

the desperate instinct of life brought face to face with death. Just at nightfall there was a slight break in the west; a red light glared across the thick air, as if for one instant the eye of the storm looked out upon the ruin it had wrought, and closed again under lids of clouds. Taking advantage of this, the solitary watcher ashore made one more effort. She waded out into the water, every drop of which, as it struck the breach, became a particle of ice, and stretching out and drawing in her arms, invited, by her gestures, the sailors to throw themselves into the waves, and strive to reach her. Captain Hackett understood her. He called to his mate in the rigging of the other mast: "It is our last chance. I will try! If I live, follow me; if I drown, stay where you are!" With a great effort he got off his stiffly frozen overcoat, paused for one moment in silent commendation of his soul to God, and, throwing himself into the waves, struck out for the shore. Abigail Becker, breast-deep in the surf, awaited him. He was almost within her reach, when the undertow swept him back. By a mighty exertion she caught hold of him, bore him in her strong arms out of the water, and, laying him down by her fire, warmed his chilled blood with copious draughts of hot tea. The mate, who had watched the rescue, now followed, and the captain, partially recovered, insisted upon aiding him. As the former neared the shore, the recoiling water baffled him. Captain Hackett caught hold of him, but the undertow swept them both away, locked in each other's arms. The brave woman plunged after them, and, with the strength of a giantess, bore them, clinging to each other, to the shore, and up to her fire. The five sailors followed in succession, and were all rescued in the same way.

A few days after, Captain Hackett and his crew were taken off Long Point by a passing vessel; and Abigail Becker resumed her simple daily duties without dreaming that she had done anything extraordinary enough to win for her the world's notice. In her struggle every day for food and warmth for her children, she had no leisure for the indulgence of self-congratulation. Like the woman of Scripture, she had only "done what she could," in the terrible exigency that had broken the dreary monotony of her life.

It so chanced, however, that a gentleman from Buffalo, Mr. E. P. Dorr, who had, in his early days, commanded a vessel on the lake, found himself, shortly after, at a small port on the Canada shore, not far from Long Point Island. Here he met an old shipmate, Captain Davis, whose vessel had gone ashore at a more favorable point, and who related to him the circumstances of the wreck of the Conductor. Struck by the account, Captain Dorr procured a sleigh and drove across the frozen bay to the shanty of Abigail Becker. He found her with her six children, all thinly clad and barefooted in the bitter cold. She stood there six feet or more of substantial womanhood—not in her stockings, for she had none—a veritable daughter of Anak, broad-bosomed, large-limbed, with great, patient blue eyes, whose very smile had a certain pathos, as if one saw in it her hard and weary life experience. She might have passed for an amiable giantess, or one of those much developed maids of honor who tossed Gulliver from hand to hand in the court of Brobdignag. The thing that most surprised her visitor was the child-like simplicity of the woman, her utter unconsciousness of deserving anything for an action that seemed to her merely a matter of course. When he expressed his admiration with all the warmth of a generous nature, she only opened her wide blue eyes still wider with astonishment.

"Well, I don't know," she said, slowly, as if pondering the matter for the first time, "I don't know as I did more'n I'd ought to, nor more'n I'd do again."

Before Captain Dorr left, he took the measure of her own and her children's feet, and on his return to Buffalo sent her a box containing shoes, stockings, and such other comfortable articles of clothing as they most needed. He published a brief account of his visit to the heroine of Long Point, which attracted the attention of some members of the Provincial Parliament, and through their exertions a grant of one hundred acres of land, on the Canada shore, near Port Rowan, was made to her. Soon after she was invited to Buffalo, where she naturally excited much interest. A generous contribution of one thousand dollars, to stock her farm, was made by the merchants, ship-owners