

## CHAPTER XII

### CAPTAIN HATTERAS

The Forward, under steam, rapidly made its way between the ice-mountains and the icebergs. Johnson was at the wheel. Shandon, with his snow spectacles, was examining the horizon, but his joy was of short duration, for he soon discovered that the passage ended in a circus of mountains. However, he preferred going on, in spite of the difficulty, to going back. The dog followed the brig at a long distance, running along the plain, but if he lagged too far behind a singular whistle could be distinguished, which he immediately obeyed. The first time this whistle was heard the sailors looked round about them; they were alone on deck all together, and no stranger was to be seen; and yet the whistle was again heard from time to time. Clifton was the first alarmed.

"Do you hear?" said he. "Just look how that animal answers when he hears the whistle."

"I can scarcely believe my eyes," answered Gripper.

"It's all over!" cried Pen. "I don't go any further."

"Pen's right!" replied Brunton; "it's tempting God!"

"Tempting the devil!" replied Clifton. "I'd sooner lose my bounty money than go a step further."

"We shall never get back!" said Bolton in despair.

The crew had arrived at the highest pitch of insubordination.

"Not a step further!" cried Wolsten. "Are you all of the same mind?"

"Ay! ay!" answered all the sailors.

"Come on, then," said Bolton; "let's go and find the commander; I'll undertake the talking."

The sailors in a tight group swayed away towards the poop. The Forward at the time was penetrating into a vast circus, which measured perhaps 800 feet in diameter, and with the exception of one entrance--that by which the vessel had come--was entirely closed up.

Shandon said that he had just imprisoned himself; but what was he to do? How were they to retrace their steps? He felt his responsibility, and his hand grasped the telescope. The doctor, with folded arms, kept silent; he was contemplating the walls of ice, the medium altitude of which was over 300 feet. A foggy dome remained suspended above the gulf. It was at this instant that Bolton addressed his speech to the commander.

"Commander!" said he in a trembling voice, "we can't go any further."

"What do you say?" replied Shandon, whose consciousness of disregarded authority made the blood rise to the roots of his hair.

"Commander," replied Bolton, "we say that we've done enough for that invisible captain, and we are decided to go no further ahead."

"You are decided?" cried Shandon. "You talk thus, Bolton? Take care!"

"Your threats are all the same to us," brutally replied Pen; "we won't go an inch further."

Shandon advanced towards the mutineers; at the same time the mate came up and said in a whisper: "Commander, if you wish to get out of here we haven't a minute to lose; there's an iceberg drifting up the pass, and it is very likely to cork up all issue and keep us prisoners."

Shandon examined the situation.

"You will give an account of your conduct later on, you fellows," said he. "Now heave aboard!"

The sailors rushed to their posts, and the Forward quickly veered round; the fires were stuffed with coals; the great question was to outrun the floating mountain. It was a struggle between the brig and

the iceberg. The former, in order to get through, was running south; the latter was drifting north, ready to close up every passage.

"Steam up! steam up!" cried Shandon. "Do you hear, Brunton?"

The Forward glided like a bird amidst the struggling icebergs, which her prow sent to the right-about; the brig's hull shivered under the action of the screw, and the manometer indicated a prodigious tension of steam, for it whistled with a deafening noise.

"Load the valves!" cried Shandon, and the engineer obeyed at the risk of blowing up the ship; but his despairing efforts were in vain. The iceberg, caught up by an undercurrent, rapidly approached the pass. The brig was still about three cables' length from it, when the mountain, entering like a corner-stone into the open space, strongly adhered to its neighbours and closed up all issue.

"We are lost!" cried Shandon, who could not retain the imprudent words.

"Lost!" repeated the crew.

"Let them escape who can!" said some.

"Lower the shore boats!" said others.

"To the steward's room!" cried Pen and several of his band, "and if

we are to be drowned, let's drown ourselves in gin!"

Disorder among the men was at its height. Shandon felt himself overcome; when he wished to command, he stammered and hesitated. His thought was unable to make way through his words. The doctor was walking about in agitation. Johnson stoically folded his arms and said nothing. All at once a strong, imperious, and energetic voice was heard to pronounce these words:

"Every man to his post and tack about!"

Johnson started, and, hardly knowing what he did, turned the wheel rapidly. He was just in time, for the brig, launched at full speed, was about to crush herself against her prison walls. But while Johnson was instinctively obeying, Shandon, Clawbonny, the crew, and all down to the stoker Warren, who had abandoned his fires, even black Strong, who had left his cooking, were all mustered on deck, and saw emerge from that cabin the only man who was in possession of the key, and that man was Garry, the sailor.

"Sir!" cried Shandon, becoming pale. "Garry--you--by what right do you command here?"

"Dick," called out Garry, reproducing that whistle which had so much surprised the crew. The dog, at the sound of his right name, jumped with one bound on to the poop and lay quietly down at his master's feet. The crew did not say a word. The key which the captain of the

Forward alone possessed, the dog sent by him, and who came thus to verify his identity, that commanding accent which it was impossible to mistake--all this acted strongly on the minds of the sailors, and was sufficient to establish Garry's authority.

Besides, Garry was no longer recognisable; he had cut off the long whiskers which had covered his face, which made it look more energetic and imperious than ever; dressed in the clothes of his rank which had been deposited in the cabin, he appeared in the insignia of commander.

Then immediately, with that mobility which characterised them, the crew of the Forward cried out--"Three cheers for the captain!"

"Shandon!" said the latter to his second, "muster the crew; I am going to inspect it!"

Shandon obeyed and gave orders with an altered voice. The captain advanced to meet his officers and men, saying something suitable to each, and treating each according to his past conduct. When he had finished the inspection, he returned on to the poop, and with a calm voice pronounced the following words:

"Officers and sailors, like you, I am English, and my motto is that of Nelson, 'England expects that every man will do his duty.' As an Englishman I am resolved, we are resolved, that no bolder men shall go further than we have been. As an Englishman I will not allow, we

will not allow, other people to have the glory of pushing further north themselves. If ever human foot can step upon the land of the North Pole, it shall be the foot of an Englishman. Here is our country's flag. I have equipped this vessel, and consecrated my fortune to this enterprise, and, if necessary, I shall consecrate to it my life and yours; for I am determined that these colours shall float on the North Pole. Take courage. From this day, for every degree we can gain northwards the sum of a thousand pounds will be awarded to you. There are ninety, for we are now in the seventy-second. Count them. Besides, my name is enough. It means energy and patriotism. I am Captain Hatteras!"

"Captain Hatteras!" exclaimed Shandon, and that name, well known to English sailors, was whispered amongst the crew.

"Now," continued Hatteras, "anchor the brig to the ice, put out the fires, and each of you return to your usual work. Shandon, I wish to hold a council with you relative to affairs on board. Join me with the doctor, Wall, and the boatswain in my cabin. Johnson, disperse the men."

Hatteras, calm and haughty, quietly left the poop. In the meantime Shandon was anchoring the brig.

Who, then, was this Hatteras, and for what reason did his name make such a profound impression upon the crew? John Hatteras was the only son of a London brewer, who died in 1852 worth six millions of money.

Still young, he embraced the maritime career in spite of the splendid fortune awaiting him. Not that he felt any vocation for commerce, but the instinct of geographical discoveries was dear to him. He had always dreamt of placing his foot where no mortal foot had yet soiled the ground.

At the age of twenty he was already in possession of the vigorous constitution of a thin and sanguine man; an energetic face, with lines geometrically traced; a high and perpendicular forehead; cold but handsome eyes; thin lips, which set off a mouth from which words rarely issued; a middle stature; solidly-jointed limbs, put in motion by iron muscles; the whole forming a man endowed with a temperament fit for anything. When you saw him you felt he was daring; when you heard him you knew he was coldly determined; his was a character that never drew back, ready to stake the lives of others as well as his own. It was well to think twice before following him in his expeditions.

John Hatteras was proud of being an Englishman. A Frenchman once said to him, with what he thought was refined politeness and amiability:

"If I were not a Frenchman I should like to be an Englishman."

"And if I were not an Englishman," answered Hatteras, "I should like to be an Englishman."

That answer revealed the character of the man. It was a great grief to him that Englishmen had not the monopoly of geographical



discoveries, and were, in fact, rather behind other nations in that field.

Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of America, was a Genoese; Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese, discovered India; another Portuguese, Fernando de Andrada, China; and a third, Magellan, the Terra del Fuego. Canada was discovered by Jacques Cartier, a Frenchman; Labrador, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, the Azores, Madeira, Newfoundland, Guinea, Congo, Mexico, Cape Blanco, Greenland, Iceland, the South Seas, California, Japan, Cambodia, Peru, Kamtchatka, the Philippines, Spitzbergen, Cape Horn, Behring's Straits, Tasmania, New Zealand, New Brittany, New Holland, Louisiana, Jean Mayen Island, were discovered by Icelanders, Scandinavians, French, Russians, Portuguese, Danes, Spaniards, Genoese, and Dutch, but not one by an Englishman. Captain Hatteras could not reconcile himself to the fact that Englishmen were excluded from the glorious list of navigators who made the great discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Hatteras consoled himself a little when he turned to more modern times. Then Englishmen had the best of it with Sturt, Burke, Wills, King, and Grey in Australia; with Palliser in America; with Cyril Graham, Wadington, and Cunningham in India; with Burton, Speke, Grant, and Livingstone in Africa.

But for a man like Hatteras this was not enough; from his point of view these bold travellers were improvers rather than inventors; and he was determined to do something better, and he would have

invented a country if he could, only to have the honour of discovering it. Now he had noticed that, although Englishmen did not form a majority amongst ancient discoverers, and that he had to go back to Cook in 1774 to obtain New Caledonia and the Sandwich Isles, where the unfortunate captain perished in 1778, yet there existed, nevertheless, a corner of the globe where they seemed to have united all their efforts. This corner was precisely the boreal lands and seas of North America. The list of Polar discoveries may be thus written:

Nova Zembla, discovered by Willoughby, in 1553; Weigatz Island, by Barrough, in 1556; the West Coast of Greenland, by Davis, in 1585; Davis's Straits, by Davis, in 1587; Spitzbergen, by Willoughby, in 1596; Hudson's Bay, by Hudson, in 1610; Baffin's Bay, by Baffin, in 1616.

In more modern times, Hearne, Mackenzie, John Ross, Parry, Franklin, Richardson, Beechey, James Ross, Back, Dease, Simpson, Rae, Inglefield, Belcher, Austin, Kellett, Moore, McClure, Kennedy, and McClintock have continually searched those unknown lands.

The limits of the northern coasts of America had been fixed, and the North-West passage almost discovered, but this was not enough; there was something better still to be done, and John Hatteras had twice attempted it by equipping two ships at his own expense. He wanted to reach the North Pole, and thus crown the series of English discoveries by one of the most illustrious attempts. To attain the

Pole was the aim of his life.

After a few successful cruises in the Southern seas, Hatteras endeavoured for the first time, in 1846, to go north by Baffin's Sea; but he could not get beyond the seventy-fourth degree of latitude; he was then commanding the sloop Halifax. His crew suffered atrocious torments, and John Hatteras pushed his adventurous rashness so far, that, afterwards, sailors were little tempted to re-commence similar expeditions under such a chief.

However, in 1850 Hatteras succeeded in enrolling on the schooner Farewell about twenty determined men, tempted principally by the high prize offered for their audacity. It was upon that occasion that Dr. Clawbonny entered into correspondence with John Hatteras, whom he did not know, requesting to join the expedition, but happily for the doctor the post was already filled up. The Farewell, following the track taken in 1817 by the Neptune from Aberdeen, got up to the north of Spitzbergen as far as the seventy-sixth degree of latitude. There the expedition was compelled to winter. But the sufferings of the crew from the intense cold were so great that not a single man saw England again, with the exception of Hatteras himself, who was brought back to his own country by a Danish whaler after a walk of more than two hundred miles across the ice.

The sensation produced by the return of this one man was immense. Who in future would dare to follow Hatteras in his mad attempts? However, he did not despair of beginning again. His father, the brewer,

died, and he became possessor of a nabob's fortune. Soon after a geographical fact bitterly stirred up John Hatteras. A brig, the *Advance*, manned by seventeen men, equipped by a merchant named Grinnell, under the command of Dr. Kane, and sent in search of Sir John Franklin, advanced in 1853 through Baffin's Sea and Smith's Strait, beyond the eighty-second degree of boreal latitude, much nearer the Pole than any of his predecessors. Now, this vessel was American, Grinnell was American, and Kane was American. The Englishman's disdain for the Yankee will be easily understood; in the heart of Hatteras it changed to hatred; he was resolved to outdo his audacious competitor and reach the Pole itself.

For two years he had been living incognito in Liverpool, passing himself off as a sailor; he recognised in Richard Shandon the man he wanted; he sent him an offer by an anonymous letter, and one to Dr. Clawbonny at the same time. The *Forward* was built, armed, and equipped. Hatteras took great care to conceal his name, for had it been known he would not have found a single man to accompany him. He was determined not to take the command of the brig except in a moment of danger, and when his crew had gone too far to draw back. He had in reserve, as we have seen, such offers of money to make to the men that not one of them would refuse to follow him to the other end of the world; and, in fact, it was right to the other end of the world that he meant to go. Circumstances had become critical, and John Hatteras had made himself known. His dog, the faithful Dick, the companion of his voyages, was the first to recognise him. Luckily for the brave and unfortunately for the timid, it was well and duly

established that John Hatteras was the captain of the Forward.