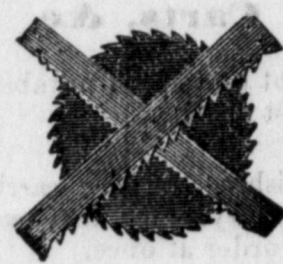


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**MAROONED.**  
BY  
**W. CLARKE RUSSELL.**  
(Condensed for THE REVIEW.)  
CHAPTER XXXI.—Continued

"What is it, do you think, Mr. Musgrave?"

The girl's question was answered by the sudden upheaval of a long black line floating up like the keel of an inverted ship, with a brilliant sparkling of phosphorescent light all along the ebon side of it, off which rose a faint gleam to the reflection of the horn of moon and to the shine of the planets and bright stars in the wet blackness, instantly followed by the same steam-like hissing as we had before heard, only it was now so close the blast of it came tingling to the ear through the dark hush; and with this sound there rose into the dusk a great feather-shaped, cloudy spout of water, green as emerald, and radiant as though it were vapor illuminated by the glare of a signal light with the sea fire that swarmed in it.

"A big whale, by Jove!" said I, "and unpleasantly near to us, too."

Indeed, the black mass had risen within pistol shot; but the very element of fear its proximity induced deepened the impression of the dark grandeur, the majestic, mysterious beauty of the show.

At last it came to an hour when I told Miss Grant she must lie down and sleep. "I shall be able to doze as I sit here, I am sure," she answered.

"Be guided by me, my dear Miss Grant. Every bone in your body would ache like the gout if you slumber seated on this hard board with your back against the side. See, now, the sort of bed I have had in my mind for you all along."

I placed a strapped rug in the middle of the boat, close against the stern-sheets, to serve as a pillow, then spread other rugs along with shawls as a mattress, reserving yet a rug, for we were well supplied in this way, to cover her with.

"Now," said I, "if you will remove your hat and pull the hood of your cloak and lie down, you will rest as comfortably as ever you did in your underground room."

"How good you are, how kind you are!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Mr. Musgrave, how would it have been with me but for you? and how do I repay you?—by bringing you into these cruel experiences and wretched adventures."

I pressed my lips to her fingers, that being the only reply I dared make just then, and sat down to chip in an agitated way at my tinder-box for a light to consume a cheroot that was but half smoked out.

It would be about three o'clock in the morning—some three-quarters of an hour before dawn at all events—that Miss Grant suddenly sat up with a little exclamation of astonishment, to which I had not time to add a note of its own.

"Oh!" she cried, "I have been dreaming. I did not know where I was. Pray help me up, Mr. Musgrave."

"The dawn will be here shortly," said I; "why not sleep the night out?"

"The dawn! Then you have let me take more than my share of rest. Pray help me up. I have slept soundly."

On this I cleared away the umbrella, removed the shawl that wrapped her about and assisted her onto her feet.

"Still the same dead calm," she exclaimed, looking round her. "Now, Mr. Musgrave, you will please lie down."

"No, I can get the forty winks I want here quite comfortably."

"But you will go on talking if you sit instead of lying down, and thus a second night will pass without your having closed your eyes."

"But I don't need to plunk it to sleep," said I. "I won't talk, I promise you. Observe how in earnest I am," and so saying, I turned up the collar of my coat, folded my arms, and let drop my chin in a proper sleeping posture; and sure enough in less than three minutes I was in a sound slumber, for I never could have imagined how worn out I was until I had shut my eyes and got fairly under weigh for a doze.

It seemed to me that I had not been sleeping five minutes when I was awakened by Miss Grant moving; I started and found myself leaning my full weight against her, my head very coolly resting upon her shoulder.

"I am grieved to disturb you," she said, "but a little breeze has sprung up, with some clouds darkening down in the west there, and I knew you would wish me to arouse you."

"Due west, as I live!" said I, "since that faintness yonder must be the east. Heaven deliver us! Why couldn't this blessed air have come away with the sun?"

"It may blow us the sight of a ship, though," she exclaimed, "let it blow whence it will."

"Ay," said I, "and thanks for that grain of comfort. But it is abominably merrifying, nevertheless. Needs must, however, when Old Nick drives, and so, Miss Grant, for a ratch to the southward, if your shawls will suffer this little hooker to look that way."

I rose, and added, "How good of you to pillow my head! We are supposed to be irresponsible in our sleep; but I think I showed myself pretty rational—I might have swayed toward the gunwale instead—but you should have shaken me off."

"Indeed," she answered, quietly, "you did sway toward the gunwale, and that you might rest with some little comfort, I coaxed your head to my shoulder."

"And it went willingly enough, I don't doubt," said I, somehow wishing she had made more out of this by her voice, for it was too dark yet to see the expression of her face. But then it was possible not to forget at moments that she and I were alone.

As the morning advanced the breeze freshened. The clouds were now broken up into vast puffs of vapor, white as steam which came rolling stately out of the west, darkening wide spaces of the frothing, running blue with violet shadows. The sea was beginning to hollow a bit, too; the ridges growing wider and deeper along with a sound of snarling in the seething slide of their heads. The yawns in the sail where the shawls had been united widened; the yard I had manufactured from the bough of a fallen tree fell to buckling uncomfortably to the growing leeward and plunges of the boat. Indeed, I presently found that if the shawls were to stand the sheet must be slackened out yet, so that before ten o'clock that morning we were running eastward with the wind almost astern of us, blowing away as fate would have it in the quite wrong direction.

A little before sunset I spied a sail right ahead. The angry crimson in the west seemed to roll like the clouds into the far east, where it hung in a smoking red haze that looked cyclonic with the huddled loom of the vapor behind it, driven in a heap down there by the wind, and in the heart of this stormy radiance I saw the sail. But whatever the craft might be she was hull down, and the red canvas of her, more like a live cinder than the fabric of a vessel, was to be caught only from the head of a sea when it lifted us. I pointed it out to Miss Grant, rather for the hope the sight might yield her than for any imaginable good it could be to us; and she rose, passing her arm around my neck to steady herself, and there was so much of an unconscious caress in this action, as though her heart dictated a gesture unnoted by her reason, that it was through Heaven's mercy alone the thrill of delight the contact of her white hand against my neck sent through me did not cause me to head the boat off and founder her.

She had barely resumed her seat, and was seemingly about to address me, when the wind breezed up with a shriek, the puff taking us precisely as we swung to the ridge of a billow, and away went the shawls, all three of them vanishing ahead like a fragment of rainbow, leaving the yard in halves, hanging to the halyards like the legs of a pair of compasses partly open. I half rose with the intention of converting the shawl that had been wrapped about Miss Grant during the night into a job-headed affair, which might provide surface enough to scud under, with some promise of the pull of it keeping us ahead of the seas, but I changed my mind on second thoughts.

"Where are we going to?" I asked myself. "Here am I suffering this boat to be blown out into the Atlantic Ocean, when our hopes of salvation lie over the stern."

I said to Miss Grant, "Please catch hold of this tiller—so. Hold it steady as you have it, straight fore and aft, that you may keep the boat dead before the wind."

She did as I bade her. I sprang forward, unstepped the mast, and taking the two paddles, bound the three together securely by the halyards. This done, I secured the bundle to the end of the coir rope that lay coiled in the bows. I then called to the girl to put the helm over, motioning to her that she might know which way to thrust the tiller, and the instant the little craft came broadside on to the sea I flung the bundle of mast and paddles overboard, then floundered aft, moving as low as I could in the boat, scarce knowing whether the next minute would not find us drowning. It was necessary but a dangerous manoeuvre in that sea. She rounded quickly head on to the pull of that rope; but ere the drag of her could tauten the line she hung a breathless moment or two in the trough, with the sea like a dark wall to windward, rearing its head to the height of my own stature, flickering dusky against the crimson in the west, and I could not fetch a sigh, so sure was I that the sweeping volume would tumble sheer over us. But the broad-beamed little structure went floating up it broadside on, with her keel at right angles, while I gripped the gunwale with one hand, my right arm encircling Miss Grant to keep her from sliding to leeward—and this without shipping more water than a small thunder-shower of spray blowing over us off the brow of the surge as we mounted it. Then, as the boat swept into the hollow behind she tautened the rope and whipped her nose round to the sea, and so lay rising and falling, heavily indeed, but comparatively safely, behind the breakwater of the masts and oars to which she rode.

"It was the only thing I could think of to do," I cried. "Thank God it is done, and well done. You have a magnificent nerve, Miss Grant. For my part, I thought it was all over with us, and was too frightened to bawl out."

"We are safer like this than with the sail set?" she said.

"Yes," I exclaimed, "we shall be able to make something like good weather of it now, even should the breeze freshen."

I ought to have thought of this old world nautical strategem long before it grew perilous to practise it."

CHAPTER XXII.  
RESCUED.

The wind fortunately did not increase when the darkness fell, but the gloom of the night gave so stormy an aspect to the ocean that you would have thought it blew as hard again as it did. I cannot expect how dismal was the appearance of the weltering liquid blackness in whose heart our tiny ark labored, one moment flung to the sight of the stars, the next plunged into the momentary stagnation and midnight of the Atlantic trough, with long dashes of pale foam heaving like great winding sheets all about us, and the slender moon leaping with a troubled silver face from the rims of the flying clouds, to render the picture ghastly with the cold, death-like complexion of her light. There was to be no couch for Miss Grant at the bottom of the boat. The fabric rode well and took but very little water over the bows, but the wet came in fast through the showering of spray off the seas curling into foam ahead of us, and obliged me again and again to bale, though it occupied but very little time to free us.

I occupied my mind by considering what we would do on the morrow, if the dawn found us alive and the weather moderated.

While I thus sat pondering, with my heart so heavy in me that I could not have felt more melancholy had I been sure that the sun never was again to rise for us, I felt the pressure of Miss Grant's form against mine, and bringing my eyes close to her face, I saw that she was asleep. I passed my arm round her that she might have the support of it, and yielded so as to bring her head to my shoulder, as she had mine on the previous night; and thus she lay, worn out in a deep sleep, breathing regularly.

For an hour, perhaps, my enjoyment lasted; at the expiration of that time my eye was suddenly taken by a pale shadow a trifle on the starboard side the boat. It came and went with our tossing. It hung steadily and grew rapidly, enlarging out of the western darkness with a steadfast spectral sheen that presently assured me it must be the canvas of a ship. The involuntary start I gave awoke Miss Grant. She sat up unconscious of the posture her sleep had taken, and I withdrew my arm from her waist.

I pointed while I put my mouth to her ear and cried out, "A ship!"

The mere sound of the word instantly brought her to her full senses. She exclaimed, "She will not be able to see us! Can we not signal? Can we not show a light?"

Alas! I had no means of making a flare. Moreover, the vessel was approaching us too rapidly to have enabled me to act, had an opportunity for doing so offered. It was very soon after I had sighted her that she had shaped out to the proportions of a large vessel of eight hundred tons at least, running under a press, all three royals set indeed, for what was half a gale of wind to us down here, lying in the eye of it and receiving its full pressure, would be but a pleasant breeze to yonder tall craft, who, by giving it her stern, took most of the spite out of it.

I sprang to my feet, sending a wild yell against the gale to her, but was immediately flung down again by the jump of the boat. I again staggered up, but only to fall afresh, this time fetching myself a thump that had like to have broken my back.

Terror had constricted my throat; I could not find my voice. The mere effort to shout wrenched me as though some hand were upon my heart striving to tear it from my breast. I could see no light along her until she gave us her stern, when there shone out some squares of illuminated windows. She had the look of a frigate, and might have been one for all I could tell, though more likely she was some fine West Indian, well to the westward in the usual course of such craft bound for home. As she had risen like a cloud, so did she vanish like one; her squares of canvas paling to the moon, then darkening to the brief eclipse, the brightening out afresh into visionary fragility, till the stars were trembling once more where her stately rolling spread of canvas had hidden them, and the sea went frothing to the mere smudge she made in the desolate, windy, distant dusk.

Miss Grant took my hand and held it, crying to me, "God watches over us, Mr. Musgrave. To-morrow will bring us help I'm sure."

We sat talking awhile, but my companions voice was broken by weariness, and presently she made no answer to some question I put, and on looking at her I found she had fallen asleep. I supported her as before, but it was not long ere I was nodding too. Her soft and regular respiration was an invitation to slumber; the rhythmic swing of the boat too was puppy-like in its influence. My eyelids turned into lead, my chin sunk upon my breast.

I was startled by a voice hailing me. It aroused me from a nightmare, and I woke in a fright. It was daylight.

"Boat ahoy!"

I started to the cry that came ringing harsh and loud close aboard, and Miss Grant opened her eyes and sat erect, with an exclamation of astonishment and a lifting up of the hands as though to fend off some phantasmal object.

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