry up with the sails, or else she may turn off in some other direction; and then how we can get her round again, will be more than I can say."

Hoisting the sails was arduous work, but they succeeded. The wind had moderated, and the vessel glided slowly back toward the beach. Bart was so anxious to rejoin Tom and Phil, that he did not venture to try any experiments in sailing, but simply kept the schooner's head toward the place where he supposed they might be standing. The wind was favorable, the vessel drew nearer and nearer, and at last the beach again became distinctly visible.

A shout of joy escaped them as they recognized Phil and Tom again.

"I wonder how they felt when they saw us drifting," said Bruce.

"They must have given us up for lost."

"I wonder whether they expected that we would raise the sails."

"I don't believe they thought of that."

"That's not surprising, after all; especially as we didn't think of it ourselves till the last moment."

"That's odd, too. It seems now as though it ought to have been the very first thing to think of."

"Well, the fact is, we had such a tough time this morning off that headland," said Bart, pointing to the dark rocks which were full before them on their right, "that it's no wonder if we gave up all ideas of ever hoisting sail again. However, it's all right. And now what ought we to do?"

"There's only one thing that we can do."

"What's that?"

"What? Why, what else can we do but run ashore, just as we did before."

"I suppose we can't do anything else; but it's a pity, too. Still we must take Tom and Phil. Though, if they were on board, we could at least find a better part of the coast. This is so remote, and I haven't seen any houses near the place at all."

Bad as it was, there was no help for it; and so Bart had to keep the schooner straight on. On account of the currents, however, and the loss of way, the Antelope could not come within a mile of her former landing-place. Phil and Tom saw this, and ran down the beach, carrying the bundles; and just as they came opposite to their companions, the Antelope grounded about a hundred feet from the beach. Without waiting another instant, Phil and Tom threw off their clothes, and waded out. They got on board without any adventures, and celebrated the restoration of their companions by dancing like wild creatures about the deck. Long explanations followed from both sides, after which they discussed their future prospects.

"Hallo!" said Arthur, as the schooner sank a little on one side. "She's aground. No farther drifting till next tide. And now what can we do, or where can we fasten her?"

"We'll have to try and use the chain and line, as we did before."

"I wonder if we are not too far out."

"No; I think not," said Phil.

"There's a good stump up there to fasten a line to," said Tom.

"I dare say we can get a line up. If not, we can bury the anchor in the mud, and put stones over it."

"And what can we do about exploring the country?"

"Some of us must stay by the schooner to attend to the fastenings."

"Two can stay, and three go."

"No, three had better stay, and two go. It's too hard work."

"Pooh! two will be enough. But who will they be?"

"Well, we must toss up for it. That's the only plan. We must do it at once. There's no time to lose."

"Suppose, before we do anything more," said Bart, "that we all slip ashore and put our clothes on. For my part, I'm chilly; and though I could easily get some more quilts, yet it seems unnecessary to do so when I have my own clothes so near. Besides, here are Phil and Tom, whose teeth are already chattering."

A loud laugh followed; after which they all sprang, one after the other, into the water, and hurried to the shore. There they dressed themselves; and as the vessel was fairly aground, with the tide rapidly going out past her, they threw themselves on the beach, and prepared to decide on the ones that would stay behind.

"There!" cried Phil, suddenly springing to his feet. "I knew it was!"

"What? what?" exclaimed all the others.

"A sail!—out there by the headland!"

"So it is," said Bart. "Phil, you've got a good pair of eyes in your head."

"It's a sail-boat," said Bruce.

"And heading this way," said Bart.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom. "They've come for us at last."

"Come, now, boys," said Arthur, "don't let us get excited again. I tell you that boat is some fisherman, and it is passing by here. Those on board won't see us, and there's no use doing anything. Let's sit down and finish the toss-up, and send Phil to the top of the bank to watch, and make what signals he can."

"Not a bit of it!" cried Bart; and springing forward, he dashed into the water toward the schooner with his clothes on. The water had fallen so far, however, that he did not get wet much above his knees. Clambering on board, he lowered the flag of the "B. O. W. C.,"—which had waved there through all their vicissitudes,—and tearing off his red flannel shirt, he fastened it close beneath the flag. Then he pulled it up; and then kept lowering and hoisting, with the utmost rapidity, the extraordinary signal. Nor was this all. He had not yet lost confidence in his pistol, in spite of its signal failure in the case of the schooner some time before, but drew it forth now with a certain solemn decision. By this time all the others had come on board, and were waving all sorts of quilts and blankets from the stern. In the midst of all this agitation Bart fired his pistol. The smart pop! rang out bravely enough; but as the sail-boat was at least three miles away, it cannot be said to have produced any very extraordinary result. Bart, however, was satisfied. He had already given charge of the "ensign" to Tom, and, standing on the starboard quarter, he fired again. After this he rested for a while, and waited for the boat to come nearer.

Nearer she was certainly coming, in spite of the scepticism of Arthur. To guard against the pain of disappointment, Arthur was trying, with all his might, not to hope, and to prevent any of the others from hoping. Yet he could not help being as sanguine as the others, in spite of his efforts.

"Boys," he cried, "be careful now. Remember this boat don't see us, and don't intend to. She's a fishing-boat, out after

sturgeon. She's sailing straight across, past us, to— Hurrah! here she comes straight down to us."

"Ha, ha, ha! Hurrah! She sees us! Up and down with the flag, Tom! Fire away, Bart! Bring up that fog-horn, somebody, and blow till you burst. I'll content myself with a sociable yell."

Whereupon a yell, so loud, so harsh, so penetrating, burst forth from Bruce, that it seemed to penetrate even to the boat. White signals certainly were waving from those on board, and a tall figure in black stood upright in the bows waving a hat.

"Ha, ha!" cried Bart, as he fired his pistol again, and danced joyously about. "And you call that a fishing-boat, do you, Arthur? So you think the fishermen here go out to throw their nets, dressed in black broadcloth and silk hats, do you? Well, I call that good. A fisherman! Who would think of Mr. Long being taken for a fisherman!"

All was now the wildest joy. There was no more doubt, and no longer any mistakes. The boat saw them, and had returned answer to their signals. It was bearing swiftly down toward them. It was filled with people. Who were they all?

The question was soon answered. Nearer came the boat, and nearer, and still nearer. At last it came close up, and grounded under the vessel's quarter. Mr. Long was first on board, wringing all the boys' hands, and pretending to scold them. After him came Mr. Simmons, then Bogud, then Billymack, then the two captains. Hearty was the greeting, and deep and fervent the joy, at finding that all had turned out so well. The "B. O. W. C." had to tell all about their adventures. They concealed nothing whatever. Bart related, with the utmost frankness, the story of his navigation experiments, interrupted by the laughter of the other boys, and the criticisms of Captain Corbet, who would insist on explaining what ought to have been done. Then followed the story of the "shovel-mouth shark," which produced an immense sensation. Captain Corbet shook his head solemnly at the sight of the jaws, which Phil had run ashore to get. But their last adventure, when they were drifted away from their clothes, was considered about the most singular of all.

"But how did you manage to find us?" asked Bart, as he ended his story.

Mr. Long related all about his first discovery of their accident up to the time that he had left with his party for the "pint."

"When we got there," continued he, "we saw a schooner sailing, and made it out with the glass to be the Antelope. We watched you as you sailed toward the Five Islands. You must have been on your second tack then. We could not imagine where you were going. Captain Corbet thought you didn't know your way. I thought you were letting the vessel go wherever the wind might take you. As it happens, I was not very far wrong.

"At last we saw you turn, and the performance of the schooner showed us all very plainly that you couldn't sail her. It filled us with the deepest anxiety. We could have got a boat, but your course was so strange, that we delayed until we could see where you might finally bring up. We didn't expect any accident exactly, but hoped that you would come nearer. At last you sailed so close to that headland that we thought you were lost. Immediately afterward you passed behind it from sight. We waited some time to see if you would reappear, but you did not. So we at once put off in the boat which belonged to a fisherman who lived near, and came here as fast as possible. The last time that you drifted off we saw you; but perhaps you were too excited to see us—or perhaps we were too far off to be seen very easily.

"And now," concluded Mr. Long, "I've found you again, and it's my fixed determination not to let any of you go out of my sight. You're all a set of Jonahs. The only comfort is, that you come out all right at last."

"I'm sure, Mr. Long," remonstrated Bart, "you oughtn't to blame us. It wasn't our fault. I'd much rather not drift away if I could help it. I don't enjoy going about in the fog, or among these tides. I'm sure Bruce don't. Neither does Arthur, nor Tom, nor Phil."


"Blame you? Of course I don't blame you," said Mr. Long. "How can I? It wasn't your fault, of course. I only mean that your fortunes have been very peculiar. I don't know but, if I believed in omens, I'd say that your black flag up there has brought us all this run of bad luck. But come, we've been thoughtful about you. We knew you'd be starving, and so we brought along with us something for you to eat."

"Starving! Mr. Long, we're in that condition that we could eat horseshoes."

With a good-natured laugh, Mr. Long turned away, and jumping into the boat, handed up the eatables that he had brought for them.

XVIII.

Wanderings about the Beach.—Science and Sport.—Back Home.—Frightful Tale of Poison.—A Visit to the Afflicted.

 he eatables which Mr. Long had brought with him were not such as would have been welcome to a fastidious taste or a dainty appetite; but to these long-fasting, hard-working, and half-starving, and altogether ravenous boys, anything that was eatable was precious. The brown ship-bread and salt pork, which Mr. Long handed up to them, were seized as eagerly as if they had been roast beef and plum pudding, and soon disposed of. A knife drawn from Phil's belt served very quickly to cut the pork into slices, after which the pork and the brown biscuit vanished.

"What a pity," said Mr. Long, as he looked around, "that we didn't get here an hour earlier! The water's going out fast; the schooner is aground, and we'll have to wait till the next tide before we can start for the cove."

"It's a pity that we can't do something while waiting, so as not to throw our time away," said Mr. Simmons.

"There don't seem to be much prospect of doing anything just here, but we can try."

"Nor do I see that there are any people living about here."

"No: Captain Corbet told me there were no inhabitants within eight miles."

"These banks are not very inviting to a mineralogist—are they?" said Mr. Simmons, with a sigh, as he looked along the beach.

"No; we'll have to lay out our strength on the mud flats. Perhaps we may find some interesting footprints at low tide."

"Well, we may as well go ashore now, I suppose. It's rather monotonous standing here on an inclined plane, with the vessel aground on her side. I think I'll climb the bank, and take a general view of the country."

"Very well; I'll go with you," said Mr. Long. "And now, boys," he continued, "remember this: don't go out of sight. This beach is long, and it will soon be wide, for the tide will leave it all uncovered. This will give space enough for even such extensive and wide-spreading desires as yours. Now, don't go off the beach or the flats. Don't go up in the woods, and get lost; don't go into the water, and get drowned; don't blow yourselves up with that pistol; don't get into any more fights with 'shovel-mouth sharks,' or, if you do, be sure to call me; don't get into air-holes if you can help it. As to going adrift again, I don't see how you can manage that, as there is nothing afloat just yet; but, dear boys, if you can possibly help it, don't do it. Try and see if you can't manage to keep your clothes on. It's much better, as a general thing, to do so."

All this the boys greeted with loud laughter; after which they sprang over the vessel's side, and scattered themselves along the beach.

Captain Corbet stood looking after them, with a beaming smile irradiating his venerable countenance.

"Yes," he ejaculated, standing near Mr. Long. "Yea, sir; I allus knowed it, an' I allus said it, that them there boys would turn up all right. Lor' bless your heart, you can't wreck 'em, an' you can't drown 'em. The fish doesn't swim that can tetch 'em. They're allus bound to turn up all straight. That's the confidin' belief that reigned in my boosom, an' sustained me when we watched, 'em in the Antelope, up there at the pint. As to that there anchor, ef it had been a bran new one, it would have been broken off jest the same, for that there schooner was bound to lie on it an' crack it, an' them there boys was bound to have that there adventoor."

Mr. Long now landed with Mr. Simmons, and went up to the top of the bank, where they sat down for some time, gazing upon the wide-spread scenery of the Basin of Minas. After this they descended and walked about the beach. At first, they hoped to obtain some shells; but nothing of the kind could be found. In fact, there were scarcely any pebbles; indeed, none but the most common kind. For all the waters of the Bay of Fundy and its adjacent harbors are singularly bare of the more delicate shell-fish. Lobsters abound, and so do clams; so also do many kinds of sea-weed; but as for the more exquisite forms of sea life, such as we love to put in the aquarium, they must be sought for elsewhere. Here are swift

currents, fierce rapids, strong tides, vast mud flats or sand flats, rivers that empty and fill themselves with every ebb and flood; and it is not amid such scenes that we may look for those graceful, yet fragile creatures, whose abode is amid stiller scenes.

As the tide went down, Messrs. Simmons and Long walked over the flats, hoping to find something which would reward their trouble. From the surface of the sea bottom thus uncovered, many interesting things might be obtained. On these mud flats are found many marks, which are the counterparts of others that have been turned into stone, and buried in the adjacent earth. Here may be seen the patter of rain-drops, and the footprints of birds or beasts made on the very day of their discovery, while among the strata of the neighboring shore there may lie traces of a similar kind made many ages ago, which thus have been graven on the rock, and treasured up for our eyes.

The boys dispersed themselves everywhere, extending their wanderings as the tide left more and more of the shore exposed. Far down they could see the weirs, placed there by the fishermen, and they waited long for these to become uncovered, so that they might visit them, and inspect their contents. But it grew later and later, and finally it became too dark to do anything. Then the voice of Mr. Long was heard summoning them to the shore.

Thus the remainder of the day passed without anything to reward them, except the general excitement which had been produced among them. It would be many hours yet before they could get afloat, and they amused themselves by making fires at the foot of the bank. A modest and frugal repast of brown biscuit and pork, washed down with cold water, concluded the day. For some time longer they sat round the fire, until, at last, excessive weariness overcame them. Then they went on board the schooner, and retired to bed.

Some time after midnight the Antelope was afloat again. None of her passengers waked. She moved away from the shore without accident. Morning came, and she had not yet reached her destination. The wind had been unfavorable, and she had lost that tide. As she could not anchor, Captain Corbet had run her ashore. They had to wait patiently, and get off at midday, with the rising tide; after which they resumed their voyage, and in three hours more they were in Captain Pratt's house.

Of the five boys who had been left behind, one was not visible, and the other four met them with pale, woe-begone faces. They showed no joy at seeing the return of the wanderers; no curiosity to learn what they had been doing; and even the sight of the jaw of the "shovel-mouth shark" produced upon them no effect whatever.

It was seen that something had happened, and the unhappy four were closely cross-questioned. At first they refused to answer. At last, on being pressed, they confessed that they had all been poisoned.

"Poisoned!" cried Bart, in horror. "How was that?"

"*Clams!!!*" said Jiggins.

"Yes, clams!" said all the others.

"*Clams?*" cried Bart. "What rubbish! How could clams poison you! Pooh!"

"Ah, you don't know," said Jiggins. "You ask Mrs. Pratt. Haven't you heard the old saying," he continued, with an air of peculiar solemnity; "the old saying, that they have about these shores:—

"'In the months without the 'R,'
Clams and oysters poison are'?"

"Never heard it," said Bart; "and I don't believe it. I've eaten lots of oysters in May myself."

Jiggins shook his head.

"Never do it again," said he.

"Do you mean to say that it was clams that upset you so?"

"Clams, and clams alone," said Jiggins. "We owe our lives to Mrs. Pratt. She's been a mother to us."

"Why! What do you mean?"

"You see we had a stew. Pat ate them raw, and fell down in horrible agonies. The torments which he suffered were so excruciating that he had to be carried to the house, and went nearly mad with pain. Mrs. Pratt attended him, and as soon as he was easier she took us in hand. We had eaten after Pat, and our pains had not yet begun. Mrs. Pratt got out all her medicines, and tried them on us one after the other."

"What! not all! not *all* her medicines!"

"Yes, *all*!" said Jiggins, in a dismal voice. "I can't tell you all that we took; but first there was opodeldoc, then ginger, then Crabb's cordial, then magnesia, then paregoric, then blue pills, then a mustard plaster, after which there was rum and onions, brimstone and molasses—"

"Stop, stop!" cried Bart. "What's all that? You don't mean to say that you took all that?"

"Yes, *all*!" ejaculated Jiggins, his face growing at once longer and paler at the recollection of his sorrows.

"And you're alive yet—all of you? Then you need never be afraid of poisons. Yes, my poor Jiggins, you have been poisoned; that's a fact, though not by clams."

Mr. Long, who was present, had listened to all this in consternation.

"And where's Pat?" he asked. That young gentleman's name was Michael, but everybody called him Pat, and so did Mr. Long. "And where's Pat?"

"In bed yet, sir."

"Poor Pat! Has he been dosed, too?"

"Yes, sir; but he was taken worse than any of us;" and with this Jiggins went on to tell all about Pat and the raw clams.

"Dear, dear, dear!" cried Mr. Long. "He must have eaten a bushel, and all raw. Dear, dear, dear! What did he think he was made of? O, how is it possible for me to keep you all out of mischief? I go after one half of you who are in peril, and come back to find the rest of you half poisoned. But poor Pat—where is he? I must see him, for we have to start for home to-night."

"I'll show you, sir," said Jiggins; and he took him to the room where Pat was. He was lying in bed, looking pale and exhausted. He greeted Mr. Long with a faint smile, and the kind-hearted teacher did his utmost to soothe the afflicted boy.

XIX.

Complaints of a disappointed Savant.—The humble Confession of Pat.—A buried Treasure, and a great Search after it by Torchlight.

"Pat," said Mr. Long, kindly, "do you think you will be able to start to-night?"

"To-night, sir?" said Pat, dolefully.

"Yes, the recess is over. Our time is up, and we must all be back to-morrow. We ought to have been there Saturday night. Do you think you can come?"

"I suppose I'll have to, sir."

"If you're too weak, or if it pains you to walk, we can carry you down, you know."

"What time are ye afther lavin' at, sir?"

"About one o'clock."

"O, thin, surely I'll be bettther by that time," said Pat. "I'll get a wink of sleep, and wake up meself again."

"Do so, Pat. Is there anything I could get you?"

"No, sir, thank ye kindly. I don't know of anything."

Yes, they had to go back, for their time was up; yet Mr. Long was in despair, not knowing what to do about the minerals. He was confident that they were somewhere—but where? No one knew, and he couldn't imagine.

"It's too bad," he cried, as his indignation grew irrepressible. "It's too bad. Our expedition has been ill organized. I don't blame anybody, but we've certainly had very bad luck. With only a week we have wasted or lost every day but one. Last Monday we were kept all day and all night at the wharf."

"Wal, Mr. Long," said Captain Corbet, "I s'pose you're kind o' blamin' me; but what could I do? Ef a man has a babby, mustn't he nuss it?"

"No, he mustn't," said Mr. Long; "he must make his wife attend to household matters, and keep his engagements."

Captain Corbet stared with a look of horror and astonishment at Mr. Long.

"Wal, sir," he said, with modest firmness, "in my humble opinion, sir, a babby is a babby, an' flesh an' blood is flesh an' blood; an' I don't care who says they ain't. Ef you'd see that there babby, sir," he continued, warming up in a glow of fond parental feeling,— "ef you'd a-seen that there babby, as I've seen him,—a crowin', an' a pullin' of my har, an' a sayin', Ga-ga-ga,—you'd—"

"Mr. Simmons," said Mr. Long, suddenly, "have you hunted for the stones?"

"O, yes, everywhere."

"And did you find nothing?"

"Nothing."

"There it is," resumed Mr. Long. "A whole week worse than lost. We lost Monday. We started Tuesday, and sailed nearly all day. We had about two hours' work, and then the boat went adrift. All Wednesday we were wandering about the bay. Thursday came, and we didn't find the boys till the day was well gone, and then stopping at O'Rafferty's and coming here took up the remainder of the time."

"Well, we had Friday to ourselves," said Mr. Simmons, with a pleasant smile. He was an amiable man, and always looked on the bright side of things.

"Yes, we had," said Mr. Long, "but unfortunately we accomplished nothing. We had a long journey, and came back empty-handed."

"At any rate, we had the time."

"But that time was lost."

"O, well," said Mr. Simmons, "it was one of those days which everybody must expect to have. We tried hard, but were unsuccessful. I don't, by any means, call such a day lost. We gave ourselves up thoroughly to science."

"Well, call it a well-spent day," said Mr. Long, "and what of it? We will count it in; but after that—what? Saturday came, and we had to go after the boys again; now our time's up, and to-night we must go back again. We have had a week; and out of it we have been able to spend, at the very utmost, only one day and two hours. Well, I don't know how it strikes you, but I call it hard."

"It would, indeed, have been hard if things had turned out as we feared," said Mr. Simmons.

"O, of course I feel all that. I am only lamenting that these accidents should have happened, and that, when we came for a certain purpose, we should have been unable to carry it out. And see how things have gone on. We are out of provisions, and have to lay in a stock of meal, and molasses, and pork."

"I'm sure, meal makes very good food," said Mr. Simmons. "Hot corn-cake is rather a delicacy, and molasses is very good to eat with it."

"After all, I don't care anything about these things," continued Mr. Long. "What I do care about is the loss of the minerals."

"O, they're not lost."

"Yes, they are. No one knows anything about them. No one has seen them. No one can find them. They're lost, Mr. Simmons, beyond the possibility of redemption."

"O, I hope not."

"Well, I'm going to make a final search. Captain Pratt has asked every man, woman, and child in the place, but no one knows anything about them. I'm now going to question every one over again. I've asked Captain Corbet already. He knows nothing. Captain Corbet, where's the mate?"

"Sound asleep in the barn, sir."

"Then I'll go out and ask him."

Captain Corbet went out with him, and after much trouble they roused the sleeper, who, however, could tell them nothing whatever about the stones.

Then Mr. Long asked all the boys in succession. He had asked them once before, but he was determined to try it again. There was no result. No one knew anything about it. At last, all had been examined but Pat. Mr. Long felt sorry for him, and would have left him untroubled; but his intense desire to investigate thoroughly was too strong, and so he resolved to ask him.

Pat was trying to get some sleep, and with very little success. Mr. Long asked him kindly about his feelings, and spoke cheerfully to him for a few moments. At length he asked him,—

"Pat, I had two baskets of specimens, and they've been lost. Do you know anything about them?"

"Two baskets of what, sir?"

"Specimens."

"Spicimins, sir?"

"Yes."

"What are spicimins, sir?"

"Why, mineralogical specimens. Minerals, you know."

"Minerals? Sorra a one o' me knows what that same is, sir. I never saw one in my life."

"Never saw a mineral? Nonsense! What we were gathering on the island—"

"Gatherin'? Was it minerals, then?" said Pat. "Is it anythin' like o'—like shrimps, sir?"

Mr. Long laughed. He knew Pat's wonderful ignorance about some things, but he was hardly prepared for this. As for Pat, the poor fellow found he had made a mistake, and colored violently from shame and vexation.

"Do you really mean to say that you don't know what minerals are?" asked Mr. Long.

"Sorra a bit of it thin, sir."

"Well, they look like little stones. Didn't you see us breaking little pieces from the rocks?"

"I didn't notice, sir."

"That's no way to do, Pat. You ought to keep your eyes open, or you'll never learn anything."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, these minerals looked like common little stones. They were in two baskets. Each one was carefully wrapped in paper. Now those two baskets of stones are missing, and I can't find out anything about them. I want you to try and remember if you've seen anything of that kind, or if you've seen any little bits of paper that may have been around them. Do you understand? Little stones, you know."

And Mr. Long smiled encouragingly, so as to give Pat a chance to collect his thoughts.

"Little stones?" faltered Pat, as there flashed over him an awful suspicion that he had done an irreparable mischief to somebody, and to Mr. Long in particular. "Little stones, sir?"

"Yes, Pat, little stones. Dirty little stones. You might have seen them, and would suppose that many of them were worthless, unless they were wrapped in paper and carefully packed."

"Dirty little stones, sir?" said Pat, in an imbecile way.

"Yes," said Mr. Long.

"And aich one wrapped in paper, sir?" said Pat, whose voice died away into a mournful wail, while he cast an imploring glance at Mr. Long.

"Yes. Tell me," cried Mr. Long, "have you seen them?"

"I have, sir," said Pat, dolefully.

"When? where? Where are they now? Where did you put them?"

"I—I—" He hesitated.

"Quick! It's late. I want to get them. You brought them to the house, I suppose; or did you put them on board of the vessel?"

"I—I—"

"Well, why don't you tell me what you did with them?"

"O, sir, it's heart-broken I am this minute, sir! It's fairly dead wid grafe I am, sir! You'll niver forgive me! an' I'm afraid to tell you, sir."

"What? What's all this? What have you been doing? What is it?" said Mr. Long, sternly.

"O, sir, I thought it was a trick, sir, that the boys played on me, sir; and I pitched them over the mud into the bank, sir."

"You what!" cried Mr. Long, in an awful voice.

Hereupon Pat, with many sighs and tears, and entreaties for pardon, told him all. Mr. Long heard him through without a word. Then he asked minutely about the spot where they had been thrown. After this he rushed from the house down to the point. The tide was down below that place, leaving the mud flat uncovered. The sun was just setting. Mr. Long stared wildly about.

There was not a trace of a single specimen; for the heavy stones had sunk in, and the soft ooze and slimy mud, closing over them, had shut them from sight.

Mr. Long looked around in despair. He had hoped that he might recover some of them, but was not prepared to see all traces of them obliterated so completely. Besides, to add to his disappointment, the sun set before he had begun anything

like a search; and the shadows of evening came on rapidly. What was he to do? Could he thus give up the results of his expedition, and consent to lose those precious specimens for which he had done so much? The thought was intolerable. He would go back and interrogate Pat afresh. It was possible that Pat had directed him to the wrong place. It was scarcely possible that every stone could have vanished so completely, if this were really the place where Pat had thrown them.

Such were Mr. Long's thoughts and hopes, under the stimulus of which he at length retreated from the bank and returned to the house. Thus far he had kept Pat's performance a secret, out of consideration for Pat himself; for he was not willing that so glaring a case of dense and utter ignorance should be made public. But now he was compelled to tell it to all of them, so as to get their assistance in the search; so, after once more questioning Pat, and getting from him fresh particulars about the place where he had thrown the stones, and finding, to his dismay, that it was no other than the very place where he had been, he went to summon the rest of the boys.

Gathering them together, Mr. Long began to unfold to them the fate of the long sought for, but still missing, stones. As he began, his native generosity made him desirous of sparing poor Pat; but as he proceeded, the sense of his own wrongs overcame the dictates of generosity. He concealed nothing, he kept back nothing, he palliated nothing. All was made known. Finally, he implored the assistance of every one of them in finding the lost treasures.

Of course, after such an appeal, there was no chance for refusal; and so they at once prepared to follow him. Bart insisted on procuring torches, and his inventive genius readily suggested an excellent mode of obtaining light. This was by stripping the inflammable bark from the huge piles of birch firewood that lay near the house, and folding these up in compact scroll-like sticks. A large number of these were made; and with these, with lanterns, and with pine knots, the whole band followed Mr. Long to the bank. Here they took off their shoes and stockings, and prepared for their task.

The mud on the surface was very soft to the depth of several inches, and into this they sank; but sinking thus far, they found a hard clay bottom. Proceeding in this way, they all sought with earnest scrutiny for signs of the buried stones. For some time nothing could be found. At last, with a cry of delight, Bogud plunged his hand into the mud, and drew out something, with which he instantly hurried to Mr. Long.

"Here's one of them!" said he.

He held out a lump, at which Mr. Long and all the rest eagerly looked. It seemed more like a small lump of mud or clay than anything else.

So they all said.

"Pooh!" said they; "a little lump of clay."

"It's not clay," said Bogud; "it's the amethyst. I know it by the way it feels. It's covered with mud, though, and ought to be washed immediately."

Saying this, he rubbed the clinging mud with his fingers, disclosing at last something with an oval surface and a dirty-gray color.

"It's the amethyst," repeated Bogud, triumphantly. "I know it by the oval back. I picked the amethyst myself. Wait till I get the rest of the mud off. See here!—but—what—hallo!"

His confident tones ceased, and changed to an exclamation of doubt, then disgust. The boys had crowded around to see the exhumed treasure, and to catch the secret of Bogud's luck. As he held it forth and wiped off the last lump of mud that adhered to its edge, it stood revealed to all.

"A clam! a clam! a clam!" was the instantaneous shout, followed by a peal of laughter.

In fact, so it proved. It was a clam-shell filled with mud which Bogud had drawn forth so triumphantly.

After this they sought for some time longer. It was a striking scene. The boys without shoes, with their trousers drawn up above the knee, with their torches flashing through the shades of evening, as they were waved overhead, with the flakes which fell every instant from the torches into the mud, with their laughter, and noise, and jesting,—all formed a scene in the highest degree wild and picturesque.

But the search was useless. Perhaps the finding of the clam disheartened them; perhaps it was really not possible to find what they sought. At any rate, after half an hour, even Mr. Long himself despaired, and called off all the boys to return to the house.

XX.

How to waken a Sleeper.—Off Home.—A weary Way.—Baffled like the Flying Dutchman.—Corbet pines for his Babby.—"The Wind at last! Hurrah!"

At midnight the whole party left Captain Pratt's, in order to make preparations for embarking in the Antelope, as soon as the tide would serve. Pat had regained very much of his former strength and spirits; the pain had, in a great measure, left him, and the reaction from his misery exhibited itself in occasional peals of wild laughter, which broke very strangely upon the silence of the night. He was quite able to walk down, and joked with the other boys about his mishap. Trouble had been anticipated in getting him down to the vessel; but the anticipations, which had proved baseless in regard to him, were more than realized in the case of the mate. This worthy had spent almost all the time in sleeping on Captain Pratt's haymow; and now, when the time had come for departure, it was found absolutely impossible to rouse him. At ten o'clock, Captain Corbet had called him, but with no result. Then he had used other modes of rousing him, which had all ended in a failure. Mr. Long had exerted himself, and with a like result. As a last resort, he had commissioned the boys to do what they could toward rousing the slumberer. They very willingly undertook the commission. Ranging themselves round him, they kept up a prolonged shake at his shoulder, his head, and his feet. By this means they succeeded in rousing him so far that he would utter words in a dreary way in answer to their cries.

"Get up! Get up!"

"Ye-e-e-e-e-s," was the reply, ending in a long snore.

"Get up! Hi, hi, hi!"

"In—a—mi—i—i—n't."

"Hallo! Up! Get up! The schooner's off!"

"Hey?"

"The schooner's off!"

"Hm-m-m—"

"Here! No sleeping! Get up! You shan't sleep any more! Get up!" and amid loud cries and yells the recumbent form was shaken from head to foot. The mate gaped, and yawned, and blinked, and opened his eyes with a glassy, dreamy stare, dazzled by a candle-light, which flickered in his face, and confused by the uproar. He was like a bat suddenly plunging into a lighted parlor full of noisy children—out of the midst of a dark night. Only he wasn't quite so much awake as a bat might be.

"My—name's—Wade," he ejaculated at last, in a slow and solemn tone.

"Hi, hi, hi! Yah, yah, yah! Hi, yah! h-o-o-o-o! Get up!"

"My ole 'oman's name's Gipson," continued the mate, in a dreamy voice, as though amid his dreams he was still following out the one train of thought which seemed to engross his mind during his waking hours.

"Ya, ya, ya, ya! Get up! Get up! Hal-l-o-o-o-o-o! Bow-wow-wow! Ba-a-a-a-a!" and with yells and shouts like these, with cock-crows, with all the cries of a crowded barn-yard, the boys returned to their effort at rousing him.

"An' ye'll not find many of that name in this country!" said the mate, with a tone to which he seemed struggling to give a sleepy emphasis.

Up rose the barn-yard cries again, mingled with yells, shrieks, bellowings, cat-calls, hoots, and roars.

"Come, come," cried Bart, shaking his head violently. "Won't you get up?"

"No, sir!" said the mate; but whether it referred to his dream, or was intended as a reply to Bart, did not very clearly appear. The boys began to despair, and at length, after further endeavors, they were compelled to give up. They accordingly returned to Mr. Long, and informed him of their utter failure.

Mr. Long's eyes glared wildly.

"Very well!" said he, sternly, and with a dark frown. "Ve-e-ry well! I'll see if I can't wake him this time. I've been humbugged long enough; and if words are of no use, I'll have to try what virtue there is in cold water."

Saying this, he seized a pail, filled it at the well, and strode to the barn, followed by all the boys. Reaching the place, he advanced to the mate, and mercilessly emptied the entire contents full upon his head.

That succeeded.

With a gasp, a splutter, and a shriek, the mate started to his feet, looking wildly around as he tried to regain the breath which Mr. Long had so rudely driven out of him.

"What—what—what—why, what—d'ye—mean?"

"I mean this," cried Mr. Long, "that you're wanted on board, and if you don't go, I'll empty the whole well on you."

The mate looked at him half fearfully, half reproachfully, and then, shaking the water out of his dripping locks, he slowly wended his way to the vessel.

At last all were on board; the baskets and boxes were in the hold, the lines were cast off, the sails were hoisted, and the Antelope dropped down the stream. Messrs. Simmons and Long retired, but most of the boys remained on deck for some time, singing, and laughing, and joking with each one about the peculiar mishaps which he might have incurred during the last eventful week. At length all retired, and silence reigned over the schooner and over the deep.

Early in the morning all were up. The sea, far and wide, was as smooth as glass, except where long lines, and occasional ripples, showed the meeting of opposing currents. Above, the sky was cloudless, the sun was bright, and in the air not a breath of wind was stirring. Upon this Mr. Long looked with extreme impatience, frowning darkly upon land, sea, and sky. The schooner's sails were flapping idly, her head was pointed toward the Five Islands, and Captain Corbet was standing listlessly at the helm.

"Captain, what's all this?" asked Mr. Long. "The schooner is heading toward the Five Islands. Are we going back?"

"No, sir. The schooner's not particular just now whar she heads."

"Why don't you steer for Grand Pré?"

"Jest what I'd like to do, if she'd let me."

"Let you?"

"Yes. There ain't a mite o' wind, an' she's goin' every which way."

"Then we're standing still, and doing nothing."

"Standin' still?" cried Captain Corbet. "Lor' bless you, a couple of hours ago we were ten miles up there;" and he pointed far away toward the other end of the bay.

"Up there?"

"Yes. We're not standin' still; not by no manner o' means."

"What are we doing?"

"Driftin'."

"Drifting?"

"Yes; goin' ahead like a race-horse—head fust, tail fust, sideways, end on, and every kind o' way that a floatin' craft kin move."

"Where are we drifting to?"

"Down to Blomidon."

"Blomidon!" cried Mr. Long, aghast.

"Yes; an' farther too. It'll be lucky if we don't find ourselves out in the Bay of Fundy before long."

"But can't you *do* something? Can't you sail for some harbor?"

"Jest what I'm a pinin' to do, on'y I can't come it, nohow. Ef I had a steam tug-boat I'd clap a line on board her, an' get into a place of refooge; but bein' as there isn't any, we've got to drift."

"Why don't you anchor?"

"Anchor?" cried Captain Corbet, in surprise. "Why, the anchor's broke."

"Well, well," said Mr. Long, in bitter vexation, "haven't you got something—no sweeps?"

"Not a sweep, as I'm a livin' Corbet."

It was too true. There was no wind, and they were drifting at the mercy of the tide. The vessel went every way, heading in no direction. They had no anchor, and they could not sail into the shore. They were completely helpless. By this time they had all hoped to be near their destination; but it seemed, from appearances, that they were farther away than ever.

What brought their situation home most forcibly to all, was the solemn fact that their provision was now limited to Indian meal and molasses, with a little salt pork. If Solomon had only been on board, it would not have been so bad, for the genius of the venerable cook would have evolved even out of such unpromising materials as these a wonderful variety of palatable dishes. But Solomon was far away, and the cooking was intrusted to the clumsy hands of the mate. His attempts were so deplorable that the boys were permitted to make experiments of their own in the lofty art of cookery. The consequence was, that they spent the whole morning in the cabin, and used up most of the molasses in making candy, which, though very badly burned, was still more agreeable than the burned paste of Indian meal which the mate laid before them as a breakfast.

The hours of the morning passed, and neither anger, nor impatience, nor hunger could have any effect upon the relentless tides. The schooner calmly and placidly went drifting on, past Blomidon, past Cape Split; and they would assuredly have drifted out into the Bay of Fundy, had they not, very fortunately, encountered a side current, which bore them into a bay by Spencer's Island. There they remained embayed till the turn of tide, and then they were borne out again, and up the channel, on the way back into the Basin of Minas.

They were so near the shore that Mr. Long deliberated seriously about landing, going on foot to Parrsboro' village, and trying to get a row-boat to take them to Cornwallis, or taking the steamer to Windsor, or doing something else equally desperate. But Captain Corbet assured him that the steamer would not come for two days, and that he would be utterly unable to get any men to row him so far. So he was compelled to stay by the schooner.

Captain Corbet bore all this with admirable equanimity, looking with a mild concern at the impatience of Mr. Long, and regarding the boys with the indulgent smile of a superior being. Leaving the tiller to take care of itself, he mingled with them, and conversed freely with all. They drifted far up into the Basin of Minas, and looked forward to nothing better than a return to Blomidon and Cape Split, with, perhaps, an excursion in the Bay of Fundy.

So the day passed, and night came. On the following morning they found themselves still in the Basin of Minas, not far from the Five Islands, and drifting toward Blomidon.

"Wal," said Captain Corbet, "I've been a-thinkin' that this here is just like the Flyin' Dutchman. You've heerd tell of him; course. They say he's a-sailin' an' a-beatin' round the Cape of Good Hope, but can't never get round, nohow. That's jest the pecooliarity of our position. Here we are, almost in sight of home, you may say, an' still we have to go a-driftin' an' a-driftin', an' I shouldn't wonder if we'll get out into the Bay of Fundy to-day. If that happens, it wouldn't be a wonder if we were blown off to Bosting."

"Captain," said Mr. Long, "I can't stand this. I must get ashore. If we get near to Blomidon again, I'll take Bruce Rawdon, and go ashore in the boat. I *must* go, for it's a matter of the highest importance. Of course, it's different with you. You wouldn't care if you drifted here till doomsday."

At this Captain Corbet thrust both hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and regarded Mr. Long with a fixed gaze.

"*Me?*" said he, in a mild and almost parental tone. "*Me* not care? *me!* Look here, Mr. Long. Do you know what I am? I'm a parient! Your books call you home, sir; but what is it that's a-callin' o' me? My babby, sir! That there tender infant has twined hisself round my boosom; an' what am I a-doin'? You don't know, sir; but I'm a-yearnin' an' a-pinin' for my babby. He's the most wonderful babby that I ever see," continued the captain, in a faltering voice. "He's got the pootiest crow; and if you'd jest hear him say his ga, ga, ga—"

"O, bother your confounded baby!" said Mr. Long, with brutal rudeness, turning away abruptly.


Captain Corbet looked after him with a puzzled expression. At first, indignant surprise seemed to predominate, and those who stood near anticipated an outburst of long-restrained feeling. But it was only for a moment. Then Captain Corbet's better angel came to his assistance. Indignation vanished, and the face that was turned toward Mr. Long had on it nothing but a meek, sad smile.

Captain Corbet shook his head.

"Thar, that's it; allus the same," said he; "onsympathetic, hard as a milestone, an' owdacious in opposition to the tender babe. Human natur'," he continued, elevating his patriarchal head, and regarding Mr. Long's back with a severe dignity,—"human natur' might exult in a administerin' of a rebewk to sich langedge; but I've learned a better lesson. Yes, boys. I've sot at the feet of my babby. The aged Corbet has received insterruption from a mild infant. Now, I regard all that," waving his hand toward Mr. Long, "not with anger, not with reperroach, no, but with kimpassion. I pity him. I feel sorry for him. To him is unknown the holiest feeling of the hewman boosom; sich as *I* feel, sich as every feyther feels when he's a-nussin' of his *peresshus* babby."

XXI.

Blomidon, insulted, avenges himself.—A Victim devotes himself to appease his Wrath.—Original Views of Captain Corbet with regard to the Archæology and the Science of Navigation.

 he schooner went on drifting, and drew near to Blomidon again. The giant cliff frowned darkly overhead, its sides all scarred and riven by the tempests of centuries, its base worn by the fierce tides that never cease to sweep to and fro. Standing as it does, it forms one of the sublimest objects in nature. Other cliffs are far higher, and every way more stupendous; but Blomidon is so peculiar by its shape, its position, and its surroundings, that it stands monarch of the scene, and rises always with a certain regal majesty, seldom appearing without its diadem of clouds. All around are low lands, wide meadows, and quiet valleys, and the far spreading sea, into which this rugged height is boldly projected, terminating an abrupt rocky wall. From the shores, for many and many a mile around, wherever the eye may wander over the scenery, it rests upon this as the centre of the view.

"Blomidon," said Bart, "looks more magnificently than ever, and we have an excellent chance for a close inspection."

"I confess," said Bruce, "that I would rather not have so good a chance just now. I'd rather be near the mud flats of Cornwallis than this majestic cliff."

"It's my opinion," said Phil, "that Blomidon is taking it out of us."

"How?"

"How? Why, because we slighted him. We started with the intention of landing here, and instead of doing so we've been almost everywhere but here. So now he has got us, and he will keep us."

"Well, if we only had something to eat I wouldn't care."

"I can't eat pork."

"And I always hated Indian meal."

"And I'm getting tired of molasses candy."

"Besides, I don't believe that it's healthy."

"And then, you know, it's always burnt."

"But it certainly takes away one's appetite."

"Yes, that's a consideration. What would become of us if our appetites were left?"

As they spoke, Mr. Long drew near. They were within a stone's throw of the cliff, and were drifting slowly by. He looked up at the summit, as it towered far above him, and then ran his eye along the black, tempest-torn sides.

"Boys," said he, with a smile, "you're right. Blomidon feels his majesty to be slighted. He's avenging himself on us. He'll keep us here till he gets a victim, or at least till some apology is made. Now, I'm going to appease his sullen majesty."

"How's that, sir?"

"By offering up a victim. And who do you think it will be? It will be—myself."

"You, sir!"

"Yes. I'm going to land."

"To land!"

"Yes. One of you can take me ashore, and leave me. I know the place well enough, and will walk to the nearest village. I can get a horse easily enough, and be home before sundown."

"Can't some of us go with you, sir?" asked Bart, eagerly.

"O, no. It's better for you to stay. You had better remain together; besides, the walk will be too rough. For my part, I wouldn't go if I could help it. But I must go. My work demands my presence at once. And then—I really can't stand this any longer. I could, perhaps, endure the delay, but I can *not* stand Captain Corbet and his—ehem!—his baby."

As he said this, he looked toward Captain Corbet, who was out of hearing, and was standing discoursing, with a pleasant smile, to Bogud and Jiggins.

"Bruce, will you put me ashore?" asked Mr. Long.

"Certainly, sir, with the greatest pleasure. But I'm very sorry that you're going."

"I wish you'd let all of us go, sir," said Arthur.

Mr. Long shook his head.

"No," he said. "You see it will be easy enough for one to get a horse to take him over, but so many could not do it. So I'll

go alone. I've been there before, and I know my way."

"It will seem worse than ever when you go, sir," said Bart.

"O, you'll have a wind before long. You won't be home as soon as I am, for the tide won't let you; but, I dare say, you won't be much behind me. Take care of yourselves, and don't try the boat again."

Saying this, Mr. Long went to Mr. Simmons, to announce his determination. That gentleman was much surprised, and endeavored to dissuade him. But Mr. Long was not to be dissuaded. Captain Corbet said nothing. He merely elevated his eyebrows; and there was that in his face which seemed to say, "There, I knew it. I'm not at all surprised. I'm sorry for him, but not surprised. He's capable of any piece of wildness. He can't appreciate babbies. What more would you have from such a man?" All this his face fully expressed, but not a word of all this did Captain Corbet say.

Mr. Long shook hands with all the boys. Bruce was in the boat waiting, and soon he jumped in. The line was cast off, and Bruce sculled on over the smooth water without much difficulty. The tide was running rapidly, but there was plenty of coast before them; it was not far away, and before long the boat had reached the beach.

Mr. Long jumped out, and as his foot touched the shore, he gave a sigh of relief.

"Ah!" he exclaimed; "here I am at last."

"Which way are you going, sir?" asked Bruce.

"Well, I'll walk along the shore for two or three miles, and after that I can find my way to a road."

"You know your way I suppose, sir?" asked Bruce, anxiously.

"O, yes. I've been here often. I know all about it. I'll make very good time if I don't get attracted by the minerals. That's my only danger here. Good by."

He wrung Bruce's hand, and walked off. Bruce then returned to the schooner, and reached it without difficulty. The boys on board watched Mr. Long for some time. The vessel was drifting down the strait, and he was walking along the shore in an opposite direction. They watched his black figure till he turned around a curve in the shore, and passed out of sight.

For some time the vessel continued to drift under the same circumstances, without any signs of wind, or even the prospect of a friendly mud flat on which they could be quietly and comfortably stranded. This time they drifted below Spencer's Island, and looked out into the Bay of Fundy with a vague fear of being borne away into its waters, and carried off for immeasurable distances. But the tide soon turned after they had reached this place; and though the dark form of Ile Haute towered up gloomily from out the waters of the Bay of Fundy, yet they came no nearer to it.

On the turn of the tide they drifted back once more. This gave them much relief, for as long as they were within the Basin of Minas it did not seem so bad. As they drifted along they came to the place where Mr. Long had landed, and they watched anxiously to see if there were any signs of him. They found none.

"If we only had a glass," said Bart. "Captain Corbet, haven't you a glass?"

"Yes—a kind of a one."

"Where?"

"It's in the cabin."

"May I have it?"

"O, yes."

Bart went down and looked for some time. At last he returned disappointed.

"I can't find any glass, Captain Corbet," said he.

"Why, it's jest in front of yer nose," said Captain Corbet. "Come down. I'll show you where it is."

Down went Bart after Captain Corbet, and the latter pointed to the wall.

"There," said he. "I wonder you didn't see it."

"Where?" asked Bart.

"Where? Why, there," said Captain Corbet; and saying this he put his horny finger on a small triangular fragment of what was once a looking-glass, which small triangular fragment was fastened to a post, on one side of the cabin, with brass trunk nails.

"There it is," said Captain Corbet. "You don't seem to have any eyes in your head, though you're sharp enough sometimes, gracious knows."

"That!" cried Bart. "That! Why, it's a spy-glass I want."

"A *spy*-glass! O, yes. Wal, I hain't got none."

"You haven't any!"

"No; never owned one in all my born days."

"That's odd, too. I thought every sea captain had to have one."

"Wal, no. There ain't no great use for sich. They're a kind o' luxury, you see. I don't have any call for them. There's other machines, too, that they talk about, sech as quadrupeds an' sextons; but I never bother my head about 'em."

"Why, how do you manage to sail your schooner?"

"How? Why, jest up sail an' let her slide."

"But what do you do when you're out of sight of land?"

"Never git out of sight. Ef I should, I'd steer straight back for the land agin."

"What do you do in the fog?" asked Bart.

"The fog? I jest do the best I kin. Any ways, I don't see what use a sexton would be in a fog, nor a quadruped nuther. Then them sort o' consarns have to be worked by the sun. So, you see, they're no manner o' use in these here waters, nor in no waters at all. People git along jest as well without 'em. Why, here am I, an' I bin sailin' this forty year, an' never tetched a sexton nor a quadruped; and me bin all the way to Bosting. Besides, did Noah make his vyge in the Ark with a quadruped? No, *sir*. Did Solomon have one in the ship that he sailed to Ophir? Agin I say, no, *sir*. So I conclude that what the prophets, an' patriarchs, an' wise men of old,—an' a darn sight better men than sea captains are as they go these times,—what they did without, we can do without."

"But you have a compass?"

"Course I have."

"They didn't have a compass in those days."

"Yes, they did."

"Excuse me—they didn't have anything of the kind."

"Excuse me, young sir,—bein' a man old enough to be your feyther, an' a seafarin' man, too, an', what's more, a man that reads his Bible,—but they did."

"I should like to know how you make that out."

"Did you ever read Acts?"

"Of course."

"Did you ever happen to hear tell of the vyge of the 'postle Paul, young sir?"

"Yes; but what's that got to do with it? You don't mean to say that he had a compass."

"That's the very pint that I'm a drivin' at."

"What! that the apostle Paul had a compass?"

"Course he had."

"Why, the compass wasn't known till the fourteenth century. Flavio Gioja, of Amalfi, is the one that they say invented it."

"So that's what they teach you over there at the Academy—is it?" said Captain Corbet, with a look that would have been one of scorn if it hadn't been so full of pity. "So that's what they teach—is it? Wal! wal! wal! If I ever! I never did! However, I'll show you at once what's the wuth, the terew wuth, of your larnin', when it's put fair an' square in opposition to facts. Look here now, an' listen, an' don't forget. In the account of that vyge, it says distinctly, 'So we fetched a compass.' What have you got to say to that, now? hey?"

And Captain Corbet drew himself up, and watched the effect of this startling piece of intelligence.

Upon Bart the effect was instantaneous, though not of the kind which Captain Corbet expected. A light broke in upon his mind, and a smile burst forth, and spread like sunshine over his lately puzzled face. He said nothing for some time, but looked away so as to take in the full flavor of what he considered so good a thing.



"So we fetched a compass." Page 286.

"O, yes," said he at last. "I see. I understand. I never thought of that before. I must let the fellows know. I'll tell them all at school, from Dr. Porter down to the smallest boy in the primary department. And I'll let them all know that it was you that told me. They've all got an idea that it was invented either by the Arabs, or the Greeks, or the Italians; but now they shall hear Captain Corbet's theory."

"Yes—do—do," said Captain Corbet, eagerly. "An' tell them that *I* told you. Tell Dr. Porter. I'd like to know what the doctor's got to say."

"Say! He'll say nothing—he'll be dumb. But I must hurry up. It's strange, too. I was sure you had a spy-glass. You had one in the boat when you came after us the time we were aground."

"So we had, but it wan't mine."

"Whose was it?"

"Captain Pratt's."

"O, then, that accounts for it. I'm sorry too. I hoped to be able to find out where Mr. Long was."

"Mr. Long? Don't bother about him. He's all right. He's among his native rocks. A man like that; a man that's a stranger to the charms of a gentle smilin' babby; a man that gets mad with others, who are nat'rally pinin' for their absent offsprin',—such a man has a heart that is a rock, an' had oughter make up his abode among rocks. I see now why it is that he spends all his time a gatherin' of 'em. Why, I told him some of the most affectin' things about my babby. But what did he say? *He!* He almost swore! Can any parient be willin' to put his son to be taught by a man like that—a man whose heart is as hard as a nether milestone?"

"He's very kind to us," said Bart. "All of the boys at school love Mr. Long dearly."

"That ain't the pint," said Captain Corbet. "The pint is, how does he feel about a babby? Doos he yearn over 'em? Doos he delight in their little pooty ways? Doos he crow over 'em? Doos he nuss 'em an' dandle 'em? I jedge of a man that way, an' by them there signs; an' I call that, by a long chalk, the most entirely jodgematical way of readin' an' interpretatin' human natur'. Read by that light, Mr. Long ain't a succumstance. He's left us. I'm glad. Let him wander among the rocks and stones of Blomidon!"

With this, Captain Corbet turned away, not caring to pursue the subject further. Bart went on deck again, to spread among his companions Captain Corbet's peculiar views on the subject of spy-glasses, sextants, quadrants, and compasses. These new theories created an immense sensation; and whatever opinion there may have been had before about the captain's seamanship, there was no question now as to the perfect originality of his views.

XXII.

*Being jolly under creditable Circumstances.—Songs, Medleys, Choruses, Cheers, Laughter, Speeches, Responses.
—The Mud again.—Hard and fast.—What'll you do now, my Boy?*

Mr. Long had gone from their gaze completely, and could be seen no more. While trying to find him, the boys made conjectures as to where he might be. Giving up all idea of his being on the beach, they imagined him wending his solitary way far up the coast, or, perhaps, scaling the mighty cliff itself in some more accessible place. Gradually the vessel drifted farther and farther away, until at length it was far up in Minas Basin.

"Well, boys," said Bart, "this is getting to be monotonous. We're like ferrymen, going forever between two points."

"Yes, or like the pendulum of a clock, vibrating always, backward and forward."

"One more night of drifting is before us."

"More meals of pork and molasses."

"Or burnt Indian paste."

"Or smoky molasses candy."

"The worst of it is, that we have nothing to amuse ourselves with."

"It's a pity we couldn't start some game."

"Bart, tell a story."

"A story?" said Bart. "Who could tell a story under such circumstances?"

"I don't believe," said Bruce, "that a calm was ever known to last so long in the Basin of Minas. Was it, captain?" he

added, appealing to Captain Corbet, who had just emerged from the cabin.

"Wal," replied Captain Corbet, "it's not usual to have a calm in the month of May; still, we do have 'em sometimes."

"I should rather think we had," said Bart.

"I've known 'em last a week," said Captain Corbet, solemnly.

"A week?"

"Yes, a hull week; but that was in July. Still, there's no knowin'. It may be in May this year."

"Then we'll have to go ashore in the boat to-morrow. I will. I'll mutiny, and start off."

So spoke Bart, and the rest all declared that they would do the same.

"O, we'll have wind to-night," said Captain Corbet, in a tone of vague encouragement. "Yes, yes, we must have wind to-night, or before mornin'. We've had about calm enough. You feel anxious, no deoubt, all on ye," he continued, with a superior smile; "but if you feel so, jedge what I must feel—me, with my babby. Why, every minute,—yes, every mortal minute,—the voice of that there smilin' babe is a-soundin' in my ears. Sometimes he says, 'Ga-ga-ga,' and sometimes 'Da-da-da;' and sometimes the cunnin' leetil human creetur emits a cry,—a favorite one of his'n,—that sounds jest like 'Bo-rax! Bo-rax! Bo-rax!' Isn't it odd?"

And he looked at the boys with that mild face of his, whereon was intermingled an expression partly made up of a father's affection, and partly of tender enjoyment of his little cherub's innocent ways.

"And what does he mean by Borax?" asked Bruce.

"What does he mean? Why, a'most everything. It's a pet name he gives to me, you know. That and 'Ga-ga'—"

"I suppose he doesn't know the English language yet."

"No, he hain't larned it yet; but he's a-gettin' on. Why, I could stand here for hours and tell you words of his'n. He's uncommon spry, too. He—"

"Bart," cried Bruce, suddenly, "start up a song. Sing 'Uncle Ned.'"

At this Bart started up a song, which was a medley, made up of "Uncle Ned" and "The Mermaid." The first verse was as follows:—

"There was an ole nigger, and he sailed on the sea;
And he lived not far from the land;
And he had no wool on de top of his head,
And a comb and a glass in his hand.

CHORUS.

"O, the sto-o-o-o-o-o-o-ormy winds, how they blow!
So take up de shubbel an' de hoe,
While we poor sailor-boys are climbin' up aloft.
He has gone whar de good niggers go—'gers go—'gers go—
He has gone whar de good niggers go."

This astonishing production was sung with uncommon energy and spirit. At its close Bart retired below, while the others went on singing; and after a short time he returned with a piece of paper in his hand, and a triumphant smile on his face.

"Hallo, Bart! what have you got there?" cried Bruce.

"It's an original song," said Bart.

"By whom?"

"Myself," he replied, meekly.

"Hurrah! Go it! Sing it! Give it to us!"

"All right; but you must all join in the chorus."

"Of course. What's the tune?"

"Auld Lang Syne."

"Go ahead, then, young feller! Propel! Shoot away! Ready—present—fire!"

Waiting for the noise to subside, Bart stood in the midst of them, and after the cries had ceased, he began:—

"Should Capting Corbet be forgot,
A-sailin' o'er the sea!
O, no! when we get back to school,
We'll often think of he.

CHORUS.

"We'll often think of he, my friends;
We'll often think of he.
O, yes! when we get back to school,
We'll often think of he."

"What's that?" cried Captain Corbet, with a smile of pleasure wreathing his venerable face. "Why, it ain't—why, railly—why, it is me, too! Why, railly! An' you made up all that? Wal, now, I call that rale cute. I do, railly. On'y I do wish, sense you did take the trouble to make up that there,—bein' as your hand was in,—I wish you'd kinder added a line interriducin' the babby. We like to be kind o' onseparable. It seems kind of agin natur' to separate us."

"All right. I'll introduce anything," said Bart. "Here, boys, I'll give you another chorus.

'We'll often think of he, my friends;
We'll often think of he;
The capting and his schewner gay,
Likewise his small ba-be-e-e-e-e."

This new impromptu chorus was sung with still greater enthusiasm. Captain Corbet was affected to tears. Emotion overpowered him. As soon as he could muster strength to speak, he exclaimed,—

"You've onmanned me—you have, railly. The mention of that blessed babby kind o' took away all my strength. But I'll reward you, boys. When we get back, I'll make you all come up, and introduce you all to the babby himself,—*sometime when the old woman's away, you know*," he added, mysteriously.

"I will now occupy the time by continuing the hymn," said Bart, solemnly. Whereupon he proceeded:—

"I love to go to Blomidon,
Its beauty for to feel;
But I'd prefer a better fare
Than pork and Indian meal.

CHORUS.

"Than pork and Indian meal, my friends;
Than pork and Indian meal—
O, I'd prefer a better fare
Than pork and Indian meal."

This was sung earnestly and with very deep feeling. The recollection of their melancholy condition caused a mild pathos to be infused into the tones of all. Some of them seemed to be shedding tears. At any rate, they held handkerchiefs to their eyes.

The next verse:—

"I love to sail on Minas Bay,
Its beauty for to see;
To hunt for clams among the sands,
And put them into me.

CHORUS.

"And put them into me, my friends;
And put them into me.
To hunt for clams among the sands,
And put them into me."

The mild melancholy that characterized the last chorus here changed into a livelier note, expressive of greater cheerfulness.

The next verse:—

"Pratt's Cove it has the biggest clams
That ever mortal saw;
But when we hunt for clams again,
We mustn't eat them raw.

CHORUS.

"We mustn't eat them raw, my friends;
We mustn't swallow them raw.
O, clams are good for human food,
But we mustn't eat them raw."

This was sung energetically, yet in a dignified manner. The chorus was intended to convey a wholesome piece of advice to those who might happen to be in need of it,—Pat, for instance,—and so it was sung with dignity; at the same time, the energy with which it was rendered was admirably adapted to enforce the advice and carry it home to the heart and conscience of the hearer.

The next verse:—

"We've got molasses for our food,
It came from Tri-ni-dad;
And when to candy it is boiled,
It really isn't bad.

CHORUS.

"It really isn't bad, my friends;
It isn't very bad.
Molasses, boiled, to candy turns,
And really isn't bad."

A greater degree of liveliness prevailed here at the celebration of the only eatable thing among the stores. There was an intention to do honor to the molasses, and honor was accordingly done.

The next verse:—

"Three cheers for Bogud, Billymack,
Three cheers for all the crew,—
For Jiggins, Sammy, Muckle, Pat,
And three for Johnny Blue!

CHORUS.

"Three cheers for Johnny Blue, my friends,
Three cheers for Johnny Blue,—
For Jiggins, Sammy, Muckle, Pat,
And three for Johnny Blue!"

Immense enthusiasm. Surprise on the part of all the boys whose names were thus so unexpectedly "wedded to song." Recovering from their surprise, each one jumped up, placed his hand on his heart, and acknowledged the compliment by a low bow; after which the song was sung again; after which there came more bows; and it would have gone on thus, with alternate bowing and singing, till the present time, had not the boys themselves felt overpowered, and demanded another verse.

The next verse:—

"Three cheers for all the boys on board;
For Corbet three times three;
And thirty more for the jolly black flag
Of the 'B. O. W. C.'!

CHORUS.

"The 'B. O. W. C.', my friends,
The 'B. O. W. C.'
Ever so many more for the jolly black flag
Of the 'B. O. W. C.'!"

This last chorus was sung with a vehemence, an ardor, and an enthusiasm that are absolutely indescribable. It included all, and identified all, in the most delicate manner, with the "B. O. W. C." It was sung over and over, and over yet again, accompanied with any quantity of cheers for everything under the sun. The special allusion to Corbet, in the last verse, elicited a fresh display of emotion from that venerable and highly-impressible party. He did not say much, however. He merely went round among the boys, and shook hands most warmly with all of them, one by one. He asked each one about his father, his mother, his brothers and sisters, and his uncles and aunts. He asked their full names, their ages, and the number of their blood relations. He then made a public address to them, in which he freely offered, at any time, to take any of them, or all of them, on a cruise anywhere, at a moment's warning. Finally, he reiterated his offer to introduce his babby to them all. This formed a climax. Beyond this he could not go. And there, naturally and inevitably, his eloquent oration ended.

So passed the time. And when you take into consideration the solemn fact that all this time they were drifting, that the sea was smooth, that there wasn't a breath of wind, that there was no prospect of getting home, or anywhere else, for that matter,—you will come to the conclusion that these boys were jolly under creditable circumstances. And you will be right in that conclusion; for it was in the very face of calms, strong tides, empty larders, wanderings at sea, famine, and privations of all kinds, that these boys stood up and sang their song.

In this sense it became not a mere song of jollity or of idle sport. It was more. It was the song of the unconquered soul. It was a defiance hurled full in the face of Fortune.

The evening passed. The shades of night came down. It was dark, and it grew darker. Until late, the sounds of song, of laughter, and of merriment, came forth and resounded through the night. At length all was still. All on board had descended to their couches, and were wrapped in profound slumber.

The boy who awaked first in the morning gave such a shout that all the others were roused at once.

What was it?

What! An instant told them all. Down through the hatchway there came a blast of wind strong and cool, and full of sea salt. Above, they could see the sail distended to its utmost, while higher up the clouds were scudding across the sky. Below, the vessel was lying far over, as it yielded to the wind; and her pitching and tossing, together with the dash of waves against her bows, told all that she was moving swiftly through the water.

They hurried up to the deck.

Far around them was the blue sea, now tossing into white-capped waves. A fresh, strong wind was blowing over the water, and it was fair. On the right rose Blomidon from out the foam that gathered at its base; on the left the water extended till it was lost in the distance amid the haze that hung over the low-lying shore. Behind them lay the Five Islands, and all that water over which they had so long been drifting. The vessel was heading straight to Grand Pré, and was tearing her way through the water as she had never done before within the experience of any of her present passengers.

Joy reigned supreme. Loud cheers and cries of delight burst forth.

"Why, captain," said Bart, "I began to think that the Antelope couldn't sail at all."

"Can't she, though? O, she isn't a bad sailor when she's got a wind dead fair like this."

"When'll we get to Grand Pré?"

"Wal, that's difficult to say," said the captain, thoughtfully.

"Why, you don't mean to say that there is any danger of the wind stopping now, or changing?"

"O, no; there's no danger of that."

"Well, what is there?"

"Why, we can't get to the wharf."

"Why not?"

"It'll be low tide when we get there."

"Low tide!" repeated Bart, in consternation; "and how far will we be from the wharf?"

"O, miles; and that isn't the worst of it. You'll have the Cornwallis River between you and Grand Pré."

Bart said no more, but retired to convey this disheartening intelligence to his companions. They talked over it thoughtfully and with serious faces.

The vessel went on. The tide was against them, but the wind was strong and fair, and blew with undiminishing power. Looking toward the shore, they could see that their progress was excellent.

Nearer they came, and nearer, until at last they saw before them a vast extent of mud flats, beyond which lay a low ridge all green with verdure; and they knew it as the dike of Grand Pré. Beyond this again ascended the hills, with the white village at the base, and on the slope the conspicuous form of the Academy, with its broad portico and lofty cupola.

"Where are you going now, captain? You can't anchor. Is there a port here to run the schooner into?"

"Nary port."

"What'll you do? Surely you won't drift off again?"

"Drift? No, *sir*."


"How will you manage?"

"How? Why, there's only one thing to do; and that is, to run her right straight in on to a mud flat."

As he spoke, he looked steadily forward, and gave the tiller a pull to starboard. The schooner turned slightly. The next instant it ran squarely upon the mud flat, and stuck there, hard and fast.

XXIII.

A wild Undertaking.—A Race for Life.—The lost Boot.—The Quicksands.—The Isle of Safety.—The Mud Gulch.—Crossing the Abyss of Mud.—Bruce's Doldrum.—Two forlorn Figures.—Rapturous Welcome.—Speech by the Grand Panjandrum.

 here they were on the mud flat. It was a situation in which the B. O. W. C. had been before, but experience had not made it any the more pleasant to them.

"We've done it before," said Bruce, "and why shouldn't we do it again?"

"So I say," remarked Arthur.

"It's a great deal farther," said Phil, "but in my opinion it isn't half so bad as the other one."

"Of course it isn't," said Tom. "The tide is leaving us rapidly, and we'll be able to jump out upon the mud, and not up to our necks in water, as we did the last time."

"And so we needn't prepare to fight with shovel-mouth sharks," said Phil.

"The fact is," said Bart, "it's going to be a difficult job, and harder than the last one, perhaps. We've got a couple of miles to go, instead of so many hundred yards. We must face that fact before leaving."

"We know that very well," said Phil.

"You see there is Grand Pré just in front of us."

"Yes."

"Well, we can't go there, because between us and that place is the Cornwallis River, which just now is an abyss of mud, with a strong stream running at the bottom. So we'll have to make an angle, and go up there toward the right, and go in a straight line to Cornwallis Bridge. It will be two miles to the grass land, and another one to the bridge. So we'll have two miles of mud."

"I don't believe the mud is any different from what we found in the other place."

"It may not be," said Bruce, "yet there may be air-holes. We've got so far to go that we may find almost anything—air-holes, quicksands, or anything else. Still, I don't believe that we'll meet with any."

"Well, let's wait till the tide gets down to the bows, and then start," said Tom.

With this the boys prepared for their journey. Those preparations consisted in nothing but getting some stout sticks, which they made by splitting up a board, and smoothing each piece with a knife. After this they informed Mr. Simmons of their intention. He looked aghast, and then told them that they would get too muddy.

At this they laughed, and said that they were covered with mud from their many experiences in the voyage, and couldn't be much worse. So Mr. Simmons looked at them from head to foot, and then at himself. By this he discovered that the

boys were in a comfortably muddy condition, and what was more, that he, Mr. Simmons, he himself, was decorated with many mud marks, which sadly marred the beauty of his black attire. This discovery filled him with such horror that he hurried below, where the sound of a brush in violent exercise showed the boys that he was trying to eradicate the stains, so as to prepare himself for a solemn entry into the village. He did not appear on deck again.

Captain Corbet, however, on learning their proposal, had much more to say about it.

He listened with staring eyes, and then declared that they all were crazy,

"Crazy? Why, ye're mad as March hares! Do ye know that that there mud is full of air-holes, an' inhospitable for man an' beast? Horses air lost there every year. So air keows likewise. People shun it. Death lurks there. I wouldn't go there for all the gold in Californy. There's quicksands, and there's air-pots, and there's holes of all kinds, there's deep gulps that you can't cross no how."

"But did you ever hear of an accident?"

"Course I have. My feyther told me onst about a neighbor of his'n that lost a friend down hereabouts. He was found next day lying on the shore up there—thrown up by the tide. Besides, my wife's ma told me of people that's been a-missin', an' what it's strongly suspected that they kind o' strayed down here, and got drowned. What d'ye say to that?"

"O, it's all the same. There are five of us. "We'll help one another."

"Ah, ye'll help one another! Yes, but to sartin ruination. Why, see here. Look at me. I'm more anxious, a hundred times, to get ashore than you be. I'm a feyther. I've got a pinin' babby that I'm a-yeearnin' after. I've got a kind of homesick feelin', that never leaves me, arter him; 'ee bessed chicken, so it was! But do I go an' resk my life? Do I throw myself away? Do I walk over quicksands, an' air-holes, an' mud gullies? Not I. I stand here like a man, an' wait."

"All right, captain; we'll tell them you're comin'," said Bart, stepping to the bows.

By this time the tide had lowered, so that they could get out from the vessel on the mud. One by one they descended. They found the mud soft, of course, but not very much so.

"O, boys," cried Captain Corbet, "come back!"

"All right!" cried Bruce. "Come, boys, if we stand, we'll stick in the mud. Hurry along!"

"Bo-o-oys! come back," wailed Captain Corbet. "If you get harmed, I can't follow you to help you."

"Good by."

"Bo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-oys! O, Bo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-oys!" wailed Captain Corbet, for the last time, as the boys went off. But this time they gave no response. He stood in silence, watching them, for a long, long time, with deep anxiety. The other boys also looked after them with not a doubt in the minds of any of them but that they would come back.

Meanwhile the boys walked on upon their dangerous way.

Perhaps their very ignorance of that danger saved them from it. They walked on in a straight line, knowing nothing of places which the people about believed to be dangerous; and as they found the outset easy, they expected all the rest would be the same. The mud was like that which they had met with before—soft at the surface, but hard beneath, so that they sank in a little distance at every step, but nevertheless found a firm foothold. The mud was so soft, and the foothold beneath so firm, that their feet were not very badly clogged. They did not find it so difficult as walking over clay roads after they had been soaked with rains, and cut up by heavy teams.

They walked on rapidly, in as straight a line as possible, laughing and shouting, declaring that mud flats were slandered, and that there was much worse walking on many a country road.

At length the mud grew softer, and the bottom was not so near the surface. To walk over this, even at a rapid pace, was difficult; for where the foot was planted at full length, it would sink so that it was difficult to extricate it. A swifter pace was necessary.

"Are you tired, Phil?" asked Bruce.

"No," said Phil; and, indeed, he seemed as fresh as any of them.

"Because we'll have to go faster," said Bruce. "Come, now, boys—Indian trot!"

Away they went at the peculiar pace known by that name,—the body bent forward, and the fore part of the foot touching the ground with its elastic tread, moving at that slow, steady, easy trot which is faster and lighter than a walk, and but little more fatiguing to those who have the knack of it. This carried them on very well for some considerable distance farther, and on looking back they began to congratulate themselves on the distance which they had already traversed. Ere long the grass-covered marsh was within sight—the place where danger ended, and progress was easier. But between them and that place there still lay difficulties which they know not of.

Suddenly as they ran on, they were arrested by a cry from Phil. They turned instantly, and were horrified at the sight that met their eyes. Phil, being the smallest and weakest, had fallen behind, and, being out of breath, had loitered a few paces so as to recover, thinking that he would catch up. Feeling a pain in his side, he had stopped to fasten his belt tighter around his waist, and without thinking he had stood motionless for a minute. In that minute his feet had sunk in the treacherous soil. In his sudden fright at this discovery, he had cried out, and made a desperate effort to extricate himself. With a jerk he had drawn forth one foot, but the other had sunk in up to his knee. And this was the position in which he stood when the others turned.

Another minute and they were by his side, pulling at him. But as they pulled, each one found himself sinking.

"Here, boys, this won't do," cried Bart. "Phil, give me your hand. Boys, form a line behind me, one after another. Now let's catch hold of one another. Now, let's keep moving backward and forward, quickly, so as not to stand still. Now, then, pull!"

Backward and forward the line of boys, thus rapidly formed, went swaying, pulling Phil as they did so. The clinging mud yielded, and Phil was slowly dragged forth. But his boot was left behind.

"Never mind the boot," cried Bart. "Come on as you are,—one shoe off, and the other one on, *tol de rol de rido*, my son John! Hurrah! Phil, go ahead of me, and I'll guard the rear."

All this time, while Bart was speaking, they were running on, Phil limping with his booted and bootless feet.

"Never mind, Phil! we'll soon get to a place where you can take off the other boot," said Bart, encouragingly.

And now began the tug. Their run had been a long one, and their exertions excessive. All of them were out of breath, and panting heavily. The distance still before them was great; but they dared not stop; they dared not even pause for an instant, or slacken their progress in any degree. Phil was most exhausted, but he toiled on with desperate exertions. The memory of his lost boot showed him his danger. That boot left behind remained as a terror, which drove him on.

On and still on. Fainter grew the boys, but they dared not stop. All of them were panting, and laboring heavily, but no relief was near. Far off still lay the marsh with its grass—a fearful distance to those so exhausted, and still compelled to labor so hard.

"I don't know how much longer I can stand this," gasped Tom.

"You must stand it! Don't stop, for your life!" cried Bruce.

The others said nothing. To speak would be but to waste their precious breath, which they were losing only too rapidly.

On and on. Still the soft mud lay beneath them, and an awful fear came to some of them that it was getting softer.

The fear was soon realized.

Softer and softer it grew, and deeper sank their feet. Had this place only been found at an earlier period, they could have returned, or they would have had strength to struggle on; but now it came in the hour of their extremest exhaustion. It was a hollow in the mud, somewhat lower than the surrounding surface.

"We can't go through this," said Bruce; and he pointed to the centre of the hollow, which looked fearfully soft and liquid. "Let's go around it;" and turning rapidly, he started off toward the right. The boys said nothing. They floundered deep in

the mud, they panted, they gasped, they moaned in the despairing efforts which they made.

"I'll lie down," gasped Phil. "I—won't—sink—"

"On, on! Never! We'll all have to die if you stop."

These words came from Bart, who, exhausted as he was, caught Phil's arm, and dragged him on.

At that moment Tom fell.

"It's all up with me, boys," he moaned. "Leave me. Save yourselves."

Bruce said nothing. He snatched him up out of the mud, and pulled him along, while at this fresh exertion his whole frame quivered, and his feet sank deeper.

How long could this last?

Tom could scarcely keep his feet. Phil could hardly keep upright, and move his legs. Arthur could barely stumble along. Bart and Bruce bore it best, and could help the others still.

But for how long?

A shout of joy came from Bruce.

"Hurrah! Look there!" he cried. Tom raised himself by a last effort, and turned his feeble eyes to where Bruce pointed. He saw, at a little distance, a green patch in the mud.

It was marsh grass!

At that instant all recognized it. The sight of it brought fresh strength to their despairing energies. It gave new life to Tom and Phil. A few steps more, and the soft mud grew harder; and soon after they were all standing on the patch of marsh grass.

No sooner had they reached this place, than they all flung themselves down upon the mud, out of which the coarse grass grew. For some time not a word was spoken. All lay there breathing heavily. Looking back, they could see the wide extent of mud flats which they had traversed. The schooner was far away, and those on board could no longer be distinguished. The soft spot in which they had been wallowing, and out of which they had found their way, spread for a great distance, not only between them and the schooner, but also on one side. Between them and Cornwallis there appeared to be a firmer surface, like that which they had found on leaving the schooner. Besides this, there were patches of grass interspersed here and there, like islands, in this sea of mud. Here they might find resting-places if they were again exhausted. The spot on which they lay was the outermost of these.

They did not hurry away. They needed a good long breathing-time, and they took it. Phil took off his remaining boot, declaring that if he had only got it off before, he would not have been so exhausted. He preferred walking over the mud barefoot, he said. This seemed to the others a good idea, and they all took off their boots and stockings, so as to pass over the mud more lightly.

At length, after about half an hour, they all rose, and resumed their journey. The mud spread away before them; and though there were patches of grass at intervals, yet the real marsh land itself did not come within half a mile of them. This distance would have to be traversed before they could reach the nearest verge. And now, keeping their eyes fixed upon the Cornwallis shore, they all set out afresh.

Their progress was easy, such as it was when they first set out, with this difference, that their goal was near, and resting-places frequent. Nearer and nearer they came to the marsh land; nearer and nearer still,—and now they were close to it,—and now they had just reached it,—when suddenly, just as they seemed to touch it, there yawned between them and that green inviting goal a deep crevice, the course of some sea current, at the bottom of which trickled, even now, some water, which probably came from one of the numerous drains of the dike land before them. The sides sloped down at an angle of forty-five degrees, and consisted of the softest mud, which seemed by its appearance ready to engulf at once any one who might step upon it. To cross here was impossible. It could not be even ventured upon.

The ground at the edge was firm enough for them to stand and survey the situation. On the left the gully seemed to go toward the Cornwallis River, on the right it seemed to approach the land. Supposing that it came from the dikes, and that it would grow narrower if they ascended in that direction, they turned off toward the right. They found their surmise correct. After walking for a half mile, the gully had become much narrower, and had diminished from a width of thirty feet and a depth of twelve, to a width of ten and a depth of six. But here they found themselves at a fork, where the gully that came from the dike land divided itself, one part going toward the Cornwallis River, and the other far down through the mud flat toward the bay. To go around it, or in any way avoid it, was impossible. It was necessary to cross it at all hazards.

"We must do it, boys," said Bart. "So here goes."

Saying this, he threw over his boots. Then he went back for some distance. Then he rushed forward, and springing from the edge of the bank, he shot through the air, and landed on the other side.

"That's more than I can do," said Tom. "I've got to wade it."

"Nor can I," said Phil.

"Go it, Arthur," said Bruce.

Arthur went back, and took a run like Bart, and jumped. But he fell two feet short. His feet sank deep into the soft mud. He struggled for a moment, and falling forward, dug his elbows into the top of the bank. Bart seized him, and after some violent struggles he was free.

After this all the boots were thrown over. Bruce encouraged Phil and Tom.

"Now, boys, go it. I'll wait here to help you."

"But we can't jump."

"Arthur and I will go down on this side, and Bruce on the other, and help you," said Bart; and he descended at the same time, followed by Arthur, while Bruce descended the opposite side. Their feet sank in for some distance, and then found bottom.

Phil then went down, and gave a wild leap, and his feet just cleared the middle. For a moment he floundered, but struggled onward, and caught Bart's hand. Another minute, and he was safe over.

"I've not got much strength left, boys," said Tom; "but I'll do what I can."

"Steady now—wait," said Bart, "let me get a little farther down. Arthur, give me your hand." Saying this, Bart descended a little farther.

Tom ran down, his foot sinking deep. Near the middle he tried to leap over, but his feet sank so that his leap failed. He fell short, and his advancing foot struck the very middle of that soft pudding in the bed of the gully. He sank to his middle at once, struggling, and panting, and throwing himself forward. Deeper and deeper he sank. It was an awful moment. At length a last violent effort brought him a little nearer. Bart dropped Arthur's hand, and clutched that which was despairingly outstretched by Tom. At the same moment Arthur caught Bart, and they dragged at their sinking companion. For some time they did nothing toward extricating him.

But now with a bound Bruce had sprung across, and hurried to their assistance. Going down close by Bart, he caught Tom's other hand. Then, with all their strength united, they pulled. Their own feet sank deep, but they thought not of that. Tom was coming out. He was out. He was saved!

Drawing out their own feet then, they helped Tom up to the top of the bank, and there they rested once more. Tom was not exhausted, but only weakened, and a few minutes were sufficient for him to rally. So, without saying much about this last adventure, they resumed their journey.

There lay the marsh right before them at last. There, too, not far away, rose a dike, beyond which were the dike lands. Their perilous journey was at last approaching an end. Soon they were on the marsh, where the coarse grass was now in its early spring growth, and not high enough to impede their progress. A short journey through this brought them to the

dike. It was only a few feet in height. They climbed to the top, and looked around. There was the Cornwallis River about half a mile away, and there, farther up, the bridge that crossed it. The coarse stubble of the grass hurt their feet, so that they walked along the top of the dike toward the river. This walk was easy and pleasant; and after their severe journey, it was even delightful. In this way they went on, till at last they reached the bank of the river, when they turned and walked up the edge toward the bridge.

At first the bed of the river was, as Bart had said, a vast abyss of soft mud, through which ran a swift stream, flowing at the bottom of this abyss; but as they walked on, they came at length to a place where the mud was intermixed with gravel, which extended down to the water, and up on the other side. Here Bruce stopped, and looked down, and then across.

"What's the matter?" asked the others.

"O, nothing. I'm thinking about trying to cross."

"To cross! You'll never get across," cried Phil.

"Yes," said Bart. "It can be done. I'll try it if you will, Bruce. You see it isn't all soft mud here, but the gravel goes down, and up the other side. I don't believe it's deep, either."

"Well, if it's over our heads, we can swim a little."

"But see how strong the current is," said Tom. "It will carry you off."

"O, it can't carry us far," said Bruce. "I'm in for it. You see, boys, it's too aggravating to look across the river here, and see the Academy close by on the other side, hardly more than a mile or so away, and then turn off for a four or five mile walk around. You fellows had better go up to the bridge, and get a wagon, and drive round. Bart and I will try it here, at any rate. If we can't get across, we'll follow you."

Without listening to any further remonstrances, Bruce and Bart descended the slope. The bed was very wide and deep, though now nearly empty, and they did not know how deep the water might be that ran there. They expected to ford it. The other boys stood on the bank watching them with intense interest.

The gravel, mixed with mud, formed a good footing; and Bruce and Bart stopped here for a time, and put their boots on, so that if they had to swim they might not be impeded with bundles.

The water was running swiftly by. It seemed wider now than it did at the top of the bank. But they did not hesitate. In they went side by side, Bruce on the right, and Bart below him on the left. The water grew deeper and deeper. It came up to their waists, then up to their armpits. Bart could not possibly stem it a moment longer. He was lifted from his feet, and borne on.

Those waiting at the top of the bank felt their hearts stop beating as they looked.

But Bart's head was above water, and he struck out bravely for the opposite shore. He knew he would not have far to swim, for he had already gone nearly half way when he was swept off his feet. The current still bore him down, but his own efforts were dragging him to the opposite shore at every stroke.

After Bart had lost his footing, Bruce still walked on. He held himself so that he could resist the current to some extent. But at last he, too, lost his footing, and was swept after Bart. He struck out strongly; and while carried down by the current, he, too, drew nearer the opposite shore.

Bart had just touched bottom, and sprang up, with the water scarce higher than his waist, and looked around for Bruce. As he looked, he caught sight of Bruce's face. It was turned toward him in agony, close by him, and but a little behind. Two hands were flung out, and with a gasp and a groan Bruce sank.

For an instant Bart stood petrified with horror. A wild thought of sharks flashed through his mind. But the next instant he had grasped Bruce, and was dragging him half fainting, still gasping, out of the water. In a few minutes they were on the bank, where they both sat down.

"It was a—a palpitation—of the—the heart," gasped Bruce. "I've felt—queer—ever since that—affair—on the—the cliff."

"Yes. You'll have to keep quiet, Bruce, for some months to come. You see you've been exerting yourself tremendously to-day, and this last thing has been too much. You've got to look out, for a thing like this is not to be trifled with."

By this time the other boys had rushed down, and were on the opposite side halloing, and asking what was the matter.

"O, nothing—a doldrum of Bruce's," cried Bart. "He's all right now."

"All right!" said Bruce, lifting up his pale face, and nodding.

"You hurry up, boys," said Bart. "Get a horse at the bridge, and drive home."

Upon this the boys left, and went to the bridge.

After about a quarter of an hour, Bruce felt able to start. They ascended the bank slowly; and after reaching the dike land, they went across in a straight line for the Academy. They walked slowly at first, but Bruce regained his strength more and more at every step.

At length they reached the gateway of the Academy grounds. Wet to the skin, handkerchiefs round their heads, with their clothes ragged, and plastered with mud from head to foot, so that hardly any of the original color was visible, these two forlorn figures attracted universal attention; and soon all the small boys were around them cheering, and shouting, and asking about the schooner.

Out came Mr. Long, who had arrived the previous evening without accident.

Out came Dr. Porter, astonishment in his face.

Out came every inhabitant of the Academy and its precincts, all making inquiries.

And, last of all, out came Solomon, with an enormous white collar standing up above his ears, and,—

"O, de gracious! O, de sakes alive, now! What's dis dat dis ole nigga does see! You gwine away whar glory takes you, an' back agin to be de light of an ole cuss's life! An' whar's all de rest ob all dem bressed chil'en? O, dis de-lightful day an' hour! An' you wet as ebber wet kin be by fallin' in de briny wave! Bress dis old nigga's heart! but whar you git all dat mud from? An' me hopin' an' prayin' fur dis glorious time! What's become ob all de Wenebble Breddren? Heah comes de Wenebble Patrick, an' de Wenebble Wodden, wid de Gran' Panjydanderum in de shinin' train! O, dis day an' hour!"

And with exclamations like these, poured forth with amazing volubility, Solomon walked along backward before them, and his voice died away in the distance to a prolonged and unintelligible hubble-bubble.

About an hour afterward Arthur, Phil, and Tom drove up, and were received in a very similar manner. If the "B. O. W. C." liked to create a sensation, they certainly had reason to be satisfied.

Mr. Simmons, with the rest of the boys, did not get to the Academy till late in the day.

But long before that, in fact, at high noon, Solomon received the "B. O. W. C." in the dining-room. They had luxuriated in the bath, and Solomon had prepared for them the banquet. He surpassed himself. His genius had invented new dishes expressly for the occasion, and the "B. O. W. C." ate, and were refreshed.

Transcriber's Note:

1. page 58—removed excess " at start of sentence "And Bart darted to...
2. page 191—corrected typo 'wier' to 'weir'
3. page 193—corrected typo 'wiers' to 'weirs'
4. page 257—corrected typo 'musn't' to 'mustn't'
5. page 271—added missing " to start of sentence 'Ve-e-ry well! I'll

see if I....'

[End of *The "B. O. W. C."* by James De Mille]