

THE PHANTOM ARMY.

And I saw a phantom army come, With never a sound of life or drum, But keeping step to a muffled hum...

And so all night marched the nation's dead, With never a banner above them spread, No sign save the bare, uncovered head...

A DOUBLE RESCUE.

A milk white beach of coral sand, on which were strung thousands of exquisite shells and strange sponge forms.

Mingled with the salt breath of the sea was a faint odor from spathes of corn colored blossoms high up among the leaf crowns.

On one of them, turned on end, sat a boy wearing a broad brimmed, high crowned hat of palm-leaf braid.

His face, generally bright and happy, was clouded as he sat, with elbows on his knees, resting his chin in his hands and gazing out over the glistening water.

The month was March, and the beach was that of one of those low cut, fertile Florida keys that form the southernmost limit of the United States territory.

The boy was John Albury, commonly called Grit, to distinguish him from the many other John Alburys of that region.

The schooner was the Polyanthus, formerly owned by Grit's father, who had been lost at sea the autumn before in a boat belonging to a neighbor.

For many years, while he was a widower, Mr. Albury had only occupied his home on the key at long intervals, spending most of the time with his boy and girl, Grit and Matey, on board the Polyanthus wrecking, sponging, fishing, while waiting for his cocoon grove to come into bearing, and, as he finally hoped, to yield him an income.

The life proved a very happy one for all three, and it was a sad day for the children when it was ended by the appearance of a stepmother, who, coming from inland on the mainland, had no knowledge of her love for boats or the water.

When the father was lost at sea in the dreadful hurricane that nearly swept away their home as well, Mrs. Albury's aversion to boats became so bitter that she would sell the Polyanthus to the first person who would offer \$100 for her.

"But, mother, \$100 is a ridiculous price for a fine boat like the Poly," urged Grit. "She can make that in a single month."

"She never has since I have known anything about her," replied Mrs. Albury.

"No, for she hasn't had a chance. You just let me take her, and I'll show you how much she can make."

"And get drowned like your poor father and leave me and Matey to tend the crop. No, indeed, sir! You are too valuable to waste that way. I need you ashore, and so do the tomatoes. They'd bring in more money than any boat that ever was built; you see if they don't. I shouldn't be surprised if we made all of \$900 out of the crop this year and twice that much after we get all of the land cleared and planted."

"But boats can make as much as that, mother, and more too. Why, at a wreck!"

"Nonsense! There aren't any wrecks nowadays, and if there were what could a boy like you do at one! No, sir; you stick to tomatoes. They're safe and sure, and I'll put temptation out of

your way by selling that boat first chance I get. You'll thank me for it in the end, see if you don't."

Now, the fatal day had nearly arrived. A man in Key West had sent word that he was coming to look at the Polyanthus and would probably buy her if she proved as represented. He might appear at any moment, and that was the reason why Grit Albury sat gazing sadly at the dear boat on that glorious March afternoon.

As the boy slowly rose to return to his work there came a sound of flying feet, and Matey's voice was heard, calling in joyous tones:

"Grit! Oh, Grit! Mother wants you to catch her a mess of fish and says I can go with you."

The lad only answered: "All right, sister. Come along," but a sudden recollection, that he did not put into words, flashed into his mind. Two minutes later a single skillful throw of a cast net into the school of sardines, always swarming alongshore, had provided a sufficiency of bait, and a light skiff was dandling merrily over the blue waves.

"Why, Grit! Where are you going?" demanded Matey as the skiff was headed directly for the Polyanthus.

"Out to the reef after fish," was the answer.

"But Grit!" "Never mind the buts now, little girl. That's where we are going, and we're going in the schooner too. Mother said fish, but so far as I have heard she didn't say what kind of fish, and so, of course, meset the best fish, such as Spanish mackerel, kingfish, yellow tails or drums. You know that we can't find those shut off the reef any more—we can go out to where they are in a skiff."

Besides, sister, it's our very last chance for a sail in the old Poly. She's going to be sold, or rather given away, tomorrow, and I don't suppose we'll ever see her again or own another boat."

Of course this was convincing, for Matey not only dearly loved to sail, but was firm in her belief that whatever Grit said or did was right. Thus an hour later saw the little schooner, after a glorious run across the broad Hawk channel, anchored just inside the great coral reef that borders the gulf stream for more than 200 miles, and on which huge breakers were dashing themselves into showers of glistening spray. The fishing was superb and so absorbing that the sun was sinking into its bed of crimson and gold ere either Grit or Matey thought of starting for home.

When at length they were ready to go and attempted to get up the anchor, all their strength on the windlass failed to budge it. A fluke had caught beneath some great bunch of coral, and with boylike carelessness Grit had neglected to provide a trip line. It was quite dark before he abandoned the attempt to recover their anchor and said cheerfully: "Never mind, Matey, girl. It won't hurt us to stay out here overnight, and as soon as it comes light again I'll dive down there and see what is the matter. I'm not going to cut the cable and lose that brand new anchor unless I have to, that's sure."

So they cooked a supper of fish and made themselves so comfortable in the snug little cabin that they rather rejoiced in their adventure than otherwise. So soundly did they sleep that night that not until he was flung from his locker on the cabin floor did Grit awaken to the fact that the Poly was pitching madly and that a gale was shrieking through her taut rigging. Calling to Matey, the boy sprang on the deck, where he was well nigh beaten down by the furious squall of wind and rain that just then hurled itself against the schooner.

There was an instant of quivering strain. Then something gave way, and Grit knew what had happened. The tense cable had parted, and they were helplessly drifting at the mercy of the storm. For a moment even Grit's stout heart quailed. He could see nothing save the ghastly forms of leaping breakers that seemed to crowd about him from all sides. He could not even tell from which direction the squall was blowing. Matey had joined him in the cockpit, with as full an understanding of the situation as his own. No words passed between them, for none could have been heard above the shriek of wind and the roar of waters. They seemed to be driving with frightful speed, and, as the brother and sister stood hand in hand, waiting their fate, they expected that each succeeding moment would see their craft dashed in pieces on the cruel reef.

Minutes passed, and still they swept on. Suddenly Grit uttered a great cry of relief that was almost a sob.

"We've passed the breakers! We're clear of the reef! We're out in the gulf! We're safe, Matey, girl!" he shouted.

To any one not a sailor it would have seemed that they were anything but safe, out in the open sea, driving through inky darkness, and with the worst squall of the season howling furiously about them, but Matey was a sailor. She knew, and down in her heart arose a fervent prayer of thankfulness.

The next change of scene was most surprising. Daylight had come; the sun was rising. Before a gentle breeze, with all sails set, the Polyanthus was approaching a great steamship that had struck on an outlying spur of the reef during the blinding bewilderment of the recent squall.

"I do believe it's a wreck!" Matey had exclaimed rapturously, when her sharp eyes first discovered the stranded ship.

"Oh, if it only should be!" cried Grit, who could hardly believe that so great a piece of good fortune had befallen them. Then, with anxious, beating hearts the young sailors had shaken out their reefs and laid a course toward the lights that marked the dimly looming hulk.

"Great Scott!" cried the captain of the stranded steamship as he caught sight of the schooner's sail. "Here's a reef wrecker alongside already. I believe these fellows live at sea and can sail a wreck a hundred miles!"

"Hello, there!" he shouted a few minutes later as the schooner drew near. "Take a line, but don't you dare come aboard. I'm not in humor to give up my ship to you pirates yet. So stay where you are, and I'll come to you."

"Don't you want your cargo lightened, sir, or anchor carried?" inquired Grit anxiously as the captain slid down a rope and stood on the Poly's deck.

"No, I'm not in a hurry to break out my hold, and I want to try something else before heaving," answered the captain. "Who is captain of this craft?"

"I am, sir."

"You?" cried the other, regarding the lad incredulously. "Well, then, where is the crew?"

"There, sir," replied Grit, pointing to Matey.

"Well, I am blessed!" gasped the captain. "A boy and a girl! Even the babies in arm turn wreckers on this coast. However," he added, "perhaps you'll do as well as an older. Can you dive?"

"Of course I can, sir," answered Grit promptly.

"Are you afraid of sharks?" "I should say not," was the contemptuous answer.

"Well, my men are, and I can't even swim, much less dive," continued the captain, "but I want a diver to go down and tell me just how my ship lies. I have a plan that I am anxious to try, if things are as I think. If you'll help me carry it out, I'll give you \$500 for an hour's work, provided we get this ship off within that time. Is it a bargain?"

"Put it in writing and have it witnessed, cap'n," replied the cautious Grit, "and I'll sign the paper. It only holds for one hour, though. Then, if you're not afloat, we'll make a new bargain, and if she's to be lightened I'm to be wreckmaster and take charge, 'cause mine is the first schooner here. Is that right?"

"Yes, that's right," smiled the captain grimly. "I reckon you've taken part in wrecks before?"

"A few," laughed Grit.

By the time the paper was made out and handed to Matey for safe keeping, Grit was ready to perform his share of the bargain. He dived from the bows of the schooner and was gone nearly a minute. Then he came up for breath and almost immediately dived again. He repeated this operation four times without telling what he had discovered. Meanwhile the passengers and crew of the steamship crowded the rail, and leaning over watched his operations with breathless interest.

Finally the young diver clambered aboard and related to the captain that his ship had struck, well forward, on a narrow ledge with deep water on both sides, and that she was afloat, with the exception of a space 10 feet long near her bow.

"That is just about what I gathered from soundings," replied the captain.

"Now, I want you to go down again, taking a lead line with you, and locate some good sized hole or crevice as near the bottom of the ledge as you can get. Leave the lead behind to mark the spot where you come up."

Grit wondered at this strange order, but did as directed, and after several descents into the clear water finally located a deep fissure nearly 20 feet beneath the surface.

"Is the hole large enough to hold this?" asked the captain when the young wrecking again came on board the schooner. As he spoke the former held out a square tin canister to which was attached a reel of slender copper wire.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy. "It's big enough to hold me."

"Very good. Now, if you will go down once more, taking this can with you, and thrust it as far as possible into the hole, I will not ask you to go into the water again."

Grit cast a curious glance at the captain's face to see if he could detect any indication of madness, but the only signs he discovered were of perfect intelligence and an indomitable will. Still, as the boy again stepped over the side ready to descend into the crystal depths and the canister was handed to him, his suspicion of the captain's party was revived by the latter's parting instructions.

"Take care of this can as you would of your own life," he said earnestly. "Don't let it hit against anything, and place it gently as far in the crevice as you can reach. It holds your life and fortune as well as mine."

These words were so strange, and the whole business was so different from the usual proceedings in connection with a wrecked ship, that even as Grit worked at his novel task far beneath the blue surface the one thought that filled his mind was, "He is as crazy as crazy can be." However, he carried out his instructions, and when he regained the schooner's deck he found it occupied by all the passengers of the stranded steamship.

"Take them off on a five minutes' cruise," ordered the captain as with his own hands he cast off the lines holding the schooner. Then he swung himself up the steamship's side and disappeared in his own cabin.

At the end of five minutes the Polyanthus was nearly a quarter of a mile away, and her young skipper, who was trying to answer a hundred questions at once from the bewildered passengers, was also wondering what he should do next. All at once it was noticed that the propeller of the great ship was working furiously backward.

Then came the most surprising thing that has ever happened in all the annals of wrecking on the Florida reefs. There was a heavy vibratory explosion, accompanied by a muffled roar. To those who happened to be looking toward the ship at that moment she seemed to be lifted bodily from the water. The next instant she was enveloped and hidden from view in a vast, fountainlike column of foam. Directly afterward the ship disappeared.

An Ounce of Prevention. Gail Borden Eagle Brand Condensed Milk. Always buy the Eagle brand, and accept no substitute.

ever in her life on the great billows of the mysterious submarine disturbance and running rapidly backward.

Late that afternoon the schooner Polyanthus again picked up her moorings off the glistening coral beach, and the young wreckers made their way to the little house beneath the cocoanuts, in which their stepmother, as yet unconscious of their return, sat nearly distracted by a sudden accumulation of troubles.

She was wild with anxiety over Grit and Matey. A man had come from Key West to look at the Polyanthus with a view to purchasing her, but finding her absent and being pressed for time had gone away again. He had, moreover, left behind him a letter from the northern commission house to which Mrs. Albury had sent her tomatoes, stating that the entire shipment had arrived spoiled and unsalable, so that instead of being entitled to returns from them she was indebted for freight charges.

As the poor woman sat quite overwhelmed by her misfortunes there came an exciting shout outside, and the next moment Grit and Matey rushed in, alive, well and breathless with excitement.

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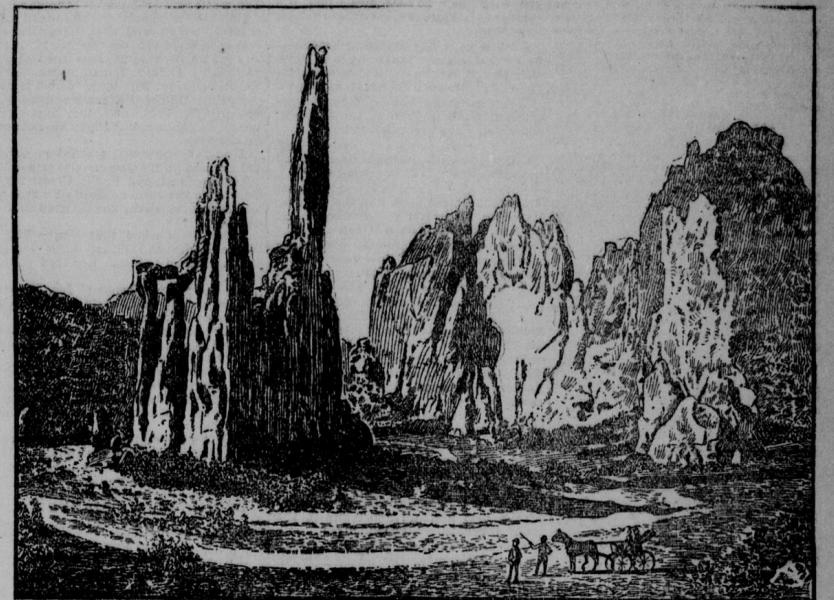
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The White Tailed Gnu. The white tailed gnu is dead. He had been ailing for the past two months. Recently he bit at the tip of his tail, which was brushing flies from his back, and before he realized what he was doing swallowed a piece of the thonglike appendage. Since then he rapidly declined. It was said that the animal showed signs of insanity.—Philadelphia Press.

A PANORAMA OF AMERICA!

If it were possible to rise to an altitude sufficiently high to permit an observer to view through a telescope the whole of North America at one time, what a wondrous spectacle would meet his gaze. Beautiful as it might appear, yet the vision would not be half so satisfactory as that which is afforded by the Great Pictographic Portfolio.

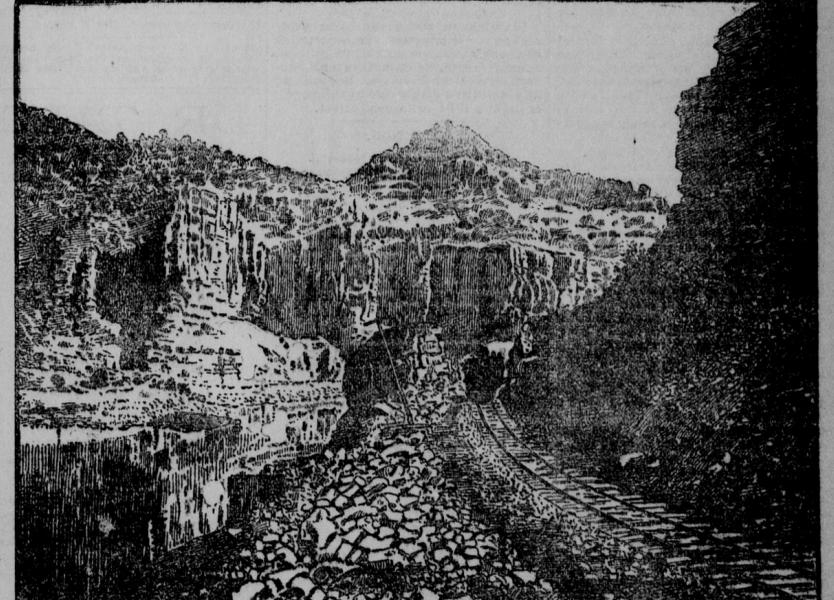


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