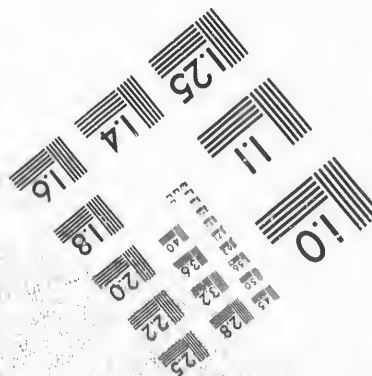
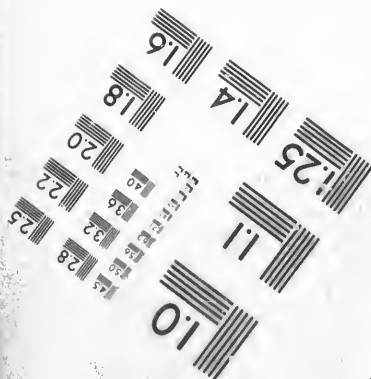
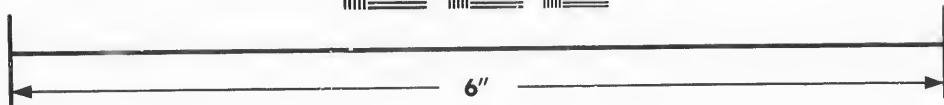
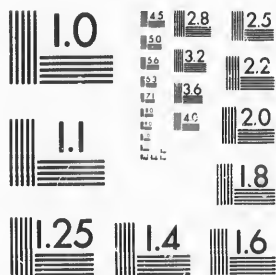


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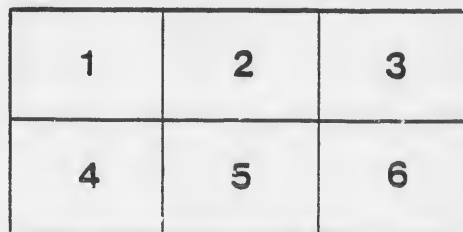
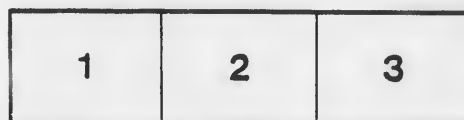
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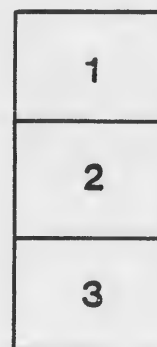
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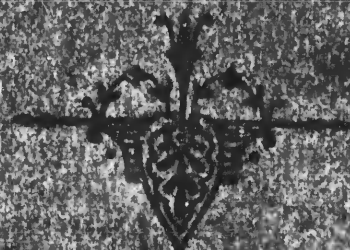
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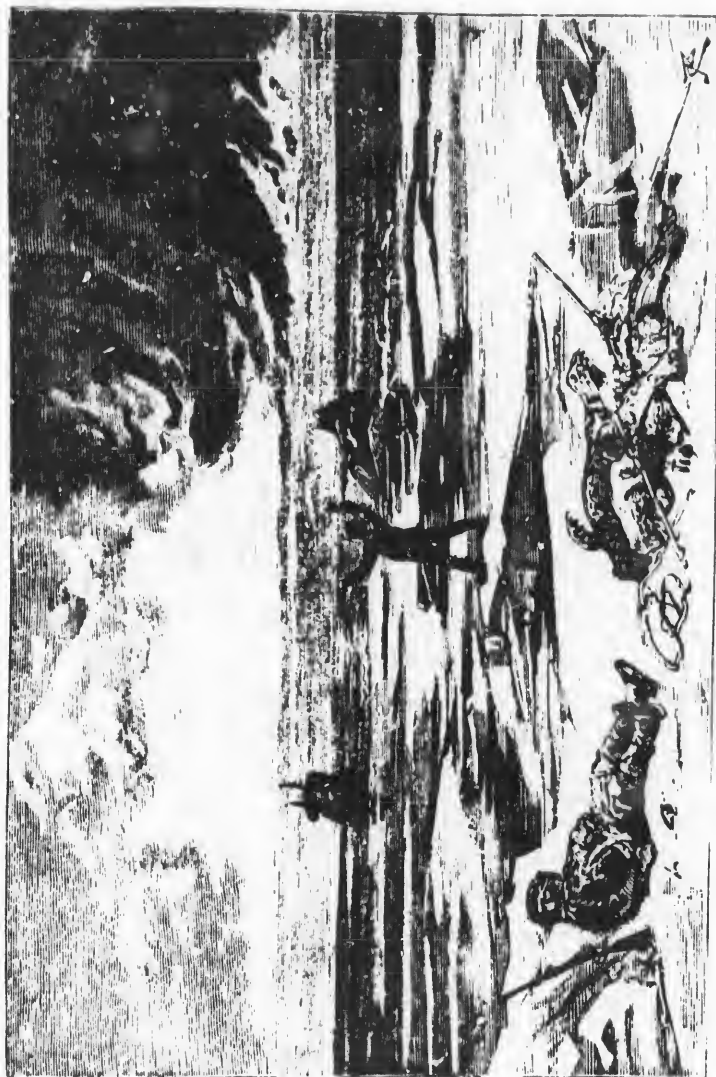
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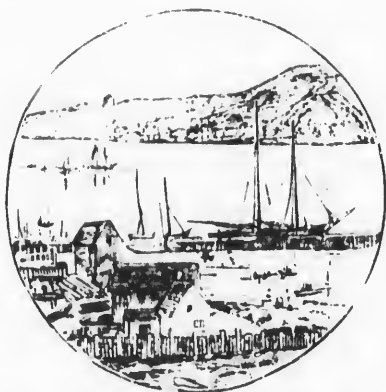


"I KAN TO THE EDGE OF THE ICE AND SHOUTED" (p. 32).

SKIPPER GEORGE NETMAN:

*A STORY OF OUT-PORT METHODISM
IN NEWFOUNDLAND.*

BY THE
REV. GEORGE J. BOND.



LONDON :
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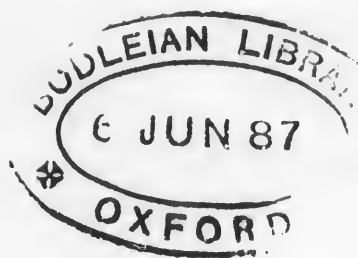
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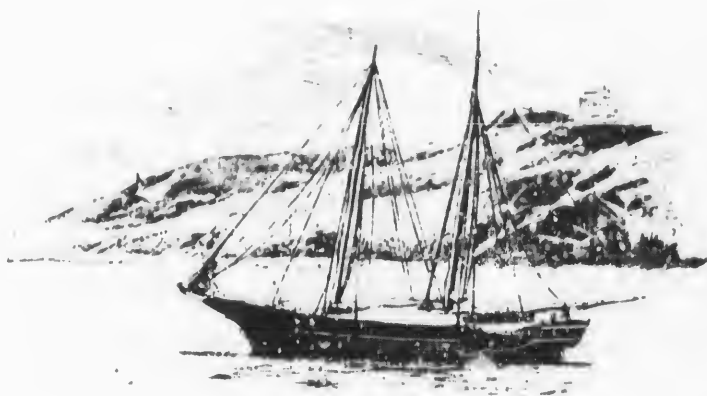
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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE	9
II. THE MAN	35
III. HIS SURROUNDINGS	40
IV. AN ITINERANT'S LETTER	46
V. THE SEALS ARE IN	57
VI. BLOWN OFF	68
VII. "AT EVENING TIME IT SHALL BE LIGHT" .	83
VIII. THE REVIVAL	92
IX. TIMES OF REFRESHING	102
X. UNCLE TOMMY WEIGHS ANCHOR	107
XI. SKIPPER GEORGE HOLDS SERVICE ABOARD	115



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SKIPPER GEORGE NETMAN.

CHAPTER I.

FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.

"The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around ;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled
Like voices in a swoon."

COLERIDGE, "*Ancient Mariner*."

"Alone, alone, all, all alone ;
Alone, on a wide, wide sea."

Ibid.

"A FINE night for the sealers, Skipper George."

"Ay, Sir, it is a fine night, sure enough ; and we'll have the wind a little more off before morn-

ing, I'm thinking, and that'll be all the better for 'em, too."

It was indeed a glorious night. Overhead the stars shone and sparkled through the clear, frosty air, paling towards the east, under the brilliancy of the full moon, which, already high in the heavens, throw its soft light over all the landscape. There was little wind, just an occasional soft breeze, which lifted the light snow from the hillsides and sent it eddying, as if in play, along their slopes. From where the speakers stood, the scene was picturesque indeed. Below them, in the valley, nestled the quiet fishing village, its white houses and snowy roofs gleaming in the moonlight; around it swept an amphitheatre of hills, while out to seaward, far as the eye could reach, tossed the unresting waters of the bay, rippling in myriad silvery wavelets, as the moonbeams fell upon them. Over all brooded the quiet of the night, unbroken save by the baying of a dog in the village below, or the rustle of the snow-gusts along the icy reaches of the hills. Ethereal indeed is our snowy northern landscape, a fairy land, unreal, unearthly in its glowing splendour, when the moon sails queenly through the cloudless winter sky. For some moments the two stood gazing in

silence out over the sea, and then the one who had been addressed as "Skipper George" turned to his companion and said, "I often come up here on moonlight nights, Sir, especially at this time o' the year. It reminds me of a night twenty years ago, and a wonderful night in my life, sure enough. Maybe you'd like to hear the story, Sir."

"I should indeed," said the other; "I should like it very much."

"Well, Sir, to begin at the beginning, I must tell you that in those days I was a wild slip of a young fellow, delighting in all kinds of fun and frolic; a regular ringleader in all the mischief carried on in the harbour. There was a sight of drinking in those times, but I was pretty steady as regards the liquor, though at weddings and such like I could take a stiff horn or two. I was utterly careless and reckless, though, in other ways, good-natured enough when unprovoked, but as good as the next man when my blood was up. I ran into danger for the very excitement of it, and was never happier than when I was in some mad scrape or other. I bore the name of being the greatest runner in the harbour, and the most venturesome in a

boat. Many's the time I went out fishing when it wasn't fit for any boat to face the weather, and my poor mother would be in terror often about me, for this is a very squally place when the wind is any way off-shore. Of course, like all the young gaffers of that time, I was a keen seal-hunter. Not a winter passed but I was at the ice, and being well known for a willing and active chap, I never had any trouble in getting a berth. Them were the days before the steamers were used, Sir, and every harbour of any size had vessels going out. Yes, Sir, many a man earned a winter's diet then that finds it hard to get one now, for I suppose twenty men got a chance of a berth then where one gets it now, since the steamers have done away nearly with sailing vessels at the ice. Why, I mind, Sir, when there were as many sailing craft going sealing out of one of the large harbours as now go from the whole island. They may say what they like about the steamers, but 'tis my opinion they're ruining the seal-fishing with their second trips, killing off the old breeding seals; and whatever a few of the merchants have made by 'em, I know there was more, yes, far more, made by the poor people when sealing ships went out and berths

were plenty. But I'm off my course, Sir; I must go on with my story.

"Well, twenty years ago this very spring, I got a berth on a fine brig, called the *Hunter*, out of Twillingate. There were over a hundred of us, all told, and a wild, hard crew we were, mostly. There were few of us sober the night we left harbour, and until the rum got off, there was many a row and scuffle on board, I can tell you. I don't think I was ever with a worse lot of men, and I've seen some rowdies in my time. There was one man aboard, however, that was different from the rest of us. He belonged somewhere to the south'ard, near Bonavista, I think, and was a stranger to most of us—Tom Williams was his name. We had great sport out of poor Tom, in our own way, especially at first. He didn't drink; he didn't smoke; he didn't swear; and we wondered what kind of a man he was, anyhow. He said his prayers regular before he turned in, and when he got up, and often besides, and he had his Bible with him, and read it as regular as he prayed. Well, Sir, I'm ashamed to say it, but he was the only man aboard that ship that bent his knees to God, or used His name, except in oath.

"Many's the time, at first, I've seen a boot or a cap flung at him, as he knelt down by his bunk. But he bore it all patiently, never flinched for a moment in saying and doing what he thought right; checked us fifty times a day for swearing, though he got plenty of abuse for his pains; and was as cheerful and ready to do a good turn as if we treated him well. I've seen him sitting on his bunk reading his Bible on a Sunday, Sir, with the men playing cards and skylarking all around him. But he gained on us, somehow, and we hadn't been many days out before we knocked off the most of our tormenting and became a little more civilised ourselves. There are many like him at the ice nowadays, Sir, but there weren't many at that time, at least not up our way. There was one thing that made us all respect him, I remember. He was a powerful man, and a match for any of us I expect; but all our jeers and fun-making at him never brought a spark of temper to his eye, or a cross word from his lips, though some tried again and again to get up a quarrel with him.

"One day, though, a great big bully of a fellow called Bowman, whom none of us liked, was tormenting a poor, little weakly man of the crew—I forget the name—and at last the little man

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gave him a saucy answer. Bowman struck him and the other struck back, and there was a scuffle, —a very short one, though, for in a minute the little chap was on his back on the deck. But the bully, not content with knocking him down fairly, began kicking him after he was down. Tom Williams came up to the hatch at that moment, and just as the big brute raised his foot to give the fallen man a vicious kick, Tom ran towards him, and catching him by the collar, shook him, like I've seen a dog shake a rat, his eyes fairly flashing. Bowman, who was really as cowardly as he was big, jerked himself clear of Tom's grip, and sneaked away, the whole crowd laughing at him; while Tom went to his work as unmoved as if nothing had happened. There were no boots flung at him after that, Sir; we felt he was a man, and respected his religion, though we had little or none ourselves.

"It was a poor time for the sealers that spring. We got out of harbour all right; but we hadn't been long out when the wind chopped round to the north-east and blew a perfect gale, jamming the ice right in on the land. I ought to tell you, Sir, perhaps, that the best time for sealers is when there is just enough out-winds to keep

the ice together, but not driving it together too tight for the vessels to get through it. Well, it was a poor spring, as I said, for that ; it blew so hard and so constantly, from the north and north-east, that the ice was well to the south'ard, and the northern bays were all jammed up full. We were more fortunate than many, though ; for we were far enough out before the gale came on to get well on the outside of the edge of the ice ; and, though caught for a while, as soon as the wind came off, we got clear. We crept along slowly for several days, picking up a scattered seal here and there, but not many. You see the ice was so packed together that we couldn't get through it, and had just to keep on the outer edge. The captain was in a great state of anger and anxiety, for the *Hunter* was a new ship, and it was his first voyage in her ; and to come home with a clean hold is a hard thing to look forward to in any case, but particularly at such a time. It was getting well on in the season, too, and that made it all the worse for us. At length, one Saturday—I mind it well—we had got a little further in than usual, and were heading through a lake of water, with a light breeze behind us blowing as it is now—just a capful—when some

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of the men, who had been sent out over the ice ahead, came up with heavy tows of seals—in prime order they were, too—and told us there were plenty, millions of 'em they said, just two or three miles ahead, and a clear lead of water all the way. In ten minutes there was hardly a man left aboard—just enough, then, to work the ship; every other was after the seals, hot-foot. We hauled over five hundred to the ship that evening, and left a couple of hundred more, panned, which we hadn't time to take with us. It was Saturday night, as I said, and late in the day when we struck the seals, and that was good work for the time we were at it.

“Next morning, as soon as it was day, the order was given, ‘All hands on the ice,’ and we scrambled up. The ship had by this time got right in among 'em; and it was a wonderful sight we saw when we went on deck. There they were all around us, as far as you could see, thousands upon thousands of 'em—and in prime order, too—the ice fairly black with 'em, and you could hear 'em crying, for all the world like young children. I never saw such a sight again but once, and I've been now going to the ice for twenty-five years, off and on.

" 'Now, boys,' says the captain, 'there's your chance. You have 'em all to yourselves ; and if you work as hard as you did yesterday, you'll do a good day's work. The better the day the better the deed, you know. Off you go now.'

"No second word was needed. The men were over the side, and on the ice, almost before the order was given. I went down to get my knife out of my bunk, and I passed Tom Williams just going on deck as I went down. I noticed he had made no preparation for going on the ice, and the captain noticed it, too.

" 'Hello, Williams,' he says, 'not on the ice yet. Why, you were one of the smartest yesterday ; not sick, are you ?'

" 'No, Sir,' says Tom, 'I'm not sick, but I'm not going on the ice to-day. 'Tis Sunday.'

" 'Sunday, you hypocrite,' roars the captain ; 'we have no Sundays at the ice. Over that rail, and do your duty. I'm master of this ship.'

" 'I cannot go, Sir.'

" 'I say you shall go, you Methodist hound. Obey orders at once, or I'll make you.'

" 'Captain Barnes,' says Tom, quite steady and slow, 'you didn't have to threaten me

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yesterday, as you know; and you won't have to threaten me to-morrow. But to-day my Master tells me to keep His day holy, and I must obey Him rather than you.'

"For a moment I thought the captain was going to strike him; he raised his fist, and his face was full of rage. Tom never moved, only looked steadily at him, and he dropped his hand and went aft without another word, while Tom went quietly below.

"Well, Sir, the rest of us worked a'! day, and we were pretty tired when night came. Bright and early next morning we were off again. Tom Williams and myself were the first two on the ice, and, as it happened, we were together most of the day. How that man worked! Fresher than any of us, from his Sunday's rest, he seemed determined to show that it wasn't laziness, anyhow, that had kept him aboard the day before. I'm certain he did most as much that day as any two of the crew, and we all worked hard, for the sky was thickening up and looking ugly to the south'ard, and we knew a stiff breeze from that point would soon scatter the ice, and we'd lose our chance. Well, just after dinner time, it began to get pretty thick and overcast, with every

now and then a smart snow-dwie; and the captain told the men to keep together as much as they could, and not go too far from the ship.

"It happened that I had killed and sculped several seals in the morning, a good distance away from the vessel, and I said to myself, 'I'm not coming aboard without them seals, blow high or low.' So off I went, found my seals, laced up as heavy a tow of 'em as I thought I could haul, and started for the ship. When I came to face the wind, I found how it had freshened while I was going with it. I hadn't minded it when it was in my back, but going against it was another matter. The snow-dwies, too, had made the ice sticky, and the hauling was very heavy and dead. However, I pressed on, for I knew my course well enough, till, all at once, I came to an open channel of water, just narrow enough to get across. The ice was separating! I remember now the fright it gave me, as I thought of the distance I had to go, but I held on to my tow of seals, and pressed ahead. The wind was dead against me, and I was pretty well tired and leary, as we say, but it was life or death with me. I hadn't gone far when I came to another

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big channel. I saw at once it was too wide for me to cross, do my best. What was I to do? I dropped my hauling rope, and ran along the edge, a good bit, to see if I could find a narrow place, but no, it got wider and wider in that direction. Back I came again on my tracks to try the other direction, only to find it worse and worse. The full thought of my position struck me like a blow. I was lost. Between me and the ship was that wide channel, and, for all I knew, there were other channels even if I could cross this one. But that itself was impossible. It was frightful. Darkness was coming on, the wind had freshened to a gale, and the big snowflakes were blinding me as I looked or tried to look to windward. The ice too was breaking up fast; all around I could hear the cracking and groaning of the big pans, as the edges ground one on another, with the swell of the sea. I was lost. There wasn't one chance in ten thousand that I should ever see land again. I should perish unseen, unhelped, alone in the storm and darkness. Reckless as I was, and thoughtless, I was horrified when I realised my awful situation.

"For some time I felt stunned like. I couldn't believe it, couldn't feel it to be true. I thought I

heard the men's voices close to me, and shouted for help again and again. I couldn't believe myself near death, and I so well and hearty and strong. And then it came over me that there was no hope for me. I thought of the rest of the crew getting back to the ship and I not missed at first, and then some one saying: 'Where's George Netman?' and one man saying, 'I've not seen him,' and another, 'I've not seen him,' and then the men being called on deck, and questioned by the captain, and guns fired, so that if I was in sound of the ship I might hear them and know where she was; and then their giving up hope as night came on and the ice broke up, and saying: 'Poor fellow, he's gone,' and talking about me, and pitying me, and wondering how they'd break the news to the old people; it all came up to me, and I sobbed like a child.

"Men say, Sir, that when a man is drowning all his life comes back to him like a flash; and I can well believe it, for all my life came back to me: the times when I was a young fellow; my father and mother and my home life; the scrapes I used to get into; the many times I had felt I was wrong. It was wonderful. Things that I had forgotten for years—actions, words, even thoughts

—came up as fresh as if all had happened just a day ago. I felt as if Almighty God was pointing out to me all the sins and foolishness of my life, and I saw then, as I had never seen before, what a fool I had been. I thought particularly of my poor mother, how she had prayed for me and talked to me many a time, and how little I had thought of it. I was a good son, in a kind of way, always treated her well, and loved her, too, for I couldn't help it: but I felt now how ill I had served her, and she so anxious for me to be a Christian. 'Ah, George,' she had often said to me, 'you'll think different some day, my child,' and I remembered her words. Now, I should never see her again, poor old soul, never see her again in this world, and in the next—well, we should be separated for ever. 'God have mercy on me!' I cried; and the only answer seemed to be the groaning of the ice-pans, the howling of the wind, and the beating of the snow-drift on my bare head as I lifted it up in my agony of prayer. O the hopelessness and loneliness of that moment! Still, I could not lie down and die, the love of life was keen in me yet, and to keep myself alive I must move. And so I staggered on, the wind fairly howling, and the thick snow beating against

me, afraid to venture far lest I should fall into some opening, and not daring to keep still lest I should perish with cold. So the hours passed, I hardly know how ; and I kept up my tramp to and fro. Suddenly I heard a sound to windward of me above the roaring of the wind—the sound of a hymn. ‘Surely,’ I said to myself, ‘I’m getting mad ; the end is coming before I thought.’ Still it came through the wind and snow, a tune familiar to me, and with words I’d often heard my mother singing :

“ ‘All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring ;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.’ ”

“Of a sudden it flashed upon me what it was. It was Tom Williams’ voice plain enough now, and I remembered that he had been with me all the morning, and now I knew that he had come back for his seals, and got lost like myself. Running in the direction of the sound, I shouted : ‘Tom, Tom Williams !’ There was no answer, only the fierce beating of the sleety wind, and through it still the old familiar words. Again I shouted as I ran : ‘Williams, Tom Williams, help ! Where are you ?’ This time he heard me, and

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shouted back ; and in a few more minutes we were together. He told me he had come after his seals, as I had supposed. He had noticed the bad weather coming on, but thought he would be back in time, and had been stopped like myself by the open channel. He also told me that he had been quite around the large pan of ice on which we were standing, and it was evident to him that we were close to the edge of the pack, and blowing out to sea as fast as the wind could carry us.

“ ‘ If it keeps on as it is now,’ said he, ‘ we shall be clear of the main body of ice by the morning. I think this pan will hold out for some time, as it’s pretty big and solid ; thereby it is only a matter of time with us, whether we drown or perish with cold or starve, I fear ; but we’ll keep together, anyhow, and leave it in the hands of God.’

“ And so we spent that night, Sir, crouching together for warmth under a hummock of ice. In the shelter, it wasn’t so very cold, for the wind, as I said, was southerly, and before dawn it stopped snowing, and the wind was not so high. When daylight came we could see our position, and a terrible sight it was. The pan of ice on

which we were standing was perhaps five hundred feet long, and nearly the same in breadth—that was all. Away to windward it was thick and cloudy, and we could see no sign of the main body of ice, only great pans floating, like the one we were on, at the mercy of the wind. To leeward of us was the open sea, ugly-looking enough, I can tell you, with the short lop which the wind had stirred up.

“‘Well, my boy,’ said Tom, ‘it looks bad, doesn’t it? I’m afraid there’s no chance of change of wind yet, and if it holds this way all day, we shall be blown a long way to the northward, and the further we get out to sea the more I’m afraid of this pan breaking up.’

“All day long we walked about as well as we could, for between the hard work of the day before, and our terrible experience of the night, we were far gone with weakness. We were not suffering from hunger, for I had two or three seals’ hearts fastened to my belt, and Tom had a couple, too. You know we sealers often eat the seal’s heart raw, Sir, when we are out among them and get hungry. So we fared well enough as far as food went; for the hearts, raw though they were, tasted honey-sweet to us.

"Just think of our situation, Sir—drifting out to sea, hopelessly and helplessly, on that pan of ice, with the cold waters breaking up over it, all around, as if they were eager to devour us!

"Towards evening the wind veered a point or two, and dropped off a little, and the night came down upon us once more. It was pitch-dark, but not foggy, and the wind died quite away about midnight. I don't think we should either of us have lived through another night like the first.

"Tom was cheerful, and tried to cheer me up; but, poor fellow, I could see his strength was failing fast, and I knew that when he went, I shouldn't be long behind him. I should have said that all through the day, every now and then, he would burst out with a hymn, and then he would say:

"'George, my boy, there's only One can help you and me now; but He can, and if it is His will we shall see home yet, never fear. Let us ask Him.'

"And, then, Sir, we would kneel down, and he would pray such a prayer, Sir; it seemed as if he saw the Saviour close to him, and I'm not sure but he did. Many times that day, some-

times with me, sometimes away by himself, he was on his knees. How he prayed for me! He didn't seem to care whether he got to land or not, so long as I was rescued, and somehow I felt as if it would be so.

"As we crouched together that night, he talked to me about himself, told me what a wild fellow he had been in his youth, and how he had been converted at a revival service, fifteen years before. He told me of the joy he felt in God's service, and of the love and peace experienced through all those years. And then, seeing I was touched, he urged me to give my heart to Jesus, then and there. I cried, and he cried with me, and prayed over me again and again. Just before dawn, the wind came further round from the westward, the sky cleared away a bit, and it grew colder. As the sun rose we could see nothing but open water all around us, as far as the eye could reach, with here and there a bit of field ice floating about; no sign of the main body of ice anywhere to be seen. It was a glorious day, not a cloud in the sky, and the sun bright and warm. The wind kept low, too; though, as the day wore on, it got colder and colder. We finished our last raw heart about dinner time, and

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quenched our thirst, as we had done before, by eating the snow.

"Tom got weaker and weaker, and I felt my own strength going fast. Our only hope was that some sealing vessel might come along and see us ; though it was a very poor hope, for we had nothing to make signals with, and our pan wasn't half the size it was when we got adrift first. Besides it wasn't at all likely, unless they passed us close enough to touch, that they would think of looking twice at a floating pan. I kept a good look out, however, for, as I said, it was our only chance, poor as it was. So the day passed away, poor Tom getting gradually too weak to stand, and lying for shelter behind the hummock where we had spent our nights. Not long after sunset, he called me over to him.

"'George, boy,' said he, quiet and solemn-like, 'I shall never see another sunset ; I don't think I shall see it rise. I feel I am going fast ; I think I must have hurt myself in some way that Monday morning. Thank God I'm not afraid to die ; I am going where there is no need of the sun, I am going to Jesus. For fifteen years He has been with me constant, and now I shall be with Him for ever. Blessed be His holy name !

But you, George, I have been praying that you may be spared, and I believe you will. I don't know how, but I believe you will. God has answered my prayer, I feel He has. O, George, promise me that you will live for God; promise me that you will come to Jesus.'

" 'I will, Tom, I will,' I sobbed out, for I was completely broken down.

" 'Kneel down, George,' he said, and I knelt beside him. 'O blessed Lord,' I heard him murmur, in his poor, weak voice, 'Thou hast heard my prayer for his life, hear me for his eternal life, too. Help him to come to Thee, help him to come to Thee now!' And then he whispered: 'You pray, George.'

" 'I don't know how, Tom,' I answered, with the tears streaming over my face.

" 'O try,' he said; 'He will help you, He will hear you; try.'

" And I prayed with all my heart. I prayed that God would forgive me, and take away my sins; that He would do it now. I was in an agony; my sins seemed greater than I could bear, and I cried to God from the depths of a wounded spirit. And He heard me. He heard and answered me then and there. I rose to my

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feet rejoicing, for I felt I was forgiven. It was bright moonlight all around, it was sunlight in my soul.

"‘Tom,’ I cried, ‘He has heard me, He has heard me!’

"He did not speak, but lay there with a smile on his face, and his eyes fixed on the bright, full moon.

"‘Praise God with me, dear ‘Tom,’ I said again, ‘for my sins are all forgiven.’

"Still he did not move; still that quiet smile and heaven-turned face. He was gone! He was praising God for me, no doubt; but it was in the land where there is no more death, and no more sea.

"Awe-stricken, but not surprised, and not afraid, I stood looking at him for a few minutes, and then turned and looked out upon the sea. It was a glorious night, and clear for miles in every direction. A large island of ice loomed up away to windward, looking in the moonlight like a ship under sail. I sighed, and, turning my head away, pondered over poor ‘Tom’s assurance that I should be rescued. It didn’t seem likely, and yet he seemed sure it would be so. Perhaps it was an hour before I looked up again to where

I had seen the island of ice. It was a ship after all! I started up. Was I dreaming? Was it a fancy of my poor mind, all weak with anxiety and exposure? Was it a vision? It was a ship, sure enough. On she came, with the bright moonlight glistening on her sails, and her spars and rigging all shining, as it seemed to me, like silver. Why, it was our own ship! It was the *Hunter*. Would she pass me close? Could I make them hear? With all my strength, I ran to the edge of the ice and shouted. Again and again I cried, but no one heard. She was within a few yards of me now, and I heard one of the watch sing out to the man at the wheel to starboard his helm or he'd be foul of a pan of ice. Still on she came, and I could recognise the men on deck, and hear them talking. Would they pass me after all?

"*Hunter*, ahoy! help, help!" I cried; and there was a rush for the rail.

"Help, O, help!" I cried again, and then I heard a voice say:

"There's a man on the pan; quick, lower a punt!"

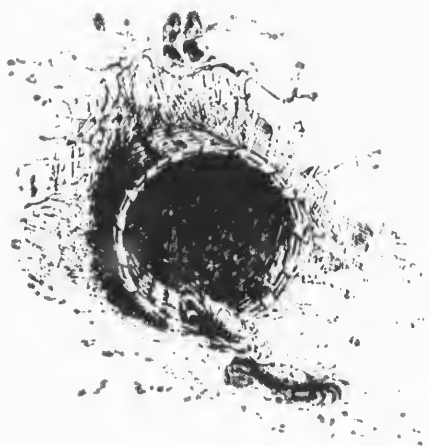
"Another minute, and the punt was lowered and rowing towards me. As it touched the ice,

I gave one more shout, and dropped down where I stood, insensible. When I came to myself, I was in the captain's cabin wrapped in blankets before the stove, with the captain himself and two or three others rubbing my body and limbs. It was some time before I could talk much, for I was badly frost-burnt, and very weak. As soon as I was able, though, I told them about poor Tom, and how he died; and there weren't many dry eyes, you may be sure, Sir, as they listened to me and, I suppose, thought of the way they had served him. We brought his poor body home to the harbour, where we arrived a couple of days later, and I'm told, for I was too ill to be there, of course, that there was many a tear shed over his coffin the day they put him under the ground.

"I was a long time sick, a good many months; but, thank God, He spared me and restored me; and I've never lost, Sir, through His grace and mercy, the peace and pardon He gave me that moonlight night on the lonely ice. I've tried to keep my promise to poor Tom, and to Him, which I made then, and to live for His glory and the good of my fellow-men.

"Now, Sir, my story is done; and you know

why I said at the beginning that I often come up here on moonlight nights like this, and look out over the sea. It seems to draw one nearer to God, and it brings home to me so closely the time when He brought me so wonderfully to Himself."



CHAPTER II.

THE MAN.

"Nane o Scotland's dogs,
But whalpit some place far abroad,
Whaur sailors gang to fish for cod."

BURNS, "*The Twa Dogs.*"

"The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that."

Idem, "*A Man's a Man.*"



SUCH was the story which George Netman told his minister as they stood, one bright March night in 187-, looking out over the moonlit waters of the Bay of Notre Dame. A startling story, truly, and so the

Rev. Mr. Fairbairn thought, as he looked at the

quiet, strong face of the narrator and thanked him for the telling. There were tears in both men's eyes as they gripped each other's hands at the close, and parted for the night. It was no time for words, the feelings stirred were too deep and tender for that ; and as the one turned down the hill to his cottage, and the other went along the ridge to where the lights of the tiny mission-house shone out their welcome, the stillness of the glorious night seemed full of the presence of the unseen God, and its very silence spake of Him.

George Netman was a Newfoundland fisherman. In mercantile phrase, he was a "planter"—a word which is of peculiar application in Newfoundland, meaning as it does a fisherman who is a householder and boatowner ; and which is evidently of the nature of a survival, dating from those old times when, in legal parlance, the island was a "plantation" of England, and its sparse settlers "planters." "Skipper George Netman," his neighbours called him, in virtue of his position and respectability as master and owner of a fine schooner and possessor of a house and fishing-room.

He was a fine specimen of his class, tall and strong, with broad shoulders and chest ; close-knit and sinewy, yet lithe and full of spring and

boy-like activity ; with a noble head well set and crowned with iron-grey hair, and an open, cheery, weather-beaten face, lighted up by a pair of bright, straightforward-looking blue eyes. He was a goodly man to look at—a man you would instinctively turn to look at the second time, if you passed him in the street, even in his homely fisherman's "rig." Then, indeed, he looked his best, his fine figure set off to advantage in the tight-fitting blue guernsey, with the appropriate accompaniment of heavy sea-boots, and yellow oil-cloth sou'-wester—every inch a fisherman, and every inch a man.

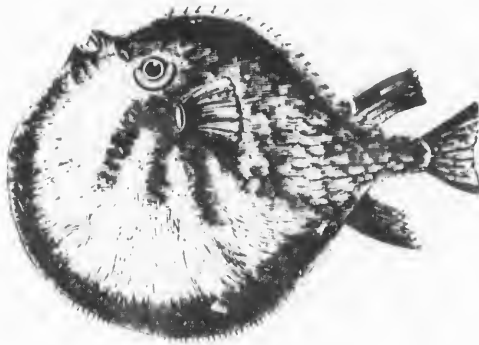
No man was better known in all the bight than Skipper George, no man better liked or more looked up to, not from his position alone, for the little settlement boasted wealthier men than he, but from general force of character and kindliness of disposition ; and above all, from that indescribable weight which accompanies always and everywhere a genuinely independent and decided Christian life. By general agreement, he was the "leadin' man" of the harbour—a first authority on all matters connected with his calling, an umpire in all cases of dispute, a justice of the peace without commission and without pay or pickings. That

Skipper George Netman said so was a sufficient guarantee of any piece of news that was current, and that it was his opinion was, in itself, antecedently a proof of the rightness of any proposition or course of procedure. And rightly so, the people would tell you, if you asked the reason. Hadn't he been one of the first "liviers" in the bight? Hadn't he been goin' to sea, man and boy, for well on to fifty years? Didn't he know every rock and shoal around the shore as well as he knew the path from his "thrastle" to his stage? Wasn't he the greatest "sile killer" on the shore? And then, if you had time to listen, you would hear of brave deeds of help and rescue unostentatiously done, and kindly deeds of beneficence and self-denial, watching by the sick and dying, quiet liberalities to the poor and suffering, done as it were by stealth. "Ah, he's a good man, Skipper George," your informant would end with, in emphasis that was silencing, in fact convincing.

Skipper George was a Methodist; indeed, he was the leading spirit in the Methodism of the settlement as he was in its general life; a liberal supporter of the cause, a true friend to the ministers, an earnest and honest worker in those fields of Christian usefulness which his Church so

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freely opens to her laymen. Fifteen years before, when he had come with his wife and children to the harbour, he had brought his religion with him, and erected the family altar from the very beginning in his new home. Then he had gathered a class around him, and welcomed to his house the heroic minister who had all the great Bay of Notre Dame for his circuit, and whose visits were, of necessity, like those of angels, few and far between. Largely from his own means, and, in good measure, with his own hands, he had built the little church, and every one knew it was owing to his influence that four years ago a young man had been sent by the Conference to Caplin Bight Circuit, and this year a married man.



CHAPTER III.

HIS SURROUNDINGS.

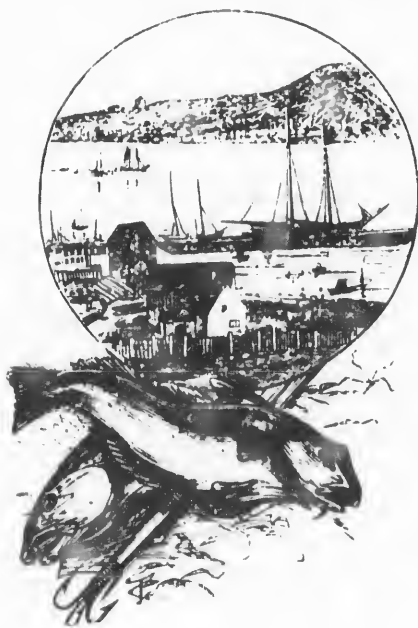
"Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm,
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands;
Beyond red roofs about a narrow wharf,
In cluster."

TENNYSON, "*Enoch Arden*."

"On this beach . . .

Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing nets,
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats updrawn."

Ibid.



CAPLIN BIGHT lies on the shore of the broad and beautiful Bay of Notre Dame. It is a picturesque little place, embosomed in wooded hills which sweep protectingly around it, sheltering it from nearly every wind that blows. Rugged and stern,

a huge rocky bluff stands, like a fortress, at each side of the narrow entrance, outside of which great breakers dash and roar in stormy weather; but once inside the Tickle, as it is called, you may bid defiance to the winds and waves, and rejoice in deep water and good anchorage.

At one side of the harbour the hills descend almost sheer to the water's edge, at the other they slope away gradually, leaving a long, broad, curving beach—a famous resort for caplin in the season, when these bright and beautiful little fish, in countless myriads, pay their annual visit to the coasts of Newfoundland. To this beach the settlement owes its existence and its name. For many a year before a house was built on the slope above, Caplin Bight had been famed all along the Bay as a place where these fish not only “struck in” the earliest, but where they “held out” the longest, and during all the “caplin school” were most plentiful, and year after year vast numbers had been caught in seines and cast-nets for bait, and myriads more tossed up by the surf, to die and rot upon the pebbles.

By-and-by, a lone fisherman had built his rough cottage on the inviting sward above the sands, to be followed, in course of time, by another and

another, until the houses now cluster thickly under the hill and around its sides. Great spider-legged "flakes" (raised platforms for drying fish on) cover a large area of the beach, and long, low-roofed "stages," and a "fishing-room," built on posts, project at every few yards into the water. Here in summer time, in a perpetual odour of fish, the processes of curing that staple of the country go busily on; and here in winter, scarcely less busily, the punts and skiffs are modelled and built for the summer's voyage.

The place has the straggling and unfinished look common to most out-harbours, and due to the temporary nature of the buildings and other erections used for fish-curing, as well as to their peculiarity of structure. But when you left the chaos of flake and stage, and walked up towards the dwellings of the people, you would not fail to be impressed, in the trimness of the little garden enclosures, the neatness of the white-painted houses, with a more favourable idea of the stability and respectability of the place. Nor would you fail to be struck with the kindly good nature of the people you chanced to accost, with their anxious courtesy in answering your queries, and with their general air of intelligence and spright-

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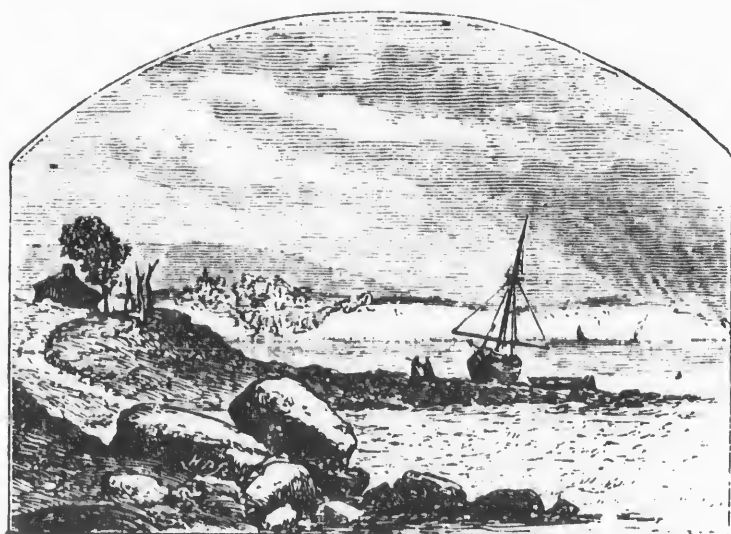
liness. Were you to avail yourself of the invitation, sure to be given, to come and sit down, the good wife would at once put the tea-kettle on the stove, and rake and replenish the fire ; then Jane or Mary would be hurried off to get a drop of milk, the carefully-kept glass bowl of white sugar would be taken from some secret recess, and a new loaf cut and buttered liberally.

"Make yourself at home, Sir ; you're kindly welcome to it, such as it is," would be your warrant to refresh yourself with the homely fare, with injunctions to "make a long arm," and help yourself, and "not wait for compliments." The hospitality of Newfoundland is proverbial, and Caplin Bight people are no exception to the rule. You will notice now the peculiar dialect of the people. There is a good deal that smacks of the West of England about it, you think as you listen, in the depth of tone and prolonging of the final syllables, as well as in the quaint pronunciation. You are right. There is good West of England blood in many of these Green Bay folk—blood that flowed clear and clean in generations of honest yeomen of Dorset or Somerset or Devon. They trace descent from sire or grandsire, or yet remoter ancestor, who came out a "youngster" to

some large planter, years and years ago—came out a lad from Poole or Bridport or Dartmouth, and never saw the dear old land again. Perhaps you will meet one or two—there are more than that in the place—who are English and have come out as described, though of late years the practice of importing “youngsters” has been largely discontinued.

A fine sturdy race, these Green Bay people, fertile in resources, ingenious in the handicrafts connected with their calling, fond of books where they have the ability to use them—a people educated, however, far more by observation than by reading, in whom necessity has developed handiness and self-reliance in a remarkable degree. Primarily and chiefly fishermen, they can yet turn their hands to many another work, and be shoemakers, gunsmiths, house-joiners or ship-builders, as need may require. A hardy race they are, too, used to roughing it from early youth, taking to the boat, and the exposure, and unrest of a fisherman's life as naturally as the fish itself does to its native element. A serious, thoughtful people in the main, disposed to earnest views of life and duty, strongly susceptible to religious influence. Such, then, in

general, are the characteristics of the people of whom this story tells. Human nature is much the same all the world over, and the problem of life has to be ciphered out by each man and woman in much the same terms after all. Responsibility equal exactly to privilege—that is the essential equation running through the sum, and though many factors on both sides enter into the question, and appear to affect its nature, it is reducible for all to that very simple equation.



CHAPTER IV.

AN ITINERANT'S LETTER.

"Dear is the work He gives in many a varied way,
Little enough in itself, yet something for every day—
Something by pen for the distant, by hand or voice for the
near,
Whether to soothe or teach, whether to aid or cheer."

F. R. HAVERGAL.



and "vamps" lying by the fender were steam-

IT was a fine bright morning. towards the end of March, a fortnight after the conversation detailed in our first chapter. The Rev. Harry Fairbairn was sitting in his study, writing home. A cheery fire glowed in the little Franklin stove, well filled with brick billets; and the minister's skin-boots

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ing with heat. A tiny room was that same study, and homely enough in its appointments. Cherished photographs of far-away loved ones hung above the plain little mantel-piece, and a half-dozen framed views of English scenery adorned the walls. Books were the chief ornaments of the room—books tidily ranged in neat shelves, on both sides of the chimney, and books scattered about the room in the untidy way so tantalising to the careful housewife, yet so natural and ever necessary to the absorbed and eager student. A short walking-stick, with a spear in it, and a pair of snow-shoes, or, as they call them in Green Bay, “rackets,” rested against the wood-box, and these, like the boots and “vamps” before mentioned, were dripping and steaming as the frozen snow melted from them. For the minister had just returned that morning from a round of his circuit, and, having arrived thoroughly fagged, had decided on taking a holiday within doors, and getting up some arrears of correspondence. As he sits there at the study table, he gives a favourable opportunity of sketching him. It is a good head that bends over the letter—a fine, broad forehead, under the abundant brown hair, a Saxon face with its full beard and dark blue eyes,

a strong, well-knit frame, tall, but full of force, and what the French call *erve*.

Somewhere between thirty and forty you would judge him to be, and rightly. Mr. Fairbairn is a Yorkshireman, from that lovely valley through which the Wharfe pours its fertilising and flashing waters—one of those Englishmen to whom Newfoundland, and many another land, owes so much, who, feeling the Divine message burning within them, have left home and occupation to preach Christ's Gospe' and who have made up for the lack of early training by an assiduous self-culture that has ripened into a truer education than the mere routine of a college curriculum, *per se*, can ever afford. Harry Fairbairn was naturally a student. When a boy on his father's farm, he began to pick up the nucleus of a library in many a well-worn but valuable volume, purchased second-hand on his visits to the towns; and these treasures, carefully conned in early morning hours, and after the toilful day had closed, had helped to equip him for the work to which he had been called. In other Churches he might have remained, his fine talent hidden and his store of knowledge all unused; but in Methodism, to her honour be it said, such men as he have always

found the means and the opportunity for development and usefulness. In his seven years of mission work in Newfoundland the habits of study acquired in the home-farm had been kept up, and the workman had, as in the Latin proverb, been made by working.

Let us glance over his shoulder. He is writing to that noble and patriarchal Yorkshire gentleman, through whose influence he had come out as a missionary, and who has been more than once affectionately and rightly called the foster-father of Newfoundland missions.

"I avail myself of a few hours' leisure," the letter runs, "to give you some news concerning myself and my surroundings. I wrote you last just after Conference, and told you of my new appointment. I have now spent nine months on it, and begin to know it and its people pretty thoroughly. I like it very much indeed; though it is pretty hard work, as I have twelve preaching places, and, from Hammer Cove on the one side to Dog-Bite on the other, I have nearly thirty miles to travel. You will laugh, I expect, at the queer names. Fancy a lovely little harbour profaned by the name of Dog-Bite, because, as I have taken the pains to find out, one of the first settlers

got bitten by his dog there when wood-cutting. But what will you think of Shoe Cove and Stocking Harbour, and Snook's Arm and Bett's Head and Nicky's Nose? All those names are to be found in this very Bay! Somehow in this country, as in other new countries, foreigners have left behind them much prettier and more appropriate names than the English. What can be finer than Bonavista, Bonaventure, or Placentia, or more inappropriate than Bloody Bay, Rogue's Harbour, or Muddy Hole?

"But to return to my mission. It is, as I was saying, pretty hard work to get round it as regularly, or as often, as I would like. I'm a poor sailor, and get terribly sea-sick in the punts, as the men take me from place to place when the water is open; and I've suffered a good bit sometimes from cold, being too sick to move or take an oar to keep myself warm. I like the winter travelling, though. It is rare exercise, this snowshoe walking that we have here, and the people tell me I'm getting to be a 'ter'ble fine hand in the rackets.' I've just come back from visiting the upper part of my mission, and, thanks to good weather, have managed to get entirely round it in less than a fortnight. It is two weeks to-morrow since I started on my round. I went first down



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to Prowse's Cove, just five miles from here, visited twenty-five families, read and prayed with them all, preached twice in Skipper Joe Batt's kitchen, with my head among the beams of the ceiling. Next I went on to Sculpin Arm, which is seven miles further down shore. Here I preached three times in the little school-chapel, just built, and visited every family in the place—about fifty, besides meeting the class for tickets, and administering the sacrament. Then I visited the 'liviers' on the other side of the Arm, gave them one service, and went on to Bill Bone's Harbour, Waggett's Beach, and Dog-Bite, preaching, and visiting every family. Then I came up home in one day, slept here, and early next morning started up the Bay, visiting Pike's Cove, Scrubby Point, Squashberry Head, and Hammer Cove, and giving each place one or two services. Altogether, in the fortnight, I've travelled some sixty miles, mostly on rackets : visited one hundred and thirty families ; preached eighteen times ; held twenty-one prayer-meetings ; met seven classes ; administered the sacrament six times ; baptized eight children ; married two couples (I wish it had been more) ; and buried an infant, and a patriarch of four-score and five.

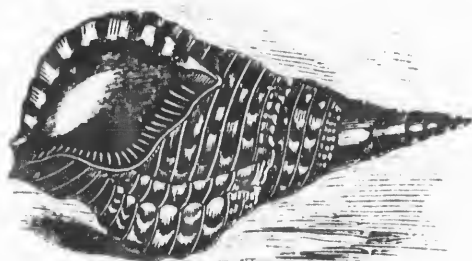
"Coming along from Hammer Cove yesterday, I was complaining a bit of the constant work, and of feeling pretty well tired out, when old John Adams, who was accompanying me, administered the somewhat ill-timed consolation, that it was 'better to wear out than to rust out.' But I don't think there is any fear of my wearing out. I never enjoyed such glorious health, and the air is so pure, and the climate so exhilarating, that walking is a positive luxury. And then the appetite! My dear Sir, if you were to see the hearty meals one makes in this country, off the homely fare one gets sometimes on a circuit like this, you would indeed be surprised. Talk of the roast beef of Old England, indeed! You should taste seal. You should sit down to a shoulder of young harp, or of two-year-old bedlamer seal, served up by the deft hand of hospitable Aunt Martha Bartlett, after a three hours' tramp on snow-shoes over the hills with a smart nor'-wester right in your face! Talk of pheasant or turkey, forsooth! You should have Aunt Kitty Fowler place before you the leg and wing of an ice-gull, or the breast of a good fat turr, after an enforced abstinence from fresh meat of perhaps a month or so! I admit, of course, that the walk and

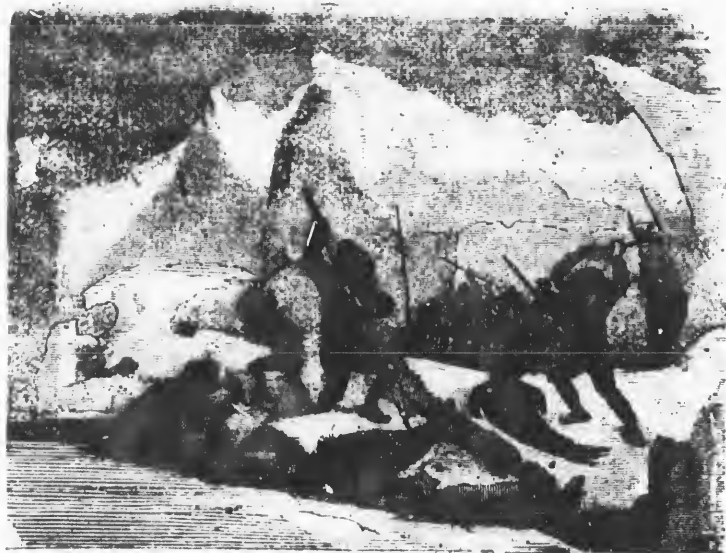
abstinence are necessary to enable an Englishman to fully appreciate these dainties at first, at all events, but on missions like this you generally have these appetizers. Indeed, my wife often laughs at me, and says I'm becoming a regular Newfoundland, to which I retort that she is not far behind me.

"I never enjoyed my work so much as I have done since we came here. The people are so wonderfully kind, so glad to see one in their homes, so hospitable, so attentive to what one says, and so respectful and apparently thankful for one's labour, that it is a real pleasure to be among them. It is true, as I said, that the work is hard, and, being, as you know, a bit of a book-worm, I feel the loss of those regular hours of study which were possible on my circuit in Trinity Bay ; but somehow my brain is kept so clear with the out-door exercise that I seem to be able to read and digest more in a couple of hours here than I did in double that time elsewhere. I have good help too in the way of faithful class-leaders, and in nearly every place there is at least one who in my absence either reads a sermon, or according to his ability preaches one, on Sundays, and maintains regular services during

the week. As I have listened to some of these men, their wonderful power in prayer, their depth of experience, and extraordinary facility of utterance in giving expression to it, I have longed that they had had in youth the advantages of education. Some of them can scarcely read, some of them cannot read a word. And yet the most beautiful language, so simple, so correct, will pour from their lips.

"I am hoping and praying for a revival. There are good signs, and I have little doubt that we shall soon have a baptism of power from on high. Meantime we are working on, thank God, in hope, and with the promises of a Word that hath never failed."





CHAPTER V.

THE SEALS ARE IN.

"And slowly moving c the horizon's brink
Floats the vast ice-field with its glassy blink."

LYTTON, "*King Arthur*."

THUS far had the Rev. Mr. Fairbairn proceeded with his correspondence, when a tap at the study door, responded to by a prompt, though half unwilling, "Come in," was followed by the entrance of a visitor, whose cheery, "Welcome back, Sir," was succeeded by a quick and apologetic, "I'm afraid I've interrupted you," as

he caught sight of the minister's letter-strewn table.

"Come in, Skipper George; never mind the interruption. I can finish my letters before the mails leave. Take a seat by the fire. Are all well at home?"

"Thank you, Sir; I won't sit down. They're all well at home, except mother, who is feeling her rheumatics terrible bad this last fortnight. I'd be glad if you'd call in and see her, in a day or two, Sir. But what brought me up now was to ask if you would like to see the men hauling seals. They've been out since daylight, and several of 'em have brought in fine tows already. If you go up to the high point over there, about a mile's walk, Burton's Pinch, as we call it, and take your spy-glass with you, you will be able to see them plain enough. I heard you say the other day, Sir, that you'd like to see such a sight, and, as you may not get another chance while you are with us, I thought I'd run up and let you know."

"I am really much obliged to you, Skipper George," said the minister eagerly, "and I will go at once. I'm delighted to hear the seals are within reach. They told me down the shore,

yesterday, they believed there were seals on the ice, but it was too far off to do much. I noticed as I came along that the sharp breeze yesterday and last night had brought it in a good deal nearer. How far off is it to the seals?"

"About four miles, Sir; but please God it keeps blowing this way, the ice will be taut on the land to-morrow. There's a tongue of ice touching the point—that's Woody Point—Sir, three miles down shore, you know already. I'll go and show you the path to the Pinch, if you're going at once. It is a short cut, and will save you going around."

The minister's preparations for going were soon made, and, with his glass slung over his shoulder, in a very few minutes he was trudging along behind his guide in the narrow track that led to the vantage ground desired.

"There, Sir," said the latter, when at length they had come to the foot of the last ascent, "keep to the left-hand path, and in ten minutes more you'll be at the top. I'd go with you myself, but I must not stop. My boys are off on the ice, and I only came in myself with a tow of seals, intending to go off at once, when my missus told me you had got home, and I thought

maybe you'd like to see the work, so I stopped to tell you. Good-bye, Sir, for the present. Don't stay too long on the top of the hill—these March winds are very searching, although the sun is so strong."

With eager step, though tired already by his morning tramp up shore, Mr. Fairbairn climbed to the top of the hill, and, sheltering himself behind a boulder from the sharp breeze blowing off the sea, he found himself, as Skipper George had expressed it, in "a complete place for spyin'." The lofty headland gave him, on the one side, a view of the Bight, and on the other of the open bay, and through his glass, in that clear atmosphere, he could see for miles. Between the shore and the ice a mile or two of open water intervened; and then, far as the eye could reach to seaward, was one vast field of white, unbroken, save where here and there an irregular opening showed the blue water underneath.

Upon this field of white the bright March sun was pouring his unclouded rays, flashed back in dazzling splendour from many a crystal pinnacle and crag. So bright was it that the minister was fain to withdraw his eyes from his glass, and rest them, again and again to turn them upon

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that fascinating scene. In the open water by the shore punts were moving to and from the edge of the ice, and on the edge itself a large number of them were hauled up, awaiting the return of their crews. Off to seaward, through his glass, Mr. Fairbairn could make out the men moving hither and thither after the seals, and even see them killing and "sculping" them; while nearer he could not only see but hear them as they hauled their gory prizes towards their punts.

Turning towards the harbour, signs of unwonted excitement were everywhere apparent. The women stood in knots about the doors, chatting eagerly, while down at the beach were crowds of children watching the bigger boys and men, as they landed the pelts from the punts, and hauled them to the stages. Even the very dogs seemed to have caught something of the excitement of the occasion, as they congregated, in canine converse, by the landing-place, and watched for opportunities to make surreptitious snaps at the tempting but tabooed delicacies brought so tantalisingly near their noses.

Upon this ever-changing living picture, so different from the associations of his early years, so unlike anything he had previously seen in his

mission work, Mr. Fairbairn gazed with absorbed interest, now turning his glass to observe the movements of the busy workers on the ice, now watching the unwonted activities of the village below him, until, reminded by a shiver of Skipper George's remark about the searching wind, he took note of the declining sun, and briskly made his way homewards, to finish his letters for the overland mail, and to add to them an account of the day's experience.

Next morning, as the minister looked from his bed-room window, he could see that Skipper George's hope had been realised. The ice was close to the shore, and packed tightly together; and from the deserted appearance of the settlement, it was evident that the men, and even the boys, were off upon it, intent on securing as many seals as possible while the welcome opportunity lasted. After breakfast, he walked down to the beach, where an old man, stick in hand, was mounting guard over a pile of pelts evidently just brought in, and keeping off the dogs that sniffed hungrily around it.

"Well, Uncle Tommy, you and I are pretty nigh the only men left ashore, it seems," said Mr. Fairbairn as he came up.

"Marnin', Sir ; glad to see 'ee home again," said the old man. "Yes, Sir, I be that old and crippled up wi' rheumatics, I be forced to stay ashore, though I seen the day I could haul my tow wi' any young gaffer among 'em."

"I suppose it is not often you have such a chance as this on the shore, Uncle Tommy?"

"No, Sir ; 'tis years now since I seen th' ice jammed in like 'tis to-day. O' course we have th' ice in the bay every winter, jammed in tight enough sometimes, but this here's the real breedin' ice from outside, and full of seals. 'Tis only a scattered time, when the bay is clear of other ice, and a slant of wind comes as this is passin' and brings it in, that we have a chance like this. I don't t'ink we'll have this very long. I don't like the looks of the sky, for all 'tis so bright and fine ; and we'll have a change of wind, an' a good breeze, too, afore to-morrow's over. 'Tis all right to-day, but I wouldn't like to go very far on it to-morrow, for if the wind comes to change and blow hard 'twill go off very quick."

"A man would soon get rich at this sort of work if he only had such chances often, wouldn't he ?"

"'Deed, he would, Sir. I mindin the spring of '61, I t'ink it was, the siles came in in thousands all along the shore. I made eighty-five pounds that year for my own hand, and my boys made a hundred and fifty pound between 'em. That was a great year, Sir. I mind in one day alone I hauled over twenty pounds' worth of siles. I s'pose dere was hundreds done so well as we—better some of 'em, for they hadn't as far to haul. There haven't been a year like that since, though."

"You must have killed a good many seals in your day, Uncle Tommy."

"Yes, Sir, I have. I was seventy-four year old last Candlemas day; and I went to th' ice, man an' boy, twenty-nine year runnin', besides the times I been off in punt after 'em from this place, and off on th' ice when they came in on the shore. I've had many a hard day's work on th' ice, Sir, I tell 'ee, and had many a narry escape, one way an' t'other. I mind once I was out on th' second trip, wi' old Skipper Joe Stuckless, an' I fired at an old dog hood an' thought I'd killed him. I went up to him, and was just getting out my knife to begin sculpin' him, when he reared at me as savage an' lively as if I ha'dn't hit him at all.

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Ter'ble ugly beast, an old dog hood, Sir. If I hadn't been smarter then than I am now, by a good deal, 'twould ha' bin all up wi' me. As it was, he tore my arm: ter'ble—there's the marks, see—but I managed to get the stock o' my gun in his mouth and run. He made splinters o' my gun, though. 'Nother time, I was out afore the bows, an' got caught 'tween the ship an' th' ice. I give myself up for dead that time, but got clear wi' a broken leg; bad enough it was too, for I couldn't get it set till we got home, more than a week after.

“'Nother time I was out swatchin', as we calls it, that's shooting siles as they comes up through the swatches—them's the holes in t you know, Sir—and I was a good way from anybody else o' th' gang, when I put my foot on what I thought was a solid little pan, to jump across a swatch, an' my foot went through, an' in I went. I'd ha' managed to scramble out right enough, only I went ahead so far, when I made the false step, that I got out of my reach of the solid ice, an' among the soft slob an' lolly in the middle of the swatch. I sung out as loud as I could, but I had little hope o' being heard; an' I struggled to get a hold o' the solid ice, but the slob was so thick

and heavy, it weighed me down further an' further. At last I got fairly spent between shoutin' an' strugglin', and I felt myself sinkin' down fast among the lolly. It was right up to my chin, and I thought I was gone sure enough, when I heard a shout, and saw my wife's brother, who had left home after I did, runnin' hot-foot towards me. He was only just in time, for I was 'most gone, but he had a gaff wi' him fortunately, an' stuck it into my coat an' hauled me out. I was a long time afore I got the better o' that. 'Twas a turnin' point wi' me, though, thank God. If I'd gone then, I'd ha' gone wrong; but now, blessed be His name, I have a good hope. That kind o' steadied me, but next winter we had a revival on the shore, an' I give my heart to God, an' I know He is with me, rough and smooth."

"Ay, Uncle Tommy, it is a good thing to have God with us. It makes a wonderful difference, either in danger or out."

"It do, Sir, it do," said the old man reverently, and he drew his rough sleeve across his eyes as he spoke. "It was the best voyage ever I made when I give my sins to God, and got His grace an' love instead."

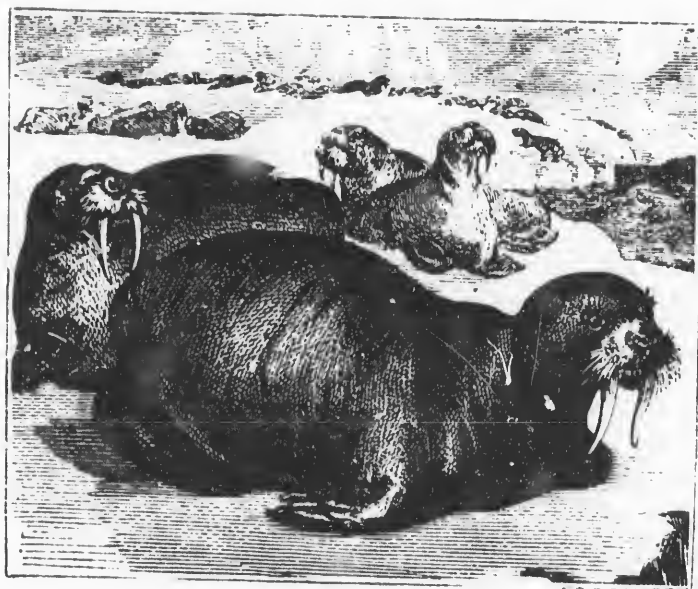
"Well, I hope the men will have a good day of

it to-day. They must have taken a good many seals yesterday, did they not ? ”

“ You be right, Sir ; an’ they’ll get a good many more to-day. The siles is some distance off, though, or they’d be comin’ in wi’ their tows quicker than they are. They can go as far as they like to-day, but I’m half afeared some of ’em ’ll be gettin’ blown off to-morrow, if the wind chops round sudden, as I think it will. You can’t trust these young fellers, they’re that venturesome and foreright.”

The garrulous old man would have chattered away much longer, but the minister’s time was precious ; so, bidding him good-bye, he went back to his study, and for the next few hours forgot all about the seals and the sealers, among the loved volumes of his library.





CHAPTER VI.

BLOWN OFF.

"Not seldom, clad in radiant vest,
Deceitfully goes forth the morn."

WORDSWORTH.

"Not a twinkling star, or beacon's light,
Abates the perils of a stormy night."—*Idem.*

THE next day broke brightly, though there was a haziness about the sky that told of a change of weather soon to come. The men spoke of it as they set off for the sealing-ground in the early morning, and warned one another gravely

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against going too far from land. All the forenoon the wind kept edging around, and the ice slackening off the shore. Still, it was close enough to get off upon, and the men were eagerly making the most of their time to secure a few more seals before it started altogether. Towards afternoon, those who came in from the furthest distance brought news that outside the ice was breaking up and running off very quickly; and as the day advanced, the men came in very weary and wet, and spoke of the difficulty they had experienced in getting along. Finally several came in without any seals, and told how they had been obliged to leave their tows behind, the ice being so bad and broken that they could not haul them.

As the day wore on, Burton's Pinch and the adjacent high lands were filled with people, anxiously watching the fast loosening ice, on which the increasing wind was now telling rapidly. Many stragglers came in, in twos and threes, to the edge of the ice, and were brought safely ashore, until at length only four remained to be accounted for—William Netman, a smart lad of eighteen; his brother John, a couple of years younger; Richard Tuffin, a son of Uncle Tommy's; and

another young man, named Henry Burton. These had come in early with seals, and had started out again. They had been seen about noon going towards the seals, but no one had seen or spoken with them since.

It was now growing dusk, the wind had freshened considerably, and every now and then a light snow squall swept across the hills. Still the anxious crowds stood peering into the fast-growing darkness. At length a party of men were observed coming towards the edge of the ice, and expectation was high that the missing ones had come; but it was a company of four from a settlement further up the bay, who had just managed to get opposite Caplin Bight as the ice drifted past. As night closed in, the little harbour was full of lamentation. It seemed as if the joyous, active life of the morning had gone out in the terrible anxiety and agony of the evening.

Poor old Uncle Tommy Tuffin was weeping like a child when Mr. Fairbairn called at his house. "I was afeared of this, Sir, I was afeared of this," he said mournfully. "I said to 'ee yesterday I was afeared th' wind would come around an' blow th' ice off afore th' lads got ashore, all of 'em. I didn't think, though, my poor boy would be caught.

The good Lord have mercy upon him ! O my boy, my poor boy ! ”

The minister tried to soothe the old man's grief, which was touching to see, and then went on to Skipper George Netman's, two of whose sons were among the missing. He found the house full of dismay. The aged grandmother sat rocking herself by the fireside, the tears trickling over her wrinkled cheeks, and her lips moving in prayer. By the table, on which lay the untouched evening meal, sat the mother, her face buried in her hands, while the younger children, awe-stricken and subdued, were sitting in a group by their mother's side.

Mrs. Netman looked up as the minister entered. “O, Mr. Fairbairn,” she exclaimed, “I am so glad you've come. You've heard of the dreadful thing that's happened. My two poor boys are lost on the ice,” and she burst out into uncontrollable weeping. “Gone, gone,” she moaned, “my two bright, beautiful boys. Here in this very room with me a few hours ago, and now, O where ?”—and she shuddered as she spoke. “Poor little Jack,” she continued, “came up and kissed me, just as they left, and told little Polly there he would try to bring her home a pretty white-coat

to play with. O my boys, my boys ! my precious boys ! ”

“ Dear Mrs. Netman,” said the minister gently, “ you will injure yourself by giving way like that. It may not be so bad as you suppose. You know they may have got to land further down shore. At all events they are in God’s hands. Where’s the master ? ” he continued, after a pause ; “ I thought I should find him here.”

“ Down at the stage, Sir, getting a skiff ready to go and look for them. Sit down, Sir. He’ll be in directly. Ah ! here he is.” As she spoke her husband entered the room, his usually quiet face showing the strain that was on his mind. He grasped silently the minister’s outstretched hand, and the latter said, “ O, Mr. Netman, this is a dreadful thing that has happened.”

“ Terrible, Sir, terrible. I’m like a man beside myself at times. Thank God, though, I haven’t given up all hope. He helps me to stand it.— Sarah, get me my other boots, and a pair of mitts ; quick now, like a good maid ; I mustn’t wait a minute. The men are all ready.”

“ You’re not going without eating anything, surely, George ? ” said his wife.

“ Eating, my dear ? I can’t eat much, but I’ll

have a bite and a cup of tea, just to please you. The men have had theirs."

"Where are you going, then, Skipper George?" said the minister.

"Down shore, Sir. The ice is well off, up here, but it's penned in down further, and, maybe, the lads got in somewhere between here and Clarke's Point. Anyhow, I've got a couple of cod-seine skiffs myself, and there are four other boats from the harbour, and we're going to try all along the shore if we can find any tidings of them. We'll get off to the edge of the ice, if there's no sign of them between here and the Point. Please God, we may find the poor fellows; but the ice ran out so fast that I'm terribly afraid they went too far, and are driven off. My poor boys, my poor boys! What did I let you go for? Good-bye, Mr. Fairbairn; you'll pray for us, I know. I'd be glad if you could stay in the house a little while after we go. My poor wife is almost broken-hearted, and I'm afraid of her giving way altogether when I leave. I didn't like to ask you while she was in the room."

"I'll stay a while, Mr. Netman, I'll stay a while. I'll send word home to Mrs. Fairbairn, so that she won't be uneasy."

"Thank you, Sir. Good-bye."

"I'll walk down to the stage with you, Skipper George, and see you off."

As the two went down to the stage together, the minister tried to give the poor stricken father a word of encouragement and hope, though inwardly his heart sank at the thought of the terrible danger of the missing young men. Unless they had already reached land, there was little hope of their ever being rescued, and he knew how true were Skipper George's words,—

"There's not much hope, Sir, unless they've already got ashore somewhere; but we'll do our best, and we won't give up what hope there is until we're obliged. If they haven't got ashore, they may get to the weather edge of the ice; and if we can get out to it, there's a bare chance still of our finding them. The wind is dropping a goodish bit already, and isn't quite as much off-shore as it was a couple of hours ago."

The rest of the crew were already aboard the skiff, which lay tossing at the stage-head, and the light of half-a-dozen lanterns showed a score or two of persons assembled to see them off. Poor old Uncle Tommy was there, his white hair blowing about, and his weather-beaten and

sorrow-pinched face looking more wrinkled than ever.

"God bless 'ee, Skipper George," he cried, as the latter stepped on board the boat, and took the steering-oar. "God grant you may find 'em and bring 'em back! I know you'll do it, if you can. The wind's droppin', thank the Lord."

"Good-bye, Uncle Tommy. Don't stop praying for us. We'll do all we can.—Cast off there, Rob. Now, boys, give way; we must catch up to the other boats before they get outside."

Many a word of cheer and many a fervent "God be with you" followed the boat as she swiftly disappeared in the darkness, and then the people went back quickly to their homes.

Mr. Fairbairn lingered behind after the others had gone, listening to the beat of the oars as the boat rowed out to the harbour mouth. The snow squalls had ceased, but the night was pitch dark, and the wind, though not nearly so strong as it had been, was still blowing freshly. The water was ebbing and flowing noisily on the beach, and gurgling around the posts on which the stage was built, while out in the harbour it was beating with a continuous lap—lap—lap against the

sides of the schooners, anchored at their winter moorings. The lights in the fishermen's houses seemed to twinkle like so many stars, while, here and there, a moving flash showed where lanterns were being used on the stages. It was very solemn and still—a striking contrast to the scene of the preceding day, when he had had the chat on the beach with Uncle Tommy. Then, a broad white field had stretched for miles into the offing, traversed by busy feet, as safely as if a part of solid land; now not a fragment of ice was to be seen: then, the joyous hum of active and eager life filled the air; now it was dreary and dark, as with the shadow of death. How night and sorrow make it seem strange that there ever could have been day and joy! Yesterday now seemed years ago, so far away and shadowy and dream-like and unreal. The minister's heart was full as he stood there alone. He could still hear the measured rhythm of the oars of the receding boats throbbing distinctly through the air, and he listened till at length it grew more and more faint, and finally died away in the far distance. How would they come back? How would they come back? And, as the wind sighed over the hills, and whistled among the rigging of the

anchored schooners, his thoughts went out to the poor young fellows, at that very moment, it might be, in deadly peril on the treacherous ice, far out in the darkness of that lonely night.

When Mr. Fairbairn went back to the house, he found the large kitchen nearly full of people; for the neighbours had, as by one consent and bound by a common tie of interest and solicitude, clustered around those whose anxiety was naturally the greatest. Old Mrs. Netman sat still by the fireside, a little apart from all the rest, her hands folded quietly on her lap; and her face, slightly uplifted, bore an expression of rest, as with eyes closed, and lips every now and then tremulously whispering a prayer, she seemed oblivious of all that was passing around her. Skipper George's wife sat earnestly talking to a young woman who was weeping bitterly, and whom the minister recognised as the sister of Henry Burton, one of the missing men. Uncle Tommy was sitting not far from her, his hands clasped upon the handle of his walking-stick, and his head bent forward upon them. The others were sitting about the room silent, or conversing in subdued tones. The strain of a great suspense was visible on nearly every face, and a nervous

excitement that sought outlet in change of position or rapid speech.

"Dear friends," said the minister quietly, after a few minutes' conversation with the mistress of the house, "we cannot go and search for our dear missing ones, but we can do something else to help them and those who have gone to look for them. You remember that when Peter was in prison, and his life in danger, 'prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him,' and God heard and answered the prayer. Our loved ones are not beyond His help, neither are we beyond His sympathy and care. Has He not said, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me'? Has He not bidden us to cast our burden on Him, with the promise that He will sustain us? Let us ask our heavenly Father in this time of anxiety, if it be His will, to save our friends, and to give us strength and grace to say, 'Thy will be done,' whatever that will may be. Let us pray." And then in an earnest prayer, emphasised by the sobs and ejaculations of the little company, Mr. Fairbairn commended the missing ones to God, praying that, if it were His will, they might reach their homes again; that those who had gone to seek

them might be under Divine guidance and care ;
and that those left in such terrible anxiety might
have patience and trust to bear the present burden,
and to meet the future, whatever it might bring
forth to them. Then, rising, he gave out the well-
known hymn commencing,

“Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands.
To His sure truth and tender care,
Who heaven and earth commands ;”

and with full hearts and broken voices they sang
it through.

“Will two of you now lead us in prayer ?” said
the minister, and they knelt again. For a moment or
two there was silence, and then a tremulous voice,
broken by frequent sobs, was lifted up in prayer.
It was Uncle Tommy’s. “O blessed Lord,” he
cried, “Thou art the Hearer and the Answerer of
prayer. Thou hast told us that, like as a father
pitieth his chil’ern, so th’ Lord pitiet’ them that
fear Him. Thou seest us here. Thou knowest
what we want. Save the poor boys out on the
ice, blessed Lord. Save ’em from bein’ blown off,
if it please Thee. Show ’em how to git to land.
Make the dark night bright before ’em. Give

'em courage, Lord. Give 'em faith, Help 'em to look to Thee. An', O Lord, bless them that's gone to look for 'em. Do Thou go wi' 'em. Do Thou lead 'em to th' right place an' at the right time. O Father, be Thou their Pilot. May they come back safe. May they come back bringin' the lost ones wi' 'em, safe and sound. But if not, O our heavenly Father, if not"—here the poor old man's voice broke almost completely down—"help us to say, 'Thy will be done ;' help us to see that Thy will is best, and to leave it all wi' Thee."

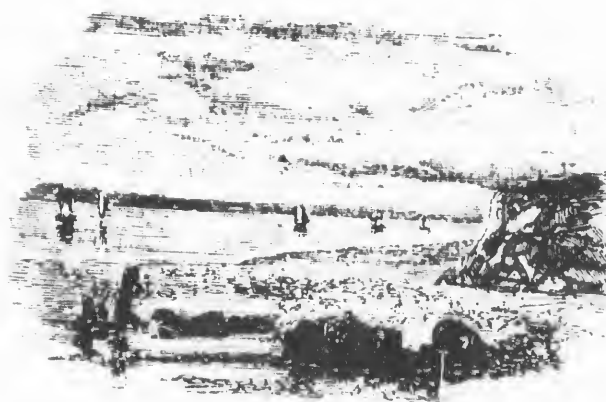
The next to pray was Mrs. Netman, and a thrill of sympathy ran through the room, as her voice broke the stillness that followed Uncle Tommy's prayer : "Heavenly Father, I plead with Thee for my children. O take them not from me, if it please Thee. Thou knowest that I love them. Thou knowest how I love them. They are Thine, blessed Lord. I have given them to Thee ; Thou knowest I have, and I thank Thee that I know Thou hast accepted the offering. I have sought to train them for Thee, for Thy service. Shall their young lives be cut short ? Shall they fail of the promise of which they were so full ? God forbid. Father, forbid. Restore them, if it please

Thee. May those who are seeking them find them, and bring them home in safety. Father, not my will be done, but Thine : Thy will of infinite tenderness and wisdom. Thy will be done. Help me to say it, whatever happens ; help us all to say it. Thou knowest, Lord, how hard it is to say it when the cup is bitter ; but help us to say it, now and always." As the mother's voice, full of the intense longing and pathos of her anxiety and love, rose and fell, in the simple petitions of her prayer, the effect was indescribable ; and after she had ceased the people still remained upon their knees, bowed in silence before God, until, at length, the minister began the hymn, " Thy will be done," and, still kneeling, the people prayed rather than sang the sweet and solemn words :—

" O teach me from my heart to say,
 ' Thy will be done ! ' "

Other prayers followed, and for nearly two hours the sound of prayer and praise went up from that company of anxious men and women. Then, with whispered words of sympathy and cheer to those chiefly interested, they dispersed, one by one, until at length only Uncle Tommy and Mary Burton remained. For these as for the Netmans

sleep was of course out of the question, and they had agreed to spend the night together. Mr. Fairbairn too remained, to stay up with them, feeling that his place was with these anxious ones in their hour of terrible suspense.



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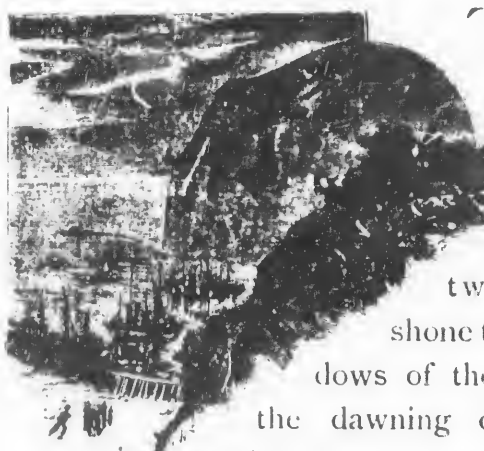
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CHAPTER VII.

"AT EVENING TIME IT SHALL BE LIGHT."

"And the night shall be full of music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

LONGFELLOW.



THERE was not much sleep in the settlement that night. The twinkling lights shone through the windows of the cottages, until the dawning of another day rendered them unnecessary ; and as the day advanced, the men gathered in knots on the hills which commanded the best view of the bay, and peered earnestly through the morning mist, to catch a glimpse of the returning boats.

Not a vestige of ice was in sight, though, away on the horizon, the dreamy light of the "ice-glim" in the sky showed that the white field was just beyond its rim. Hour after hour passed away; the morning was succeeded by noon, and yet no stroke of work was done in the little harbour. The men could not work, for the strain of a terrible uncertainty unnerved them, and made them restless. From point to point they wandered, singly or in groups, now scanning the hazy horizon, now speculating as to the whereabouts of the boats, and the chances of their success, and anon commiserating their missing neighbours, and recalling their appearance and conversation when they had last seen them, or recounting reminiscences of similar accidents of which they had heard or with which they had themselves been connected.

Slowly the hours of the day dragged on, the suspense of all becoming every hour more painful, and the strain on those chiefly interested almost agonising in its intensity. At length, just as the night came on, a boat was seen rounding the most distant point down shore, quickly followed by another and another. The news flew rapidly, "The boats are coming! The boats are

coming!" and in a few minutes the whole population of the village was clustered on the high lands, watching the boats as they were rowed up the shore. Darkness closed in long before they reached the harbour mouth, and the people, hurrying from the hills, crowded the beach and the stages, to greet them on arrival and learn the tidings they were bringing. By-and-by, the oar-strokes, plainly heard, told that they had entered the Narrows, and as the splash, splash of the steady pulls came closer and closer, the eagerness and suspense became terrible. Here, indeed, were the anxiously expected boats, but what news were they bringing? Was it life or death? O, the suspense of that awful moment! All were longing to know the truth, yet none durst ask. And thus, amidst absolute silence, the boats came slowly on. At length a voice broke the stillness. It was Mr. Fairbairn's, and strangely tremulous and unnatural it sounded:

"Is that you, Skipper George?"

"Yes, Sir." The answer came promptly through the darkness.

There was a pause, and it seemed to the minister that his heart-beats were as loud as the sound of his voice, as he asked,

"Have you found them?"

Again there was a pause—very long it seemed to the listeners—and then the reply in broken tones,

"All found, Sir, thank the good Lord."

The pent-up feelings of the people could no longer be restrained. Some shouted, some cheered, some laughed hysterically, while not a few, men as well as women, burst into tears and wept like children.

Meanwhile the boats had reached the stage, and the lights of a score of lanterns flashed down upon them. Ay, there they were, poor fellows, haggard-looking and cold, it was true, as they lay wrapped up in the blankets which their finders had brought with them, but safe and sound, there was no doubt of that. In a few minutes the boats were made fast and the missing men restored to their friends on the stage. Who can describe that meeting—the joy that was almost too great for expression, the certainty that seemed almost impossible of realisation, the excitement and agitation, intensified by the vigils of the past night and the strain of the anxious, dreary day that was closing so happily? Who can picture that mother receiving back as from the grave her two

noble boys, or that aged patriarch clasping his son to his breast, or that sister sobbing out her gratitude and love as she hung on the shoulder of her only brother, almost mourned as dead, and now restored alive and well ?

"Friends," said Mr. Fairbairn, "let us sing the Doxology," and instantly every head was bared and every voice was raised as the grand and appropriate outburst of praise rolled up to heaven. Never more fittingly, and never perhaps more sincerely, did those words go up from human hearts. Again and again they sang them, and the surrounding hills caught the echoes and redoubled them, until the very night itself seemed vocal with their song of thankfulness.

"Yes, Sir," said Skipper George, as he and the minister sat together, the following day, in close converse on the events of the rescue ; "yes, Sir, we had, you may depend on it, a pretty hard time of it. After we rowed out o' harbour that night, we kept well in by the land, following the windings of the shore, and especially careful to examine the headlands and to inquire at the settlements as we went along. But we couldn't see or hear anything of them at all, and the people down

shore didn't give us much hope, for the ice had run off very fast, and hadn't penned in, as we had hoped. However, we kept on, and by daylight were down at the Point, but without any success. One thing we were now sure of, they hadn't got to land anywhere this side of the Point, and we knew 'twas no use trying the other side, as the bay opens out wide immediately.

"We felt pretty well disheartened, I assure you, Sir, but we didn't think of giving up the search yet. So I called the other boats up close, and I told them we'd row out to the ice, and that my boat would take the farthest off place, each boat to make the edge of the ice a mile or two from the rest so as to search the whole line of it as closely and as quickly as we could. I gave 'em their bearings and we started. They all got to the edge some time before we did, for I was determined to keep as far out as possible. About an hour and a half's smart pulling took us to the edge, and we at once scattered a bit and began our search. The ice was pretty loose, though not as much so as I had feared from the way the wind blew the night before, and the 'swell that was heaving among it.

"For about two hours my crew worked about,

going out as far as we dared from the boat, and keeping within hailing distance of one another, for the ice was bad and heavy. At last I heard a shout from one of the men, and when I got to him I found he had in his hand a piece of cloth all covered with blood, which I recognised at once as a bit of the sleeve-waistcoat belonging to my boy, little Jack. He had found it about half a mile to the north, he told us, and there was a good deal of blood on the ice where he found it, and marks of blood leading south and west, as if the person bleeding had gone in that direction. My heart gave a great throb as I saw that bit of blood-stained cloth, Sir, and I began to imagine all sorts of terrible things ; and yet I thanked God that we had a clue, trifling as it was, to the whereabouts of the poor lads, and I knew that, after all, the blood might mean nothing worse than a cut hand ; so I told the men to scatter again, and we went on in the direction the traces showed.

"We soon lost the tracks, but we kept on, and by-and-by got among some heavy ice. I suppose an hour passed, and still no sign of them, when all at once I heard a shout of 'Father!' and there was my boy, William, not a hundred yards away, on the top of a big hummock of ice. In a few

minutes more I was beside him, and there, behind the hummock, was a sight I'll never forget. Poor little Jack, white as a corpse, was lying with his head on Dick Tuffin's shoulder, and Harry Burton was busy rubbing his forehead with snow. The poor little chap had fainted when he heard William call out 'Father!' and knew that I was coming. As I bent over him he came to, and put his arms round my neck and cried.

" 'It's all right now, father ; I'll soon be able to get up and go home,' he said, after the first outburst was over. It seems that poor Jack was the principal cause of their being blown off. He had managed to give his leg an ugly gash when sculpting a seal late in the afternoon, and just as they were thinking of starting, and it bled so much that the poor boy got weak, and couldn't get along fast. Then William told the others to go ahead, and he'd hold on with Jack ; but the others wouldn't leave them, and so they all got drove off together.

" Poor fellows ! they had an awful time of it. William told me the grinding of the ice and the howling of the wind were fearful during the first part of the night. They were so near the weather edge that it was packed pretty tight, so they were

able to move about and keep themselves warm, and ever since daylight they had been on the tramp, keeping near the edge, and moving to windward, in the bare hope that some one might rescue them. Will tells me they never gave up hope, and poor little Jack was the pluckiest of the lot, always with a merry laugh and a cheery word of hope that help was sure to come. Come in and see the boys, Sir. They're smart to-day."





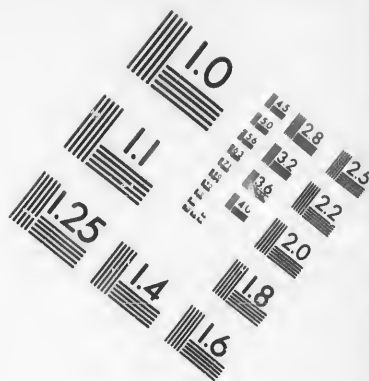
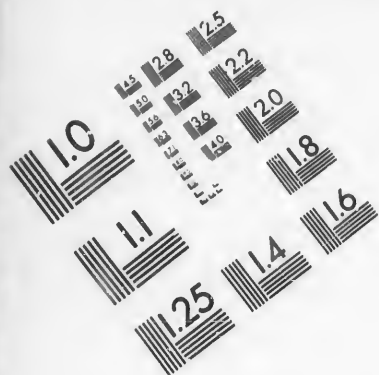
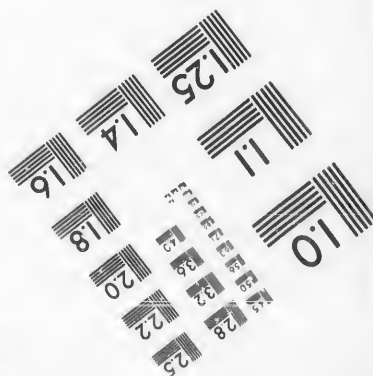
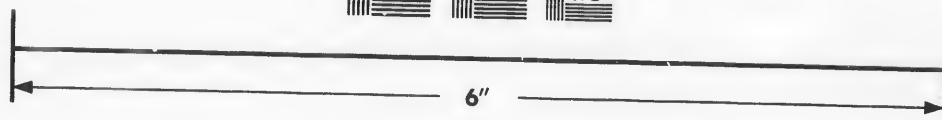
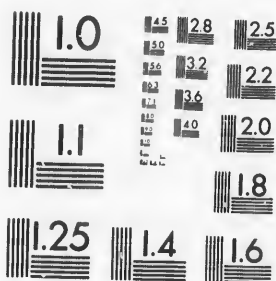


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CHAPTER VIII.

THE REVIVAL.

"He is here! His loving voice
Hath reached thee, though so far away!
He is waiting to rejoice,
O wandering one, o'er thee to-day;
Waiting, waiting to bestow
His perfect pardon full and free;
Waiting, waiting till thou know
His wealth of love for thee, for thee!"

F. R. HAVERGAL.



ON the Sunday morning following the startling episode related in the last chapter, the little church at Caplin Bight was filled to overflowing. It was known that Mr. Fairbairn was going to make special allusion to the incident; for the service had been announced, at the Friday evening

prayer-meeting, as a thanksgiving service, and this had helped to swell the congregation. As the groups of men gathered about the doors outside before the service—an out-port custom far from conducive to spirituality of thought or converse—there was a quietness about their demeanour, and an earnestness in their tones, as they talked of the rescue and the rescued, which showed them to be deeply touched by the events of the week. When Mr. Fairbairn arose to give out the opening hymn, he was struck at once with this quiet and intense feeling in the congregation. There sat Skipper George on the right side under the gallery, and Mrs. Netman with her rescued boys, one on each side of her. In the middle row of pews, not far from the pulpit, the snowy head of Uncle Tommy met his eye, with his stalwart son safe and sound beside him; and in the next pew, Henry Burton and his sister Mary. There was a sympathetic moisture in the minister's eyes, and a tremor of emotion in his voice, as he gave out the hymn beginning :

“ God of my life, Whose gracious power
Through varied deaths my soul hath led,
Or turned aside the fatal hour,
Or lifted up my sinking head ; ”

and as the joyous strains rang through the building, the hearts of the people seemed to go out to God in the earnestness of their song. All through the prayer and the lessons the same strong feeling was evident; and when the text was read, "T'en they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses," Mr. Fairbairn felt at once that strange, subtle influence which comes only from an audience whose attention is concentrated and whose emotion is quickened by intense interest in the speaker's theme. Every eye was fixed upon the preacher as he proceeded, and as, after dwelling upon the goodness of the heavenly Father, and the readiness and mercy with which He hears and answers the prayer of those in trouble, applying it to the present instance, and to the experience of his hearers in similar circumstances in the past, he wound up with an appeal to them to let their gratitude take practical shape in lives of living obedience, he felt in his heart that the message had gone home.

At the evening service the place was crowded, and the same intense and pent-up feeling manifest from the very outset. The text was, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" and the theme, always appropriate,

but now made much more effective by the week's events, kindled the hearts of both minister and hearers. Never had Mr. Fairbairn felt such an inspiration, never had his heart been so full of the Divine love, or his lips so touched with the hallowed fire of spiritual energy. It seemed to him as though heart and brain and tongue were being used directly by God, so strong was the impulse that swayed him, so apart from himself the power which gave him fulness of thought and fluency of speech. With tears pouring over his cheeks, his voice high-pitched in nervous eagerness, his frame thrilling with the strong tide of emotion that swept him along, he dilated upon the saving love of God in Christ, and pressed the subject home upon his hearers. An intense love for his people possessed him, an intense longing for their salvation agonised his spirit. Leaning over the desk, with outstretched hands and broken voice, he besought them to be reconciled to God. The common-place conventionalisms of the pulpit were forgotten; gesture, voice, manner were the exponents not of trained habit, but of the sudden, startling, supernatural quickening of knowledge, sympathy, and affection for God and souls. "Grotesque," perhaps the cold critic would style that

strong emotion, those quickly changing movements, that rapid, excited pleading. Grotesque, indeed, as earnestness is ever, perforce, grotesque to him who knows not its cause, or fails to understand the reason for it. To Harry Fairbairn, leaning there over the homely little pulpit, had come that same Pentecostal chrism, which, issuing in the intense preaching of Peter and the rest, had led naturally enough to the cynic's sneer, "These men are full of new wine!" There were no cynics, however, in that little company; the earnestness of the preacher was almost equalled by the earnestness of his hearers; and as he warmed with his subject, a wave of spiritual influence passed over the people, and they swayed beneath its impulse as trees sway beneath the breeze of summer.

It was, after all, but the culmination of efforts made through months of prayer and strong entreaty; the providential crisis after prolonged and, in some cases, poignant mental debate and spiritual unrest. Prayer had been long offered, it was now to be answered; the seed had been long sowing, it was now time for the joy of harvest. The old men, who had been expecting this, rejoiced as they noted the preacher's

kindling eye and felt the magnetic thrill of his eager pleadings. In almost every pew, the awe-stricken look, the bowed head, or the unchecked tear revealed the emotion of the listeners. Yet all was still, as if the very breath was held, in that absorbed attention with which they bent forward to catch the rapidly uttered words. "Remember, beloved," cried the impassioned speaker, "remember how we felt last week. Remember our anxiety, our agony of solicitude for our loved ones, lost in the storm and darkness. Lost, lost, lost! How keenly we felt it! How our imagination pictured the awfulness of their situation! How we shuddered over the terrible risk of their never being found! How we rejoiced at the strength and knowledge and courage and determination of those who went to seek and to save them! How our hearts went out to God in gratitude when they were brought back safe and sound! Did those fathers whose sons were lost feel deeply? Ay, the strong men wept like women, their hearts were full, their eyes o'erflowed! And doth not God feel, think you, for those in spiritual danger, His children entrapped, estrayed, endangered? Ah, yes, with infinite solicitude and compassionate anxiety our heavenly

Father yearns over His lost children, and seeks to save and to bring them home to Himself. Lost, lost, lost ! Lost to true self, lost to true happiness, lost to heaven, lost to God ! O the untold peril of a wandering soul—lost, lost—out upon the dark storm-swept seas of sin, in the night of prejudice and pride and passion ; starless, black, and hopeless ! No human heart can estimate the peril, no human hand can rescue from it. No help, no hope, no haven !

“ But stay. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He *is come*. Do you ask, as the Jews of old, ‘ Who is this Son of man ? ’ He is the incarnate God, the Substitute, the Saviour—‘ able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by Him.’ Able to save ! Willing to save ! Come to save ! Thank God, thank God. Ay, and to the uttermost ! No doubt of it, for He is God. The infinite possibilities of Godhead are in Him, the infinite merit of the High and Holy One is in His Atonement. He is come to save that which was lost. Beloved, were our friends who went out to seek their lost ones a few days ago, content with merely an effort, a single effort to reach those whom they sought ? You know they were not. What cared they for

trouble or toil? They searched diligently again and again. They called, if so be their voices might be heard by those astray. And Christ is come and is calling. Hark! He is here—in this church—at this moment. He is come to seek and to save the lost. Do ye not hear Him? Hist! Listen to the voice that was hushed in death at Calvary. He is calling His lost ones in this congregation. Do ye not hear Him, I say again, calling, calling now? Ah, yes, beloved, you hear Him some of you; I see it in your faces I hear it in your quick-drawn breath. Will ye not listen? Will ye not come to Him? Will ye not be saved? Will ye not? O will ye not?"

The preacher stopped, with hands outstretched, the tears coursing down his cheeks as he looked out over the people. The deepest silence prevailed, and an awe, as from a conviction of the unseen presence of the Saviour, rested upon the congregation. There was a pause; then a pew-door opened, and quietly, with head bowed down, Henry Burton, one of the rescued men, stepped down the aisle, and knelt at the communion-rail. In a moment he was followed by Richard Tuffin; and then another and another went forward, until the little rail was well-nigh filled. As Uncle Tommy

saw his son go forward, his shout of 'Glory be to God!' broke the spell which seemed to hold the congregation, and instantly cries of penitence on the one hand, and of the joy of fulfilled longing on the other, were heard all over the church. Without closing the service Mr. Fairbairn gave out the hymn, "Come to Jesus," and invited those who were anxious to be saved to come out boldly and decidedly for Christ. As the pathetic words of invitation rang through the church, one after another came to the rail or knelt in the nearest seats, and in the prayer-meeting which followed the sound of weeping penitence, followed by the shout and rapture of assured pardon, went up from many a heart. It was a sight to move the hardest. There were fathers rejoicing over their sons, brothers praying with sisters, mothers pointing their weeping children to the Cross. It was, indeed, a Bochim—a place of weeping. The state of nervous tension to which the people had been brought by the strain of their recent anxiety had, doubtless, much to do with this fact; the deep spiritual power leading to intense conviction of sin had, just as unquestionably, more. There was noise, doubtless, and apparent confusion; but it was the noise of earnestness, not of mere

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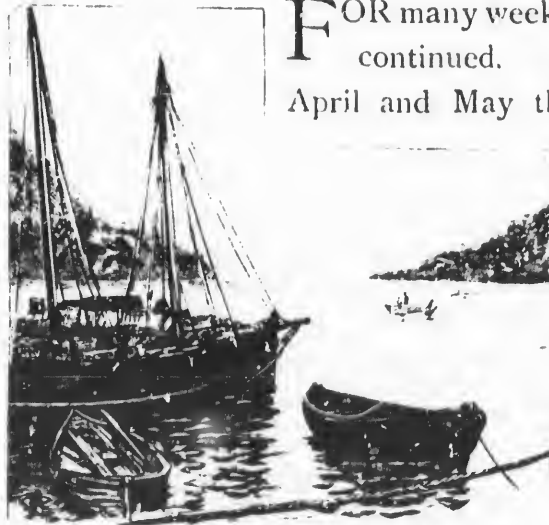
excitement. There was little to occasion comment, there was nothing to condemn. Calm and self-controlled, Mr. Fairbairn guided the earnestness and emotion of the people to secure the best results. He did not unduly check it; he did not allow it to degenerate into mere hysteric agony. He let the Lord do His own work, and the Lord was glorified and souls were saved. Years afterwards it was looked back to by the people not as "Mr. Fairbairn's revival," but as "the great revival," and the human instrument was forgotten in the honour of the Master Whom he had served.



CHAPTER IX.

TIMES OF REFRESHING.

"And while the spring airs trembled through the trees,
The gracious Wind that bloweth where it lists
Dispersed the fallacies, the world-breathed mists
That hid unseen realities. That Breeze
Unveiled the mysteries of hidden sin,
And let the all-searching Light flash startlingly within."
"Under His Shadow."



FOR many weeks the revival continued. All through April and May the meetings

were kept up every night, with unabated fervour and with un-failing success. True, it was the busy sea-

son, and the men were toiling through the long

spring days, tarring and painting their boats, mending and barking their nets and seines, and getting things generally in order for the approaching "voyage." Yet, night after night, the church was filled, and the sounds of prayer and praise swelled out through the open windows across the placid bight. Scarce a family in the settlement but had been visited by the gracious influences, in the conversion of one or more of its members ; scarce a heart but had felt, in some degree, the mysterious moving of the subtle spiritual energy, with which the very atmosphere seemed charged. In some homes, indeed, there was a complete change ; parents and children had all yielded, one by one, to the Divine call, had passed through the throes of spiritual awakening, and now rejoiced together in the common salvation. In others the prayers and efforts of years had at length been rewarded, and godly fathers and mothers looked with increased pride, and with something far more exultant than pride, upon strapping lads and comely lasses, born anew into spiritual, serious, and joyous vitality, and aflame with holy zeal in every good word and work.

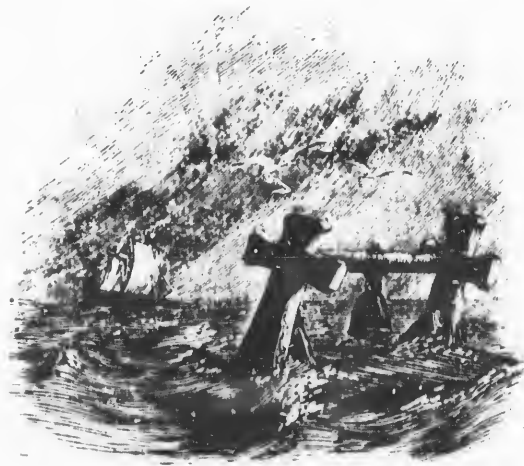
Not only among the grown-up people, however, did the revival influences spread ; large numbers of

the children of the Sabbath School were genuinely converted, and manifested the sincerity of their hearts, and the power of the spiritual life within them, by earnest and continued efforts for the salvation of their young companions and classmates. Many a night, while the elders were at the church, the children gathered in prayer-meetings, and even in class-meetings, by themselves, in one or other of the houses. Very touching indeed it was, as you passed some lowly cottage, to hear the clear treble of children's voices in "Jesus loves me," or "Come to Jesus," or the plaintive pleading of some youthful prayer-leader as he drew near to God; or, peeping in, to see a cluster of serious, earnest-faced little ones, listening to one of their own age, as he spoke of Jesus and His love. Morning, noon, and night the air was vocal with the sweet melodies and sweeter words of favourite hymns. The men sang them as they worked in their stages and about their boats, the women sang them as they pursued their household duties, the children sang them as they passed to and from the school, or gathered in play upon the beach or among the hills. The very blithesomeness of the springtide was intensified by the spiritual warmth

that filled the little community, and the commonplace round of its activities and interests was dignified and elevated by the Divine light that lay upon them, as the bit of broken glass is transfigured into more than diamond brilliancy by the magic touch of a stray sunbeam.

And not alone in Caplin Bight did the holy influence come down; the whole circuit, to its remotest preaching place, felt the quickening impulse of the wind that bloweth where it listeth, and, in every settlement, hearts "strangely warmed," and lives blessedly changed, testified clearly and unmistakably to the fact of birth from above. Nor was this all. Who that has laboured on the out-port circuits of Newfoundland has not been filled with amazement at the fluency and eloquence of speech, the clearness of idea, the fulness of insight, and the fervour and pathos of expression with which new converts, often utterly illiterate, and by nature modest and shrinking, are enabled to tell of their experience and to appeal to their unconverted friends? Who has not listened with awe as some humble pleader, prostrate before God, has led the congregation in prayer so simple and yet so powerful, so elevated in thought and so striking in phrase, as to be

noticeable under any circumstances ; remembering that the man to whom he was listening had had no teacher save the Spirit of God, and had been but a few days or hours before stolid, unspiritual, uncouth, and unholy ? And as these glorious testimonies were given, and these heaven-inspired prayers offered, in the cottage meetings and public gatherings all over the circuit, the minister rejoiced with that exquisite and unspeakable joy which none can realise save those privileged by the Master to be partakers with Him in the work and the reward of harvest.

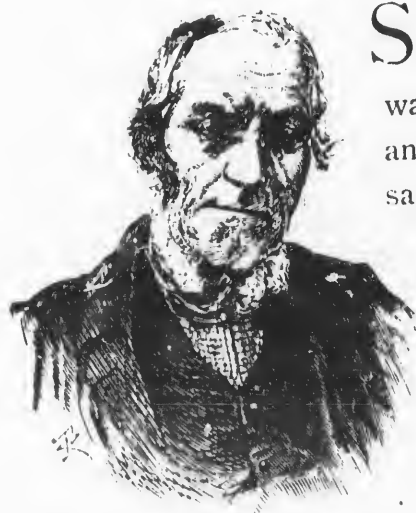


CHAPTER X.

UNCLE TOMMY WEIGHS ANCHOR.

"To die is gain."—ST. PAUL.

"The end of that man is peace."—DAVID.



SOON after the revival, Uncle Tommy was taken seriously ill, and evidently, as he said himself, "took for death." For a long time the old man had been failing, crippled with rheumatism, and shattered with the toil and exposure

of years of struggle as the bread-winner of a large family. The nervous tension when his son was blown off to sea, the excitement attendant upon

his rescue, and the joy of his subsequent conversion, had been too much for the enfeebled constitution of the old fisherman, and rapidly, yet gently, the silver cord was loosening. The quaint smile was still upon his face, and the sharp look lingered in the fast dimming eye, as Mr. Fairbairn entered his room one bright June morning. The sun was doing its best to enter through the small casement, and touched here and there the silvery locks upon the pillow, and the gnarled and wrinkled hands that lay folded upon the coverlet.

"Here I be, Sir," he said cheerily, after the first greetings were over, "out in the stream, all ready for the voyage, thank God, and only waitin' for the word to up anchor and be off. God have bin very good to me, Sir. I've had a long time on airth, and heaps o' blessin's. Bless His name, since I seen the state I was livin' in, and give Him my heart, I bin led along like a little child. An' now my dear boy's begun to serve Him, my last care is gone. Not but what I'd ha' bin glad to live a bit longer—but then, too, I'm glad to go. Seemin' to me, Sir, it's been like heaven in Caplin Bight these last few weeks!"

"It has indeed, Uncle Tommy," said the minister.

"It have, Sir, it have. Seemin' to me I won't be able to feel more joy or peace hardly up yonder. Sure I forgot, though; I'll see Jesus. That'll be different. That'll be more joy. Praise His name. I shall know Him by the prents o' the wounds in His hands. 'We shall see Him as He is,' the 'postle says—that manes wounds and all, I s'pose. An' I'll see my little girls that died when they were babies, over forty year ago—two of 'em. Will they be babies still, do 'ee think, Sir, or grewed out o' my knowledge?"

"I'm sure we'll know our loved ones in heaven, Uncle Tommy, though we cannot tell how they may have altered."

"Yes, Sir, I believe it. Since I bin lyin' here, I bin thinkin', thinkin', tarnin' over in my mind th' past o' my life. 'Tis wonderful, too, to think how, after seventy-three years o' knockin' about, afloat and ashore, hard put, often, an' wi' terrible narry 'scapes many times, here I be dyin' so quiet an' comfortable like. I told 'ee once how I was brought to God, Sir; I didn't tell 'ee, did I, of the time I was carried overboard wi' an anchor? No, I thought not. 'Twas near fifty year ago. I was shipped wi' a man called Clarke, in a small schooner. We'd bin to Twillingate for salt, I

mind, an' we was comin' home. It was blowin' heavy, an' we couldn't make the run, and had to go into a bight, a few miles down the shore, for the night. In beatin' in we mis-stayed in a terrible ugly spot, an' to keep her from goin' ashore the skipper shouted to let go the anchor. Somehow it fouled, and wouldn't start, and I got leanin' over the rail to try an' clear it, when, all of a sudden, it slipped round, the fluke hitched in my sleeve, and I was jerked overboard, and went down to bottom with it. By God's mercy, when it struck the bottom, the fluke was unhitched from my sleeve, and I rose to the top again, an' climbed on board; but it was an awful moment for me when I felt myself pulled down to bottom foul of an anchor, an' I'll never forget the look on the skipper's face when I got on board, or the words he said to me. 'Tuffin,' he says, 'there's no man livin' has had a narrier 'scape than you. If you sin agin' God after this, you're an ongrateful chap. 'Tis a warnin', lad, 'tis a warnin'.' Poor old skipper Joe Clarke put me in mind o' that many a time arterward; but I carried on much the same as afore fur a long time. Thank the Lord, I did turn to 'en afore it wuz too late, and He sove me. He didn't cast me away. He sove

me. Will 'ee sing a verse o' 'Happy Day,' Sir, if 'ee please?"

The minister at once started the familiar words, the weak, quavering voice of the old man joining in fervently. As the singing proceeded, Uncle Tommy's voice grew louder and louder, and his whole frame seemed to dilate with the consciousness of his acceptance with God. His countenance lost the haggard look of illness, and his eye was lit up as with inward fire. Raising himself suddenly to a sitting position, he clapped his hands together, as the chorus of the last verse was finished, and lifting his face to heaven, he began ecstasically to praise and glorify God for His goodness towards him.

"I can rej'ice in Him, I can rej'ice in His salvation," he cried. "I feel Him with me, He fills me with His love. Glory be to His holy name for ever! Glory, glory, glory!"

Judging the excitement to be too great for the old saint's exhausted frame, Mr. Fairbairn took up the Bible, lying beside the bed, and began to read the one hundred and third Psalm. As the quiet tones of his voice, reading the beautiful and familiar words, fell upon the old man's ear, he lay back upon his pillow, and, turning his radiant

face towards the minister, repeated the psalm, verse by verse, after him.

"Thank you, Sir," he said, as the reading closed ; "now pray with me."

Kneeling by the bedside, Mr. Fairbairn gave thanks to God for His goodness to His aged servant, and asked for grace and strength for him in his hours of weakness and approaching death. The old man responded feebly yet fervently all through, and as the prayer ended, he lay with closed eyes and parted lips, as though exhausted, just opening his eyes with a look of affection and gratitude as the minister bade him good-bye and promised to call again in the evening.

"What do you think of father, Sir?" said his son Richard, as he shook hands with the minister on leaving the house.

"Well, Richard," was the reply, "I don't think he can last much longer. He seems to have given way all at once. I should not be surprised if he goes in a day or two."

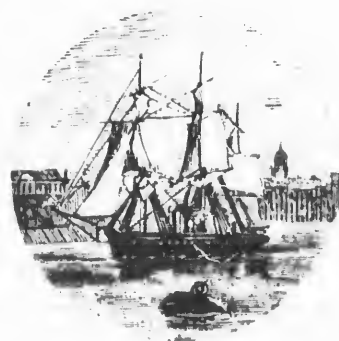
"That's just my thinking, Sir," said the young man. "He's been so happy this last week, prayin' and singin' and exhortin' everybody that comes to see him, that I don't think he can stand it much longer, for he's failin' very fast, as you say."

"Well, Richard, I believe the dear old man will soon be with Jesus. He was talking to me so triumphantly of seeing his Saviour just now. He will soon see Him face to face, and be with Him for ever. Let me know if there's any change. Good morning."

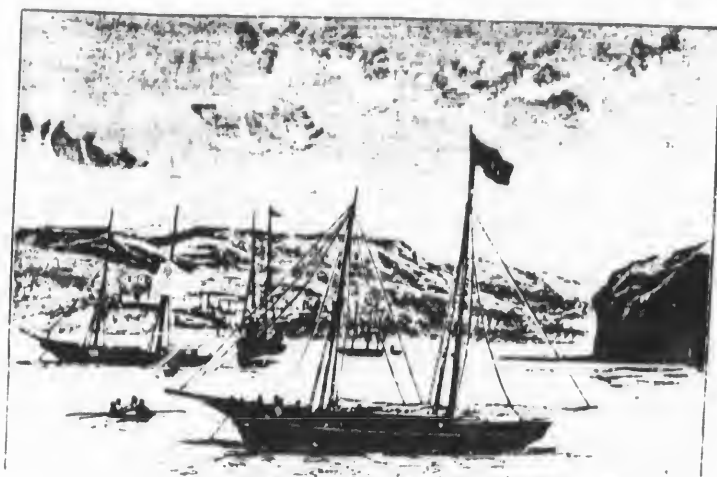
"Good morning, Sir. I will indeed, and thank you too."

Towards the close of the day a messenger came for the minister. Old Mr. Tuffin had had a change for the worse, and Richard would be glad if Mr. Fairbairn would come down; such was the substance of the message. In a few minutes the minister was in the sick room. A wonderful change had taken place in the brief interval. It seemed no longer the old familiar, friendly face, full of good nature and quaint fun, that lay there on the pillow, but a refined and sublime countenance, purified from earthliness of contour or expression, and glowing with a radiance that awed you as you gazed. The old man was unconscious, and the watchers told the minister that he had been wandering in his thoughts and speech all the afternoon. The sun was setting in glorious purple and golden clouds, and the room was flooded with its light. Quietly, the circle

around the bed watched the calm face that was already growing grey in death. Startlingly and with wonderful clearness came the sudden words, "Heave up the anchor, boys; we're all ready;" and then, "Starboard there, boy, steady; now we're off." The watchers looked at one another, and whispered, "He's wandering again;" and Mr. Fairbairn, seeing the face altering rapidly, said, "Beloved, let us commend our dear friend to God." Kneeling down amid many a sob, the minister prayed for an abundant entrance for the soul about to enter the haven of eternal rest, and as he prayed the change came. One glance around, one quiver of the lip, one soft, child-like breath, and then the stillness of a death-chamber. Uncle Tommy had weighed anchor, and sailed away beyond the sunset.



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CHAPTER XI.

SKIPPER GEORGE HOLDS SERVICE ABOARD.

"All the storms will soon be over,
Soon we'll anchor in the harbour ;
We are out on an ocean sailing,
To our home beyond the tide."

"Home Beyond."

"Where there's no more 'Topsail haul,'
And there's no more 'Hard-a-lee.'"

Sea Song.

SKIPPER GEORGE NETMAN'S schooner, the *Foam-Crest*, or, as the fishermen generally called her, the *Cres'*, lay at anchor one bright September Sunday morning in the harbour at

Grady, Labrador. It had been, as the fishermen say, "a middlin' good v'yage" that summer, and the schooner was well filled with fish, and bound home. The hard work of the Labrador fishery, with its days of unceasing toil, and its nights of broken rest, was over for another season, and as the men leaned over the bulwarks they chatted freely and rejoicingly at the prospect of being home "afore next Sunday."

At Labrador the winter sets in very early, and already there was snow on the high lands in the neighbourhood, and a slight coating of "sish" or ice-scum on the harbour, which the bright sun had not yet quite dissipated. Several schooners, bound home like the *Cres'*, were at anchor at short distances from her, and through the sharp, still morning air there came, ever and anon, the murmur of conversation or the sound of whistling or of singing.

"'Most time for pr'yers, bain't it?" said one of the men.

"Yes, 'tis," said another. "You'll have the skipper on deck d'rectly, singin' out to h'ist the flag."

"Wonder if any o' them schooners is goin' to have pr'yers aboard," said the first speaker.

"Don't know any of 'em," was the response ;
"I bin tryin' to see if I could make out where
they belongs to. They're all strangers ; though
seemin' to me I've seen that far-off one there,
painted green with a white stripe, somewhere
about Twillingate."

"So 've I," said another ; "if I bain't mistaken,
that's Skipper Jimmy Youngs's craft, from the
Back Harbour o' Twillingate, and he's a great
man for pr'yers, same as our own. Ah, here's
the skipper comin' on deck. We'll have the
word now, I s'pose."

"Good morning, boys," said Mr. Netman.
"I'm glad we've got a fine Sunday. Tom, run
up the flag there, and let's show our colours. Do
you know any o' those schooners, boys ?"

"We was just sayin', Sir, that they seem to be
strangers mostly, though Jack thinks that green
one with the white stripe is a Twillingate craft."

"Which one ? O, yes ; Jack is right, that is
James Youngs's new schooner. A couple of you
take the punt, and row off, will you, and tell him
that I'd be glad if he'd come over, and we'll have
service on our schooner. You might go round
and tell the men on the other craft, too. There's
plenty o' time."

In a few minutes the punt was off on her mission, and the flag floating at the main-truck announced to all who saw it the proposed gathering for worship. It was a large white flag, with the word BETHEL in red letters upon it---a present from Mrs. Fairbairn to Skipper George, and highly prized by both him and his crew; and on every Sabbath during the summer it had spoken out silently yet clearly the principles and practices on board the *Cres'*, and invited all who saw it to come aboard for worship.

Once, indeed, the Labrador voyage was a constant scene of Sabbath-breaking and sin, and men acted almost universally as if there were no God, and no obligations north of the Straits of Belle Isle; but, for many years, that has been greatly changed, and to-day, thanks mainly to the faithfulness of Methodist preachers, and the leavening of the people with Methodist doctrine, there are few harbours on all the Labrador coast in which you will not find, as the Sabbath-day comes round, one or more schooners flying the Bethel flag, and many earnest men, able and willing to "hold service," and gather their comrades and neighbours together for prayer.

In a half-hour or so after the hoisting of the

flag, quite a goodly congregation, each schooner in the harbour furnishing its quota, had assembled on board the *Cres'*, and the somewhat small cabin was crowded to excess. It was an interesting sight, too—that company of strong, hardy men in their rough garb, clean and tidy as they could make themselves, and bronzed and roughened from exposure to sun and storm.

There was a certain amount of fun and mischief half-repressed in the eyes of some of the younger men and lads, proceeding, however, rather from the exultation of relief from work than from irreverence or levity; but the older men sat there with a serene seriousness upon their faces that betokened an intense interest in and enjoyment of the exercises of the hour; and a quiet solemnity rested upon all the faces as Skipper George gave out the first hymn:

"O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"

How they sang it—to be sure! The tune was some old-fashioned one, full of grace-notes and repeats, that had filtered down through years of congregational singing, gaining in queerness by the filtering, until it now contained notes and

repeats that would have astounded the original composer ; but there was a swing in its chorus-like repetitions that made it a great favourite with the hearty singers, and it rolled and swelled and reverberated around the cabin and up through the companion-way—a volume of rough but soul-stirring melody.

After the singing came an earnest prayer, emphasised by loud amens and expressions of assent from the listeners, and then Skipper George opened the Bible and read the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. As he came to the words, "*I pray for them,*" he stopped suddenly, and resting the Bible on the table before him, he said : " Friends, I'm thinkin' of something that happened four years ago this very fall. We were comin' from St. John's to Caplin Bight in Green Bay, with our winter's provisions, in the month of November, just the first week in November it was. The sky looked ugly when we left, but we were anxious to get home ; so we started with a light, southerly wind, about one o'clock in the day, and before night we got a good piece on our way. Just before nightfall the wind came more eastern, and it set in a nasty drizzle, but I thought we'd get to Seldom-Come-By before the

weather set in ; for I could see very well that we were in for a breeze from the north-east, and some real dirty weather. So we pressed on as well as we could with the scant wind, all through the night. Towards morning I saw 'twas getting thick o' fog, and the wind was getting more ahead, an' the sea rising very fast.

"How's'ever, I knew I'd set my course all right, and that we hadn't run far enough yet to be in any danger from the land ; so we kept on, just dodging along nearly head to wind. Well, so the day passed, wind and sea both rising, and fog as thick as I ever saw it. Night was coming on again, and I knew we must be in a ticklish place, but all we could do was to keep her head to it, and make all as snug as possible ; so I had everything settled away nicely, and prepared for a bad night. My wife and a couple of other women were in the cabin, and I battened down the hatch and fastened everything up securely. The sea was running very high, making a clean breach over her from stem to stern sometimes, and the wind was so high that we were reefed down pretty close, I tell you ; just enough canvas on to give her steerage-way. I stationed the men on the bows and amidships, to keep as good a look-out as they could,

and to listen for the 'rote' of the breakers, for I felt sure we must be drifting near dangerous ground ; and I took the helm myself.

"That was an awful night. Hardly one of us stirred for hours, myself at the wheel, and the men with their eyes fixed on the darkness, and their ears strained to catch the 'rote.' The noise of the wind and sea was deafening, and we were drenched and blinded by the seas that constantly swept over us. Well, to come to my point. As I stood there at the wheel all through the night, I could hear my wife and some of the other women in the cabin below us, praying that God, in His mercy, would deliver us from our danger. Hour after hour they prayed, O, such prayers ! and I listened as I stood at the wheel, and the strength of those prayers seemed to come into my hands and my heart. Then sometimes they'd sing :

" 'Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
He gently clears thy way ;'

or,

" 'Steady, O pilot, stand firm at the wheel !
Steady, we soon shall outweather the gale ;'

or some other encouraging hymn that sent life into me, as I stood there, almost numb with the cold, and expecting every minute to hear the cry

of 'Breakers !' and, perhaps, be dashed to pieces in an hour. How I thanked God for those prayers, and how, by-and-by, the faith of those women seemed to kindle my own, and to make me feel that all would be right ! And then this very verse came into my mind, 'I pray for them,' and I thought of Jesus with His disciples in the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and how easy it was for Him to bring us safe through. 'I pray for them ;' —it came to me with such comfort. I, His child, in danger, and He, knowing it, and praying for me. And I gripped the wheel all the tighter as I thought of it, and thanked my God for the assurance of His love and care.

"Well, towards morning the wind veered a little and dropped, and the fog cleared up somewhat ; and by daylight it was blowing just a light breeze from about west-nor'-west, and quite clear, so that we could see where we were. There was the land on the port bow, about a quarter of a mile off, and one long line of foaming breakers for miles ; and we must have drifted in the night along the very worst part of the Straight Shore, and I needn't tell you, friends, what that place is like in a gale of wind and heavy sea. We must have drifted close along by the rocks on that

awful lee shore ; and how we scraped along, as I may say, without touching them is more than I can tell. I believe there wasn't a minute that night, hardly, but we were in instant danger ; but out of it all the good hand of God brought us, and I never read the verse since, or think of it, without that scene coming up to me.

"Dear friends, we need the prayer of Jesus, in the struggle of life, always, and, thank God, we have it. 'I pray for them,' He says ; and if we are His, that prayer goes to God morning, noon, and night, for our well-being, our guidance, and our deliverance, in storm or calm, on sea or land. We're homeward bound to-day—to our earthly homes—and we've yet many a mile of sea to get to them, and many a rock and ugly bit of coast to keep clear of ; but, 'I pray for them,' He says, and if we trust Him it will all be right, never fear. An' some of us are homeward bound for heaven, thank God ; and, though 'tis often 'hard toiling to make the blest shore,' as the hymn says, yet we shall cast anchor there some day, never fear, if we are faithful, for He's praying for us, and the Father hears Him always.

"Yes, friends, we are all bound home for Newfoundland, but are we all bound home to

heaven? P'raps not. P'raps there are some of us that hope to get there without Jesus. Well, friends, we won't. We won't. We'll drive on the lee shores of sin and be lost, unless we have Christ as our Saviour. 'I pray for them;' why, there isn't a man in this cabin that Jesus isn't praying for—not one. If we're His, He is praying that we may be kept from the evil one; and if we are not His, He is praying, 'Spare him yet another year.' He's prayed that for some of us perhaps a good many years, and we've been kept along, kept along, from year to year, just by the prayer of our loving, long-suffering Saviour. What is it to be, friends,—the harbour or the lee shore? Shall we work along with Jesus and let Him help us, or shall we baffle Him and all His love and longing and power to save us? 'Tis for us to settle; 'tis for us to settle. May we all settle it to-day."

A deep seriousness rested upon the faces of the little company during the Skipper's short address, and the stillness showed how close was the attention with which he was heard. The half-dozen prayers which followed were intensely earnest, and full of spiritual energy and touching though homely pathos; and when the meeting

was over, and the men were moving off in their punts to their respective vessels, it was evident, from the absence of the usual chatter and banter, and the almost universal silence which prevailed, how deep were the impressions that had been made, and how solemn the feelings which the service had evoked.

"Well, Skipper Netman," said one old man, as he was leaving the *Cres*', "I can only love and t'ank 'ee for the word you give us this mornin'. It did my old heart good. I bin beatin' about a good many year, but I'm bound home, t'ank God, and I know Jesus is prayin' and lookin' out for me yonder. I won't be able to git over to prayer meetin' to-night, so I'll bid 'ee 'Good-bye,' and if we never meet here agen, I hope we'll anchor together in the harbour above."

Kind reader mine, we, too, part here. These "short and simple annals of the poor" must now come to a close. Possibly we may meet again; just as possibly we may not. In any case, I must now say "Good-bye," and, in the parting words of the old fisherman, "I hope we'll anchor together in the harbour above."

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