

## CHAPTER II THE THREE DOCUMENTS

ALL that could be discovered, however, on these pieces of paper was a few words here and there, the remainder of the lines being almost completely obliterated by the action of the water.

Lord Glenarvan examined them attentively for a few minutes, turning them over on all sides, holding them up to the light, and trying to decipher the least scrap of writing, while the others looked on with anxious eyes. At last he said: "There are three distinct documents here, apparently copies of the same document in three different languages. Here is one in English, one in French, and one in German."

"But can you make any sense out of them?" asked Lady Helena.

"That's hard to say, my dear Helena, the words are quite incomplete."

"Perhaps the one may supplement the other," suggested Major McNabbs.

"Very likely they will," said the captain. "It is impossible that the very same words should have been effaced in each document, and by putting the scraps together we might gather some intelligible meaning out of them."

"That's what we will do," rejoined Lord Glenarvan; "but let us

proceed methodically. Here is the English document first."

All that remained of it was the following:

62            Bri            gow  
sink                        stra  
          aland  
          skipp Gr  
                          that monit of long  
and                        ssistance  
          lost

"There's not much to be made out of that," said the Major, looking disappointed.

"No, but it is good English anyhow," returned the captain.

"There's no doubt of it," said Glenarvan. "The words SINK, ALAND, LOST are entire; SKIPP is evidently part of the word SKIPPER, and that's what they call ship captains often in England. There seems a Mr. Gr. mentioned, and that most likely is the captain of the shipwrecked vessel."

"Well, come, we have made out a good deal already," said Lady Helena.

"Yes, but unfortunately there are whole lines wanting," said the Major, "and we have neither the name of the ship nor

the place where she was shipwrecked."

"We'll get that by and by," said Edward.

"Oh, yes; there is no doubt of it," replied the Major, who always echoed his neighbor's opinion. "But how?"

"By comparing one document with the other."

"Let us try them," said his wife.

The second piece of paper was even more destroyed than the first; only a few scattered words remained here and there.

It ran as follows:

7 Juni                    Glas  
zwei            atrosen  
                  graus  
                  bringt ihnen

"This is written in German," said John Mangles the moment he looked at it.

"And you understand that language, don't you?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"Perfectly."

"Come, then, tell us the meaning of these words."

The captain examined the document carefully, and said:

"Well, here's the date of the occurrence first: 7 Juni means June 7; and if we put that before the figures 62 we have in the other document, it gives us the exact date, 7th of June, 1862."

"Capital!" exclaimed Lady Helena. "Go on, John!"

"On the same line," resumed the young captain, "there is the syllable GLAS and if we add that to the GOW we found in the English paper, we get the whole word GLASGOW at once. The documents evidently refer to some ship that sailed out of the port of Glasgow." "That is my opinion, too," said the Major.

"The second line is completely effaced," continued the Captain; "but here are two important words on the third. There is ZWEI, which means TWO, and ATROSEN or MATROSEN, the German for SAILORS."

"Then I suppose it is about a captain and two sailors," said Lady Helena.

"It seems so," replied Lord Glenarvan.

"I must confess, your Lordship, that the next word puzzles me.

I can make nothing of it. Perhaps the third document may throw some light on it. The last two words are plain enough.

BRINGT IHNEN means BRING THEM; and, if you recollect, in the English paper we had SSISTANCE, so by putting the parts together, it reads thus, I think: 'BRING THEM ASSISTANCE.'"

"Yes, that must be it," replied Lord Glenarvan. "But where are the poor fellows? We have not the slightest indication of the place, meantime, nor of where the catastrophe happened."

"Perhaps the French copy will be more explicit," suggested Lady Helena.

"Here it is, then," said Lord Glenarvan, "and that is in a language we all know."

The words it contained were these:

troi	ats	tannia
	gonie	austral
		abor
contin	pr	cruel indi
jete		ongit
et 37 degrees 11"		LAT

"There are figures!" exclaimed Lady Helena. "Look!"

"Let us go steadily to work," said Lord Glenarvan, "and begin at the beginning. I think we can make out from the incomplete words in the first line that a three-mast vessel is in question, and there is little doubt about the name; we get that from the fragments of the other papers; it is the BRITANNIA. As to the next two words, GONIE and AUSTRAL, it is only AUSTRAL that has any meaning to us."

"But that is a valuable scrap of information," said John Mangles.

"The shipwreck occurred in the southern hemisphere."

"That's a wide world," said the Major.

"Well, we'll go on," resumed Glenarvan. "Here is the word ABOR; that is clearly the root of the verb ABORDER. The poor men have landed somewhere;

but where? CONTIN--does that mean continent? CRUEL!"

"CRUEL!" interrupted John Mangles. "I see now what GRAUS is part of in the second document. It is GRAUSAM, the word in German for CRUEL!"

"Let's go on," said Lord Glenarvan, becoming quite excited over his task, as the incomplete words began to fill up and develop their meaning.

"INDI,--is it India where they have been shipwrecked?  
And what can this word ONGIT be part of? Ah! I see--it is LONGITUDE;  
and here is the latitude, 37 degrees 11". That is the precise  
indication at last, then!"

"But we haven't the longitude," objected McNabbs.

"But we can't get everything, my dear Major; and it  
is something at all events, to have the exact latitude.  
The French document is decidedly the most complete of the three;  
but it is plain enough that each is the literal translation of  
the other, for they all contain exactly the same number of lines.  
What we have to do now is to put together all the words we  
have found, and translate them into one language, and try  
to ascertain their most probable and logical sense."

"Well, what language shall we choose?" asked the Major.

"I think we had better keep to the French, since that was the most  
complete document of the three."

"Your Lordship is right," said John Mangles, "and besides,  
we're all familiar with the language."

"Very well, then, I'll set to work."

In a few minutes he had written as follows:

7 Juin 1862 trois-mats Britannia Glasgow  
sombre                   gonie           austral  
          a terre           deux matelots  
capitaine Gr                   abor  
contin    pr           cruel       indi  
  jete ce document           de longitude  
et 37 degrees 11" de latitude   Portez-leur secours  
                          perdus.

[7th of June, 1862       three-mast BRITANNIA Glasgow]  
foundered           gonie           southern  
on the coast       two sailors       Gr  
Captain           landed  
contin           pr       cruel   indi  
          thrown this document   in longitude  
and 37 degrees 11" latitude   Bring them assistance  
          lost

Just at that moment one of the sailors came to inform the captain that they were about entering the Firth of Clyde, and to ask what were his orders.

"What are your Lordship's intentions?" said John Mangles,



addressing Lord Glenarvan.

"To get to Dunbarton as quickly as possible, John; and Lady Helena will return to Malcolm Castle, while I go on to London and lay this document before the Admiralty."

The sailor received orders accordingly, and went out to deliver them to the mate.

"Now, friends," said Lord Glenarvan, "let us go on with our investigations, for we are on the track of a great catastrophe, and the lives of several human beings depend on our sagacity. We must give our whole minds to the solution of this enigma."

"First of all, there are three very distinct things to be considered in this document--the things we know, the things we may conjecture, the things we do not know."

"What are those we know? We know that on the 7th of June a three-mast vessel, the BRITANNIA of Glasgow, foundered; that two sailors and the captain threw this document into the sea in 37 degrees 11" latitude, and they entreat help."

"Exactly so," said the Major.

"What are those now we may conjecture?" continued Glenarvan. "That the

shipwreck occurred in the southern seas; and here I would draw your attention at once to the incomplete word GONIE. Doesn't the name of the country strike you even in the mere mention of it?"

"Patagonia!" exclaimed Lady Helena.

"Undoubtedly."

"But is Patagonia crossed by the 37th parallel?" asked the Major.

"That is easily ascertained," said the captain, opening a map of South America. "Yes, it is; Patagonia just touches the 37th parallel. It cuts through Araucania, goes along over the Pampas to the north, and loses itself in the Atlantic."

"Well, let us proceed then with our conjectures. The two sailors and the captain LAND--land where? CONTIN--on a continent; on a continent, mark you, not an island. What becomes of them? There are two letters here providentially which give a clew to their fate--PR, that must mean prisoners, and CRUEL INDIAN is evidently the meaning of the next two words. These unfortunate men are captives in the hands of cruel Indians. Don't you see it? Don't the words seem to come of themselves, and fill up the blanks? Isn't the document quite clear now? Isn't the sense self-evident?"

Glenarvan spoke in a tone of absolute conviction, and his

enthusiastic confidence appeared contagious, for the others all exclaimed, too, "Yes, it is evident, quite evident!"

After an instant, Lord Edward said again, "To my own mind the hypothesis is so plausible, that I have no doubt whatever the event occurred on the coast of Patagonia, but still I will have inquiries made in Glasgow, as to the destination of the BRITANNIA, and we shall know if it is possible she could have been wrecked on those shores."

"Oh, there's no need to send so far to find out that," said John Mangles. "I have the Mercantile and Shipping Gazette here, and we'll see the name on the list, and all about it."

"Do look at once, then," said Lord Glenarvan.

The file of papers for the year 1862 was soon brought, and John began to turn over the leaves rapidly, running down each page with his eye in search of the name required. But his quest was not long, for in a few minutes he called out: "I've got it! 'May 30, 1862, Peru-Callao, with cargo for Glasgow, the BRITANNIA, Captain Grant.'"

"Grant!" exclaimed Lord Glenarvan. "That is the adventurous Scotchman that attempted to found a new Scotland on the shores of the Pacific."

"Yes," rejoined John Mangles, "it is the very man.

He sailed from Glasgow in the BRITANNIA in 1861, and has not been heard of since."

"There isn't a doubt of it, not a shadow of doubt," repeated Lord Glenarvan. "It is just that same Captain Grant. The BRITANNIA left Callao on the 30th of May, and on the 7th of June, a week afterward, she is lost on the coast of Patagonia. The few broken disjointed words we find in these documents tell us the whole story. You see, friends, our conjectures hit the mark very well; we know all now except one thing, and that is the longitude."

"That is not needed now, we know the country. With the latitude alone, I would engage to go right to the place where the wreck happened."

"Then have we really all the particulars now?" asked Lady Helena.

"All, dear Helena; I can fill up every one of these blanks the sea has made in the document as easily as if Captain Grant were dictating to me."

And he took up the pen, and dashed off the following lines immediately:

"On the 7th of June, 1862, the three-mast vessel, BRITANNIA, of Glasgow, has sunk on the coast of Patagonia, in the southern hemisphere.

Making for the shore, two sailors and Captain Grant are about

to land on the continent, where they will be taken prisoners by cruel Indians. They have thrown this document into the sea, in longitude and latitude 37 degrees 11". Bring them assistance, or they are lost."

"Capital! capital! dear Edward," said Lady Helena. "If those poor creatures ever see their native land again, it is you they will have to thank for it."

"And they will see it again," returned Lord Glenarvan; "the statement is too explicit, and clear, and certain for England to hesitate about going to the aid of her three sons cast away on a desert coast. What she has done for Franklin and so many others, she will do to-day for these poor shipwrecked fellows of the BRITANNIA."

"Most likely the unfortunate men have families who mourn their loss. Perhaps this ill-fated Captain Grant had a wife and children," suggested Lady Helena.

"Very true, my dear, and I'll not forget to let them know that there is still hope. But now, friends, we had better go up on deck, as the boat must be getting near the harbor."

A carriage and post-horses waited there, in readiness to convey Lady Helena and Major McNabbs to Malcolm Castle, and Lord Glenarvan bade adieu to his young wife, and jumped

into the express train for Glasgow.

But before starting he confided an important missive to a swifter agent than himself, and a few minutes afterward it flashed along the electric wire to London, to appear next day in the Times and Morning Chronicle in the following words:

"For information respecting the fate of the three-mast vessel BRITANNIA, of Glasgow, Captain Grant, apply to Lord Glenarvan, Malcolm Castle, Luss, Dumbartonshire, Scotland."