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"GOD AND MY COUNTRY."

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THE LOST SHIP.

BY MARY DANFORTH.

"Hark!" said a young man to a group of men, who were gathered around a cheering fire of an inn and momentarily drinking, in gay sallies and boisterous mirth, the noise of the gale without—"Hark! was not that a gun?"

Every voice in the company ceased at once and every ear was turned in eager inquiry towards the window. The roar of the neighbouring surf, and the wild tumult of the tempest as it whistled without broke distinctly on the ear, but for more than a minute, during which all listened intently, nothing else was heard.

"It was but fancy, Jack," said one of the group, "you—"

The speaker stopped short, for at that instant the deep boom of a cannon out at sea sounded distinctly and fearfully across the night, so that the hearers started and gazed into each other's faces, as men gaze when they listen to a voice from the dead. Neither the pen of the novelist nor the pencil of the painter could do justice to that look of horror. The silence lasted for a full minute, and was then broken by the first speaker.

"There is a ship on the coast—but hark! a third gun, and it sounds nearer than the last!"

"And the wind is right on shore, and is blowing a most terrible hurricane," said another.

"God help them!—but let us hurry to the coast, and see if we can do anything for them," ejaculated the first speaker.

With one consent the party moved toward the door, first, however, calling to the land-ord to bring lanterns and ropes in case the latter might be needed. As the door was opened, a gust of wind eddied into the room, flaring the candles in their sockets and whistling keenly around the corners of the apartment. When the adventurers stepped outside they were almost borne down, for a moment, by the intensity of the glare, which, sweeping uncheered across the plain that lay between the inn and beach, burst on the house with almost incredible fury.

It was snowing violently, and the snow came hissing and spitting in the hurricane, almost blinding the eyes of the adventurers; but drawing their shaggy coats around them, the compassionate travellers bent their heads against the storm, and hurried to the coast, their paces increasing momentarily as the solemn boom of that signal gun rose more and more clear and distinctly on the night.

The shore to which they turned their steps was a bold, high rocky coast, against which the surf was beating with a violence that shook the cliffs to their very centre, and flung the spray in showers over their edge a hundred feet above the raging deep below.

The party had stood some time, however, on the summit of the rocks before the anxious lookers out could distinguish anything through the storm, although they strained their eyes to the utmost in the direction from which the sounds of the cannon proceeded. At length a light was discernible through the gloom, and directly a dim shadowy object, gradually assuming the outlines of a ship flying before the tempest, started out of the misty distance. For a moment she was driving up towards the spectators. That moment seeming to them an age, was spent in a breathless horror that did not admit of words. Each one involuntarily clenched his hands tighter together, and gazed with straining eyes on the powerless craft that was sweeping on with such velocity to the cliffs at its feet. On, on, she came, driving midst the white foam and the whiter tempest. A moment more and there was a crash, followed by a shriek that rose even above the storm, and froze the very hearts of the listener. It ceased, and the hurricane alone was heard.

"It is all over," said one of the listeners. "God have mercy on the souls who have gone to their last account."

"Amen!" said another. Again the breathless silence followed, during which each spectator listened to hear if there might be any survivors. At length one spoke:

"There was a cry."

"It sounds like the wail of a child."

"From what direction does it come?"

"Just beneath the cliffs—but now I lose it."

"Hark! there it was again."

"Ay! and it is a woman's voice."

There was no doubt any longer in their minds that a living being was crying for succour from the foot of the cliffs, and a dozen lanterns were immediately lowered over the edge. The violence of the gale dashed them against the rocks and broke several, but the momentary light they shed on the scene below, revealed to the spectators a white figure, which they knew at once to be that of a female, clinging to the rocks, and drenched with every wave. For an instant, and an instant only, by the light of a lantern lowered farther down the precipice, but almost immediately shattered to pieces, the face of a female had been cast upwards in earnest supplication, and those who had a momentary glimpse of it said it was a young and beautiful girl. But what could be done for her? The phrenzy of the gale forbade any attempt to rescue her by descending the cliff; and it was certain that she could not live until morning exposed to the driving snow, the intense cold, the washing of the surf, and the fierce eddies of the gale around the precipice. The spectators looked at each other in dismay. And when, in a lull of the hurricane, the cry of agony came to their ears, a cold shiver ran through their frames.

Meanwhile the cliffs were becoming crowded with people, who, apprized of the wreck by the signal guns she had fired, poured forth from their houses to render what assistance was possible to the sufferers. A fire was soon kindled on the verge of the precipice, for although the hissing snow flakes almost extinguished the flames, the efforts of the warm-hearted adventurers at length fanned them into existence, the lurid volume stemmed up steadily into the storm, or flared to and fro in the stronger puffs of the tempest.

As the fire flung its light across the countenances of the group which had gathered around it, there might be traced in every face an expression of the most anxious concern, while each spectator gazed out towards the ocean, striving to catch, through the fleecy storm, a sight of the wreck, or peered down cautiously over the edge of the cliff to discover the exact position of the sufferer below, and see whether or not any succour could be afforded her. During all this time persons had been arriving at the scene of the disaster, bringing ropes, tackles, and other appliances, by which aid might be rendered to the crew of the dismantled ship.

At length the fire, fed by renewed fuel blazed high up in the air, and flung its ruddy blaze far and wide around, enabled the spectators to catch momentary glimpses of the wreck. She appeared to be a ship of heavy tonnage, and had run so high upon the rocks that she stuck there as it impaled, her stern falling off seaward, while her bow overhung the boiling vortex on the land side of a sharp rock on which she lay. The racking of the sea, had by this time broken her hull in two, and the forward part, crowded with living beings, fell away in the gulf below just as the ruddy blaze of the flames enabled the spectators to catch the first glimpse of the wreck. It was a heart-rending sight. At the very moment when the beacon fire informed the sufferers that succour was at hand, just when hope began again to brighten in their darkened bosoms, they were swept into the raging vortex, powerless and hopeless, before the agonized eyes of those who were powerless as the victims! One wild shriek rose over all the uproar of the gale—and then a silence, if silence there should be, fell on the scene.

"God Almighty," said the pastor of the neighbouring village, "have mercy on their souls—surely he is the Lord, for the deep overthrew his power!"

The deep hush, unbroken by this ejaculation, continued for several minutes, during which every eye was strained to detect, if possible, a single struggling form in the wild vortex below. But whether faintness of the light forbade it, or whether the sufferers were confounded with the foam below, not a solitary living being was ever seen of all those who had stood

on the forecastle of the wreck. Minute after minute elapsed, and still the spectators gazed curiously into the darkness, but as moments slipped away, hope grew fainter, until at length it ceased altogether. At length one spoke:

"There is not a soul left alive nor does there appear to be any one on the stern of the vessel. I fear that the sufferer below is the sole survivor. Can nothing be done to rescue her?"

For several minutes there was no reply, but each person gazed into his neighbour's face with a sad, hopeless look that told too plainly what was thought. Many shook their heads, and several turned away, as if longer delay at the spot was useless. But when the silence had reigned for some time the young man, who at the inn had been the first to hear the signal gun, stepped out and said:

"The only hope is the descending to her aid. I will try it with a rope—so help me God!"

"That were madness," said one.

"You will not live to get half way down," said another.

"I cannot die in a holier cause," he answered.

"Nolly spoken, my son," said the pastor, "and may God be with you in the attempt. He who guided the children of Israel through the desert, and maintained the holy martyrs amid the fires of persecution, will not desert you in this extremity."

The words of the venerable man had an invigorating influence on the listeners, and infused new hope into their bosoms. The tackle was speedily rigged, and the fire was replenished, and then the adventurer stood on the edge of the cliff waiting a lull of the gale.

The attempt now to be made, was one of the most perilous nature, and certain death would be sure to overtake the adventurer, if his nerve should fail him, or his path become immersed in darkness during his descent. The side of the precipice was nearly perpendicular, but it shelved in perhaps a few yards in its descent, while its surface was broken with fissures and jutting crags, against the latter of which a person descending its side with a rope would run a constant peril of being flung by the violence of the gale oscillating the rope to and fro. The only possible means by which the foot of the precipice could be reached would be by the aid of a pole, used with a quick eye and a steady nerve, to land off the adventurer from the side of the cliff. Even in the day time and during a calm, the descent would have been an exploit that few persons would have coveted, but in the night with a violent wind beating against the face of the cliff, and whirling in eddies around the broken surface, the attempt was productive almost certainly of death, and only to be justified by the extreme necessity of the present occasion.

Added to all this peril, however, was that of darkness, for although the fire on the edge of the cliff was vigorously maintained, the light of the flames shot out horizontally or at least diagonally downwards, so that the face of the precipice was only illuminated by fitful gleams, and never wholly removed from shadow. How could a person descending the face of the cliff in the comparative darkness, guard himself with any certainty against the numerous jutting fragments of the rock?—or how could he, even if he should effect his own descent, ascend again to the edge of the cliff above with another person.

At length it was arranged that the adventurer should descend at once by the means of a rope, girt around his body and made fast above, while another rope should accompany him down. Then if he reached the foot of the precipice in safety, cloaks and blankets would be lowered to him in order that the sufferer might be protected, as much as possible, against the chilling blasts. When morning dawned, or earlier if the storm abated, an attempt was to be made to raise the sufferer to the top of the cliff by means of a chair and whip.

Every thing having been arranged, the daring adventurer seized a favourable opportunity during a lull of the gale and commenced his descent. The light of the fire as it shivered on the dark face of the precipice, and the wild whirlpool of foam below, gave an ominous character to all around him; but his heart was a stranger to fear, and skilfully avoiding the jutting angles of the rock, he reached at length the foot of the cliff, and with a light leap bounding over an intermediate chasm, stood by the side of the fugitive from the wreck. We shall not attempt to describe

her emotions during the dizzy descent of the bold young man, nor the glad cry of joy with which she saw him landed on the rock to which she clung. She would have thrown herself at his feet but he would not permit it. Raising her up, he said—

"To God alone our thanks are due; let us pray to him that we may escape the peril that yet surrounds us, for I cannot conceal from you that the danger is still imminent, and I scarcely know how we can reach the top of the cliff. But drop not, for I have come to save you or die with you!"

The fugitive raised her grateful eyes to the young man, and he then saw, for the first time, that she was a young girl about seventeen, and of unusual loveliness. Even now, with her dress all covered with spray, and the silk foam intermingled with the tresses of her dishevelled hair, her beauty was so startling that the young adventurer could scarcely repress an exclamation of rapturous admiration, and he felt that he could dare the same danger a thousand times, to win another such grateful glance from the dark eyes of the lovely stranger. But the exposed situation of the rock on which they stood—for every wave dashed the cold spray over them, soon recalled him to the necessity of providing a place of shelter for his companion, until means should be found to raise her to the summit of the cliff.

With great difficulty, and aided by the rope from above he succeeded in elevating her to a narrow shelf of the rock some ten feet higher up the face of the cliff, where, however, exposed to the driving sleet and the impetuosity of the wind, she would at least be safe from the showers of foam that deluged the rocks below.

"Oh! can I ever sufficiently thank you?" said the grateful girl, "your kindness may be in vain; but God will bless you!"

Her companion made no reply, but as he looked at her shivering form, he saw that her exposure had almost exhausted her, and that it was with an effort that she had spoken.

"Drop not, dear lady," he said, "I see that they are lowering down cloaks in which to wrap yourself, and keep out this pitiless storm? If we can only sustain ourselves here for an hour longer we can reach the summit. The gale must lull by that time."

She made no answer except by a despairing shake of her head. The bundle was by this time swinging overhead, and watching a chance, her companion succeeded in catching and disentangling it from the rope. He now busied himself in wrapping up the form of the chilled and exhausted girl, and for a while she revived; but it soon became evident that her fragile constitution was giving way under her sufferings. This the young man saw with agony. Oh! how he wished that the ledge on which they stood could have afforded them a fire, how he prayed that the storm would abate in order that she might be raised to the summit of the hill.

Happily, he had provided himself ere he began his descent, with restoratives, and other necessities, and these he now applied freely to the sinking girl in his arms. He clasped her small fair hand, and made her drink of the life-giving liquid, and besought her to attempt to walk to and fro, supported by him, on the narrow ledge of rock on which they stood. By these efforts he succeeded partially in reviving her, and at the end of half an hour, saw, with a joy unspeakable, that the tempest had begun to lull, and in a few minutes, as if miraculously, the snow ceased, and the wind died almost wholly away. The youth now gave the signal to those above, and soon saw the chair descending. How he trembled with eagerness during the time to elapse ere it reached the rock, lest the gale should burst forth with renewed fury. At length the chair swung on the ledge where they stood. Not a moment was to be lost. Exhorting his companion to rally her energies for this last effort, he fastened firmly in her seat, and seizing the rope by which the ascent of the chair was to be guided, gave the signal. With tearful eyes his companion took leave of him, but he, assuming a cheerfulness he scarcely felt, bid her retain her presence of mind, and all would go well.

"Oh! it is only for you I fear now. How can you reach the summit when there will be no one below to guide your ascent?"

"The God who preserved me once, will preserve me, if he sees fit, again."

Ere ten minutes I shall be safely by your side."

With a beating heart the young man gazed at the dizzy course of the chair, and once or twice he trembled violently as he saw it, despite all he could do, swinging in dangerous proximity to the jutting rock. At length he beheld it reach the level of the cliff—and then he knew that his lone companion was safe. We will not attempt to analyze his feelings at that moment, but they were certainly as deep as if he had known that lovely creature during a long life-time—so true it is that an hour of fearful peril breaks down the barrier betwixt two hearts which otherwise it might take years to remove.

In a few minutes the rope again descended, and the young adventurer, by incredible exertions, reached the summit of the cliff without injury. The moment his feet reached the cliff, a dozen hands grasped his own, and a long loud shout of enthusiastic applause pealed to the sky. But the first thing his eyes sought was the rescued girl, who, deaf to all entreaty, had watched from the top of the cliff until she saw her preserver safe. Then she fell back exhausted into the arms of a kind-hearted dame, who had left her home and hurried to the shore the instant she had heard that the sufferer was a woman.

The rescued girl proved to be a young lady, the daughter of an opulent merchant in a neighbouring city, who was returning from her education in Europe, accompanied by her governess. Her preserver was a naval officer, a lieutenant in the revenue cutter, which, but a few days before, had run into the little roadstead, a mile or two from the scene of the wreck. It was endeavouring to make that anchorage that the ill-fated ship had come ashore when of all her freight, only this fair girl had been saved.

Need we recount the gratitude of the father when his only child was placed in his arms? Need we say how often that child thought of her preserver, or how the young lieutenant found her at length necessary to his happiness? The grateful father dreamed it the happiest day of his life when he placed his daughter's hand in that of her preserver, and gave her away at the altar to one who, by risking his life for her, when she was a stranger to him, had proved that he would be a protector to her in after life when she was known and loved.

From the Aurora of Saturday

CHRISTMAS.—Well, friends, we have lived to see another Christmas; the anniversary of the birth of the Saviour, and the grand epoch of the Christian era;—the time when the angels came down from Heaven to spread good tidings among men. What holy associations are connected with this period! Where is the man in a Christian land who does not feel his calm and quiet influence stealing o'er his mind? The exile associates the period with the morning of his life in his fatherland; the joyous faces of his youthful companions, the smiling and happy matron, the contented sire, a prattling flock of brothers and sisters, sitting around the social fire which blazes up the old Saxon or Danish chimney, roaring as though the spirits of our ancestors were returned to bid us a merry Christmas! These are the feelings of the exile, but where are now the companions of his youth? Alas, alas! some forgotten and neglected—for man is a selfish animal, always forming new friendships and forgetting old ones—some in one part of the world and others in another, scattered about wherever interest or caprice led them, and many, many, beneath the green sod, a prey for worms.

Certain are we that many of our readers: "When dark December glooms the day, And takes our autumn joys away, When short and scant the sunbeam throws Upon the weary waste of snows, A cold and profitless regard, Like patron on a needy bard, When sylvan occupation's done, And o'er the chimney rests the gun."

Will remember the olden times, when they cried

"Heap on more wood!—the wind is chill; But let it whistle as it will, We'll keep our merry Christmas still."

They will also remember how, when the wood was brightly blazing and we were sitting around it eating our Christmas cakes and drinking our Christmas ale, we

"In merry chorus well combined, With laughter drowned the whistling wind, Mirth was within; and care, without, Might gnaw her nails to hear our shout."

And why should we not? for

"Well our christian sires of old Loved when the year its course had rolled, And brought blithe Christmas back again, With all his hospitable train. Domestic and religious rite Gave honour to the holy night. On Christmas eve the bells were rung; On Christmas eve the mass was sung; That only night in all the year, Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear. The daisied donned her little sheen, The hall was dressed with holly green, Forth to the wood did merry men go, To gather in the mistletoe. Then opened wide the baron's hall To vassal, tenant, serf, and all; Power laid his rod of rule aside, And ceremony doffed her pride. The heir with roses in his shoes, Might then a village parson choose; The lord, undergating, share The vulgar game of 'post and pair.' All bailed with uncontrolled delight, And general voice, the happy night, That to the cottage, as the crown, Brought tidings of salvation down. The fire with well-dried logs supplied, Went roaring up the chimney wide; The huge hall table's oakened face, Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace, Bore then upon its massive board, No mark to part the squire and lord.

Then the huge sirloin reeked; hard by Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie, Nor failed old Scotland to produce, At such high tide, her savory goose.

England was merry England, when Old Christmas brought his sports again. 'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale; 'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale; A Christmas gambol oft could cheer The poor man's heart through half the year.

Thus sung Sir Walter Scott; and we perfectly agree with him and say let's keep our merry Christmas still. The time should ever be remembered and improved by us, not with drunken wassailing—not by anything which has a vicious or immoral tendency; but as a season of mutual congratulation and refreshment, and by the giving and receiving social visits; we think that every person professing himself a christian, should be prepared to forgive every wrong—real or fancied—he had received from his neighbor, and hold out the right hand of fellowship to all. But above all we hope our friends when making merry in commemoration of our Saviour's birth, will REMEMBER THE POOR. Hoping that our labours will not fail in contributing something to the amusement and improvement of our patrons, we wish them all a MERRY CHRISTMAS!

ATHENS.—Among the towns of Greece no one is so celebrated as Athens. It was founded over three thousand years ago, and in after years was filled with magnificent temples, halls, and palaces, built of costly marble, and spreading over an extent of twenty-seven miles in circuit.

But this splendid city perished long since, and a few noble ruins only remain to tell us of its former glory. The Parthenon or temple of Minerva, though tottering to its fall, cannot be looked upon without admiration. It is still beautiful even in its decay; and excites a strong desire in the beholder to know more of the wonderful people who built it.

A man of weak, complying disposition, whom no one fears, no one will be at the trouble to oppose; while a man of strong and fixed character will be liable to opposition, at least from those who expect to derive a certain kind of importance from the dignity of their adversary. But he will compel even this opposition into subservience to himself; just as the mariner obliges the wind that opposes him to help him forward.

A fault once denied is twice committed.