R. M. BALLANTYNE



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The World of Ice

EAN 8596547337119

DigiCat, 2022

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CHAPTER I.

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Some of the "dramatis personæ" introduced—Retrospective glances—Causes of future effects—Our hero's early life at sea—A pirate—A terrible fight and its consequences—Buzzby's helm lashed amidships—A whaling-cruise begun.

Nobody ever caught John Buzzby asleep by any chance whatever. No weasel was ever half so sensitive on that point as he was. Wherever he happened to be (and in the course of his adventurous life he had been to nearly all parts of the known world) he was the first awake in the morning and the last asleep at night; he always answered promptly to the first call; and was never known by any man living to have been seen with his eyes shut, except when he winked, and that operation he performed less frequently than other men.

John Buzzby was an old salt—a regular true-blue Jack tar of the old school, who had been born and bred at sea; had visited foreign ports innumerable; had weathered more storms than he could count, and had witnessed more strange sights than he could remember. He was tough, and sturdy, and grizzled, and broad, and square, and massive—a first-rate specimen of a John Bull, and according to himself, "always kept his weather-eye open." This remark of his was apt to create confusion in the minds of his hearers; for John meant the expression to be understood figuratively, while, in point of fact, he almost always kept one of his literal eyes open and the other partially closed, but as he reversed the

order of arrangement frequently, he might have been said to keep his lee-eye as much open as the weather one. This peculiarity gave to his countenance an expression of earnest thoughtfulness mingled with humour. Buzzby was fond of being thought old, and he looked much older than he really was. Men guessed his age at fifty-five, but they were ten years out in their reckoning; for John had numbered only forty-five summers, and was as tough and muscular as ever he had been—although not quite so elastic.

John Buzzby stood on the pier of the sea-port town of Grayton watching the active operations of the crew of a whaling-ship which was on the point of starting for the ice-bound seas of the Frozen Regions, and making sundry remarks to a stout, fair-haired boy of fifteen, who stood by his side gazing at the ship with an expression of deep sadness.

"She's a trim-built craft and a good sea-boat, I'll be bound, Master Fred," observed the sailor; "but she's too small by half, accordin' to my notions, and I *have* seen a few whalers in my day. Them bow-timbers, too, are scarce thick enough for goin' bump agin the ice o' Davis' Straits. Howsom'iver, I've seen worse craft drivin' a good trade in the Polar Seas."

"She's a first-rate craft in all respects; and you have too high an opinion of your own judgment," replied the youth indignantly. "Do you suppose that my father, who is an older man than yourself and as good a sailor, would buy a ship, and fit her out, and go off to the whale-fishery in her, if he did not think her a good one?" "Ah! Master Fred, you're a chip of the old block—neck or nothing—carry on all sail till you tear the masts out of her! Reef the t'gallant sails of your temper, boy, and don't run foul of an old man who has been all but a wet-nurse to ye—taught ye to walk, and swim, and pull an oar, and build ships, and has hauled ye out o' the sea when ye fell in—from the time ye could barely stump along on two legs, lookin' like as if ye was more nor half-seas-over."

"Well, Buzzby," replied the boy, laughing, "if you've been all that to me, I think you *have* been a *wet*-nurse too! But why do you run down my father's ship? Do you think I'm going to stand that? No! not even from you, old boy."

"Hallo! youngster," shouted a voice from the deck of the vessel in question, "run up and tell your father we're all ready, and if he don't make haste he'll lose the tide, so he will, and that'll make us have to start on a Friday, it will, an' that'll not do for me, nohow it won't; so make sail and look sharp about it, do—won't you?"

"What a tongue he's got!" remarked Buzzby. "Before I'd go to sea with a first mate who jawed like that I'd be a landsman. Don't ever you git to talk too much, Master Fred, wotever ye do. My maxim is—and it has served me through life, uncommon—'Keep your weather-eye open and your tongue housed 'xcept when you've got occasion to use it.' If that fellow'd use his eyes more and his tongue less, he'd see your father comin' down the road there, right before the wind, with his old sister in tow."

"How I wish he would have let me go with him!" muttered Fred to himself sorrowfully.

"No chance now, I'm afeard," remarked his companion. "The gov'nor's as stiff as a nor'-wester. Nothin' in the world can turn him once he's made up his mind but a regular sou'-easter. Now, if you had been *my* son, and yonder tight craft *my* ship, I would have said, 'Come at once.' But your father knows best, lad; and you're a wise son to obey orders cheerfully, without question. That's another o' my maxims, 'Obey orders, an' ax no questions.'"

Frederick Ellice, senior, who now approached, whispering words of consolation into the ear of his weeping sister, might, perhaps, have just numbered fifty years. He was a fine, big, bold, hearty Englishman, with a bald head, grizzled locks, a loud but not harsh voice, a rather guick temper, and a kind, earnest, enthusiastic heart. Like Buzzby, he had spent nearly all his life at sea, and had become so thoroughly accustomed to walking on an unstable foundation that he felt quite uncomfortable on solid ground, and never remained more than a few months at a time on shore. He was a man of good education and gentlemanly manners, and had worked his way up in the merchant service step by step until he obtained the command of a West India trader.

A few years previous to the period in which our tale opens, an event occurred which altered the course of Captain Ellice's life, and for a long period plunged him into the deepest affliction. This was the loss of his wife at sea under peculiarly distressing circumstances.

At the age of thirty Captain Ellice had married a pretty blue-eyed girl, who resolutely refused to become a sailor's bride unless she should be permitted to accompany her husband to sea. This was without much difficulty agreed to, and forthwith Alice Bremner became Mrs. Ellice, and went to sea. It was during her third voyage to the West Indies that our hero Fred was born, and it was during this and succeeding voyages that Buzzby became "all but a wetnurse" to him.

Mrs. Ellice was a loving, gentle, seriously-minded woman. She devoted herself, heart and soul to the training of her boy, and spent many a pleasant hour in that little, unsteady cabin in endeavouring to instil into his infant mind the blessed truths of Christianity, and in making the name of Jesus familiar to his ear. As Fred grew older his mother encouraged him to hold occasional intercourse with the sailors—for her husband's example taught her the value of a bold, manly spirit, and she knew that it was impossible for her to instil that into him—but she was careful to guard him from the evil that he might chance to learn from the men, by committing him to the tender care of Buzzby. To do the men justice, however, this was almost unnecessary, for they felt that a mother's watchful eye was on the child, and no unguarded word fell from their lips while he was romping about the forecastle.

When it was time for Fred to go to school, Mrs. Ellice gave up her roving life and settled in her native town of Grayton, where she resided with her widowed sister, Amelia Bright, and her niece Isobel. Here Fred received the rudiments of an excellent education at a private academy. At the age of twelve, however, Master Fred became restive, and during one of his father's periodical visits home, begged to be taken to sea. Captain Ellice agreed; Mrs. Ellice insisted

on accompanying them; and in a few weeks they were once again on their old home, the ocean, and Fred was enjoying his native air in company with his friend Buzzby, who stuck to the old ship like one of her own stout timbers.

But this was destined to be a disastrous voyage. One evening, after crossing the line, they descried a suspicious-looking schooner to windward, bearing down upon them under a cloud of canvas.

"What do you think of her, Buzzby?" inquired Captain Ellice, handing his glass to the seaman.

Buzzby gazed in silence and with compressed lips for some time; then he returned the glass, at the same time muttering the word, "Pirate."

"I thought so," said the captain in a deep, unsteady voice. "There is but one course for us, Buzzby," he continued, glancing towards his wife, who, all unconscious of their danger, sat near the taffrail employed with her needle; "these fellows show no mercy, because they expect none either from God or man. We must fight to the last. Go, prepare the men and get out the arms. I'll tell my wife."

Buzzby went forward; but the captain's heart failed him, and he took two or three rapid, hesitating turns on the quarter-deck ere he could make up his mind to speak.

"Alice," he said at length abruptly, "yonder vessel is a pirate."

Mrs. Ellice looked up in surprise, and her face grew pale as her eye met the troubled gaze of her husband.

"Are you quite sure, Frederick?"

"Yes, quite. Would God that I were left alone to—but—nay, do not be alarmed; perhaps I am wrong, it may be a—a

clipper-built trading-vessel. If not, Alice, we must make some show of fighting, and try to frighten them. Meanwhile you must go below."

The captain spoke encouragingly as he led his wife to the cabin; but his candid countenance spoke too truthfully, and she felt that his look of anxious concern bade her fear the worst.

Pressing her fervently to his heart, Captain Ellice sprang on deck.

By this time the news had spread through the ship, and the crew, consisting of upwards of thirty men, were conversing earnestly in knots of four or five while they sharpened and buckled on cutlasses, or loaded pistols and carbines.

"Send the men aft, Mr. Thompson," said the captain, as he paced the deck to and fro, casting his eyes occasionally on the schooner, which was rapidly nearing the vessel. "Take another pull at these main-topsail-halyards, and send the steward down below for my sword and pistols. Let the men look sharp; we've no time to lose, and hot work is before us."

"I will go for your sword, father," cried Fred, who had just come on deck.

"Boy, boy, you must go below; you can be of no use here."

"But, father, you know that I'm not afraid."

"I know that, boy—I know it well; but you're too young to fight—you're not strong enough. Besides, you must comfort and cheer your mother; she may want you."

"I'm old enough and strong enough to load and fire a pistol, father; and I heard one of the men say we would need all the hands on board, and more if we had them. Besides, it was my mother who told me what was going on, and sent me on deck to *help you*, *to fight*."

A momentary gleam of pride lit up the countenance of the captain as he said hastily, "You may stay, then," and turned towards the men, who now stood assembled on the quarter-deck.

Addressing the crew in his own blunt, vigorous style, he said, "Lads, yon rascally schooner is a pirate, as you all know well enough. I need not ask you if you are ready to fight; I see by your looks you are. But that's not enough—you must make up your minds to fight *well*. You know that pirates give no quarter. I see the decks are swarming with men. If you don't go at them like bull-dogs, you'll walk the plank before sunset every man of you. Now, go forward, and double-shot your muskets and pistols, and stick as many of the latter into your belts as they will hold. Mr. Thompson, let the gunner double-shot the four big guns, and load the little carronade with musket-balls to the muzzle. If they do try to board us, they'll get a warm reception."

"There goes a shot, sir," said Buzzby, pointing towards the piratical schooner, from the side of which a white cloud burst, and a round shot ricochetted over the sea, passing close ahead of the ship.

"Ay, that's a request for us to lay-to," said the captain bitterly, "but we won't. Keep her away a point."

"Ay, ay, sir," sung out the man at the wheel. A second and a third shot were fired, but passed unheeded, and the captain, fully expecting that the next would be fired into them, ordered the men below.

"We can't afford to lose a man, Mr. Thompson; send them all down."

"Please, sir, may I remain?" said Buzzby, touching his hat.

"Obey orders," answered the captain sternly. The sailor went below with a sulky fling.

For nearly an hour the two vessels cut through the water before a steady breeze, during which time the fast-sailing schooner gradually overhauled the heavy West Indiaman, until she approached within speaking distance. Still Captain Ellice paid no attention to her, but stood with compressed lips beside the man at the wheel, gazing alternately at the sails of his vessel and at the windward horizon, where he fancied he saw indications that led him to hope the breeze would fail ere long.

As the schooner drew nearer, a man leaped on the hammock-nettings, and, putting a trumpet to his mouth, sang out lustily, "Ship ahoy! where are you from, and what's your cargo?"

Captain Ellice made no reply, but ordered four of his men on deck to point one of the stern-chasers.

Again the voice came harshly across the waves, as if in passion, "Heave to, or I'll sink you." At the same moment the black flag was run up to the peak, and a shot passed between the main and fore masts.

"Stand by to point this gun," said the captain in a subdued voice.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Fetch a red-hot iron; luff, luff a little—a little more steady —so." At the last word there was a puff and a roar, and an iron messenger flew towards the schooner. The gun had been fired more as a reply of defiance to the pirate than with the hope of doing him any damage; but the shot had been well aimed—it cut the schooner's main-sail-yard in two and brought it rattling down on deck. Instantly the pirate yawed and delivered a broadside; but in the confusion on deck the guns were badly aimed, and none took effect. The time lost in this manoeuvre, added to the crippled condition of the schooner, enabled the West Indiaman to gain considerably on her antagonist; but the pirate kept up a well-directed fire with his bow-chasers, and many of the shots struck the hull and cut the rigging seriously. As the sun descended towards the horizon the wind fell gradually, and ceased at length altogether, so that both vessels lay rolling on the swell with their sails flapping idly against the masts.

"They're a-gittin' out the boats, sir," remarked John Buzzby, who, unable to restrain himself any longer, had crept upon deck at the risk of another reprimand; "and, if my eyes be'n't deceiving me, there's a sail on the horizon to wind'ard—leastways, the direction which wos wind'ard afore it fell calm."

"She's bringing a breeze along with her," remarked the captain, "but I fear the boats will come up before it reaches us. There are three in the water and manned already. There they come. Now, then, call up all hands."

In a few seconds the crew of the West Indiaman were at their stations ready for action, and Captain Ellice, with Fred at his elbow, stood beside one of the stern-chasers. Meanwhile, the boats of the pirate, five in number, pulled away in different directions, evidently with the intention of attacking the ship at different points. They were full of men armed to the teeth. While they rowed towards the ship the schooner resumed its fire, and one ball cut away the spanker-boom and slightly wounded two of the men with splinters. The guns of the ship were now brought to bear on the boats, but without effect, although the shot plunged into the water all round them. As they drew nearer a brisk fire of musketry was opened on them, and the occasional falling of an oar and confusion on board showed that the shots told. The pirates replied vigorously, but without effect, as the men of the ship were sheltered by the bulwarks.

"Pass the word to load and reserve fire," said the captain; "and hand me a musket, Fred. Load again as fast as I fire." So saying, the captain took aim and fired at the steersman of the largest boat, which pulled towards the stern. "Another, Fred—"

At this moment a withering volley was poured upon the boat, and a savage yell of agony followed, while the rowers who remained unhurt paused for an instant as if paralyzed. Next instant they recovered, and another stroke would have brought them almost alongside, when Captain Ellice pointed the little carronade and fired. There was a terrific crash; the gun recoiled violently to the other side of the deck; and the pirate boat sank, leaving the sea covered with dead and wounded men. A number, however, who seemed to bear charmed lives, seized their cutlasses with their teeth, and swam boldly for the ship. This incident, unfortunately,

attracted too much of the attention of the crew, and ere they could prevent it another boat reached the bow of the ship, the crew of which sprang up the side like cats, formed on the forecastle, and poured a volley upon the men.

"Follow me, lads!" shouted the captain, as he sprang forward like a tiger. The first man he reached fell by a ball from his pistol; in another moment the opposing parties met in a hand-to-hand conflict. Meanwhile Fred, having been deeply impressed with the effect of the shot from the little carronade, succeeded in raising and reloading it. He had scarcely accomplished this when one of the boats reached the larboard quarter, and two of the men sprang up the side. Fred observed them, and felled the first with a handspike before he reached the deck; but the pirate who instantly followed would have killed him had he not been observed by the second mate, who had prevented several of the men from joining in the *mêlée* on the forecastle in order to meet such an emergency as this. Rushing to the rescue with his party, he drove the pirates back into the boat, which was immediately pulled towards the bow, where the other two boats were now grappling and discharging their crews on the forecastle. Although the men of the West Indiaman fought with desperate courage, they could not stand before the increasing numbers of pirates who now crowded the fore part of the ship in a dense mass. Gradually they were beaten back, and at length were brought to bay on the quarter-deck.

"Help, father!" cried Fred, pushing through the struggling crowd, "here's the carronade ready loaded."

"Ha! boy, well done!" cried the captain, seizing the gun, and, with the help of Buzzby, who never left his side, dragging it forward. "Clear the way, lads!"

In a moment the little cannon was pointed to the centre of the mass of men, and fired. One awful shriek of agony rose above the din of the fight, as a wide gap was cut through the crowd; but this only seemed to render the survivors more furious. With a savage yell they charged the quarter-deck, but were hurled back again and again by the captain and a few chosen men who stood around him. At length one of the pirates, who had been all along strength and conspicuous for his daring, deliberately up, and pointing a pistol at the captain's breast, fired. Captain Ellice fell, and at the same moment a ball laid the pirate low; another charge was made; Fred rushed forward to protect his father, but was thrown down and trodden under foot in the rush, and in two minutes more the ship was in possession of the pirates.

Being filled with rage at the opposition they had met with, these villains proceeded, as they said, to make short work of the crew, while several of them sprang into the cabin, where they discovered Mrs. Ellice almost dead with terror. Dragging her violently on deck, they were about to cast her into the sea, when Buzzby, who stood with his hands bound, suddenly burst his bonds and sprang towards her. A blow from the butt of a pistol, however, stretched him insensible on the deck.

"Where is my husband? my boy?" screamed Mrs. Ellice wildly.

"They've gone before you, or they'll soon follow," said a savage fiercely, as he raised her in his powerful arms and hurled her overboard. A loud shriek was followed by a heavy plunge. At the same moment two of the men raised the captain, intending to throw him overboard also, when a loud boom arrested their attention, and a cannon-shot ploughed up the sea close in front of their bows.

While the fight was raging, no one had observed the fact that the breeze had freshened, and a large man-of-war, with American colours, at her peak, was now within gunshot of the ship. No sooner did the pirates make this discovery than they rushed to their boats, with the intention of pulling to their schooner; but those who had been left in charge, seeing the approach of the man-of-war, and feeling that there was no chance of escape for their comrades, or, as is more than probable, being utterly indifferent about them, crowded all sail and slipped away, and it was now hull-down on the horizon to leeward. The men in the boats rowed after her with the energy of despair; but the Americans gave chase, and we need scarcely add that, in a very short time, all were captured.

When the man-of-war rejoined the West Indiaman, the night had set in and a stiff breeze had arisen, so that the long and laborious search that was made for the body of poor Mrs. Ellice proved utterly fruitless. Captain Ellice, whose wound was very severe, was struck down as if by a thunderbolt, and for a long time his life was despaired of. During his illness Fred nursed him with the utmost tenderness, and in seeking to comfort his father, found some relief to his own stricken heart.

Months passed away. Captain Ellice was conveyed to the residence of his sister in Grayton, and, under her care, and the nursing of his little niece Isobel, he recovered his wonted health and strength. To the eyes of men Captain Ellice and his son were themselves again; but those who judge of men's hearts by their outward appearance and expressions, in nine cases out of ten judge very wide of the mark indeed. Both had undergone a great change. The brilliancy and glitter of this world had been completely and rudely dispelled, and both had been led to inquire whether there was not something better to live for than mere present advantage and happiness—something that would stand by them in those hours of sickness and sorrow which must inevitably, sooner or later, come upon all men. Both sought, and discovered what they sought, in the Bible, the only book in all the world where the jewel of great price is to be found.

But Captain Ellice could not be induced to resume the command of his old ship, or voyage again to the West Indies. He determined to change the scene of his future labours and sail to the Frozen Seas, where the aspect of every object, even the ocean itself, would be very unlikely to recall the circumstances of his loss.

Some time after his recovery, Captain Ellice purchased a brig and fitted her out as a whaler, determined to try his fortune in the Northern Seas. Fred pleaded hard to be taken out, but his father felt that he had more need to go to school than to sea; so he refused, and Fred, after sighing very deeply once or twice, gave in with a good grace. Buzzby, too, who stuck to his old commander like a leech,

was equally anxious to go; but Buzzby, in a sudden and unaccountable fit of tenderness, had, just two months before, married a wife, who might be appropriately described as "fat, fair, and forty," and Buzzby's wife absolutely forbade him to go. Alas! Buzzby was no longer his own master. At the age of forty-five he became—as he himself expressed it—an abject slave, and he would as soon have tried to steer in a slipper-bath right in the teeth of an equinoctial hurricane, as have opposed the will of his wife. He used to sigh gruffly when spoken to on this subject, and compare himself to a Dutch galliot that made more leeway than headway, even with a wind on the guarter. "Once," he would remark, "I was clipper-built, and could sail right in the wind's eye; but ever since I tuck this craft in tow, I've gone to leeward like a tub. In fact, I find there's only one way of going ahead with my Poll, and that is right before the wind! I used to yaw about a good deal at first, but she tuck that out o' me in a day or two. If I put the helm only so much as one stroke to starboard, she guv' a tug at the tow-rope that brought the wind dead aft again; so I've gi'n it up, and lashed the tiller right amid-ships."

So Buzzby did not accompany his old commander; he did not even so much as suggest the possibility of it; but he shook his head with great solemnity, as he stood with Fred, and Mrs. Bright, and Isobel, at the end of the pier, gazing at the brig, with one eye very much screwed up, and a wistful expression in the other, while the graceful craft spread out her canvas and bent over to the breeze.

CHAPTER II.

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Departure of the "Pole Star" for the Frozen Seas—Sage reflections of Mrs. Bright, and sagacious remarks of Buzzby—Anxieties, fears, surmises, and resolutions—Isabel—A search proposed—Departure of the "Dolphin" for the Far North.

Digressions are bad at the best, and we feel some regret that we should have been compelled to begin our book with one; but they are necessary evils sometimes, so we must ask our reader's forgiveness, and beg him, or her, to remember that we are still at the commencement of our story, standing at the end of the pier, and watching the departure of the *Pole Star* whale-ship, which is now a scarcely distinguishable speck on the horizon.

As it disappeared Buzzby gave a grunt, Fred and Isobel uttered a sigh in unison, and Mrs. Bright resumed the fit of weeping which for some time she had unconsciously suspended.

"I fear we shall never see him again," sobbed Mrs. Bright, as she took Isobel by the hand and sauntered slowly home, accompanied by Fred and Buzzby, the latter of whom seemed to regard himself in the light of a shaggy Newfoundland or mastiff, who had been left to protect the family. "We are always hearing of whale-ships being lost, and, somehow or other, we *never* hear of the crews being

saved, as one reads of when ships are wrecked in the usual way on the seashore."

Isobel squeezed her mother's hand, and looked up in her face with an expression that said plainly, "Don't cry so, mamma; I'm *sure* he will come back," but she could not find words to express herself, so she glanced towards the mastiff for help.

Buzzby felt that it devolved upon him to afford consolation under the circumstances; but Mrs. Bright's mind was of that peculiar stamp which repels advances in the way of consolation unconsciously, and Buzzby was puzzled. He screwed up first the right eye and then the left, and smote his thigh repeatedly; and assuredly, if contorting his visage could have comforted Mrs. Bright, she would have returned home a happy woman, for he made faces at her violently for full five minutes. But it did her no good, perhaps because she didn't see him, her eyes being suffused with tears.

"Ah! yes," resumed Mrs. Bright, with another burst, "I know they will never come back, and your silence shows that you think so too. And to think of their taking two years' provisions with them in case of accidents!—doesn't that prove that there are going to be accidents? And didn't I hear one of the sailors say that she was a crack ship, A number one? I don't know what he meant by A number one, but if she's a cracked ship I know she will never come back; and although I told my dear brother of it, and advised him not to go, he only laughed at me, which was very unkind, I'm sure."

Here Mrs. Bright's feelings overcame her again.

"Why, aunt," said Fred, scarce able to restrain a laugh, despite the sadness that lay at his heart, "when the sailor said it was a crack ship, he meant that it was a good one, a first-rate one."

"Then why did he not say what he meant? But you are talking nonsense, boy. Do you think that I will believe a man means to say a thing is good when he calls it cracked? and I'm sure nobody would say a cracked tea-pot was as good as a whole one. But tell me, Buzzby, do you think they ever will come back?"

"Why, ma'am, in coorse I do," replied Buzzby, vehemently; "for why, if they don't, they're the first that ever, went out o' this port in my day as didn't. They've a good ship and lots o' grub, and it's like to be a good season; and Captain Ellice has, for the most part, good luck; and they've started with a fair wind, and kep' clear of a Friday, and what more could ye wish? I only wish as I was aboard along with them, that's all."

Buzzby delivered himself of this oration with the left eye shut and screwed up, and the right one open. Having concluded, he shut and screwed up the right eye, and opened the left—he reversed the engine, so to speak, as if he wished to back out from the scene of his triumph and leave the course clear for others to speak. But his words were thrown away on Mrs. Bright, who was emphatically a weak-minded woman, and never exercised her reason at all, except in a spasmodic, galvanic sort of way, when she sought to defend or to advocate some unreasonable conclusion of some sort, at which her own weak mind had arrived somehow. So she shook her head, and sobbed good-

bye to Buzzby, as she ascended the sloping avenue that led to her pretty cottage on the green hill that overlooked the harbour and the sea beyond.

As for John Buzzby, having been absent from home full half-an-hour beyond his usual dinner-hour, he felt that, for a man who had lashed his helm amid-ships, he was yawing alarmingly out of his course; so he spread all the canvas he could carry, and steered right before the wind towards the village, where, in a little whitewashed, low-roofed, one-doored, and two little-windowed cottage, his spouse (and dinner) awaited him.

To make a long story short, three years passed away, but the *Pole Star* did not return, and no news of her could be got from the various whale-ships that visited the port of Grayton. Towards the end of the second year Buzzby began to shake his head despondingly; and as the third drew to a close, the expression of gloom never left his honest, weather-beaten face. Mrs. Bright, too, whose anxiety at first was only half genuine, now became seriously alarmed, and the fate of the missing brig began to be the talk of the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, Fred Ellice and Isobel grew and improved in mind and body; but anxiety as to his father's fate rendered the former quite unable to pursue his studies, and he determined at last to procure a passage in a whale-ship, and go out in search of the brig.

It happened that the principal merchant and shipowner in the town, Mr. Singleton by name, was an intimate friend and old school-fellow of Captain Ellice, so Fred went boldly to him and proposed that a vessel should be fitted out immediately, and sent off to search for his father's brig. Mr. Singleton smiled at the request, and pointed out the utter impossibility of his agreeing to it; but he revived Fred's sinking hopes by saying that he was about to send out a whaler to the Northern Seas at any rate, and that he would give orders to the captain to devote a *portion* of his time to the search, and, moreover, agreed to let Fred go as a passenger in company with his own son Tom.

Now, Tom Singleton had been Fred's bosom friend and companion during his first year at school; but during the last two years he had been sent to the Edinburgh University to prosecute his medical studies, and the two friends had only met at rare intervals. It was with unbounded delight, therefore, that he found his old companion, now a youth of twenty, was to go out as surgeon of the ship, and he could scarce contain himself as he ran down to Buzzby's cottage to tell him the good news, and ask him to join.

Of course Buzzby was ready to go, and, what was of far greater importance in the matter, his wife threw no obstacle in the way. On the contrary, she undid the lashings of the helm with her own hand, and told her wondering partner, with a good-humoured but firm smile, to steer where he chose, and she would content herself with the society of the two young Buzzbys (both miniature fac-similes of their father) till he came back.

Once again a whale-ship prepared to sail from the port of Grayton, and once again Mrs. Bright and Isobel stood on the pier to see her depart. Isobel was about thirteen now, and as pretty a girl, according to Buzzby, as you could meet with in any part of Britain. Her eyes were blue and her hair nutbrown, and her charms of face and figure were enhanced

immeasurably by an air of modesty and earnestness that went straight home to your heart, and caused you to adore her at once. Buzzby doated on her as if she were his only child, and felt a secret pride in being in some indefinable way her protector. Buzzby philosophized about her, too, after a strange fashion. "You see," he would say to Fred, "it's not that her figurehead is cut altogether after a parfect pattern—by no means, for I've seen pictur's and statues that wos better—but she carries her head a little down, d'ye see, Master Fred? and there's where it is; that's the way I gauges the worth o' young women, jist accordin' as they carry their chins up or down. If their brows come well for and they seems to be lookin' at the ground they walk on, I knows their brains is firm stuff, and in good workin' order; but when I sees them carryin' their noses high out o' the water, as if they wos afeard o' catchin' sight o' their own feet, and their chins elewated, so that a little boy standin' in front o' them couldn't see their faces nohow, I make pretty sure that t'other end is filled with a sort o' *mush* that's fit only to think o' dress and dancing."

On the present occasion Isobel's eyes were red and swollen, and by no means improved by weeping. Mrs. Bright, too, although three years had done little to alter her character, seemed to be less demonstrative and much more sincere than usual in her grief at parting from Fred.

In a few minutes all was ready. Young Singleton and Buzzby having hastily but earnestly bade Mrs. Bright and her daughter farewell, leaped on board. Fred lingered for a moment.

"Once more, dear aunt," said he, "farewell. With God's blessing we shall come back soon.—Write to me, darling Isobel, won't you? to Upernavik, on the coast of Greenland. If none of our ships are bound in that direction, write by way of Denmark. Old Mr. Singleton will tell you how to address your letter; and see that it be a long one."

"Now then, youngster, jump aboard," shouted the captain; "look sharp!"

"Ay, ay," returned Fred, and in another moment he was on the quarter-deck, by the side of his friend Tom.

The ship, loosed from her moorings, spread her canvas, and plunged forward on her adventurous voyage.

But this time she does not grow smaller as she advances before the freshening breeze, for you and I, reader, have embarked in her, and the land now fades in the distance, until it sinks from view on the distant horizon, while nothing meets our gaze but the vault of the bright blue sky above, and the plane of the dark blue sea below.

CHAPTER III.

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The voyage—The "Dolphin" and her crew—Ice ahead— Polar scenes—Masthead observations—The first whale— Great excitement.

And now we have fairly got into blue water—the sailor's delight, the landsman's dread,—

"The sea! the sea! the open sea; The blue, the fresh, the ever free."

"It's my opinion," remarked Buzzby to Singleton one day, as they stood at the weather gangway watching the foam that spread from the vessel's bow as she breasted the waves of the Atlantic gallantly—it's my opinion that our skipper is made o' the right stuff. He's entered quite into the spirit of the thing, and I heard him say to the first mate yesterday he'd made up his mind to run right up into Baffin's Bay and make inquiries for Captain Ellice first, before goin' to his usual whalin'-ground. Now that's wot I call doin' the right thing; for, ye see, he runs no small risk o' getting beset in the ice, and losing the fishin' altogether by so doin'."

"He's a fine fellow," said Singleton; "I like him better every day, and I feel convinced he will do his utmost to discover the whereabouts of our missing friend; but I fear much that our chances are small, for, although we know the spot which Captain Ellice intended to visit, we cannot tell to

what part of the frozen ocean ice and currents may have carried him."

"True," replied Buzzby, giving to his left eye and cheek just that peculiar amount of screw which indicated intense sagacity and penetration; "but I've a notion that, if they are to be found, Captain Guy is the man to find 'em."

"I hope it may turn out as you say. Have you ever been in these seas before, Buzzby?"

"No, sir—never; but I've got a half-brother wot has bin in the Greenland whale-fishery, and I've bin in the South Sea line myself."

"What line was that, Buzzby?" inquired David Summers, a sturdy boy of about fifteen, who acted as assistant steward, and was, in fact, a nautical maid-of-all-work. "Was it a logline, or a bow-line, or a cod-line, or a bit of the equator, eh?"

The old salt deigned no reply to this passing sally, but continued his converse with Singleton.

"I could give ye many a long yarn about the South Seas," said Buzzby, gazing abstractedly down into the deep. "One time when I was about fifty miles to the sou'-west o' Cape Horn, I—"

"Dinner's ready, sir," said a thin, tall, active man, stepping smartly up to Singleton, and touching his cap.

"We must talk over that some other time, Buzzby. The captain loves punctuality." So saying, the young surgeon sprang down the companion ladder, leaving the old salt to smoke his pipe in solitude.

And here we may pause a few seconds to describe our ship and her crew.

The *Dolphin* was a tight, new, barque-rigged vessel of about three hundred tons burden, built expressly for the northern whale-fishery, and carried a crew of forty-five men. Ships that have to battle with the ice require to be much more powerfully built than those that sail in unencumbered seas. The Dolphin united strength with capacity and buoyancy. The under part of her hull and sides were strengthened with double timbers, and fortified externally with plates of iron, while, internally, stanchions and crossbeams were so arranged as to cause pressure on any part to be supported by the whole structure; and on her bows, where shocks from the ice might be expected to be most frequent and severe, extra planking, of immense strength and thickness, was secured. In other respects, the vessel was fitted up much in the same manner as ordinary merchantmen. The only other peculiarity about her worthy of notice was the crow's-nest, a sort of barrel-shaped structure fastened to the fore-mast-head, in which, when at the whaling-ground, a man is stationed to look out for whales. The chief men in the ship were Captain Guy, a vigorous, earnest, practical American; Mr. Bolton, the first stout, burly, off-hand Englishman; and Saunders, the second mate, a sedate, broad-shouldered, raw-boned Scot, whose opinion of himself was unbounded, whose power of argument was extraordinary, not to say exasperating, and who stood six feet three in his stockings. Mivins, the steward, was, as we have already remarked, a tall, thin, active young man, of a brisk, lively disposition, and was somewhat of a butt among the men, but being in a position of power and trust, he was respected. The young