

swim ; the channel on either side was, therefore, an unpassable barrier. Even had I been an excellent swimmer, I doubt if in my enfeebled state I could have won the further bank of the channel, where the current was running the least swiftly. How long would my island remain uncovered by the sea ?

Six or eight feet above my head, tangled masses of sea-weed hanging in the interstices of the wood-work shewed the highest reach of the tide. The ebb had commenced an hour before I had started from Abermaw. Allowing an hour for my subsequent adventures, the ebb would still have three hours to run ; then another three hours' flood would elapse before the tide would once more reach me. I remembered that I had a flask of metal in my pocket which still contained a dram of brandy, and that I had a few fragments of biscuit in my pocket, remaining of some that my wife had packed up for my use a couple of days before. I drank the brandy and munched the biscuits, and felt again hopeful. Six hours ! Why, in that time help might come. Death was no longer imminent.

But I was entirely wrong. The strong south-westerly gales had piled up the waters about the mouth of the estuary, so that the ebb was checked, and the flood increased, and the tide ran out only some three hours. I must have been longer lying on the sand, too, than I had calculated, for, as I watched the waters hurrying down on each side of me, I noticed that the current seemed to slacken all of a sudden ; then it stopped, so that a fragment of bleached wood that was floating downward came to a rest, then moved slowly once more upwards. The tide had turned.

In a very short time the expanse of waters before me, that had just now seemed a broad river outlet, scored and marked with sand-banks, assumed the appearance of an agitated sea. Short waves hurried along, their white crests gleaming in the moonlight ; they came in serried lines, tier over tier ; the hoarse roar of the advancing tide reverberated in the air, mingling in my brain with the strange rattle as of bells that never ceased to jangle therein.

How remorseless they seemed those waves hurrying up, like hounds who view their prey ! And yet it was a solemn scene ; and what there was of dignity and grandeur in the sight, half reconciled me to the thought that my life would be swallowed up ere long in these advancing battalions of serried waves ; for now the bitterness of death was past ; its terrors had vanished ; I felt a profound sadness—that was all.

How far could I climb up these slimy, slippery posts and buttresses, that seemed to mock me with their lying proffers of safety ? A couple of cross-beams or ties which bound together the lower ends of the piers afforded at their intersection a sort of angular resting-place, where I could, for a time perhaps, find a refuge from the waves. This was far below high-water mark, so that to reach it would only give me a short respite from my final agony ; but, for all that I determined to attempt it. As soon as the water covered the little island on which I stood, I would try to climb this slippery beam, that rose from the sand, in which it was partly buried, at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

With the tide rose the wind ; with the wind came rain and fog. The moon, blurred and indistinct, shone faintly for a while, and then vanished altogether, although her diffused light still made everything darkly visible. Soon the waves were dashing at my feet, the sand a pulp beneath them. Now was the time to make my last effort for a little more life. But I found that I had overrated my own powers. I crawl-