

THE WORLD AT WAR
JACK MANLY
HIS ADVENTURES BY SEA AND LAND



JAMES GRANT

Jack Manly

His Adventures by Sea and Land

James Grant

CHAPTER I. WHY I WENT TO SEA.

It was the evening of the sixteenth of March.

Exactly six months had elapsed since I left my father's snug villa at Peckham, with its walls shrouded by roses and honeysuckle; and now I found myself two thousand three hundred miles distant from it, in his agent's counting-room, in the dreary little town of St. John, in Newfoundland, writing in a huge ledger, and blowing my fingers from time to time, for snow more than ten feet deep covered all the desolate country, and the shipping in the harbour was imbedded in ice at least three feet in thickness; while the thermometer, at which I glanced pretty often, informed me that the mercury had sunk twelve degrees below the freezing point.

While busily engrossing quintals of salted fish, by the thousand, barrels of Hamburg meal and Irish pork, chests of bohea, bales of shingles, kegs of gunpowder, caplin nets, anchors and cables, and Indian corn from the United States, with all the heterogeneous mass of everything which usually fill the stores of a wealthy merchant in that terra nova, I thought of the noisy world of London, from which I had been banished, or, as tutors and guardians phrased it, "sent to learn something of my father's business —*i.e.*, practically to begin life as he had begun it;" and so I sighed impatiently over my monotonous task, while melting the congealed ink, from time to time, on the birchwood fire, and reverting to what March is in England, where we may watch the bursting of the new buds and early flowers; where the birds are heard in every sprouting hedge and tree, and as we inhale the fresh breeze of the morning, a new and unknown delight makes our pulses quicken and a

glow of tenderness fill the heart—for then we see and feel, as some one says, "what we have seen and felt *only* in *childhood and spring*."

"Belay this scribbling business, Jack," said a hearty voice in my ear; "come, ship on board my brig, and have a cruise with me in the North Sea. I shall have all my hands aboard to-morrow."

I looked up, threw away my pen, closed the gigantic ledger with a significant bang, and shook the hand of the speaker, who was my old friend and schoolfellow, Bob Hartly, whose face was as red as the keen frost of an American winter evening could make it, albeit he was buttoned to the throat in a thick, rough Flushing coat, and wore a cap with fur ear-covers tied under his chin—a monk-like hood much worn in these northern regions during the season of snow.

"I don't think your cruise after seals and blubber will be a very lively affair, Bob," said I, rubbing my hands at the stove, on which he was knocking the ashes of his long Havannah.

"Lively! if it is not more lively than this quill-driving work, may I never see London Bridge again, or take,

'Instead of pistol or a dagger, a
Desperate leap down the falls of Niagara!'"

"I am sick of this Cimmerian region!" said I, stamping with vexation at his jocular mood, when contrasted to my own surly one.

"Cimmerian—ugh! that phrase reminds me of school-times, and how we used to blunder through Homer together, for he drew all his images of Pluto and Pandemonium from the dismal country of the Cimmerii. By Jove! I could give you a

stave yet from Virgil or Ovid, hand over hand, on the same subject; but that would be paying Her Majesty's colony a poor compliment."

"Well, Bob, I am sick of this place, in which evil fate, or rather bad luck, has buried me alive—this frozen little town of wood and tar, without outlet by sea or land in winter, without amusement, and, at this time, seemingly without life."

"It forms a contrast to London, certainly," said Hartly, assisting himself, uninvited, to the contents of a case-bottle of Hollands which stood near; "but there is a mint of money to be made in it."

"The first English folks who came here were reduced to such straits, we are told, that they killed and ate each other; and those who returned were such skeletons that their wives and mothers did not know them."

Hartly laughed loudly, and said—

"But that was in the time of King Henry VIII., and people don't eat each other here now. But to resume what we were talking about——"

"Old Uriah Skrew, my father's agent, and I are on the worst terms; he keeps a constant watch over me. I go from my desk to bed, and from bed to my desk—so passes my existence."

"Why not slip your cable and run, then?"

"Skrew being a partner in the firm," I continued, warming at the idea of my own rights and fancied wrongs, "cares for nothing but making money from the riches of the sea, and thinks only of cargoes of fish to be bartered in Lent, at

Cadiz, for fruit and wine, oil, seals, and blubber; and really in this cold season——"

"Ah, but summer is coming," interrupted Bob, drily.

"Summer! How is the year divided here?"

"Into nine months of winter and three of bad weather."

"A pleasant prospect! If I were once again at Peckham——"

"Well, Jack, I have a grudge at old Uriah Skrew, for, like a swab, he played me a scurvy trick about a cargo I had consigned to your father and him, from Cadiz, last year—a trick by which I lost all my profit and tonnage.

"Likely enough; this ledger is Uriah's bible—and his God ——"

"Is gold! So I care not a jot if, for the mere sake of provoking him, I lend you a hand to give him the slip, for a few months at least. Ship with me to-morrow—as a volunteer, passenger, or whatever you please."

"I shall," said I, throwing my pen resolutely into the fire.

"Your hand on it! I like this. Get your warmest toggery sent on board; you'll need it all, I can tell you! I can give you a long gun, and bag for powder and slugs; and then, with a bowie-knife in your belt, a seal-skin cap with long flaps, and a stout pea-jacket, you will make as smart a seal fisher as ever sailed through the Narrows! By this time to-morrow you may be forty miles from your ledger, running through the North Sea with a flowing sheet. By Jove, I know a jolly old Esquimau who lives at Cape Desolation under an old whaleboat. He will be delighted to make your acquaintance, and give you a feed of sea weed and blubber

that will make your mouth water, though we eat it when the mercury is frozen in the bulb."

This cheerful prospect of Arctic hospitality might have persuaded me to remain where I was, but soured by the treatment I experienced from Mr. Skrew, who misrepresented my conduct and habits to my family at home, and tired of the monotony of his counting-room, I looked forward with eagerness to an anticipated escape.

How little could I foresee the consequences of my impatience, folly, and wayward desire for rambling! Ere a month was past, I had repented in bitterness my boyish repugnance for steady application and industrious habits.

My friend, Robert Hartly, who was eight years my senior, was master and owner of the *Leda*, a smart brig of two hundred and fifty tons register—a craft in which he had invested all his savings. Last year he had lost a wife and two children, whom he tenderly loved; he had come to St. John from Cadiz, missed a freight and been frozen-in, and now, with all a sailor's restlessness and dread of being idle, even for a month or two, he had resolved to sail for the spring seal fishery, as a change of scene, and a trip which he hoped would not prove unprofitable, as his vessel was one of a class far superior to those which usually venture into the region of ice, being well found, well manned, coppered to the bends, and, in short, the perfection of a British merchant brig.

"By the bye," said he, "talking of powder and slugs, we may need both, for other purposes than shooting seals."

"How?" I asked.

"I mean if we came athwart the *Black Schooner* which has been prowling and plundering about the coast for the last

six weeks."

"Are there more news of her?"

"No; but here is a placard given to all shipmasters yesterday," said he, unfolding a paper surmounted by the royal arms, and running in the name of "His Excellency the Governor and Commander-in-Chief over the Island of Newfoundland and its Dependencies," offering 500*l.* to the crew of any ship that would capture "the vessel known as the *Black Schooner*," &c. "She is a queer craft," continued Hartly, "and said to be a slaver, bankrupt, and out of business; though Paul Reeves, my mate, maintains that she is the *Adventure* galley. which sailed from London in the time of King William III., and that her crew are the ghosts of Kidd and his pirates; but ghosts don't steal beef and drink brandy."

Hartly's father had been in the navy; thus he had received a good and thorough nautical education, but early in life had been left to work his way in the world; so he made the watery portion thereof his home and means of livelihood. He was a handsome, hardy, and cheerful young fellow, and the *beau idéal* of a thorough British seaman.

On the third finger of his left hand he wore a curious ring of base metal, graven with runes of strange figures. This was the gift of an old woman to whom he had rendered some service when in Iceland, and who had promised, that while he wore it, he could *never be drowned*; consequently Hartly was too much imbued with the superstition of his profession to part with it for a moment.

"But how am I to elude old Skrew, and get on board," said I, after we had concluded all our arrangements, over a glass of hot brandy-punch, in Bob's lodgings in Water-street.

"True—the brig lies frozen-in at the end of his wharf, the hatches are all locked, and the hands ashore."

"If he sees me on board, there will be an end of our project, for I have no wish to quarrel with him in an unseemly manner; but merely to 'levant' quietly, leaving a letter to announce where I am gone, and when I may, perhaps, return."

"All right—I have it! I'll send an empty cask to Skrew's store to-morrow. Paul Reeves, the mate, and Hammer, the carpenter, will head you up in it, and so you may be brought on board unknown to all save them—ay, under the very nose of old Uriah. Will that suit you?"

"Delightfully!" said I, clapping my hands. The whole affair had the appearance of an adventure, and though there were a hundred ways by which I might have joined the brig, when the *cutting-out* of the sealing fleet took place next day, like a young schoolboy—for in some respects I was little more—I accepted the strange proposal of going on board in a cask, and retired to bed, to dream of adventures on the high seas; for being young, healthy, and active, I could always have pleasant dreams without studying the art of procuring them—an art on which Dr. Franklin wrote so learnedly in the last century.

CHAPTER II.

ADVENTURE IN A CASK.

On the next day (17th of March), when the fleet of adventurers departs for the spring seal fishery, the little seaport town of St. John's presents an unusual aspect of bustle and gaiety. On that anniversary, at least one hundred vessels, having on board three thousand seamen, batmen, and gunners, sail to seek their fortune in the ice-fields; but on the day I am about to describe, the number of craft and their crews far exceeded this.

The day was clear and sunny, not a speck of cloud was in the sky, whose immensity of blue made the eye almost ache, while the intense brilliance of the snow, which covered the hills and the whole scenery, made them seem to vibrate in the sunshine, and caused a species of blindness, especially on entering any apartment, however large or well-lighted; for after being out of doors in that season and region for an hour or so, a house usually seems totally dark for a time.

For some days previous there had been that species of drizzle which is termed locally "a silver thaw," thus, all the houses of the town, the roofs, walls, and chimneys; the trees, the shipping in the frozen harbour, every mast, yard, and inch of standing or running rigging, were thickly coated with clear ice, which sparkled like prisms in the sunshine, making them seem as if formed of transparent crystal. Then, there was a glittering in the frosty atmosphere, as if it was composed of minute particles, while the intensity of the cold made one feel as if a coarse file were being roughly applied to one's nose or cheekbones on facing the west, the point whence the wind came over the vast and snow-covered tracts of untrodden and

unexplored country which stretch away for three hundred miles towards the Red Indian Lake and the Bay of Exploits.

The keepers of stores and shops—who in St. John are usually dressed like seamen, in round jackets and glazed hats—with all idlers, were pouring through every avenue and thoroughfare, and spreading over the harbour. All the ships displayed their colours, and the sound of music, as bands perambulated the ice, rang upon the clear and ambient air, mingled with the musical jingle of the sleigh bells, as the more wealthy folks, muffled and shawled to the nose, galloped their horses with arrow-like speed from side to side of the harbour.

The latter and the town (but especially the grog-shops) were crowded by the seal fishermen, who had come in from all parts of the coast, and bore bundles of clothing slung over their backs, each having his carefully selected club wherewith to smite the young seals on the head, and also to be used as a gaff or ice-hook. Many of these men were also armed with long sealing-guns, which are twice the size and weight of an ordinary musket, and resemble the huge, unwieldy gingals of the East Indians, having flintlocks of a clumsy fashion.

They are generally loaded with coarse-grained powder and pieces of lead, termed *slugs*, to shoot the old seals, who frequently prove refractory, and dangerous when defending their young.

Those fishers who are thus armed as gunners rank before the mere clubmen, and receive a small remuneration, or are remitted some of the "berth money" which is usually paid to the storekeeper or merchant who equips the vessel for the ice; "the outfitting," says one who is well-informed on these matters, "being always defrayed by the receipt of

one-half the cargo of seals, the other half going to adventurers, with these and other deductions for extra supplies." But, as Captain Hartly fitted out his own vessel and shipped his own crew, gunners, and batmen at stipulated salaries, he expected to reap the whole profits of the expedition.

In addition to the project I had in view, I was particularly anxious to witness the gaiety of this the only and yearly colonial gala day—the shipping of the crews, (who always proceed in procession along the ice,) with the cutting-out and departure of the sealers; but old Mr. Uriah Skrew, with his clean-shaven face and small cunning eyes, was in the counting-room betimes, and piled work upon me thick and fast, to anticipate any application for a day's leave.

"May I not go out for an hour, sir, and see what is going on in the harbour?" I asked, gently.

"No, sir," he replied, sharply; "such nonsense only leads to idleness—idleness to dissipation, and dissipation to ruin! That is the sliding-scale, young man——"

"Oh! my good sir, you are too severe."

"Severe! Mr. Jack Manly!——"

"Well, sir?"

"I have always been kind and indulgent to you."

"Kind—hum."

"Yes; more kind and indulgent than your father, my worthy partner, wishes—and more than he would be."

"Query?"

"What do you mean by 'query'?" he demanded in a bullying tone, for he intensely disliked me, fearing that I should soon be admitted into the firm.

"Because I have my doubts on the subject, and your refusal to grant me leave to-day confirms my opinion of you, Mr. Skrew."

"Very well; enough of this, not a word more, or by the first ship for Europe I will write what you'll wish had not been written. Not a word more."

"I am mute as a fish."

"Engross these papers—but, first, go to the store on the wharf, and tell the keeper to speak with me; and look sharp!"

I put on my cap and left the counting-room, feeling assured that many a day would elapse ere I stood within it again, as I caught a glimpse of Paul Reeves, mate of the *Leda*, and two seamen, loitering outside; but near the window, wherein stood my desk, under the leaf of which I deposited a letter addressed to Mr. Skrew, informing him, in the parlance of Bob Hartly, that "I had slipped my cable and gone to sea."

"Captain Hartly's friend, sir?" said the mate, touching his hat, and winking knowingly.

"Yes."

"All right, sir! here is the cask, step in, and Tom Hammer, our carpenter, and his mate, will head you up in it comfortably in less than a minute."

"No one is near?" said I, anxiously glancing round the courtyard.

"Not a soul, sir: in you go, on with the head, Tom, and be quick, for the ice channel is cutting fast to the fairway; the jib and foretopsail are loose, and the lashings all but cast off."

The counting-room of Messrs. Manly and Skrew stood within a courtyard, which was entered by a gateway from Water-street; and from this court—which was formed by four large wooden stores, all pitched, tarred, and now coated with snow and ice—a path led down to the wharf, at the end of which, as at the end of all the others that jutted into the harbour, a mercantile flag was displayed from a mast. In this court were piles of old barrels, hampers, boxes, an anchor, a spare topmast or so, half buried under the usual white mantle, on which a flock of poor little snowbirds were hopping and twittering drearily.

"Do you feel snug, sir?" inquired Paul Reeves, through the bunghole.

"Yes; but please to lose no time in getting me through the crowd on the wharf, and on board the *Leda*" I replied, in a somewhat imploring tone of voice; for the cask, though a roomy one, was the reverse of comfortable, and already I longed to stretch myself.

"The *Leda* lies just outside the Bristol clipper."

"She that was overhauled and plundered, and had three of her crew shot by the *Black Schooner*?"

"Yes, sir," replied Reeves, as the two seamen hoisted up the cask; and I soon became aware by the clamour around me that I was being conveyed down to the wharf, where Mr.

Skrew, in a full suit of Petersham and sables, was walking to and fro till his sledge arrived.

"Hallo, what have you fellows got in the cask?" he demanded as I was borne past him.

"Some of the captain's stores, sir," replied Reeves.

"His grandmother's best featherbed," added the carpenter.

"Very good," said Uriah, as I was deposited almost on his gouty toes.

Men often stumbled against my cask, and swore at it or pushed it aside. Once a fellow seated himself on it, and kicked with his heels till I was nearly deranged, and the impulse to scare him by a shout became almost irrepressible. For a time, I dreaded that it might be tumbled off the wharf into the sludge and broken ice alongside!

Ere long the wharf was cleared; I heard the clanking of the gates, as the keeper, by order of Mr. Skrew, locked them, doubtless to exclude me therefrom on this great gala day; and then followed the jangling of bells, as he stepped into his sledge, and departed upon the ice. Thus I was left to my own reflections on the solitary wharf.

Before this, a great commotion had taken place at the extremity thereof, as the Bristol clipper by some mismanagement ran foul of the *Leda*, and the usual volleys of threats, oaths, and orders incident to such collisions in harbour were exchanged from the decks and rigging of both vessels, while, by using boat-hooks aloft and fenders below, the crew strove to keep the rigging clear and the hulls apart.

Amid this unexpected hurly-burly, I was *forgotten* in my cask!

The wharf stood near the western extremity of the town, which lies along the basin of the harbour. The sounds in my vicinity seemed all to die away, as the crowd along the shore and upon the ice followed the ships, which in succession were warped along their ice-channels into the fairway, and each was greeted by a tremendous cheer as the sails fell, their head canvas filled, and they broke into blue water; but hours seemed to elapse, without a person coming near the horrible cask in which I was imprisoned, and the agonies I endured are beyond description!

The sense of oppression and of being cramped amounted to intense bodily torture; thus a perspiration alternately burning hot and icy cold burst over me. The interior of this now detested prison seemed hot as a furnace; yet there was in my soul a deadly fear of perishing by cold, as I should assuredly do, if left all night on the locked wharf, in such a climate, with the thermometer at twelve degrees below the freezing point!

How fruitlessly I repented me of the silly project of thus escaping, and alternately longed to be back again in Skrew's snug counting-room, or on board the departing brig—of being anywhere, instead of being thus "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd," and forgotten. A terror of being conveyed on board, and left, perhaps, in the hold—left undiscovered till dead of suffocation, gave me wild energy; madly I strove to kick or beat out the head of the cask; but my legs were powerless, as if suffering from paralysis, for my aching knees were wedged under my chin, and I might as well have attempted to escape from a block of adamant.

Faintness and delirium were fast coming over me! I screamed like a madman; but my hoarse voice was lost in the hollow of the cask. Though a perspiration bathed all my aching limbs, my tongue clove to my palate, and soon became hot and dry. Starry lights seemed to flash and dance before me in the darkness; my brain reeled; then I gasped, as sense and pulsation ebbed together, and after enduring three hours (as I afterwards learned) of such agony as those who were confined in the stone chests of the Venetians, or in the iron cages which Louis XI. placed in the Bastille, alone could have known—I fainted.

CHAPTER III. THE NARROWS OF ST. JOHN.

On recovering, I found myself in the cabin of the *Leda*, with Captain Hartly hanging over me, and chafing my hands and temples, in anxiety and solicitude, with hartshorn and vinegar; for being a kind-hearted fellow, he was seriously alarmed.

In these friendly offices he was ably assisted by Cuffy Snowball, his black cook, who burned several grey goose-quills under my nose, and who brought me a rummer full of brandy-punch steaming hot from the galley. On swallowing this, which they forced me to do at two draughts, I became considerably revived and invigorated.

"Why did you leave me there, Hartly—it might have been, to die?" I asked, reproachfully.

"I did not leave you, my dear boy, at least not a moment longer than we could help," he replied. "It cost us no small trouble to get clear of that lubberly barque. I wish the *Black Schooner* had sunk her, when athwart her hawse! We had to clap on all hands to warping into the fairway, and once there, we had to keep constantly forging a-head, as other craft were crowding into the channel astern of us."

"Then I was pretty near being left till the wharf-keeper came next morning. My heaven! I should have been stiff enough by that time!"

"I sent Paul Reeves and Hans Peterkin to bring off the cask on a sledge, and you may imagine the fright we were in on finding you cramped up and lifeless as a pickled herring!"

"Oh, Hartly," said I, "the torture I endured was frightful! I now repent of my undertaking, and wish myself back again."

"Repent—bah! It has been a stupidly managed job, but it is over now, and there is an end of it. Take another sip of the hot brandy-and-water, and come on deck; we are abreast of the Crow's Nest now, and in ten minutes more will be in blue water; then hurrah for the ice-fields!"

I followed him on deck, and found that we were, as he said, abreast of a high sugar-loaf shaped rock, crowned by a little battery named the Crow's Nest, and that around us a very exciting scene was passing.

The *Leda* was now in the fairway, or main channel, which was formed through the ice in the centre of the harbour, and into which there were cut more than fifty canals, or connecting links, along which the sealing ships were being warped from the various wharves at which they had been fitted out. All were gaily decked with their owners' private colours, and had their courses, or lower sails, cast loose, and were accompanied by crowds, who were conversing, laughing, and expressing their hopes of a successful fishery to the crews, whose voices rang cheerily as they tripped round the capstan or wrenched at the windlass, till they came abreast of the kedge anchor which was wedged in the ice; and then it was torn up, and carried off a-head towards the Narrows. when the cheering, warping, and tripping began anew.

Thousands of persons, many of them on skates, covered all the glassy expanse of the frozen harbour, which from some points of view appears land-locked, so closely do the mountains of rock converge at its entrance; and hundreds of sledges (Mr. Uriah Skrew's among the number), with

round Russian bells at their horses' collars, or on the circular iron rod above their ears, with the drivers muffled in furs, swept to and fro; while bands of music playing the air invariable on this occasion, "St. Patrick's Day," marched alongside of the departing fleet.

Flags of every fashion—square, triangular, and swallow-tailed—were streaming everywhere; on the mastheads of the shipping, on the black-tarred mercantile stores, and on the dwellings of their owners—a passion for a display of bunting being one of the peculiarities of this our most northern colony in America.

The aspect of its capital, which covers the northern slope of the harbour, is rather pretty, though the country beyond is nearly as wild and as dreary as when, in the words of Hakluyt—"in the yeere of our Lord 1497, John Cabot a Venetian, and his son Sebastian, with an English fleet from Bristol, discovered that land which no man had before attempted, on 24th June, about five of the clocke, early in the morning. That island which lieth out before the land, he called of *St. John*, as I think, because it was discovered upon the day of John the Baptist."

During the brief summer, this harbour, the entrance of which is so narrow that two ships can scarcely pass in the dangerously deep mid-channel, is smooth as a mill-pond, and presents a lively scene, for there the smart Clyde-built clipper, the dark and battered Sunderland collier brig, the smart Yankee liner, with her gaudy stars and stripes, her snowy decks, and gear so taut; the Pomeranian, with her grass-green hull and fur-capped crew; the Dutch galliot, all brown varnish, and shaped like a half cheese, or like the old craft that bore the Crusaders to Palestine; the huge ship of Blackwall, redolent of guano, all blistered, rusted, and turned yellow by the sun of the fiery south; the sharp

Spanish brig, which had run her cargo of slaves in South Carolina and escaped here, to go quietly home, with her brass nines hidden in the hold, and with fish in Lent for the pious at Cadiz or Oporto—during the brief season of summer, I say, all these had been here; but now when a snowy mantle covered the land, and black ice locked the harbour, its basin or bosom presented a very different scene.

Floundering through sludge and water, a thousand of those men who are England's real pioneers in the Far West—Irish emigrants—in long boots, were cutting the thick ice with ponderous saws, and pushing the blocks under the solid mass on either side, to form a fairway or clear channel for the shipping; and this channel, though at least twenty feet broad, would certainly be frozen hard and fast ere morning dawned.

On this occasion there passed out with us, as I have elsewhere stated, more than one hundred sail of sealing craft. There were brigs, brigantines, and schooners, ranging from fifty to two hundred and fifty tons, all following each other through the fairway, warping ahead, till beyond the Chain Rock, where they got into open water.

Many of the smaller craft are miserably adapted for the dangers they have to encounter, and thus are frequently crushed or lost in the ice by being swept off among the floes and fields to the far north, from whence they never return. Some, I have observed, had only a box lined with fire-brick placed on edge, lashed aft the foremast, for a caboose, and an iron cauldron on three legs placed therein for boiling the wretched mess of old salt pork and doughballs which form the daily food of the crew, who, with such apparatus, would be unable to cook anything in foul weather or a heavy sea.

The wind was southerly for a time, but gradually veered a little to the west as we neared the harbour mouth. After passing the Chain Rock, where a cable of Cyclopean aspect, that now lies a mass of rust thereon, was wont in times of war and alarm to be stretched across to the Pancake Rock to secure the harbour at night, we found ourselves in the deep water. With a loud cheer we brought the kedge anchor and hawser on board. Paul Reeves took the wheel; we sheeted home the foresail and gib, let fall the fore and main topsails, and brought the starboard tacks on board when we were clear of the Signal Hill, and the Dead Man's Bay—a dreary inlet of the sea—lay on our quarter.

This hill is a stern and precipitous mountain of sandstone and slate-rock, nearly six hundred feet in height, with batteries that rise over each other in tiers, to the highest, which is named "The Queen's." Opposite, towers an equally abrupt mountain of similar height and aspect, having at its base a little promontory defended by Fort Amherst.

The slender gut between is named the Narrows of St. John.

The breeze came more and more round upon our quarter as we ran past Signal Hill, ploughing through a somewhat heavy surf; past the Sugar Loaf, and a little creek where, in the clear summer sea, I have seen the guns of an ancient and forgotten wreck lying like black dots on the smooth white sand many fathoms below; for in these regions, when a brilliant sun shines upon the ocean, its waters become transparent to a wondrous depth; thus giant corals, dusky weeds, and the snow-white bones of mighty fish,

"With the rainbow hues of the sea-trees' bloom,"

may be seen distinctly at the depth of a hundred and fifty feet from the surface.

There, too, I have seen the bright yellow sea anemone, with its long fibrous leaves, that close and shrink into the rocks from view when touched.

Cape St. Francis, one of the eastern promontories of Avalon, was soon upon our beam; Cape Spear light had sunk into the waves astern, and night was coming down upon the wintry sea, when we hauled up a point or two to the north and west, and stood right away to the icy regions of the North; and that night merrily at supper we sang in the cabin—

"'Twas in the year of 'sixty-one,
Of March the seventeenth day,
That our gallant ship her anchor weighed
And to the North seas bore away,

Brave boys,"

&c.

CHAPTER IV

THE BRIG "LEDA."

We had twenty-four hands on board; twelve of these were landsmen, being gunners and batmen, half agriculturists and half fishermen, who, at times, in summer, left their families to till the scanty soil, while they fished in open boats among the countless creeks and bays which indent the peninsula of Avalon; and now in winter, when all out-of-door operations were suspended, and the land was buried under fourteen feet of frozen snow—and when the sea, even to the distance of two hundred miles, would soon be bound with ice, they became seal-fishers; and, like others, had shipped in the little fleet which, on St. Patrick's Day, always departed from this Iro-American isle for the stormy seas that lash the Labrador.

All these men were Irish and oft at sea; I have heard the poor fellows, when seated under the lee of the foresail, with the icy spray flying over them to leeward, singing the sweet or merry songs they had learned at their mothers' knee, in the brave old land they were fated never to see again—for the story of our crew is a sad one!

We had a negro, who was our cook (of course), Cuffy Snowball—I never heard him named otherwise; and his adventures had been somewhat singular.

Cuffy had been a warrior of Congo, and dwelt in a hut on the banks of the Zaire, where, by dint of "his spear and shaggy shield," he had amassed a wealth of baskets, gourds, carved calabashes, and wooden spoons from cowards who could not defend them. He could tell, with great simplicity, innumerable stories of his combats with other tribes, and with lions, leopards, buffaloes, crocodiles,

and hippopotami; and in evidence of his prowess, he wore on his left arm a bracelet formed entirely of lions' teeth—which form a kind of "Order of Valour" in Congo. He had been very happy in his wigwam, till the daughter of a Chenoo or chief—a beautiful damsel, with her teeth painted blue and the bone of a shark through her nose—espied him one day, and desired to have him for her husband, as it is the right of these ladies to do.

The chosen, of whom she becomes absolute mistress and proprietress, dare not refuse, so poor Cuffy was married to the Chenoo; there were great rejoicings, and three prisoners of war were devoured at the marriage-feast.

But his sable fair one tired of him in a short time, and by certain artful means decoyed him one evening to the mouth of the Zaire, and there sold him into slavery.

The slave-ship was wrecked; but Cuffy got ashore on the island of Jamaica, where he was very much surprised to see some of his countrymen, dressed and armed like white men, in coats of a red colour, with light blue trousers; so he enlisted as a soldier in one of her Majesty's West India Regiments.

Ere long Cuffy was made a corporal; and though he ground his sharp teeth now and then when thinking of his wigwam in Congo, and the treacherous Chenoo his wife, he was very happy, for he had plenty of rice, yams, and sangaree, and as a corporal, carried his black snub nose very high indeed!

From Jamaica his company was ordered to Trinidad, and the whole, a hundred in number, were shipped on board of a Yankee barque which had been freighted for the purpose. Her skipper, on seeing such a choice lot of tall and handsome young negroes, proposed to their captain (a

reckless fellow, who was steeped to the lips in debt and all kinds of West Indian dissipation) to bear away for the Southern States of the Union, and there sell the whole as slaves. Singular as it may seem, the captain, who owed more money in Trinidad than he could ever hope to pay, accepted the proposal, and the soldiers of this company of H.M. West India Regiment, instead of garrisoning the isle where the "mother of the cocoa" blooms, were duly landed at Charleston in South Carolina, where they were all sold to the highest bidders. The skipper and captain put the money in their pockets, leaving the astonished lieutenant and ensign to get back to headquarters in Jamaica as they best could.

Cuffy's new master proved a severe one, and under his lash he often sighed for the rice, yams, and his quiet duty as sentinel under a sunshade, or the high authority he could wield as corporal over Scipio, Sambo, or Julius Cæsar, in the days when he was the white man's comrade; but one day Cuffy lost his temper, and gave his master a tap on the head with a sugar-hoe!

Then, without waiting to see whether or not he had killed him, he fled into the woods—crossed the Savannah river, and getting on board a British vessel became a sailor, and within one year thereafter, was shipped, as cook, on board the *Leda*.

The rest of our crew were all steady and hardy men, and Paul Reeves, the senior mate, was the model of an English sailor.

The wind had changed during the night; thus, when next day dawned, we were still in sight of Cape St. Francis—a snow-covered headland, which shone white and drearily, as the sun came up from the blue sea.

Hartly expressed some impatience at our progress as we trod to and fro aft the mainmast in the clear, cold, bracing air of the morning, while the odour of a hot breakfast, which Cuffy was preparing, came in whiffs from the galley.

"Never mind," said I; "the wind will soon change again—I can see by the clouds there are contrary currents overhead; and when once among the ice, we shall have great fun!"

"Fun! I don't know much about that," said Hartly, who, like every seaman, was put in a sulky mood by a foul wind.

"We shall have perils to encounter!"

"Perils may be fun to one so young as you, Jack," said Hartly, pausing thoughtfully; "however, in our trade, I have ever found that peril and profit go together. Think over all we have read of what Parry, Ross, Scoresby, Franklin, and Kane underwent in those regions of ice and snow; and I do not remember the word *fun* occurring once in their narratives."

"Well," said I, abashed by his monitory tone, "we shall have excitement, at all events."

"Both excitement and danger, I grant you," said he, as we resumed the usual quarter-deck step and trod to and fro again: "it is a well-paying speculation, a sealing expedition; and, by Jove! it would need to be so to compensate poor fellows for all they undergo in such a rigorous season, and in such seas as those which sweep round the frozen rocks and shores of Newfoundland and the drearier Labrador in the blustering month of March. Some crews are frozen in, far at sea, for months and months, till all perish of starvation; others are lost in detached parties on the ice-fields, in fogs, and are never found again. Some are swept out to sea on broken floes, or fall through holes in the ice,

and are never more seen. Then the strongest ships are often crushed, as you would crush an egg upon an anvil, by the ice-fields, masses of which, perhaps a hundred miles in extent, are whirled, dashed, and split against each other by opposite currents, with a sound so frightful, that one might well imagine the last day was at hand, or that chaos had come again! Ah, we should have some profit, after encountering all that!"

"I should think so," said I while glancing at my watch, and reflecting that Mr. Uriah Skrew would, about this time, find the farewell letter I had left for him on my desk in the counting-room.

"But I do not say all this, Jack Manly, to cast you down," said Hartly, laughing; "for you will always be safe with me, as you know I never can be drowned, while wearing *this* ring."

"Do you really believe in it?" I inquired.

"Why, I don't know, Jack; but I should not like to lose it now: we sailors have strange fancies at times, but, with all our alleged superstition, are, I cannot help thinking, more religious than you landsmen. One who finds his daily bread upon the waters, and is for ever struggling with the wild elements by night and day, must at times think solemnly of the mighty Hand and Will that fashioned them out of thin air."

"But your ring?"

"She who gave it me was a strange old woman, whom we called Mother Jensdochter—a kind of Norna of the Fitful Head, who lived, or for aught I know, lives still, in a hut at the base of Mount Hecla, in Iceland. I was wrecked there, when on a voyage in the *Princess*, of Hull, bound for

Archangel, five years ago. This witch occupied a regular Icelandic hut. It was built of wreck and drift wood, caulked with moss and earth, roofed with rafters of whale-ribs covered with turf, and having in the centre a hole for a chimney. Her bed was a mere box of seaweed, feathers, and down; but I seldom saw any house of a better kind in Iceland."

"Well?"

"She used to sell fair winds or foul, blessings or maledictions, as the matter might be, to the fishermen of the fiords. She would give, as the simple folks believed, a fair wind that would carry a craft as far as Cape Horn without lifting tack or sheet; or a curse that would sink the *Royal Albert* line-o'-battle ship, for a loaf of ground codfish, or a bottle of hockettle oil for the iron cruse that hung from her whalebone rafters; but she conceived a strong regard for me, because I had saved her miserable life in a snowstorm one night, and carried her in my arms—ugh! what a precious armful she was!—to her wigwam. She used to assure me that whenever there was a battle being fought anywhere in the world, the terrible mountain that overhung her dwelling vomited black ashes and stones; and then, as she sat at her door, with her long grey locks hanging over her fierce red eyes, she could see troops of infernal spirits carrying the souls of the damned, shrieking through the air, towards the flaming crater. The noise of the ice-floes dashed against the shore, she alleged to be the groans of others, who were doomed to endure excess of cold for eternity, even as those in Hecla were to endure excess of heat; and she had many other fancies wild enough to make a poor Jack Tar's hair stand up on end!

"Near her hut stood a conical knoll, covered with fine green grass, and thence named the GroenbiERG. There, she

asserted, by putting an ear to the ground, she could hear the large-headed gnomes and little bandy-legged dwarfs, who dwelt in it, busy at work, fashioning trinkets and curiously carved goblets—especially at Yule, where the clink of their tiny hammers rang like chime-bells on little anvils; and the puff of their bellows and forge could be heard, with the jingle of gold and silver coins, and opening and shutting of quaintly-carved and iron-bound treasure-chests, which they were shoving to and fro, and hiding in the bowels of the mountain. She fell asleep there one evening, and dreamed that the Grcenbiery opened, and there came forth a little man in a red cloak and pair of puffy breeches, with a white beard the entire length of his body (that is, about two feet,) and he bestowed this ring upon her, with a promise that whoever wore it was free from all danger hereafter. He then vanished into a mole-track on the hill-side. Mother Jensdochter awoke, and found the ring upon her finger, where it remained, until, in a burst of gratitude, she bestowed it on me, with the comfortable assurance (I give you the yarn, Jack, for what it is worth) that I 'could never be drowned while it remained on my finger.' Hans Peterkin—forward there!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Brace those foreyards sharper up; set the fore and main staysails and foretopmast staysail; and keep her a point or so further off the land.—And now, Jack, come below, for Cuffy has gone down with the bacon and coffee, piping hot, too."

Leaving Hans, the second mate, in charge of the deck, with orders to announce the slightest indication of a change of wind, we descended to breakfast with the appetites of hawks.