

of the party, handing his torch to Con Tupper, spoke out bravely: "Don't begin to blubber yet. Give me plenty of light, and I'll see if we can't get through."

Then, throwing off his coat and boots, Frank dashed into the water. Before him the darkness was intense, and at each step the water deepened, until at last he had to swim. Yet fearlessly he pressed forward, hoping every stroke to see beyond him the patch of light that would mean escape. Suddenly his head struck something hard. He put up his hand. It was the roof of the cave! The mouth then was already full, and all chance of escape cut off. There was no alternative but to turn back and await the worst. He and his companions were as helpless as rats in a trap.

There was not a braver boy in the country than Frank Atherton. But who could blame him for feeling limp and nerveless as he made his way back to the little group, tremblingly awaiting his return? They knew his answer before he spoke, and as he despondently dragged himself out of the water, the poor little fellows, who had been trying hard to control their sobs broke out afresh.

"Come now, boys; stop that," said Frank, in a commanding but not unkindly tone; "crying won't help matters. There's nothing for us but to wait here until the tide goes out again. Let us go back to the end of the cave."

Thereupon they all made their way to the farthest recess of the long tunnel, dug out by the persistent waves, and putting down their lights, gathered close about Frank for comfort and direction.

Their situation was one of sufficient danger to appal the stoutest heart, and a few words of explanation are necessary in order to make it clear. The party consisted of a dozen boys, ranging in age from ten to fourteen years, all of them pupils at Chebucto Academy. Among the many legends of the sea current in Chebucto was one to the effect that a certain cave, which penetrated deep into the side of Sambo Head, and bore the name of Smuggler's Cave, although no smuggler had been known to make use of it for generations past, was one of the hiding-places where Captain Kidd had bestowed a portion of his ill-gotten gain. This legend every boy at the Academy devoutly believed, and it was a frequent subject of discussion among them, although no attempt had ever been made on their part to test its accuracy until Frank Atherton, one of those boys who always take the lead among their fellows, a handsome, athletic, daring lad, not quite fifteen years of age, having heard the story until he believed every word of it, became possessed with the determination to see if there was anything in it.

Any enterprise that Frank Atherton headed was sure of plenty of volunteers, and he had no difficulty in organizing an exploring party quite as large as he desired. Choosing a Saturday when the tide would be at its ebb about noon, these youthful searchers after buried treasure provided themselves with picks, shovels, crowbars, lanterns, and torches, and set off in two boats for the scene of their operation.

The day proved as favourable as could be desired, the harbour had hardly a ripple upon its surface, the sun shone from a cloudless sky, the air was warm without being oppressive. In high spirits the party rowed away to Smuggler's Cave.

When they landed the tide was just running out, and they had but a little while to wait before the entrance to the cave was clear. Fastening their boats securely at the foot of the cliff, they lit their torches, shouldered their tools, and marched out of the glare and warmth of the sunlight into the shadow and chill of the dripping cave. Far into its depths they made their way, singing and shouting noisily to show how bold they felt, until they reached the extreme end, where they put down their tools and awaited their leader's instructions.

Now, a certain old "salt," who hung about Market Square, having apparently no other occupation than to shift his quid, hitch up his breeches, and retail fishy yarns for the benefit of whoever would listen to him, had, as a very great favour, and in consideration of one dollar down, and a thousand more payable in event of justifiable success, given to Frank a decidedly dirty piece of paper upon which were scrawled certain crooked lines that purported to be a plan of the interior of the cave, and to indicate the precise spot where Captain Kidd had made his deposit of bullion and jewels.

The boys gathered eagerly about Frank as with knitted brow he studied Ben Sculpin's mystic scrawl. Evidently he found it no easy task to identify its indication. But at length his face lightened. He thought he had caught the

clue all right, and soon under his directions the whole party was toiling away vigorously in a corner of the cave that certainly looked a fitting hiding-place for pirate treasure.

So heartily did they work, inspired by hopes as splendid as they were vague, that they took no thought of time until their stomachs hinted that refreshments would be in order, when they knocked



FAR INTO THE DEPTHS THEY MADE THEIR WAY.

off for half an hour, ate their lunch, had a little rest, and then recommenced with undiminished ardour. After another hour or so, however, signs of weariness began to show themselves, one of the first to tire being Stan Clarkson, who was a lazy kind of a chap at any time, and it was while resting on his pick that his quick ear caught the sound of waves breaking softly upon the sand, which caused him to rush toward the mouth of the cave with the result already described.

When the boys realized that they were prisoners until the tide should fall again and set them free, their first thought naturally was, did the tide fill the whole cave, or did it leave sufficient space at the far end for them to wait in safety their deliverance? By common consent they referred this question to Frank Atherton, and his prompt answer, given in a cheerful, confident tone, was:

"We'll be all right, boys. Don't get scared. We'll have to stay here a little longer than we expected to; that's all."

His companions tried bravely to imitate his composure, although their spirits were sinking fast, and under his direction they sought around the walls for ledges and other projections which would enable them to get as far out of reach of the water as possible. In doing this some of the lights were extinguished through being dropped or overturned, which mishap heightened their growing terror until they were on the verge of a panic. But Frank diverted their thoughts for the moment by scolding the clumsy ones vigorously and bidding the others be more careful; and soon all save he

over the sand wave after wave, waxing higher inch by inch. The soft ripples seemed to be chasing one another in innocent merriment; for although the wind blew briskly outside, none of its violence was felt within, and the tide advanced simply by its inherent force. For some time the boys were silent, the slow yet irresistible progress of the water exercised a sort of fascination over them

akin to that exerted by a serpent over a bird. They did not know but that each glistening wavelet brought death a little nearer, and they had no thought for anything else. Presently, his young nerves unable to stand the strain any longer, little Regie Barton burst into piteous sobs, and dropped his torch which vanished with an expiring hiss into the water at his feet. This set off others of the smaller boys, and soon the cave was filled with sounds of weeping and lamentation.

Braced against the extreme back of the cave, and holding fast the brightest of the torches, Frank Atherton alone of the twelve, fully retained self-control. As the organizer of the party he felt responsible for the safety of its members, and, being naturally of a cool, courageous temperament, his spirit sustained him in the face of a growing dread that their case was hopeless.

"Come come, boys" said he, firmly, but soothingly, "don't be cry-babies. There's more water in the cave now than we want, and it's no use adding your tears to it. Keep a good grip on your lights, and don't lose your foothold, and you'll get out of here all right enough."

Higher, steadily, smoothly, piteously higher rose the tide. It played about Frank's feet, washed gleefully over them, crept past his ankles up toward his knees, and the higher it climbed the deeper sank his brave young heart. For the hundredth time he peered eagerly around in the hope of discovering some ledge, some cranny that would enable him to climb above the water's reach. But the search was vain. Such slight advan-

they grow dim, flickered for a moment, and then expired, until at length only the torch held by Frank, which happily was one of extra size that had been well filled at the outset, remained burning.

By this time most of the boys had become too terrified to shed tears; chilled to the marrow, and almost paralysed with fear, they clung like limpets to the slippery rock, the pallid faces looking inexpressibly piteous in the deepening gloom.

"Let us say our prayers," whispered Regie Barton; and his companions, by a common impulse, began with chattering lips to repeat the prayer most familiar to them. In the very midst of this there came a sharp cry of fright, followed by a thrilling splash. Poor little Regie, in making a slight movement, had lost his foothold and fallen into the water.

Thrusting his torch into the hand of the nearest boy, with the command, "Here, take care of this; I'll get Regie," Frank plunged after the youngster, who in his chilled condition was almost helpless, and dragged him back to his place.

"Hold on tight now, Regie," said he. Then seeing that the boy was really too weak to keep himself upright, he took his stand beside him, although the water was deeper there than in his former position.

And still the tide rose. The air, confined within narrowing limits, and drawn upon by twelve persons and a flaming torch, became foul and oppressive, producing a stupefying effect upon the boys. The water lapped about Frank's waist. It encircled his heart. It climbed upon his shoulders. A few inches more, and the stern struggle would be over. Oh! what a dreadful way it was to die pent up in that dark, dripping cave, where their bodies might perhaps remain undiscovered, hidden away to be food for the crabs and lobsters that now were crawling hungrily about their feet! No loving lips to give the last kiss, no gentle hands to tenderly close the glazing eyes, but instead, the merciless, deadly embrace of the sea, and the cruel, greedy maw of its hideous progeny!

The sobs had ceased. There was silence save for the soft lapping of the waves against the walls almy with seaweeds. The tide need rise but a few inches more, and its work would be complete. It already touched Frank Atherton's chin. With a fortitude truly heroic he awaited his fate.

But what was this? Had the water really ceased to rise? or was it only his imagination playing him false? Trembling betwixt the extreme of hope and fear, Frank stood for some minutes hardly breathing in his agonizing uncertainty. Then a cry of joy burst from his lips.

"Hurrah, boys!" he shouted, waving his torch triumphantly. "The tide's going down again. Keep your places, and we'll all be saved."

There was first a feeble effort at a united cheer in response, and then, their tongues being loosened by the good news, the boys began to hail one another cheerfully, and to hazard guesses as to how long it would be before they would be released from their prison.

Oh, how cruelly slow the tide was in ebbing out again! Surely it took twice as long to fall as it did to rise; at least, so it seemed to the exhausted boys, who could barely keep themselves from slipping into its cold depths. But at length, and not a moment too soon, it retreated sufficiently to permit them to move about freely on the floor of the cave, and an hour later they splashed their way to the entrance.

To their amazement they found that it was as dark as pitch outside as well as inside the cave. They had entered it at midday. It was now not far from midnight. Not a sign of their boats could they find. The high water had torn them from their moorings, and carried them away. Fortunately Frank knew pretty well the lay of the land, and stumbling slowly along the shore, they eventually reached the cottage of a fisherman, who, in response to their appeal, took them in at once, made a big fire for them, and did his best for their comfort.

The next morning he carried them in his big boat back to Chebucto, where they found their mysterious disappearance the sensation of the town, and parties being organized to go in search of them. Their remarkable story aroused intense interest. Frank Atherton found himself the hero of the day, and in their abounding joy at the safe return of their sons, the parents of his companions freely forgave him for having organized the expedition which had so narrow an escape from perishing in Smuggler's Cave.—Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.



AND STILL THE TIDE ROSE.

had secured some sort of a foothold which raised them above the level of the cave's floor. There, in anxious uncertainty, they awaited the coming of the tide.

As gently and playfully as though incapable of harm the dark water stole up

tages as there were had already been given over to the other boys, and, after all, they might only serve to postpone a few moments longer the death that seemed inevitable. To add to the terrors of the situation the oil in the lights began to give out. One after another