

Mrs. Aleshine remarking that, leaving out being chilled or colicky, we were never likely to need it more than now. Thus refreshed and strengthened, Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine took up their oars, while I swam slightly in advance. As before, when, with occasional intermissions of rest, and a good deal of desultory conversation, we had swept and swam for about an hour, Mrs. Lecks suddenly exclaimed: "I can see that thing ever so much plainer now, and I don't believe it's a ship at all. To me it looks like bushes."

"You're mighty long-sighted without your specs," said Mrs. Aleshine, "and I'm not sure but what you're right." "As sure as I'm standin' here," said Mrs. Lecks, who although she could not read without spectacles, had remarkably good sight at long range, "them is trees and bushes that I see before me, though they do seem to be growin' right out of the water."

"There's an island under them; you may be sure of that," I cried. "And isn't this ever so much better than a sinking ship?"

"I'm not so sure about that," said Mrs. Aleshine. "I'm used to the ship, and as long as it didn't sink I'd prefer it. There's plenty to eat on board of it, and good beds to sleep on, which is more than can be expected on a little bushy place like that ahead of us. But then, the ship might sink all of a sudden, beds, vittles, and all."

"Do you suppose that is the island the other boats went to?" asked Mrs. Lecks.

"This question I had already asked of myself. I had been told that the island to which the captain intended to take his boats lay about thirty miles south of the point where we left the steamer. Now I new very well that we had not come thirty miles, and had reason to believe, moreover, that the greater part of the progress we had made had been towards the north. It was not at all probable that the position of this island was unknown to our captain; and it must, therefore, have been considered by him as an unsuitable place for the landing of his passengers."

But, whatever its disadvantages, I was most wildly desirous to reach it; more so than either of my companions.

"I do not believe," I said, in answer to Mrs. Lecks, "that that is the island to which the captain would have taken us; but, whatever it is, it is dry land, and we must get there as soon as we can."

"That's true," said Mrs. Aleshine, "for I'd like to have ground nearer to my feet than six miles, and if we don't find anything to eat and any place to sleep when we get there, it's no more than can be said of where we are now."

"You're too particular, Barbry Aleshine," said Mrs. Lecks, "about your comforts. If you find the ground too hard to sleep on when you get there, you can put on your life-preserver, and go to bed in the water."

"Very good," said Mrs. Aleshine; "and if these islands are made of coral, as I've heard they was, and if they're as full of small pints as some coral I've got at home, you'll be glad to take a berth by me, Mrs. Lecks."

I counseled my companions to follow me as rapidly as possible, and we all pushed vigorously forward. When we had approached near enough to the island to see what sort of place it really was, we perceived that it was a low-lying spot, apparently covered with verdure, and surrounded, as far as we could see, as we rose on the swells, by a rocky reef, against which a tolerably high surf was running.

We swam and paddle for a long time, and still the surf rolled menacingly on the rocks before us. We were now as close to the island as we could approach with safety, and I determined to circumnavigate it, if necessary, before I would attempt, with these two women, to land upon that jagged reef. At last we perceived at no great distance before us, a spot where there seemed to be no breakers; and when we reached it we found, to our unutterable delight, that there was smooth water flowing through a wide opening in the reef.

I swam into this smooth water, followed close by Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, who managed to paddle after me; and they were as much astonished as I was when, just after making the slight turn, we found stretched across the narrow passage a great iron bar about eight or ten inches above the water. A little farther on, and two or three feet above the water, another iron bar extended from one rocky wall to the other. Without uttering a word, I examined the lower bar, and found one end of it fastened by means of a huge padlock to a great staple driven into the rock. The lock was securely wrapped in what appeared to be tarred canvas. A staple through an eye-hole in the bar secured the other end of it to the rocks.

"These bars were put here," I exclaimed, "to keep out boats, whether at high or low water. You see, the can only be thrown out of the way by taking off the padlocks." "They won't keep us out," said Mrs. Lecks, "for we can duck under. I suppose whoever put 'em here didn't expect anybody to arrive on life-preservers."

PART II.

Adopting Mrs. Lecks' suggestion, I "ducked" my head under the bar, and passed to the other side of it. Mrs. Lecks, with but little trouble, followed my example; but Mrs. Aleshine found it impossible to get herself under the bar. In whatever manner she made the attempt, her head or her shoulders were sure to bump and arrest her progress.

"Now, Barbry Aleshine," said Mrs. Lecks, who had been watching her, "if you ever want to get out of this salt water, you've got to make up your mind to take some of it into your mouth and into your eyes; that is, if you don't keep 'em shut. Get yourself as close to that bar as you can, and I'll come and put you under."

So saying, Mrs. Lecks returned to the other side of the bar, and having made Mrs. Aleshine bow down her head and close her eyes and mouth, she pushed both hands up her companion's broad shoulders and threw as much weight as possible upon them. Mrs. Aleshine almost disappeared beneath the water, but she came up sputtering and blinking on the other side of the bar, where she was quickly joined by Mrs. Lecks.

"Merciful me!" exclaimed Mrs. Aleshine, wiping her wet face with her still wetter sleeve, "I never supposed the heat there would be up to such tricks as makin' us do that!"

I had waited to give any assistance that might be required, and, while doing so, had discovered another bar under the water, which proved that entrance at almost any stage of the tide had been guarded against. Warning my companions not to strike their feet against this submerged bar, we paddled and pushed ourselves around the turn in the rocky passage; and the first thing that arrested our attention as we gazed across it was a little wharf or landing-stage, almost opposite to us.

"As sure as I stand here," exclaimed Mrs. Lecks, who never seemed to forget her upright position, "somebody lives in this place!"

"And it isn't a stickery coral island, either," cried Mrs. Aleshine, "for that sand's as smooth as any I ever saw." "Whoever does live here," resumed Mrs. Lecks, "has got to take us in, whether they like it or not; and the sooner we get over there the better."

I told the two women that I could easily tow them across this narrow piece of water; and instructing Mrs. Lecks to take hold of the tail of my coat, while Mrs. Aleshine grasped her companion's dress, I began to swim slowly towards the beach, towing my companions behind me.

"Goodness! gracious me!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Aleshine, with a great bounce and splash, "look at the fishes!"

"Now, don't jerk my skeert off on account of the fishes," said Mrs. Lecks. "I expect there was just as many outside, though we couldn't see 'em. But I must say that this water looks as if it had been boiled and filtered."

I made for the little wharf, from which steps came down into the water, and as soon as we reached it we all clambered rapidly up, and stood dripping upon the narrow platform, stamping our feet and shaking our clothes.

"Do you see that house?" said Mrs. Lecks. "That's where they live, and I wonder which way we must go to get there."

Leaving the wharf, we soon found a broad path through the bushes, and in a few moments reached a wide, open space, in which stood a hand-some, modern-built house. It was constructed after the fashion of tropical houses belonging to Europeans, with its gabled porches and shaded balconies; the grounds about it were neatly laid out, and behind it was a walled inclosure, probably a garden.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mrs. Aleshine, "I'd like to be less drippin' before I make a call on genteel folks!"

"Genteel folks!" exclaimed Mrs. Lecks indignantly. "If you're too proud to go in as you are, Barbry Aleshine, you can go set in the sun till you're dry. As for me, I'm goin' to ask for the lady of the house, and if she don't like me she can lump me, so long as she gives me somethin' to eat and a dry bed to get into."

Mrs. Lecks walked boldly up to the front door and plied the knocker, stepping back immediately, so that she might not drip too much water on the porch.

"When they come," she said, "we'll ask 'em to let us in the back way, so that we shan't slop up their floors any more than we can help."

We waited for a couple of minutes, and then I, as the member of the party who dripped the least, went up on the porch and knocked again.

"It's my belief they're not at home," said Mrs. Lecks, after we had waited some time longer. "But perhaps we'll find some of the servants in"; and she led the way to the back part of the house.

As we passed the side of the mansion I noticed that all the window-shutters were closed, and my growing belief that the place was deserted became a conviction after we had knocked several times at a door at the back of the building without receiving any answer.

"Well, they're all gone out, that's certain!" said Mrs. Lecks.

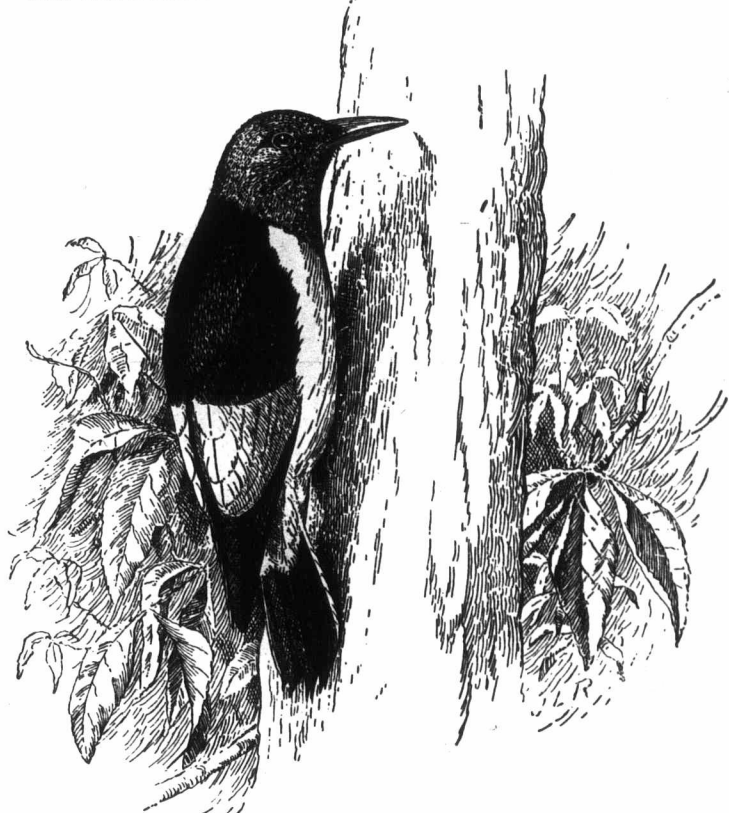
"Yes, and they barred up the entrance to the island when they left," I added.

"I wonder if there's another house in the neighborhood?" asked Mrs. Aleshine.

"I don't believe," said I, "that the neighborhood is very thickly settled; but if you will wait here a few minutes, I will run around this wall and see what there is beyond. I may find the huts of some natives or workpeople."

I followed a path by the side of the garden wall, but when I reached the end of the enclosure I could see nothing before me but jungle, and I began to think that this was probably a very small island, and that the house we had seen was the only one on it. I returned and reported this belief to my companions.

Now that Mrs. Aleshine had no fear of appearing in an



THE WOODPECKER.

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untidy condition before "genteel folks," her manner changed very much. "If the family has gone into the country," said she, "or whatever else they've done, I want to get into this house as soon as I can. I expect we can find something to eat. At any rate we can get ourselves dry, and lay down somewhere to rest, for not a wink has one of us slept since night before last."

"I should think," said Mrs. Lecks, addressing me, "that if you could manage to climb up to them second-story windows, you might find one of them that you could get in, and then come down and open the door for us. Everybody is likely to forget to fasten some of the windows on the upper floors, know it isn't right to force our way into other people's houses, but there's nothin' else to be done, and there's no need of our talkin' about it."

I agreed with her perfectly, and taking off my coat and shoes I climbed up one of the columns of the veranda, and got upon its roof. I walked along it and tried all the shutters, and I soon came to one in which some of the movable slats had been broken. Thrusting my hand and arm through the aperture, I easily pushed the bolt aside, raised the sash, and entered. I found myself in a small hall at the head of a flight of stairs. Down these I hurried, and, groping my way through the semi-darkness of the lower story, I reached a side door. This was fastened by two bolts and a bar, and I quickly had it open.

Stepping outside, I called Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine. "Well," said the latter, "I'm sure I'll be glad to get in, and as we've squeezed most of the water out of our clothes we won't make so much of a mess, after all."

We now entered, and I opened one of the shutters. "Let's go right into the kitchen," said Mrs. Lecks, "and make a fire. That's the first thing to do."

But Mrs. Lecks soon discovered that this mansion was very different from a country dwelling in one of our Middle States. There were no stairs leading to a lower floor, and the darkened rooms into which my companions peered were certainly not used for culinary purposes.

In the meantime I had gone out of the door by which we had entered, and soon discovered, on the other side of the house, a small building with a chimney to it, which I felt sure must be the kitchen. The door and shutters were fastened, but before making any attempt to open them, I returned to announce my discovery.

"Door locked, is it?" said Mrs. Aleshine. "Just wait a minute."

She then disappeared, but in a very short time came out, carrying a bunch of large keys.

"It's always the way," said she, as the two followed me round the back of the house, "when people shut up a house and leave it, to put all the door-keys in the back corner of some drawer in the hall, and to take only the front-door key with them. So, you see, I knew just where to go for these."

"It's a poor hen," said Mrs. Lecks, "that begins to cackle when she's goin' to her nest; the wise ones wait till they're comin' away. Now, we'll see if one of them keys fit." Greatly to the triumph of Mrs. Aleshine, the second or third key I tried unlocked the door. Entering, we found ourselves in a good-sized kitchen, with a great fireplace at one end of it. A door opened from the room into a shed where there was a pile of dry twigs and firewood.

"Let's have a fire as quick as we can," said Mrs. Lecks, "for since I went into that shut-up house I've been chilled to the bones."

"That's so," said Mrs. Aleshine, "and now I know how a fish keeps comfortable in the water, and how dreadfully wet and flabby it must feel when it's taken out."

I brought in a quantity of wood and kindling, and finding matches in a tin box on the wall, I went to work to make a fire, and was soon rewarded by a crackling blaze. Turning around, I was amazed at the actions of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine. I had expected to see them standing shivering behind me, waiting for the fire to be made; but, instead of that, they were moving rapidly here and there, saying not a word, but going as straight to cupboard, closet, and pantry as the hound follows the track of the hare. I gazed on them with delight while one filled a kettle from a little pump in the corner which brought water from a cistern, and the other appeared from the pantry, carrying a tea-caddy and a tin biscuit-box.

"Now, then," said Mrs. Lecks, hanging the kettle on a crane over the fire, and drawing up a chair, "by the time we've got a little dried off, the kettle will bile, and we'll have some hot tea; and then the best thing to do is to go to bed."

"We'll take time to have a bite first," said Mrs. Aleshine, "for I was never so near famished in my life. I brought out a box nearly full of biscuits, and there's sardines in this, Mr. Craig, which you can easy open with your knife."

As soon as the kettle began to simmer, up jumped Mrs. Aleshine. A sugar-bowl and some cups were placed upon a table, and in a short time we were cheered and invigorated by hot tea, biscuits, and sardines.

"This isn't much of a meal," said Mrs. Aleshine apologetically, "but there's no time to cook nothin', and the sooner we get off our wet things and find some beds, the better."

"If I can once get into bed," said Mrs. Lecks, "all I ask is that the family will not come back till I have had a good long nap. After that they can do what they please."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The Woodpecker.

There are several species of the woodpecker to be found scattered throughout Canada, the most common of which is the red-headed variety.

Most of us have heard the familiar "tap, tap," which announces their proximity to us when walking through the orchards and woods. Looking up carefully we see a small hole which the bird appears to be enlarging. It is on this account the farmers are so suspicious of them, thinking they are injuring the tree, and whenever they find holes in the bark it is taken for granted that the damage has been done by woodpeckers.

It has, however, been ascertained by careful observation that they rarely leave the smallest mark on a sound tree, but searching for one affected by borers and other injurious insects, they set to work in a most methodical manner to devour the larvæ, and seldom fly away till they are all consumed. Sometimes the holes originally made by the borers become infested with colonies of ants, which will enlarge the cavities to suit their numerous families. These in their turn are attacked by the woodpecker, and meet the self-same fate as their predecessors.

Ants are particularly injurious to timber: they pitch on the smallest hole in a tree, and continue to enlarge it to accommodate their ever-increasing colony until the whole trunk is literally honeycombed by them. The woodpecker is the only bird that can rid the tree of these pests.

Their tongues and beaks are especially adapted to the work of digging them out of their holes, and by their indefatigable labors immense herds of these destructive insects are annually destroyed. Woodpeckers are the great protectors and conservators of our orchards and forests, and as such they should be preserved and encouraged to build their nests in the vicinity.

The Little Grave.

"It's only a little grave," they said,
"Only just a child that's dead."
And so they carelessly turned away
From the mound the spade had made that day.
Ah! they did not know how deep a shade
That little grave in our home had made.

I know the coffin was narrow and small,
One yard would have served for an ample pall;
And one man in his arms could have borne away
The rosewood and its freight of clay.
But I know that darling hopes were hid
Beneath that little coffin-lid.

I know that a mother stood that day
With folded hands by that form of clay;
I know that burning tears were shed
From the mound the spade had made that day.
And I know her lip, and cheek, and brow
Were almost as white as her baby's, now.

I know that some things were hid away,
The crimson frock, and wrappings gay;
The little sock, and the half-worn shoe,
The cap with its plumes and tassels blue,
And an empty crib, with its covers spread,
As white as the face of the silent dead.

'Tis a little grave; but, oh! have care!
For world-wide hopes are buried there;
And ye, perhaps, in coming years,
May see, like her, through blinding tears,
How much of light, how much of joy,
Is buried up with an only boy!