

CHAPTER LXI

They Round The Stormy Cape Of Capes

Long leagues, for weary days, we voyaged along that coast, till we came to regions where we multiplied our mantles.

The sky grew overcast. Each a night, black storm-clouds swept the wintry sea; and like Sahara caravans, which leave their sandy wakes--so, thick and fleet, slanted the scud behind. Through all this rack and mist, ten thousand foam-flaked dromedary-humps uprose.

Deep among those panting, moaning fugitives, the three canoes raced on.

And now, the air grew nipping cold. The clouds shed off their fleeces; a snow-hillock, each canoe; our beards, white-frosted.

And so, as seated in our shrouds, we sailed in among great mountain passes of ice-isles; from icy ledges scaring shivering seals, and white bears, musical with icicles, jingling from their shaggy ermine.

Far and near, in towering ridges, stretched the glassy Andes; with their own frost, shuddering through all their domes and pinnacles. Ice-splinters rattled down the cliffs, and seethed into the sea.

Broad away, in amphitheatres undermined by currents, whole cities of

ice-towers, in crashes, toward one center, fell.--In their earthquakes, Lisbon and Lima never saw the like. Churned and broken in the boiling tide, they swept off amain;--over and over rolling; like porpoises to vessels tranced in calms, bringing down the gale.

At last, rounding an antlered headland, that seemed a moose at bay--ere long, we launched upon blue lake-like waters, serene as Windermere, or Horicon. Thus, from the boisterous storms of youth, we glide upon senility.

But as we northward voyaged, another aspect wore the sea.

In far-off, endless vistas, colonnades of water-spouts were seen: all heaven's dome upholding on their shafts: and bright forms gliding up and down within. So at Luz, in his strange vision, Jacob saw the angels.

A boundless cave of stalactites, it seemed; the cloud-born vapors downward spiraling, till they met the whirlpool-column from the sea; then, uniting, over the waters stalked, like ghosts of gods. Or midway sundered--down, sullen, sunk the watery half; and far up into heaven, was drawn the vapory. As, at death, we mortals part in twain; our earthy half still here abiding; but our spirits flying whence they came.

In good time, we gained the thither side of great Kolumbo of the South; and sailing on, long waited for the day; and wondered at the darkness.

"What steadfast clouds!" cried Yoomy, "yonder! far aloft: that ridge, with many points; it fades below, but shows a faint white crest."

"Not clouds, but mountains," said Babbalanja, "the vast spine, that traverses Kolumbo; spurring off in ribs, that nestle loamy valleys, veined with silver streams, and silver ores."

It was a long, embattled line of pinnacles. And high posted in the East, those thousand bucklered peaks stood forth, and breasted back the Dawn. Before their purple bastions bold, Aurora long arrayed her spears, and clashed her golden shells. The summons dies away. But now, her lancers charge the steep, and gain its crest a-glow;--their glittering spears and blazoned shields triumphant in the morn.

But ere that sight, we glided on for hours in twilight; when, on those mountains' farther side, the hunters must have been abroad, morning-glories all astir.