

embrace, while the tears that would not be controlled suffused his eyes.

So intense and general was the anxiety on board the *Francis* that none of the passengers thought of going to their berths that night, but all gathered in the cabins finding what cheer they could in one another's presence. In the main cabin were the Copelands, Captain Sterling of the 7th Fusiliers, Lieutenant Mercer of the Royal Artillery, Lieutenants Suttan, Roebuck, and Moore of the 16th Light Dragoons, and other officers, while in the fore-cabin were household servants of the Prince, and soldiers, bringing up the total number of passengers to full two hundred.

Feeling that it was no longer of any use to disguise the magnitude of their peril, Captain Reefwell had sent word to his passengers to prepare for the worst, and so they had all dressed in their warmest clothing, and made up little bundles of such valuables as might perchance be saved.

The night wore slowly on, the sturdy brig straining and groaning as the billows mercilessly buffeted her, and the wild gale shrieking through the rigging as though in demoniac glee at the helplessness of the vessel with its precious freight.

They were a brave band that awaited their fate in the main cabin. The men were borne up by the unflinching courage of the true British soldier, and Mrs. Copeland, the only woman, by an unflinching faith in Him who holds the seas in the hollow of His hand.

Now and then some one would creep up on deck, and brave the fury of the blast for a while in hope of noting some change for the better, and on his return the others would look eagerly into his face, only to be met by a sorrowful shake of the head that rendered words unnecessary.

Eric alone found temporary oblivion in sleep. He felt very weary, and though fully alive to the dangers impending could not resist falling into fitful snatches of sleep that gave him some little rest.

Stretched out on the cabin floor at his feet dozing comfortably in happy unconsciousness of threatened ill lay his mastiff, Prince, for under the circumstances Eric had ventured to break the rule laid down by the Captain when he consented to the dog's coming on board. Prince did not look at all so well as the day he won Captain Reefwell's heart by his good manners. He had grown gaunt, and his smooth shiny hide looked rough and unkempt. But otherwise he was none the worse for the voyage, and quite ready for active duty should occasion present itself.

Awaking from a brief sleep during which he had dreamed that he and Prince were having a glorious romp on the lawn at Oakdene, Eric saw his father returning to the cabin from a visit to the deck, and at once plied him with eager questions.

"Is the storm getting better, and will it soon be daylight again?"

Dr. Copeland strove hard to look cheerful as he answered:

"The storm's no worse, Eric, at all events, and it will not be long before daylight comes."

"But if we should be wrecked, father," said Eric. "We might all get ashore all right, mightn't we?"

"Certainly, my boy," replied the Doctor, promptly, although deep down in his heart something seemed to say over again Captain Reefwell's words "Sable Island makes sure work."

"And, father," continued Eric, "I'm going to keep hold of Prince's collar if we get wrecked. He can swim splendidly, and he won't have any trouble in dragging me ashore."

Dr. Copeland could not resist smiling at his son's earnestness as, putting his hand tenderly on his head, he said, in reverent tones:

"God grant there may be no need of Prince dragging you ashore, Eric. We may weather this storm, and reach Halifax safely yet. Many a ship has survived a worse one."

"I don't want to be wrecked, that's certain, but if we are so unlucky I'm mighty glad I've got Prince here to help me—the dear old fellow that he is," and so saying Eric threw himself down on the big dog, and gave him a hearty hug, which the mastiff evidently appreciated.

Day broke at last, if the slow changing of the thick darkness into a gray enswathing obscurity could rightly be called daybreak, and the *Francis* still bravely battled with the storm. She had proven herself a trusty ship, and with Captain Reefwell on the quarter deck, fit to cope with the worst fury of wind and wave. But no ship that ever has been or ever will be built could survive the ordeal of the Sable Island breakers, whose dread thunder might at any moment make itself heard above the howling of the blast.

At breakfast time the worn and weary passengers gathered around the table for what might for aught they knew be their last meal on ship-board, and were thus engaged, when a sailor burst into the cabin, his bronzed face blanched white with fear, as he shouted breathlessly:

"Captain says for all to come on deck, ship'll strike in a minute."

Instantly there was a rush for the companion way, but Dr. Copeland waited to throw a warm cloak about his wife, and to clasp Eric's hand tightly before following the others.

Making their way to the deck an awful scene was presented to their eyes. The fog had lifted a little, so that it was possible to see some distance from the ship, and there right across her bow, and now not more than a hundred yards away a tremendous line of breakers stretched as far as eye could see. Straight into their midst the *Francis* was driving helplessly at the bidding of the gale. No possible avenue of escape presented itself. Not only did the breakers extend to right and left until they were lost in the shifting fog, but the nearest line was evidently an advance guard, for beyond it other lines could be dimly descried, rearing their crests of foam as they rolled fiercely onward.

"The Lord have mercy upon us and deliver us!" exclaimed Dr. Copeland, as with one swift glance he took in the situation.

The next instant the ship struck the bar with a shock that sent everybody to the deck, and the Doctor just had time to grasp his wife and son and draw them close to the mast, where they could take hold of the ropes dangling from the belaying pins, before a tremendous billow broke over the vessel sweeping her from stern to bow, and carrying away a number of the soldiers, who, having nothing to hold on by, were borne off like mere chips, their pitiful cries for the help that could not be rendered reaching the ears of those who knew not but that the next billow would hurry them to the same fate.

Again and again was the *Francis* thus swept by the breakers. Then came a wave of surpassing volume which lifted her up as though she had been a feather, and carried her over the bar into the deeper water beyond, where she righted once more, and drove on towards the next ridge.

The Doctor gave a gasp of relief when the brig righted, but the glint of hope that came into his countenance quickly vanished as he saw another

line of breakers no less terrible than those they had just passed through awaiting the vessel's approach.

Rearing and plunging amid the froth and foam the *Francis* charged at the second bar, struck full upon it with a force that would have crushed in the bow of a less sturdy craft, hung there for a few harrowing moments while the breakers, as if greedy for their prey, swept madly over her, never failing to carry off one or more of their unhappy victims, then, responding gallantly to the impulse of a wave mightier than its fellows, leaped over the sandy barrier, and once more floated freely.

But the cost of her deliverance had been great. Both masts had gone by the board, and now, held captive by the rigging, added a fresh element of danger as they were dashed with terrible violence against the vessel's sides. Mrs. Copeland narrowly escaped being carried away by the wreckage of the mainmast, but the Doctor saw her danger in time to avert it, and drag her to a safer place.

The passage of the bars having thus been effected, those who were left on board the *Francis* began to cherish a hope of ultimate salvation.

"There's hope yet, dearest," called the Doctor to his wife, whose pale face brightened into a smile at the cheering words.

Eric, catching what his father said, cried eagerly: "Will we get ashore all right, father?" receiving in reply an emphatic nod that comforted his heart.

Between the bars and the main body of the Island lay a heavy cross sea on which the brig pitched and tossed all the more violently now that with her masts gone there was nothing to give her steadiness. Somewhere beyond this wild confusion of waters was the surf that foamed out its fury not upon semi-submerged bars, but upon the beach itself. Once that surf would be reached the fate of the *Francis* was settled forever. Whether or not a single one of the beings she carried would survive her God alone knew. The chances were as one in a thousand—and yet they hoped.

There were not many left now. Captain Sterling was gone, and Lieutenants Mercer and Suttan. Beside the Copelands, only Lieutenants Roebuck and Moore were left of the cabin passengers; of the soldiers and servants fully two-thirds had been already swept away with many of the crew. Captain Reefwell still held his post at the wheel, for although the rudder was useless, that seemed to be his proper place.

The few miles that intervened between the bars and the beach were soon crossed. Faintly at first and then more distinctly, the long line of foaming white loomed through the fog, and its awful thunder filled the air.

"Into Thy hands we commit our spirits," murmured Mrs. Copeland.

The next moment the vessel struck the beach and was overwhelmed beneath a vast volume of water that leaped to her destruction as though it had been long waiting for the opportunity.

When the billow retreated the decks were clear. Not a human form was visible where a moment before three score men and women had been clinging for dear life. Whether had they vanished, and what was their fate? Surely they were not all to be hurried into eternity with such appalling suddenness!

Hissing and seething in the very excess of elemental strife, and sending their spray and spume high into the mist-laden air the merciless billows bore their victims off to fling them ruthlessly upon the trembling shore. Then, ere they could make escape they would be caught up again and carried back by the recoil of the wave to be once more