Philosopher Jack

R.M. Ballantyne

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Chapter One. Treats of our Hero and Others.

If the entire circuit of a friend's conversation were comprised in the words “Don't” and “Do,” — it might perhaps be taken for granted that his advice was not of much value; nevertheless, it is a fact that Philosopher Jack's most intimate and valuable — if not valued — friend never said anything to him beyond these two words. Nor did he ever condescend to reason. He listened, however, with unwearied patience to reasoning, but when Jack had finished reasoning and had stated his proposed course of action, he merely said to him, “Don't,” or “Do.”

“For what end was I created?” said the philosopher, gloomily.

Wise and momentous question when seriously put, but foolish remark, if not worse, when flung out in bitterness of soul!

Jack, whose other name was Edwin, and his age nineteen, was a student. Being of an argumentative turn of mind, his college companions had dubbed him Philosopher. Tall, strong, active, kindly, hilarious, earnest, reckless, and impulsive, he was a strange compound, with a handsome face, a brown fluff on either cheek, and a moustache like a lady's eyebrow. Moreover, he was a general favourite, yet this favoured youth, sitting at his table in his own room, sternly repeated the question — in varied form and with increased bitterness — “Why was I born at all?”

Deep wrinkles of perplexity sat on his youthful brow. Evidently he could not answer his own question, though in early life his father had carefully taught him the “Shorter Catechism with proofs,” while his good old mother had enforced and exemplified the same. His taciturn friend was equally unable, or unwilling, to give a reply.

After prolonged meditation, Jack relieved his breast of a deep sigh and re−read a letter which lay open on his desk. Having read it a third time with knitted brows, he rose, went to the window, and gazed pathetically on the cat's parade, as he styled his prospect of slates and chimney cans.

“So,” said he at last, “my dreams are over; prospects gone; hopes collapsed — all vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision.”

He turned from the cat's parade, on which the shades of evening were descending, to the less romantic contemplation of his empty fire−grate.

“Now,” said he, re−seating himself at his table and stretching his long legs under it, “the question is, What am I to do? shall I kick at fate, throw care, like physic, to the dogs, cut the whole concern, and go to sea?”

“Don't,” said his taciturn friend, speaking distinctly for the first time.

“Or,” continued Jack, “shall I meekly bow to circumstances, and struggle with my difficulties as best I may?”

“Do,” replied his friend, whose name, by the way, was Conscience.

For a long time the student sat gazing at the open letter in silence. It was from his father, and ran thus:—

> “Dear Teddie, — It's a long time now that I've been thinkin' to write you, and couldn't a−bear to give you such a heavy disappointment but can't putt it off no longer, and, as your mother, poor soul, says, it's the Lord's will and can't be helped — which, of course, it shouldn't be helped if that's true — but — well, howsomever, it's of no use beatin' about the bush no longer. The seasons have been bad for some years past, and it's all I've been able to do to make the two ends meet, with your mother slavin' like a nigger patchin' up the child'n's old rags till they're like Joseph's coat after the wild beast had done its worst on it — though we *are* given to understand that the only wild beasts as had to do with that coat was Joseph's own brothers. Almost since ever I left the North of England — a small boy — and began to herd cattle on the Border hills, I've had a strange wish to be a learned man, and ever since I took to small farmin', and perceived that such was not to be my lot in life, I've had a powerful desire to see my eldest son — that's you, dear boy — trained in scientific pursoots, all the more that you seemed to have a natural thirst that way yourself. Your mother, good soul, in her own broad tongue — which I've picked up somethin' of myself through livin' twenty year with her — was used to say she 'wad raither see her laddie trained in ways o' wisdom than o' book−learnin',' which I'm agreed to myself, though it seems to

> me the two are more or less mixed up. Howsomever, it's all up now, my boy; you'll have to fight your own battle and pay your own way, for I've not got one shillin' to rub on another, except what'll pay the rent; and, what with the grey mare breakin' her leg an' the turnips failin', the look−out ahead is darkish at the best."

The letter finished with some good advice and a blessing.

To be left thus without resources, just when the golden gates of knowledge were opening, and a few dazzling gleams of the glory had pierced his soul, was a crushing blow to the poor student. If he had been a true philosopher, he would have sought counsel on his knees, but his philosophy was limited; he only took counsel with himself and the immediate results were disastrous.

"Yes," said he, with an impulsive gush, "I'll go to sea."

"Don't," said his quiet friend.

But, regardless of this advice, Edwin Jack smote the table with his clenched fist so violently that his pen leapt out of its ink−bottle and wrote its own signature on one of his books. He rose in haste and rang the bell.

"Mrs Niven," he said to his landlady, "let me know how much I owe you. I'm about to leave town — and — and won't return."

"Ech! Maister Jack; what for?" exclaimed the astonished landlady.

"Because I'm a beggar," replied the youth, with a bitter smile, "and I mean to go to sea."

"Hoots! Maister Jack, ye're jokin'."

"Indeed I am very far from joking, Mrs Niven; I have no money, and no source of income. As I don't suppose you would give me board and lodging for nothing, I mean to leave."

"Toots! ye're haverin'," persisted Mrs Niven, who was wont to treat her "young men" with motherly familiarity. "Tak' time to think o't, an' ye'll be in anither mind the morn's mornin'. Nae doot ye're—"

"Now, my good woman," interrupted Jack, firmly but kindly, "don't bother me with objections or advice, but do what I bid you — there's a good soul; be off."

Mrs Niven saw that she had no chance of impressing her lodger in his present mood; she therefore retired, while Jack put on a rough pilot−cloth coat and round straw hat in which he was wont at times to go boating. Thus clad, he went off to the docks of the city in which he dwelt; the name of which city it is not important that the reader should know.

In a humble abode near the said docks a bulky sea−captain lay stretched in his hammock, growling. The prevailing odours of the neighbourhood were tar, oil, fish, and marine−stores. The sea−captain's room partook largely of the same odours, and was crowded with more than an average share of the stores. It was a particularly small room, with charts, telescopes, speaking−trumpets, log−lines, sextants, portraits of ships, sou'−westers, oil−cloth coats and leggings on the walls; model ships suspended from the beams overhead; sea−boots, coils of rope, kegs, and handspikes on the floor; and great shells, earthenware ornaments, pagodas, and Chinese idols on the mantel−piece. In one corner stood a child's crib. The hammock swung across the room like a heavy cloud about to descend and overwhelm the whole. This simile was further borne out by the dense volumes of tobacco smoke in which the captain enveloped himself, and through which his red visage loomed over the edge of the hammock like a lurid setting sun.

For a few minutes the clouds continued to multiply and thicken. No sound broke the calm that prevailed, save a stertorous breathing, with an occasional hitch in it. Suddenly there was a convulsion in the clouds, and one of the hitches developed into a tremendous cough. There was something almost awe−inspiring in the cough. The captain was a huge and rugged man. His cough was a terrible compound of a choke, a gasp, a rend, and a roar. Only lungs of sole−leather could have weathered it. Each paroxysm suggested the idea that the man's vitals were being torn asunder; but not content with that, the exasperated mariner made matters worse by keeping up a continual growl of indignant remonstrance in a thunderous undertone.

"Hah! that *was* a splitter. A few more hug — sh! ha! like that will burst the biler entirety. Polly — hallo!"

The lurid sun appeared to listen for a moment, then opening its mouth it shouted, "Polly — ahoy!" as if it were hailing the maintop of a seventy−four.

Immediately there was a slight movement in one corner of the room, and straightway from out a mass of

marine−stores there emerged a fairy! At least, the little girl, of twelve or thereabouts, who suddenly appeared, with rich brown tumbling hair, pretty blue eyes, faultless figure, and ineffable sweetness in every lineament of her little face, might easily have passed for a fairy or an angel.

“What! caught you napping?” growled the captain in the midst of a paroxysm.

“Only a minute, father; I couldn't help it,” replied Polly, with a little laugh, as she ran to the fireplace and took up a saucepan that simmered there.

“Here, look alive! shove along! hand it up! I'm chokin'!”

The child held the saucepan as high as she could towards the hammock. The captain, reaching down one of his great arms, caught it and took a steaming draught. It seemed to relieve him greatly.

“You're a trump for gruel, Polly,” he growled, returning the saucepan. “Now then, up with the pyramid, and give us a nor'−wester.”

The child returned the saucepan to the fireplace, and then actively placed a chair nearly underneath the hammock. Upon the chair she set a stool, and on the top she perched herself. Thus she was enabled to grasp the lurid sun by two enormous whiskers, and, putting her lips out, gave it a charming “nor'−wester,” which was returned with hyperborean violence. Immediately after, Polly ducked her head, and thus escaped being blown away, like a Hindoo mutineer from a cannon's mouth, as the captain went off in another fit.

“Oh! father,” said Polly, quite solemnly, as she descended and looked up from a comparatively safe distance, “isn't it awful?”

“Yes, Poll, it's about the wust 'un I've had since I came from Barbadoes; but the last panful has mollified it, I think, and your nor'−wester has Pollyfied it, so, turn into your bunk, old girl, an' take a nap. You've much need of it, poor thing.”

“No, father, if I get into my crib I'll sleep so heavy that you won't be able to wake me. I'll just lie down where I was before.”

“Well, well — among the rubbish if ye prefer it; no matter s'long as you have a snooze,” growled the captain as he turned over, while the fairy disappeared into the dark recess from which she had risen.

Just then a tap was heard at the door. “Come in,” roared the captain. A tall, broad−shouldered, nautical−looking man entered, took off his hat, and stood before the hammock, whence the captain gave him a stern, searching glance, and opened fire on him with his pipe.

“Forgive me if I intrude, Captain Samson,” said the stranger; “I know you, although you don't know me. You start to−morrow or next day, I understand, for Melbourne?”

“Wind and weather permittin',” growled the captain. “Well, what then?”

“Have you completed your crew?” asked the stranger.

“Nearly. What then?” replied the captain with a touch of ferocity, for he felt sensations of an approaching paroxysm.

“Will you engage *me*?” asked Philosopher Jack, for it was he.

“In what capacity?” demanded the captain somewhat sarcastically.

“As an ordinary seaman — or a boy if you will,” replied Edwin, with a smile.

“No,” growled Samson, decisively, “I won't engage you; men with kid gloves and white hands don't suit me.”

From the mere force of habit the young student had pulled on his gloves on leaving his lodging, and had only removed that of the right hand on entering the captain's dwelling. He now inserted a finger at the wrist of the left−hand glove, ripped it off, and flung it with its fellow under the grate. Thereafter he gathered some ashes and soot from the fireplace, with which he put his hands on a footing with those of a coal−heaver.

“Will you take me now, captain?” he said, returning to the hammock, and spreading out his hands.

The captain gave vent to a short laugh, which brought on a tremendous fit, at the conclusion of which he gasped, “Yes, my lad, p'r'aps I will; but first I must know something about you.”

“Certainly,” said the philosopher, and at once gave the captain a brief outline of his circumstances.

“Well, you know your own affairs best” said Captain Samson when he had finished; “I'm no judge of such a case, but as you're willin' to ship, I'm willin' to ship you. Come here before ten to−morrow. Good night. There, it's a−comin' — hash — k—!”

In the midst of another furious paroxysm Edwin Jack retired.

Not long after, the captain raised himself on one elbow, listened intently for a few seconds, and, having

satisfied himself that Polly was asleep, slipped from his hammock — as only seamen know how — and proceeded to dress with the utmost caution. He was evidently afraid of the little sleeper among the rubbish. It was quite interesting to observe the quiet speed with which he thrust his great limbs into his ample garments, gazing anxiously all the time at Polly's corner.

Issuing from his own door with the step of an elephantine mouse, the captain went rapidly through several streets to the house of an intimate friend, whom he found at supper with his wife and family.

"Evenin', Bailie Trench; how are 'ee, Mrs T.? how's everybody?" said the captain, in a hearty rasping voice, as he shook hands right and left, while one of his huge legs was taken possession of, and embraced, by the bailie's only daughter, a pretty little girl of six.

"Why, Samson," exclaimed the bailie, after quiet had been restored, and his friend had been thrust into a chair with little Susan on his knee, "I thought you were laid up with influenza — eh?"

"So I was, bailie, an' so I am," replied the captain; "leastwise I'm still on the sick−list, and was in my hammock till about half an hour ago, but I'm gettin' round fast. The night air seems to do me a world o' good — contrariwise to doctor's expectations."

"Have some supper?" said Mrs Trench, who was a weakish lady with watery eyes.

"No supper, Mrs T., thank 'ee; the fact is, I've come on business. I should be on my beam−ends by rights. I'm absent without leave, an' have only a few minutes to spare. The passenger I spoke of has changed his mind and his berth is free, so I'm glad to be able to take your son Ben after all. But he'll have to get ready quick, for the *Lively Poll* sails the day after to−morrow or next day — all bein' well."

The eyes of young Benjamin Trench sparkled. He was a tall, thin, rather quiet lad of eighteen.

"I can be ready to−night if you wish it, Captain Samson," he said, with a flush on his usually pale face.

Beside Mrs Trench there sat a sturdy little boy. He was the bosom friend of Ben — a bright ruddy fellow of fourteen, overflowing with animal spirits, and with energy enough for three lads of his size. This youth's countenance fell so visibly when Ben spoke of going away, that Mrs Trench could not help noticing it.

"Why, what's the matter, Wilkins?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing!" returned the boy, "only I don't like to hear Ben speak of leaving us all and going to Australia. And I would give all the world to go with him. Won't you take me as a cabin boy, Captain Samson?"

"Sorry I can't, lad," said the captain, with a grin, "got a cabin boy already."

"Besides, your father would not let you," said Mrs Trench, "and it would never do to go without his leave. Only misfortune could come of that."

"Humph! it's very hard," pouted the boy. "I wanted him to get me into the navy, and he wouldn't; and now I want him to get me into the merchant service, and he won't. But I'll go in spite of him."

"No, you won't, Watty," said Ben, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Yes, Ben, I will," returned little Wilkins, with such an air of determination that every one except Ben laughed.

"Now, bailie," said the captain, rising, "I'm off. The truth is, I wouldn't have come if it had not been important to let you know at once to get your boy ready; but I had no one to send except Polly, and I wouldn't send her out at night by herself for all the wealth of Indy. Moreover, *she* wouldn't have let me out to−night for any consideration whatever. She's very strict with me, is my little keeper. I wouldn't for the world she should wake and find me gone. So, good−night all."

Ten minutes more, and the guilty man entered his dwelling on tiptoe. In order to get into his hammock with extreme caution he forsook his ancient method of a spring, and mounted on an empty cask. The cask was not equal to the emergency. He went through the head of it with a hideous crash! Spurning it from him, he had just time to plunge into his place of repose and haul the clothes over him, when Polly emerged from her lair with wondering eyes.

"What ever was that, father?"

"Nothin', my dear, nothin' in partickler — only a cask I kicked over. Now, then, Poll, since you're keepin' me awake in this fashion, it's your dooty to soothe me with an extra panful, and another nor'−wester — so, up wi' the pyramid; and after you've done it you must turn into your crib. I'll not want you again to−night; the cough's much better. There — thank 'ee. Pollyfy me now — that's right. Good−night."

Oh, base mariner! little did you merit such a pleasant termination to your evening's work; but you are not the

only wicked man in this world who receives more than he deserves.

Two days after the incidents just related a noble ship spread her canvas to a favouring breeze, and bowing farewell to her port of departure, commenced the long long voyage to the Antipodes.

She was not a passenger ship, but a trader; nevertheless there were a few passengers on her quarter−deck, and among these towered the colossal figure of Captain Samson. Beside him, holding his hand, stood a fairy−like little creature with brown curls and pretty blue eyes. Not far from her, leaning over the bulwarks, Benjamin Trench frantically waved a handkerchief and wiped his eyes. The signal was responded to, with equal feeling, by the bailie, his wife, and little Susan. A good number of people, young and old, assembled at the pier−head, among whom many waved handkerchiefs, and hands, and scarfs, and hats to the crew.

Among the sailors who gazed wistfully towards the pier was one who made no farewell signal, and received no parting wave. Philosopher Jack had concealed his intention of going to sea from all his college chums, and a bitter feeling of loneliness oppressed his heart as he thought of his old father and mother, and the lowly cottage on the Border hills. He had not, indeed, acted in direct opposition to the wishes of his parents, but he had disobeyed the well−known Scripture command to do them “honour,” for he had resolved on his course of action without consulting them, or asking their advice. He felt that he had very selfishly forsaken them in their old age; in the hour of their sore distress, and at a time when they stood woefully in need of his strong muscles, buoyant spirit, and energetic brain. In short, Edwin Jack began to feel that he required all his philosophy, and something more, to enable him to face the future with the unflinching courage of a man.

So the ship moved slowly on, revealing on her stern the “*Lively Poll*” in letters of burnished gold — past the pier−head, down the broad river, out upon the widening firth, beyond lighthouse, buoy, and beacon, until at last the fresh Atlantic breezes filled her snowy sails.

And ever as she rose and sank upon the rolling waves, their swish and thud fell strangely on the ear of one who lay deep down in the recesses of the hull, where — among barrels of pork, and casks of tar, and cans of oil, and coils of rope, and other unsavoury stores — he consorted with rats and mice and an uneasy conscience, in thick darkness. This was a “stowaway.” He was a sturdy, bright, ruddy little fellow of fourteen. Down in that unwholesome place, with a few ship−biscuits and a bottle of water to keep him alive, he would have looked like a doubled−up overgrown hedgehog if there had been light enough to reveal him.

Thus, with its little world of hopes and fears, its cares and pleasures, and its brave, trembling, trusting, sorrowing, joyful, anxious, reckless hearts, the good ship passed from the shores of Britain, until her sails quivered like a petrel's wings on the horizon, and then vanished into the boundless bosom of the mighty sea.

Chapter Two. Tells of a Ghost and an Overwhelming Disaster.

It may seem strange, nevertheless it is true, that ignorance is a misfortune which now and then results in good. Of course we do not make this remark in commendation of ignorance, but if Baldwin Burr had not been ignorant and densely stupid, Philosopher Jack would not have bad the pleasure of instructing him, and the seaman himself would not have enjoyed that close intimacy which frequently subsists between teacher and pupil. Even Polly Samson derived benefit from Baldwin's want of knowledge, for, being remarkably intelligent for her years, and having been well taught, she took great pleasure in enlightening his darkness.

“How is it,” she asked one day, while sitting on the cabin skylight and looking up in the man's rugged countenance, “how is it that you are so stupid?”

Burr, who was steering, gave the wheel a turn, looked up at the mast−head, then round the horizon, then down at his questioner with a bland smile, and said—

“Well now, Miss Polly, d'ee know, that's wot I can't exactly tell. P'r'aps it's 'cause of a nat'ral want of brains, or, maybe, 'cause the brains is too much imbedded in fat — for I'm a fleshy man, as you see — or, p'r'aps it's 'cause I never went to school, my parients bein' poor, uncommon poor, though remarkably honest. I've sometimes thought, w'en meditatin' on the subject, that my havin' bin born of a Friday may have had somethin' to do with it.”

“Oh, Baldwin,” said Polly with a little laugh, “surely you can't believe that. Father says it's all nonsense about Friday being an unlucky day.”

“P'r'aps it is, an' p'r'aps it ain't,” returned the cautious seaman. “I regard your father, my dear, as a deeply learned man, and would give in, if I could, to wotever he says, but facts is facts, and opinions is opinions, you can't change that, nohow you fix it. Wot's the cap'n's opinions, now, as to ghosts?”

“He don't believe in 'em at all,” was Polly's prompt answer. “No more do I, for father knows everything, and he's always right.”

“He's a lucky man to have you, Polly, and there's a lucky boy knockin' about the world somewheres lookin' out for you. A good daughter, it's said, inwariably makes a good wife; which you don't understand just now, but you'll come to in course of time. Hows'ever, as I wos observin', I've been of the same opinion as your father till two nights ago, when I heard a ghost right under the deck, it seemed to me, blow my hammock, where there's nothin' but ship's stores and rats.”

“Heard a ghost!” exclaimed Polly, with opening eyes.

“Ay, an' seed 'im too,” said Burr. “Night before yesterday I heer'd 'im as plain as I hear myself. He wos groanin', an' it's quite impossible that a tar−barrel, or a cask, or a rat, could groan. The only thing that puzzled me wos that he seemed to snore; more than that he sneezed once or twice. Now, I never heard it said that a ghost could sleep or catch cold. Did you, Polly?”

Polly laughed and said that she never did, and asked eagerly what the ghost was like.

“It was wery much like an or'nary man of small size,” said the seaman, “but it were too dark to make out its face. I know the figure of every soul in the ship by this time, an' I could swear before a maginstrate, or a bench of bishops, that the ghost is neither one of the crew nor a passenger.”

“Why didn't you speak to it?” asked Polly.

“So I did speak to it, but it wouldn't answer; then I made a grab at it, but it was as active as a kitten, dodged round the mainmast, flew for'ed on inwisible wings, and went slap down the fore−scuttle, head first, with a crash that would have broke the neck of anything but a ghost.”

At this interesting point the conversation was interrupted by Edwin Jack, whose turn it was to relieve the man at the wheel. He nodded to Polly as he came up, took his post, and received the ship's “course" from Burr, who thrust his hands into his pockets, and left the quarter−deck.

Edwin was by this time a considerably changed man, although but a few days at sea. The rough blue trousers, guernsey, and pea−jacket, took as naturally to his strong limbs as if he had been born and bred a sailor; and already some huge blisters, a few scars, and not a little tar, had rendered his hands creditable.

Steering at the time was a mere matter of form, as a dead calm prevailed. Our philosopher therefore amused himself and Polly with commentaries on the ghost−subject which Burr had raised.

Late that night, when the stars were shining in a cloudless sky, and winking at their reflections in the glassy ocean, the ghost appeared to Edwin Jack. It was on this wise:

Jack, being one of the watch on deck, went to the port bulwarks near the foremast shrouds, leant over, and, gazing down into the reflected sky, thought sadly of past, present, and future. Tiring at last of his meditations, he went towards a man who appeared to be skulking under the shadow of the long−boat and remarked that it was a fine night, but the man made no reply.

“A most enjoyable night, shipmate,” he said, going closer.

“I'm glad you think so,” said the ghost, “it's anything but enjoyable to *me*. The state of the weather hasn't much effect, either one way or another, on a fellow who is half−dead with hunger, half−choked with a cold caught among the rats and stores, and half−killed by a tumble down the fore−scuttle, or whatever may be the name of that vile ladder that leads to the regions below.”

“Surely,” exclaimed Jack in surprise, seizing the ghost by the shoulders and looking close into its face, “I have heard your voice before now, and, eh? — no, I don't know you.”

“Yes, Philosopher Jack, you do know me,” returned the ghost; “I've had the honour of playing cricket with you on the green, though you've forgotten me, and no wonder, for I've suffered much from bad air and sea−sickness of late. My name is Walter, more familiarly Watty Wilkins.”

“Little Wilkins!” exclaimed Jack, in surprise, “well, you *are* changed; you don't mean to say that you've run away from home?”

“That's just what I've done,” said the poor lad in a tone of despondency; “but you've no occasion to shake your head at me so solemnly, for, to all appearance, you have run away too.”

“No, Wilkins, you are wrong, I have walked away, being my own master, and I have done it openly, though I admit somewhat hastily—”

Jack was interrupted at that moment by Ben Trench laying a hand on his shoulder.

“It strikes me,” he said, in some surprise, “that I recognise the voice of a townsman — Mister Jack, if I mistake not?”

“No, sir,” replied the philosopher, “not *Mister*, only Edwin Jack, seaman aboard the *Lively Poll*. You are right, however, in styling me townsman. Allow me to introduce you to another townsman, Mr Watty Wilkins, stowaway on board of the same vessel!”

Trench had not, in the darkness, recognised his friend. He now seized him by both shoulders, and peering into his face, said—

“O Watty, Watty, have you really done it? I had thought better of you.”

“I *said* I would do it, and I've *done* it,” returned the little youth somewhat testily; “and now I want to know what is to be done next.”

“Report yourself and take the consequences,” said Jack, promptly.

This advice being seconded by Ben Trench, Watty Wilkins went aft to the captain, who had just come on deck, touched his cap, and confessed himself.

For some moments the captain spoke not a word, but looked at the young culprit with a portentous frown. Then, uttering something like a deep bass growl, he ordered the lad to follow him into his private cabin. When there, Captain Samson seated himself on a locker, and with a hand on each knee, glared at his prisoner so long and so fiercely from under his shaggy brows, that Watty, in spite of his recklessness, began to feel uneasy.

“So, youngster, you've run away?” he said at length, in deep solemnity.

“Yes, sir,” replied Wilkins.

“And you think yourself a fine clever fellow, no doubt?”

“No, sir, I don't,” said Watty, with much humility.

“I knew your father, boy,” continued the captain, assuming a softer and more serious tone, “and I think he is a good man.”

“He is, sir,” returned the boy promptly.

“Ay, and he is a kind man; he has been kind to *you*, I think.”

Watty hung his head.

“He has fed you, clothed you, educated you since you was a babby; nursed you, maybe, in sickness, and prayed for you, no doubt that God would make you a good, obedient and loving son.”

The boy's head drooped still lower.

“And for all this,” continued the captain, “you have repaid him by running away. Now, my lad, as you have made your bed you shall lie on it. I'll clap your nose to the grindstone, and keep it there. Steward!”

A smart little man answered to the call.

“Take this boy for'ed, and teach him to clean up. Don't spare him.”

In obedience to this order the steward took little Wilkins forward and introduced him to the cook, who introduced him to the coppers and scrubbing brushes. From that day forward Master Watty became deeply versed in the dirty work and hard work of the ship, so that all the romance of a sea life was driven out of him, and its stern realities were implanted. In less than three weeks there was not a cup, saucer, or plate in the ship that Watty had not washed; not a “brass” that he had not polished and re−polished; not a copper that he had not scraped; not an inch of the deck that he had not swabbed. But it must not be supposed that he groaned under this labour. Although reckless, hasty, and inconsiderate, he was not mean−spirited. Making up his mind to do his best in the circumstances, he went cheerfully to his dirty work, and did it well.

“You see,” said he to Philosopher Jack, as they chanced one dark night to have a few minutes' talk together near the weather gangway, where Watty paused on his way to the caboose with a soup−tureen, “as the captain says, I've made the bed myself, so I must lie on it and I'm resolved to lie straight, and not kick.”

“Right, Watty, right,” said Jack, with a sigh; “we have both been fools, so must grin and bear it.”

Watty greeted this remark, to Jack's surprise, with a sudden and unexpected yell, as he received a cut from a rope's−end over the back.

“What, idling, eh?” cried the steward, flourishing the rope's−end again.

In a burst of rage the poor boy raised the soup−tureen, and would infallibly have shattered it on the man's head if Jack had not caught his arm.

“Come, Wilkins, mind what you're about,” he said, pushing him towards the forepart of the ship to prevent a scuffle.

A moment's reflection sufficed to convince Wilkins of the folly, as well as uselessness, of rebellion. Pocketing his pride and burning with indignation, he walked forward, while the tyrannical steward went grumbling to his own private den.

It chanced that night that the captain, ignorant of what had occurred, sent for the unfortunate stowaway, for the mitigation of whose sorrows his friend Ben Trench had, more than once, pleaded earnestly, but in vain. The captain invariably replied that Watty had acted ungratefully and rebelliously to a kind father, and it was his duty to let him bear the full punishment of his conduct.

Watty was still smarting from the rope's−end when he entered the cabin.

“Youngster,” said the captain, sternly, “I sent for you to tell you of a fact that came to my knowledge just before we left port. Your father told me that, being unwilling to disappoint you in your desires, he had managed to get a situation of some sort for you on board a well−known line of ocean steamers, and he only waited to get the thing fairly settled before letting you know about it. There, you may go for'ed and think what you have lost by running away.”

Without a word of reply Watty left the cabin. His day's work had just been completed. He turned into his hammock, and, laying his head on his pillow, quietly wept himself to sleep.

“Ain't you rather hard on the poor boy, father?” said Polly, who had witnessed the interview.

“Not so hard as you think, little woman,” answered the captain, stroking the child's head with his great hand; “that little rascal has committed a great sin. He has set out on the tracks of the prodigal son you've often read about, an' he's not sufficiently impressed with his guilt. When I get him into a proper frame o' mind I'll not be so hard on him. Now, Polly, go putt your doll to bed, and don't criticise your father.”

Polly seized the huge whiskers of her sire, and giving him an unsolicited “nor'−wester,” which was duly returned, went off to her little cot.

We do not mean to trouble the reader with all the incidents of a prolonged voyage to southern latitudes, during which Philosopher Jack formed a strong friendship with Ben Trench and Watty Wilkins; continued his instruction of the amiable and unfathomable Baldwin Burr, and became a general favourite with the crew of the *Lively Poll*. Suffice it to say that all went well, and the good ship sailed along under favouring breezes without mishap of any kind until she reached that great ocean whose unknown waters circle round the Southern Pole.

Here, however, good fortune forsook them, and contrary−gales baffling the *Lively Poll* drove her out of her course, while tumbling billows buffeted her severely.

One night a dead calm prevailed. The air became hot, clouds rose rapidly over the sky, and the barometer — that faithful friend of the mariner — fell unusually low.

“How dreadfully dark it is getting,” said Polly, in a low, half−frightened tone to Baldwin Burr, who was at the wheel.

“We're going to have a night of it, my dear,” replied the seaman.

If he had said that the winds and waves were going to “have a night of it” Baldwin Burr would have been more strictly correct. He had scarcely uttered the words when the captain gave orders to close−reef the top−sails. Our philosopher, springing aloft with his comrades, was out on the top−sail yard in a few seconds. Scarcely had the sails been reefed when the gale burst upon the ship, and almost laid her flat upon the foaming sea. At first the very violence of the wind kept the waves down, but they gradually rose until the ship was tossed on their crests and engulfed in their hollows like a cork. As the force of the gale increased sail was further reduced, until nothing but a mere rag was left and even this at last was split and blown to ribbons. Inky clouds soon obscured the sky, and, as night descended on the wild scene, the darkness became so intense that nothing could be seen except the pale gleam of foaming billows as they flashed past over the bulwarks. In the midst of the turmoil there came a blinding flash of lightning, followed instantly by a terrible crash of thunder. This was succeeded by a sound of rending which was not the result of elemental strife.

“Foremast gone, sir,” cried one of the men, staggering aft.

Seizing an axe, the captain sprang forward. Edwin Jack followed. They found the ship's−carpenter already at work cutting the shrouds and other ropes that held the wreck of the mast. As flashes of lightning followed in quick succession they revealed a scene of ruin on the forepart of the vessel, with the tall figure of Edwin as he stood on the bulwarks wielding an axe. At last the wreck was cleared, but the seas were now bursting over the decks and sweeping away everything not made fast. Among other things the long−boat was carried away, and ere long all the other boats were torn from their fastenings or destroyed. It was a fearful night. Even the most reckless among the sailors were overawed by such a display of the terrors of God. At such times scoffers are wont to become tremblers, and those who “trust in God" find Him “a very present help in trouble.”

The gale was as short−lived as it was fierce. By the dawn of the following day it had abated considerably, and it was found that less damage had been done to the ship than might have been expected.

“We're all right, Polly, thank God!” said the captain, earnestly, when he ventured to open the companion hatch and go below. “You prayed for us, dear, didn't you?”

“Yes, father, I did; I prayed that our lives might be spared, if He pleased.”

“Well, Polly, our prayers have been answered,” said the captain; “our lives are spared and the ship is safe, though we've lost the foremast and the boats. However, that can be putt to rights; we'll rig up a jury−mast and get on famously, so keep up your heart, old girl, and give us a nor'—. There, you'd better stay below yet awhile; it's dirty on deck.”

The weather was not long of improving. A profound calm followed the storm. Bright sunshine banished the thunder−clouds. The contrast between the dangers just past and the peaceful condition that prevailed had the effect of raising the spirits of all on board the *Lively Poll* to an unusual height, so that snatches of song, whistling, and cheery remarks, were heard on all sides among the busy crew as they rigged up a new mast, bent on new sails, and repaired the various damages. When night put a stop to their labours, and every one sought repose, except the watch and the captain and the man at the wheel, the same peaceful calm continued. Only the long undulating swell of ocean remained to tell of the recent storm, while the glassy surface reflected a universe of stars.

It was at this time of profound repose and fancied security that the death−knell of the *Lively Poll* was sounded. In the southern seas there is a little creature, named the coral insect (of which we shall have more to say hereafter), which is ever at work building walls and ramparts on the bottom of the sea. These rise by degrees to the surface, — rise above it — and finally become some of the fairest isles of the Pacific. Charts tell of the isles, but no charts can tell the locality of coral reefs which have just, or barely, reached the surface. The *Lively Poll* was forging slowly ahead under a puff of air that only bulged her top−sails as she rose and sank on the majestic swell. Presently she rose high, and was then let down on a coral reef with such violence that the jury−mast with the main−topmast and all the connected rigging, went over the side. Another swell lifted her off, and flung her on

the ocean's breast a total wreck.

The scene that followed may be imagined. Whatever could be done by an able and active seaman in such an emergency was done by Captain Samson. Water was rushing in through the shattered hull. To pass a sail under the ship's bottom and check this was the first act. Then the pumps were rigged and worked by all on board. Besides Ben Trench there were three gentlemen passengers. These took their turn with the rest, but all was of no avail. The ship was sinking. The utmost efforts of those whose lives seemed dependent on her only delayed the final catastrophe.

“There is no hope,” said the captain in a low tone to his chief mate, to whom he gave some rapid orders, and went below.

It was daybreak, and the first gleam of light that leaped over the glassy sea tinged the golden curls of Polly Samson as she lay sleeping on one of the cabin sofas. She awoke and started up.

“Lie still, darling, and rest as long as you may,” said the captain in a low tender voice, “and pray, Polly, pray for us again. God is able to save to the uttermost, my pet.”

He said this without pausing, as he went to his berth and brought out a sextant, with which he returned on deck.

Standing near the foot of the companion−ladder, Watty Wilkins had heard the words, “There is no hope,” and the few sentences addressed to the child. His impressionable spirit leapt to the conclusion that the fate of all on board was sealed. He knew that the boats had all been swept away, and a feeling of profound despair seized him. This was quickly followed by contrition for his past conduct and pity for his father, under the impulse of which he sat down in a corner of the steward's pantry and groaned aloud. Then he wrote a few lines in pencil on a piece of paper, bidding farewell to his father. Often had he read of such messages from the sea being wafted ashore in bottles, but little did he expect ever to have occasion to write one. He had just put the paper in a bottle, corked it up, and dropped it out of one of the cabin windows, when he was summoned on deck, and found that a raft was being hastily prepared alongside. Already some casks of biscuits and water had been lowered on it, while the carpenter and several men were busily at work increasing its size and binding it together with iron clamps, hawsers, and chains.

There was urgent need for haste, as the ship was fast settling down.

“Now then, my lads, look alive!” cried the captain, as he lifted his little daughter over the side. “The ship can't float much longer. Here, Jack, catch hold.”

Edwin sprang to the side of the raft, and, standing up, received Polly in his arms.

“Take care of her! Hold her tight!” cried the anxious father.

“Trust me,” said Philosopher Jack.

The child was placed on the highest part of the raft with the passengers, and partially covered with a shawl. The crew were then ordered to leave the ship. Having seen every one out of it Captain Samson descended and gave the order to shove off. This was quickly done, and the distance was slowly increased by means of two large oars. The huge mass of spars and planks moved gradually away from the doomed vessel, whose deck was by that time little above the level of the sea. They had not got more than a few hundred yards off, when Baldwin Burr, who pulled one of the oars, uttered an exclamation. Edwin Jack and Ben Trench, who knelt close to him fastening a rope, looked up and saw the captain standing on the high part of the raft near Polly and little Wilkins, waving his right hand. He was bidding farewell to the old ship, which suddenly went down with a heavy roll. Another moment, and only a few ripples remained to mark the spot where the *Lively Poll* had found an ocean tomb.

Chapter Three. Adrift on the Great Ocean.

Sunshine gladdens the heart of man and causes him more or less to forget his sorrows. The day on which the *Lively Poll* went down was bright and warm, as well as calm, so that some of those who were cast away on the raft — after the first shock had passed, and while busily employed in binding the spars and making other needful arrangements — began to feel sensations approaching almost to hilarity.

Polly Samson, in particular, being of a romantic turn of mind, soon dried her eyes, and when called on to assist in the construction of a little place of shelter for herself on the centre of the raft, by means of boxes and sails, she began to think that the life of a castaway might not be so disagreeable after all. When this shelter or hut was completed, and she sat in it with her father taking luncheon, she told him in confidence that she thought rafting was “very nice.”

“Glad you find it so, Polly,” replied the captain with a sad smile.

“Of course, you know,” she continued, with great seriousness of look and tone, “I don't think it's nice that our ship is lost. I'm very very sorry — oh, you can't think how sorry! — for that, but this is such a funny little cabin, you know, and so snug, and the weather is *so* fine; do you think it will last long, father?”

“I hope it may; God grant that it may, darling, but we can't be sure. If it does last, I daresay we shall manage to reach one of the islands, of which there are plenty in the Southern Seas, but—”

A roar of laughter from the men arrested and surprised the captain. He raised the flap of sail which served as a door to the hut — Polly's bower, as the men styled it — and saw one of the passengers dragged from a hole or space between the spars of the raft, into which he had slipped up to the waist. Mr Luke, the passenger referred to, was considered a weak man, mind and body, — a sort of human nonentity, a harmless creature, with long legs and narrow shoulders. He took his cold bath with philosophic coolness, and acknowledged the laughter of the men with a bland smile. Regardless of his drenched condition, he sat down on a small keg and joined the crew at the meal of cold provisions which served that day for dinner.

“Lucky for us,” said one of the sailors, making play with his clasp−knife on a junk of salt pork, “that we've got such a fine day to begin with.”

“That's true, Bob,” said another; “a raft ain't much of a sea−goin' craft. If it had blowed hard when we shoved off from the ship we might ha' bin tore to bits before we was well fixed together, but we've had time to make all taut now, and can stand a stiffish breeze. Shove along the breadbasket, mate.”

“You've had your allowance, Bob; mind, we're on short commons now,” said Baldwin Burr, who superintended the distribution of provisions, and served out a measured quantity to every man. “There's your grog for you.”

Bob Corkey growled a little as he wiped his knife on his leg, and accepted the allowance of “grog,” which, however, was only pure water.

“Are you sure the raft can stand a storm?” inquired Watty Wilkins of Philosopher Jack, who sat eating his poor meal beside him.

“Sure?” responded Jack, “we can be sure of nothing in this life.”

“Except trouble,” growled Corkey.

“Oh yes, you can be sure of more than that,” said Baldwin Burr; “you can always be sure of folly coming out of a fool's mouth.”

“Come, come, Baldwin, be civil,” said Philosopher Jack; “it's cowardly, you know, to insult a man when you can't fight him.”

“Can't fight him?” repeated Burr with a grin; “who said I couldn't fight him, eh? Why, I'm ready to fight him now, right off.”

“Nevertheless, you can't,” persisted the philosopher; “how could two men fight on a raft where there's not room for a fair stand−up scrimmage between two rats? Come now, don't argue, Burr, but answer little Wilkins's question if you can.”

“Stowaways don't desarve to have their questions answered,” said Corkey; “in fact, they don't desarve to live. If I had my way, I'd kill little Wilkins and salt him down to be ready for us when the pork and biscuit fail.”

"Well, now, as to the safety of this here raft in a gale, small Wilkins," said Baldwin, regardless of Corkey's interruption, "that depends summat on the natur' o' the gale. If it was only a half−gale we'd weather it all right, I make no doubt; but, if it should come to blow hard, d'ee see, we have no occasion to kill and eat you, as we'd all be killed together and eaten by the sharks."

"Sharks!" exclaimed Mr Luke, whose damp garments were steaming under the powerful sun like a boiler on washing−day; "are there sharks here?"

"Ay," said Corkey, pointing to the sea astern, where the glassy surface was broken and rippled by a sharp angular object, "that's a shark a−follerin' of us now, leastwise the back fin of one. If you don't believe it, jump overboard and you'll soon be convinced."

This reference to the shark was overheard by Polly, who came out of her bower to see it. The monster of the deep came close up at that moment, as if to gratify the child, and, turning on its back, according to shark habit when about to seize any object, thrust its nose out of the water. For one moment its double row of teeth were exposed to view, then they closed on a lump of pork that had been accidentally knocked overboard by Corkey.

"Is that the way you take care of our provisions?" said the captain, sternly, to Baldwin.

"We've got a big hook, sir," said Edwin Jack, touching his cap; "shall we try to recover the pork?"

"You may try," returned the captain.

Little Wilkins uttered something like a war−whoop as he leaped up and assisted Jack to get out the shark−hook. It was soon baited with another piece of pork. Ben Trench, who had a strong leaning to natural history, became very eager; and the men generally, being ever ready for sport, looked on with interest and prepared to lend a band. The shark, however, was cautious. It did indeed rush at the bait, and seemed about to swallow it, but suddenly changed its mind, swam round it once or twice, then fell slowly astern, and finally disappeared.

Although the fish was not caught, this little incident served to raise the spirits of every one, and as the calm sunny weather lasted the whole day, even the most thoughtful of the party found it difficult to realise their forlorn condition; but when evening drew near, the aspect of things quickly changed. The splendid ocean−mirror, which had reflected the golden crags and slopes, the towers and battlements of cloud−land, was shivered by a sudden breeze and became an opaque grey; the fair blue sky deepened to indigo; black and gathering clouds rose out of the horizon, and cold white crests gleamed on the darkening waves. The men gathered in anxious groups, and Polly sat in the entrance of her bower gazing on the gloomy scene, until her young heart sank slowly but steadily. Then, remembering her father's advice, she betook herself to God in prayer.

Young though she was, Polly was no sentimentalist in religion. She believed with all her heart in Jesus Christ as a living, loving Saviour. Her faith was very simple, and founded on experience. She had prayed, and had been answered. She had sought Jesus in sorrow, and had been comforted. The theologian can give the why and how and wherefore of this happy condition, but in practice he can arrive at it only by the same short road. One result of her prayer was that she went to sleep that night in perfect peace, while most of her companions in misfortune sat anxiously watching what appeared to be a gathering storm.

Before going to rest however, Polly had an earnest little talk with her father.

"Polly," said Captain Samson, sitting down under the shelter of the tarpaulin, and drawing the child's fair head on his breast, "I never spoke to you before on a subject that p'r'aps you won't understand, but I am forced to do it now. It's about money."

"About money!" exclaimed Polly in surprise; "oh, father, surely you forget! The very last night we spent on shore, you spoke to me about money; you gave me a half−sovereign, and said you meant to give a blow−out to old Mrs Brown before leaving, and told me to buy — stay, let me see — there was half a pound of tea, and four pounds of sugar, and three penn'orth of snuff, and—"

"Yes, yes, Polly," interrupted the captain, with a smile, "but I meant about money in a business way, you know, because if you chanced, d'ee see, ever to be in England without me, you know, — it—"

"But I'll never be there without you, father, will I?" asked the child with an earnest look.

"Of course not — that's to say, I *hope* not — but you know, Polly, that God arranges all the affairs of this world, and sometimes in His love and wisdom He sees fit to separate people — for a time, you know, *only* for a time — so that they don't always keep together. Now, my darling, if it should please Him to send me cruising to — to — anywhere in a different direction from you, and you chanced ever to be in England alone — in Scotland,

that is — at your own home, you must go to Bailie Trench — you know him — our old friend and helper when we were in shoal water, my dear, and say to him that I handed all my savings over to Mr Wilkins — that's Watty's father, Poll — to be invested in the way he thought best. When you tell that to Bailie Trench he'll know what to do; he understands all about it. I might send you to Mr Wilkins direct but he's a very great man, d'ee see, and doesn't know you, and might refuse to give you the money."

"To give me the money, father! But what should I do with the money when I got it?"

"Keep it, my darling."

"Oh! I see, keep it safe for you till you came back?" said Polly.

"Just so, Poll, you're a clever girl; keep it for me till I come back, or rather take it to Bailie Trench and he'll tell you how to keep it. It's a good pot o' money, Poll, and has cost me the best part of a lifetime, workin' hard and spendin' little, to lay it by. Once I used to think," continued the captain in a sad soliloquising tone, "that I'd live to cast anchor near the old spot, and spend it with your mother, Polly, and you; but the Lord willed it otherwise, and He does all things well, blessed be His name! Now you understand what you're to do about the money, don't you, if you should ever find yourself without me in Scotland, eh?"

Polly did not quite clearly understand, but after a little further explanation she professed herself to be quite prepared for the transaction of that important piece of financial business.

Poor Captain Samson sought thus to secure, to the best of his ability, that the small savings of his life should go to Polly in the event of her being saved and himself lost. Moreover, he revealed the state of his finances to Philosopher Jack, Ben Trench, and Watty Wilkins, whom he found grouped apart at a corner of the raft in earnest conversation, and begged of them, if they or any of them should survive, to see his daughter's interest attended to.

"You see, my lads, although I would not for the world terrify the dear child uselessly, by telling her that we are in danger, it must be clear to you that if a gale springs up and our raft should be broken up, it's not likely that all of us would be saved. Yet Polly might escape, and some of you also. We are all in the Lord's hands, however, and have nothing to fear if we are His followers."

Ah! that "if" went home. The captain did not lay stress on it; nevertheless stress was laid on it somehow, for the three youths found it recurring again and again to memory that night, though they did not speak of it to each other.

As the night advanced, the threatening gale passed away; the stars came out in all their splendour, and the morning sun found the glassy sea again ready to reflect his image. Thus they floated for several days in comparative peace and comfort. But it came at last.

One evening a squall came rushing down on them, turning up the sea, and converting it to ink and foam as it approached. The rag of sail with which they had previously courted the breeze in vain was hastily taken in; the fastenings of everything were looked to. Polly was placed in her canvas bower, and the whole structure of the raft was strengthened with a network of hawsers and cordage.

When the squall struck them, the raft appeared to tremble. The seas broke clean over them, several articles not properly secured were swept off, and weak points in the main fastenings were made plain, as the spars, beams, and planks writhed and struggled to get free.

But Captain Samson and his men were equal to the occasion; an iron clamp here, and an extra turn of a chain or hawser there, made all fast, so that before the squall had time to raise the sea, the raft held well together, and yielded, without breaking, to the motions of the waves.

Of course every one was drenched, including poor little Polly, for although the tarpaulin turned off the waves and spray above, it could not prevent the water spirting up between the spars from below. But Polly was, according to Baldwin, "a true chip of the old block;" she bore her discomforts with heroism, and quite put to shame poor Mr Luke, whose nervous temperament caused him great suffering.

Thus was spent a night of anxiety. The next day was little better, and the night following was worse. In addition to the violence of the wind and constant breaking over them of heavy seas, the darkness became so intense that it was difficult to see where damage to the fastenings occurred, and repairs became almost impossible.

About midnight there was a terrible rending of wood in that part of the raft lying farthest from Polly's bower, and a great cry of fear was heard. The more courageous among the men sprang, by a natural impulse, to assist those in distress. It was found that a large portion of the raft had broken adrift, and was only held to it by a single rope. On this portion were two passengers and one of the crew. The former were apparently panic−stricken; the

latter made frantic but futile attempts to haul in on the rope.

"Bear a hand, boys!" cried Edwin Jack, as he laid hold of the inner end of the rope.

Strong and willing hands were ready, but before they could lay hold the rope parted, and Jack was dragged violently into the sea. He rose like a cork. Little Wilkins lay down, and stretched out a helping hand. Jack caught it, and would infallibly have dragged the little fellow into the water if Ben Trench had not thrown himself on his legs and held on. Baldwin Burr seized hold of Ben, and the captain coming up at the moment, lent his powerful aid. Jack was saved, but the broken part of the raft, with its hapless occupants, was swept away and lost sight of.

This sad event had naturally a very depressing effect on every one. True, the portion of the raft which had broken away was large enough to sustain the unfortunates who were on it. Moreover, some of the provisions had also gone with them, so that there was hope of their holding out for a time and being picked up by a passing ship, but the hope was slight, and in the event of rougher weather, their fate would be certain.

For six days and nights the raft was tossed about on the open sea. It could scarcely be said that it sailed, although as large a mast and piece of canvas as they could set up urged it slowly though the water when the wind was strong. As to steering, that was next to impossible, and in truth it did not matter much how they steered.

Constant exposure by night and by day now began to tell on the less robust of the crew. Little Polly, however, was not one of these. She possessed a naturally good constitution, and was, besides, specially cared for by her father, who devoted all the powers of an inventive mind to the strengthening and improving of "the bower." In this he was ably assisted by Philosopher Jack, whose love for the child deepened daily as he watched the sweet contented manner with which she received every drenching — and she got many — and the anxious way in which she inquired for, and sought to help, those of the party whose health began to fail.

Among these latter was Ben Trench.

"Ah! Polly," said Ben one sultry forenoon when she brought him a glass of sweetened lime−juice and water, "you're a kind little nurse. I really don't know how I should get on without you."

"Upon my word," said little Wilkins, pouting, "you're a grateful fellow! Here have I been nursing you all the morning, yet you seem to think nothing of that in comparison with Polly's glass of lime−juice."

"Come, Watty, don't be jealous," said Ben; "it's not the glass of lime−juice, but Polly's sympathetic face beaming behind it, that does me so much good. Besides, you know, Polly's a girl, and a girl is always a better nurse than a man; you must admit that."

Watty was not at all prepared to admit that, but his being spoken of as a man did much to mollify his hurt feelings.

"But I do hope you feel better to−day," said Polly, observing with some anxiety the short, half−breathless manner in which the invalid spoke.

"Oh yes! I feel better — that is to say, I think I do. Sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't. You know, Polly, I came on this voyage chiefly on account of my health, and of course I must expect to be a little damaged by so much exposure, though your good father has indeed done his best to shelter me. Why, do you know, I sometimes think the berth he has made for me between the logs here is a greater triumph of his inventive genius than your bower. I often think they spoiled a splendid engineer when they made your father a sailor."

Polly laughed at this, and Watty Wilkins tried to laugh, just by way of keeping up his friend's spirits and being what Baldwin called good company; but poor Watty could not laugh. He had loved and played with Ben Trench since ever he could remember, and when he looked at his pale face and listened to his weak voice, a dread foreboding came over him, and brought such a rush of feeling to his heart that he was fain to leap up and spring to the farthest end of the raft, where he fell to hauling and tightening one of the rope−fastenings with all the energy of his little body and soul.

"Land ho!" shouted one of the men at that moment from the top of a cask, which formed the outlook, where, every day and all day, a man was stationed to watch for a sail or a sign of land.

An electric shock could not have produced greater excitement than these two words.

"Where away?" exclaimed the captain, leaping up beside the look−out.

"On the port−bow, sir, — there!" pointing eagerly.

"I don't see it — oh — yes — no. It's only a cloud. Who ever heard of the port−bow of a raft? Bah! your eyes have been squintin'. Not a bit of it, I see it — low lyin'; why, I see the palms — and I see the nuts — ah, and the monkeys, no doubt a−eatin' of 'em — hip, hip, hurrah!"

Such were some of the exclamations, ending in a long, deep−toned, British cheer, with which the discovery of land was greeted.

In a short time all uncertainty was removed, and the land was clearly made out to be a small coral island with its narrow outlying reef, and a few cocoa−nut palms waving thereon.

The joy of the shipwrecked crew was excessive — somewhat in proportion to their previous depression. They shook bands, laughed, cheered, and in some cases wept, while a few clasped their hands, looked up, and audibly thanked God.

“You'll soon get ashore,” said Polly, laying her hand on Ben Trench's arm.

“Ay, and the cocoa−nut milk will set you up and make you fat in no time,” added Watty Wilkins.

“So it will,” returned Ben, who had not risen like the others; “we'll have jolly times of it, won't we? Like Robinson Crusoe. Oh! how I wish that sister Susan was here! She would enjoy it so much. It's an island, isn't it?”

“Yes,” said Edwin Jack, coming forward at the moment, “a coral island, with plenty of vegetation on it. So cheer up, Ben, we shall soon be ashore.”

Not so soon, however, as they expected, for the wind was light, although favourable, the raft was heavy, and the two oars had but little influence on it. The sun sank and rose again before they drew near to the reef. Inside the reef, between it and the island−shore, there was a lake or lagoon of calm water, but outside, on the reef itself, a heavy swell broke with continuous roar. To get involved in those giant breakers would have been destruction to the raft, and probably death to most of those on board. One narrow opening, marked by a few shrubs and palms on either side, formed the only portal to the calm lagoon. The captain himself took the steering oar, and summoned our philosopher to his assistance.

“Give way now, lads, with a will.”

As many men as could grasp the two oars laid hold of them, and bent their backs till the strong wood cracked again. Gradually the raft neared the opening. As it did so the ground−swell began to act on it. By degrees the towering billows — which seemed to rise out of a calm sea and rush to their destruction like walls of liquid glass — caught it, dragged it on a little, and then let it slip. At last one great wave began to curl in hissing foam underneath, caught the raft fairly, carried it forward on its boiling crest, and launched it with lightning speed into the opening. The space was too narrow! One of the projecting spars touched the reef. Instantly the fastenings were rent like pack−thread, and the raft was hurled forward in disconnected fragments. One of these turned completely over with several men on it. Another portion passed through the opening and swung round inside. The steering oar was wrenched from Jack's hands, and struck the captain into the water. As if by instinct, Jack sprang to the “bower,” caught Polly in his arms, and leaped into the sea. At the same moment Wilkins ran to the rescue of his friend Ben. These two were on the part that had swung round to the calm side of the reef, and Watty waded to it with Ben on his back. The captain and all the rest were washed in a cataract of foam and wreckage through the opening into the lagoon, and pitched by curling eddies on the shore. In a few minutes they all stood in safety, panting, but uninjured, on the white sands of the coral reef.

Chapter Four. The Coral Island — Proceedings Therein.

The island on which the raft with its occupants had been cast was of small size, not more than six miles in extent, and lay low in the water. Nevertheless it was covered with luxuriant vegetation, among which were several groves of cocoa−nut palms, the long feathery branches of which waved gracefully in a gentle breeze, as if beckoning an invitation to the castaways on the reef to cross the lagoon and find shelter there. But crossing the lagoon was not an easy matter.

“Shure it's a mile wide if it's a futt,” said one of the men as they stood in a group on the reef, dripping and gazing at the isle.

“No, Simon O'Rook,” said Bob Corkey, in that flat contradictions way to which some men are prone; “no, it's only half a mile if it's an inch.”

“You're wrong, both of you,” said Baldwin Burr, “it ain't more than quarter of a mile. Quite an easy swim for any of us.”

“Except my Polly,” observed the captain quietly.

“Ay, and those who are too weak to swim,” said Watty Wilkins, with a glance at his friend Ben, who had lain down on the sand and listened with a calm untroubled look to the conversation.

“You don't seem at all anxious,” whispered Polly to Ben.

“No, Polly, I'm not. I have lately been taught how to trust in God by your example.”

“By mine!” exclaimed the child in extreme surprise.

Before Ben could reply the captain turned and called to Polly.

“Come here, my duckey; Edwin Jack offers to swim over the lagoon to the island with you on his back. Will you trust yourself to him?”

“Yes, father,” answered the child promptly.

“But maybe there are sharks,” suggested O'Rook.

There was a momentary silence. In the excitement of the occasion every one had forgotten sharks. What was to be done? The raft was utterly destroyed. Only a few of the logs which had formed it lay on the reef; the rest were floating on the lagoon at various distances, none nearer than fifty yards.

“There's nothing for it, then, but to reconstruct our raft,” said the captain, throwing off his coat and shoes; “so these logs must be secured.”

He had only taken two steps towards the water when Philosopher Jack grasped his arm.

“Stop, sir, it is your duty to look after Polly. Now lads, those who can swim come along!”

Another instant and he was in the sea, regardless of sharks, and striking out for the floating wreckage, closely followed by O'Rook, Corkey, Burr, and Watty Wilkins. Strange to say, eight other men of the crew could not swim, although they had managed somehow to scramble on the reef. Whether it was that the sharks were not there at the time, or that the number and energy of the swimmers frightened them, we cannot tell, but each man reached a log or plank in safety, and began pushing it towards the reef. It was when they drew near to this that the trial of their courage was most severe. The excitement and gush of daring with which they had plunged in was by that time expended, and the slow motion of the logs gave them time for reflection. O'Rook's lively fancy troubled him much.

“If the baists would only attack a man in front,” he muttered, “it's little I'd mind 'em, but to come up behind, sneakin' like — hooroo!”

At that moment a branch of coral, which projected rather far from the bottom, touched O'Rook's toe and drew from him an uncontrollable yell of alarm. Baldwin Burr, who swam close behind, was humorously inclined as well as cool. He pushed the plank he was guiding close to his comrade's back, dipped the end of it, and thrust it down on O'Rook's legs.

The effect was even more powerful than he had hoped for.

“A shark! — a sha−a−a−rk!” howled O'Rook, and dived under the broken main−yard, which he was piloting ashore. Coming up on the other side, he tried to clamber on it, but it rolled round and dropped him. He went down with a gurgling cry. Again he rose, grasped the spar with his left arm, glared wildly round, and clenched his right

hand as if ready to hit on the nose any creature — fish, flesh, or fowl — that should assail him.

"Take it easy, messmate," said Burr in a quiet tone; "sorry I touched you. Hope it didn't hurt much."

"Och! it was you, was it? Sure, I thought it was a shark; well, well, it's plaised I am to be let off so aisy."

With this philosophic reflection O'Rook landed with his piece of timber. Enough of material was soon collected to form a raft sufficiently large to ferry half of the party across the lagoon, and in two trips the whole were landed in safety on the island.

"You don't mean to tell me, Jack," said Baldwin Burr, "that this island was made by coral insects?"

"Yes, I do!" said Jack.

"From the top to the bottom?" asked Burr.

"From the bottom to the top," said Edwin.

Baldwin asked this question of the philosopher during a pause in their labours. They were, at the time, engaged in constructing a new bower for Polly among the flowering shrubs under the cocoa−nut palms. Polly herself was aiding them, and the rest of the party were scattered among the bushes, variously employed in breaking down branches, tearing up long grass, and otherwise clearing ground for an encampment.

"How could insects make an island?" asked Polly, sitting down on a bank to rest.

"Don't you know, Poll?" said Edwin; "why, I thought your father taught you about almost everything."

"Oh no," replied Polly, with an innocent smile, "not everything yet, you know, but I daresay he will in the course of time. Tell me about the insects."

"Well, let me see, how shall I begin?" said Jack, leaning against the bank, and crossing his arms on his breast. "The coral insects, Polly, are very small, some of them not larger than a pin's head. They are great builders. There is lime in sea−water. The insects, which are called corallines, have the power of attracting this lime to them; drawing it away from the water, so to speak, and fixing it round their own bodies, which is called secreting the lime. Thus they form shells, or houses, to themselves, which they fix at the bottom of the sea. Having laid the basements of their houses close together, they proceed to add upper storeys, and thus they add storey to storey, until they reach the surface of the sea. They work in such innumerable millions that, in course of time, they form reefs and islands, as you see."

"But I *don't* see!" said Polly, looking round; "at least, I don't see corallines working."

"Ah, good," said Baldwin, with a nod of approval to the child, as if to say, "You have him there!"

"True," returned the philosopher. "because the corallines can only work under water. The moment they reach the surface they die; but those that remain continue their labours on the sides of the reef or island, and thus widen it. Then the waves break off masses of coral, and cast them, with drifting sea−weed and other things, up on the reef, which makes it higher; then sea−birds come to rest on it. The winds carry seeds of various plants to it, which take root, grow up, die; and thus thicken the soil by slow degrees, till at last, after a long, long time, the island becomes a pretty large and fertile one like this."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Polly; "what a clever insect!"

"Clever indeed," returned Edwin; "especially when we consider that it has got no brains."

"No brains!" echoed Baldwin.

"No, it has little more than a stomach."

"Oh! come now," remonstrated Baldwin; "we can't believe that, can we, Miss Polly? Even a house−builder must think, much more an island−builder; and no fellow can think with his stomach, you know."

"Nevertheless, it is as I tell you," continued Jack, "and these little creatures manage to create hundreds of islands in the Southern Seas, by their perseverance, energy, and united action. Quite an example to man — eh, Baldwin?"

"Ha! just so — a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together. I think we'd better act on the principles of these corry−lines, else Miss Polly's bower won't be ready afore dark."

So saying, the seaman and our philosopher resumed their work with such united energy — aided by Polly herself — that a very comfortable habitation of boughs and large leaves was finished before the day closed. It resembled a large beehive, was overshadowed by dense foliage of a tropical kind, and carpeted with a species of fern.

Polly was profuse in her thanks, and when it was finished, called to her father to come and admire it. The stout mariner at once obeyed the summons. He quitted the pile of firewood on which he had been labouring, and with a

violently red face and perspiring brow, appeared on the scene, bearing a mighty axe on his shoulder.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed, with beaming admiration. "It's fit for the queen of the coral isles."

"For whom it is intended!" said Philosopher Jack, quickly.

Polly laughed, for she understood the compliment, but suddenly became grave, as she remembered Ben Trench, and said, "No, no; it must be used as a shelter for Ben."

"That's kind of you, Polly," said Watty coming up with a huge bundle of grass and foliage for bedding at the moment; "but Ben has got friends to remember him as well as you. Bob Corkey and I have made him a hut on the other side of the bushes — there, you may see the top of it through the leaves."

"Does any one know where Mr Luke is?" asked the captain.

None of those assembled at the bower had seen him for some hours, and Captain Samson was on the point of organising a party to go in search of him, when one of the crew came in from the bush and said he had gone off with Simon O'Rook to the highest point of the low islet, to ascertain if possible its extent.

"He's all right if O'Rook is with him," said the captain to Polly, in confidence, when they went into the bower together; "but he's not to be trusted away by himself. I never saw a man more unfit to look after himself."

"And yet he is a good, kind man, father," said Polly.

"True, quite true, Poll," replied the captain, musingly. "I wonder why it is that some men seem as if they had been meant for women; maybe it is by way of balancing those women who seem to have been meant for men!"

Polly listened to this with a look of grave consideration, but not having formed an opinion on the subject, wisely held her tongue.

Meanwhile O'Rook led his companion towards the highest part of the islet, which, being clear of trees, seemed likely to afford them a good outlook. The sailor was a man of inquiring disposition, and, being of a free−and−easy nature, did not hesitate to speak out his mind on all occasions. After walking beside his tall companion and eyeing his thin figure and sad countenance in silence for some time, he said—

"You're a cadaverous sort o' man, Mr Luke."

"Think so?" said Mr Luke, gently.

"Of course; I can't help thinkin' so, because I see it," returned O'Rook. "Was it a fall, now, w'en you was a babby, that did it, or measles?"

"Neither, that I am aware of," replied Mr Luke, with a good−natured smile; "my father before me was cadaverous."

"Ah!" said O'Rook, with a look of sympathy, as he touched the region of his heart with his left thumb, "p'r'aps it was somethin' o' this sort, eh? I've bin through that myself in the ould country, where as purty a — well, well, it's all over now, but I've a fellow−feelin' for—"

"No," interrupted Mr Luke, with a sigh, "it wasn't a disappointment, it was — oh! what a splendid view!"

They had reached the top of the ridge at the moment, and the view of the verdant islet that burst upon them might well have called forth admiration from men of coarser mould than they.

O'Rook forgot for a few minutes the subject of his curiosity, and compared the prospect to some of the beautiful scenery of Ireland, though there was no resemblance whatever between the two. He soon returned, however, to the previous subject of conversation, but Mr Luke had ceased to be communicative.

"What is that lying on the beach there?" he said, pointing in the direction referred to.

"It's more than I can tell," answered O'Rook; "looks like a boat, don't it?"

"Very," said Mr Luke, "and there is something lying beside it like a man. Come, let's go see."

The two explorers went rapidly down the gentle slope that led to the beach, and soon found that the object in question was indeed a boat, old, rotten, and blistered with the sun. Beside it lay the skeleton of a man, with a few rags of the garments that had once formed its clothing still clinging to it here and there. It was a pitiful sight. Evidently the unfortunate man had been cast away in an open boat, and had been thrown on that beach when too much exhausted to make a last struggle for life, for there was no sign of his having wandered from the boat or cut down bushes, or attempted to make a fire. His strength had apparently enabled him to get out of the boat, that was all, and there he had lain down to die.

For some time the two wanderers stood contemplating the sight in silence, and when at length they spoke it was in low, sad tones.

"Poor, poor fellow," said Mr Luke, "he must have been shipwrecked, like ourselves, and cast adrift in the

boat. But I wonder that he is alone; one would expect that some of his comrades must have got into the boat along with him."

"No doubt," said O'Rook, "they was all starved at sea and throw'd overboard. Come, Mr Luke, let's bury him; it's all we can do for him now."

Saying this, O'Rook threw off his jacket and, with his companion's assistance, soon scraped a hole in the sand. Into this they were about to lift the skeleton, when they observed that its right hand covered a decayed remnant of rag, under which was seen a glittering substance. It turned out to be the clasp of a notebook, which, however, was so decayed and glued together that it could not be opened. O'Rook therefore wrapped it in his handkerchief and put it in his pocket. Then they buried the skeleton, and rolled a large mass of coral rock upon the grave to mark the spot.

A careful examination was next made of the old boat and the locality around it, but nothing whatever was found to throw light on the fate of the vessel to which the man had belonged.

Returning to the encampment, O'Rook and his companion found their friends busy preparing supper, which consisted of some provisions saved from the raft, and cocoa−nuts.

In a few seconds the whole party was assembled in front of Polly's bower, listening attentively, while O'Rook described the discovery of the skeleton to the captain, and produced the old notebook. Deep was the interest of every member of that little community as the captain attempted to open the book, and intense was the expression of disappointment on each countenance — especially on that of Polly — when, after a prolonged trial, he utterly failed.

"Let Philosopher Jack try it," exclaimed Watty Wilkins eagerly.

The captain at once handed the book to Jack with a smile.

"To be sure," said he, "a philosopher ought to understand the management of books better than a skipper; but when a book is glued hard and fast like that, it may puzzle even a philosopher to master its contents."

Jack made the attempt, however. He went to work with the calm deliberation of a thorough workman. By the aid of heat and gentle friction and a little moisture, and the judicious use of a penknife, he succeeded at last in opening the book in one or two places. While he was thus engaged, the rest of the party supped and speculated on the probable contents of the book.

"Here is a legible bit at last," said Jack, "but the writing is very faint. Let me see. It refers to the state of the weather and the wind. The poor man evidently kept a private journal. Ah! here, in the middle of the book, the damp has not had so much effect."

As he turned and separated the leaves with great care, Jack's audience gazed at him intently and forgot supper. At last he began to read:—

> "'*Saturday, 4th*. — Have been three weeks now on short allowance. We are all getting perceptibly weaker. The captain, who is not a strong man, is sinking. The boat is overcrowded. If a gale should spring up we shall all perish. I don't like the looks of two of the men. They are powerful fellows, and the captain and I believe them to be quite capable of murdering the most of us, and throwing us overboard to save their own lives.'

"Here there is a blank," said Jack, "and the next date is the 8th, but there is no month or year given. The writing continues:—

> "'I scarce know what has passed during the last few days. It is like a horrible dream. The two men made the attempt, and killed big George, whom they feared most, because of his courage and known fidelity to the captain; but, before they could do further mischief, the second mate shot them both. The boat floats lighter now, and, through God's mercy, the weather continues fine. Our last ration was served out this morning — two ounces of biscuit each, and a wine−glass of water. *Sunday, 11th*. — Two days without food. The captain read to us to−day some chapters out

> of the Bible, those describing the crucifixion of Jesus. Williams and Ranger were deeply impressed, and for the first time seemed to lament their sins, and to speak of themselves as crucifiers of Jesus. The captain's voice very weak, but he is cheerful and resigned. It is evident that *his* trust is in the Lord. He exhorts us frequently. We feel the want of water more than food. *Wednesday*. — The captain and Williams died yesterday. Ranger drank sea water in desperation. He went mad soon after, and jumped overboard. We tried to save him, but failed. Only three of us are left. If we don't meet with a ship, or sight an island, it will soon be all over with us. *Thursday*. — I am alone now. An island is in sight, but I can scarcely raise myself to look at it. I will bind this book to my hand. If any one finds me, let him send it to my beloved wife, Lucy. It will comfort her to know that my last thoughts on earth were of her dear self, and that my soul is resting on my Redeemer. I grow very cold and faint. May God's best blessing rest—'"

The voice of the reader stopped suddenly, and for some moments there was a solemn silence, broken only by a sob from Polly Samson.

"Why don't you go on?" asked the captain.

"There is nothing more," said Jack sadly. "His strength must have failed him suddenly. It is unfortunate, for, as he has neither signed his name nor given the address of his wife, it will not be possible to fulfil his wishes."

"Maybe," suggested O'Rook, "if you open some more o' the pages you'll find a name somewheres."

Jack searched as well as the condition of the book would admit of and found at last the name of David Ban—, the latter part of the surname being illegible. He also discovered a lump in one place, which, on being cut into, proved to be a lock of golden hair, in perfect preservation. It was evidently that of a young person.

"That's Lucy's hair," said O'Rook promptly. "Blessin's on her poor heart! Give it me, Philosopher Jack, as well as the book. They both belong to me by rights, 'cause I found 'em; an' if ever I set futt in old England again, I'll hunt her up and give 'em to her."

As no one disputed O'Rook's claim, the book and lock of hair were handed to him.

Soon afterwards Polly lay down to rest in her new bower, and her father, with his men, made to themselves comfortable couches around her, under the canopy of the luxuriant shrubs.

A week passed. During that period Captain Samson, with Polly, Jack, and Wilkins, walked over the island in all directions to ascertain its size and productions, while the crew of the *Lively Poll* found full employment in erecting huts of boughs and broad leaves, and in collecting cocoa−nuts and a few other wild fruits and roots.

Meanwhile the bottle thrown overboard by Watty Wilkins, with its "message from the sea," began a long and slow but steady voyage.

It may not, perhaps, be known to the reader that there are two mighty currents in the ocean, which never cease to flow. The heated waters of the Equator flow north and south to get cooled at the Poles, and then flow back again from the Poles to get reheated at the Equator.

The form of continents, the effect of winds, the motion of the earth, and other influences, modify the flow of this great oceanic current and produce a variety of streams. One of these streams, a warm one, passing up the coast of Africa, is driven into the Gulf of Mexico, from which it crosses the Atlantic to the west coast of Britain, and is familiarly known as the Gulf Stream. If Watty Wilkins's bottle had been caught by this stream, it would, perhaps, in the course of many months, have been landed on the west of Ireland. If it had been caught by any of the other streams, it might have ended its career on the coasts of Japan, Australia, or any of the many "ends of the earth." But the bottle came under a more active influence than that of the ocean streams. It was picked up, one calm day, by a British ship, and carried straight to England, where its contents were immediately put into the newspapers, and circulated throughout the land.

The effect of little Wilkins's message from the sea on different minds was various. By some it was read with interest and pathos, while others glanced it over with total indifference. But there were a few on whom the message fell like a thunderbolt, as we shall now proceed to show.

Chapter Five. Tells of Plottings and Trials at Home, with Doings and Dangers Abroad.

In a dingy office, in a back street in one of the darkest quarters of the city, whose name we refrain from mentioning, an elderly man sat down one foggy morning, poked the fire, blew his nose, opened his newspaper, and began to read. This man was a part−owner of the *Lively Poll*. His name was Black. Black is a good wearing colour, and not a bad name, but it is not so suitable a term when applied to a man's character and surroundings. We cannot indeed, say positively that Mr Black's character was as black as his name, but we are safe in asserting that it was very dirty grey in tone. Mr Black was essentially a dirty little man. His hands and face were dirty, so dirty that his only clerk (a dirty little boy) held the firm belief that the famous soap which is said to wash black men white, could not cleanse his master. His office was dirty, so were his garments, and so was his mean little spirit, which occupied itself exclusively in scraping together a paltry little income, by means of little ways known only to its owner. Mr Black had a soul, he admitted that; but he had no regard for it, and paid no attention to it whatever. Into whatever corner of his being it had been thrust, he had so covered it over and buried it under heaps of rubbish that it was quite lost to sight and almost to memory. He had a conscience also, but had managed to sear it to such an extent that although still alive, it had almost ceased to feel.

Turning to the shipping news, Mr Black's eye was arrested by a message from the sea. He read it, and, as he did so, his hands closed on the newspaper convulsively; his eyes opened, so did his mouth, and his face grew deadly pale — that is to say, it became a light greenish grey.

“Anything wrong, sir?” asked the dirty clerk.

“The *Lively Poll*,” gasped Mr Black, “is at the bottom of the sea!”

“She's in a lively position, then,” thought the dirty clerk, who cared no more for the *Lively Poll* than he did for her part−owner; but he only replied, “O dear!” with a solemn look of hypocritical sympathy.

Mr Black seized his hat, rushed out of his office, and paid a sudden visit to his neighbour, Mr Walter Wilkins, senior. That gentleman was in the act of running his eye over his newspaper. He was a wealthy merchant. Turning on his visitor a bland, kindly countenance, he bade him good−morning.

“I do hope — excuse me, my dear sir,” said Mr Black excitedly, “I do hope you will see your way to grant me the accommodation I ventured to ask for yesterday. My business is in such a state that this disaster to the *Lively Poll*—”

“The *Lively Poll*!” exclaimed Mr Wilkins, with a start.

“Oh, I beg pardon,” said Mr Black, with a confused look, for his seared conscience became slightly sensitive at that moment. “I suppose you have not yet seen it (he pointed to the paragraph); but, excuse me, I cannot understand how you came to know that your son was on board — pardon me—”

Mr Wilkins had laid his face in his hands, and groaned aloud, then looking up suddenly, said, “I did not certainly know that my dear boy was on board, but I had too good reason to suspect it, for he had been talking much of the vessel, and disappeared on the day she sailed, and now this message from—”

He rose hastily and put on his greatcoat.

“Excuse me, my dear sir,” urged Mr Black; “at such a time it may seem selfish to press you on business affairs, but this is a matter of life and death to me—”

“It is a matter of death to *me*,” interrupted the other in a low tone, “but I grant your request. My clerk will arrange it with you.”

He left the office abruptly, with a bowed head, and Mr Black having arranged matters to his satisfaction with the clerk, left it soon after, with a sigh of relief. He cared no more for Mr Wilkins's grief than did the dirty clerk for his master's troubles.

Returning to his dirty office, Mr Black then proceeded to do a stroke of very dingy business.

That morning, through some mysterious agency, he had learned that there were rumours of an unfavourable kind in reference to a certain bank in the city, which, for convenience, we shall name the Blankow Bank. Now, it so happened that Mr Black was intimately acquainted with one of the directors of that bank, in whom, as well as in the bank itself, he had the most implicit confidence. Mr Black happened to have a female relative in the city

named Mrs Niven — the same Mrs Niven who had been landlady to Philosopher Jack. It was one of the root−principles of Mr Black's business character that he should make hay while the sun shone. He knew that Mrs Niven owned stock in the Blankow Bank; he knew that the Bank paid its shareholders a very handsome dividend, and he was aware that, owing to the unfavourable rumours then current, the value of the stock would fall very considerably. That, therefore, was the time for knowing men like Mr Black, who believed in the soundness of the bank, to buy. Accordingly he wrote a letter to Mrs Niven, advising her to sell her shares, and offering to transact the business for her, but he omitted to mention that he meant to buy them up himself. He added a postscript on the back, telling of the loss of the *Lively Poll*.

Mrs Niven was a kind−hearted woman, as the reader knows; moreover, she was a trusting soul.

“Very kind o' Maister Black,” she observed to Peggy, her maid−of−all−work, on reading the letter. “The Blankow Bank gi'es a high dividend, nae doot, but I'm well enough off, and hae nae need to risk my siller for the sake o' a pund or twa mair income i' the year. Fetch me the ink, Peggy.”

A letter was quickly written, in which worthy Mrs Niven agreed to her relative's proposal, and thanked him for the interest he took in her affairs. Having despatched Peggy with it to the post, she re−read Mr Black's epistle, and in doing so observed the postscript, which, being on the fourth page, had escaped her on the first perusal.

“Hoots!” said she, “that's stipid. I didna notice the P.S.” Reading in a low tone, and commenting parenthetically, she continued, “'By the way, did not one of your lodgers, a student, sail in the *Lively Poll*, (Atweel did he; he telt *me*, though he telt naebody else, an' gaed muckle again' *my* wull) as a common sailor?' (Common indeed! na, na, he was an uncommon sailor, if he was onything.) 'If so, you'll be sorry to learn that the *Lively Poll* is lost, and all her crew and passengers have per—'“

Instead of reading “perished” poor Mrs Niven finished the sentence with a shriek, and fell flat on the floor, where she was found soon after, and with difficulty restored to consciousness by the horrified Peggy.

That same morning, in his lowly cottage on the Scottish border, Mr John Jack opened a newspaper at the breakfast−table. Besides Mrs Jack there sat at the table four olive branches — two daughters and two sons — the youngest of whom, named Dobbin, was peculiarly noticeable as being up to the eyes in treacle, Dobbin's chief earthly joy being “treacle pieces.”

Mr Jack's eye soon fell on the message from the sea. Of course he knew nothing of the writer, but recognised the name of the vessel as being that in which his son had sailed for the Southern Seas, for our hero had written to tell of his departure, although he had not asked or waited for advice. Mr Jack was a man of strong nerve. Rising quietly from the table, he left the room, but his wife noticed the expression of his face, and followed him into their bedroom.

“What's wrang, John?”

The poor man turned abruptly, drew his wife to him, and pressed her head on his breast.

“O Maggie!” he said, in a low husky voice, “'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,' can you finish the sentence?”

“Ay, 'blessed be the name o' the Lord,'“ said Mrs Jack in a tremulous voice; “but what—”

“Listen,” said her husband, and he read out the fatal message.

“It canna be — oh! it canna be — that my Teddie is gone,” said the stricken mother, clasping her hands; “I canna, I winna believe it. Are ye sure that was the ship's name?”

“Yes, too sure,” answered her husband. “I've mislaid the dear boy's letter, but I'll go and see Mrs Niven. He mentioned it, I know, to her.”

There was yet another house in Scotland into which the message carried profound grief; namely, that of Bailie Trench. Need we say that the supposed loss of an only son was a crushing blow, rendered all the more terrible by the thought that death had been met so suddenly in a voyage which had been undertaken in search of health?

But we will spare the reader further details, and return once more to the Coral Island, where we left the castaways making themselves as comfortable as the nature of the place would admit of.

And, truth to tell, there are many people in civilised lands much less comfortably situated than were these same castaways.

The weather, as O'Rook said, “was splendacious, almost equal to that of ould Ireland.” Cocoa−nuts and other fruits were abundant. The lagoon swarmed with fish, including sharks, which rendered fishing an excitingly dangerous, as well as enjoyable, pastime. Polly Samson found gardens of coral and seaweed in crystal pools,

which she could gaze at and admire for hours, though she could not walk in them. But she could, and did, sympathise with the little fish of varied size and colour which darted about in these water gardens, and Philosopher Jack found in them an inexhaustible theme for discourse to the teachable and inquisitive Baldwin Burr. The captain found enough of employment in directing and planning generally for the whole party. Cutting firewood, gathering nuts and wild fruit, fell to the lot of Bob Corkey; and Simon O'Rook slid naturally into the office of cook. The remainder of the men were employed at various jobs, according to circumstances.

Watty Wilkins was a passionate fisher. He divided his time between the lagoon and the couch of his sick friend Bell Trench, who soon began to improve on rest, sunshine, and cocoa−nut milk. As for Mr Luke, being fit for nothing, he was allowed to do very much what he pleased, except at meal times, when O'Rook made him wash the dishes, many of which were merely flat stones. In short, the place was, according to Polly, a sort of paradise, and would have been almost perfect, but for a tendency in one or two of the men to quarrel, and a powerful disposition in Bob Corkey and Simon O'Rook to argue. Though the arguing never quite degenerated into quarrelling, and the quarrelsome men never absolutely came to blows, their tendencies made this coral paradise imperfect.

Two of the most troublesome men, named respectively Bounce and Badger, were cured by the captain in the following manner:— They had been quarrelling verbally for half an hour one morning, calling each other names, and threatening, as usual, to fight, but not doing so.

“Come, lads, follow me,” said the captain to them sternly, and much to their surprise.

He led the way to a neighbouring grove, where he stopped. “Now,” said he, “this is a cool, shady spot. I want to know which of you two is the best man. Come, go to work and fight it out. I'll see fair play.”

Bounce and Badger showed much unwillingness, whereupon the captain buttoned his coat, turned up his wristbands, doubled his enormous fists, and declared that they would have to fight with him if they would not fight with each other.

“But we don't want to fight, sir,” said Bounce, humbly, seeing that the captain was thoroughly in earnest.

“Very well, then, shake hands,” said the captain, in a tone so peremptory that the men were fain to obey.

“Now, go back to camp together,” said the captain, “and let us have no more boasting — d'ee understand?”

They went off at once. After that there was less disagreement and no threatening to fight among the men.

One morning — it was a Sunday — the captain called the whole party together after breakfast, and announced the fact that he was going to preach them a sermon.

“You see, my lads,” said he, “since you have agreed that I shall continue to be your captain on shore as well as at sea — to be the governor, in short, of this little colony — it is right that we should come to a distinct understanding as to our new position, and be guided by fixed laws. In time I will draw you up a code which I hope will be ratified by yourselves, and will work well. To−day I mean to start by preaching a sermon. I pr'pose to do so every Sunday, and to have family prayers every morning. Is that agreed to?”

“Agreed,” said nearly every one. Bounce and Badger laughed, however, supposing that the captain was jesting.

But he was very far from jesting. Taking no notice of the laughter, he continued, in an earnest, impressive manner, which enforced respect while he pointed towards the other side of the island—

“My lads, the skeleton that lies over yonder furnishes me with a text: 'One is taken, and another left.' That poor fellow was taken away from this life. You and I have been left behind. Assuredly we have been left for a good purpose, and the merciful God who has spared us means that we should henceforth live for His glory. My lads, you all know what a blessed thing is a state of peace, and you also know what a miserable thing it is to be for ever quarrelling. Since we landed on this island, we've had a little of both. I took in hand to stop the quarrelling the other day, in my own way. P'r'aps it wasn't altogether my own way either, for I've read in the Bible of smiting a scorner, that the simple might take warning. However, be that as it may, that system may serve a turn; but it's not the straight road to come to a state of peace. If we are to live happily here, my lads, to avoid quarrelling, to honour our Maker, and to prove to each other — as well as to angels and devils, who may be lookin' on for all that I know — that we stand on a higher level than the brutes, we must square our conduct by the rules and laws laid down by the Prince of Peace, whose desire is that on earth men should live together in peace and goodwill. I'll now read you some of these laws.”

Here the captain drew a small Bible from his pocket, and slowly read the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel,

pausing at each verse, and commenting thereon, after his own peculiar fashion, to the surprise of all who heard him; for although all knew the captain to be an upright man, they were not prepared, by his usually stern look and brusque off−hand manner, for the tender spirit and depth of feeling which he now displayed.

“Now, my lads,” said he, shutting the book, “that's all I've got to say to you to−day, but before closing, let me ask you to think like men — not like children — about what we have been reading. The service of God is not a mere matter of ceremonies. Jesus Christ came to save you and me, not so much from punishment, as from sin itself. It is a great salvation. Those of you who may have been swimming with the current know and care nothing about the power of sin. If you think you do, my lads, turn up stream. Try to resist sin, and you'll learn something new. Only those who are made willing and strong by the Spirit of God can do it successfully. No doubt that remark will set adrift a lot o' thoughts and questions in your minds. To all of them I give you a short text as a good course to steer by: 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' Ask light and ask wisdom.

“Now, cook,” continued the captain, turning to O'Rook, “go to work and get your dinner under weigh, for talking makes one hungry. Meanwhile, I intend to go and have a short ramble on the sea−shore, and I want to know if there is any small female on this island who wants to go with me.”

At this Polly jumped up with a laugh, put her little hand in that of her father, and stood on tiptoe, with upturned face. The captain stooped, received a stiff nor'−wester, and the two went off together.

The following night, as the party were seated round the fire finishing supper, Watty Wilkins surprised his friends by rising, clearing his throat, extending his right arm, after the manner of an orator, and delivering himself of the following speech:—

“Lady and gentlemen, — I rise on the present occasion, with or without your leave ('Order,' from Ben Trench), to make a few pertinent remarks ('Impertinent,' from Philosopher Jack) regarding our present strange and felicitous circumstances. (Hear, hear.) Our community is a republic — a glorious republic! Having constituted Captain Samson our governor, pastor, and lawgiver, it has occurred to me that we might, with great advantage to ourselves, institute a college of learning, and, without delay, elect professors. As a stowaway, I would not have presumed to make such a proposal, but, as a free and independent citizen of this republic, I claim the right to be heard; and I now move that we proceed to elect a professor of natural philosophy, natural history, and any other natural or unnatural science that any of us may happen to remember or invent. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) As a student is naturally allied to a professor, and somewhat resembles him — the only difference being that the one knows mostly everything, and the other next to nothing — I further propose that we appoint to this professorship Philosopher Jack, with a salary of gratitude depending on merit, and the duty of lecturing to us every night after supper for our entertainment.”

Watty Wilkins sat down amid great applause, and Ben Trench seconded the motion, which was of course carried unanimously.

Philosopher Jack at once accepted the professorship, and proceeded then and there to deliver his inaugural address, in which he philosophised of things past, present, and to come, both seriously and humorously, in a way that filled his favourite pupil, Baldwin Burr, with inexpressible delight.

When he had finished, Bob Corkey rose, and with an air of intense solemnity said—

“Messmates, my lady, fathers, and brethren, — I begs to offer a observation or two. It seems to me that a college with only one professor ain't quite the thing for this great and enlightened republic. Seems to me; therefore, that we should appint a professor who could spin yarns for our amusement, not to say edification. And, for this end, I moves that we appint Simon O'Rook (great applause), whose gifts in the way o' story−tellin', or nat'ral lyin', so to speak, is unequalled by any nat'ral philosopher on the island.” (Hear, hear, and cheers, mingled with laughter.)

This motion was seconded by Bounce, and the appointment was gracefully accepted by O'Rook, who, however, declined taking office till the following night as it was getting late, and he required time to compose his professional lies; but he ventured, as a free citizen of the “noo” republic, to move that the house should adjourn to bed.

The idea thus jestingly introduced was so far carried into effect in earnest, that Philosopher Jack did, on many evenings thereafter, amuse and interest his comrades round the camp−fire, by relating many a tale from history, both ancient and modern, with which his memory was well stored. He also proved to himself, as well as to others, the great value of even a small amount of scientific knowledge, by being able to comment on the objects of

surrounding nature in a way that invested them with an interest which, to absolutely ignorant men, they could not have possessed.

O'Rook also fulfilled his engagements to some extent, being not only able, but willing, to spin long−winded yarns, which, when genuine material failed, he could invent with facility.

Thus the time passed pleasantly enough for several weeks, and the shipwrecked crew succeeded in keeping up their spirits, despite the undercurrent of heavy anxiety with which they were oppressed, — as indeed they could scarcely fail to be, when they reflected on the fact that the island, on which they had been cast, lay far out of the ordinary track of ships. This had been ascertained by the captain, who, it may be remembered, had taken his sextant from the ship, and who, the day before the destruction of the raft on the coral reef, had obtained a reliable observation, and fixed their position.

But this anxiety was deepened, and a darker gloom was cast over the party, by an incident which happened soon afterwards.

It has been said that Watty Wilkins was passionately fond of fishing. This business he prosecuted by means of a small raft, made from the remnants of the old one, which he pushed about with a long pole. But the raft was inconvenient; moreover, it had been more than once nearly upset by a shark. Watty therefore resolved to make a small boat out of the remains of the old boat beside which the skeleton had been found. In this he was so ably assisted by his friends Jack and Ben, that the boat — which was a very small one — was launched in the course of two weeks. A pair of light oars was also made, and in this boat the fishing was prosecuted with redoubled vigour. Sometimes the three friends went off in company; more frequently little Wilkins went out alone.

One day he pushed off by himself, and pulled to different parts of the lagoon, casting his line now and then with varying success. The day happened to be unusually calm and bright. When he passed the opening in the reef, the surf appeared less violent than usual, so that he was tempted to pull though it. The breakers were passed in safety, and he soon found himself with a sensation of great delight, floating on the gentle swell of the open sea. He pulled out for a considerable distance, and then cast his lines. So intent was he on these, that he did not observe the approach of a squall till it was almost upon him. Seizing the oars, he pulled towards the island, but he had drifted off shore a considerable distance. The wind, also, was against him. His efforts were vain. In short he was blown out to sea.

The desperate anxiety of the poor boy was changed to despair when the island gradually receded and finally disappeared. At first the little boat was nearly swamped, but by clever management of the oars Watty saved it. The squall was short−lived. Before long it again fell calm, and the sky cleared, but nothing was now to be seen save the unbroken circle of the horizon.

Who can tell the feelings of the poor youth when night descended on the sea? For hours he sat in the stern−sheets quite motionless, as if stunned. (Note: see frontispiece.) Rowing, he knew, would be of no use, as he might be pulling away from the island instead of towards it. Fastening his jacket to an oar, he set it up as a signal, and sat down helpless and inactive, but his mind was busy as he gazed into the depths of the moonlit sky. He thought of home, of the father whom he had so deeply injured, of the prospects that he had unwittingly blighted, of his comrade Ben Trench, and his other friends on the Coral Island. As he continued to think, conscience rose up and condemned him sternly. Wilkins bowed his head to the condemnation, and admitted that it was just.

“Oh!” he cried, in a passion of sudden remorse, “O God! spare me to return home and be a comfort to my father, — my dear, dear father!”

He put his face in his hands and wept bitterly. Sitting thus, overcome with sorrow and fatigue, he gradually sank lower and lower, until he slid to the bottom of the boat, and lay at last with his head on the thwart, in profound slumber. He dreamed of home and forgiveness as he floated there, the one solitary black spot on the dark breast of the solemn sea.

Chapter Six. Watty Wilkins is Tried, Comforted, Run Down, Rescued, and Restored.

When Watty Wilkins awoke from sleep, the sun was high in the heavens and the sea smooth as a mirror.

The poor boy raised himself on one elbow and looked about him, at first with a confused feeling of uncertainty as to where he was. Then the truth burst upon him with overwhelming force. Not only was he alone in a little, half−decayed boat without sail, rudder, or compass, on the great Pacific Ocean, but, with the exception of a few fish, he was without food, and, worst of all, he had not a drop of fresh water.

What was to be done? An unspoken prayer ascended from his heart to God, as he rose and seized the oars. A belief that it was needful to act vigorously and at once was strong upon him. For several minutes he relieved his feelings by rowing with all his might. Then he stopped abruptly, and his spirit sank almost in despair as he exclaimed aloud—

“What's the use? I don't know where the island is. I may only be pulling farther away from it. Oh! what shall I do?”

At that moment of extreme depression, the value of having had a God−fearing father who had taught him the Bible was unexpectedly realised, for there flashed into his mind, as if in reply to his question, the words, “Call upon me in the time of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

He pulled in the oars at once, fell on his knees, and, clasping his hands, prayed fervently. Watty had been taught a form of prayer in childhood, and had often used it with little or no regard to its meaning. Now, in his distress, he prayed in earnest. He meant what he said. It followed, also, that he said what he meant. The old form, being quite unsuitable to the occasion, was forgotten, and very homely language indeed was used, but it was sufficient for the purpose. The substance of it was a cry for pardon and deliverance. That which winged it to the Throne of Grace was the name of Jesus Christ.

Resuming the oars, he rowed gently; not for the sake of directing the boat, but because a state of inaction was disagreeable, and as he rowed he thought of the promise that had been sent to him. Strange to say, the latter part of it, “Thou shalt glorify me,” seemed to take a stronger hold of his mind than the first. “Yes,” he thought, “the whole promise is true. He will deliver me and make me to glorify Himself in some way or other. Perhaps He will let me live to return home, and be a comfort to my father.”

The thought of the sorrow he had caused his father weighed heavier than ever in the poor boy's mind, and the desire to express his repentance, and, if possible, make his father glad again, became very intense. It seemed to him that a millstone would be removed from his heart if he could be allowed, even for one minute, to hold his father's hand and say, “Oh, I am so sorry, sorry, sorry that I ran away!” The millstone was not removed at that time, however; but in answer to prayer it was unquestionably lightened.

The exercise of rowing and the fresh morning air produced their natural effect ere long on the little castaway. He became ravenously hungry, and turned his eyes inquiringly on the few fish which surged about in the pool of dirty water that had gathered in the bottom of the boat. It was not an inviting breakfast. Watty turned his eyes away from it, looked up into the fair blue sky, and tried to think of other things! But the calls of nature were not to be silenced. Instead of thinking of other things, he somehow thought of bread and butter. He even fell into a species of argument with himself as to whether it would not be uncommonly pleasant in various supposable circumstances, to eat bread without butter. Then he found himself meditating on the delights of butter and jam together, which somehow suggested the scriptural figure of a land flowing with milk and honey.

“Oh!” he sighed at this point, “if the sea was only milk and honey — milk even without honey! — what a glorious prospect!”

He looked at it as if he half thought it would be transformed under the power of his intense wish. Then he looked again at the floating fish and shuddered. Well might he shudder, for they were contemptible little fish, most of them, with unnaturally large heads, and great staring eyes, as if they had failed, even in death, to get rid of their surprise at being caught. With their mouths opened to the uttermost, they seemed to wish to shout, but couldn't.

“I may as well take them out of the dirty water anyhow,” he muttered, suiting the action to the word, and

spreading the fish on the thwart in front of him. Liking their appearance still less in that position, he put them on the thwart behind him, and tried to forget them. Impossible! He might as well have tried to forget his own existence. At last, after holding out as long as possible, the poor boy made up his mind to eat a little. Then he thought, “If I could only cook them; oh! for only one small lump of live coal from the camp fire on—”

The thought was checked abruptly, for he suddenly remembered that he had a burning−glass in his trousers pocket. He might perhaps be able to roast them with that — in a somewhat underdone fashion, no doubt — still, any sort of cooking would be better than none!

It need scarcely be said that the attempt failed. The only results were a burnt spot or two and a faint odour that served to intensify his hunger. At last he bit a mouthful out of the back of one of the fish, chewed it viciously, swallowed it in a hurry, and felt very sick. The ice was broken, however, and he got on better than he had expected. But when hunger was appeased, there came gradually upon him the far less endurable condition of thirst. He really felt as if he should choke, and once or twice he dipped his baling−dish over the side, but restrained himself on remembering the journal of the skeleton, wherein it was recorded that one of the men had gone mad after drinking salt water.

Towards the afternoon hope was revived in his breast by the appearance of clouds indicating rain. It came at last, in a soft gentle shower — far too gentle, indeed, for it could not be collected. What dropped upon the wooden baling−dish seemed to sink into or evaporate off it. The few drops that fell upon his patiently protruded tongue served only to tantalise him. But Watty was not prone to give way to despair; at least, not to remain in that condition. He took off his jacket, spread it out so as to form a basin, and eagerly watched the result. Alas! the cloth was too soft. It acted like a sponge, into which the rain−drops disappeared.

When it became evident that the coat was a failure — refusing even to part with a single drop when wrung, — Watty chanced to cast down his eyes, and they naturally fell on his trousers. They were stiff canvas trousers, and very greasy from much service among the dishes. Instantly he had them off, and spread out as the coat had been. Joy inexpressible — they held water! To convert the body of them into a lake and the legs into two water−courses was not difficult for one whose ingenuity was beyond the average. But oh! the lake basin was slow to gather the precious drops! He caused the two legs to debouch into the baling−dish, and watched eagerly for half an hour, at the end of which period about a wineglassful was collected. He sucked it in, to the last drop, and waited for more. It seemed as if the very sky sympathised with the boy's distress, for soon afterwards the rain increased, then it poured, and finally, Watty Wilkins was more than satisfied, he was drenched. Fortunately the downpour was short−lived. It ceased suddenly; the clouds broke up, and the evening sun came out in full splendour, enabling him to partially dry his garments.

In the Southern Seas at that time, the weather was particularly warm, so that our castaway felt no inconvenience from his ducking, and spent the second night in comparative comfort, his dreams — if he had any — being untroubled with visions of food or drink. Once, indeed, he awoke, and, looking up, recalled so vividly the fate of the man who had been cast alone and dying on the Coral Island, that he became deeply depressed by the thought of meeting a similar fate; but the text of the previous day again recurred to him. Clinging to it, he again fell asleep, and did not wake till morning.

Looking over the side, he saw what sent a gush of hope and joy to his heart. A ship, under full sail, not half a mile off! He rubbed his eyes and looked again. Was he dreaming? Could it be?

He sprang up with a cry of delight and gave vent to a long, loud cheer, as much to relieve his feelings as to attract attention. It was almost too good to be true, he thought. Then a voice within whispered, “Did you not ask for deliverance?” and the boy mentally responded, “Yes, thank God, I did.”

While he was thinking, his hands were busy refastening his jacket (which he had taken down to sleep in) by a sleeve to its former place at the end of an oar. But there was no occasion to signal. The vessel, a barque, was running straight towards him before a light breeze under full sail — as Baldwin Burr would have said, with “stuns'ls slow and aloft.” Believing that he had been observed, he ceased waving his flag of distress.

But soon a new idea sent a thrill through his heart. No sign of recognition was made to him as the ship drew near. Evidently the look−out was careless.

Leaping up, Watty seized the oar, waved his flag frantically, and yelled out his alarm. Still the ship bore majestically down on him, her huge bow bulking larger and higher as she drew near. Again Watty yelled, loud and long, and waved his flag furiously. The ship was close upon him — seemed almost towering over him. He

saw a sailor appear lazily at the bow with his hands in his pockets. He saw the eyes of that seaman suddenly display their whites, and his hands, with the ten fingers extended, fly upwards. He heard a tremendous “Starboard ha−a−a−rd!” followed by a terrific “Starboard it is!” Then there was a crashing of rotten wood, a fearful rushing of water in his ears, a bursting desire to breathe, and a dreadful thrusting downwards into a dark abyss. Even in that moment of extremity the text of the morning flashed through his whirling brain — then all was still.

When Watty's mind resumed its office, its owner found himself in a comfortable berth between warm blankets with a hot bottle at his feet, and the taste of hot brandy−and−water in his mouth. A man with a rough hairy visage was gazing earnestly into his face.

“Wall, youngster, I guess,” said the man, “that you'd pretty nigh slipped your cable.”

Watty felt thankful that he had not quite slipped his cable, and said so.

“You went over me, I think,” he added.

“Over you! Yes, I just think we did. You went down at the bows — I see'd you myself — and came up at the starn. The cap'n, he see'd you come up, an' said you bounced out o' the water like the cork of a soda−water bottle. But here he comes himself. He told me I wasn't to speak much to you.”

The captain, who was an American, with a sharp−featured and firm but kindly countenance, entered the berth at the moment.

“Well, my boy, glad to see you revived. You had a narrow escape. Wouldn't have been so if it hadn't chanced that one of our worst men was the look−out — or rather wasn't the look−out. However, you're all right now. Your ship went down, I expect, not long since?”

“About three or four months ago,” answered Watty.

“Come, boy, your mind hasn't got quite on the balance yet. It ain't possible that you could be as fat as a young pig after bein' three or four months at sea in an open boat. What was the name of your ship?”

“The *Lively Poll*.”

“What! a Scotch ship?”

“Yes; part owned and commanded by Captain Samson.”

“*I* know him; met him once in Glasgow. A big, rough−bearded, hearty fellow — six foot two or thereabouts. Didn't go down with his ship, did he?” asked the captain with a look of anxiety.

“No,” replied Watty with increasing interest in the American; “we escaped on a raft to an island, off which I was blown, while alone in my boat only two days ago.”

“Only two days ago, boy!” echoed the captain, starting up; “d'you happen to know the direction of that island?”

Watty did not know, of course, having had no compass in his boat; but he fortunately remembered what Captain Samson had said when he had ascertained the latitude and longitude of it.

“Mr Barnes,” shouted the captain to the first mate, who stood on deck near the open skylight, “how's her head?”

“Sou'−sou'−west, sir.”

“Put her about and lay your course west and by north. Now,” said the captain, turning again to Watty, with a look of satisfaction, “we'll soon rescue Captain Samson and his crew. I'm sorry I won't be able to take you all back to England, because we are bound for San Francisco, but a trip to California is preferable to life on a coral island. Now, boy, I've talked enough to you. The steward will bring you some dinner. If you feel disposed, you may get up after that. Here are dry clothes for you. We ripped up your own to save time after hauling you out of the sea.”

It was not usual for the gentle Polly Samson to alarm the camp with a shriek that would have done credit to a mad cockatoo, nevertheless, she did commit this outrage on the feelings of her companions on the afternoon of the day on which Watty was run down and rescued.

Her father and all the others were seated around the camp fire among the bushes at the time. Polly had left them, intending to pay a visit to one of her beautiful water−gardens on the beach, and had just emerged from the bushes and cast her eyes upon the sea, when she beheld the sight that drew from her the shriek referred to. She gave it forth in an ascending scale.

“Oh! Oh!! Oh!!! father! come here! quick! quick! oh!”

Never since he was a boy had the captain jumped so sharply from a sitting posture to his legs. Every man

followed suit like a Jack−in−the−box. There was a rush as if of a tempest through the bushes, and next moment the whole party burst upon the scene, to find Polly — not as they had feared in some deadly peril, but — with flashing eyes and glowing cheeks waving her arms like a windmill, and shrieking with joy at a ship which was making straight for the island under full sail.

The captain greeted the sight with a bass roar, Philosopher Jack with a stentorian shout. Ben Trench did his best to follow Jack's example. Simon O'Rook uttered an Irish howl, threw his cap into the air, and forthwith began an impromptu hornpipe, in which he was joined by Bob Corkey. Baldwin Burr and his comrades vented their feelings in prolonged British cheers, and Mr Luke, uttering a squeak like a wounded rabbit, went about wanting to embrace everybody, but nobody would let him. In short every one went more or less mad with joy at this sudden realisation of “hope long deferred.” Only then did they become fully aware of the depth of anxiety which had oppressed them at the thought of being left, perhaps for years, it might be to the end of their days, on that unknown island.

As the vessel approached, it became apparent that there was some one on board whose temporary insanity was as demonstrative as their own, so wild were his gesticulations.

“It's too fur off,” said Baldwin, “to make out the crittur's phisog; but if it warn't for his size, I'd say he was a monkey.”

“P'r'aps it's an ourang−outang,” suggested Corkey.

“Or a gorilla,” said O'Rook.

“Oh!” exclaimed Polly, in a low, eager voice of surprise, “I do believe it is Watty Wilkins!”

“Polly is right,” said Philosopher Jack; “I'd know Watty's action among a thousand.”

As he spoke, the vessel rounded−to outside the reef, backed her top−sails, and lowered a boat. At the same time the excited figure disappeared from her bow, and reappeared, wilder than ever, in the stern of the boat. As it crossed the lagoon, the voice of Watty became audible, and was responded to by a succession of hearty cheers, in the midst of which the boat was run ashore. The excited lad sprang on the beach, and was almost annihilated by the species of miscellaneous embracing that he immediately underwent.

Need we say that Captain Samson and his men were only too thankful to have such an opportunity of deliverance? They at once accepted the offer of the American captain, embarked in his ship the following morning, passed Cape Horn not long after, sailed up the coast of South America, and, in course of time, cast anchor in the renowned harbour of San Francisco.

At the time of which we write, the excitement about the gold−fields of California was at its highest pitch. Men were flocking to that region from all parts of the earth. Fortunes were being made by some in a few months, and lost by others, at the gaming−tables, in a few days, or even hours. While a few gained a competence, many gained only a bare subsistence; thousands lost their health, and not a few their lives. It was a strange play that men enacted there, embracing all the confusion, glitter, rapid change of scene, burlesque, and comedy of a pantomime, with many a dash of darkest tragedy intermingled. Tents were pitched in all directions, houses were hastily run up, restaurants of all kinds were opened, boats were turned keel up and converted into cottages, while ships were stranded or lying idle at their anchors for want of crews, who had made off to that mighty centre of attraction, the diggings.

Arrived at San Francisco, Captain Samson and his crew were landed one fine morning at an early hour, and went up to a modest−looking hotel, without any definite idea as to what was best to be done in their peculiar circumstances. Feeling a strange sensation of helplessness in the midst of so much turmoil and human energy, after their quiet sojourn on the Coral Island, they kept together like a flock of sheep, and wandered about the town. Then they returned to their hotel and had luncheon, for which so large a sum was demanded, that they resolved to return on board at once, and ask the American captain's advice.

They found their deliverer pacing his quarterdeck, with his hands in his pockets, and a stern frown on his countenance. He was quite alone, and the vessel wore an unusually quiet air.

“Nothing wrong, I hope,” said Captain Samson, as he stepped over the gangway.

“Everything wrong,” replied the American; “crew skedaddled.”

“What! bolted?”

“Ay, every man, to the diggin's.”

“What will you do?” asked Captain Samson, in a sympathetic tone.

“Sell off the ship and cargo for what they'll fetch, and go to the diggin's too,” replied the other. “Moreover, I'd strongly recommend you to do the same.”

“What say you to that advice, Philosopher Jack?” asked Captain Samson, turning to our hero, with a peculiar smile.

“I say,” answered the philosopher, returning the smile, “that the advice requires consideration.”

“Cautiously replied; and what says my Polly?” continued the captain.

“I say whatever you say, father.”

“Ah! Poll, Poll, that sort of answer don't help one much. However, we'll call a council of war, and discuss the matter seriously; but, first of all, let's see how the wind blows. How do *you* feel inclined, Ben Trench? Bein' the invalid of our party, so to speak, you're entitled, I think, to speak first.”

“I say, Go,” replied Ben.

“And I say ditto,” burst from Watty Wilkins with powerful emphasis.

“You wasn't axed yet,” observed Bob Corkey. “Besides, stowaways have no right to speak at all.”

“What says Mr Luke!” continued the captain.

“Don't go,” answered Mr Luke feebly.

“Now, lads,” said the captain, after putting the question to the others, “we'll go in for the pros and cons.”

They went in for the pros and cons accordingly, and after an animated debate, resolved that the path of duty, as well as that of interest and propriety, lay in the direction of the diggings.

Having settled the matter, and gathered together into a common fund the small amount of cash and property which each had saved from the wreck, they went ashore, purchased the articles necessary for their expedition, and followed the great stream of Californian gold−diggers.

We shall join them, but let not the reader suppose that we intend to bore him or her with the statistics and details of Californian gold−digging. It is our purpose only to touch lightly on those salient points in the adventures of our wanderers which had a more or less direct bearing on the great issues of their lives.

Chapter Seven. Failure.

There are times, probably, in the life of all when everything seems to go against one, — when plans and efforts turn out ill, or go wrong, and prospects look utterly black and hopeless. Such a time fell upon Philosopher Jack and his friends some months after their arrival at the gold−diggings.

At first they were moderately successful, and at that time what amazingly golden visions they did indulge!

“A carriage and pair,” soliloquised Watty Wilkins, one evening at supper, while his eyes rested complacently on the proceeds of the day's labour — a little heap of nuggets and gold−dust, which lay on a sheet of paper beside him; “a carriage and pair, a town house in London, a country house near Bath or Tunbridge Wells, and a shooting−box in the Scotch Highlands. Such is my reasonable ambition.”

“Not bad,” said Philosopher Jack, “if you throw in a salmon river near the shooting−box, and the right to wear the bonnet, plaid, and kilt at pleasure.”

“Not to mention bare legs an' rheumatiz,” remarked Simon O'Rook, who was busy with the frying−pan. “Sure, if the good Queen herself was to order me to putt on such things, I'd take off me bonnet an' plaid in excuse that I'd be kilt entirely if she held me to it. All the same I'd obey her, for I'm a loyal subject.”

“You're a bad cook, anyhow,” said Baldwin Burr, “to burn the bacon like that.”

“Burn it!” retorted O'Rook with an air of annoyance, “man alive, how can I help it? It hasn't fat enough to slide in, much less to swim. It's my belief that the pig as owned it was fed on mahogany−sawdust and steel filin's. There, ait it, an' howld yer tongue. It's good enough for a goold−digger, anyhow.”

“In regard to that little bit of ambition o' your'n,” said Bob Corkey, as the party continued their meal, “seems to me, Watty, that you might go in for a carriage an' four, or six, when you're at it.”

“No, Corkey, no,” returned the other, “that would be imitating the foibles of the great, which I scorn. What is *your* particular ambition, now, Mr Luke? What will you buy when you've dug up your fortune?”

The cadaverous individual addressed, who had become thinner and more cadaverous than ever, looked up from his pewter plate, and, with a sickly smile, replied that he would give all the gold in the mines to purchase peace of mind.

This was received with a look of surprise, which was followed by a burst of laughter.

“Why, you ain't an escaped convict, are you?” exclaimed Baldwin Burr.

“No, I'm only an escaped man of business, escaped from the toils, and worries, and confinements of city life,” returned Mr Luke, with another sickly smile, as he returned to his tough bacon.

“Well, Mr Luke, if contrast brings any blessing with it,” said Edwin Jack, “you ought to revive here, for you have splendid fresh country air — by night as well as by day — a fine laborious occupation with pick and shovel, a healthy appetite, wet feet continually, mud up to the eyes, and gold to your heart's content. What more can you desire?”

“Nothing,” replied the cadaverous man with a sigh.

The state of prosperity to which Jack referred did not last. Their first “claim,” though rich, was soon worked out, and they were obliged to seek another. This turned out to be a poor one, yielding barely enough of the precious metal to enable them to pay their way, every article of clothing, tools, and food being excessively dear at the mines. Nevertheless, they worked on in hope, but what was termed their “luck” became worse and worse every day, so that at last they were obliged to run into debt.

This was not difficult to do, for the principal store−keeper, Higgins by name, saw that they were respectable, trustworthy men, and felt pretty safe in giving them supplies on credit. One bad result of the debt thus incurred was that the whole tone and spirit of the party was lowered.

“It's too bad,” growled Philosopher Jack one evening, as he strode into the tent and flung down his tools; “got barely enough to keep the pot boiling.”

“Better that than nothing,” remarked Watty Wilkins, who was in the act of taking off his wet boots. “*I* haven't got as much dust as would gild the end of a bumbee's nose. Hope some of the others have been more successful. None of them have come in yet except O'Rook, who is as unlucky as myself. He's off to the store for something for supper.”

Watty sat down before the fire which burned in front of the tent, and sadly toasted his toes.

"I'll tell you what," said Jack, sitting down beside him, "I fear we were fools to come here."

"Not so sure of that" returned Wilkins, with a dubious shake of the head. "Every one, you know, cannot be lucky. Some succeed and some don't. We are down just now, that's all. The wheel of fortune is going round, and something will be sure to turn up soon."

"Nothing will turn up unless we turn it up for ourselves, you may depend upon that" said Philosopher Jack.

"The captain seemed to preach a different doctrine from that last Sunday, didn't he, when he remarked that God sometimes sends prosperity and riches to those who neither ask, work for, nor deserve them?"

"True, Watty, but these, he told us, were exceptional cases; the rule being, that those who labour with body or mind acquire possessions, while those who don't labour fall into poverty. The simple truth of that rule is partially veiled by the fact that thousands of laborious men labour unwisely, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, thousands of idle men live on the product of their forefathers' labours. Besides, didn't the captain also impress upon us that success is not success when it leads to evil, and failure is not failure when it results in good?"

"From all which," retorted Watty, "you bring forward strong proof that your present growling at bad luck is most unphilosophic, you cross−grained philosopher."

"Not at all," returned Jack. "The captain's principles may, or may not be correct. The mere statement of them does not prove that my ill luck just now is going to result in good. But the worst of it is, that during the time of our good fortune, I had been hoarding up in order to be able to send money to my poor father, and now it has all melted away."

"I'm sorry for you, Jack," said Watty, "but that is not the worst of it to my mind, bad though it be. What grieves me most is, that my dear friend and chum, Ben Trench, is surely losing his health under the strain of anxiety and hard work. You see, he is not gifted with the gutta−percha feelings and cast−iron frame of Philosopher Jack, neither has he the happy−go−lucky spirit and tough little corpus of Watty Wilkins, so that it tells on him heavily — very heavily."

Poor Watty said this half jestingly, yet with such a look of genuine feeling that Jack forgot his own troubles for the moment.

"Something *must* be done," he said, gazing with a concerned look at the fire. "Did you observe that man Conway last night up at the store?"

"Yes; what of him?"

"He staked largely at the gaming−table last night — and won."

Little Wilkins glanced quickly in his friend's face. "Jack," he said, with a look and tone of earnestness quite unusual to him, "we must not think of *that*. Whatever straits we are reduced to, we must not gamble — I repeat, we *must* not!"

"Why not, little man?" asked Jack, with an amused smile at what he considered an uncalled−for burst of seriousness.

"Because it is dishonourable," said Wilkins, promptly.

"I don't see it to be so," returned Jack. "If I am willing to stake my money on a chance of black or red turning up, and the banker is willing to take his chance, why should we not do it? the chances are equal; both willing to win or to lose, nothing dishonourable in that! Or, if I bet with you and you bet with me, we both agree to accept the consequences, having a right, of course, to do what we please with our own."

"Now, Jack," said Wilkins, "I'm not going to set up for a little preacher, or attempt to argue with a big philosopher, but I'll tell you what my father has impressed on me about this matter. One day, when we were passing some ragged boys playing pitch−and−toss on the street, he said to me, 'Watty, my boy, no man should gamble, because it is dishonourable. To want money that does not belong to you is greedy. To try to get it from your neighbour without working for it is mean. To risk your money in the hope of increasing it by trade, or other fair means, and so benefit yourself and others, is right; but to risk it for nothing, with the certainty of impoverishing some one else if you win, or injuring yourself if you lose, is foolish and unfeeling. The fact that some one else is willing to bet with you, only proves that you have met with one as foolish and unfeeling as yourself, and the agreement of two unfeeling fools does not result in wisdom. You will hear it said, my boy, that a man has a right to do what he will with his own. That is not true. As far as the world at large is concerned, it is, indeed, partially true, but a man may only do what God allows with what He has lent him. He is strictly

accountable to God for the spending of every penny. He is accountable, also, to his wife and his children, in a certain degree. ay, and to his tradesmen, if he owes them anything. Yes, Watty, gambling for money is dishonourable, believe me!' Now, Jack, I did, and I do believe him, from the bottom of my heart."

What Jack would have replied we cannot tell, for the conversation was interrupted at that moment by the abrupt appearance of Captain Samson. He led Polly by the hand. The child had an unwonted expression of sadness on her face.

"Come into the tent. Now then, darling," said the captain; "sit on my knee, and tell me all about it. Polly has seen something in her rambles that has made her cry," he explained to Jack, Wilkins, and the rest of the party who chanced to come in while he was speaking. "Let us hear about it."

"Oh! it is *so* sad," said Polly, whimpering. "You know that good kind man Jacob Buckley, who lives up in Redman's Gap with his sick brother Daniel, who is so fond of me; well, I went up to the Gap this afternoon, when I had done cleaning up, to sit with the sick brother for a little. I found him in great anxiety and very ill. He told me that Jacob, who had always been such a good nurse to him, is much cast down by his bad luck, and has taken to drink, and that he has lost or spent all his money, and can't get credit at the store. He went out quite drunk last night, and has not returned since. Of course poor Daniel has had nothing to eat, for he can't leave his bed without help, and even if he could, there isn't a morsel of food in the house."

This story created much sympathy in the hearts of Polly's hearers.

"Well now, messmates, what's to be done in this case?" asked Captain Samson, looking round.

"Make a c'lection," said O'Rook.

"Here you are," said Watty, taking up his cap and dropping several small nuggets into it as he handed it to Jack.

The philosopher contributed a pretty large nugget, which, in his heart, he had intended to stake at the gaming−table. "Well," said he, "we are reduced to low enough circumstances just now, but we are rich compared with poor Buckley."

The entire party at that time numbered only nine, including Polly, Bounce, and Badger, the other members of the crew of the *Lively Poll* having separated soon after leaving San Francisco. But as all of them were men of generous spirit, Watty's cap soon contained a very creditable "c'lection," which was made up forthwith into a bag, and carried with some cooked provisions by Polly to Redman's Gap, under the safe escort of her father and Baldwin Burr.

The following evening, after supper, Philosopher Jack quietly put his last bag of gold into his pocket and went off with it to Higgins' store. On the way up he entered into a debate with himself as to the rectitude of gambling. He seemed to himself to be composed of two persons, one of whom condemned, while the other defended gambling. But Jack had a strong will of his own. He was not to be lightly turned from a purpose, either by the disputants within him or by the arguments of his friend Wilkins. Being a good reasoner, our philosopher found that the condemner of gambling within him was rapidly getting the best of the argument; he therefore brought the matter to a point by suddenly exclaiming aloud, "Now, the question is, shall I do it?"

"Don't?" said his old, brusque, but faithful friend Conscience, with a promptitude that made him quite uncomfortable.

"Or," continued Jack slowly, "shall I go back and wait to see whether things will turn and mend?"

"Do!" answered his friend at once.

If Jack had put more questions, he would have received clear and emphatic replies, but he merely said, "Pooh!" and when a man says "pooh!" to conscience, he is in a very bad way indeed.

At Higgins' store gold−miners assembled to buy and sell, to talk and drink and gamble. As the necessaries of life were procured there, miners of all sorts, from the steady to the disreputable, were to be found assembled at times, but it was chiefly the latter who "hung about" the place. No notice was taken of Jack as he mingled with the crowd, except by one or two acquaintances, who gave him a passing nod of recognition.

At the bar there was assembled a boisterous group, who were laughing heartily at something. Jack joined it, and found a tall, half−tipsy man offering to bet with another. When men are smitten with the gambling spirit anything that affords a "chance" will serve their turn.

"See here, now," said the tall man, looking round, "I repeat, that I'll bet any man ten dollars — all I have in the world — that there's not any four of the men in this store can prevent my lifting this tumbler of water to my

lips."

He held out a tumbler in his right hand as he spoke, and straightened his long sinewy arm.

Some of those present laughed, but one, a short, thick−set, powerful fellow, said "Done!" at once, and stepped forward.

"Well, stranger," said the tall man, with a smile, "lay hold. You ought to be strong enough to prevent me by yourself, but come on some more of you."

Three strong fellows rose and laughingly grasped the man's arm, while several of the lookers−on began to bet on the event.

"Now, hold fast," said the tall man, giving his arm a slight but vigorous shake, which had the effect of causing those who held it to tighten their grip powerfully.

"Oh! you're not strong enough," he added; "come, another of you!" Hereupon a fifth man rose, and laid hold of the arm amid much laughter.

At that moment a big, rough miner pushed his way through the crowd and demanded to know "what was up." On being told, he drew a bag from his pocket and exclaimed, "I'll bet you this bag of dust if you can match it, that these five men will prevent you easily. They are strong enough to hold Goliath himself, if he were here."

"Sorry that I can't match your bag, stranger," replied the tall man; "I'm only game for ten dollars, and that's already staked."

"But *I* can match it," exclaimed Philosopher Jack, suddenly producing his bag, which was much the same size as that of the big miner.

"Now, then, hold fast, but don't break the bone if you can help it," said the tall man, giving his arm another shake.

The laugh with which this was received was changed into a roar of delight, when the tall man passed his left arm over the heads of those who held him, and with his left hand conveyed the tumbler to his lips.

There was a good deal of disputation immediately, as to the justice of paying up bets on what was obviously a "sell," but it was ruled that in this case they had been fairly lost and won, so that the big miner turned his back on his bag of gold, and, with a deep curse, left the store.

Never before had Edwin Jack felt so thoroughly ashamed of himself as when he went forward and took up the two bags of gold. He did it, how ever, and, hurriedly quitting the store, returned to his tent.

There was a small portion of the tent curtained off at the farther extremity, as a chamber for Polly Samson. Jack was relieved, on arriving, to find that she had retired to it for the night. He was also glad to observe that all his tired companions were asleep, with the exception of O'Rook. That worthy was busy clearing up his pots and pans for the night.

"It's late you are to−night," remarked O'Rook with a yawn.

"Yes, I've been to the store," said Jack; "hand me that candle; thanks."

Turning his back on his comrade, he opened the bag which he had won, and looked in. The first thing that met his astonished gaze was the identical nugget which he had contributed the evening before to the sick miner at Redman's Gap. There was a name inside the bag. Holding it near the candle, he read— "Buckley!"

"They must have been robbed!" he muttered to himself; then, rising, said to O'Rook, "I've taken a fancy to go up to the Gap to see the Buckleys. Don't mistake me for a thief when I return."

"No mistake at all if I did," returned O'Rook, "for you're stealin' a march on us all just now, an' isn't it robbin' yourself of your night's rest you are? ah! then, a wilful man must have his way; good luck go with ye."

Before the sentence and the yawn that followed it were finished, Jack was on his way to the Gap. He found the elder Buckley seated on a log by his brother's couch, with his face buried in his hands. A glance showed him that the sick man was dying. Jacob looked up quickly. His face was haggard from the combined effects of dissipation, grief, and watching. He seemed rather annoyed than pleased by Jack's visit.

"I'm grieved to see Daniel so ill," said Jack in a low voice, which, however, roused the attention of the invalid.

"Dying," said Jacob sternly, though in a voice that was scarcely audible. "What have you got there?" he added, almost fiercely, as he observed, and at once recognised, the bag in his visitor's hand.

"Your property," answered Jack. "Have you not missed it? I conclude, of course, that it has been stolen from you, because it was gambled away by a big rough fellow at Higgins' store this evening."

A peculiar smile flitted for a moment across the rugged face of Jacob Buckley as he said, "No, he didn't steal

it. Not being able to leave my brother myself, I sent him with it to the store, to try his luck. It was my last throw, contained all I had, includin' the dust and nuggets you and your comrades sent me last night."

He said this in a hard, reckless, defiant manner, then looked suddenly in Jack's eyes, and inquired with an expression of curiosity how he came by the bag.

"I won it, God forgive me," said Jack, a deep flush of shame overspreading his face, "and I now come to return what I had no right to win."

A sound from the dying man attracted their attention at that moment.

"He wants to speak to you," said Jacob, who had stooped down to listen.

Jack bent over the sick man, who said in a low whisper, with occasional pauses for breath, for his strength was almost gone.

"God bless you! You've saved his life. He said if he lost that gold that he'd blow out his brains — and he'd have done it — he would; I know Jacob — he'd have done it. Read to me — the Word — the only true gold."

Jack looked round. Jacob had sat down, and again covered his face with his hands.

"I have not my Bible with me," said Jack, "but I can repeat passages from memory."

He began with the words, "They that trust in Him shall never be put to confusion," when the dying man roused himself, and with a strong effort whispered, "O, sir, I *do* trust in Him! Will you try to save my brother from gambling and drink. Speak! — promise!"

"I will!" whispered Jack in his ear.

The man's energy left him at once, and he fell back on the pillow, from which he had partially risen, with a deep, prolonged sigh. Jacob heard it. Springing up, he fell on his knees by the bedside and seized his brother's hand.

"O Dan! dear Dan," he exclaimed, passionately, "don't give way like that. You'll get well soon, an we'll cut this infernal place altogether; we'll go home and work with the old folk. Dan, dear Dan! speak to me—"

He stopped abruptly, and rose with a stony stare of hopelessness, for Dan's spirit had returned to God who gave it.

Without a word Jacob set to work to lay out the body, and Jack quietly assisted him. Having finished, the former put the recovered bag of gold in his pocket, stuck a revolver in his belt, and took up the door key of the hut.

"Come, Jacob," said Jack, purposely taking no notice of these actions, "you'll go home and spend the night with me. Dear Dan wants no tending now. We will return together, and see to his remains to−morrow. Come."

Buckley looked undecided.

"You haven't your flask, have you?" he asked eagerly.

Jack felt in his pockets, and with something like joy found that his flask was not there. "No," said he, "I haven't got it. But come, Jacob, you want rest. I'll give you something better than spirits to drink when we reach the tent. Come."

The man submitted. They went out and, locking the door, walked quickly and silently away.

Many and anxious were the thoughts that chased each other through the busy brain of our hero during that dreary midnight walk. Before it was ended, he had almost resolved upon a plan of action, which was further matured while he prepared a can of strong hot coffee for poor Jacob Buckley.

"This is how the matter stands," he said to Captain Samson next morning, during a private conversation, while Buckley and the others were at breakfast in the tent. "I, who am not a teetotaller, and who last night became a gambler, have pledged myself to do what I can to save Jacob Buckley from drink and gaming. To attempt that *here* would be useless. Well, we are at our lowest ebb just now. To continue working here is equally useless. I will therefore leave you for a time, take Buckley and Wilkins with me, and go on a prospecting tour into the mountains. There it will be impossible to drink or gamble; time may cure Buckley, and perhaps we may find gold! Of course," he added, with a sad smile, "if we do, we'll return and let you know."

The captain approved of this plan. Jacob Buckley and Watty Wilkins at once agreed to go, and immediately after Daniel's burial, the prospecters set out. The entire party, including Polly, convoyed them as far as Redman's Gap, where, wishing them good−speed, they parted company. Then the three adventurers passed through the Gap, and were soon lost in the wild recesses of the mountain range.

Chapter Eight. Success.

For more than a month did the prospecting party wander among the Californian mountains in quest of gold, but found none — at least not in paying quantities.

At first the trip was to each of them full of romance, interest and hope. Even Buckley began to cheer up after a few days had passed. The craving for drink began to wear off, and grief for his lost brother — whom he had truly loved — began to abate. The wild scenery through which they passed was in itself sufficient to rouse to a high pitch the enthusiasm of such youths as Philosopher Jack and Watty Wilkins, while their comrade, though not so impressionable in regard to the sublime and beautiful, was roused to sympathy by their irresistible ardour. The necessity of hunting, too, in order to obtain food, added excitement of a more stirring kind, and an occasional encounter with a grizzly bear introduced a spice of danger to which none of them objected. Their various washings of the soil and examination of river beds afforded a sufficient quantity of gold to foster hope, though not to pay expenses. Thus they progressed through many a scene of loveliness, where the hand of God had sown broadcast all the forms and hues of grace and beauty which render this world attractive; they also passed through many a savage defile and mountain gorge — dark, gloomy, almost repulsive — which served to enhance their enjoyment of the beautiful by contrast.

But as the time passed by they became accustomed to the life, and therefore less appreciative. They failed, also, to find gold in larger quantities, and as the finding of gold was their highest aim, they were proportionally disappointed and downcast. Watty, indeed, kept up his spirits pretty well. He experienced the benefit of the change that had taken place in his soul that time when he was alone with God in the little boat upon the sea. He prayed in secret for light, and tried to believe that “all things work together for good to them that love God;" but his faith was weak, and the old heart of unbelief was still very strong.

As for Philosopher Jack, his spirit was still engaged in rebellious warfare. He growled a good deal at his “luck,” and was heartily seconded by Buckley. In addition to this, Jack's spirit was much troubled by his promise to Daniel Buckley on his deathbed. He shrank, with a strength of feeling that surprised himself, from speaking to Jacob about his infirmity, yet he felt the duty lying strong upon him, for he knew well that, if nothing was said, the man would certainly go back to his old habits on returning to the neighbourhood of the store where drink could be obtained.

“Shall I break the ice at once?” thought Jack. “Perhaps it would be well to wait till we know each other better.”

“Don't,” said the voice of his old laconic friend.

But Jack did wait, and the longer he waited the more disinclined to speak did he become. He held strongly, however, that a right promise once given should never be broken, and, under a feeling of desperation, said to himself one day, “Would it not be much better to end this matter by speaking without further delay?”

“Do,” said conscience, approvingly.

And Jack did, then and there, the result being that Jacob Buckley did not take it well, but told him flatly to mind his own business. Jack flushed crimson and clenched his fist; then the absurdity of attempting to knock sobriety into a man struck him, and he laughed as he said—

“Well, Buckley, that is just what I am doing, for it *is* my business to remonstrate with a comrade when I see him give way to a habit which will result in his destruction if not abandoned.”

After this Buckley allowed him to talk a little on the subject, but Jack felt the work to be very distasteful. Eventually he gave it up, consoling himself with the reflection that at all events he had brought the man away on an expedition where nothing stronger than cold water and hot tea was to be had for love or money.

At last the tide turned. On the same day a piece of great good and bad fortune befell our explorers. It happened thus:—

Watty Wilkins roused himself from a golden dream one morning, threw off his blanket looked up at the bush which served him and his comrades as a canopy, and yawned. It was grey dawn. There was that clear sweet light in the sky which gives sure promise of a fine day. Seeing that his companions still slept, he drew from his breast a small Testament, read a few verses, and prayed. This had been his custom ever since his deliverance by the

American ship.

Soon after, Jack moved his bulky frame, rolled round, threw out his arms, and yawned. The yawn awakened Buckley, who immediately followed suit — such is the force of example!

"I'll tell you what it is, mates," said the latter, sitting up, "that twist I gave my leg yesterday troubles me a little. I shall remain in camp to−day and smoke."

"Very good," said Jack, rising and putting the kettle on the fire with a view to breakfast. "Watty and I will go up that valley and prospect. We will expect that you'll eat no more than your share of the provisions during our absence, and that you'll have supper ready for us when we return."

The simple breakfast being disposed of and washed down with cans of hot tea, the two friends shouldered their guns and set off up the gorge or narrow mountain valley, near the mouth of which they had bivouacked. There was a belt of wood close to their camp; beyond that a small plain, after crossing which they entered a dense thicket, and began a toilsome march up the bed of a little mountain stream. The channel was nearly dry at the time, but the boulders, which were strewn about everywhere, showed that it was sometimes a formidable torrent.

"A likely place for gold," said Watty, with a hopeful look and tune.

"We've tried many such likely places," replied Jack, with a look and tone not quite so hopeful.

For several miles they advanced, washing out a panful of dirt here and there, and finding a little gold−dust as usual. Mid−day arrived, and they sat down to a cold dinner, consisting of a few scraps of meat left from breakfast. Little conversation was indulged in. They were too hungry for that — perhaps too much depressed by hope deferred.

"I'll try the banks higher up," said Jack, rising.

"And I'll try the bed of the stream lower down, just by way of opposition," said Watty.

They separated, and the latter soon found himself among the boulders, where he continued to search — actively at first, but more lazily as time passed by. Presently he came to a wild spot where the stream was overhung by bushes. He turned over a small stone. Beneath it was a hole or "pocket". He stooped quickly, and pulled out a nugget of gold about the size of a thimble. He stooped again, and, inserting his hand, pulled at something that would not come. His heart gave a jump and appeared to get into his throat, where it apparently remained, while the blood rushed to his forehead. Another pull, and out came a mass of solid gold, about the size of his own fist! A cheer rose to his lips, but he checked it. "P'r'aps there's more!" he said. Yes, the greedy little wretch said that! But there was no more in that pocket.

Quickly turning over several more stones, he found more pockets, with nuggets of various sizes in each. In a short time his specimen pouch was pretty well lined with the precious metal.

Meanwhile his friend Jack was equally successful, the chief difference between them being that the latter washed out the earth on the banks above, and found his gold in little grains and specks, but in such quantities that he felt as if his fortune were already made. Towards evening Watty hallooed and was replied to. As they walked rapidly towards the pre−arranged rendezvous, each hit on the same idea — that of deception!

"Well, what luck?" asked Watty with a careless air that ill concealed the elation of his heart.

"Only a little dust — nothing to speak of — at least not as compared with what some fellows get," said Jack, whose laughing eye gave the lie direct to his melancholy tones. "See here, Watty, this is all I've got."

As he spoke, the hypocrite poured the glittering contents of his pouch into his tin wash−pan.

"Well, *what* a lucky fellow you are!" said Watty, with mouth expanded. "Just look here; this is all that I have got."

He opened his bag and displayed the nuggets, with the big one in the midst!

Need we say that these youths found it difficult to express their joy and astonishment? The fact was evident that they had at last discovered unusually rich ground, and they travelled back to the camp to tell their lazy comrade the good news.

It was near sunset when they reached the little plain or open space at the mouth of the gorge. Here Jack turned aside to cut a stick of peculiar form, which had caught his eye on the way up, and which he meant to keep as a souvenir of their discovery and the spot. Watty sauntered slowly across the plain.

He had just reached the wood on the other side, and turned to wait for his comrade, when he heard two shots in quick succession. There was nothing unusual in this, but when he heard the Philosopher utter a loud cry, he started, cocked his gun, and ran a few steps back to meet him. Next moment Jack burst from the thicket and ran

across the plain at a speed that told of imminent danger. From the same thicket there also rushed a large grizzly bear, whose speed was greater than that of Jack, though it did not appear to be so.

All the blood in Watty Wilkins's body seemed to fly back to his heart, and immediately after it rushed to his brain and toes. Prompt action! no time to think! Life! death! Watty never afterwards could tell clearly what he felt or did on that tremendous occasion, but Jack could tell what he did, for he saw him do it.

Going down on one knee and resting his left arm on the other, in what is known to volunteers as the Hythe position, the little youth calmly levelled his double−barrelled gun. It was charged only with small shot, and he knew that that was useless at long range, therefore he restrained himself and waited.

Jack and the bear ran straight towards him.

"Up, Watty, up a tree," gasped Jack; "it's no use — shot won't hurt him — quick!"

As he spoke he darted to the nearest tree, seized a large limb, and swung himself up among the branches. The bear passed under him, and, observing the kneeling figure in front, charged at once. When it was within three feet of him the youth let fly the contents of both barrels into the grizzly's mouth. So true was his aim that about six inches of the barrel followed the shot as the bear rushed upon it. This saved Watty, who was violently hurled aside by the stock of his own gun, while the bear went head−over−heels, vomiting blood and rage amid smoke and dust and scattered nuggets of gold!

"O Watty!" cried Jack, leaping down to the rescue with his drawn hunting−knife.

But before Jack reached him, or the bear had time to recover himself, Watty was on his active legs, and sprang up a tree like a monkey. Jack caught a branch of the same tree, and by sheer strength swung himself up, but on this occasion with so little time to spare, that the bear, standing on its hind legs, touched his heel lovingly with its protruded lips, as he drew himself out of reach.

We need scarcely say it was with beating and thankful hearts that the two friends looked down from their perch of safety on the formidable and bloody foe who kept pawing at the foot of the tree and looking hungrily up at them.

"What a mercy that the grizzly can't climb!" panted Watty, who had not yet recovered breath.

"But he can watch and keep us here all night," said Jack, "and we have no means of killing him. I fell and lost my gun in escaping, and yours is doubled up. We're in for a night of it, my boy. Why didn't you do what I bade you, get up into the tree with your gun when you saw us coming, and then we could have shot him at our leisure?"

"Why didn't you lend me your own cool head and clear brain," retorted the other, "and then we might have done something of the sort? But surely the shot I gave him must tell in the long−run."

"Pooh!" said Jack, "it's not much more to him than an over−dose of mustard would be to a cat. However, we've nothing for it but to wait. Perhaps Buckley may have heard our shots."

In this conjecture Jack was right. The gold−miner was enjoying an unsocial cup of tea at the time, and fortunately heard the distant shots and shouting. Buckley was a prompt man. Loading his double barrel with ball as he ran, he suddenly made his appearance on the field, saw at a glance how matters stood, and, being a good shot, put two balls in the bear's carcass with deadly effect. Grizzly bears are, however, remarkably tenacious of life. This one at once turned on his new foe, who, getting behind a tree, re−loaded as quickly as possible. As the animal passed he put two more balls in its heart and killed it.

"Splendidly done!" cried Jack, leaping to the ground and shaking Buckley by the hand, as he thanked him for his timely aid. Almost in the same breath he told of their unexpected good fortune.

"Now, then," he added, "we'll cut off the claws of this fellow as a trophy, and then to camp and supper."

"Stop a bit, not so fast," said Wilkins, who had descended the tree and was sitting on the ground with a most lugubrious countenance; "we must gather up my nuggets before going. Besides, it strikes me there's something wrong with my ankle."

This was found to be too true. In scrambling into the tree Watty had sprained his ankle badly, and in jumping down had made it so much worse that he could not bear to put even his toe to the ground. He was compelled, therefore, to accept the services of Jacob Buckley, who carried him into camp on his back.

Despite his sufferings poor Wilkins rejoiced that night with his comrades at their good fortune, and it was long before he or they could cease to talk over future plans and take needful rest. At length Buckley rolled himself in his blanket, and lay down.

"Poor fellow," said Jack, seeing Watty wince a little, "does it hurt much?"

“Yes, rather, but I'll he all right to−morrow. Now, Jack, I'm going to sleep. Do me a favour before turning in. Just make a pile of my nuggets close to my pillow here, with the big one on the top. There, thanks.”

“What a covetous little wretch you are becoming!” said Jack with a laugh, as he lay down. “Have a care, Watty, that you don't become a miser.”

Watty made no reply, but in the night, when he thought his comrades were asleep, he was overheard muttering in a low tone: “Yes, my dear old dad, you shall have them every one, big 'un as well; at least I'll send you every rap that they will fetch. Not that you need it. You're rich enough as it is, but this will show you, perhaps, that my first thoughts after my first luck were of you.”

A long sigh followed the remark. Looking up soon afterwards, Jack saw that Watty was sound asleep, with the point of his nose reposing on the big nugget.

The poor lad's idea of a sprain was not quite correct. Instead of being “all right” next day, he found himself to be hopelessly lame, and was unable to move from the camp for a couple of weeks. During that period Jack and Buckley went forth to the new diggings every morning, and returned at night laden with gold, so that in a short time they had gathered as much as they could conveniently carry. Then they resolved to go for their comrades and return with them to continue their labours at what they named Grizzly Bear Gulch. As Watty was still unable to walk without great pain, they made a sort of litter of a blanket between two poles. In this contrivance they carried him, with their gold and their other belongings, back to the old diggings.

But here, on arrival, they found a wonderfully altered state of affairs.

“Immediately after you left,” said Captain Samson, over a cup of tea, while Polly, who presided, listened with sympathetic delight, “we bought a new claim or two, without much hope, however, of bettering our circumstances. One of these claims we bought for you, Jack, with part of the money you left in our charge, one for Buckley, and another for Wilkins. Well, these claims all turned out splendidly, and we've been makin' our fortunes ever since! As you were off prospecting, as much for our benefit as your own, we agreed that it was the least we could do to work a little for you, so we gave your claims a rummage day about, and thus we've made your fortunes too, or part of 'em anyhow. We've bin sendin' home bills of exchange too, and knowin' your wish to help your father, Jack, I took upon me to send a small sum to him with your love. I did right didn't I?”

“Right!” exclaimed Jack, seizing the captain's hand and squeezing it; “need you ask? I'm only sorry I didn't dig the gold out with my own hand, and enclose the bill in my own letter. How much did you send?”

“Only £1000,” replied the captain.

“Come, don't joke. I'm anxious to know, because he was very hard up when I left.”

“More shame to you for leaving him, my young Philosopher,” returned the captain, “but I tell you the truth; I sent him £1000 sterling, and I believe there's as much lyin' here in gold−dust and nuggets that belongs to you. We've all done equally well, I'm thankful to say, and, better than that, good fortune seems to have brought us good health. Even Ben Trench there is able to dig like the rest of us.”

“Not exactly,” said Ben with a pleasant smile at his old friend Wilkins, “but I'm very well, thank God, and able to do a little. I wouldn't have been what I am now but for the care of this dear little nurse.”

Polly was quite pleased with the compliment, and made a liberal offer to supply more tea to any of the company who might want it.

All this, and a great deal more, was corroborated by every one present; moreover, it was told them that there were many other claims which had suddenly turned out well, and that the whole aspect of these diggings had changed for the better.

“And what of Mr Luke?” asked Jack, glancing round the circle.

“Gone,” said the captain, “nobody knows where. He became gloomier and stranger than ever after you went away, and one morning announced his intention to leave us and return to San Francisco. He left, and has not been heard of since. Bob Corkey, too, is off. He got restless and disappointed at our bad luck, said he'd go away prospectin' on his own hook, and went.”

“Good luck go with him! He was altogether too fond of argifying,” said Simon O'Rook.

“He's not the only one,” remarked Baldwin Burr, with a grin.

After much consideration and consultation, it was agreed that, in the meantime, the party should remain where they were, and, when their claims began to fail, go off to Grizzly Bear Gulch.

This being decided, Jacob Buckley rose, saying that he was going to visit his friends at Higgins' store. Jack

followed him. When they were alone he said—

“Now, Jacob, don't go, there's a good fellow. You saved my life, I may say, and that gives me a claim on you.” Buckley frowned, but said nothing. “If you get among your old mates,” continued Jack, “and begin to *taste*, you're a gone man. God has been very good to us. He has made us rich. We may live to be useful, Jacob. Think of it.”

A half sarcastic smile flitted over Buckley's face as he said, “You didn't use to be a preacher, Jack; what makes you now so keen to save me, as you call it?”

“I'm not sure what it is that makes me anxious now,” replied Jack, “but I know what made me anxious at first. It was your poor brother Daniel. That night he died, when he whispered in my ear, it was to make me promise to save you from drink and gambling if I could.”

“Did he?” exclaimed the miner vehemently, as he clenched his hands. “O Dan! dear Dan, did you say that at such an hour? Look you, Jack,” he added, turning sharply round, “I'll not go near the store, and if I *am* saved it is Dan who has done it, mind that — not you.”

And Buckley held to his word. For months after that he worked with the Samson party — as it was styled — and never once tasted a drop of anything stronger than tea.

During all that time success continued, but Philosopher Jack felt in his heart that no success in digging up gold was at all comparable to that of working with the Lord in helping a brother−sinner to turn from the error of his ways.

As their wealth accumulated, the different members of the party converted it into cash, sent some of it home to the assistance of friends or relatives, and the rest for safe and remunerative investment. For the latter purpose they committed it to the care of Mr Wilkins senior, who, being a trusty and well−known man of business, was left to his own discretion in the selection of investments. Simon O'Rook, however, did not follow the example of his friends. He preferred to keep his gold in his own hands, and, as its bulk increased, stowed it away in a small chest, which, for further security, he buried in a hole in the tent directly under his own sleeping corner.

In addition to his remittances to Mr Wilkins for investment, Edwin Jack sent large sums regularly to his father, for the purpose not only of getting him out of his difficulties, but of enabling him to extend his farming operations. The wheel of fortune, however, had turned upwards with Jack senior, and he did not require these sums, as we shall see.

While things were going on thus prosperously at the other side of the world, a wonderful change — intimately connected with gold — took place in the “Old Country", which materially altered the circumstances of some of those personages whose names have figured in our tale.

Chapter Nine. Treats of a Catastrophe and Ruin.

We return once again to the cottage on the Scottish Border. It is not quite so lowly as it was when first introduced to our readers. Although not extensively changed, there is a certain air of comfort and prosperity about it which gives it much the appearance of a dirty boy who has had his face washed and a suit of new clothes put on. It has been whitewashed and partially re−roofed. A trellis−work porch with creepers has been added. The garden bears marks of improvement, and in one part there are four little plots of flower−beds, so conspicuously different in culture and general treatment as to suggest the idea of four different gardens. Inside of Mr Jack's abode there are also many changes for the better. The rooms are better furnished than they used to be. Several cheap oleograph copies of beautiful pictures adorn the walls, and the best parlour, which used to be kept in a condition of deadly propriety for state occasions only, is evidently used in the course of daily life. A brand−new piano, with a pretty little girl seated before it, suggests advancing refinement, and the expression of the child's face, while she attempts the impossible task of stretching an octave, indicates despair. There is another little girl seated at a table darning with all the energy of a Martha−like character. She is engaged upon a pair of juvenile socks, which have apparently been worn last by a cart−horse. Books and drawing materials and mathematical instruments on the table betoken progressive education, and, in short, everything without and within the cottage tells, as we have said, of prosperity.

It must not be supposed, however, that all this is due to Philosopher Jack's good fortune and liberality. When the first letter came from California, telling of the safety of our hero and his friends, Mr Jack was indeed in great material distress, but there was no money in that letter. It was despatched from San Francisco at the time of the arrival of the party, along with letters from the other members, informing their various relations of their deliverance. But if the letter had contained tons of the finest gold it could not have added a feather's weight to the joy of the old couple, who, like the widow of Nain or the sisters of Bethany, had received their dear lost one direct from the Lord, and, as it were, back from the dead. Then, after an interval, came Captain Samson's letter enclosing the bill for £1000, and explaining why Philosopher Jack himself did not write with it. Mr Jack senior thankfully used two hundred of the amount, which was quite sufficient to extricate him from all his difficulties. The balance he put into the nearest bank, to be kept for “the dear boy” on his return.

From that date God sent prosperity to the cottage on the Border. Flocks increased, seasons were no longer bad, grey mares no longer broke their legs, turnips throve, and, in short, everything went well, so that, instead of using the large sums of money which his son frequently sent him, Mr Jack placed them all to “dear Teddie's” credit in the bank.

In one of these letters, his son mentioned that he had sent still larger sums to the care of Mr Wilkins senior, to be invested for himself. Mr Jack, having consulted with his faithful spouse, drew his son's gifts from the local bank, went to the city of Blankow, called on Mr Wilkins, and desired him to invest the money in the same concern with the rest. Mr Wilkins purchased shares with it in the Blankow Bank, telling Mr Jack that he considered it one of the best and safest investments in Scotland, that he had invested in it all the funds sent home by his own son and his comrades, and that he himself was a large shareholder. Thus did Mr Jack senior act with all the gifts that Jack junior sent him, saying to Mr Wilkins on each occasion, that, though the dear boy meant him to use the money, he had no occasion to do so, as the Lord had prospered him of late, and given him enough and to spare.

We re−introduce the Jack family to the reader at breakfast−time, not because that was the only noteworthy period of their day, but because it was the time when the parents of the family were wont to talk over the daily plans.

Mr Jack went to the door and shouted, “Breakfast!” in a sonorous tone. Instantly the octave was abandoned and the socks were dropped. Next moment there was a sound like the charge of a squadron of cavalry. It was the boys coming from the farm−yard. The extreme noise of the family's entry was rendered fully apparent by the appalling calm which ensued when Mr Jack opened the family Bible, and cleared his throat to begin worship. At breakfast the noise began again, but it was more subdued, appetite being too strong for it. In five minutes Dobbin was up to the eyes in a treacle−piece. This was a good opportunity for conversation.

“Maggie,” said Mr Jack, looking up from his plate, “the last bill sent us from the diggin's by the dear boy makes the sum in my hands up to two thousand pounds. I'll go to town to−day and give it to Mr Wilkins to invest as usual.”

“Very weel, John,” replied Mrs Jack, “but it's been runnin' in my mind that it's no that safe to pit a' yer eggs in the same basket. Maybe ye might invest it in somethin' else.”

“That's true, Maggie, we shall see,” said Mr Jack, who was at all times a man of few words. As Dobbin became at the moment clamorous for more food, nothing further was said on the subject.

Arrived in the city, John Jack made his way to the office of Mr Wilkins. He found that gentleman with an expression of unwonted resignation on his countenance.

“I've brought you more money to invest, Mr Wilkins,” said John Jack, sitting down after wiping his forehead, and producing a fat pocketbook; “I thought of doin' it in the old way, but my wife and I have been thinkin' that perhaps it might be wise to put some of the eggs in another basket.”

A very sad and peculiar smile flitted for a moment across Mr Wilkins's face. “It is plain that you have not heard of the disastrous failure,” he said. “Only last week the Blankow Bank suspended payment, and if the reports as to its liabilities be true, the result will be widespread ruin throughout the country.”

“Do you mean to say that the Bank has failed?” asked Mr Jack, anxiously.

“Yes, and it is feared that most of the shareholders will be ruined. I am one, you know.”

“Will *you* be ruined, Mr Wilkins?”

“I fear that the first call will be more than I can meet. I trust that you are not personally involved.”

“No, thank God, I'm not,” said Mr Jack, with an increasingly anxious look. “But tell me, Mr Wilkins — for I don't understand banking matters very well — is my son's money all gone?”

“All,” returned Mr Wilkins sadly, “and all that my own son has invested, as well as that of his friends!”

“How was it, sir,” asked Mr Jack, in a reproachful tone, “that you were so confident in recommending the investment?”

“Because I thoroughly believed in the soundness of the bank and in the character of its directors. Investing my own funds so largely in its stock proves how I trusted it. But I was mistaken. It is a mystery which I cannot solve. Perhaps, when the examination of its affairs is completed, light may be thrown on the subject. I hope that no more of your relations or friends have stock in it?”

“None that I know of, except indeed my poor friend Mrs Niven, who was my son's landlady when he was at college. I'll go and inquire about her.”

Mr Jack thrust the fat pocket−book into a breast pocket, and buttoned up his coat with the determined air of a man who means to keep hold of what he has got.

Bidding Mr Wilkins good−bye, he walked rapidly to Mrs Niven's house and pulled the bell rather violently. The summons was promptly answered by Peggy, who ushered him into a little parlour, where he was quickly joined by Mrs Niven.

“I'm very sorry to hear the bad news,” said Mr Jack, pressing the good woman's hand in sympathy.

“What bad news?” asked Mrs Niven, in alarm.

“The bank, you know,” said Mr Jack. “It's very hard, and to think that you're in the same boat with my dear boy, whose fortune is wrecked—”

A little scream stopped him, for the word “wrecked” struck a chill to the poor woman's heart.

“What! wrecked again?” she cried, “on a bank, in a boat? Oh! don't tell me, don't tell me that he's drownded.”

“No, no,” cried Mr Jack, hastening to relieve her mind, while he supported her to a chair; “no, no; my dear boy's all right. It's the Blankow Bank I mean that's gone to wreck, you know, and all his money with it, and yours too, I suppose, for you told me you had shares in that bank.”

“Oh! as to that,” said Mrs Niven, greatly relieved, “you may mak' yer mind easy. I've got nae shares intilt noo. I selt them through Mr Black lang syne. He's a douce, clever, honest felly — a relation o' mine, and a first−rate business man; but for him I'd hae lost my siller, nae doot. He warned me that the bank was nae a right ane, and advised me to sell.”

Mr Jack thought that such a clever, disinterested man−of−business, and a relation of Mrs Niven, might be just the person to give him sound advice at this crisis; he therefore obtained his address, and, after a long chat with the good woman, who would have listened for hours to the adventures of her “bonny lodger,” took his departure, and

in due time stood at the door of the dirty little office.

The dirty clerk ushered the visitor into the presence of Mr Black, whose presence was more repulsive than it used to be. He received Mr Jack rather gruffly, and asked his business.

"Oho! an eccentric character, gruff but honest." thought Mr Jack, who began by saying that he had just come from visiting his friend Mrs Niven.

Mr Black's face grew almost green at the name, and his brows scowled fiercely.

"Strange look for an honest, kindly man," thought Mr Jack, "but we must never judge from the outward appearance;" then he said aloud, "I went to see her about that bank failure—"

"Ha!" growled Mr Black, interrupting, "but for that woman, and that—" he checked himself and said, "but you came here on some matter of business, I suppose. Will you state it?"

"A very eccentric man indeed, remarkably so, for a kindly, honest man," thought Mr Jack; but he only said, "I came here to consult you about the investment of two thousand pounds—"

"Oh! indeed," said Mr Black, in quite an altered tone, as he rose and politely offered his visitor a chair.

"But," continued Mr Jack, rebuttoning his greatcoat which he had partly opened, "but, sir, I have changed my mind, and bid you good−day."

So saying, he went out, leaving Mr Black standing at the door in stupid amazement and his dirty clerk agonising with suppressed laughter behind his desk. Mr Black had been groaning and growling all the day at the thoughts of the ruin which had overtaken him — thoughts which were embittered by the knowledge that he had drawn it on himself through the instrumentality of Mrs Niven. The climax of Mr Jack's visit did not tend to restore him. Recovering from his amazement, and observing the condition of the clerk, he suddenly hurled the cash−book at him. Cleverly dodging it, the dirty little creature bolted from the office, and banged the door behind him.

Meanwhile Mr Jack cashed his last bill of exchange, returned home, and presented his wife with a bag of gold, which she deposited in the darkest recesses of the great family chest.

"That bank gives no interest," said John Jack, with a quiet chuckle, as he superintended the deposit, "but we shall always have the interest of knowing that it is there."

Long afterwards Mr Wilkins sought to combat Mr Jack's objection to invest in another Scotch bank. "This disaster," he said, "ought not to be called a bank *failure*; it is a bank *robbery* committed by its own directors, as has been clearly proved, and no more touches the credit of Scotch banks in general than the failure of a commercial house, through the dishonesty of its principals, affects the other commercial houses of the kingdom."

"It may be as you say, sir," replied John Jack, gravely, "an' if it was my own money I might act on your advice. But I intend to take care of what's left of the dear boy's money myself."

So saying, the stout farmer threw his shepherd's plaid over his shoulder, and went off to his cottage on the Border.

But we must pass from this subject. Space forbids our going deeper into it, or touching on the terrible consequences of dishonesty coupled with unlimited liability. Fortunes were wrecked; the rich and the poor, the innocent and guilty, the confiding and the ignorant as well as the knowing and wise, fell in the general crash. Many homes were desolated, and many hearts were broken. May we not believe, also, that many hearts were purified in passing through the furnace of affliction!

"All is not evil that brings sorrow," may be quite as true as the proverb, "All is not gold that glitters." Some have been glad to say with the Psalmist, "It was good for me that I was afflicted." This truth, however, while it might strengthen some hearts to bear, did not lighten the load to be borne. The great Bank failure produced heart−rending and widespread distress. It also called forth deep and general sympathy.

Out among the mountain gorges of California the gold−hunters knew nothing of all this for many a day, and our adventurers continued to dig, and wash, and pile up the superstructure of their fortunes, all ignorant of the event which had crumbled away the entire foundations.

At last there came a day when these fortunate gold−miners cried, "Hold! enough!" an unwonted cry — not often uttered by human beings.

Standing beside the camp fire one evening, while some of the party were cooking and others were arranging things inside the tent Captain Samson looked around him with an unusually heavy sigh.

"It's a grand country, and I'll be sorry to leave it," he said.

"Troth, and so will meself," responded O'Rook.

It was indeed a grand country. They had lately changed the position of their tent to an elevated plateau near a huge mass of rock where a little mountain stream fell conveniently into a small basin. From this spot they could see the valley where it widened into a plain, and again narrowed as it entered the gloomy defile of the mountains, whose tops mingled magnificently with the clouds.

"You see, my lads," continued the captain, "it's of no use goin' on wastin' our lives here, diggin' away like navvies, when we've got more gold than we know what to do with. Besides, I'm not sure that we ain't gettin' into a covetous frame of mind, and if we go on devotin' our lives to the gettin' of gold that we don't need, it's not unlikely that it may be taken away from us. Moreover, many a man has dug his grave in California and bin buried, so to speak, in gold−dust, which is a fate that no sensible man ought to court — a fate, let me add, that seems to await Ben Trench if he continues at this sort o' thing much longer. And, lastly, it's not fair that my Polly should spend her prime in acting the part of cook and mender of old clothes to a set of rough miners. For all of which reasons I vote that we now break up our partnership, pack up the gold−dust that we've got, and return home."

To this speech Polly Samson replied, promptly, that nothing pleased her more than to be a cook and mender of old clothes to rough miners, and that she was willing to continue in that capacity as long as her father chose. Philosopher Jack also declared himself willing to remain, but added that he was equally willing to leave if the rest of the firm should decide to do so, as he was quite content with the fortune that had been sent him. Simon O'Rook, however, did not at first agree to the proposal.

"It's rich enough that I am already, no doubt," he said, "but sure, there's no harm in bein' richer. I may be able to kape me carriage an' pair at present, but why shudn't I kape me town house an' country house an' me carriage an four, if I can?"

"Because we won't stay to keep you company," answered Watty Wilkins, "and surely you wouldn't have the heart to remain here digging holes by yourself? Besides, my friend Ben is bound to go home. The work is evidently too hard for him, and he's so fond of gold that he won't give up digging."

"Ah! Watty," returned Ben with a sad smile, "you know it is not my fondness for gold that makes me dig. But I can't bear to be a burden on you, and you know well enough that what I do accomplish does little more than enable me to pay my expenses. Besides, a little digging does me good. It occupies my mind and exercises my muscles, an' prevents moping. Doesn't it, Polly?"

In this estimate of his case Ben Trench was wrong. The labour which he undertook and the exposure to damp, despite the remonstrances of his companions, were too much for a constitution already weakened by disease. It was plain to every one — even to himself — that a change was necessary. He therefore gladly agreed to the captain's proposal.

Baldwin Burr, however, dissented. He did not, indeed, object to the dissolution of the partnership of Samson and Co., but he refused to quit the gold−fields, saying that he had no one in the Old Country whom he cared for, and that he meant to settle in California.

It was finally agreed that the captain, Philosopher Jack, Watty Wilkins, Ben Trench, Simon O'Rook, and Polly should return home, while Baldwin Burr and Jacob Buckley should enter into a new partnership and remain at the fields.

Although, as we have said, most of our adventurers had sent their gold home in the form of bills of exchange for investment, they all had goodly sums on hand in dust and nuggets — the result of their more recent labours — for which strong boxes were made at Higgins's store. Simon O'Rook, in particular, — who, as we have said, did not send home any of his gold, — had made such a huge "pile" that several strong boxes were required to hold all his wealth. The packing of these treasure−chests occupied but a short time. Each man cut his name on the lid of his box inside, and printed it outside, and nailed and roped it tight, and took every means to make it secure. Then, mounting their mules and travelling in company with a trader and a considerable party of miners, they returned to San Francisco, having previously secured berths in a ship which was about to sail for England *via* Cape Horn.

Baldwin Burr and Buckley convoyed them a day's journey on the way.

"I'm sorry you're goin', Miss Polly," said Baldwin, riding up alongside of our little heroine, who ambled along on a glossy black mule.

"I am *not* sorry that we're going," replied Polly, "but I'm sorry — very sorry — that we are leaving you behind us, Baldwin. You're such a dear old goose, and I'm so fond of teaching you. I don't know how I shall be able to get

on without you."

"Yes, that's it, Miss Polly," returned the bluff seaman, with a look of perplexity. "You're so cram full of knowledge, an' I'm sitch an empty cask, that it's bin quite a pleasure to let you run over into me, so to speak."

"Come, Baldwin, don't joke," said Polly, with a quick glance.

"I'm far from jokin', Miss Polly," returned the seaman; "I'm in downright earnest. An' then, to lose Philosopher Jack on the selfsame day. It comes hard on an old salt. The way that young man has strove to drive jogriffy, an' 'rithmetic, an navigation into my head is wonderful; an' all in vain too! It's a'most broke his heart — to say nothin' of my own. It's quite clear that I'll never make a good seaman. Howsever, it's a comfort to know that I've got edication enough for a landsman — ain't it, Miss Polly?"

Polly laughed, and admitted that that was indeed a consoling reflection.

While these two were conversing thus, Jack and Jacob Buckley were riding together in the rear of the party. They had been talking as if under some sort of restraint. At last Jack turned to his companion with a kind, straightforward look.

"It's of no use, Buckley, my beating about the bush longer. This is likely to be the last time that you and I shall meet on earth, and I can't part without saying how anxious I am that you should persevere in the course of temperance which you have begun."

"Thank you, Jack, thank you," said the miner heartily, "for the interest you take in me. I do intend to persevere."

"I know that, Jacob, I know it; but I want you to believe that you have no chance of success unless you first become a follower of Jesus Christ. He is the *only* Saviour from sin. Your resolutions, without Him, cannot succeed. I have found that out, and I want you to believe it, Jacob."

"I *do* believe it," said the miner earnestly. "Dear Dan used to tell me that — often — often. Dear Dan!"

"Now," added Jack, "we shall have to part soon. There is another thing I want to mention. There is a bag of gold with my name on it, worth some few hundred pounds, more or less. I want you to accept it, for I know that you have not been so successful as we have during our short—"

"But I won't take it, Jack," interrupted Buckley.

"Yes you will, Jacob, from an old friend and comrade. It may tide you over a difficulty, who knows? Luck does not always last, as the saying goes."

Still Buckley shook his head.

"Well, then," continued Jack, "you can't help yourself, for I've left the bag under your own pillow in the tent!"

Buckley's reply was checked by a shout from Captain Samson. They had reached the parting point — a clump of trees on an eminence that overlooked a long stretch of undulating park−like region. Here they dismounted to shake hands and say farewell. Little was said at the time, but moistened eyes and the long grasp of hard muscular hands told something of feelings to which the lips could give no utterance.

The party could see that knoll for miles after leaving it, and whenever Polly reined up and looked back, she saw the sturdy forms of Baldwin Burr and Jacob Buckley waving a kerchief or a hat, standing side by side and gazing after them. At last they appeared like mere specks on the landscape, and the knoll itself finally faded from their view.

At San Francisco they found their vessel, the *Rainbow*, a large full−rigged ship, ready for sea. Embarking with their boxes of gold−dust they bade farewell to the golden shore, where so many young and vigorous men have landed in hopeful enthusiasm, to meet, too often, with disappointment, if not with death.

Our friends, being among the fortunate few, left it with joy.

The *Rainbow* shook out her sails to a favouring breeze, and, sweeping out upon the great Pacific, was soon bowling along the western coast of South America, in the direction of Cape Horn.

Chapter Ten. Change of Scene and Fortune.

The fair wind that swept the good ship *Rainbow* away from California's golden shores carried her quickly into a fresh and purer atmosphere, moral as well as physical. It seemed to most, if not all, of the gold−finders as if their brains had been cleared of golden cobwebs. They felt like convalescents from whom a low fever had suddenly departed, leaving them subdued, restful, calm, and happy.

"It's more like a dream than a reality," observed Ben Trench one day, as he and Polly sat on the after part of the vessel, gazing out upon the tranquil sea.

"What seems like a dream?" asked Philosopher Jack, coming aft at the moment with Watty Wilkins, and sitting down beside them.

"Our recent life in California," replied Ben. "There was such constant bustle and toil, and restless, feverish activity, both of mind and body; and now everything is so calm and peaceful, and we are so delightfully idle. I can hardly persuade myself that it is not all a dream."

"Perhaps it is," said Philosopher Jack. "There are men, you know, who hold that everything is a dream; that matter is a mere fancy or conception, and that there is nothing real or actually in existence but mind."

"Bah!" exclaimed Watty with contempt; "what would these philosophers say if matter, in the shape of a fist, were to hit them on their ridiculous noses?"

"They'd say that they only imagined a fist and fancied a blow, I suppose," returned Jack.

"And would they say that the pain and the blood were imagination also?"

"I suppose they would."

"But what if I were to come on them slily behind and hit them on their pates before they had a chance to see or to exert their terribly real and powerful minds?" demanded Watty.

"You must ask one of themselves, Watty, for I don't know much about their views; indeed, I'm not sure that I have represented them correctly, though it's very likely I have, for there is no species of nonsense under the sun that men have not been found to hold and defend with more or less vigour."

"Would you not call that a proof of the Creator's intention that man should exercise the investigative powers of his mind?" asked Ben.

"I would call it a proof of man's depravity," said Wilkins.

"What does Polly think?" asked Jack, with an amused look at the child, whose fair brow wore an anxious little frown as she tried to understand.

"I think it's a proof of both," replied Polly, with a blush and a laugh; "we have got the power to think and speak and reason, and we are sometimes very naughty."

"Well said, Polly; we must call *you* the philosopher in future," cried Watty. "But Jack," he added, with a perplexed air, "it seems to me that we live in such a world of confusion, both as to the limited amount of our knowledge, and the extent of our differences of opinion, while presumptuous incapacity attempts to teach us on the one hand, and designing iniquity, or pure prejudice, seeks to mislead us on the other, and misconception of one's meaning and motives all round makes such a muddle of the whole that — that — it seems to me the search after truth is almost hopeless, at least to ordinary minds."

"I admit it to be a great difficulty," replied Jack, "but it is by no means hopeless. We must not forget that the world is well supplied with extraordinary minds to keep the ordinary minds right."

"True, but when the extraordinary minds differ, what are the poor ordinary ones to do?" asked Watty.

"Use their brains, Watty, use their brains," said Captain Samson, who had come aft, and been listening to the conversation. "Your brains, whether good or bad, were given to be used, not to be sold. The power to reason is a gift that is not bestowed only on extraordinary minds. The unlearned are sometimes better reasoners than the learned, though, of course, they haven't got so many tools to work with. Still, they are sufficiently furnished with all that's needful to run the race that is set before them. God has given to every man — civilised and savage — a brain to think with, a heart to feel with, a frame to work with, a conscience to guide him, and a world, with all its wonderful stores, in which to do what he will. Conscience — which, I think, is well named the voice of God in man — tells him to do *right*, and forbids him to do *wrong*; his heart glows with a certain degree of pleasure when

he does well, and sinks, more or less, when he does ill; his reason tells him, more or less correctly, *what* is right, and *what* is wrong. The Word of God is the great chart given to enlighten our understandings and guide us heavenward. As my reason tells me to go to my charts for safe direction at sea, so every man's reason will tell him to go to God's revealed Word, when he believes he has got it. There he will find that Jesus Christ is the centre of the Word, the sum and substance of it, that he cannot believe in or accept the Saviour except by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will also find the blessed truth that God has promised the Spirit to those who simply 'ask' for Him. There is no difficulty in all this. The great and numberless difficulties by which we are undoubtedly surrounded are difficulties of detail, which we may be more or less successful in solving, according to our powers of mind, coupled with our submission to the revealed will of God. To some extent we fail and get into trouble because we lazily, or carelessly, let other men think for us, instead of making use of other men's thoughts to help us to think for ourselves. Depend upon it, Watty, we won't be able to justify ourselves at the judgment day by saying that things were too deep for us, that things seemed to be in such a muddle that it was of no use trying to clear 'em up. Why, what would you say of the mainspring of a watch if it were suddenly to exclaim, 'I'll give up trying! Here am I — so powerful and energetic, and so well able to spin round — checked, and hindered, and harassed by wheels and pinions and levers, some going this way, and some going that way, all at sixes and sevens, and all for no good end that I can see, buried as I am in this dark hole and scarcely allowed to move at all?' Would it be right or reasonable to charge the watchmaker with having made the watch in vain, or made it wrong? Of this I at least am convinced, that God is *perfect*, and that all things are working towards a *good* end, God's sovereignty, our mysterious free−will and personal responsibility being among these 'all things.'"

While Captain Samson was discoursing on these important subjects, the look−out on the forecastle reported a sail on the weather−bow.

"She's a whaler, I do believe, and her boats are after a sperm whale," said Simon O'Rook, who stood by the mizzen shrouds looking intently at her through his double glass. Simon, being now a rich man, had not only taken a cabin passage, but had bought for himself one of the best binocular telescopes to be had in San Francisco.

It was soon seen that O'Rook was right for the whale rose to blow, and swam towards the *Rainbow*, while the boats of the whaler immediately followed in pursuit.

Great was the excitement on board the *Rainbow* as the men clustered on the forecastle, or ran up the rigging, to watch the chase, while the officers and passengers got out their telescopes.

"Come here, Polly," cried Jack; "look through my glass. It's a rare chance you've got of seeing what men have to go through in order to send oil to market."

Polly at once accepted the invitation. Jack assisted her to mount on the top of the capstan, and arranged the glass.

"There she blows!" shouted one of the men who had been an old whaler; "there she breaches!"

As he spoke the whale rose about three miles to windward of them, not far from the boat that led the chase. The men in the boat were seen to bend to their oars, as Captain Samson said, "with a will." Another moment and the harpooneer stood up in the bow. The spectators were too far off to see the weapon used, but they could perceive the man's action, and there was no possibility of mistake as to the result, when the tail of the enormous creature was suddenly flourished in the air, and came down on the sea like a clap of distant thunder.

"Oh! oh!!" shrieked the horrified Polly, "the boat is gone!"

But the boat was not gone. It had been quickly backed out of danger when the harpoon was thrown, and reappeared when the cataract of spray sent up had dispersed.

"He's pouring water on the rope now," said Jack, in a low excited voice, "to prevent its catching fire as it runs out. They're fast to the fish."

"Yes, I see," exclaimed Polly, squeezing her right eye against the glass and shutting the other with her hand.

But in a few minutes there was no need for telescopes, as the whale came straight towards the *Rainbow*, dragging the boat after it, while the other boats followed as fast as the men could pull. The whale−ship steered in the same direction, but there was scarcely wind enough to fill her top−sails.

Suddenly the leviathan came to the surface for breath, not far off, and sent up a grand spout of water on the *Rainbow's* starboard bows. The boat pulled quickly up, and another harpoon was sent deep into the whale's side. It dived immediately, and, turning at an angle, darted off in an other direction. This time the excited onlookers could hear the cheer given by the whalers as the second "iron" was fixed, and replied to it with enthusiasm. Soon the

boat was carried far away, and the telescopes became again necessary, but ere long the fish turned, and once more made for the ship. It could not have been more than five hundred yards distant when it came to the surface for the third time, and the harpooneer was distinctly seen to drive a lance deep into its side, from which fountains of blood flowed. He had struck its “life,” as whalemen express it, and the whale soon went into its dying struggles, in the course of which it hit the boat, stove in its side, and overturned it.

There was a cry of consternation on board the *Rainbow* at this. Instantly the order was given to lower the boats. Philosopher Jack and O'Rook sprang to obey, by an irresistible impulse, as if they had been part of the ship's crew. In a few seconds two boats were rowing at full speed to the rescue, while the boats belonging to the whale−ship — still far distant — made for the scene of disaster.

Ere long the rescue party had the great satisfaction of picking up the wrecked whalers, and found that not a man among them had received greater injury than a bruise or two and a ducking. Their boat, however, was completely destroyed. They were therefore taken on board the *Rainbow*, while the whaler's boats came up and secured their prize.

That night, while the stars twinkled at their own reflections in the sleeping sea, the crew of the whale−ship had a “gam” on board the *Rainbow*.

A “gam,” good reader, may be described as a “small tea−party” on the sea. But it differs in many respects from such gatherings on shore, inasmuch as the revellers are not “a few friends", male and female, but are usually absolute strangers to each other, and of the male sex only. But the circumstances of their meeting — on the lone ocean, far from home and friends — have a marvellous effect in opening up the fountains of the human heart. The men and officers fraternised at once. The whalers were chiefly American, the Rainbowers principally English, with a slight mixture of Irish and Scotch. They all spoke the same language; that was enough. Soon after the arrival of their guests, powerful friendships were formed. While tea, or rather supper, was being discussed, these were cemented; and, when pipes were lit, confidences of the most touching nature were interchanged. Anecdotes and stories naturally followed the confidences, broke up the separate parties, and drew the company more together. The union was finally and effectually concentrated by one of the whalers' crew making a demand for a song.

“Come, O'Rook,” cried one of the *Rainbow* men, “let's have 'The poor little pig wi' the purple nose.'“

O'Rook began at once, and sang with such fervour and pathos, that his auditors became quite uproarious in their admiration. But when the Irishman called on the whalers for a ditty, a fine−looking youth sang a song of the “Homeward Bound,” in a voice so sweet and true, that the spirit of the men was changed, and many a moistened eye told that deep chords of sympathy had been touched.

“Can you play the fiddle?” asked one of the men of O'Rook, when the song was finished.

“Sure it's myself can do that same,” he replied, with a modest air, which drew forth a peal of laughter. When the fiddle was produced and O'Rook struck up reels, and strathspeys, and hornpipes, with a precision of touch and time and perfection of tune that was far above the average of amateurs, the joy of the party could no longer find vent through eye and mouth. They were forced to open the safety−valves of heel and toe. For this purpose the quarter−deck was cleared, and flags were festooned round it; the officers joined, and Polly Samson was placed on the capstan, like the presiding angel of the scene.

Ah! reader, if you have not been for many months on the ocean, or in the lone wilderness, without seeing a new face, or hearing a sweet sound, or feeling the power of female influence, you cannot fully appreciate what we describe. There was no drink save coffee and tea at that feast. The *Rainbow* was a temperance ship. But the men required no spirits. Each one had more than sufficient within himself. The presence of Polly, too, had a powerful effect. Every man there saw his own particular Polly or Susan or Nancy in her pretty laughing face and sparkling eyes.

“Your men are powerful fellows,” said the captain of the *Rainbow* to the captain of the whaler; “I've no doubt they'll be quite game for work to−morrow, though they should keep it up all night.”

“They certainly would,” replied the latter, “if called on to do duty; but they won't be required to work to−morrow, for we keep the Sabbath on board of our ship as a duty we owe to God, and we find that we are great gainers in health and strength, while we are no losers of fish by doing so.”

“Ha! the great Captain Scoresby tried that before you, and said that he found keeping the Sabbath to be good both for body and soul,” said the captain of the *Rainbow*.

"I know he did," replied the other, "and I am trying to follow in Scoresby's wake."

It was pretty late in the evening before the whalers could tear themselves away, and when at last they did so, they expressed a unanimous opinion that it had been the most successful gam they had ever had in their lives.

Not long after parting company from the whale−ship the *Rainbow* sailed into the cold and variable regions south of Cape Horn. Here they experienced what the men styled "very dirty weather." The skies were seldom blue, and the decks were never dry, while it became necessary to keep the stove burning constantly in the cabin, and the berth−ports almost always shut.

The effect of all this on poor Ben Trench was to injure his health severely. His cough increased, and it soon became evident that his complaint, which at first had only threatened to grow worse, had now become chronic and serious.

"Watty," he said one day, while his friend sat beside his cot reading to him, "it's of no use shutting one's eyes to facts. I fear that I am now hopelessly ill, and that I shall never see father or mother or Susan again in this world."

"O Ben! don't speak like that," said Watty, laying down the book, and gently taking his friend's thin hand in both of his. "You mustn't do it. It will only make you worse. When we get out of this horrible region into the trade winds and the sunshine near the Line, you'll be a new man. Come now, cheer up, Ben, and don't let your good little nurse see you with such a sad face."

Polly's step was heard at the moment. She entered with a bowl of soup.

"Here, Ben, this will do you good," she said, handing him the bowl. "The cook says it's the stuff to stick to your ribs. There now, I can't stop to give it you, for father wants me, but you're all right when Watty's by. Are you better?"

"Well, not much," replied Ben with a smile; "but I'm always the better of seeing your little face. Don't be long of returning, Poll."

When she had left, Ben drank the soup, and then lay down with a sigh.

"It may be that the warm latitudes will do me good, Watty," he said, "but I don't feel as if they would. Still I'm resigned to God's will, though it seems sad to die so young, and just when I've come to know my dear Redeemer, and might, perhaps, have done some little work for Him. It seems so strange to be saved and not allowed time to *do* anything."

"You *have* done something," returned his friend with an earnest look; "if I have really turned to Jesus at all, it has been through your influence, Ben, and I'm sure that Jack would say the same of himself; and if he and I are spared to do any good work for our Lord, it will be all owing to you."

"Not to me, Watty, not to me," rejoined Ben, with a glad look; "but if God's holy Spirit has used me as an instrument in this, I shall have cause to praise Him for it throughout eternity. Oh! is it not strange that in a region where there is so little godliness, and while we were in the eager pursuit of gold, our eyes should have been opened to see and appreciate the true gold? But now, Watty," he added in a lower tone, "I want to ask you to do me a favour. I want you to go yourself to our house, without delay, and break it to mother."

He paused. Watty laid his face in the bedclothes, and wept silently.

"They are very fond of you," continued Ben, "and I should not like them to hear of it from any one but you. Be very tender to Susan, Watty. Poor Susan, she will need comfort, and you know how to direct her."

For some time Ben Trench continued talking, and then fell into a quiet slumber, in which his friend left him, while Polly watched by his side.

The warm latitudes did no good to the invalid. On the contrary, he suffered much from the heat, and became visibly weaker.

At last the shores of Old England drew nigh. A few days more and they should sight land. They sought to cheer him with this, but there was no answering sparkle in Ben's eyes.

"Yes," he said, faintly, "I shall see them all again, but not *here*."

Ben was dying when the *Rainbow* approached the British Channel. The whole of the previous day a stiff gale had blown, and this had not much abated when night drew on. Liverpool was their port, and the captain carried on full sail — more than the good ship could well bear. It is not known whether he felt so sure of his course that he did not think it necessary to shorten sail on nearing the Land's End, or that he was anxious, at all hazards, to reach port before Ben Trench should die, but he held on recklessly, and, in the dead of night, ran the *Rainbow* straight

against the high cliffs not far from the Cornish town of St. Just.

The wreck of the ship was complete in a few seconds. All her masts went over the side, and the waves overwhelmed her. She would have gone down in deep water if she had not been dashed between two rocks and held there. Time was thus given for one of the boats to be got out, but utter confusion reigned, for the captain had disappeared. No wonder that several of the men leaped into her, crying, “Every man for himself,” and endeavoured to cast off.

“Have you got Polly?” cried Jack, as he dimly saw a figure staggering through the turmoil of wind and whirling spray.

“All safe!” gasped Captain Samson.

Jack instantly jumped into the boat and found O'Rook struggling to prevent one of the men from cutting the hawser. Jack knocked the man down, and, hauling the boat close alongside, shouted, “Jump, Captain, jump!” The captain did so at the right moment, and alighted safely, though with great violence. Just then Watty Wilkins was seen striving to lift Ben Trench over the bulwark of the ship. It was impossible to render him assistance, though Jack tried to do so, for at the moment a towering billow fell on the deck and tore the invalid from his grasp. With a shriek of despair Watty fell back into the sea, but was caught by one of the men and hauled into the boat which was then cut adrift. It was not a moment too soon, for the next wave dashed their ship to pieces.

As it was impossible to effect a landing among perpendicular cliffs which were lashed by roaring breakers, they were obliged to push out to sea, where they rowed till daylight, and succeeded in reaching Penzance harbour.

Leaving the others to report the news, Jack and Wilkins started off along the coast to the scene of the wreck. They found the spot, but not a vestige was to be seen of what had so long been their home, save a few broken spars, here and there far down in the clefts of inaccessible rocks. A fisherman, however, told them that several bodies had been thrown into a little bay, and were then lying in a shed near the spot. Hastening thither, they found five lying side by side. Among them were those of poor Ben Trench and the captain of the ship — the one strong, stalwart and still ruddy in the face, the other attenuated and ghastly, as might have been expected of one who had, as it were, died a double death.

We will not dwell on the terrible scene. While Jack and Captain Samson remained to attend to the dead, Wilkins set off, without delay, to be first, if possible, in breaking the sad news to his friend's family, according to promise.

In regard to the wreck, it is sufficient to say that she, with all her precious freight was scattered on the rugged coasts of Cornwall, and our adventurers stood once more on their native shores without even the means of paying their travelling expenses home. They did not like to speak of their invested wealth, fearing that their statements might be disbelieved. They therefore stood literally in the position of beggars.

In this extremity they found the hospitable men of Cornwall to be friends indeed and full of sympathy.

Chapter Eleven. Return of the Wanderer.

Great was the anxiety of Edwin Jack as he walked, with light foot and fluttering heart, over the Border hills and drew near to the old home. He had not heard from his father for nearly a year. Were they all well? had they struggled out of their difficulties with the funds he had sent them. Was there no empty chair? Such and similar thoughts hurried through his mind as he went along, until he was forced to run for relief. There was a rocky ridge of land in front of him. From the top of this he knew the cottage could be seen. Panting with exertion when he gained the top, he sat down on a mass of rock and gazed at the old place till tears disturbed his vision. There it stood as of yore — no change in the general aspect of things, though there did seem one or two improvements about the cottage. But he did not gaze long. Starting up again he hurried on.

At last he stood in the midst of the old home−circle — all well, and, thank God, not one absent!

Philosopher though he was, he could not reason down the tears of joy that blinded, and the lump in his throat that well−nigh choked him. After the first wild miscellaneous embrace all round was over, Jack (or Teddie, as the home−circle called him) found relief by catching up Dobbin and burying his face in his neck and curls, regardless of the treacle with which that gentleman was plentifully besmeared.

“I've got bad news for you, Teddie, my boy,” said his father, after they had moderated a little.

“Nobody ill or — dead?” asked Jack, with a look of anxiety.

“No, nobody.”

“Then I'm prepared for any other kind of bad news,” said our philosopher with a quiet smile.

“The Blankow Bank,” said his father, laying a hand impressively on his shoulder, “has failed, and every penny of your gold is gone!”

The family had become very grave. Jack looked from one to the other with a bewildered air.

“You are jesting, father.”

“No, my boy; I would that it were not true. The distress that is abroad in the land because of this calamity is very great. Not only is all your fortune gone, Ted, but anything that you may have brought home with you will be taken to pay the creditors of the bank; and they require so much money that it would ruin you, though you had thousands upon thousands of pounds.”

A strange smile flitted across the youth's face as he replied—

“What I brought home with me won't benefit them much, for it lies with the wreck of the *Rainbow* at the bottom of the sea.”

This was indeed a surprise to the old couple, who now learned, for the first time, that the wrecked ship, about which a rumour had just reached them, was that in which their son had come home.

“But, father,” continued Jack, with a look of deepening anxiety, “if this be as you say, then my comrades must also be ruined, for their gold was all invested by Mr Wilkins in the same bank.”

“All ruined,” replied the old man in a sad tone. “Mr Wilkins himself is bankrupt — the first call brought him and many others down.”

“And yourself father; I hope you had no shares in it.”

“None, my boy, thank God. Prosperity has attended me ever since I got the first money you sent home. *That* saved me, Teddie.”

A gleam of joy overspread Philosopher Jack's countenance as he started to his feet.

“Then am I well and undeservedly rewarded, daddy,” he exclaimed; “but all this news is pretty tough. I must go out to tackle it. I'll be back in a few minutes.”

He sprang through the cottage door and sped away over the moor like a greyhound. Reaching the top of a rising ground — from which he could see a boundless stretch of border−land, with the sea in the far distance and the sun setting in a flood of golden light — he drew himself up, and pushing back the hair from his temples with both hands, stood gazing wistfully into the radiant glory.

“So like a dream — so like a dream!” he murmured. “It was God who gave; surely it is He who has taken away. Can there be anything but good in all this?”

His hands dropped to his side as he spoke, and he sauntered slowly down the slope on which he stood.

Entering a small plantation of fir−trees at the foot of it, he disappeared.

When he returned to the cottage all trace of strong feeling was gone. “We won't talk of the bank to−night,” he said, “let's be jolly,” and jolly he was accordingly. Not only so, but he made Dobbin jolly too, by supplying him with such a number of treacle−pieces that the child could hardly gasp his refusal of the last slice offered, and was made sticky from the ends of his filthy fingers to the crown of his curly head.

It is not necessary, nor would it be pleasant to describe minutely the effect of the “bad news” on the other members of our gold−digging party. Captain Samson and Watty Wilkins took it well, but Polly and Simon O'Rook could not easily reconcile themselves to their fate. The former, it is true, sorrowed not for herself, but for her father. O'Rook, however, was more selfish, and came down very heavily on what he called his “luck.”

“Sure it's a misfortunate pig I've been iver since I left Owld Ireland,” he remarked to his pipe one day after dinner, being alone with that implement at the time; “an no sooner does the first stroke of good luck befall me, an me fortune's made intirely, than whoop! down goes the whole consarn to the bottom of the say. It's well, hows'ever, that ye didn't go down yerself along with it, Simon. Ye've raison to be thankful for that, anyhow.”

If O'Rook's pipe did not offer him a comforting reply it appeared to console him with its fumes, for after a pause, during which the smoke played voluminously about his nose, he wrinkled his visage into a smile of good humour.

“Now, Simon,” he said, rising and putting the black little implement in his pocket, “you're in a fit state to go an' comfort the widdy.”

Saying which he went out of the cheap refreshment room in which he had dined, and betook himself to the principal street of the city, whose name we have already declined to mention.

To explain his remark, we may state here that after the most diligent inquiry without success, the Irishman had, by the merest chance, discovered the widow of David Ban— in this very city, to which he had accompanied Philosopher Jack and Captain Samson, after clearly ascertaining that every vestige of the wreck of the *Rainbow* had disappeared, and that all his gold was irrevocably gone. Walking along the principal street one day, he had been attracted by a temperance eating−house named the “Holly Tree.” Entering it for the purpose of, as he said, “revictualling the ship,” he was rooted to the spot by hearing a customer call out, “Another cup of coffee, please, Mrs Bancroft,” while at the same moment an assistant at the counter addressed the comely woman, who replied, “Yes, sir,” by the name of “Lucy.” Could proof be more conclusive? Upon inquiry “Lucy” turned out in very truth to be the widow of David Bancroft, and the lock of hair corresponded. Of course O'Rook revealed to her the sad circumstances connected with her husband's end. To say that Mrs Bancroft was overwhelmed with grief would not be true. She had long mourned him as dead, and although the information, corroborated as it afterwards was by Edwin Jack and Captain Samson, did re−open the old wound to some extent, she nevertheless bore it heroically, and took Simon O'Rook's comforting observations in good part. But we must not anticipate. Let us return to Watty Wilkins.

Having broken the news of Ben Trench's death to the Bailie and his family — and a terrible duty he found it to be, — Watty went straight to his father's house. We drop the curtain on the meeting. The joy of the elder Wilkins can only be fully understood by those who can say of an only son, “He was lost and is found.”

“Now, Watty, dear boy,” said Mr Wilkins when they came to talk of ordinary matters, “God has mingled mercy with my sorrows. My business has indeed been ruined, and I have passed through the bankruptcy court; but I am by no means so unfortunate as hundreds of people who have been reduced to absolute poverty by this crash. You remember my brother James — Uncle Jimmy? well, he has got a flourishing business in the West Indies. For some years past he had been meditating the establishment of an agency in connection with it in this city. The moment he heard of my failure he offered to make me his agent here, with a good salary. Of course I was only too glad and thankful to accept the offer, and after my affairs were wound up, entered upon the office. So now, you see, here I am, through God's goodness, still inhabiting the old house, which I now rent from the person who purchased it. Of course I can no longer keep a carriage, and it will cost me some calculation and economy to make the two ends meet, but these are small matters.”

“Oh, father, I'm so glad and thankful!” said Watty with sparkling eyes.

“But,” continued Mr Wilkins, with a look of profound gravity, “at present I happen to be troubled with a great difficulty.”

“What's that?” asked his little son, with a ready sympathy that was natural to him, and which his recent

experiences had rendered much more powerful.

"I find the nature of my duties too much for me," replied Mr Wilkins with a peculiar smile, "and it is almost impossible that I can get along without a clever, honest, intelligent clerk, or, shall we say, secretary — a character that is not easily found in these degenerate days. Can you recommend one, Watty?"

"O yes," cried the youth, springing up and seizing his father's hand in both of his; "you mean *me*! Don't you, now? You *can't* get on without me."

Watty felt inclined to dance a hornpipe, but he sat down instead, and, covering his face with his hands, burst into tears of joy. Being a tender−hearted man, Mr Wilkins could not help joining him, but in a moderate degree. We will leave them thus engaged, merely remarking that if the act was a weakness, it nevertheless seemed to do them a world of good.

After a considerable time had elapsed, Philosopher Jack left the Border cottage one day, went up to town, and presented himself at his old lodgings to Mrs Niven. That lady's feelings, under the influence of surprise, had a tendency, as we have shown, to lay her flat on the floor. But the faithful Peggy had come to understand her tendencies, and was usually too much for her. When her old lodger made his appearance in her parlour, Mrs Niven exhibited symptoms which caused Peggy to glide swiftly forward and receive her in her arms, whence she was transferred to an easy−chair.

Recovering, she gave Jack what, in the circumstances, was a hearty welcome.

"Losh me, laddie, ye'll be the death o' me!"

"I hope not, Mrs Niven," said Jack, laughing, as he shook her hand heartily and sat down, "for my own sake as well as yours; because I have come to take my old room if it is vacant."

"Yer auld room, Maister Jack!" exclaimed the bewildered woman.

"Yes, if it is not already occupied."

"The yin wi' the reeky lum and the view o' chimbley−pats frae the wundy?"

"The same. I hope I can have it, for I'm going to college again, and I've an affection for the old place, despite the smoky chimney and the cans on the cats' parade."

"Yer jokin', Maister Jack."

"Indeed I am not, Mrs Niven."

"They telt me ye was in Callyforny, an had made 'eer fortin there by howkin' gold."

"Well, they told the truth, my good woman, but I happened to invest all in Blankow Bank shares, and—"

"Wow! wow!" exclaimed Mrs Niven, whimpering, for she understood full well the meaning of that, "an' 'ee've been ruined! Oh dear! Weel, weel, ay, ay, an it's come to that. Jist like my kind freen' Maister Black. Losh me! man," she added in a sudden burst of indignation, "what for disna the Government order a penny subscription ower the hail kingdom to git the puir guiltless shareholders oot o' their diffeeculties?"

Philosopher Jack declined to enter upon so subtle a question, but after finding that his old room was vacant, retook it, and then went out to the region of the docks to pay a visit to Captain Samson. He found that old salt in possession of his old lodging, but it was wonderfully changed, and, perhaps, not for the better. Polly was there, however, and her presence would have made any place charming.

"Sit down. There is an empty keg to offer a friend," said the captain, looking round the almost empty room. "You see they've cleared me out. Had to sell everything a'most."

This was true. The marine stores, coils of rope, kegs, charts, telescopes, log−lines, sextants, foreign shells, model ships, Chinese idols — all were gone, excepting a table, a chair, a child's crib in a corner, and the hammock, which latter looked more like an overwhelmingly heavy cloud than ever, as it hung over the clean but desolate scene.

"But we're going to have *such* a nice tea," said Polly, "and you shall stay and have some."

She bustled about the fire, but it had so little heart that even her coaxing nearly failed to make it burn. Jack offered to assist.

"Take care," said Polly with some anxiety; "if you cough or sneeze you'll put it out."

"But I promise neither to cough nor sneeze," said Jack.

Under their united efforts the fire blazed, and tea with buttered toast ere long smoked on the board.

"Polly's going to London," said the captain suddenly — almost fiercely.

"Yes," said Polly, hastening to explain; "you see, my aunt Maria has been so good as to offer to take me to

live with her and put me to school."

"Ha!" said the captain, almost blowing the buttered toast out of his mouth with contempt, "and Aunt Maria says she'll make a lady of Polly! Think o' that, Jack; *make* a lady out of an angel!"

The captain was so tickled with the idea that he went off into a roar of sarcastic laughter.

"I'll tell 'ee what it is, Jack," he continued on recovering, "I shouldn't wonder it in the course of a few months' residence with her, Polly was to make a lady out of Aunt Maria — supposin' that to be possible."

"Oh! father," remonstrated Polly.

"Come," cried the captain savagely, "give us a nor'−wester — that's it; another — thank 'ee. The fact is, I'm goin' in for nor'−westers durin' the next fortnight — goin' to have it blow a regular hurricane of 'em."

Philosopher Jack hoped, if at all allowable, that he might be permitted to come under the influence of the gale, and then asked why Polly was leaving her father.

"She's not leavin' me, bless you," said the captain, "it's me that's leavin' *her*. The fact is, I've got a ship. What's left of me is not over young, but it's uncommon tough, so I mean to use it up as long as it lasts for Polly. I'm off to the East Indies in two or three weeks. If it hadn't been for this Aunt Maria I shouldn't have known what to do for Polly, so I've no call to abuse the stupid old thing. A lady, indeed — ha!"

"You might have been quite sure that my father's house would have been open to Polly," said Jack quite warmly, "or Mr Wilkins's, for the matter of that."

"I know it lad, I know it" returned the captain, slapping his friend on the shoulder, "but after all, this Aunt Maria — this lady−like individual — is the most natural protector. But now, tell me, what of O'Rook?"

"I know nothing of him. Haven't seen him for several days. When I last met him he seemed to be much depressed, poor fellow. I don't wonder, considering the fortune he has lost. However, Wilkins's father is sure to do the best he can for him. He feels so deeply having led him and the rest of us into this — though it was no fault of his, and he went in and suffered along with us. I couldn't understand, however, what O'Rook meant by some wild remarks he made the other day about taking to the temperance line and going in for coffee and mutton chops up a holly−tree. I hope it hasn't unseated his reason, poor fellow."

While the trio were thus discussing O'Rook over a cup of tea, that bold Irishman was busily engaged "comforting the widdy" over a cup of coffee in Mrs Bancroft's private parlour.

It is only just to O'Rook to say that he originally sought the widow from a simple desire to tell her of her husband's sad end, which, as we have seen, had made a deep impression on his sympathetic heart. When, however, he found that the widow was young, cheery, and good−looking, his sympathy was naturally increased, and the feeling was not unnaturally intensified when he found her engaged in the management of so excellent an institution as the "Holly Tree Public House without Drink." At first O'Rook confined his visits to pure sympathy; then, when he had allowed a "raisonable" time to elapse, he made somewhat warmer approaches, and finally laid siege to the widow's heart. But the widow was obdurate.

"Why won't ye have me, now?" asked the poor man one evening, with a perplexed look; "sure it's not bad−lookin' I am, though I've no occasion to boast of gud looks neither."

"No, it's not your looks," said Mrs Bancroft with a laugh, as she raised her eyes from her knitting and looked at her sister Flo, who sat opposite, also knitting, and who took a smiling but comparatively indifferent view of the matter.

"Then it must be because I'm not owld enough. Sure if ye wait a year or two I'll be as owld as yourself, every bit," said O'Rook.

"No, it's not that either," said the widow.

"Ah, then, it can't be because I'm poor," persisted O'Rook, "for with this good business you don't want money, an' I'm great at cookin', besides havin' the willin' hands that can turn to a'most anything. If ye'd seen me diggin' for goold, bad luck to it, ye'd belaive what I tell ye. Ah!" he added with a sigh, "it's a rich man I'd have been this day if that ship had only kep' afloat a few hours longer. Well, well, I needn't grumble, when me own comrades, that thought it so safe in the Blankow Bank, are about as badly off as me. When was it they began to suspec' the bank was shaky?"

"Oh, long ago," said Mrs Bancroft, "soon after the disappearance of Mr Luke, the cashier—"

"Mr who?" demanded O'Rook with a start.

"Mr Luke. Did you know him?"

"I've heard of such a man," replied O'Rook with assumed carelessness; "what about *him*?"

"Well, it was supposed that he was goin' deranged, poor fellow, and at last he suddenly disappeared, no one could tell why; but it's clear enough now, for he was made to put the accounts all wrong, and I suppose the struggle in his mind drove him to suicide, for he was a long, thin, weakly sort of man, without much brains except for figures."

Hereupon O'Rook told the widow all he knew about the strange passenger of that name with whom he had sailed to the Southern Seas and worked at the gold fields. The conclusion which they came to was that the gold−digging passenger was the absconded cashier. Having settled this, O'Rook renewed the siege on the widow's heart but without success, though she did not cast him off altogether. The poor man, however, lost patience, and, finally, giving it up in despair, went off to sea.

"I've been too hard on him," remarked the widow, sadly, to her sister Flo, after he was gone.

"You have," was Flo's comforting reply, as she rose to serve a clamorous customer of the Holly Tree.

Philosopher Jack from that time forth devoted himself heartily to study, and gradually ceased to think of the golden dreams which had for so long a time beset him by night and by day. He had now found the gold which cannot perish, and while he studied medicine and surgery to enable him to cure the bodies of men, he devoted much of his time to the study of the Book which would enable him to cure their souls.

The captain came and went across the seas in the course of his rough calling, and he never came without a heart full of love and hands full of foreign nick−nacks, which he conveyed to Polly in London, and never went away without a rousing nor'−wester.

Watty and his father worked on together in vigorous contentment and many a visit did the former pay to Bailie Trench, attracted by the strong resemblance in Susan to the bosom friend who had reached the "Better Land" before him.

Thus time rolled quietly on, until an event occurred which modified the career of more than one of those whose fortunes we have followed so long.

Chapter Twelve. Conclusion of the Whole Matter.

If it be true that there is “many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip" — which we have no reason to doubt — it is not less true that many a cup of good fortune is, unexpectedly and unsought, raised to the lips of thankless man.

Captain Samson was seated one fine summer evening in his shore−going cabin, that used to be the abode of fishy smells, marine−stores, Polly, and bliss, but which now presented an unfurnished and desolate aspect. He had just returned from a voyage. Little “kickshaws” for Polly lay on the table before him, and a small fire burned in the grate, with a huge kettle thereon. A stormy sigh escaped the captain as he glanced round the old room.

“Come, come, Samson,” he exclaimed, apostrophising himself, “this will never do. You mustn't give way to the blues. It's true you haven't got as much to leave to Polly when you slip your cable as you once had; but you have scraped together a little these few years past, and there's lots of work in you yet, old boy. Besides, it's His way of ordering events, and that way *must* be right, whatever it appears to me. Why, Samson, for all your preaching to others, your own faith isn't as big as a grain of mustard seed. Ah! Polly, you're a woman now a'most — and a beauty, I'll be bound. I wish you'd come though. You're not up to time, young 'ooman. It's as well you've got one or two faults, just to keep you in sympathy with other mortals. Ah here you come.”

He hastened to answer a double knock at the door, and checked himself, not a moment too soon, from giving a warm embrace to the postman. Under a strong impulse to knock the man down he took a letter from him, flung it on the table, and shut the door. After pacing the room for some time impatiently he sat down, opened the letter, and read it aloud. It ran thus:—

> “Sir — Having been for some years past engaged in diving operations at the wreck of the *Rainbow* — lost off the coast of Cornwall in 18—, I write to say that I have recovered a large chest of gold with your name on the inside of it, and that of a man named Simon O'Rook. Most of the gold recovered from the *Rainbow* has been scattered about, but in all cases when ownership could be proved, I have handed over the property. If you can give such an account of the contents of the chest referred to as shall satisfy me that it is yours, the part of its contents which belongs to you shall be restored.
>
> “I would feel obliged if you could give me any clew to the whereabouts of O'Rook. — I am etc.”

“The whereabouts of O'Rook!” cried the captain, starting up and gazing at the letter; “why, he's my own first mate, an' close alongside at this good hour!”

“True for ye,” cried a man outside the window, as he flattened his nose against the glass, “an is it polite to kape yer own first mate rappin' the skin off his knuckles at the door?”

The captain at once let in his follower, and showed him the letter. His surprise may be better imagined than described.

“But d'ee think it's true, cap'n?”

“I haven't a doubt of it, but we can settle that to−morrow by a visit to the writer of the letter.”

“That's true,” said O'Rook; “which o' the boxes, now, that belonged to us d'ee think it is?”

“It can only be one,” replied the captain, “that box of mine in which you asked me to stuff the remnant of the gold−dust that you hadn't room for in your own boxes. It was the strongest box o' the lot, which accounts for its not breakin' up like the others.”

“It must be that. I rowled it up in an owld leather coat bought from an Injin the day before we left the diggin's. It's but a small remainder o' me fortune — a thousand pounds, more or less, — but sure, it's found money an comes handy this good day, which reminds me I've got some noose for 'ee. What d'ee think, cap'n?” continued O'Rook, with a very conscious look.

“How can I think if ye don't give me somethin' to think about?”

“The widdy's tuk me after all!” said O'Rook.

“What! widow Bancroft?”

O'Rook nodded impressively. “Moreover,” he said, “she's tuk me as a poor beggar with nothin' but his pay, for better and for worse, an, sure now, it's better I'll be than she tuk me for.”

The captain was interrupted in his congratulations of the mate by another knock at the door. He opened it, and next moment was seized round the neck by a tall, graceful, beautiful, exquisite — oh! reader, you know who we mean.

“Why didn't you come up to time, old girl?” demanded the captain, while O'Rook looked on in admiration.

“Oh, father,” gasped Polly, “don't crush me so and I'll tell you.”

When she had explained that delay in the train had caused her want of punctuality, she shook hands with O'Rook, with whom she had renewed acquaintance at the time of his being appointed first mate to her father's ship. Then she was bid stand up in a corner to be “overhauled.” The captain retired to an opposite corner, and gazed at his daughter critically, as though she had been a fine portrait.

“Yes, Polly, you'll do,” he said, while an approving smile wrinkled his vast countenance. “Fit for a queen any day. A *lady* — ha! ha! Have you done your duty to Aunt Maria, Polly, eh? Have you made a lady of her, eh? Have you infused into her something allied to the angelic, eh? Come, now, a rousing nor'−wester!”

With a laugh worthy of her girlhood, Polly ran out of her corner and obeyed orders.

“Now, my pet” said the captain, seating her on his knee, “here are some kickshaws from foreign parts for you; but before letting you look at 'em, I must explain why I asked you to meet me here instead of going to see you as usual in London. The fact is, I had bin longing to take you with me my next voyage, and it would have been handier to have you by me here when we're getting ready for sea, but — but, the fact is, things have taken a sudden turn, and — and — in short, circumstances have come about that I can't speak of just now; only I'm not quite so sure about going to sea as I was an hour ago. But you don't seem to jump at the notion, Polly. Surely you'd have liked to go — wouldn't you?”

“Liked, father, of *course*. I should have been overjoyed to have gone with you, but — but — the truth is,” she said, with a little laugh and a glance at O'Rook, “circumstances have come about that *I* can't speak of just now.”

“Well, my pet,” rejoined the captain, with a puzzled, anxious look, “we'll *not* talk about 'em. Now, you must know that I've got up a small party to meet you here to−night, and expect you to do me credit. The pastry−cook next door has undertaken to send in cakes, and tea, and hot sausages, and buns, at a moment's notice. I expect his man here every minute to lay out the spread. Now, who d'ee think are coming? You'll never guess. There's Mr and Mrs John Jack, the father and mother of Edwin Jack — you remember him, Polly? Philosopher Jack we used to call him.”

“Yes,” replied Polly, in a low tone.

“Well, they happen to be in town just now with their family, and they're all coming. Then there's my first mate, Simon O'Rook; he would be coming, only he's come already, a full hour before his time! Then there's a Mr Burr and a Mr Buckley, both returned from California with fortunes—”

“A−rowlin' in gold,” muttered O'Rook, in a low tone.

“You don't *really* mean, father, that—”

“Yes I do, Polly. I mean that Baldwin Burr and Jacob Buckley are coming. I met 'em only two days ago in the streets, going about in chimney−pot hats and broadcloth like gentlemen — which they are, every inch of 'em, if worth and well−doing and wisdom make the gentleman. So, knowing you were to be here, I made 'em promise to come. Well, then, there's your old friend Watty Wilkins, who, by the way, is engaged to be married to Susan Trench. I tried to get Susan to come too, but she's shy, and won't. Besides these, there's a doctor of medicine, whom I think you have met before, a very rising young man — quite celebrated, I may say. Got an enormous practice, and—”

The captain was interrupted by the rattle of wheels outside, and the pulling up of a carriage at the door.

Polly rose quickly, with a half−frightened look.

“Don't be alarmed, Poll, it's only the doctor,” he said, going out to the passage.

“Pardon my coming so much before the appointed time,” said a familiar voice; “but I have something to communicate before she comes — something very important and—”

Philosopher Jack stopped short, for he had entered the room and saw that Polly had already come. With one

spring he was at her side, seized her in his arms, and imprinted on her lips what her father afterwards called the "stiffest nor'wester he'd ever seen." At the time, however, the captain strode up to our philosopher with a frown.

"Come, come, doctor," he said, sternly, "there is a limit to familiarity even among—"

"Pardon me," said our hero, drawing Polly's unresisting hand through his arm; "I had no intention of doing it until I had your consent; but somehow — I can't tell how — it came upon me suddenly while I was paying my respects to her in London, not long ago, and before I knew where I was, it all came out, and she accepted me, on the understanding that I should consider it no engagement until I had obtained your consent. So now, I have to ask your forgiveness and your blessing — father."

Captain Samson stood there, bereft of speech, and O'Rook stood there, the picture of benignity, in a corner. What the former would have said it is impossible to tell, for at that moment there came an impatient rapping at the door.

"Hurrah! captain, I could not help looking in before the time," cried Watty Wilkins, "to tell you that Susan's coming after all. The dear girl—"

He stopped suddenly, and stared at Polly, as if he had applied the term of endearment to her.

"The ghost of Polly Samson!" he exclaimed, after a breathless pause.

"Nothing of the sort, my boy," said the captain, grasping his little friend's hand, "but an enlarged and improved edition of Polly Samson, not yet full−bound, but goin' to be, very soon, by Philosopher Jack."

At that auspicious moment the pastry−cook made his appearance, and compelled the party to quit the premises. They therefore went for a stroll while he put things in order. When they returned, it was found that his wonderful powers had made a change little short of miraculous. The floor was swept. Chairs had been introduced on the scene. The table groaned, being weak in the legs, under a surfeit of viands. The hammock had been removed. The fire leaped high, as if desirous of going up the chimney altogether, and the huge kettle sat thereon, leaning back, with its spout in the air, pouring its very heart out in a joyous domestic song.

Need we say that the united party made the most of their opportunity? They spoke of the golden land, of their toils and joys, their successes and losses, and of their Heavenly Father's guiding hand. The ex−gold−diggers, Baldwin Burr and Jacob Buckley, fought their battles over again, and sang the camp−fire songs. Philosopher Jack sat beside his mother, who was a little deaf, to explain the miners' slang and point the jokes. Watty Wilkins became involved in Susan, and was comparatively useless; but he laughed at the jokes, whether he saw them or not, and joined with telling effect in the choruses. Polly sang, in a voice that corresponded with her sweet face, two or three of the hymns with which they had been wont to make vocal the palm grove on the coral island in the southern seas, and Philosopher Jack related the story of the slaying of the bear at Grizzly Bear Gulch. All this was a rare treat to the family from the lonely cottage on the Border, the younger members of which had by that time ascended, through Christian example and improved education, to a high level in the social scale. Dobbin, in particular, had become a strapping youth of gentlemanly mien, and would as soon have thought of shoe−blacking as of treacle to his bread. He retained a sneaking fondness for it, however, especially when presented in the form of golden syrup.

But we must not prolong the scene. It is sufficient to say that they had a glorious night of it, on strictly temperance principles, which culminated and drew to a close when Captain Samson, opening his Bible, and reading therefrom many precious promises, drew his friends' minds from things seen and temporal to things unseen and eternal. Thereafter he prayed that neither he nor they should be permitted to forget that a loving Father holds the helm and guides the souls of his people, whether in joy or in sorrow, success or failure, through time into eternity.

And now it is incumbent on us to draw our story to a close.

On the day following the feast Captain Samson called with his chief mate on the writer of the important letter, and found that his principal chest of gold had indeed been fished up from the deep. He and O'Rook were able to give so correct an account of its contents that their claim was at once admitted, and thus the captain became possessor of gold to the value of about four thousand pounds sterling, while O'Rook recovered upwards of one thousand. This was only a fraction of their original fortune, but the interest of it was sufficient to supply their moderate wants.

Going straight off to the Holly Tree, of which a healthy shoot had been planted in the suburbs, O'Rook proceeded, according to use and wont, to "comfort the widdy."

“It's a rich man I am, darlin', after all,” he said, on sitting down beside her.

“How so, Simon?”

Simon explained.

“An' would you consider yourself a poor man if you had only me?” asked the widow, with a hurt air.

“Ah! then, it's the women can twist their tongues, anyhow,” cried O'Rook. “Sure it's about dirty goold I'm spakin', isn't it? I made no reference to the love of purty woman — did I, now? In regard of that I wouldn't change places with the Shah of Pershy.”

“Well now, Simon, if it's the women that can twist their tongues, it's the Irishmen that can twist their consciences, so you an' I will be well matched.”

“That's well said, anyhow,” rejoined O'Rook. “An' now, darlin', will ye name the day?”

“No, Simon, I won't; but I'll think about it. There, now. Go home, it's gettin' late, and if ye happen to be passing this way to−morrow you may give us a call.”

Thus Simon O'Rook prosecuted his courtship. In process of time he married the widow, and was finally installed as master of the juvenile Holly Tree in the suburbs, while his wife conducted the parent stem in town. Vegetables and other country produce had to be conveyed to the town Tree regularly. For this purpose a pony−cart was set up, which travelled daily between it and the country branch. Thus it came to pass that O'Rook's Californian dreams were realised, for “sure,” he was wont to say, “haven't I got a house in the country an' a mansion in the town, an' if I don't drive my carriage and four, I can always drive me cart an' wan, anyhow, with a swate little widdy into the bargain.”

It is, we suppose, almost superfluous to say that Doctor Jack and Polly Samson were united in due course, but it is necessary to record that, by special arrangement, Walter Wilkins, Esq., and Susan Trench were married on the same day. More than that, the Doctor and Watty so contrived matters that they rented a double villa in the suburbs of the nameless city, one−half of which was occupied by Dr. Jack's family, the other by that of Wilkins. Still further, it was so contrived by Philosopher Jack that a small cottage was built on an eminence in his garden, in which there was a room, precisely similar in all respects to that in which he had first met his father−in−law. There was a hammock in this room, slung as the original hammock had been, and although the old telescopes and sou'−westers and marine stores and charts had been sold and lost past redemption, a good many new things, bearing a strong resemblance to such articles, were purchased and placed on the walls and in the corners, so that almost the only difference between it and the old room was the absence of fishy smells. There was an improvement, also, in the view; for whereas, in the old room, the window commanded a prospect of about ten yards in extent, comprising a brick wall, a lamp−post, and a broken pump, the windows of the new room overlooked miles and miles of landscape, embracing villages, hamlets, fields, and forests, away to the horizon.

In this cottage Captain Samson took up his abode, rent free, and the money which he was thus enabled to save, or which Jack insisted on his saving, was spent in helping the poor all round his dwelling. Here the captain spent many happy hours in converse with Polly and her husband. To this room, as time rolled on, he brought a small child, to which, although not its nurse, he devoted much of his spare time, and called it “Polly.”

And oh! it was a wonderful sight to see Polly the second, with her heart in her mouth and her hair flying in the air, riding the captain's foot “in a storm!”

Here, too, as time continued to roll on, he fabricated innumerable boats and ships for little boys, whose names were Teddie, Watty, Ben, Baldwin, and such like. In this room, also, every Sunday morning early, the captain was to be found with a large, eager, attentive class of little boys and girls, to whom he expounded the Word of God, with many an illustrative anecdote, while he sought to lead them to that dear Lord who had saved his soul, and whose Holy Spirit had enabled him to face the battles of life, in prosperity and adversity, and had made him “more than conqueror.” Here, also, in the evenings of the same holy day, he was wont to gather a meeting of old people, to whom he discanted on the same “old, old story.” In all which works he was aided and abetted by the families of the double house close by.

Besides his constant visitors among the young, the aged, and the poor, the captain had a few occasional visitors at his residence, which, by the way, was named Harmony Hall.

Among these were Bailie Trench and his wife, who were naturally attracted to that region by the presence there of a slender, loving, sprightly boy, whose name was Benjamin Walter Wilkins, and who bore — at least they thought he bore — a striking resemblance to their loved and lost son Ben. The family from the cottage on the

Border also paid annual visits to No. 1 of the double house (which was the Doctor's), and the various members of that family, being very fond of a chat with the old sailor, often found themselves of an evening in “the old store−room” (as the boys styled it) of Harmony Hall.

These visits were regularly returned, chiefly in the summer−time, by the captain and the families of the double house, on which occasions the cottage on the Border was taxed to such an extent that Philosopher Jack was obliged to purchase a neighbouring barn, which he had fitted up as a dormitory that could accommodate almost a battalion of infantry. During these visits the trouting streams of the neighbourhood were so severely whipped that the fish knew the difference between a real and an artificial fly as well as their tormentors, but they were captured for all that.

Baldwin Burr and Jacob Buckley were also among the occasional visitors at the Hall; but their visits were few and far between, because of their having taken up their permanent abode in California. Only when they came home on business, once in the two years, had they an opportunity of seeing their old comrade, but they never failed to take advantage of such opportunities. These men were not prone to speak about themselves, but from various remarks they made, and from their general appearance, it was easy to see that they were substantial and influential members of society in foreign parts.

From Baldwin the captain heard that Bob Corkey had, during his wanderings, fallen in with Bounce and Badger, and that these three had formed a partnership, in which they tried their luck at gold−digging, farming, fur−trading, and many other sources of livelihood, but, up to the last news of them, without success. There was hope of them yet, however, so thought Baldwin Burr, because of the latest remarks made by them in the hearing of credible witnesses. Bob Corkey, having attained to the lowest depths of destitution and despair, had, it was said, made to his comrades the following observation: “Mates, it strikes me that we are three great fools;” whereupon Bounce had replied, “We're more than that Bob, we're three great sinners;” to which Badger had added, with considerable emphasis, “That's a fact,” and when men come to this, there is hope for them.

The only personage of our tale who now remains to be mentioned is Mrs Niven.

That steady−going female continued her vocation of ministering to the wants of young students, some of whom treated her well, while others — to their shame, be it said — took advantage of her amiability. In regard to this latter fact, however, it may be recorded that Peggy proved a sharp−witted, tight−handed, and zealous defender of her mistress. Among Mrs Niven's other boarders there was one who was neither young nor a student. He came to reside with her in the following manner:—

One evening Peggy was heard in altercation with a man in the passage who seemed bent on forcing his way into the house. The students who chanced to be in their rooms at the time cocked their ears, like war−steeds snuffing the battle from afar, and hoped for a row. Mrs Niven, after opening the parlour door softly, and listening, called out, “Let the gentleman come up, Peggy.”

“Gentleman indeed!” cried the irate Peggy, who had the intruder by the throat, “he's only a dirty auld blagyird.”

“Niver ye mind, Peggy,” returned Mrs Niven peremptorily; “I ken him. Let him up.”

Immediately after, there walked into the parlour a bowed, mean−looking, dirty little old man, who, as he sat down on a chair, paid some doubtful compliments to Peggy.

“Oh, Maister Black, is it you!” said Mrs Niven, sitting down beside him.

Besides being all that we have said, Mr Black was ragged, dishevelled, haggard, and in every way disreputable.

“Yes, it's me, Mrs Niven,” he replied harshly, “and you see I'm in a sorry plight.”

“I see, I see,” said the good woman, taking his hand and shedding tears. “I kent ye had lost a' by that fearfu' bank failure, but I didna ken ye had come doon sae low. And oh! to think that it was a' through me, an your kindness in offerin' to tak the shares aff my hands. Oh! Maister Black, my heart is wae when I look at ye. Is there onything I can dae for ye?”

Now, it was quite a new light to Mr Black that his relative had not found him out. He had called in a fit of desperation, for the purpose of extorting money from her by any means. He now changed his tactics, and resolved to board and lodge with her gratuitously. The proposition rather startled the poor woman, for she found it difficult to make the two ends meet, even when her house was full of lodgers. She had not the heart to refuse him, however, and thus Mr Black was fairly installed in the old room whose window opened on the cats' parade.

In her difficulty Mrs Niven went, as she was in the habit of doing, to Philosopher Jack, to whom she represented Mr Black as such a suffering and self−sacrificing man, that his heart was quite melted.

“I'll tell you what I'll do, Mrs Niven,” he said. “There is a sum of money in my father's possession, the interest of which enabled me to pay my way when I came back from the gold−fields. My father won't use that money himself and I won't accept it from him. We have therefore resolved to devote it to charitable purposes. Now, we will give Mr Black a small annuity out of it, for your sake, Mrs Niven.”

Philosopher Jack was not, however, so easily deceived as Mrs Niven. He afterwards “found out” Mr Black, and told him so in very stern language. Nevertheless, he did not stop his allowance. Neither did he enlighten Mrs Niven as to the man's true character, though he kept a sharp eye on him.

Thus did Mr Black become a pensioner and a free boarder. There is no sinner on this side (of) the grave who is beyond redemption. That which prosperity and adversity had equally failed to accomplish, was finally brought about by unmerited kindness, — Mr Black's spirit was quietly and gradually, but surely, broken. The generous forbearance of Edwin Jack, and the loving Christian sympathy of his intended victim, proved too much for him. He confessed his sin to Jack, and offered to resign his pension; but Jack would not hear of it, as the pensioner was by that time too old and feeble to work. He also confessed to Mrs Niven, but that unsuspecting woman refused to believe that he ever did or could harbour so vile a design towards her, and she continued in that mind to her dying day.

Peggy, however, was made of sterner stuff. She not only believed his confession, but she refused to believe in his repentance, and continued to treat him with marked disrespect until her mistress died. After that however, she relented, and retired with him to a poorer residence, in the capacity of his servant. Peggy was eccentric in her behaviour. While she nursed him with the assiduous care and kindness of a rough but honest nature, she continued to call him a “dirty auld blagyird” to the last. The expression of this sentiment did not, however, prevent her from holding more polite intercourse. When his eyes grew dim, she read to him not only from the Bible, but from the Pilgrim's Progress and Robinson Crusoe, which were their favourites among the books of the little library furnished to them by Christian friends. And many sage and original remarks did Peggy make on those celebrated books. The topics of conversation which she broached with Mr Black from time to time were numerous, as a matter of course, for Peggy was loquacious; but that to which she most frequently recurred was the wonderful career of Philosopher Jack, for Peggy liked to sing his praises, and never tired of treating the old man to long−winded accounts of that hero's ever memorable voyage to the Southern Seas.

The End.