

CHAPTER XXXVII

Once More They Take To The Chamois

Try the pumps. We dropped the sinker, and found the Parki bleeding at every pore. Up from her well, the water, spring-like, came bubbling, pure and limpid as the water of Saratoga. Her time had come. But by keeping two hands at the pumps, we had no doubt she would float till daylight; previous to which we liked not to abandon her.

The interval was employed in clanging at the pump-breaks, and preparing the Chamois for our reception. So soon as the sea permitted, we lowered it over the side; and letting it float under the stern, stowed it with water and provisions, together with various other things, including muskets and cutlasses.

Shortly after daylight, a violent jostling and thumping under foot showed that the water, gaining rapidly in the hold, spite of all pumping, had floated the lighter casks up-ward to the deck, against which they were striking.

Now, owing to the number of empty butts in the hold, there would have been, perhaps, but small danger of the vessel's sinking outright--all awash as her decks would soon be--were it not, that many of her timbers were of a native wood, which, like the Teak of India, is specifically heavier than water. This, with the pearl shells on

board, counteracted the buoyancy of the casks.

At last, the sun--long waited for--arose; the Parki meantime sinking lower and lower.

All things being in readiness, we proceeded to embark from the wreck, as from a wharf.

But not without some show of love for our poor brigantine.

To a seaman, a ship is no piece of mechanism merely; but a creature of thoughts and fancies, instinct with life. Standing at her vibrating helm, you feel her beating pulse. I have loved ships, as I have loved men.

To abandon the poor Parki was like leaving to its fate something that could feel. It was meet that she should the decently and bravely.

All this thought the Skyeman. Samoa and I were in the boat, calling upon him to enter quickly, lest the vessel should sink, and carry us down in the eddies; for already she had gone round twice. But cutting adrift the last fragments of her broken shrouds, and putting her decks in order, Jarl buried his ax in the splintered stump of the mainmast, and not till then did he join us.

We slowly cheered, and sailed away.

Not ten minutes after, the hull rolled convulsively in the sea; went round once more; lifted its sharp prow as a man with arms pointed for a dive; gave a long seething plunge; and went down.

Many of her old planks were twice wrecked; once strown upon ocean's beach; now dropped into its lowermost vaults, with the bones of drowned ships and drowned men.

Once more afloat in our shell! But not with the intrepid spirit that shoved off with us from the deck of the Arcturion. A bold deed done from impulse, for the time carries few or no misgivings along with it. But forced upon you, its terrors stare you in the face. So now. I had pushed from the Arcturion with a stout heart; but quitting the sinking Parki, my heart sunk with her.

With a fair wind, we held on our way westward, hoping to see land before many days.