

## CHAPTER VII.

### TRISTAN D'ACUNHA.

Four days later, the Halbrane neared that curious island of Tristan d'Acunha, which may be described as the big boiler of the African seas. By that time I had come to realize that the "hallucination" of Captain Len Guy was a truth, and that he and the captain of the Jane (also a reality) were connected with each other by this ocean waif from the authentic expedition of Arthur Pym. My last doubts were buried in the depths of the ocean with the body of Patterson.

And now, what was Captain Len Guy going to do? There was not a shadow of doubt on that point. He would take the Halbrane to Tsalal Island, as marked upon Patterson's note-book. His lieutenant, James West, would go whithersoever he was ordered to go; his crew would not hesitate to follow him, and would not be stopped by any fear of passing the limits assigned to human power, for the soul of their captain and the strength of their lieutenant would be in them.

This, then, was the reason why Captain Len Guy refused to take passengers on board his ship, and why he had told me that his routes never were certain; he was always hoping that an opportunity for venturing into the sea of ice might arise. Who could tell indeed, whether he would not have sailed for the south at once without

putting in at Tristan d'Acunha, if he had not wanted water? After what I had said before I went on board the Halbrane, I should have had no right to insist on his proceeding to the island for the sole purpose of putting me ashore. But a supply of water was indispensable, and besides, it might be possible there to put the schooner in a condition to contend with the icebergs and gain the open sea--since open it was beyond the eighty-second parallel--in fact to attempt what Lieutenant Wilkes of the American Navy was then attempting.

The navigators knew at this period, that from the middle of November to the beginning of March was the limit during which some success might be looked for. The temperature is more bearable then, storms are less frequent, the icebergs break loose from the mass, the ice wall has holes in it, and perpetual day reigns in that distant region.

Tristan d'Acunha lies to the south of the zone of the regular south-west winds. Its climate is mild and moist. The prevailing winds are west and north-west, and, during the winter--August and September--south. The island was inhabited, from 1811, by American whale fishers. After them, English soldiers were installed there to watch the St. Helena seas, and these remained until after the death of Napoleon, in 1821. Several years later the group of islands populated by Americans and Dutchmen from the Cape acknowledged the suzerainty of Great Britain, but this was not so in 1839. My personal observation at that date convinced me that the possession

of Tristan d'Acunha was not worth disputing. In the sixteenth century the islands were called the Land of Life.

On the 5th of September, in the morning, the towering volcano of the chief island was signalled; a huge snow-covered mass, whose crater formed the basin of a small lake. Next day, on our approach, we could distinguish a vast heaped-up lava field. At this distance the surface of the water was striped with gigantic seaweeds, vegetable ropes, varying in length from six hundred to twelve hundred feet, and as thick as a wine barrel.

Here I should mention that for three days subsequent to the finding of the fragment of ice, Captain Len Guy came on deck for strictly nautical purposes only, and I had no opportunities of seeing him except at meals, when he maintained silence, that not even James West could have enticed him to break. I made no attempt to do this, being convinced that the hour would come when Len Guy would again speak to me of his brother, and of the efforts which he intended to make to save him and his companions. Now, I repeat, the season being considered, that hour had not come, when the schooner cast anchor on the 6th of September at Ansiedling, in Falmouth Bay, precisely in the place indicated in Arthur Pym's narrative as the moorings of the Jane.

At the period of the arrival of the Jane, an ex-corporal of the English artillery, named Glass, reigned over a little colony of twenty-six individuals, who traded with the Cape, and whose only

vessel was a small schooner. At our arrival this Glass had more than fifty subjects, and was, as Arthur Pym remarked, quite independent of the British Government. Relations with the ex-corporal were established on the arrival of the Halbrane, and he proved very friendly and obliging. West, to whom the captain left the business of refilling the water tanks and taking in supplies of fresh meat and vegetables, had every reason to be satisfied with Glass, who, no doubt, expected to be paid, and was paid, handsomely.

The day after our arrival I met ex-corporal Glass, a vigorous, well-preserved man, whose sixty years had not impaired his intelligent vivacity. Independently of his trade with the Cape and the Falklands, he did an important business in seal-skins and the oil of marine animals, and his affairs were prosperous. As he appeared very willing to talk, I entered briskly into conversation with this self-appointed Governor of a contented little colony, by asking him,--

“Do many ships put in to Tristan d’Acunha?”

“As many as we require,” he replied, rubbing his hands together behind his back, according to his invariable custom.

“In the fine season?”

“Yes, in the fine season, if indeed we can be said to have any other in these latitudes.”

“I congratulate you, Mr. Glass. But it is to be regretted that Tristan d’Acunha has not a single port. If you possessed a landing-stage, now?”

“For what purpose, sir, when nature has provided us with such a bay as this, where there is shelter from gales, and it is easy to lie snug right up against the rocks? No, Tristan has no port, and Tristan can do without one.”

Why should I have contradicted this good man? He was proud of his island, just as the Prince of Monaco is justly proud of his tiny principality.

I did not persist, and we talked of various things. He offered to arrange for me an excursion to the depths of the thick forests, which clothed the volcano up to the middle of the central cove.

I thanked him, but declined his offer, preferring to employ my leisure on land in some mineralogical studies. Besides, the Halbrane was to set sail so soon as she had taken in her provisions.

“Your captain is in a remarkable hurry!” said Governor Glass.

“You think so?”

“He is in such haste that his lieutenant does not even talk of

buying skins or oil from me.”

“We require only fresh victuals and fresh water, Mr. Glass.”

“Very well,” replied the Governor, who was rather annoyed,  
“what the Halbrane will not take other vessels will.”

Then he resumed,--

“And where is your schooner bound for on leaving us?”

“For the Falklands, no doubt, where she can be repaired.”

“You, sir, are only a passenger, I suppose?”

“As you say, Mr. Glass, and I had even intended to remain at  
Tristan d’Acunha for some weeks. But I have had to relinquish that  
project.”

“I am sorry to hear it, sir. We should have been happy to offer  
you hospitality while awaiting the arrival of another ship.”

“Such hospitality would have been most valuable to me,” I  
replied, “but unfortunately I cannot avail myself of it.”

In fact, I had finally resolved not to quit the schooner, but to  
embark for America from the Falkland Isles with out much delay. I

felt sure that Captain Len Guy would not refuse to take me to the islands. I informed Mr. Glass of my intention, and he remarked, still in a tone of annoyance,--

“As for your captain, I have not even seen the colour of his hair.”

“I don’t think he has any intention of coming ashore.”

“Is he ill?”

“Not to my knowledge. But it does not concern you, since he has sent his lieutenant to represent him.”

“Oh, he’s a cheerful person! One may extract two words from him occasionally. Fortunately, it is easier to get coin out of his pocket than speech out of his lips.”

“That’s the important thing, Mr. Glass.”

“You are right, sir--Mr. Jeorling, of Connecticut, I believe?”

I assented.

“So! I know your name, while I have yet to learn that of the captain of the Halbrane.”

“His name is Guy--Len Guy.”

“An Englishman?”

“Yes--an Englishman.”

“He might have taken the trouble to pay a visit to a countryman of his, Mr. Jeorling! But stay! I had some dealings formerly with a captain of that name. Guy, Guy--”

“William Guy?” I asked, quickly.

“Precisely. William Guy.”

“Who commanded the Jane?”

“The Jane? Yes. The same man.”

“An English schooner which put in at Tristan d’Acunha eleven years ago?”

“Eleven years, Mr. Jeorling. I had been settled in the island where Captain Jeffrey, of the Berwick, of London, found me in the year 1824, for full seven years. I perfectly recall this William Guy, as if he were before me. He was a fine, open-hearted fellow, and I sold him a cargo of seal-skins. He had the air of a gentleman, rather proud, but good-natured.”



“And the Jane!”

“I can see her now at her moorings in the same place as the Halbrane. She was a handsome vessel of one hundred and eighty tons, very slender for’ards. She belonged to the port of Liverpool.”

“Yes; that is true, all that is true.”

“And is the Jane still afloat, Mr. Jeorling?”

“No, Mr. Glass.”

“Was she lost?”

“The fact is only too true, and the greater part of her crew with her.”

“Will you tell me how this happened?”

“Willingly. On leaving Tristan d’Acunha the Jane headed for the bearings of the Aurora and other islands, which William Guy hoped to recognize from information--”

“That came from me,” interrupted the ex-corporal. “And those other islands, may I learn whether the Jane discovered them?”

“No, nor the Auroras either, although William Guy remained several weeks in those waters, running from east to west, with a look-out always at the masthead.”

“He must have lost his bearings, Mr. Jeorling, for, if several whalers, who were well deserving of credit, are to be believed, these islands do exist, and it was even proposed to give them my name.”

“That would have been but just,” I replied politely. “It will be very vexatious if they are not discovered some day,” added the Governor, in a tone which indicated that he was not devoid of vanity.

“It was then,” I resumed, “that Captain Guy resolved to carry out a project he had long cherished, and in which he was encouraged by a certain passenger who was on board the Jane--”

“Arthur Gordon Pym,” exclaimed Glass, “and his companion, one Dirk Peters; the two had been picked up at sea by the schooner.”

“You knew them, Mr. Glass?” I asked eagerly.

“Knew them, Mr. Jeorling? I should think I did, indeed! That Arthur Pym was a strange person, always wanting to rush into adventures--a real rash American, quite capable of starting off to the moon! Has he gone there at last?”

“No, not quite, Mr. Glass, but, during her voyage, the schooner, it seems, did clear the polar circle, and pass the ice-wall. She got farther than any ship had ever done before.”

“What a wonderful feat!”

“Yes. Unfortunately, the Jane did not return. Arthur Pym and William Guy escaped the doom of the Jane and the most of her crew. They even got back to America, how I do not know. Afterwards Arthur Pym died, but under what circumstances I am ignorant. As for the half-breed, after having retired to Illinois, he went off one day without a word to anyone and no trace of him has been found.”

“And William Guy?” asked Mr. Glass.

I related the finding of the body of Patterson, the mate of the Jane, and I added that everything led to the belief that the captain of the Jane and five of his companions were still living on an island in the austral regions, at less than six degrees from the Pole.

“Ah, Mr. Jeorling,” cried Glass, “if some day William Guy and his sailors might be saved! They seemed to me to be such fine fellows.”

“That is just what the Halbrane is certainly going to attempt, so

soon as she is ready, for her captain, Len Guy, is William Guy's own brother."

"Is it possible? Well, although I do not know Captain Len Guy, I venture to assert that the brothers do not resemble each other--at least in their behaviour to the Governor of Tristan d'Acunha!"

It was plain that the Governor was profoundly mortified, but no doubt he consoled himself by the prospect of selling his goods at twenty-five per cent above their value.

One thing was certain: Captain Len Guy had no intention of coming ashore. This was the more singular, inasmuch as he could not be unaware that the Jane had put in at Tristan d'Acunha before proceeding to the southern seas. Surely he might be expected to put himself in communication with the last European who had shaken hands with his brother!

Nevertheless, Captain Len Guy remained persistently on board his ship, without even going on deck; and, looking through the glass skylight of his cabin, I saw him perpetually stooping over the table, which was covered with open books and out-spread charts. No doubt the charts were those of the austral latitudes, and the books were narratives of the precursors of the Jane in those mysterious regions of the south.

On the table lay also a volume which had been read and re-read a

hundred times. Most of its pages were dogs'-eared and their margins were filled with pencilled notes. And on the cover shone the title in brightly gilded letters:

THE ADVENTURES OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM.