

Ice Bound.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE TREASURE.

When his pipe was out he rose and made several strides about the cook room, then took the lantern, and, entering the cabin, stood awhile surveying the place.

"So this would have been my coffin but for you, Mr. Rodney," said he. "I was in good company, though," pointing over his shoulder at the crucifix with his thumb. "Lord, how the rogues prayed and cursed in this same cabin! In fine weather and when all was well, the sharks in our wake had more religion than they; but the instant they were in danger, they tumbled upon their quivering knees; and if heaven was twice as big as it is, it could not have held saints enough for those varlets to petition."

"You were nearly all Spaniards?"

"Ay—the worst class of men a ship could enter these seas with. But for our calling they are the fittest of all the nations in the world; better even than the Portuguese, and with truer trade instincts than the trained mulatto—nimble artists in roguesy than ever a one of them. I despise their superstition, but they are a better pirates for it. They carry it as a man might a featherbed; it enables them to fall soft. 'D'ye take me?' He gave one of his short, loud laughs, and said, 'I hope this slope won't increase. The angle's stiff enough as it is. 'Twill be like living on the roof of a house. I have a mind to see how she lies. What d'ye say, Mr. Rodney? Shall I venture into the open?'"

"Why not?" said I. "You can move briskly. You have as much life as ever you had."

"Let's go, then!" he exclaimed, and climbing the ladder he pushed open the companion door and stepped on to the deck. I followed with but little solicitude, as you may suppose, as to what might attend his exposure. The blast of the gale, though it was broken into downward eddies and whirls by the rocks, made him tawd out with the sting of it, and for some moments he could think of nothing but the cold, stamping the deck in his boots and beating his hands.

"Ha!" cried he, grinning to the smart of his cheeks, "this is not the cook room, eh? Great thunder! you will not have it that this ice has been drifting north? Why, man, 'tis icier by 20 degs than when we were first locked up."

"I hope not," said I, "and I think not. Your blood doesn't course strong yet, and you are fresh from the furnace. Besides it is blowing a bitter cold gale. Look at that sky, and listen to the thunder of the sea!"

The commotion was indeed terribly uproarious. The rending noises of the ice in all directions were distinct and fearful. The Frenchman looked about him with consternation, and to my surprise crossed himself.

"May the blessed Virgin preserve us!" he said. "Do you say we have drifted north? If this is not the very heart of the South Pole, you shall persuade me we are on the equator."

"It cannot storm too terribly for us, as you just now said," I replied. "I want this island to go to pieces."

As I said this a solid pillar of ice just beyond the brow of the hill on the starboard side was dislodged or blown down; it fell with a mighty crash, and filled the air with crystal splinters. Tassard started back with a faint cry of "Bon Dieu!"

"Judge for yourself how the ship lies," said I; "this is freezing work."

He went aft and looked over the stern, then walked to the larboard rail and peered over the side.

"Is there ice beyond that opening?" he asked, pointing over the taffrail.

"No," I answered; "that goes to the sea. There is a low cliff beyond. Mark that cloud of white; it is the spray hurled athwart the mouth of this hollow."

"Good," he mumbled, with his teeth chattering. "The change is marvelous. There was ice for a quarter of a mile where that slope descends. 'Tis too cold to converse here."

"There are your companions," said I, pointing to the two bodies lying a little distance before the mainmast.

He marched up to them and exclaimed, "Yes, this is Trentanove and that is Barros. Both were blind, but they are blinder now. Would they thank you to arouse them out of their comfortable sleep, and force them to feel as I do—this cold, to which they are now as insensible as I was? By heaven, for my part I can stand it no longer!" and with that he ran briskly to the hatch.

I followed him to the cook room, and he crept so close to the furnace that I thought he had a mind to roast himself.

The heat comforted him presently, and he put a lump of wine into the oven to melt, and this comforted him also.

"I can converse now," said he. "Perhaps after all the danger lies more in the imagination than in the fact. But it is a hideous naked scene, and needs no such coloring as the roaring of wind, the rushing of seas, and the crashing falls of masses of ice to render it frightful."

"You tell me," said I, "that when you fell asleep—I would sometimes express his frozen state thus—"there was a quarter of a mile of ice beyond the schooner's stern."

"At least a quarter of a mile," he answered. "Day after day it would be built up till it came to a face of that extent."

I thought to myself if it had taken forty-eight years of the wear and tear of storm and surge to extinguish a quarter of a mile, how long a time must elapse before this island splits up! But then I reflected that, during the greater part of these years, this seat of ice had been struck very low south, where the cold was so extreme as to make it defy dissolution; that since then it was come away from the main and stealing north, so that what might have taken thirty years to accomplish in 70 degs. of south latitude might be performed in a day on the parallel of 60 degs. in the summer season in these seas.

Tassard continued speaking with the panikin in his hand, and his eyes shut as if to get the picture of the schooner's position affixed to his mind's vision: "There was a quarter of a mile of ice beyond the ship, I have it very plain in my sight; it was a great middle of hills, for the ice pressed thick and hard, and raised us, and vomited up peaks and rocks to the squeeze. Suppose I had been asleep a week? Here he opened his eyes and gazed at me.

"Well?" said I.

"I say," he continued, in the tone of one easily excited into passion, "a week. It will not have been more. It is impossible. Never mind about your 1801," showing his fangs in a sarcastic grin; "a week is long enough, friend. Then this is what I mean to say: that the breaking away of a quarter of a mile of ice in a week is like work, full of grand promise; the next wrench—which might come now as I speak, or to-morrow, or in a week—the next wrench may bring away the rock on which we are lodged, and the rest will be a matter of patience—which we

can afford; they for we are but two—there is plenty of meat and liquor, and the reward afterward is a princely independence, Mr. Paul Rodney."

I was struck with the notion of the bed of ice on which the schooner lay going about, and said: "Are sea and wind to be helped, think you? If the block on which we lie could be detached it might beat a bit against its parent stock, but would not unite again. The schooner's canvas might be made to help it along—though suppose it capsize?"

"We must consider," said he; "there is no need to hurry. When the wind falls we will survey the ice."

He warmed himself afresh, and after remaining silent with the air of one turning many thoughts over in his mind, he suddenly cried, "D'ye know I have a mind to view the plate and money below? What say you?"

His little eyes seemed to sparkle with suspicion as he directed that to me. I was confident he suspected I had lied in saying I knew nothing of this treasure, and that he wanted to see if I had meddled with those chests. One of the penalties attached to a man being forced to keep the company of liars is, he himself is never believed by them. I answered, indignantly, "Certainly. I should like to see this wonderful booty. It is right that we should find out on one or if it is there; for, supposing it vanished, we should be no better than madmen to sit talking here of the fine lives we shall live if ever we get home."

He picked up the lantern, and said, "I must go to your cabin; it was the captain's. The keys of the chests should be in one of his boxes."

He marched off, and was so long gone that I was almost of belief he had tumbled down in a fit. However, I had made up my mind to act a very wary part; and particularly never to let him think I distrusted him, and so I would not go to see what he was about. But what I did was this: the arms room was next door; I lighted a candle, entered it, and swiftly armed myself with a sort of dagger, a kind of boarding knife—a very murderous little two-edged sword, the blade about seven inches long, and the haft of brass. There were some fifty of these weapons, and I took the first that came to my hand, and dropped it into the deep side pocket of my coat, and returned to the cook room. It was not that I was afraid of going unarmed with this man into the hold; there was no more danger to me there than here; should he ever design to dispatch me one place was the same as another, for the dead above could not testify—there were no witnesses in this white and desolate kingdom. What resolved me to go armed was the fear that should the treasure be missing—and who was to swear that the schooner had never been visited once in eight and forty years?—the Frenchman, who was persuaded his superior had not lasted above a week, and who was doubtless satisfied the chests were in the hold down to the period when he lost recollection, would suspect me of foul play, and in the barbarous rage of a pirate fall upon and endeavor to kill me.

It might be that he was long because of having to seek for the keys; but my own conviction was that he found the keys early and stayed to rummage the boxes for such jewels and articles of value as he might there find. I think he was gone near half an hour; he then returned to the cook house, saying briefly, "I have the keys," and jingling them, and after warming himself said, "Let us go."

He led the way, and coming to the trap hatch that conducted to the lazarette he pulled it open and we descended. He held the lantern and threw the light around him, and said, "Ay, there are plenty of stores here. We reckoned upon provisions for twelve months, and we were seventy of a crew."

A strange figure he looked, just touched by the yellow candle light, and standing out upon the blackness like some vision of a dis-tempered fancy, in his hair cap and flaps, and with his long nose and beard and little eyes shining as he rolled them here and there. We made our way over the casks, bales and the like till we were right aft, and here there was a small clear space of deck in which lay a hatch. This he lifted by its ring, and down through the aperture did he drop, I following. The lazarette deck came so low that we had to squat when still or move upon our knees. At the foremost end of this division of the ship, so far as it was possible for my eyes to pierce the darkness—for it seems that this run went clear to the forehold bulkhead, that is to say, under the powder room, to where the fore hold began—were stowed the spare sails, ropes for gear, and a great variety of furniture for the equipment of a ship's yards and masts. But immediately under the hatch stood several small chests and cases, painted black, stowed side by side so that they could not shift.

Tassard ran his eye over them, counting, "Right," cried he; "hold the lantern, Mr. Rodney."

I took the light from him, and, pulling the keys from his pocket, he fell to trying them at the lock of the first chest. One fitted; the bolt shot with a hard click, like cocking a trigger, and he raised the lid. The chest was full of silver money. I picked up a couple of the coins, and bringing them to the candle perceived them to be Spanish pieces of 1789. The money was tarnished, yet it reflected a sort of dull, metallic light. The Frenchman grasped a handful and dropped them, as though, like a child, he loved to hear the tink the pieces made as they fell.

I returned to the cook room and went about the old business of lighting the fire and preparing the breakfast—this job, by an understanding between the Frenchman and me, falling to him who was first out of bed—and in about twenty minutes Tassard arrived.

"The wind is gone," said he.

"Yes," I replied; "it is a bright, still morning. I have been on deck. There has been a great fall of ice close to."

"Does it block us?"

"No; on the contrary, it clears the way to the sea; the ocean is now visible from the deck. Not that it mends our case," I added. "But there is a great rent in the ice that puts a fancy into my head; I'll speak of it later, after a closer look."

The breakfast was ready, and we fell to in a hurry, the Frenchman gobbling like a hog in his eagerness to make an end. When we were finished he wrapped himself up in three or four coats and cloaks, warming the under ones before folding them about him, and completing his preparations for the excursion by swallowing half a pint of raw brandy. I had him arm himself with a short-headed spear to save his neck, and thus equipped we went on deck.

He stood stock still with his eyes shut on emerging through the hatch, crying out with a number of French oaths that he had been struck blind. This I did not believe, though I really supposed that the glare made his eyeballs smart so as to cause him a good deal of agony. Indeed, all along I had been surprised that he should have found his sight so easily after having sat in blindness for forty-eight years, and it was not wonderful that the amazing brilliance on deck, smiting his sight on a sudden, should have caused him to cry out as if he had lost the use of his eyes forever.

I waited patiently, and in about ten minutes he was able to look about him, and then

very choicely wrought, that may have been in a family for several generations; a watch of a curious figure, and the like. There might have been the pickings of the cabins, trunks, and portmanteaus of 100 opulent men and women in this chest; and so far as I could judge from what lay atop, the people plundered represented several nationalities.

But there were other chests and cases to explore—ten in all; two of these were filled with silver money, a third with plate, a fourth with English, French, Spanish and Portuguese coins in gold; but the one over which Tassard hung longest in a transport that held him dumb was the smallest of all, and this was packed with gold in bars. The stuff had the appearance of moldy yellow soap, and having no sparkle nor variety did not affect me as the jewelry had, though in value this chest came near to being worth as much as all the others put together. The fixed, transported posture of the pirate—his little shining eyes intent upon the bars, his form in the candle light looking like a sketch of a strange, wildly appearing man done in phosphorus, coupled with the loom of the black chests, the sense of our desolation, the folly of our enjoyment of the sight of the treasure in the face of our pitiable and dismal plight, the melancholy storming of the wind, moaning like the rattle of thunder heard in a vault, and above all the feeling of unreality inspired by the thought of my companion having lain for eight-and-forty years as good as dead—combined to render the scene so startlingly impressive that it remains at this hour pointed as vividly upon the eye of memory as if I had come from it five minutes ago.

"So," cried the Frenchman, suddenly, slamming the lid of the chest, "it's all here! Now, then, to the business of considering how to come off with it."

He thrust the keys in his pocket, and we returned to the cook room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE TALK OVER OUR SITUATION.

That night, as afterward, Tassard occupied the berth that he was used to sleep in before he was frozen. Although I had not then the least fear that he would attempt any malignant tricks with me while we remained in this posture, the feeling that he lay in the berth but one next mine made me uneasy in spite of my reasoning; and I was so nervous as to silently shoot a great iron bolt, so that it would have been impossible to enter without beating the door in.

In sober truth, the sight of the treasure had put a sort of fever into my imagination, of the heat and effects of which I was not completely sensible until I was alone in my cabin and swinging in the darkness. That the value of what I had seen came to ninety or a hundred thousand pounds of our money, I could not doubt; and I will not deny that my fancy was greatly excited by thinking of it. But there was something else. Suppose we should have the happiness to escape with this treasure, then I was perfectly certain the Frenchman would come between me and my share of it. This apprehension threading my heated thoughts of the gold and silver kept me restless during the greater part of the night, and I also held my brains on the stretch with devices for saving ourselves and the treasure; yet I could not satisfy my mind that anything was to be done unless nature herself assisted us in freeing the schooner.

However, as it happened, the gale roused for a whole week, and the cold was so frightful and the air so charged with spray and hail that we were forced to lie close below with the hatches on for our lives.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE TAKE A VIEW OF THE ICE.

For seven days the gale raged with uncommon violence; it then broke, and this brought us into the first week in August. The wind fell in the night, and I was awakened by the silence, which you will not think strange if you consider how used were my ears to the fierce seething and strong blowing of the blast. I lay listening, believing that it had only veined, and that it would come on again in gusts and gusts; but the stillness continued, and there were no sounds whatever save the noises of the ice, which broke upon the ear like slow answers from batteries near and distant, half whose cannon have been silenced.

I slept again, and when I awoke it was 7:30 o'clock in the morning. The Frenchman was snoring lustily. I went on deck before entering the cook house, and had like to have been blinded by the astonishing brilliancy of the sunshine upon the ice and snow. All the wind was gone. The air was exquisitely frosty and sharp. But there was a heavy sound coming from the sea which gave me to expect the sight of a strong swell. The sky was a clear blue, and there was no cloud on as much of its face as showed between the brows of the slopes.

My attention was quickly attracted by the appearance of the starboard cliff over against our quarter. The whole shoulder of it had broken away, and I could just catch a view of the horizon of the sea from the deck by stretching my figure. The sight of the ocean showed me that the breakage had been prodigious, for to have come at that prospect before I should have had to climb to the height of the main lower masthead. No other marked or noteworthy change did I detect from the deck; but on stepping to the larboard side to peer over I spied a split in the ice that reached from the very margin of the ravine—I mean to that end of it where it terminated in a cliff—to and past the bows of the schooner by at least four times her own length.

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I waited patiently, and in about ten minutes he was able to look about him, and then

it was not long before he could see without pain. He stood a minute gazing at the glories upon the rigging, and in that piercing light I noticed the unwholesome color of his face. His cap hid the scar, and no hint of his countenance was to be seen but the cheeks, eyes and nose. He was much more wrinkled than I had supposed, and I thought the spirit of cruelty lay visible in every line. I had never seen eyes so full of cunning and treachery—so expressive, I should say, of these qualities; yet they were no bigger than mere punctures. I was sensible of a momentary fear of the man—not, let me say, an emotion of cowardice, but a sort of mixture of alarm and awe, such as a ghost might inspire. This I put down to the searching light in which I watched him for a moment or two—an irradiation subtle enough to give the sharpest form to expression, to exquisitely define every meaning that was distinguishable in his graven physiognomy. I left him to stare and judge for himself of the posture in which the long, hard gale had put the schooner, and stepped over to the two bodies. They were shrouded in ice from head to foot, as though they had each been packed in a glass case cunningly wrought to their shapes. Their faces were hid by the crystal masks. Tassard joined me.

"Small chance for your friends now," said I, "even if you were agreeable to my proposal to attempt to revive them."

"So!" cried he, touching the body of the mate with his foot; "and this is the end of the irresistible Trentanove! For what conquests has Death robbed him so bravely? See, the colors shine in him like fifty different kinds of ribbons. Poor fellow! he could not curl his mustaches now, though the loveliest eyes in Europe were fixed in passionate admiration on him. He'll never slit another throat, nor hiecock Petrarch over a goldenhair, nor retrace with me for my humanity. Shall we toss the bodies over the side?"

"They are your friends," said I; "do as you please."

"But we must empty their pockets first. Business before sentiment, Mr. Rodney."

He started the figure again with his foot.

"Well, presently," said he, "this armor will want the hatchet. Now, my friend, to view the work of the gale."

The increased level of the ship brought the larboard fore channel low, and we stepped without difficulty from it on to the ice. The rent or fissure that I have before spoken of went very deep—it was nearly two feet wide in places; but, though the light poured brilliantly upon it, I could see no bottom.

"If only such another split as this would happen to the side," said the Frenchman, "I believe this block would go adrift."

"Well," said I, after musing a little while, as I ran my eye over the hollows, "I'll tell you what was in my mind just now. There is a great quantity of gunpowder in the hold—ten or a dozen barrels. By dropping large parcels of it into the crevices on the right there, and firing it with slow matches—"

He interrupted me with a cry: "By St. Paul, you have it! What crevices have you?"

We walked briskly round the vessel, and all about her beam and starboard quarter I found, in addition to the seams I had before noticed, many great cracks and fissures, caused no doubt by the fall of the shoulder of the slope. I pushed on farther yet, going down the ravine, as I have called it, until I came to the edge, and here I looked down from a height of some twelve or fourteen feet—so greatly had the ice sunk or been changed by the weather—upon the ocean. I called to Tassard. He approached warily. I firmly believe he feared I might be tempted to give him a friendly shove over the edge.

"Observe this hollow," said I, "the split there goes down to the water, and you may take it that the block is wholly disconnected on that side. Now look at the face of the ice," said I, pointing to the starboard or right-hand side; "that crack goes as far as the vessel's quarter, and the weakness is carried on to past the bows by the other rents. Mr. Tassard, if we could burst this body of ice by an explosion from its moorings ahead of the bowsprit, where it is all too compact, this cradle with the schooner in it will go free of the parent body."

He answered promptly, "Yes, it is the one and only plan. That crack to starboard is like telling us what to do. It is well you came here. We should not have seen it from the top. This valley runs deep. You must expect no more than the surface to be liberated, for the foot of the cliff will go deep."

"Desire no more."

"Will the ship stand such a launch, supposing we bring it about?" said he.

I responded with one of his own shrugs, and said, "Nothing is certain. We have one of two courses to choose: to venture this launch, or stay till the ice breaks up, and take our chance of floating or of being smashed."

"You are right!" he exclaimed. "Here is an opportunity. If we wait, bergs may gather about this point and build us in. As to this island dissolving, we are yet to know which way 'tis heading. Suppose it should be traveling south, hey?"

He struck the ice with his spear, and we toiled up the slippery rocks with difficulty to the ship. We walked past the bows to the distance of the vessel's length. Here were many deep holes and cracks, and, as if we were to be taught how these came about, even while we were viewing them, an ear-splitting crash of noise happened within twenty fathoms of us, a rock many tons in weight rolled over and left a black gulf behind it.

The Frenchman started, muttered and crossed himself. "Holy Virgin!" he cried, rolling his eyes. "Let us return. The powder barrel must have the first chance." And he made for the schooner scowling and striking the ice with his spear, and gawling curses to himself as he plowed and climbed and jumped his way along.

CHAPTER XX.

A MERRY EVENING.

By the time we had reached the bottom of the hollow, Tassard was blowing like a bellows with the uncommon exertion; and, swearing that he felt the cold penetrating his bones, and that he should be stupefied again if he did not mind, he climbed into the ship and disappeared. I loved him so little that secretly I very heartily wished that nature would make away with him—I mean that something it would be impossible in me to lay to my conscience should befall him—as becoming comatose again, and so lying like one dead. Assuredly in such a case it was not the hand that would have wasted a drop of brandy in returning an evil, white livered, hectoring old rascal to a life that smelled faintly with him and the like of him.

I entered the ship, and found Tassard roasting himself in the cook house.

"I have been surveying the ice," said I, drawing to the furnace, "and have very little doubt that if we wisely bestow the powder in great quantities we shall succeed in dislocating the bed on which we are lying."

"Good!" he cried.

"But after?" said I.

"What?"

"As much of this bed as may be dislodged will not be deep; icebergs, as of course you know, capsize in consequence of their being top heavy by the wasting of the bulk that is submerged. This block will make but a small berg should we liberate it, and I very much fear that the weight of this schooner

will overset it the instant we are launched."

"Body of Moses!" he cried, angrily, knitting his brows, whereby he stretched the ear to half its usual width, "what's to be done, then?"

"She is a full ship," said I, "and weighty. If the liberated ice be thin she may sit up on it and keep it under. We have a right to hope in that direction, perhaps. Yet there is another consideration. She may leak like a sieve!"

"Why?" he exclaimed. "She took the ice smoothly; she has not been strained; she was as tight as a bottle before she stranded; the coating of ice will have cherished her; and a stout ship like this does not suffer from six months of lying up!"

Six months, thought I.

"Well, it may be as you say; but if she leaks, it will not be in our four arms to keep her free."

He exclaimed, hotly, "Mr. Rodney, if we are to escape we must venture something. To stay here means death in the end. I am persuaded that this ice is joined with some vast main body far south, and that it does not move. What is there, then, to wait for? There is promise in your gunpowder proposal. If she capsize, then the devil will get his own." And with a savage flourish of the panikin he put it to his lips and drained it.

His sudden determination that we should stand or fall by my scheme was not very useful to me. I had looked for some shrewdness in him, some capacity of originating and weighing ideas; but I found he could do little more than curse and swagger and ply his can, in which he found most of his anecdotes and recollections and not a little of his courage. I pulled out my watch, as I must call it, and observed that it was half upon 1 o'clock.

"Tis lucky," said he, eyeing the watch greedily and coming to it away from the great subject of our deliberance, as though the sight of the fine gold thing with its jeweled letter extinguished every other thought in him, "that you removed that watch from Mendoza. But he will have carried other good things to the bottom with him, I fear."

"His flask and tobacco box I took away," said I. "He had nothing of consequence besides."

"They must go into the common chest," cried he; "tis share and share, you know."

"Ay," said I, "but what I found on Mendoza is mine by the highest right under heaven. If I had not taken the things they would now be at the bottom of the sea."

"What of that?" cried he, savagely. "If we had not plundered the galley she might have been wrecked and taken all she had down with her. Yet should such a consideration hinder a fair division as between us—between you, who had nothing to do with the pillage, and me, who risked my life in it?"

I said, "Very well; be it as you say," appearing to consent, for there was something truly absurd in an altercation about a few guineas' worth of booty in the face of our melancholy and most perilous position, though it not only enabled me to send a deeper glance into the mind of this man than I had yet been able to manage, but made me understand a reason for the bloody and furious quarrels which have again and again arisen among persons standing on the brink of eternity, to whom a cup of drink or the sight of a ship had been more precious than the contents of the Bank of England.

I set about getting the dinner.

"While you are at that work," cried he, starting up, "I'll overhaul the pockets of the bodies on deck," and picking up a choppe, away he went, and I heard him cursing in his native tongue as he stumbled to the companion ladder through the darkness in the cabin.

His rapacity was beyond credence. There was an immense treasure in the hold, yet he could not leave the pockets of the two poor wretches on deck alone. I did not envy him his task, the frozen figures would bear a deal of hammering, and besides he had to work in the cold. Ah, though I, with a groan, I should have left him to make one of them!

I had finished my dinner by the time he arrived. He produced the watch I had taken from and returned to the mate's pocket when I had searched him for a tinder box, also a gold snuffbox set with diamonds and a few Spanish pieces in gold. On seeing these things I remembered that I had found some rings and money in Tassard's pockets while overhauling him for means to obtain fire, but I held my peace.

"Should not we have been imbeciles to sacrifice these beauties?" he cried, viewing the watch and snuffbox with a rapacious grin.

"They were hard to come at, I expect?"

"No," he answered, pocketing them and turning to a piece of beef in the oven. "I knocked away the ice, and after a little wrenching got at the pockets. But poor Trentanove; d'ye know, his nose came away with the mask of ice! He is no longer lovely to the sight!" He broke into a guffaw, then stuffed his mouth full, and talked in the intervals of chewing. "There was nothing worth talking on Barros. They are both overboard!"

"Overboard!" I cried.

"Why, yes," said he. "They are no good to deck. I stood them against the rail, then tipped them over."

This was an illustration of his strength I did not much relish.

"I don't if I could have lifted Barros," said I.

"No, you?" he exclaimed, running his eye over me. "A Dutchman would have the weight of a rary above me, Barros."

"Well, Mr. Tassard," said I, "before you are so strong you will be very useful to our scheme. There is much to be done."

"Give me a sketch of your plans that I may understand you," he exclaimed, continuing to eat very heartily.

"First of all," said I, "we shall have to break the powder barrels out of the magazine and hoist them on deck. There are tackles, I suppose?"

"You should be able to find what you want among the boatswain's stores in the run," he replied.

"There are some splits wide enough to receive a four barrel of powder," said I. "I counted four such yawns all happily lying in a line athwart the ice past the bows. I propose to sink these barrels twenty feet deep, where they must hang from a piece of spar across the aperture."

"He nodded.

"Have you any slow matches aboard?"

"Plenty among the gunner's stores," he replied.