

"No, I suppose not," she sighed mournfully. "But really," she went on, "you must admit that it is dreadful to be compelled to spend the greatest day in the year on a wretched iceberg!"

"It might have been worse if we had been drowned, Miss Brown," I put in.

"And the cold," she went on, ignoring my remark; "I am wet through and perishing with it." And she burst into a violent fit of sobbing.

Here I left the two ladies to console one another in the best way they could whilst I went down to see if there was any chance of obtaining some food. To my great joy I perceived two large square tins of biscuits floating alongside of the berg. They were evidently those which had been in the steward's pantry, for each, as I afterwards discovered, had been opened and some of the contents used. With some difficulty I managed to get both tins on to the berg and then looked around to see if there were any signs of a water cask floating about, but could see none. I took the tins to the place of shelter. "Now, ladies," I said, placing a few biscuits on one of the covers which served as a tray, "let us be thankful that we have something to eat. Miss Hunter, will you —"

Further utterance on my part was checked by a terrific crashing sound followed by a violent oscillation of the berg. Miss Brown, who had been sitting on the small jutting piece of ice, was hurled violently from her seat, shrieking loudly the while, whilst Miss Hunter was precipitated into my arms. When the oscillation had somewhat subsided and Miss Brown had managed to pick herself up again, the two women looked inquiringly at me as though for an explanation of all the noise and motion. I told them that I thought another large piece of ice must have become detached and fallen from the berg and that I would go out to see.

It had happened as I said, and the piece which had broken off the parent berg was now grinding away at its foot. I told my two companions what I had seen.

"If it goes on like this," whimpered Miss Brown, "there'll be nothing left for us to stand upon, and then what shall we do?"

"Madam," I replied, "if it keeps on doing like this we shall not need anything to stand upon for long. But let us hope," I added, hastily, as I observed a very downcast expression steal over the face of the younger lady, "that we may be fortunate enough to get rescued from our position before such a thing should happen. And now, ladies," I broke off, and handing a biscuit to them, "this is our Christmas fare; let us be thankful for it."

"Don't, don't, don't," said Miss Brown, imploringly. "Christmas fare, indeed! Oh, what a cruel mockery! I can't touch it; it's no use!" and she turned away in despair. Miss Hunter, however, partook freely, saying that she felt too hungry to refuse anything.

"And I feel hungry too, my dear," snorted Miss Brown, "but not hungry enough to eat biscuits."

"Madam," I observed, feeling angry at her want of gratitude. "if we are alive so long, I will wait until you are *very* hungry before I again offer you the biscuits."

She made no reply but burst into another fit of sobbing. Poor ladies, how much I pitied them in their wet clothes shivering with the cold and in a position seemingly so hopeless and wretched. How were we to get through the long night which was stealing on us quickly? What could I do to get these poor creatures warm? These were the questions which filled my mind now to the exclusion even of our ultimate safety, and I must admit that nearly every ray of hope was extinguished within me when I thought of my wretched impotency. There seemed only one chance, and a very meagre one

too. This was of our being taken off the berg by some outward bound vessel. Such a chance would have been poor enough even had we been five or six more degrees to the northward; how much less was it now in the high latitude we were in; how few vessels must pass in the course of a year.

I was, of course, wet through, cold and miserable myself, but I said nothing, and although I felt utterly despondent and wretched I strove to appear as hopeful as I could, but it was a terrible effort and I very nearly failed in the attempt. I determined before it became too dark to descend once more and see if I could fish out anything which was likely to be of service to us. When I reached the water's edge I discovered two hatches floating alongside. It struck me that these might be useful in more ways than one. They would serve for the ladies to lie upon instead of the bare ice, and in the event of another disruption and our being hurled into the water, they would serve to keep us afloat. So I dived into the water and after much difficulty succeeded in landing them on the berg.

"What!" exclaimed Miss Brown when I explained how that the hatches might be utilized, "Sleep on the bare wood! Oh never! never! What have I come to?"

"An iceberg, madam," I put in quietly; "perhaps, however, you would prefer to sleep on the bare ice and find yourself in a pool of water when you wake up."

"Thank you so very much, Captain M—," was the very different rejoinder of Miss Hunter. "How very good and kind of you to think so much of us! and oh, how fatigued you must be with all that diving and dragging up these heavy pieces of wood!" I was feeling fatigued and I admitted it.

Sleep soon overcame all Miss Brown's scruples and both women were soon extended on the hatches. I entered another small cave close to and sitting down on the icy floor—if I may so term it—buried my face in my hands and gave way to reflection. Night, the awful dreaded night, had come, and darkness like some huge funeral pall covered the face of the deep and the berg we were on. Far in the distance I could distinguish the shouts of the men who were on the other berg, and through the darkness the glimmering effulgence of the berg, itself like some ominous luminosity stalking over the dark waste of mighty waters. A horrid feeling of drowsiness seized me as I sat, and this brought painfully to my mind the stories I had read of men having given way to such feeling in the snow and ice and who never awoke again in this world. I grew alarmed and undecided as to whether I should awaken the ladies. Thrice I stood at the entrance to the cave they were lying in, almost decided to arouse them, and thrice I returned to my own chilly apartment without having done so. They were sleeping soundly, their troubles forgotten; I could not bring myself to awaken them. And yet, supposing that anything fatal were to happen through my own wilful neglect, how wretched I should feel! I tried to solace myself with the thought that if it were true that people would die from giving way to sleep in the snow, it was equally true that they must die without it. This decided me and I allowed them to sleep on, although not without grave fears. At last, so intensely and painfully drowsy did I become that I could hold out no longer and fell asleep. How long I had slept I know not; it might have been two, three, or four hours; I had no means of judging, but I was awakened by one of those ominous crashing sounds with which we had now become so painfully familiar. I jumped up and standing on the little plateau just outside the entrance to the cave, looked around me. It was still dark, but very clear; a light

cold breeze was blowing from the southward and the stars shone down from the sky with that intense brilliancy so noticeable during a southerly wind in high latitudes in the southern hemisphere. I could still see the pale effulgence of the other berg, and close around the white crests of the waves as stirred by the wind. I saw nothing, however, to denote that any more ice had broken off and I went to the cave where the two women lay to calm their fears if aroused by the noise. They were still asleep, however, and for this I felt very thankful. I returned again to the cave and sat down to think, longing ardently for daylight and dreading every moment lest another disruption should take place. At last I saw the first pale streaks of dawn creeping slowly up from the eastward and watched them spreading over the sky, and then I went out once more and scanned the horizon with feverish anxiety. There was nothing, however, to be seen save the other berg, now about half a mile to the westward of us, and the floating debris of the ill-fated *Smiling Morn*, now clustering around the berg we were on. With a saddened heart I turned away and was about to ascend higher, when my eyes chanced to light upon a white speck far away on the western point of the horizon. I stood staring at it for some considerable time, my heart beating rapidly the while. Could it be a vessel, or was it only the white wings of some huge albatross skimming the clear, dark blue thread of horizon? I rubbed my eyes and shaded them with my hands in such a manner, as to shut out every other point of the horizon, save that in which the small white speck could be discerned. It was still there, it had not moved! it could not be a bird! it must be a vessel! "Thank God!" burst joyfully from my lips as I turned to arouse the two women, "Miss Hunter, Miss Brown!" I shouted wildly. But there was no reply, and I grew terribly alarmed. Had that sleep, indeed, proved to be their last long one? I shouted again, but still there came no reply, and then I entered the cave. "God be praised, they are alive!" I exclaimed joyfully, as I distinguished the sounds of their breathing. But I must rouse them. "Miss Hunter," I said, touching her lightly on her arm, "there is a vessel to the westward; come out and look at it!"

She started violently and then sat up and stared curiously into my face, as though trying to collect her thoughts. Then with a sweet smile of assurance she rose to her feet. I next went to Miss Brown. No sooner, however, had this lady felt my touch than with a wild shriek she seized me by my beard, calling me a "monster and a villain," until awakened sufficiently to recognize me, when she begged my pardon, and excused her conduct by stating that she had been dreaming about burglars. Both women then came excitedly out of the cave, and we stood with beating hearts watching the small white speck upon which our all hopes seemed to depend.

"Will they see us, Captain M—?" anxiously inquired Miss Hunter.

"They will see the icebergs," I replied; "and the great fear is lest the very sight of them should make them alter their course."

"And then they would pass us by, I suppose?" moaned Miss Brown.

"Let us take a more hopeful view than that," I replied cheerily. "We must try and make some sort of a signal. I will get an oar and fasten my coat to it and wave it from the summit of the berg."

"Oh, that will be capital!" exclaimed Miss Hunter, enthusiastically.

I could not find an oar, but a boat's mast was floating near, which I secured and made my way to the top of the berg, the ladies viewing my ascent with great interest. After much