

officer who had now come up. "What a whopper!" he added.

It was a "whopper," and as I viewed it looming so largely through the white fog, I felt deeply grateful that it had been seen in time to avoid a collision with it. The appearance of this berg had now kindled my anxiety to such an extent that I dared not to leave the deck, expecting every moment to hear another hail from the look-out. It came. A berg was reported on the port bow, to which I buffed a little. Then another was reported right ahead and it seemed very clear to me that we had got into a cluster of these dangerous floating objects.

I felt a hand on my arm whilst straining my eyes ahead of the ship, and, turning round, was confronted by the fat, rubicund visage of Miss Brown, the chaperone.

"Captain," she remarked in deep, bell-like tones, "I hear a great deal of shouting; there is no danger, is there?"

"Not unless we strike a berg, madam," I replied.

"I suppose it wouldn't do to anchor, Captain," she asked after a short pause, and in so simple a manner and with an expression so irresistibly comic that I could scarcely forbear from laughing outright.

"Anchor, madam," I repeated; "why, do you not know that the depth of water here is something over four miles. Why," I continued, "if the whole ship was laden with chain there would not be sufficient to reach the bottom!"

She looked at me half incredulously, said she did not mean anything, asked me to excuse her ignorance and then went below. She had scarcely disappeared when "Berg right ahead, sir!" came from the topsail yard. To this I starboarded, but had scarcely steadied the ship when, "There's another right ahead sir!" made me shift the helm once more. Then it was that I noticed to my horror that the two bergs appeared as though they were closing together and but a narrow passage between the two lay ahead of the ship.

There was no time now to do anything with the helm; I must risk the passage. "Go forward on the fore-castle, Mr. —," I said to the chief officer, "and tell me how to steer, quick, quick for our lives!"

In a few moments he was there and shouting out his orders. But all was of no avail, for as the vessel got under the lee of the huge towering berg on the starboard side, all the wind was taken out of her sails and she drifted helplessly against the berg. The great and more immediate danger now was, lest the other berg should close in upon us and crush the timbers of the ship, and my heart seemed as though it had ceased to beat as I contemplated such a catastrophe. As I stood upon the poop deck looking up at the huge frowning cliffs of ice which towered high above the ship's masts until lost in the fog, I was startled by Miss Hunter's voice behind me.

"My wish to see an iceberg has been very soon gratified, Captain M—," she observed very calmly; "but I am afraid this one is a great deal too close to be safe. Is there much danger?"

"Miss Marion," I replied, jerking a thumb towards the other berg, "it is useless to disguise the fact that we are in danger. If that great fellow there closes in upon us we shall be crushed, or if this fellow which is walking off with us, arm in arm as it were, should take it into its head to capsize, why then we shall run a risk of being smashed to pieces. We are in danger from both these bergs and it is useless to try and hide it from you."

"Can't we manage to get away from this one?" she inquired, calmly, and just when, to my horror, I saw that my great fears were to be realized, the other berg was coming down upon

us rapidly and in another few minutes our noble ship must be crushed. There was no time to reply to Miss Hunter's question and I saw her large eyes fixed curiously on me as I shouted out the order for every one to take to the boats which I had lowered in readiness. I saw Miss Hunter and her chaperone into the gig and was the last to leave the ship and leap into the same boat myself. In a very few minutes the huge bergs came together and the stout timbers of the ship were crushed like a nutshell, whilst her masts and yards came clattering down upon deck.

No one who has not been in similar circumstances can realize my feelings as I sat between the two ladies and viewed with such bitter sorrow the once noble ship now being crushed to pieces between the two mighty bergs; my own hopes were being crushed and dispelled at the same time. Our position was a most perilous and almost hopeless one, and when after the first shock was over and I began to realize it more fully, I must admit that my heart failed me and a sense of the most awful depression overwhelmed me. I felt, however, that it would be very unwise to exhibit any signs of despair before the two ladies, and so strove hard to assume as hopeful a manner as I could under such wretched circumstances. In this I partly succeeded, being helped considerably by Miss Hunter's own calm and encouraging manner.

There were three other boats besides the gig, each filled with men, and when clear of the ship, they gathered round and a consultation was held as to what had best be done under the circumstances. But this consultation was fated to meet with a very sudden and awful termination. We had just decided to keep together as close as we could and steer north to get into the track of the outward-bounders, when a loud and fearful cracking noise in the berg which the ship had first drifted against warned us that a disruption was coming.

"Pull for your lives, men!" I shouted, and the men instantly "gave way." But too late. Before two strokes of the oar were given, the enormous berg with a noise like the broadside of a line of battleship, burst, and in a few moments every boat was submerged and its occupants in the water. When I rose to the surface the sight which met my eyes was one never to be effaced from my memory. The water for a considerable area around was turbulent with the sudden and mighty displacement, and large fragments of ice from the parent berg were grinding and chafing together in wild, chaotic confusion, the water bubbling and seething and shooting up in hissing fountains between them.

My first thought was of the two ladies, and I looked around anxiously for them, my mind full of apprehensions for their safety. I saw the fat, rubicund face of Miss Brown appear on the surface of the water and two stout arms clutching convulsively at an oar. She saw me and shouted for help.

"Keep your heart up," I replied, peering around anxiously for Miss Hunter; "we shall be all right presently."

She gurgled out something in reply, which I could not distinguish, and stuck to the oar. The gig was floating bottom uppermost, and it suddenly struck me that Miss Hunter might be underneath and unable to rise. I immediately dived and found that my surmises were correct—she was there!

Seizing the slight form I managed, but not without some difficulty, to get it clear of the boat, and we then rose quickly to the surface. Then clutching hold of a life-buoy, two of which were most providentially floating near, I succeeded in placing it over her shoulders. Then with the other buoy I made for Miss Brown with the same intentions.

Here, however, I encountered great difficulty, so loath was that lady to let go of the oar for one single instant. She abused me most vehemently and very foolishly declared that I only wanted to drown her. At last, feeling greatly annoyed at the time thus wasted, I tore the oar from her grasp and succeeded in slipping the buoy over her.

When I looked around again, I discovered that two of the other boats were still floating, and I also noticed to my great surprise that the berg which had drifted on to the ship and crushed her, was now detached, and once more drifting on its own account. Of the hull of the ship nothing was visible, it had gone far beneath the waves; but a great deal of her cargo had become liberated, and was now floating around us, together with spars, hatches, hencoops, pig and sheep pens in a giddy whirl of hissing waters. Many of the men were clambering on to the second berg, and one or two were making for the boats, alas! never to reach them, but to be crushed to death between two grinding floes. Other men were clinging for dear life to the spars of the ill-fated ship. It was a scene of wild confusion and one which I can never forget.

I saw that it would be useless to attempt to reach the boats in that whirling mass of waters, and resolved to strike out for the first berg and endeavour to obtain a footing on it; it would be better, I thought, than hanging on to spars, although the choice which lay before us was miserable when looked at from any point of view. I swam between the two women, reached the berg, and after a great deal of difficulty we managed to get a footing on it.

The next thing to be done was to find, if possible, some sheltered place to sit and rest in after our unusual exertions, so leading the two poor women shivering in their wet garments, I climbed a little higher up the berg and soon discovered a small cave into which I eventually succeeded in getting them. Miss Brown, when she had somewhat recovered from the reaction caused by her fright, sat down upon a small jutting piece of ice and began loudly to bemoan her fate. Not so, Miss Hunter; that young lady kept surprisingly calm, and once or twice I caught her beautiful eyes fixed upon mine with a look so tender and trustful that my heart began to beat in a strange and very unusual manner. But there was no time for emotional feeling. We were on an iceberg drifting with the current, and with the by no means pleasant prospect before us of being starved to death or drowned, and we had something more practical to think about. What was to be done for our safety? That was the question which was uppermost in our minds. It was useless to think of the boats; they were amongst that seething mass of grinding floes and spars and would soon be broken up and useless. Even supposing that we could have entered one our position would not have been bettered. I racked my brain in a hopeless endeavour to hit upon something better than remaining on the berg, and so told the ladies who were anxiously awaiting my opinion.

"But, what are we to do for food?" moaned Miss Brown, the tears streaming down her fat cheeks. "And this is Christmas Day—of all days in the year"—she added, plaintively.

"My dear madam," I replied, "I hope to be able to get some biscuits, and perhaps some beef or pork, and if I am able to do so we shall have cause to feel deeply thankful." "Yes, indeed," agreed Miss Hunter, "and I do hope and pray you will be successful." "Biscuits and salt meat on a Christmas Day!" wailed out Miss Brown. "Oh, what a wretched Christmas!"

"Madam!" I exclaimed, reprovingly, "you cannot expect roast turkey and plum-pudding on an iceberg."