

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A LITTLE REMNANT.

That same day, in the afternoon, the Paracuta departed from the coast of the Land of the Sphinx, which had lain to the west of us since the 21st of February.

By the death of Dirk Peters the number of the passengers was reduced to twelve. These were all who remained of the double crew of the two schooners, the first comprising thirty-eight men, the second, thirty-two; in all seventy souls. But let it not be forgotten that the voyage of the Halbrane had been undertaken in fulfilment of a duty to humanity, and four of the survivors of the Jane owed their rescue to it.

And now there remains but little to tell, and that must be related as succinctly as possible. It is unnecessary to dwell upon our return voyage, which was favoured by the constancy of the currents and the wind to the northern course. The last part of the voyage was accomplished amid great fatigue, suffering, and but it ended in our safe deliverance from all these.

Firstly, a few days after our departure from the Land the Sphinx, the sun set behind the western horizon reappear no more for the whole winter. It was then the midst of the semi-darkness of the

austral night that the Paracuta pursued her monotonous course. True, the southern polar lights were frequently visible; but they were not the sun, that single orb of day which had illumined our horizons during the months of the Antarctic summer, and their capricious splendour could not replace his unchanging light. That long darkness of the poles sheds a moral and physical influence on mortals which no one can elude, a gloomy and overwhelming impression almost impossible to resist.

Of all the Paracuta's passengers, the boatswain and Endicott only preserved their habitual good-humour; those two were equally insensible to the weariness and the peril of our voyage. I also except West, who was ever ready to face every eventuality, like a man who is always on the defensive. As for the two brothers Guy, their happiness in being restored to each other made them frequently oblivious of the anxieties and risks of the future.

Of Hurliguerly I cannot speak too highly. He proved himself a thoroughly good fellow, and it raised our drooping spirits to hear him repeat in his jolly voice,--

“We shall get to port all right, my friends, be sure of that. And, if you only reckon things up, you will see that we have had more good luck than bad. Oh, yes, I know, there was the loss of our schooner! Poor Halbrane, carried up into the air like a balloon, then flung into the deep llke an avalanche! But, on the other hand, there was the iceberg which brought us to the coast, and the Tsalal

boat which brought us and Captain William Guy and his three companions together. And don't forget the current and the breeze that have pushed us on up to now, and will keep pushing us on, I'm sure of that. With so many trumps in our hand we cannot possibly lose the game. The only thing to be regretted is that we shall have to get ashore again in Australia or New Zealand, instead of casting anchor at the Kerguelens, near the quay of Christmas Harbour, in front of the Greea Cormorant."

For a week we pursued our course without deviation to east or west, and it was not until the 21st of March that the Paracutis lost sight of Halbrane Land, being carried towards the north by the current, while the coast-line of the continent, for such we are convinced it is, trended in a round curve to the north-east.

Although the waters of this portion of sea were still open, they carried a flotilla of icebergs or ice-fields. Hence arose serious difficulties and also dangers to navigation in the midst of the gloomy mists, when we had to manoeuvre between these moving masses, either to find passage or to prevent our little craft from being crushed like grain between the millstones.

Besides, Captain Len Guy could no longer ascertain his position either in latitude or longitude. The sun being absent, calculations by the position of the stars was too complicated, it was impossible to take altitudes, and the Paracuta abandoned herself to the action of the current, which invariably bore us northward, as the compass

indicated. By keeping the reckoning of its medium speed, however, we concluded that on the 27th of March our boat was between the sixty-ninth and the sixty-eighth parallels, that is to say, some seventy miles only from the Antarctic Circle.

Ah! if no obstacle to the course of our perilous navigation had existed, if passage between this inner sea of the southern zone and the waters of the Pacific Ocean had been certain, the Paracuta might have reached the extreme limit of the austral seas in a few days. But a few hundred miles more to sail, and the iceberg-barrier would confront us with its immovable rampart, and unless a passage could be found, we should be obliged to go round it either by the east or by the west.

Once cleared indeed--

Ah! once cleared, we should be in a frail craft upon the terrible Pacific Ocean, at the period of the year when its tempests rage with redoubled fury and strong ships dread the might of its waves.

We were determined not to think of this. Heaven would come to our aid. We should be picked up by some ship. This the boatswain asserted confidently, and we were bound to believe the boatswain.

For six entire days, until the end of April, the Paracura held her course among the ice-barrier, whose crest was profiled at an altitude of between seven and eight hundred feet above the level of

the sea. The extremities were not visible either on the east or the west, and if our boat did not find an open passage, we could not clear it. By a most fortunate chance a passage was found on the above-mentioned date, and attempted, amid a thousand risks. Yes, we required all the zeal, skill, and courage of our men and their chiefs to accomplish such a task.

At last we were in the South Pacific waters, but our boat had suffered severely in getting through, and it had sprung more than one leak. We were kept busy in baling out the water, which also came in from above.

The breeze was gentle, the sea more calm than we could have hoped, and the real danger did not lie in the risks of navigation. No, it arose from the fact that not a ship was visible in these waters, not a whaler was to be seen on the fishing-grounds. At the beginning of April these places are forsaken, and we arrived some weeks too late.

We learned afterwards that had we arrived a little sooner, we should have met the vessels of the American expedition.

In fact, on the 1st of February, by 95° 50' longitude and 64° 17' latitude, Lieutenant Wilkes was still exploring these seas in one of his ships, the Vincennes, after having discovered a long extent of coast stretching from east to west. On the approach of the bad season, he returned to Hobart Town, in Tasmania. The same year, the expedition of the French captain Dumont d'Urville, which

started in 1838, discovered Adélie Land in 66° 30' latitude and 38° 21' east longitude, and Clarie Coast in 64° 30' and 129° 54'. Their campaign having ended with these important discoveries, the Astrolabe and the Zélée left the Antarctic Ocean and returned to Hobart Town.

None of these ships, then, were in those waters; so that, when our nutshell Paracuta was "alone on a lone, lone sea" beyond the ice-barrier, we were bound to believe that it was no longer possible we could be saved.

We were fifteen hundred miles away from the nearest land, and winter was a month old!

Hurliguerly himself was obliged to acknowledge the last fortunate chance upon which he had counted failed us.

On the 6th of April we were at the end of our resources; the sea began to threaten, the boat seemed likely to be swallowed up in the angry waves.

"A ship!" cried the boatswain, and on the instant we made out a vessel about four miles to the north-east, beneath the mist which had suddenly risen.

Signals were made, signals were perceived; the ship lowered her largest boat and sent it to our rescue.

This ship was the *Tasman*, an American three-master, from Charlestown, where we were received with eager welcome and cordiality. The captain treated my companions as though they had been his own countrymen.

The *Tasman* had come from the Falkland Islands where the captain had learned that seven months previously the American schooner *Halbrane* had gone to the southern seas in search of the shipwrecked people of the *Jane*. But as the season advanced, the schooner not having reappeared, she was given up for lost in the Antarctic regions.

Fifteen days after our rescue the *Tasman* disembarked the survivors of the crew of the two schooners at Melbourne, and it was there that our men were paid the sums they had so hardly earned, and so well deserved.

We then learned from maps that the *Paracuta* had debouched into the Pacific from the land called *Clarie* by Dumont d'Urville, and the land called *Fabricia*, which was discovered in 1838 by Bellenny.

Thus terminated this adventurous and extraordinary expedition, which cost, alas, too many victims. Our final word is that although the chances and the necessities of our voyage carried us farther towards the south pole than those who preceded us, although we actually did pass beyond the axial point of the terrestrial globe, discoveries of great value still remain to be made in those waters!

Arthur Pym, the hero whom Edgar Poe has made so famous, has shown the way. It is for others to follow him, and to wrest the last Antarctic Mystery from the Sphinx of the Ice-realm.

THE END.

End of the Voyage Extraordinaire