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THE MAN ON THE MAST.

Concluded.

When they got to the head of the pier, the boat was not more than fifty or sixty yards beyond it. The small progress they had made, which was accounted for by the tremendous force of the shoeward sea, as well by the violence of the storm, which rendered it a matter of difficulty for those inland to keep their feet where they stood, afforded matter of considerable anxiety to the physician, as he thought of the short distance he had accomplished at great labour, and calculated on the time it would take to make a mile of way to windward under the circumstances. But he was still more alarmed when, in consequence of an observation from one of the bystanders, he looked ahead of the boat, and observed the aspect of the bar, which extended all across the harbor, at a little distance from the shore. It was terrific. The sea seemed to rage in one white chain of foam, of an hundred yards in breadth, and to offer an insurmountable barrier to either entrance or exit, presenting as continuous and heavy a surf as that which rolled in under the lime-kiln. At this time of the tide there were but a few feet of water over it, and independent of the violence of the waves, it was to be feared that in the toughness of the sea boat would, but too inevitably touch the sandy bottom.

An old sailor edged up to the physician—
"Doctor, these lobster-men will have a wet sock in the gut, if they don't feel the ground under their keel. Three hours hence they would have a better chance, but the tide's ebbing fast, and by the time they get there, there'll be little water enough for them, even if it was as smooth as velvet."
"It's too true, I fear," said the person addressed.
"Oh, the men know what they are doing, and they'll be all right. They're anxious to get to sea, and they're determined to succeed. There—you see they're upon it now, and are getting on quite steady. I know it's easy," as she saw a smile crept over the faces. "I've often seen boats in a greater storm than this, I assure you," and the poor woman endeavored to smile with an air of cheerfulness and hope, the glowiness of which was but too clearly shown in the agonized expression of anxiety into which the features relaxed the next moment. There are few things more touching than the efforts of the distressed to gain comfort from those by assuming confidence themselves, and to mask their feelings under a veil of hope, that they should see despair written in the faces from which they seek to read their fate. This was plain, indeed, that the main difficulty yet to be encountered. As the yawl forced its way over the landward boundary of the shoals, she made two or three short pitches at the water, and then fought manfully on for some time; till a mass of foam heavier than the rest above her like a cloud, and swept over her drenching every one in her through and about, besides lodging a considerable quantity of water in her bottom. A nutmeg was heard to fall from the pier, and every eye was instantly fixed on the boat.
The sun, which now showed its broad disc above the horizon, played bright on the spray, and the water on the tarred sides of the boat; some sea-birds glanced and skimmed close to it—their wild screams sounding ominously in the ears of the superstitious spectators who came fitfully to land, mixed with the roar of the winds and the waters. Gallantly the boatmen strain, and skillfully did they steer their bark through this labyrinth of waves which once passed, and there was little doubt they could be able to surmount the long and deep sea. The individual for whom the event was a matter of hope or despair had just raised her clasped hands for the first time towards heaven, when a sea more than the rest threw the bows of the boat completely up out of the water, and, as she fell again, both the larboard oars were

unslipped from the rullocks; in an instant she was whipped round, and before they had time to bring her head to, another wave had broken over, and nearly water-logged her. The men made every effort to bring her up again, but in vain—she was rolled back upon the surf, and speedily filled; and at last a dead blow on the sand burst her open, and shivered her to pieces, casting out her crew into the midst of the breakers. A cry of horror was raised. "Save them! save them!" was shouted by an hundred voices; a rush was made off the pier to the rocks at the harbor's mouth; and in a few moments there was no one left on it but the physician, holding in his arms the senseless form of her whose hopes now seemed to be extinguished for ever.

The shape of the harbour, however, was such, that although the crew of the shattered boat were a considerable distance from the spectators on the pier when the accident happened, they were but a short way from the shelving rocks at either side, which ran out and narrowed the entrance considerably at low water; and as the wind and surf both bore them in from the bar in a few moments, they were enabled, all of them being stout swimmers, to reach a nook on the southern shore, without greater injury than a few trifling bruises.

This event, discouraging in itself, was fraught with fatal consequences to others. Five human beings there were—alone in the midst of the winds and waves, and unconscious of what had been attempted—whose only earthly chance for deliverance seemed cut off for ever by this accident.

At the lime-kiln the chief officer of the coast-guard, who had never quitted the spot, and still continued to keep a narrow look-out for any goods which might be washed ashore from any vessel with a view to salvage, did not in the least relax his vigilance. He was by several individuals who came down to enjoy the interesting spectacle of the death-agonies of five fellow-creatures. In town there are executions; in the country, people who love the terrible, have to depend on such accidents as this for their gratification.

Amongst those who arrived on the shore about this time—nine o'clock—were the male inmates of the house, consisting of the worthy host himself, his white-waistcoated guests, and the juvenile crew already made known to my readers. They were loud and animated, of course, in their inquiries concerning the business, and were strenuous to see the woman, of whom the officer had given a sufficiently flourishing account. The carousals had been kept up so late the night before, that it needed all their heroism and generosity to turn out at such an early hour in the morning; and, as it was, there were some of the party who were rather dragged down to the shores by their shame, than impelled by their benevolence. During their festivities the preceding evening a gallant vessel had been foundering within a mile or two of them, and the cry of more than one wretch who had found in the stormy seas his fate and his grave, had been uttered almost close enough to mingle with the cadences of the convivial song.

But such thoughts did not seem to weigh in any man's mind, on the satisfied consciences of the wassailors—they had not exceeded that night—that is, they had not exceeded their allowance, for it was usually measured by the capacity of their girdle. Comfortless it was to see them then, standing on the yet cozy bank, looking out to seaward with their faces drawn up as if with a running string, their eyes watering and nearly closed, their well-brushed teeth grinning in the wind, and their hands buried in the profoundest depths of their great coats, in which, and in their own discomfort, they seemed far more wrapped up than in the distress of the unfortunate wretches they were looking at.

One of the young men whispered another—
"Edward!"
"Well, George?"
"Ask Mr. — whether he has reconciled to Chloe this morning. The sight of the water

will bring on the fit of hydrophobia again, I suspect."

"But it was awful, George, now that I think of it, that that rigmorle about diving, while the horrible reality was enacting so near us. Look at his face! I vow I think he has something of the kind in his mind this instant. See! his mouth is down at the corners, for the first time, I believe, in his life."

"You're right, Edward—one of these elderly jokers forced into seriousness is a miserable sight. All the muscles are screwed the wrong way. But, I say, Edward, that rogue the doctor has taken this fair lady all to himself. I hear he never leaves her side, and has begun to console her already for her half-drowned lover—ay, and with some success, too. That's the way of all these professional men. The vacancy is scarcely in view before they are ready, papers in hand, to apply for it."

"Come, George, this is too bad. Look out there, and be serious for a moment. A word in your ear"—and he drew his young friend aside as he spoke.

The other colored, clenched his hand, and said nothing, but gave a nod of assent, while his companion muttered, "Well, when the time comes we'll try, at least."

As the tide rose, each hour saw the mast lightened of its human burthen. One soul more was swept into eternity—boly after body was washed ashore, and the wretched creature who had returned to the cliff, and now watched it drift successively in, was still satisfied that each, though well-known, was not that of her beloved. The day, as it advanced, enabled her to see him distinctly—to mark his effort to preserve himself and his companions by his lashing the boy to the mast by a piece of loose rope, suspended to which, however, he expired early—his apparent sufferings from sea-sickness, and his imploring look towards her, and more than once she had seen him from the station she had resumed at the lime-kiln, and much of it she gained by report from the officer, whose glass seemed the interpreter of her destinies. She looked more dead than alive—her air was wild and haggard—her face and figure had shrunk supernaturally since the night—her limbs were benumbed with cold, and shook as in palsy, beneath her ill-fitted and showily colored garments—and yet her energy was unabated; she refused all offers of refreshment of any kind, nor would she stir from the spot, but seated herself down beside the lime-kiln, with her hands crossed over her knees, and said not a word, but looked steadfastly and tearfully at the mast.

She had not long been placed thus, when a dog, of the French poodle breed, was seen struggling up the steep cliff, occasionally stopping to shake the water from its long curly hair; and as soon as it had reached the top, it ran directly to where the woman was sitting, and began to jump upon her with the most extravagant marks of delight. She sprang up, seized the little animal in her arms, and covered it with caresses, and at length burst into an agony of tears. It had evidently called her mistress, and had probably floated ashore on some piece of the wreck, without having been observed by the persons on shore, and now rejoiced one of its owners with its safety. But the force of instinct told the animal that in its rejoicing it had a duty to perform; and no sooner did it miss its mistress put it down from her arms, than it began to jump round her, to pull at her dress, to run to the brink of the cliff and look out to sea, and then run back with a greater show of eagerness, and go through the same energetic dumb-show again.

She had watched the struggles and agony of the ship-wrecked man himself, and retained some possession of herself in the midst of her despair; but this was too much for her. She rushed frantically towards the precipitous pathway which led to the beach, and would in all probability have hurried down and plunged into the breakers in her frenzy, had she not been laid hold of by the bystanders and forced back to her old place, and the dog secured in the hands of one of the coast-guard.

Before mid-day, but one human being remained on the mast; and that was he to whom her existence clung. He appeared nearly worn out, the rising tide immersed him still more frequently and fearfully beneath the waves, and it was plain to see that he could not hold out much longer. About this time the officer began to look towards the point of the Chapel Head, and then at the country people around him, as if some thought was laboring in his mind; and when one of the young party from the house questioned him, he replied that there might, perhaps, be a chance of a stout-built boat living now over the bar, since, although the wind had freshened, the water had become so much deeper as to render the surf at that place less dangerous than before. The poor woman became almost frantic when she heard these words. The crowd gathered round, and she implored the people by every moving argument and entreaty to save the man on the mast. She offered them any thing—they laughed—alas! she had lost all that with which she could have made her promises good! The owner of the house, being moved with compassion, went so far as to offer a handsome reward to any boat's crew which should save the surviving individual; but it was plain that the fishermen on the coast were not only appalled by the fate of the first attempt, but, moreover, a little dubious about the relation of the parties; and it was considered too desperate an undertaking for the coast-guard to be justified in engaging in, particularly as the officer had stated it as his opinion that the chances were against any but a life-boat getting safe over the bar. The tide having risen, moreover, would render it less easy for the crew to reach the shore in case of any disaster happening.

The crowd stood around in moody consultation—the officer and the gentlemen in the midst—the more adventurous weighing chances and shaking their heads—the timid talking of great dangers of what they would do under these circumstances; and the curious pushing forward to witness the progress of the deliberation.

The mournful concave had just decided that the subject of their debate must be left to his fate, all human aid being out of the question, when one of the coast-guard's men, who had been looking out to the northward, suddenly exclaimed—

"Look there, sir!—as I'm a living man, a boat!" and he pointed towards the Chapel Head, which lay about a mile and a quarter from them in all that direction.
All eyes were turned to the point in question—and there, true enough, was to be seen a long, dark streak, occasionally visible between the waves, and just clear of the headland.

"A boat! a boat! by heavens!" exclaimed the gentlemen, and a tremendous cheer broke from the multitude, accompanied by a rush, which was evidently perceived by the wretch on the mast, who, almost dropping into the water, now seized a rope convulsively, and seemed to look on shore and around for the cause of the movement.

"What is it?" "Who are they?" exclaimed an hundred voices, and all eyes were directed to the coast-guard officer, who raised his glass with more expedition than usual, the clasped hands, and an expression of such agonized hope, as once more drew the sympathy of the bystanders towards her.

"Why—I can't believe my eyes!" he exclaimed, after an attentive survey—"surely it is impossible! As I live, though," after another look, "it is that cockle-shell, the Kitty-wake, with those hair-braided young 'uns in her!"

Another shout, lengthened and renewed, showed that the common people were ready to do justice to the generous heroism of their superiors. Who, indeed, could withhold at such a moment his tribute of heartfelt admiration at the conduct of those noble young spirits, who, when the stoutest heart quailed, and the strongest boat was deemed insufficient, had manned their slight and fragile craft, and braved in her the fate which the more expe-