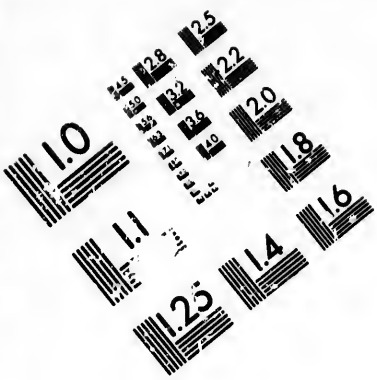

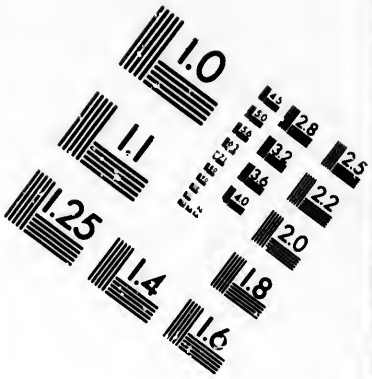

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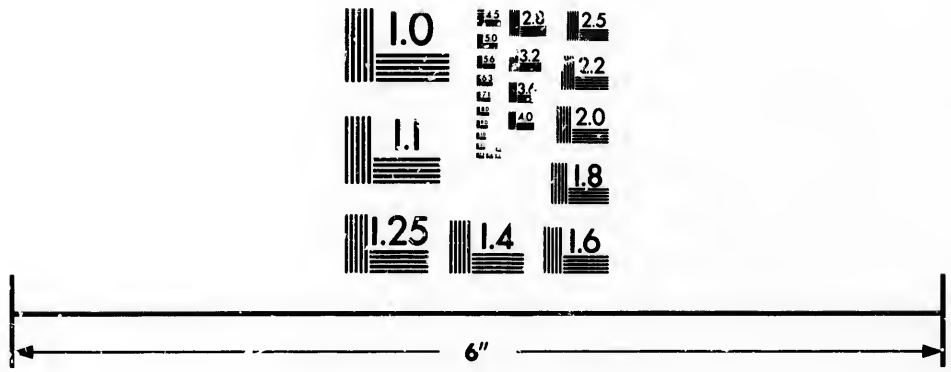

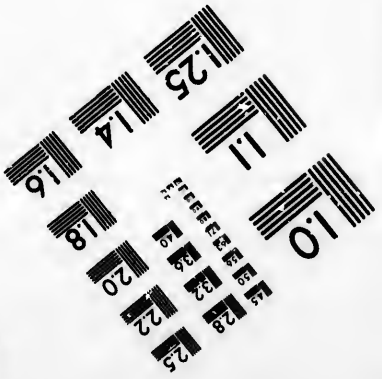

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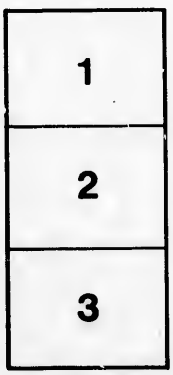

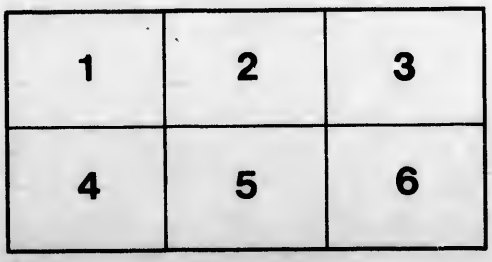

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THE

WRECK OF THE CHANCELLOR.

THE

WRECK OF THE CHANCELLOR,

BY

JULES VERNE,

Author of "Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea," &c., &c., &c.

TORONTO:
BELFORD BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.
1875.

THE

WRECK OF THE CHANCELLOR.

I.

CHARLESTON, *September* 27, 1869.—We have just left the Battery wharf, at 3 P.M. The ebb-tide is fast carrying us out to sea. Captain Huntly has put on all sail, and the north-wind is wafting the *Chancellor* across the bay. We soon double Fort Sumter, and the batteries flanking us along the cost are passed on the left. At four o'clock the entrance to the harbor, through which rushes a rapid ebb current, gives egress to the vessel. But the open ocean is still distant, and in order to reach it we must follow in the narrow channels which the waves have hollowed out in the sand-banks. Captain Huntly therefore enters the southwest channel. The sails are nearly trimmed, and by seven in the evening our vessel has left behind the last sandy point on the coast, and is fairly launched upon the Atlantic.

The *Chancellor*, a fine three-masted ship of nine hundred tons burden, belongs to the wealthy house of the Lairds, of Liverpool. She is two years old, sheathed and fastened with

copper, lined with teak-wood, and her low masts, except the mizzen-mast, are of iron, as is also the rigging.

This substantial and comely craft, ranked A 1, is now making her third trip between Charleston and Liverpool. On clearing Charleston harbor the British flag has been hoisted; but no sailor, seeing the ship, could doubt her nationality. She is distinctly British from her water-line to the trucks of her masts. My reason for taking passage on board the *Chancellor*, outward bound for England, is as follows:—

There is no direct steamship communication between South Carolina and the United Kingdom. To cross the Atlantic, you must either repair to New York, or go southward to New Orleans. Several steamship lines ply between New York and the old world, English, French, and German; and a *Scotia*, a *Pereire*, or a *Holsatia* would speedily have borne me to my destination. Rapid transits are made between New Orleans and Europe, by the boats of the "National Steamship Navigation Company," which connect with the French transatlantic steamers from Colon and Aspinwall.

But as I was sauntering along the Charleston quays, I happened to espy the *Chancellor*. She pleased me, and I know not what instinct led me to go on board her. Her arrangements were as comfortable as possible. Besides, a voyage in a sailing vessel, when favored by wind and sea,

is nearly as rapid as travelling by steam, and is preferable on all accounts. In the early autumn the season is still fine in the lower latitudes. I therefore decided to take passage by the *Chancellor*.

II.

September 28.—I have said that the captain's name is Huntly. His first names are John Silas. He is a Scotchman from Dundee, about fifty years old, with a high reputation as an Atlantic sailor. He is of medium height, with narrow shoulders, and a small head which, from long habit, is inclined a little to the left side. I do not pretend to be a physiognomist; but I think I have already read Captain Huntly, though I have only known him a few hours.

I do not doubt that Silas Huntly is reputed to be a good sailor, or that he is a thorough master of his business. But I cannot believe that he has firmness of character, or a physical and moral energy which is proof against all tests.

In short, Captain Huntly seems heavy, and betrays a certain depression in his manner. He is indifferent; this is seen in the unsteadiness of his look, the slow movements of his hands, and his way of resting languidly first upon one leg, then on the other. He is not and cannot be an energetic, or even an obstinate man; for

his eyes do not contract, his jaw is loose, his fists have no habitual tendency to close. Besides, he has a strange manner, which I am not yet able to explain; but I will observe him with all that attention which the commander of a ship (who is said to be "the master, after God") merits.

If I mistake not however, there is, between God and Silas Huntly, a man on board who is destined, in certain events, to take an important part. This is the first mate of the *Chancellor*, whom I have not yet sufficiently studied, and of whom I shall speak later on.

The crew of the *Chancellor* comprises Captain Huntly, Robert Curtis, the first mate, Lieutenant Walter, a boatswain, and fourteen Scotch and English sailors, in all eighteen; quite enough to manage a three-masted vessel of nine hundred tons. These men have the appearance of knowing their business. All that I can affirm thus far is, that they have, under the mate's orders, skilfully carried her through the passes of Charleston harbor.

I complete the list of persons who have embarked on board the *Chancellor*, by mentioning Hobart, the stewart, and the negro Jynxtrop, who is the cook; and by giving the list of passengers.

These passengers are eight in number, counting myself. I scarcely know them, but the monotony of a sea voyage, the daily incidents,

the constant confinement of people in a limited space, the natural tendency to exchange thoughts, that curiosity which is innate in man, will speedily bring us together. Up to this time, the confusion of getting on board, taking possession of the cabins, the arrangements required by a voyage which may last from twenty to twenty-four days, our various occupations, have kept us apart from one another. Yesterday and to-day all the guests have not even appeared at table, and very likely some of them are suffering from sea-sickness. I have not, therefore, seen all of them, but I know that among the passengers are two ladies, who occupy the rear cabins, the windows of which are pierced in the breastwork of the ship.

The following is the list of passengers as I find it on the records of the vessel:—

Mr. and Mrs. Kear, Americans, of Buffalo.

Miss Hervey, English, companion to Mrs. Kear.

M. Letourneur, and his son, Andre Letourneur, French, of Havre,

William Falsten, an engineer from Manchester, and John Ruby, a Cardiff merchant, both English.

Finally, J. R. Kazallon of London, the author of this journal.

III.

September 29.—Captain Huntly's bill of lading, that is, the document which describes the cargo of merchandise on board the *Chancellor*, and the conditions of its transportation, is in these words :—

"BRONSFIELD & Co., *Commission Merchants, Charleston.*

"I, John Silas Huntly, of Dundee (Scotland), master of the ship *Chancellor*, of nine hundred tons (or thereabouts) burden, being now at Charleston, for the purpose of proceeding, at the first favorable weather, under the protection of God, to the port of Liverpool, where I shall discharge cargo, acknowledge having received on board my said ship *Chancellor*, from you, Messrs. Bronsfield & Co., commission merchants of Charleston, the following to wit: seventeen hundred bales of cotton, valued at £26,000, the whole being in good condition, marked and numbered as in the margin; which effects I promise to carry in good condition, barring the perils of the sea, to Liverpool, and there to deliver them to Laird Brothers or their order, on payment of my freight in the sum of £2,000. And for the fulfilment of this agreement I have pledged and do pledge my person, my goods, and the said ship, with all its appurtenances.

"In witness whereof, I have signed this bill in triplicate; one of which triplicates having been fulfilled and cancelled, the rest shall be void.

"Signed at Charleston, September 13, 1870.

"J. S. HUNTLY."

The *Chancellor* therefore is carrying seventeen hundred bales of cotton to Liverpool. Consignors, Bronsfield & Co. of Charleston; consignees, Laird Brothers of Liverpool.

This shipment has been made with the greatest care, the vessel having been especially constructed for the transportation of cotton. The bales occupy the whole of the hold, except a small portion reserved especially for the passengers' baggage; and these bales, pressed down by screw-jacks, form an extremely compact mass. No part of the hold, therefore, is unemployed, —a great advantage for a ship which can thus receive its full cargo of merchandise.

IV.

From September 30 *to October* 6.—The *Chancellor* is a swift ship, which could easily outstrip many another of the same size; and, since the wind was freshened, a long track, clearly drawn, extends behind us out of sight. You might fancy it a long piece of white lace, stretched over the sea as over a blue ground.

The Atlantic is not often much ruffled by the wind. No one on board, as far as I know, has been disturbed by the rolling or the pitching of the vessel. Besides, none of the passengers are making their first voyage, and all are more or less familiar with the ocean. No place at table is left unoccupied at meal-time.

Pleasant relations are being established among the passengers, and life on board is becoming less monotonous. M. Letourneur and I often have a chat together.

M. Letourneur is a man of fifty-five years, tall, with white hair and grizzly beard. He certainly seems older than he is, which would indicate that he has had much trouble. He has been tried by heavy sorrows, and, I may add, is still tried by them. This man evidently carries within him an inexhaustible source of grief, betrayed by his somewhat enfeebled body, and his head bowed upon his breast. He never laughs, seldom smiles, and then only to his son. His eyes are mild, but their look seems to me to be through a misty veil. His face presents a mixture of bitterness and love, and its general expression is that of a caressing kindliness.

You would say that M. Letourneur has some involuntary misfortune for which he blames himself. But who would not be deeply touched to learn what these reproaches are, for which this father surely holds himself to account?

M. Letourneur has with him his son Andre,

who is about twenty years of age, with a mild and interesting face. This young man is the portrait, a little smoothed out, of M. Letourneur, but—and this is the incurable grief of his father—is deformed. His left leg, dreadfully turned outward, forces him to limp, and in walking he is obliged to use a cane.

The father adores this boy, and one can see that his whole life is in the poor fellow. He suffers more from his son's infirmity than does the son himself; perhaps he even asks his pardon for it! His devotion to Andre is constant. He never leaves him, anticipates his slightest wishes, watches his slightest movements. His arms belong more to his son than to himself; they envelop and sustain him, whilst the young man walks up and down the ship's deck.

M. Letourneur and I have become cronies, and he is forever talking of his son.

To-day I said to him,—

"I have just left M. Andre. You have a good son in him, M. Letourneur. He is a bright, intelligent young man."

"Yes, Mr. Kazallon," replied he, with a slight smile, "his is a beautiful soul, shut up in a wretched body,—the soul of his poor mother, who died in giving birth to him."

"He loves you, sir."

"The dear child!" said M. Letourneur, bowing his head. "Ah! you cannot understand

what a father suffers at the sight of a deformed son,—deformed from childhood!"

"M. Letourneur," I responded, "in the misfortune that has visited your boy, and you, too, you do not make the burden an equal one to each of you. Andre is to be pitied, no doubt; but is it nothing to be loved by you, as he is? A physical infirmity may be more easily borne than a moral grief, and the moral grief of this misfortune is yours. I have carefully observed your son; and if anything particularly affects him, I think I can declare that it is your own sorrow."

"I do not let him see it!" replied M. Letourneur, eagerly. "I have but one solicitude,—to distract and amuse every moment of his life. I have found out that, despite his infirmity, my son is passionately fond of travelling. His spirit has limbs and even wings, and for several years we have travelled together. We first went all over Europe, and we have just made the tour of the principal States of the Union. I have myself conducted Andre's education, and I am completing it by our travels. Andre is endowed with a quick intelligence and an ardent imagination. He is sensible; and sometimes I comfort myself by fancying that he forgets his misfortune in gazing at the glorious sights of nature."

"Yes—no doubt," said I.

"But if he forgets," resumed M. Letourneur,

as he pressed my hand, "*I* do not forget, and I shall never forget! Mr. Kazallon, do you believe that my son forgives his mother and me for having brought him deformed into the world?"

This father's grief, and his accusing himself of a misfortune for which no one could be to blame, rends my heart. I wish to console him. but at this moment his son appears. M. Letourneur hastens to him, and helps him ascend the narrow staircase which leads to the poop.

Andre sits down on one of the benches arranged over the hen-coops, and his father places himself beside him. They talk together, and I join in the conversation. The subject is the voyage of the *Chancellor*, the chances of the journey, and the programme of our existence on board. M. Letourneur, like myself, has formed a far from high idea of Captain Huntly. The captain's want of decision and sleepy appearance have disagreeably impressed him. M. Letourneur's opinion of the mate, on the other hand, is a very favorable one. Robert Curtis is a man of thirty, well built, of great muscular force, always in vigorous activity, with a strong will impelled unceasingly to manifest itself in deeds. Curtis has just ascended to the deck. I watch him attentively, and I am impressed by the symptoms betrayed of his power and vital expansion. He is there with erect body, easy gait, a fine expression of the eye, the muscles of

his eyebrows slightly contracted. He is an energetic man, and he must possess that cool courage which is indespensible to a true sailor; at the same time, he is a good soul, for he takes an interest in young Letourneur, and is eager to be useful to him on every occasion.

After scanning the heavens, and observing the sails, the mate draws near to us and takes part in our conversation.

I can see that young Letourneur likes to talk with him.

Robert Curtis gives us some details concerning those of the passengers with whom we have become but little acquainted.

Mr. and Mrs. Kear are Americans, who have become wealthy in the ownership and working of petroleum wells. It is known that these are the source of many recent great fortunes in the United States. But this Mr. Kear, a man fifty years of age, who seems to be rather enriched than rich, is a sorry guest, neither seeking nor wishing for anything except his ease. A metallic sound issues from his pockets, in which his hands are always plunged. Haughty, vain, contemplating himself and despising others, he affects a supreme indifference for everything that does not belong to him. He struts like a peacock; "smells himself, relishes himself, tastes himself," as the wise physiognomist Gratiolet has it. In short, he is a blockhead as well as an egotist. I cannot explain to myself

why he has taken passage on the *Chancellor*, a plain craft of commerce, which can offer him none of the comforts of the transatlantic steamers.

Mrs. Kear is an insignificant, nonchalant, indifferent sort of person, who has reached her fortieth year, without wit, reading, or conversation. She looks, but does not see; she listens but does not hear. Does she think? That I, cannot tell.

The sole occupation of this woman is to have herself served by her travelling companion, Miss Hervey, a young Englishwoman of twenty, soft and quiet, who does not earn without humiliation the few pounds thrown to her by the oil-merchant.

This young person is very pretty. She is a blonde with dark blue eyes, and her pleasant face has none of the blank insignificance seen in some Englishwomen. Her mouth would be charming, if it ever had occasion to smile. But on whom, or for what, should the poor girl smile, being the victim of the constant teasing and absurd caprices of her mistress? However, if Miss Hervey suffers within, she submits, at least, and appears resigned to her fate.

William Falsten is a Manchester engineer, with a very English air. He directs some large hydraulic works in South Carolina, and is going to Europe in search of new and perfected machinery, especially the centrifugal mills of the house

of Cail. He is a man of forty-five years, a sort of student of machines, quite absorbed in mechanics and calculation, beyond which he sees nothing. When he is talking with you, it is hard to get rid of him.

As for Mr. Ruby, he is a type of the commonplace tradesman, without greatness or originality. For twenty years this man has done nothing but buy and sell; and, as he has usually sold at higher rates than he has bought, his fortune is made. What he will do with it, he could not tell you. This Ruby, whose whole existence has been stupified in petty trade, does not think, does not reflect; his brain is henceforth closed to every impression, and he does not at all justifiy the saying of Pascal, that "man is visibly made to think. It is his whole dignity and his whole merit."

V.

October 7.—It is ten days since we left Charleston, and it seems to me that we have made good and rapid progress. I find myself talking often with the mate, and a certain intimacy has grown up between us.

To-day, Robert Curtis has told me that we cannot be far from the group of the Bermudas, —that is, off Cape Hatteras. Our position, by

observation, is in 32° 20' north latitude, and 64° 50' longitude west of the Greenwich meridian.

"We shall see the Bermudas, and especially St. George's Island, before night," said the mate.

"How," said I, "are we approaching the Bermudas? I thought that a ship, going from Charleston to Liverpool, should sail northward of them, and follow the current of the Gulf Stream."

"No doubt; that is the direction usually taken; but it seems that, this time, the captain has decided not to follow it."

"Why?"

"I don't know; but he has taken the eastern route, and we are now going eastward."

"And you have not called his attention to it."

"I remarked to him that it was not the usual route, and he replied that he knew what he was about."

As he spoke, Robert Curtis contracted his brow, and passed his hand mechanically across his forehead.

"Yet, Mr. Curtis," I resumed, "it is already the 7th of October, and there is no occasion now for trying new routes. We have not a day to lose, if we wish to reach Europe before the bad season."

"No, Mr. Kazallon, not a day."

"Mr. Curtis, is it indiscreet in me to ask what you think of Captain Huntly?"

"I think—I think that he is my captain."

This evasive reply could not but set me thinking.

The mate was not mistaken. About three o'clock the watch announced land to the windward of us, in the northeast; but it looked as indistinct as a cloud of vapor.

At six o'clock I ascended the deck with M. Letourneur and Andre, and we gazed at the group of the Bermudas, which are nearly flat, and bounded by a formidable chain of brakers.

"There is the enchanting archipelago!" said Andre; "the picturesque group which your poet, Thomas Moore, has celebrated in his odes! As long ago as 1643, the exiled Walter gave a glowing description of these islands; and, if I mistake not, English ladies for some time would wear no hats but those made of the leaves of a certain Bermuda palm."

"You are right, my dear Andre," I replied. "The Bermuda archipelago was much in the fashion in the seventeenth century; but now it has fallen into the most complete obscurity."

"Besides, Master Andre," said Robert Curtis, "the poets who speak so enthusiastically of this archipelago differ from the sailors, for this spot, so pleasant to the eye, is difficult to approach with vessels; as the rocks, at a distance of two or three leagues from land, form a semicircular

belt, submerged beneath the waters, which is especially formidable to navigation. Add to this that the serenity of the atmosphere so much boasted of by the Bermudans is often disturbed by tempests. Their islands receives the fag-end of the tempests which lay waste the Antilles, and this fag-end, like the end of a whalebone, is the part to be the most feared. I therefore advise ocean travellers to mistrust the descriptions of Walter and Thomas Moore."

"Mr. Curtis," resumed Andre Letourneur, smiling, "you are, no doubt, right, but the poets are like proverbs; you may always contradict one by another. If Tom Moore and Walter have celebrated this archipelago as a charming retreat, the greatest of your poets, on the other hand,—Shakespeare,—who knew it better, perhaps, has chosen the Bermudas for one of the most terrible scenes of his 'Tempest.'"

The neighborhood of the Bermudas is, indeed, a dangerous one. The English, to whom this group has belonged ever since its discovery, use it only as a military station between the Antilles and Nova Scotia. With time—that great agent in Nature's work—the archipelago, which already comprises one hundred and fifty islands and islets, is destined to include yet more; for the madrepores are ever toiling to construct new Bermudas, which will gradually unite and form, little by little, a new continent.

Neither of the three other passengers, nor

Mrs. Kear, have taken the trouble to go on deck to observe this group. As for Miss Hervey, she had no sooner reached the poop, than the drawling voice of Mrs. Kear was heard, calling the young girl to return to her place by her side.

VI.

From October 8 *to October* 13.—The wind is beginning to blow rather violently from the north-east, and the *Chancellor*, under her top-sails close-reefed, is forced to proceed with caution.

The sea is very rough, and the vessel labors. The partitions shake with a tormenting noise. The passengers are, for the most part, under the poop.

As for me, I prefer to remain on deck, though a fine rain is saturating me with its drops, pulverized by the wind.

For two days we run on much in this way. The disturbance of the atmospheric strata has passed into the condition of a gale. The wind is at this moment making from fifty to sixty miles an hour.

Despite the excellent qualities of the *Chancellor*, she drifts a good deal, and we are being carried southward. The state of the heavens, obscured by clouds, does not permit us to take

observations, and we are forced to guess at our position.

My fellow-travellers, to whom the mate has said nothing, are ignorant that we are taking an unusual direction. England is in the northeast, and we are running towards the southeast. Robert Curtis does not at all understand the captain's obstinacy. The latter ought, at least, to change his tack, and, by turning to the northwest, seek for more favorable currents. Since the wind began to blow from the northeast, the *Chancellor* has veered still more to the south.

To-day, finding myself alone on the poop with Robert Curtis, I said to him,—

"Is your captain a fool, Mr. Curtis?"

"I would ask you the same question, Mr. Kazallon," replied Curtis, "since you have been observing him attentively."

"I do not know how to reply. But I confess that his singular expression of countenance, his often haggard eyes—have you sailed with him before?"

"No; this is the first time."

"And have you again spoken to him about the course we are taking?"

"Yes; he replied that it was the right one."

"Mr. Curtis," I resumed, "what do Lieutenant Walter and the boatswain think of this way of acting?"

"They think as I do."

"And suppose Captain Huntly wished to carry his ship to China?"

"They would obey him, as I would."

"Still obedience has its limits."

"No, so long as the captain does not put the ship in peril of destruction."

"But, if he is a fool?"

"If he is a fool, sir, I shall see what I have to do."

Here is certainly a state of things which I did not foresee when I embarked on the *Chancellor*.

Meanwhile, the weather has been getting worse and worse; a real gale is sweeping across this part of the Atlantic. The ship has been forced to reduce her canvas to close-reefed main top-sail and fore stay-sail; and she heads up to the wind. But, as I have said, she drifts considerably, andwe are carried more and more to the south.

This is very evident when, on the night of the 11th, the *Chancellor* finds herself in the Sea of Sargasses.

This sea, shut in by the tepid current of the Gulf Stream, is a vast expanse of water, covered with the sea-weed which the Spaniards call "sargasso." The ships of Columbus navigated it with difficulty on their first voyage across the ocean.

In the morning the Atlantic presents a singular aspect, and M. Letourneur and his son come

on deck to observe it, despite the blustering squalls which make the metallic shrouds resound like the strings of a harp. Our clothing, sticking tight to our bodies, would be torn to shreds if it gave the least hold to the wind. The ship bounds over the waves, which are thick with the prolific sea-weed, a vast herby plain which the ship's stem cuts through like a ploughshare. Sometimes long threads, raised by the wind, twist themselves in the rigging, and form verdant festoons hanging from mast to mast. Some of these long sea-weed—endless ribbons, which measure, at least, three or four hundred feet—are twined quite to the tops of the masts, like so many floating pendants. For several hours the *Chancellor* has to struggle against this invasion of sea-weed, and at times the good ship, her mast covered with hydrophytes bound together by these fantastic threads, resembles a moving grove in the midst of a vast field.

VII.

October 14.—The *Chancellor* has at last quitted this vegetable sea, and the violence of the wind has to a large degree subsided. We are going forward rapidly, with two reefs in the top-sails. The sun has come out to-day, and shines brilliantly. The temperature is becom-

ing very warm. A good observation places us in 21° 33' north latitude and 50° 17' west longitude. The *Chancellor*, then, has gone more than ten degrees to the south.

And her course is still southeastward!

I have tried to find out the reason of the captain's inconceivable obstinacy, and have several times talked with him.

Has he good sense or not? He usually talks well enough. Is he under the influence of partial insanity, of a sort of absence of mind which has relation solely to the matters of his profession? Such cases have been known to exist, and I have spoken of this to Robert Curtis, who listened to me coldly. The mate has told me, and still repeats, that he has no right to depose his captain so long as the ship is not put in peril by an evidently insane act. It is, in short, a serious alternative, which carries with it a very grave responsibility.

I return to my cabin about eight o'clock and pass an hour reading by the light of my lamp. I spend some time in reflection, and then go to bed and to sleep.

I am awakened some hours after by an unusual noise. I hear heavy steps on deck, and loud and excited talking. The crew seem to be running rapidly back and forth. What is the cause of this unwonted commotion? No doubt it is occasioned by wearing ship.

But no! It cannot be that, for the vessel con-

tinues to lie along on the starboard and therefore has not changed her tack.

For a moment I think of going on deck; but soon the noise ceases. I then hear Captain Huntly returning to his cabin in front of the poop, and I compose myself in my berth again. No doubt it is some manœuvre which has caused this going to and fro. The motion of the ship, however, has not increased. It does not blow hard, then.

The next day, the 11th, I go upon the poop at six in the morning, and look about the ship.

Nothing is changed on board—to all appearance. The *Chancellor* runs, larboard tack, under her lower sails, top-sails, and gallants. She is well trimmed and behaves admirably on the sea, ruffled as it is by a fresh and manageable breeze. Her speed is good at this moment, and should be at least eleven miles an hour.

Soon M. Letourneur and his son appear on deck.

I help Andre mount the poop. He is rejoiced to breathe the invigorating morning air, charged as it is with sea perfumes.

I ask them if they were not aroused in the night by the noise of steps, indicating some unusual event on board.

"For my part, no," replies Andre. "I slept soundly all night."

"Dear boy," says M. Letourneur, "you slept well, then: for I was awakened by the noise of

which Mr. Kazallon speaks. I thought I even heard the words, 'Quick! quick to the hatchways!'"

"Ah!" said I, "What time was it?"

"About three in the morning."

"And you do not know the cause of the noise?"

"I do not. But it could not have been serious, as none of us were called on deck."

I look at the hatchways, arranged before and behind the main-mast, and giving access to the hold of the ship. They are shut, as usual, but I notice that they are covered by heavy tarpaulins, and that every necessary precaution has been taken to close them tight.

Why have these openings been so carefully shut? There is a reason for this that I cannot fathom. Robert Curtis will tell me, no doubt. I wait, then, for the mate's turn to go on watch, and I kept my own observations to myself, preferring not to mention them to M. Letourneur.

The day will be a fine one, for the sun is magnificent at its rising, and the air is very dry, which is a good sign.

I can still see above the opposite horizon the half-wasted disc of the moon, which will not set until fifty-seven minutes past ten in the morning. Her last quarter will be in three days, and on the 24th the new moon will rise. I consult my almanac and I see that to-day we shall have a fine tide of syzygy. This is of little im-

portance to us, who floating in the open ocean, cannot see the effects of this tide; but on all the coasts of the continents and islands, the phenomenon will be an interesting one to observe, for the new moon will raise the masses of water to a considerable height.

I am alone on the poop. The Letourneurs have gone down to breakfast, and I am waiting for the mate.

At eight o'clock Robert Curtis goes on watch, relieving Lieutenant Walter. I advance and shake him by the hand.

Before wishing me good morning, Curtis casts a rapid glance over the deck of the ship, and slightly frowns. He then examines the state of the sky, and the sails.

He next goes up to Lieutenant Walter and asks,—

"Captain Huntly?"

"I have not yet seen him, sir."

"Nothing new?"

"Nothing."

Then Curtis and Walter talk together a few moments in low tones. To a question asked of him, Walter replies with a negative sign.

"Send me the boatswain, Walter," says the mate, as the lieutenant is leaving him.

The boatswain soon makes his appearance, and Curtis asks him a few questions, to which the other replies in a low voice, and by shaking his head. Then by order of the mate, the boat-

swain causes the tarpaulins which cover the large hatchway to be sprinkled.

Some moments after, I speak to Robert Curtis, and at first we talk of insignificant matters. Seeing that the mate does not broach the subject which I wish to discuss, I say to him,—

"By the way, Mr. Curtis, what happened on board last night?"

He looks at me attentively, without replying.

"Yes," I continue, "I was awakened by an unusual noise, which also disturbed M. Letourneur. What was going on?"

"Nothing, Mr. Kazallon," returns Robert Curtis. "A blunder of the steersman made it necessary to correct it promptly; this caused some commotion on deck. The blunder being promptly repaired, the *Chancellor* at once continued on her way."

It seems to me that Robert Curtis, usually so frank, is not telling me the truth.

VIII.

From October 15 *to October* 18.—The voyage continues in the same way; the wind holds still from the northeast; and, to one not warned, there seems to be nothing unusual going on on board.

Yet there is something. The sailors, standing about in groups, talk among themselves, and stop talking when we approach them. Several times I have surprised the word "hatchway," which struck M. Letourneur. What is there in the hold of the *Chancellor* that calls for so many precautions? Why are the hatchways thus hermetically closed? One would think that here was a hostile crew, with a prisoner between decks, and that too much care could not be taken to guard him effectually!

On the 15th, as I am promenading the forecastle, I hear the sailor Owen say to his comrades,—

"Do you know, you fellows? I will not wait till the last moment. Every man for himself."

"But what will you do, Owen?" asked Jynxtrop, the cook.

"Good!" returned the other. "Long-boats were not invented for the porpoises!"

This conversation was suddenly cut short, and I could not learn anything more.

Is some plot, then, going forward against the officers of the ship? Has Robert Curtis surprised signs of revolt? The evil disposition of some sailors is always to be distrusted, and it is necessary to subject these to an iron discipline.

Three days have passed, during which I have heard or seen nothing more that is suspicious.

I observe that, since yesterday, the captain

and the mate have freqent consultations. Curtis seems to be impatient, which much astonishes me in a man usually so perfect a master of himself; but it seems to me that at the end of these consultations Captain Huntly is more than ever obstinate in his ideas. Besides, he appears to be in a state of nervous excitement, the cause of which escapes me.

The Letourneurs and I have noticed that, at table, the captain is taciturn and the mate restless. Sometimes Curtis tries to lead the conversation, but always it relapses into silence, and neither the engineer Falsten nor Mr. Kear are capable of keeping it up. Mr. Kear, as a man before whom even the elements ought to yield, is evidently disposed to hold Captain Huntly to account for the delays, and takes a high tone with him.

During the 17th, and from that day, the deck is sprinkled several times a day by order of the mate. Usually this takes place only in the morning; but is doubtless now done more often on account of the higher temperature, for we have been carried a considerable distance southward. The tarpaulins which cover the hatchways are kept constantly moist, and their tightened tissues make perfectly impermeable canvases. The *Chancellor* is provided with pumps, which render it an easy matter to perform these liberal washings. I imagine that the decks of the daintiest crafts of the Yatch Club are not

more carefully and constantly cleansed. Beyond a certain point the crew might reasonably complain of this excess of work; but complain they do not.

During the night of the 18th the temperature of the cabins seems to me almost stifling. Though the sea is disturbed by a heavy swell, I leave the port-hole of my cabin open.

Decidedly, it is clear that we are in the tropics.

I go on deck at day-break. Strangely enough, I do not find the outer temperature to correspond with that in the cabins. The morning, on the other hand, is fresh, for the sun has scarcely risen from the horizon. Yet I cannot be mistaken; it is really very hot on the poop.

At this moment the sailors are busy at the incessant washing of the deck, and the pumps are spurting out the water, which, following the inclination of the ship, escapes from the scuppers on the starboard and larboard sides.

The sailors with naked feet, run about in this limpid sheet, which foams in little waves. I do not know why, but the impulse seizes me to imitate them. I take of my shoes and stockings and then patter about in the puddle of sea-water.

To my great surprise I find the deck of the *Chancellor* distinctly warm beneath my feet, and I cannot repress an exclamation. Robert Curtis hears me, turns round, comes to me, and

answering a question which I have not yet put, says,—

"Well—yes! There is fire aboard!"

IX.

October 19.—Everything is explained; the whispered conferences of the sailors, their restless actions, Owen's words, the washing of the deck, which they wish to keep in a permanent state of moisture, and, in fine, this heat which is already spreading below deck, and is becoming nearly intolerable. The passengers have suffered from it as well as I, and cannot at all understand the unnatural temperature.

After having given me this alarming information, Robert Curtis remained silent. He waits for me to question him, but I confess that at first I shudder from head to foot. Here is the most terrible of all the perils which can assail those who travel by sea; no man, however capable of self-control, can hear, without shuddering, the sinister words, "There is fire aboard!"

I soon recover myself, however, and my first question to Robert Curtis is,—

"How long has this fire been going?"

"For six days."

"Six days!" I cried. It was, then, on that night—"

"Yes; the night you heard so much noise on deck. The sailors on watch perceived a light smoke escaping from the cracks of the large hatchway. The captain and I were at once apprized of it. There was no possible doubt of what the matter was. The cotton had taken fire in the hold, and there was no way of reaching its seat. We did the only thing possible, under the circumstances, which was to close up the hatchways, so as to prevent the air from getting access to the interior of the ship. I hoped that we might thereby succeed in stifling the fire at its beginning, and at first I thought we had it under control. But for three days we have been forced to the conclusion that the fire was making new progress. The heat under our feet constantly increased, and unless I had taken the precaution to keep the deck always damp, it would have broken out ere this. I prefer, after all, that you should know this, Mr. Kazallon, and that is why I tell you."

I hear the mate's statement in silence. I comprehend all the gravity of the situation; we areinpresence of a conflagration, the intensity of which is increasing day by day, and which, it may be, no human power can check.

"Do you know how the bales took fire?" I ask.

"Probably by spontaneous combustion of the cotton."

"Does that often happen?"

"Not often, but sometimes. When the cotton is very dry at the time of putting it on board, combustion may take place spontaneously at the bottom of a damp hold which it is difficult to ventilate. I am very sure that this is the sole cause of the fire now raging."

"Of what importance is the cause after all?" I reply; "is there anything to be done, Mr. Curtis?"

"No," he says; "I have already told you that we have taken every precaution possible. I have thought of tapping the ship at her water-line, so as to introduce a certain quantity of water, which the pumps would soon exhaust afterwards; but we have discovered that the fire has spread to the middle layers of the cargo, and the whole hold must be inundated to put it out. However, I have had holes pierced in the deck at certain points, and water is poured into these during the night; but this is insufficient. No, there is really but one thing to do—what is always done in similar cases—and that is, to attempt to stifle the fire, by closing every issue to the outer air, and to force the fire, for want of oxygen, to go out of itself."

"And it is constantly increasing?"

"Yes, and that proves that the air is getting into the hold through some opening, which with all our diligence, we are unable to find."

"Are any instances known of ships having been saved under circumstances like these?"

"Undoubtedly. It is not unusual for ships loaded with cotton to reach Liverpool or Havre with a portion of their cargo burned. But in such cases the fire had been put out, or at least confined during the voyage. I have known more than one captain who has thus arrived in port, with the deck scorching under his feet. The unloading was done rapidly, and the undamaged portion of the cargo was saved at the same time with the ship. In our case it is different; for I know but too well that the fire, instead of being checked, makes fresh progress every day. There must, therefore, be a hole somewhere, which has escaped our search, and through which the air enters to stimulate the fire."

"Might we not return on our path, and gain the nearest land?"

"Perhaps; and that is just what Walter, the boatswain, and I have been discussing with the captain this very day. I will tell you, Mr. Kazallon, that I have already taken it upon myself to change the route followed so far, and we now have the wind behind us, and are running south-westward, that is, towards the coast."

"The passengers know nothing of the danger which menaces them?"

"Nothing; and I beg of you to keep secret all I have told you. Our difficulty must not be increased by the terror of women, or of pussi-

lanimous men. The crew has also received orders to say nothing."

I understand the importance of the mate's caution, and promise him absolute secrecy.

X.

October 20 and 21.—The *Chancellor* continues on her way, with all the sail on that her masts can support. Sometimes the gallant-masts bend until they almost break, but Curtis is on the watch. Stationed near the rudder wheel, he will not leave the helmsman to himself. By slight yaws and lurches, skillfully managed, he yields to the breeze when the safety of the ship is threatened, and the *Chancellor* loses nothing of her speed under the hand that guides her.

During the 20th of October all the passengers have ascended to the poop. They have evidently noticed the strange height of the temperature below deck; but not suspecting the truth, they do not trouble themselves about it. Besides, their feet, comfortably shod, have not felt the heat which penetrates the planks of the deck, despite the water which is almost continuously sprinkled upon it. The working of the pumps should provoke some astonishment on their part, it would seem; but it does not. Most of

them, stretched out on the benches, yield to the rocking caused by the rolling of the ship, in a state of perfect serenity. M. Letourneur alone has betrayed surprise at the very unusual zeal for cleanliness, betrayed by the crew. He says a few words to me about this, and I reply in an indifferent tone. This Frenchman is a man of energetic character, and I might safely confide the truth to him; but I have promised Curtis to keep silent, and so I say nothing.

Then, when I give myself over to reflections concerning the results of the catastrophe which threatens, my heart is oppressed. There are twenty-eight of us on board—twenty-eight victims, perhaps—to whom the flames will soon not leave a single plank!

To-day a conference has taken place between the captain, mate, lieutenant and boatswain, upon which depends the safety of the *Chancellor*, her passengers, and her crew.

Robert Curtis has informed me of the result. Captain Huntly is thoroughly demoralized; this was easy to foresee. He has no longer any coolness or energy, and he tacitly leaves the command of the vessel to Robert Curtis. The progress of the fire in the interior of the *Chancellor* is now indisputable, and it is already difficult to stay in the crew's quarters aft. It is clear that the fire cannot be subdued, and that it will sooner or later burst fiercely forth.

this case, what is best to be done? There

is but one course to take—to reach the nearest land. This land is that of the Little Antilles, and we may hope to reach it ere very long, with the wind holding steadily from the northeast.

This decided upon, the mate has only to keep on the course pursued for the last twenty-four hours. The passengers, without any means of judging of place or direction on this vast ocean, and little familiar with the indications of the compass, cannot become aware of our change of route; and the *Chancellor*, with all sail up, royal and bonnet, bears straight down towards the land-falls of the Antilles, from which she is still distant more than six hundred miles. To M. Letourneur, who asks him about this change of route, the mate replies that not being able to weather the ship, he is trying to find more favorable currents in the west.

This was the only remark provoked by the change in the direction of the *Chancellor*.

On the next day, the 21st of October, the situation is the same. The voyage continues, in the eyes of the passengers, under the ordinary conditions, and nothing is changed in the routine of the life on board.

The progress of the fire, however, does not betray itself outside, and this is a good sign. The openings have been so tightly sealed up, that not a whiff of smoke betrays the conflagation below. Perhaps it may be possible to concentrate the fire in the hold, and, perhaps, in

short, from want of air, it will go out of itself, or will be so stifled as not to extend to the whole of the cargo. This is Curtis's hope, and, by his extreme precaution, he has even had the orifice of the pumps plugged up; for the pipe, extending to the bottom of the hold, might give passage to a few whiffs of air.

May heaven come to our aid, for surely we cannot help ourselves! This day would have passed without any incident, if chance had not led me to hear a conversation, which apprized me that our situation, already so serious, is becoming terrible.

The reader may judge of this from what follows.

I was sitting on the poop, where two of the passengers were talking in a low voice, not suspecting that their words would reach my ear. These were the engineer, Falsten, and the merchant, Ruby, who often conversed together.

My attention was first attracted by one or two significant gestures from Falsten, who seemed to be earnestly reproaching his companion. I could not help listening, and I heard these words:—

"Why, it is absurd! a man could not be more imprudent!"

"Bah!" replied Ruby carelessly, "nothing will come of it."

"A great misfortune may come of it, on the contrary," returned the engineer.

"Good! It is not the first time I have done so."

"But only a shock is necessary to bring about an explosion!"

"The box is securely packed, Mr. Falsten, and I repeat, there is nothing to fear."

"Why not have apprized the captain?"

"Eh! Because he would have wished to take away my box."

The wind having subsided for a few moments, I heard nothing further: but it was clear that the engineer continued to insist, whilst Ruby confined himself to shrugging his shoulders.

Not long after, these words reached my ears:—

"Yes, yes," says Falsten, "you must inform the captain! This box must be thrown overboard! I have no wish to be blown up!" Blown up? I was roused by this expression. What did the engineer mean? To what did he allude? He certainly did not know the condition of the *Chancellor*, and was ignorant of the fire which is devouring the cargo.

But one word, one terrible word, made me bound; and this word, or rather these words, "picrate of potassium," were repeated several times.

In an instant I was beside the two passengers and involuntarily, and with irresistable force, I seized Ruby by the collar.

"Is there picrate of potassium on board?"

"Yes," replied Falsten, "a box that contains thirty pounds of it."

"Where?"

"In the hold, with the cargo.

XI.

October 21.—Continued. I cannot describe what passed in my mind on hearing Falsten's reply. It was not terror: I experienced rather a sort of resignation. It seemed to me that this completed the situation, and, even, that it might give issue to it. I was perfectly cool, therefore, when I went in search of Robert Curtis, on the forecastle.

On learning that a box containing thirty pounds of picrate of potassium—that is to say, enough to blow up a mountain—is on board, at the bottom of the hold, in the very seat of the fire, and that the *Chancellor* may explode from one instant to another, Curtis does not frown; his forehead scarcely wrinkles, his pupils scarcely dilate.

"Well," he says, "not a word of this? Where is Ruby?"

"On the poop."

"Come with me Mr. Kazallon."

We repair together to the poop, where the engineer and the merchant are still talking.

Curtis goes straight up to them.

"You have done this?" asks he, addressing Ruby.

"Well, yes, I have done it," replies Ruby quietly, thinking that at most he is guilty of a fraud.

It seems to me for a moment that Robert Curtis is about to crush the luckless passenger, who cannot comprehend the gravity of his imprudence. But the mate succeeds in controlling himself, and I see him clenching his hands behind his back, so as not to be tempted to seize Ruby by the throat.

Then, in a calm voice, he interrogates Ruby. The latter confirms what I have reported. Among the boxes containing his stock of goods is one with about thirty pounds of the dangerous mixture. Ruby has acted in this case with that sort of imprudence, which, it must be confessed, is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon races; and has introduced this explosive mixture in the hold of the ship, as a Frenchman would have done with a mere bottle of wine. If he did not declare the nature of this box, it was because he knew perfectly well that the captain would not have received it on board.

"After all," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "it is nothing to take a man to task for; if this box disturbs you so much, you can throw it into the sea. My stock is insured."

At this reply I cannot contain myself, for I

do not possess Robert Curtis's coolness, and my anger overcomes me. I fall upon Ruby before the mate can prevent me, and cry "Wretch! you don't know, then, that the ship is on fire!"

Scarcely are these words pronounced before I regret them; but it is too late. The effect they produce on Ruby is indescribable. He is seized with a convulsive terror. His body paralyzed into stiffness, his hair dishevelled, his eyes starting from their sockets, panting as if he were asthmatic, he cannot speak, and horror, in him, has reached its acme. All at once his arms move; he gazes at the deck of the *Chancellor*, which may be blown up at any instant; he falls down below the poop, rises, runs up and down the ship, gesticulating like a maniac. Then he recovers speech, and these sinister words escape from his mouth:—

"There is fire on board! There is fire on board!"

At this cry, the whole crew rush upon deck, thinking, doubtless, that the fire has broken out above, and that the hour has come to fly in the boats. The passengers hasten up—Mr. Kear, his wife, Miss Hervey, the Letourneurs. Robert Curtis tries to impose silence on Ruby, but Ruby is beside himself.

At this moment the disorder is extreme. Mrs. Kear has fallen, fainting, on the deck. Her husband pays no attention to her, and leaves Miss Hervey to tend her. The sailors

have already prepared the tackle of the long-boat so as to launch it upon the ocean.

Meanwhile, I am telling the Letourneurs that the cargo is on fire, and the father's first thought is of his boy, whom he folds in his arms. The young man preserves his presence of mind, and reassures his father by reminding him that the danger is not an immediate one.

Curtis, with the aid of Walter has succeeded in stopping his men. He assures them that the fire has not made fresh progress, that the passenger Ruby does not know what he is about or what he is saying, that they must not act hastily, and, that, when the moment comes, the ship will be abandoned. Most of the sailors stop at the mate's voice, for they both like and respect him. He can persuade them to do what Captain Huntly could not, and the long boat remains in its place. Happily, Ruby had not spoken of his chest, shut up in the hold. If the sailors knew the truth—if they learned that the ship is really a volcano, ready, perhaps, to burst forth under their feet, they would become demoralized, and could not be prevented from making off in the boats, cost what it might.

The mate, Falsten and I, alone know in what a terrible way the fire on board is complicated; and it is imperative that we alone should know it.

When order is re-established, Curtis and I join Falsten on the poop. The engineer has re-

mained there, with folded arms, thinking, perhaps, of some mechanical problem, in the midst of the general terror. We advise him to say nothing of this new danger, due to Ruby's imprudence.

Falsten promises to keep it secret. As for Captain Huntly, who is still ignorant of the extreme gravity of the situation, Curtis promises to inform him of it. But Ruby's person must first be secured, for he still continues quite out of his head. He has no consciousness of his actions, and runs across the deck, all the while crying out, "fire! fire!"

The mate orders the sailors to seize him, gag him, and bind him securely. He is then carried to his cabin, where he will for the future be closely guarded.

The terrible word has not escaped his lips!

XII.

October 22 and 23.—Robert Curtis has told everything to Captain Huntly. Captain Huntly is by right, if not in fact, his chief, and he could not conceal the situation from him.

The captain did not reply a word, and after passing his hand across his forehead, like a man who wishes to drive away annoying thoughts, he

quietly re-entered his cabin, without giving any orders whatever.

Curtis, Walter, the boatswain and I hold counsel together, and I am amazed at the coolness with which each of these men discuss the subject. All the chances of safety are considered, and Curtis sums up the situation thus:—

"The fire cannot be checked, and the temperature of the sailors' quarters forward, has already become insupportable. The time will come, then, perhaps soon, when the intensity of the fire will be such, that the flames will break out on deck. If, before this new form of the catastrophe, the state of the sea enables us to make use of the boats, we will abandon the ship. If, on the contrary, it is not possible for us to quit the *Chancellor*, we will struggle against the fire to the last. Who knows if we shall not be able to subdue it, when it has at last burst out! We may be able to fight the visible enemy better than the concealed one."

"That is my opinion," said the engineer quietly.

"It is also mine," say I;" "but, Mr. Curtis, have you taken account of the thirty pounds of picrate of potassium, shut up at the bottom of the hold?

"No Mr. Kazallon. That is only a detail; I take no account of it! And why should I? Can I go and search for this substance in the midst of a cargo on fire, and in a hold where we must

not permit the air to penetrate? No; I do not wish to even think of it! Before the sentence I am uttering is out of my mouth, this explosion might produce its effect, might it not? Yes! Then the fire will either reach it, or it will not. Therefore the circumstance of which you speak does not exist for me. It is in the power of God, and not in mine, to spare us this supreme catastrophe."

Curtis pronounces these words in a solemn tone, and we bow our heads without response. Considering the state of the sea, then, we had better forget this circumstance.

"The explosion is not necessary, as a formalist would say; it is only contingent."

This remark is made by the engineer, with the most admirable coolness in the world.

"I would like to ask you one question, Mr. Falsten," I say, "can picrate of potassium ignite when there is no collission?"

"Certainly," replied the engineer. Under ordinary conditions, this substance is not more inflammable than common powder; but it is as much so. Ergo—"

Falsten says "Ergo." One might fancy he is making a demonstration to a chemical class.

We then go on deck. As we pass out of the cabin, Curtis seizes my hand.

"Mr. Kazallon," he says, without trying to conceal his emotion, "to see this *Chancellor*

which I love, being devoured by fire, and to be able to do nothing—nothing—"

Mr. Curtis, your emotion—"

"Sir," he resumes, "I have not been able to control it. You alone have seen all that I suffer. But it is over," he adds, making a violent effort to recover his usual calmness.

"Is the situation desperate, then?" I ask.

"This is the situation," he replies, coldly: "we are attached to a mine furnace, and the match is lit! It remains to see if this match is long!"

He then walks away.

At all events, the sailors and passengers are ignorant of the worst feature of our position.

As soon as the fire is known, Mr. Kear begins to busy himself collecting his most valuable belongings, and, naturally, never gives a thought to his wife. After giving the mate his orders to extinguish the fire, and holding him responsible for all consequences, he retires to his cabin aft, and doesn't reappear. Mrs. Kear keeps up a constant groaning, and, despite her weaknesses, elicits the pity of the other passengers. Miss Hervey thinks herself less than ever freed from her duties to her mistress, and tends her with an absolute devotedness. I cannot but admire this young girl, to whom duty is everything.

On the next day, the 23d of October, Captain Huntly sends for the mate, who repairs to his

cabin; and there a conversation ensues, which Robert Curtis reports to me.

"Mr. Curtis," says the captain, whose haggard eyes indicate mental trouble, "I am a sailor, am I not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, consider that I no longer know my trade. I can't tell what is the matter with me —I forget—I don't know. Have we, or not, gone northeastward since we left Charleston?

"No, sir; we have run southeastward, according to your orders."

"We are freighted, though, for Liverpool?'

"Undoubtedly."

"And the—what is the ship's name, Mr. Curtis?"

"The *Chancellor*."

"Ah yes, the *Chancellor!* And we are now——"

"South of the tropic."

"Well, sir, I won't undertake to bring her back to the north! No, I could not. I want to stay in my cabin; the sight of the sea makes me sick!"

"Sir," replies Curtis, "I hope that, with good care—"

"Yes, yes, we will see, later on. Meanwhile I am going to give you an order, but it is the last you will get from me."

"I am listening, sir."

"From this moment, sir," resumes the captain, "I am no longer anything on board, and you take command of the ship. The circumstances are too much for me, and I feel that I am not equal to them. I am losing my head! I suffer a good deal, Mr. Curtis," adds Silas Huntly, pressing both his hands against his forehead.

The mate looks attentively at the man who has hitherto been in command, and contents himself with replying, "It is well, sir."

Then, going on deck, he recounts to me what has passed.

"Yes," say I, "this man has a diseased brain, if he is not actually insane; and it is much better that he should voluntarily give up his command."

"I replace him under grave circumstances," returns Curtis. "But never mind; I will do my duty."

This said, he calls a sailor, and orders him to go for the boatswain, who speedily appears.

"Boatswain," says Curtis, "get the crew together under the main-mast."

The boatswain retires, and, a few minutes after, the sailors of the *Chancellor* are collected at the appointed place.

"Lads," says Curtis, "going into the midst of them, "in the situation in which we are, and for reasons known to me, Mr. Silas Huntly has

thought best to resign his functions as captain. From this day I am in command on board."

Thus is effected a change which cannot but be best for all. We have at our head a man at once energetic and sure, who will not recoil before any measure for the common safety. The Letourneurs, Falsten, and I hasten to congratulate Robert Curtis, and Walter and the boatswain join their good wishes to ours. The ship's course is now to the southwest, and Curtis, in forcing the sails, is trying to reach, with the least possible delay, the Little Antilles.

XIII.

From October 24 *to October* 29.—For the past five days the sea has been very rough. Though the *Chancellor* has ceased to struggle against it, and runs with wind and wave, she has been very much shaken. During this voyage on a fire-ship we have not had a single moment of quiet. We contemplate the water which surrounds the vessel, and attracts and fascinates us, with envious eyes.

"Why not tap the keel below the water-line?" I say to Robert Curtis. "Why not dash tons of water into the hold? What harm, if the ship is full of it? The fire once put out, the

pumps would throw off all this water into the sea."

"Mr. Kazallon," returns the mate, "I have already told you, and repeat, that, if we give the smallest passage to the air, the fire will spread over the whole ship in an instant, and the flames will envelop her from the keel to the tops of the masts. We are condemned to inaction, and there are times when we must have the courage to do nothing."

Yes, to keep every issue hermetically closed is the only means of contending with the fire; and this is what the crew is doing.

Still, the progress of the fire is constant, and perhaps more rapid than we suppose. Little by little the heat has become intense enough to drive the passengers on deck, and the aft cabins, well lighted by the windows of the breastwork, are the only ones fit for occupation. Mrs. Kear never leaves one of these, and the other has been assigned by Curtis to Ruby. I have been several times to see this miserable man. He is really insane, and has to be kept tied, or he would break the door of his cabin. Strangely enough he has retained, in his madness, a feeling of frightful terror, and utters horrible cries, as if, under some strange hallucination, he really felt himself burning.

I have also paid several visits to the ex-captain, and find him very calm; he talks reasonably, except on the subject of his profession as

a sailor. He no longer betrays common-sense when speaking of this. I offer him my services, for he is suffering; but he does not wish to accept them, and never leaves his cabin.

To-day, the crew's quarters have been invaded by a tart and nauseous smoke, which filters through the cracks in the partition. It is certain that the fire is gaining on that side, and, by listening attentively, a dull roaring may be heard. Where, then, does the air get in to feed the fire? What opening has escaped our vigilance? The catastrophe cannot be far off now! Perhaps it is a question of a few days, perhaps of a few hours; and, unhappily, the sea is so much swollen that we cannot for a moment think of taking to the boats.

The partition of the crew's quarters is covered, by the orders of Curtis, with a tarpaulin which is kept continually moist with water.

Despite these precautions, the smoke still escapes, with a damp heat, which spreads over the forward part of the ship and makes the air there difficult to breathe.

Happily, the main-mast and mizzen-masts are of iron. Were they not, burned at their bases, they would have fallen by this time, and we should have been lost.

Robert Curtis has put on all sail possible, and, under the northeast wind which has sprung up, the *Chancellor* is ploughing swiftly across the waves.

It is fourteen days since the fire was discovered, and it has been constantly increasing, for we have not been able to contend with it. Now, the working of the ship is becoming more and more difficult. On the poop—the flooring of which is in immediate connection with the hold—we can still walk about; but on the deck, as far as the forecastle, it is impossible to walk even with thick shoes. The water no longer suffices to moisten the planks, which the fire is licking beneath. The rosin of the sap-wood shrivels up around the knots, the seams are opening, and the coating, liquefied by the heat, runs off in capricious zig-zags. And, to complete the misfortune, the wind suddenly turns to the northwest, and blows furiously! It is a real tempest, such as sometimes bursts forth in these parts, and it drifts us away from the Antilles, which we are seeking to gain! Curtis tries to make headway against it; but the wind is so furious that the *Chancellor* cannot hold her try-sail, and we are soon forced to take flight from the blows of the sea, which are terrible when they strike a ship on the sides.

On the 29th, the storm is at its height. The ocean is in a savage fury, and the spray of the waves covers the *Chancellor*. It would be impossible to take to the boats, for they would upset immediately. We have taken refuge, some on the poop, others on the forecastle. We stare at each other, but dare not speak. As for

the box of picrate, we no longer think of it. We have forgotten the "detail," as Robert Curtis calls it. I really do not know whether the blowing up of the ship, which would end our suspense at once, is not to be desired. As I write this, I am trying to give the exact condition of our minds. Man, long menaced by a danger, ends by wishing that it would come; for the waiting for an inevitable catastrophe is more horrible than the reality.

While it is yet time, Captain Curtis orders a portion of the provisions, stored in the steward's room, where no one can now remain, to be taken out. The heat has already spoiled a large quantity of the provisions; but several barrels of salt meat and biscuit, a cask of wine-brandy, and some hogsheads of water have been put on deck; and some coverings, instruments, a mariner's compass, and some sails have been collected there, so that, in an emergency, we may be able to quit the ship at once.

At eight in the evening, despite the noise of the tempest, clamorous roarings are heard. The hatchways of the deck rise under the pressure of the heated air, and whirlwinds of black smoke escape, like the vapor under the cap of a boiler valve.

The sailors hasten towards Robert Curtis, to ask him for orders.

The same idea has taken possession of all,—

to fly from this volcano which is about to burst forth under our feet!

Curtis looks at the ocean, the monstrous waves of which are breaking into foam. We can no longer get near the long-boat, lying on its stocks in the middle of the deck; but it is still possible to make use of the barge, suspended astern of the ship.

The sailors rush towards the barge.

"No!" cries Curtis, "that would be to risk our last chance on an angry sea!"

Some excited sailors, with Owen at their head, are still bent on taking to the boats. Curtis, leaping on the poop and seizing a hatchet, cries out,—

"The first man who touches the tackle dies!"

The sailors recoil. Some mount in the rat-lines of the shrouds; others take refuge in the tops.

At eleven o'clock, loud reports are heard in the hold. The partitions are bursting, leaving passage to the hot air and smoke. Soon torrents of vapor issue by the companion-way of the sailors' quarters, and a long tongue of flame licks the mizzen-mast. Now loud cries are heard. Mrs. Kear, supported by Miss Hervey, hurriedly leaves her cabin, which the fire is attacking. Then Silas Huntly appears, his face blackened by smoke, and, after saluting Robert Curtis, tranquilly directs his steps to

the shrouds aft, climbs up the ratlines, and installs himself in the mizzen-top.

The appearance of Silas Huntly reminds me that another man remains a prisoner below the poop, in the cabin which the flames are perhaps on the point of devouring.

Must the wretched Ruby be left to perish? I rush toward the staircase. But the maniac, having broken his bonds, now shows himself, with his hair singed and his clothing on fire. Without uttering a cry, he walks across the deck, and his feet do not burn. He throws himself into the whirlwinds of smoke, but the smoke does not stifle him. He is a human salamander, rushing athwart the flames.

Then a fresh report resounds; the long-boat flies up with a loud noise; the middle hatch bursts open, tearing the tarpaulin to shreds; and a jet of fire long suppressed, leaps to the middle of the mast.

At this moment the madman shrieks loudly, and these words escape from his lips:—

"The picrate! We shall all be blown up—blown up!"

Then, before there is time to stop him, he leaps through the hatchway into the fiery furnace.

XIV.

During the night of October 29.—This scene has been a terrible one, and each of us, despite the desperate situation in which we are, feel all the horror of it.

Ruby is no more; but his last words may have serious consequences. The sailors have heard him cry: "The picrate!" They have comprehended that the ship may blow up at any moment, and that it is not only a conflagration, but also an explosion, when menaces them.

Some of the men, losing all self-control, wish to fly at all hazards and at once.

"The barge! the barge!" they cry.

They do not, will not see—fools that they are—that the sea is in a fury, and that no boat could brave those waves, which are foaming at a prodigious height. Nothing can stop them, and they do not hear their captain's voice. Curtis throws himself in the midst of his crew, but in vain. The sailor Owen appeals to his comrades; the barge is unfastened and pushed out towards the sea.

The boat is balanced for a moment in the air, and, obeying the rolling of the ship, butts against the wales. A last effort of the sailors

disengages it, and it is on the point of reaching the waters, when a monstrous wave seizes it from below, withdraws it for an instant, then dashes it against the side of the *Chancellor*. The long-boat and the barge are now gone, and there remains to us only a narrow and fragile whale-boat.

The sailors, stupefied, stand motionless. Nothing is heard but the whistling of the wind amid the rigging, and the roaring of the fire.

The furnace extends deep into the centre of the ship, and torrents of fuliginous vapor, escaping from the hatchway, shoot up heavenward. The poop cannot be seen from the forecastle, and a barrier of flame devides the *Chancellor* into two parts.

The passengers and two or three sailors take refuge in the aft part of the poop. Mrs. Kear is stretched out unconscious, on one of the hen-coops, and Miss Hervey is at her side. M. Letourneur has grasped his son in his arms, and presses him to his breast. I am seized by a nervous agitation, and am unable to calm myself. Falsten coolly consults his watch and takes note of the time in his diary.

What is going on forward, where the lieutenant, the boatswain, and the rest of the crew, whom we can no longer see, are doubtless stationed? All communication is cut off between the two halves of the vessel, and it is impossible

to cross the curtain of flame which escapes from the large hatchway.

I go up to Curtis.

"All is lost?" I ask.

"No," he replies. "Now that the hatchway is open, we will throw a torrent of water on this furnace, and perhaps we shall be able to put it out."

"But how can the pumps be worked upon the burning deck, Mr. Curtis? And how can you give orders to the sailors across these flames?"

Robert Curtis did not reply.

"All is lost?" I asked again.

"No, sir," says he. "No! As long as a plank of this ship remains under my feet, I shall not despair."

Meanwhile the violence of the fire is redoubled, and the sea is tinged with a reddish light. Above, the low clouds reflect broad tawny gleams. Long jets of fire spread across the hatchways, and we have taken refuge on the taffrail, behind the poop. Mrs. Kear has been laid on the whale-boat, and Miss Hervey has taken her place at her side. What a horrible night! What pen could describe its terrors? The tempest, now at the height of its fury, breathes over this furnace like an immense ventilator. The *Chancellor* speeds on through the darkness like a gigantic fire-ship. There

is no other alternative,—either to throw ourselves into the sea, or to perish in the flames!

But the picrate does not catch fire. This volcano will not burst, then, under our feet! Has Ruby lied? Is there no explosive substance shut up in the hold?

At half past eleven, when the sea is more terrible than ever, a strange rumbling, especially feared by sailors, is added to the noise of the furious elements, and this cry pierces the air,—

"Breakers! Breakers to starboard!"

Robert Curtis leaps upon the gunwale, casts a rapid glance over the white waves, and turning to the helmsman, cries, in a commanding voice,

"Helm to starboard!"

But it is too late. I perceive that we are lifted on the back of an enormous wave, and all of a sudden we feel a shock. The ship touches astern, strikes several times, and the mizzen-mast, broken at the deck, falls into the sea.

The *Chancellor* is motionless.

XV.

Night of October 29, *continued.*—It is not yet midnight. There is no moon, and we are in profound darkness. We know not at what point the ship has just run aground. Has she, violently driven by the storm, reached the American coast, and is land in sight?

I have said that the *Chancellor*, after striking several times, has remained perfectly motionless. Several moments after, a noise of chains aft apprizes Robert Curtis that the anchors have just been cast.

"Good, good!" says he. "The lieutenant and boatswain have let go the two anchors! It is to be hoped they will hold!"

I then see Robert Curtis advance along the gunwale as far as the flames permit him. He glides along the starboard chain-wale, on the side where the ship careens, and hangs on there for several minutes, despite the heavy masses of water which are crushing him. I see him listening. You would say that he was listening for some peculiar noise in the midst of the hurly-burly of the tempest.

At last he returns to the poop.

"Water is getting in," says he, "and perhaps this water—may Heaven grant it!—will overcome the fire!"

"But what after?"

"Mr. Kazallon," returned he, "'after' is in the future,—that will be as God wills. Let us think only of the present."

The first thing to do would be to resort to the pumps, only the flames will not just now permit us to reach them. Probably some plank, beaten in on the bottom of the ship, has given a large issue to the water, for it seems to me that the fire is already diminishing. I hear dull hissings, which prove that the two elements are contending with each other. The base of the fire has certainly been reached, and the first range of cotton-bales has already been soaked. Well, if the water stifles the fire, we, on our side, shall then have to struggle with the water in its turn! Perhaps it will be less formidable than the fire. Water is the sailor's element, and he is in the habit of overcoming it.

We wait with an indescribable anxiety during the three remaining hours of this long night. Where are we? It is certain that the waters are subsiding little by little, that the fury of the waves is growing less. The *Chancellor* ought to touch bottom an hour after high tide, but it is hard to ascertain exactly, without calculations or observations. If this be so, it may

be hoped that, supposing the fire to be put out, we shall get clear promptly at the next tide.

Towards half-past four the sheet of flame between the two ends of the ship diminishes little by little, and we at last perceive a dark group beyond it. It is the crew, who have taken refuge on the narrow forecastle. Soon we are able to communicate with each other, and Walter and the boatswain rejoin us on the poop, by walking along the gunwale, for it is as yet impossible to step foot on the deck.

Captain Curtis, Walter, and the boatswain hold a conference in my presence, and agree that nothing shall be done until daylight. If land is near, and the sea is practicable, they will gain the coast, either with the whale boat, or by means of a raft. If there is no land in sight, and the *Chancellor* is aground on an isolated reef, they will try to get her off and patch her up, so as to put her in condition to reach the nearest port.

"But it is difficult to guess where we are," says Curtis, with whose opinion the others agree; "for, with these northwest winds, the *Chancellor* must have been driven far to the southward. It is a long time since I have been able to take soundings; still, as I do not know of any rock in this part of the Atlantic, it may be that we have struck somewhere on the South American coast."

"But," I remark, "we are in constant danger

of an explosion. Could we not abandon the *Chancellor* and take refuge—"

"On this reef?" replies Curtis. "But what is its form? Is it not covered at high tide? Could we reconnoitre it in this darkness? Let us wait for daylight, and then we will see."

I at once report Curtis's words to the other passengers. They are not wholly reassuring, but no one wishes to think of the new danger to which the situation of the vessel threatens if, unhappily, she has been cast upon some unknown reef, several hundred miles from land. A single consideration engrosses all of us; that now the water is fighting for us, is getting the upper hand of the fire, and is therefore lessening the chances of an explosion. A thick smoke, indeed, has succeeded little by little to the bright flames, and is escaping from the hatchway. Some fiery tongues still shoot up in the midst of the smoke, but they suddenly go out. The hissing of the water being vaporized in the hold is heard, instead of the roaring of the flames. It is certain that the sea is now doing what neither our pumps nor our buckets could have done; for this conflagration which has spread into the midst of seventeen hundred bales of cotton, required nothing less than an inundation to put it out.

XVI.

October 30.—The first morning light has whitened the horizon, but the sea-fog confines the vision to a narrow circumference. No land is as yet in sight, yet our eyes eagerly scan the western and southern portions of the ocean.

At this moment the sea is almost calm. There are not six feet of water around the ship, which, when full freighted, sinks nearly fifteen feet. Points of rock emerge here and there, and we perceive, by certain colors in the bottom, that this reef is composed of rocks of basalt. How was the *Chancellor* carried so far forward upon this reef? An enormous wave must have lifted her, and it was doubtless that which I felt just before we struck. After examining for a long time, the line of rocks which surround her I begin to ask myself how we are going to succeed in getting her off. She is inclined both astern and astem, which makes it difficult to walk on the deck: and, besides, as fast as the level of the ocean descends, she leans more and more to the larboard. Robert Curtis for a moment surmises that she will capsize at low water: but her inclination has at last become definitely fixed, and there is nothing to fear in this respect.

At six in the morning we feel violent shocks. It is the mizzen-mast, which, having fallen, has returned to beat against the sides of the *Chancellor*. At the same time loud cries are heard, and the name of Robert Curtis is several times repeated. We look in the direction whence these cries proceed, and in the dim light of the coming day we see a man clinging to the mizzen-top. It is Silas Huntly, whom the fallen mast has carried down with it, and who has miraculously escaped his death.

Robert Curtis hastens to the aid of his old captain, and braving a thousand dangers, succeeds in hauling him on board. Silas Huntly, without uttering a word, goes and sits down in the remotest corner of the poop. This man, become an absolutely passive being, no longer counts for anything.

They then succeed in carrying the mizzen-mast round to leeward, and it is now moored securely to the ship, so that it no longer bumps against the side. Perhaps this waif will be of service to us,—who knows?

Now it is light, and the fog has begun to lift. We can already discern the perimeter of the horizon for more than three miles, but nothing as yet appears that looks like a coast. The line of breakers runs southwest and northeast for nearly a mile. In the north a sort of islet, of irregular form, appears. It is a capricious jumble of rocks, distant, at most, two hundred

fathoms from the place where the *Chancellor* is aground, and some fifty feet high. It must, therefore, overlook the level of the highest tides. A sort of narrow bank but one practicable at low water, will enable us to reach this islet if necessary.

Beyond, the sea resumes its sombre color. There the water is deep. There ends the reef.

A great discouragement, justified by the situation of the ship, takes possession of the minds of all. It is to be feared, in short, that these breakers do not belong to any land.

At this moment it is seven o'clock,—the day is clear, and the fog has vanished. The horizon stands out with perfect distictness around the *Chancellor*, but the line of the water and that of the sky unite, and the sea fills all the intervening space.

Robert Curtis, motionless, observes the ocean, especially in the west. M. Letourneur and I, standing side by side, watch his smallest movements, and clearly read the thoughts which crowd on his mind. His surprise is great, for he had good reason to think that he was near land, as we have almost constantly sailed southward since leaving the Bermudas; still no land is in sight.

Robert Curtis, quitting the poop, now goes along the gunwale to the shrouds, climbs up the ratlines, seizes the shrouds of the main-mast, springs over the capstan bars, and quickly

reaches the top-gallant mast. From there he for some time carefully scrutinizes space; then, seizing one of the backstays, he lets himself slip to the wale and returns to us.

We look at him inquiringly.

"No land," he says, coldly.

Mr. Kear then comes forward, and, in an ill-natured tone, says, "Where are we, sir?"

"I have no idea, Mr. Kear."

"You ought to know," replied Mr. Kear, stupidly.

"Perhaps, but I do not."

"Well," resumed the passenger, "you must know, then, that I have no intention of staying eternally on your boat, sir, and I call upon you to depart!"

Robert Curtis contents himself with shrugging his shoulders. Then turning towards M. Letourneur and me, he says, "I will make an observation if the sun comes out, and we shall then know to what part of the Atlantic the sea has driven us."

He busies himself with distributing provisions to the passengers and crew. We all have need of food, for we are weak from weariness and hunger. We devour some biscuit and a little salt meat; then the captain, without losing an instant, takes measures for getting the ship afloat again.

The fire has greatly diminished, and now no flame appears outside. There is less smoke,

though it is still black. It is certain that the *Chancellor* has a great deal of water in her hold, but this cannot be determined, as the deck is impassable.

Robert Curtis orders the burning planks to be sprinkled, and in two hours the sailors are able to walk on the deck.

The first care is to make soundings, and this is done by the boatswain. He finds that there are five feet of water in the hold, but the captain does not yet give the order to bail it out, for he wishes that it should finish its work. First, the fire. Then the water.

Now, is it best to leave the ship at once, and take refuge on the reef? This is not Captain Curtis's opinion, and he is supported by Walter and the boatswain.

In a heavy sea, indeed, we could not maintain ourselves even upon the highest of these rocks, which must be washed by the big waves. As for the chances of explosion, they are now distinctly less; the water has certainly invaded that part of the hold where Ruby's stock is stored, and consequently the dangerous box. It is therefore determined that neither passengers nor crew shall abandon the *Chancellor*.

A sort of camp is then prepared aft, on the poop, with some mattresses which have not been burned, for the two female passengers. The sailors, who have saved their sacks, place them under the forecastle. They will lodge there, as their quarters are quite uninhabitable.

Happily, but little damage has been done to the steward's room; the provisions, for the most part, have been spared, as well as the hogsheads of water. The spare stores of sails, forward, are also intact.

We are at last, perhaps, at the end of our trials. One might be tempted to think so; for since morning the wind has considerably abated, and the surge of the sea has to a great degree subsided. This is a favorable circumstance, for the strokes of a heavy sea at this moment would inevitably break her to pieces on these hard basalts.

M. Letourneur and I have talked much about the officers on board, and the sailors, and the way in which all of them have conducted themselves throughout this period of dangers. They have all betrayed courage and energy. Lieutenant Walter, the boatswain, and Douglas the carpenter, have especially distinguished themselves. These are brave fellows, good sailors, who may well be trusted. There is no need to praise Robert Curtis. Now, as always, he multiplies himself and is everywhere; no difficulty seems to dismay him; he encourages his sailors with word and gesture, and has become the soul of the crew, which only acts through his inspiration.

Since seven in the morning, however, the sea has begun to rise again. It is now eleven, and the heads of the breakers have disappeared beneath the waves. We must expect the level of

the water in the hold of the *Chancellor* to rise as fast as the level of the sea rises; and this occurs.

There are soon nine feet of water in the hold, and new layers of cotton are inundated; and we cannot but find much comfort in this.

Since it has got to be high tide, most of the rocks which surround the ship are submerged; only the form of a small circular basin, with a diameter of from two hundred and fifty to three hundred feet, of which the *Chancellor* occupies the northern angle, is now visible. The sea is quite calm, and the waves do not reach the ship, —a happy circumstance, since, being perfectly immovable, our vessel would otherwise be beaten against like a rock.

At half past eleven the sun, which has been hidden by clouds since ten, fortunately shows itself. The captain who, during the morning, has calculated by a horary angle, gets ready to ascertain the meridian height, and towards noon he makes a very accurate observation. Then he descends to his cabin, makes his calculation, reappears on the poop, and says to us,—

"We are in 18° 5′ north latitude, and 45° 53′ west longitude."

He then explained the situation to those who are ignorant of the meaning of these figures. Robert Curtis is wise enough to wish to conceal nothing, and is anxious that every one should

know exactly what to make of the existing state of things.

The *Chancellor* has stranded in 18° 5′ north latitude and 45° 53′ west longitude, on a reef not indicated by the charts. How can such reefs exist in this part of the Atlantic without being known? Is this islet, then, a recent formation, and has it been caused by some Plutonian upheaving? I can see scarcely any other explanation of the fact. However this may be, this islet is at least eight hundred miles from Guiana; that is, from the nearest land. This is what the captain's observations and the charts establish in the most positive manner.

The *Chancellor*, then, has been driven southward to the eighteen parallel, at first by the infatuated obstinacy of Captain Huntly, and then by the northwest wind-storm which has forced her to fly. Therefore the *Chancellor* must still sail more than eight hundred miles before reaching the nearest coast.

Such is the situation. It is serious, but the impression given by the captain's information is not a bad one,—at least, just now. What new danger could now move us who have just escaped from the menaces of conflagration and explosion? It is forgotten that the hold is full of water, that land is afar off, that the *Chancellor*, when she takes to the sea again, may founder on her passage. But our minds are still under

the influence of the terrors passed, and, finding a little tranquility, are disposed to take good cheer.

What is Robert Curtis going to do now? Simply that which the purest common-sense enjoines; to put the fire entirely out, to throw overboard the whole or part of the cargo, not forgetting the horrible box of picrate, to stop up the issue of the water, and, the ship being relieved, to profit by a high tide to leave the reef at the earliest possible moment.

XVII.

October 30, *continued.*—I have been talking with M. Letourneur about our situation, and have thought myself entitled to assure him that our stay on the reef will be short, if events favor us. But M. Letourneur does not seem to share my opinion.

"I fear on the contrary, he replies, "that we shall have to remain a long while on these rocks."

"Why so?" I ask. "It is not a long or difficult job to throw a few hundred bales of cotton overboard; it can be done in two or three days."

"No doubt, Mr. Kazallon, that could be done rapidly, if the sailors could set to work from to-

day. But it is quite impossible to penetrate the hold of the *Chancellor*; for the air is stifling, and who knows whether it will not be several days before any one can go down there, as the middle layer of the cargo is still burning? Besides, after we have got the complete upper hand of the fire, shall we be in a condition to sail? No; it will still remain to stop up the hole now open to the water, which must be a large one, and that with the greatest care, if we would not founder after having run in danger of being burned. No, Mr. Kazallon, let us not deceive ourselves; I think we shall be fortunate if we leave the reef within three weeks. And may Heaven grant that no tempest comes before we have put to sea again; for the *Chancellor* would be shattered like glass on this reef, which would become our tomb!"

That is, indeed, the greatest danger which menaces us. The fire will be subdued, the ship will be repaired,—at least there is every reason to believe so; but we are at the mercy of a tempest. Admitting that the highest part of the reef might offer a refuge during a storm, what would become of the passengers and crew of the *Chancellor*, when only a wreck remained of their ship?

"M. Letourneur," I then ask, "you have confidence in Robert Curtis?"

"An absolute confidence, Mr. Kazallon; and I regard it as a blessing from Heaven that Cap-

tain Huntly gave over to him the command of the ship. All that it is possible and necessary to do to extricate us from our desperate condition will, I am confident, be done by Robert Curtis."

When I ask the captain how long he thinks we shall remain on the reef, he replies that he cannot yet estimate it, and that it depends entirely upon circumstances; but he hopes that the weather will not be unfavourable. The barometer is steadily rising, and does not oscillate as it does when the atmospheric strata are in a disturbed condition. This is a sign of a durable calm, therefore a happy presage for our tasks.

For the rest, not an hour is lost, and all hands set to work with a will.

Robert Curtis first takes measures to entirely put out the fire, which is still consuming the upper layer of cotton bales, above the level which the water has reached in the hold. But there is no idea of wasting time in sparing the cargo. It is clear that the only way is to stifle the fire between two sheets of water. The pumps, therefore, are brought into use to perform their office.

During this operation the crew amply suffices to work the pumps. The passengers are not put into requisition, but all of us are ready to help; nor will our aid be superfluous, when the time comes to unload the vessel.

The Letourneurs and I meanwhile pass the time in talking and reading, and I seize the occasion also, to write up my diary. The engineer Falsten, who talks little, is always deep in his figures, or in drawing diagrams of machines, with plan, section, and elevation. Would to Heaven that he could invent some powerful apparatus to get the *Chancellor* off the reef!

As for the Kears, they keep apart, and spare us the weariness of hearing their constant complaints; unhappily Miss Hervey is obliged to remain with them, and we see but little of the young girl.

Silas Huntly takes no part in anything of interest to the ship; the sailor no longer exists in him and he barely vegetates.

The steward, Hobbart, performs his wonted duties, as if the vessel was sailing in its ordinary routine. Hobbart is an obsequious, dissembling person, on far from good terms with Jynxtrop, his cook, who is a negro with an ugly face, a brutal and impudent manner, and who mingles more than is proper with the other sailors.

There is no want of resources to pass the time on board. The idea fortunately occurs to me to explore the unknown reef upon which the *Chancellor* has struck. The excursion will be neither a long nor a varied one, but is an excuse for quitting the ship for a few hours, and studying a soil whose origin is certainly a curious one.

It is important, moreover, to make a careful plan of this reef, which is not set down on the charts. I think that the Letourneurs and myself are able to perform this hydrographic task, leaving it to Captain Curtis to complete it when he finds time to calculate the latitude and longitude of the reef with the utmost exactness.

The Leteurneurs are pleased with my project. The whale-boat, furnished with sounding lines, and with a sailor to row it, is put at our disposal, and we leave the *Chancellor* on the morning of October 31.

XVIII.

From October 31 *to November* 5.—We have begun to make the tour of the reef, the length of which is about a quarter of a mile.

This little voyage of circumnavigation is rapidly accomplished, and, sounding-line in hand, we ascertain the depth below the rocks. It is no longer doubtful that a sudden upheaving, a violent outburst, due to the action of subterraneous forces, has thrown this reef above the sea.

The origin of this island is not open to dispute. It is purely volcanic. Everywhere are blocks of basalt, disposed in perfect order, the regular prisms of which give to the whole

the appearance of a gigantic crystallization. The sea is marvellously transparent at the perpendicular side of the rock, and reveals the curious cluster of prismatic shafts which support this remarkable substructure.

"What a strange islet!" says M. Letourneur. "And its existence is certainly recent."

"That is clear, father," replied young Andre, "and you may add that it is the same phenomenon that is produced at Julia Island, on the coast of Sicily, and at the groups of the Santorins, in the Archipelago, which has created this islet, and made it large enough to permit this *Chancellor* to run aground upon it."

"Indeed," I add, "an upheaving must have taken place in this part of the ocean, since this rock does not appear on the latest charts; for it could not have escaped the notice of the sailors in this locality, which is much frequented. Let us then, explore it carefully, and bring it to the knowledge of the navigators."

"Who knows if it will not soon disappear by a phenomenon similar to that which produced it?" replies Andre. "You know Mr. Kazallon, that these volcanic islands often have but a brief duration; and by the time that the geographers have set this one down in their new maps, perhaps it will no longer be in existence."

"No matter, dear boy," says his father. "Much better point out a danger which does not exist, than to ignore one that does; and

sailors will have no right to complain if they no longer find a rock here, where we shall have made note of one."

"You are right, father; and, after all, it is very possible that this islet is destined to last as long as our continents. Only, if it is to disappear, Captain Curtis would prefer that it should be within a few days, when he shall have repaired his damages; for that would save him the trouble of refloating his ship."

"Really Andre," I cry, jokingly, "you pretend to dispose of nature as if you were sovereign of it! You wish that it should upheave and ingulf a reef at your will, according to your personal need; and, after having created these rocks especially to permit the fire to be put out on board the *Chancellor*, that it should make them disappear at a stroke of your wand, to free her!"

"I wish for nothing," replies the young man, smiling, "unlessit is to thank God for having so visibly protected us. It was He who threw our ship on this reef, and He will set her afloat again, when the right moment comes."

"And we will aid in this with all our resources, will we not, my friends?"

"Yes, Mr. Kazallon," replies M. Letourneur, "for it is the law of humanity to help itself. However, Andre is right to put his trust in God. Certainly, in venturing upon the sea, man makes a remarkable use of the qualities

with which nature has endowed him; but, on this ocean without limits, when the elements breaks loose, he perceives how feeble and disarmed he is! I think that the sailors motto should be this: 'Confidence in one's self, and faith in God!'"

"Nothing is more true, M. Letourneur," I reply. "I, too, think that there are very few sailors whose souls are obstinately callous to religious impressions."

As we talk, we carefully examine the rocks which form the base of the islet, and everything convinces us that its origin is recent.

Not a sea-weed or shell clings to the side of the rock. A student in natural history would not be paid for the trouble of searching this heap of crags, where vegetable and animal nature has not yet set the imprint of its seal. Mollusks are absolutely wanting, and there are no hydrophytes. The wind has not wafted hither so much as a germ, nor have the sea-birds here sought refuge. Geology alone can find an intesting study in examining this basaltic substructure, which betrays every trace of subterranean formation.

At this moment our boat is returning to the point south of the islet on which the *Chancellor* is stranded. I propose to my companions to land, and they consent to do so.

"In case the island is destined to disappear," said Andre, laughing, "at least human creatures have paid a visit to it."

The boat runs alongside of the rock, and we land upon it. Andre goes forward, for the ground is quite practicable, and the young man does not need to be supported. His father keeps a little behind him, near me, and we pass up the rock by a very gentle ascent which leads to its highest summit.

A quarter of an hour suffices to accomplish this distance, and all three of us sit down upon basaltic prism which crowns the highest rock of the islet. Andre draws a notebook from his pocket and begins to sketch the reef, the contour of which stands out very sharply against the green ground of the sea.

The sky is clear, and the sea, now at low water, reveals the remotest points which emerge on the south, leaving between them the narrow pass entered by the *Chancellor* before she stranded.

The form of the reef is a singular one, and calls to mind a "York ham"; the central part widens to the swelling, the summit of which we occupy.

When Andre has sketched the outline of the islet, his father says to him,—

"Why, my boy you have been drawing a ham!"

"Yes, father, a basaltic ham, of a shape to rejoice Gargantua. If Captain Curtis consents, we will name this reef 'Ham Rock.'"

"Certainly," I cry, "the name is well thought

of. The reef of Ham Rock! And let the navigators take care to keep at a respectful distance from it, for they have not teeth hard enough to gnaw it!"

The *Chancellor* has stranded on the extreme south of the islet, that is, on the neck of the ham, and in the little creek formed by the concavity of this neck. She leans over on her starboard side, and just now inclines a great deal, owing to the water being very low.

When Andre has finished his sketch, we re-descend by another inclination, which passes gently downward on the western side, and we soon come upon a pretty grotto. You would have almost imagined it to be an architectural work of the kind which nature has formed in the Hebrides, and especially on the Island of Staffa. The Letourneurs, who have visited Fingal's Cave, find a remarkable resemblance to it in this grotto, but in miniature. There is the same arrangement of concentric prisms, due to the manner of the cooling of the basalts; the same roofing of black beams, the joints of which are stuck with a yellow material; the same purity of the prismatic edges, which the chisel of a sculptor would not have more clearly fashioned; finally, the same rustling of the air across the sonorous basalts, of which the Gauls made harps in the shades of Fingal's Cave. But, at Staffa, the soil is a liquid sheet; while here, the grotto can only be reached by the most stormy waves, and the prismatic shafts form a solid pavement.

"Besides," says Andre, the grotto of Staffa is a vast Gothic cathedral, and this is only a chapel of the cathedral. But who would of thought to find such a marvel on an unknown reef in the ocean!"

After we had rested an hour in the grotto of Ham Rock, we coast along the islet and return to the *Chancellor*. We tell Robert Curtis of our discoveries, and he notes the islet on his chart, with the name which Andre has given to it.

During the ensuing days, we have not neglected to make excursions to the grotto of Ham Rock, where we pass many pleasant hours. Robert Curtis has also visited it, but like a man absorbed in something very different from the admiration of a wonder of nature. Halsten has been there once, to examine the nature of the rocks, and break off some pieces with the pitilessness of a geologist. Mr. Kear has not wished to put himself to the inconvenience of going, and has remained on board. I have invited Mrs. Kear to accompany us on one of our excursions, but the discomfort of going in the boat and getting tired has induced her to refuse my invitation.

M. Letourneur has also asked Miss Hervey if it would be agreeable to her to visit the reef. The young girl thought herself justified in accepting his proposal, glad to escape, if only for an hour, from the capricious tyranny of her

mistress. But when she asked Mrs. Kear's permission, that lady bluntly refused it.

I am provoked at this conduct, and intercede with Mrs. Kear in the young girl's behalf. Persuasion is difficult, but as I have already had occasion to render some services to the selfish passenger, and as she may still have need of me, she at lasts yields to my request.

Miss Hervey accompanies us several times on our excursions across the rocks. Several times, also, we fish off the shore of the islet, and lunch gaily in the grotto, whilst the basaltic harps vibrate under the breeze. We are really delighted at the pleasure which Miss Hervey experiences in finding herself free for a few hours. The islet is certainly small, but nothing in the world has seemed so large to the young girl. We also love this arid reef, and soon not a stone of it is unfamiliar to us, not a path that we have not joyously followed. It is a vast domain compared with the narrow deck of the *Chancellor*, and I am sure that when we go away, we shall not leave it without a sigh of regret.

Apropos of the Island of Staffa, Andre informs us that it belongs to the McDonald family, who confirm its possession by the payment of twelve pounds sterling a year.

"Well, gentlemen," asks Miss Hervey, "do you think that any one would lease this reef for more than half a crown?"

"Not for a penny, miss," I say, laughing. "Have you an idea of renting it?"

"No, Mr. Kazallon," replies the girl, repressing a smile. "Yet this is the onlyspot, perhaps, where I have been happy!"

"And I!" murmurs Andre.

Many sufferings are concealed in Miss Hervey's response. The young girl, poor, an orphan, without friends, has not yet found happiness,—even a momentary happiness,—except upon an unknown rock in the Atlantic!

XIX.

From November 6 *to November* 15.—For the first five days after the stranding of the *Chancellor*, thick and tart vapors escaped from the hold; then they diminished little by little, and, on the 6th of November, the fire might be regarded as extinct. Robert Curtis, however, as a matter of prudence, continued to have the pumps worked, so that the hull is now swamped up to between decks. Only, the water becomes low in the hold at low tide, and the two liquid surfaces are on a level with each other within and without.

"This proves," says Curtis to me, "that the leak is considerable, as the flowing out is so rapid."

Indeed, the opening in the hull measures not less than four square feet of superficies. One of the sailors, Flaypole, having dived down at low water, has ascertained the position and extent of the damage. The leak opens thirty feet from the helm, and three planks have been staved in by a point of rock nearly two feet above the rabbet of the keel. The shock was a very violent one, the vessel being heavily laden and the sea high. It is even surprising that the hull was not laid open in several places. As for the leak, we shall learn whether it is easy to repair it, when the cargo, moved or got rid of enables the master carpenter to reach it. But two days must yet elapse before it will be possible to penetrate the hold of the *Chancellor*, and to take thence the cotton-bales which have been spared by the fire.

During this time Robert Curtis does not remain idle, and important orders are carried on with the zealous aid of his crew.

The captain has the mizzen-mast, which has fallen down since the stranding, and which has been heaved upon the reef with all its rigging, set up in its place again. Sheers have been installed aft, the low mast has been replaced on its stump, which Douglas, the carpenter, has mortised for this purpose.

This done, the whole rigging is carefully examined; the shrouds, backstays, and stays are tightened anew, some of the sails are chang-

ed, and the running-rigging, conveniently re-established, will enable us to navigate safely once more.

There is much to do both forward and aft, for the poop and sailors' quarters have been much injured by the fire. It is necessary to put these in good condition, and this requires time and care. There is time enough, happily: and we shall soon be able to return to our cabins.

It is not until the 8th that the unloading of the *Chancellor* can be profitably begun. The cotton-bales being soaked in water, of which the hold is full at high tide, tackle is set up over the hatchways, and we lend a hand to the sailors in hoisting these heavy masses, which are for the most part, irretrievably damaged. One by one they are put on the whale-boat and transported upon the reef.

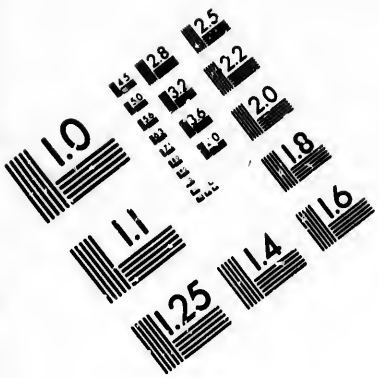
When the first layer of the cargo has thus been removed, it is time to think of exhausting a part, at least, of the water which fills the hold. This makes it necessary to close as tightly as possible the hole which the rock has made in the hull of the ship. This is a difficult task, but the sailor Flaypole and the boatswain accomplish it with a zeal and skill above all praise. They have succeeded, by diving below the starboard quarter at low tide, in fastening a copper sheet over the hole; but as this sheet cannot bear the pressure when the interior

level of water falls by the action of the pumps, Robert Curtis tries to secure the stoppage of the leak by piling up cotton-bales against the boards that have been staved in. There are plenty of these, happily, and soon the bottom of the *Chancellor* is, as it were, "mattressed" by the heavy and impermeable bales, which, it is to be hoped, will enable the copper sheet the better to resist the water.

The captain's device has succeeded. The pumps work well, for the level of the water is descending little by little in the hold, and the men are able to continue the unloading.

"It is probable, then," says Robert Curtis, "that we shall be able to reach the leak and repair it from the inside. It would have been better, no doubt, to careen the ship and change the boards; but I have no means of undertaking so great an operation. And then, I should be withheld by the fear that bad weather might come while the ship was over on her side, which would completely put her at the mercy of a storm. Still, I think I may assure you that the leak will be closed up, and that we shall be able, before long, to attempt to regain land under conditions of reasonable security."

After two days of toil, the water has for the most part been exhausted, and the unloading of the last bales of the cargo has been accomplished without obstacle. The passengers have taken their turn at the pumps, relieving the sailors.



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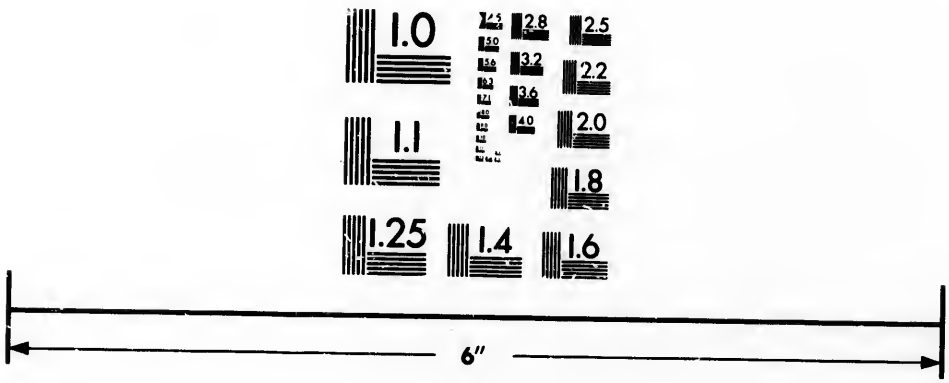

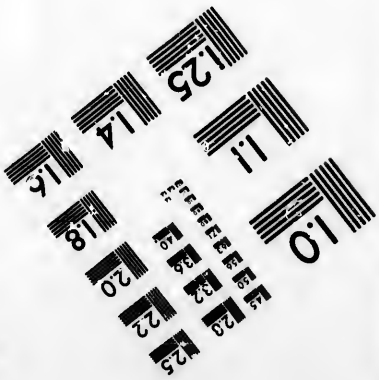

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Andre Letourneur, despite his infirmity, has joined in the pumping, and each one has done his duty according to his strength.

Yet this is a very fatiguing labor; we cannot keep it up long without resting. Our arms and backs are soon tired out by the working up and down of the pump-handles, and I do not wonder that the sailors dislike the operation. Still, the work is done under favorable conditions, as the vessel is on a solid bottom, and no gulf yawns under our feet. We are not defending our lives against an invading sea, and there is no struggle between us and water which comes in as fast as it is pumped out. May Heaven grant that we may never be put to such a proof on a foundering ship!

XX.

From November 15 *to November* 20.—To-day they have been able to go down into the hold; and they have at last discovered the box with the picrate, aft, in a spot which the fire, happily, has not reached. The box is intact; even the water has not damaged its contents; and now it is deposited in a safe place at the extremity of the islet. Why is it not thrown into the sea at once? I know not; but this has not been done.

Robert Curtis and Douglas, during their visit

to the hold, ascertain that the deck and the beams which sustain it are less injured than has been supposed. The intense heat to which these thick planks and beams have been subjected has badly scorched them, but without eating into them deeply, and the action of the fire seems to have mainly directed itself upon the sides of the hull. Indeed, the interior binding has been devoured by the flames to a considerable distance in its length; the ends of the carbonized treenails stick out here and there, and unhappily the timbers have been seriously burned; the tow has escaped from the ends and seams, and it may be regarded as a miracle that the ship did not yawn apart long ago.

It must be confessed that this state of things is to be regretted. The *Chancellor* has suffered damages such as cannot evidently be repaired with the restricted means at the captain's disposal, and he will be unable to give his vessel the solidity necessary for a long voyage. The captain and carpenter come up, therefore, in an anxious mood. The damages are really so serious that, if Curtis found himself on an island, instead of on a reef that the sea may sweep over at any moment, he would not hesitate to demolish the ship and construct a smaller one, in which, at least, he might place confidence!

But Robert Curtis quickly makes up his mind, an dsummons all of us passengers and crew, on the deck of the *Chancellor*.

"My friends," he says, "the damage is much greater than we supposed, and the hull of the ship is very much injured. As, on the one hand, we have no means for repairing it, and as, on the other hand, we have not time, situated on this islet, and at the mercy of the first storm, to construct another vessel, this is what I propose to do: to close up the leak as perfectly as possible, and to gain the nearest port. We are only eight hundred miles from the coast of Paramaribo, which forms the northern side of Dutch Guiana; and in ten or twelve days, if the weather favors us, we shall have found refuge there."

There is nothing else to do. The captain's determination, therefere, is unanimously approved.

Douglas and his companions now busy themselves with closing the leak on the interior, and strengthening as much as possible the couplings of the treenails gnawed by the fire. But it is very evident that the *Chancellor* does not offer sufficient security for a long voyage, and that she will be condemned at the first port she enters.

The carpenter also calks the seams of the planks on that part of the hull, which emerges at low tide; but he cannot reach the part which the water covers at low tide, and has to content himself with making repairs on the interior.

These tasks occupy the time up to the 20th. On that day, all having been done that is humanly possible to repair his ship, Robert Curtis decides to put her to sea again.

It is needless to say that, from the moment the hold was emptied of its cargo and the water, the *Chancellor* has not ceased to float, even before high tide. The precaution having been taken to anchor her forward and aft, she has not been thrown upon the reef, but has remained in the little natural basin, protected on the right and left by the rocks which are not submerged, even at high tide. Thus it happens that this basin, in its widest part, enables the *Chancellor* to be manœuvred; and this is easily done by means of hawsers, which have been fixed upon the rock, so that the ship now presents her stem towards the south. It seems then, that it will be easy to release the *Chancellor* either by hoisting sails, if the wind is favourable, or by towing her out the pass, if the wind is contrary. Meanwhile, this task presents some difficulties which it is necessary to remedy.

The entrance of the pass is barred by a sort of basaltic floor, above which, at high tide, there remains scarcely enough water for carrying out the *Chancellor*, though she were entirely unballasted. If she passed over this floor before stranding, it was, I repeat, because she was lifted up by an enormous wave, and thrown into

the basin. There was on that day, besides, not only a new-moon tide, but the highest tide of the year, and several months must elapse before so high an equinoctial tide will again occur.

It is very evident, however, that Robert Curtis cannot wait several months. There is to-day a great sea of sysygy; we must profit by it to release the ship. Once out of the basin, she will be ballasted so that she can bear sails, and she will float away.

The wind is favorable, for it blows from the northeast, and therefore in the direction of the pass. But the captain, with good reason, does not care to put on all sail, against an obstacle which may abruptly stop her, and with a ship whose soundness is so doubtful. After conferring with Walter, the carpenter, and the boatswain, he resolves to tow the vessel out. An anchor is accordingly fixed aft, in case that, if the attempt fails, the vessel may be anchored again; then two other anchors are carried outside the pass, the length of which does not exceed two hundred feet. The chains are rigged to the windlass, and, at four o'clock the *Chancellor* is put in motion.

The tide ought to be high at twenty-three minutes past four. Ten minutes before this, the ship is hauled as far as her draught will permit, but the fore part of her keel soon slides upon the floor, and she is obliged to stop. And now, as the lower extremity of the stem has escaped the

obstacle, there is no reason why Captain Curtis should not avail himself of the wind to aid the mechanical force of the windlass. The lower and upper sails are therefore spread and trimmed, the wind blowing from behind. The moment has come. It is slack water. The passengers and crew are at the bars of the windlass. The Letourneurs, Falsten, and I are holding on to the starboard pump-brake. Robert Curtis is on the poop, overlooking the putting on sail; the lieutenant is on the forecastle; the boatswain is at the helm.

The *Chancellor* undergoes several shocks, and the sea, which is swollen, lifts her lightly; but, happily, it is calm.

"Come, my friends," cries Robert Curtis, in his tranquil and confident voice, "with all your might, now, and all together. Go!"

The bars of the windlass are set in motion. We hear the clicking of the pawls, and the chains, tightening in proportion, strain upon the hawseholes. The wind freshens, and as the ship cannot go fast enough, the masts bend under the pressure of the sails. Twenty feet are gained. A sailor sings one of those guttural songs the rhythm of which aids in timing our movements. We redouble our efforts, and the *Chancellor* quivers.

But our efforts are vain. The tide begins to go out. We shall not be able to pass.

From the moment that the ship ceases to move

she cannot remain balanced on this rocky floor, for she would be broken in two at low tide.

By order of the captain, the sails are quickly taken in, and the anchor aft is soon to be brought in use. There is not a moment to lose. They turn about to make stern-way, and there is an instant of terrible suspense. But the *Chancellor* slides on her keel, and returns to the basin, which now serves her as a prison.

"Well, Captain," says the boatswain, "how are we going to get out?"

"I know not," was the reply. "But get out we will."

XXI.

From November 21 to November 23.—We must, indeed, leave this basin, and without delay. The weather, which has favored us throughout the month of November, threatens to change. The barometer has been falling since last evening, and the fog is beginning to gather around Ham Rock. The islet would not be tenable in a storm; the *Chancellor* would be shattered in pieces.

This very evening, at low tide, Robert Curtis, Falsten, the boatswain, Douglas, and I examine the basaltic floor in the pass, which is now out of water. There is only one way to open a pas-

sage, and that is to attack the basalt with pick-axes, on a width of ten feet by a length of six. A levelling down of eight or nine inches ought to suffice for the draught of the *Chancellor*, and, by carefully buoying this little canal, she will free it and find herself in deep water, immediately beyond.

"But this basalt is as hard as granite," observed the boatswain, "and it will be a long job; all the more, as it can only be executed at low tide—that is, during scarcely two hours in the twenty-four."

"All the more reason, boatswain, for not losing a moment," replies Robert Curtis.

"Eh, captain," says Douglas, "it will take a month. Would it not be possible to blow up these rocks? There is powder aboard."

"But not enough of it," responds the boatswain.

The situation is very serious. A month's work! But, ere a month is over, the ship will be demolished by the sea!

"We have something better than powder," says Falsten.

"What, pray?" asks Curtis, turning towards the engineer.

"The picrate of potassium!" replies Falsten.

The picrate of potassium, indeed! The very box brought on board by poor Ruby. The explosive substance which was to have blown up the ship, will be just the thing to get rid of our

obstacle! A hole bored in the basalt, and the obstacle will cease to exist! The box, as I have already said, has been placed in a secure spot on the reef. It is truly fortunate, even providential, that it was not thrown into the sea when taken from the hold.

The sailors go in search of the pickaxes, and Douglas, directed by Falsten, begins to bore a hole, following the direction which may produce the best effect. Everything leads us to hope that the hole will be completed before night, and, that on the morrow, at break of day, the explosion will have produced its intended effect, and the pass will have been made free.

It is well known that picric acid is a crystalline and bitter substance, extracted from coal-tar, and that it forms a yellow salt in combination with potash, which is picrate of potassium. The explosive power of this substance is inferior to that of gun-cotton and dynamite, but it is much superior to that of ordinary powder. As for its inflammation, it can be easily provoked by a hard and violent shock, and we shall be able to effect this without difficulty.

Douglas, and his comrades have worked zealously, but their task is far from ended at daybreak. It is not possible, indeed, to hollow out the hole excepting at low tide, that is, for scarcely an hour at a time. It follows, that four tides are necessary to give it the requisite depth.

The work is finally completed on the morning of the 20th. The floor of basalt is pierced by an oblique hole, which can contain ten pounds of the explosive salt; and it is to be charged at once. It is about eight o'clock.

At the moment of introducing the picrate into the hole, Falsten says to us,—

"I think we ought to mix it with common powder. That will permit us to light the mine with a match, in place of priming, which would bring about the explosion by a shock. Besides, it is established that the simultaneous use of powder and picrate of potassium is better for blowing up hard rocks. The picrate, very violent in its nature, prepares the way for the powder, which, being more slow in getting alight, will then tear the basalt asunder."

Falsten does not speak often, but it must be confessed that, when he speaks, he speaks well. His advice is followed. The two substances are mixed, and after first introducing a match at the bottom of the hole, the mixture is poured in and packed tight.

The *Chancellor* is sufficiently far from the mine to escape the explosion. The passengers and crew, however, take the precaution to retreat to the further extremity of the reef, in the grotto, and Mr. Kear, despite his complaints, has thought it prudent to leave the ship.

Then Falsten, having applied fire to the match, which will burn for nearly ten minutes, rejoins us.

The explosion takes place. It is dull, and much less startling than one would have supposed; but this is always the case with mines that are hollowed deep.

We run forward to the spot; the operation has clearly succeeded. The floor of basalt has been literally reduced to powder, and now a little channel, which the rising tide is beginning to fill, leaves the passage free.

A general hurrah bursts out. The door of the prison is open, and the prisoners have only to fly!

At high tide the *Chancellor*, weighing anchor, crosses the pass, and floats on the open sea.

But she must still remain for another day near the islet; for she cannot navigate in her present condition, and it is necessary to put on enough ballast to ensure her stability. During the next twenty-four hours, therefore, the sailors employ themselves in taking on board stones, and those cotton-bales which are the least damaged.

While this is going on, the Letourneurs, Miss Hervey, and I make one more excursion among the basalts of the reef, which we shall never see again, and upon which we have sojourned for three weeks.

The name of the *Chancellor*, that of the rock, and the date of stranding, are artistically graven by Andre on one of the sides of the grotto, and a last adieu is given to this rock, upon which

we have passed many days which some of us will count among the happiest of our existence!

At last, on the 25th of November, at morning tide, the *Chancellor* sets sail under her lower sails, her top-sails, and her gallants, and two hours after the last summit of Ham Rock has disappeared below the horizon.

XXII.

From November 24 to December 1.—We are now at sea, and on an unsound ship; but, happily, the voyage we are making is not a very long one. We have only eight hundred miles to go. If the north-east wind continues for several days, the *Chancellor*, sailing before the wind, will certainly reach the Guiana coast.

Our route is southwestward, and life on board resumes its monotonous routine.

The first days pass without any incident. The wind's direction holds good, but Robert Curtis does not wish to put on all sail, for he fears the reopening of the leak by urging the vessel into too great a rapidity.

It is a gloomy journey, at best, that is made under these conditions, when you have no confidence in the ship that is carrying you! And then, we are going back on our route instead of advancing. Each one is absorbed in his own

thoughts, and there is not that social animation on board which attends a safe and rapid voyage.

During the 29th the wind rises a quarter in the north. The aid of the wind aft, therefore, cannot be preserved. The yards must be braced about, the sails trimmed, and a tack made to starboard. This causes the ship to careen not a little. Curtis brails his gallant-sails, for he perceives that the inclination fatigues the ship's hull; and he is right, since it is not so important to go fast as to reach land without any new accident.

The night of the 29th is black and foggy. The breeze continues fresh, and, unhappily, veers to the northwest. Most of the passengers resort to their cabins, but Captain Curtis does not leave the poop, and the whole crew remain on deck. The ship still careens a good deal, though she carries none of her upper sails.

Towards two in the morning I am getting ready to go down into my cabin, when Burke, one of the sailors, who has been in the hold, comes up hurriedly, and cries—

"Two feet of water!"

Robert Curtis and the boatswain hasten down by the ladder and find that the bad news is but too true.

Either the leak has reopened despite every precaution, or some of the seams, badly calked, have separated, and the water is fast oozing into the hold.

The captain, having returned on deck, puts the ship about, wind astern, so as to fatigue her less, and waits for day.

At daylight they sound, and find three feet of water.

I look at Robert Curtis. A fleeting pallor has whitened his lips, but he preserves all his accustomed presence of mind. The passengers, several of whom have come on deck, are told of what is passing; it would have been difficult, indeed, to have concealed it from them.

"A new misfortune!" says M. Letourneur to me.

"It was to be foreseen," I reply; "but we cannot be very far from land, and I hope that we shall reach it."

"May God grant it!"

"Is God on board, do you suppose?" asks Falsten, shrugging his shoulders.

"He is here, sir!" replies Miss Hervey, quietly.

The engineer respectfully keeps silence before this response, full of a faith which is not to be argued with.

By the captain's order the pumps are resorted to. The sailors set to work with more resignation than zeal; but it is a question of safety, and the sailors, divided into two parties, relieve each other at the brakes.

During the day, the boatswain makes new soundings, and ascertains that the water is entering the hold, slowly, but incessantly.

Unhappily, the pumps, by much working, often get out of order, and must be repaired. They also disgorge cinders, and bits of cotton, which still fill the lower part of the hold. This makes it necessary to clean them several times, which results in a loss of part of the labor of pumping.

The next morning, after sounding anew, it is discovered that the level of the water has risen to five feet. If, therefore, for any reason whatever, the working at the pumps were suspended, the ship would fill. It would only be a question of time, and of a very short time. The water-line of the *Chancellor* has already sunk a foot, and her pitching becomes more and more heavy, for she rises with great difficulty to the waves. I see Captain Curtis frown every time the boatswain makes his report. It is a bad sign.

The working at the pumps continues throughout the day and night. But the sea has still gained on us. The sailors are exhausted. Signs of discouragement appear among them. Still, the boatswain and mate preach by example, and the passengers take their places at the brakes.

The situation is not the same as at the time that the *Chancellor* was stranded on the firm soil of Ham Rock. Our vessel is now floating on an abyss, in which she may be at any moment engulphed!

XXIII.

December 2 and 3.—We struggle vigorously for twenty-four hours more, and prevent the level of the water from rising in the interior of ship. But it is clear that a moment will come when the pumps will no longer suffice, even to throw off a quantity of water equal to that which enters by the leak in the hull.

During this day, Captain Curtis, who does not take a moment's rest, makes a new investigation in the hold, and I, the boatswain, and the carpenter accompany him. Some bales of cotton are displaced, and we hear, by listening attentively, a sort of chopping or gurgling noise. Has the old leak reopened, or is it a general dislocation of the entire hull? It is impossible to ascertain exactly. At all events, Robert Curtis is going to try to make the hull more staunch aft, by covering it on the outside with tarred sails. Perhaps he will in this way succeed in intercepting all communication, temporarily at least, between the inside and the outside. If the leaking-in of the water is only arrested a very short time, they will be able to pump more effectively, and, doubtless, to relieve the vessel.

The task is a more difficult one than might be thought. The speed of the vessel must first be slackened; and, after some strong sails, main-

tained by girt-lines, have been slipped under the keel, they are slid along to the place where the old leak was, so as to completely envelop that part of the *Chancellor's* hull.

After this is done, the pumps gain a little, and we return to our work with renewed courage. No doubt, the water still gets in, but in less quantity; and at the close of the day the level has descended several inches. Several inches only! The pumps now throw off more water by the scuppers than comes into the hold, and they are not for a moment abandoned.

The wind freshens briskly during the night, which is very dark. Still, Captain Curtis has kept on as much sail as possible. He knows that the hull is but poorly protected, and is in haste to come in sight of land. Should any vessel appear, he would not hesitate to make signals of distress, to transfer his passengers and even his crew, though he himself would remain on board until the *Chancellor* sank under his feet.

But all this is not likely to happen.

During the night, indeed, the canvass covering has yielded to the external pressure; and on the next day (December 3), the boatswain, after sounding, cannot avoid saying, with an oath,—

"Six feet of water still in the hold!"

It is only too true. The ship is beginning to fill again, and is visibly sinking, so that her waterline is already distinctly submerged.

Still, we keep at the pumps more bravely than ever, and devote our utmost strength to them. Our arms are broken, our fingers bleed; but, despite all our exertions, the water gains upon us.

Robert Curtis then orders a line to be formed to the opening of the hatchway; and the buckets pass rapidly from hand to hand.

All is useless. At half past eight in the morning a fresh increase of water is discovered in the hold. Despair now seizes some of the sailors. Robert Curtis urges them to continue working. They refuse.

One of these men—a ringleader among the crew—is inclined to revolt. This is the sailor Owen, of whom I have already spoken. He is about forty years of age. His face ends in a pointed reddish beard, and his cheeks are shaven His lips turn inward, and his yellow-gray eyes are marked by a red point at the union of the lids. He has a straight nose, ears wide apart, and a forehead broken by deep and evil-looking wrinkles.

He is the first to leave his post.

Five or six of his comrades follow his example, and among them I perceive Jynxtrop, the cook, —also a bad man.

Robert Curtis orders them to return to the pumps. Owen promptly refuses to obey.

The captain repeats his order.

Owen again refuses.

Robert Curtis goes up to the unruly sailor

"I advise you not to touch me," says Owen, coldly, going upon the forecastle.

Robert Curtis then directs his steps to the poop, enters his cabin, and comes out with a loaded revolver.

Owen looks at him for a moment; but Jynxtrop makes him a sign, and they all return to their work.

XXIV.

December 4.—The first attempt at a revolt has been checked by the energetic conduct of the captain. Will Robert Curtis be as successful in future? It is to be hoped so; for insubordination in the crew would render our already grave situation a terrible one.

During the night the pumps cannot any longer make progress. The ship's motion is heavy; and, as it is very difficult for her to rise with the waves, she receives the masses of water which beat upon her and which penetrate the hatchways. So much water added to that in the hold.

Our situation will soon become as menacing as it was in the last hours of the fire. The passengers and the crew perceive that the ship is, little by little, sinking beneath their feet. They see the water, which now seems as for-

midable as did the flames, slowly but incessantly rising in the hold.

The crew continue at work under the captain's threats, however; and, whether they will or not, the sailors labor lustily. They are, nevertheless, all but tired out. Besides, they are unable to exhaust the water, which is constantly renewing itself, and the level of which is rising, hour by hour. Those who are working at the buckets are soon forced to leave the hold, where already immersed up to the waist, they run in danger of being drowned; and they come up on deck.

One last resource now remains; and on the next day (the 4th), in a conference between the three officers, it is resolved to abandon the ship. As the whale-boat—the only one now left—cannot hold us all, a raft is to be immediately constructed. The crew will continue to work at the pumps up to the moment that the order is given to abandon the *Chancellor*.

Douglas, the carpenter, is ordered to make the raft, which is to be constructed without delay out of the spare yards and floating wood, these being first sawed to the necessary length. The sea, which is just now comparatively calm, will aid this work, difficult even under the most favourable circumstances.

Robert Curtis, Falsten, the carpenter, and ten sailors, armed with hatches, and saws, proceed at once to arrange and cut the yards before

launching them upon the sea. In this way, they will only have to bind them strongly together and construct a light frame upon which the platform of the raft, which is to measure forty feet long by from twenty to twenty-five feet wide, will repose.

The rest of the passengers and crew remain at the pumps.

Andre Letourneur, whom his father is constantly watching with tender emotion, keeps near me What will become of his son, M. Letourneur is no doubt asking himself, if he is forced to struggle with the waves, when a strong and well man could hardly save himself? At all events, there are two of us who will not abandon him.

Our extreme danger has been concealed from Mrs. Kear, whom a long drowsiness still retains in an almost unconscious state. Miss Hervey has appeared on deck several times, but only for a few moments. Fatigue has made her pale, but she continues to be strong. I tell her to hold herself ready for any event.

"I am always ready, sir," replies the brave girl, as she returns to her mistress.

Andre looks at the young girl as she descends to the cabin, with a sad expressiou on his face.

About eight in the evening the frame of the raft is nearly finished. The empty barrels, hermetically closed, which are intended to secure the floating of the raft, are let down and are made fast to it.

Two hours after, loud cries are heard below the poop. Mr. Kear appears, shouting,—

"We are sinking! We are sinking!"

Then comes Falsten and Miss Hervey, bearing up the inanimate form of Mrs. Kear.

Robert Curtis runs to his cabin. He soon returns with a chart, a sextant, and a compass.

Cries of distress break forth, and confusion reigns on board. The sailors rush towards the raft; but its frame, the platform of which is still wanting, cannot receive them.

It is impossible to describe the thoughts which at this moment crowd upon me, or to paint the rapid vision of my entire life that passes before me! It seems to me as if my existence centred in this supreme moment, which is about to end it; I feel the planks of the deck giving way beneath my feet. I see the water rising about the ship, as if the ocean were hollowed out beneath her!

Some of the sailors take refuge in the shrouds, shrieking with terror. I am about to follow them.

A hand arrests me. M. Letourneur points to his son, while great tears course down his cheeks.

"Yes," I say, grasping his arm convulsively, "We two, we will save him!"

But Robert Curtis has rejoined Andre before me, and is about to carry him to the shrouds, when the *Chancellor*, which the wind is now

urging violently forward, suddenly stops. A violent shock is felt.

The ship is foundering! The water reaches my legs. Instinctively I seize a rope. But of a sudden the sinking ceases, and when the deck is two feet below the level of the sea, the *Chancellor* rests motionless.

XXV.

Night of December 4.—Robert Curtis takes up Andre, and, running across the submerged deck, places him in the starboard shrouds. His father and I hoist ourselves up near him.

Then I look around me. The night is clear enough for me to perceive what is going on. Robert Curtis, having returned to his post, is standing on the poop. At the extreme end of the stem, near the not as yet submerged taffrail, I see Mr. Kear, his wife, Miss Hervey, and Falsten in the obscurity; on the extremity of the forecastle are the lieutenant and boatswain; the rest of the crew are in the tops and on the shrouds.

Andre has hoisted himself into the main-top, thanks to his father, who has made him place a foot on each shoulder; and, despite the rolling, has succeeded in getting up without accident. But it has been impossible to make Mrs. Kear

listen to reason, and she has remained on the poop, at the risk of being swept off by the waves should the wind freshen up. Miss Hervey, not wishing to leave her, has kept by her side.

The captain's first care, as soon as the sinking ceased, is to have all the sails lowered immediately; then, to have down the yards and gallant-masts so as not to leave the stability of the ship in danger. He hopes that, by taking these precautions, the *Chancellor* will not capsize. But may she not sink at any moment? I rejoin Robert Curtis, and put him this question.

"I cannot know," he replies sadly. "That depends above all on the state of the sea. What is certain is, that the ship is actually in equilibrium; but this may change at any time."

"Can the *Chancellor* sail now, with two feet of water on her deck?"

"No, Mr. Kazallon; but she may drift by the action of the current and the wind, and if she can maintain this for several days she may come to land on some point of the coast. Besides, we have the raft as a last resource. It will be finished in a few hours; and by daylight we may be able to embark on it."

"You have not, then, lost all hope?" I ask, surprised at his calmness.

"Hope can never become wholly extinct, Mr. Kazallon, even in the most terrible situation. All that I can say to you is, that if ninty-

nine chances out of a hundred are against us, the hundreth, at least, belongs to us. If my memory does not fail me, the *Chancellor*, half ingulfed, is in exactly the same condition as was the three-mast *Juno* in 1795. For more than three weeks that ship remained thus suspended between two waters. Passengers and sailors had taken refuge in the tops, and, land having been at last signalled, all who had survived the fatigue and hunger were saved. It is too well known a fact in the annals of the sea for me not to remember it now! Well, there is no reason why the survivors of the *Chancellor* should not be as fortunate as those of the *Juno*."

Perhaps there might be much to reply to Robert Curtis; but it appears from this conversation that our captain has not lost all hope.

Meanwhile, since the equilibrium may be at any moment destroyed, we must abandon the *Chancellor* as soon as possible. It is therefore decided that to-morrow, as soon as the carpenter has finished the raft, we shall embark upon it.

But let the reader judge of the despair which seizes the crew when, about midnight, Douglas discovers that the carpentry work of the raft has disappeared! The shafts, though they were solid, have been broken by the vertical displacement of the ship, and the framework must have drifted away more than an hour since!

When the sailors hear this new misfortune, they raise cries of distress.

"To sea with the masts!" shout these demented creatures. And they attempt to cut the rigging so that the top-masts may fall, and that they may construct another raft.

But Robert Curtis stops them.

"To your posts, my lads!" he cries. "Let not a thread be cut without my orders! The *Chancellor* is in equilibrium. The *Chancellor* will not sink yet!"

The sailors recover their presence of mind on hearing the captain's firm tone, and despite the ill feeling of some among them, each returns to his designated place. As soon as it is daylight Robert Curtis mounts as far as the bars and carefully scans the sea around the ship far and near. The raft is now out of sight! Must the whale-boat be manned, and a long and perilous search be made for it? This is impossible; for the swell is too strong to be braved by a fragile boat. It is then determined to build a new raft, and this work is begun without delay.

The waves have risen higher. Mrs. Kear has at last concluded to leave her place in the rear of the poop, and has reached the main-top, on which she has lain down in a state of complete prostration. Mr. Kear is installed with Silas Huntly on the mizzen-top. Near Mrs. Kear and Miss Hervey are the Letourneurs, very much crowded, as may be supposed, on this platform, which measures only twelve feet at its greatest diameter. But purlins have been

put up between the shrouds, and enable them to hold steady against the rolling of the vessel. Robert Curtis has taken care to have a sail placed over the top to shelter the two women.

Some casks which were floating among the masts after the submersion, and which have been rescued from time to time, have been hauled upon the tops, and securely fastened to the stays. These contain biscuits, preserved meats, and soft water, and now form our last resource of provisions.

XXVI.

December 5.—The day is warm. December, under the sixteenth parallel, is a summer, not a winter, month. We must expect to submit to oppressive heat, if a breeze does not come up to moderate the sun's rays.

Meanwhile the sea continues rough. The ship's hull, three quarters immersed, is beaten against like a rock. The foam of the waves leaps up to the tops, and our clothing is saturated with spray as if with a fine rain.

This is what remains of the *Chancellor* above the level of the sea: the three lower masts, surmounted by their top-masts; the bowsprit, to which the whale-boat is suspended, so that it shall not be shattered by the waves; and the

poop and forecastle, united only by the narrow border of the gunwale. As for the deck, it is completely immersed.

Communication between the tops is difficult. The sailors are only able to reach each other by hoisting themselves by the stays. Below, between the masts, from the taffrail to the forecastle the sea is foaming in a breaker, and is tearing away little by little the sides of the ship, the planks of which are being recovered as best they can. It is truly a terrible sight and sound for the passengers, taking refuge on the narrow platforms of the tops, to see and hear the ocean roaring beneath their feet! The masts which rise out of the water tremble at each stroke of the waves, and seem ever on the point of being swept away. Surely it is better not to look or reflect; for this abyss has a horrible attraction, and one is tempted to plunge into it! Meanwhile the sailors are working ceaselessly upon the new raft. The top-masts, gallant-masts, and yards are used, and the work, under the direction of Robert Curtis, is done with the greatest care. The *Chancellor* does not seem to be likely to sink as yet; it is probable that, as the captain has said, she will remain thus, in equilibrium between two waters, for some time. Robert Curtis, therefore, insists that the raft shall be made as firm and solid as possible. Our journey upon it must be a long one, since the nearest coast, that of Guiana, is still several

hundreds of miles away. Better, therefore, pass one more day in the tops, and take time to construct a raft that can be relied upon. We are all agreed in this respect.

The sailors have recovered some confidence, and now the work is being done in an orderly manner.

One old sailor alone, sixty years of age, whose beard and hair have whitened amid many storms, is opposed to leaving the *Chancellor*. He is an Irishman, named O'Ready.

At the moment I reach the poop he comes up to me.

"Sir," says he, chewing his quid with superb indifference, "the boys think we ought to quit the ship; but I don't. I have been shipwrecked nine times,—four times in the open sea, five times on the coast. I know something about it. Well, then, confound me if I haven't always seen the wretches perish miserably who ran away on rafts and long-boats! As long as a ship floats, you must remain aboard her. Take my word for it."

Having said this very energetically, the old Irishman, who seems to have eased his conscience by these words, falls into absolute silence.

About three o'clock in the afternoon I perceive Mr. Kear and Silas Huntly talking very earnestly in the mizzen-top. The petroleum merchant seems to be urging the other, and the latter to be making objections to Mr. Kear's proposals.

Several times Silas Huntly gazes a long time at the sea and the sky, and then shakes his head. At last, after an hour's talking, he lowers himself by the mizzen-stay to the end of the forecastle, mingles with the sailors, and I lose sight of him.

I attach but little importance to this incident, and ascend again to the main-top, where, with the Letourneurs, Miss Hervey, and Falsten, I remain talking for several hours. The sun is very warm, and we should not be able to stay where we are, were it not for the sail, which serves as a tent for us.

At five o'clock we take a repast, consisting of biscuit, dried meat, and a half-glass of water for each person. Mrs. Kear, much prostrated by fever, eats nothing. Miss Hervey is only able to relieve her somewhat by moistening her parched lips from time to time. The poor woman is suffering very much. I doubt whether she will be able to bear such misery much longer.

Her husband has not once inquired for her; yet, at about a quarter before six, I question whether some good impulse has not at last moved the heart of this egotist. He hails several sailors on the forecastle, and begs them to help him descend from the mizzen-top. Is he going to join his wife in the main-top?

At first the sailors do not heed Mr. Kear's appeal. He again begs them to help him, and

promises to pay well those who will render him this service.

Then Burke and Sandon, two of the sailors, jump on the gunwale, reach the mizzen-shrouds, and then the top.

On reaching Mr. Kear, they discuss the terms of their compliance a long time. It is clear that they are asking a great deal, and that Mr. Kear wishes to give them but little. At one time the sailors seem about to leave him in the top. At last, however, they seem to agree, and Mr. Kear, taking out a roll of dollar-bills, gives it to one of the sailors. The latter carefully counts them up, and I estimate that he has obtained not less than a hundred dollars.

The next thing is to haul down Mr. Kear by the mizzen-stay to the forecastle. Burke and Sandon tie a rope around his body, which they roll on the stay; then they let him slip down like a trunk, not without causing him some violent concussions, which provoke much joking among the sailors.

But I was mistaken. Mr. Kear has not the least idea of joining his wife in the main-top. He remains on the forecastle, near Silas Huntly, who has been waiting for him there. The darkness soon conceals them from my view.

Night has come; the wind has calmed down, but the sea is still swollen. The moon, which has been up since four o'clock in the afternoon, only peeps out at rare intervals from between

narrow belts of clouds. Some of these vapors, lying in long strata in the horizon, are of a reddish tint, betokening a stiff breeze for the morrow. May Heaven grant that this breeze may still blow from the northeast, and waft us landward! Any change in its direction would be for the worse, when we are embarked on a raft which can only progress with the wind astern.

Robert Curtis ascends to the main-top about eight o'clock. I imagine that he is scanning the state of the sky, and that he wishes to divine what the weather will be on the morrow. He continues to make observations for a quarter of an hour; then, before going down, he grasps my hand without saying a word, and returns to his place in the rear of the poop.

I try to fall asleep on the narrow space reserved for me in the top; but I cannot succeed. The serenity of the air disturbs me, and I find it all too calm. It is seldom that even a breath passes, from time to time, through the rigging, causing a vibration of the metallic cordage; yet the sea is stirred by a long swell, and evidently feels the rebound of some far-off tempest.

Towards eleven, through a space between two clouds, the moon bursts forth brilliantly, and the waves shine as if illumined by some submarine light.

I get up and look around. Strangely enough, I seem to perceive, for a few moments, a black

object rising and falling in the midst of the intense whiteness of the sea. It cannot be a rock, for it obeys the motion of the swell. What is it, then?

The moon is once more veiled, the darkness again becomes profound, and I lie down near the larboard shrouds.

XXVII.

December 6.—I have succeeded in sleeping several hours. At four in the morning the whistling of the breeze suddenly awakes me. I hear the captain's voice in the midst of the squall, the shock of which shakes the masts.

I get up. Clinging closely to the top, I try to see what is going on below and around me. In the midst of the darkness the sea is roaring beneath me. Great sheets of foam, livid rather than white, dash between the masts, which oscilate from the rolling. Two black shadows in the aft of the ship stand out sharply against the whitish color of the sea. These are Captain Curtis and the boatswain. Their voices, muffled by the clash of the waves and the whistling of wind, sound to my ears like a groan.

At this moment one of the sailors, who has climbed up in the top to fasten a rope, passes near me.

"What is the matter?" I ask him.

"The wind has changed."

He adds a few words which I cannot hear distinctly.

The wind seems to have veered from north-east to southwest; if so, it will drift us away from land again! My presentiments, then, have not deceived me!

Little by little, daylight comes at last. The wind has not changed as much as I have imagined, but—what is quite as bad for us—it blows from the northwest. Therefore, it is carrying us from land. Moreover, there are now six feet of water on deck, the gunwale of which has completely disappeared.

The ship has sunk during the night, and both the forecastle and the poop are now at the level of the sea, which incessantly washes over them. Robert Curtis and his crew are working hard to finish the raft; but the work cannot go forward quickly, owing to the violence of the surge, and it is necessary to take the greatest precautions to prevent the raft from being broken up before it is firmly put together.

The Letourneurs are now standing near me, and the father is holding his son up against the violent rolling of the ship.

"The top is about to break down!" cries M. Letourneur, hearing the narrow platform which sustains us crack.

Miss Hervey rises at these words, and, pointing to Mrs. Kear, stretched out at her feet,—

"What must we do, gentlemen?" she says.

"We must remain where we are," I reply.

"Miss Hervey," adds Andre Letourneur, this is still our safest refuge. Fear nothing."

"It is not for myself that I fear," replies the young girl, with her calm voice, "but for those who have some reason to cling to life!"

At quarter past eight the boatswain cries to the sailors, "Halloa! Ahead there!".

"What is it, master?" replies one of the sailors,—O'Ready, I think.

"Have you got the whale-boat?"

"No, master."

"Then it has drifted away!"

The whale-boat is no longer, indeed, suspended at the bowsprit; and soon, the absence of Mr. Kear, Silas Huntly, and three sailors, one Scotchman and two Englishmen, is discovered. I now understand what Mr. Kear and Silas Huntly were talking about last evening. Fearing that the *Chancellor*, would go down before the raft was finished, they were conspiring to fly, and have bribed the three sailors to possess themselves of the whale-boat. I am able to explain the black object which I saw in the night. The wretch has abandoned his wife! The incapable captain had deserted his ship! And they have taken from us this boat, the only one that remained to us!

"Five men saved!" says the boatswain.

"Five men lost!" replies the old Irishman.

The state of the sea seems to confirm O'Ready's words.

There are now only twenty-two of us on board. By how many will this number still be reduced.

The crew, on learning this cowardly desertion and the theft of the boat, break forth in execrations upon the deserters. Should chance restore them to the ship, they would pay dearly for their treason!

I advise that Mrs. Kear be kept in ignorance of her husband's flight. The poor woman is being wasted by a constant fever, which we are powerless to check, the ingulfing of the ship having been so sudden that the medicine-chest could not be saved. And besides, even if we had medicines, what good could they do to one in Mrs. Kear's condition?

XXVIII.

December 6, *Continued*—The *Chancellor* no longer maintains herself in equilibrium amid the layers of water. It is probable that her hull is displaced, and we feel that she is gradually sinking.

Happily the raft will be finished by evening, and we can then go upon it, unless Captain Curtis prefers to embark at daylight on the morrow. The raft has been securely built. The

spars which compose it have been bound together with strong ropes, and as they are placed cross-wise, one above another, the raft rises about two feet above the level of the sea. The platform is constructed of the planks which have been torn off by the waves, and have been carefully recovered.

In the afternoon the sailors begin to transfer to the raft all that has been saved in the way of provisions, sails, instruments, and tools. No time is to be lost for already the main-top is not more than ten feet above water, and all that remains of the bowsprit is its outer end, which stands up obliquely.

I shall be much surprised if to-morrow is not the last day of the *Chancellor!*

And now, in what mental condition do we find ourselves? I try to analyze my own thoughts and feelings. It seems to me that I feel rather an unconcious indifference than a sentiment of resignation. M. Letourneur lives wholly in his son, who, on his side thinks only of his father. Andre betrays a courageous and Christian resignation, which I cannot but compare with that of Miss Hervey. Falsten is always Falsten, and if you will believe me, is still figuring in his note-book! Mrs Kear is dying, despite Miss Hervey's care and mine.

As for the sailors, two or three of them are calm, but the rest seem on the point of losing their minds. Some, urged by their brutish

nature, appear eager to indulge in excesses. They will be hard to control,—these men who are under the bad influence of Owen and Jynxtrop,—when we find ourselves with them on a narrow raft!

Lieutenant Water is very feeble; despite his courage, he must soon give up attempting to fulfil his duties. Robert Curtis and the boatswain are now, as always, energetic and resolute.

About five in the afternoon one of our companions in misfortune ceases to suffer. Mrs. Kear is dead, after a painful agony, perhaps without having been conscious of her situation. She sighed several times, and then all was over. Up to the last moment, Miss Hervey has lavished her care upon her with a devotion which has deeply touched every one of us.

The night has passed without incident. At daybreak I take hold of the dead lady's hand; the fingers are cold and stiff. Her body cannot remain long in the top. Miss Hervey and I wrap her clothing around her; then some prayers are said for the soul of the unhappy woman, and the first victim of so many miseries is cast into the waves.

One of the men in the shrouds is now heard saying these terrible words:—

"There is a body that we shall regret having thrown away."

I turn round. It is Owen who has spoken thus.

Then the thought occurs to me that the provisions will perhaps some day fail us.

XXIX.

December 7.—The ship is still sinking. The sea has now reached the mizzen-top. The poop and forecastle are completely immersed, and the bowsprit has wholly disappeared. Only three low masts now rise above the ocean.

But the raft is ready, and loaded with everything that has been saved. A step has been fixed aft, for receiving a mast which will be supported by some shrouds on the sides of the platform. The sail of the royal will be spread and will perhaps waft us towards the coast.

Who knows if this frail support of planks, less easy to submerge, will not do for us what the *Chancellor* could not do? Hope is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that I still hope!

It is seven in the morning. We are about to go upon the raft, when, of a sudden, the ship sinks so hastily that the carpenter and men occupied with the raft are forced to cut their mooring so as not to be dragged down in the eddy.

We then feel a keen anxiety, for it is exactly at the instant that the ship is foundering that our only plank of safety drifts away! Two

seamen and a sea-boy, losing their minds, throw themselves into the sea; but they vainly struggle against the surge. It is soon evident that they can neither reach the raft nor return to the ship, as both waves and wind are against them. Robert Curtis ties a rope to his waist and plunges in after them. Useless devotion! Before he can reach them, these three unfortunate creatures sink struggling, after vainly stretching their arms out towards us!

Robert Curtis is drawn back again, all bruised by the same surf which is beating the heads of the masts.

Meanwhile Douglas and his comrades, by means of spars, which they use as oars, try to regain the ship. It is only after an hour of effort,—an hour which seems to us a century; an hour during which the sea rises to the level of the tops,—that the raft, which has drifted only two cable-lengths away, is able to come alongside the *Chancellor*. The boatswain throws a rope to Douglas, and the raft is once more moored to the main-mast.

There is not an instant to lose, for a violent whirlpool opens near the submerged carcass of the ship, and many enormous air-bubles rise to the surface of the water.

"Get on the raft! Get on the raft!" cries Curtis.

We hasten upon the raft. Andre, having seen that Miss Hervey was safely aboard,

happily reaches the platform. His father is soon by his side. A moment after, we have all embarked,—all, excepting Captain Curtis and the old sailor O'Ready.

Curtis, erect on the main-top, does not wish to quit his ship until she disappears in the abyss. It is his duty and his right. The *Chancellor*, which he loves and still commands, —it is easy to see what emotion oppresses his heart at the moment of leaving her!

The Irishman has remained on the mizzen-top.

"Go to the raft, old man!" cries the captain.

"Is the ship sinking?" asks the obstinate sailor, as coolly as possible.

"She is sinking perpendicularly."

"We must leave her, then," replies O'Ready, when the water has reached his waist.

And with bowed head he leaps upon the raft.

Robert Curtis remains yet another moment on the top, and looks around him; then, the last, he leaves his ship.

It is time. The mooring is cut, and the raft slowly drifts away. We all look towards the spot where the ship is foundering. The end of the mizzen-mast first disappears; then the end of the main-mast; and soon nothing remains of the good ship that was the *Chancellor*.

XXX.

December 7, continued.—A new floating apparatus is bearing us away. It cannot sink, for the pieces of wood which composes it will float, whatever happens. But will not the sea disunite its parts?" Will it not break the ropes which hold it together? Will it not, in short, destroy the shipwrecked ones who are crowded upon its surface?

Of the twenty-eight persons who embarked on the *Chancellor* at Charleston, ten have already perished.

There are still eighteen of us,—eighteen on this raft, which forms a sort of irregular quadrilateral, measuring about forty feet long by twenty wide.

The following are the names of the survivors of the *Chancellor*: the two Letourneurs, Falsten the engineer, Miss Hervey, and myself, passengers; Captain Robert Curtis, Lieutenant Walter, the boatswain, Hobbart the stewart, Jynxtrop the negro cook, Douglass the carpenter, and the seven sailors, Austin, Owen, Wilson, O'Ready, Burke, Sandon, and Flaypole.

Has not the sea tried us sorely enough during the seventy-two days since we left the American coast; has not its hand been heavy enough upon us? The most confident are in despair.

But let us think, not of the future, but of the present, and let us go on setting down the incidents of this drama as fast as they occur.

The occupants of the raft have been recounted. What, then, are the resources?

Robert Curtis has only been able to transfer to the raft what provisions remained in the steward's room; most of the provisions were destroyed when the deck of the *Chancellor* was submerged. What remains is far from abundant, considering that there are eighteen mouths to feed, and that many days may yet elapse before a ship or land is signalled. A cask of biscuit, a barrel of dried meat, a small cask of wine-brandy, are all that has been saved. It is therefore important to deal these out in rations from the beginning.

We have absolutely no change of clothing. Some sails serve us at once as a covering and a shelter. The tools belonging to the carpenter, the sextant and compass, a chart, our pocket-knives, a metal kettle, a tin cup which has never left the old Irishman O'Ready,—such are the utensils and instruments which remain to us. All the boxes which were deposited on deck to be put on the first raft, sank when the ship was partially ingulfed, and from that time it was no longer possible to go down into the hold.

This, then, is the situation. It is serious, but not desperate. Unhappily, there is reason to fear that moral as well as physical energy has

deserted more than one of our little group. Besides, there are evil minds among us, who will be difficult to control.

XXXI.

December 7, continued.—The first day has been marked by no occurrence worthy of note.

At eight this morning, Captain Curtis calls us all together, passengers and sailors.

"My friends," he says, "listen well to me. I command on board this raft as I did on board the *Chancellor;* I count therefore, on being obeyed by all of you, without exception. Let us think of the common safety; let us be united; and may Heaven protect us!"

These words are well received.

The light breeze that is blowing, the direction of which is ascertained by the captain with his compass, has increased somewhat in veering to the north. It is a fortunate circumstance. We must hasten to profit by it to reach the American coast as soon as possible. The carpenter has been busy putting up the mast for which the step aft of the raft has been arranged; and he has fixed two buttresses to hold the mast as firmly as possible. As he works, the boatswain and sailors bend the royal to the yard which has been reserved for this use.

At half past nine the mast is put up. Shrouds, fastened to the sides of the raft, insure its firmness. The sail is hoisted and hauled aft; and the raft, urged on wind astern, is sensibly hastened under the action of the still freshening breeze.

This task once done, the carpenter sets about fixing a rudder, which shall give the raft the right direction. He receives the advice of Captain Curtis and Falsten. After working two hours, a sort of scull is arranged aft, much like those used on the Malay boats.

Meanwhile, Captain Curtis has been making the necessary observations to obtain the exact longitude; and at noon he is able to take a good altitude of the sun.

He finds that, as nearly as possible, we are in latitude 15° 7′ north, and in longitude 49° 35′ west of Greenwich.

This point, found on the chart, shows that we are about six hundred and fifty miles north-east of the coast of Paramaribo,—that is, of the nearest part of the American Continent, which, as well as the coast already mentioned, forms the sea-line of Dutch Guiana.

Considering all the chances, we cannot hope, even with the constant aid of the trade-winds, to make more than ten or twelve miles a day, on an apparatus so imperfect as a raft which cannot manœuvre with the wind.

Even under the most favorable circumstances,

it will take two months to reach land, unless, as is not probable, we meet with some vessel. The Atlantic is less frequented in this locality than it is more to the north or to the south of us. We have been thrown, unhappily, between the transatlantic steamship-routes of the Antilles and those of Brazil, and had best not count on the chances of encountering a ship.

Besides, should a calm occur,—should the wind change and waft us eastward,—we should be on the ocean, not two months, but four or even six; and the provisions would give out before the end of the third!

Prudence demands, then, that from henceforth, we shall eat only what is absolutely necessary. Captain Curtis has asked our opinions about this, and we have sternly resolved on the course to take. Rations are measured out to all without distinctions, so that our hunger and thirst may be half satisfied. The working of the raft does not require much physical exertion, and a restricted amount of food ought to suffice for us. As for the wine-brandy, of which there are about five gallons, it must be dealt out with the greatest care; no one will have the right to touch it without the captain's permission.

The rations are thus regulated; each person will have five ounces of meat and five ounces of biscuit per day. It is little, but the ration cannot be greater; for, at this rate, eighteen

mouths will absorb five pounds each of the meat and biscuit,—that is, six hundred pounds in three months. But we do not possess in all more than six hundred pounds of these articles. We must, then, stop at this figure. We have about thirty-two gallons of water, and it is agreed that each day's consumption shall be limited to a pint to each person; this will keep us in water also for three months.

The distribution of the food is to take place each morning at ten o'clock, and will be made by the boatswain. Each person will then receive his day's ration of meat and biscuit, which he may eat when and how it suits him. As we have no utensils for holding water except the kettle and the Irishman's tin cup, the water will be distributed twice a day,—at ten A. M. and six P. M.; and each will drink at once and make way for the others.

It must be said, also, that we have two chances of replenishing our provisions,—rain, which would give us water, and fishing, which would give us food.

Two empty barrels are placed to receive rain-water. The sailors busy themselves with devising means for fishing, and get ready the lines.

Such are the measures taken. They are agreed to, and will be rigorously maintained. It is only by adhering to the most stringent rules that we can hope to escape from the

horrors of famine. Too many sad examples have warned us to have forethought; and if we are reduced to the last privations, it will be because fate will not have ceased to pursue us!

XXXII.

From December 8 *to December* 17.—When evening comes, we crouch under the sails. Wearied by the long hours passed in the masts, I have been able to sleep several hours. The raft, being relatively little weighted, rises quite easily to the waves. As the sea is not ruffled, the waves do not reach us. Unhappily, if the swell has gone down, it is because the wind is subsiding; and towards morning I am forced to put in my journal, "Weather calm." At daylight I have nothing new to remark. The Letourneurs have also slept during a part of the night. We have once more grasped each other's hands. Miss Hervey has had some repose; her features, less fatigued, have resumed their habitual serenity.

We are below the eleventh parallel. The heat during the day is very great, and the sun shines brilliantly. A sort of hot vapor is mingled with the air. As the breeze only comes by whiffs, the sail hangs on the mast in the calms, which are too long continued. But Robert

Curtis and the boatswain, by certain signs which sailors alone can interpret, think that a current of from two to three miles an hour is carrying us westward. This would be a favorable circumstance, which would shorten our journey not a little. May the captain and the boatswain not be mistaken; for in these first days and in this high temperature, the ration of water scarcely suffices to assuage our thrist!

And yet, since we left the *Chancellor*, or rather the tops of the ship, to embark upon this raft, our situation has really improved. The *Chancellor* might founder at any moment, and the raft, at least, is relatively firm. Yes, the situation is a more favorable one, and each of us feels in better spirits. In the daytime we get together, chat, argue, and watch the sea. At night we sleep beneath the shelter of the sails. We are interested in all that is going on, are attracted by the fishing-lines and the captain's observations, and almost enjoy ourselves.

"Mr. Kazallon," says Andre, a few days after our coming upon the raft, "it seems to me that the calm days we are now having are like those on the islet of Ham Rock."

"Yes, indeed, my dear Andre," I reply.

"But I observe that the raft has one great advantage over the islet, it goes!"

"As long as the wind is good, Andre, the raft has the advantage, no doubt; but if the wind should shift—"

True, Mr. Kazallon, replies Andre; but do not let us get discouraged; let us be hopeful!"

Well, we are all hopeful! Yes; it seems as if we had escaped from terrible perils, not to return to them. The circumstances are more favorable. There is not one of us that does not feel almost safe again!

I do not know what is passing in Robert Curtis's mind, and cannot tell whether he shares our good spirits. He most often keeps himself apart from the rest of us. He is the chief; he has not only his life, but our lives to save. I know that it is in this wise that he understands his duty. He is constantly absorbed in his own reflections, and we avoid disturbing him.

During these long hours most of the sailors sleep in the forward part of the raft. The rear part, by the captain's orders; has been reserved for the passengers, and a tent has been set up there, giving us a little shade. We are in a satisfactory state of health. Walter alone has not been able to recruit his strength. The care bestowed upon him does not revive him, and he still grows weaker every day.

I have never appreciated Andre Letourneur's good qualities so much as now. This amiable young man is the soul of our little world. He has an original mind, and new ideas and unexpected perceptions abound in his way of looking at things. His conversation amuses and often instructs us. As he talks, his sickly

countenance lightens up. His father seems to drink in his words. Sometimes he gazes at him, holding his hand, for hours together.

Miss Hervey now and then takes part in our conversations, though she is always very reserved. We try by our attentions to make her forget that she has lost her natural protectors. The young girl has made a firm and fatherly friend in M. Letourneur, and she talks to him with an ease which his age invites. At his request she has told him the story of her life,—that courageous and self-sacrificing life which is the lot of poor orphans. She was with Mrs. Kear for two years, and now she is quite without means in the present or hope of fortune in the future; yet she is confident, for she is ready for any fate. Miss Hervey, by her character and moral courage, inspires respect, and neither word nor gesture from the coarser men has so far outraged her feelings. The 12th, 13th, and 14th of December have brought no change in the situation. The wind has continued to blow unequally from the east. The raft has required no managing; it has not been necessary to turn the rudder or rather scull. The raft runs wind astern, and there is not enough sail on to make it lurch on one side or the other. The sailors on watch, posted forward, have orders to watch the sea with the utmost attention.

Seven days have elapsed since we abandoned the *Chancellor*. I observe that we are getting

used to the rations imposed on us, at least as far as food is concerned. It is true that we have not been put to the proof by physical weariness. We are not "used up," to use a vulgar but apt expression, and under such conditions a man requires but little to sustain him. Our greatest privation is that of water, for, amid these great heats, the quantity doled out is to us clearly insufficient.

On the 15th a shoal of fishes, a sort of "gilt-heads," comes swarming about the raft. Though our fishing apparatus consists of nothing more convenient than long cords with a curved nail at the end, baited with bits of dry meat at the end, we catch quite a number of these fish, which are happily hungry.

It is truly a miraculous fishing, and we forthwith have a little feast. Some of the fish are broiled, others boiled in salt water over a wood-fire lit on the forward part of the raft. What a dinner! It is so much provision economized. The fish are so abundant that, during two days, more than two hundred pounds of them are taken. If it will but rain now, all will be for the best.

Unfortunately, the shoal of fishes does not remain long in our vicinity. On the 17th some large sharks appear on the surface of the water. They have fins, and black backs with white spots and transversal stripes. The presence of these horrible creatures is always alarming.

By reason of the slight elevation of the raft we are nearly on a level with them, and several times their tails beat with terrible violence against our spars. The sailors, however, succeed in driving them off by means of hand-spikes. I shall be much surprised if they do not persistently follow us as a prey in reserve for them.

XXXIII.

From December 18 *to December* 20.—To-day the weather has changed, and the wind has freshened. We do not complain, for the change is a favorable one. The precaution is taken, however, to steady the mast, so that the tension of the sail may not cause it to break. This done, the raft advances a little more swiftly, and leaves a long foamy track behind it.

In the afternoon some clouds overcast the sky, and the heat is rather less intense. The swell rocks the raft more perceptibly, and several waves have washed over it. Happily, the carpenter has succeeded in putting up some armors two feet high, the better to protect us from the sea.

The barrels with the provisions and the water are more firmly fastened, too, by means of double ropes. Should the sea carry them off

we should be reduced to the most horrible distress! It is impossible to think of such a misfortune without shuddering.

On the 18th the sailors gather some of the marine plants which are called "sargasses," much like those which we found between the Bermudas and Ham Rock. They have a sugarish taste, and are somewhat nutritious. I advise my companions to chew the stems. They do so, and their lips and throats are much refreshed thereby.

Nothing new occurs on this day. I observe that some of the sailors, chiefly Owen, Burke, Flaypole, Wilson, and the negro Jynxtrop, have frequent conferences, the subject of which I do not discover. I also observe that they stop talking when one of the officers or passengers approaches them. Robert Curtis has noticed the same thing, and speaks of it to me. These secret consultations do not please him, and he proposes to watch the mennarrowly. Jynxtrop and Owen are evidently two rascals, who are not to be trusted, for they may be able to lure away their comrades.

On the 19th the heat is excessive. The sky is cloudless. The breeze does not fill the sail, and the raft lies still. Some of the sailors take a plunge into the sea, and the bath affords them refreshing relief by diminishing to some extent their thirst. But it is dangerous to trust one's self beneath these waves infested by sharks, and

none of us have followed the rash example of the sailors. Who knows, though, whether we shall not, later on, follow their example? To see the raft motionless, the long undulations of the ocean without a ripple, the sail limp on the mast, is it not to be feared that this situation will last long?

Walter's health gives us great anxiety. He is being wasted by a slow fever, which seizes him at fitful intervals. Perhaps sulphate of quinine might subdue it. But the swamping of the poop was so rapid, as I have said, that the medicine-box disappeared beneath the waves. Then this poor young man certainly has phthisic, and for some time this incurable disease has made terrible inroads upon him. The external symptoms are not to be mistaken. Walter is seized with a slight, dry cough; his breathing is short, and he perspires abundantly, especially in the morning. He grows thin, his nose is transparent, his sharp cheek-bones, by their heightened color, are in deep contrast with the general pallor of his face, his cheeks are sunken, his lips parched, the whites of his eyes shine and have become slightly blue. Even were he in a comfortable position, medicine could little avail the poor fellow against this relentless disease.

On the 20th the temperature remains the same, and the raft is still motionless. The scorching rays of the sun pierce the canvass

of our tent, and, overcome by the heat, we sometimes find ourselves panting. With what impatience do we await the moment when the boatswain will distribute our poor ration of water! With what eagerness do we pounce upon the few drops of lukewarm liquid! Those who have not experienced thirst cannot comprehend our emotions.

Walter is very much changed, and suffers more than any of us from the scarcity of water. I observe that Miss Hervey keeps nearly all her share of water for him. This compassionate and charitable young girl does everything that she can, if not to appease, at least to lessen, the sufferings of our poor comrade.

To-day, Miss Hervey says to me,—

"This poor man is getting weaker every day, Mr. Kazallon."

"Yes, miss," I reply, "and we can do nothing for him—nothing!"

"Take care; he may hear us!"

Then she sits down at the end of the raft, and, with her head resting on her hands, falls into reverie.

An unpleasant event has taken place to-day, which I ought to jot down.

About one o'clock the sailors Owen, Flaypole, Burke, and Jynxtrop have a very animated conversation. They talk in low tones, and their gestures betray much excitement. Owen rises and walks deliberately aft, to the part of the raft reserved for the passengers.

"Where are you going, Owen?" asks the boatswain.

"Where I have business," replies the sailor, insolently.

At this the boatswain leaves his place; but Robert Curtis, before him, confronts Owen.

The sailor boldly returns the captain's look, and in an injured tone says,—

"Captain, I have something to say to you on behalf of the lads."

"Say on," returns Curtis, coldly.

"It is about the wine-brandy. You know—that little cask of it. Is it being kept for the porpoises, or the officers?"

"Well?"

"We demand that our grog be distributed to us every morning as usual."

"No," replies the captain.

"You say—"

"I say—no."

The sailor looks fixedly at Robert Curtis, and a malicious smile spreads over his face. He hesitates a moment, as if asking himself if he shall insist, but does not, and, without adding a word, returns to his comrades, who are whispering together.

Was Robert Curtis wise in refusing so bluntly? The future will reveal. When I speak to him about it, he replies,—

"Give wine-brandy to those men! I would rather throw the cask into the sea!"

XXXIV.

December 21.—This incident has had no result,—so far, at least.

For several hours, to-day, shoals of fish appear alongside the raft, and we are able to catch a great many of them. They are packed in an empty barrel, and this surfeit of provisions encourages us to hope that we shall not, at least, suffer from famine.

Evening has come, but without bringing its usual coolness. The nights are generally cool under the tropics; but to-night threatens to be stifling. Masses of vapor roll heavily above the waves. The moon will be new at half past one in the morning. The darkness is profound, excepting when the heat-lightning, of a dazzling intensity, lights up the horizon. There are long and wide electric discharges, without determinate form, but extending over a vast area. But there is no thunder, and the calmness of the air is terrible, so absolute is it.

For two hours, Miss Hervey, Andre, and I, seeking for some less heated breath in the air, watch these beginnings of the storm; and we forget our desperate situation in admiring this sublime spectacle of a combat between electric

clouds. The most savage souls must be moved by scenes so grand; and I see the sailors attentively watching this incessant deflagration of the clouds. No doubt they are somewhat disturbed by these portents, announcing the approaching conflict of the elements. What, indeed, would become of the raft in the midst of the combined fury of the heavens and the sea? We remain seated in the aft part of the raft until midnight. These luminous shafts, the whiteness of which is intensified by the darkness, cast upon us a livid tint, like the ghastly color which objects assume when subjected to a flame produced by alcohol impregnated with salt.

"Are you afraid of the storm, Miss Hervey?" asks Andre.

"No, sir," she replies. "The feeling I have is rather one of awe and admiration. Is it not one of the most beautiful spectacles that we can witness?"

"Nothing is more true, Miss Hervey," replies Andre; "especially when the thunder rolls. What more majestic sound can fill our ears? What is the roar of artillery, that harsh and echoless hubbub, when compared with it? The thunder fills the soul, and it is rather a sound than a noise, a sound which swells and subsides, like the prolonged note of a singer. Why, Miss Hervey, never did the voice of the finest artist move me as does this grand and incomparable voice of nature."

"A deep bass," I say, laughing.

"Yes," replies Andre; "and may we hear it before long, for this noiseless lightning is monotonous."

"Do you think so, dear Andre?" I reply. "Submit to the storm, if it comes; but do not wish for it."

"Good; the storm will bring wind!"

"And water, also, doubtless," adds Miss Hervey; "the water that we need!"

Much might be said in reply to this, but I refrain from jarring upon their poetry with my sad prosaic thoughts. They look at the storm from a special point of view, and for two hours I listen to their poetic reveries, and their eager prayers that the storm may come.

Meanwhile the firmanent has gradually become overclouded. The stars have gone out at the zenith, one by one, and the zodiacal constellations have disappeared beneath the mists at the horizon. Black and heavy vapors collect above our heads, and conceal the last lingering stars in the heavens. Every moment this cloudy mass throws out great whitish gleams, against which appear small grayish clouds

This whole electric reservoir in the upper regions of the atmosphere has, up to this time, emptied itself noiselessly. But the air being very dry, and therefore a bad conductor, the fluid can only escape by terrible concussions; and it seems to me impossible that the storm

should not soon burst forth with an extreme violence.

This is the opinion both of Robert Curtis and of the boatswain. The latter is guided by his sailor's instinct, which is infallible. The captain adds to this "weather-wise" instinct the learning of a scholar. He points out to me a thick cloud-mass above us, which the meteorologists call a "cloud-ring," and which is very rarely formed in any other locality than the torrid zone; this region being saturated with all the water-vapor which the trade-winds carry thither from various parts of the ocean.

"Yes, Mr. Kazallon," says Robert Curtis, "we are in the regions of storms, for the wind has driven us into the torrid zone, where a close observer, with very sensitive ears, would continually hear the rolling of the thunder. This has been long remarked, and I believe it to be true."

"It seems to me," says I, listening as I speak, "that I can hear the continuous rumbling to which you refer."

"Very likely; it is the first muttering of the storm. Within two hours it will be upon us with all its fury. Well, we shall be ready to receive it!"

No one thinks of sleeping; nor is it possible, so oppressive is the air. The lightning spreads, and appears at the horizon across a space of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty

degrees ; it successively inflames the whole periphery of the firmament, while a sort of phosphorescent light is evolved from the atmosphere.

At last the rolling of the thunder becomes more distinct and sharp ; but it is still, if I may so express it, a round noise, without angles of explosion, a rumbling as yet unechoed. It would seem as if the celestial vault were muffled by these clouds, the elasticity of which stifles the fulness of the electric discharges.

The sea, so far, has remained calm, heavy. even stagnant. Still, the sailors do not fail to understand the meaning of the wide undulations which are beginning to raise the waters. To their thinking the sea is "getting ready," and there is a tempest somewhere, the rebound of which has reached us. The terrible wind is not far off, and a ship would have been already ahull, as a measure of prudence ; but the raft cannot be managed, and must fly before the storm.

At one o'clock a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a discharge after a few seconds, indicates that the storm is close upon us. The horizon suddenly disappears behind a damp fog.

Just then one of the sailors cries out,—

"The squall ! the squall !"

XXXV.

Night of December 21.—The boatswain hastens to the halliard which holds the sail, and the yard is at once lowered. It is time, for the squall comes on at once like a whirlwind. If the sailor had not cried out, we should have been capsized, and perhaps thrown into the sea. The tent in the aft part of the raft has been carried off at a stroke.

But if the raft has nothing to fear directly from the wind, if it is too flat to give the wind a hold, it has everything to fear from the monstrous waves raised by the tempest. These waves are flattened, and, as it were, crushed, for some minutes, under the pressure of the layers of air; then they rise furiously, and their height increases in proportion to the very compression to which they have just been subjected.

The raft soon follows the unruly motions of the surge, and if it is not displaced more than the surge, the incessant motion to and fro makes it oscillate from side to side, and before and behind.

"Tie yourselves! Tie yourselves to the raft!" cries the boatswain, throwing us some ropes.

Robert Curtis hastens to our aid. The Letourneurs, Falsten, and I are soon firmly tied to the raft. We shall not be carried off, even if the raft breaks. Miss Hervey is tied by the middle of the body to one of the posts which sustained the tent, and, by the light of the lightning-flashes, I see that her face is, as always, serene.

Now the thunder and lightning begin in good earnest, with flashes aud quickly succeeding rumblings. Our ears and eyes are full of them. One clap ofthunder does not wait for the other, and no sooner does one flash cease than another comes. In the midst of these resplendent fulgurations, the whole vault of vapors seems be catch fire. It appears as if the ocean as well as the heavens were ablaze, and I see several ascending flashes which, rising from the crest of the waves, reinforce those of the clouds. A strong sulphurous odor spreads through the air; but so far the lightning has spared us, and has only struck the waves.

At two in the morning the storm is at the height of its fury. The wind has become tempestuous, and the surge, which is frightful, threatens to break up the raft. Douglas the carpenter, Robert Curtis, the boatswain, and other sailors hurriedly bind it together more securely with ropes. Enormous masses of water fall directly upon it, and these heavy baths wet us to the skin, with water that is almost luke-

warm. M. Letourneur throws himself against one of these furious waves, as if to protect his son from too violent a shock. Miss Hervey is motionless; she looks like a statue of resignation.

At this moment, by the light of a sudden flash, I perceive some great, deep clouds of a reddish colour; and a crackling noise, like a discharge of musketry, resounds in the air. This is produced by a series of electric discharges, to which hailstones serve as intermediates between the opposing clouds. Indeed, hail has been formed by the meeting between a storm-cloud and a current of cold air, and is falling with great violence. We are riddled by hailstones as big as a nut, which strike the raft with a metallic sonorousness.

The stony shower continues thus for half an hour, and aids in beating down the wind; but the wind, after shifting to every point of the compass, rises again with great violence. The mast, the shrouds of which are broken, has fallen over across the raft, and the sailors make haste to disengage it from its step, so that it shall not be broken off at its foot. The helm is disjointed by the sea, and the sculls drift hopelessly away. At the same time the larboard armors are torn off, and the waves invade the raft through the breach thus made.

The carpenter and sailors try to repair the damage; but the shocks of the waves prevent them, and they roll over each other. The raft,

lifted by immense waves, inclines at an angle of more than forty-five degrees. How is it that the men are not carried off? How is it that the ropes which hold us are not broken? How is it that we are not all hurled into the sea? It is difficult to say. As for me, it seems impossible that, in one of these frightful moments, the raft should not turn upside down, and leave us to perish in the convulsions of asphyxia! About three in the morning, indeed, at the moment when the storm is more furious than ever, the raft, lifted on the back of a wave, is, so to speak, placed endwise. Cries of fright escape us. We are going to capsize! No. The raft is held on the crest of the wave, at an immense height; and, under the intense light of the flashes which are shooting all around us, we are able to cast horror-stricken glances over the sea, which foams as if it were breaking over rocks.

Then the raft almost immediately resumes its horizontal position; but while it is in this oblique situation, the fastenings of the casks are broken. I see one of them go overboard, and another break, letting escape the water it contains.

Two of the sailors rush forward to save the second cask, which contains the dry meat. But one of them catches his foot between the disjoined planks of the platform, and utters loud cries of pain. I try to run to him, and succeed

in untying the rope which binds me. It is too late. By a dazzling flash of lightning I see the wretched man, whoh as got his foot free, carried off by a wave which completely covers us. His comrade has disappeared with him and there is no possibility of lending them aid. The wave has laid me flat on the platform, and my head having struck upon the edge of a spar, I lose consciousness.

XXXVI.

December 22.—Day has come at last, and the sun has peeped out between the last clouds left behind by the tempest. This conflict of the elements has only lasted a few hours, but it has been frightful, and the air and water have been in collision with unparalleled violence.

I have only been able to describe the main incidents, for the fainting which followed my fall has not permitted me to observe the end of the cataclysm. I only know that, shortly after the storm subsided under the action of violent showers, and that the electrical tension of the atmosphere was lessened. The tempest, therefore, has not besn prolonged beyond the night. But in this brief space of time, how much damage it has caused, what irreparable losses we have suffered, what miseries await us! We

have not even been able to preserve a drop of the torrents of water which the storm has shed! I have come to myself, thanks to the attention of the Letourneurs and Miss Hervey; but I owe it to Robert Curtis that I was not carried off by a second wave.

The two sailors who have perished during the tempest are Austin, a young man of twenty-eight, a worthy fellow, active and brave; and the old Irishman O'Ready, the survivor of so many shipwrecks! There are only sixteen of us left on the raft; that is, about half of those who set out on the *Chancellor* have already disappeared! And now, what provisions will remain to us?

Robert Curtis thinks it best to take an exact account of them. Of what do they consist, and how long will they last?

The water will not give out yet, for there remains in the broken cask about fourteen gallons, and the second cask is still intact. But both the cask containing the dried meat, and that in which the fish were packed, have been carried off; of these resources, therefore, nothing remains. Not more than sixty pounds of biscuit, Robert Curtis thinks, have been saved from the assaults of the sea.

Sixty pounds of biscuit will feed sixteen persons for eight days, allowing nearly half a pound apiece per day.

Robert Curtis has apprized us of the exact

situation. We have heard him in silence. In silence, also, has this twenty-second day of December been passed. Each of us is absorbed in reflection; but it is evident that the same thoughts fill the minds of all. It seems to me that we look at each other with different eyes, and that the spectre of famine is already brooding over us. Up to this time we have not been absolutely deprived of food and drink; but now the ration of water must be reduced, and as for the ration of biscuit—

I go up to a group of sailors who are lying down forward, and hear Flaypole say, in an ironical tone, "Those who are going to die had better die pretty soon!"

"Yes!" replied Owen. "At least, they would leave the others their share."

The day has passed amid general dejection. Each has received his allotted half a pound of biscuit. Some devour it at once, with a sort of rage; the others eat it slowly and at intervals. Falsten seems to have divided his share into as many portions as the number of meals he has been in the habit of taking each day.

If any one survives, it will be Falsten.

XXXVII.

From December 23 to December 30.—Since the tempest, the wind has shifted northeast, and maintains itself with a fine breeze. We must take advantage of it, for it tends to carry us landward. The mast, replaced in its position by Douglas, is securely fastened, the sail is once more set, and the raft advances with wind astern at the rate of from two to two and a half miles an hour.

The sailors now busy themselves with re-adjusting a scull, which is done by means of a spar and a long plank. It works very fairly; but with the pace at which the wind is pushing forward the raft, but little effort is required to maintain it.

The platform is also repaired with ropes and pins, which hold together the disjointed planks. The larboard armors, carried off by the waves, are replaced, and protect us from the assaults of the sea. In a word, all that it is possible to do to strengthen the raft and its appliances has been done.

The tropical heat has returned with the clear sky. To-day it is fortunately tempered by the breeze. The tent having been set up anew in

the aft part of the raft, we take turns in seeking shelter beneath it.

Meanwhile the insufficiency of food begins to be seriously felt. We suffer visibly from famine. Our cheeks are getting hollow and our faces emaciated. With most of us the nervous system is attacked, and the astriction of the stomach produces a painful sensation. If we had some narcotic,—opium or tobacco,—to elude this famine and get to sleep, it would perhaps be more easy to bear; but we have nothing of this sort.

One of the party, at least escapes from this imperious need. This is Walter, who is assailed by an intense fever, which "nourishes" him; but he is tortured by a burning thirst. Miss Hervey, who contrives to save a part of her ration for the sick man, has obtained an extra quantity of water for him from the captain, and every quarter of an hour she moistens poor Walter's lips with it. He can scarcely speak, and so thanks the kind girl with a grateful look. Poor fellow! He is doomed, and the tenderest care will not save him. He at least will not suffer long!

To-day he seems to be conscious of his condition, and he beckons to me to approach him. I sit down by his side. He summons all his strength, and in broken words, says, "Mr. Kazallon, have I long to live?"

Slight as is my hesitation in answering, Walter perceives it.

"The truth!" he continues; "the whole truth!"

"I am not a doctor, and I cannot tell—"

"Never mind; answer me, I beg of you!"

I look at him a long time, and then put my ear to his chest. The phthisic has evidently made frightful progress for some days. It is certain that one of his lungs does not act, and that the other scarcely suffices for the need of breathing. Walter is the victim of a fever which seems to foreshadow a speedy dissolution. What can I say in reply to his question?

His look is so searching that I do not know what to do, and I try to think of some evasive answer.

"My friend," I say, "none of us, in our present situation, can count upon surviving very long. Who knows if, a week hence, any who are on the raft—"

"A week hence?" he murmurs, with his burning look fixed upon me; then he turns his head, and appears to be dozing.

There is no change in our situation during the next three days. Strange as it may appear, we are getting used to dying by hunger. The narratives of shipwrecked men have often stated what I now observe. When I read them I thought them exaggerated. They were not so; for I can now see that want of nourishment can be borne a much longer time than I have supposed. Besides, the captain has added several

drops of wine-brandy to our half-a-pound of biscuit, and this sustains our strength more than might be imagined. If we could only be sure of as large a ration for two months, or even for one month! But our reserves are being exhausted, and each of us may already foresee the moment when this already meagre nourishment will have entirely given out. We must then, at all hazards, seek additional food from the sea, now a difficult task to accomplish. Still the boatswain and carpenter prepare new lines, and for hooks they use nails torn from the planks of the platform. This done, the boatswain seems well satisfied with his work.

"These nails are not the best fish-hooks in the world," he says to me; "but they would catch fish as well as the rest, if we had any bait. We have nothing but biscuit, and that will not hold on. If I could but catch one fish, I would make bait of him. But there's the rub,—how to catch the first fish!"

The boatswain is right, it seems as if the fishing will be in vain. He tries his luck, however,—lets down his lines; but, as might have been foreseen, not a fish bites. It is evident, moreover that there are but few fish in this part of the ocean.

On the 28th and 29th we renew our attempts, but in vain. The pieces of biscuit which serve as bait dissolve in the water, and must be rejected. It is useless wasting our only food,

and we have already got to counting the crumbs.

The boatswain, in despair, next tries a bit of cloth on the nails at the end of the lines. Miss Hervey gives him a piece of the red shawl she is wearing. Perhaps this rag, shining under the water will attract some hungry fish.

This experiment is tried on the 30th. For several hours the lines are sunk to the bottom; but when they are drawn up the red rag appears still untouched.

The boatswain is quite discouraged. Here is another resource that has failed us. What would we not give to catch this first fish, which would perhaps enable us to catch others?

"There is yet one more way of baiting our lines," says the boatswain to me, in a low tone.

"What?" I ask.

"You will know, after a while," he rejoins, looking at me significantly.

What do these words mean, from a man who has always seemed to me very reserved? I have been thinking them over all night.

XXXVIII.

From January 1 to January 5.—It is more than three months since we left Charleston, in the *Chancellor*, and we have been twenty days on this raft; carried hither and thither at the mercy of the winds and currents. Have we gone westward, towards the American coast, or has the tempest driven us further away from any land?

It is no longer possible even to take an observation. During the last storm, the captain's instruments were broken, despite every precaution. Curtis has no longer any compass to apprise him of the direction we are taking, nor any sextant to measure the sun's height. Are we near or many miles from the coast? We cannot tell; but it is much to be feared that, as everything has been against us, we are far away from it.

There is something very depressing, no doubt, in this total ignorance of our whereabouts; but, as hope never quits the human heart, we are fain often to fancy, without any reason, that the coast is near. Each of us scans the horizon, and tries to discern on this clear line an appearance of land. The eyes of the passengers, at least, often deceive them in this respect, and make

their illusion all the more painful. We think we see it, and there is nothing! It is a cloud, or a mist, or an undulation of the surge. No land is there; no ship appears upon the grayish perimeter, where the sea meets the sky. The raft is always the centre of this desolate circumferance.

On January 1st we have eaten our last biscuit, or rather our last crumbs. The 1st of January! What memories does this day recall to us! And, by comparison, how wretched it seems to us! The birth of the new year, the good resolves and wishes to which it gives rise, the family love-tokens it brings, the hope with which it fills the heart—nothing of this any longer concerns us! The words "I wish you a happy New Year!" which are only to be said with a smile—who of us dares utter them? Who of us would dare to hope for even a day for himself?

The boatswain, however, coming up to me, and looking at me strangely, says,—

"Mr. Kazallon, I wish you a happy—"

"New Year?"

"No, I was going to speak of to-day only; and even this is rash on my part, for there is nothing left to eat on the raft!"

Everybody knows this, and yet, on the next day, when the time of distributing the food comes, we seem to be struck by a new blow. We cannot believe in this utter dearth!

Towards evening, I feel violent twinges in the stomach. These cause me to yawn painfully; but two hours later they are to some degree assuaged.

On the 3rd, I am much surprised to find that I am no longer suffering. I feel within myself a great void, but this is as much fanciful as physical. My head, heavy, and ill-balanced, seems to shake on my shoulders, and I experience the dizziness which one feels when leaning over an abyss.

All of the party, however, are not attacked by these symptoms. Some of my companions already suffer terribly; among others, the carpenter and the boatswain, who are naturally great eaters. Their tortures force involuntary cries from them, and they are obliged to tie themselves up with a rope. And this is only the second day!

Ah, that half a pound of biscuit, that meagre portion which just now seemed to us so insufficient, how our hunger magnifies it now, how enormous it was, now that we have no longer anything! This bit of biscuit, if it were still doled out to us, if we could but have half of it—nay, even a quarter—we might subsist upon it several days! We would eat it crumb by crumb!

In a besieged city, reduced to the last degree of want, the victims may still find, amid the ruins, in the brooks in the corners, some lean

bone or rejected root, which will delay famine for the moment. But on these planks, which the waves have so many times washed over, the cracks of which have already been searched, the angles of which, where the wind might have blown some of the refuse, have been scratched, what can we still hope to find?

The nights seem very, very long—longer than the days. In vain do we seek in sleep a momentary relief. Sleep, when it does close our eyes, is only a feverish doze, big with nightmares.

On this night, however, yielding to fatigue, at a moment when my hunger is also asleep, I have been able to rest several hours.

The next morning, at six o'clock, I am awakened by loud voices on the raft. I quickly jump up, and see the negro Jynxtrop, and the sailors Owen, Flaypole, Wilson, Burke, and Sandon, grouped in a belligerent attitude on the forward part of the raft. These wretches have possessed themselves of the carpenter's tools—his hatchet, hammer, and chisels; and they are threatening the captain, the boatswain, and Douglas. I hasten at once to join Curtis and his party. Falsten follows me. We have only our knives for arms, but we are none the less determined to defend ourselves.

Owen and his comrades advance toward us. The rascals are drunk. During the night they have emptied the cask of wine-brandy, and have used it up.

What do they wish to do?

Owen and the negro, less drunk than the rest, are inciting them to murder us, and they are under the influence of a sort of alcoholic fury.

"Down with Curtis! To the sea with the captain! Owen for master! Owen for master!"

Owen is the leader, and the negro serves as his lieutenant. The hatred of these two men for their officers now manifests itself by a resort to force, which, even if it succeeds, will not save the situation. But their comrades, incapable of reasoning, are armed, while we are not; and this renders them formidable.

Robert Curtis, on seeing them advance, walks towards them, and with a steady voice cries,—

"Down with your arms!"

"Death to the captain!" shouts Owen.

The wretch excites his followers by gestures; but Curtis, passing the drunken group, goes straight up to him.

"What do you wish?" he asks.

"No more captain on the raft!" replies Owen, "all equal here!"

Stupid brute! As if we were not all equal, in the presence of misery!

"Owen," says the captain, a second time, "Down with your arms!"

"Come on, men!" cries Owen.

A struggle begins. Owen and Wilson fall upon Robert Curtis, who parries their blows with the end of a spar; while Burke and Flay-

pole attack Falsten and the boatswain. I come into collision with the negro Jynxtrop, who, brandishing a hammer, tries to strike me. I endeavour to seize him with my arms, in order to render him helpless, but the rascal's muscular force is too much for me. After struggling several moments, I feel that I am about to yield, when Jynxtrop rolls upon the platform, dragging me with him. Andre Letourneur has caught him by the leg and thrown him over.

This has saved me. The negro, in falling, has let go the hammer, which I seize. I am about to break his head with it, when Andre's hand arrests me in my turn.

The mutineers have all been driven back upon the forward part of the raft. Robert Curtis, after eluding Owen's blows, has just seized a hatchet, and, raising his hand, strikes.

But Owen jumps aside, and the hatchet hits Wilson full on the stomach. The wretched man falls over the side of the raft and disappears

"Save him! save him!" cries the boatswain.

"He is dead," replies Douglas.

"Yes, that is why"—replies the boatswain, without ending his sentence.

Wilson's death ends the struggle. Flaypole and Burke, in the last stages of drunkenness, have fallen flat and motionless; and we seize Jynxtrop and tie him firmly to the foot of the mast.

As for Owen, he has been overcome by the

boatswain and the carpenter. Robert Curtis comes up to him and says,—

"Pray to God; for you are going to die!"

"You are in a hurry, then, to eat me!" replies Owen, with inconceivable insolence.

This atrocious reply saves his life. Robert Curtis throws aside the hatchet which he has already raised over Owen, and, with a pale face, goes and sits down in the rear of the raft.

XXXIX.

January 5 and 6.—This scene has deeply impressed us. Owen's reply, under the circumstances, is enough to overwhelm the most resolute. As soon as my mind has become more calm, I warmly thank young Letourneur, whose timely interference has saved my life.

"You thank me," he says, "when, perhaps, you ought to curse me!"

"You, Andre!"

"Mr. Kazallon, I have only prolonged your miseries."

"No matter Andre," says Miss Hervey, who has approached us; "you have done your duty."

This sentiment of duty is ever present with the young girl. She has grown thin from privation; her clothing, faded by the dampness,

torn by concussions, floats almost in tatters; but no murmur of complaint has passed her lips, nor does she allow herself to become dejected.

"Mr. Kazallon," she asks, "we are fated, then, to die of hunger?"

"Yes, Miss Hervey," I reply, almost harshly.

"How long can one live without food?"

"Longer than you would think. Perhaps for long, interminable days!"

"Strong people suffer the most, do they not?"

"Yes, but they die more quickly. It is a compensation."

How could I reply to the young girl thus? What! I cannot think of a word of hope with which to cheer her! I have thrust the truth, with all its bitterness, upon her. Has every human feeling died within me? The Letourneurs, who hear me, look at me several times with their large, clear eyes, dilated by hunger. They are wondering if it is really I who speak thus.

Several moments after, when we are alone, Miss Hervey says to me in a low voice,—

"Mr. Kazallon, would you be willing to do me a service?"

"Yes, miss," I reply, this time with warmth, ready to do anything for her.

"If I die before you,—and that may happen, for I am weaker than you are,—promise to throw my body into the sea."

"Miss Hervey, I was wrong—"

"No, no," she adds, half smiling. "You were right to speak to me as you did; but promise to do as I ask. It is a weakness. I fear nothing while alive; but, when I am dead, promise to cast me into the sea."

I promise. Miss Hervey offers me her hand, and I feel her shrunken fingers feebly press my own.

Another night has passed. At times my sufferings are so extreme that cries of pain escape me; then they calm down, and I repose, plunged in a sort of stupor. When I return to myself, I am amazed to find my companions still living.

Of all on the raft, Hobbart the steward appears to support his privations best. He is a small man, with a suspicious face, a fawning expression, smiling often with a smile "which only moves the lips;" his eyes are usually half shut, as if he wished to disguise his thoughts, and his whole air seems to breathe falsehood. I could swear that he is a hypocrite; and though privation seems to have less effect on him than on the rest, he is forever complaining and groaning. It seems to me that these complaints and groans are assumed. We shall see. I will watch this man, for I have suspicions about him which it would be well to clear up.

To-day (January 6) M. Letourneur takes me apart, and leading me aft, betrays the intention of making me a secret communication. He does

not wish to be either seen or heard. I go with him, and, as night is falling, no one can observe us.

"Mr. Kazallon," says M. Letourneur, in a low voice, "Andre is very weak. My boy is dying of hunger. Sir, I cannot see it any longer! No, I cannot!"

He speaks to me as if he were suppressing anger beneath his piteous words, and his accent has something savage in it. Ah, I can understand all that this father suffers!

"M. Letourneur," I say, taking his hand, "let us not despair. Some ship—"

"I have not come to ask commonplace consolations from you," says he, interrupting me. "We shall not meet any ship; you know that as well as I. No; I wish to speak of something else. How long is it that my son, you, and the rest, have been without eating?"

This question astonishes me. I reply, —

"The biscuit gave out on January 2d. This is the 6th. It is four days, then, since—"

"Since you have eaten?" returns M. Letourneur. "Well, it is eight days since I have eaten!"

"Eight days!"

"Yes; I have saved up my portion for my son."

At these words, tears come to my eyes. I seize M. Letourneur's hands. I can scarcely speak. I look at him. Eight days!

"Sir" I say, "what do you wish of me?"

"'Sh! not so loud! Let nobody hear us."

"But tell me—"

"I wish," he says, lowering his voice—"I wish that you would offer Andre—"

"But you yourself—cannot you—!"

"No, no! He would think that I had robbed myself for him. He would refuse me. No; this must come from you!"

"M. Letourneur!"

"For pity's sake do me this service—the greatest that I can ask of you! Besides, —for your trouble—"

Saying this, M. Letourneur takes my hand and softly carresses it.

"For your trouble—yes—you may eat—just a little!"

Poor father! As I listen to him, I tremble like a child. All my being thrills, and my heart beats as if it would break. At the same time I feel M. Letourneur slipping a little piece of biscuit into my hand.

"Take care that nobody sees you," he says. "The monsters, they would murder you! There is only enough for one day; but to-morrow—I will give you as much more!"

The unhappy man distrusts me! And perhaps he is right; for when I feel the bit of biscuit in my hands, I am on the point of carrying it to my mouth!

I have resisted the temptation; and let those who read this imagine all that my pen cannot depict! The night has come on with the rapidity peculiar to low latitudes. I glide up to Andre, and give him the piece of biscuit as if it came from me.

The young man jumps up.

"And my father?" he says.

I tell him that M. Letourneur has had his share, and I mine; that to-morrow, and the following days, I shall no doubt be able to give him still more. I urge him to take it!

Andre does not ask me where the biscuit comes from, but voraciously devours it.

XL.

And this evening, despite M. Letourneur's offer, I have eaten nothing—nothing!

January 7.—For several days, the salt sea which almost incessantly washes over the platform of the raft, as soon as the surge rises, has stung to the quick the skin of the feet and legs of some of the sailors. Owen, whom the boatswain has kept tied aft since the mutiny, is in a deplorable state. At our request he is freed from his bonds. Sandon and Burke have also been gnawed by the biting of the salt water; the rest of us have thus far been preserved from

it, because the rear of the raft is less beaten by the waves. To-day, the boatswain, crazed by the fury of starvation, devours bits of sails, and pieces of wood. I hear his teeth crunching these poor substitutes for food. The poor fellow, urged by terrible hunger, tries to fill his stomach so as to swell out the mucous membrane. At last, after searching about, he finds a piece of leather on one of the masts, which sustain the platform. The leather is animal matter; he tears it and devours it with indescribable voracity, and it seems as if he finds some relief from its absorption. Everybody hastens to follow his example. A hat of tanned hide, the visors of caps, everything that is of an animal substance is savagely gnawed. It seems, just now, as if we were no longer human. I never shall forget this scene!

If hunger is not satisfied, its twinges, have at least, been an instant assuaged. But some of us are unable to endure this revolting nourishment and throw it up.

Let me be pardoned for giving these details. I must conceal nothing that the shipwrecked of the *Chancellor* have suffered. The reader will learn by this narrative, all the moral and physical miseries that human beings can sustain. Let this be the mission of this diary. I will tell all, and I forsee but too clearly that we have not reached the height of our misfortunes!

One thing that I have observed during this

scene, has confirmed my suspicions of the steward. Hobbart, though all the while complaining, has taken no part in eating the leather. To hear him, one would think he was dying from inanition; yet to see him, it would appear that he was free from the tortures of the rest. Has this hypocrite some secret reserve, from which he is still drawing? I have been watching him, but have discovered nothing.

The heat is still great, and even insufferable, when the breeze does not moderate it. The ration of water is certainly insufficient, but hunger kills our thirst. And though it is true that the want of water might make us suffer more than the want of food, just now I cannot believe, or at least imagine it. Still, this has often been remarked. God grant that we may not be reduced to this new extremity!

Happily, several pints of water, still remain in the cask which was half broken during the storm, and the second cask is as yet untouched. Though there are fewer of us, the captain, despite complaints, has reduced the daily ration to half a pint each. I approved of this.

As for the wine-brandy, there only remains a quarter of a gallon, which has been securely put away aft.

To-day (the 7th), about half past seven in the evening, one of our party passes away. We now number only fourteen. Walter has expired in my arms, and neither the cares of Miss

Hervey nor of myself have availed anything. He suffers no longer!

A few moments before dying Walter thanked Miss Hervey and me in a voice we could scarcely hear.

"Mr. Kazallon," said he, letting a crumpled letter drop from his trembling hand, "this letter—from my mother—I have not strength—it is the last—I received. She says to me, 'I am waiting for you, my child—I want to see you again!' No, mother, you will never see me again!' This letter, sir—put—on my lips—there, there! Let me die kissing it—my mother—my God!"

I replaced Walter's letter in his cold hand, and carried it to his lips. His eye brightened for a moment, and we heard the noise of a feeble kiss!

He is dead, poor Walter! God has called him to himself!

XLI.

January 8.—I have remained near the poor fellow's corps all night, and Miss Hervey has been several times to pray for the dead.

By daylight the body is quite cold and stiff. I am in haste to cast him into the sea. I have asked Robert Curtis to help me in this sad task. When the body is wrapped in its wretched clothing, we will throw it into the waves; and I trust that, owing to his extreme thinness, he will not float.

Robert Curtis and I, having taken precautions not to be seen, take from Walter's pockets some articles which we shall restore to his mother, if either of us survives.

Just as I am putting on the body the clothing which is to serve it as a shroud, I cannot suppress an exclamation of horror.

The right foot is wanting, and the leg is only a bleeding stump! Who is the perpetrator of this profanation? I must have yielded, then, to my weariness during the night, and some one has profited by my sleeping to mutilate the corpse! But who was it!

Robert Curtis looks angrily about him, Everything, howevr, is as usual; the silence

is broken only by groans. Perhaps we are being watched. Let us hasten to throw these remains into the sea, to avoid more horrible scenes!

Having said a few prayers, we cast the body into the sea and it sinks at once.

"Heavens and earth! The sharks are well fed, they are!"

Who says this? I turn round. It is Jynxtrop, the negro.

The boatswain is standing by.

"This foot," I say, "do you believe that those wretches—"

"That foot? ah, yes," replies the boatswain, in a strange tone. "Besides, it was their right."

"Their right!" I cry.

"Sir," says the boatswain, "it is better to eat a dead man than a living one!"

I know not what to say on this coldly given response; and stretch myself on the rear of the raft.

A piece of good fortune happens about eleven o'clock. The boatswain, who has been casting his lines since morning, has succeeded at last.

Three fishes have just been caught. They are cod-fish of large size, between two and three feet long.

The boatswain had scarcely hauld them on board, before the sailors pounced upon them. Captain Curtis, Falsten, and I hastened to rescue

them, and order is soon restored. Three cod-fish are but little for fourteen persons; but each, at any rate, has his share. Most of the party devour the fish raw, it might even be said, living. Curtis, Andre, and Miss Hervey have the patients to wait. They light a few pieces of wood in a corner of the raft, and broil their pieces. I am not able to impose so much self-control on myself; but eat my portion raw and bleeding.

M. Letourneur is not more patient than I or the rest. He falls upon his bit of fish like a famished wolf. How is it that this poor man, who has not eaten for so long, still lives? I cannot understand.

The boatswain's joy, in hauling out the fish, almost reached delirium. It is certain that if his success continues, we may be saved from a horrible death.

I go and talk with him, and urge him to go on fishing

"Yes!" he says,—"yes of course—of course I will go on!"

"And why do you not cast in your lines again?" I asked.

"Not now," he replies evasively. "Night is more favourable than day for catching big fish, and we must be chary of our bait. Fools that we are, we have not even kept any scraps for bating our lines!"

It is true the error is perhaps a fatal one.

"I have some."

"Some that is good?"

"Excellent, sir, since the fish have bitten at it."

I look at the boatswain, who stares back at me.

"You have something left for baiting your lines?" I ask.

"Yes," he returns in a low voice; and without a word more, leaves me.

This meagre nourishment has, meanwhile, given us some strength, and with it, a little hope. We talk about the boatswain's fishing, and it seems impossible that he should not succeed again. Is fate at last getting tired of pursuing us?

It is a sure proof of a certain degree of expansion in our minds, that we begin to talk again of the past. Our thoughts are no longer fixed exclusively on the miserable present, and the terrible future which menaces us. The Letourneurs, Falsten, the captain and I revert to the events which have happened since the shipwreck. We recall our lost companions, the incidents of the fire, the foundering of the ship, the reef of Ham Rock, the leakage, the frightful voyage in the tops, the raft, the tempest,—all these things, which now seem so far off! Yes, we have passed through all this, and still live!

We live! Is this what can be called living? We are now only fourteen out of twenty-eight, and soon we shall perhaps be but thirteen!

"An unlucky number," says Andre, "but we shall have trouble in finding a fourteenth!"

During the night of the 8th the boatswain once more casts his lines aft, and himself remains to watch them, not wishing to confide this task to any one.

In the morning I go up to him. It is scarcely daylight, and he is trying to pierce the obscurity of the waters with his burning eyes. He does not see me, nor has he heard me approach.

I touch him lightly on the shoulder. He turns towards me.

"Well, boatswain?"

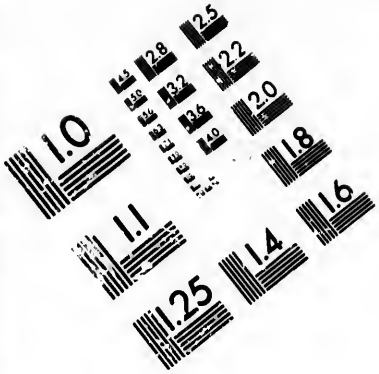
"Well, the accursed sharks have devoured my bait," he replies, in a hollow voice.

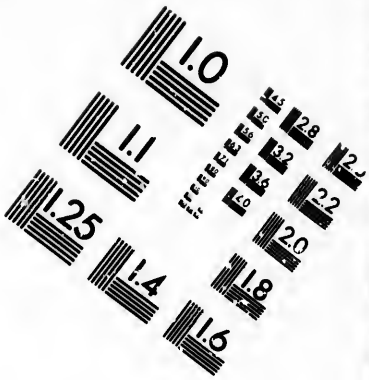
"Have you none left?"

"No! and do you know what that proves, sir?" he adds, grasping my arm. "It proves that we must do things by halves!"

I put my hand over his mouth. I understand him.

Poor Walter!





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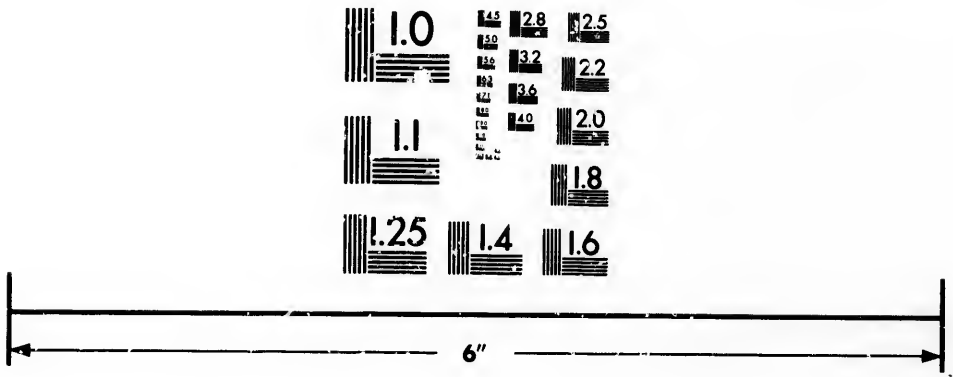

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XLII.

January 9 and 10.—To-day we are becalmed. The sun is burning hot, the breeze has quite subsided, and not a ripple breaks the long undulations of the sea, which rises almost imperceptibly. If there is not some current, the direction of which we cannot determine, the raft must be absolutely stationary.

I have said that the heat, to-day, is intolerable. Our thirst is, therefore, also intolerable. The insufficiency of water makes us suffer terribly, for the first time. I foresee that it will bring tortures more difficult to bear than those arising from hunger. Already our mouths, throats, and pharynxes are contracted by dryness, and our mucous membranes are sorely affected by the hot air carried to them by breathing.

At my entreaties, the captain has for once relaxed the usual rule. He grants a double portion of water, and we are able to quench our thirst, after a fashion, four times in the course of the day. I say "after a fashion," for the water, kept in the bottom of the cask, though covered with canvass, is in truth lukewarm.

The day has been a miserable one. The sailors, overcome by hunger, again give themselves over to despair.

The breeze has not risen with the moon, which is now nearly full. Still, as the tropical nights are cool, we experience some relief; but during the day the heat is insufferable. We cannot doubt, from the constant height of the temperature, that the raft has drifted far to the south.

As for land, no one any longer looks for it. It seems as if the terrestrial globe were only a watery sphere. Always and everywhere, this infinite ocean!

On the 10th there is the same calm and the same heat. The sky pours down upon us a rain of fire; it is burning air that we breathe.

Our desire to drink is irresistible, and we forget the torments of hunger; we await with furious impatience the moment of receiving the few drops of water which are our portion. O, that we might drink to satiety, just for once, even were we to exhaust our supply, and die!

About noon one of our companions is taken with sharp pains which force him to cry out. It is the wretched Owen, who, lying down forward, writhes in dreadful convulsions.

I hurry towards him. Whatever his conduct in the past, humanity impels me to see if I cannot afford him some relief.

Just at this moment the sailor Flaypole gives a shout.

I turn round.

Flaypole is standing near the mast, and is pointing towards the horizon.

"A ship!" he cries.

We are all upon our feet in an instant. Perfect silence reigns on the raft. Owen, ceasing his cries, stands up with the rest. A white speck appears in the direction indicated by Flaypole. But does it move? Is it a sail? What do the sailors, with their experienced eyes, think of it?

I watch Robert Curtis, who, with folded arms, is observing the white speck. His cheeks are projecting, every part of his face expresses intensity of attention, his brow contracts, his eyes are half shut, and he concentrates upon the spot all the power of vision of which he is capable. If this spot is a sail, he will be sure to recognize it.

But he shakes his head; his arms fall to his side.

I look. The white speck is no longer there. It is not a ship; it is some reflection, the broken crest of a wave,—or if it is a ship, the ship has passed out of sight!

What prostration follows this moment of hope! We all resume our wonted places. Robert Curtis stands motionless, but no longer scans the horizon.

Then Owen's cries begin with increased violence. His whole body is writhing in terrible pain, and his aspect is really frightful. His throat is shrunk by a spasmodic contraction, his

tongue is dry, his abdomen swollen, his pulse feeble, rapid, and irregular.

The unfortunate man has violent convulsive movements and tetanic shocks. These symptoms are not to be mistaken; Owen has been poisoned by oxide of copper.

We do not possess the medicine to neutralize the effects of this poison. Still, vomiting may be provoked, to eject the contents of Owen's stomach. Lukewarm water is sufficient for this. He consents. The first cask being exhausted, I am about to procure water from the other, which is still untouched, when Owen gets upon his knees, and in a voice that is scarcely human, cries,—

"No! no! no!"

Why this "no"? I return to Owen, and explain to him what I am going to do. He replies yet more eagerly that he does not wish to drink that water.

I try then to relieve him by tickling the uvula; and this succeeds.

It is but too clear that Owen is poisoned, and that nothing can be done to save him.

But how has he been poisoned? He has had some relief. He can now speak. The captain and I question him.

I will not attempt to describe our feelings on hearing the wretched man's reply.

Owen, urged by atrocious thirst, has stolen several pints of water from the full cask. The water in this cask is poisoned!

XLIII.

From January 11 *to January* 14.—Owen died during the night amid terrible agonies.

It is but too true! The poisoned cask formerly contained copperas. This is very evident. Now, by what fatality was it converted into a water cask, and by what yet more deplorable fatality was it taken on board the raft? It matters little. What is certain is, that we have no more water.

We have been forced to throw Owen into the sea at once, for decomposition immediately began its work. The boatswain could not even use the flesh for bate, so far gone was it. The death of this wretched man will not have been of any use to us!

We all know our situation just as it is, and remain silent. What could we say? Besides, the sound of our voices is exceedingly painful to hear. As we have become very irritable, it is better that we should not speak; for the least remark, a look, a gesture, were enough to provoke a frenzy which it would be impossible to restrain. I do not understand why we are not all madmen by this time!

On the 12th we received no ration of water, the last drop having been exhausted last evening. There is not a cloud in the sky which might give us a little rain, and a thermometer —if we had one—would show one hundred and four degrees (Fahrenheit) in the shade,—if there were any shade on the raft.

It is the same on the 13th. The salt water begins to sting our feet to the quick, but I scarcely notice it. The state of the men afflicted with this torture has grown worse.

Ah, this water that surrounds us! When I think that, by evaporating or freezing it we might make it drinkable! Reduced to vapor or ice, it would no longer contain the least bit of salt, and it might be drunk. But the means of doing this fail us; we cannot effect it.

To-day the boatswain and two sailors have been in bathing, at the risk of being devoured by the sharks. The bath has in some degree refreshed them. Three of our companions and myself, being scarcely able to swim, have lowered ourselves by ropes into the sea, and have remained in the water nearly half an hour. During this time, Robert Curtis was watching for sharks. Happily none appeared. Despite our entreaties and her sufferings, Miss Hervey refused to follow our example.

About eleven on the morning of the 14th the captain comes up to me and whispers in my ear—

"Do not make any motion that will betray you, Mr. Kazallon. I may be mistaken, and I do not wish to cause our companions a fresh disappointment."

I look at him anxiously.

"This time," he says, "I have just really seen a ship."

The captain has done well to warn me, for I should not have been able to control my feelings.

"Look," he adds. "See, on the larboard, aft."

I get up, pretending an indifference I am far from feeling, and scan the arc of the horizon pointed out by Curtis.

My eyes are not those of a sailor: but, in an indistinct outline, I recognize a vessel without sails.

Almost immediately the boatswain, who has been looking that way for several minutes, cries,—

"A ship!"

The news does not at once produce the expected effect. It provokes no emotion, either because it is not believed, or because the strength of the party is exhausted. Nobody gets up. But the boatswain having several times repeated, "A ship! a ship!" every one peers at the horizon.

This time the fact is not to be denied. We see the unhoped-for ship. Will she perceive us?

Meanwhile the sailors try to determine the form and direction of the ship, especially her direction.

Robert Curtis, after observing her with keen attention, says,—

"That ship is a brig, running nearly on a starboard tack. If she continues in this direction for two hours, she will necessarily strike across our track."

Two hours! Two centuries! But her direction may change any moment, all the more as she is only tacking so as to take advantage of the wind. If this is so, when her tack is ended she will tack again to the larboard, and run away from us. Ah, if she were only going wind astern, or even with full sail on, we should have some reason for hope!

We must, then, attract the attention of this ship. At all hazards, she must see us. Curtis orders that every possible signal be given; for the brig is still twelve miles to the east, and she could not hear our cries. We have no fire-arms with which to attract her notice. Let us, then, haul up some sort of flag to the mast-head.

Miss Hervey's shawl is red, and this color is the most distinctly perceptible against the horizon of the sea and the sky.

The shawl is hoisted, and a light breeze which is just now wrinkling the waves spreads forth its folds. It floats from time to time, and our hearts are filled with hope. You know with

what energy a drowning man clings to the smallest object within his reach. The flag is this object, for us!

For an hour we pass through a thousand varying doubts and hopes. The brig has evidently come nearer; sometimes it seems to stop; and we ask ourselves if she is not going to tack about.

How slowly she progresses! She carries, however, her royal and her stay-sails, and her hull is almost visible above the horizon. But the wind is weak, and suppose it should subside still more? We would give years of existence to be older by one hour!

About half past twelve the captain and boatswain estimate that the brig is still nine miles away. She has therefore gained three miles in an hour and a half. The breeze which passes over our heads scarcely reaches her. It seems to me, now, that her sails no longer swell out, but hang limp along the masts. I look to windward to see if a breeze is not coming up; but the waves are in a doze, and the breath of wind which has given us so much hope dies away.

I have gone aft, near the Letourneurs and Miss Hervey, and we look constantly from the ship to the captain. Robert Curtis is motionless, in the forward part, leaning against the mast; and the boatswain is by his side.

Their eyes do not turn aside from the brig for an instant. We read on their faces, which cannot remain expressionless, the emotions they feel.

Not a word is uttered until Douglas cries out, in a tone that cannot be described,—

"She is tacking!"

Our whole existence is at this moment in our eyes. All have started up, some on their knees, others upright. A terrible oath is uttered by the boatswain. The ship is still nine miles from us, and at this distance she has not perceived our signal. As for the raft, it is only a point in space, lost in the intense glow of the sun's rays. It cannot be seen. It has not been seen! If the captain of this ship, whatever she is, had perceived us, would he have been so inhuman as to depart without coming to our aid? No; it is not to be imagined. He has not seen us!

"Fire! Smoke!" cries Robert Curtis. "Burn the planks of the raft! My friends, it is our last chance of being seen!"

Some planks are thrown down forward, so as to form a pile. They are lighted, not without trouble, for they are damp; but this dampness will make the smoke more thick, and therefore more easily seen. Soon a blackish column of smoke rises straight up into the air. If it were night, if darkness should come on before the brig disappears, the flames would be visible, even at our distance!

But the hours pass; the fire goes out.

At such a time to be thus resigned, to submit to the will of God, requires more self-control

than I now possess! No; I cannot have confidence in the God who makes our sufferings yet more terrible; who arouses hope to be thus miserably dashed!

I blaspheme and swear, as did the boatswain. A feeble hand touches me; and Miss Hervey points heavenward.

But it is too much. I do not wish to see anything more; I slip down under the sail; I conceal myself; sobs break from me in spite of myself.

All this while, the brig has taken another tack; she glides slowly away eastward; and three hours afterward the keenest eyes cannot discern any of her sails above the horizon.

XLIV.

January 15.—After this blow, we have nothing to expect but death. It will come more or less gradually; but it will come. To-day some clouds have risen in the east, and have brought with them some whiffs of wind. The temperature is little less oppressive, and despite our prostration, we feel relief from this. My throat breathes an air less dry; but since the last fish were caught, seven days ago, we have not eaten. There is nothing left on the raft. Yesterday I gave Andre the last morsel of biscuit that his father had saved, and had handed to me with tears in his eyes. Jynxtrop, the negro, has managed to rid himself of his bonds, and the captain has not ordered them to be replaced. What good would it do? The wretched man and his accomplices have become feeble from famine. What could they attempt, now?

To-day several large sharks have made their appearance, and we see their big black fins rapidly beating the waves. I cannot help fancying them living coffins, which will soon swallow up our wretched remains. They do not frighten me; they rather attract me. They come near enough to graze the sides of the

raft, and Flaypole's arm, which is leaning over them, just escapes being snapped off by one of the monsters.

The boatswain, with fixed and staring eyes, and tightly closed teeth which appear between his open lips, looks at these sharks from a different point of view. He yearns to devour them, and not to be devoured by them. If he could catch one of them, he would not be slow to eat its tough flesh. Nor would any of us.

The boatswain decides to try and catch one, and as he has no whirl to attach to a line, he goes to work making one. Curtis and Douglas perceive what he is doing, and they confer with each other, while throwing out some ends of spars and ropes, so as to keep the sharks around the raft.

Douglas gets his hatchet to use as a whirl.

It is possible that this tool may stick between the jaws of a shark, either by its edge or the opposite end, should the shark swallow it. The wooden handle is attached to a strong cable, which in turn is securely fastened to one of the uprights of the raft.

Our desires are keenly excited by these preparations. We are breathless with impatience. We use every exertion to hold the attention of the sharks, that they may not swim away.

The tackle is ready, but there is nothing to bait it with. The boatswain, going back and forth, talking to himself, ferrets in every corner and in the air to find a body among us.

He must, then, return to the method he has already adopted, and the top of the hatchet is enveloped in a strip of the red wool, provided by Miss Hervey's shawl.

But the boatswain does not wish to act hastily. Is the tackle securely fastened? Will the upright hold the line? He makes certain of these. This done, he lets his apparatus slip into the water.

The sea is transparent, and we could easily distinguish any object a hundred feet below the surface. I see the hatchet slowly descending, with the red strip around it, the color standing out distinctly against the deep blue of the water.

Passengers and sailors lean over the sides in breathless silence. But it seems that the sharks, while this bait is held out to their voracity, have gradually disappeared. Still, they cannot be far off, and whatever prey should fall in here would be devoured in a moment.

Suddenly the boatswain makes a sign with his hand. He points out an enormous mass which is gliding towards the raft, ruffling the surface of the sea. It is a shark, twelve feet long, which has left the deeper waters, and is swimming straight towards us. When the beast is not more than four fathoms from the raft, the boatswain slowly draws in his line, so as to put the hatchet in his way; and he slightly twitches the hatchet, so as to give it the semblance of a living thing.

My heart beats violently, as if my life depended on the issue.

The shark approaches; his eyes glitter on the surface of the waves, and his jaws, gaping wide open, betray, when he turns a little, his palate paved with sharp teeth.

A cry is heard. The shark stops and plunges deep down into the sea.

Who uttered that cry, which seemed an involuntary one?

"I will kill the first man that speaks?" said the boatswain, rising; pale with rage.

He returns to his line.

After all, the boatswain is right.

The hatchet has sunk again; but for half an hour no shark appears, and the line must be lowered twenty fathoms. It seems to me that the water is disturbed at that depth, and this indicates the presence of sharks.

The line suddenly receives a violent shock, and slips from the boatswain's hands; but, being firmly held by the upright it does not escape into the sea.

A shark has bitten.

"Help, lads, help!" cries the boatswain.

All hands at once grasp the line. Our strength is revived by hope, but is scarcely enough to hold the struggling monster. We all haul together. Little by little the upper beds of the water are disturbed by the beating of the shark's tail and fins. As I lean over, I perceive

the enormous body writhing in the midst of blood-stained waves.

"Cheerily, cheerily now!"

The shark's head at last emerges from the water. The hatchet has entered between his half-open jaws, and has penetrated his gullet, where it has stuck so fast that no shaking can dislodge it. Douglas seizes a hammer to finish him as soon as he reaches the level of the platform.

At this instant a harsh noise is heard. The shark has violently shut his jaws, which bite off the handle of the hatchet, and he disappears beneath the waves.

A shriek of despair issues from our breasts!

The boatswain, Curtis, and Douglas try once more to catch one of these sharks, though they have no longer any tool with which to make one. They throw out ropes with slip-knots, but these lassoes slide over the slipery backs of the sharks. The boatswain tries to attract them by letting his leg hang over the raft, at the risk of being amputated at a single bite!

These fruitless attempts are finally abandoned, and each one returns to his place to await a death which nothing can henceforth avert.

But I do not retire so quickly as not to hear the boatswain say to Captain Curtis,—

"Captain, on what day shall we draw lots?"

Curtis does not reply; but the question has been put.

XLV.

January 16.—We all lie down upon the sails. Were a ship to pass us, her crew would think the raft a waif covered with corpses.

I suffer dreadfully. Could I eat, when my lips, tongue, throat, are in such a condition? I do not think so; and yet we cast savage glances at each other.

The heat to-day is all the greater as the heavens are overcast. Thick vapors are rising, and it really seems as if there might be rain everywhere excepting on the raft.

We all watch the clouds rising, however, with eager eyes. Our lips stretched out towards them. M. Letourneur raises his hands in mute supplication towards the pitiless firmament.

I listen for some far-off rolling to announce a storm.

It is eleven in the morning. The vapors have screened the sun's rays, but they have no longer an electric appearance. It is evident that the storm will not come, for the clouds have assumed a uniform color, and their shapes so distinctly marked at daybreak, have melted into an unbroken grayish mass. It is nothing now but a fog.

But cannot rain break from this fog, if ever so little,—if but a few drops?

"Rain!" cries Douglas, suddenly.

The rain is indeed falling about half a mile from the raft, and I see the drops pattering on the surface of the sea. The wind, which has freshened, carries it towards us. If only the cloud does not exhaust itself before passing over our heads!

God has pity on us at last. The rain falls in big drops, such as are shed by stormy clouds.

But this shower will not last and we must collect all that it can yield; for already a vivid streak of light illumines the cloud on its lower side, just above the horizon.

Captain Curtis has the broken cask set up, so as to hold the most water possible, and the sails are folded to receive the rain on the largest possible surface.

We fall on our backs with open mouths. The water moistens my face and lips, and I feel it trickling down my throat. O, inexpressible delight! It is life which is coursing within me. My throat is lubricated by the rain. I breath in as well as drink the revivifying water, which penetrates to my inermost being!

The rain lasts nearly twenty minutes; then the cloud, half exhausted, passes away into space.

We rise up better; yes, far better. We grasp each other's hands, and speak. It seems

as if we were saved! God, in his compassion, will send us other clouds, which will bring us more water, of which we have been so long deprived!

And then, the water which has fallen on the raft will not be lost. The cask and the sails have collected it; but it must be kept preciously, and be doled out drop by drop.

The cask has retained, indeed, two or three pints of water, and by wringing the sails we may increase our supply to some extent.

The sailors are about to do this, when Captain Curtis stops them.

One moment," he says. "Is this water drinkable?"

I look at him. Why should not this water, which is only rain-water, be drinkable?"

Captain Curtis wrings out a little of the water contained in the folds of a sail into a tin cup; then he tastes it, and to my amazement immediately spits it out!

I taste it in my turn. The water is brackish. One would say it was sea-water!

This is because the sails, so long exposed to the action of the waves, have communicated an extreme saltiness to the water.

It is an irreparable calamity. No matter; we have become confident again. Besides, there remain several good pints in the cask. And then, it has rained. It will rain again!

XLVI.

January 17.—If our thirst is for the moment assuaged, hunger, by a natural consequence, has seized upon us with more violence than ever. Is there no means, without whirl or bait, of taking one of the sharks which are swarming about the raft? No; unless we throw ourselves into the sea, and attack the monsters in their own element, with knives, as do the Indians in the pearl-fisheries. Captain Curtis has had thoughts of trying the experiment. We have held him back. The sharks are too numerous, and it would be to doom himself to certain death, and in vain.

Let me observe here, that if one can succeed in assuaging thirst, either by plunging into the sea, or by chewing some metal object, it is not so with hunger; nothing can replace the nutritive substance. Besides, water may always come by a natural event—by rain, for instance. Therefore, though one need never completely despair of drinking, he may uttery despair of eating.

This is the point we have reached. To speak plainly, some of our companions are looking upon each other with ravenous eyes. Imagine the direction our thoughts are taking,

and to what savage impulses misery may urge brains possessed by a single overwhelming craving!

Since the shower which yielded us a half-hour of rain, the sky has become clear again. The wind freshens for a moment, but it soon calms down, and the sail hangs limp throughout the night. We no longer look upon the wind as a motive-power. Where is the raft? To what part of the Atlantic have the currents drifted it? No one can tell, nor does any one wish that the wind should blow from the east, rather than from the north or south. We only ask one thing of the breeze,—that it will refresh us, and mingle a little vapor with the dry air which is devouring us, and temper this heat which a firey sun is pouring down upon us from the zenith!

Evening has come, and the night will be dark till midnight, when the moon, entering upon her last quarter, will rise. The constellations, being a little hazy, do not cast forth the beautiful twinkling light which illumines colder nights.

Seized by a sort of delirium, and suffering from a dreadful hunger, which becomes yet more intense at night, I stretch myself on a heap of sails on the starboard, and lean over the waves to breathe in their coolness.

How many of my companions, I wonder, find relief from their misery in sleep? Not one,

perhaps. As for me, my empty brain is haunted by nightmares.

Still, I am overcome by a sickly drowsiness, which is neither waking nor slumber. I cannot tell how long I have remained in this state of prostration. All that I can recall is, that at a certain moment a strange sensation rouses me from it.

I know not whether I am dreaming, but my sense of smell is roused by an odor for which I cannot account. It is indistinct, wafted hither now and then by the breeze. My nostrils dilate and sniff it in. "What is this smell?" I am tempted to cry out. A kind of instinct restrains me, and I search as one does in his memory for a forgetten word or name.

Some minutes elapse. The intensity of the smell, how increasing, rouses me from my doze.

"Why," I say, all of a sudden, like one who at last remembers, "it is the odor of cooked flesh!"

I am still more confirmed in this idea; yet, on this raft—I get upon my knees, and again sniff the air; the same smell assails my nortrils. I am to the leeward of the odor, which therefore comes from the forward part of the raft.

I leave my place, crawling like an animal, ferreting about, not with my eyes, but with my nose; gliding under the sails, between the spars, with the slyness of a cat, and not wishing

at any price to arouse the attention of my companions.

I crawl thus for some minutes into all the corners, guided by the smell, like a bloodhound. Sometimes the smell escapes me, either because I lose the trail or because the breeze falls; sometimes it reaches me with renewed intensity. At last I have the trail, I follow it, and go straight towards it.

At this moment I reach the forward starboard corner, and recognize this odor as that of a bit of smoking lard. I am not mistaken. All the papillas of my tongue bristle with desire!

I then crawl in under a thick fold of sails. No one sees or hears me. I get on my knees and lean on my elbows. I stretch out my arms. My hand clutches something wrapped in a piece of paper. I quickly draw it to me, and look at it by the light of the moon, which is just now breaking out above the horizon.

It is no illusion. I have here, in my hand, a bit of lard, scarcely a quarter of a pound, but enough to relieve my tortures for a whole day!

A hand seizes mine. I turn, hardly able to repress a cry. I recognize Hobbart, the steward.

Everything is explained. Hobbart's unaccountable condition, his relatively good health, his hypocritical complaints. At the moment of the shipwreck, he managed to save some

provisions and hide them away; and he has been feeding upon them, while we were dying of hunger! Ah, the wretch!

But no. Hobbart has acted wisely. I think him prudent, clear-sighted; if he has saved some food unbeknown to the rest, so much the better for him—and for me.

Hobbart does not so understand it. He seizes my hand and tries to take the bit of lard away from me, but without speaking. He does not wish to attract the attention of our companions.

I have the same reason for keeping quiet. The rest must not be allowed to deprive me of this prey! I struggle, then, silently, but with all the more energy as I hear Hobbart mutter between his teeth,—

"My last morsel! My last mouthful!"

His last mouthful! I must have it at all hazards, I wish it, I *will* have it. I clutch my adversary by the throat, which rattles under my fingers, and he soon lies motionless.

I crush the bit of lard between my teeth, while holding Hobbart down. Then, letting the wretch go, I creep back to my place in the rear.

XLVII

January 18.—I await day with harrowing anxiety. What will Hobbart say? It seems to me that he will have the right to denounce me. No. It is absurd. If I tell what has passed, if I tell how Hobbart has lived while we have been starving, how he has eaten in secret, his companions will murder him pitilessly.

No matter; I wish that day would come!

My hunger has been for the while appeased, though the morsel of lard was but a trifle,—a mouthful, "the last," as Hobbart said. I no longer suffer, and I feel a sort of remorse at not having shared this wretched morsel with my companions. I should have thought of Miss Hervey, of Andre, of his father,—and I have thought only of myself!

The moon rises on the horizon, and is soon followed by the first light of morning. Day will come quickly, for we are in those low latitudes which know neither dawn nor dusk.

I have not shut my eyes. In the earliest light I seem to see an irregular mass swinging at mid-mast.

What is this object? I cannot yet distinguish it, and I remain stretched on a heap of sails.

But the first rays of the sun soon slant across the sea, and I now perceive a body which, attached to the end of a rope, obeys the motions of the raft.

An irresistible impulse draws me towards this body, and I gain the foot of the mast.

The body is of one who has been hung. It is Hobbart, the stewart! I have driven the unhappy man to commit suicide!

A cry of horror escapes me. My companions jump up, see the body, and pounce upon it; but not to see if some spark of life yet remains in it. Hobbart is really dead; his body is already cold. The rope is cut in an instant. The boatswain, Douglas, Jynxtrop, Falsten, and others greedily bend over the corpse.

No, I have not looked! I have no wish to look. I have taken no part in this horrible repast! Neither Miss Hervey, nor Andre, nor his father have desired an alleviation of their sufferings at this price.

Of the captain I know nothing; I have not dared to ask him. But the others—the boatswain, Douglas, Falsten, the sailors! O, man changes into a wild beast—it is horrible!

The Letourneurs, Miss Hervey, and I conceal ourselves under the tent, for we do not wish to witness the scene. It is dreadful enough to hear it!

Andre has an impulse to fall upon the cannibals, and snatch away their unnatural food; and

I have to struggle with him to prevent his doing so.

Yet, it is the right of the unhappy creatures. Hobbart is dead; they have not killed him. And, as the boatswain said one day, "better eat the dead than the living!"

Who knows if this scene is not the prologue of a dreadful drama which will cover the raft with blood?

I say all this to Andre, but I cannot conjure away the horror with which he is filled.

Let us think of this; that we are dying of hunger, and that eight of our comrades are perhaps going to escape this terrible death!

Hobbart, thanks to his concealed provisions, was the most healthy person on board. No organic disease had shrunk his tissues. He ceased to live in the fullness of health.

My reflections are most harassing. Do these cannibals make me more jealous than horror-stricken?

At this moment one of them speaks. It is Douglas.

He proposes to evaporate the sea-water by the sun, so as to get some salt.

"And we will salt what is left," he says.

"Yes," replies the boatswain.

This is all. No doubt, the carpenter's proposition has been accepted; for I hear nothing more. A profound silence reigns on the raft, and I conclude that my companions are sleeping. They are no longer hungry.

XLVIII.

January 19—To-day the sky and temperature are the same as yesterday. Night has come, and there is no change to note in the atmosphere. I have slept several hours. Towards morning I hear angry cries on the raft.

The Letourneurs and Miss Hervey, who are under the tent with me, get upon their feet. I pull aside the canvas, to see what is going on.

The boatswain, Douglas, and the other sailors are terribly exasperated. Robert Curtis, who is seated aft, rises, and on learning what excites their anger, tries to calm them.

"No, no! We will know who has done this!" says Douglas, casting ferocious glances about him.

"Yes," replies the boatswain, "there is a thief here, as what still remained to us has disappeared."

"It is not I!" "Nor I!" declare the sailors, one after another.

And I see the wretched fellows ferreting in the corners, lifting the sails, and moving aside the spars. Their anger increases as their search continues, in vain.

The boatswain comes to me.

"You must know the thief," he says.

"I do not know what you mean," I reply.

Douglas and several others sailors approach.

"We have ransacked the whole raft," says Douglas, "except this tent."

"Neither of us has left the tent, Douglas."

"We must see!"

"No; leave those who are dying of hunger in peace."

"Mr Kazallon," says the boatswain, controlling himself, "we do not accuse you. If one of you has taken the share he did not wish for yesterday, he had a right to it. But the whole has disappeared, you understand,—the whole!"

"Let us search the tent," cries Sandon.

The sailors advance. I cannot resist the poor fellows, blind as they are with rage. A horrible fear seizes me. Is it possible that M. Letourneur has taken the missing food, not for himself, but for his son? If he has, he will be torn in pieces by these furious men.

I look at Robert Curtis as if to ask for his protection. He comes and stands near me. His hands are plunged in his pockets, but I suspect that they are armed.

Meanwhile the Letourneurs and Miss Hervey, warned by the boatswain, have come out of the tent, and it is searched to its remotest corners,—happily, in vain.

It is evident, since Hobbart's remains have disappeared, that they have been thrown into the sea.

The boatswain, carpenter, sailors, sink into the profoundest despair.

Who has done this? I look at Miss Hervey and M. Letourneur. Their eyes respond that it is not either of them.

I glance at Andre, who turns his head for an instant.

The unhappy young man! Is it he? And if so, does he know the consequences of his act?

XLIX.

From January 20 *to January* 22.—During the next few days, those who have partaken of the unnatural repast of the 18th suffer little, having been nourished, and their thirst having been quenched.

But Miss Hervey, the Letourneurs, and I suffer indescribable miseries. We are almost driven to regret that Hobbart's remains have disappeared. If one of us should die, would the others now resist the temptation!

The sailors soon begin to feel the gnawings of hunger again, and look upon us with wild eyes. Are we, then, a doomed prey to them?

In truth, we suffer more from thirst than from hunger. Yes; between a few drops of water and a few crumbs of biscuit we should not hesitate a moment. This has always been

said of victims of shipwreck, who are reduced to our condition, and it is true. A man suffers more from thirst than from hunger, and dies sooner because of it.

What increases the misery beyond description is, that we have all around us the boundless sea-waves, which so much resemble the water we have been used to drink! Several times I have tried to drink a little of the salt water, but it made me sick, and gave me a more burning thirst than before.

Ah, this is too much! It is twenty-two days since we left the ship. Who of us can deceive himself any longer? Are we not fated to die, one after another, the worst of deaths?

I perceive that a sort of fog is thickening in my brain. It seems a delirium that is overcoming me. I struggle to arouse my intelligence, which is fading. This delirium terrifies me! Whither will it conduct me? Shall I be strong enough to recover my reason?

I have come to myself again,—after how many hours I could not tell. My forehead has been bathed by Miss Hervey yet I feel that I have but little time to live.

To-day (the 22d) a frightful scene takes place. The negro Jynxtrop, suddenly seized with a furious madness, runs back and forth on the raft howling hideously. Robert Curtis tries to hold him, but in vain. He throws himself upon us as if to devour us. We are forced to defend

ourselves against the assaults of this ferocious beast. Jynxtrop seizes a handspike, and it is difficult to ward off his blows.

But of a sudden, by a change that madness alone can explain, his wrath turns against himself. He tears himself with his teeth and nails, and throws his blood in our faces, crying out,—

"Drink! Drink!"

He continues this for some minutes, and rushes to the forward part of the raft, still shrieking,—

"Drink! Drink!"

Then he leaps over, and I see his body fall into the sea.

The boatswain, Falsten, and Douglas hasten forward to recover the body; but they see nothing but a wide, red circle, in the midst of which monstrous sharks are struggling and writhing!

L.

January 22 *and* 23.—There are only eleven of us left on the raft, and it seems impossible that each day, now, should not count some new victim. The end of this drama, whatever it may be, is approaching. Within a week, either land will have been reached, or a ship will have rescued the occupants of the raft. Or else, the last survivor of the *Chancellor* will have lived—and died.

On the 23d the aspect of the sky changes. The breeze has distinctly freshened up. The wind, during the night, has veered northeast.

The sail of the raft is swelled out, and a distinct track shows that we are sensibly moving.

The captain estimates our speed at three miles an hour.

Curtis and Falsten are certainly the strongest of the party. Though they are extremely thin, they sustain their privations wonderfully. I cannot picture the extremity to which poor Miss Hervey has been reduced. She is no longer anything but a soul,—a valiant soul still; and her whole life seems to have taken refuge in her eyes, which shine brightly. She looks heavenward, not earthward.

The boatswain, though a man of great energy, is now completely prostrated. He is scarcely to be recognised. His head hanging on his breast, his long bony hands stretched on his knees, his sharp knee-pans protruding through his tattered trousers, he remains seated in a corner of the raft, without ever lifting his eyes. Unlike Miss Hervey, he only lives in his body, and his motionless attitude makes me sometimes imagine that he has ceased to live.

There are no more words, or even groans, heard on the raft. It is absolute silence. Ten words are not spoken a day. Besides, whatever words our swollen tongues and lips might utter, would be quite unintelligible. The raft no longer bears anything but spectres, wan and bloodless.

LI.

January 24.—Where are we? Towards what part of the Atlantic has the raft drifted? I have twice asked Robert Curtis, but he could only reply vaguely. Yet, as he has taken care to observe the direction of the currents and winds, he thinks that we have been carried westward, that is, towards land.

To-day the breeze has entirely gone down. But there is a wide swell on the surface of the sea, which indicates that there is some disturbance of the water in the east. A tempest has probably swept over that part of the Atlantic. The raft is getting shaky. Curtis, Falsten, and the carpenter use what strength they have left in repairing the parts which seem in danger of coming asunder.

Why take this trouble? Let the planks come asunder, if they will! Let the ocean ingulf us! It is useless to dispute with it our miserable lives!

Our tortures have, indeed, reached the highest point endurable by man. They cannot go further. The heat is intolerable. The heavens seem to be pouring molten lead upon us. The

perspiration saturates our rags, and still more increases our thirst. No, I cannot describe what I feel! Words fail when we come to describe superhuman pains!

The only way of refreshing ourselves, one in which we have sometimes indulged, is now forbidden us. We cannot think of bathing; for, since Jynxtrop's death, the sharks, coming in shoals, have constantly swarmed about the raft.

I have tried, to-day, to procure a little drinkable water, by evaporating the sea water; but, despite my patience, I am scarcely able to moisten a piece of linen. Besides, the kettle, which is nearly worn out, could not bear the fire; it has cracked, and I am forced to abandon my attempt.

Falsten is now nearly exhausted, and will only survive us a few days. When I lift my head, I do not even see him any more. Is he lying under the sails, or is he dead? The energetic Captain Curtis alone is erect and watching, forward. When I think that this man still hopes!

I go and stretch myself out aft. Here I will await death. The sooner, the better.

How many hours pass, I know not.

Suddenly I hear shouts of laughter. Some one has gone mad, no doubt. It little matters to me. Several incoherent words reach my ears.

"A field, a field! Green trees! A tavern under the trees! Quick, quick, some wine-

brandy, some gin, water at a guinea a drop! I will pay,—I have gold, I have gold!"

Poor fool! All the gold in the bank could not now buy you a drop of water.

It is the sailor Flaypole, who, seized by delirium, is crying out, "Land! There is land!"

This word would galvanize a corpse! I make a painful effort, and get up.

No land anywhere! Flaypole is walking up and down the platform. He is laughing and singing, and points to an imaginary coast. Certainly the senses of hearing, seeing, and taste are wanting in him, but they are supplied by a purely mental phenomenon. He talks to absent friends; he invites them to his Cardiff Tavern, "The Arms of St. George." There he offers them gin, whiskey, water,—especially water,—water which intoxicates him. There he goes, walking over those prostrate forms, stumbling at every step, falling, getting up again, singing in a tipsy voice. He seems to have reached the last stage of drunkenness. In his madness he no longer suffers, and his thirst is appeased.

Is he, then, going to end like Jynxtrop, and jump into the sea?

Douglas, Falsten, and the boatswain evidently think so; and if Flaypole is going to kill himself, they will not let him do it without their profiting by it. They get up, follow him, and eagerly watch him. If Flaypole jumps

into the sea, they will this time dispute him with the sharks.

This is not destined to happen. During his hallucination, Flaypole has reached the extreme state of intoxication, as if by the liquors he was offering in his delirium, and, falling in a heap, has sunk into a heavy slumber.

LII.

January 25.—The night of the 24th is foggy, and, for what reason I know not, is one of the hottest imaginable. The fog is stifling. It would seem only to need a spark to set it on fire, like an explosive substance. The raft is not only stationary, but absolutely motionless. I question sometimes whether it is still floating.

During the night I try to count how many of us there are on board. It seems to me that there are still eleven, but I can scarcely collect my thoughts sufficiently to make an exact calculation. Sometimes I count ten; sometimes, twelve.

There should be eleven, since Jynxtrop has perished. To-morrow there will only be ten, for I shall be dead.

I feel, indeed, that I am drawing near the end of my sufferings, for my whole life is revived in my memory. My country, my friends,

my family, all appear for the last time in my final dream!

Towards morning I awake, if, indeed, the sickly doze in which I have been plunged can be called sleep. My God pardon me, but I have serious thoughts of suicide. This idea impresses itself upon my brain. I experience a sort of charm in saying to myself that this misery will cease whenever I choose.

I make known my resolution to Robert Curtis, and speak to him of it with a strange serenity. The captain contents himself with making an affirmative sign.

"As for me," he says, then, "I shall not kill myself. It would be deserting my post. If death does not reach me before my comrades, I will remain the last upon the raft."

The fog still broods. We float in the midst of a grayish atmosphere. We do not even see the surface of the water. The fog rises from the ocean like a thick cloud, but we know that above it a burning sun is shining, which will soon have sucked up all these vapors.

About seven o'clock I seem to hear the screeching of birds over my head. Curtis, always erect, eagerly listens to these cries. They are renewed three times.

At the third time I go towards the captain, and hear him mutter, in a hollow voice,—

"Birds! Why, then—land must be near!"

Does Curtis still believe in our reaching land?

I do not. Continents do not exist, nor islands. The globe is no longer anything but a liquid sphere, as it was in the second period of its formation.

Still, I await the lifting of the fog with a certain impatience; not that I expect to see land, but this absurd thought of an impossible hope possesses me, and I am in haste to get rid of it. It is not till towards eleven that the fog begins to lift. As its thick masses roll along the surface of the waves, I catch glimpses of the blue sky in their interstices. Bright rays pierce the mist, and prick us like white-hot arrows. But the condensation of the vapors is going on in the upper layers, and I cannot yet discern the horizon.

For half an hour the fog-masses envelop us; they dissolve slowly, for there is no wind.

Captain Curtis, leaning on the side of the platform, tries to peer through this opaque curtain of mists.

At last the sun, in all its heat, sweeps the surface of the ocean, the fog retreats, and the air becomes clear over a wide radius. The horizon appears.

The horizon is as it has been for six weeks, —a continuous and circular line, in which the sea and the sky melt into each other!

Captain Curtis looks around him, but says nothing. Ah, I pity him sincerely, for, of us all, he alone has no right to make an end of

himself when he pleases! As for me, I will die to-morrow, and if death does not come of itself I will go to meet it. I do not know whether my companions are still living, but it seems to me that days have passed since I have seen them.

Night has come. I am not able to sleep a moment. Towards two o'clock thirst causes me such anguish that I cannot help crying out. What! Before dying, shall I not have the supreme delight of extinguishing the fire which is burning in my breast?

Yes! I will drink my own blood, in default of that of others. It will do me no good, I know, but at least I will deceive my disease!

This idea has scarcely crossed my mind before I put it into execution. I succeed in opening my knife. My arm is bare. By a rapid stroke I cut a vein. The blood trickles out, drop by drop, and I quench my thirst at the very source of my existence. The blood appeases for an instant my terrible torments; then it stops, and has no longer any strength to run.

How long the morrow is in coming!

At daylight a thick fog still broods at the horizon, contracting the circle of which the raft is the centre. This fog is as hot as steam escaping from a boiler.

This is my last day.

Before dying I should like to grasp the hand of a friend. Curtis is just here, near me. I

drag myself to him and take his hand. He understands me; he knows that it is a farewell; and it seems as if, by a last thought of hope, he wishes to retain me. It is useless.

I should like, also, to see the Letourneurs and Miss Hervey once more. I dare not! The young girl would read my resolution in my eyes. She would speak to me of God, of the other life which I ought to await. I have no longer the courage to wait—may God forgive me!

I return to the rear part of the raft, and after long efforts succeed in getting upright near the mast. For the last time I look around upon the pitiless ocean, this eternal horizon. Should land appear, or a sail rise above the waves, I should think myself the sport of an illusion. But the sea is desolate!

It is ten in the morning. Now is the moment to end all this. The gnawing of hunger, the stings of thirst, assail me with renewed violence. The instinct of self-preservation has become torpid within me. In a few moments I shall have ceased to suffer. May God have mercy upon me!

At this instant I hear a voice. It is that of Douglas.

The carpenter is standing near Robert Curtis.

"Captain," he says, "we are going to draw lots."

At the very moment I am about to throw myself into the sea, I stop. Why? I cannot tell; but I return to my place aft.

LIII.

January 26. — The proposition has been made. All have heard it, and understood it. For some days it has been a fixed idea, but an idea which no one has dared to utter.

They are going to draw lots.

Each will have his share of him whom the lot condemns.

Well, so be it! If the lot chooses me I will not complain.

I think I hear it proposed that Miss Harvey shall be excepted, and that is the suggestion of Andre. There are eleven of us on board; each therefore have ten chances in his favor, and one against him; were an exception made, this proportion would be lessened. Miss Harvey will be subjected to the common fate.

It is now half-past ten in the morning. The boatswain, who has been revived by Douglas's proposition, insists that the lot should be drawn at once. He is right. Besides, none of us cling to life. He who is chosen by the lot will only precede the others a few days, perhaps a few hours. We know this, and do not dread death.

But to cease suffering from hunger for a day or two, to cease being crazed by thirst, is what all of us crave; and this will now occur.

I cannot tell how each of our names has got into the bottom of a hat. It must have been Falsten who has written them on a leaf torn from his note book.

The eleven names are there. It is agreed that the last name drawn shall designate the victim.

Who will draw the lot? There is a moment of hesitation

"I," says one.

I turn round, and recognize M. Letourneur.

There he is, erect, livid, with extended hand, his white hair falling upon his sunken cheeks, appalling in his calmness.

Ah, unhappy father, I understand you! I know why you wish to call the names. Your paternal devotion goes to this length!

"When you will!" says the boatswain.

M. Letourneur plunges his hand into the hat. He takes a billet, unfolds it, pronounces the name written thereon in a loud voice, and passes it to him to whom the name belongs.

The first name drawn is that of Burke, who utters a cry of joy.

The second, Flaypole.

The third, the boatswain.

The fourth, Falsten.

The fifth, Robert Curtis.

The sixth, Sandon.

One more than half the names has been drawn.

Mine has not yet come out. I try to calculate the chances which remain to me; four good chances, one bad chance.

Since Burke's cry of joy not a word has been spoken.

M. Letourneur continues his terrible task.

The seventh name is that of Miss Hervey; but the young girl does not even tremble.

The eighth name is mine. Yes, mine!

The ninth name,—

"Letourneur!"

"Which?" asks the boatswain.

"Andre!" replies M. Letourneur.

A cry is heard, and Andre falls down unconscious.

"Go on, go on!" cries Douglas, growing red; his name remains in the hat, alone with that of M. Letourneur.

Douglas glares on his rival like a victim whom he wishes to devour. M. Letourneur is almost smiling. He puts his hand in the hat, draws the last billet but one, slowly unfolds it, and with an unfaltering voice, and a firmness of which I could never have believed this man capable, pronounces the name,—

"Douglas!"

The carpenter is saved. A groan issues from his breast.

Then M. Letourneur takes the last billet, and without opening it, tears it up.

But a piece of the torn paper has been blown into a corner of the raft. No one pays any attention to it. I crawl to the spot, rescue the paper, and in one corner of it I read, "And—." M. Letourneur rushes upon me, tears the bit of paper violently from my hands, twists it between his fingers, and looking sternly at me, throws it into the sea.

LIV.

January 26, *continued.*—My conjecture was right. The father has sacrificed himself for his son, and, having nothing but his life to give him, has given him that.

Meanwhile, these starving creatures do not wish to wait any longer. The gnawing within them is redoubled in presence of the victim destined for them. M. Letourneur is no longer a man in their eyes. They have said nothing yet, but their lips protrude, and their teeth, which betray themselves, ready for the feast, will tear like the teeth of cannibals, with the brutal ferocity of beasts.

They seem to be eager to fall on their victim and devour him alive.

Who will believe that, at this supreme moment, an appeal has been made to the lingering remains of humanity in these men, and

who will believe, above all, that the appeal has been listened to? Yes, a word has stopped them, at the instant that they are about to throw themselves upon M. Letourneur! The boatswain, all ready to perform the office of butcher, Douglas, hammer in hand, stand motionless.

Miss Hervey advances, or rather drags herself up to them.

"My friends," she says," "will you wait one more day?—only a day! If, to-morrow, land is not in sight, if no ship appears, our poor companion will become your prey."

At these words my heart flutters. It seems to me as if the young girl has spoken with a prophetic tone, and that she is animated by an inspiration from above. A great hope fills my heart. Perhaps Miss Hervey has already caught a glimpse of the coast, or the ship, in one of those super-natural visions which sometimes float in human dreams. Yes, we must wait one day longer. What is a day, after all we have suffered?

Robert Curtis agrees with me. We join our entreaties to those of Miss Hervey. Falsten comes to our aid. We supplicate our companions.

The sailors stop, and no sound escapes their lips.

Then the boatswain throws down his hatchet, and says, in a hollow voice,—

"To-morrow, at daybreak!"

This is the decision. If, to-morrow, neither land nor ship is in sight, the horrible sacrifice will be completed.

Each one now returns to his place and seeks, by feeble efforts, to repress his suffering. The sailors conceal themselves under the sails. They do not try to even look at the sea. Little matters it to them; to-morrow, they will eat!

Meanwhile, Andre has recovered consciousness, and his first thought is for his father. Then I see him counting the passengers on the raft. Not one is missing. Upon whom has the lot fallen? When Andre fainted, only two names remained in the hat,—that of the carpenter and that of his father; yet both M. Letourneur and Douglas are there!

Miss Hervey approaches him, and says to him simply that the drawing of lots has not yet been finished.

Andre does not seek to know more. He takes his father's hand. M. Letourneur's face is calm, almost smiling. He sees nothing, understands nothing, but that his son is spared. These two, so closely bound up in each other, sit down aft and converse in low tones.

Meanwhile, I cannot help thinking of the impression I have received from the young girl's words. I believe in a providential rescue. I cannot tell to what degree this idea has taken root in my mind; but I would not hesitate to

affirm that we are approaching the end of our miseries, and feel certain that the land or the ship is there, some miles to the leeward. Let not the reader be astonished at this. My brain is so empty, that chimeras usurp the place of realities in it.

I speak of my presentiments to the Letourneurs. Andre, like myself, is confident. The poor boy, if he knew that, to-morrow—

The father listens to me gravely, and encourages me to hope.

He willingly believes—at least, he says so—that Heaven will spare the survivors of the *Chancellor*, and he lavishes on his son the caresses which, for him, are the last.

Then, later on, when I am alone with him, M. Letourneur whispers in my ear,—

"I commend my poor child to your care. Never let him know that——".

He does not finish the sentence; big tears course down his cheeks.

I am full of hope.

I turn and gaze at the horizon throughout its perimeter. It is unbroken; but I am not disturbed. Before to-morrow a sail or land will come in sight.

Robert Curtis also watches the sea. Miss Hervey, Falsten, the boatswain himself, concentrate their lives in their gaze.

Night comes, and I am convinced that some ship will approach us in the darkness, and that she will see our signals at daybreak.

LV.

January 27.—I do not shut my eyes. I hear the slightest noises, the clash of the waves, the murmuring of the waters. I observe that there are no longer any sharks about the raft. This seems to me a good sign.

The moon rises at forty-six minutes after midnight, showing its half-face; but it does not shed enough light to enable me to look far out to sea. How many times, though, do I think I see, a few cables-lengths off, the so-much-longed-for sail! But morning comes. The sun rises over a desolate sea. The dread moment approaches. Then I feel all my hopes of the evening fading little by little away. There is no land. I return to reality and my memory. It is the hour when a horrible execution is to take place!

I no longer dare to look at the victim; and when his eyes, so calm and resigned, fix on me, I cast down my own.

An insurmountable horror seizes me. My head whirls giddily. It is six o'clock. I no longer believe in a providential rescue. My heart beats a hundred pulsations a minute, and a perspiration of anguish breaks out all over me.

The boatswain and Robert Curtis, leaning

against the mast, unceasingly watch the ocean. The boatswain is frightful to see. I feel that he will not anticipate the fatal moment, and that he will not postpone it. It is impossible to divine the captain's thoughts. His features are livid; he seems only to live in his look.

As for the sailors, they drag themselves across the platform, and with their burning eyes already devour their victim.

I cannot keep still, and I crawl towards the forward part of the raft.

The boatswain is still erect and looking.

"At last!" he cries.

The word makes me leap up. Douglas, Flaypole, Sandon, Burke, hasten aft. The carpenter convulsively grasps his hammer.

Miss Hervey cannot stifle a cry.

Of a sudden Andre rises to his feet.

"My father?" he cries, in a choked voice.

"The lot has fallen on me," replies M. Letourneur.

Andre seizes his father, and puts his arms around him.

"Never! he cries, with a groan. "You will first kill me! It was I who threw Hobbart's body overboard! It is I whom you must kill!"

The wretched boy!

His words redouble the rage of the executioners. Douglas, going up to him, tears him from M. Letourneur's arms, saying,—

"Not so much fuss!"

Andre falls over, and two sailors bind him so that he cannot move.

At the same time Burke and Flaypole, seizing their victim, drag him towards the forward part of the raft.

This frightful scene passes more rapidly than I can describe it. Horror holds me rooted to the spot. I long to throw myself between M. Letourneur and his executioners, and I cannot! At this moment M. Letourneur is erect. He has repulsed the sailors, who have torn off a portion of his clothing. His shoulders are bare.

"A moment," he says, in a tone of dauntless energy. "A moment! I have no idea of robbing you of your rations. But you are not going to eat the whole of me, I suppose, to-day!"

The sailors stop, look at him, and listen to him stupefied.

M. Letourneur goes on.

"There are ten of you. Will not my two arms suffice? Cut them off, and to-morrow you shall have the rest."

M. Letourneur stretches out his two bare arms.

"Yes!" cried Douglas, in a terrible voice.

And, quick as lightning, he raises aloft his hammer.

Neither Robert Curtis nor I can look on any longer. While we are alive, this massacre shall not take place. The captain throws himself in the midst of the sailors, to tear their victim

from them. I plunge into the *melee;* but, before reaching the forward part of the raft, I am violently pushed back by one of the sailors, and fall into the sea!

I shut my mouth. I want to be strangled to death. Suffocation, however, is stronger than my will. My lips open. Several mouthfuls of water enter.

Eternal God! The water is fresh!

LVI.

January 27, *continued.*—I have drunk! I have drunk! I live again! Life has suddenly returned to me! I no longer wish to die!

I cry out. My cry is heard. Robert Curtis appears at the side of the raft and throws me a rope, which my hand seizes. I haul myself up and fall on the platform.

My first words are,—

"Fresh water!"

"Fresh water!" cries Robert Curtis. "Land is there!"

There is yet time. The murder has not been committed. The victim has not been struck. Curtis and Andre have struggled against these cannibals, and it is at the moment that they are about to yield that my voice is heard!

The struggle ceases. I repeat the words,

"fresh water," and, leaning over the raft, I drink greedily and long.

Miss Hervey is the first to follow my example. Curtis, Falsten, and the rest hasten to this source of life. Those who were a moment ago ferocious beasts, raise their cries to heaven. Some of the sailors cross themselves, and cry out that it is a miracle. Each one kneels at the side of the raft, and drinks with ecstacy.

Andre and his father are the last to follow our example.

"Where are we?" I cry.

"Less than twenty miles from land!" replies Curtis.

We look at him. Has the captain gone mad? There is no coast in sight, and the raft still occupies the centre of the watery circle.

Yet, the water is fresh. How long has it been so? No matter. Our senses are not deceived, and our thirst appeased.

Yes; land is not in sight, but it is there!" says the captain, pointing to the west.

"What land?" asks the boatswain.

"America,—the land where flows the Amazon, the only river with a current strong enough to freshen the ocean twenty miles from its mouth!"

LVII.

January 27, *continued.*—Robert Curtis is evidently right. The mouth of the Amazon, which delivers into the sea nearly two hundred and forty thousand cubic metres* an' hour, is the only part of the Atlantic where we could have found fresh water at such a distance from land. Land, then, is before us. The wind is carrying us toward it!

At this moment Miss Hervey raises her voice in prayer, and we join our prayers to hers.

Andre is in his father's arms, aft, whilst the rest of us are forward, watching the western horizon.

One hour after, Robert Curtis cries,—

"Land!"

. . . . . .

The diary in which I have inscribed these daily notes is finished. Several hours after, we were rescued, as I shall narrate in a few words.

The raft, towards eleven in the morning, was met off Magouri Point, on Marajo Island. Some charitable fishermen took us up and refreshed us with food and drink. They then conducted us to Para, where we received the tenderest care.

* A metre is a little more than a yard.

The raft reached land in 0° 12' north latitude. It had therefore drifted at least fifteen degrees southwestward since we abandoned the *Chancellor*. I say "at least," for it is clear that we may have gone still further south. If we came to land at the mouth of the Amazon, it was because the Gulf Stream had caught the raft and carried it thitherward. Had it not been for this, we should have been lost.

Of the thirty-two who embarked at Charleston, nine passengers and twenty-three sailors, there only remained five passengers and six sailors,—in all, eleven. These were the sole survivors of the *Chancellor*. The Brazilian authorities drew up an official account of the rescue, which was signed by Miss Hervey, J. R. Kazallon, Letourneur senior, Andre Letourneur, Falsten, the boatswain, Douglas, Burke, Flaypole, Sandon, and, last of all, by Robert Curtis, Captain.

I ought to add that means were afforded at Para, almost immediately, to enable us to return to our own countries. A ship has conducted us to Cayenne, and we have taken passage on the French transatlantic steamer *Ville de Saint Nazaire*, from Aspinwall, which will restore us to Europe.

And now, having undergone so many sufferings together, after so many dangers miraculously escaped, is it not natural that an eternal bond of friendship should bind the survivors of the *Chancellor?* Whatever happens, however

far apart fate may carry us, is it not certain that we shall never forget one another? Robert Curtis is, and always will remain, the firm friend of those who were his companions in misfortune.

Miss Hervey desired to retire from the world, and give herself up to the care of the suffering.

"But is not my son an invalid?" said M. Letourneur to her.

Miss Hervey now has a father in M. Letourneur, a brother in his son Andre. I say a brother; but before long, this brave young girl will have found in her new family, the happiness she deserves, and which we wish her with all our hearts.