

## THE FROZEN PIKE.

BY W. CLARK RUSSELL.

[Continued.]

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE FRENCHMAN DIES.

However, if I expected my Frenchman to sit very long silent, he soon undeceived me by beginning to complain in his tremulous aged voice of his weakness and aching limbs.

I could not say that his mind was gone, but he talked with many breaks for breath, and not very coherently, as though the office of his tongue was performed by habit rather than memory, so that he often went far astray and babbled in sentences that had no reference to what had gone before, though on the whole I managed to collect what he meant. I was sure he had not power enough of vision to observe me in the dim reddish light of the cook-room, and this being so, he could not know I was present, more particularly as he could not hear me, yet he persisted in his poor babble, which was a behaviour in him that, more than even the matter of his speech, persuaded me of his imbecility.

He made no reference to our situation, and in solemn truth I believe his memory retained no more than a few odds and ends of the evil story of his life, like bits of tarnished lace and a rusty button or two lying in the bottom of a dark chest that has long been emptied of the clothes it once held.

I left him babbling to himself, sometimes grinning as if greatly diverted, sometimes lifting a trembling hand to help his ghostly recital by an equally ghostly dumb-show, and went on deck, satisfied that he was too weak to get to the fire and meddle with it, but sufficiently invigorated by his long night's rest to sit up without tumbling off the bench.

I got into the main chains to view the body of the vessel, and noticed with satisfaction that the constant pouring of the sea had thinned down the frozen snow to the depth of at least a foot. This encouraged me to hope that the restless tides would sap to her keel at least, and put her into a posture to be easily launched by the blow of a surge upon her bows—that is if fortune continued to keep her head on.

I regained the deck and stepped over to the pumps. There were two of them, but built up in snow. My business was to save my life if I could, and the schooner too, for the sake of the great treasure in her. Nothing must disconcert me I said to myself—I must spare no labour, but act a hearty sailor's part for God's countenance. So I trotted below, and selecting some weapons from the arms-room, such as a tomahawk, a spade-headed spear, a pike and a chopper, I returned to the pumps and fell upon them with a will. In a little more than an hour I had chopped both clear, so that they were ready for work when the schooner was launched.

Our spars and gear were as if the ice itself were rigged as a ship, to offer to the breeze a tolerable resistance for its offices of propulsion and we were making some progress, and at noon the island of ice bore at least half a league distant from us, and we had opened the sea broadly past its northern cape. To determine the hour and our position I fetched a quadrant from my cabin, and was happily just in time to catch the sun crossing the meridian. My watch was half an hour fast, so I had been out of my reckoning to the extent of thirty minutes ever since I had been cast away. I made our latitude to be sixty-four degrees twenty-eight minutes south, and the computation was perhaps near enough.

This business ended, I went to the cook-house to prepare dinner, and the first object I saw was Tassard flit upon his face near the door that opened into the cabin. He glanced when I picked him up, which I managed without much exertion of strength, for so much had he shrunk that I dare say more than half his weight lay in his clothes; and set him upon his bench with his back to the dresser. I put my mouth to his ear and roared, "Are you hurt?" His head nodded as if he understood me, but I question if he did. He was the completest picture of old age that you could imagine. I fetched a couple of spears from the arms-room, and cutting them to his height, put one in each hand that he might keep himself propped; and whilst my own dinner was broiling I made him a mess of broth with which I fed him, for now that he had the sticks he would not let go of them. But in any case I doubt if his trembling hand could have lifted the spoon to his lips without capsize the contents down his beard.

With some small idea of rallying the old villain, I mixed him a very stiff bumper of brandy, which he sipped down out of my hand with the utmost avidity. The draught soon worked in him, and he began to move his head about, seeking me in his blind way, and then tried in his broken notes, "I have lost the use of my legs and cannot walk. O holy St. Antonio, what is to become of me?"

I guessed from this that, impelled by habit or some small spur of reason, he had risen to go on deck and fallen.

Seeing how it must be with him presently, I brought his mattress and rugs from his cabin, and had scarce laid them down when he let fall one of his sticks and dropped over. I grasped him, and partly lifting, partly hauling, got him on his back and covered him up. In a few minutes he was asleep.

I trust I shall not be deemed inhuman if I confess that I heartily wished his end would come. If he went on living he promised to be an intolerable burden to me, being quite helpless. Besides, he was much too old for this world, in which a man who reaches the age of ninety is pointed to as a sort of wonder.

Nothing worth recording happened that day. The wind slackened, and the ice travelled so slow that at sundown I could not discover that we had made more than a quarter of a mile of progress to the north since noon, though we had settled by half as much again that distance westwards.

I had not closed my eyes on the previous night, and was tired out when the evening arrived, and, as no good

could come of my keeping a watch, for the simple reason that it was not in my power to avert anything that might happen, I tumbled some further covering over the Frenchman, who had lain on the deck all the afternoon, sometimes dozing, sometimes waking and talking to himself, and appearing on the whole very easy and comfortable, and went to my cabin.

I slept sound the whole night through, and on waking went on deck before going to the cook-house and lighting the furnace (as was my custom), so impatient was I to observe our state and to hear such news as the ocean had for me.

The island lay a league distant on the larboard team, and looked a wondrous vast field of ice going into the south. I went below and got about lighting the fire. The Frenchman lay very quiet, under as many clothes as would fill a half-dozen of sacks. It was bitterly cold, sharper in the cook-house than I had ever remembered it, and I could not conceive why this should be, until I recollected that I had forgotten to close the companion-hatch before going to bed. I prepared some broth for my companion, and dressed some ham for myself, and ate my breakfast, supposing he would meanwhile awake. But after sitting some time and observing that he did not stir, a suspicion flashed into my mind; I knelt down, and clearing his face, listened. He did not breathe. I brought the lathorn to him, but his countenance had been so changed by his unparalleled emergence from a state of middle life into extreme old age, he was so puckered, hollowed, gaunt, his features so distorted by the great weight of his years that I was not to know him dead by merely viewing him. I threw the clothes off him, listened at his mouth breathlessly, felt his hands, which were ice-cold. Dead indeed! thought I. Great Father, 'tis Thy will! And I rose very slowly and stood surveying the silent figure with an emotion that owed its inspiration partly to the several miracles of vitality I had beheld in him during our association, and to a bitter feeling of loneliness that swelled up in me.

He was dead, and there was an end; and without further ado I carried him into the forecastle and threw a hammock over him, and left him to lie there till there should come clear water to the ship to serve him for a grave. (To be continued.)

**An Italian Critic on British Officers.**  
The victory of the English at Suakin affords a further demonstration—were it still needed—of their great superiority over other Europeans in colonial warfare, and of their marvellous aptitude—the true characteristic of a conquering race—in organizing and in leading in action forces raised from among conquered peoples. Be their soldiers Hotentots of South Africa, Gorkhas of the Himalaya, Sikhs of the Punjab, or negroes of the Sudan, English officers know how to bring them under control, to discipline and instruct them, and to lead them to victory. The reason of this command over the militaristic elements of conquered races, which English officers exercise in so much greater degree than do those of other colonizing nations, will be easily understood by bearing in mind that their natural inclination is more warlike than military, and that the nature of their studies is humane and civilizing. Whoever has, for any length of time, frequented the society of English officers so thoroughly to know them, must have observed that while they possess in their full development the noblest qualities of the soldier, they exhibit in a much less degree than do those of other nations those characteristics—certainly not always agreeable—which seem peculiarly to result from the habits of a military life. Daring to tenacity in the face of danger, the English officer is generally modest and reserved in ordinary intercourse; he, no matter how intimate he may be with you, will never trouble you by talking of himself, his campaigns, his wounds, his honors. Of that arrogant, almost defiant, bearing which the officers of certain continental armies too frequently assume towards their civilian fellow-citizens, there is no trace in the English officer. To terrify by arbitrary acts, to gain popularity by means of weak concessions, he deems equally contemptible and unworthy of him. The English have no military seminaries like our military colleges. Young men who desire to obtain a commission in the army can only do so by passing through the schools at Sandhurst or Woolwich, through the militia, or by proving to the satisfaction of a purely civil board of examiners—called the Civil Service Commission—that they are fully instructed in mathematics, classics and modern languages. It is no rare thing to find English officers writing with elegance and purity of style, and remarkable also for the breadth and humanity of their ideas, while it is very rare to find in continental military writers the thinker and the politician so perceptible. In the latter we recognize the individual, not a mere unit in a collective institution—for example, Malcolm Napier, Hanley, Wolsey and Brackenbury—General Clarke, in the *Adriatic* (Venice).

Water Power.

The riteous wells of Dakota are probably the most remarkable for pressure and the immense quality of water supplied of any ever opened. More than 100 of such wells, from 500 to 1,000 feet deep, are to day in successful operation, distributed throughout twenty-nine counties, from Yankton, in the extreme south, to Pembina, in the extreme north, giving forth a constant, never varying stream, which is in no wise affected by the increased number of wells, and showing a great pressure in some instances as high as 100 to 175, and 187 pounds to the square inch. This tremendous power is utilized in the more important towns for water supply, fire protection and the driving of machinery at a wonderful saving on the original cost of plant and maintenance, not counting the constant repair necessary, had steam been employed, for fuel, repairs, and the salaries of engineer and fireman. What has been accomplished through the aid of natural gas and steam in building up manufacturing establishments, may some day be rivaled on the prairies of Dakota by tapping the inexhaustible power stored in nature's reservoirs beneath the surface.—Fire and Water.

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**Palmer's Sleeping Cars** run through to St. John on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and to Halifax on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and from St. John, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The above Table is made up on E. C. Railway standard time, which is 75th meridian time. All the local Trains stop at Nelson Station, both going and returning, if signalled. All freight for transportation over this road, if above Fourth (4th) Class, will be taken delivery of at the Union Wharf, Chatham, and forwarded free of Truckage Custom House Entry or other charges. Special attention given to Shipments of Fish.

**CHATHAM RAILWAY.**  
WINTER 1888-9.

On and after MONDAY, NOV. 26TH, Trains will run on this railway in connection with the Intercolonial Railway, daily (Sunday nights excepted) as follows—

GOING NORTH				THROUGH TIME TABLE			
LOCAL TIME TABLE	NO. 1 EXPRESS, NO. 2 ACCOMMODATION	Leave Chatham, 12.10 a.m.					