

THE SURVIVORS.

Evening was just closing in, heralded by that indescribable feeling of refreshment in the torrid air always experienced at sea near the Equator when the sun is about to disappear. The men in the 'crow's nest' were anxiously watching the declining orb, whose disappearance would be the signal for their release from their tedious watch. But to the chagrin of every foremast hand, before the sun had quite reached the horizon, the officer up at the main-mast head, taking a final comprehensive sweep with his glasses all around, raised the thrilling cry of 'blo-o-o-w.' And despite the lateness of the hour, in less than ten minutes four boats were being strenuously driven in the direction of the just-sighted whale. Forgetting for a while their discontent at the prospect before them, the crews toiled vigorously to reach their objective, although not a man of them but would have rejoiced to lose sight of him. It was not so to be. At another time he would probably have been startled by the clang of the oars as they turned in the rowlocks, but now he seemed to have lost his powers of apprehension, allowing us to come up with him and harpoon him with comparative ease. The moment that he felt the prick of the keen iron all his slothfulness seemed to banish, and without giving one of the other boats a chance to get fast also, he milled around to windward, and exerting all his vast strength, rushed off into the night that came up to meet us like the opening of some dim portal into the unknown.

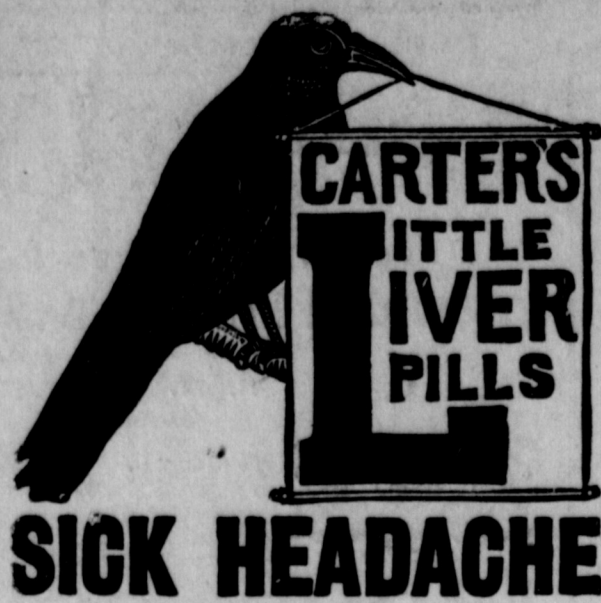
Some little time was consumed in our preparations for the next stage of our proceedings, during which the darkness came down upon us and shut us in with our prey, blotting out our ship and the other boats from the stunted horizon left to us, as if they had never been. By some oversight no compass was in our boat, and a rare occurrence in those latitudes, the sky was overcast so that we could not see the stars. Also there was but little wind, our swift transit at the will of the whale alone being responsible for the breeze we felt. On, on went in silence except for the roar of the parted waters on either hand, and unable to see anything but the spectral gleam ahead whenever the great mammal broke water to spout.

Presently the headlong rush through the gloom began to tell upon everybody's nerves, and we hoped, almost prayed for a slackening of the relentless speed kept up by the monster we had fastened ourselves to. The only man who appeared unmoved was the second mate, who was in charge. He stood in the bows as if carved in stone, one hand grasping his long lance and the other resting on his hip, a stern figure whose only sign of life was his unconscious balancing to the lively motion of the boat. Always a mystery to us of the crew, he seemed much more so now, his inscrutable figure dimly blotched against the gloom ahead, and all our lives in his hand. For a year we had been in daily intercourse with him, yet we felt that we knew no more of the man himself than on the first day of our meeting. A strong, silent man, who never cursed us as the others did, because his lightest word carried more weight than their torrents of blasphemy, and withal a man who came as near the seaman's ideal of courage, resourcefulness, and tenacity as we could conceive possible.

Again and again as we sped onward through the dark, each of us after his own fashion analyzed that man's character in a weary, purposeless round of confused thought through the haze of which shot with dread persistence the lured phrase, 'a lost boat.' How long we had thus been driving blindly on none of us could tell; no doubt the time appeared enormously prolonged; but when at last the ease up came we were all stiff with our long constraint of position. All—that is—by Mr. Neville, our chief, who, as if in broad day, within a mile of the ship, gave all the necessary orders for the attack. Again we were baffled, for, in spite of his unprecedented run, the whale began to sound. Down, down he went in hasteless, determined fashion, never pausing for an instant, though we kept all the strain on the line that was possible, until the last fluke of our 300 fathoms left the tub, slithered through the harpooner's fingers, round the loggerhead and disappeared. Up flew the boat's head with a shock that sent us all flying in different directions; then all was silent. Only for a minute. The calm, grave tones of Mr. Neville broke the spell by saying: 'Make yourselves as comfortable as you can, lads; we can do nothing till daylight but watch for the ship.'

We made an almost whispered response and began our watch. But it was like trying to peer through the walls of an unlit cellar, so closely did the darkness hem us in. Presently down came the rain, followed by much wind, until, notwithstanding the latitude, our teeth chattered with the cold. Of course we were in no danger from the sea, for except in the rare hurricanes there is seldom any wind rising to the force of a gale. But the night was very long. Nor did our miserable anticipations tend to make our hard lot any easier.

So low did we feel that when at last the day dawned we could not fully appreciate the significance of that heavenly sight. As the darkness fled however, hope revived and eager eyes searched every portion of the gradually lightening ring of blue of which we were the tiny centre. Slowly, fatigues, the fact was driven home to our hearts that what we had feared was come to pass; that ship was nowhere to be seen. More than that, we all knew that in that most unfrequented stretch of ocean months might pass without signs of vessel of any kind. There were six pounds of biscuits in one keg and three gallons of water in another, sufficient, perhaps, at utmost need, to keep the six of us alive for a week. We looked in one another's



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faces and saw the fear of death plainly inscribed; we looked at Mr. Neville's face and were strengthened. Speaking in his usual tones, but with a curiously deeper inflexion in them, he gave orders for the sail to be set, and making an approximate course by the sun, we steered to the north-west. Even the consolation of movement was soon denied us, for as the sun rose the wind sank, the sky over-head cleared and the sea glazed. A biscuit each and half a pint of water was served out to us and we made our first meal, not without secretly endeavoring to calculate how many more still remained to us. At Mr. Neville's suggestion we sheltered ourselves as much as possible from the fierce glare of the sun, and to keep off thirst poured sea water over one another at frequent intervals. Our worst trial for the present was inaction, for a feverish desire to be doing—something—no matter what, kept our nerves twitching and tingling so that it was all we could do to keep still.

After an hour or two of almost unbroken silence Mr. Neville spoke, huskily at first, but as he went on his voice rang mellow and vibrant. 'My lads, he said, 'our position has been occupied many times in the history of the sea as you all well know. Of the scenes that have taken place when men are brought by circumstances such as ours down from their high position in the scale of creation to the level of unreasoning animals, we need not speak unhappily such tragedies are too clearly present in the thoughts of every one of us. But in the course of my life I have many times considered the possibilities of some day being thus situated, and have earnestly endeavored to prepare myself for whatever it had in store for me. We are all alike here, for the artificial differences that obtain in the ordinary affairs of life have dropped away from us, leaving us on the original plane of fellow-men. And my one hope is that although we be of different nationalities and still more widely different temperaments, we may all remember that so long as we wrestle manfully with the beast that is crouching in every one of us we may go, if we must go, without shame before our God. For consider how many of those who are safe on shore this day are groaning under a burden of life too heavy to be borne, how many are seeking a refuge from themselves by the most painful by-ways to death. I am persuaded and so are all of you, if you give it a thought, that death itself is no evil; the anticipation of pain accompanying death is a malady of the mind harder to bear by many degrees than physical torture. What I dread is not the fact of having to die, although I love the warm light, the glorious beauty of this world as much as a man may, but that I may forget what I am, and disgrace my manhood by letting myself slip back into the slough from which it has taken so many ages to raise me. Don't let us lose hope, although we need not expect a miracle, but let each of us help the other to be a man. The fight will be fierce but not long and when it is won, although we may all live many days after we shall not suffer. Another thing, perhaps some of you don't believe in any God, others believe mistily in they know not what. For my part I believe in a Father-God from whom we came and to whom we go. And I so think of Him that I am sure He will do even for an atom like me that which is not only best for me but best for the whole race of mankind as presented in me. He will neither be cruel nor forget. Only I must endeavor to use the powers of mind and body. He has given me the best advantage now that their testing time has come.'

With eyes that never left that claim strong face we all hung upon his words as if we were absorbing in some mysterious way from them courage to endure. Of the five of us, two were Scandinavians, a Swede and a Dane, one, the harpooner, was an American negro, one was a Scotchman, and myself, an Englishman. Mr. Neville himself was an American, of old Puritan stock. When he left speaking there was utter silence, so that each could almost hear the beating of the other's heart. But in that silence every man of us felt the armor of a high resolve encasing him, an exalting courage uplifting him, and making his face to shine.

Again the voice of our friend broke the stillness, this time in a stately song that

none of us had never heard before. 'O, Rest in the Lord! From thenceforward he sang almost continually, even when his lips grew parched with drought, although each of us tendered him some of our scanty measure of water so that he might still cheer us. Insensibly we leant upon him as the time dragged on, for we felt that he was a very tower of strength to us. Five days and nights crept away without any sign of change. Patience had become a habit with us, and the scanty allowance of food and drink had so reduced our vitality that we scarcely felt any pain. Indeed, the first two days were the worst. And now the doles became crumbs and drops, yet still no anger, or peevishness even, showed itself. We could still smile sanely and still look upon each other kindly. Then a heavy downpour of rain filled our water-breakers for us, giving us in the meantime some copious draughts, which, although they were exquisitely refreshing at the time, racked us with excruciating pain afterward. The last crumb went, and did not worry us by its going, for we had arrived by easy stages at a physical and mental condition of acquiescence in the steady approach of death that almost amounted to indifference. With a strange exception; hearing and sight were most acute, and thought was busy about a multitude of things, some of them the pettiest and most trivial that could be imagined, and others of the most tremendous import. Speech was difficult, impossible to some, but on the whole we must have felt somewhat akin to the Hindu devotees who withdraw themselves from mankind and endeavor to reduce the gross hamperings of the flesh until they can enter into the conception of the unseen verities that are about us on every side. What the mental wrestlings of the others may have been they only knew; but to all outward seeming we had been gently gliding down into peace.

The end drew near. Nothing occurred to stay its approach. No bird or fish came near enough to be caught until we were all past making an effort had one been needed. We had lost count of time, so that I cannot say how long our solitude had lasted, when one brilliant night as I lay in a state of semi-consciousness looking up into the glittering dome above, I felt a hand touch me. Slowly I turned my head, and saw the face of the negro harpooner, who lay by my side. I dragged my heavy head close to him and heard him whisper: 'I'm a-goin' an' I'm glad. What he said wuz true. It's as easy as goin' ter sleep. So long.' And he went. What passed thereafter I do not know, for as peacefully as a tired man settles himself down into the cosy embrace of comfortable bed, heaving a sigh of utter content as the embracing rest relaxes the tension of the muscles and brain, I, too, slipped down into dreamless slumber.

I awoke in bitter pain, gnawing aches that left no inch of my body, unwrung. And my first taste of life's return gave me a fierce feeling of resentment that it would all have to be gone through again. I felt no gratitude for life spared. That very night of my lost consciousness the whaler that rescued us must have been within a few miles, for when we were sighted from her crow's nest at daybreak we were so near that they could distinguish the bodies with our glasses. There were only three of us still alive, the fortunate ones who had gone to their rest being Mr. Neville, the harpooner, and the Swede. The rescuers said that except for the emaciated condition of our bodies we all looked like sleepers. There were no signs of pain or struggle. It was nearly two months before we who had thus been brought back to a life of care and toil were able to resume it, owing to our long cramped position as much as to our lack of strength. I believe, too, that we were very slow in regaining that natural will-to-live which is part of the animal equipment, and so necessary to keep off the constant advances of death. And, like me, my companions both felt that they could not be grateful for being dragged back to life again.

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'Help, Jimmy, help!' 'Wait till you sink 't'ree times. Maudie. It'll look better in de papers.'



Mrs. James Constable, Seaforth, Ont., writes:—"Ever since I can remember I have suffered from weak action of the heart. For some time past it grew constantly worse. I frequently had sharp pains under my heart that I was fearful if I drew a long breath it would cause death. In going up-stairs I had to stop to rest and regain breath. When my children made a noise while playing I would be so overcome with nervousness and weakness that I could not do anything and had to sit down to regain composure. My limbs were unnaturally cold and I was subject to nervous headaches and dizziness. My memory became uncertain and sleep deserted me.

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FLASHES OF FUN.

'Why, why, do you turn your head away from me, dearest?' 'Onions, love.'

'Do you never work?' said Mrs. Subbute to a tramp who asked for a handout. 'Never, mum,' was the proud reply. 'I am an immune.'

Lulu—You should get him to sign the pledge before you marry him. Baba—Why, he doesn't drink. Lulu—No, but he may be tempted to do so later.

Teacher—Who was Mercury? He was the liar of mythology. That's why they put him into thermometers. He's still up to his old business, pa says. —Syracuse Herald.

Gentleman (to house agent)—The great disadvantage is that the house is so damp. House agent—Disadvantage, sir? Advantage, I call it. In case of fire it wouldn't be so likely to burn.

Fond Mother—What do you think of little Freddie? He's the very image of his father, isn't he? Visitor (cynically)—Well, Freddie needn't mind that as long as he has good health.

Spriggs: 'How much older is your sister than you, Johnny?' Johnny: 'I dunno. Maud used to be twenty-five years, then she was twenty, and now she ain't only eighteen. We'll soon be twins.'

Getting out of it.—Teacher—"How is the United States of America bounded?" Scholar (who doesn't know)—"Why—er—since de war, ma'am, there is no north, no south, no east and no west, ter dis glorious country!"

In Ireland.—Native—"If Oi should decide to come to New York, how long would it be before Oi could vote?" Casey (of Tammany Hall, on a visit)—"Will, Oi don't kape thrack of thim election days, but Oi think there's another wan in about four months."

'Yes, a faith curer did me good once.' 'Get out.'

'Fact. I had the toothache. He gave me a treatment and I gave him that moldy gag about believing he had his pay was the same as getting it. Then he hit me in the jaw, and that knocked out the tooth.'

Comparison.—Some despaired. 'It is vain to ask a favor of him! they exclaimed. 'His face is as cold and impassive as that of a marble statue!'

Others hoped. 'But,' they protested, his 'trousers are not nearly so bagged and distorted as those of the average status!'

That was to say he doubtless had a heart after all.—Detroit Journal.

Ethelberts: 'I want a pair of slippers for pa—number tens, please, and squeaky.'

General Shoemaker: 'Squeaky, miss? I'm afraid we haven't any of that kind.'

Ethelberts: 'I'm so sorry. Couldn't you make him a squeaky pair? There is a certain young gentleman who visits me frequently and—and it would be very convenient for him to know just when pa is coming downstairs.'

'What made you break off the argument so suddenly?' 'Didn't you hear what he said?' asked the cautious citizen.

'Yes. When you left he had just said, 'Let us talk this over calmly and reasonably.'

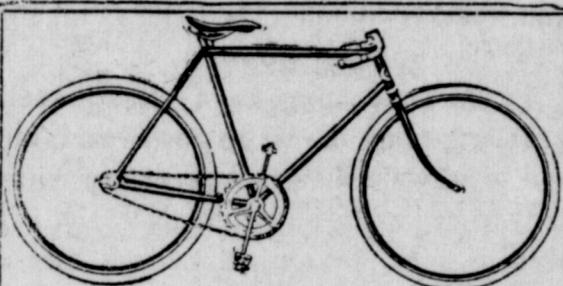
'That's why I went. Whenever a man says, 'Let's talk it over calmly and reasonably,' you may depend on his being so angry it won't take more than three words to make him fight.'—Washington Star.

Not long ago a lover of cricket arrived at the Oval after the commencement of a match in which Hall was plying. Being anxious to see that cricketer's batting per-

formances, he inquired of a son of toil who was looking on:— 'Is Hall out?' 'No, sir,' was the answer, 'there be six more to go in.'

Bicycle Foot.

'Traumatic flatfoot'—so-called by surgeons to distinguish it from the congenital variety—is said to be unusually prevalent among women bicycle riders this season, and is known as the 'bicycle foot.' It is ascribed, in part, to the unnecessary energy with which many women dismount, without bending the knees to escape the strain occasioned by the concussion, and in part to the wearing of the fashionable high-heeled, thin-soled bicycle boots. These boots do not give sufficient support to the instep and ball of the foot, and in time the ligaments become too weak to retain the arch in its proper position—hence traumatic effects. Physicians recommend the wearing of calfskin boots with thick soles and low heels, if women bicycle riders would escape a malformation which is not only exceedingly painful in effects, but difficult to cure.



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