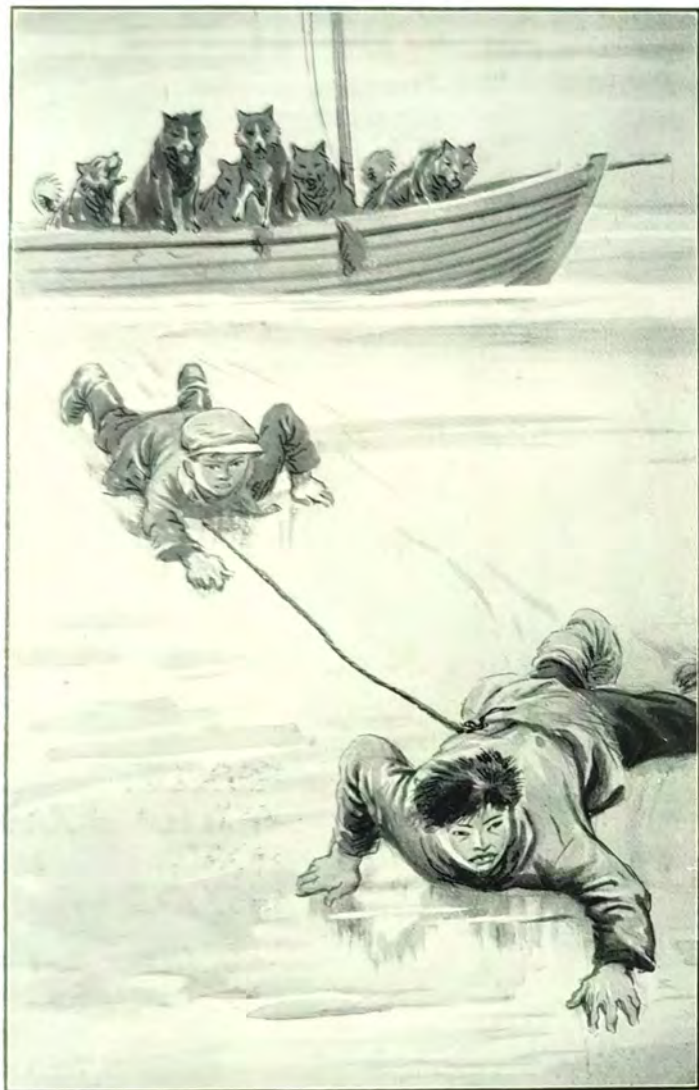




IT WAS A DESPERATE CHANCE.

PARSON JOHN OF THE LABRADOR

A STORY WHICH TELLS ALSO OF
THE EXCITING ADVENTURES OF
BOY NUMBER NINE, TOM BADD,
AND OTHER BOLD CHARACTERS

BY

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PARSON JOHN OF THE LABRADOR

CHAPTER I

INTO A STRANGE NEW LAND

HE opened his eyes, sprang up, and looked around.

“ I wonder where I am,” he said.

He stood on a bit of sloping, gravelly sea-beach, on which he had been flung by the waves, dripping and benumbed, in the darkness.

“ I wonder where I am,” he repeated ;
“ and how long I’ve been asleep ? ”

A great stretch of sea lay out in front. Shooting up out of this, several miles off shore, with a scarf of white foam about its base, its highest pinnacle glittering in the morning sun, was a giant iceberg. To the right of the iceberg in the offing, just inside the line where

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the sea and sky met, was a speck that might be a distant boat. Behind, grey and solemn, seamed, weather-beaten and towering to the sky, ran a wall of rock.

The cliff impressed the boy mightily.

"It must be half a mile high," he mused.

He stood looking up the cliff for some time, marking how the clouds seemed to be sliding from its top, out over the sea. A white gull dived from a crevice far up in the wall of rock and flew screaming off seaward. The boy's eyes followed the gull till it was lost against the white of the iceberg. Then, for a time, the speck that might be a boat, claimed his attention. When convinced that he could make nothing of this, he began, as best he could, in his shattered condition, to piece together the events that had preceded his arrival in this place of vast and forbidding loneliness.

It came to him slowly that he had been one of a great number of boys shipped from a London "Home," in the direction of America. He recalled, also, the long-continued storm and the rumours that the ship was being driven far out of her course. He remembered, too,

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how one night, in the darkness, he had heard loud shouting on the vessel's deck; how a great wave had swept the ship, how something had floated to him, and how he had held on, and held on, and held on, till, hungry to the point of famishing and chilled into partial insensibility, he had been flung on what seemed to be a bit of beach.

That much, in a shaky, uncertain sort of way, he could recall. But that was all. Whether the ship had sunk, or he had been swept off, he could not say. The fierce buffetings of the sea, cold, hunger, and exposure, had, however, left their mark. This fact came home to him with something of a shock, when, rack his wavering brain as he might, he discovered that he could not recall his name. It had clean gone from him !

But even this discovery did not unnerve him. He began to rub his arms and his legs, his face and his hands. The sun got the range on the bit of beach and began to warm him. His blood began to circulate. The effect of his long nap on the damp beach, in the chill air, left him somewhat suddenly; and it was but a brief time before the fact that he could not

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recall his name took on a half-humorous aspect. What if some one met him, and asked him his name, and he could not answer? What if it did not come back to him? What if——?

But glancing down his eye fell on a small, leather tab that hung from the top button-hole of his coat. On this were the words, "Boy Number Nine."

"Ha!" he ejaculated; "here's my name now, 'Number Nine.' That's what they called me on the ship; and that's good enough for here, anyway, and for me till I've done something worthy of a name. I'll stick to my number till then."

A small wave ran almost to his feet.

"Whew!" he said. "Tide rising, I guess. I must be getting out of here. And I've got to hurry up, too."

He glanced off seaward. The iceberg was still there, and the speck that might be a boat. But that was all. He looked eagerly for sails, for trailing lines of smoke such as he had seen from the ship, for any sign of life on the ocean. Nothing could be seen anywhere but the two objects noted, and the immeasurable reaches of shimmering sea. It was evident that from

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that direction no help was likely to come, so Boy Number Nine turned his eyes to the towering cliff.

He scanned this carefully.

“Gracious!” he exclaimed, a slight feeling of fear coming over him.

Another wavelet ran up the beach, this time sweeping about his feet, and reminding him of the necessity for immediate action. Seeing that the cliff fell back somewhat, and that the strip of beach broadened slightly to the left, he determined to investigate in that direction.

He had not gone far, when, to his surprise and delight, he found a sharp, V-shaped indentation running well back into the great wall of rock. It was as though a mighty wedge of the towering cliff that made the sombre coast-line had been cut out from top to bottom and carried clean away. Toward the top, the sides of the cleft rock fell back, and, another feature of immense significance, down the crevice there trickled a tiny stream of pure, fresh water.

Boy Number Nine’s spirits rose. He would not need to die of thirst at any rate.

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In the battle for life in the strange, new land on which he had been flung, he would have a kindly ally in the trickling stream. He knelt down and took a long drink. Then he made up his mind to scale the cliff.

It was, he knew, a tremendous undertaking, but it was a case where there was no alternative. The tide was advancing. The cliff must be scaled or death was certain.

And here, let it be said, that Boy Number Nine was by no means unfitted for high endeavour and daring feats. True, he had not before found himself with the hungry sea in front, anxious to swallow him up, and a tremendous cliff, towering to the sky, behind him; but he had been brought up in the London slums. And the London slum is a hard school. It is a school, however, not altogether without merit. It had done something for Boy Number Nine. It had taught him to go hungry, and to suffer cold; to sleep out o' nights, and to fight weariness; to be killed, and to come to life again. In its own hard, rough way it had taught him to endure, to survive, to win.

But the London slum had not been the

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only agency engaged in fitting Boy Number Nine for life and daring deeds. This was forced upon the boy himself, quite by accident, as he stood facing the lofty cliff. It was on buttoning his coat preparatory to facing up to his first great task in the new land, that something hard in his breast pocket attracted his attention. In a moment a small, strongly bound Bible was in his hand. He had received the usual dowry of the great London Home.

He was on the point of returning the book—which had been so tightly clasped that the water had not injured it—to its place, when, falling open near the middle, it disclosed a small, folded sheet of writing paper. This fell to the gravel at his feet. Picking it up, and unfolding it, the boy at once recognized his mother's handwriting. It read :

“ Dear Roly,

“ Don't forget, in your new home, that you have a mother, and that she'll be praying for you, and hoping that you'll do well, and some day send for her, or come back to her, a great man. She won't forget, and little

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Elsie won't forget, that you promised, when you earned it, that you'd send money to have her taken to the hospital, and made better of her lameness. Take care of yourself, and be a good, brave, kind boy wherever you are.

“ Lovingly,

“ MOTHER WEST.

“ P.S.—If the fortune ever comes, and I know where you are, of course I'll let you know.”

His hand shook a bit, and his eyes moistened a trifle, as he folded the small paper and slid it again between the leaves of the Bible.

“ It hasn't turned out, so far, just as mother may have thought it would,” he mused, replacing the book and re-buttoning his coat ; “ but I'll not forget her, or Elsie—or my promise to make good, an'—an'—I'll try anything,” he finished, just as the advancing tide swished savagely about him, this time coming as high as his ankles.

“ Whew ! ” he whistled, trying to pull both his feet out of the water at once. Then he made a dash for the crevice in the cliff.

For a long time he kept on climbing. He did not look up, nor down, nor out. He

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just climbed. Now he scrambled over a great boulder. Again it was a short, steep reach of gravel, or a stalled avalanche of stones, large and small, smooth and rough, mixed with the scrapings and scourings of the cliff for centuries. Now he wound to the right; now to the left. On occasions he could see or hear the trickling stream. Again there was neither sound nor sight of it.

Finally he fixed upon a projecting horn of rock, some fifty feet above him, as a point where he would rest and look about. This decision had scarcely been arrived at, when, to his surprise and confusion, with a fierce scream and a mad rush of swirling wings, something swooped out of the air behind him and shot past with the speed of lightning, just missing his head by a handbreadth. It was the gull he had seen fly off seaward earlier in the morning. It had been screaming out a call to its fellows to assemble for battle in defence of their coastal nesting-place.

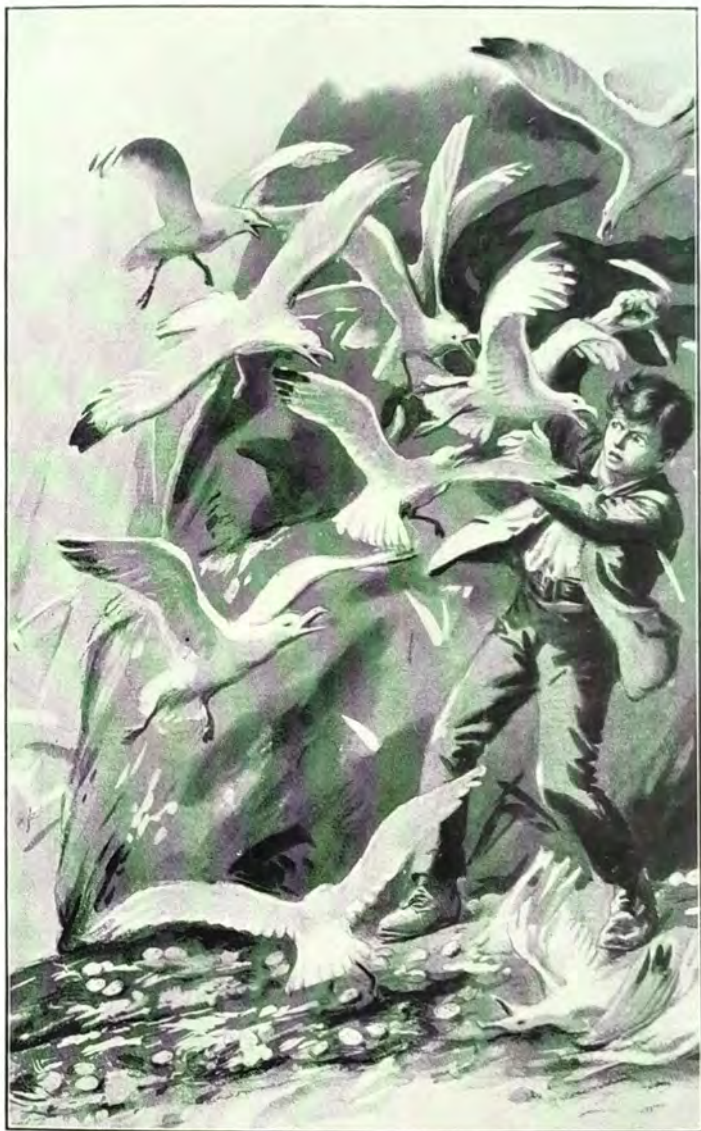
For a time Boy Number Nine was dazed. But it was for a time only. A glance showed him that the gulls were coming in thousands. But he had fought before, and he could fight

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again. He must, however, he felt instinctively, have a stronger position in which to defend himself than that in which he was at present. So, waving his arms, and striking 'out fiercely with his fists, he fought his way to the horn of rock.

As he clambered over the edge of this, the fury of the gulls increased. With beaks angrily agape, and eyes aflame, they dashed at him. Once on the rock, the cause of the commotion was clear; for, lying everywhere about, among the stones and in the gravel, without the faintest semblance of nests, there lay innumerable gulls' eggs.

On reaching the level it did not take an experienced fighter long to select the place of greatest advantage for the coming struggle. Leaping over the small stones and eggs that seemed to cover the wide platform of rock completely, Boy Number Nine soon had his back to the wall of the cliff, with his screaming, maddened assailants in front of him. The position was a strategic commanding one. No man, certainly no boy with English blood in his veins, could be more favourably placed for a fight to the death.



THE GULLS SEEMED TO ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE, AND CAME ON
WITH REDOUBLED FURY.

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And it was but a moment till the fight was on in earnest.

Fortunately, right at the boy's feet, lay a limitless supply of stones of the proper size for throwing at the attacking gulls. He stooped down, gathered several of these, then advancing a single step, that his right arm might have room to swing well clear of the wall of rock behind, he began flinging the stones among the dashing, screaming birds.

They seemed to accept the challenge, and came on with redoubled fury. Though unfitted in a way for fighting, and though unused to fighting, it soon became evident to Boy Number Nine that the gulls were going to give him the fight of his life. They had made choice of this part of the coast to lay their eggs, on account of its desolate isolation, and this particular cliff on the assumption that it was inaccessible to either man or beast. No intruder had previously appeared. But now that their nesting-ground was invaded, the hitherto harmless birds were suddenly invested with a fury and fighting power that was amazing. They fought as for their lives.

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On the other hand, there was Boy Number Nine. For him, too, the fight was largely a matter of life or death. He was hungry to the point of famishing. The eggs of the gulls—and this thought had flashed into his mind as soon as he had peered over the edge of the rock—would satisfy his hunger, would refresh him as nothing else could, and would, for the time at any rate, save his life. So he, too, had a vital and compelling interest in the battle that had just begun.

The first stones, flung largely at random, missed their mark, which was hardly to be wondered at: for the keen-eyed, nimble-winged sea-gull is not an easy target to hit. The second volley had better result. It brought a single bird to the rock, wounded, if not dead. It fluttered wildly for a moment among the eggs and small stones, and then disappeared, screaming, over the edge of the cliff. Boy Number Nine had drawn first blood in the fight.

This aroused and nerved him. But it seemed to have a similar effect on the gulls. With fury and determination they closed in and charged. Their wings brushed his face,

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and on occasions their fierce beaks were but inches from his eyes. Their screams were deafening, and, so great were their numbers, that they almost darkened the sky.

But nothing daunted, now with savagely flung stones, now striking out with his fists; now with his back to the wall, and now a yard or two out in the open, Boy Number Nine kept up the struggle. As the gulls massed closer about him, it became much easier to hit and bring many of them to the ground. Several already lay dead. Many wounded fluttered about, and not a few tumbled helplessly over the cliff. On each occasion when this happened, a number of the birds detached themselves from the main fighting body, and, evidently bent on determining what would befall the wounded, dashed after them down the face of the cliff. Noticing this, and hoping in this way to reduce the number of his enemies, the boy redoubled his efforts. He was in the midst of a tremendous attack, when having neglected to guard his head as well as usual, a beak was driven into his face close to the corner of his left eye. He felt claws also, and the blinding batter of wings.

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Instinctively he sank down, gripping, as he did so, with his right hand, the bold and vicious bird.

He wrung its neck, and flung it from him. Then he clapped his hand to his bleeding face.

And Boy Number Nine's first fight with conditions in the strange, new land was over: for the gulls, either tired of the fight, and convinced of defeat, or satisfied that victory had been won, turned tail and flew screaming off seaward.

An hour later, rested and refreshed by sucking gulls' eggs, and satisfied that the wound inflicted by the gull was not so dangerous as he had at first supposed, Boy Number Nine was looking off in the direction of the giant iceberg. Greatly to his surprise, he noticed a short distance out, and steering directly toward the cliff where he stood, a large, fast-running motor-boat. As it came nearer he could make out the figure of a tall man standing near the bow. A woman sat near the stern, and about the middle was a large black bunch of something. He could see that the man was signalling to him to come down from the cliff. He decided to do this,

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and in less than twenty minutes the motor-boat was securely hitched to the wall of rock in the great V-shaped indentation in the coast, and Boy Number Nine was on her deck, with the tall man warmly shaking his hand.

The boy was impressed with the man's bigness, his refined face, kindly grey eyes, and capless head of tousled, light hair. He seemed to be over six feet in height, every inch an athlete, and was probably between twenty-five and thirty years of age. The woman, on nearer view, proved to be a girl, and the black bunch, as seen from the cliff, evolved itself into a fluffy, kindly, enormous Newfoundland dog. The boy concluded at once that the girl would be two or three years older than himself—probably about nineteen or twenty.

The man gripped the boy's hand, smiling, for a long time. Then he broke into an open laugh.

"The gulls were making it pretty hot for you, for a time, weren't they? But they don't hold out. I knew, however, from the tow-row they were making on the cliff, that something must have happened. So I decided to run in and see what the fuss was about.

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One of them got a peck pretty close to your left peeper there, didn't he ? ”

He laughed again, the free, expansive contagious laugh of a schoolboy.

Then, of a sudden, and as if guilty of some offence, his face fell. A note of sympathy and of high seriousness displaced the twinkle in the kindly grey eyes.

“ By the way,” he said, “ do you know if there's been a wreck on the berg ? ” He pointed toward the iceberg. “ Running down this morning I saw in one place what might have been a bit of wreckage, and I skirted about the berg for a while, but saw nothing further. Been a long, bad nor'easter, you know.”

He stopped and looked Boy Number Nine over more critically than he had done before. Then—

“ You're not a Labrador fellow,” he said. “ You don't look like one. There's been a wreck, hasn't there ? ”

Boy Number Nine told what he knew. But it left the man's question unanswered.

“ And what's your name ? ” the man asked when the boy had finished.

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The boy had read his mother's letter and his name had come back in a flash. He hesitated a moment. Then, resolving to have a little fun, and recalling his resolve not to tell his name till he had done something—

“Oh, I'm just ‘Boy Number Nine,’ ” he said. The man laughed.

“And I'm just Parson John of the Labrador. I came here from England, three years ago, as a missionary. I've the whole coast, now—from the Straits to Chidley—over a thousand miles, for my parish. It's quite a job, this job of mine, too. I've a meeting to-night at Sheltering Hand Harbour, twelve miles further down. You'll go with me to that, and help me afterwards in my work, I hope. It'll be great fun for both of us ; and I've been looking for a chap just like you for the last two years.”

Then, turning to the girl who sat demurely on the small cross-seat in the stern of the boat : “This is Miss Undle of St. John's, Newfoundland, one of my teachers,” he said. “Miss Undle, meet—allow me to present Mister—Mister——” He ran his hand through his long, tousled, light hair and broke into another laugh, “Mister Number Nine !” he finished.

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The girl rose, flashed her white teeth in welcome, and without the slightest show of hesitation, put out a browned, welcoming hand.

“Pleased to meet you, Mister Number Nine,” she laughed, her finely formed, solid little face aglow with humour, and a fund of latent merri-ment showing in the twinkle of her amber eyes. “I hope you’ll like the work with Parson John and me on the Labrador.”

The bedraggled boy was speechless. He shook the proffered hand shyly, mechanically. Surely it was a strange land on which he had been flung! Here, in the wilderness of the sea, this handsome man! this glowing girl! this evidently perfectly natural and yet amazingly strange and unusual situation!

But the enormous Newfoundland dog came to the boy’s rescue. He seemed to think he, too, must be presented. He whimpered aggrievedly, then he wobbled forward to where the boy and girl stood and pushed his great, cold nose up against their clasped hands.

“Ah!” Parson John broke in apologetically and slapping the great dog’s side. “Beg pardon, Old Chum, it was an indefensible over-

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sight. Of course you must be introduced also." Then, swinging his hand toward his head in a sort of military salute—

"Mister Number Nine, meet Old Chum, another friend and helper of mine from Newfoundland," he laughed.

At once the great dog lifted a shaggy, ponderous paw. The boy took it and shook it with a freedom that had quite forsaken him as he had attempted to greet Miss Undle. The huge dog licked his chops; and a light came into his soft, great understanding eyes. He was satisfied.

"Great dog, Old Chum, great dog," Parson John commented, slapping his side; "he's done a great deal already, and he's going to do something yet to make himself famous. I'm not just sure what it will be, but his time will come, as it does for all of us down here, to do something—something big, and stunning, and notable, I mean."

He waved his long arm over the dog's head, and snapped his fingers.

"Won't it, Old Chum?"

Old Chum gave a thunderous, deep-toned bark; at which Miss Undle emitted a quick

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little shriek, and Boy Number Nine started. Parson John laughed, then, with time for pleasantries over, his face taking on a more serious aspect, he turned his attention to his motor-boat.

“I named her ‘Saint Martha,’” he said, stooping down and giving the wheel of the engine a roll ; “because she’s always doing something, always on the go.”

The engine chugged immediately ; and the boat swept out of the V-shaped indentation in the great cliff. Her head swung around, and she was off on her run “down north,” to Sheltering Hand Harbour.

High overhead a long drift of circling seagulls screamed a good-bye to the speeding boat.

CHAPTER II

SHELTERING HAND HARBOUR

THE Labrador summer—and honesty demands that this be confessed at the outset—is little more than a break in the winter. But such a break ! There is no summer like it for freshness and splendour. The appeal of early morning, the exhilaration of high noon, and the glory of evening and of night, must be felt and experienced in order to be understood and appreciated. The winters are horrible beyond words—long, wild, wasting ; with smothering snows, howling winds, unendurable cold. Then the timid and the faint-spirited, the fearful and the cowardly, are broken and succumb : only the fit, and the fearless, and the heroic survive. But the brief summers are incomparably appealing and glorious. Then, on the Labrador, as nowhere else on the earth, God sets a tabernacle for the sun, and tells that the heavens and the earth are His handiwork.

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One may worship there in temples not made with hands, their aisles mile-long, their choirs gorgeously ornate and massive; their façades fretted with the gales of a thousand years, their spires piercing the clouds.

The evening of the glorious Labrador summer day was coming on as the motor-boat came in sight of the entrance to Sheltering Hand Harbour. The shadows of the cliffs, in places, had pushed far out on the water, shading long reaches of sea. But islands, reefs, headlands, and rocks lay everywhere, glorious in the slanting sunshine.

Parson John pointed forward directly over the boat's bow.

"That's the South Tickle," he said. "That's the channel by which everything from up south enters Sheltering Hand. There's a North Tickle, too, around at the other end of the island. The island," he went on, "is long and narrow and has a crook in it, and as it shuts out the sea, and makes the harbour perfectly safe, is called God's Elbow. Off there," he pointed to an ugly reef of jagged rocks lying ahead and well to the right, "off there's the Rim o' Hell, and in here, just to our left—we'll pass quite close to them going in—those columns

Sheltering Hand Harbour 31

and pillars off from the bluff, that's Satan's Teeth. The black horn of rock half-way to the Rim o' Hell is the Devil's Hoof. You'll need to get familiar with these," he laughed, "if you're going to navigate the Labrador."

"The peak there"—he pointed to a towering pinnacle of rock that shot up to a tremendous height—"that peak that runs up from the crook of God's Elbow, that's the look-out for vessels coming and going; that's the Mizzen Tops'il. You'll hear of that often. And, by the way, there's some one on it now. Wouldn't be surprised if it isn't Uncle Davy Joy, and Li'l' Jimmie, watching, and likely wondering what's happened to me."

The boat sped on toward the shining opening. The sea was windless, but the long slow ground swell was sending the white water hissing back and forth through Satan's Teeth. As they sped past these, Parson John saw Boy Number Nine was looking closely at the ugly rocks.

"Not very hospitable looking, eh?" said Parson John.

Boy Number Nine turned and looked more critically.

"Anybody ever hit them?" he asked.

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Parson John laughed.

"Perhaps," he said. "Perhaps. But if anybody ever did he'd get small sympathy in Sheltering Hand, they're so dead easy to escape. Lots of room, they always make a noise, and the current's off, not on."

But Parson John's eyes were on the Mizzen Tops'il rather than on Satan's Teeth.

"It's Uncle Davy, all right, and Li'l' Jimmie. They've probably been there half the afternoon watching for me. Yes, they're coming down now toward the landing-stage to meet us."

The boat sped through the tickle, and Boy Number Nine found himself face to face with a new world. The harbour was probably a mile in length by less than a half in width. It could be seen at a glance that it was a rare and kindly haven of refuge. The long island, like a bent human arm, high and rugged on the seaward side, but sloping gently to the water toward the harbour, fended it securely from the roaring north, north-east, and easterly gales. The high hill to the westward caught the winds that came racing from the interminable wastes behind, and shot them out over the harbour,

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without ruffling its waters, to roar about the Mizzen Tops'il, and then rage off seaward. A high promontory to the south, slithering irregularly down to the sea and ending in Satan's Teeth, took care of any fog that might, on occasions, choose to float up from that quarter, by shooting it skyward, while to the northward, making the inner line of the North Tickle, and providing picturesque variety, its outer tip running to within a few rods of the northern end of God's Elbow, was a towering cliff of grey rock, barren and unscaleable. This broke the power and took the sting out of snowstorms from the north.

Considered, therefore, from any standpoint, Sheltering Hand was wisely named. It was a cosy and kindly nook, a true haven of safety in a wilderness of reefs, rocks, and cliffs; and it is not to be wondered at that hundreds of skippers of little Fore-and-Afters and Hook-and-Line men innumerable breathed prayers of thanks and sighs of relief, when, with a rising sea and a snapping gale at their heels, they shot through the narrow tickle at the north, or flashed past the white water swishing savagely through Satan's Teeth at the south. And

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inside there were stretches of kindly beach, natural landing-stages, ideal sites for numerous "fish flakes," on which the split cod were dried in the sun; and, in the whole expanse of enclosed water, there was not a rock, reef, or shoal. Naturally Sheltering Hand Harbour had made its appeal. It was proud of itself. So shielded and fended was it, that, unlike most of the coastal harbours, it was habitable in winter as well as in summer.

As they ran through the tickle, Boy Number Nine surveyed it all with silent interest. He noticed that most of the houses were on the island side of the harbour. Neat, white, and trim, facing the sunshine, their backs to the giant cliff that broke the nor'easters, scattered like goats on a hillside, were the homes of the people. Paths trailed hither and thither among them, winding about bits of green, around giant boulders, or across reaches of gravel. These, he noticed, like the threads in the spider's web, led to a common centre—down where at the middle of the island, and at the foot of the slope, the land and the water of the harbour met. At this point the buildings were bunched. Here stood the Company store, and here, it

Sheltering Hand Harbour 35

was evident, the business of the community was done. Here, also, was the landing-stage, the real point of contact between Sheltering Hand and the outer world.

The coming of the " Saint Martha " having been announced from the Mizzen Tops'il, a considerable crowd had gathered. Women, children, and old men greatly predominated: for, on the Labrador, in midsummer, the young men and the strong men, the bread-winners and the fathers of families, are not likely to be hanging about landing-stages waiting for incoming boats. It was the old men, " past their labour," the crippled and broken, the little boys and little girls, the women and maids, mainly, who had gathered to meet the missionary. And they met him with a familiarity and joyousness that was amazing.

Uncle Davy was the first to grasp his hand. And Boy Number Nine noticed that a certain deference was paid to the broad-shouldered, bent, weather-beaten old man designated Uncle Davy. Even Mr. MacKenzie, the manager of the Company store, stepped aside for Uncle Davy. He was given the centre of the landing-stage, as the boat drew up. No one welcomed

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Parson John till Uncle Davy had done so ; no one shoved, or shouldered Uncle Davy, and no one seemed impatient as he shook the missionary's hand for a long time.

“ You've come home again, Parson John,” his old, faded blue eyes peering from under his shaggy brows, “ you've come home again ; an' we's all tremendous glad t'see yeh. We's needin' ye, bad. There's been terrible goin's on,” he said solemnly, “ since you left here two months ago, swearin'—drinkin'—dancin', 'n everything.”

Though the majority of those behind him remained sober-faced, Boy Number Nine detected merriment in the eyes, and on the faces, of many. A few giggled audibly.

The old man went on.

“ They's goin' to do it, Parson John, sure, if they's able this fall, they says. They's goin' t'drive yeh off the coast, if it kin be done. Tom Badd's sworn to do it, and most all who likes the liquor's standin' with him. I'm afraid, Parson John, that—— ”

“ Afraid nothing, Uncle Davy,” Parson John ejaculated cheerfully. “ Why, I've got the Lord and you, and all the good people of Sheltering

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Hand, and the whole coast with me ; and then now, in addition as a helper to go with me everywhere, I've this husky young fellow as assistant, and this fine young lady to teach school."

He turned round and pulled Boy Number Nine up toward the old man.

"He got a knock on the head and seems to have forgotten his name," he laughed, "but he's got a number, and, and he's a good fellow. I picked him up fighting with a few thousand sea-gulls up the coast this afternoon, and I brought him along."

Uncle Davy put out a monstrous, broad, brown old hand.

"Y're welcome, b'y, t'th' Labrador," he said. Then his face lit up. "Don't ye think Shelterin' Han's a fine harbour?" he questioned, with enthusiasm.

"Uncle Davy's the man who knows where to find the fish," Parson John commented, for the edification of Number Nine. "There never was any one like him for that." Then, raising his voice so as to be heard over the whole landing-stage, "This is Miss Undle, the teacher for the new school, from New-

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foundland, and this is Boy Number Nine, my new assistant in the work on the coast. I hope you'll give them both a welcome, and a cheer."

The harbour rang in response to the appeal. Just as the sound died Archie Hammond, Mr. MacKenzie's single clerk in the Company store, pushed his way to the front of the landing-stage.

"Archie, just a minute," called Parson John.

In a moment a smart young man, of about twenty-two years of age, neatly dressed in a tweed suit—and with the exception of Mr. MacKenzie's it was the only one to be seen in the crowd—was beside the boat.

"Help Miss Undle ashore, Archie."

Miss Undle was of average height; she was neatly and efficiently dressed, and in her way, especially on that lone coast, she was picturesque and appealing. She was to play her part. But not quite the part intended for her by Parson John.

"She's to stay with Mrs. MacKenzie—for the present," Parson John said to Archie Hammond as he passed her suit case from the deck of the "Saint Martha" to the care of that young man. "You'll see that she gets there safely, Archie."

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"Yes, sir," Archie said promptly, an appealing and disconcerting flash of white teeth catching his eye, even as he spoke.

With Miss Undle disposed of, a spirit of greater freedom began to prevail. A dozen boys at once began calling loudly to Old Chum ; and dogs innumerable—Eskimo dogs, wolf dogs, curs of all grades, and crosses, and colours, for a time drowned all other sounds in a confused medley of barking, yelping and snarling in the direction of the solid and imperturbable, but superior specimen of their kind on the motor-boat. Finally, after much shouting on the part of the men and boys, and much clouting of boisterous wolfish curs on the head, quiet was restored.

Then Boy Number Nine came ashore. He had scarce touched the landing-stage when he was confronted by a small, wiry boy of probably eight years.

He was sharp-chinned, thin-faced, and, though red-haired, he had deep, eager brown eyes. While the lad could not be called a cripple he looked like a child who had suffered. His right leg was shrunken from the knee to the ankle. He limped considerably when he walked ; and he carried a small crutch.

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He pushed himself directly in front of Boy Number Nine.

"I's Li'l' Jimmie," he piped. "Dog bited me when I vus small, so I's lame. I's Uncle Davy's gran'son, an' lives wit' him, 'long wit' Charlie Mucko, and Mary the Maid ; an'—an'—I's not afraid uv the sea," he finished with little regard for what he had previously been saying, and looked sharply into Boy Number Nine's face.

"You's not afraid uv the sea, nuther, is you ? You mustn't be afraid uv the sea here or, or, it'll cotch you ; an'—an' nobody'd respect you. Donny Blunt was afraid uv the sea, an' it cotched 'im. But Uncle Davy's not afraid uv the sea, an' Parson John's not afraid uv the sea, an'—an'," he doubled up his small brown fist and shook it in the direction of the tickle to the south—"an' ecod, I's not afraid uv the sea, nuther."

There was a burst of laughter, which Boy Number Nine did not understand. But Parson John understood.

"He's picked it up," he said.

A stout, strong maid pushed to the front and pulled Li'l' Jimmie away. "You've got to stop that swearin', Li'l' Jimmie," she snapped.

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That evening Parson John preached. The sermon was about Jesus walking on the sea. It was evident to Boy Number Nine that a deep impression was being made upon many of the hearers as Parson John proceeded : and Parson John, it was obvious, was no ordinary preacher. Uncle Davy, and a few others of the older men, interjected vigorous “ Amens ! ” A few of the women, especially when reference was made to the cruelty of the sea, broke into sobs and hid their faces. Many hymns were sung, always led by Miss Undle, and there were obvious evidences of deep religious feeling. The meeting was pronounced a marked success. At its close, Parson John, accompanied by his new assistant, repaired to the home of Uncle Davy to spend the night.

Parson John, it should be said, in so far as he had a home anywhere, lived at Sheltering Hand. It was as near the centre of his wide-flung parish as any other harbour on the coast. Winter and summer alike it had a considerable population. Here the missionary, through strenuous efforts, had made a start on converting an old fish house into a church ; and had built a two-room shack, mainly with his own hands, and the assistance

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of Uncle Davy and Li'l' Jimmie, for himself to live in when he was not ranging the coast, in summer with his motor-boat or in winter on a komatik, or long dog-sled, on the ice.

The joy of Li'l' Jimmie over the discovery of Boy Number Nine—and it was only as the evening wore on into the night that he discovered him fully—was boundless. His crutch forgotten, his deep brown eyes sparkling, his hunger for news of the great world that lay beyond Satan's Teeth and the Rim o' Hell, keen upon him, he listened to the tale of the fight with the gulls, of the London Home, of the London slums, and fights, and strange, appealing, appalling life beyond Sheltering Hand.

“ But you's not afraid UV THE SEA,” he would interject now and then with emphasis. Then he would settle himself for more.

Once, in a little lull, he turned to the silent Eskimo boy, who, as already intimated, made up part of Uncle Davy's home.

“ Charlie Mucko great shot—and great in a boat, an' on t' ice with dogs,” he said. “ Mary the Maid fine scrubber—an' cook,” he added, glancing in the direction of the stout fifteen-year-

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old girl who represented the gentler sex in the home.

That young lady, being thus brought more directly into the limelight, at once rose and announced that it was long past the time when Li'l' Jimmie should be in the cock-loft, asleep.

Meantime Parson John and Uncle Davy, in another corner of the single, great, bare room, were in deep and earnest conversation. Uncle Davy, it may be said, was the chief pillar in Parson John's church, if indeed his "cause" at Sheltering Hand, or, for that matter anywhere on the long, sombre coast, could be dignified by the name of church. There were a few deeply, emotionally religious men scattered up and down the great barren shore; there were many women, born "up South" in Newfoundland, some of the older ones even in England or Scotland, to whom a church, and religious traditions, at any rate, made some appeal. But for the great mass of men, for the strong men and the young men who went "t' the ice" in March for seals, to the "traps" in summer for cod, to the white wastes behind on "furring" expeditions in winter—to the real factors, and to the main players in the great drama of

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life “down North” on the bleak and lone Labrador—to these, though few were openly infidel or reprobate, and practically all believed in God and His power, and in fate and destiny, and in heaven and hell; to the vast majority of these, the sweeping moral-uplift-programme of church, and school, and of Parson John, made little appeal.

While averse from thieving, on principle, they were not up to the point of joining heartily with the Parson in cleaning out the thieves. When they planned a journey, went on a voyage, embarked on any enterprise, they said concerning the success or failure of it, touching life or death for themselves, “Oh, that’s God’s business!” So they did not bother greatly about thieves or thieving, drinking or drunkards. They left almost everything to God.

It was this that gave Parson John, strange though it may seem, his greatest anxiety and sometimes his most dramatic and memorable experiences. It was this phase of the life that lay about them that he was discussing with Uncle Davy.

“Tom Badd has got to confess he scuttled the ‘Whiskaway,’ and quit selling rum at

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Never-Go-By, or get out. He's got to confess, too, in a public meeting, a church service, when I come back from my trip up Wilderness Inlet. These are my terms—the least the Scripture demands, and the least I'll accept."

Uncle Davy looked straight into Parson John's flashing blue eyes. A look of strange courage spread over his seamed old face.

"I's with yeh, Parson John, so's all in my house ; but, but I's not so sure that——"

Parson John broke in firmly.

"Over trifles"—he spoke in measured and deliberate tones—"over trifles, I never squabble or scrap with anybody. Life's too short for that ; but over principles, over big issues like this I'll never yield. I'll fight to the death. Jesus would do it, and so with His help will I."

Out on the landing-stage in front of the Company store, grouped about a lantern, the catch of the day looked after, a group of Hook-and-Line men, the last to come in from the fishing grounds that lay well off from the Rim o' Hell, were talking.

"She've hit the berg, stove in her fore-foot, backed off an' dove like a gull, takin' everything

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an' everybody but the boy with her," Tom Pottle announced.

And as Tom Pottle had been to Spanish ports his opinion counted. Nearly everybody agreed with him, except Oliver Tall.

"She be still afloat, I 'low," he maintained doggedly. "The chap may have been swept off with a big sea an' thought it was a wreck. My word is ye'll hear o' that vessel again."

After a pause somebody said—

"Parson's back."

"Yes, he's back for a time."

Though the light of the lantern did not carry to where he sat, everybody knew the voice of Infidel Ike Lunt.

When Tom Badd came up from Never-Go-By to Sheltering Hand, he always stayed with Infidel Ike Lunt.

"And he's a girl with him frum Newf'un'-lan'."

"Huh!" grunted Infidel Ike Lunt.

CHAPTER III

LOST IN THE FOG

THE next morning found Sheltering Hand Harbour throbbing with life. It was mid-August, and the clean, resplendent Labrador summer was barely past flood-tide. Breakfast was over early in the humble home of Uncle Davy, and the regular dwellers there, as well as the strangers who had come in from the sea on the previous evening, were soon playing their respective parts in the community's life.

"We'll go t' th' Mizzen Tops'il," proposed Li'l' Jimmie as soon as prayers were over; "so's yeh c'n see things."

Boy Number Nine, Charlie Mucko—the broad-faced, wide-nosed Eskimo boy of nineteen—and Li'l' Jimmie were soon on their way up the great tower-like, coastal look-out. The view from its top was magnificent. The Rim o' Hell out in front and the Devil's Hoof seemed

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to lie almost at the boys' feet. The white water, swishing through Satan's Teeth, looked like an easy stone's-throw to the right, and the harbour appeared to invite an attempt to jump across it. There was also an excellent view of the full, broad river, which wound its way down from the interminable waste of woods, and flowed into the western corner of the harbour. The river was of great value to the people, as it afforded them a line of travel from the coasts where they fished in summer, and dwelt in the clinging white cottages, as they were doing now, and the sheltering woods far back, where, with an abundance of fuel, and hidden from the raging winds of the ocean, they hunted, living the while in "tilts" or camps, constructed of logs, lined with boughs and roofed with bark.

Li'l Jimmie looked for a long time in the direction from which the river flowed.

"It's awful in there," he said. "Men freezes, an' starves in there; an' there's wolves, an' panthers, an' Injuns, an' everythin'. Ye best not go in there till yer mighty strong an' tough"; he added, looking solemnly at Boy Number Nine. "I's afraid o' in there, but," he swung around till he faced the far-flung sea,

glittering and dancing in the morning sunshine, "but," and he shook his small fist out over it, "I's not afraid uv the sea; an' Uncle Davy's not afraid uv the sea, an' Parson John's not afraid uv the sea, an'—an' Jesus not afraid uv the sea, cos Parson John sid He walked on't. Sid it las' night too, he did."

The boys remained for a long time on the look-out. Then Li'l' Jimmie proposed that they go down and get a boat.

"Ye kin have big fun in a boat," he confided to Boy Number Nine as he hobbled along between the two larger boys.

Meanwhile Parson John had been rapidly getting hold of the threads of his varied and wide-spreading work. He had not come to the Labrador to mope and dream and study; to watch daily from headlands for the return of the mail-boat, and to count the days when the term of his stay, fixed by his mission board, would expire, and he could be off again to join his class in college. Parson John was through with college: and he had seen a vision and heard a call. This had come to him one evening just after his graduation. In a little English country town he had drifted into a meeting

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where he had heard a doctor talk of the needs of the Labrador. That had been his call. He had graduated with high honours from a great English University, and he had rowed stroke oar in the winning boat in his senior year. But the call and the vision had taken him to the Labrador. And to the Labrador he had come with a physical constitution, and a social and religious programme quite different from that of any of his predecessors. His programme made him the busiest man in the place. He was at work on it early the morning after his return to Sheltering Hand.

“First, now, Uncle Davy, who’s sick, and needing a call, and a word of comfort?” he asked.

The old man went over a list of the physical Down-and-Outs.

“There’s Aunt Julia Squires, she’s most gone, I’m feared. Doctor can’t help none, it’s the heart. She’s turrible discouraged. She’s wantin’ t’ see yeh, bad. Says no one else does her any good. She kin read her Bible, an’ pray, an’ has religion; still, she’s been longin’ fer yeh t’ git back.

“Then there’s Skipper George Runn. He’s

had a stroke. He's in a bad way. An' now you know Skipper George, Parson John. Waal, Skipper George, ye'll hef t' see Skipper George, Parson John. Skipper George's knocked about a lot, seen a lot, an' been through a lot. But Skipper George was one as never took much t' religion. He's thinkin' now, though; thinkin' deep. I's t' see un Sunday, an' while un can't talk very well on account o' th' stroke, un says to me, an' I was thinkin' un was thinkin' deep w'en un said it: 'Uncle Davy,' un said t' me, 'Uncle Davy, I's stood me watch.' Then un looked at me kin' o' solemn an' serious, *fer him.*"

He paused a moment.

"Ye'll see Skipper George, soon, Parson John."

He enumerated a large number of others. Mrs. Pottle's lung trouble was much worse, The cancer was surely winning over Steve Trundle. Abe Hanson was no better, and was not likely to be. "Mountaineer" Mike had turned yellow, and lost flesh; and all the doctor had done was to look serious, shake his head, and tell him not to count on any "furrin' " trip this winter. The Hardy girls were going

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out on sunny days only, and coughed terribly. The doctor had said the climate was against the Hardy girls.

“It’ll take ye quite a while, Parson John,” Uncle Davy finished, “t’ see all as is needin’ yeh.”

He stopped again.

“You’ve a great job, Parson John, th’ greatest job in all the world.” Then he added very slowly: “There’s a whole lot the doctor can’t do fer we—much as un ’u’d like to help.”

Before he did anything else Parson John made the round of his sick parishioners; for, modern parson though he was, and determined though he was to bring in a new social order, Parson John held rigidly to the conventional practice of dealing pointedly, searchingly, and individually with the needs of men’s souls. Where he found religion in possession of the citadel, as he did in the case of Aunt Julia Squires, he strengthened its hold, as best he could; and without exception he left the old lady upon the mountain tops of faith. Mrs. Pottle, Mountaineer Mike—and a cloud of ominous black hung over the life of the man who hunted, *and lived with the Mountaineer Indians*,

it was said in whispers—Steve Trundle, Abe Hanson, the Hardy girls, Skipper George—none of them escaped his keen, practical, and searching spiritual clinics. He never minced matters, or spoke with uncertainty.

Visiting Skipper George, he said: “You must repent, and believe, and be baptized, Skipper George, or you’ll die in your sins, and be lost. There’ll be nothing else for you. It’s all as plain as day, as sure as fate.”

Then he swung to the mercy side of the Gospel.

“The City’s four-square, and there’s twelve gates, three facing every point of the compass,” he exulted with an enthusiasm that was amazing, and of course contagious; “and from all the points, north, south, east, west, they can come to sit down in the Kingdom of God.”

It was only in the case of the sons of perdition that Parson John failed to impress. On the whole coast he became a light-bringer. His feet became beautiful upon the mountains; for he said to the Labrador—and he said it in a new and in a more human way than it had ever been said before—thy God reigneth: and he brought beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for

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mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, to innumerable souls that had pined in darkness, or sat under the shadow and dwelt in the fear of death.

The doctor did great things on the Labrador, for the bones and the bodies of men: Parson John came in as the healer of the wounds of the people's hearts. The one dealt with the physical and the passing: the other with the abiding and eternal. Both were sorely needed. There was no conflict between them. Their dog-teams met in winter; their motor-boats, or punts, in summer; and they hailed each other as co-workers, as brothers. To neither of them was the wage, or the reward, of consequence—only the need, and the call, and the love of man and of God, counted. But their spheres were different. The doctor realized this. Parson John realized this. Skipper George realized this. And he listened with apparent interest and attention. Then he looked into Parson John's eager, expectant face.

"I's stood me watch," he said; "an'—an' I's been a turrible joker." In a moment again he mumbled: "I's stood me watch."

Was it the glimmerings of long-delayed

spiritual renewal? Uncle Davy had hoped so.

“ I’s six and seventy.”

“ You’re getting on, Skipper George.”

He was getting on.

Parson John looked at the grey, twisted, seamed old face. And it was not to be wondered at that Skipper George’s face was grey, and seamed, and twisted. For sixty summers he had fished, as Hook-and-Line man, out of Sheltering Hand Harbour; and for a like number of winters he had tramped the white wastes of interminable woods behind for fur. Innumerable nights in “ snow holes,” with the temperature sixty below; peering into black fog, thick and impenetrable, for rocks, or squinting on miles of ice blazing in the March sunshine, looking for trouble; pounding through leagues of freezing smother on the black sea; standing watch all night on little thirty-ton ships, with the deck awash, and the nor’easter whipping the sleet into the eyes to the tune of a forty-mile gale; snowstorms of incredible ferocity; drifting on wave-washed, tempest-driven ice-pans; wearing and ageing trips coastward over miles of “ raftered ” ice in the

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face of roaring blizzards from the west—they had all registered, during the sixty years, in the face of Skipper George. So it was no marvel that the face was grey and seamed and twisted.

Skipper George closed his eyes.

“Mm-meh,” he said.

Parson John sat in silence.

Presently the old man turned his face toward him.

“I’s jist a old codger,” he began, hitching his head a little forward on the pillow; “I’s jist a old codger. I’s gittin’ on. I’s stood me watch, an’ I’s needin’ a blink o’ sleep. Doctor can’t do nuthin’. No, much as he’d like to; an’ ”—a semblance of a grin played about his drawn, twisted old mouth—“an’ Parson John, ’twoud’n’t be reason to ’spect even a doctor to make a old codger young again, would it? So, so, Parson, I’s headin’ in, fast. I’s on me last run; an’ I’s been wonderin’ since you was speakin’ if, when I’s knocked up agin’ the coast, as I’s sure t’ be some black night, I’s wonderin’ whether I’d strike one uv them gates as you was sayin’, faced every-which way. I was wonderin’, Parson, wonderin’ whether I’d hit the tickle



A WALL OF BLACK FOG WAS ROLLING UP FROM THE SOUTH.

an' git into harbour, or mebbly go t' smash on Satan's Teeth ! ”

“ ‘ I am the door,’ Jesus said,” commented Parson John.

“ Mm-meh ! ” Skipper George said. “ Mm-meh ! ”

Then he sank back as though tired, and in need of rest.

Presently his hand twitched, his bleared old eyes opened, and a look of obvious anxiety spread over his face. He raised his head, peering toward the window and listening intently.

“ Ain't that wind ? Ain't the weather comin' on, an' the fog ? ”

Parson John started. He rose quickly and opened the door. He stepped out. By a strange instinct the broken old man of the sea had sensed what was happening. The sun was shut out ; there was a chill in the air ; and a glance through the South Tickle showed that a wall of black fog was rolling up from the south.

It caught the three boys—Charlie Mucko, Li'l' Jimmie and Number Nine—fully two miles off shore. On the suggestion of Li'l' Jimmie,

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in the calm and glory of the morning, after coming from the Mizzen Tops'il, they had rowed off to Gull's Egg Island.

And they had been late starting for home.

The first thing that had attracted the attention of the boys to the weather had been a low mutter of thunder in the north-east. Then a thick, yellow mist had crept up the coast from the south. One after another the headlands had disappeared. Before the boys had covered half the distance from Gull's Egg Island to the harbour, trouble was certain.

"It's goin' t' be thick," Li'l' Jimmie said.

"An' weather comin' on," Charlie Mucko added.

The fog thickened rapidly. The Rim o' Hell disappeared. Satan's Teeth disappeared. The Devil's Hoof disappeared. The Mizzen Tops'il disappeared. Everything disappeared. And there was a faint stirring in the air.

Now, on the Labrador, men are not afraid of the sea: and boys are not afraid of the sea. They love the sea, and praise it, and glory in it. But they do not like fog. Nobody likes fog. The coast is a fearsome, evil coast, and, including bays and inlets, there are a thousand miles of

it. There are men who know it all—from Red Bay to Chidley—its jagged reefs, black headlands, lurking shoals, racing tide-ripps, treacherous tickles. But they do not know it in a fog. It is the fog that wrecks the ships, cheats the graveyards, sets the boldest and the wisest shivering in their sea-boots, and most surely confounds the wits and exhausts the resources of the men of the coast. They don't like running by guess, or steering by an echo. They know there are no fog-horns to moo out warnings, no guns to thunder out the location of trouble ; they know—and it is a proverb on the coast—that “there's no chart for icebergs.” The men of the Labrador revel in the wind, in the flowing sea ; and they love every crooked mile of the coast whether white and silent as in winter, or frothy and noisy as in summer ; but the fear of fog works its way into the bones. The profane swear more viciously, and the devout pray more fervently, when a fog comes in than at any other time.

“I's not afraid uv the sea,” Li'l' Jimmie said. “But I's doesn't like this fog.”

The punt was not a large one. It was without sail ; and of course without compass.

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It was not a Hook-and-Line fishing punt ; it was one of the small, light type of boat called a "rodney" ; and it was used mainly for shooting about the harbour, or on sealing trips, when, owing to its lightness, it could be picked up and carried over the ice-pans from one lane of water to another. Naturally it was not a rough-water boat. It would be helpless in a lippy sea, the boys knew.

"Me'll take both the oars," Charlie Mucko said.

It was natural that the Eskimo boy should assume the leadership. Born of a race inured to fighting a ceaseless battle with nature, the Eskimo boy was the logical captain of the little ship which, by this time, was fast becoming enveloped in the thickening mist. He at once assumed his responsibility, and Li'l' Jimmie and Boy Number Nine, with equal promptness, accepted his leadership. It was reassuring to see that his dark, stolid face, and his smooth, deep black eyes, showed not the slightest trace of anxiety or emotion.

"Charlie'll take us in, somehow" ; Li'l' Jimmie volunteered with only the slightest hint of doubtfulness in his voice. "An' you won't

go an' get scart, even if it do blow, will yeh ? ” he said, addressing Number Nine.

“ No ! ” Number Nine said.

“ No ! ” repeated Li'l' Jimmie confidently. Then he broke out in a tone that had a half challenge in it.

“ I's not afraid—uv—uv the *fog*, when Charlie Mucko's along.”

The punt sped on, the fog thickening, Li'l' Jimmie in the bow, Number Nine in the stern, the Eskimo boy in the middle pulling doggedly at the oars. The sea was still flat, the faint stir in the air not yet registering on the water. Boy Number Nine could not help noting with a kind of envy the strong and pendulum-like strokes of the sombre-faced boy at the oars.

On and on they went, steadily, smoothly, strongly, into the mist, the fog-wall coming closer, the face of the sea growing momentarily darker, a chill creeping into the stirring air. As is so often the case on the Labrador, there was nothing for the little boy in the bow, and the large boy in the stern of the punt to do, but wait, in silence. Of course there are occasions when fighting is necessary ; when the goal of

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safety lies at the end of a road which calls for the most stupendous and courageous activity, and when to sit still means death. But it is not always thus. When the ice-pan drifts to sea with the sealing crew on it ; when the storm comes down on the barrens, or the woods, with the hunters in the lea of a rock, or in the tilt ; when the fish do not come ; when the disease will not yield ; when the tiny ship is driven helpless in the grip of the gale ; while the long night holds, or the winter, or the smother of snow continues to fall—then, and on a thousand other occasions for the man on the Labrador there is nothing to do but wait. That is what Li'l Jimmie and Boy Number Nine did—for a long time.

Presently Charlie stopped rowing.

“ W’at’s you steerin’ by, Charlie ? ” Li'l Jimmie questioned ; and it was evident from the tone that doubt was invading the small mind ; “ an’ w’at’s you stoppin’ fer ? ”

There was another mutter of thunder. It was louder, obviously nearer, plainly more menacing. And a little whiff of wind raced over the punt and on into the wall of fog ahead.

The Eskimo boy’s face perceptibly

brightened. Li'l Jimmie's and Number Nine's fell.

“ Good ! ” said Charlie eagerly. “ Good ! ”

He swung the punt's head sharply around, and settled again to his former strong, telling stroke.

“ Ye've changed yer course,” commented Jimmie ; “ an' you's bearin' too far t' th' sou'east.”

Charlie made no reply. He pulled doggedly. The punt sped on. It was now so thick that Number Nine could see Li'l Jimmie only dimly, and in outline. Being much closer to the Eskimo boy he could make out the features of his face. It was not perturbed in the least. Why it was not, puzzled Number Nine. Surely there was imminent danger. And what was the good of rowing with nothing to guide ? Might they not be heading seaward, up the coast or down, for a rock, or a reef, or an iceberg ? Then it was going to blow. By the feel of the air, by the whisp of wind, by all the known signs it was going to blow. And the rodney would be but a cockle-shell in the lop. But the face of the Eskimo boy was placid, unperturbed ; it wore a look—if indeed it was not a wholly

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illegible face—of confidence and security. And, stranger than all, another loud rumble of thunder, plainly increased the look, and there was now no mistaking it, it was a look of quiet fearlessness and mastery.

Boy Number Nine was plainly puzzled. But he had been long enough on the Labrador, brief as his time there had been, to have learned to wait in silence. And as it fell out he had to wait but a brief time. From the hidden bow of the punt he heard the sound of cackling, hilarious laughter. It was Li'l' Jimmie.

"We's in the tickle," he ejaculated; "we's in the tickle—an'—an'—you's been steerin' by t' t'under, in the nor'east o' course, Charlie! Hasn't yeh?"

The fishing punts came racing in from the Hook-and-Line grounds. Some of them came in by the South Tickle, some by the North. But they all came in.

"It's t' good Lard as does it," Uncle Davy said. "It's t' good Lard as made t' harbours for we, an' sends t' fish, an' t' swiles, as sends t' thunder t' steer by. It's t' good Lard as does it all for we."

That evening it fell gloriously calm, and

Archie Hammond took Miss Undle for a row on the harbour. That night, with the three boys again in the cock-loft, reviewing the events of the day and planning achievements for the future, Uncle Davy and Parson John talked till it was late.

“I’ve seen them all now,” Parson John said ; “I’ve seen and talked to, and prayed with all who need me here. I must be getting on now. The coast’s long and the summer’s short. I must be getting on.”

“You seed Skipper George ? ”

“Yes.”

“An’ you’ll see Tom Badd at Never-Go-By ? ”

“I’ll see Tom Badd at Never-Go-By. Yes.”

CHAPTER IV

“UP THE BOTTOM”

NEVER-GO-BY and Sheltering Hand are separated by a sixty-mile stretch of harbourless shore. It is necessary to look well to the weather before you leave one for the other. It is on this part of the coast that the nor'easter has everything its own way: for there is not a fending island, not a welcoming haven, not a river-mouth, or a tickle, or a yard of beach on the whole, bleak, black, frowning sixty miles. Jutting, horn-like capes; beetling cliffs; crooked, jagged off-shore reefs; towering promontories; black wave-washed, unscaleable walls of rock there are a-plenty; but coves there are none, harbours there are none, and mercy there is none.

It is called “The Bone Yard.”

It is not a kindly coast anywhere from Red Bay, where you look across the Straits of Belle Isle to Newfoundland, to Cape Chidley, a

thousand miles north, where you swing into Hudson's Bay, but the Bone Yard is the unkindest, the most fearsome and evil stretch of all. It is in making the run from Sheltering Hand to Never-Go-By that craft give the coast the widest berth.

“Off the Bone Yard ye don't catch me foolin' with no land,” skippers explain if you ask them regarding the first sixty miles of their course northward from the Rim o' Hell.

Parson John arrived safely at Never-Go-By. He had Number Nine and Charlie Mucko, and Old Chum, with him. Li'l' Jimmie had been reluctantly left behind because of the space limitations of the “Saint Martha” and the well-known dangers of even a summer voyage to Wilderness Inlet by motor-boat. Parson John made his usual round of visits, then he called on Tom Badd.

Tom Badd had blown into Never-Go-By on the “Whiskaway,” all alone, three years previously. The place suited him admirably. He bought a tumble-down old fish house and fitted it up as a saloon, for he knew that with the sixty miles of harbourless shore to the south, with the next land to the north more than fifty miles

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away across the mouth of the inlet, and with scattered settlers all the way to Mud Lake, more than a hundred miles "up the Bottom" of the great fiord, with this the situation, and with the significance of the name of the place fully apprehended, he knew he might settle down to do business. And trade prospered. It came from "up south," and "down north." It came from the Hook-and-Line grounds, from the great cod "trap" grounds far to the nor'east; from up the Bottom, from the Eskimos, from the Indians, from everywhere. And Tom Badd saw visions of becoming vastly rich.

Nobody denied that Tom Badd was a wicked man. Everybody knew that his proper place was, at least, in the penitentiary at St. John's. Not a few believed that on three occasions anyway, before he had been driven off the French Shore of Newfoundland, he should have been hanged. In addition to being bad, he was able. He could commit a crime—everybody would be sure he had committed the crime—but it could never be *proven* against him. He could always cover his tracks. More than once he had left court with his tongue in his cheek, and a leer of cynical triumph on his evil face.

He had fooled shrewd Scotch wholesale dealers out of cargoes of rum, he had pulled the wool over the eyes of clever lawyers and smart insurance men in St. John's, and, as for the simpler and more unsophisticated folk of the “down north” country, naturally, he did as he liked with most of them.

Personally and physically, the man appeared to bad advantage. He was bald, blear-eyed, and red-faced. He was probably sixty years of age, was below medium height, and his left leg, which had been broken in a fight with three constables, was badly bowed outward at the knee. But he had good shoulders, a fine chest and magnificent arms, and the tales of the weight of his blows, and of the success of his fistic encounters, were legion.

He had a large stomach, and it was a continual cause for wonder that his legs, neither of them stout, and one of them so badly bowed, bore him up. And it was known that, on occasions when necessity required, he could move with wonderful celerity and lightness. It was known, too, that he had marvellous powers of endurance; that he could strike like lightning, and with the force of a trip-hammer, and

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as for scuttling out of the way when his blow was delivered, no rat could excel him. Newfoundlanders, who knew him in the old French Shore days, added to the local inventory of evil characteristics the information that Tom Badd, when cornered, and with all avenues of escape cut off, was cowardly—*except in a boat*.

Yes, they all admitted it, and it was Tom Badd's single merit, his sole claim upon the regard of the coast; Tom Badd, though an evil man, was brave—*in a boat*. And he was also able. Be it rodney, punt, sloop, schooner, or steamer, Tom Badd was known to be both brave and able on the water. No sea could daunt him. They said he had learned to handle boats, and to master the sea running away from justice and the law. And they withheld from him, to a degree, at any rate, the credit due to him. He had risked the sixty-mile stretch of the Bone Yard in a punt. No one else had done it. He had navigated the entire coast of Newfoundland in a sloop in November, *himself*: a stupendous achievement everybody admitted. But they said he was driven to it: officers of the law were on his trail. They gave him only qualified credit; and when he was first to the

wrecks on the reefs, the coast said it was his thieving instinct for salvage, not his bravery and not to save lives, that took him there.

But, to give the devil his due, as a rule, and on the whole, the men of the coast admitted, when pressed, that Tom Badd was brave, and able, *in a boat*.

“I’m busy,” Tom Badd said when Parson John, after entering his shop, asked for a few words with him in private.

Parson John waited a reasonable time. Tom Badd was still “busy.” Parson John detected a subterfuge. He stepped up to Tom Badd.

“I’ll be back from my trip up the Bottom some time in October. I’ve announced a meeting, a church service, for the evening of the day I get back.”

Then he outlined, as he had done to Uncle Davy, the course he would expect Tom Badd to pursue. “This,” he finished in a firm, level voice, “is the least the Scripture demands. On this much I shall insist, publicly, at the service.”

Tom Badd glanced around. He did not speak for a moment. Then he roared—

“I’ll see you in—in——” he stammered,

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hesitated an instant, then with another glance over his shoulder, with the speed of lightning, and the force of a catapult, he shot his heavy fist straight in the direction of Parson John's face.

Parson John ducked. He made no attempt either at fending or returning the blow. He straightened up, then took a single step backward.

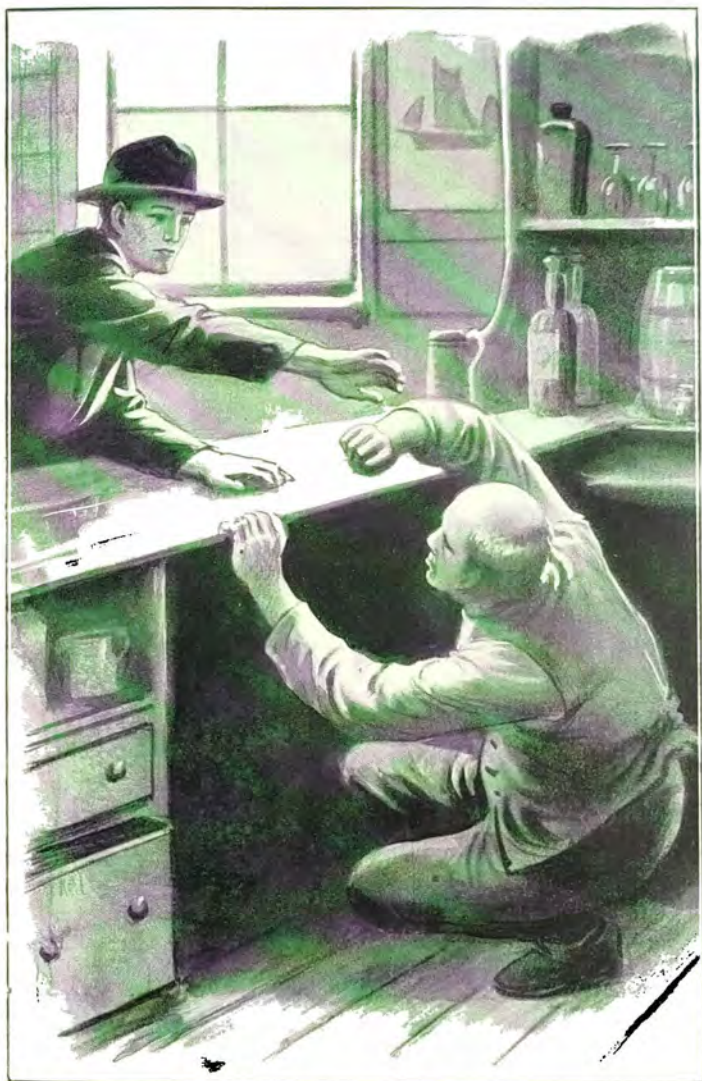
"Oh no!" he smiled blandly. "Oh no!"

Number Nine broke into a laugh. Charlie Mucko's sombre face brightened. Tom Badd, blowing like a whale from passion and exertion, stood behind his counter. He rubbed his stomach, which, owing to the blow having met no resistance, had come into violent contact with the inner edge of the counter.

Presently he broke out—

"I'll see you in—in——" he hesitated again, then seeming to feel that the conventional phrase he had intended to use was in some way inadequate—"an' I'm not going to be bluffed by no——missionary. You get out o' here," he roared.

Parson John had stepped forward. He shot out his long arm, with hand open, and palm extended as though to cover Tom Badd's mouth.



"YOU GET OUT O' HERE," ROARED TOM BODD FROM BENEATH
THE COUNTER.

“Wait!” he said sharply. “No swearing in my presence.”

Tom Badd, expecting a blow, ducked. He was soon safe beneath the shelter of the counter.

“You get out o’ here,” he roared again from beneath.

Parson John tapped the counter.

“Look, Tom,” he said; “I’ll be back here in October——”

“You get out o’ here,” came again from beneath the counter.

“I’ll be back, and I’ll expect you to appear at my meeting and confess that you sunk the ‘Whiskaway’ to get the insurance, and I’ll also expect you to promise, in the presence of all the people, that you’ll quit selling rum at Never-Go-By.”

There was a tremendous uproar under the counter. Tom Badd was thoroughly aroused. He rained several blows upward: and the counter shook. Parson John steadied it.

“I’ll see you in——”

“No swearing, remember.”

“I’d like to see myself confess to——”

“You’ll do it.”

“I’ll never.”

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“ We’ll see.”

“ This is my store—an’—an’—you get out o’ here, or I’ll blow you into—into—— ”

There was a sound as if the speaker were changing his position. His voice, which had risen to an almost unintelligible roar, fell away in pitch and volume, then ceased.

“ I’m in earnest, Tom.”

There was no reply. And there was no sound. Parson John pounded on the counter.

“ You hear me, Tom ? ”

Still no reply came, and no sound. Parson John turned to Charlie Mucko.

“ Go around, Charlie, and see what has happened.”

The Eskimo boy ventured around the end of the counter.

“ He gone ! ” he said simply.

Parson John and Number Nine went around the counter. The Eskimo boy was examining the floor beneath the counter critically.

“ He gone tru de floor ! ” he commented.

The outline of a trap-door could be made out plainly.

“ Open it, Charlie,” Parson John ordered.

Charlie obeyed. The place was black as a coal-pit. It emitted a foul smell. There was absolute silence.

“You there, Tom?”

There was no answer.

“Tom!”

Silence only.

Parson John made a motion with his hand.

“Close it, Charlie.”

The trap-door flipped to its place. Then Parson John broke into a laugh. The boys followed him around the counter, then through the dirty shop into the open air.

“The rat’s in his hole, boys,” he laughed. “But we’ve made our call, done our duty. He knows what’s expected of him. That’s all for this time. We must be getting on now.”

The “Saint Martha” was soon on her way again on her long run up the great inlet. A fresh breeze from the north-east sent the lop flying over her stern. It was just such a breeze as Parson John enjoyed.

“I always like a wind,” he said; “especially when it pushes me along as this does.”

By and by he broke into a laugh.

“That Tom Badd’s a funny fellow,” he

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said. "I do hope we can make him into a decent citizen, and not have to drive him off the coast. That was really funny about the trap-door. He had that all arranged for emergencies. Wonder if he was still in there. We'll have fun, and don't you forget it, boys, when we get back here."

He laughed again, and the wind caught the laugh and seemed to scatter it over the waters of the inlet.

"It's a great job, this of mine, the greatest job in all the world," he said gleefully.

The "Saint Martha" sped on; faster and faster she seemed to go. Old Chum sat as look-out on the fore-deck evidently supremely happy. The great Newfoundland dog played an important part in the work of Parson John. True, he was not a "team dog," as Number Nine soon learned; he was not a "huskie," and there was no wolf in him. But he had qualities of his own. He was trustworthy, wise, and courageous.

"You best not fall down," Li'l' Jimmie had warned Number Nine the first night in the cock-loft of Uncle Davy's home, "you best not fall down when t' dogs is around. They'll

heat yeh hup, 'specially if they's hungry. They's heaten hup a lot. Their fathers wus wolves, ye know," he had finished.

But Old Chum was not of that breed of dog. Gentle blood flowed in his veins. Of course he could fight. When occasion demanded, Old Chum could fight like a lion, could throw snarling, yelping huskies this way and that, even as a cat could toss a mouse in play, but he was not a lover of fighting, as was the average huskie. And he was dependable. Of treachery, sly cunning, deep and deadly deceit, he knew nothing. No charge of blood-guiltiness was ever laid at his door: his tribe passed as blameless.

It was not so with the huskie. With man at his strongest, alertest and best, the huskie was his servant, his helper, often his only hope of life. But let the huskie see a man limp; let him detect an unsteadiness in the step; let him sense weakness, or waning power from any cause whatsoever, let him see a man fall down, then the huskie, almost without exception, was back to the source from which he had sprung: he was a wolf again. Woe, then, to the traveller without knife, or pistol, or axe.

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But with Old Chum, it was when man was down, when he was stricken, when he was at his wits' end, fagged, beaten, half-dead, it was then that Old Chum, and his kind, came to the front. Parson John invariably carried Old Chum along with him on all his summer trips, that he might be sure his boat would be unmolested when he was on shore visiting, preaching, working his job as missionary ; and that, in case of accident to himself, he might have an assistant. And he was aware that Old Chum's speciality was in helping out in coastwise and seashore accidents.

The run up the great inlet was accomplished leisurely. The nature of Parson John's work necessitated many stops. Indeed, wherever a camp or cottage, or group of camps or cottages appeared, there the "Saint Martha" dropped anchor, and a landing was made. Sometimes there was a little nook of a harbour with a few families scattered about it. Sometimes it was a bold, grey, precipice-like rock with a single cottage looking like a bird-house perched on its top. Sometimes it was the mouth of a stream. Again it was the solitary camp of a hunter set in the midst of

interminable reaches of scrubby spruce. Or it might be a man waving from a towering rock. It might be a shout, a flag, a flare or fire by night, a beached boat, a stranded family on the way to Never-Go-By, a few lone Eskimos or an encampment of Indians. But whatever it was, and wherever it showed from the waters of the great inlet that was more than two hundred miles deep and ranged in width from four to thirty miles, there Parson John stopped to ply his trade as missionary. He had nothing for men's bodies, or bones; his panacea was for the hurt of the people's hearts.

It took many days to make the trip. Somebody had a sorrow, and must have comfort and direction. Neighbours had quarrelled, and had to be reconciled. Deep mysteries of the soul, of the spirit world, and of the world to come, as well as of the world that was; why God permitted the bad to prosper, and the good to suffer; why profane hunters caught game, and fish, and had luck, and the godly had none; whence life was and whither it went; what profit there was in goodness, and what pain in badness; it took time to discuss in the vast and lonely solitudes these

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high and appealing themes. And again, some one was sick unto death, and a funeral was but a matter of days. So Parson John's trip was broken, slow, irregular. His ministry was a wayside ministry. But it never occurred to him to think it was less important or less a ministry on that account.

"I don't run by time-table," he would laugh. "The 'Saint Martha' hasn't any sailing dates."

Finally the end of the inlet was reached. Parson John scanned the shore carefully. "I hope Miss Wilton, my teacher here, is all right," he said.

The grandeur of the scenery impressed Number Nine mightily. Compared with the far-flung forests that lay everywhere in sight now, the English woods with which he was familiar seemed like patchy little groves, and measured by the great river that here flowed into the Bottom, the Thames was but a rivulet. But it was not the scenery alone that was to provide interest for the English boy in this unique and remote corner of the earth.

As the "Saint Martha" drew toward the

shore the figures of what seemed to be a large boy and girl could be made out. There was no sign of the teacher, Miss Wilton. The boy and girl were standing side by side, and as the motor-boat drew closer, it could be seen that they held each other by the hand. A look of pleasurable anticipation was plainly written on their broad, brown faces. Charlie Mucko peered toward the couple with unusual interest.

“Huh!” he said, and Number Nine for the first time noted on his sombre face a semblance of a smile.

Parson John laughed.

“I declare,” he said; “it’s Willie Ikie and Tillie Toomashie, the little Eskimo couple. I’d forgotten all about them, but I recall now that when I was here last winter I said I’d marry them when I came in the summer. Here they are, waiting for me, of course.”

He laughed again, hilariously. Then, jumping forward on the fore-deck—

“Hullo, Willie Ikie, hullo Tillie! How are you?” he called.

“We’s here, Parson John, waitin’ fer yeh t’ marry we.”

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"And the Company doesn't object? The boss won't discharge you, Willie?"

"Naw!" He smiled broadly, showing a row of teeth of magnificent whiteness. "Naw! Company glad. Company promise bar'l flour, an' big room for gitten marriety in, an' dance."

Parson John threw up his hands.

"Hurrah!" he said. "That's fine."

Tillie Toomashie smiled, coyly, shyly, appealingly.

The "Saint Martha" nosed into the sand. Parson John leaped ashore.

"You're sure you love each other, Willie," he bantered.

Willie Ikie smiled. Tillie Toomashie smiled. Charlie Mucko smiled. Number Nine laughed outrightly. And for some unknown reason Old Chum, standing bolt on the prow of the "Saint Martha," emitted a thick, friendly, big "Bow-wow."

A few moments later Miss Wilton arrived and was joyfully welcomed by Parson John.

"I've got along finely," she said, "have eleven scholars, and I have decided to stay on till Christmas."

She clapped her hands gleefully when

Parson John announced that he had letters for her from Miss Undle and others.

It was soon arranged that the marriage would be solemnized the following evening in the large cook-house of the single lumber company that had bravely invaded the magnificent forests found at the head of the great inlet. As usual, invitations were sent all about the bay, and far up the river.

Now, as it fell out, it was this that precipitated a crisis at the wedding. As a rule, and it may be stated here as well as elsewhere, when Labrador men go anywhere, their dogs go also. And every settler has, as a rule, from six to ten full-grown huskies, and puppies uncountable. Everybody for miles came to the wedding. The lumber crews came, the livyers, or native Labradormen, came, the Eskimos and Indians came, the old men and the women came, the boys and girls, everybody came. And all the dogs came.

CHAPTER V

WILLIE IKIE AND TILLIE TOOMASHIE

THE ceremony of joining Willie Ikie and Tillie Toomashie in the bonds of holy matrimony began in due form. There was a great crowd present; for the "down north" folk of all classes are not averse, when occasion offers, from availing themselves of an opportunity to laugh and to dance. It is a dreary coast. The storms are fierce, the skies sombre, and it is a land of rock. But there are tiny patches of soil, there are gleams of glorious sun, and an occasional flower blooms. There are bright spots, too, in the life lived there. An Eskimo wedding is invariably one of them. The wide circle about the small, smiling couple that stood in the middle of the great cook-house floor was not a sombre circle. Parson John had to take a firm grip of himself to prevent his inward merriment from showing in his countenance and his voice.

To the first direct question asked him in the ceremony Willie Ikie answered with a grin. Of course everybody laughed. Parson John, assuming great gravity, announced that marriage, being a matter of unusual seriousness, must not be treated with levity.

Willie Ikie grinned again. Tillie Toomashie smiled. She looked at Willie as though for instruction in her part of the ceremony. Finally Willie was got through his part of the ritual. Then Parson John turned himself to the task of leading Tillie Toomashie through the maze of bridal responses. And then, just outside, and where the high ground was close against and on a level with the long row of windows that lit the great room, the dog-fight began.

This was natural. Nothing else could have been expected. The lumbermen, many of them mischievous renegades from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, had expected it. Nobody was surprised at it; and nobody had taken any precautions to prevent it.

Now the Eskimo dog, generally called the "huskie," is a great dog. He has great qualities. Though lacking the weight and size of the Newfoundland or St. Bernard dog and wanting

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also many of their fine virtues, he excels these in powers of endurance. He has fox-like, pointed ears which always stand erect. He is not a small dog, often standing over two feet in height, and frequently weighing a hundred pounds. Harnessed and skilfully driven, with good going and wisely fed, the huskie can cover a hundred miles in a single day. He can endure tremendous cold, can go without food for twelve days, can subsist on less and endure more than any animal known to man. It is this that makes the huskie the factor he is in the life lived down north. On the long lone trail he has no peer. Without him on the Labrador life in winter would be a practical impossibility ; the line of communication with the outer world would be severed ; for it is the huskie that runs on kingly errands with His Majesty's mails for hundreds of miles along the white coasts. It is the huskie that pulls the doctor to his patients and the parson to his parishioners, that drags the wood to the tilt, that brings home the fur and the food from the wood and from the ice, and again and again, often on the floating ice-pan, or in the depths of the woods, when hope of food from all other sources has gone, then the

huskie occasionally is sacrificed that his master may not die of hunger. So the huskie is a great dog. He has many friends and stout defenders—who meet charges of wolfish viciousness and panther-like ferocity with tales of huskie devotion, of heart-moving fidelity, of unshakable attachment to man and his interests.

But, while concerning the huskie and his good qualities there will probably continue to be controversy, on this there is no dispute; friends and enemies of the huskie dog, those who trust and those who hold him in fearsome awe, agree that he loves to fight, and that, secondly, when a fight has once started, with savage unanimity, and regardless of canine kinship, age, infirmity, justice or injustice, all combine against the under dog. He it is they seek, that they may nip, and rend and consume him. In the constant manifestation of this savage trait they disappoint their lovers, and make any complete vindication of huskie character impossible.

It was evident from the outset that the fight would be a great fight. Parson John knew it would be a great fight. And he sought to hurry Tillie Toomashie with the bridal responses. But that smiling and diminutive fragment of woman-

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kind, pleased for once in her life at least to be the centre of an attentive and admiring circle, refused to be jostled into wifehood.

“Say it this way, after me, now,” Parson John urged.

Tillie Toomashie did not say it that way, nor any way. She smiled at Willie Ikie. Willie Ikie grinned at Tillie Toomashie.

And then an amazing thing happened. The dog-fight, as intimated, had begun on the high ground close to, and just outside the windows in the cook-house. For a few minutes the fight swayed this way and that, then, of a sudden, the dogs lunged against the long row of windows. A moment later, carrying glass and sash before them, with a crash that was deafening, the enormous ball of dogs—and it had assumed that shape—rolled to the floor of the cook-house. One of the dogs was flung against Parson John, and another snarling monster shot between the half-married couple.

Now, a dog-fight anywhere, as is well known, is noisy. This fight was unusually noisy. It was in a building. There were two hundred dogs. They were mainly Eskimo dogs, huge, wolfish dogs; hungry for the diversion of

fighting, keen for anything to break the monotony of dog life ; and there were other dogs : mongrel dogs, curs of various shades, sizes, and colours. Many that had been at a little distance when the fight began came tearing up outside and leaped through the aperture upon the struggling, snarling mass now fairly in possession of the centre of the floor.

The heaving ball of tangled legs, waving tails, bristling backs, swayed, now this way, now that. The building shook. The noise was tremendous. The broken glass had been responsible for no little blood-letting, and soon the white-coated Eskimo dogs were everywhere streaked with scarlet. And the blood, as was always the case, had loosed the wolf in the huskies. And of course the huskies were each bent on finding the under dog.

This kept the battle centralized. There were no side shows. Now and then a wolfish monster, his tongue lolling red, his eyes flashing, his jaws frothing white, would be flung to one side or the other by an unexpected heave of the pack. Instantly he would spring to the top of the writhing, yelling ball and begin tearing his way inward. Sometimes he would be seen to

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work his way downward slowly, his waving tail finally signaling his position and progress. Again he would settle sideways through the mass till lost from sight. Now and then, a giant fighter, prone on his back, howling fiercely, his legs beating the air wildly, would be seen for a time, helplessly struggling to turn himself but unable to do so, on the top of the swaying mass. Others, when thrust aside from the fighting centre, unable to leap to the top, would nip, and snarl, and bite their way inward from any quarter; for the huskie spirit had imparted itself to the entire *mêlée*, and mongrel and cur, terrier and spaniel, collie and pointer, with king hairs erect, with muscles taut, many of them streaming blood, strove madly to find the under dog: for, by all the rules of dog logic, an under dog there must be, somewhere. It unified the fight, and when this point in huskie psychology had been apprehended by all the wedding guests it brought a sense of partial relief to even the more apprehensive onlookers.

“They’ll get un,” said Bob Tott. “Ecod, they’ll get un.”

He rubbed his old hands and grinned gleefully.

“ Let un alone an’ they’ll get un.”

“ Can’t. There ain’t none. Dey’s all under,
an’ dey’s all on top.”

“ Let un alone.”

“ Dey’s enjoyin’ it fine.”

“ Ecod, look at Tog ! ”

“ An’ see ol’ Turk ! ”

“ An’ Smoke ! ”

“ Ecod ! ”

The fight went on.

Queer Tom Tall said—

“ It’s too late now. Their blood’s up.”

Skipper Jimmie Muff said—

“ I’s never seed the like afore.”

Uncle Abram Utt said—

“ Can’t do nuthin’.”

Lud Parsons said—

“ Some fight ! ”

Bob Tott repeated—

“ They’ll get un.”

And then a new actor entered. The “ Saint Martha ” had been brought up to the landing-stage. The big Newfoundland dog had, as usual, been left on guard. The evening was still, and the noise of the fight had floated to him. He concluded he was needed. He

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resolved to have a hand in the battle. He sprang ashore, and dashed toward the cook-house. He came up to it on the side where the ground was high, where the windows had been carried away. It gave him a strategic and commanding position to do what he had resolved on doing.

With a roar like that of a lion he sprang toward the fighting dogs. He landed directly on the top of the snarling, wriggling, yelping mass. He began flinging bloody huskies right and left. It was top dogs, not under dogs, with which he concerned himself. He had stopped fights before, and knew how it was done. Now he seized a combatant by the throat, now he got his monstrous grip on a flank; now it was a protruding leg, a waving tail, or the back of a neck, whatever it was, he seized it in his iron-like jaws, and flung it this way and that. The air was thick with flying dogs. And all the while, when his jaws were free, he kept up a thunderous barking. Thus, in a sort of double-barrelled fashion, Old Chum charged the snarling mass. One moment he was tearing at the huskies' hides, the next he was striking terror to their minds by his thunderous barks. And the huskies, having courage only when conscious

of mastery of the situation, under the twofold terror, began to weaken in their zeal for further fighting. Of a sudden it dawned on them that the bully of the pack had come. Snarling and cowed, bullied and broken, with the lust for battle sated, they began leaping toward the high ground outside the window. Some dived among the screaming women toward the door, and others dashed through the raised windows on the opposite side. In the briefest possible time Old Chum—black, shaggy, panting—was standing alone in the midst of the bloody circle. He was without a scratch.

He shook his great head.

“Bow-wow-wow!” he thundered.

When the echo had died, from every point of the compass, there came in on the cool night air, sounds of the scurrying, fleeing huskies: for while the huskie cannot bark, he can snarl, and yelp, and howl to perfection. That comes from the wolf in him.

Old Chum looked about him for a moment. Then he fled back to his post on the “Saint Martha.” The wedding guests began talking it over.

“They’d ’a’ got un if——”

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“ ’Twa’n’t like a winter fight.”

“ No, ’twa’n’t like a winter fight.”

“ Dogs too well fed t’ be real savage.”

“ They too fat. Fishin’ too good.”

“ T’ey catchin’ all t’ey wants lately t’em-selves.”

“ ’Twa’n’t like a winter fight.”

“ No.”

“ ’Twa’n’t bad, though.”

“ For a summer fight.”

“ No, for a summer fight.”

“ Haw-haw-haw ! ”

“ But it’s over.”

“ They won’t come back.”

“ No.”

“ Ol’ Newf’un’lander great bully.”

“ Ecod, how he flung un ! ”

“ Scart un blue.”

“ Hear un howl.”

“ It’s over.”

“ An’ now fer t’ dance.”

“ Yes, now fer t’ dance.”

“ Hurrah ! ”

Everybody woke up. The fight was over. The dogs had had their diversion. The monotony of the lone life of “ up the Bottom ” had

been broken—for the dogs! It must now be broken for the people.

Some of the young men gathered about Parson John.

“We dance now, Parson John?” they questioned.

Parson John was a human man. He smiled.

“Always do,” they pressed.

Parson John pointed to the floor. Glass, blood, tips of tails and of ears, tufts of hair, fragments of dog, lay everywhere.

“You dance on that?” he laughed.

The young men laughed. The maids laughed. Everybody laughed.

“Fetch a shovel.”

“Get water.”

The young men again pressed about Parson John.

“We dance, Parson John, if we clean ’er up?”

Parson John was a human man, as well as a Christian man. It was a wedding. It was a Labrador wedding, and an Eskimo wedding. It was a lone land and life. There was much winter, and little summer; much sorrow, and little joy. Parson John loved joy. He was a

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joyful man, and a joy-bringer. He thought a moment. And there came to him a scene in Cana of Galilee. And he heard a Voice say : “ Fill the water-pots with water,” and “ Draw out now.” He saw a Figure in the middle of the feasts of men of the long ago, and words came back to him about not coming to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

The young men clamoured again. The maids pressed closer.

“ We dance little while, Parson John ? ”

Parson John had thought his way through.

“ It’s not my house,” he said ; “ it’s the Company’s house. But if Mr. Wallace, the manager—— ”

There was a stampede for Mr. Wallace. That genial gentleman waved a ready and welcome assent in the direction of Parson John.

“ Very well then, and to make sure you won’t dance too long, and to see that nothing goes wrong, I’ll stay myself.”

There was a great shout of glad approval. The glass was gathered up, the floor was hastily swept and scrubbed with brooms and mops, and in an incredibly short time the great room was ready for dancing. But the dance did not

begin immediately, at any rate. Willie Ikie, pulling Tillie Toomashie through the crowd, appeared on the inner fringe of the great circle. The picturesque little couple, all thought of them now swallowed up in the passion for the coming dance, made their way directly to Parson John.

Willie spoke—

“Us married, Parson John, or only half married?”

“Gracious me, Willie! I forgot, or nearly forgot!”

He slapped his leg, and burst into a roar. The laugh was contagious. It ran around the whole great circle. Miss Wilton shook with laughter. The renegade lumbermen exploded with merriment. Mr. Wallace, and the boss of the mill, bent over holding their stomachs. Even the morbidly religious—the men subject to “glory fits,” who looked on joking and humour of all brands as sins of the most deadly type—relaxed into smiles.

“Us married, or only half married?” Willie questioned again in the first little lull in the uproar of merriment.

“Me say I’s marry Tillie—Tillie not say she marry me.”

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There was another outburst of laughter. Parson John found himself hopelessly incompetent to proceed. There was nothing to do—as is so often the case on the Labrador—but wait.

Finally Parson John regained partial composure. At the same time impatience over the delaying of the dance began to show itself.

“ Out of the way, Willie ! ”

“ You married enough ! ”

“ Clear the floor ! ”

“ Everybody dance ! ”

“ Hit her up, Johnnie.”

Of course there was no piano. There was no gramophone. There was no violin. But old Johnnie Dundee, from Nova Scotia, the night-watch in the mill, had been engaged to provide the necessary music. Old Johnnie was possessed of that strange and unique ability which best expresses itself in the musical practice known as “ liling.” Liling cannot be described. It must be heard to be appreciated. Its appeal to the feet to shuffle, to the body to sway, to the individual to dance, is well-nigh irresistible.

Old Johnnie found a nook where he knew he would be safe from the romping dancers, settled

himself in the conventional, hunched position, coughed, spat toward the corner behind him, then, keeping time with his foot, he burst, full throated, into the moving, familiar, endless "Tow-row-row," of lilting.

The challenge was accepted immediately: for, next to their love of God, and their lone land, the men and the women of the Labrador love the dance. It was a formless, rollicking dance, but it served. And everybody could have a part in it. In that lay its chief merit. Indeed in the main it was more a joyous, hilarious, romping gallop about the room than a dance.

It was the splash of warm sunshine on the black, cold, sea of life "up the Bottom."

"There can't be any harm in it. I'd almost like to be in it myself," Parson John said to Number Nine as they stood together watching the racing, indiscriminate mass of Eskimos and Indians, of white men and brown, of fishers and hunters, of old and young.

Parson John moved around to where Mr. Wallace also looked on. That genial gentleman was in an amiable mood notwithstanding the loss of some glass to the Company. In response

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to Parson John's regrets over the loss of the window, he laughed.

"We've more in stock," he said, "and they're having a good time. The dogs had a good time, too, I think, and no lives lost. I hope it will be the same with this."

He waved his hand over the romping dancers.

"The winter's coming on," Parson John said.

"And a long winter it is."

"Of course I'll see it through," Parson John commented.

"You better!" Wallace added.

Old Johnnie speeded up. His voice swelled. The dancers felt the urge to follow. They did follow. And old Johnnie gave them the race of their lives. A spirit came upon him: and he lilted as never before. When he was well-nigh winded, and when many of the dancers were at the point of exhaustion, the interminable tow-row-row merged into understandable song—

"Green grow the rashes, O!
Green grow the rashes, O!"—

The old voice cut through the din of the romping dancers, and ran out on the still air of

the northern night racing to an unstudied but telling climax—

“ Green grow the rashes, O !—
Kiss her quick and let her go,
She-needs-no-shelter-where-the-wind-don't-blow ! ”

The spirit that had come upon him brought the old lilter to his feet.

He shot out his right arm, then brought it up as though leading a cheer. He swung it in a wide circle.

“ Ah-ah-ah-oooh ! ” he yelled at the top of his lungs and with the last of his breath.

The Scotsmen in the crowd had been touched—and of course there were Scotsmen “ up the Bottom ”—with the bit of Burns. The lumbermen recognized the war-cry of their craft, the livyers, and the Eskimos, and the Indians, and of course all the dancers, old and young, men and women, as by instinct, knew it was a time to cheer.

And the cheer that went up was a tremendous cheer. As it died the howl of the huskies far and near as in answer to a challenge, floated in on the chill, night air.

The dance went on to its harmless finish about midnight. As the floor cleared Willie

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Ikie again drew up to Parson John. He was pulling Tillie Toomashie with him.

“ Finish marry we now ? ” he stammered.

“ Why, of course, Willie, of course, and I’ll make it short.”

The dance-tired crowd was now willing to yield the floor. A number gathered around smilingly sympathetic. Parson John took wholly unwarranted liberty with the marriage ritual of his church.

“ Everybody quiet now, and listen,” he said. Then, “ Tillie Toomashie,” he questioned, “ do you take Willie Ikie to be your lawful wedded husband ? ”

He looked pointedly at the small, brown little woman with the round face, and the flat nose.

“ Ya ! ” she said.

“ God bless you ! and that’s all ! ”

Willie Ikie grinned. Tillie Toomashie smiled—coyly, shyly, appealingly. Then the quaint little couple, silently, hand in hand, faded from the picture.

Parson John’s day’s work was done. He smiled.

“ It’s a great life, this of mine,” he said to

Number Nine as they went down from the cook-house to the "Saint Martha." Number Nine felt it was a great life. The greatness of it had begun to grow upon him.

They went aboard the "Saint Martha." The big Newfoundland dog and Charlie Mucko were already on board. Parson John and Number Nine turned in.

And all night long, from the woods and the high hills far and near, the huskies howled at the moon and the stars.

In the morning, it was winter. Ice that would carry a dog stretched everywhere over the water. Parson John surveyed it.

"We must be getting on, boys," he said.
"We must be getting on."

CHAPTER VI

CAUGHT IN THE ICE

THE wedding, the dog-fight, and the dance left the Bottom smiling. The huskies crippled home. The shattered windows were replaced. The Company sent the barrel of flour to Willie Ikie. Tillie Ikie baked, scrubbed, after the manner of all Labrador women, and began home-making. Parson John reverted again to the more purely spiritual aspects of his job and began with renewed zeal and joyousness to sow the seeds of religion in the soil of "up the Bottom."

And, all things considered, the soil was not utterly hopeless soil. Below the interest in the romping, rollicking dance, underneath the love for an occasional dog-fight, and the temporary lapses into intemperance, there was, Parson John felt sure, a solid substratum of interest in the more enduring things of life. This drew and inspired him. It reached out

to him appealing, imploring hands. There was capacity there, there was heart-hunger, soul-thirst, vast need.

The greatness and the bigness of Parson John's job startled him. He had set up a home in the marriage he had performed. It was a diminutive home, it was true, but a home. Its being had depended on his coming. Without him it could not have been. It was his, too, to offer spiritual and social leadership to the Bottom. It was a great job, his, truly. There was none greater. It appalled him when he let himself think. And it was the same at Sheltering Hand, and at Never-Go-By, and all along the vast, lonely reaches of coast up south and down north.

Then there were the white, interminable wastes of woods behind. Men lived in there, men with minds as well as bodies; men with capacity for things of the spirit, with souls, with eyes to see the "vision splendid" if the revealer came, with ears to hear heavenly symphonies if only one went who could strike the lyre. So Parson John started in anew on his great, appealing, joyful job.

He had quiet talks about the doorsteps in

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the drab evenings with the men as they smoked. He wrote letters home for renegade lumbermen. He romped in the woods with the boys. He spent happy hours in Miss Wilton's school. He laughed men, and women too, out of unneighbourly and childish animosities and jealousies; he called to repentance, he preached, he lit the fire of hope, and blew upon the dead or dying embers of faith; and the cold black rocks looked warmer and kinder, the grey heads of the barren hills were haloed, God came down to meet men in the tilts, and Jesus walked on the sea.

With the usual period of his time given to "up the Bottom" Parson John made his plans for getting on. And on the Labrador, "getting on" must be the keynote of all who would render service or earn a reward. The season is ever driving one on. In summer it is the terror of winter and in winter the brevity and uncertainty of summer that haunts and shadows one like a spectre. One is never quite at ease on the Labrador. There is so much to do, and so little time in which to do it. One never knows what a day may bring forth, or an hour. There is no stability,

no permanency, no possibility of calculating. A glorious, appealing sea, aglint with sunrise, tempts the punts to the offing for cod, and in an hour "the bottom falls out of the glass," and the Bone Yard exacts its toll. Nobody knows.

But you must "get on." You cannot afford to wait, or to be caught. Parson John had been caught before. Four weeks up the Bottom was his limit, a little beyond his limit. Though it was only the beginning of October the line of distant mountains that paralleled the great inlet many miles back from the shore, showed white with snow, and the ice that had appeared for the first time on the morning after the wedding now fringed the shores everywhere.

One of Parson John's concerns was about dogs for the winter. His old team had gone to pieces: he must have new dogs, and a new winter outfit. He was informed that on the north side of the inlet, some fifty miles down, some of the best dogs on the Labrador could be secured. Having come up that side of the bay, and wishing to visit the other side on his way down, he fitted up a large fishing

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punt and committed it to the care of Charlie Mucko and Number Nine with instructions to sail across the bay, secure the necessary dogs and other equipment and meet him, with the "Saint Martha," just above the narrows of the inlet.

He bade the boys a cheerful good-bye on a sunny morning. As the wind caught the sail of the punt and swung it off with a bang, Parson John took off his cap. He waved it in a wide circle.

"Good luck!" he called; "and remember, the next big event is Tom Badd of Never-Go-By."

Three days later, the instructions carried out, and the necessary dogs huddled in the punt with them, together with other winter travel equipment and a ten-pound cut of fresh caribou meat as a present for Parson John from an admirer, the boys were pulling across the great inlet toward the point agreed upon. The weather had turned cold, and the dull afternoon sky threatened snow.

The boys had planned to cross the inlet well above the narrows, where, as they knew, the water ran swiftly, and elements of danger

were not wanting. The dogs behaved well, and good luck followed them till they were almost across. Then, quite unexpectedly, they ran into thin ice which had formed the previous night. This at first gave them small concern. But later, when it was discovered that the ice was not frozen to the shore, as they had at first supposed it was, but was being rapidly carried down toward the narrows, and on in the direction of the open sea, the situation took on a new aspect.

Charlie Mucko was a resourceful lad. Parson John had the utmost confidence in him. Number Nine recalled how he had taken the punt into the harbour steering by the thunder. He, too, had confidence in Charlie Mucko. But Charlie Mucko did not like ice.

Nobody on the Labrador likes ice. Ice is one of the real terrors down north. It is worse than fog. Nobody knows what it will do. A man can be afraid of ice, and not be called a coward. Nobody is ashamed to confess that he dislikes ice. It takes many forms, and none of them are kindly. It may be the towering berg with pinnacles poking at the stars. It may be interminable miles of sheet

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ice. It may be "growlers," or small bergs. It may be "standing edge" clinging to the coast. It may be in the form called "raftered," pushed up in the form of the roofs of houses. It may be in the shape of floes or pans. It may be nothing but "a thin string o' slob." But no matter in what form it appears, it is hated and feared. Ice has no friends. It is the sure mark of a fool to take chances with ice. For the giant berg, without a moment's warning, may topple over. The "standing edge" may suddenly detach itself from the rocks of the shore to which it has clung for months. The interminable field fringing the land may float off seaward; then when the schooners have been tempted from harbour it may swing in again to crush them like egg-shells on the coast. The "raftered" ice may flatten out. The floes may break up, the pans flip over, the "slob" make the ship's log tell lies and upset the most careful reckoning. There is no limit, in a word, to the mischief ice may make.

"I's don't like it," Charlie Mucko said.
"I's don't like dis hi-yer ice."

He began flailing at it with his oar.

Caught in the Ice

III

The distance to the shore was not great—not more than a hundred yards. But it soon became evident that progress was impossible. The ice got thicker. And the current strengthened.

Faster and faster the punt was swept along. Now and then a projecting horn of ledge would tear into the racing sheet of ice and threaten to open a lane of water to the rocky shore. Once they were so near to land that it seemed it could almost be touched with an outstretched oar. But there was no breaking through. It was the inner edge of the ice that held.

It soon became evident that the prospect of reaching shore by attempting to push forward was far from bright. To turn back was out of the question. The track they had broken was closed behind them owing to the pressure of the tide on the ice above. So, held as in a vice, the punt was hurried on toward the narrows.

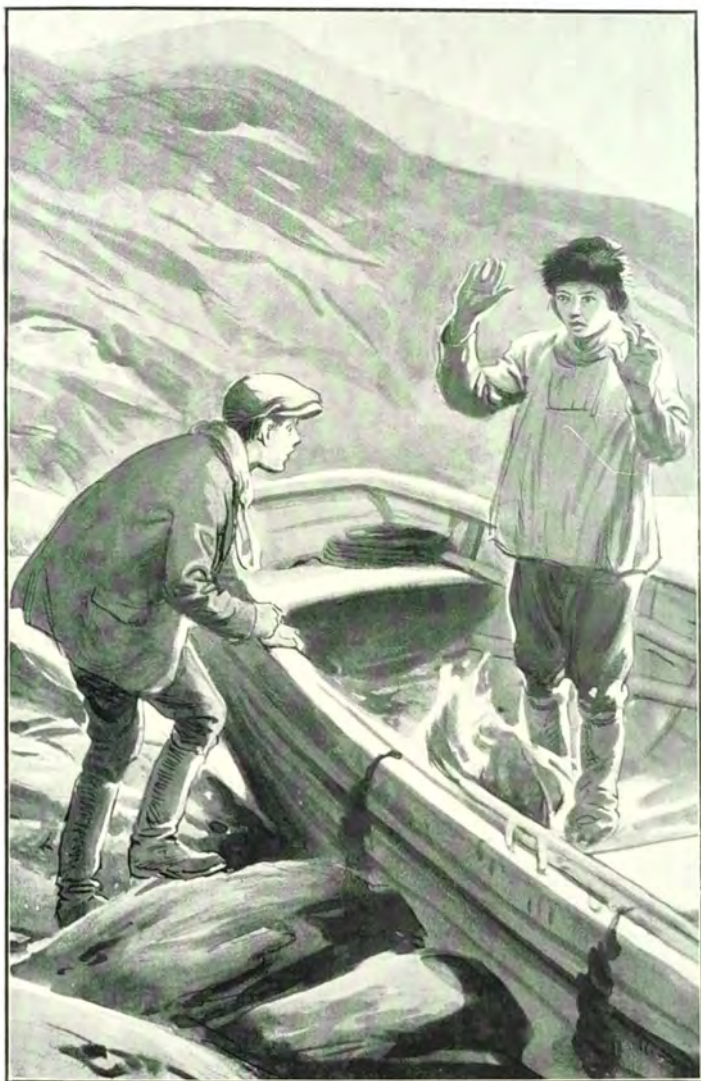
Just what might happen there it was difficult to say. The rougher water might, it was true, break up the ice and liberate the punt. On the other hand, this might involve

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the chance of being swamped. The punt was low in the water, for, in addition to seven full-grown huskies, a komatik, or large dog-sled of the north, sleeping-bags, dog-harness and other equipment, had, on the orders of Parson John, been secured on the northern side of the inlet and were being conveyed across the bay by the boys.

The punt swept into the narrows. But the ice did not yield nor open. It swayed and swelled and shot forward, unbroken. Once through the narrows, the bay began to widen. The cliffs of the great fiord rapidly fell away. The ice ceased swaying and swelling, but it continued to be held firmly in the grip of the strong tide ; and silently, steadily, and smoothly it was carried on toward the open sea.

Neither boy spoke. There was nothing to say. To shout for help would be folly. As a rule shouting for help on the Labrador is folly. There is no one to hear. The vastness of the place, its comparative emptiness, the remoteness of hut from hut, and dweller from dweller, except in the shelter of the harbour where help is never needed, means that one must fight one's battles alone, and there is



THE ESKIMO BOY THREW UP HIS HANDS. "MEAT GONE," HE SAID, HIS CHOCOLATE FACE GOING LIVID.

not much audible calling for help. So the boys did not say anything, nor call. They just thought, and, as it is so often necessary to do in the north land, waited.

Presently the oldest huskie, whose name had been given as Thief, whimpered. It set Number Nine thinking. Things Li'l' Jimmie had told him about huskies came back to him. They were ugly things. There were seven huskies in the punt, all full grown. They had been fed the night before, not since. Number Nine was not Labrador bred, but he had been long enough on the coast to have learned that hungry huskies must be watched.

"How much dog-meat we got, Charlie?" he ventured at length.

The Eskimo boy shook his head.

"No dog-meat," he said; "but plenty caribou meat for we."

It was reassuring.

Gripping the punt, squeezing it on every side, the ice sped on. The cliffs on either side seemed to shrink rapidly toward the water as the bay widened. It got decidedly colder. And it was obvious that the afternoon was fast merging toward dusk. What

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wind there was helped to hurry the ice and the punt on seaward. The boys scanned the receding shores for signs of life, and the outer reaches of the bay for sails. But it was October and the cod fleet had gone south, loaded. There was nothing to be seen. A single snowflake cavorted over the punt. The huskie named Thief whimpered again. The wind brought the sound of light waves swishing over the outer edge of the ice to the north.

Charlie Mucko looked steadily for a time in the direction from which had come the single snowflake.

"Weather comin' on," he said.

Number Nine turned and looked.

"What's happened to the North Shore?" he asked. "Where'd it go?"

"Weather comin' on," Charlie Mucko repeated.

Came then suddenly the wind, a smother of snow, and the dark!

Everything was blotted out.

Presently the snow thinned, and the light returned. Both sides of the inlet could still be seen, dimly, but the land already looked alarmingly low and distant. The tide was

evidently still running strongly outward. The wind fell with the passing of the snow-squall, and the cold increased. The moon rode through the breaking clouds, and several stars appeared. It had been one of winter's preliminary skirmishes.

Naturally the boys had wished for an increase in the wind to break up the ice and free the punt. They were to be disappointed. The swish of water over the distant edge of the ice ceased, and it soon became evident that the night was to be still and cold.

"Us'll just have to wait," Charlie Mucko said. "An' we's got caribou meat, lots," he added, grinning.

On and on they drifted. An hour passed, then another, and another. Midnight approached. The last vestige of cloud disappeared from the sky. In the glowing moonlight the boundaries of the ice surrounding the punt could be made out clearly owing to the fact that the snow, which had fallen to the depth of fully an inch, showed plainly upon it. Beyond the edge of this widespread blanket of white, out in front, and in the direction in which the ice was still rapidly drifting, a broad path of silver

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ran away under the moon. To the right and left, and behind, the sea, looked at over the glowing white of the snow, showed inky black.

The situation appealed strongly to Number Nine. He was not unaware of the fact that there was some danger. Of course there was no means of knowing where the ice would carry them. Storms were always possible, and the punt, though substantial and fitted with a sail, was no craft for a storm. Then there were the dogs. When they got hungry, well, there would be the possibility of trouble. There always was with unharnessed huskies when they were hungry. He had not liked the look that the last of the light had shown in Thief's eye. Then the boys would get hungry themselves. There was only the caribou meat, and a few biscuits. The cold, too, was increasing, and a further drop in temperature would be but natural. Looked at, therefore, from almost any angle the situation was not wanting in elements of danger.

Still, in a vague way, something seemed to say to the boy that it was good to be there. The sky impressed him mightily. It was not as the sky that arched England, and lands

to the south and east ; it was a higher sky. And it had greater depth and distance ; wider range and appeal. Then there was the smooth, majestic movement of the ice, and there was the mighty silence of the northland, the path of silver to the moon, the glowing blanket of white on the sea of inky black. There was, also, the uncertainty, the simple and yet strong and strange way in which the ice had trapped them and cut so sharply across their carefully pre-arranged plan.

But it came to him from the wide spaces around that, in some way, all would be well : that the great forces in whose grip they were, would be kindly ; that Charlie Mucko would not fail ; that somehow the cloud would lift, and the danger pass as naturally and as unexpectedly as it had come upon them. Was it not, after all, but a part of the work of the day in the spacious northland ? He was ready for this, for whatever befell. And, looking out over the white ice and on to the black sea with the long path of silver running away to the moon and up to the high dome of the sky, a feeling of strange and hopeful exhilaration came over him.

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On and on slid the great sheet of ice, gripping the punt more firmly than ever. The sleeping-bags which Charlie Mucko had proposed early in the evening afforded the necessary warmth. One thing was certain, nothing could be done. He nibbled some biscuits, which, with the caribou meat, made up the food supply. As he did so his mind ran back to England, and the London slums; to his mother, and little lame Elsie. Could they have heard where he was, and what had happened? What if——? But he put the thought away. He had said on reading his mother's letter the morning he woke up on the beach that he would not forget—that he would make good—that he would try anything. He was keeping his pledge. And he was happy, cheerful, unafraid.

The punt sped on, and the night slipped away.

Finally, low and far off over the edge of the sea broke the day. Amber light spread up in the sky and ran around the horizon. The east blazed with colour, and, quite of a sudden, as it seemed to the boys, the glowing light of dawn flushed the sea.

"Look!" Number Nine said.

"'Smornin'," answered Charlie Mucko.

The huskie dog, Thief, whimpered, and throwing up his head and opening his great wolf mouth wide so that he showed his red tongue and fang-shaped teeth, saluted the light with a little howl. Number Nine started unconsciously. Thief's steely eyes glittered, and his king hairs rose. His muscles came taut, and, sinking down a little he emitted a low growl. The eyes of all the other dogs were riveted on him.

Instantly Charlie Mucko was on his feet.

"Down, Thief! Back!" he roared.

The huskie cowered. Others of the pack whimpered and cowered too. Charlie Mucko turned to Number Nine.

"Ye mustn't start, or show ye're scart," he warned quietly.

The light increased and the glory grew. Freshly formed ice could be seen beyond that covered with snow. It was still cold. There was no sound. There was no wind. A low mist shut out everything that lay behind and on either side. The ice sped on. The moon lost its glow and the stars faded. A wide track

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of gold took the place of the path of silver on the sea. Finally came the sun and the new day.

The boys munched a few biscuits, the dogs looking on alertly interested.

Charlie Mucko scanned the sea minutely, but placidly. His wide, chocolate-coloured face showed no perturbation. Now and then he shot a sharp, cowing glance at Thief, and the cunning brute would lick his chops, drop his shoulders, and pretend to fawn.

Finally Charlie sprang up.

“There ! Look !” he said.

Number Nine got up.

“See it ?—Here t’ th’ south-east ?”

Through the thinning mist the irregular outline of land showed. It was probably between three and four miles away. It lay slightly to the right of the direction in which the current seemed to be carrying the ice.

“It’s a island, probably Big White Bear,” Charlie said.

There was a faint stirring in the air. They put up the sail. It quivered, hesitated, then became perfectly still. A faint sound of water lapping the distant edge of the ice came down

from the north. The air stirred again. The sail swung outward, and a thin band of snow that lay along the gunwale of the punt was flung off. Half an hour later the ice all about the punt was heaving in a slow and measured way, and far ahead, where the wide track of gold ran toward the sun, the wind was kicking up the waves in a manner that could have but one result.

Just before noon they came up to a small rocky island.

"But whether Big White Bear, or Li'l' White Bear, or some other islan', me dunno," Charlie Mucko announced. But the boy's countenance was placid, and his words without hint of inward anxiety. Number Nine was reassured.

The punt touched the low rocks. The dogs sprang ashore. All of them but Thief clambered up the bank. He waited till the boys were on the rocks, waited till they had thoughtlessly gone up the slope to discover the extent, and the character of the place. Then he sneaked back to the punt and sprang aboard.

The island proved to be a vast, barren rock. It abounded in caves, crags, and gorges. It was

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uninhabited. There was no water, no food, no fuel on it. From the highest point of it, in to the west, through the now clear air, land could be seen.

Charlie Mucko strained his eyes.

"I's doesn't know it. Too far 'way," he said. "Looks like t' Bone Yard, an' o' course t'ere's ice."

"What about something to eat?" questioned Number Nine. "What about some of Parson John's caribou meat? I'm hungry."

Charlie Mucko started. Then he turned quickly, and clambered down from the rock. He hastened to the punt and sprang aboard. He found the hempen bag that had held the caribou meat—with a great hole torn in the side of it. But there was no meat. And there was no sign of Thief—nor of any of the dogs.

The Eskimo boy turned toward Number Nine. He threw up both his hands.

"Meat gone!" he said simply, his chocolate face going livid.

CHAPTER VII

A DESPERATE CHANCE

THE loss of the caribou meat was not a light matter. On that both boys were agreed. But they were in a land where life is a struggle, and where abnormal and unexpected things are constantly coming to pass. So though stunned, and surprised, they were not daunted. They did not lose heart. A new situation had developed, with amazing suddenness it was true, and a new and heavier task had been imposed. But that was all, and that was not unusual in the northland. They resolved to face the new task just as they had faced the old, with courage, determination, and hope.

They decided, first, to make an accurate inventory of their remaining food supply. As already intimated they had a limited supply of biscuits. These were brought ashore, and a rock was found with a flat top.

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"We'll count them together," Number Nine said.

He laid a biscuit on the rock.

"One!" he began.

"One!" repeated Charlie Mucko.

"Two!" A second biscuit was laid on top of the first.

"Two!" followed the Eskimo boy.

"Three!" A third was placed on the second.

"Three!" repeated Charlie.

"Four!"

"Four!"

"Five!"

"Five!"

"Six!"

"Six!"

They went on to eleven.

"That's all we have," Number Nine said.

The eleven biscuits made a slender, unstable little tower. It could have been blown over by a breath. It was not a large supply of food. It could have been all eaten at a single lunch by two hungry boys.

Each of the boys ate a biscuit. It left nine in the little pile on the rock.

It was not a large supply. The boys realized that it was not a large supply. They did not say so, but they thought so. It must be well guarded. It must be used sparingly. It must be watched. No chances must be taken, as with the meat. Of course one biscuit each did not satisfy the boys' hunger. But neither made any move to take more. Their boat was a very small boat. The island was a very small island. It was a long way to land, and the land might be the Bone Yard. Nobody could land on the Bone Yard. Then there was ice, miles and miles of it, too thick to row through, too thin to walk upon. The wind that had liberated them from the thin pan in the morning had not increased sufficiently to clear the coast. And now, with the sun dipping westward, the wind was falling. It looked like another still, clear, cold night.

Number Nine put his hand lightly on the top of the little pile of biscuits.

"One - Two - Three - Four - Five-Six-Seven-Eight-Nine!" he counted.

"Two for supper to-night, two for breakfast to-morrow, two for dinner, two at night again——"

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He paused, and held up a single finger.

“ How many left ? ”

“ One ! ” said Charlie Mucko.

It was one !

So the food supply was not large. Used judiciously, sparingly, it would carry them through the next day—and into the day following. Beyond that, there was not much to say, so far as food was concerned.

Of course there were the dogs ! Yes, there were the dogs !

Number Nine, since being flung on the Labrador some two months before, had heard a lot about dogs. It was a land of dogs. That was obvious. Dogs played a great part on all the coast. He had heard of the part they played when living and, on a few occasions, not without some twinges of shrinking and feelings of aversion, of the part they sometimes played when dead.

They had nine biscuits and in the hollows of the rocks there was water from the melted snow. They had sleeping-bags, and could keep warm, and there were gorges, and caves, and crannies for shelter on the island in case a storm came, and, yes, there were the dogs, seven of them !

The dogs were on the island—somewhere. But they were free. They had leaped ashore and scampered off like wolves. Evidently they had hidden themselves. Nor hide nor hair of them was visible. They were silent, too, an ominous sign. They were no longer in servitude. They had not been fed, and they had seen the boys eat. Thief had got the caribou meat. Thief, being the bully of the pack, had privileges. He might have eaten the meat, bolting the whole ten pounds on the spot. He might have carried it off and hidden it after the manner of dogs; or the pack might have pounced upon him, and there might have been a snarling fight, all having received a portion. It was impossible to say what had happened to the meat. One thing was clear, it was gone. So were the dogs. And if the pack instinct had seized them, as it doubtless had, now that they were free and back in the environment from whence their ancestors had sprung, was their presence somewhere on the island a benefit, or a menace? The boys could think of the dogs as representing a possible food supply. On the other hand, the dogs could think of the boys as—as—— If they thought so, it would not be the first time dogs had thought

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so. For huskies do a lot of thinking and they are lovers of flesh in any form, which same Charlie Mucko knew well.

"I's didn't like the look in that T'ief's eye," he said. "I's didn't like it. Un a bad dog—sure—T'ief is."

Number Nine listened as Charlie went on.

"I's didn't have good show wit' dem dogs, hadn't time t' learn dem. Never had dem harnessed. I's doesn't know dem real well yet. Only got jist t'eir names, an' li'l' 'bout each."

Naturally the boy was at a disadvantage.

"T'ief a bad dog, I's t'ink, t'ough, a verra bad dog," he went on, "an' I's doesn't know w'at un may be up to."

He paused a moment scanning the top of the rocks as though he imagined the wolfish eyes of the big huskie fixed upon him. But he saw nothing.

"Turk now," he said, "looked better. I rather liked Turk."

He went on, Number Nine still listening.

"Sly puzzled me, couldn't make much o' Sly. Didn't like Sly as well as Turk. Buster an' Slim looked all right an' mebbly t'ey is all

right. Trick acted good enough, so did Spunky, still—still t'ey's huskies, an' huskies is huskies," he added significantly, glancing again along the rim of rocks as though looking for steely eyes or sniffing nostrils.

The afternoon wore on. The light wind fell away to an almost dead calm. In to the west the air cleared and the coast looked nearer. Number Nine scanned the sea out toward the north and east.

"Wonder we don't see a sail," he said.

"Fleet gone—no sails till next year."

Yes, the fleet was gone. The schooners were probably tying up at the docks in St. John's. The fleet was home. The sea was without sails. And the coast was without inhabitants, too, to a great extent. On their way down the inlet the boys had met the last straggling boats hasting for the shelter of "up the Bottom" and the cosy warmth of the tilts far inward from the biting cold of the raging nor'-easters of the fall and winter. So with the fleet gone south and the coastal dwellers fled to their winter quarters there was small hope of any assistance for the castaways from either the sea or the land. To set out for the shore without

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wind to break up the ice would be folly: it might mean being caught again, and being carried further seaward. So they resolved at any rate to risk the coming night on the island.

A complete search over the rocks revealed no sign of the dogs. It was a mystery. Where had they gone? What were they planning? Had the island been large—and wooded—there would have been no mystery. The boys at once would have concluded that the dogs had taken to the timber, and would have dismissed them from their minds. As it was, the dogs could not be dismissed. If Thief was a bad dog, and the bully, then, as Thief did, the pack would do, unless, perhaps, by some means, and for some cause, the pack would combine against him, as packs often did against a bully. It would not be beyond the mental range of the other dogs to suspect that Thief had stolen the meat. Nor could the dogs be ignorant of the situation of the boys touching their supply of food.

“They knows we’s short,” Charlie commented as they came again to the punt after their survey of the island rocks, “an’ with t’at

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T'ief t' bully uv t' pack, I's wouldn't take no chances. I's wouldn't care t' sleep on t' shore, fear o' w'at might happen. But us kin anchor t' punt out a li'l' an' sleep in t'at."

It was a happy thought. Number Nine's face brightened. Sleeping on the shore with seven hungry huskies so near had never appealed to him favourably. The punt as a place in which to sleep was a tip-top idea. He wondered why he had not thought of it himself.

The boys ate another biscuit each. It left seven.

Then they pushed out the punt a couple of lengths from the low rocks, anchored her securely, and backed into their sleeping-bags.

About midnight they were awakened by a tremendous snarling and howling. The noise came from along the shore a little distance from opposite the point where they lay. In the dim light, for the moon was obscured by clouds that were drifting in from the east, they could make out the figures of the dogs. They were fighting fiercely; and the wind was rising.

Both boys sat up.

"T'ey's pounced on T'ief," Charlie said.

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The fight went on. The dogs were large dogs. They were hungry, angry, cold. The pack had been cheated by the bully, and the pack knew it. The pack has its own way of doing things. And the pack, when it cuts loose, knows no mercy.

The boys listened. It was another case where nothing could be done but wait. The grey figures continued leaping and snarling for a long time. Then they came to closer grips. There was less movement. Individual shapes were lost. There was no leaping. There was a grey, wriggling mass, which, after a time, seemed to become fixed to a single spot; and from one dog at any rate there were coming sounds that indicated that he was being choked or strangled.

Finally these ceased.

“T’ey got un,” Charlie Mucko said. “T’ey got un.”

The grey mass swayed a little, but only a little. The yelping and snarling almost ceased. The heads of all the dogs were low, and in the dull light it could be seen that they were in the form of a rough circle. They were tearing and straining, and gulping. This continued for

a brief time. Then the circle broke, and one after another six wolfish figures leaped up the low bank and disappeared.

The morning came. Came also a freshening of the wind from the east, and with it the prospect of smashing the coast ice. The outlook for deliverance had improved.

The boys clambered ashore. They went along the beach to where the fight had been. They saw bones, licked and chewed, and in the narrower crevices of the rock, below the reach of nozzles and tongues, were small quantities of blood. Blown a little to one side, was a dog's tail.

Charlie Mucko stepped over and picked it up. He examined it carefully.

"It T'ief's," he said. "T'ey've eat un up."

They had eaten him up.

Number Nine did not speak. There was nothing to say. The London boy was learning.

"T'ey've eat un up," Charlie Mucko repeated. "T'ey've eat un up," he said again.

There was no trace of perturbation, much

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less of sorrow, in the Eskimo boy's voice. Before long he showed that he realized there was a measure of rough justice in what had transpired.

"T'ief bad dog," he said ; "verra bad dog. Un better dead."

He *was* better dead. This came out a little later.

The boys found one of the depressions in the rock in which water from the melted snow of the squall of the previous evening still lay. They broke the ice : then they each ate another biscuit.

"That leaves five," Number Nine said.

It was five !

But in some way it came to both boys that while the food supply was shrinking, the general situation was improving. The lap, lap, lap, of the small wavelets on the shore rocks, and on the windward side of the punt was encouraging. Of course it might develop into a gale : and a gale was, in point of time, now due. The time of calm is never of great duration—down north—as winter draws on. A gale would, of course, work mischief. And yet there must be wind, enough to clear the coast of ice, but not so much

as to swamp a fishing punt fairly low in the water. Would wind of just the proper strength come? Very likely, as so often on the Labrador, it would be a touch-and-go affair, a hit-or-miss venture, as most down-north ventures were anyway.

They decided to put off for shore. They had taken a last drink from the water in the hollow of the rock and were stepping toward the punt when a slight rustle on the top of a rock that rose directly behind them to a height of about ten feet attracted their attention. Both boys stopped, turned and looked up. There, in open sight, his head and shoulders showing plainly, stood one of the huskies.

He did not shrink, nor fawn. There was no lurking fire in his eye, no wolfish cunning, no challenge to battle. Nor was there the faintest hint in his look of guilty participation in any misdemeanour of the night.

Charlie Mucko read the look. His face brightened.

"Good ol' Turk!" he said.

The dog understood. He disappeared from the rock. The next instant he was on the beach with the boys. Sly came also, and Slim—and

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Buster—and Trick and Spunky! Thief did not come.

“T’ey’s dogs again,” commented Charlie Mucko.

Number Nine was learning further.

It was obvious that the dogs were in a kindly mood. They did not seem hungry: they were not hungry, nor guilty, nor afraid.

“T’ey’s all right,” Charlie reassured. “T’ey’s done fur t’at T’ief, now t’ey’s all right. T’ey knowed us wus goin’, an’ t’ey wants t’ go wit’ we. T’ey’s all right, I’s sure.”

The boys went aboard the punt. Turk went aboard, Sly went, all the dogs went.

The anchor was pulled up, the sail was raised, and a start made in the direction of the distant coast, which showed faint and irregular over the top of the low mist.

The punt slid along before the light breeze. The dogs fell into dozes. The island behind seemed to sink, and the coast in front to rise. The situation looked hopeful. The boys were in high spirits. True, their rations had been light, and they could not honestly have said that they were not hungry, still the tension of the situation, the swing of their minds from

hope to fear, from fear back to hope again, the uncertainty and the exhilaration of it all, had, in some strange way, disarmed, if it had not wholly removed, the feeling of hunger. And they felt they were winning. That helped.

A little more than an hour's sailing in the slow breeze brought the punt to the edge of the first of the thin coast ice. Greatly to the boys' delight, a wide lane of open water lay directly in front of them. It seemed to extend all the way to the mainland. And though, of course, the coast was rocky and forbidding, the wavy line of it showed dents here and there that raised high hopes regarding a landing place.

Charlie Mucko scanned it critically.

"It look like t' north end o' t' Bone Yard," he said. "Can't mak' un out for sure, but seems like an' might be t' shore jist south o' Never-Go-By."

He continued looking, straining his eyes. Turk, the huskie that now seemed to be the accepted bully of the pack, sat up and sniffed the air. He seemed to sense something.

They ran on, and on, down the great lane. They went slowly, and soon it became apparent that the wind was failing. They put out the

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oars and rowed. The wind fell to a flat, dead calm. They rowed harder, pulling doggedly, silently, thinking as they pulled. Only now and then glancing over their shoulders to make sure that they kept the course.

Noon brought them to within a mile of the coast. But noon brought also something else. It brought a faint stirring in the air from the westward. Came also, following this, a saucy, capering little breeze out of the north. It did a world of mischief. The lane of open water closed up. It closed in front: and it closed behind.

The boys stopped rowing. The punt came to a standstill. The Northland was not yet conquered. The Northland is not easily conquered. Once more the ice, the wind and the tide assumed control, and again there was nothing to do but wait!

The boys ate another biscuit each.

"That leaves three," Number Nine said.

It was three!

The wind increased. It came in fitful little jumps out of the north. The ice began to drift slowly, smoothly, steadily. It got colder. Two of the dogs, Turk and Sly, whimpered uneasily.

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Charlie Mucko struck the ice with his oar.

"It too thick to row t'rough," he said.

He put out his foot and tapped it with his heel. It yielded, and broke.

"An' it too t'in to walk on he," he added.

All afternoon they drifted. It became dreary, monotonous. The coastline went lower and lower. The wind rose and the temperature dropped. The dogs became nervous and restless. Finally the dusk fell. It was a dull, grey, cheerless dusk. The promise of the morning had not been realized. The outlook was not cheering. The boys were hungry, naturally. The dogs fortunately were not. That was all to the good. And the wolfish bully was out of the way. It was wholly unlikely that there would be any trouble from the dogs.

"We'll eat again," Number Nine said.

He took out the biscuits.

"One—two—three," he counted.

He gave one to Charlie Mucko, and took one himself. The dogs looked on in silence, interested, alert, their steely eyes snapping. Each boy ate his biscuit.

"That leaves one," Number Nine said.

It was one !

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Again—and for the third night—the boys backed into their sleeping-bags. What the night might bring or the morning or the next day they had no means of knowing. They were not so sure now that they were winning. As the night passed they felt that they were no longer drifting: they were being driven. And whither? They lost all sense of direction.

Toward morning the cold increased greatly. The wind fell, and the ice, as far as could be judged, came to rest. With the breaking of dawn it was certain that the ice was no longer moving. As the light gained and the morning mist lifted far away to the right, beyond a dozen miles of gleaming ice, there showed a single, sombre, welcome headland.

“It Cape Porcupine,” Charlie Mucko said.

The morning was crisp and clear. The night had been unusually cold and the wind had fallen to a level calm.

Charlie Mucko again swung his feet over the side of the punt. He tapped the ice with his heel.

It held.

“It be stronger nearer shore,” he said, his face brightening; “An’ us better go.”

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The dogs whimpered nervously, understandingly.

He took out his pocket-knife and quickly cut the sheet-rope from the boom of the punt. He tied one end about his waist, and threw the other end to Number Nine.

"Tie on," he directed.

The dogs whimpered again.

Then he slid over the side of the punt.

"C'mon!" he said, simply.

Number Nine obeyed.

It was a desperate chance. Both boys knew it was a desperate chance. It was twelve miles to the coast. But there was only one biscuit. Both boys knew there was only one biscuit. There was no water. The fleet was gone south. The boys were weakened with hunger, and there in the boat, to attempt to kill a dog for food, with five other dogs, full-grown, well-fed, and, thanks to their own viciousness, fit for a fight, and strong—well, the boy with the chocolate face, had thought it through in silence, and he had decided to make a dash for the distant headland. It was a desperate chance. Yes, but not so desperate as was the only alternative. So he had slid over the side of the punt and called :

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“ C'mon ! ”

And Number Nine had come on.

The ice bent, but did not break. The dogs, standing with fore-feet on the gunwale of the punt, with tongues lolling, snarled and nipped at each other, yelping in desperation.

The ice bent more ominously than before. Charlie Mucko sprawled to his stomach, and spread out his arms and legs.

“ C'mon—dis way,” he called to Number Nine, but without turning his head.

Number Nine obeyed. He, too, sprawled to his stomach and spread out his arms and legs.

The ice seemed to rise and become steadier and firmer. With the burden upon it thus more widely distributed, the prospect of getting over it safely brightened. Fortunately it was not perfectly smooth, and the boys were able, by pushing with their legs and pulling with their arms, to make fair progress.

They sprawled on. The yelping of the dogs as they watched the boys intently became pitiful. They sensed tragedy. They knew they were being sacrificed. They howled like lost souls. It went to the boys' hearts, but they could do nothing.

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"C'mon!" urged Charlie Mucko, and then, as though in answer to the tide of pity rising in Number Nine's mind, "It's every man for hisself—now," he added.

It was.

And this was the conclusion to which the pack evidently came of a sudden, for Turk, standing on the bow of the punt, took a long leap toward the boys. He hit the weakened ice heavily, and broke through.

He perished.

Sly leaped. She perished.

Slim leaped, Trick leaped, Buster leaped, Spunky leaped.

They all perished!

The boys sprawled on.

Just before the dusk settled that evening, Skipper Ruben Hind, of Cape Porcupine, strolled out to have a final evening glance at the ice and the sea. He did this often. His boy was with him. Skipper Ruben was always the last to leave the coast for the shelter of the tilts.

The boy said—

"I sees swiles (seals) on t' ice."

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“ No, b’y, no swiles, now in t’ fall.”

“ But I does, two o’ dem.”

“ No, b’y.”

“ Sure ! Look ! I’s get t’ gun.”

He turned and ran to the cottage. Skipper Ruben looked critically and for a long time out over the ice.

“ Dere do be somethin’ dere, sure,” he muttered.

The boy returned, panting, with the old, heavy sealing-gun.

“ Shoot un,” he said.

“ No, b’y.”

Skipper Ruben took the gun. He rested the butt on the rock, and put his right hand over the muzzle. Then he peered seaward for a long time. Presently he said—

“ Dem’s men, b’y, crawlin’ ashore.”

They hurried down the cliff and waited. The objects grew larger.

“ Dey is men, I b’l’ eve,” gasped the boy.

“ Hist, b’y.”

Skipper Ruben sent off a cheery hail. There came a faint answering sound.

Presently, still roped to each other, faint and hungry, the boys crept to shore. In less

than half an hour they were safe in the hospitable shelter of Skipper Ruben's coastal home.

The next morning a steady off-shore wind was blowing. There was no sign of ice.

"We purty good luck," Charlie Mucko said, looking off at the naked, tumbling sea.

And good luck was to continue, for, on the afternoon of the second day, spouting up from the north, in a vast hurry lest another cold snap come, came Parson John. He ran the nose of the "Saint Martha" up to the gravel, and jumped to land. Old Chum leaped ashore with a tremendous bow-wow of welcome to Number Nine and the Eskimo boy.

Parson John threw back his head and laughed. Then he slapped both boys on the shoulder.

"I heard the ice caught you, and I knew you'd be off-shore for a while; but I kept tab on the weather, and as there was no storm, I expected to pick you up."

"Us sorry 'bout t' dogs, an' t' komatik, an' t' punt, zur," Charlie Mucko said; "an' 'bout your caribou meat."

Parson John laughed again.

"All part of the job, and the life, boys," he

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joked. "And there's plenty more dogs, and komatiks, and punts on the Labrador."

"What about Tom Badd?" Number Nine questioned, recalling Parson John's last words as they had left the Bottom.

Parson John threw up his hands.

"Tom Badd! Oh, yes! Tom Badd!" he ejaculated. "Tom's ahead of us. He got away before I got down, dodged me for the present. Left Never-Go-By with the last of the fleet, with plans all made, I was told, for opening a saloon at Sheltering Hand for the winter."

He paused a moment. A little later, with a trifle more of seriousness in his tone, he said—

"We must be getting on, boys. We must be getting on."

CHAPTER VIII

THE WRECK ON THE RIM O' HELL

IT was going to blow. By all the lore of the Labrador wind was coming. In this Sheltering Hand Harbour was unanimous. Tom Pottle, who had been to Spanish ports, said it was going to blow. Uncle Davy, who knew where to find the fish, said it was going to blow. Old Uncle Ezra Mee, who had put out to the Hook-an'-Line grounds at least twenty thousand times, who had been swept to sea by the icepacks seven times, who had weathered six hundred gales, big and little, and had been "cast away" more times than any man on the Labrador, so far as known—and withal honestly wanted to live his life over again—said it was going to blow. Skipper Zeb North said it was going to blow. Abe Hanson said it. And, finally, the glass said it.

All things considered, a blow was likely.

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The season for it was at hand. It was November ; and in the matter of blows there was a vast arrearage. There had been no blow for weeks, none at least worthy of the name. The fall season had been strangely fine. There had been no wrecks. The whole fleet was home. The Bone Yard had got nothing, not even a punt. It was unusual. Everybody had got in. It was hinted that the climate was changing and it was suggested, with no very obvious symptoms of pride either, that possibly the Labrador, in the matter of blows, might degenerate to the level of other countries.

But now there were signs of wind. Everybody sensed a blow. It was in the air, on the stages, everywhere. Of course nobody put to sea. The barometer went down—down—down, and then “the bottom fell out of the glass.” And there was also the fog.

Yes, there was also the fog !

It came with the morning, thick, cold, clammy, stifling. The high bluff that made the south side of the harbour had been powerless this time to shoot it skyward : in the windless air it had tumbled over the bluff, a vast greyish-yellow deluge upon the wharves, fish-flakes,

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cottages, and rocks. It had submerged everything. It hid Satan's Teeth. It blotted out the Rim o' Hell. It obliterated the Devil's Hoof and it smothered the Mizzen Tops'il. It affected breathing, and voices coming through it had a gasping, muffled sound.

"Tur'ble thick!" they saluted.

"Yes; tur'ble thick!"

"Everybody in, though," they congratulated.

"Yes, t'ank t' Lard! Everybody in."

"An' it'll be from t' east."

"Aye! From t' east, b'y."

"But t' fleet's home."

"Mm-mm! T' fleet's home."

"An' Parson John's in."

"An' Tom Badd!"

"Aye! An' Tom Badd!"

"'Twill be fun—sure."

"Aye! b'y, 'twill."

"If t' Parson insists."

"Fight, mebb'y."

"Aye! Fight—mebb'y."

Parson John began his round of pastoral visits early in the day. Among the first to claim his attention were the sick of his flock.

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A joyous man, and a joy-bringer, naturally Parson John was joyfully received.

“You’s back, Parson John, you’s back,” sobbed old Aunt Julia Squires, who had the heart trouble, “after two months, one week, an’ four days.”

She fixed her mild, faded old eyes firmly on him.

“It’s been ter’ble long,” she said. “Ter’ble long.”

“You’re looking fine, Aunt Julia”; he cheered. “You’ve the freshness and the colour of a girl of seventeen.”

She smiled wanly.

“I’m ter’ble weak—an’ gone.”

“You’ve the freshness and colour of a girl,” he repeated.

There was a little throb of wind at the window where the fog pressed.

“You must be feeling fine or you couldn’t have that beautiful bride-like pink and white in your cheeks.”

She threw up a hand and gave a faint little cackle. A single long grey curl flanked the delicate old face on either side and ran down, in the hollow of each shoulder, almost to her waist.

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She twirled one of these with a finger: and, as though to make the words a little less of a lie than they had been, the colour deepened and spread. A dash of new light flickered into the mild, faded, old eyes.

"At one time," she said; "at one time—when I was a girl——"

"I know, Aunt Julia—I know—of course," he laughed.

There was another little throb at the window.

"I'd an interesting wedding on my trip up the Bottom," he said.

Her mild, faded old eyes brightened and the light of distant youth came back. And then, with much merriment, and many details, as a prophet of the Lord, and a minister of grace to the old woman's soul, he told her of the love and the marriage of Willie Ikie and Tillie Toomashie. She laughed softly, and pleasantly—and for a long time.

"I might have been married, too," she said, "had it not been for the——"

She faced the window.

"Wasn't that wind?" she asked.

"I think I'd better pray," he said. "Next

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time, Aunt Julia, I'll have longer—and you'll tell me."

"Yes, pray."

He knelt down and offered a brief, bright, triumphant prayer of thanksgiving and of hope.

"Now I must be getting on. I'm delighted to find you looking so youthful and so well, Aunt Julia," he farewelled.

When he was gone, and the door was shut behind him, she crippled over to the small mirror to see the bride-like pink and white of which he had spoken.

Once outside of Aunt Julia's cottage it was obvious to Parson John that there was a strange stirring in the air. Little swishes of wind whirled into the fog here and there and left the rocks smoking. They came from the east, down from the Mizzen Tops'il, and scurried over the harbour water, then raced away inland like mad. When they were gone the stillness would settle again, and hold till another puff came. The little gusts were cool and playful and harmless: and they rendered a service in splitting the fog-bank and in revealing cottages and paths and roadways.

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To the understanding they were significant mainly in what they portended.

Parson John continued his rounds. He called on Skipper George Runn. Skipper George had been reported by Uncle Davy as "most gone."

"I's found t' Lard," Skipper George ejaculated as Parson John gripped his old hand. "I's found t' Lard. Praise t' Lard, I's found Un. I's jist a old codger, as everybody knows, an' I's knocked about a lot, an' I's been a tur'ble joker in my day, out at t' Hook-an'-Line groun's, an' on t' flakes, an' everywhere—still I's found t' Lard. I's see it all as plain as day now, an' by one o' them gates, as you was speakin' uv, I's goin' in clean an' clear o' Satan's Teeth or any other obstruction. Un a Receiver o' Wrecks, t'at's w'at Un be," he finished, brightening markedly.

"'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,' " Parson John quoted.

"T'at's w'at I says—Un a Receiver o' Wrecks. See!" he pursued, holding up a finger and searching the face of the missionary to determine if he had grasped the figure. "You sees t' sign down on t' Company's store—

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‘Receiver o’ Wrecks’;—t’at t’ sea casts up. They’s t’ save w’at can be saved o’ t’ vessels for t’ owners, or t’ Gov’ment. Now t’ Lard does t’at wit’ men. Un set all dem gates, as you telled uv, Un a ‘Receiver o’ Wrecks,’ sure. Just t’ same as t’ Company. I’s found Un an’ I’s told Tom Badd.”

He settled back as though exhausted with a great creative effort of the mind.

“I’s mos’ gone,” he mumbled. “I’s glad you’s home for my funeral, Parson John. I’s headin’ in fast. I’s stood me watch an’ it’s time for a blink o’ sleep now. But I’s found t’ Lard,” he exulted faintly; “I’s found t’ Lard for Un a Receiver—a Receiver——”

His voice fell low, and took on a hollow sound. One hand lay outside the coverlet. The gnarled old fingers of it fanned up and down weakly.

“—o’ Wrecks!” he finished hoarsely.

The old fingers fell still.

Skipper George was in.

Parson John knew that Skipper George was in. It was some satisfaction to Parson John to feel that he had helped Skipper George in.

The door of the cottage throbbed, and a

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whisk of wind brushed the clinging fog from the window. It let in some fresh light. It fell on the seamed, still, old face, lighting and warming it: and the marks made by sixty summers at the Hook-and-Line grounds for fish and of a like number of winters tramping the wastes behind for fur were blotted out.

"It's a great job, this of mine!" Parson John muttered to himself, as he pushed his way through the rising wind and the thinning fog toward the cottage of his next parishioner.

Before night fell there was no need of further prophesying. The blow was on. Sunset brought a great scattering of the fog, a wild splash of angry red to the west, with the sea all black out in front, and the waves leaping high and merrily about the Rim o' Hell and the Devil's Hoof.

"Wait till ye see it in t' marnin'," said old Uncle Ezra Mee, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Wait till ye see it in t' marnin'."

"Aye! wait till ye see it in t' marnin'," they responded.

"But t' fleet's home!"

"Everybody's in!"

"T'ere's nobody out!"

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“ Let ’er blow ! ”

“ Aye ! b’y, let ’er blow ! ”

That evening, his round of visits made, Parson John sat with Uncle Davy in the great bare kitchen of Uncle Davy’s humble home. Mary the maid, with her floor well scrubbed and herself well tidied up, sat knitting a small sock. Number Nine, Charlie Mucko, and Li’l Jimmie were in the broad bed on the cock-loft floor. Old Chum lay outside stretched along the sill in front of the door.

“ They’ve a plan, Parson John, an’ they goin’ t’ do it if they can,” Uncle Davy said. “ Tom Badd’s here now, an’ all as likes t’ liquor is standin’ wit’ him. They’s goin’ t’ drive ye off if they can.”

“ And they know my terms, the least I’ll accept from Tom Badd ? ”

“ Aye, they knows.”

“ And you think they’ll fight for him ? ”

“ Mebby—yes.”

“ Mebby no.”

“ Yes, mebby no.”

“ And my meeting’s announced for next Sunday ? Miss Undle gave it out in the school ? Everybody knows, you think ? ”

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"Everybody knows."

"This is Wednesday. Tom's got till Sunday."

The wind assaulted the house more vigorously than it had yet done. It screamed about the gable, and pulsed savagely against the door and windows.

But Parson John paid no attention to the wind. His mind was on other things. He did not speak for a while. Then he said very solemnly—

"My job's a varied job, Uncle Davy. I have to do a lot of things. Jesus did a lot of things. Some you can help with talk, some you can't. There was Skipper George, now, he was reasonable. He could be talked to, and won by talk and reason. Tom Badd won't talk, won't listen, won't reason. Therefore other means must be used with Tom. I told Tom Badd what I'd expect him to do at Never-Go-By. He dodged me there, but he won't dodge me here. He's got to come to my meeting announced for here next Sunday and confess he sunk the 'Whiskaway,' and promise he'll quit selling rum on this coast. Since I got home and found he was here I sent him word as

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to what I'd expect. It's all very simple. Tom can do right and stay here, or go on doing wrong and get out. He's got till Sunday. You see, Uncle Davy, I must work my job. I must show I'm interested in religion. I'm a minister to men's souls, and I must mind my business."

The wind smote the house again. It seemed to shake and stagger. The gale was gaining in striking force and power.

"You's a useful man here, Parson John," Uncle Davy said; "an' us would hate tur'ble to see them drive ye off t' coast. You fits in here, you does a lot o' good. You says Skipper George found t' Lard?"

"Skipper George found the Lord—yes."

Li'l' Jimmie from the cock-loft called down that he heard something like the sound of the mail-boat blowing. Almost at the same instant Old Chum whimpered and scratched at the door.

"It's the wind, b'y," responded Uncle Davy. "Go to sleep."

The talk was resumed. Downstairs it followed along the line already indicated. Upstairs it was different. Li'l' Jimmie babbled interminably of the happenings at Sheltering

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Hand since the other boys had left. He prattled of school, of Miss Undle, of Archie Hammond, of Mary the maid, of the catch of fish, of the schooners that had come and gone, of a thousand nothings. And of course the story of the drift to sea in the ice had to be rehearsed, also of the pack, and what had befallen the bully thereof, of the slowly diminishing food supply, of the long crawl to shore and safety. It was toward midnight when the tales had all been told.

But before sleep came, came another sound from the sea. And this time there was no mistaking it for the wind. It was the long, swinging sound of a steamer's whistle.

"There!" yelled Li'l' Jimmie springing up.
"Hear that?"

"Ya!" responded Charlie Mucko.

Downstairs old Uncle Davy lifted his head from his pillow.

"Lard—Lard—Lard—to-night!" he said.

He was not swearing. He was praying.

Parson John sprang up. Old Chum was howling at the door. The boys scrambled down the ladder from the cock-loft. Mary the maid began dressing hastily.

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They opened the door and the wind swept in like mad. They lit lanterns and ventured out.

"I's heerd it first!" boasted Li'l' Jimmie foolishly.

"Hush! b'y," Uncle Davy cautioned.

They stood all tense bent against the gale, peering into the roaring black, attempting to listen. They heard nothing but the tumultuous revel and boom of the storm for a time. And then it came again, low at first, rising and riding, as it were, on the wind, sinking and again swelling till it was clear and strong above the gale, an interminable moan, plaintive, heartrending, ominous, horrible.

Lights showed at other doors. The fog, riven by the gale, had been swept to the wilderness. The lights burned in the blackness like stars. They began to move—along the paths that could not be seen—over the wharves and fish-flakes, and some flashed up on the schooners in the harbour.

And then there came cries from near and far, sounding in the lulls of the gale, cutting through the black revel of the night.

"Wreck!"



THE MAN WAS WATCHING ; AS THE WAVE CAME HE LEAPED HIGH
IN THE AIR.

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" Wreck ! Sure ! "

" On Satan's Teeth ! "

" On the Devil's Hoof ! "

" On the Rim o' Hell ! "

" But a wreck—somewhere ! "

" Aye ! A wreck—somewhere ! "

" The mail-boat, mebbly ! "

" Not the mail-boat ! Not her whistle ! "

" A big steamer then ! "

" Wreck—anyway ! "

" Wreck ! "

" Wreck ! "

The cry went everywhere, and it came back from everywhere. It ran along the whole inner face of God's Elbow to which the white cottages clung. It came down from the Mizzen Tops'il where there were a few lights already flashing. It came from the mainland side of the harbour, from the river-mouth back toward the west, from the North Tickle, and from the South. It sounded everywhere.

" Wreck ! "

" Wreck ! "

" Wreck ! "

Soon there was not a cottage window anywhere that was not a-glow. There was a

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scramble for boots, and oil-skins, and lines, and lifebelts. And then came the rush for the punts !

Hoarse, hollow, and fear-filling, came again from the sea the roar of the steamer's whistle. It blared loud, and wild, and full-toned for a time, then it trailed off into a shrieking wail, and stopped abruptly.

Parson John, Number Nine, and Charlie Mucko were early at the wharf. They untied the " Saint Martha " and put off.

" The South Tickle, boys ! We'll try it first."

They tried it. They found many punts before them. But it was to no purpose. It was impossible to get half-way through the tickle. No craft could live in that tumbling, tremendous cauldron. They put about, and ran to the North Tickle. It was worse. The sea had better range, and the breakers, mountains high, were going to smash on the towering horn of granite in a way that made the boldest shiver in their sea-boots.

The punts, one by one, came again to the landing-stages. The " Saint Martha " came.

" I'll stay with her in case it lulls," Parson

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John said ; " but if you can get there," he added, addressing the boys, " see what it looks like from the Mizzen Top."

Seizing a lantern, the boys dashed off. Staggering and stumbling ; whipped now this way now that by the wind ; now sprawling to the ground to let a gust of unusual fierceness pass over them ; panting and breathless, finally they reached a shelf of rock as high as they dared venture on the Mizzen Top. It afforded a view seaward.

They could make out, when they could look to windward at all, now black, now smothered in lashing foam and spume, the outline of the Devil's Hoof. Beyond this, in the roaring darkness, they knew lay the Rim o' Hell.

They were but a few moments on the shelf of rock when the sea in front was suddenly lit up as by a mighty flash of lightning. It showed the black, mountainous seas tipped with angry white, racing to the towering cliffs. It showed the Devil's Hoof, a reach of raging sea beyond, and on the other side of this, dark against the foam and spuming white of the Rim o' Hell, there towered the black bow of a big steamer.

Both boys gasped. Other dare-devils who

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had pressed up beside them gasped. The signal flare from the ship collapsed, and blackness again fell on the roaring sea.

"I seed men!" one said.

"Aye! an' wimmen!" another panted.

"Wavin'!"

"Aye! Wavin'!"

There came another flare. But it got nowhere. The wind beat it into the sea.

"Let's light a fire. It'll cheer un."

They gathered material for a fire on the Mizzen Top. When they laid down the wood the wind whipped it away like feathers.

And then with the wind came rain—cold, cutting, blinding—turning soon to sleet and snow.

The night wore away, the gale gaining rather than slackening. The arrearage in the matter of blows was being made up.

Morning came at length, haltingly, reluctantly: but finally it could be said that it was day. The snow had ceased with midnight, and in the momentary rifts in the driving mist and rain, the great bow of the stricken steamer could be seen plainly against the raging white of the Rim o' Hell. She had evidently struck, head

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on, about the middle of the reef. Many figures could be made out silhouetted against the white of the waves that were breaking behind, and all around them. To hear cries was, of course, impossible owing to the tremendous roar of the sea, and the boom of the storm. It was only in the lee of rocks, or in the shelter of the shaking cottages that ordinary speech was audible. On the Mizzen Top, or out where the rocks rimmed the sea, and the wind had the range, men cupped their hands to windward of their mouths when they attempted to speak; and then, as a rule, they spoke into the raging wind.

"She holdin'—so far!" they roared.

"A lot aboard!" would be yelled in reply.

But the gale would get it, not the ear for which it was intended.

Bolder ones tried the South Tickle with a strong punt, strongly manned, toward mid-forenoon. She was flung back like a cockleshell, and escaped swamping by the narrowest margin.

By noon it was believed there was a slight lull, and the falling back of the wind a point or two into the south eased the swell in the

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North Tickle. A bold crew tried it but they were beaten back.

“No use—yet!” they concluded.

Nearly everybody gave up hope. The majority went to the Mizzen Top to watch—and as is so often necessary on the Labrador—simply, and helplessly, to wait.

“No use—to-day!” they decided.

The ship seemed to be settling. Bits of wreckage were pounding to pulp far down at the base of the Mizzen Top, the seaward side of which met the waves and flung them back again. The slight swing of the wind to the south'ard was ominous.

“It'll get 'er more on the beam,” they said.

And then, with the middle of the afternoon come, the watchers on the Mizzen Top saw an amazing thing. A punt was outside of the North Tickle, and was at least half-way to the Devil's Hoof. There was a single man in it.

“Who is un?” they gasped.

He made headway. It was marvellous, incredible.

“Look! Look!” they pointed.

“Un has a line!”

“Aye! a line. Un has a line!”

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"A line!" they echoed. "A line goin' out!"

"A line!"

"A line!"

It was amazing beyond words. The daring boatman darted this way and that. Now a wave hung over him, but when it fell he was gone. He ran up the great billows like a squirrel; and shot down the other side like a bird. Hidden for a time—and given up for lost—he would spring through the spume, shake his shoulders to throw off the spray, turn his head and flash a glance to the right and left to see which way the wave came, and then, after locating the dent in the oncoming comber, the tiny punt would shoot through the lop like a shuttle, to balance and tremble for a moment and then prepare for the next climb or dip. The daring, and dexterity, and the triumph of it all held the gazers on the Mizzen Top dumb. Here was a master craftsman, they felt. It was something new in punt-handling.

Old Uncle Ezra Mee cleared his eyes of spray. Then he rubbed his hands.

"Ecod!" he cried. "Ecod! Look at un!"

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Old Uncle Ezra Mee was the oldest man at Sheltering Hand. He was good in a boat. He had weathered six hundred gales, and had been cast away oftener than any man on the coast, so far as was known. Good work in a boat always appealed to Old Uncle Ezra Mee.

He rubbed his old hands again. And this time he laughed. It was not a heartless laugh but one of admiration.

“ Ecod ! ” he chuckled. “ Ecod ! ”

And then an unlooked-for thing happened. The boat had got well out from the rougher and more broken cross-seas of the coast, and many who had been holding their breath began to breathe more easily when, in an unguarded moment, a wave that seemed to the onlookers to be running crosswise of the usual seas, caught the punt sidewise, lifted it high on its crest, bore it for a full half hundred yards out of its course, and smashed it to kindling-wood on the sloping side of the Devil's Hoof. The boatman leaped up the rock obviously uninjured. And at almost the same instant the word ran up to the watchers on the Mizzen Top that it was Tom Badd who had started for the wreck in the punt with a line.

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It was realized at once that the position of the castaway was a perilous one. Every now and then the rock seemed to be completely submerged. No man had ever before been on the Devil's Hoof in a storm. It was no place for living things in storm or calm. On the bow of the stranded steamer, and on the Mizzen Top, now as crowded as the ship, they waited breathlessly for the next wave.

It came.

Fortunately only the thin top of it swept over the rock. The man was watching, and as it came, he leaped high in the air. Most of the water went under him. He came down, but he seemed to slip or stumble, and rolled off the lee side of the rock. The watchers gasped. But he clung on. With the wave spent, he scrambled again to the top. Then he made a dash for a point on the rock that looked slightly higher. He reached it well before the next wave came. He clutched it. The next wave, a little lower than the first, failed to shake him loose.

A feeling of admiration again mastered Old Uncle Ezra Mee. Again he rubbed his hands.

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“ Ecod, look at un clingin’ there like a mussel, t’ sea breakin’ clear over un ! ”

He broke into a profane chuckle.

“ ’Cod, look at un ! ” he repeated raucously, laughing again.

When the next wave came—and the next—Badd held on. The third broke his hold and flung him over the lea of the rock. But he scampered up, and flopped down again in his former position.

There was not much to say as Tom Badd kept up his tremendous fight with the sea on the slippery rock. Now he would try leaping ; now on one spot on the rock, now on another, they would see him, braced, tense, alert for the onset. Now he would run forward to meet the seas and successfully fight his way through them. Again he would scamper before them, and slip down over the lea of the rock, holding on with his hands, pulling himself up after the wave had passed. If his hold was broken in one place, he would scramble about and catch hold somewhere else, and always, it would seem, just at the moment when he appeared certain to be swept away.

There was no denying it, it was a great fight,

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a battle royal ! It was intensely interesting—to watch. They almost forgot the wreck. But how would it end ? That was the question.

The afternoon wore toward evening. Some thought the gale was wasting, the sea flattening a trifle. But there was small ground for the thought.

Then the darkness began to settle. It shut out the ship ; and it invested the leaping figure on the Devil's Hoof with an aspect that was weird and uncanny beyond words to describe.

“ Un won't be t'ere in t' marnin', ” they said.

“ Yes, un will, ” chuckled Old Uncle Ezra Mee.

CHAPTER IX

THE THIN GREY LINE

OLD Uncle Ezra Mee was right. The first of the morning light showed Tom Badd still clinging to the Devil's Hoof. It had been a marvellous feat, but it had been accomplished. He was still there.

They rubbed their eyes. Yes ; he was still there on the rock.

“Stickin’ like a mussel,” they commented, peering.

The wind was still blowing in long shrieking gusts, and the sea was surging up and down the black line of the cliffs, that flanked and buttressed the Mizzen Tops’il in thunderous confusion. But to the knowing ones the gale had reached its maximum at any rate ; and, though the storm was far from having blown itself out, it was felt, in a vague way, that Tom Badd had won. It was observed, as the

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light strengthened, that it was only now and then that a wave reached the top of the rock.

They breathed easier.

“ He’ve won,” they said.

“ Aye ! he’ve won ! ”

“ It drawin’ more t’ t’ s’uthard. Us ’ill get un afore night.”

And then, with the gaining light, eyes were strained on to where the wreck had been. It, too, was there, but it was evident that the night had left its mark. All through the roaring darkness the tremendous seas had been pounding the stricken steamer. They had not been without effect. The vessel had perceptibly settled ; and the waves were raking her in threatening and ominous fashion. The slight list of the wind to the south, would, it was felt, in due time, by bringing the ship more broadside to the seas, perceptibly hasten the coming and inevitable smash.

Already it could be seen as the light grew that the base of the cliff was lined with wreckage which was being pounded to a pulp. It gave the wretched people on board hints of what would befall them if they sought to avail

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themselves of lifebelts or floating wreckage as a means of escape.

And yet it was obvious, too, that remaining on the wreck much longer would soon be impossible. The ship was surely breaking up. And the ship was the only hope of safety, for the reef itself was submerged with every wave. Let the vessel lurch backward or to either side, let the great teeth-like rocks that held her bow high and firmly, once relax their hold, and there would be a crash and hissing, some wild, clamorous cries, great foam-crested rollers crowned with figures struggling helplessly, a mad swirl of green water, and the black coast rocks of God's Elbow that met the sea like the wall of a cathedral would again exact its toll. No human being could survive it, not a soul could be saved. The men and women on the ship saw it as inevitable ; the watchers on the Mizzen Top, as the morning merged into day, saw it. But what was to be done ?

“ A line ! ” they said.

“ Aye ! A line ! ”

Tom Badd had started with a line. He had failed. And what Tom Badd had failed to do in a boat no man at Sheltering Hand

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would attempt. The tickles were still roaring cauldrons ; the inner waters of the harbour felt the stir of the sea and there was foam further up it than for years. By common consent it was agreed that no punt could get clear of the tickles. It was not therefore by boats, nor by men, that deliverance could be thought of.

Were there no other means ?

By ten o'clock it came to one of the watchers on the Mizzen Top that there was another way. It came suddenly in a little lull of the wind with the first audible cry from the stricken ship. It was this cry, and the obvious response it evoked from his great Newfoundland dog, Old Chum, that flashed a ray of hope into Parson John's mind. The dog, hearing the cry from the ship, had leaped up to his master's face as though seeking orders to do something. Then he had run forward to the edge of the cliff whimpering nervously and made as though he would leap into the sea.

It was enough. Parson John understood. He recalled, too, what he had been told of the dog's early training on the French shore of Newfoundland where he had secured him. He had tested him himself in trying and exacting circumstances,

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and the big dog had never failed. His intelligence and powers of endurance were marvellous. Again and again Parson John had been amazed at the evident mental range and comprehending powers of the dog. He knew he would obey even up to the point of going straight to his death. Of reaching the ship by punt there was no hope. The sea had not gone down, the gale was as fierce as ever. Tom Badd had made a brilliant and heroic attempt, and had won for himself a great name and place, but Tom Badd was on the Devil's Hoof ; and there was yet no certainty as to what would become of him. Of this, however, there was no doubt ; what Tom Badd had failed in, no man would undertake. And it was obvious that the ship could not stand the pounding much longer. If anything was to be done it must be done quickly. It was thirty-six hours since the vessel struck. Another night was coming. It was a desperate chance, with the sea running as it was, but Parson John decided to take it.

He announced his intention of sending Old Chum to the wreck with a line.

They met the suggestion with a jeer.

“ Huh ! ” mocked Tom Pottle.

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“ ‘Cod ! ” said Old Uncle Ezra Mee.

“ In that ! A dog ! ” scorned Infidel Ike Lunt.

“ It a man’s job.”

“ Aye ! not a dog’s,” they hooted.

The Labradorman is brave to the point of folly. He will attempt the impossible, but he does not like a slight. And he wants to do the big things himself. There was small enthusiasm for Parson John’s proposal. In what Tom Badd had done, and was still doing ; in that, well, that way honour lay. Tom Badd had moved up. He was not afraid of the sea. He was winning in the battle with the waves ; he was still sticking like a mussel to the rock. He had done a large, commanding thing in what he had attempted. He had not got to the wreck ; but he had not failed. He was beating the sea, winning over the Northland, saving himself alive. They would have crowned him, and envied him, and applauded him, even if it could have been established that he had started to the wreck for salvage ! It moved them. They liked it ; even as they liked the skipper, who, when all avenues of escape were cut off, smashed his schooner on the black face of the Bone Yard,

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head on, and died like a man, and a sailor. But Parson John's proposal moved them not. It left them cold. They continued to jeer.

"Let the Parson keep to 'is job o' savin' souls," they ridiculed.

But Parson John was not a novice on the coast. He had been born on the coast—in England. His plan once conceived, he proceeded to put it into operation. He dispatched Charlie Mucko to the Company store for a great skein of strong cord.

"Cod-trap twine, Charlie, the strongest and best," he warned.

The Eskimo boy came panting back. Li'l' Jimmie stood on one side of Old Chum, patting him, Number Nine on the other.

They tied the end of the cod-trap twine to the dog's collar. Then they led him forward to the edge of the cliff. Now where the land meets the sea as a sheer precipice, the action of the waves in a storm is peculiar. The sea does not curl and break, it does not come racing on, tumbling over itself, its plunging, arching lop engulfing and smothering everything before it, as on a beach. The long fore-foot of the sea, running ahead, and meeting the cliff far down,

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swells up the face of the rock, and, acting as a sort of buffer to the on-coming sea, takes the force of it, and flings the wave back upon itself, often shooting it off seaward again in the form of a harmless "back-bound." So that, in the main, big seas breaking on a cliff resolve themselves largely into an enormous sinking and swelling again of the ocean up and down the precipice.

Parson John held Old Chum by the collar. He waited. Everybody waited. The jeering had stopped. They pressed nearer. Came then, in due time, an enormous wave. It swelled up the cliff, and up, and up, till it was within ten feet of the floor of the ledge. Then it began to settle, and to race seaward.

Parson John relaxed his hold on the dog's collar.

"Go, Old Chum, to the wreck!" he said.

Instantly the great dog leaped. He struck the receding back-bound well down, and out. It carried him seaward for probably forty yards.

The long fore-foot of the incoming sea caught and lifted him. Though he swam savagely, it

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bore him backward, and seemed to threaten to fling him again to the rock from which he had sprung. But the back-bound from the cliff met the wave and threw it seaward again, carrying the dog safely away from the coast for the time at any rate.

Parson John paid out the line.

“ ‘E off,” L’il’ Jimmie said. “ ‘E off anyway.”

Slowly the great dog made way. Now up one side of the big waves, in plain sight, he seemed to climb; now down the other side, lost to sight, he would plunge. He would seem, at times, to be swallowed up, and would appear no more. But, in due season, now to the right, now some distance to the left of where he was last seen, the bobbing black head would show in the swirl and smother of the sea. Each wave would beat him back a certain distance; but gradually, surely, he widened the tumbling, raging breach between himself and the cliff.

“ Un doin’ well,” Old Uncle Ezra Mee said, admiration showing in his tone. “ Un doin’ well.”

Others said he was doing well.

“ But a long way to the Rim o’ Hell ! ”

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“ Aye ! b’y, a long way ! ”

“ A quarter mile ! ”

“ Aye ! fully ! ”

“ Un’ll no make it ! ”

“ Mebby ! ”

“ But it not a dog’s job ! ”

“ No ; it not a dog’s job ! ”

“ Un shouldn’t o’ sent un ! ”

“ It a man’s job—goin’ t’ a wreck ! ”

“ But a man couldn’t—— ”

“ No ; a man couldn’t—— ”

“ But a man’s job ! ”

“ Aye ! a man’s job ! ”

“ Un doin’ well ! ”

“ Fine ! ”

“ Aye ! ”

Parson John continued to pay out line. Old Chum, when visible through the wind-lop, could be seen still to be making way. In a half-hour he was well out opposite the Devil’s Hoof. It lay slightly to the north of the direct line to the wreck. It had been to the south of the course taken by Tom Badd, who had gone out of the North Tickle. It was a critical place, and an anxious time. Parson John remembered what the cross-wave had done to Tom Badd.

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He was anxious. Li'l' Jimmie was anxious. Number Nine was anxious. Everybody was anxious—even those who said it was a man's job.

The dog had come up to the area of choppy sea around the Devil's Hoof. Once through that he would be in the lea of the Rim o' Hell which lay directly beyond, and there would be a fighting chance. The power of the waves would be broken, and the strong landward set of the sea relaxed.

He passed the chop about the Devil's Hoof safely. The great head, now a speck of sharp black against the white of the spume, could be seen bobbing about.

They would lose it for a time, and talk would cease, or fall to a whisper, and breaths would be held or come uncertainly, and eyes would be cleared of flying mist, and little prayers would go up: and then the black speck, always shrinking in size because always moving away, would shoot up further on, and relief would come. Then they would talk again. They talked and breathed more freely than usual when the speck got by the tremendous kick-up to the south of the Devil's Hoof.

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Old Uncle Ezra Mee rubbed his hands and chuckled raucously.

“ ‘Cod, un’s goin’ to make it ! ” he said.

“ Yes ; un’s goin’ to make it,” gleefully piped Li’l Jimmie.

“ God bless un ! ” petitioned Uncle Davy.

“ They sees un from t’ wreck.”

“ An’ Tom Badd’s watchin’.”

“ But can’t do nuthin’.”

“ No, can’t do nuthin’.”

“ Nobody can do nuthin’.”

“ No ! ”

Parson John paid out more line. The black speck got smaller. The gale seemed to be wasting. Tom Badd was having it easier on the Devil’s Hoof. But a tremendous sea was still running. Then it was approaching noon of a November day in the Northland. And any moment the ship might suddenly go to pieces.

Tom Pottle, who had been to Spanish ports, came over to where Parson John stood. Tom Pottle had maintained that the job was a man’s job. But Tom Pottle was a Labradorman. He admired good work. It moved him.

“ Un goin’ to make it ! ” he said. “ I never seed it done in all my days, but it looks all

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right." Then, "Is ther anythin' I c'n do, Cap'n?" he added; for, in a vague way, the man of the sea had come to recognize that the man of the Gospel had won the right to give orders.

Parson John peered seaward.

"Yes; I think he'll make it—now," he said. "He's made the lee of the rock, anyway. If they manage their end of it all right now—I think——"

"They'll manage," Tom Pottle said, shading his eyes and peering sharply; "they sees un an' understands. They's lettin' somethin' down in the lee o' the Rim to pick un up, they's ready if un gets there," he finished.

Then, turning to Parson John, he said—

"Is you ready, zur, at this end?"

"That line—that halliard line—goes to this," Parson John said, touching the cord in his hand. "It's the next biggest. It'll take the small cable, and the small cable the big one—they'll soon all be here now, and, by the way, Tom, you'd better pick out a place, well up the Top, to fasten the big line. Make sure of something solid to tie to, and well up to clear the sea."

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He again paid out line. Only a little of the skein remained. The thin grey line swayed in the wind ; then dipped into the sea far out and was lost.

“ Like a log-line,” they said. “ Looks like a log-line trailin’ from a ship.”

It was like a log-line. And how slender it looked !

Panting and staggering men arrived on the great wind-swept shelf with the enormous lines. Fortunately Sheltering Hand abounded in lines. There were lines of all sizes, from the strong and slender cod-trap twine up to the enormous whaling cables, as thick as a man’s leg. And they were of endless length, too. It was fortunate—“ providential ” Uncle Davy said—that they were there, and that they were long and strong.

There was a decided tug at the line. It brought the end of the skein of twine to Parson John’s hand. He reached towards the coil of larger rope. Li’l’ Jimmie had the end loose, and ready.

“ Here it be, Parson John,” he said. “ Here it be.”

Parson John took the end of the larger rope

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and laid it against the end of the strong twine he held in his hand. Tom Pottle, Infidel Ike Lunt, Mountaineer Mike, Abe Hanson, Skipper Zeb North and others of the strong men of the harbour were fighting their way up the Mizzen Top with a free end of the enormous whaling line.

It was a time of tension. The speck of black in the distant spume had gone out of sight against the black of the rocks of the Rim o' Hell. And nobody could see what was happening. Tom Badd, with his back to the watchers on the cliff, was evidently engrossed in what was taking place at the wreck. Parson John's hands trembled a bit as he tied the end of the coil of halliard rope to the end of the cod-trap cord.

He had just made sure that the knot was secure—and what issues of life or death, hung, he felt, on that knot, and on that thin grey cord!—when, a savage pull at the line whipped the knot from his hands, and it raced away over the rim of the cliff at his feet. He sprang forward, shocked for a moment into thinking that all was lost, and at that instant a cheer, clear-cut and ringing, came in over the sea on the

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wind. A moment later there was a hoarse hurrah and a wild leap from Tom Badd on the Devil's Hoof.

Old Chum had reached the wreck !

Li'l Jimmie waved his crutch and cheered ecstatically. Uncle Davy slid to his knees and offered a prayer of thanksgiving. A number of huskies began to howl : and many women wrung their hands and cried joyfully. Charlie Mucko's chocolate face brightened, and Number Nine learned another lesson about the Northland.

Old Uncle Ezra Mee rubbed his hands gleefully.

"I knew un'd make it," he announced admiringly.

"I sure knew un'd make it."

In the strong, sure way of the men of the sea—in giant tubs, and barrels and baskets—by means of the great whaling cable, and other smaller lines, they brought the shipwrecked people over the boiling sea, safe to land. They brought every soul : no one was lost. They brought the children and the women ; they brought the men who had been passengers ; they brought the crew, and the captain ; they brought Old Chum.

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And, finally, they brought Tom Badd.

"You come mighty nigh gettin' cotched *that* time, Tom," Old Uncle Ezra Mee chaffed.

"Huh!" says he, "I'll have to come a mighty sight nigher 'n that *afore I gets cotched.*"

Everybody laughed.

Just as the dark settled, the noise of a great grinding and smashing came in from the sea. The big whaling cable fastened to a horn of the Mizzen Top slackened. They began to heave on the line. It came easily.

"She've busted," Tom Pottle said.

She had.

And that night while Old Chum lay stretched along the door-sill outside, in the cock-loft of Uncle Davy's humble home, Li'l' Jimmie, Charlie Mucko, and Number Nine talked it over. When they had discussed it from all possible angles, Li'l' Jimmie reverted to a question often in his mind. "Mary, the maid, know your name now, your real name; she seed it in your Bible," he teased. "She won't tell me, but she says she seed it, and she know it. I t'ink she tell Miss Undle too an' she tell Archie Hammond, cause they's keepin' company now."

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Uncle Davy called up sharply that there should be no more talking.

“ It’s time for sleep now, for everybody,” he commanded.

The last thing Li’l’ Jimmie said, in a whisper, was : “ Un ain’t afraid uv the sea, is un ? an’ un won’t go ’way from t’ Labrador, will un ? ”

“ No,” Number Nine had whispered back.
And then silence had fallen.

CHAPTER X

PARSON JOHN AND TOM BADD

A NEW day came. It was Saturday. The forty-eight-hour gale had blown itself out. The sun shone, and the wind came softly from the west, flattening the sea and tempting innumerable punts to the open for salvage. The shipwrecked swarmed about the harbour, peering curiously, questioning, speculating as to when the mail-boat would come to carry them away.

A group of men were digging a grave. It was for Skipper George Runn, who had died just as the first gusts of the great gale had swept down from the Mizzen Tops'il. Skipper George's funeral, postponed for a day on account of the wreck, was due to take place on Saturday afternoon. The men dug leisurely, talking as they dug.

"To-morrow's the day Tom Badd's to confess."

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" But Tom won't."

" He'll have to—for the Parson's no trifier."

" An' he's passed his word."

" Aye! he's passed his word. He's said Tom must confess."

" But Tom's done somethin' since."

" So's the Parson."

" Aye! they's both done somethin'. They's both well thought o'—*now*."

" An' ol' dog—un done well, too."

" Aye, b'y, fine."

" But the Parson's idee, an' the Parson's dog."

" Yes; the Parson's idee, an' the Parson's dog."

" Still, 'twern't a dog's job."

" But it worked, got un all ashore."

" I's sure it helped the Parson—helped a lot."

" Mebby. We'll see Sunday."

" Tom did well in the sea."

" An' on t' rock."

" Aye! mighty well on t' rock."

" I's heard un prayed—on t' rock."

" Un should uh."

" Not Tom, though. Not Tom Badd."

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“ Un heard it. Heard un told it.”

“ Huh ! ”

“ How'll the crowd divide, think ye, if it do come t' a fight ? ”

“ Shouldn't be no fight.”

“ No, both good men. Both needed on t' coast.”

“ Hope they's fix it up—somehow.”

“ An' without a fight.”

“ Aye ! without a fight.”

“ Poor time for a fight.”

“ Jist after a wreck.”

“ An' a funeral.”

“ Aye ! poor time.”

They struck a great boulder. Grave-digging on the Labrador is attended with difficulties. It is a land of rock, and soil of sufficient depth for a proper graveyard is seldom found.

The men paused.

“ Us'll have to enlarge t' grave,” they concluded.

It meant much additional work, but there was no alternative. They continued diligently digging away.

“ Skipper George got in.”

" Found t' Lard, t'ey say."

" Aye ! found t' Lard."

" Died happy, not afraid o' nuthin'."

" Give t' Parson a text fer 'is funeral, didn't un ? "

" An' spoke t' Tom Badd on religion."

Several of the diggers stopped work.

" Huh ! " they said.

" 'Twouldn't do no good with Tom."

" I's donno. He good in a boat anyway."

" Aye ! good in a boat."

" An' on a rock."

" Aye ! "

" But Parson's done a lot for we down here. Can't let un be driven off."

" 'Member 'bout Si Logan's baby ? " one questioned.

" No. What about Si Logan's baby ? "

All the men stopped digging. They folded their hands over the handles of their shovels.

" What about Si Logan's baby ? "

" 'Twas winter 'fore last. Parson had all ready for long trip up th' Bottom—dogs harnessed, everything packed, ice was good an' weather fine. He'd been waitin' fer more'n a week fer a chance ter git off. Jist as he

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was sayin' good-bye, wit' th' dogs yelpin' an' keen fer t' trip, Si arrives an' says his baby's sick. Says his wumman was turrible upsot cos she afraid t' baby'd die, an' it not christened. It wus twenty miles back to Si's tilt, right contrary t' th' direction in which Parson John was goin'.

" 'Wumman's wantin' ye t' come—bad,' says Si. 'She'll be turr'ble cut up if ye can't come an' christen li'l feller. Un awful sick, Parson, an' if un dies, an' not christened, wumman'd be turr'ble upsot.'

" 'It's twenty miles, Si,' says Parson John.

" 'Aye!' says Si. 'Mebby that much.'

" 'An' the mother's anxious?'

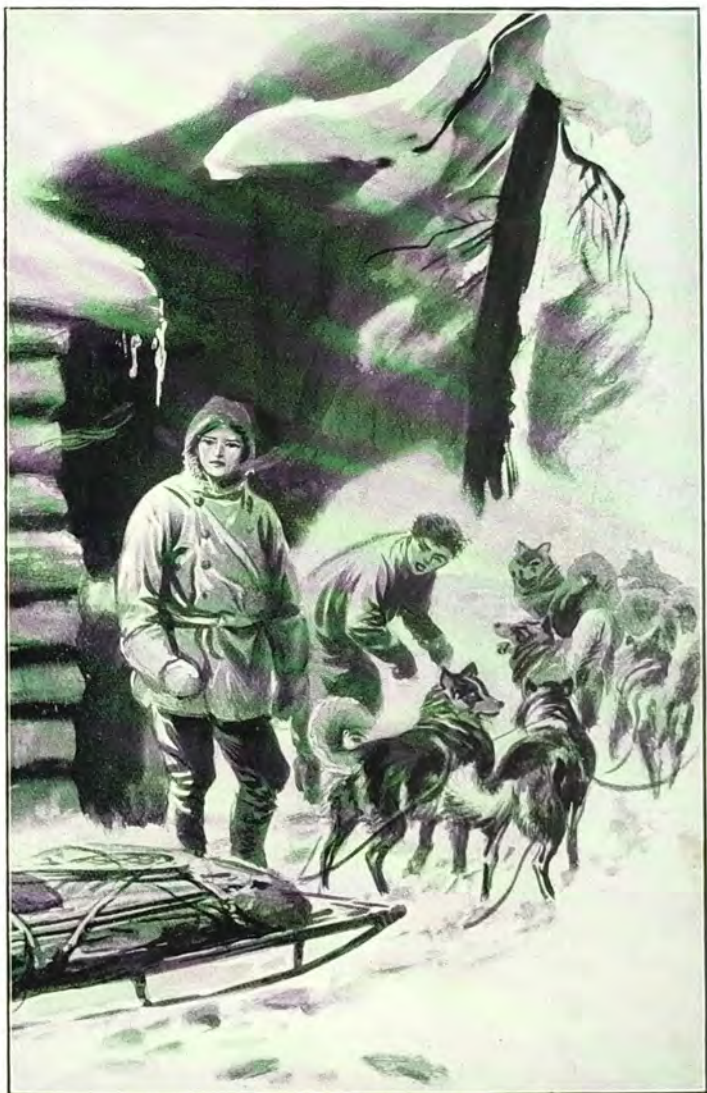
" 'Aye! turr'ble anxious.'

" 'But it's only a kid,' said some one.

" Parson John looked fierce. I thought he'd eat t' man. 'Turn the dogs' heads about,' says he; 'I'll go and christen the baby.' "

The younger men and the unmarried men in the grave smiled. The men with families listened soberly.

" Waal, t' Parson went—went all t'at way t' Si's tilt an' christened t'at baby."



"WAAL, T' PARSON WENT—WENT ALL T'AT WAY T' SI'S TILT, AND
CHRISTENED T'AT BABY."

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“ ‘How much, Parson?’ says Si after it was over.

“ ‘How much, Si?’ says he, surprised. ‘Why, nawthin’. This is part of my job, ye know. It’s nawthin’.

“ ‘The baby kep’ on sick. ‘You’ll be wantin’ t’ be gettin’ on now, Parson John,’ says Si. ‘You’s done all ye can.’

“ ‘Unharness t’ dogs,’ says he. ‘We’ll see how it goes wit’ t’is hyre baby first.’

“ ‘Waal, t’at baby lingered on seven days, jist sort o’ balancin’ ’tween life an’ death, an’, do you know, t’at man never stirred a foot. When it was all over, knowin’ he’d lost a lot o’ time, says Si: ‘You’s lost a whull week, Parson. You’ll want t’ be gettin’ on. Us can manage, now.’

“ ‘But w’at about t’ grave, an’ t’ funeral?’ says he. ‘I’ll stay for t’ funeral.’ He stayed two more whull days an’ buried t’at t’ere small kid o’ Si Logan’s, jist t’ same as if un’ad been you or me, or some big bug. He digged t’ grave, too, jist as he did for a lot when t’ flu was on,” he finished.

He stopped a minute.

“ ‘It came on t’ snow,” he went on presently ;

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“an’ t’ Parson didn’t git back t’ t’ Hand fer four days more. T’ere was no gittin’ off t’ th’ Bottom then fer more’n a week on account o’ th’ snow.”

“ ‘Ye missed a fine chanct fer yer trip down narth, Parson,’ they said.

“ ‘But I struck a fine chance to bring a bit of comfort to Si Logan and the wife,’ says he. ‘An’ bringin’ comfort’s my main job.’ ”

“Wonder if he remembers about that ! ”

“Not likely ; he’s did so much of it when t’ flu was on.”

“No. Not likely.”

They went on with the grave-digging. After a time they again reverted to talk.

“Wonder what the Parson’ll say ’bout Skipper George ? ”

“Skipper George lived a long time.”

“He seed a lot.”

“Caught a lot o’ fish.”

“Made a lot o’ jokes.”

“Yes, made a lot o’ jokes.”

They were in Skipper George’s grave. They laughed softly.

“Wonder if the Parson’ll mention that ? ”

“Should be a big funeral—anyway.”

“ Aye ! should be.”

“ An’ ’twill be.”

The prophesy thus spoken was realized. The funeral of Skipper George touched a new, high mark. This was natural. Skipper George was well known. He had lived seventy-six years at Sheltering Hand Harbour. He was well liked. He had not been an extremist for either good or evil, his place being about midway between Uncle Davy, who stood for religion in its most spiritual and exalted form, and Tom Badd and Infidel Ike Lunt, who were supposed, to all outward appearance at any rate, to represent the opposite pole in matters of character and things of the spirit. It meant that Skipper George's death drew all Sheltering Hand around his grave. All quarters sent its quota ; for he had been kindly, and cheerful. He had loved, and had been loved in return ; and the man had made many jokes.

Then there had been the wreck, and there was the great crowd of the shipwrecked. They had to await the coming of the mail-boat. Scattered for the first night among the various cottages, and housed on the floors of fish-houses, sheds and stores, they had slept the

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heavy but thankful sleep of those snatched, as by a miracle, from the jaws of the sea. By the afternoon, the time set for the funeral, they were all astir. And as they had looked about the harbour; as they had ranged over the hills near by, and come to the brinks of the towering cliffs that met the sea on the back of God's Elbow like a plumb line; as they had climbed the Mizzen Tops'il and surveyed the tickles, and the wilderness of jagged reefs and rocks from which they had been delivered; as the full significance of their escape dawned upon them, and the full story of all that had preceded it was told; as they thought it over, and learned of the funeral, and of the fact that the presiding genius in the matter of their deliverance was to appear there as officiating minister, naturally they turned their steps, as the afternoon drew on, in the direction of the freshly-dug grave of Skipper George Runn.

The day, too, was fine; a gentle, Indian-summer blink of warm calm after storm; a last, lingering smile of summer, before the black frown of winter settled on the face of the desolate land.

The funeral procession came up to the

great ugly gash in the earth, slowly, haltingly. Striking the boulder had robbed the grave of grave-like regularity. It looked like a giant shell-hole on a battlefield. But it served: and it was typical of the Northland, where the conventional is the exceptional, and the unusual is the rule of life. And fortunately it widened the circle, and made it possible for a larger percentage of the great crowd that had gathered to occupy the foreground of the picture, and thus to come face to face with the master of ceremonies for the day.

They lowered the coffin, or, rather, getting down into the huge cavity in the earth, they placed the great box in its final resting-place. Then they clambered out and took their places on the front rim of the solemn circle. Everybody knew that the time for the service to begin had come.

There was a great silence.

Parson John stood at the head of the grave. Miss Undle stood beside him. Parson John had a small Bible in his hand and Miss Undle had a hymn book. The appearance of Parson John was striking and appealing. He was hatless and his slightly tousled mass of light

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hair fell back loosely from his smooth fine forehead. His strongly moulded face that bore all the marks of health and life in the open, his broad and capable shoulders, his towering stature of six feet two, his strong hands, his lithe youthfulness, his serene poise, ease and efficiency, impressed the shipwrecked onlookers mightily. It was their first glimpse of the man who had devised and effected their deliverance from the sea. He looked the part he had played. Their eyes searched him hungrily, greedily, admiringly. In a vague but sure way something whispered that here was an aristocrat of the true type. Surely this was no ordinary man. And he was here—on a bleak and sombre coast—in the coldest country in the world—a lone missionary! He was part of the life, they had learned: he was happy, they had been told, and did not want to leave. He lived here—and loved and laughed—and was at home. He had saved them from the sea: and he was saving others—in another way. It was all amazing. They hushed and held their breath as they saw him prepare to speak.

Parson John's church had a beautiful ritual for the burial of the dead. But Parson John

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did not always follow it slavishly. He could not.

"We shall begin our service with a hymn," he said.

Miss Undle handed him the hymn book. It was open at a special number. In a voice that carried to the farthest fringes of the great straggling crowd, and in finely modulated tones he read—

" 'Now the labourer's task is o'er ;
Now the battle day is past ;
Now upon the further shore,
Lands the voyager at last.
*Father, in Thy gracious keeping,
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.*' "

He returned the book to Miss Undle. She began to sing. She sang on, clearly, sweetly, strongly. Parson John joined in. Many others joined in. The song floated out over the crowd. It drifted down to the fish-flakes, out over the wharves, up toward the Mizzen Tops'il. In the still air it went everywhere.

The men of the Labrador love to sing. And song moves them. As the refrain came around, at the close of each verse, they joined in heavily, hoarsely, feelingly : for words like " battle day," " further shore," and " voyager," when thought

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of in connection with Skipper George were deeply significant.

With the song finished Parson John read the Scripture and prayed. Then he announced another hymn. He turned again to Miss Undle. The clear, bird-like voice again sounded out strongly and sweetly—

“ ‘ Jesus, Saviour, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea.’ ”

She sang, getting that far almost alone. As she went on, however, on this song, she had generous and telling support. It was an old favourite at Sheltering Hand—when caught in the fog—when running by guess or by an echo—when danger settled suddenly on either sea or land. They thought of Skipper George, and they thought of themselves, and they joined and sang in various keys but with both feeling and understanding—

“ ‘ Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treacherous shoal ;
Chart and compass come from Thee,
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.’ ”

The voice led on through the second verse and paused a moment before the third and last was begun. It was evident that the crowd was being moved. Uncle Davy had put up a

fervent "Amen!" at the close of the first verse and at the end of the second he had added a loud "Hallelujah!" Several of the women were weeping openly, and it was obvious from a glance at the shipwrecked refugees that many of them, both those who had been joining in the singing and those who had been silent, were touched by the solemnity of the scene and the appropriateness of the words.

Miss Undle began again—

" 'When at last I near the shore,
And the fearful breakers roar.' "

Some who had looked down from the basket slung to the line on the tremendous riot of the waves surging fiercely on the cliff the evening before, shuddered, and dropped out of the song. It gripped the Labrador men and made them feel the heave of the back-bound from the cliff, but they held on raucously—

" 'Twixt me and the peaceful rest,' "

Sheltering Hand Harbour, of course, it was—

" 'Then, while leaning on Thy breast,' "

Some thought of Skipper George, and some of themselves—

" 'May I hear Thee say to me,' "

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It fell away, and ended beautifully soft and low—

“ ‘ Fear not, I will pilot thee.’ ”

And then Parson John knew it was the time to preach. Anybody could see it was the time to preach, if preaching there was to be.

The glorious Indian-summer mildness had held. The people were comfortable, even though the majority of them stood. To Parson John every occasion was a great occasion—the christening of a baby, the praying with an Eskimo, the opening of a door of hope to a Mountaineer Indian. This was a great occasion. There were many present from far and strange lands. They were there, silent, reverent, waiting. And the coast folk, and the harbour folk were there, all that could walk, or cripple, or crawl. Mountaineer Mike was there; Tom Pottle was there; Oliver Tall was there, Infidel Ike Lunt, Tom Badd.

It was a great congregation. Parson John knew it was a great congregation. He knew, as in the case of his Master, in the synagogue at Nazareth, that all eyes were upon him. His thought flashed on to Jesus on the mountain with the multitude before Him—waiting to be

taught. His own folk of the coast were there—believing and unbelieving. Beyond these, back a little, but reverent, expectant, waiting, was a great multitude of mixed folk, flung there before him, as by the hand of God, from the ends of the earth. It was a great congregation : and it was a great occasion. Yesterday it had been the lives of men : to-day it was the souls of men.

Parson John's frame throbbed with the appeal of it. It all came within the scope of his great appealing, appalling job.

He gave out his text.

“ ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ ”

As he drew toward the close, he referred, with telling effect, to the Lord, as suggested by Skipper George, as a “Receiver of Wrecks.” He told of the old Skipper's confession of his sin—and he made this very prominent—and of his joyous discovery ; of his exuberant zeal and triumphant assurance and peace which had followed ; of how he had gone up later against the last enemy, which is death, like a bold sailor, on a black night, against the coast, unafraid, with a cheer ; of how he had found the

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Lord and the way into the eternal haven of quiet—through the Receiver of Wrecks ; of how, in a word, Skipper George had died with the assurance that Christ had redeemed and that God would receive him. And when he had done, after repeating and enforcing his text, and presenting the Lord as walking on the sea and stilling it in the days of His flesh, and as holding forth His hands forever as the only appointed Receiver of the Wrecks of humanity that strewed the shores of the ocean of life, they said, as it was said in the days when Elijah confounded the prophets of Baal, “ The Lord, He is the God : the Lord, He is the God ! ”

Miss Undle sang “ Throw out the Life Line,” and the service closed.

They filled up the great grave.

That evening, at the store, on the wharves and fish-flakes, out on the little schooners and sloops in the harbour and in all the cottages, they talked it over.

“ It a great sermon,” they agreed.

“ Skipper George got in.”

“ Aye ! Skipper George got in.”

“ But un ’ad to confess.”

“ An’ un ’ad only made jokes ! ”

“ Aye ! un ’ad only made jokes ! ”

“ But confession t’ only way—in.”

“ Tom Badd t’ confess Sunday—t’ morrer.”

“ I’s been t’inkin’ t’at t’ere’s more’n Tom
orter—— ”

“ Aye ! b’y, ’eaps more.”

“ If th’ truth wus known.”

“ Aye ! if th’ truth wus known.”

The Parson’s candid dealing with Tom Badd had not been without effect. It had set the coast thinking. Since the funeral sermon Sheltering Hand was thinking harder than ever. Of course Tom Badd was a sinner. But Skipper George had been a sinner. He had felt the need of confession—and had confessed. What of others ?

“ If th’ truth wus known ! ”

“ Aye ! if th’ truth wus known.”

Sheltering Hand reasoned, and wrestled. Sheltering Hand was not without religious feeling. It believed in God. He made the harbours, loosed the storms, walked on the sea, sent the fish. Sheltering Hand loved God and believed in Him. It loved the Labrador and it clung to it as to life : and it loved and believed in Parson John—and in Tom Badd. Parson

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John was a good man and Tom Badd was—or always had been—a sinner. But he was brave—tremendously brave—in a boat. He had started for the wreck with a line in a punt, alone! To-morrow, before all the people—and they knew the Parson was a man of adamant and would not go back on his word—Tom Badd would have to confess. Failing, he would have to leave the coast.

But was Tom Badd the only sinner?

“If the truth wus known!”

“Aye! if the truth wus known!”

Sheltering Hand continued to wrestle.

“’Twon’t be fair,” they reasoned.

“No; ’twon’t be fair.”

“Can’t do nawthin.’”

“No.”

“Yes—can.”

“Yes?”

“How now?”

It was in the store. There were a lot present. It was Uncle Jimmie Wise who had said “Yes.”

They gathered about him.

“How now?” they pressed.

Uncle Jimmie Wise was well known. He

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was a good man in a crisis—on the ice, at the traps, in a storm. He had often found a way.

“ There’s a way—t’ help Tom,” he said.

“ Then it’ll hurt th’ Parson,” they chorused.

“ No.”

“ No ? ”

“ How now ? ”

“ How help Tom wit’out hurtin’ th’ Parson ? ”

“ We can help both : there’s a way,” Uncle Jimmie said evenly.

They pressed closer.

“ How, Uncle Jimmie ? How now ? ” they urged.

He held up a single finger.

“ We c’n all confess ! ”

It struck each man like a blow with a sealing gaff. They backed off.

“ Mm-mh ! ” they gasped.

Uncle Jimmie Wise was not a joker. He was a serious man.

He said again—

“ We c’n all confess—t’-morrer—at th’ meetin’.”

“ Mm-mh ! ” they gasped again.

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The tide of religion had been rising. Parson John's life and amazing service had not been without effect. They saw in him a full-sized, heroic man. They realized that his life was a love-gift to the coast: and his words were the words of truth. And coupled with it all was the inward spur and prompting of conscience. Something said—

“That way soul healing—that way happiness lies.”

Of course it would have consequences: they saw that, for though the centre from which it operated was far removed, they lived in a land of law.

“T'ey'll hear it t' St. John's,” one cautioned.

“Aye! t'ey'll hear it t' St. John's,” several chorused.

“Mebby it'll hang we.”

Old Uncle Ezra Mee rubbed his hands. Old Uncle Ezra Mee wanted to live on.

“Aye! mebbly it'll hang we,” he piped.

“Us'll chance it,” they countered.

“Us must help save Tom.”

“Us must help save ourselves.”

“Us 'as been awful wicked.”

“Us orter confess.”

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“ Even if there’s no hell.”

“ Aye ! even if there’s no hell.”

“ Even if it hang we ! ”

“ Mm-mh ! ”

“ Aye ! ”

CHAPTER XI

THE CONFESSION

UNCLE Jimmie Wise, having conceived a plan for saving Tom Badd, naturally was interested in carrying it to a successful issue. He talked with many, Tom included. He found the atmosphere everywhere favourable. It soon became obvious that notwithstanding the somewhat unusual proposal, it was the one to adopt. It was seen at once that it would help Tom—immensely ; and with a little thought given to it many discovered that it would give fitting outward expression to a new inward spirit that had come to dwell in Sheltering Hand. The plan was received with practically universal favour. Everybody seemed to be on the side of righteousness : and the fear of the Lord had cast out the fear of man—and of St. John's.

This being so, Parson John had scarce

finished his sermon on the morning of the Sunday following the funeral of Skipper George Runn, before at least a dozen of his hearers were on their feet. Of course it was a great venture. The men knew it was a great venture. But men of the Northland do not shrink from great ventures. So it was, that, some evenly and steadily, some brokenly and with sobs, some in a sentence, and some with many words, in the courageous and candid way of the men of the sea, they told the tale of their misdeeds and bared their lives.

Tom Pottle told of evil things done in Spanish ports ; Mountaineer Mike of dark deeds committed in the white wastes of the woods. There were sins of youth, and sins of old age and of the years that lay between. There had been blows struck in anger, and there had been smuggling, thieving, lying and profane swearing. All places—the Hook-and-Line grounds, where the great cod traps swung in the tide ; on the immeasurable reaches of ice where the seals were slaughtered ; in the harbours and on the high, far seas ; in the tilts and in the smothering snows ; on the dog-trails that wound over the standing edge of the ice of the crooked coast—

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all places and all times and seasons, had presented their opportunities to sin, and men had sinned. And with a frankness and directness that seemed to bear the stamp of truth, one after another, each man told, as the spirit moved him, of evils he had done, of sins he had committed.

When Tom Badd's opportunity came—and it did not come for some time—the way had been prepared for him. It seemed as though a thousand forces had rallied to his support. Psychology, the atmosphere of the place, made it easy to tell the worst, and to tell all.

“I's not done murder, so far as I knows,” he began ; “but I's done a lot o' bad.”

He stopped a moment. His mouth was dry, and he spoke huskily. Many leaned forward and several cupped their hands about their ears. They knew Tom Badd was on trial in a way the others were not. They saw Parson John's eyes were wide, and his ears alert. The situation was critical. There was strained, deep silence.

“I's not done murder—not as I knows, anyhow,” Tom began again ; “but like most o' we, I's missed the way purty offen.”

A fear that Tom might stick to generalities and avoid the particulars specified by Parson John, slipped into the minds of some of the listeners. But his next sentence was reassuring.

“I’s sunk t’ ‘Whiskaway,’ an’ I’s sold rum, an’—an’—I’s done so many other things that them two sins is hardly wo’th mentionin’. Puttin’ all together I’s done a lot o’ wrong, an’ considerin’ the time I’s been at it, b’ys, it’s likely I’s got ye all beaten in badness. T’ Lard knows we’at I hain’t been inter on t’is coast. T’ wonder is I’s——”

His mouth went dry, and his voice again came huskily, and he stopped. He was evidently deeply moved. His head settled forward, and his great shoulders heaved. Those who could see his knees noticed that they shook.

Finally he lifted his face and fixed his eyes, now streaming great tears, on Parson John. There was tense silence.

“D’ye really ’spose, Parson, t’ere’s any hope for sic as me?”

“‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out,’” quoted Parson John.

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Tom studied a moment. He seemed dazed, and his whole frame shook. Then—"Lard o' mercy, help me," he said, "I's comin'—an' I's goin' t' quit t' rum, an' be a decent man."

That was all. That was enough. He had met the tests imposed—triumphantly—even as he had met the assaults of the sea when marooned on the Devil's Hoof.

He sat down.

The cupped hands were withdrawn from about the listening ears. Everybody breathed easier. Those who had leaned forward, leaned back. Parson John's face lit up. Uncle Davy Joy said "Hallelujah!"; and there were a few "Amens" and "Praise the Lords!"

The confessions went on—and on. Another wanderer — and another — and another — announced his return. It came at length to Infidel Ike Lunt. He rose and stammered simply—

"Lord, ha' mercy!"

It was the crowning triumph. Parson John knew it was the time to close. He announced a meeting for enquirers and those who might

desire baptism, and pronounced the benediction.

On the way home they talked it over.

“ Us knew Tom wa’n’t th’ only sinner.”

“ If th’ truth wus known.”

“ Aye ! If th’ truth wus known.”

CHAPTER XII

THE SHIPWRECKED STRANGER

THREE days had passed. A gentlemanly stranger — one of the shipwrecked passengers—sat in the small office of the Company store. He was in earnest conversation with Mr. MacKenzie, the manager.

They were talking of Boy Number Nine.

“I am satisfied,” the stranger was saying, “that here, quite by accident, owing to the wreck, I have hit upon the very lad I was sent to Canada to search for. I have now seen him three times, and while he has grown and changed somewhat owing to the open and active life he has been living, I am quite sure, from the photograph I have here and from the description I have of him from his mother, that this is the boy for whom the fortune is intended provided he returns at once to England. I saw and marked him at the funeral on Saturday, again on Sunday at the great meeting when the confessions were

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made, and once since on the wharf, where I had a brief talk with him, but, owing to the nature of my instructions and the danger of error and of being deceived into taking home the wrong boy, I confined myself to generalities, and revealed nothing. There is of course the possibility of error, but, with the knowledge I already possess, I am practically convinced that you have had here for several months the lad I am seeking."

"But how singular it all would be—if it should so prove!"

"Singular enough, indeed, but in no sense impossible. Both vessels were to take the course by the Straits into the St. Lawrence. In each case an easterly storm, the deck of his vessel in August swept by a sea, as the captain reported on reaching Quebec, and the boy carried overboard in the darkness, together with some of the lighter deck equipment on which he reached the coast several miles to the south of here. My vessel, driven far from her course, is wrecked here in November. Singular in a way it may be, and yet how natural!"

"And the boy's name—as you have it?"

Mr. MacKenzie questioned.

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“ The boy’s name is West, Roly West, having been named for his father’s uncle. His father, a labourer it is true, died when the boy was but three, leaving his mother, with an infant girl in her arms, absolutely without support, though it was known at the time that the woman’s husband had a bachelor uncle in Australia who had grown rich in wool-growing. The inevitable happened. The woman drifted to the slums, where for ten years she lived with her two children, she and they together fighting for their lives. When the boy was ten the Barnardo Home discovered him, and took him in. They gave him their usual care and training, and last June, with some seventy-five others, sent him, as it is their custom to send children to all parts of the Empire, to Montreal. He, it would appear from reports sent back to England, when enquiries were made—and news of the death of the rich uncle reached England less than two weeks after the vessel had sailed—had never reached Montreal. There had been lack of oversight on the part of some one, it was hinted, though without warrant ; and it was well known that once in a storm on a dark night and as the ship was nearing the Straits of Belle Isle, the

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steerage deck of the vessel to which the boys had access, had been swept by a sea and some of the deck equipment of that part of the ship had been carried overboard. The lost boy had probably gone overboard too.

“That, in a word, sir, is about all that reached England. Further correspondence on the matter not proving satisfactory, I, as one interested in the Home, on the advice of the boy’s mother and of her solicitor, took passage for Montreal to confer with the agency to whom the children were sent, and to determine, if possible, what had become of the boy not accounted for.

“I believe, sir,” he said, rising and smiling as he did so, “that your Boy Number Nine, of this coast, is the Roly West for whom I am seeking.

“Of course,” he added, “and Mrs. West’s lawyer told me to be very careful on this point, I would like some independent proof, something that would be accepted in a court, and, as the estate is a very large and valuable one, we must be very careful in establishing the identity of the heir. Do you suppose this boy had anything with him, anything on his person or in his

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possession, that might help to identify him and strengthen his claim ? It would hardly be safe to take him home to England on this photograph which is three years old, or on my conjectures, and of course his own word as to his name and claim would count for nothing in an English court. I have also a written message from the boy's mother to be delivered to him when found."

He drew from the inner pocket of his coat a sealed letter.

"I am under a very solemn pledge to deliver this to Roly West and to no other," he said. "So, you see, I must have proof. I cannot take chances."

He sat down again. Mr. MacKenzie's interest had grown and deepened.

"I see," he said. "I understand your position. I think I can help in investigating the matter."

He stepped to the door of the small office that opened into the shop.

"Archie," he called, "this way a minute, please."

Archie came.

"Come inside and close the door," Mr. MacKenzie said.

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The young man did so.

“Do you know,” Mr. MacKenzie said, “if Parson John’s helper—Boy Number Nine, as he is called, and as I understand he named himself when Parson John found him on the cliff up south—do you know what his real name is ? ”

Archie hesitated. He was surprised. He blushed.

Finally he stammered—

“I don’t know, sir, no—not for sure.”

“Do you know if he had anything with him, when he was washed ashore, that might prove what his name is ? ”

Archie paused a moment.

“He’d a Bible, sir, I think. A small Bible.”

The stranger’s face lighted up.

“Yes ? ” he said eagerly. “Yes ? The Home gives a Bible—to every one it sends out.”

Mr. MacKenzie went on.

“Have you seen it ? ”

“No, sir.”

“Do you know any one who has ? ”

Again Archie blushed.

“Mary the maid, sir, in the cock-loft of Uncle Davy’s home,” he ventured, hoping that the

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confession would not have too serious consequences.

The interest on the stranger's face deepened.

"Was there a name in the Bible, do you think?"

"I don't know, sir," Archie answered quickly.

"Do you know if any one knows?" questioned Mr. MacKenzie.

"I don't know, sir," Archie said again quickly.

"Do you think you could get the Bible—that we might see it?"

Archie paused.

"I might," he said. "I might if it's very important—if it's really necessary."

The stranger rose.

"There is no doubt," he said with eagerness; "of the need and of the importance of my seeing the Bible if possible. It is a matter on which hangs—I think I may say—though it is not to be disclosed—a fortune, if I mistake not."

Archie stared. He was speechless. A fortune! For whom?

Mr. MacKenzie broke the tension.

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"You know the young folk, all of them, Archie," he said. "Of course you will stoop to nothing mean, or wrong, but do what you can to secure for us a look at this Bible by—by——" he hesitated, looking towards the stranger—

"This time to-morrow morning," that gentleman said.

"That will do, Archie," Mr. MacKenzie said. "And, of course, you will understand, nothing is to be revealed."

Archie went back into the shop, his mind in a whirl of wonder.

When he was gone Mr. MacKenzie tapped the table gently with his fingers.

"It's not a place, sir, where we make much of names, you know, and for that reason things have run on just as you find them, in this case. We make more of what a man does on the Labrador than of his name. For instance, there's Parson John now; I don't believe—actually—no, I can't at this moment recall his name. But the people will know some day who he is, and when the name is known it will stand for something."

Presently the stranger got up and took his leave, the understanding being that he would

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call the following day at the same hour providing the mail-boat did not arrive before that time.

As he stepped out of the store the sound of a great clatter of hammers, saws, and axes smote his ears. Practically all the men of Sheltering Hand were at work on the long-delayed enterprises of completing Parson John's house and church. As intimated, both of these had been started, but little progress had been made. What had been done had been done mainly by Parson John himself with some small assistance from Uncle Davy, Li'l' Jimmie, Charlie Mucko, and a few others of the more decidedly religious folk. But now, after the great meeting of Sunday, and the announcement by so many that they had decided to lead a new life, a mighty impulse had been given to the lagging cause of religion. Everybody was helping. Mountaineer Mike, Tom Pottle, Oliver Tall, Tom Badd, and even the one time infidel Ike Lunt were at work on the church. Many of the shipwrecked were also freely assisting. Some had promised large contributions to be sent on later. Several were at it with hammers, saws, and axes. The greatest enthusiasm

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prevailed, and practically every one was at work on either the church or the house.

Glancing out of the shop door Archie Hammond decided that it was probably an opportune time for a word with Mary the maid touching the matter just laid upon him. He readily secured Mr. MacKenzie's permission to leave the shop, and was soon in conversation with the substantial and efficient little fifteen-year-old specimen of womanhood that presided over Uncle Davy's home.

Mary at first showed symptoms of both surprise and alarm. It came to her that in some way she had done wrong. But Archie's tactful persistence was finally rewarded.

"He has a Bible, yes," she ultimately admitted. "I seed it in t' cock-loft as I sweeped an' dusted. It a small one—with small print."

"Was there a name in it?"

She did not answer. She seemed puzzled. Then she glanced from the window, in the direction of the church to which old and young had been drawn by the announcement that a day's work was to be spent on the church and the house for Parson John.

"I get it," she said, starting for the ladder

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that led to the loft, which, in all Labrador homes, is the special preserve of the boys of the household. She soon returned holding the small firmly-clasped Bible.

She handed it to Archie.

"There!" she said. "There 'tis."

Archie opened the book. There was no name in it, but it seemed as though a leaf on which a name would most likely be written had been removed.

He turned the leaves carefully.

"There's no name here, Mary, that I can see."

She looked out of the window once more, then again at the book.

"You better hurry," she said. "He may come."

A sheet of folded paper, discoloured and thumb-marked, fell from the book to the floor. Archie picked it up, and unfolded it carefully.

It read—

"Dear Roly,

"Don't forget, in your new home, that you have a mother, and that she'll be praying for you, and hoping that you'll do well, and some

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day send for her, or come back to her, a great man. She won't forget, and little Elsie won't forget, that you promised, when you earned it, that you'd send money to have her taken to the hospital, and made better of her lameness. Take care of yourself, and be a good, brave, kind boy wherever you are.

“ Lovingly,

“ MOTHER WEST.

“ P.S.—If the fortune ever comes, and I know where you are, of course I'll let you know.”

Archie pondered. He read the letter and examined the book again. He was quite sure a leaf had been torn out, a blank leaf, at the front. Why should it have been done? If the boy had a name, and of course he had, why should he wish to hide it?

He recalled that Miss Undle had told him that the boy had accepted an introduction to her, through Parson John, as “Mr. Number Nine.” It was as such he had always been known. He had chaffed him about it, Li'l Jimmie had teased him about it, and others had wondered about it. But it had ended there. No one had pressed him regarding the matter.

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He had been busy, had been away on long trips with Parson John, and the oddness of it had made it popular. It served and to a degree it suited. Of course he had no relatives to object, to appeal to, or dispute his wish in the matter of his name. He had been thrown on the coast as a bit of driftwood, and, having come thus in a strange way, it did not seem altogether unfitting that he should have come to be designated in a way different from other boys.

That was the way the coast had looked upon it. That was the way it had appealed to Archie Hammond. But the boy himself had another reason, a deeper one, which was soon to be revealed.

Archie continued to study the letter. He marked how it began, how it ended. Did not the beginning and the ending of the letter give the English boy a name? Might it not be taken as proof positive? And then there was the surprising postscript. In connection with this he recalled the words of the stranger. He had spoken of a fortune. Here was reference to a fortune. He had read of strange happenings in books, of castaways, and fortunes, and odd coincidences, but what was this?

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The Labrador had its mysteries, its tragedies and comedies, its odd ways, its surprises, that occasionally broke the dull monotony of the days. But nothing quite like this had come before. It was a riddle that Archie Hammond could not read: it provided a problem he could not solve. It did more. It raised a question in Archie's mind as to whether a plan he had made for the coming Christmas season, in which a long dog-team trip, Charlie Mucko, and Number Nine were to play an important part, might not be spoiled by the matters now unfolding. In a quiet way Archie had been working toward a fixed goal. The plan he had made was of supreme and vital importance to him personally.

But on putting the words of the stranger and the letter he held in his hands together, well, his Christmas plan might be spoiled. And Archie Hammond was particularly anxious that his Christmas plan should *not* be spoiled.

He refolded the paper, as it had been folded before, and returned it to the book. Then he rose.

"I'll take the little Bible with me, Mary, to the shop. I'll bring it back to-mo——"

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Mary the maid sprang toward him.

"You can't have it," she half screamed. "It must not go out of the house. I should not have showed it to you. I did wrong. I was mean to do it."

She snatched the book from his hands and made a dash toward the ladder that led to the cock-loft.

"It not yours," she called back excitedly. "It his—and he might come. He don't want his name known."

Archie stood in the middle of the great bare room. He could hear her footsteps above him. Finally she appeared on the ladder.

In a moment she was down facing him. Her face was flushed, and she seemed deeply moved.

"You must not tell anybody you saw it," she flashed.

She doubled her plump little hand into the shape of a fist. She shook this in his face and stamped her foot. "I kill you, Archie Hammond, if you tell anybody you saw Roly West's Bible," she panted more in fright than in anger.

Then she flew to the window and flashed a look in the direction of the old fish-house that



"I KILL YOU, ARCHIE HAMMOND, IF YOU TELL ANYBODY."

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was rapidly assuming the appearance of a church. Taking what he felt was perhaps a mean advantage but realizing that words would be useless, and feeling that he could do no more, Archie slipped out. A little way along from the house he glanced back. Mary the maid was in the door.

“I kill you, Archie Hammond, if you tell anybody,” she screamed.

CHAPTER XIII

ROLY WEST

THAT evening, just as the dusk was settling, the mail-boat came. She came through the North Tickle, her whistle sounding hoarsely, great finger-like prongs of light running on ahead of her over the waters of the harbour, the polished fittings of her deck flashing out of the coming dark.

The coming of the mail-boat made the usual stir. There was freight to be landed and freight to be put on board. There were passengers to be put ashore and passengers to be taken on board. There was mail to be delivered and mail to be shipped. And, finally, there was the great crowd of shipwrecked to be transported to St. John's for distribution to their various destinations.

With the first sound of the whistle of the mail-boat still in his ears, the stranger, who in the morning had manifested such interest

in Boy Number Nine, again sought out the Company store. There he soon learned that the captain of the mail-boat had announced that he hoped to sail by noon of the following day.

“That being so we must go into the matter in which you are interested to-night,” Mr. MacKenzie said. “We can meet here in my office, and, in view of what I believe Archie has learned, I think your conjectures are probably correct. Of course there is nothing certain, I believe, so far, and Archie is evidently very reticent and seems somewhat upset over the matter, still I am quite sure we would be safe in having him, as well as the Parson and his boy, Number Nine, meet here this evening that the matter might be investigated. It might have to be somewhat late, however, owing to the boat having come; still I think by ten o’clock we would be ready to take the matter up. I shall arrange to have those concerned here at that time.”

The stranger expressed himself as satisfied, and went out. Mr. MacKenzie, passing into the store, intimated to Archie what had been arranged and asked that he notify Parson John

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and Number Nine of the place and time of the proposed meeting.

“ You will be ready, also, if need be, to make a full statement regarding all you may have learned.”

Mr. MacKenzie turned and was gone. He left Archie in a whirl of uncertainty and indecision. Just what he should do was not clear to him.

As he hurried hither and thither attending to this duty and that, he tried vainly to think his way through to solid ground. But it was not easy to do this. He had seen the Bible and the folded letter. But could he tell this? He recalled Mary the maid's threat.

He liked the friendly, efficient little maid—everybody liked her—and he would not for the world involve her in trouble. And yet it was not easy to see how he could do as Mr. MacKenzie had directed without involving her. He felt the delicacy and awkwardness of his position keenly.

Then there was Number Nine himself. For him Archie had developed strong regard and great affection. True they were separated by several years in age, but they were in a world

outpost and their having come from "outside" had drawn them together. They had often talked and rowed and climbed and planned for the future together. Were Number Nine to go from Sheltering Hand—from the coast—there would be a great gap, Archie felt. There was no one quite like him and no one could take his place.

Then there was the Christmas plan for the long dog-team trip, of which he scarcely let himself think lest the reason for it should leak out. And, finally, there was the matter of the fortune. This introduced a grave complication. He wished the stranger, or Mr. MacKenzie, had intimated the name of the man or the boy or whoever it was, to whom the fortune might fall. Of course the stranger had a name in mind. What was that name? Was it Roly West? If so, and he told what he had seen and read—well, it was good-bye for ever to a friend and companion; and friends and companions on the Labrador have a value all their own.

On the other hand, if he did not tell what he knew, his friend might lose a fortune! That, of course, was the alternative. And it was an alternative that he did not care to contemplate.

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The more he tried to think his way through the situation the more confused and puzzled he became. When ten o'clock in the evening arrived and he walked into the small office where the stranger was seated with Mr. MacKenzie, Parson John, and Number Nine, not a ray of light had dawned. Archie could not see his way. But he went in, hoping, as Labradormen must do so often, that luck would be with him, and that from some unexpected quarter light would arise, and help would come.

The light arose, and the help came. Archie Hammond was to have true Labrador luck. He was not to be slain by the wrathful little Mary the maid, nor yet dishonoured in the eyes of his friend. Mr. Mackenzie, in addition to asking Archie to investigate, had done some investigating himself. He had gone to Parson John, had told him what he had learned and had left the matter entirely in his hands. Parson John had decided immediately on the course to be pursued. He advised his assistant, whose real name he had long known, but which, out of deference to the boy's wish that his name be withheld till he had done something worthy of a name, he had not revealed—to meet the

stranger, as Mr. MacKenzie had arranged, and bring any proofs he might have of identity with him.

It was with a sigh of genuine relief that Archie Hammond learned of the turn of events. A great load was lifted from his mind. However, it was not for long that he was to be free from anxiety. He had passed one danger—triumphantly—as Labradormen do so often, only to find another looming directly ahead. He had escaped the wrath of Mary the maid and any suspicion of revealing the name of his friend, but, as he saw Number Nine produce the small Bible and lay it on the office desk, Archie's heart gave a little bound.

Parson John picked up the book.

"This," he said, addressing the stranger, "is for you to examine."

The stranger took the book.

"It is a Barnardo Home Bible," he said at once.

It fell open and the folded letter showed.

"May I read this?"

"It is of some importance, I think," Parson John said.

The stranger read the letter. He read it a

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second time. The office was very still. Archie Hammond's heart was beating uneasily. He was obviously nervous. Mr. MacKenzie was all attention. Parson John was not perturbed. Number Nine was calm.

The stranger read the letter a third time. Then he laid it down, got up, and stepped over to the English boy. He put out his hand. "I congratulate you, my young sir, most heartily, on your great good fortune. Quite accidentally, and yet quite naturally, I have fortunately found you, Mr. West. As soon as your identity, of which I am now convinced, is proven in the proper court in England, you will come into a great estate left to you by an uncle of your father, after whom, as it appears in the will, you are named. You will be ready, of course, to sail with me on the mail-boat to-morrow at noon."

He again shook the boy's hand.

"Again I congratulate you."

"So do I," said Mr. MacKenzie, springing forward and grasping the boy's hand energetically. "So do I. You're a lucky chap, sure."

"Thank you, thank you both," the boy said. "But I can't go."

Archie Hammond's heart gave a bound.

"You can't go!" the stranger and Mr. MacKenzie said in astonished unison.

The stranger moved closer.

"You can't go!"

"No, sir."

The stranger backed away.

"You can't go—to claim a fortune?"

The boy was perfectly calm.

"No, sir," he repeated.

"Not now, you mean? Not to-morrow?"

"Not at all, I mean."

The stranger sat down. He looked at Mr. MacKenzie.

"Can you understand, sir, this strange—this amazing announcement?"

Mr. MacKenzie did not answer. Archie Hammond had gone pale with excitement. Parson John was interested. He was thinking, wondering, intently watching the boy's face. He had seen little ships in great storms, battling with the wind and waves and had wondered if they would beat their way through. In the "Saint Martha" he had often been tremendously pressed. He had talked with Boy Number Nine. In deeds, too, as well as in words, he had held before him a great life

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ideal of service. He wondered if the appeal of the ideal had got across to the boy. He was beginning to think it had. And some of the joy that comes to those who save souls came to Parson John.

Since coming to the Labrador Parson John had not been without encouragement. He had seen some of the fruits of ministering to men's souls. Skipper George Runn had recently died without fear. Aunt Julia Squires was being helped by counsel and visits. It had not been necessary to drive Tom Badd off the coast: Tom Badd was working on the church, had confessed he sank the "Whiskaway," and had announced that he was all through with selling rum. Tom Pottle had publicly intimated that he had done wrong in Spanish ports. Mountaineer Mike had confessed to living dissolutely and had turned over a new leaf. Infidel Ike Lunt was going to church. A new sun was rising over Sheltering Hand. Everybody could see it. Parson John was on the mountain tops.

The thing that gripped him now, however, was the situation in which his helper of the last three months was placed. Would he stand the test to which he was now being submitted?

Would he beat his way through like the little ships, like the "Saint Martha," or go down ?

It was a moment of anxiety.

Failing an answer from Mr. MacKenzie, who had been struck speechless, the stranger spoke again.

"You have reasons, I suppose," he said at length, addressing the English boy, "for your strange and amazing decision in this matter ? If so, might I take the liberty of asking what they are ? Why do you refuse, if I may presume to ask ?"

The boy did not hesitate.

"I have not done anything—yet," he said. "And I will not now be needed at home. My mother and Elsie may have the money. I am not now needed there—and I am here—to help Parson John—and the people. I must stay till I do something, something to give meaning and significance to the name I bear. And, in thinking over the matter of the use to which I shall put my life, and seeing the greatness of the work in which Parson John is engaged, I have decided, if he thinks I'm fitted for it, to try and prepare myself for work like his.

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I like it here, too," he finished, "so I cannot leave; I cannot go with you, sir."

"But you will read this, before you decide finally," the stranger said, handing him the sealed envelope, which in his confusion he had previously forgotten. "This is from your mother."

The boy opened the letter. As he read it, all in the room watched him closely.

His face lit up strangely.

"Ha!" he ejaculated. "She tells me the fortune has come, and hopes I will come home, but leaves it to myself to do what I think is right."

He looked at Parson John.

"That makes it all easy," he laughed. "That means that I stay, for sure, and that I can begin to prepare for——"

Parson John's face relaxed. He breathed easier. The appeal had got across. The little ship had beaten her way through.

Mr. MacKenzie emitted an astonished, "Well!"

The stranger sat in dumb amazement.

The colour stole back to Archie's face.

That night in the cock-loft of Uncle Davy's home the boys, as usual, talked it over.

“ You’s not goin’ ? ” Li’l Jimmie exulted.

“ No. I’ll stay—and help Parson John—and the people.”

“ An’ us c’n call ye by yer right name, Roly West, now ? ”

“ Yes, now since everybody seems to think I’ve done something.”

Li’l Jimmie was silent for a moment.

“ An’ you’s not afraid uv the sea,” he exulted again.

“ No.”

“ An’ I’s not afraid uv the sea, nuther.”

* * * * *

The mail-boat sailed next day at noon. She took away all the shipwrecked folk ; and among these was the stranger who bore a written statement signed by Roly West, showing that any claim he might have to the fortune from Australia was to pass to his mother and sister.

That evening Sheltering Hand Harbour was electrified to hear that Archie Hammond and Miss Undle were engaged to be married at Christmas when the school term was over, and that Roly West and Charlie Mucko were to make a two-hundred mile trip to Wilderness

246 Parson John of the Labrador

Inlet with a dog-team to bring Miss Wilton, Miss Undle's friend, to the wedding.

Quick upon the heels of this, and before the wonder of it had died away, came another announcement. It was brought to the Company store by Old Uncle Ezra Mee. He came in rubbing his hands, a mischievous twinkle in his deep-set old eyes.

"'Eard about Tom Badd ? " he questioned.

"No. What about Tom Badd ? "

"Un goin' t' be baptized—w'en t' church is finished, an' ——"

"An' w'at, Uncle Ezra ? "

"An' un goin' t' 'ave a new name—as well as t' Parson's boy."

"W'at, Uncle Ezra ? W'at new name Tom Badd gonna have ? "

"Tom Good," he grinned.

They laughed softly.

"But it's all right," they agreed.

"For Tom brave—in a boat."

"An' on a rock."

"An' un'll mak' a good Christian."

"Aye ! "

"Mm—m ! "



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