

CHAPTER XIV.

A VOICE IN A DREAM.

Entirely free from ice? No. It would have been premature to affirm this as a fact. A few icebergs were visible in the distance, while some drifts and packs were still going east. Nevertheless, the break-up had been very thorough on that side, and the sea was in reality open, since a ship could sail freely.

“God has come to our aid,” said Captain Len Guy. May He be pleased to guide us to the end.”

“In a week,” I remarked, “our schooner might come in sight of Tsalal Island.”

“Provided that the east wind lasts, Mr. Jeorling. Don’t forget that in sailing along the icebergs to their eastern extremity, the Halbrane went out of her course, and she must be brought back towards the west.”

“The breeze is for us, captain.”

“And we shall profit by it, for my intention is to make for Bennet Islet. It was there that my brother first landed, and so soon as we shall have sighted that island we shall be certain that we are on

the right route. To-day, when I have ascertained our position exactly, we shall steer for Bennet Islet.”

“Who knows but that we may come upon some fresh sign?”

“It is not impossible, Mr. Jeorling.”

I need not say that recourse was had to the surest guide within our reach, that veracious narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, which I read and re-read with intense attention, fascinated as I was by the idea that I might be permitted to behold with my own eyes those strange phenomena of nature in the Antarctic world which I, in common with all Edgar Poe’s readers, had hitherto regarded as creations of the most imaginative writer who ever gave voice by his pen to the phantasies of a unique brain. No doubt a great part of the wonders of Arthur Gordon Pym’s narrative would prove pure fiction, but if even a little of the marvellous story were found to be true, how great a privilege would be mine!

The picturesque and wonderful side of the story we were studying as gospel truth had little charm and but slight interest for Captain Len Guy; he was indifferent to everything in Pym’s narrative that did not relate directly to the castaways of Tsalal Island: his mind was solely and constantly set upon their rescue.

According to the narrative of Arthur Pym Jane experienced serious difficulties, due to bad weather, from the 1st to the 4th of

January, 1828. It was not until the morning of the 5th, in latitude 23° 15' that she found a free passage through the last iceberg that barred her way. The final difference between our position and the Jane in a parallel ease, was that the Jane took fifteen days to accomplish the distance of ten degrees, or six hundred miles, which separated her on the 5th of January from Tsalal Island, while on the 19th of December the Halbrane was only about seven degrees, or four hundred miles, off the island. Bennet Islet, where Captain Guy intended to put in for twenty-four hours, was fifty miles nearer. Our voyage was progressing under prosperous conditions; we were no longer visited by sudden hail and snow storms, or those rapid falls of temperature which tried the crew of the Jane so sorely. A few ice-floes drifted by us, occasionally peopled, as tourists through a pleasure yacht, by penguins, and also by dusky seals, lying flat upon the white surfaces like enormous leeches. Above this strange flotilla we traced the incessant flight of petrels, pigeons, black puffins, divers, grebe, sterns, cormorants, and the sooty-black albatross of the high latitudes. Huge medusas, exquisitely tinted, floated on the water like spread parasols. Among the denizens of the deep, captured by the crew of the schooner with line and net, I noted more particularly a sort of giant John Dory (1) (dorade) three feet in length, with firm and savoury flesh.

During the night, or rather what ought to have been the night of the 19th-20th, my sleep was disturbed by a strange dream. Yes! there could be no doubt but that it was only a dream! Nevertheless, I think it well to record it here, because it is an additional

testimony to the haunting influence under which my brain was beginning to labour.

I was sleeping--at two hours after midnight--and was awakened by a plaintive and continuous murmuring sound. I opened--or I imagined I opened my eyes. My cabin was in profound darkness. The murmur began again; I listened, and it seemed to me that a voice--a voice which I did not know--whispered these words:--

“Pym . . . Pym . . . poor Pym!”

Evidently this could only be a delusion; unless, indeed, some one had got into my cabin: the door was locked.

“Pym!” the voice repeated. “Poor Pym must never be forgotten.”

This time the words were spoken close to my ear. What was the meaning of the injunction, and why was it addressed to me? And besides, had not Pym, after his return to America, met with a sudden and deplorable death, the circumstances or the details being unknown?

I began to doubt whether I was in my right mind, and shook myself into complete wakefulness, recognizing that I had been disturbed by an extremely vivid dream due to some cerebral cause.

I turned out of my berth, and, pushing back the shutter, looked out

of my cabin. No one aft on the deck, except Hunt, who was at the helm.

I had nothing to do but to lie down again, and this I did. It seemed to me that the name of Arthur Pym was repeated in my hearing several times; nevertheless, I fell asleep and did not wake until morning, when I retained only a vague impression of this occurrence, which soon faded away. No other incident at that period of our voyage calls for notice. Nothing particular occurred on board our schooner. The breeze from the north, which had forsaken us, did not recur, and only the current carried the Halbrane towards the south. This caused a delay unbearable to our impatience.

At last, on the 21st, the usual observation gave $82^{\circ} 50'$ of latitude, and $42^{\circ} 20'$ of west longitude. Bennet Islet, if it had any existence, could not be far off now.

Yes! the islet did exist, and its bearings were those indicated by Arthur Pym.

At six o'clock in the evening one of the crew cried out that there was land ahead on the port side.

(1) The legendary etymology of this piscatorial designation is Janitore, the "door-keeper," in allusion to St. Peter, who brought a fish said to be of that species, to our Lord at His

command.

CHAPTER XV.

BENNET ISLET.

The Halbrane was then within sight of Bennet Islet! The crew urgently needed rest, so the disembarkation was deferred until the following day, and I went back to my cabin.

The night passed without disturbance, and when day came not a craft of any kind was visible on the waters, not a native on the beach.

There were no huts upon the coast, no smoke arose in the distance to indicate that Bennet Islet was inhabited. But William Guy had not found any trace of human beings there, and what I saw of the islet answered to the description given by Arthur Pym. It rose upon a rocky base of about a league in circumference, and was so arid that no vegetation existed on its surface.

“Mr. Jeorling,” said Captain Len Guy, “do you observe a promontory in the direction of the north-east?”

“I observe it, captain.”

“Is it not formed of heaped-up rocks which look like giant bales of cotton?”

“That is so, and just what the narrative describes.”