Masterpieces of Adventure

Stories of the Sea and Sky

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Masterpieces of
Adventure

In Four Volumes

STORIES OF THE SEA AND SKY

Edited by
Nella Braddy

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In these volumes the word *adventure* has been used in its broadest sense to cover not only strange happenings in strange places but also love and life and death—all things that have to do with the great adventure of living. Questions as to the fitness of a story were settled by examining the qualities of the narrative as such rather than by reference to a technical classification of short stories.

It is the inalienable right of the editor of a work of this kind to plead copyright difficulties in extenuation for whatever faults it may possess. We beg the reader to believe that this is why his favorite story was omitted while one vastly inferior was included.

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MASTERPIECES OF ADVENTURE

Masterpieces of Adventure

STORIES OF THE SEA AND SKY

I

THE SHIP THAT SAW A GHOST

FRANK NORRIS

Very much of this story must remain untold, for the reason that if it were definitely known what business I had aboard the tramp steam-freighter *Glarus*, three hundred miles off the South American coast on a certain summer's day, some few years ago, I would very likely be obliged to answer a great many personal and direct questions put by fussy and impertinent experts in maritime law—who are paid to be inquisitive. Also, I would get "Ally Bazan," Strokher and Hardenberg into trouble.

Suppose on that certain summer's day, you had asked of Lloyds's agency where the *Glarus* was, and what was her destination and cargo. You would have been told that she was twenty days out from Callao, bound North to San Francisco in ballast; that she had been spoken by the bark *Medea* and the steamer *Benevento*; that she was reported to have blown out a cylinder head, but being manageable was proceeding on her way under sail.

That is what Lloyds's would have answered.

If you know something of the ways of ships and what is expected of them, you will understand that the *Glarus*, to be some half a dozen hundred miles south of where Lloyds's would have her, and to be still going South, under

full steam, was a scandal that would have made her brothers and sisters ostracize her finally and forever.

And that is curious, too. Humans may indulge in vagaries innumerable, and may go far afield in the way of lying; but a ship may not so much as quibble without suspicion. The least lapse of "regularity," the least difficulty in squaring performance with intuition, and behold she is on the black list, and her captain, owners, officers, agents and consignors, and even supercargoes, are asked to explain.

And the *Glarus* was already on the black list. From the beginning her stars had been malign. As the *Breda*, she had first lost her reputation, seduced into a filibustering escapade down the South American coast, where in the end a plain-clothes United States detective—that is to say, a revenue cutter—arrested her off Buenos Ayres and brought her home, a prodigal daughter, besmirched and disgraced.

After that she was in some dreadful blackbirding business in a far quarter of the South Pacific; and after that—her name changed finally to the *Glarus*—poached seals for a syndicate of Dutchmen who lived in Tacoma, and who afterward built a clubhouse out of what she earned.

And after that we got her.

We got her, I say, through Ryder's South Pacific Exploitation Company. The "President" had picked out a lovely little deal for Hardenberg, Strokher and Ally Bazan (the Three Black Crows), which he swore would make them "independent rich" the rest of their respective lives. It is a promising deal (B. 300 it is on Ryder's map), and if you want to know more about it you may write to ask Ryder what B. 300 is. If he chooses to tell you, that is his affair.

For B. 300—let us confess it—is, as Hardenberg puts it, as crooked as a dog's hind leg. It is as risky as barratry. If you pull it off you may—after paying Ryder his share—divide sixty-five, or possibly sixty-seven, thousand dollars between you and your associates. If you fail, and you are perilously like to fail, you will be sure to have a man or two of your companions shot, maybe yourself obliged to pistol certain people, and in the end fetch up at Tahiti, prisoner in a French patrol-boat.

Observe that B. 300 is spoken of as still open. It is so, for the reason that the Three Black Crows did not pull it off. It still stands marked up in red ink on the map that hangs over Ryder's desk in the San Francisco office; and anyone can have a chance at it who will meet Cyrus Ryder's terms. Only he can't get the *Glarus* for the attempt.

For the trip to the island after B. 300 was the last occasion on which the *Glarus* will smell blue water or taste the trades. She will never clear again. She is lumber.

And yet the *Glarus* on this very blessed day of 1902 is riding to her buoys off Sausalito in San Francisco Bay, complete in every detail (bar a broken propeller shaft), not a rope missing, not a screw loose, not a plank started—a perfectly equipped steam freighter.

But you may go along the "Front" in San Francisco from Fisherman's Wharf to the China steamships' docks and shake your dollars under the seamen's noses, and if you so much as whisper *Glarus* they will edge suddenly off and look at you with scared suspicion, and then, as like as not, walk away without another word. No pilot will take the *Glarus* out; no captain will navigate her; no stoker will feed her fires; no sailor will walk her decks. The *Glarus* is suspect. She has seen a ghost.

* * * * * * *

It happened on our voyage to the island after this same B. 300. We had stood well off from shore for day after day, and Hardenberg had shaped our course so far from the track of navigation that since the *Benevento* had hulled down and vanished over the horizon no stitch of canvas nor smudge of smoke had we seen. We had passed the equator long since, and would fetch a long circuit to the southard, and bear up against the island by a circuitous route. This to avoid being spoken. It was tremendously essential that the *Glarus* should not be spoken.

I suppose, no doubt, that it was the knowledge of our isolation that impressed me with the dreadful remoteness of our position. Certainly the sea in itself looks no different at a thousand than at a hundred miles from shore. But as day after day I came out on deck at noon, after ascertaining our position on the chart (a mere pin-point in a reach of empty paper), the sight of the ocean weighed down upon me with an infinitely great awesomeness—and I was no new hand to high seas even then.

But at such times the *Glarus* seemed to me to be threading a loneliness beyond all worlds and beyond all conception desolate. Even in more populous waters, when no sail notches the line of the horizon, the propinquity of one's kind is nevertheless a thing understood, and to an unappreciated degree comforting. Here, however, I knew we were out, far out in the desert. Never a keel for years upon years before us had parted these waters; never a sail had bellied to these winds. Perfunctorily, day in and day out we turned our eyes through long habit toward the horizon. But we knew, before the look, that the searching would be bootless. Forever and forever, under the pitiless sun and cold blue sky stretched the indigo of the ocean floor. The ether between the planets can be no less empty,

no less void.

I never, till that moment, could have so much as conceived the imagination of such loneliness, such utter stagnant abomination of desolation. In an open boat, bereft of comrades, I should have gone mad in thirty minutes.

I remember to have approximated the impression of such empty immensity only once before, in my younger days, when I lay on my back on a treeless, bushless mountainside and stared up into the sky for the better part of an hour.

You probably know the trick. If you do not, you must understand that if you look up at the blue long enough, the flatness of the thing begins little by little to expand, to give here and there; and the eye travels on and on and up and up, till at length (well for you that it lasts but the fraction of a second), you all at once see space. You generally stop there and cry out, and—your hands over your eyes—are only too glad to grovel close to the good old solid earth again. Just as I, so often on short voyage, was glad to wrench my eyes away from that horrid vacancy, to fasten them upon our sailless masts, and stack, or to lay my grip upon the sooty smudged taffrail of the only thing that stood between me and the Outer Dark.

For we had come at last to that region of the Great Seas where no ship goes, the silent sea of Coleridge and the Ancient One, the unplumbed, untracked, uncharted Dreadfulness, primordial, hushed, and we were as much alone as a grain of star-dust whirling in the empty space beyond Uranus and the ken of the greater telescopes.

So the *Glarus* plodded and churned her way onward. Every day and all day the same pale-blue sky and the unwinking sun bent over that moving speck. Every day and

all day the same black-blue water-world, untouched by any known wind, smooth as a slab of syenite, colourful as an opal, stretched out and around and beyond and before and behind us, forever, illimitable, empty. Every day the smoke of our fires veiled the streaked whiteness of our wake. Every day Hardenberg (our skipper) at noon pricked a pin-hole in the chart that hung in the wheel-house, and that showed we were so much farther into the wilderness. Every day the world of men, of civilization, of newspapers, policemen and street-railways receded, and we steamed on alone, lost and forgotten in that silent sea.

"Jolly lot o' room to turn raound in," observed Ally Bazan, the colonial, "withaout steppin' on y'r neighbour's toes."

"We're clean, clean out o' the track o' navigation," Hardenberg told him. "An' a blessed good thing for us, too. Nobody ever comes down into these waters. Ye couldn't pick no course here. Everything leads to nowhere."

"Might as well be in a bally balloon," said Strokher.

I shall not tell of the nature of the venture on which the *Glarus* was bound, further than to say it was not legitimate. It had to do with an ill thing done more than two centuries ago. There was money in the venture, but it was to be gained by a violation of metes and bounds which are better left intact.

The island toward which we were heading is associated in the minds of men with a Horror. A ship had called there once, two hundred years in advance of the *Glarus*—a ship not much unlike the crank high-prowed caravel of Hudson, and her company had landed, and having accomplished the evil they had set out to do, made shift to sail away. And then, just after the palms of the island had sunk from sight

below the water's edge, the unspeakable had happened. The Death that was not Death had arisen from out the sea and stood before the ship, and over it, and the blight of the thing lay along the decks like mould, and the ship sweated in the terror of that which is yet without a name.

Twenty men died in the first week, all but six in the second. These six, with the shadow of insanity upon them, made out to launch a boat, returned to the island and died there, after leaving a record of what had happened.

The six left the ship exactly as she was, sails all set, lanterns all lit—left her in the shadow of the Death that was not Death.

She stood there, becalmed, and watched them go. She was never heard of again.

Or was she—well, that's as may be.

But the main point of the whole affair, to my notion, has always been this. The ship was the last friend of those six poor wretches who made back for the island with their poor chests of plunder. She was their guardian, as it were, would have defended and befriended them to the last; and also we, the Three Black Crows and myself, had no right under heaven, nor before the law of men, to come prying and peeping into this business—into this affair of the dead and buried past. There was sacrilege in it. We were no better than body-snatchers.

* * * * * * *

When I heard the others complaining of the loneliness of our surroundings, I said nothing at first. I was no sailor man, and I was on board only by tolerance. But I looked again at the maddening sameness of the horizon—the same

vacant, void horizon that we had seen now for sixteen days on end, and felt in my wits and in my nerves that same formless rebellion and protest such as comes when the same note is reiterated over and over again.

It may seem a little thing that the mere fact of meeting with no other ship should have ground down the edge of the spirit. But let the incredulous—bound upon such a hazard as ours—sail straight into nothingness for sixteen days on end, seeing nothing but the sun, hearing nothing but the thresh of his own screw, and then put the question.

And yet, of all things, we desired no company. Stealth was our one great aim. But I think there were moments—toward the last—when the Three Crows would have welcomed even a cruiser.

Besides, there was more cause for depression, after all, than mere isolation.

On the seventh day Hardenberg and I were forward by the cat-head, adjusting the grain with some half-formed intent of spearing the porpoises that of late had begun to appear under our bows, and Hardenberg had been computing the number of days we were yet to run.

"We are some five hundred odd miles off that island by now," he said, "and she's doing her thirteen knots handsome. All's well so far—but do you know, I'd just as soon raise that point o' land as soon as convenient."

"How so?" said I, bending on the line. "Expect some weather?"

"Mr. Dixon," said he, giving me a curious glance, "the sea is a queer proposition, put it any ways. I've been a seafarin' man since I was big as a minute, and I know the

sea, and what's more, the Feel o' the sea. Now, look out yonder. Nothin', hey? Nothin' but the same ol' skyline we've watched all the way out. The glass is as steady as a steeple, and this ol' hooker, I reckon, is as sound as the day she went off the ways. But just the same if I were to home now, a-foolin' about Gloucester way in my little dough-dish—d'ye know what? I'd put into port. I sure would. Because why? Because I got the Feel o' the Sea, Mr. Dixon. I got the Feel o' the Sea."

I had heard old skippers say something of this before, and I cited to Hardenberg the experience of a skipper captain I once knew who had turned turtle in a calm sea off Trincomalee. I asked him what this Feel of the Sea was warning him against just now (for on the high sea any premonition is a premonition of evil, not of good). But he was not explicit.

"I don't know," he answered moodily, and as if in great perplexity, coiling the rope as he spoke. "I don't know. There's some blame thing or other close to us, I'll bet a hat. I don't know the name of it, but there's a big Bird in the air, just out of sight som'eres, and," he suddenly exclaimed, smacking his knee and leaning forward, "I—don't—like—it—one—dam'—bit."

The same thing came up in our talk in the cabin that night, after the dinner was taken off and we settled down to tobacco. Only, at this time, Hardenberg was on duty on the bridge. It was Ally Bazan who spoke instead.

"Seems to me," he hazarded, "as haow they's somethin' or other a-goin' to bump up pretty blyme soon. I shouldn't be surprised, naow, y'know, if we piled up on some bally uncharted reef along o' to-night and went strite daown afore we'd had a bloomin' charnce to s'y 'So long, gen'lemen all.'"

He laughed as he spoke, but when, just at that moment, a pan clattered in the galley, he jumped suddenly with an oath, and looked hard about the cabin.

Then Strokher confessed to a sense of distress also. He'd been having it since day before yesterday, it seemed.

"And I put it to you the glass is lovely," he said, "so it's no blow. I guess," he continued, "we're all a bit seedy and ship-sore."

And whether or not this talk worked upon my own nerves, or whether in very truth the Feel of the Sea had found me also, I do not know; but I do know that after dinner that night, just before going to bed, a queer sense of apprehension came upon me, and that when I had come to my stateroom, after my turn upon deck, I became furiously angry with nobody in particular, because I could not at once find the matches. But here was a difference. The other man had been merely vaguely uncomfortable. I could put a name to my uneasiness. I felt that we were being watched.

* * * * * * *

It was a strange ship's company we made after that. I speak only of the Crows and myself. We carried a scant crew of stokers, and there was also a chief engineer. But we saw so little of him that he did not count. The Crows and I gloomed on the quarterdeck from dawn to dark, silent, irritable, working upon each other's nerves till the creak of a block would make a man jump like cold steel laid to his flesh. We quarrelled over absolute nothings, glowered at each other for half a word, and each one of us, at different times, was at some pains to declare that never in the course of his career had he been associated with such a disagreeable trio of brutes. Yet we were always together, and sought each other's company with painful

insistence.

Only once were we all agreed, and that was when the cook, a Chinaman, spoiled a certain batch of biscuits. Unanimously we fell foul of the creature with as much vociferation as fishwives till he fled the cabin in actual fear of mishandling, leaving us suddenly seized with noisy hilarity—for the first time in a week. Hardenberg proposed a round of drinks from our single remaining case of beer. We stood up and formed an Elk's chain and then drained our glasses to each other's health with profound seriousness.

That same evening, I remember, we all sat on the quarterdeck till late and—oddly enough—related each one his life's history up to date; and then went down to the cabin for a game of euchre before turning in.

We had left Strokher on the bridge—it was his watch—and had forgotten all about him in the interest of the game, when—I suppose it was about one in the morning—I heard him whistle long and shrill. I laid down my cards and said:

"Hark!"

In the silence that followed we heard at first only the muffled lope of our engines, the cadenced snorting of the exhaust, and the ticking of Hardenberg's big watch in his waistcoat that he had hung by the arm-hole to the back of his chair. Then from the bridge, above our deck, prolonged, intoned—a wailing cry in the night—came Strokher's voice:

"Sailoh-h-h!"

And the cards fell from our hands, and, like men turned to stone, we sat looking at each other across the soiled red

cloth for what seemed an immeasurably long minute.

Then stumbling and swearing, in a hysteria of hurry, we gained the deck.

There was a moon, very low and reddish, but no wind. The sea beyond the taffrail was as smooth as lava, and so still that the swells from the cutwater of the *Glarus* did not break as they rolled away from the bows.

I remember that I stood staring and blinking at the empty ocean—where the moonlight lay like a painted stripe reaching to the horizon—stupid and frowning, till Hardenberg, who had gone on ahead, cried:

"Not here—on the bridge!"

We joined Strokher, and as I came up the others were asking:

"Where? Where?"

And there, before he had pointed, I saw—we all of us saw—— And I heard Hardenberg's teeth come together like a spring trap, while Ally Bazan ducked as though to a blow, muttering:

"Gord 'a' mercy, what nyme do ye put to a ship like that?"

And after that no one spoke for a long minute, and we stood there, moveless black shadows, huddled together for the sake of the blessed elbow touch that means so incalculably much, looking off over our port quarter.

For the ship that we saw there—oh, she was not a half-mile distant—was unlike any ship known to present day construction.

She was short, and high-pooped, and her stern, which was turned a little toward us, we could see, was set with curious windows, not unlike a house. And on either side of this stern were two great iron cressets such as once were used to burn signal-fires in. She had three masts with mighty yards swung 'thwart-ship, but bare of all sails save a few rotting streamers. Here and there about her a tangled mass of rigging drooped and sagged.

And there she lay, in the red eye of the setting moon, in that solitary ocean, shadowy, antique, forlorn, a thing the most abandoned, the most sinister I ever remember to have seen.

Then Strokher began to explain volubly and with many repetitions.

"A derelict, of course. I was asleep; yes, I was asleep. Gross neglect of duty. I say I was asleep—on watch. And we worked up to her. When I woke, why—you see, when I woke, there she was," he gave a weak little laugh, "and—and now, why, there she is, you see. I turned around and saw her sudden like—when I woke up, that is."

He laughed again, and as he laughed the engines far below our feet gave a sudden hiccough. Something crashed and struck the ship's sides till we lurched as we stood. There was a shriek of steam, a shout—and then silence.

The noise of the machinery ceased; the *Glarus* slid through the still water, moving only by her own decreasing momentum.

Hardenberg sang, "Stand by!" and called down the tube to the engine-room.

"What's up?"

I was standing close enough to him to hear the answer in a small, faint voice:

"Shaft gone, sir."

"Broke?"

"Yes, sir."

Hardenberg faced about.

"Come below. We must talk." I do not think any of us cast a glance at the Other Ship again. Certainly I kept my eyes away from her. But as we started down the companionway I laid my hand on Strokher's shoulder. The rest were ahead. I looked him straight between the eyes as I asked:

"Were you asleep? Is that why you saw her so suddenly?"

It is now five years since I asked the question. I am still waiting for Strokher's answer.

Well, our shaft was broken. That was flat. We went down into the engine-room and saw the jagged fracture that was the symbol of our broken hopes. And in the course of the next five minutes' conversation with the chief we found that, as we had not provided against such a contingency, there was to be no mending of it. We said nothing about the mishap coinciding with the appearance of the Other Ship. But I know we did not consider the break with any degree of surprise after a few moments.

We came up from the engine-room and sat down to the cabin table.

"Now what?" said Hardenberg, by way of beginning.

Nobody answered at first.

It was by now three in the morning. I recall it all perfectly. The ports opposite where I sat were open and I could see. The moon was all but full set. The dawn was coming up with a copper murkiness over the edge of the world. All the stars were yet out. The sea, for all the red moon and copper dawn, was gray, and there, less than half a mile away, still lay our consort. I could see her through the portholes with each slow careening of the *Glarus*. "I vote for the island," cried Ally Bazan, "shaft or no shaft. We rigs a bit o' syle, y'know——" and thereat the discussion began.

For upward of two hours it raged, with loud words and shaken forefingers, and great noisy bangings of the table, and how it would have ended I do not know, but at last—it was then maybe five in the morning—the lookout passed word down to the cabin:

"Will you come on deck, gentlemen?" It was the mate who spoke, and the man was shaken—I could see that—to the very vitals of him. We started and stared at one another, and I watched little Ally Bazan go slowly white to the lips. And even then no word of the ship, except as it might be this from Hardenberg:

"What is it? Good God Almighty, I'm no coward, but this thing is getting one too many for me."

Then without further speech he went on deck.

The air was cool. The sun was not yet up. It was that strange, queer mid-period between dark and dawn, when the night is over and the day not yet come, just the gray that is neither light nor dark, the dim dead blink as of the refracted light from extinct worlds.

We stood at the rail. We did not speak; we stood watching. It was so still that the drip of steam from some loosened pipe far below was plainly audible, and it sounded in that lifeless, silent grayness like—God knows what—a death tick.

"You see," said the mate, speaking just above a whisper, "there's no mistake about it. She is moving—this way."

"Oh, a current, of course," Strokher tried to say cheerfully, "sets her toward us."

Would the morning never come?

Ally Bazan—his parents were Catholic—began to mutter to himself.

Then Hardenberg spoke aloud.

"I particularly don't want—that—out—there—to cross our bows. I don't want it to come to that. We must get some sails on her."

"And I put it to you as man to man," said Strokher, "where might be your wind."

He was right. The *Glarus* floated in absolute calm. On all that slab of ocean nothing moved but the Dead Ship.

She came on slowly; her bows, the high, clumsy bows pointed toward us, the water turning from her forefoot. She came on; she was near at hand. We saw her plainly—saw the rotted planks, the crumbling rigging, the rust-corroded metal-work, the broken rail, the gaping deck, and I could imagine that the clean water broke away from her sides in refluent wavelets as though in recoil from a thing unclean. She made no sound. No single thing stirred aboard the hulk of her—but she moved.

We were helpless. The *Glarus* could stir no boat in any direction; we were chained to the spot. Nobody had thought to put out our lights, and they still burned on through the dawn, strangely out of place in their red-and-green garishness, like maskers surprised by daylight.

And in the silence of that empty ocean, in that queer half-light between dawn and day, at six o'clock, silent as the settling of the dead to the bottomless bottom of the ocean, gray as fog, lonely, blind, soulless, voiceless, the Dead Ship crossed our bows.

I do not know how long after this the Ship disappeared, or what was the time of day when we at last pulled ourselves together. But we came to some sort of decision at last. This was to go on—under sail. We were too close to the island now to turn back for—for a broken shaft.

The afternoon was spent fitting on the sails to her, and when after nightfall the wind at length came up fresh and favourable, I believe we all felt heartened and a deal more hardy—until the last canvas went aloft, and Hardenberg took the wheel. We had drifted a good deal since the morning, and the bows of the *Glarus* were pointed homeward, but as soon as the breeze blew strong enough to get steerageway Hardenberg put the wheel over and, as the booms swung across the deck, headed for the island again.

We had not gone on this course half an hour—no, not twenty minutes—before the wind shifted a whole quarter of the compass and took the *Glarus* square in the teeth, so that there was nothing for it but to tack. And then the strangest thing befell.

I will make allowance for the fact that there was no centre-board nor keel to speak of to the *Glarus*. I will

admit that the sails upon a nine-hundred-ton freighter are not calculated to speed her, nor steady her. I will even admit the possibility of a current that set from the island toward us. All this may be true, yet the *Glarus* should have advanced. We should have made a wake.

And instead of this, our stolid, steady, trusty old boat was—what shall I say?

I will say that no man may thoroughly understand a ship—after all. I will say that new ships are cranky and unsteady; that old and seasoned ships have their little crotchets, their little fussinesses that their skippers must learn and humour if they are to get anything out of them; that even the best ships may sulk at times, shirk their work, grow unstable, perverse, and refuse to answer helm and handling. And I will say that some ships that for years have sailed blue water as soberly and as docilely as a street-car horse has plodded the treadmill of the 'tween-tracks, have been known to balk, as stubbornly and as conclusively as any old Bay Billy that ever wore a bell. I know this has happened, because I have seen it. I saw, for instance, the *Glarus* do it.

Quite literally and truly we could do nothing with her. We will say, if you like, that that great jar and wrench when the shaft gave way shook her and crippled her. It is true however, that whatever the cause may have been, we could not force her toward the island. Of course, we all said "current"; but why didn't the log-line trail?

For three days and three nights we tried it. And the *Glarus* heaved and plunged and shook herself just as you have seen a horse plunge and rear when his rider tries to force him at the steam-roller.

I tell you I could feel the fabric of her tremble and

shudder from bow to stern-post, as though she were in a storm; I tell you she fell off from the wind, and broad-on drifted back from her course till the sensation of her shrinking was as plain as her own staring lights and a thing pitiful to see.

We roweled her, and we crowded sail upon her, and we coaxed and bullied and humoured her, till the Three Crows, their fortune only a plain sail two days ahead, raved and swore like insensate brutes, or shall we say like mahouts trying to drive their stricken elephant upon the tiger—and all to no purpose. "Damn the damned current and the damned luck and the damned shaft and all," Hardenberg would exclaim, as from the wheel he would catch the *Glarus* falling off. "Go on, you old hooker—you tub of junk! My God, you'd think she was scared!"

Perhaps the *Glarus* was scared, perhaps not; that point is debatable. But it was beyond doubt of debate that Hardenberg was scared.

A ship that will not obey is only one degree less terrible than a mutinous crew. And we were in a fair way to have both. The stokers, whom we had impressed into duty as A.B.'s, were of course superstitious; and they knew how the *Glarus* was acting, and it was only a question of time before they got out of hand.

That was the end. We held a final conference in the cabin and decided that there was no help for it—we must turn back.

And back we accordingly turned, and at once the wind followed us, and the "current" helped us, and the water churned under the forefoot of the *Glarus*, and the wake whitened under her stern, and the log-line ran out from the trail and strained back as the ship worked homeward.

We had never a mishap from the time we finally swung her about; and, considering the circumstances, the voyage back to San Francisco was propitious.

But an incident happened just after we had started back. We were perhaps some five miles on the homeward track. It was early evening and Strokher had the watch. At about seven o'clock he called me up on the bridge.

"See her?" he said.

And there, far behind us, in the shadow of the twilight, loomed the Other Ship again, desolate, lonely beyond words. We were leaving her rapidly astern. Strokher and I stood looking at her till she dwindled to a dot. Then Strokher said:

"She's on post again."

And when months afterward we limped into the Golden Gate and cast anchor off the "Front" our crew went ashore as soon as discharged, and in half a dozen hours the legend was in every sailors' boarding-house and in every seaman's dive, from Barbary Coast to Black Tom's.

It is still there, and that is why no pilot will take the *Glarus* out, no captain will navigate her, no stoker feed her fires, no sailor walk her decks. The *Glarus* is suspect. She will never smell blue water again, nor taste the trades. She has seen a Ghost.

II

A NIGHTMARE OF THE DOLDRUMS*

W. CLARK RUSSELL

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The *Justitia* was a smart little barque of 395 tons. I had viewed her with something of admiration as she lay in mid-stream in the Hooghly—somewhere off the Coolie Bazaar, I think it was. There was steam then coming to Calcutta, though not as steam now is; very little of it was in any sense palatial, and some of the very best of it was to be as promptly distanced under given conditions of weather by certain of the clippers, clouded with studding sails and flying-kites to the starry buttons of their skysail mastheads, as the six-knot ocean tramp of to-day is to be outrun by the four-masted leviathan thrashing through it to windward with her yards fore and aft.

I—representing in those days a large Birmingham firm of dealers in the fal-lal industries—had wished to make my way from Calcutta to Capetown. I saw the *Justitia* and took a fancy to her; I admired the long, low, piratic run of her hull as she lay with straining hawsepipes on the rushing stream of the Hooghly; upon which, as you watched, there might go by in the space of an hour some half-score at least of dead natives made ghastly canoes of by huge birds, erect upon the corpses, burying their beaks as they sailed along.

I found out that the *Justitia* was one of the smartest of

the Thames and East India traders of that time, memorable on one occasion for having reeled off a clean seventeen knots by the log under a main topgallant-sail, set over a single-reefed topsail. It was murmured, indeed, that the mate who hove that log was drunk when he counted the knots; yet the dead reckoning tallied with the next day's observations. I called upon the agents, was told that the *Justitia* was not a passenger ship, but that I could hire a cabin for the run to Capetown if I chose; a sum of rupees, trifling compared with the cost of transit by steam, was named. I went on board, found the captain walking up and down under the awning, and agreeably killed an hour in a chat with as amiable a seaman as ever it was my good fortune to meet.

We sailed in the middle of July. Nothing worth talking about happened during our run down the Bay of Bengal. The crew aforemast were all of them Englishmen; there were twelve, counting cook and steward. The captain was a man named Cayzer; the only mate of the vessel was one William Perkins. The boatswain, a rough, short, hairy, immensely strong man, acted as second mate and kept a lookout when Perkins was below. But he was entirely ignorant of navigation, and owned to me that he read with difficulty words of one syllable, and could not write.

I was the only passenger. My name, I may as well say here, is Thomas Barren. Our run to the south Ceylon parallels was slow and disappointing. The monsoon was light and treacherous, sometimes dying out in a sort of laughing, mocking gust till the whole ocean was a sheet-calm surface, as though the dependable trade wind was never again to blow.

"Oh, yes," said Captain Cayzer to me, "we're used to the unexpected hereabouts. Monsoon or no monsoon, I'll tell you what: you're always safe in standing by for an

Irishman's hurricane down here."

"And what sort of a breeze is that?" I asked.

"An up-and-down calm," said he, "as hard to know where it begins as to guess where it'll end."

However, thanks to the frequent trade puffs and other winds, which tasted not like the monsoon, we crawled through those latitudes which Ceylon spans, and fetched within a few degrees of the equator. In this part of the waters we were to be thankful for even the most trifling donation of a catspaw, or for the equally small and short-lived mercy of the gust of the electric cloud. I forget how many days we were out from Calcutta: the matter is of no moment. I left my cabin one morning some hour after the sun had risen, by which time the decks had been washed down, and were already dry, with a salt sparkle as of bright white sand on the face of the planks, so roasting was it. I went into the head to get a bath under the pump there. I feel in memory, as I write, the exquisite sensation of that luxury of brilliant brine, cold as snow, melting through me from head to foot to the nimble plying of the pump-brake by a seaman.

It was a true tropic morning. The sea, of a pale lilac, flowed in a long-drawn, gentle heave of swell into the southwest; the glare of the early morning brooded in a sort of steamy whiteness in the atmosphere; the sea went working to its distant reaches, and floated into a dim blending of liquid air and water, so that you couldn't tell where the sky ended; a weak, hot wind blew over the taffrail, but it was without weight. The courses swung to the swell without response to the breathings of the air; and on high the light cotton-white royals were scarcely curved by the delicate passage of the draught.

Yet the barque had steerage way. When I looked through the grating at her metalled forefoot I saw the ripples plentiful as harp strings threading aft, and whilst I dried myself I watched the slow approach of a piece of timber hoary with barnacles, and venerable with long hairs of seaweed, amid and around which a thousand little fish were sporting, many-coloured as though a rainbow had been shivered.

I returned to my cabin, dressed, and stepped on the quarter-deck, where I found some men spreading the awning, and the captain in a white straw hat viewing an object out upon the water through a telescope, and talking to the boatswain, who stood alongside.

"What do you see?" I asked.

"Something that resembles a raft," answered the captain.

The thing he looked at was about a mile distant, some three points on the starboard bow. On pointing the telescope, I distinctly made out the fabric of a raft, fitted with a short mast, to which midway a bundle—it resembled a parcel—was attached. A portion of the raft was covered by a white sheet or cloth, whence dangled a short length of something chocolate-coloured, indistinguishable even with the glass, lifting and sinking as the raft rose and fell upon the flowing heave of the sea.

"This ocean," said the captain, taking the glass from me, "is a big volume of tragic stories, and the artist who illustrates the book does it in that fashion," and he nodded in the direction of the raft.

"What do you make of it, boatswain?" I asked.

"It looks to me," he answered in his strong, harsh, deep

voice, "like a religious job—one of them rafts the Burmuh covies float away their dead on. I never seen one afore, sir, but I've heard tell of such things."

We sneaked stealthily toward the raft. It was seven bells —half-past seven—and the sailors ate their breakfast on the forecastle, that they might view the strange contrivance. The mate, Mr. Perkins, came on deck to relieve the boatswain, and, after inspecting the raft through the telescope, gave it as his opinion that it was a Malay floating bier—"a Mussulman trick of ocean burial, anyhow," said he. "There should be a jar of water aboard the raft, and cakes and fruit for the corpse to regale on, if he ha'n't been dead long."

The steward announced breakfast; the captain told him to hold it back awhile. He was as curious as I to get a close view of the queer object with its white cloth and mast and parcel half out like a barge's leeboard, and he bade the man at the helm put the wheel over by a spoke or two; but the wind was nearly gone, the barque scarcely responded to the motion of her rudder, the thread-like lines at the cutwater had faded, and a roasting, oppressive calm was upon the water, whitening it out into a tingling sheen of quicksilver with a fiery shaft of blinding dazzle, solitary and splendid, working with the swell like some monstrous serpent of light right under the sun.

The raft was about six cables' lengths off us when the barque came to a dead stand, with a soft, universal hollowing in of her canvas from royal to course, as though, like something sentient, she delivered one final sigh before the swoon of the calm seized her. But now we were near enough to resolve the floating thing with the naked eye into details. It was a raft formed of bamboo canes. A mast about six feet tall was erected upon it; the dark thing over the edge proved a human leg, and, when the fabric lifted

with the swell and raised the leg clear, we saw the foot had been eaten away by fish, a number of which were swimming about the raft, sending little flashes of foam over the pale surface as they darted along with their back or dorsal fins exposed. They were all little fish; I saw no sharks. The body to which the leg belonged was covered by a white cloth. The captain called my attention to the parcel attached to the mast, and said that it possibly contained the food which the Malays leave beside their dead after burial.

"But let's go to breakfast now, Mr. Barren," said he, with a slow, reproachful, impatient look round the breathless scene of ocean. "If there's any amusement to be got out of that thing yonder there's a precious long, quiet day before us, I fear, for the entertainment."

We breakfasted, and due course returned on deck. The slewing of the barque had caused the raft to shift its bearings, otherwise its distance remained as it was when we went below.

"Mr. Perkins," said the captain, "lower a boat and bring aboard that parcel from the raft's jury-mast, and likewise take a peep at the figure under the cloth, and report its sex and what it looks like."

I asked leave to go in the boat, and when she was lowered, with three men in her, I followed Mr. Perkins, and we rowed over to the raft. All about the frail contrivance the water was beautiful with the colors and movements of innumerable fish. As we approached we were greeted by an evil smell. The raft seemed to have been afloat for a considerable period; its submerged portion was green with marine adhesions or growths. The fellow in the bows of the boat, manoeuvring with the boat-hook, cleverly snicked the parcel from the jury-mast and

put it beside him without opening it, for that was to be the captain's privilege.

"Off with that cloth," said Mr. Perkins, "and then backwater a bit out of this atmosphere."

The bowman jerked the cloth clear of the raft with his boathook; the white sheet floated like a snowflake upon the water for a few breaths, then slowly sank. The body exposed was stark naked and tawny. It was a male. I saw nothing revolting in the thing: it would have been otherwise perhaps had it been white. The hair was long and black, the nose aquiline, the mouth puckered into the aspect of a harelip; the gleam of a few white teeth painted a ghastly contemptuous grin upon the dead face. The only shocking part was the footless leg.

"Shall I hook him overboard, sir?" said the bow-man.

"No, let him take his ease as he lies," answered the mate, and with that we returned to the barque.

We climbed over the side, the boat was hoisted to the davits, and Mr. Perkins took the parcel out of the stern-sheets and handed it to the captain. The cover was a kind of fine canvas, very neatly stitched with white thread. Captain Cayzer ripped through the stitching with his knife, and exposed a couple of books bound in some kind of skin or parchment. They were probably the Koran, but the characters none of us knew. The captain turned them about for a bit, and I stood by looking at them; he then replaced them in their canvas cover and put them down upon the skylight, and by-and-by, on his leaving the deck, he took them below to his cabin.

The moon rose about ten that night. She came up hot, distorted, with a sullen face belted with vapor, but was

soon clear of the dewy thickness over the horizon and showering a pure greenish silver upon the sea. She made the night lovely and cool; her reflection sparkled in the dew along the rails, and her beam whitened out the canvas into the tender softness of wreaths of cloud motionless upon the summit of some dark heap of mountain. I looked for the raft and saw it plainly, and it is not in language to express how the sight of that frail cradle of death deepened the universal silence and expanded the prodigious distances defined by the stars, and accentuated the tremendous spirit of loneliness that slept like a presence in that wide region of sea and air.

There had not been a stir of wind all day: not the faintest breathing of breeze had tarnished the sea down to the hour of midnight when, feeling weary, I withdrew to my cabin. I slept well, in spite of the heat and the cockroaches, and rose at seven. I found the steward in the cabin. His face wore a look of concern, and on seeing me he instantly exclaimed—

"The captain seems very ill, sir. Might you know anything of physic? Neither Mr. Perkins nor me can make out what's the matter."

"I know nothing of physic," I answered, "but I'll look in on him."

I stepped to his door, knocked, and entered. Captain Cayzer lay in a bunk under a middling-sized porthole; the cabin was full of the morning light. I started and stood at gaze, scarce crediting my sight, so shocked and astounded was I by the dreadful change which had happened in the night in the poor man's appearance. His face was blue, and I remarked a cadaverous sinking of the eyeballs; the lips were livid, the hands likewise blue, but strangely wrinkled like a washer-woman's. On seeing me he asked in a husky

whispering voice for a drink of water. I handed him a full panikin, which he drained feverishly, and then began to moan and cry out, making some weak miserable efforts to rub first one arm, then the other, then his legs.

The steward stood in the doorway. I turned to him, sensible that my face was ashen and asked some question. I then said, "Where is Mr. Perkins?" He was on deck. I bade the steward attend to the captain, and passed through the hatch to the quarter-deck, where I found the mate.

"Do you know that the captain is very ill?" said I.

"Do I know it, sir? Why, yes. I've been sitting by him chafing his limbs and giving him water to drink, and attending to him in other ways. What is it, d'ye know, sir?"

"*Cholera!*" said I.

"Oh, my God, I hope not!" he exclaimed. "How could it be cholera. How could cholera come aboard?"

"A friend of mine died of cholera at Rangoon when I was there," said I. "I recognize the looks, and will swear to the symptoms."

"But how could it have come aboard?" he exclaimed, in a voice low but agitated.

My eyes, as he asked the question, were upon the raft. I started and cried, "Is that thing still there?"

"Aye," said the mate, "we haven't budged a foot all night."

The suspicion rushed upon me whilst I looked at the raft, and ran my eyes over the bright hot morning sky and the burnished surface of sea, sheeting into dimness in the

misty junction of heaven and water.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said I, "to discover that we brought the cholera aboard with us yesterday from that dead man's raft yonder."

"How is cholera to be caught in that fashion?" exclaimed Mr. Perkins, pale and a bit wild in his way of staring at me.

"We may have brought the poison aboard in the parcel of books."

"Is cholera to be caught so?"

"Undoubtedly. The disease may be propagated by human intercourse. Why not then by books which have been handled by cholera-poisoned people, or by the atmosphere of a body dead of the plague?" I added, pointing at the raft.

"No man amongst us is safe, then, now?" cried the mate.

"I'm no doctor," said I, "but I know this, that contagious poisons such as scarlet fever and glanders, may retain their properties in a dormant state for years. I've heard tell of scores of instances of cholera being propagated through articles of dress. Depend upon it," said I, "that we brought the poison aboard with us yesterday from that accursed death-raft yonder."

"Aren't the books in the captain's cabin?" said the mate.

"Are they?"

"He took them below yesterday, sir."

"The sooner they're overboard the better," I exclaimed, and returned to the cabin.

I went to the captain, and found the steward rubbing him. The disease appeared to be doing its work with horrible rapidity; the eyes were deeply sunk and red; every feature had grown sharp and pinched as after a long wasting disease; the complexion was thick and muddy. Those who have watched beside cholera know that terrific changes may take place in a few minutes. I cast my eyes about for the parcel of books, and, spying it, took a stick from a corner of the berth, hooked up the parcel, and, passing it through the open porthole, shook it overboard.

The captain followed my movements with a languid rolling of his eyes but spoke not, though he groaned often, and frequently cried out. I could not in the least imagine what was proper to be done. His was the most important life on board the ship, and yet I could only look on and helplessly watch him expire.

He lived till the evening, and seldom spoke save to call upon God to release him. I had found an opportunity to tell him that he was ill of the cholera, and explained how it happened that the horrible distemper was on board, for I was absolutely sure we had brought it with us in that parcel of books; but his anguish was so keen, his death so close then, that I cannot be sure he understood me. He died shortly after seven o'clock, and I have since learned that that time is one of the critical hours in cholera.

When the captain was dead I went to the mate, and advised him to cast the body overboard at once. He called to some of the hands. They brought the body out just as the poor fellow had died, and, securing a weight to the feet, they lifted the corpse over the rail, and dropped it. No burial was read. We were all too panic-stricken for reverence. We got rid of the body quickly, the men handling the thing as though they felt the death in it stealing into them through their fingers—hoping and

praying that with it the cholera would go. It was almost dark when this hurried funeral was ended. I stood beside the mate, looking around the sea for a shadow of wind in any quarter. The boatswain, who had been one of the men that handled the body, came up to us.

"Ain't there nothing to be done with that corpus out there?" he exclaimed, pointing with a square hand to the raft. "The men are agreed that there'll come no wind whilst that there dead blackie keeps afloat. And ain't he enough to make a disease of the hatmosphere itself, from horizon to horizon?"

I waited for the mate to answer. He said gloomily, "I'm of the poor captain's mind. You'll need to make something fast to the body to sink it. Who's to handle it? I'll ask no man to do what I wouldn't do myself, and rat me if I'd do that!"

"We brought the poison aboard by visiting the raft, bo'sw'n," said I. "Best leave the thing alone. The corpse is too far off to corrupt the air, as you suppose; though the imagination's nigh as bad as the reality," said I, spitting.

"If there's any of them game to sink the thing, may they do it?" said the boatswain. "For if ther's ne'er a breeze of wind to come while it's there—"

"Chaw!" said the mate. "But try 'em, if you will. They may take the boat when the moon's up, should there come no wind first."

An hour later the steward told me that two of the sailors were seized with cramps and convulsions. After this no more was said about taking the boat and sinking the body. The mate went into the forecastle. On his return, he begged me to go and look at the men.

"Better make sure that it's cholera with them too, sir," said he. "You know the signs;" and, folding his arms, he leaned against the bulwarks in a posture of profound dejection.

I went forward and descended the forescuttle, and found myself in a small cave. The heat was over-powering; there was no air to pass through the little hatch; the place was dimly lighted by an evil-smelling lamp hanging under a beam but, poor as the illumination was, I could see by it, and when I looked at the men and spoke to them, I saw how it was, and came away sick at heart, and half dead with the hot foul air of the forecastle, and in deepest distress of mind, moreover, through perceiving that the two men had formed a part of the crew of the boat when we visited the raft.

One died at six o'clock next morning, and the other at noon; but before this second man was dead three others had been attacked, and one of them was the mate. And still never a breath of air stirred the silver surface of the sea.

The mate was a strong man, and his fear of death made the conflict dreadful to behold. I was paralyzed at first by the suddenness of the thing and the tremendous character of our calamity, and, never doubting that I must speedily prove a victim as being one who had gone in the boat, I cast myself down upon a sofa in the cabin and there sat, waiting for the first signal of pain, sometimes praying, or striving to pray, and seeking hard to accustom my mind to the fate I regarded as inevitable. But a keen and biting sense of my cowardice came to my rescue. I sprang to my feet and went to the mate's berth, and nursed him till he died, which was shortly before midnight of the day of his seizure—so swift and sure was the poison we had brought from the raft. He was dropped over the side, and a few hours later he was followed by three others. I cannot be

sure of my figures: it was a time of delirium, and I recall some details of it with difficulty, but I am pretty sure that by the morning of the fourth day of our falling in with the accursed raft the ship's company had been reduced to the boatswain and five men, making, with myself, seven survivors of fifteen souls who had sailed from Calcutta.

It was some time about the middle of the fifth day—two men were lying stricken in the forecastle—the boatswain and a couple of seamen came aft to the quarter-deck where I was standing. The wheel was deserted: no man had grasped it since the captain's death; indeed, there was nothing to be done at the helm. The ocean floated in liquid glass; the smell of frying paint, bubbled into cinders by the roasting rays, rose like the stench of a second plague to the nostrils. The boatswain and his companions had been drinking; no doubt they had broached the rum casks below. They had never entered the cabin to my knowledge nor do I believe they got their liquor from there. The boatswain carried a heavy weight of some sort, bound in canvas, with a long lanyard attached to it. He flung the parcel into the quarter-boat, and roared out—

"If that don't drag the blistered cuss out of sight I'll show the fired carcass the road myself. Cholera or no cholera, here goes!"

"What are you going to do?" said I.

"Do?" he cried; "why sink that there plague out of it, so as to give us a chance of a breeze. Ain't this hell's delight? What's a-going to blow us clear whilst *he* keeps watch?" And he nodded with a fierce drunken gesture toward the raft.

"You'll have to handle the body to sink it," said I. "You're well men, now; keep well, won't you? The two

who are going may be next taken."

The three of them roared out drunkenly together, so muddling their speech with oaths that I did not understand them. I walked aft, not liking their savage looks. Shouting and cursing plentifully, they lowered the boat, got into her by descending the falls, and shoved off for the raft. They drew alongside the bamboo contrivance, and I looked to see the boat capsize, so wildly did they sway her in their wrath and drink as they fastened the weight to the foot of the body. They then sank the corpse and with the loom of their oars, hammered at the raft till the bamboos were scattered like a sheaf of walking-sticks cut adrift. They now returned to the barque, clambered aboard, and hoisted the boat.

The two sick men in the forecastle were at this time looked after by a seaman named Archer. I have said it was the fifth day of the calm; of the ship's company the boatswain and five men were living, but two were dying and that, not counting me, left three as yet well and able to get about.

This man Archer, when the boatswain and his companions went forward, came out of the forecastle, and drank at the scuttle-butt in the waist. He walked unsteadily, with that effort after stateliness which is peculiar to tipsy sailors; his eyes wandered, and he found some difficulty in hitting the bunghole with the dipper. Yet he was a civil sort of man when sober; I had occasionally chatted with him during his tricks at the wheel; and, feeling the need of some one to talk to about our frightful situation, I walked up to him, and asked him how the sick men did.

"Dying fast," he answered, steadying himself by leaning against the scuttle-butt, "and a-ravin' like screetch owls."

"What's to be done, Archer?"

"Oh, God alone He knows!" answered the man, and here he put his knuckles into his eyes, and began to cry and sob.

"Is it possible that this calm can last much longer?"

"It may last six weeks," he answered, whimpering. "Down here, when the wind's drawed away by the sun, it may take six weeks afore it comes on to a blow. Six weeks of calm down here ain't thought nothen of," and here he burst out blubbering again.

"Where do you get your liquor from?" said I.

"Oh, don't talk of it!" he replied, with a maudlin shake of the head.

"Drinking'll not help you," said I; "you'll be all the likelier to catch the malady for drinking. This is a sort of time, I should think, when a man most wants his senses. A breeze may come, and we ought to decide where to steer the barque to. The vessel's under all plain sail, too, and here we are, four men and a useless passenger, should it come on to blow suddenly—

"We didn't sign on under you," he interrupted, with a tipsy scowl, "and as ye ain't no good either as a sailor or doctor, you can keep your blooming sarmons to yourself till they're asked for."

I had now not only to fear the cholera but to dread the men. My mental distress was beyond all power of words to convey: I wonder it did not quickly drive me crazy and hurry me overboard. I lurked in the cabin to be out of sight of the fellows, and all the while my imagination was tormenting me with first pangs of the cholera, and every minute I was believing I had the mortal malady.

Sometimes I would creep up the companion steps and cautiously peer around, and always I beheld the same dead, faint blue surface of the sea stretching like an ocean in a dream into the faint indefinable distances. But shocking as that calm was to me, I very well knew there was nothing wonderful or preternatural in it. Our forefoot five days before had struck the equatorial zone called the Doldrums, and at a period of the year when a fortnight or even a month of atmospheric lifelessness might be as confidently looked for as the rising and setting of the sun.

At nine o'clock that night I was sitting at the cabin table with biscuit and a little weak brandy and water before me, when I was hailed by some one at the open skylight above. It was black night, though the sky was glorious with stars: the moon did not rise till after eleven. I had lighted the cabin lamp, and the sheen of it was upon the face of Archer.

"The two men are dead and gone," said he, "and now the bo'sun and Bill are down. There's Jim dead drunk in his hammock. I can't stand the cries of sick men. What with liquor and pain, the air below suffocates me. Let me come aft, sir, and keep along with you. I'm sober now. Oh, Christ, have mercy upon me! It's my turn next, ain't it?"

I passed a glass of brandy to him through the skylight, then joined him on deck, and told him that the two dead bodies must be thrown overboard, and the sick men looked to. For some time he refused to go forward with me, saying that he was already poisoned and deadly sick, and a dying man, and that I had no right to expect that one dying man should wait upon another. However, I was determined to turn the dead out of the ship in any case, for in freeing the vessel of the remains of the victims might lie my salvation. He consented to help me at last, and we went into the forecastle and between us got the bodies out of their bunks,

and dropped them, weighted, over the rail. The boatswain and the other men lay groaning and writhing and crying for water; cursing at intervals. A coil of black smoke went up from the lamp flame to the blackened beam under which the light was burning. The atmosphere was horrible. I bade Archer help me to carry a couple of mattresses on to the forecastle, and we got the sick men through the hatch, and they lay there in the coolness with plenty of cold water beside them and a heaven of stars above, instead of a low-pitched ceiling of grimy beam and plank dark with processions of cockroaches, and dim with the smoke of the stinking slush lamp.

All this occupied us till about half-past ten. When I went aft I was seized with nausea, and, sinking upon the skylight, dabbled my brow in the dew betwixt the lifted lids for the refreshment of the moisture. I believed that my time had come, and that this sickness was the cholera. Archer followed me, and seeing me in a posture of torment, as he supposed, concluded that I was a dead man. He flung himself upon the deck with a groan, and lay motionless, crying out at intervals, "God, have mercy! God, have mercy!" and that was all.

In about half an hour's time the sensation of sickness passed. I went below for some brandy, swallowed half a glass, and returned with a dram for Archer, but the man had either swooned or fallen asleep, and I let him lie. I had my senses perfectly, but felt shockingly weak in body, and I could think of nothing consolatory to diminish my exquisite distress of mind. Indeed, the capacity of realization grew unendurably poignant. I imagined too well, I figured too clearly. I pictured myself as lying dead upon the deck of the barque, found a corpse by some passing vessel after many days; and so I dreamt, often breaking away from my horrible imaginations with moans and starts, then pacing the deck to rid me of the nightmare

hag of thought till I was in a fever, then cooling my head by laying my cheek upon the dew-covered skylight.

By-and-by the moon rose, and I sat watching it. In half an hour she was a bright light in the east, and the shaft of silver that slept under her stretched to the barque's side. It was just then that one of the two sick men on the forecastle sent up a yell. The dreadful note rang through the vessel, and dropped back to the deck in an echo from the canvas. A moment after I saw a figure get on to the forecastle-rail and spring overboard. I heard the splash of his body, and, bounding over to Archer, who lay on the deck, I pulled and hauled at him, roaring out that one of the sick men had jumped overboard, and then rushed forward and looked over into the water in the place where the man had leapt, but saw nothing, not even a ripple.

I turned and peered close at the man who lay on the forecastle, and discovered that the fellow who had jumped was the boatswain. I went again to the rail to look, and lifted a coil of rope from a pin, ready to fling the fakes to the man, should he rise. The moonlight was streaming along the ocean on this side of the ship, and now, when I leaned over the rail for the second time, I saw a figure close under the bows. I stared a minute or two, the colour of the body blended with the gloom, yet the moonlight was upon him too, and then it was that after looking awhile, and observing the thing to lie motionless, I perceived that it was the body that had been upon the raft! No doubt the extreme horror raised in me by the sight of the poisonous thing beheld in that light and under such conditions crazed me. I have recollection of laughing wildly, and defying the dark floating shape in insane language. I remember that I shook my fist and spat at it, and that I turned to seek for something to hurl at the body, and it may have been that in the instant of turning, my senses left me, for after this I can recall no more.

The sequel to this tragic and extraordinary experience will be found in the following statement, made by the people of the ship *Forfarshire*, from Calcutta to Liverpool: —"August 29, 1857. When in latitude 2° 15' N. and longitude 79° 40' E. we sighted a barque under all plain sail, apparently abandoned. The breeze was very scanty, and though we immediately shifted our helm for her on judging that she was in distress, it took us all the morning to approach her within hailing distance. Everything was deserted, and there were no signs of anything living in her. We sent a boat in charge of the second officer, who returned and informed us that the barque was the *Justitia*, of London. We knew that she was from Calcutta, for we had seen her lying in the river. The second officer stated that there were three dead bodies aboard, one in a hammock in the forecastle, a second on a mattress on the forecastle, and a third against the coamings of the main-hatch; there was also a fourth man lying at the heel of the port cathead—he did not seem to be dead. On this Dr. Davison was requested to visit the barque, and he was put aboard by the second officer. He returned quickly with one of the men, whom he instantly ordered to be stripped and put into a warm bath, and his clothes thrown overboard. He said that the dead showed unmistakable signs of having died from cholera. We proceeded, not deeming it prudent to have anything further to do with the ill-fated craft. The person we had rescued remained insensible for two days; his recovery was then slow, but sure, thanks to the skilful treatment of Dr. Davison. He informed us that his name was Thomas Barron, and that he was a passenger on board the *Justitia* for Capetown. He was the travelling representative of a large Birmingham firm. The barque had on the preceding Friday fallen in with a raft bearing a dead body. A boat was sent to bring away a parcel from the

raft's mast, and it is supposed that the contents of the parcel communicated the cholera. There were fifteen souls when the vessel left Calcutta, and all perished except the passenger, Thomas Barron."

III

THE KITE*

MAJOR-GENERAL E. D. SWINTON, D. S. O.

*This story, which was first printed in June, 1906, is here reproduced by permission of the author.

"Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire."—(Ecclesiastes.)

I

Three dirty and breathless soldiers scrambled painfully through a gap in the hedge on the brow of the rounded slope of the hill and, taking out their maps and field-glasses, lay down prone on their stomachs. So dirty were they that it was hard to realize that they were officers. Placing both elbows squarely on the ground, to counteract the unsteadiness of hand caused by their heaving bodies,

their thumbs were soon busily twisting the focussing-screws as they directed their glasses on to a large patch of scrub away below, some three miles to the west. On a rise in this rough country a long line of intermittent flashes could be seen with the naked eye.

The hedge stretched for some distance along the brow of the hill. About one hundred yards behind, and parallel to it, between hazel hedges, ran a country road. This—hardly more than a lane—was, to the south of this point, sunken, but just here was flush with the ground. On the near side of it, immediately behind where the officers were lying, was an open gate, and close to this gate a young poplar tree, against which was propped a motor-bicycle. In the lane itself were a motor-cyclist and a couple of orderlies, the latter dismounted and holding the horses of the party. Down below, in the direction in which the three were gazing, stretched a peaceful panorama of undulating country, fading into bluish heat-haze in the distance. The different crops gave a many-hued appearance to the landscape, the richer colour of the uncut hay alternating with the still crude green of the young grain and the reddish purple of the beetroot fields. The few fleecy clouds floating lazily in the sky here and there cast vague shadows, which slowly moved over hill and dale. The white walls and shining roofs of the homesteads dotted about stood out gleaming in the sunlight, and these, with the patches of woodland, caught the eye and assisted in some estimation of distance, otherwise impossible upon the variegated background with its network of hedges.

It was an almost perfect day in early June. Yet, in spite of the brilliant sunshine, there was an oppressive sultriness in the air which gave more than a hint of a coming storm.

Far off, in the same positions they had occupied all day, hung three war-balloons, motionless in the still air. They

were of a curious shape, and as the sun glistened on their distended skins they had the appearance of three monstrous and bloated yellow caterpillars. Upon the youngest of the three men under the hedge they had a disquieting effect of oppression. He felt that they were the eyes of the enemy—as indeed they were—and was uneasy under their silent gaze; at times he even imagined that those menacing eyes could read not only his actions, but his very thoughts and desires.

Though the elements seemed at peace, there was clear evidence that man was not, for here and there could be seen the angry glow of a conflagration with its pall of black smoke. In places the dirty-white dust-clouds betrayed the movement of masses, though the masses were not visible, while over certain spots thick clusters of smoke-puffs, suddenly breaking out like signal flags from the halliards of a ship, showed where shrapnel shell were raining down destruction. These puffs were of different colours—the majority pure white, but others were of a purple and magenta hue as violet as aniline dyes. An occasional bright flash, followed by a dull detonation and an upshooting trefoil of black smoke, marked the fall of high-explosive shell. From the clamour that filled the air, one might have imagined that the whole countryside formed one large shipyard or boilermaker's shop, so metallic was the sound of musketry close at hand. Every moment this body of sound was stabbed by the nearer rifle-shots which rang out separately, and broken by the occasional throb of machine-guns, the mechanical beat of pom-poms, and the booming of artillery. But to an ear used to the noise of battles, there was one fresh sound—that of the quick-firing field-guns; for as they seized some fleeting occasion to pour out their squalls of shell, individual shots could not be distinguished in the continuous roar.

Notwithstanding this din in the air, it was difficult to see

any signs of life. Of the work of man there was ample evidence; but of man himself—save those on the hill—there was no trace. Had a curious observer, however, walked some way down the bellying slope of the hill, he would have seen the backs of a long line of infantry digging for dear life near the bottom.

From all this turmoil down below, the little group at the top of the hill seemed strangely detached. No shell flew screeching over their heads, no bullet sang near them—they gazed on undisturbed. At last one put down his glasses and sat up with a grunt.

"We've been looking at the wrong place all along. We've been watching their flashes and bluff trenches on that rise. The guns are using flameless powder, and are a good deal closer—more to the left of the rough. I can just make them out, but cannot see how many there are."

"I can't see anything except the flashes which appear just where the trenches are," replied a second.

"Yes, of course, that's their game! D'you see that red and white farm?"

"Yes."

"Above that there's some water."

"Yes."

"Above that, still more to the left, on that hump covered with—"

"Yes, yes, I have them now; I should say there was more than one battery. They don't seem to be entrenched, either; but it is hard to tell on that background."

"There are more like twenty guns there," continued the first. "You may be certain they're entrenched—they're no fools. They have shown the dummies and hidden the real emplacements, which would not require much work on such a place as that—an ideal spot for guns."

"And so is this," added the third, the youngest of the three. "If it were not for their balloons, we could get a whole brigade up here unseen all the way, and suddenly open fire from behind this hedge. Even if they are entrenched, we could enfilade them and give them a bad time—enough to keep them quiet. If they're not, Lord help them, once we start!" He chuckled softly, and muttered fervently to himself, "Yes, Lord help them!" He was a Gunner.

He stared for a minute at the nearest balloon, silently and in deep thought, then taking off his hat, began absently to mop his head. Suddenly he stopped quite still, his head turned to one side as if listening.

"My God! it is rising!"

The two gazed at him in blank amaze, and, startled, at once seized their repeating-pistols.

"The wind, I mean—the wind. I feel it on my damp head!"

They still looked blank.

"Don't you see? If the wind only rises, down go those cursed balloons, and then—" There was no need to finish the sentence. The others jumped to their feet; one sucked his finger and held it up; the other picked a puff-ball and threw it in the air; all watched it gently wafted up the hill.

"Yes, look over there; that's more than haze—it's cloud!"

Toward the west there was now a low bank of gray cloud stretched across the horizon, against which the intermittent flashes showed bright.

"Whistle up the cyclist!" snapped out the eldest of the three, sitting down with notebook and pencil.

As the cyclist came up, he said, "Take this as quick as possible to the General of the 10th Division: he must be found; but if on the way you get near the officer commanding the Corps Artillery, show it to him and say I want him to read it."

After a minute they heard, as they got up, the snort of the motor breasting a rise on their left, and after three minutes there was nothing but the reek of petrol to show that any one had been on that hilltop.

They had gone and no one had noticed two small scoops in the ground—one under the hedge and the other farther along near the road—where ranging shell had fallen.

II

The wind has risen with the coming storm, and, above, the white clouds begin to chase each other across the blue sky. Out in the open and on the hilltops the trees are stricken by gusts of wind which rob the hawthorns of the last of their bloom. In the sheltered valleys there is peace and quiet, and under the lee of the hill the sultriness of the whole morning seems to have been concentrated.

The artillery brigade has now been waiting some time in that hollow lane between the high banks covered with wildflowers. Long enough to breathe the panting gun-

teams, and for some of the gunners to dismount and pluck dog-roses, which they have stuck in their hats.

The still air in this little heat-trap, heavy with the smell of horses and the overpowering scent of May-blossom strewn on the ground, combined with the drowsy buzzing of the bumblebees—the gentle murmur of a hot summer's day—has a somnolent effect on all except the animals, as they stand there zigzagged across the lane, the guns and limbers slewed to ease the strain. They present a succession of shiny quivering skins, and tails switching in a vain endeavour to drive off the hovering swarms of flies who divided their attention between the backs of the men and the horses. Though there is no conversation, for the men—here and there chewing a biscuit or taking a sparing drink from their water-bottles—are all tired, yet there is a general air of pleasurable expectancy, for the nature of their present errand is now known to all. It is their first experience of active service, and the event now awaited is to be their baptism of fire. In the minds of the more serious, a slight though vague feeling of apprehension—running like the coloured thread through the lay of a rope—adds zest to their suppressed excitement, for many and wonderful have been the yarns going the round of the barrack-rooms as to the powers of the enemy's quick-firing artillery. Here a more phlegmatic man has lit his pipe and wastefully thrown the match away, to burn to the end among the nettles on the bank—a thing which alone is sufficient to show that these are the early days of operations.

How the sun's rays pour down between the trees! How mercilessly they betray, even through the cloud of dust still hanging in the air, a hint of the more unpleasant side of war! The weary and lathered horses, the red and strained faces of the men, their peeled noses, the little runnels made in the grime on their cheeks by the perspiration as it

streams down, the purple sweat-patches in the greenish-yellow uniform. Now and again, as if maliciously to accentuate the contrast between its dainty self and the crowd of men and animals sweating below, a pale butterfly flits aimlessly in and out of the shadows—sometimes nearly, but never quite, settling on a horse or gun.

The windings of the lane only permit a view of some hundred yards of its length at one time; but even this short distance offers an impressive sight. It is apparent, in spite of the dust and dirt, that the greater number of these men—some still on their horses, some standing, and some stretched out on the shady side of the road—are seasoned and in the prime of life; no mere boys, but men in the best sense of the word, sturdy and full-set. Even for gunners they are a fine lot; and during this lull preceding the coming storm, the sight of this little collection of splendid men and horses raises thoughts as to whether any other army in the world can produce their equal. Both men and animals are the last word in continuous training and scientific preparation applied to picked material. Not only are they good to look upon, but good to act. From the showy prettiness of a tournament driving competition to the serious business of getting on to the target, they excel; for here at this moment is collected the smartest brigade of field-artillery in the army—and that means, as they think, the smartest brigade in the world: they are armed also with the best guns in the world. There stand the guns one after another slewed across the narrow road, almost blocking it with their length. Wicked they look in their dusty greenish paint, with an occasional glint of steel where it has been scraped off. Even to the uninitiated these quick-firers have a more venomous appearance than the simple old guns; for, with their long, low-hung bodies peering mysteriously from behind their shields, they look like monstrous grasshoppers crouching on a hill. Ugly and venomous

looking, they are the pride of their owners. Though he may not talk much about it, never has there been a true gunner who did not love his weapon and thrill with the idea of using it.

To those, now a little thoughtful on account of the legends concerning the enemy's wonderful quick-firing artillery, the sight of their own, whose powers they have so often tested on the practice-ground, is reassuring. They have the best gun ever invented, and at speed of ranging and accuracy of fire they are unequalled. What more? Are they not going to catch the enemy unawares? And to be caught unawares by a squall of shrapnel from modern quick-firers means extinction.

To the officers, the exact nature of the present task is known, and the possibilities of the occasion better appreciated—for though as yet without personal experience in war, they know to what a pitch all the nations have brought their quick-firing artillery, and what is expected from its "*rafales*," "*tir rapide*," "*schnell feuer*"—call it what you will—upon an exposed and unsuspecting enemy. They are standing alongside the horses, one feeling his animal's legs, another loosening a girth, but the majority cheerfully talking in little groups.

At last the dreary wait is over, a flag flickers from one hill to the other. "The enemy's balloons are down." With a sigh of relief the order is passed, and the brigade moves on, slowly at first, then breaking into a trot, for its destination is still some way off, and time, tide, and the chances for quick-firing artillery wait for no man.

The message has come down from the youngest of the three officers who were making the reconnaissance under the hedge two hours ago. For the past hour he has been watching those malignant balloons from that same spot,

and whistling for the wind. As the wind has risen, so have his spirits. It is a difficult thing to gauge the height of an object in the air, and several times he has thought that the balloon nearest the enemy's guns seems lower than it was, only to find out he is wrong.

The cloud-bank to the west grows larger, and as its ragged edge creeps up over the blue sky, the dark background shows up the glistening balloons the more brilliantly. The two farthest off are coming down—there is no doubt about it—and at last the nearer one seems lower. Yes—it is! Down, down it sinks. When it is quite close to the ground he waves to a signaller behind the road, who passes on the message, and so back it goes to the waiting brigade.

He crawls behind the hedge for a moment to watch the range-takers, who have been up here for the past half-hour and have taken and checked and rechecked the distance to the enemy's guns. Some men with tools also, who have uprooted the gate-posts, and widened some openings from the lane on to the hilltop, are now cutting little windows through the hedge on the brow. A few officers arrive ahead of the batteries, and to these he points out their positions and the target and range.

All is ready, and the head of the column is even now jangling up the hill.

III

The same landscape as watched by the three under the hedge, but viewed from the other side. In the foreground, half hidden among the patches of gorse on a gentle slope,

is a long irregular line of perhaps twenty guns. It is difficult even at this short distance to count their number, for they are dotted about here and there amongst the clumps of cover. Though of a grayer hue, they have a strong family resemblance to those others resting in the little lane on the hillside. By each is a water-bucket, the purpose of which is shown by the damp earth round the gun, and the absence of dust. Alongside also are little shelter-pits dug for the gun detachments, the bright yellow of the freshly turned earth artfully concealed with pieces of bush. The guns, the limbers, and the very horses themselves—over there in the rear—are embowered in greenery. The incongruous Jack-in-the-Green appearance thus given to these engines of destruction seems at first ill-timed foolery. It strikes a jarring note, as does laughter in the presence of death. Overhead, to one side of the line of guns, a huge yellow balloon sways in the rising wind and strains at the cable which slants away down to a small collection of wagons in a convenient hollow.

To the general din of battle all round is periodically added the roar of some of the guns in the line as a target worthy of a "*rafale*" of shell is found. The paroxysms of noise indulged in at intervals by these quick-firers are the only sign they give of their action, for they neither belch out flame nor kick up dust. Each fresh outburst seems to call up an echo from the direction of some absurdly ill-concealed earthworks about half a mile to the rear. The enemy are shooting badly. Few shells fall near the guns, though many pass over with a shriek to burst in the neighbourhood of those conspicuous earthworks, whose parapet must be a very shell trap, so continuous are the explosions on it. An occasional heavy shell rumbles up from the South, and, passing over with the noise of an electric tram, detonates in a fountain of yellow earth near the same target.

Near the focus of these explosions are a number of men sitting at the bottom of deep holes, and from their occupation it appears that not all the explosions so close to them are caused by hostile shell. They are busily employed in setting off flash bombs just outside their yellow parapet whenever their own artillery fires. And as two more shrapnel from different directions whistle high above the much-decorated guns, and burst over the pits, it is clear that the latter are the targets aimed at.

This is the method in the madness of these troglodytes in their pits and of the other stage effects.

Some little way from his guns is a dried-up saturnine sort of man, dirty and anything but smart—the commander of the artillery. He is talking to a staff-officer, with occasional pauses as he stoops to gaze through a telescope mounted on a tripod, not to the southeast, in which direction his guns are firing, but toward the hills to the east. Close by sits another officer at a field telephone in a hole in the ground; such work is at the present moment too important for an orderly. From the instrument a cable, sagging from one bush to another in loops, leads toward the wagons near the balloon anchorage: this cable is the nerve leading from the eye up aloft to the nerve centre below. A few soldiers are sitting about. Not only do these men wear a different uniform from those other gunners now perspiring on that hillside, but they are unmistakably of a different race.

The Commander again takes a long look toward the hills where something seems to excite his apprehension, for he converses earnestly with the staff-officer, and the two look more than once toward a poplar tree the top half of which is visible above that hill on the East. The wind increases.

The distant balloons are already gradually descending,

and a message shortly comes down from the observer above that it is too windy to remain up. The word is given, and slowly the great mass is hauled down to the depression near the wagons, where it is practically hidden, its approach to the ground being the occasion of special attentions from the enemy. Here, like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, it is seized by many hands and bound. Hardly has it nestled, with much heaving of billowy sides, into its hollow, when the eye is attracted by something dancing up and down among the brushwood close to it. It is an oblong framework, partially covered with dirty gray canvas, which has commenced to make sundry abortive little swoops up into the air, ending in abrupt dives down again to earth. Finally this weird kite—for kite it is—makes up its mind and sails steadily upward to the tune of its whining cable-drum. Up, up it goes, holding well in the strong breeze till it becomes a mere speck in the sky. Another kite follows, then another, and again one more, threaded on the same cable, till with the combined pull it is stretched as taut as a piano wire, and hums in the breeze like the weather mainstay of a racing yacht.

The Commander walks over to the starting-point of the kites, where, sitting near an exaggerated clothes-basket, is a young officer. He is unshaven, his face is pale and drawn, and he appears worn out as he sips slowly from the cup of his flask, but as his senior approaches, he rises, salutes, and listens attentively to his somewhat lengthy instructions. He is an exceptionally slight man, and his general air of fatigue is explained by the fact that he has been observing from the balloon for the past three hours; the dark rings under his eyes show where the constant strain has most told. In spite of this he is again to go up in the kite, not because there is none other capable, but because the advantage of having up aloft a pair of eyes that already know the lie of the country is at the present juncture of

greater importance than the fatigue of any man.

As the Commander concludes his harangue, a shell bursts on the ground close to him, covering him with sand. He does not pause to shake the sand off, but finishes his sentence: "Of course it is a chance, but they may not notice you go up against this cloudy background, and may be tempted to take up that position by seeing the balloon go down. If they do, well—" and he looks toward his guns and smiles thoughtfully.

The younger man nods, takes one more pull at his flask, feels if both pairs of field-glasses are hanging round his neck—he carries two—straps a telephone receiver and mouthpiece round his head, and climbs into the clothes-basket which is held by the men. The basket is attached to the rigid kite cable by runners. After the gear is tried, another large kite, which is harnessed to his prosaic-looking chariot, is thrown into the air. Making one or two ineffectual dives, it catches the wind and begins to pull. Slowly at first the observer rises, then faster as the great wings above him catch more of the breeze. Now they feel it, and up he sails like a pantomime stormfiend, to the accompanying moan of the wire vibrating in the wind. In a few moments he is a stationary spot far up on the slanting wire.

How insignificant in contrast to the great bulk of the balloon does the whole collection of kites appear—yet—the eye is there.

IV

The commanding officer goes back to his station by the

telephone, and waits. Prrrrrt, grumbles the instrument, and this time it is he himself who takes the receiver. He listens attentively, for it is difficult to hear along an aerial line, and there is much repetition before he finally replies "All right!" to his subordinate up above. A word to a staff-officer, who at once waves to some one near the guns. Then ensues much activity. Within three minutes every muzzle has been switched round by hand so as to face the hills on the East, at half a right angle from its former direction. The gun-layers at once start laying at the range obtained by those few shots fired some hours back, and buckets are emptied on the ground, but no effort is made to dig shelters, for they will be unnecessary. The exposure of and loss to be caused by the new position is ignored. When all are at their stations ready to open fire, a whistle sounds.

The suppressed excitement is catching. That the Commander himself is not unaffected is shown from the manner in which he ostentatiously, and with almost too great deliberation, selects a cigar from his case and begins chewing the end of it....

"Prrrrrt," rattles the telephone: the Commander drops the chewed cigar and listens.

"Are you ready?" gurgles down the wire.

"Yes."

"The head of their column is not far off the poplar tree."

A pause.

* * * * * * *

Meanwhile, on the hilltop, the watcher has again sat down. Now there is nothing to watch in the sky, he sets himself to study the enemy's guns, amongst which he

seems vaguely to discover some movement. Can they have suspected anything? As he sweeps his glass carelessly across the gray cloud toward its terrestrial object, something—a midge probably—in the upper corner of the object-glass catches his eye. He puts down the glass and rubs the lens with his handkerchief. He looks again. The midge is still there. He looks directly at it—it is a collection of midges. Good God! These are no midges—they are a covey of war kites high up in the sky! Yes, and there is the observer hanging some distance below, who must have seen all!

By this time two or three guns have turned out of the lane and are unlimbering.

He rises and tries to shout—it is too late.

* * * * * * *

"Now they're turning out of the road, through three or four gaps, to come into action—now two guns have left the road—hullo!—are you there?" continues the thin metallic voice down the wire.

"Yes."

"Let them have it."

The Commander, from his lowly position, looks up and nods to a signaller standing up on a mound; the latter drops his flag.

The air is split by the noise of the whole line of guns as they open rapid fire. It is like the report of one piece prolonged into a continuous long note.

Upon the brow of that hill of doom, hiding the sky-line for perhaps 400 yards to the right of the now obscured

poplar, appears a crown of magenta-coloured smoke, out of which a succession of light flashes sparkle.

* * * * * * *

By those up on that hill is heard a faint roar in the distance, followed by a whistling sound, and the air above —all round—is full of crackling reports, shouts, oaths, and groans. Bullets tear the earth on all sides, and the steel gun-shields ring out like gongs under their blows. Everything except the dreadful sounds becomes blurred in the puffs of acrid, tinted smoke which the wind drives across the hilltop.

* * * * * * *

In a minute, automatically, the fire ceases—a long period for quick-firing guns which pour out fifteen shells a minute, and much ammunition, but this is an opportunity given by the gods.

The Commander puts the telephone to his lips:

"Hullo!—is that enough?"

"Wait a minute. My God! It is."

V

Not one return shot has been fired.

The smoke is dissipated by the wind as soon as the squall of shell ceases, and the scene of the butchery stands revealed.

Behind the hedge are three guns unharmed except for splintered wood. Their green tint is all mottled with oval patches of shining silver, plated by the metal of the glancing bullets. Men are lying about singly, nearly all wounded in the head, and nearly all dead. A few who still crouch paralyzed behind the shields seem unhurt. Horses lie tied together by their harness in kicking, screaming bunches. At the gateway is a tangle of capsized gun, limber, man, and beast, which entirely blocks that part of the lane.

This is an *abattoir* better undescribed in detail—a medley of dead and dying men and animals, and of vehicles jammed into a solid mass. At intervals guns lie upturned or wedged across. The mass still struggles and heaves. Here and there drivers have half succeeded in driving their guns up the bank, in a gallant attempt to get out of the shambles, with the result that the horses lie dead on the top, and the guns lie overturned in the hollow. A few unharmed and dazed officers and men still shout orders and shove and push at the guns. There, where an ammunition wagon, hit direct by a shell, has exploded, is a cleared space. Branches and twigs are splintered in all directions, and the shrapnel balls have stripped the leaves from the trees and scattered a sparse shower of green over their handiwork.

Though at least one of the shells has not burst exactly, for on its back, under the hedge on the brow of the hill, lies the headless body of the young gunner officer—the glasses still in his left hand, a handkerchief in the right—yet, as the small voice had squeaked down the telephone wire 5000 yards away—it *is* enough!

IV

SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"*

BY DONN BYRNE

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The lights of Dunkirk slipped rearward, vibrating like a lantern at a ship's stern. They became a vague yellow splotch, like a hazy harvest moon; they became a dim halo, and narrowed down to an orange pin-point, like a smoker's match in a fog. Ypres showed southward in a pale aureole. Afar off the guns of Flanders thundered like drums.

Meriwell, as he leaned over the middle car of the dirigible, lowering his masked head to the wind, watched the black country skim by as if it were being pulled along by a rope. A spring wind cut past like a hurricane, and in it Meriwell could taste the sharp tang of gunpowder mingled with the scent of April flowers. Ypres flashed by beneath them and Cambrai rose like a star. The noise of the artillery discharges came nearer. It took on the heavy, booming tones of a March sea beating hollowly on cliffs.

"We're coming near the firing-line," Meriwell said to himself. "We ought to be rising now."

He glanced across to where the steersman stood cowled and rigid at his wheel, his slim, tall form suggested more than defined by the hooded electric lights. Beside him

poring over compass and map, his pale lawyer's face showing up like that of a hunting-bird, was the navigating lieutenant. In the shadows, leaning over the edge of the car, as a captain leans over his flying bridge, was the flight commander, old Colonel Sanderson. Meriwell glanced surreptitiously at his square-cut, tow-like beard and bowed engineer's shoulders. They seemed to droop more than ever to-night.

"Poor old skipper!" Meriwell muttered sympathetically.

The guns of the firing-line crashed into the air with heavy, shattering blasts. In the distance there showed the faint shadows of lights. Green shadows, that were lyddite; and infinitesimal pin-points of yellow, that were the flashes of rifles; and the pretty orange of shrapnel; and the blinding white of magnesium flares.

"Eighteen degrees up," the navigating lieutenant ordered. He watched his plumb-line while the steersman heaved on his switch. "Easy! Steady! Right-o!"

The floor of the car tilted like the deck of a steamer rising to the swell. The huge dirigible nosed her way upward like a mounting dragon-fly. They passed through a fleece of cloud that touched them caressingly like soft fingers. The noise of battle beneath them faded into a vibrating bass chord. The propellers purred like giant cats.

"She answered like a blood mare," said the navigator, pride ringing in his voice.

"If only my guns and bombs go as well as your planes," Meriwell told him, "I'll be satisfied."

"They will, never fear," the navigator laughed.

They were all proud of her, navigator, gunnery

lieutenant, engineers, and crew. Full-fledged, like Minerva from the head of Jove, she had appeared from the tousled brain of the queer, misshapen Scotch engineer of the Clyde, who had come knocking at the door of the war-office when the slug-shaped Zeppelins were pouring fire on the heart of London and the British airmen were relying on frail, insufficient biplanes—sparrow-hawks competing with eagles. They had, thank God! trusted that little man with the Scots accent and the brier pipe, and here they had her now in the air, three hundred feet of her, a miracle of aluminum and gas and oiled silk, rigid, dependable, fleet as a bullet from a sharpshooter's piece. Meriwell studied her lines through the darkness with a throb of pride: her graceful length, like some wonderful night insect; the wide sweep of her planes, like a jinn's wings, the shelf-like horizontal ones to send her nosing upward like a hawk or to let her down in a gliding sea-gull's swoop, the vertical one like the rudder of a gigantic vessel; the three great baskets, attached to the keel with the trellised runway between them; the four propellers, humming like a nest of bees, two to the forward car, two to the aft; the platform above the many-jointed aluminum-covered balloons, with its emergency bridge and rapid-fire gun.

"We're up seven thousand feet," the navigating lieutenant grinned. "How do you like it?"

"Don't like it at all," Meriwell answered. His teeth were chattering.

"You'll like it less in a minute. I'm going up to ten."

The din of fighting below had vanished into a faint murmur and the flashing guns and flaming artillery had become small, flickering lights, like fireflies on an August night. Occasionally a cloud flicked past below them and shut off even the pinpoints of light. Here and there a group

of stars showed, coldly lustrous, while southward toward Reims one fell sheer, like a bomb.

"I'd rather be shot than as cold as this," Meriwell grumbled. Beneath his leather suit and woolen mask his skin had become rough as sandpaper.

He looked about the car. The navigator stamped his feet and swung his arms with the cold. The steersman crouched low behind the wheel. Four of the crew huddled in blankets against the walls of the basket. Only the commander stood imperturbable and grim, looking into the night. The shaded electric bulbs threw a sickly yellow light over the mechanism of the dirigible; over the black signal-board, on which green, red, and white circles and triangles showed, messages to and from the engineers fore and aft; over the row of switches, like those in a railroad tower, that opened the cages beneath the cars to release the pear-shaped bombs; over the navigator's map and compass. They outlined dimly the machine gun that peered over each side swathed in their oilskin coverings. They drew strange, green glints from barometer and spirit-level, and made silver sparkles on the frost crystals that were forming, parallelogram on parallelogram and triangle on triangle, among the twisted riggings of the car.

"What time is it?" Meriwell asked.

"It's ten-thirty," the navigator jerked. "We'll make Mainz by two and be back about dawn."

The cold became more dry and piercing. It seemed to ooze in at the pores and mingle with the blood and compose itself into a mixture that chilled flesh and bone. Meriwell felt his limbs going numb. The countryside beneath was becoming darker. There were no longer great chandeliers of light to show towns and small clusters that

were villages. To the left a faint geometrical array of arc lamps rose dimly. The navigator crossed to the side of the car and looked at it for a moment. He shook his head grimly. Meriwell knew it was Brussels. A cloud enveloped them and dashed them with particles of dew that were like a shower of frost. Through the thick spray the figures of the steersman and commander loomed up gigantically, like visitors from another world showing vaguely through a misty dawn.

There was something eerie, Meriwell thought, in the immobility of the commander. He should have shown more eagerness, more of a sense of satisfied ambition. For years the old engineer officer had lived in the hope of seeing England recapture her lead in the aviation of the world. He had worked night and day in his laboratory, testing gases, testing metals, working out models for a battleship of the air that would thrust aside the Zeppelin and the Schutte-Laenze as the steamer put aside the barkentine. And now to-night he was commanding his dream for the first time in action. He was to raid the great railway network of Mainz, over which German corps were entraining night and day for the last supreme effort to gain the coast towns. In two hours he would be tearing the mighty terminal to shreds of twisted rails and charred wood, and distorted lumps of iron that had once been panting locomotives. Meriwell was proud to be with him, and the commander should be proudest of all. The gunner remembered how the old man had pleaded for the detail. The chief of staff had argued he was too old; he was too valuable. The chief had had in mind a thing Meriwell had forgotten and which suddenly came back to him with stunning force. But the old aviator had won.

"The old sportsman!" Meriwell said to himself, and his throat choked with pride; "the great old sportsman!"

He remembered how, on the first raid of the leprous-white Zeppelins from over the channel, the first house to be struck was the house of the old commander, a square, uncompromising, soldier-like house on Notting Hill, where his wife—the gray-haired, motherly lady with the dignified eyes—dwelt, and his widow daughter, mourning her husband dead somewhere in France. His soldier son, of the Sherwood Foresters, home on leave, was sleeping at the time. There were heard the high whir of propellers and the desultory crashing of anti-aircraft guns. Then, accurate as a thunderbolt, the great pear-shaped bomb had dropped, with the crash of lightning striking a tree. A colleague of the Royal Artillery, a blunt old fighter, with a cropped gray moustache, had told him about it, tactfully, laconically, with a fighter's sympathy. He told him how the gray-haired lady had died—very dignified, as she had been in life; very peaceful, as befitted an upright gentlewoman, her calm features mercifully unmarked. He stumbled as he spoke of the young captain, for a soldier should die on the battlefield, with guns roaring and his men about him, instead of being potted like a rat in a corn-stack. When he came to the daughter his face diffused to purple and his gray eyes flashed.

"Curse them!" he swore viciously, "curse them night, noon, and morning! living and dead! the rotten gallows-birds!"

"That's all right, Carter," the aviator had said. "Thank you for telling me." And he had walked off, fumbling pitifully at his sword-belt. What black hairs he had left had turned white since then, and his gray eyes were more sunken, but his beard jutted savagely since, and his voice snapped commands to his airmen with a ring like that of steel.

"I wish we were over that railway station," said

Meriwell to himself, grimly. He squinted across at the switches of the bomb-cages and at the silent machine guns in their oilskin swathings. "He's going to get some good work in to-night, if I can help."

The officer at the compass straightened suddenly. He punched at the indicator buttons in a quick burst of energy.

"Up planes," he shouted. "Nine degrees down."

"Nine down!" the steersman repeated. He heaved on his switch with a long, graceful pull. The notches clicked successively like a clock in winding. The car tilted forward gradually. Meriwell grasped at a support to keep himself from sliding. Wind flew against them in a strong upward sweep. The steersman braced to his wheel like a wrestler. The propellers purred less loudly. Meriwell had the sensation of being gently pulled downward. He looked over the side of the car fearfully. A few desultory lights showed dimly, like the lamps of a train in the distance. An engineer officer dropped into the car from the passage, electric torch in one hand and oil-can in the other. He reeked pungently of gasolene.

"Time you were going down," he remarked peevishly to the navigating lieutenant in strong Scots. "Do you want all my engines to freeze?"

"It'll be hot enough pretty soon," the navigator jeered at him.

"Where are we?" Meriwell asked.

"South of Maastricht," the lieutenant answered. He was as excited as a schoolboy. "We'll be over the border in a minute." He leaned toward the wind-gauge. "Doing seventy-two miles an hour," he shouted after the engineer.

It was warmer now. Meriwell glanced at the scale beside the barometer and saw it registered two thousand five hundred feet. Vague, clean scents stole through the wind—the white odour of hawthorn and the freshness of spring grass and early flowers, and the transparent odour of the wind, like the transparent taste of water. Sounds rose vaguely into the air—the shadows of sounds, it seemed—the baying of an uneasy dog and the twitter of startled birds. An automobile-horn screamed raucously and somewhere there was the cutting whistle of a train. As he leaned over the side of the car, the gunnery lieutenant saw the sparsely lighted land slip away beneath them as a pier slips away from a liner. Occasionally there was a brightly lighted municipal building; occasionally a microscopic point that Meriwell felt was a man with a lantern. Here and there a forge licked like flames on a volcano—a mute suggestion of war in which labour ceased neither night nor day. Afar off a flashing line of lights, like the lighted fuse of a crude mine, showed a train speeding. Meriwell felt himself looking at these things as a disembodied spirit might—the last odour and sound and sight of an earth that years of dwelling in had invested with a great affection. He felt himself shiver.

He moved slightly against the edge of the car, and as he did he discovered, with a sense of shock, that his hand had grasped the rail so tightly that he could hardly move it. The horrible intent nervousness that airmen know was lapping itself about him. He felt a wild desire to find himself on earth again, so wild that he had to clinch his teeth to prevent himself from jumping over the side of the car. He was suddenly conscious of his nerves—they seemed to spread all over his body like the veins of an ivy leaf, to be writhing, to be crying at his finger-tips. A great fear came on him, as it might come on a man swimming in the ocean far from sight of land or sail. They had no right to be there,

he said to himself fiercely, no right to be high among the winds. They were intruders, impertinently encroaching on the domain of some Power whose inalienable domain the air was. They might irritate It, who had placed them on the earth to walk with feet on it and not above it to fly with wings. At any moment It might arise and smite their meagre human device of gas and steel as a man might smash a fly on the wall. He cowered suddenly, as if expecting a blow.

A faint exhalation of pale light showed to the northeast like a phosphorescent cloud—Aix-la-Chapelle! So they were over the border at last! Meriwell's teeth set and his eyes glinted. A sense of danger seized him, and suddenly there began running in his head the full sonorous rhythm of the "Watch upon the Rhine." They were over the iron wall at last, over the impregnable ring of steel. In spite of singing, in spite of all boasting—and as he felt his blood pulse proudly another chilling terror came over him. He felt as if the souls of all the dead fighters of the empire were rising up against them in a vast current of wings, Saxon men and Prussian and Hessian, soldiers of Bavaria and of Würtemberg, levies of the Hansa towns—striking at the steel bird with ineffectual, spiritual fingers, clinging pathetically to rigging and nacelle and plane, gazing hatefully at the invaders with horrible bloodshot, unbodily eyes....

The navigator turned suddenly to the man at the wheel.

"What the deuce is wrong with you?" he raged. "Starboard, I said. Starboard!"

The steersman bent to the wheel. He tugged and pushed until the veins stood out on his forehead like ropes.

"Can't do anything, sir," he stammered, "I'm jammed."

The navigator jumped to the signal-board. He snapped switches like fingers cracking. He leaned into the shelter-box of the speaking-tube.

"Cut off," he shouted, "the rudder's jammed. Engineer-lieutenant amidships!"

The hum of the propellers died away musically. The dirigible glided easily like a bird volplaning. There was the shuffle of feet along the metal-latticed passage. The dour Scots lieutenant dropped into the car, cotton waste in one hand and oil-can in the other. His second, a bright-cheeked Suffolk lad, leaped agilely after him.

"Oil on the hinges all evaporated—with your seventy-two miles an hour," the lieutenant snapped at the navigator. "I'll go aft and oil up."

"I'll do that," the second urged. He caught at the oil-can and plucked his torch from its scabbard. They heard him patter aft in the rear car. They saw his light flicker for an instant as he swung into the rigging. The Scotsman looked after him with an affectionate eye.

"A fine lad!" he murmured, "and a fine nerve he has!"

As he looked over the rail of the nacelle Meriwell saw the earth swing beneath him gently like a cradle rocking. The swaying lights gave him a sense of dizziness. He felt suddenly that the earth was a small thing, bowling through space like a tossed ball.

"Right!" he heard the engineer's second hail faintly.

"Right-o!" came the cheery call of the navigator. He watched the light of the boy's torch as he crept along the rigging to the main car. He heard him bandy a hearty word with somebody. He heard a gruff word of caution, a laugh,

and a choked scream. Meriwell sprang to his full height and grasped the rail with both hands. He saw the flicker of the shadow as it plunged downward.

"My God!" he blurted. "He's gone!"

The navigator rushed to the side of the car like a maniac. The steersman half-turned from the wheel. The engineer officer stiffened like a pointing dog.

"He's gone!" the navigator said stupidly. "Poor Conroy's gone!"

They stood a moment silent, looking at each other in white horror. The commander came out of the shadows. He took his peaked cap off.

"God be good to a gallant officer!" he said.

"Amen!" Meriwell answered.

The engineer strode forward silently through the passage. The commander touched the navigating officer on the arm.

"Ahead, Mr. Brennan," he said simply.

The navigator caught up his tube.

"Full ahead," he ordered. He turned to the steersman. "Southeast by east," he directed.

"Southeast by east," the steersman repeated mechanically. The propellers throbbed, whirred, hummed. The night air cut against them like a whip. A lone star showed up for a moment in a break of cloud, and then disappeared again, as a stage disappears between closing curtains.

Meriwell felt dazed. War—this wasn't war! This was a puny fooling with the engines of destiny, children pulling the triggers of firearms. He remembered how a great-uncle of his had died at Balaklava: a bright morning with the battle-drums beating; guns pealing, soldiers cheering; Cardigan riding gallantly at the head of the Light Brigade. *Pro patria mori*! Yes—but to fall two thousand feet in the night-time and to strike an alien ground with a sickening thud—that was not war. That was horror. He remembered inconsequently how he had heard that a man would be dead before he struck the ground and the thought consoled him somewhat.

Stollberg slipped past dreamily in a murk, Lamersdorf, Blankenheim, Adenau and Honnigen. Carts rattled as they flashed over Dumpelfeld. At Naub an alert sentry fired his Mauser, a whip's crack and a bullet's futile ping. Coblenz flitted past and they were over the Rhine, black, undulating, reflecting mistily the lamps of unsleeping barges. They swung over Wiesbaden, and Mainz came toward them, ambling like a man into ambush. The dirigible tilted upward at an angle of thirty. Meriwell sprang to the centre of the car. The commander climbed forward.

"Remember," he warned. "Not a second to waste!"

Doubt and nervousness dropped from Meriwell like a cloak. His brain sprang into action like a boxer's muscles at the call of the gong. He clambered forward along the passage toward the first arc. Already the gun crew had stripped the covers from the machine guns. Men stood alongside the rails with queer umbrella-like things in their hands—the asbestos parachutes, with their naphtha-soaked torch in the handle, flares that would light up every cranny in the ground beneath and protect the dirigible from the light of the flares themselves.

"Ready, gunner?" asked the navigating lieutenant.

"Ready," Meriwell sang back.

They swung toward the town easily as a ship comes to its pier. Beneath them they could see the lights of the railroad station, big violet globes that radiated like stars. Men hurried to and fro along the concrete platforms—queer, squat, huddled figures. Two engines fussed in and out like busy housewives. In one corner was a massed city of railroad-cars. Rails shone in a bewildering intricacy like a metal puzzle. Long, lank sheds showed like barns.

"Ease up," the commander ordered. He stood square in the centre of the car, his beard jutting, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. It was as if some main nerve had suddenly come into play, electrifying the great steel vessel. The navigator sprang to the speaking-tube.

"Cut off," he shouted. He thrust the steersman away from the wheel and caught at the spokes. "Figure of eight," he muttered. The dirigible swung gracefully in a curve leftward. Meriwell looked over the side again and raised his night-glasses. On the platforms beneath men were running to and fro excitedly. As they looked upward they had the appearance of a child's tin soldiers gazing fearsomely at a human being. A whistle cut metallically into the air. A carbine cracked. A searchlight shot skyward in a broad ribbon of white and began casting about like a fisherman's line. Somewhere there was a thudding boom, a whining scream, and a white star opened like a flower three hundred yards away with a crash like wood breaking.

"Go ahead, Mr. Meriwell," the commander directed.

Meriwell raised his megaphone to his lips.

"Overboard, the parachutes," he thundered.

There was a burst of murky, yellow flame fore and aft. Six flaming torches floated downward like snowflakes falling. The town cowered darkly to the rear of them. Beneath, to the right, the station showed as if lit up by some great conflagration. Above, everything seemed to have gone grotesquely black. Meriwell could hardly see across the car. Another searchlight leaped in to the air and crossed the first one. They stabbed about like the tentacles of an octopus. The anti-aircraft guns shot six white stars to port in rapid succession like revolver shots. Along the concrete platforms a brace of sharpshooters dropped to their knees and cuddled their pieces to their cheeks. The dirigible moved with easy dignity toward the station. Meriwell calculated a moment. The bombs in the fall would carry forward in the direction the dirigible was headed for. He would have to wait a moment. Weights, distance, heights, flashed through his head like the dots and dashes of a Morse code.

"Sections A and B, lanyards 3 and 4, fore and aft," he bellowed. "Heave on!"

The dirigible shivered and jumped like a restive horse as the gunners heaved on their switches and the weighted bombs dropped from their cages. A searchlight caught the great hawk for a moment and showed it gray and lustrous like a battleship at sea. The navigator swung his wheel about with a jerk. The dirigible turned like a hare. The propellers burst into a wild, spasmodic hum. They oscillated dangerously. Meriwell clung onto the side and looked over.

Eight great splotches of red flame burst suddenly on the ground, sideways, like water splashing. They showed red and angry like a man's wound. There were dark streaks

among them—earth thrown up, men, metal, concrete. A puff of hot wind struck the car, and a vast unspeakable noise, a maddened, crashing roar, like the earth protesting at being attacked—a shuddering, horrible thing that drowned the feeble crackling of the guns and seemed to blot out life itself for a moment. The dirigible shivered like a feather in a gully of wind.

"Ease up," he called to the navigator. "A and B, lanyards 2 and 5, fore and aft," he roared again. Again the jump and curvet of the car; the red cup-like explosions, the terror of sound. A gun boomed southward, and something passed them with a high shriek. The searchlight caught them again and hung on with the tenacity of a bulldog. Something like a fly appeared in the west.

"Look out," the commander warned the lieutenant at the wheel. "Get ready to rise."

Meriwell looked downward again with his glasses. The naphtha planes were approaching the junction on their drop and were lighting up the scene with a lurid Satanic glow. The glasses nearly slipped from his hands. Beneath him was chaos. The glittering rails, the compact platforms, the lank sheds, the massed cars, the violet lights were no longer there. The terminal showed like a ploughed field—a wilderness of stone and earth, of twisted metal and shattered wood. Great chasms showed where the bombs had struck; little hillocks of thrown-up earth; great iron pillars broken in two like match-wood; huddled figures that had been soldiers on the platform; while from the massed cars and the long sheds great waves of red and blackish flame showed with foam tops of rolling brown smoke, rolling, licking, crackling, roaring, like a mediæval dream of hell.

"I don't need section C," he laughed. All the havoc had

been wrought by the light bombs. There were still eight mammoth pears in their cages, unused. He could save those.

"Get the bridge now, Mr. Meriwell," the commander instructed, "and swing around to the forts."

"Empty ballast," roared the navigator.

There was a gurgle as the stop-cocks on the water-tanks of the keel were opened—a hollow rushing that should have ended in a splash. In the glaring light the water poured downward in two great streams fore and aft like silver cables falling. The dirigible rose as if drawn upward. Bombs burst like firecrackers. Beneath, the fire rustled like crushed paper and exploded now and then, in queer, hollow, inadequate sounds. The navigator swung over the river. Four thousand feet below, the bridge showed over the black ribbon of the Rhine like a plank over a rivulet. Meriwell watched it with the eye of a cat ready to spring on a mouse.

"Ready on section C," he warned, "lanyards 2 and 3, fore and aft."

They floated along hazily, like a stick along a river. The anti-aircraft guns broke into a passion of whipping reports. The searchlights cut into the air like thrusting bayonets.

"Heave on!" he yelled suddenly.

The dirigible lifted violently like a canoe struck by a great wave. There was a loud whirring in the air as the bombs dropped downward. Meriwell felt his heart jump to his mouth. He peered over the edge breathlessly, his hands gripping the rail with sudden fear. Mechanically he opened his mouth to protect his ear-drums from the report, and as

he did a vast wave of orange flame, like discoloured sheet lightning, seemed to flick along the river. For a moment, soundless, the river rose in its bed as if struck by a mighty hand. The great stone bridge disappeared as if kicked away.

"My God!" said Meriwell hoarsely, "my God!"

Then suddenly noise struck him between the shoulder-blades, noise such as he could hardly believe possible—an infinitude of sound that rocked him like a crashing blow, a sound as of two planets meeting in mid-course, a gigantic forbidden thing, that only gods should make.

"The bridge is gone," said Meriwell stupidly.

A great hush swung over the town. The anti-aircraft guns stuttered and died. The futile rifle fire stopped. The thunder of the forts was cut off in mid-air. Only the blaze at the junction roared a little like a forced draft. Over the river all was black. The water had shut off the flare of the explosion. The searchlight struck the ballonet of the dirigible as a spear strikes a fish. There was the throb of propellers.

"Triplane to starboard," the navigator warned.

"Send him down, Mr. Meriwell," the commander ordered calmly. "Navigator, put the men by the engines ready to start on the word."

The triplane rose jerkily in the air like a toy at the end of a string. Its three shelf-like planes showed dimly and vaguely like a great kite. Meriwell felt sorry for it—it was a game, chivalrous thing, to rise in the air to give battle to the leviathan. He felt a great throb of sympathy and sorrow for it. It looked such a puny thing—but he mustn't let it get

above him, or alongside him——

"Searchlight on starboard gun," he snapped.

A sergeant and corporal sprang to the Maxim. They clamped a thing like an automobile-lamp to the barrel. They snapped a switch, and a line of light shot out like a harpoon. It whipped about like a fencer's blade, parrying, thrusting, lifting, dropping. The corporal threw his leg over the saddle and caught the trigger.

"When you see her, fire!" Meriwell ordered.

She showed up for a moment, black and fragile, and motionless it seemed. The gun broke into an infuriated chatter. The cartridge-tape leaped like a hooked eel. Suddenly they saw the great kite twist like a wounded bird. It dropped in a wavering zigzag while two black pin-points dropped in plumb-lines.

"God help them!" Meriwell breathed.

The propellers of the dirigible plunged into their loud whir like the first peal of an organ. Meriwell staggered and lurched. The dirigible shot forward like a stone from a sling. The commander fell to pacing the car nervously. His fingers cracked like castanets. His beard twitched. He turned on the gunner.

"Never mind the forts," he shouted. "We've done enough. What have you left?"

"Sixteen small and four large bombs," Meriwell answered.

"Get ready," he warned. He turned to the navigator. "Back and over the town."

"Back and over the town?" the navigator queried stupidly. "Over the town?"

"Yes," the commander barked. His face seemed queerly white and strained. "Let them have all you've got, Mr. Meriwell."

"You don't mean—?" Meriwell nearly laughed in amazement. "Bombard the town?"

"Yes. Quick. Circle around and let go."

A great, tawny lake of flame poured over the acreage of cars in the junction. It lighted the town dully and they could see it hazily, through a smoke screen, as it were. The narrow Gothic buildings showed up as in a painting; the peaceful cathedral; the great, squat municipal hall; the queer dolls' houses—it all seemed like a theatrical spectacle. Southward the gunners still threw their white stars and the artillery of the forts stabbed red and blindly into the murky fog.

"Take the wheel," the navigator told the steersman. "Planes up eighteen and swing in a circle." He looked at the commander with grave, disquieted eyes.

Meriwell caught at the commander's sleeve.

"My God, sir! You can't do that!" he shouted in horror. "You can't fire on civilians."

"I can," said the old man doggedly. "I can and I will."

"You're mad, sir! You're mad!" he babbled.

A stray shot cut screaming past them. They rocked from the current. The crew moved about the car uneasily.

"Bring her around," the commander ordered. The navigator never moved.

A vast desire to throw himself on the old commander came on Meriwell, to bind him hand and foot. He must have gone crazy, he judged. That last terrific explosion had injured his brain. Then suddenly he remembered the house on Notting Hill, the white-haired lady who had died on the night raid, the screaming, distraught daughter, the gallant captain of Sherwood Foresters killed like a rat in a trap. He understood.

"I can't do it, sir," the navigator replied. Meriwell took a step toward him. His hands went out pleadingly.

"I know, sir. I understand. But we can't do it. I won't give the order and the men wouldn't pull the lanyards," his voice stumbled. "We're soldiers," he continued, "and we're fighting soldiers—not unarmed men, not sleeping children, not women."

There was a moment's silence. The wind blew about them as from a great blast-pipe. The reports of the air-guns ceased for a moment and began intermittently. The navigator turned his head away. Meriwell looked at the commander's white face.

"Soldiers!" he repeated. "Clean fighters. Soldiers and gentlemen. Officers and gentlemen, as your son was. And your wife was a soldier's wife and your daughter was a soldier's daughter."

He waved his hand toward the town.

"We've smashed the junction and smashed the bridge. No train will pass that way again and no ship will come up the Rhine. We've done our work—and not a building

outside injured and not a civilian attacked. They'd be proud of that, your people, sir. You can't do this other thing, sir. It isn't the game. It isn't cricket."

He watched the commander's face keenly. He waited until he saw the bitter twist pass from the mouth and the frown go out of his eyes.

"They wouldn't want that," he urged. "They'd be ashamed, those people of yours." He waited a moment. "The old code, sir, an officer and a gentleman."

The commander's head drooped a little. The stiff poise of his grey beard softened. His shoulders lost their tenseness suddenly.

"I—I—" he wavered. He turned to the navigator. "Right about and back," he said weakly. He slipped into the rear among the shadows.

The navigator sprang to his compass.

"Nor'west by west," he ordered.

"Nor'west by west," the steersman repeated mechanically.

And as Meriwell leaned over the car he saw the town race flatly away from them, while the guns still chattered viciously, like disturbed magpies, and their charges burst high in the air into pretty, artificial stars.

V

THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER OF ASPINWALL*

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

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I

On a time it happened that the lighthouse keeper in Aspinwall, not far from Panama, disappeared without a trace. Since he disappeared during a storm, it was supposed that the ill-fated man went to the very edge of the small, rocky island on which the lighthouse stood, and was swept out by a wave. This supposition seemed the more likely as his boat was not found next day in its rocky niche. The place of lighthouse keeper had become vacant. It was necessary to fill this place at the earliest moment possible, since the lighthouse had no small significance for the local movement as well as for vessels going from New York to Panama. Mosquito Bay abounds in sandbars and banks. Among these navigation, even in the daytime, is difficult; but at night, especially with the fogs which are so frequent on those waters warmed by the sun of the tropics, it is nearly impossible. The only guide at that time for the numerous vessels is the lighthouse.

The task of finding a new keeper fell to the United States consul living in Panama, and this task was no small one: first, because it was absolutely necessary to find the man within twelve hours; second, the man must be unusually conscientious,—it was not possible, of course, to take the

first comer at random; finally, there was an utter lack of candidates. Life on a tower is uncommonly difficult, and by no means enticing to people of the South, who love idleness and the freedom of a vagrant life. That lighthouse keeper is almost a prisoner. He cannot leave his rocky island except on Sundays. A boat from Aspinwall brings him provisions and water once a day, and returns immediately; on the whole island, one acre in area, there is no inhabitant. The keeper lives in the lighthouse; he keeps it in order. During the day he gives signals by displaying flags of various colours to indicate changes of the barometer; in the evening he lights the lantern. This would be no great labour were it not that to reach the lantern at the summit of the tower he must pass over more than four hundred steep and very high steps; sometimes he must make this journey repeatedly during the day. In general, it is the life of monk, and indeed more than that,—the life of a hermit. It was not wonderful, therefore, that Mr. Isaac Falconbridge was in no small anxiety as to where he should find a permanent successor to the recent keeper; and it is easy to understand his joy when a successor announced himself most unexpectedly on that very day. He was a man already old, seventy years or more, but fresh, erect, with the movements and bearing of a soldier. His hair was perfectly white, his face as dark as that of a Creole; but, judging from his blue eyes, he did not belong to a people of the South. His face was somewhat downcast and sad, but honest. At the first glance he pleased Falconbridge. It remained only to examine him. Therefore the following conversation began:

"Where are you from?"

"I am a Pole."

"Where have you worked up to this time?"

"In one place and another."

"A lighthouse keeper should like to stay in one place."

"I need rest."

"Have you served? Have you testimonials of honourable government service?"

The old man drew from his bosom a piece of faded silk resembling a strip of an old flag, unwound it, and said:

"Here are the testimonials. I received this cross in 1830. This second one is Spanish from the Carlist War; the third is the French legion; the fourth I received in Hungary. Afterward I fought in the States against the South; there they do not give crosses."

Falconbridge took the paper and began to read.

"H'm! Skavinski? Is that your name? H'm! Two flags captured in a bayonet attack. You were a gallant soldier."

"I am able to be a conscientious lighthouse keeper."

"It is necessary to ascend the tower a number of times daily. Have you sound legs?"

"I crossed the plains on foot." (The immense steppes between the East and California are called "the plains.")

"Do you know sea service?"

"I served three years on a whaler."

"You have tried various occupations."

"The only one I have not known is quiet."

"Why is that?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Such is my fate."

"Still you seem to me too old for a lighthouse keeper."

"Sir," exclaimed the candidate suddenly in a voice of emotion, "I am greatly wearied, knocked about. I have passed through much as you see. This place is one of those which I have wished for most ardently. I am old, I need rest. I need to say to myself, 'Here you will remain; this is your port.' Ah, sir, this depends now on you alone. Another time perhaps such a place will not offer itself. What luck that I was in Panama! I entreat you—as God is dear to me, I am like a ship which if it misses the harbour will be lost. If you wish to make an old man happy—I swear to you that I am honest, but—I have enough of wandering."

The blue eyes of the old man expressed such earnest entreaty that Falconbridge, who had a good, simple heart, was touched.

"Well," said he, "I'll take you. You are a lighthouse keeper."

The old man's face gleamed with inexpressible joy.

"I thank you."

"Can you go to the tower to-day?"

"I can."

"Then good-bye. Another word,—for any failure in service you will be dismissed."

"All right."

That same evening, when the sun had descended on the other side of the isthmus, and a day of sunshine was followed by a night without twilight, the new keeper was in his place evidently, for the lighthouse was casting its bright rays on the water as usual. The night was perfectly calm, silent, genuinely tropical, filled with a transparent haze, forming around the moon a great coloured rainbow with soft, unbroken edges; the sea was moving only because the tide raised it. Skavinski on the balcony seemed from below like a small black point. He tried to collect his thoughts and take in his new position; but his mind was too much under pressure to move with regularity. He felt somewhat as a hunted beast feels when at last it has found refuge from pursuit on some inaccessible rock or in a cave. There had come to him, finally, an hour of quiet; the feeling of safety filled his soul with a certain unspeakable bliss. Now on that rock he can simply laugh at his previous wanderings, his misfortunes, and failures. He was in truth like a ship whose masts, ropes, and sails had been broken and rent by a tempest, and cast from the clouds to the bottom of the sea,—a ship on which the tempest had hurled waves and spat foam, but which still wound its way to the harbour. The pictures of that storm passed quickly through his mind as he compared it with the calm future now beginning. A part of his wonderful adventures he had related to Falconbridge; he had not mentioned, however, thousands of other incidents. It had been his misfortune that as often as he pitched his tent and fixed his fireplace to settle down permanently, some wind tore out the stakes of his tent, whirled away the fire, and bore him on toward destruction. Looking now from the balcony of the tower at the illuminated waves, he remembered everything through which he had passed. He had campaigned in the four parts of the world, and in wandering had tried almost every occupation. Labour-loving and honest, more than once had he earned money, and had always lost it in spite of every

prevision and the utmost caution. He had been a gold-miner in Australia, a diamond-digger in Africa, a rifleman in public service in the East Indies. He established a ranch in California,—the drought ruined him; he tried trading with wild tribes in the interior of Brazil,—his raft was wrecked on the Amazon; he himself alone, weaponless, and nearly naked, wandered in the forest for many weeks living on wild fruits, exposed every moment to death from the jaws of wild beasts. He established a forge in Helena, Arkansas, and that was burned in a great fire which consumed the whole town. Next he fell into the hands of the Indians in the Rocky Mountains, and only through a miracle was he saved by Canadian trappers. Then he served as a sailor on a vessel running between Bahia and Bordeaux, and as a harpooner on a whaling-ship; both vessels were wrecked. He had a cigar factory in Havana, and was robbed by his partner while he himself was lying sick with the vomito. At last he came to Aspinwall, and there was to be the end of his failures,—for what could reach him on that rocky island? Neither water nor fire nor men. But from men Skavinski had not suffered much; he had met good men oftener than bad ones.

But it seemed to him that all the four elements were persecuting him. Those who knew him said that he had no luck, and with that they explained everything. He himself became somewhat of a monomaniac. He believed that some mighty and vengeful hand was pursuing him everywhere, on all lands and waters. He did not like, however, to speak of this; only at times, when someone asked him whose hand that could be, he pointed mysteriously to the Polar Star, and said, "It comes from that place." In reality his failures were so continuous that they were wonderful, and might easily drive a nail into the head, especially of the man who had experienced them. But Skavinski had the patience of an Indian, and that great

calm power of resistance which comes from the truth of heart. In his time he had received in Hungary a number of bayonet-thrusts because he would not grasp at a stirrup which was shown as means of salvation to him, and cry for quarter. In like manner he did not bend to misfortune. He crept up against the mountain as industriously as an ant. Pushed down a hundred times, he began his journey calmly for the hundred and first time. He was in his way a most peculiar original. This old soldier, tempered, God knows in how many fires, hardened in suffering, hammered and forged, had the heart of a child. In the time of the epidemic in Cuba, the vomito attacked him because he had given to the sick all his quinine, of which he had a considerable supply, and left not a grain to himself.

There had been in him also this wonderful quality,—that after so many disappointments he was ever full of confidence, and did not lose hope that all would be well yet. In winter he grew lively, and predicted great events. He waited for these events with impatience, and lived with the thought of them whole summers. But the winters passed one after another, and Skavinski lived only to this,—that they whitened his head. At last he grew old, began to lose energy; his endurance was becoming more and more like resignation, his former calmness was tending toward supersensitiveness, and that tempered soldier was degenerating into a man ready to shed tears for any cause. Besides this, from time to time he was weighed down by a terrible homesickness which was roused by any circumstance,—the sight of swallows, gray birds like sparrows, snow on the mountains or melancholy music like that heard on a time. Finally there was one idea which mastered him,—the idea of rest. It mastered the old man thoroughly and swallowed all other desires and hopes. This ceaseless wanderer could not imagine anything more to be longed for, anything more precious than a quiet corner in

which to rest and wait in silence for the end. Perhaps specially because some whim of fate had so hurried him over all seas and lands that he could hardly catch his breath did he imagine that the highest human happiness was simply not to wander. It is true that such modest happiness was his due; but he was so accustomed to disappointments that he thought of rest as people in general think of something which is beyond reach. He did not dare to hope for it. Meanwhile unexpectedly in the course of twelve hours he had gained a position which was as if chosen for him out of all the world. We are not to wonder, then, that when he lighted his lantern in the evening he became as it were dazed,—that he asked himself if that was reality, and he did not dare to answer that it was. But at the same time reality convinced him with incontrovertible proofs; hence, hours one after another passed while he was on the balcony. He gazed, and convinced himself. It might seem that he was looking at the sea for the first time in his life. The lens of the lantern cast into the darkness an enormous triangle of light, beyond which the eye of the old man was lost in the black distance completely, in the distance mysterious and awful. But that distance seemed to run toward the light. The long waves following one another rolled out from the darkness, and went bellowing toward the base of the island; and then their foaming backs were visible, shining rose-coloured in the light of the lantern. The incoming tide swelled more and more and covered the sandy bars. The mysterious speech of the ocean came with a fulness more powerful and louder, at one time like the thunder of cannon, at another like the roar of great forests, at another like the distant dull sound of the voices of people. At the moments it was quiet; then to the ears of the old man came some great sigh, then a kind of sobbing and again threatening outbursts. At last the wind bore away the haze, but brought black broken clouds, which hid the moon. From the west it began to blow more and more; the

waves sprang with rage against the rock of the lighthouse licking with foam the foundation walls. In the distance a storm was beginning to bellow. On the dark, disturbed expanse certain green lanterns gleamed from the masts of ships. These green points rose high and then sank; now they swayed to the right, and now to the left. Skavinski descended to his room. The storm began to howl. Outside, people on those ships were struggling with night, with darkness, with waves; but inside the tower it was calm and still. Even the sounds of the storm hardly came through the thick walls, and only the measured tick-tack of the clock lulled the wearied old man to his slumber.

II

Hours, days, and weeks began to pass. Sailors assert that sometimes when the sea is greatly roused, something from out the midst of night and darkness calls them by name. If the infinity of the sea may call out thus, perhaps when a man is growing old, calls come to him, too, from another infinitely still darker and more deeply mysterious; and the more he is wearied by life the dearer are those calls to him. But to hear them quiet is needed. Besides old age loves to put itself aside as if with a foreboding of the grave. The lighthouse had become for Skavinski such a half grave. Nothing is more monotonous than life on a beacon-tower. If young people consent to take up this service they leave it after a time. Lighthouse keepers are generally men not young, gloomy, and confined to themselves. If by chance one of them leaves his lighthouse and goes among men, he walks in the midst of them like a person roused from deep slumber. On the tower there is a lack of minute impressions which in ordinary life teach men to adapt themselves to everything. All that a lighthouse keeper

comes in contact with is gigantic, and devoid of definitely outlined forms. The sky is one whole, the water another; and between those two infinities the soul of man is in loneliness. That is a life in which thought is continual meditation, and out of that meditation nothing rouses the keeper, not even his work. Day is like day as two beads in a rosary, unless changes of weather form the only variety. But Skavinski felt more happiness than ever in life before. He rose with the dawn, took his breakfast, polished the lens, and then sitting on the balcony gazed into the distance of the water; and his eyes were never sated with the pictures which he saw before him. On the enormous turquoise ground of the ocean were to be seen generally flocks of swollen sails gleaming in the rays of the sun so brightly that the eyes were blinking before the excess of light. Sometimes the ships, favoured by the so-called trade winds, went in an extended line one after another, like a chain of sea-mews or albatrosses. The red casks indicating the channel swayed on the light wave with gentle movement. Among the sails appeared every afternoon gigantic grayish feather-like plumes of smoke. That was a steamer from New York which brought passengers and goods to Aspinwall, drawing behind it a frothy path of foam. On the other side of the balcony Skavinski saw, as if on his palm, Aspinwall and its busy harbour, and in it a forest of masts, boats and craft; a little farther, white houses and the towers of the town. From the height of his tower the small houses were like the nests of sea-mews, the boats were like beetles and the people moved around like small points on the white boulevard. From early morning a light eastern breeze brought a confused hum of human life, above which predominated the whistle of steamers. In the afternoon six o'clock came; the movement in the harbour began to cease; the mews hid themselves in the rent of the cliffs; the waves grew feeble and became in some sort lazy; and then on the land, on the sea, and on the

tower came a time of stillness unbroken by anything. The yellow sands from which the waves had fallen back glittered like golden stripes on the width of the waters; the body of the tower was outlined definitely in blue. Floods of sunbeams were poured from the sky on the water and the sands and the cliff. At that time a certain lassitude full of sweetness seized the old man. He felt that the rest which he was enjoying was excellent; and when he thought that it would be continuous nothing was lacking to him.

Skavinski was intoxicated with his own happiness and since a man adapts himself easily to improved condition, he gained faith and confidence by degrees; for he thought that if men built houses for invalids, why should not God gather up at last His own invalids? Time passed, and confirmed him in this conviction. The old man grew accustomed to his tower, to the lantern, to the rock, to the sand-bars, to solitude. He grew accustomed also to the sea-mews which hatched in the crevices of the rock, and in the evening held meetings on the roof of the lighthouse. Skavinski threw to them generally the remnants of his food; and soon they grew tame, and afterward, when he fed them, a real storm of white wings encircled him, and the old man went among the birds like a shepherd among sheep. When the tide ebbed he went to the low sand-banks, on which he collected savory periwinkles and beautiful pearl shells of the nautilus, which receding waves had left on the sand. In the night by the moonlight and the tower he went to catch fish, which frequented the windings of the cliff in myriads. At last he was in love with his rocks and his treeless little island, grown over only with small thick plants exuding sticky resin. The distant views repaid him for the poverty of the island, however. During afternoon hours, when the air became very clear he could see the whole isthmus covered with the richest vegetation. It seemed to Skavinski at such times that he saw one gigantic

garden,—bunches of cocoa, and enormous musa, combined, as it were, in luxurious tufted bouquets, right there behind the houses of Aspinwall. Farther on, between Aspinwall and Panama, was a great forest over which every morning and evening hung a reddish haze of exhalations,—a real tropical forest with its feet in stagnant water, interlaced with lianas and filled with the sound of one sea of gigantic orchids, palms, milk-trees, iron-trees, gum-trees.

Through his field-glass the old man could see not only trees and the broad leaves of bananas, but even legions of monkeys and great marabous and flocks of parrots, rising at times like a rainbow cloud over the forest. Skavinski knew such forests well, for after being wrecked on the Amazon he had wandered whole weeks among similar arches and thickets. He had seen how many dangers and deaths lie concealed under those wonderful and smiling exteriors. During the nights which he had spent in them he heard close at hand the sepulchral voices of howling monkeys and the roaring of the jaguars; he saw gigantic serpents coiled like lianas on trees; he knew those slumbering forest lakes full of torpedo-fish and swarming crocodiles; he knew under what a yoke man lives in those unexplored wildernesses in which are single leaves that exceed a man's size ten times,—wildernesses swarming with blood-drinking mosquitoes, tree-leeches, and gigantic poisonous spiders. He had experienced that forest life himself, had witnessed it, had passed through it; therefore it gave him the greater enjoyment to look from his height and gaze on those *matos*, admire their beauty, and be guarded from their treacherousness. His tower preserved him from every evil. He left it only for a few hours on Sunday. He put on then his blue keeper's coat with silver buttons, and hung his crosses on his breast. His milk-white head was raised with a certain pride when he heard at the

door, while entering the church, the Creoles say among themselves, "We have an honourable lighthouse keeper and not a heretic, though he is a Yankee." But he returned straightway after Mass to his island, and returned happy, for he had still no faith in the mainland. On Sunday also he read the Spanish newspaper which he bought in the town, or the *New York Herald*, which he borrowed from Falconbridge; and he sought in it European news eagerly. The poor old heart on that lighthouse tower, and in another hemisphere, was beating yet for its birthplace. At times, too, when the boat brought his daily supplies and water to the island, he went down from the tower to talk with Johnson, the guard. But after awhile he seemed to grow shy. He ceased to go to the town to read the papers and to go down to talk politics with Johnson. Whole weeks passed in this way, so that no one saw him and he saw no one. The only signs that the old man was living were the disappearance of the provisions left on shore, and the light of the lantern kindled every evening with the same regularity with which the sun rose in the morning from the waters of those regions. Evidently, the old man had become indifferent to the world. Homesickness was not the cause, but just this,—that even homesickness had passed into resignation. The whole world began now and ended for Skavinski on his island. He had grown accustomed to the thought that he would not leave the tower till his death, and he simply forgot that there was anything else besides it. Moreover, he had become a mystic; his mild blue eyes began to stare like the eyes of a child, and were as if fixed on something at a distance. In the presence of a surrounding uncommonly simple and great, the old man was losing the feeling of personality; he was ceasing to exist as an individual, was becoming merged more and more in that which inclosed him. He did not understand anything beyond his environment: he felt only unconsciously. At last it seems to him that the heavens, the

water, his rock, the tower, the golden sand-banks and the swollen sails, the sea-mews, the ebb and flow of the tide—all form a mighty unity. One enormous mysterious soul; that he is sinking in that mystery and feels that soul which lives and lulls itself. He sinks and is rocked, forgets himself; and in that narrowing of his own individual existence, in that half-waking, half-sleeping, he has discovered a rest so great that it nearly resembles half-death.

III

But the awakening came.

On a certain day, when the boat brought water and a supply of provisions, Skavinski came down an hour later from the tower, and saw that besides the usual cargo there was an additional package. On the outside of this package were postage stamps of the United States, and the address: "Skavinski, Esq.," written on coarse canvas.

The old man, with aroused curiosity, cut the canvas, and saw books; he took one in his hand, looked at it, and put it back; thereupon his hands began to tremble greatly. He covered his eyes as if he did not believe them; it seemed to him as if he were dreaming. The book was Polish,—what did that mean? Who could have sent the book? Clearly, it did not occur to him at the first moment that in the beginning of his lighthouse career he had read in the *Herald*, borrowed from the consul, of the formation of a Polish society in New York, and had sent at once to that society half his month's salary, for which he had, moreover, no use on the tower. The Society had sent him the books with thanks. The books came in the natural way;

but at the first moment the old man could not seize those thoughts. Polish books in Aspinwall, on his tower, amid his solitude,—that was for him something uncommon, a certain breath from the past times, a kind of miracle. Now it seemed to him, as to those sailors in the night, that something was calling him by name with a voice greatly beloved and nearly forgotten. He sat for a while with closed eyes, and was almost certain that, when he opened them, the dream would be gone.

The package, cut open, lay before him, shone upon clearly by the afternoon sun, and on it was an open book. When the old man stretched his hand toward it again, he heard in the stillness the beating of his own heart. He looked; it was poetry. On the outside stood printed in great letters the title, underneath the name of the author. The name was not strange to Skavinski; he saw that it belonged to the great poet,[1] whose productions he had read in 1830, in Paris. Afterward, when campaigning in Algiers and Spain, he had heard from his countrymen of the growing fame of the great seer; but he was so accustomed to the musket at that time that he took no book in hand. In 1849 he went to America, and in the adventurous life which he led he hardly ever met a Pole, and never a Polish book. With the greater eagerness, therefore, and with a livelier beating of the heart, did he turn to the title-page. It seemed to him then that on his lonely rock some solemnity was about to take place. Indeed it was a moment of great calm and silence. The clocks of Aspinwall were striking five in the afternoon. Not a cloud darkened the clear sky; only a few sea-mews were sailing through the air. The ocean was as if cradled to sleep. The waves on the shore stammered quietly, spreading softly on the sand. In the distance the white houses of Aspinwall, and the wonderful groups of palm, were smiling. In truth, there was something there solemn, calm, and full of dignity.

Suddenly, in the midst of that calm of Nature, was heard the trembling voice of the old man, who read aloud as if to understand himself better:

"Thou art like health, O my birth-land Litva![2]
How much we should prize thee he only can know who has lost thee.
Thy beauty in perfect adornment this day
I see and describe, because I am yearning for thee."

[1] Mickiewicz (pronounced Mitskyevich), the greatest poet of Poland.

[2] Lithuania.

His voice failed Skavinski. The letters began to dance before his eyes; something broke in his breast, and went like a wave from his heart higher and higher, choking his voice and pressing his throat. A moment more he controlled himself, and read further:

"O Holy Lady, who guardest bright Chenstohova,
Who shinest in Ostrobrama and preservest
The castle town Novgrodek with its trusty people,
As Thou didst give me back to health in childhood,
When by my weeping mother placed beneath Thy care
I raised my lifeless eyelids upward,
And straightway walked unto Thy holy threshold,
To thank God for the life restored me,—
So by a wonder now restore us to the bosom of our birthplace."

The swollen wave broke through the restraint of his will.

The old man sobbed, and threw himself on the ground; his milk-white hair was mingled with the sand of the sea. Forty years had passed since he had seen his country, and God knows how many since he heard his native speech; and now that speech had come to him itself—it had sailed to him over the ocean, and found him in solitude on another hemisphere,—it so loved, so dear, so beautiful! In the sobbing which shook him there was no pain,—only a suddenly aroused immense love, in the presence of which other things are as nothing. With that great weeping he had simply implored forgiveness of that beloved one, set aside because he had grown so old, had become so accustomed to his solitary rock, and had so forgotten it that in him even longing had begun to disappear. But now it returned as if by a miracle; therefore the heart leaped in him.

Moments vanished one after another; he lay there continually. The mews flew over the lighthouse, crying as if alarmed for their old friend. The hour in which he fed them with the remnants of his food had come; therefore, some of them flew down from the lighthouse to him; then more and more came, and began to pick and shake their wings over his head. The sound of the wings roused him. He had wept his fill, and had now a certain calm brightness; but his eyes were as if inspired. He gave unwittingly all his provisions to the birds, which rushed at him in uproar, and he himself took the book again. The sun had gone already behind the gardens and the forest of Panama, and was going slowly beyond the isthmus to the other ocean; but the Atlantic was full of light yet; in the open air there was still perfect vision; therefore, he read further:

"Now bear my longing soul to those forest slopes, to those green meadows."

At last the dusk obliterates the letters on the white paper —the dusk short as a twinkle. The old man rested his head on the rock, and closed his eyes. Then "She who defends bright Chenstohova" took his soul, and transported it to "those fields coloured by various grain." On the sky were burning yet those long stripes, red and golden, and on those brightnesses he was flying to beloved regions. The pine-woods were sounding in his ears; the streams of his native place were murmuring. He saw everything as it was; everything asked him, "Dost remember?" He remembers! he sees broad fields; between the fields, woods and villages. It is night now. At this hour his lantern usually illuminates the darkness of the sea; but now he is in his native village. His old head dropped on his breast, and he is dreaming. Pictures are passing before his eyes quickly, and a little disorderly. He does not see the house in which he was born, for war had destroyed it; he does not see his father and mother, for they died when he was a child; but still the village is as if he had left it yesterday,—the line of cottages with lights in the windows, the mound, the mill, the two ponds opposite each other, and thundering all night with a chorus of frogs. Once he had been on guard in that village all night; now that past stood before him at once in a series of views. He is an Ulan again, and he stands there on guard; at a distance is the public-house; he looks with swimming eyes. There thundering and singing and shouting amid the silence of the night with voices of fiddles and bass-viols "U-ha! U-ha!" Then the Ulans knock out fire with their horseshoes, and it is wearisome for him there on his horse. The hours drag on slowly; at last the lights are quenched; now as far as the eye reaches there is mist, and mist impenetrable; now the fog rises, evidently from the fields, and embraces the whole world with a whitish cloud. You would say, a complete ocean. But those are fields; soon the land-rail will be heard in the darkness, and the bitterns will call from the reeds. The night is calm

and cool,—in truth, a Polish night! In the distance the pine-wood is sounding without wind, like the roll of the sea. Soon dawn will whiten the East. In fact, the cocks are beginning to crow behind the hedges. One answers to another from cottage to cottage; the storks are screaming somewhere on high. The Ulan feels well and bright. Some one had spoken of a battle to-morrow. Hei! that will go on, like all the others, with shouting, with fluttering of flaglets. The young blood is playing like a trumpet, though the night cools it. But it is dawning. Already night is growing pale; out of the shadows come forests, the thicket, a row of cottages, the mill, the poplars. The well is squeaking like a metal banner on a tower. What a beloved land, beautiful in the rosy gleams of the morning! Oh, the one land, the one land!

Quiet! the watchful picket hears that some one is approaching. Of course, they are coming to relieve the guard.

Suddenly some voice is heard above Skavinski,—

"Here, old man! Get up! What's the matter?"

The old man opens his eyes, and looks with wonder at the person standing before him. The remnants of the dream-visions struggle in his head with reality. At last the visions pale and vanish. Before him stands Johnson, the harbour guide.

"What's this?" asked Johnson; "are you sick?"

"No."

"You didn't light the lantern. You must leave your place. A vessel from St. Geromo was wrecked at the bar. It is lucky that no one was drowned, or you would go to trial.

Get into the boat with me; you'll hear the rest at the Consulate."

The old man grew pale; in fact he had not lighted the lantern that night.

A few days later, Skavinski was seen on the deck of a steamer, which was going from Aspinwall to New York. The poor man had lost his place. There opened before him new roads of wandering; the wind had torn that leaf away again to whirl it over lands and seas, to sport with it till satisfied. The old man had failed greatly during those few days, and was bent over; only his eyes were gleaming. On his new road of life he held at his breast his book, which from time to time he pressed with his hand as if in fear that that too might go from him.

VI

THE WRECK

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

It was yesterday, the 31st of December.

I had just finished breakfast with my old friend Georges Garin when the servant handed him a letter covered with seals and foreign stamps.

Georges said:

"Will you excuse me?"

"Certainly."

And so he began to read the letter, which was written in a large English handwriting, crossed and re-crossed in every direction. He read slowly, with serious attention and the interest which we only pay to things that touch our hearts.

Then he put the letter on the mantel-piece and said:

"That was a curious story! I've never told you about it, I think. Yet it was a sentimental adventure, and it really happened to me. That was a strange New Year's Day indeed! It must have been twenty years ago, since I was then thirty, and am now fifty years old.

"I was then an inspector in the Maritime Insurance Company, of which I am now director. I had arranged to pass the *fête* of New Year's in Paris—since it is a convention to make that day a *fête*—when I received a letter from the manager, asking me to proceed at once to the island of Ré, where a three-masted vessel from Saint-Nazaire, insured by us, had just been driven ashore. It was then eight o'clock in the morning. I arrived at the office at ten, to get my advices, and that evening I took the express, which put me down in La Rochelle the next day, the thirty-first of December.

"I had two hours to wait before going aboard the boat for Ré. So I made a tour in the town. It is certainly a fantastic city, La Rochelle, with a strong character of its own—streets tangled like a labyrinth, sidewalks running under endless arcaded galleries like those of the Rue de Rivoli, but low, mysterious, built as if to form a fit scene for conspirators, and making an ancient and striking

background for those old-time wars, the savage heroic wars of religion. It is indeed the typical old Huguenot city, conservative, discreet, with no fine art to show, with no wonderful monuments, such as make Rouen; but it is remarkable for its severe, somewhat cunning look; it is a city of obstinate fighters, a city where fanaticisms might well blossom, where the faith of the Calvinists became exalted, and which gave birth to the plot of the 'Four Sergeants.'

"After I had wandered for some time about these curious streets, I went aboard the black, rotund little steamboat which was to take me to the island of Ré. It was called the *Jean Guiton*. It started with angry puffings, passed between the two old towers which guard the harbour, crossed the roadstead, and issued from the mole built by Richelieu, the great stones of which can be seen at the water's edge, enclosing the town like a great necklace. Then the steamboat turned to the right.

"It was one of those sad days which give one the blues, tighten the heart and kill in us all energy and force—a gray, cold day, with a heavy mist which was as wet as rain, as cold as frost, as bad to breathe as the mist of a wash-tub.

"Under this low ceiling of sinister fog, the shallow, yellow, sandy sea of all gradually receding coasts lay without a wrinkle, without a movement, without life, a sea of turbid water, greasy water, of stagnant water. The *Jean Guiton* passed over it, rolling a little from habit, dividing the smooth, dark blue water, and leaving behind a little chopping sea, a few big waves, which were soon calm.

"I began to talk to the captain, a little man with small feet, as round as his boat and balancing himself like it. I wanted some details about the disaster on which I was to give a report. A great square-rigged three-master, the

Marie Joseph, of Saint-Nazaire, had gone ashore one night in a hurricane on the sands of the island of Ré.

"The owner wrote us that the storm had thrown the ship so far ashore that it was impossible to float her, and that they had to remove everything which could be detached, with the utmost possible haste. Nevertheless, I must examine the situation of the wreck, estimate what must have been her condition before the disaster, and decide whether all efforts had been used to get her afloat. I came as an agent of the company in order to give contradictory testimony, if necessary, at the trial.

"On receipt of my report, the manager would take what measures he might think necessary to protect our interests.

"The captain of the *Jean Guiton* knew all about the affair, having been summoned with his boat to assist in the attempts at salvage.

"He told me the story of the disaster. The *Marie Joseph*, driven by a furious gale, lost her bearings completely, in the night, and steering by chance over a heavy foaming sea —'a milk-soup sea,' said the captain—had gone ashore on those immense banks of sand which make the coasts of this country seem like limitless Saharas at hours when the tide is low.

"While talking I looked around and ahead. Between the ocean and the lowering sky lay a free space where the eye could see far. We were following a coast. I asked:

"'Is that the island of Ré?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"And suddenly the captain stretched his right hand out before us, pointed to something almost invisible in the

middle of the sea, and said:

"'There's your ship!'

"'The *Marie Joseph*?'

"'Yes.'

"I was stupefied. This black, almost imperceptible speck, which looked to me like a rock, seemed at least three miles from land.

"I continued:

"'But, captain, there must be a hundred fathoms of water in that place.'

"He began to laugh.

"'A hundred fathoms, my child! Well, I should say about two!'

"He was from Bordeaux. He continued:

"'It's now nine-forty, just high tide. Go down along the beach with your hands in your pockets after you've had lunch at the Hotel du Dauphin, and I'll wager that at ten minutes to three, or three o'clock, you'll reach the wreck without wetting your feet, and have from an hour and three-quarters to two hours aboard of her; but not more, or you'll be caught. The faster the sea goes out the faster it comes back. This coast is as flat as a turtle! But start away at ten minutes to five, as I tell you, and at half-past seven you will be aboard of the *Jean Guiton* again, which will put you down this same evening on the quay at La Rochelle.'

"I thanked the captain, and I went and sat down in the

bow of the steamer to get a good look at the little city of Saint-Martin, which we were now rapidly drawing near.

"It was just like all small seaports which serve as the capitals of the barren islands scattered along the coast—a large fishing village, one foot on sea and one on shore, living on fish and wild-fowl, vegetables and shell-fish, radishes and mussels. The island is very low, and little cultivated, yet it seems to be thickly populated. However, I did not penetrate into the interior.

"After breakfast I climbed across a little promontory, and then, as the tide was rapidly falling, I started out across the sands toward a kind of black rock which I could just perceive above the surface of the water, out a considerable distance.

"I walked quickly over the yellow plain; it was elastic, like flesh, and seemed to sweat beneath my foot. The sea had been there very lately; now I perceived it at a distance, escaping out of sight, and I no longer could distinguish the line which separated the sands from ocean. I felt as though I were assisting at a gigantic supernatural work of enchantment. The Atlantic had just now been before me, then it had disappeared into the strand, just as does scenery through a trap; and I now walked in the midst of a desert. Only the feeling, the breath of the salt-water, remained in me. I perceived the smell of the wreck, the smell of the wide sea, the good smell of sea-coasts. I walked fast; I was no longer cold; I looked at the stranded wreck, which grew in size as I approached, and came now to resemble an enormous shipwrecked whale.

"It seemed fairly to rise out of the ground, and on that great, flat, yellow stretch of sand assumed wonderful proportions. After an hour's walk I at last reached it. Bulging out and crushed, it lay upon its side, which, like

the flanks of an animal, displayed its broken bones, its bones of tarry wood pierced with great bolts. The sand had already invaded it, entering it by all the crannies, and held it, and refused to let it go. It seemed to have taken root in it. The bow had entered deep into this soft, treacherous beach; while the stern, high in air, seemed to cast at heaven, like a cry of despairing appeal, the two white words on the black planking, *Marie Joseph*.

"I climbed upon this carcass of a ship by the lowest side; then, having reached the deck, I went below. The daylight, which entered by the stove-in hatches and the cracks in the sides, showed me a long somber cellar full of demolished woodwork. There was nothing here but the sand, which served as foot-soil in this cavern of planks.

"I began to take some notes about the condition of the ship. I was seated on a broken empty cask, writing by the light of a great crack, through which I could perceive the boundless stretch of the strand. A strange shivering of cold and loneliness ran over my skin from time to time; and I would often stop writing for a moment to listen to the mysterious noises: the noise of the crabs scratching the planking with their crooked claws; the noise of a thousand little creatures of the sea already crawling over this dead body.

"Suddenly, very near me, I heard human voices; I started as though I had seen a ghost. For a second I really thought I was about to see drowned men rise from the sinister depths of the hold, who would tell me about their death. At any rate, it did not take me long to swing myself on deck. There, below the bow, I found standing a tall Englishman with three young girls. Certainly, they were a good deal more frightened at seeing this sudden apparition on the abandoned three-master than I had been at seeing them. The youngest girl turned round and ran; the two others

caught their father by the arms; as for him, he opened his mouth—that was the only sign of his emotion which he showed.

"Then, after several seconds, he spoke:

"'Môsieu, are you the owner of this ship?'

"'I am.'

"'May I go over it?"

"'You may.'

"Then he uttered a long sentence in English, in which I only distinguished the word 'gracious,' repeated several times.

"As he was looking for a place to climb up, I showed him the best, and gave him a hand. He ascended. Then we helped up the three little girls, who had now quite recovered their composure. They were charming, especially the oldest, a blonde of eighteen, fresh as a flower, and very dainty and pretty! Ah yes! the pretty Englishwomen have indeed the look of tender fruits of the sea. One would have said of this one that she had just risen from the sands and that her hair had kept their tint. They all, with their exquisite freshness, make you think of the delicate colours of pink sea-shells, and of shining pearls hidden in the unknown depths of the ocean.

"She spoke French a little better than her father, and she acted as interpreter. I must tell all about the shipwreck, and I romanced as though I had been present at the catastrophe. Then the whole family descended into the interior of the wreck. As soon as they had penetrated into this sombre, dim-lit gallery, they uttered cries of astonishment and admiration. Suddenly the father and his three daughters

were holding sketch-books in their hands, which they had doubtless carried hidden somewhere in their heavy weather-proof clothes, and were all beginning at once to make pencil sketches of the melancholy and fantastic place.

"They had seated themselves side by side on a projecting beam, and the four sketch-books on the eight knees were being rapidly covered with little black lines which were intended to represent the half-opened hulk of the *Marie Joseph*.

"I continued to inspect the skeleton of the ship, and the oldest girl talked to me while she worked.

"They had none of the usual English arrogance; they were simple honest hearts of that class of constant travellers with which England covers the globe. The father was long and thin, with a red face framed in white whiskers, and looking like a living sandwich, placed between two wedges of hair. The daughters, like little wading-birds in embryo, had long legs and were also thin —except the oldest. All three were pretty, especially the tallest.

"She had such a droll way of speaking, of laughing, of understanding and of not understanding, of raising her eyes to ask a question (eyes blue as the deep ocean), of stopping her drawing a moment to make a guess at what you meant, of returning once more to work, of saying 'yes' or 'no'— that I could have listened and looked indefinitely.

"Suddenly she murmured:

"'I hear a little movement on this boat.'

"I lent an ear; and I immediately distinguished a low,

steady, curious sound. I rose and looked out of the crack, and I uttered a violent cry. The sea had come back; it had already surrounded us!

"We were on deck in an instant. It was too late. The water circled us about, and was running towards the coast with awful swiftness. No, it did not run, it raced, it grew longer, like a kind of great limitless blot. The water on the sands was barely a few centimeters deep; but the rising flood had gone so far that we no longer saw the flying line of its edge.

"The Englishman wanted to jump. I held him back. Flight was impossible because of the deep places which we had been obliged to go round on our way out, and through which we could not pass on our return.

"There was a minute of horrible anguish in our hearts. Then the little English girl began to smile, and murmured:

"'So we too are shipwrecked?'

"I tried to laugh; but fear caught me tight, a fear which was cowardly and horrid and base and mean, like the tide. All the dangers which we ran appeared to me at once. I wanted to shriek 'Help!' But to whom?

"The two younger girls were clinging to their father, who regarded, with a look of consternation, the measureless sea which hedged us round about.

"The night fell as swiftly as the ocean rose—a lowering, wet, icy night.

"I said:

"'There's nothing to do but to stay on the ship.'

"The Englishman answered:

"'Oh, yes!'

"And we waited there a quarter of an hour, half an hour, indeed I don't know how long, watching that creeping water which grew deep about us, whirled round and round the wreck.

"One of the little girls was cold, and we went below to shelter ourselves from the light but freezing wind which blew upon us and pricked our skins.

"I leaned over the hatchway. The ship was full of water. So we must cower against the stern planking, which shielded us a little.

"The shades were now enwrapping us, and we remained pressed close to one another. I felt trembling against my shoulder the shoulder of the little English girl, whose teeth chattered from time to time. But I also felt the gentle warmth of her body through her ulster, and that warmth was as delicious to me as a kiss. We no longer spoke; we sat motionless, mute, cowering down like animals in a ditch when a hurricane is raging. And, nevertheless, despite the night, despite the terrible and increasing danger, I began to feel happy that I was there, glad of the cold and the peril, to rejoice in the long hours of darkness and anguish which I must pass on this plank so near this dainty and pretty little girl.

"I asked myself, 'Why this strange sensation of well-being and of joy?'

"Why! Does one know? Because she was there? Who? She, a little unknown English girl? I did not love her, I did not even know her. And for all that I was touched and

conquered. I wanted to save her, to sacrifice myself for her, to commit a thousand follies! Strange thing! How does it happen that the presence of a woman overwhelms us so? Is it the power of her grace which infolds us? Is it the seduction in her beauty and youth, which intoxicates one like wine?

"Is it not rather the touch of Love, of Love the Mysterious, who seeks constantly to unite two beings, who tries his strength the instant he has put a man and a woman face to face?

"The silence of the shades and of the sky became dreadful, because we could thus hear vaguely about us an infinite low roar, the dull sound of the rising sea, and the monotonous dashing of the waves against the ship.

"Suddenly I heard the sound of sobs. The youngest of the little girls was crying. Her father tried to console her, and they began to talk in their own tongue, which I did not understand. I guessed that he was reassuring her, and that she was still afraid.

"I asked my neighbour:

"'You are not too cold, are you, Mademoiselle?'

"'Oh, yes. I am very cold.'

"I offered to give her my cloak; she refused it. But I had taken it off, and I covered her with it against her will. In the short struggle her hand touched mine. It made a charming shiver run over my body.

"For some minutes the air had been growing brisker, the dashing of the water stronger against the flanks of the ship. I raised myself; a great gust of wind blew in my face. The wind was rising!

"The Englishman perceived this at the same time that I did, and said, simply:

"'This is bad for us, this—'

"Of course it was bad, it was certain death if any breakers, however feeble, should attack and shake the wreck, which was already so loose and broken that the first big sea would carry it off.

"So our anguish increased momentarily as the squalls grew stronger and stronger. Now the sea broke a little, and I saw in the darkness white lines appearing and disappearing, which were lines of foam; while each wave struck the *Marie Joseph*, and shook her with a short quiver which rose to our hearts.

"The English girl was trembling; I felt her shiver against me. And I had a wild desire to take her in my arms.

"Down there before and behind us, to left and right, lighthouses were shining along the shore—lighthouses white and yellow and red, revolving like the enormous eyes of giants who were staring at us, watching us, waiting eagerly for us to disappear. One of them in especial irritated me. It went out every thirty seconds and it lit up again as soon. It was indeed an eye, that one, with its lid ceaselessly lowered over its fiery look.

"From time to time the Englishman struck a match to see the hour; then he put his watch back in his pocket. Suddenly he said to me, over the heads of his daughters, with a gravity which was awful:

"'I wish you a Happy New Year, Môsieu.'

"It was midnight. I held out my hand, which he pressed. Then he said something in English, and suddenly he and his daughters began to sing 'God Save the Queen,' which rose through the black and silent air and vanished into space.

"At first I felt a desire to laugh; then I was seized by a strong, fantastic emotion.

"It was something sinister and superb, this chant of the shipwrecked, the condemned, something like a prayer, and also something grander, something comparable to the ancient '*Ave Cæsar morituri te salutamus*.'

"When they had finished I asked my neighbour to sing a ballad alone, anything she liked, to make us forget our terrors. She consented, and immediately her clear young voice rang out into the night. She sang something which was doubtless sad, because the notes were long drawn out, and hovered, like wounded birds, about the waves.

"The sea was rising now and beating upon our wreck. As for me, I thought only of that voice. And I thought also of the sirens. If a ship had passed nearby us what would the sailors have said? My troubled spirit lost itself in the dream! A siren! Was she not really a siren, this daughter of the sea, who had kept me on this worm-eaten ship, and who was soon about to go down with me deep into the waters?

"But suddenly we were all five rolling on the deck, because the *Marie Joseph* had sunk on her right side. The English girl had fallen upon me, and before I knew what I was doing, thinking that my last moment was come, I had caught her in my arms and kissed her cheek, her temple, and her hair.

"The ship did not move again, and we, we also, remained motionless.

"The father said, 'Kate!' The one whom I was holding answered, 'Yes,' and made a movement to free herself. And at that moment I should have wished the ship to split in two and let me fall with her into the sea.

"The Englishman continued:

"'A little rocking; it's nothing. I have my three daughters safe.'

"Not having seen the oldest, he had thought she was lost overboard!

"I rose slowly, and suddenly I made out a light on the sea quite near us. I shouted; they answered. It was a boat sent out in search of us by the hotel-keeper, who had guessed at our imprudence.

"We were saved. I was in despair. They picked us up off our raft, and they brought us back to Saint-Martin.

"The Englishman began to rub his hands and murmur:

"'A good supper! A good supper!'

"We did sup. I was not gay. I regretted the *Marie Joseph*.

"We had to separate the next day after much handshaking and many promises to write. They departed for Biarritz. I wanted to follow them.

"I was hard hit; I wanted to ask this little girl to marry me. If we had passed eight days together, I should have done so! How weak and incomprehensible a man

sometimes is!

"Two years passed without my hearing a word from them. Then I received a letter from New York. She was married, and wrote to tell me. And since then we write to each other every year, on New Year's Day. She tells me about her life, talks of her children, her sisters, never of her husband! Why? Ah! why? ... And as for me I only talk of the *Marie Joseph*. That was perhaps the only woman I have ever loved. No—that I ever should have loved.... Ah, well! who can tell? Facts master you.... And then—and then—all passes.... She must be old now; I should not know her.... Ah! she of the by-gone time, she of the wreck! What a creature! ... Divine! ... She writes me her hair is white.... That caused me terrible pain.... Ah! her yellow hair.... No, my English girl exists no longer.... They are sad, such things as that!"

VII

A DESCENT INTO THE MAELSTROM

EDGAR ALLAN POE

"The ways of God in Nature, as in Providence, are not as our ways; nor are the models that we frame any way commensurate to the vastness, profundity, and unsearchableness of His works, *which have a depth in them greater than the well of Democritus*."—JOSEPH GLANVILLE.

We had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

"Not long ago," said he at length, "and I could have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or at least such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a very old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?"

The "little cliff," upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down to rest, that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this "little cliff" arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to within half-a-dozen yards of its brink. In truth, so deeply was I excited by the perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance.

"You must get over these fancies," said the guide, "for I have brought you here that you might have the best possible view of the scene of that event I mentioned—and to tell you the whole story with the spot just under your eye.

"We are now," he continued, in that particularising manner which distinguished him—"we are now close upon the Norwegian coast—in the sixty-eighth degree of latitude—in the great province of Nordland—and in the dreary district of Lofoden. The mountain upon whose top we sit is Helseggen, the Cloudy. Now raise yourself up a little higher—hold on to the grass if you feel giddy—so—and look out, beyond the belt of vapour beneath us, into the sea."

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer's account of the Mare Tenebrarum. A panorama more deplorably desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay out-stretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horribly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against it its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land, arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and the shore, had something very

unusual about it. Although, at the time, so strong a gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still there was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry cross dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise. Of foam there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

"The island in the distance," resumed the old man, "is called by the Norwegians Vurrgh. The one mid-way is Moskoe. That a mile to the northward is Ambaaren. Yonder are Islesen, Hotholm, Keildhelm, Suarven, and Buckholm. Farther off—between Moskoe and Vurrgh—are Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen, and Stockholm. These are the true names of the places—but why it has been thought necessary to name them at all, is more than either you or I can understand. Do you hear anything? Do you see any change in the water?"

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we had ascended from the interior of Lofoden, so that we had caught no glimpse of the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us, was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea, as far as Vurrgh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into frenzied convulsion—heaving, boiling,

hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes, except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half-shriek, half-roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.

"This," said I at length, to the old man—"this can be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelström."

"So it is sometimes termed," said he. "We Norwegians call it the Moskoe-ström, from the island of Moskoe in the midway."

The ordinary accounts of this vortex had by no means prepared me for what I saw. That of Jonas Ramus, which is perhaps the most circumstantial of any, cannot impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence, or of the horror of the scene—or of the wild bewildering sense of the novel which confounds the beholder. I am not sure from what point of view the writer in question surveyed it, nor at what time; but it could neither have been from the summit of Helseggen, nor during a storm. There are some passages of his description, nevertheless, which may be quoted for their details, although their effect is exceedingly feeble in conveying an impression of the spectacle.

"Between Lofoden and Moskoe," he says, "the depth of the water is between thirty-six and forty fathoms; but on the other side, toward Ver (Vurrgh), this depth decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel, without the risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather. When it is flood, the stream runs up the country between Lofoden and Moskoe with a boisterous rapidity; but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarce equalled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts, the noise being heard several leagues off; and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beat to pieces against the rocks; and when the water relaxes, the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquillity are only at the turn of the ebb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norway mile of it. Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding against it before they were within its reach. It likewise happens frequently, that whales come too near the stream,

and are overpowered by its violence; and then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once, attempting to swim from Lofoden to Moskoe, was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine trees, after being absorbed by the current, rise again broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and reflux of the sea—it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year 1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima Sunday, it raged with such noise and impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground."

In regard to the depth of the water, I could not see how this could have been ascertained at all in the immediate vicinity of the vortex. The "forty fathoms" must have reference only to portions of the channel close upon the shore either of Moskoe or Lofoden. The depth in the centre of the Moskoe-ström must be immeasurably greater; and no better proof of this fact is necessary than can be obtained from even the sidelong glance into the abyss of the whirl which may be had from the highest crag of Helseggen. Looking down from this pinnacle upon the howling Phlegethon below, I could not help smiling at the simplicity with which the honest Jonas Ramus records, as a matter difficult of belief, the anecdotes of the whales and the bears; for it appeared to me, in fact, a self-evident thing, that the largest ships of the line in existence, coming within the influence of that deadly attraction, could resist it as little as a feather in the hurricane, and must disappear bodily and at once.

The attempts to account for the phenomenon—some of which, I remember, seemed to me sufficiently plausible in

perusal—now wore a very different and unsatisfactory aspect. The idea generally received is that this, as well as three smaller vortices among the Faroe Islands, "have no other cause than the collision of waves rising and falling, at flux and reflux, against a ridge of rocks and shelves, which confines the water so that it precipitates itself like a cataract; and thus the higher the flood rises, the deeper must the fall be, and the natural result of all is a whirlpool or vortex, the prodigious suction of which is sufficiently known by lesser experiments."—These are the words of the Encyclopædia Britannica. Kircher and others imagine that in the centre of the channel of the Maelström is an abyss penetrating the globe, and issuing in some very remote part—the Gulf of Bothnia being somewhat decidedly named in one instance. This opinion, idle in itself, was the one to which, as I gazed, my imagination most readily assented; and, mentioning it to the guide, I was rather surprised to hear him say that, although it was the view almost universally entertained of the subject by the Norwegians, it nevertheless was not his own. As to the former notion, he confessed his inability to comprehend it; and here I agreed with him—for, however conclusive on paper, it becomes altogether unintelligible, and even absurd, amid the thunder of the abyss.

"You have had a good look at the whirl now," said the old man, "and if you will creep round this crag, so as to get in its lee, and deaden the roar of the water, I will tell you a story that will convince you I ought to know something of the Moskoe-ström."

I placed myself as desired, and he proceeded.

"Myself and my two brothers once owned a schooner-rigged smack of about seventy tons burden, with which we were in the habit of fishing among the islands beyond Moskoe, nearly to Vurrgh. In all violent eddies at sea there

is good fishing, at proper opportunities, if one has only the courage to attempt it; but among the whole of the Lofoden coast-men, we three were the only ones who made a regular business of going out to the islands, as I tell you. The usual grounds are a great way lower down to the southward. There fish can be got at all hours, without much risk, and therefore these places are preferred. The choice spots over here among the rocks, however, not only yield the finest variety, but in far greater abundance; so that we often got in a single day, what the more timid of the craft could not scrape together in a week. In fact, we made it a matter of desperate speculation—the risk of life standing instead of labour, and courage answering for capital.

"We kept the smack in a cove about five miles higher up the coast than this; and it was our practice, in fine weather, to take advantage of the fifteen minutes' slack to push across the main channel of the Moskoe-ström, far above the pool, and then drop down upon anchorage somewhere near Otterholm, or Sandflesen, where the eddies are not so violent as elsewhere. Here we used to remain until nearly time for slack-water again, when we weighed and made for home. We never set out upon this expedition without a steady side wind for going and coming—one that we felt sure would not fail us before our return—and we seldom made a miscalculation upon this point. Twice, during six years, we were forced to stay all night at anchor on account of a dead calm, which is a rare thing indeed just about here; and once we had to remain on the grounds nearly a week, starving to death, owing to a gale which blew up shortly after our arrival, and made the channel too boisterous to be thought of. Upon this occasion we should have been driven out to sea in spite of everything, (for the whirlpools threw us round and round so violently, that, at length, we fouled our anchor and dragged it) if it had not been that we drifted into one of the innumerable cross

currents—here to-day and gone to-morrow—which drove us under the lee of Flimen, where, by good luck, we brought up.

"I could not tell you the twentieth part of the difficulties we encountered 'on the ground'—it is a bad spot to be in, even in good weather—but we made shift always to run the gauntlet of the Moskoe-ström itself without accident; although at times my heart has been in my mouth when we happened to be a minute or so behind or before the slack. The wind sometimes was not as strong as we thought it at starting, and then we made rather less way than we could wish, while the current rendered the smack unmanageable. My eldest brother had a son eighteen years old, and I had two stout boys of my own. These would have been of great assistance at such times, in using the sweeps, as well as afterward in fishing—but, somehow, although we ran the risk ourselves, we had not the heart to let the young ones get into danger—for, after all said and done, it was a horrible danger, and that is the truth.

"It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you occurred. It was on the 10th of July, 18—, a day which the people of this part of the world will never forget—for it was one in which blew the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens. And yet all the morning, and indeed until late in the afternoon, there was a gentle and steady breeze from the south-west, while the sun shone brightly, so that the oldest seaman among us could not have foreseen what was to follow.

"The three of us—my two brothers and myself—had crossed over to the islands about two o'clock. P.M., and soon nearly loaded the smack with fine fish, which, we all remarked, were more plenty that day than we had ever known them. It was just seven, by my watch, when we weighed and started for home, so as to make the worst of

the Ström at slack water, which we knew would be at eight.

"We set out with a fresh wind on our starboard quarter, and for some time spanked along at a great rate, never dreaming of danger, for indeed we saw not the slightest reason to apprehend it. All at once we were taken aback by a breeze from over Helseggen. This was most unusual—something that had never happened to us before—and I began to feel a little uneasy, without exactly knowing why. We put the boat on the wind, but could make no headway at all for the eddies, and I was upon the point of proposing to return to the anchorage, when, looking astern, we saw the whole horizon covered with a singular copper-coloured cloud that rose with the most amazing velocity.

"In the meantime the breeze that had headed us off fell away, and we were dead becalmed, drifting about in every direction. This state of things, however, did not last long enough to give us time to think about it. In less than a minute the storm was upon us—in less than two the sky was entirely overcast—and what with this and the driving spray, it became suddenly so dark that we could not see each other in the smack.

"Such a hurricane as then blew it is folly to attempt describing. The oldest seamen in Norway never experienced anything like it. We had let our sails go by the run before it cleverly took us; but, at the first puff, both our masts went by the board as if they had been sawed off—the mainmast taking with it my youngest brother, who had lashed himself to it for safety.

"Our boat was the lightest feather of a thing that ever sat upon water. It had a complete flush deck, with only a small hatch near the bow, and this hatch it had always been our custom to batten down when about to cross the Ström, by

way of precaution against the chopping seas. But for this circumstance we should have foundered at once—for we lay entirely buried for some moments. How my elder brother escaped destruction I cannot say, for I never had an opportunity of ascertaining. For my part, as soon as I had let the foresail run, I threw myself flat on deck, with my feet against the narrow gunwale of the bow, and with my hands grasping a ring-bolt near the foot of the foremast. It was mere instinct that prompted me to do this—which was undoubtedly the very best thing I could have done—for I was too much flurried to think.

"For some moments we were completely deluged, as I say, and all this time I held my breath, and clung to the bolt. When I could stand it no longer, I raised myself upon my knees, still keeping hold with my hands, and thus got my head clear. Presently our little boat gave herself a shake, just as a dog does in coming out of the water, and thus rid herself, in some measure, of the seas. I was now trying to get the better of the stupor that had come over me, and to collect my senses, so as to see what was to be done, when I felt somebody grasp my arm. It was my elder brother, and my heart leaped for joy, for I had made sure that he was overboard; but the next moment all this joy was turned into horror, for he put his mouth close to my ear, and screamed out the word '*Moskoe-ström*!'

"No one ever will know what my feelings were at that moment. I shook from head to foot as if I had the most violent fit of the ague. I knew what he meant by that one word well enough—I knew what he wished to make me understand. With the wind that now drove us on, we were bound for the whirl of the Ström, and nothing could save us!

"You perceive that in crossing the Ström channel, we always went a long way up above the whirl, even in the

calmest weather, and then had to wait and watch carefully for the slack—but now we were driving right upon the pool itself, and in such a hurricane as this! 'To be sure,' I thought, 'we shall get there just about the slack—there is some little hope in that'—but in the next moment I cursed myself for being so great a fool as to dream of hope at all. I knew very well that we were doomed, had we been ten times a ninety-gun ship.

"By this time the first fury of the tempest had spent itself, or perhaps we did not feel it so much, as we scudded before it, but at all events the seas, which at first had been kept down by the wind, and lay flat and frothing, now got up into absolute mountains. A singular change, too, had come over the heavens. Around in every direction it was still as black as pitch, but nearly overhead there burst out, all at once, a circular rift of clear sky—as clear as I ever saw—and of a deep bright blue—and through it there blazed forth the full moon with a lustre that I never before knew her to wear. She lit up everything about us with the greatest distinctness—but, O God, what a scene it was to light up!

"I now made one or two attempts to speak to my brother—but in some manner which I could not understand, the din had so increased that I could not make him hear a single word, although I screamed at the top of my voice in his ear. Presently he shook his head, looking as pale as death, and held up one of his fingers, as if to say '*Listen!*'

"At first I could not make out what he meant—but soon a hideous thought flashed upon me. I dragged my watch from its fob. It was not going. I glanced at its face by the moonlight, and then burst into tears as I flung it far away into the ocean. *It had run down at seven o'clock! We were behind the time of the slack, and the whirl of the Ström was in full fury!*

"When a boat is well built, properly trimmed, and not deep laden, the waves in a strong gale, when she is going large, seem always to slip from beneath her—which appears very strange to a landsman—and this is what is called *riding*, in sea phrase.

"Well, so far we had ridden the swells very cleverly; but presently a gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it rose—up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge, that made me feel sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-ström whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the everyday Moskoe-ström, than the whirl as you now see it, is like a mill-race. If I had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognized the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror. The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

"It could not have been more than two minutes afterward until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind of shrill shriek—such a sound as you might imagine given out by the water-pipes of many thousand steam-vessels, letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the whirl; and I thought, of course, that another moment would plunge us into the abyss—down which we could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we were borne along. The

boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a huge writhing wall between us and the horizon.

"It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I felt more composed than when we were only approaching it. Having made up my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a great deal of that terror which unmanned me at first. I supposed it was despair that strung my nerves.

"It may look like boasting—but what I tell you is truth—I began to reflect how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner, and how foolish it was in me to think of so paltry a consideration as my own individual life, in view of so wonderful a manifestation of God's power. I do believe that I blushed with shame when this idea crossed my mind. After a little while I became possessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a wish to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make; and my principal grief was that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I should see. These, no doubt, were singular fancies to occupy a man's mind in such extremity—and I have often thought since, that the revolutions of the boat around the pool might have rendered me a little light-headed.

"There was another circumstance which tended to restore my self-possession; and this was the cessation of the wind, which could not reach us in our present situation—for, as you saw yourself, the belt of surf is considerably lower than the general bed of the ocean, and this latter now towered above us, a high, black, mountainous ridge. If you have never been at sea in a heavy gale, you can form no

idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by the wind and spray together. They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection. But we were now, in a great measure, rid of these annoyances—just as death-condemned felons in prison are allowed petty indulgences, forbidden them while their doom is yet uncertain.

"How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer to its horrible inner edge. All this time I had never let go of the ring-bolt. My brother was at the stern, holding on to a small empty water-cask, which had been securely lashed upon the coop of the counter, and was the only thing on deck that had not been swept overboard when the gale first took us. As we approached the brink of the pit he let go his hold upon this, and made for the ring, from which, in the agony of his terror, he endeavoured to force my hands, as it was not large enough to afford us both a secure grasp. I never felt deeper grief than when I saw him attempt this act—although I knew he was a madman when he did it—a raving maniac through sheer fright. I did not care, however, to contest the point with him. I knew it could make no difference whether either of us held on at all; so I let him have the bolt, and went astern to the cask. This there was no great difficulty in doing; for the smack flew round steadily enough, and upon an even keel—only swaying to and fro, with the immense sweeps and swelters of the whirl. Scarcely had I secured myself in my new position, when we gave a wild lurch to starboard, and rushed headlong into the abyss. I muttered a hurried prayer to God, and thought all was over.

"As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent, I had instinctively tightened my hold upon the barrel, and closed

my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open them—while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still lived. The sense of falling had ceased; and the motion of the vessel seemed much as it had been before, while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she now lay more along. I took courage and looked once again upon the scene.

"Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror, and admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel, vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony, but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.

"At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little, however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view, from the manner in which the smack hung on the inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam-ends. I could not help observing, nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation, than if we had been upon a dead level; and this, I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we revolved.

"The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly, on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmans say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist, or spray, was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all met together at the bottom—but the yell that went up to the heavens from out of that mist, I dare not attempt to describe.

"Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam above, had carried us to a great distance down the slope; but our farther descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept—not with any uniform movement—but in dizzying swings and jerks, that sent us sometimes only a few hundred yards—sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress downward, at each revolution, was slow, but very perceptible.

"Looking about me upon the wide waste of liquid ebony on which we were thus borne, I perceived that our boat was not the only object in the embrace of the whirl. Both above and below us were visible fragments of vessels, large masses of building timber and trunks of trees, with many smaller articles, such as pieces of house furniture, broken boxes, barrels and staves. I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer and nearer to my dreadful doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our company. I must have been delirious—for I even sought amusement in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below. 'This fir tree,' I found myself at one time saying, 'will

certainly be the next thing that takes the awful plunge and disappears,' and then I was disappointed to find that the wreck of a Dutch merchant ship overtook it and went down before. At length, after making several guesses of this nature, and being deceived in all—this fact—the fact of my invariable miscalculation, set me upon a train of reflection that made my limbs again tremble, and my heart beat heavily once more.

"It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting *hope*. This hope arose partly from memory and partly from present observation. I called to mind the great variety of buoyant matter that strewed the coast of Lofoden, having been absorbed and then thrown forth by the Moskoe-ström. By far the greater number of the articles were shattered in the most extraordinary way—so chafed and roughened as to have the appearance of being stuck full of splinters—but then I distinctly recollected that there were *some* of them which were not disfigured at all. Now I could not account for this difference except by supposing that the roughened fragments were the only ones which had been *completely absorbed*—that the others had entered the whirl at so late a period of the tide, or, from some reason, had descended so slowly after entering, that they did not reach the bottom before the turn of the flood came, or of the ebb as the case might be. I conceived it possible, in either instance, that they might thus be whirled up again to the level of the ocean, without undergoing the fate of those which had been drawn in more early or absorbed more rapidly. I made, also, three important observations. The first was, that as a general rule, the larger the bodies were, the more rapid their descent—the second, that, between two masses of equal extent, the one spherical, and the other of any other shape, the superiority in speed of descent was with the sphere—the third, that, between two masses of equal

size, the one cylindrical, and the other of any other shape, the cylinder was absorbed the more slowly. Since my escape, I have had several conversations on this subject with an old schoolmaster of the district; and it was from him that I learned the use of the words 'cylinder' and 'sphere.' He explained to me—although I have forgotten the explanation—how what I observed was, in fact, the natural consequence of the forms of the floating fragments —and showed me how it happened that a cylinder, swimming in a vortex, offered more resistance to its suction, and was drawn in with greater difficulty than an equally bulky body of any form whatever.*

* See Archimedes, De Incidentibus in Fluido, lib. 2.

"There was one startling circumstance which went a great way in enforcing these observations, and rendering me anxious to turn them to account, and this was that, at every revolution, we passed something like a barrel, or else the yard or the mast of a vessel, while many of these things, which had been on our level when I first opened my eyes upon the wonders of the whirlpool, were now high up above us, and seemed to have moved but little from their original station.

"I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw myself with it into the water. I attracted my brother's attention by signs, pointed to the floating barrels that came near us, and did everything in my power to make him understand what I was about to do. I thought at length that he comprehended my design—but whether this was the case or not, he shook

his head despairingly, and refused to move from his station by the ring-bolt. It was impossible to reach him; the emergency admitted of no delay; and so, with a bitter struggle, I resigned him to his fate, fastened myself to the cask by means of the lashings which secured it to the counter, and precipitated myself with it into the sea, without another moment's hesitation.

"The result was precisely what I had hoped it might be. As it is myself who now tell you this tale—as you see that I did escape—and as you are already in possession of the mode in which this escape was effected, and must therefore anticipate all that I have further to say—I will bring my story quickly to conclusion. It might have been an hour, or thereabout, after my quitting the smack, when, having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and, bearing my loved brother with it, plunged headlong, at once and for ever, into the chaos of foam below. The barrel to which I was attached sunk very little farther than half the distance between the bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard, before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the vast funnel became momentarily less and less steep, the gyrations of the whirl grew gradually less and less violent. By degrees, the froth and the rainbow disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon was setting radiantly in the west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores of Lofoden, and above the spot where the pool of the Moskoe-ström had been. It was the hour of the slack—but the sea still heaved in mountainous waves from the effects of the hurricane. I was borne violently into the channel of the Ström, and in a few minutes, was hurried down the coast into the 'grounds' of the fishermen. A boat picked me up—

exhausted from fatigue—and (now that the danger was removed)—speechless from the memory of its horror. Those who drew me on board were my old mates and daily companions—but they knew me no more than they would have known a traveller from the spirit-land. My hair, which had been raven-black the day before, was as white as you see it now. They say, too, that the whole expression of my countenance had changed. I told them my story—they did not believe it. I now tell it to *you*—and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden."

END

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MASTERPIECES OF ADVENTURE—STORIES OF THE SEA AND SKY ***

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