would be frozen as stiff as the figure on the rocks; but, though it was very conceivable that I might perish of cold in the cabin by sitting still, I was sure the temperature below had not the severity to stonify me to the granite of the men at the table.

Still, though a greater degree of cold—cold as killing as if the world had fallen sunless—did unquestionably exist in those latitudes, whence this ice with the schooner in its hug had floated, it was so bitterly bleak in this interior that 'twas scarce imaginable it could be colder elsewhere; and as I rose from the cask, shuddering to the heart with the frosty, motionless atmosphere, my mind naturally went to the consideration of a fire by which I might sit and toast myself.

I put a bunch of candles in my pocket—they were as hard as a parcel of marline spikes—and took the lantern into the passage and inspected the next room. Here was a cot hung up by hooks, and a large black chest stood in cleats upon the deck; some clothes dangled from pins in the bulkhead, and upon a kind of tray fixed upon short legs and serving as a shelf were a miscellaneous bundle of boots, laced waistcoats, three corner hats, a couple of swords, three or four pistols, and other objects not very readily distinguishable by the candle light. There was a port which I tried to open, but found it so hard frozen I should need a handspike to start it. There were three cabins besides this—the last cabin, that is, the one in the stern, being the biggest of the lot. Each had its cot, and each also had its own special muddle and litter of boxes, clothes, firearms, swords and the like.

Indeed, by this time I was beginning to see how it was. The suspicion that the watches and jewelry I had discovered on the bodies of the men had excited was now confirmed, and I was satisfied that this schooner had been a pirate or buccaneer, of what nationality I could not yet divine—methought Spanish from the costume of the first figure I had encountered; and I was also convinced, by the brief glance I directed at the things in the cabin, particularly the wearing apparel, and the make and appearance of the firearms, that she must have been in this position for upward of fifty years.

The thought awed me greatly—twenty years before I was born those two men were sitting dead in the cabin! He on deck was keeping his blind and silent lookout; he on the rocks, with his hands locked upon his knees, sat sunk in blank and frozen contemplation!

Every cabin had its port, and there were ports in the vessel's side opposite; but on reflection I considered that the cabin would be the warmer for their remaining closed, and so I came away and entered the great cabin afresh, bent on exploring the forward part.

I must tell you that the mainmast, piercing the upper deck, came down close against the bulkhead that formed the forward wall of the cabin, and on approaching this partition, the daylight being broad enough now that the hatch lay open on top, I remarked a sliding door on the larboard side of the mast. I put my shoulder to it and very easily ran it along its grooves, and then found myself in the way of a direct communication with all the fore portion of the schooner. The arrangement indeed was so odd that I suspected a piratical device in this uncommon method of opening out at will the whole range of deck. The air here was as vile as in the cabins, and I had to wait a bit.

On entering I discovered a little compartment with racks on either hand filled with small arms. I afterward counted 113 muskets, blunderbusses and fusils, all of an antique kind, while the sides of the vessel were hung with pistols great and little, boarding pikes, cutlasses, hangers and other sorts of sword. This armory was a sight to set me walking very cautiously, for it was not likely that powder should be wanting in a ship thus equipped; and where was it stowed?

There was another sliding door in the forward partition; it stood open, and I passed through it into what I immediately saw was the cook house. I turned the lantern about and discovered every convenience for dressing food. The furnaces were of brick and the oven was a great one—great, I mean, for the size of the vessel. There were pots, pans and kettles in plenty, a dresser with drawers, dishes of tin and earthenware, a French clock—in short, such an equipment of kitchen furniture as you would not expect to find in the galley of an Indiaman built to carry two or three hundred passengers. About half a chaldron of small coal lay heaped in a wood angular fence fixed to the starboard side, for the sight of which I thanked God. I held the lantern to the furnace, and observed a crooked chimney rising to the deck and passing through it. The mouth or head of it was no doubt covered by the snow. For I had not noticed any such object in the survey I had taken of the vessel above. Strange, I thought, that those men should have frozen to death with the material in the ship for keeping a fire going. But then my whole discovery I regarded as one of those secrets of the deep, which defy the utmost imagination and experience of man to explain them. Enough that here was a schooner which had been interred in a sepulcher of ice, as I might rationally conclude, for near half a century; that there were dead men in her, who looked to have been frozen to death; that she was apparently stored with miscellaneous booty; that she was powerfully armed for a craft of her size, and had manifestly gone crowded with men. All this was plain, and I say it was enough for me.

Before I could make a fire the chimney must be cleared. Among the furniture in the arms room were a number of spade headed spears—the spade as wide as the length of a man's thumb and about a foot long, mounted on light, thin wood. Armed with one of these weapons, I passed into the cabin to proceed on deck.

I speedily spied the chimney, which showed a head of two feet above the deck, and made short work of the snow that was frozen in it, as nothing could have been fitter to cut ice with than the spade shaped weapon I carried. This done, I returned to the cook room, and with a butcher's ax that hung against the bulkhead I hacked away one of the boards that confined the coal, split it into small pieces and in a short time had kindled a good fire. When I was thoroughly warm and comforted I took the lantern and went aft to the steward's room and brought thence a cheese, a ham, some biscuit and one of the jars of spirits, all of which I carried to the cook room and placed the whole of them in the oven. I was extremely hungry and thirsty, and the warmth and cheerfulness of the fire set me yearning for a hot meal. But how was I to make me a bowl without fresh water? I went on deck and scratched up some snow, but the salt in it gave it a sickly taste, and I was not only certain it would spoil and make disgusting whatever I mixed it with or cooked in it, but it stood as a drink to disorder my stomach and bring on an illness. So, thought I to myself, there must be fresh water about—casks enough in the hold, I dare say; but the hold was not to be entered and explored without labor and difficulty, and I was weary and famished, and in no temper for hard work.

In all ships it is the custom to carry one or more casks called scuttlebutts on deck, into which fresh water is pumped for the use of the crew. I stepped along, looking earnestly at the several shapes of guns, coils of rigging, hatchways, and the like, upon which the snow lay thick and solid, but perceived nothing that answered to the shape of a cask. At last I came to the well in the head, passed the forecastle deck, and, on looking down, spied, among other shapes, three bulged and bulky forms. I seemed by instinct to know that these were the scuttlebutts, and went for the chopper, with which I returned and got into this hollow, that was four or five feet deep. The snow had the hardness of iron; it took me a quarter of an hour of severe labor to make sure of the character of the bulky thing I wrought at, and then it proved to be a cask. Whatever might be its contents it was not empty, but I was pretty nigh spent by the time I had knocked off the iron bands and beaten out staves enough to enable me to get at the frozen body within. There were three-quarters of a cask full. It was sparkling clear ice, and, chipping off a piece and sucking it, I found it to be very sweet fresh water. Thus was my labor rewarded.

I cut off as much as, when dissolved, would make a couple of gallons, and returned to the cook room.

The fire burned brightly, and its ruddy glow was sweet as human companionship. I put the ice into a saucepan and set it upon the fire, and then pulling the cheese and ham out of the oven found them warm and thawed. On smelling at the mouth of the jar, I discovered its contents to be brandy. Only about an inch deep of it was melted. I poured this into a pannikin and took a sup, and a finer drop of spirits I never swallowed in all my life; its elegant perfume proved it amazingly choice and old. I fetched a lemon and some sugar, and speedily prepared a small smoking bowl of punch. The ham cut readily; I fried a couple of stout rashers, and fell to the heartiest and most delicious repast I ever sat down to. At any time there is something fragrant and appetizing in the smell of fried ham; conceive, then, the relish that the appetite of a starved, half frozen, shipwrecked man would find in it! The cheese was extremely good, and was as sound as if it had been made a week ago. Indeed, the preservative virtues of the cold struck me with astonishment. Here was I making a fine meal off stores which, in all probability, had lain in this ship fifty years, and they ate as choicely as like food of a similar quality ashore. Possibly some of these days science may devise a means for keeping the stores of a ship frozen, which would be as great a blessing as could befall the mariner, and a sure remedy for the scurvy; for then as much fresh meat might be carried as salt, besides other articles of a perishable kind.

CHAPTER XII.

A LONELY NIGHT.

I had a pipe of my own in my pocket; I fetched a small block of the black tobacco that was in the pantry, and with some trouble, for it was as hard and dry as glass, chipped off a bowlful and fell a-puffing with all the satisfaction of a hardened lover of tobacco who has long been denied his favorite relish.

My pipe being emptied, I threw some more coals into the furnace, and putting a candle in the lantern went aft to take another view of the little cabins, in one of which I resolved to sleep; for though the cook room would have served me best while the fire burned, I reckoned upon it making a colder habitation when the furnace was black than those small compartments in the stern. The cold on deck pinched down so bitingly through the open companion hatch that I was fain to close it. I mounted the steps, and with much ado shipped the cover and shut the door, by which of course the great cabin, as I call the room in which the two men were, was plunged in darkness; but the cold was not tolerable, and the parcels of candles in the larder rendered me indifferent to the gloom.

On entering the passage in which were the doors of the berths, I noticed an object that had before escaped my observation—I mean a small trap hatch, no bigger than a manhole, with a ring for lifting it, midway down the lane. I suspected this to be the entrance to the lazarette, and putting both hands to the ring pulled the hatch up. I sniffed cautiously, fearing foul air, and then sinking the lantern by the length of my arm I peered down, and observed the contents of casks, bales, cases of white wood, chests, and so forth. I dropped through the hole on to a cask, which left my head and shoulders above the deck, and then with the utmost caution stooped and threw the lantern light around me. But the casks were not powder barrels, which perhaps a little reflection might have led me to suspect, since it was not to be supposed that any man would stow his powder in the lazarette.

As I was in the way of settling my misgivings touching the stock of food in the schooner, I resolved to push through with this business at once, and fetching the chopper went to work upon those barrels and chests; and very briefly I will tell you what I found. First, I dealt with a tierce that proved full of salt beef. There was a whole row of these tierces, and one sufficed to express the nature of the rest; there were upward of thirty barrels of pork; one canvas bale I ripped open was full of hams, and of these bales I counted half a score. The white cases held biscuit. There were several sacks of peas, a number of barrels of flour, cases of candles, cheeses, a quantity of tobacco, not to mention a variety of jars of several shapes, some of which I afterward found to contain marmalade and succadoes of different kinds. On knocking the head off one cask I found it held a frozen body that by the light of the lantern looked as black as ink; I chipped off a bit, sucked it, and found it wine.

I was so transported by the sight of this wonderful plenty that I fell upon my knees in an outburst of gratitude, and gave hearty thanks to God for his mercy. There was no further need for me to dismally wonder whether I was to starve or not; supposing the provisions sweet, here was food enough to last me three or four years. I was so overjoyed and withal curious that I forgot all about the time, and flourishing the chopper made the round of the lazarette, sampling its freight by individual instances, so that by the time I was tired I had enlarged the list I have given by discoveries of brandy, beer, oatmeal, oil, lemons, tongues, vinegar, rum and eight or ten other matters, all stowed very haphazardly, and in so many different kinds of casks, cases, jars and other vessels, as disposed me to believe that several piratical rummagings must have gone to the creation of this handsome and plentiful stock of good things.

Well, thought I, even if there be no more coal in the ship than what lies in the cook house, enough fuel is here in the shape of casks, boxes and the like to thaw me provisions for six months, besides what I may come across in the hold, along with the hammocks, bedding, boxes, and so forth, in the forecastle, all which would be good to feed my fire with. This was a most comforting reflection, and I recollect of spearing out through the lazarette hatch with as spirited a caper as ever I had cut at any time of my life.

I replaced the hatch cover, and having resolved upon the aftmost of the four cabins as my bedroom, entered it to see what kind of accommodation it would yield me. I hung up the lantern, and looked into the cot that was slung athwartships, and spied a couple of rugs or blankets, which I pulled out, having no fancy to lie under them. The deck was like an old clothes shop or the wardrobe of a traveling troop of actors. From the confusion in this and the adjoining cabins I concluded that there had been a rush at the last—a wild overhauling and flinging about of clothes for articles of more value hidden among them. But just as likely as not the disorder merely indicated the slovenly indifference of plunderers to the fruits of a pillage that had overstocked them.

The first garment I picked up was a cloak of a sort of silk material, richly furred and lined; all the buttons but one had been cut off, and that which remained was silver. I spread it in the cot, as it was a snug thing to lie upon. Then I picked up a coat of the fashion you will see in Hogarth's engravings—the coat collar a broad fold, and the cuffs to the elbow. This was as good as a rug, and I put it into the cot with the other.

I swept the huddle of things with my foot into a corner, and lifting the lids of the boxes saw more clothes, some books, a collection of small arms, a couple of quadrants, and sundry rolls of paper, which proved to be charts of the islands of the Antilles and the western South American coast, very ill digested. There were no papers of any kind to determine the vessel's character, nor journal to acquaint me with her story.

I was tired in my limbs rather than sleepy, and went to the cook room to warm myself at the fire and get me some supper, meaning to sit there till the fire died out and then go to rest; but when I put my knife to the ham I found it as hard frozen as when I had first met with it—so with the cheese, and this though there had been a fire burning for hours! I put the things into the oven to thaw, as before, and sitting down fell very pensive over this severity of cold, which had power to freeze within a yard or two of the furnace. To be sure, the fire by my absence had slunk, and the sliding door being open admitted the cold of the cabin; but the consideration was, How was I to resist the killing enfoldment of this atmosphere? I had slept in the boat, it is true, and was none the worse, and now I was under shelter, with the heat of a plentiful belyful of meat and liquor to warm me; but if wine and ham and cheese froze in an air in which a fire had been burning, why not I in my sleep, when there was no fire, and life beat weakly, as it does in slumber? Those figures in the cabin were dismal warnings and assurances; they had been men perhaps stouter and heartier than ever I was in their day, but they had been frozen into stony images, nevertheless, under cover, too, with the materials to make a fire, and as much strong waters in their lazarette as would serve their schooner to float in.

It strangely and importunately entered my head to conceive that though those men were frozen and stirless they were not dead as corpses are, but as a stream whose current, checked by ice, will flow when the ice is melted. Might not life in them be suspended by the cold, not ended? There is vitality in the seed, though it lies a dead thing in the hand. These men are corpses to my eye, but, said I to myself, they may have the principles of life in them, which heat might call into being. Putrefaction is a natural law, but it is balked by frost; and just as decay is hindered by cold, might not the properties of life be left unaffected in a body, though it should be numbed in a marble form for fifty years?

This was a terrible fancy to possess a man situated as I was, and it so worked in me that again and again I caught myself looking first forward, then aft, as though heaven help me! my secret instincts foreboded that at any moment I should behold some form from the forecastle or one of those figures in the cabin stalking in, and coming to my side and silently seating himself. I pshawed and pished, and querulously asked of myself what manner of English sailor would to suffer such womanly terrors to visit me; but it would not do: I could not smoke; a coldness of the heart fell upon me, and set me trembling above any sort of shivers which the frost of the air had chilled through me; and presently a hollow creak sounding out of the hold, caused by some movement of the bed of ice on which the vessel lay, I was seized with a panic terror and sprang to my feet, and lantern in hand made for the companion ladder, with a prayer in me for the sight of a star!

I durst not look at the figures, but setting the light down at the foot of the ladder squeezed through the companion door on to the deck. My fear was uppermost in this way, and I did not feel the cold. There was no star to be seen; but the whiteness of the ice was flung out in a wild, strange glare by the blackness of the sky, and made a light of its own. It was the most savage and terrible picture of solitude the invention of man could reach to, yet I loosed it for the relief it gave to my ghost enkindled imagination. Presently, when the cold was beginning to pierce me, my courage was so much the better for this excursion into the hoarse and black and gleaming realities of the night, that my heart beat at its usual measure as I passed through the hatch and went again to the cook room.

I was, however, sure that if I sat here long, listening and thinking, fear would return. So, raking out the fire, I picked up the lantern and was about to go, then halted, considering whether I should not show the frozen provisions a way. It was a natural thought, seeing how precious food was to me. But, alas! it mattered not where they lay; they were as secure here as if they were as snugly hidden in the bottom of the hold. It was the white realm of death; if ever a rat had crawled in this ship it was, in its hiding place, as stiff and idle as the frozen vessel. So I let the lump of wine, the ice, ham, and so forth, rest where they were, and went to the cabin I had chosen, involuntarily peeping at the figures as I passed, and hurrying the faster because of the grim and terrifying liveliness put into the man who sat starting from the table by the swing of the lantern in my hand.

I shut the door and hung the lantern near the cot, having the flint and box in my pocket. There was, indeed, an abundance of candles in the vessel; nevertheless, it was my business to husband them with the utmost niggardliness. How long I was to be imprisoned here, if indeed I was ever to be delivered, Providence alone knew; and to run short of candles would add to the terrors of my existence by forcing me either to open the hatches and ports for light, and so filling the ship with the deadly air outside, or living in darkness. There were a cloak and a coat in the cot, but they would not suffice; there was, however, plenty of apparel in the corner to serve as wraps, and having chosen enough to smother me I vaulted into the cot, and so covered myself that the clothes were above the level of the sides of the cot.

I left the lantern burning while I made sure my bed was all right, and lay musing, feeling extremely melancholy; the hardest part was the thought of those two men watching in the cabin. The most fantastic alarms possessed me. Suppose their ghosts came to the ship at midnight, and entering their bodies quickened them into walking! I caught myself listening; and there was enough to hear, too, what with the subdued roaring of the wind, the splintering of ice, the occasional creaking—not unlike a heavy booted tread—of the fabric of the schooner to the blasts of the gale against her masts, or to a movement in the bed on which she reposed.

But plain sense came to my rescue at last. I resolved to have no more of these night fancies so, blowing out the candle, I put my head on the coat that formed my pillow, resolutely kept my eyes shut, and after a while fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

I EXPLORE THE HOLD AND FORECASTLE.

It was pitch dark when I awoke, and I conceived it must be the middle of the night; but, to my astonishment, on lighting the lantern and looking at the watch, which I had taken the precaution to wind up over night, I saw it wanted but twenty minutes to eight o'clock, so that I had passed through eleven hours of solid sleep. However, it was only needful to recollect where I was and to cast a glance at the closed door and port, to understand why it was dark. I had slept fairly warm, and awoke with no sensation of cramp; but the keen air had caused the steam of my breath to freeze upon my mouth in such a manner that, when feeling the sticky inconvenience I put my finger to it, it fell like a little mask; and I likewise felt the pain of cold in my face to such an extent that had I been blistered there, my cheeks, nose and brow could not have smarted more. This resolved me henceforward to wrap up my head and face before going to rest.

I opened the door and passed out, and observed an amazing difference between the temperature of the air in which I had been sleeping and that of the atmosphere in the passage—a happy discovery, for it served to assure me that, if I was careful to lie under plenty of coverings and to keep the outer air excluded, the heat of my body would raise the temperature of the little cabin; nor, providing the compartment was ventilated throughout the day, was there anything to be feared from the vitiation of the air by my own breathing.

My first business was to light the fire and set my breakfast to thaw, and I boil me a kettle of water; and while this was preparing I went on deck to view the weather and to revolve in my mind the routine of the day. On opening the door of the companion hatch I was nearly blinded by the glorious brilliance of the sunshine on the snow; after the blackness of the cabin it was like looking at the sun himself, and I had to stand a full three minutes with my hand upon my eyes before I could accustom my sight to the dazzling glare. It was fine weather again; the sky over the glass like masts of the schooner was a clear, dark blue, with a few light clouds blowing over it from the southward. The wind had shifted at last; but, pure as the heavens were, the breeze was piping briskly with the weight and song of a small gale, and its fangs of frost, even in the comparative quiet of the sheltered deck, bit with a fierceness that had not been observable yesterday.

The moment I had the body of the vessel in my sight I perceived that she had changed her position since my last view of her. Her bows were more raised, and she lay over farther by the depth of a plank. I stared earnestly at the rocky slopes on either hand, but could not have sworn their figuration was changed. An eager hope shot into my mind, but it quickly faded into an emotion of apprehension. It was conceivable, indeed, that on a sudden some early day I might find the schooner liberated and afloat, and this was the first inspiriting flush; but then came the fear that the disruption and volcanic throes of the ice might crush her—a fear rational enough when I saw the height she lay above the sea, and how by pressure those slopes which formed her cradle might be jammed and welded together. The change of her posture then fell upon me with a kind of shock, and determined me, when I had broken my fast, to search her hold for a boat or for materials for constructing some ark by which I might float out to sea, should the ice grow menacing and force me from the schooner.

I made a plentiful meal, feeling the need of abundance of food in such a temperature as this, and heartily grateful that there was no need why I should stint myself.

While I ate my mind was so busy with considerations of the change in the ship's posture during the night, that it ended in determining me to take a survey of her from the outside, and then climb the cliffs and look around before I fell to any other work. Arming myself with a boarding pike to serve as a pole, I dropped into the fore chains and thence stepped on to the ice, and very slowly and carefully walked round the schooner, examining her closely and boring into the snow upon her side with my pike wherever I suspected a hole or indent. I could find nothing wrong with her in this way, though what a thaw might reveal I could not know. Her rudder hung frozen upon its pintles, and looked as it should. Some little distance abaft her rudder, where the hollow or chasm sloped to the sea, was a great split three or four feet wide; this had certainly happened in the night, and I must have slept as sound as the dead not to hear the noise of it. Such a rent as this sufficed to account for the subsidence of the after part of the schooner and her further inclination to larboard. Indeed, the hollow was now coming to resemble the "ways" on which ships are launched; and you would have conceived by the appearance of it that if it should slope a little more yet, off would slide the schooner for the sea, and in the right posture, too—that is, stern on. But I prayed with all my might and again for anything but this. It would have been very well had the hollow gone in a gentle declivity to the wash of the sea—to the water itself, in short; but it terminated at the edge of a cliff, not very high, indeed, but high enough to warrant the prompt foundering of any vessel that should launch herself off it. Happily the keel was too solidly frozen into the ice to render a passage of this description possible; and the conclusion I arrived at, after careful inspection, was that the sole chance that could offer for the delivery of the vessel to her proper element lay in the cracking up and disruption of the bed on which she lay.

Satisfied as to the state of the ice and the posture of the schooner viewed from without, I sent a slow and piercing gaze along the ocean line, and then returned to the ship. The strong wind, the dance of the sea, the grandeur of the great tract of whiteness, vitalized by the flying of violet cloud shadows along it, had fortified my spirits, and being free for a while of all superstitious dread, I determined to begin by exploring the forecastle and ascertaining if more bodies were in the schooner than those two in the cabin and the giant form on deck. I threw some coal on the fire, and placed an ox tongue along with the cheese and a lump of the frozen wine in a pannikin into the oven for I had a mind to taste the vessel's stores, and thought the tongue would make an agreeable changes, and then, putting a candle into the lantern, walked very bravely to the forecastle and entered it.

I was prepared for the scene of confusion, but I must say it staggered me afresh with something of the force of the first impression. Sailors' chests lay open in all directions, and their contents covered the decks. There was the clearest evidence here that the majority of the crew had quitted the vessel in a violent hurry, turning out their boxes to cram their money and jewelry into their pockets, and heedlessly flinging down their own and the clothes which had fallen to their share. This I had every right to suppose from the character of the muddle on the floor; for, passing the light over a part of it, I witnessed a great variety of attire of a kind which certainly no sailor in any age ever went to sea with—not so fine, perhaps, as that which lay in the cabins, but very good, nevertheless, particularly the linen.

In many places, glittering among the effects, were gold and silver coins, a few silver ornaments, such as buckles, and watches—things not missed by the pirates in the transport of their flight. In kicking a coat aside I discovered a couple of silver crucifixes bound together, and close by were a silver goblet and the hilt of a sword broken short off for the sake of the metal it was made of. Nothing ruder than this interior is imaginable. The men must have been mighty put to it for room. There was a window in the head, but the snow veiled it. May be the rogues messed together aft, and only used this forecastle to lie in. Right under the hatch, where the light was strongest, was a dead rat. I stopped to pick it up, meaning to fling it on to the deck, but its tail broke off at the rump like a pipe stem.

Close against the after bulkhead that separated the forecastle from the cook room was a little hatch. There was a quantity of wearing apparel upon it, and I should have missed it but for catching sight of some three inches of the dark line the cover made in the deck. On clearing away the clothes I perceived a ring similar to that in the lazarette hatch! and it rose to my first drag and left me the hold yawning black below. I peered down, and observed a stout stanchion traversed by iron pins for the hands and feet. The atmosphere was nasty, and to give it time to clear I went to the cook house and warmed myself before the fire.

The fresh air blowing down the forecastle hatch speedily sweetened the hold. I lowered the lantern and followed, and found myself on top of some rum or spirit casks, which on my hitting them returned me a solid note. There was a fore peak forward in the bows, and the casks were stowed to the bulkhead of it. The top of this bulkhead was open four feet from the upper deck, and on holding the lantern over and putting my head through I saw a quantity of coals. If the forepeak went as low as the vessel's floor then I calculated there would not be less than fifteen tons of coal in it. This was a noble discovery to fall upon, and it made me feel so happy that I do not know that the assurance of my being immediately rescued from this island could have given a lighter pulse to my heart.

The candle yielded a very small light, and it was difficult to see above a yard or so ahead or around. I turned my face aft, and crawled over the casks and came to under the main hatch, where lay coils of hawser, buckets, blocks and the like; but there was no pinnace, though here she had been stowed, as a sailor would have promptly seen. A little way beyond, under the great cabin, was the powder magazine, a small bulkheaded compartment with a little door, atop of which was a small bull's eye lamp. I peered warily enough, you will suppose, into this place; and made out twelve barrels of powder. I heartily wished them overboard; and yet, after all, they were not very much more dangerous than the wine and spirits in the lazarette and forehold.

The run remained to be explored—the afterpart, I mean, under the lazarette deck to the rudder post—but I had seen enough; crawling about that black interior was cold, lonesome, melancholy work, and it was rendered peculiarly arduous, by the obligation of caution imposed, by my having to bear a light amid a freight mainly formed of explosives and combustible matter. I had found plenty of coal, and that sufficed. So I returned by the same road I had entered, and sliding to the bulkhead door to keep the cold of the forecastle out of the cook room, I stirred the fire into a blaze and sat down before it to think.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCE.

While I sat smoking my pipe it entered my head to presently turn those two silent gentlemen in the cabin out of it. It was a task from which I shrank, but it must be done. To be candid, I dreaded the effects of their dismal companionship on my spirits. But how was I to dispose of them? I meditated this matter while I smoked. First I thought I would drag them to the fissure or rent in the ice just beyond the stern of the schooner and tumble them into it. But even then they would still be with me, so to speak—I mean they would be neighbors, though out of sight; and my eagerness was to get them away from this island altogether, which was only to be done by casting them into the sea.

I settled my scheme thus: First, I was to haul the figures as best I could on to the deck; then, there being three, to get them over the side, and afterward, by degrees, to transport the four of them to some steep, whence they would slide of themselves into the ocean. Yet so much did I dread the undertaking, and abhor the thought of the tedious time I foresaw it would occupy me, that I cannot imagine any other sort of painful and distressing work that would not have seemed actually agreeable as compared with this.

My pipe being smoked out, I stepped into the cabin, and ascending the ladder throw off the companion cover and opened the doors, and then went to the man that had his back to the steps—but my courage failed me; he was so life like, there was so wild and fierce an earnestness in the expression of his face, so inimitable a picture of horror in his starting posture, that my hands fell to my side and I could not lay hold of him. I will not stop to analyze my fear or ask why, since I know that this man was dead, he should have terrified me as surely no living man could. I can only repeat that the prospect of touching him, and laying him upon the deck and then dragging him up the ladder, was indescribably fearful to me, and I turned away shaking as if I had the ague.

But it had to be done, nevertheless, and after a great deal of reasoning and self-reproach I seized him on a sudden, and kicking away the bench let him fall to the deck. He was frozen as hard as stone and fell like stone, and I looked to see him break, as a statue might that falls lumpishly. His arms remaining raised put him into an attitude of entreaty to me to leave him in peace; but I had somewhat mastered myself, and the hurry and tumult of my spirits were a kind of hot temper; so catching him by the collar I dragged him to the foot of the companion steps, and then, with infinite labor and a number of sickening pauses, hauled him up the ladder to the deck.

I let him lie, and returned weary and out of breath. He had been a very fine man in life—of beauty, too, as was to be seen in the shape of his features and the particular elegance of his chin, despite the distortion of his last unspeakable dismay; and with his clothes I guessed his weight came hard upon 200 pounds—no mean burden to haul up a ladder.

I went to the cook house for a dram and to rest myself, and then came back to the cabin and looked at the other man. His posture has been already described. He made a very burly figure in his coat, and if his weight did not exceed the other's it was not likely to be less. Nothing of his head was visible but the baldness on the top and the growth of hair that ringed it, and the fluffing up of his beard about his arms, in which his face was sunk. I touched his beard with a shuddering finger, and noted that the frost had made every hair of it as stiff as wire. It would not do to stand idly contemplating him, for already there was slowly creeping into me a dread of seeing his face; so I took hold of him and swayed him from the table, and he fell upon the deck sideways, preserving his posture, so that his face remained hidden. I dragged him a little way, but he was so heavy and his attitude rendered him as a burden so surprisingly cumbrous, that I was sure I could never of my own strength have hauled him up the ladder. Yet neither was it tolerable that he should be there.

Then, thought I, if I was to put him before the fire, he might presently thaw into some sort of suppleness, and so prove not harder than the other to get on deck. I liked the idea, and without more ado dragged him behind a cask into the cook room and laid him close to the furnace, throwing in a little pile of coal to make the fire roar.

Dragged him laboriously into the cook room.

I then went on deck, and easily enough, the deck being slippery, got my first man to where the huge fellow was that had entoiled the vessel when I first looked down upon her; but when I viewed the slopes, broken into rocks, which I, though undaunted, had found hard enough to ascend, I was perfectly certain I should never be able to transport the bodies to the top of the cliffs. I must either let them fall into the great split astern of the ship, or lower them over the side and leave the hollow in which the schooner lay to be their tomb.

It was mighty comforting on returning to the cabin to find it vacant, to be freed from the sense of the sight of the two silent figures. I drew my breath more easily and stopped to glance around. It was the barest cabin I was ever in—uncarpeted, with no other seats than the little benches. I looked at the crucifix, and guessed from the sight of it that, whatever might be the vessel's nation, she had not been sailed by Englishmen. I peeped into poor Polly's cage—it a parrot it was—and the sight of the rich plumage carried my imagination to skies of brass, to the mysterious green solitude of tropic forests, to islands fringed with silver surf, in whose sunny flashing spurted nude girls of faultless forms, showing their teeth of pearl in merry laughter, winding amorously with the blue billow, and filling the aromatic breeze with the melody of their language of the sun. Ha! thought I, sailors see some changes in their time; and with a hearty sigh I stepped into the cook room.

I started, stopped, and fell back a pace with a cry. When I had put the figure before the fire he was in the same posture in which he had sat at the table—that is, leaning forward with his face hid in his arms. I had laid him on his side, with his face to the furnace, and in that attitude you would have supposed him a man sound asleep with his arms over his face to shield it from the heat. But now, to my unspeakable astonishment, he lay on his back, with his arms sunk to his side, and resting on the deck, and his face upturned.

I stared at him from the door as if he was the dead himself. I could murder creep my senses; and my consternation was so great that I cannot conceive of anguish ever having labored under a greater height. I plainly ejaculated "Good God!" several times, and could hardly prevent my legs from running away with me. You see, it was certain that he must have moved of his own accord to get upon his back. I was positive of the fire to thaw him into lumberness, and had I found him straightened so as what I should not have been surprised. But there was no power in fire to stretch him to his full length and turn him over on his back. What living or ghostly hand had done this thing? But spirits walk this schooner after all! Had I missed of something more terrible than any number of dead men in searching the vessel?

I had made a great fire, and its light was strong, and there was also the light of the lantern; but the furnace flames played very lively, completely overmastering the steady illumination of the candle, and the man's figure was all activity with moving shadows, and a hundred fantastic shades seemed to steal out of the side and bulkheads and disappear upon my terrified gaze. Then, thought I, suppose after all that man should be alive, the vitality in him set flowing by the heat! I minded myself of my own shuffle of the current checked by frost, yet retaining unimpaired the principle of motion; and, getting my agitation under some small control, I approached the body on tiptoe and held the lantern to its face.

He looked a man of 60 years of age; his beard was gray and very long, and lay upon his breast like a cloud of smoke. His eyes were closed; the brows shaggy, and the dark scar of a sword wound ran across his forehead from the corner of the left eye to the top of the right brow. His nose was long and hooked; but the repose in his countenance, backed by the vague character of the light in which I inspected him, left his face almost expressionless. I was too much alarmed to put my ear to his mouth to mark if he breathed, if indeed the noise of the burning fire would have permitted me to distinguish his respiration. I drew back from him, and put down the lantern and watched him.

Presently his left leg, that was slightly bent toward the furnace, stretched itself out to its full length, and my ear caught a faint sound, as of a weak and melancholy sigh. Gracious heaven, thought I, he is alive! and with less of terror than of profound awe, now that I saw there was nothing of a ghostly or preternatural character in this business, I approached and bent over him. His eyes were still shut, and I could not hear that he breathed; there was not the faintest motion of respiration in his breast nor stir in the hair, that was now soft, about his mouth. Yet, so far as the light would suffer me to judge, there was a complexion in his face such as could only come with flowing blood, however languid its circulation; and putting this and the sigh and the movement of the leg together, I felt convinced that the man was alive, and forthwith fell to work, very full of awe and amazement, to be sure, to help nature, that was struggling in him.

My first step was to heat some brandy, and while this was doing I pulled open his coat and freed his neck, fetching a coat from the cabin to serve as a pillow for his head. I next removed his boots and laid bare his feet (which were incased in no less than four pairs of thick woolen stockings, so that I thought when I came to the third pair I should fin his legs made of stockings), and after bathing his feet in hot water, of which there was a kettleful, I rubbed them with hot brandy as hard as I could chafe. I then dealt with his hands in the like manner, having once been shipmate with a seaman who told me he had