

their generous intrepidity had been often enough roughly put to the proof by the fury of the unchained elements.

END OF BOOK ONE

In Search of the Castaways

Australia

CHAPTER I A NEW DESTINATION

FOR the first few moments the joy of reunion completely filled the hearts. Lord Glenarvan had taken care that the ill-success of their expedition should not throw a gloom over the pleasure of meeting, his very first words being:

"Cheer up, friends, cheer up! Captain Grant is not with us, but we have a certainty of finding him!"

Only such an assurance as this would have restored hope to those on board the DUNCAN. Lady Helena and Mary Grant had been sorely tried

by the suspense, as they stood on the poop waiting for the arrival of the boat, and trying to count the number of its passengers. Alternate hope and fear agitated the bosom of poor Mary. Sometimes she fancied she could see her father, Harry Grant, and sometimes she gave way to despair. Her heart throbbed violently; she could not speak, and indeed could scarcely stand. Lady Helena put her arm round her waist to support her, but the captain, John Mangles, who stood close beside them spoke no encouraging word, for his practiced eye saw plainly that the captain was not there.

"He is there! He is coming! Oh, father!" exclaimed the young girl. But as the boat came nearer, her illusion was dispelled; all hope forsook her, and she would have sunk in despair, but for the reassuring voice of Glenarvan.

After their mutual embraces were over, Lady Helena, and Mary Grant, and John Mangles, were informed of the principal incidents of the expedition, and especially of the new interpretation of the document, due to the sagacity of Jacques Paganel. His Lordship also spoke in the most eulogistic terms of Robert, of whom Mary might well be proud. His courage and devotion, and the dangers he had run, were all shown up in strong relief by his patron, till the modest boy did not know which way to look, and was obliged to hide his burning cheeks in his sister's arms.

"No need to blush, Robert," said John Mangles. "Your conduct has

been worthy of your name." And he leaned over the boy and pressed his lips on his cheek, still wet with Mary's tears.

The Major and Paganel, it need hardly be said, came in for their due share of welcome, and Lady Helena only regretted she could not shake hands with the brave and generous Thalcave. McNabbs soon slipped away to his cabin, and began to shave himself as coolly and composedly as possible; while Paganel flew here and there, like a bee sipping the sweets of compliments and smiles.

He wanted to embrace everyone on board the yacht, and beginning with Lady Helena and Mary Grant, wound up with M. Olbinett, the steward, who could only acknowledge so polite an attention by announcing that breakfast was ready.

"Breakfast!" exclaimed Paganel.

"Yes, Monsieur Paganel."

"A real breakfast, on a real table, with a cloth and napkins?"

"Certainly, Monsieur Paganel."

"And we shall neither have CHARQUI, nor hard eggs, nor fillets of ostrich?"

"Oh, Monsieur," said Olbinett in an aggrieved tone.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, my friend," said the geographer smiling. "But for a month that has been our usual bill of fare, and when we dined we stretched ourselves full length on the ground, unless we sat astride on the trees. Consequently, the meal you have just announced seemed to me like a dream, or fiction, or chimera."

"Well, Monsieur Paganel, come along and let us prove its reality," said Lady Helena, who could not help laughing.

"Take my arm," replied the gallant geographer.

"Has his Lordship any orders to give me about the DUNCAN?" asked John Mangles.

"After breakfast, John," replied Glenarvan, "we'll discuss the program of our new expedition en famille."

M. Olbinett's breakfast seemed quite a FETE to the hungry guests. It was pronounced excellent, and even superior to the festivities of the Pampas. Paganel was helped twice to each dish, through "absence of mind," he said.

This unlucky word reminded Lady Helena of the amiable Frenchman's propensity, and made her ask if he had ever fallen into his old habits

while they were away. The Major and Glenarvan exchanged smiling glances, and Paganel burst out laughing, and protested on his honor that he would never be caught tripping again once more during the whole voyage.

After this prelude, he gave an amusing recital of his disastrous mistake in learning Spanish, and his profound study of Camoens. "After all," he added, "it's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and I don't regret the mistake."

"Why not, my worthy friend?" asked the Major.

"Because I not only know Spanish, but Portuguese. I can speak two languages instead of one."

"Upon my word, I never thought of that," said McNabbs. "My compliments, Paganel--my sincere compliments."

But Paganel was too busily engaged with his knife and fork to lose a single mouthful, though he did his best to eat and talk at the same time. He was so much taken up with his plate, however, that one little fact quite escaped his observation, though Glenarvan noticed it at once. This was, that John Mangles had grown particularly attentive to Mary Grant. A significant glance from Lady Helena told him, moreover, how affairs stood, and inspired him with affectionate sympathy for the young lovers; but nothing of this was apparent in his manner to John, for his next question was what sort of a voyage he had made.

"We could not have had a better; but I must apprise your Lordship that I did not go through the Straits of Magellan again."

"What! you doubled Cape Horn, and I was not there!" exclaimed Paganel.

"Hang yourself!" said the Major.

"Selfish fellow! you advise me to do that because you want my rope," retorted the geographer.

"Well, you see, my dear Paganel, unless you have the gift of ubiquity you can't be in two places at once. While you were scouring the pampas you could not be doubling Cape Horn."

"That doesn't prevent my regretting it," replied Paganel.

Here the subject dropped, and John continued his account of his voyage. On arriving at Cape Pilares he had found the winds dead against him, and therefore made for the south, coasting along the Desolation Isle, and after going as far as the sixty-seventh degree southern latitude, had doubled Cape Horn, passed by Terra del Fuego and the Straits of Lemaire, keeping close to the Patagonian shore.

At Cape Corrientes they encountered the terrible storm which had handled the travelers across the pampas so roughly, but the yacht had borne it bravely, and for the last three days had stood right out to sea, till the welcome signal-gun of the expedition was heard announcing

the arrival of the anxiously-looked-for party. "It was only justice," the captain added, "that he should mention the intrepid bearing of Lady Helena and Mary Grant throughout the whole hurricane. They had not shown the least fear, unless for their friends, who might possibly be exposed to the fury of the tempest."

After John Mangles had finished his narrative, Glenarvan turned to Mary and said; "My dear Miss Mary, the captain has been doing homage to your noble qualities, and I am glad to think you are not unhappy on board his ship."

"How could I be?" replied Mary naively, looking at Lady Helena, and at the young captain too, likely enough.

"Oh, my sister is very fond of you, Mr. John, and so am I," exclaimed Robert.

"And so am I of you, my dear boy," returned the captain, a little abashed by Robert's innocent avowal, which had kindled a faint blush on Mary's cheek. Then he managed to turn the conversation to safer topics by saying: "And now that your Lordship has heard all about the doings of the DUNCAN, perhaps you will give us some details of your own journey, and tell us more about the exploits of our young hero."

Nothing could be more agreeable than such a recital to Lady Helena

and Mary Grant; and accordingly Lord Glenarvan hastened to satisfy their curiosity--going over incident by incident, the entire march from one ocean to another, the pass of the Andes, the earthquake, the disappearance of Robert, his capture by the condor, Thalcave's providential shot, the episode of the red wolves, the devotion of the young lad, Sergeant Manuel, the inundations, the caimans, the waterspout, the night on the Atlantic shore--all these details, amusing or terrible, excited by turns laughter and horror in the listeners. Often and often Robert came in for caresses from his sister and Lady Helena. Never was a boy so much embraced, or by such enthusiastic friends.

"And now, friends," added Lord Glenarvan, when he had finished his narrative, "we must think of the present. The past is gone, but the future is ours. Let us come back to Captain Harry Grant."

As soon as breakfast was over they all went into Lord Glenarvan's private cabin and seated themselves round a table covered with charts and plans, to talk over the matter fully.

"My dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan, "I told you, when we came on board a little while ago, that though we had not brought back Captain Grant, our hope of finding him was stronger than ever. The result of our journey across America is this: We have reached the conviction, or rather absolute certainty, that the shipwreck

never occurred on the shores of the Atlantic nor Pacific. The natural inference is that, as far as regards Patagonia, our interpretation of the document was erroneous. Most fortunately, our friend Paganel, in a happy moment of inspiration, discovered the mistake. He has proved clearly that we have been on the wrong track, and so explained the document that all doubt whatever is removed from our minds. However, as the document is in French, I will ask Paganel to go over it for your benefit."

The learned geographer, thus called upon, executed his task in the most convincing manner, descanting on the syllables GONIE and INDI, and extracting AUSTRALIA out of AUSTRAL. He pointed out that Captain Grant, on leaving the coast of Peru to return to Europe, might have been carried away with his disabled ship by the southern currents of the Pacific right to the shores of Australia, and his hypotheses were so ingenious and his deductions so subtle that even the matter-of-fact John Mangles, a difficult judge, and most unlikely to be led away by any flights of imagination, was completely satisfied.

At the conclusion of Paganel's dissertation, Glenarvan announced that the DUNCAN would sail immediately for Australia.

But before the decisive orders were given, McNabbs asked for a few minutes' hearing.

"Say away, McNabbs," replied Glenarvan.

"I have no intention of weakening the arguments of my friend Paganel, and still less of refuting them. I consider them wise and weighty, and deserving our attention, and think them justly entitled to form the basis of our future researches. But still I should like them to be submitted to a final examination, in order to make their worth incontestable and uncontested."

"Go on, Major," said Paganel; "I am ready to answer all your questions."

"They are simple enough, as you will see. Five months ago, when we left the Clyde, we had studied these same documents, and their interpretation then appeared quite plain. No other coast but the western coast of Patagonia could possibly, we thought, have been the scene of the shipwreck. We had not even the shadow of a doubt on the subject."

"That's true," replied Glenarvan.

"A little later," continued the Major, "when a providential fit of absence of mind came over Paganel, and brought him on board the yacht, the documents were submitted to him and he approved our plan of search most unreservedly."

"I do not deny it," said Paganel.

"And yet we were mistaken," resumed the Major.

"Yes, we were mistaken," returned Paganel; "but it is only human to make a mistake, while to persist in it, a man must be a fool."

"Stop, Paganel, don't excite yourself; I don't mean to say that we should prolong our search in America."

"What is it, then, that you want?" asked Glenarvan.

"A confession, nothing more. A confession that Australia now as evidently appears to be the theater of the shipwreck of the BRITANNIA as America did before."

"We confess it willingly," replied Paganel.

"Very well, then, since that is the case, my advice is not to let your imagination rely on successive and contradictory evidence. Who knows whether after Australia some other country may not appear with equal certainty to be the place, and we may have to recommence our search?"

Glenarvan and Paganel looked at each other silently, struck by the justice of these remarks.

"I should like you, therefore," continued the Major, "before we actually start for Australia, to make one more examination of the documents. Here they are, and here are the charts. Let us take up each point in succession through which the 37th parallel passes, and see if we come across any other country which would agree with the precise indications of the document."

"Nothing can be more easily and quickly done," replied Paganel; "for countries are not very numerous in this latitude, happily."

"Well, look," said the Major, displaying an English planisphere on the plan of Mercator's Chart, and presenting the appearance of a terrestrial globe.

He placed it before Lady Helena, and then they all stood round, so as to be able to follow the argument of Paganel.

"As I have said already," resumed the learned geographer, "after having crossed South America, the 37th degree of latitude cuts the islands of Tristan d'Acunha. Now I maintain that none of the words of the document could relate to these islands."

The documents were examined with the most minute care, and the conclusion unanimously reached was that these islands were entirely out of the question.

"Let us go on then," resumed Paganel. "After leaving the Atlantic, we pass two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope, and into the Indian Ocean. Only one group of islands is found on this route, the Amsterdam Isles. Now, then, we must examine these as we did the Tristan d'Acunha group."

After a close survey, the Amsterdam Isles were rejected in their turn. Not a single word, or part of a word, French, English or German, could apply to this group in the Indian Ocean.

"Now we come to Australia," continued Paganel.

"The 37th parallel touches this continent at Cape Bernouilli, and leaves it at Twofold Bay. You will agree with me that, without straining the text, the English word STRA and the French one AUSTRAL may relate to Australia. The thing is too plain to need proof."

The conclusion of Paganel met with unanimous approval; every probability was in his favor.

"And where is the next point?" asked McNabbs.

"That is easily answered. After leaving Twofold Bay, we cross an arm of the sea which extends to New Zealand. Here I must call your attention to the fact that the French word CONTIN means a continent, irrefragably.

Captain Grant could not, then, have found refuge in New Zealand, which is only an island. However that may be though, examine and compare, and go over and over each word, and see if, by any possibility, they can be made to fit this new country."

"In no way whatever," replied John Mangles, after a minute investigation of the documents and the planisphere.

"No," chimed in all the rest, and even the Major himself, "it cannot apply to New Zealand."

"Now," went on Paganel, "in all this immense space between this large island and the American coast, there is only one solitary barren little island crossed by the 37th parallel."

"And what is its name," asked the Major.

"Here it is, marked in the map. It is Maria Theresa--a name of which there is not a single trace in either of the three documents."

"Not the slightest," said Glenarvan.

"I leave you, then, my friends, to decide whether all these probabilities, not to say certainties, are not in favor of the Australian continent."

"Evidently," replied the captain and all the others.

"Well, then, John," said Glenarvan, "the next question is, have you provisions and coal enough?"

"Yes, your honor, I took in an ample store at Talcahuano, and, besides, we can easily replenish our stock of coal at Cape Town."

"Well, then, give orders."

"Let me make one more observation," interrupted McNabbs.

"Go on then."

"Whatever likelihood of success Australia may offer us, wouldn't it be advisable to stop a day or two at the Tristan d'Acunha Isles and the Amsterdam? They lie in our route, and would not take us the least out of the way. Then we should be able to ascertain if the BRITANNIA had left any traces of her shipwreck there?"

"Incredulous Major!" exclaimed Paganel, "he still sticks to his idea."

"I stick to this any way, that I don't want to have to retrace our steps, supposing that Australia should disappoint our sanguine hopes."

"It seems to me a good precaution," replied Glenarvan.

"And I'm not the one to dissuade you from it," returned Paganel;
"quite the contrary."

"Steer straight for Tristan d'Acunha."

"Immediately, your Honor," replied the captain, going on deck,
while Robert and Mary Grant overwhelmed Lord Glenarvan with
their grateful thanks.

Shortly after, the DUNCAN had left the American coast,
and was running eastward, her sharp keel rapidly cutting her way
through the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.